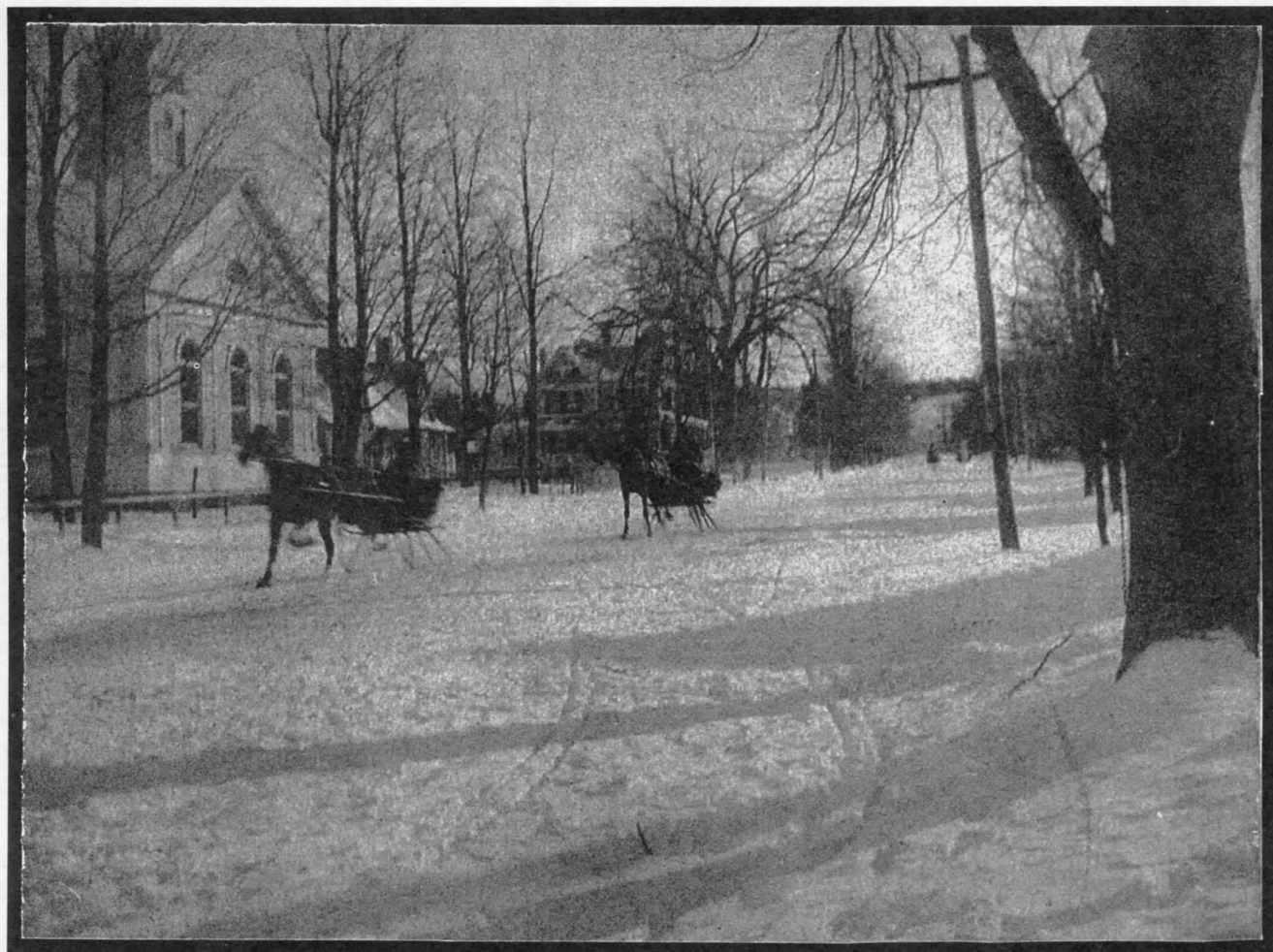




THE *FREE-HOLDER*

WINTER 1997 THE OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOUNDED 1960

- ♦ A SALUTE
TO THE
PRINTERY
- ♦ AN OLD-TIME
HOLIDAY
TREAT
- ♦ CELTS IN
COLONIAL
OYSTER BAY
- ♦ HISTORICAL
SOCIETY IN
CYBERSPACE



THE HISTORY MAGAZINE OF THE TOWN OF OYSTER BAY

Editorial

Thanks to all for your comments regarding the first two issues of *The Freeholder*. Our readers have told us that they would like to keep receiving our magazine, and we're happy to oblige!

We now have the wherewithal to print the magazine for the near

future, thanks to a generous in-kind donor (see p. 12). However, we still need your submissions and comments to keep *The Freeholder* going. They don't have to be long, footnoted articles; short stories of historical interest are nice, too!

Happy Holidays to all our members and friends.

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

On page 16 the Fall 1996 *Freeholder* in his article about "The Dutch Next Door", Lee Myles states "we can't contradict the opinion of Winfred Blevin who compiled the *Dictionary of*

the American West in which she said..." Author Win Blevins of the said dictionary is not a "she". He is a fine gentleman and friend of mine who lives in Jackson, Wyoming. His latest novel, *Stonesong*,... a fictional biography of Chief Crazy Horse, is 1995 winner of the prestigious Spur Award for western fiction and has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.

THE FREEHOLDER

of the

Oyster Bay Historical Society
Vol. 1 No. 3 Winter 1997

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Purpose: The Oyster Bay Historical Society was founded in 1960 with the express purpose of preserving the history of the Town of Oyster Bay. The Society maintains a museum and research library in the Town-owned c.1720 Earle-Wightman House, 20 Summit Street, Oyster Bay. Call (516) 922-5032 for more information. Copyright 1997 by the Oyster Bay Historical Society

ABOUT OUR FRONT COVER

A snowy scene on South Street in front of St. Paul's Methodist Church, c. 1895. Two sleighs are shown rushing past the camera. In winter, it was the quickest, if not always the safest, mode of transportation.

*Photo from collections of the
Oyster Bay Historical Society*

My family has a Dutch Oven which my great-grandmother brought over from France (from the north near Flanders) and is still in use by my mother and me to make coq au vin. It cooks stewed meats like nothing else. We have always called it the Dutch Oven - I don't know what it was called in French - and it is a heavy iron pot with a lid and handle similar to the one you pictured. We use it on a gas

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BASIC TOOLS OF THE COMPOSITOR: A SALUTE TO THE PRINTERY

Part I

By Charles Reichman

Close your eyes and imagine that you've been conjured via hocus pocus to Oyster Bay in the last year of the 19th century. When you open your eyes, you find yourself standing in front of a quaint printshop. Part of its odd appearance is that it produced the effect of a temporary structure. And such it was! The Disbrow family which built it, apparently intended to replace it with a far more stable piece of real estate but never got around to it. Too busy, it seems, in publishing the "Oyster Bay Guardian", their major enterprise.

In 1970, "The Guardian" office moved to a new location and the old building faced razing. This horrified a member of the community, Elizabeth Schneider. The former Guardian Building, old and poorly constructed as it was, was viewed by her as a historic site that should be preserved. And it is, thanks to her grandson, Bill Miller who has owned and operated "The Printery", as it is now known, for the last 10 years.

What is fascinating about "The Printery" apart from its near-centenary status is that it is a rare print shop, obviously faithful to the artistry of the hands-on printing techniques upon which it was founded.

Here, the historic ways of letterpress printing defy the overwhelming inroads of cyberspace printing. And for this alone, the staff of The Freeholder dedicates this article on old printing tools to Bill Miller's "The Printery."

What Johann Gutenberg over five centuries ago and Othmar Mergenthaler 100 years ago wrought with their revolutionary inventions of movable printing type and mechanical typesetting machinery, respectively, has been superseded in the last 40 or so years by the introduction of offset and computer-generated typesetting.

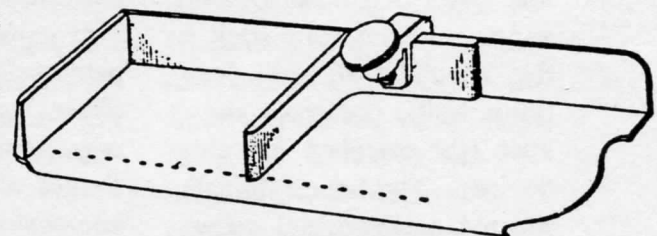
This oceanic upheaval in printing technology not only decimated letterpress printing¹ but in its wake made completely obsolete the skill and artistry of one of the most colorful figures in the industry, the compositor². Of the four principal craftsmen of the art of letter-press printing- the operator of the mechanical typesetter, the stoneman, pressman and compositor -it was the latter who was the key person³ in the printing plant, whether a small job shop or a large newspaper or book publishing establishment. And it is the contents of his

bag⁴ of tools that are now being eagerly sought by collectors and museums.

The compositors tool bag usually contained at least a dozen tools, not counting duplicates in varying sizes: brayer, brush, small and large planer, shooting stick, a galley or two, quoins, bodkin, tweezer, pica gauge and composing stick. But it was the last four that defined his calling, with the aptly-named composing stick epitomizing it. Each will be discussed seriatim, beginning with the composing stick, sometimes also dubbed, job stick.

Originally a sculpted piece of wood (thus the word, stick) with a chiseled-out groove in which individual letters were placed and ending in a shaped handle so it could be held steady, the composing stick early on blossomed into a precisely engineered implement, first of wood and later of metal, either plain or stainless steel.

The metal stick that finally evolved from its carpentered wooden ancestor was no



Composing Stick

longer a stick, but the misnomer persisted. Whether of wood or metal the composing stick may be best described as a shallow tray with two fixed sides or walls, one running lengthwise and the other widthwise. The lengthwise wall, in addition to being the base on which the letters rested, acted as a rail to support a movable device for setting the width of each line of type.

Figure 1 is a sketch of one kind of composing stick.

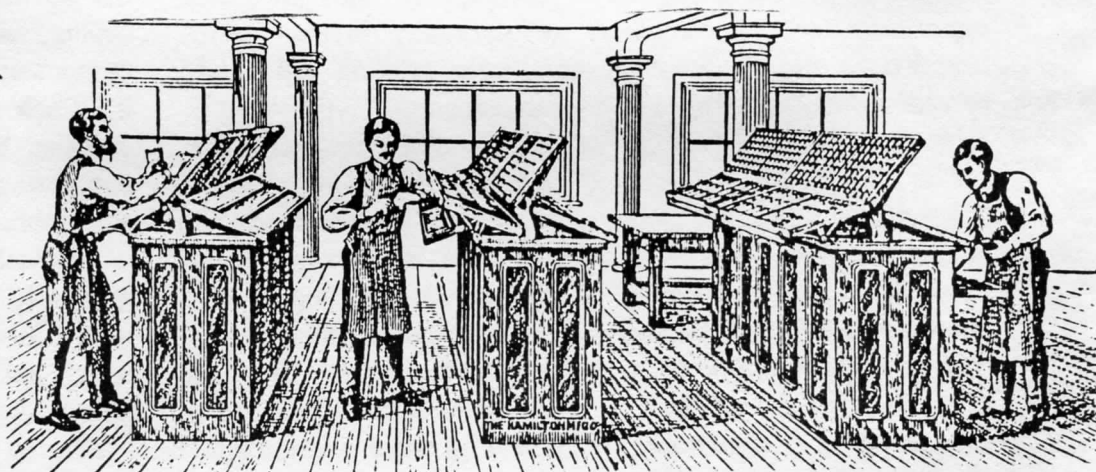
As a group, composing sticks fall into two categories: small to medium and large. The first group encompasses composing sticks measuring from two to 20 inches across in intervals of two inches and in depths of 2, 2¼ and 2½ inches. The second group ranged from 24 to 42 inches across in the same intervals and depths as the first group.

The nomenclature of the four parts of standard wood and metal composing stick is: the "head" (small wall), "rail" (long wall), bed(tray) and knee (the attached movable device). The knee originally sported a clamp and screw mechanism, requiring the compositor to use a

screwdriver to adjust the width. In 1856, a new, more efficient method of adjusting the knee, via a lever and clamp, was invented by a Middletown, Conn. printer, Oliver F. Grover. By 1867 this method of knee construction was greatly improved. It took another 20 or more years before further adaptations of the Grover

found them more appropriate when having to set wood type.

Wood too persisted right up to the demise of letterpress printing as the raw material of the compositor's pica gauge or ruler. It was not until well into the current century that pica gauges made of steel became available. However, these never replaced the wooden ones for a peculiar



lever and clamp concept were patented.

Of all the tools of the compositor, the composing stick underwent the most changes. From 1850 to 1920, for example, the composing stick was the subject of an impressive total of 73 U. S. patents⁵, none having to do either with its basic construction or appearance. It should also be noted that composing sticks made of wood remained in use well into this century. Compositors

reason: for most compositors the pica gauge of wood came free. Type foundries, printers' supply houses, paper manufacturers, and engravers found the gauge to be an excellent medium for advertising company names, products and services and distributed them widely.

The pica gauge was a late arrival on the printing landscape; much later than the composing stick and bodkin but probably before the tweezer. What propelled its

TWEEZERS.



This is good and cheap, polished steel, nonpareil points.

development was the adoption by American printers in 1870 of the Point System of printing measurement, then already in use in France for many years.

Under the Point System there were three basic printers' measures: one point, the equivalent of .013837 of an inch, nonpareil equal to six points, and pica 12 points equal to .996264 of an inch⁶. Comparable to a standard wooden ruler, the pica gauge was divided in picas and equivalent nonpareil points and in inches. For many a compositor, it was a godsend and ensured accuracy in width and depth in composing and imposing an advertisement, news column, book page, poster or assorted ephemera.

The bodkin and tweezer were akin in function in the composing process. Both enabled the compositor to extract damaged or erroneous type or lines from assembled type. Of the two tools, the bodkin has perhaps the more interesting history. Pick-like in shape, it first surfaced in the ateliers of tailors and dressmakers. Though somewhat resembling a needle, it was not used in sewing. Like an awl in carpentry, it was used to puncture holes in fabric or leather instead of wood. How it emerged in printing is not known. An

anecdotal assumption is that around 1846 a printer may have borrowed one from his wife to pry an incorrect or flawed letter from a chase or galley of type.

The first bodkins were made of either bone or ivory. It is doubtful whether either substance was employed in the making of the compositor's bodkin. The likelihood is that it was crafted from metal.

When the tweezer was adopted as a compositor's tool is not on record but it might have been in the late 19th or early 20th Century. It too had earlier usage. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* it goes back to 1658, as part of the contents of an etui or sewing case. The *OED*, however, also defines it as a small pincer or nipper used for plucking out hair or grasping small objects.

The compositor's tweezer aped in appearance the tweezer primarily made for plucking out hair, though it was larger and made of sturdier and heavier metal. Most contemporary tweezers were 4½ inches in length with the grasping ends serrated on the inside to ensure a firm grip on letters or lines of leaded type. Some also were available with an attached movable bodkin, in a multi-blade pocket knife

arrangement.

As indicated earlier, the four tools discussed best represent the compositor's craft in composing, the manual operation of typesetting. But the compositor in the late 19th Century also became responsible for imposing, that is, fitting the type that he had set on the composing stick in a chase or form. This was initially the work of a craftsman called a stoneman because the job was performed on a stone-topped table⁷. After completing the stone work, the compositor in most shops would also proof the assembled type for symmetry and alignment and proper spacing of text and headings. The proofing for spelling was not within his domain; only typographical, as distinguished from spelling and grammatical, gaffes were his responsibility.

For these two job descriptions, the compositor required the eight remaining tools previously cited. All will be covered in the second part of this article. Not to be included are the materiel for constructing printing surfaces in chases: reglets and other furniture, quads, leads, slugs, rules, all of which are sometimes incorrectly classified as compositor's implements.

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THE HOLIDAY PIE

By Gus Stahl

One of the traditions that American Thanksgivings and Christmases have in common is the appearance on the holiday table of that noble viand, mince pie. Introduced to the English long before the Pilgrims came to these shores, the first mince pie seems to have been a main dish, not a dessert, an omnium-gatherum of the finely chopped flesh and organs of a half dozen or more birds and beasts, seasoned with the spices and condiments brought home from the Crusades and baked in a great crust of flaky pastry. Fruit was added early and became one of the major ingredients.

Obviously created for celebrations of the rich and famous, such dishes became a custom that filtered down through the social orders, and, by the seventeenth century, had evolved into something very like our current holiday pie.

A seventeenth century English recipe called for minced chicken and more neats tongues, eggs, sugar, lemon peel, oranges, raisins and spices like nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves and mace. By the last quarter of the 18th century one American household left a record of eating mince pies composed of chopped venison, dried cherries, chopped apples, cinnamon and nutmeg. Fifty years later the mix was chopped boiled beef, suet, chopped apples, grated lemon, raisins or currants, sugar, pepper, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, cider and a gill of lemon brandy.

Perhaps an evolution can be discerned tending toward the creation that today adorns our Thanksgiving and Christmas

tables, but we should not assume that the mince pie recently served at Thanksgiving across America was of uniform ingredients mixed in the same quantities. Every locale and every family seems to have its own recipe. A half dozen twentieth century cook books consulted did nothing to produce uniformity. Different lists of components, some including meat and some using only fruit as the major ingredient compounded confusion as to the structure of the real mince pie.

Often called Christmas pie when served on that day of days, the mince pie (or minced pie, either form is proper) may still have a flavor for some, not just a savory holiday treat, but of the sacred symbolism it once bore. Before the Reformation, mince pie was often made with an oblong pie shell. The fancy had grown up that this pastry box represented the crèche or manger in which the Christmas babe was laid. Atop the lid, it became the custom to place a pastry doll to represent the newborn. This smacked too much of "images" or popish doctrine for the dissenters and with the rise of Protestantism, the pretty invention was tabooed. Mince pies became round and the doll disappeared.

However, the origin of the convention may have arisen from a less than sacred notion. Oblong pie cases have been called "coffins" in our language since at least as early as the beginning of the 15th century. It may have suited the macabre sense of humor of a time beset by plagues, famines and wars, to supply the coffin with a little body. Those

cooks and diners who were a little more nice-minded might then have substituted the crèche story as a less gruesome explanation of the presence of the little figure. Against this idea is the fact that the earliest use of coffin for a pie case is found about a hundred years before coffin in its modern sense of burial box appears in the records. Earliest written appearances of words, the source of most of our knowledge of them, are, however, not necessarily indicators of the moment of their introduction to oral use. Till more definite evidence appears, you are free to speculate.

It was a long time between the first Thanksgiving at Plymouth, that provides us with so much of the festival's iconography and the establishment of an annual national holiday. George Washington, as our first president, took a major step in that direction when he issued the First National Thanksgiving Proclamation. That did not create a re-occurring American legal holiday, and, although there were plenty of local celebrations in following years, it was not until Abraham Lincoln proclaimed another National Thanksgiving that an uninterrupted progression of annual observances began. Christmas began to be generally recognized across the land as something more than a religious observance early in the 19th century, as the Christmas customs of our multitudinous immigrants began to mix and merge. With the widespread acceptance of both holidays, with all their trimmings, the mince pie

A List of Some of the Various Ingredients Noted
in Five Hundred Years of Mince Pie Recipes

MEATS

Beef
Mutton
Chicken
Neats' (Beef) Tongue
Neats' Feet
Organ Meat
Venison

FRUIT

Apples
Currants
Plums
Raisins
Dried Cherries
Cranberries
Quinces
Lemon Peel
Citron Peel
Orange Peel

(Fruits were used dried, candied or fresh)



FLAVORINGS

Mace
Cinnamon
Cloves
Nutmeg
Pepper
Allspice
Sugar
Molasses
Vinegar
Verjuice
Sack
Brandy
Rum
Wine
Cider

FATS

Suet
Butter
Drippings

gained its rightful place among the many holiday delights we enjoy. Perhaps some of *The Freeholder's* readers can tell us something about early Oyster Bay holidays and their features. Included, I'm sure, will be accounts of the local consumption of mince pie.

PRINTERY

continued from p. 5

NOTES

1. Letterpress printing has not been entirely wiped out. Among the true believers still practicing it are hobby printers and some small press book publishers.
2. Joseph Moxon, who is credited as the author of the earliest

manual on printing in 1683, claimed the compositor to be the most erudite craftsman in the trade. "It is necessary," he wrote, "that he be a good English Schollar." Quoted from Moxon's *Mechcanik Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* Dover Publications, New York. 2nd reprint Edition.

3. In many plants there was strong rivalry between pressmen and compositors for dominance. The former usually dismissed compositors as "galley slaves", the first word borrowed from the name of wood and metal trays, called galleys, in which compositor placed type after lines were set.

4. Journeymen printers in their perambulations from shop to shop invariably carried their tools in cloth or leather bags.

5. For a more detailed consideration of patents covering composing sticks see "Composing Sticks: A Printing Arts Collectible" by the author of this article. *Maine Antiques Digest*, April 1982. An informative essay on the tool, "A Disquisition on the Composing Stick" by Martin K. Speckter, The Typophiles, Inc., New York, is also recommended.

6. *The Practice of Printing*. By Ralph H. Polk. The Manual Arts Press, Peoria, Ill. 1926.

7. The arrival of mechanical typesetting machinery radically changed the work of the compositor. Instead of being just a typesetter, he also took over the work of the stoneman. His dual role was exercised at first in small job shops and later in newspaper plants and other large-volume printers.

Letters to the Editor

continued from p. 2

or electric range. It seems to distribute heat more evenly than modern cookware.

And has anyone thought that the use of the Dutch oven may have come to Britain via the advent of William III, who was born at The Hague and was known as William of Orange prior to assuming the English throne after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 that deposed the Catholic James II. Must have been lots of Dutch influence in

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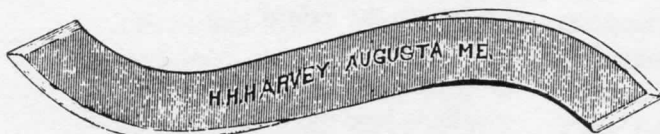


ASK UNCLE PELEG

To Uncle Peleg:

In the garage of a house I moved into I found a strange piece of metal six or seven inches long and of the shape sketched. I think it might be old, perhaps antique. I'm pretty sure it's not just an unidentifiable piece of something from which it has been separated but has a use in its own right. Do you recognize it?

Karen Ward



BRICK JOINTER ON JOINT FORMER.

Yes. And it might have some age on it and it might not. In place of your sketch I illustrate the same object from a catalog more than 100 years old. It shows a brick mason's iron jointer used to dress the mortar joint between courses of brick. Also called tuck pointers and joint formers, the tools came

with either convex or concave edges. These could be v-shaped, round or square. Some people collect such things but it probably isn't worth much. As a paper weight it would doubtless be a conversation piece.

Uncle Peleg:

Why is a horseshoe lucky? I found one hung on a tree limb in a woods upstate and everybody said I'd have good luck.

M.L.

Our name's not "Pegleg"! It's Peleg. Like many of our non-conformist New England ancestors we are named for the Biblical Peleg, son of Eber and brother of Joktan.

We're not sure a horseshoe is thought lucky just because it's a horseshoe. Way we heard it long ago was that a found horseshoe was lucky because once upon a time iron was expensive and even a worn horseshoe was worth something. However, our illustration, below, argues against that notion. As is done even unto the present, the "lucky horseshoe" is nailed up over an entranceway. The horns-up position keeps the luck from running out. If the value of the iron were the luck in it, then it would have been recycled by the blacksmith. It may be that the shoe in this position is a crescent moon symbol originally representing the Goddess

continued on p.19





CURRENTS OF THE BAY



*This section focuses on the doings of local historical societies, museums, and communities in the Town of Oyster Bay and its neighbors. Upcoming special events, exhibits, lectures, and tours are featured, so send your submissions to the Editor if you would like to see your events covered by **The Freeholder**.*

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNOUNCES WINTER WORKSHOP OFFERINGS

The following workshops will be held at the Oyster Bay Historical Society's Earle-Wightman House Museum, 20 Summit Street, Oyster Bay. They are designed as parent/child programs, but individuals may attend as well. Join us at the Historical Society on Saturday, January 11, 1997, from 9:30-12:30 p.m. for a Neat & Tidy Box Decorating Workshop. Our ancestors had a box for everything! Decorate your own box any way you'd like! One box and decorating supplies will be provided per couple, except cotton rags. This workshop is limited to the first ten parent/child couples who register and the fee is \$35 per couple, member and \$40 per couple, non-member.

On Saturday, February 8, from 9:30-12:30 p.m. a Theorem Painting Workshop will take place at the Earle-Wightman House. Theorem painting, which utilizes a series of stencils on a cloth ground, was a very popular pastime in America during the second quarter of the 19th Century. Try your hand at it in this unique workshop! All supplies are included in the registration fee of \$45 per couple, member; \$50 per couple, non-member.

The final workshop in the series, Silhouette Portraits, will take place on Saturday, March 8,

from 10 - 1 p.m. Silhouette portraits have had a long history in America and were much in vogue prior to the invention of photography. Come in and have your likeness cut in 18th and 19th Century dress! Each person will cut their own portrait. Registration is limited to four parent/child couples per hour; pre-registration is required. Fee: \$25 per couple, member; \$30, non-member.

Pre-registration is required for each workshop and the fee is non-refundable. However, credit may be applied toward the fee for a subsequent workshop. More information on supplies and program fees is available by calling 922-5032. Space is limited, call to reserve today!



SOCIETY WEBSITE OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

The Historical Society, working in conjunction with consultant Louis Bruno of Installations Plus, has opened its own site on the Internet. According to Society Director Tom Kuehhas, "This website will allow anyone anywhere in the world to get information on Oyster Bay, its

history, what the Historical Society has to offer, special events, membership benefits, and a whole lot more!"

Visitors to the website begin on the Society's homepage, which shows a line drawing of the Earle-Wightman House, the Society's seal, address, phone and fax lines, and E-mail address, as well as a series of boxes that the visitor can "click" on to get directions to the museum, special events, order publications, volunteer opportunities, and related tourist sites. Most of these individual pages have illustrations and highlighted text which enables the visitor to navigate between the various pages with ease. There's even a guest register where visitors can record their thoughts on how to improve the website!

So next time you're "surfing the Net" be sure to visit the Historical Society's site at <http://users>.

AOL.com/OBHistory. We'd like to hear from you!

7TH ANNUAL 20/20 LECTURE SERIES IN OYSTER BAY

The Oyster Bay Historical Society and the Friends of Raynham Hall Museum will again be sponsoring a series of lectures at the Matinecock Masonic Lodge in the village of Oyster Bay. The five talks will take place on Tuesday evenings at 8 P.M. beginning in late

January. There is no admission charge and refreshments will be available at the close of each lecture.

The first lecturer on Jan. 28 will be Michael Deering, Director of the Friends of the Bay, an environmental group based in Oyster Bay. He will speak on the history of environmental planning -- or the lack thereof -- in relation to Oyster Bay Harbor and its waterfront. He will also outline plans for the future and explain the purpose and goals of his organization.

The second speaker, on Feb. 25, will be Dr. Linda Day, a college professor and writer whose topic will be "African-Americans on Long Island".

On March 25, Rita Cleary, a novelist and researcher, will speak on "The Techniques of Writing Historical Fiction". Her previous works have been set in the Far West of the previous century, but her current work-in-progress is based on the Colonial history of Oyster Bay and Long Island in general.

Arthur F. Sniffen will be the fourth speaker on April 25 on "Family History Research for Beginners". He has lectured for more than twenty years on various genealogical and archival topics throughout the Northeast and beyond.

The final event in the series will take place on May 20 when David Relyea of the Frank M. Flower Oyster Company of Oyster Bay and Bayville will be the speaker. His topic will be "The History of Oystering in the Waters of Oyster Bay" and will

include slides and other visual items.

BAYVILLE MUSEUM MOUNTS NEW EXHIBIT

The Bayville Historical Museum recently mounted a holiday exhibit entitled: Angels and Cherubs. More than 300 figures of every description and size have been gathered, ranging from one inch to seven feet in height. All are on loan from twelve angel collectors, and may be viewed through January, 1997. The museum is open on Sundays and Tuesdays from 1 to 3 P.M., and by appointment for groups. Gladys Mack and Thomas Alfano are co-directors of the museum, and more information can be obtained by calling 628-1720 or 628-8975.

CENTRAL PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY DEDICATES PLAQUE

The Central Park Historical Society (Bethpage) dedicated a plaque and bench to the late Al Procida, a charter member of the organization, back in October. The bench is located in the outdoor reading area of the recently expanded Bethpage

Public Library. Taking its name from the original village, the Society was founded in 1936.

CRADLE OF AVIATION MUSEUM SEEKS ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

The Cradle of Aviation Museum at Mitchell Field, Garden City, is in the midst of a major renovation and construction program. Upon completion, the Museum, along with the Leroy and Rose Grumman Imax Dome Theater, will make up one of the finest Air and Space Museums in the world. At present, the museum is especially interested in any photographs or archival materials relating to the small airfields which used to dot the Long Island landscape. The Cradle of Aviation Museum can be reached at (516) 572-0411.

FARMINGDALE-BETHPAGE SOCIETY CELEBRATES PUBLICATION'S ANNIVERSARY

The Farmingdale-Bethpage Historical Society will mark the 40th anniversary of the publication of **Farmingdale's Story: Farms to Flights** at its

OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY Categories of Membership

Individual	\$ 20	Business	\$ 50
Family	\$ 30	Business Sponsor	\$ 100
Contributing	\$ 50	Business Friend	\$ 300
Sponsor	\$ 100	Business Patron	\$ 500+
Sustaining	\$ 250	Benefactor	\$ 1000+
Patron	\$ 500		

Member Benefits: Quarterly Magazine, Members' Party, Invitations to Exhibition Previews and Special Events, 10% Discount on Publications and Workshops. Call 922-5032 for more information on joining the Society.

meeting in November at the Public Library. The 200-page book was written in 1956 by the Junior Historical association under the direction of their faculty advisor at Howitt High School, the late Luita Jones. It continues to provide essential information on the village of Farmingdale for residents and researchers.

HEMPSTEAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLISHES NEWSLETTER

A revitalized Hempstead Village Historical Society issued its first newsletter in October, 1996. **News From Old Blue** takes its name from the "blue laws" that once held sway in Hempstead, due in part to its early settlement by English Puritans "who were well-known for their adherence to a strict code of personal behavior and intolerance for unseemly behavior in others." Sunday closing of businesses and a nighttime curfew were more recent vestiges of these laws. The new president of the Society is Carol Clarke, and they are gearing up to seek out and accept gifts of old photos and other village artifacts. The goal of the group is to establish an historical museum for the village.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE MASSAPEQUAS CELEBRATES

LIBRARY'S CENTENNIAL
One of the truly unique features of the Massapequas is the Delancey Floyd-Jones Free Library, which celebrated its centennial on Oct. 20, 1996. It was in 1896 that Colonel

Delancey Floyd-Jones decided to present the community with a library. He applied for a charter from the State of New York and set up an endowment for \$6,000, quite a sum of money 100 years ago.

Delancey was born in 1826 and was a career army officer. He graduated from West Point at the age of 20 and had a very distinguished career. Colonel Floyd-Jones was decorated in the Mexican War and the Civil War. He even fought at the Battle of Gettysburg. A tireless traveler, he crossed the Isthmus of Panama in 1851 and through his long life visited Europe, Egypt, India, and Scandinavia. His exploits even led to the writing of a book, "Letters From the Far East."

When the library was built, the population numbered in the hundreds. It was open two days a week but if you paid ten dollars a year, you would receive your own key. Of course that's the equivalent of about a hundred dollars today.

The original board of trustees was mostly made up of members of the Floyd-Jones family. The rector of Grace Episcopal Church is, according to the by-laws, always a trustee. In those days it was the Rev. Wm. Wiley. One of the outstanding librarians of the little library was Helen Luhrs. She got extra book shelves made by prisoners at the Nassau County jail and procured discarded railroad ties from the LIRR to use as firewood.

For 60 years this was the only library in town. Measuring only 18 feet by 24 feet, there was, and is, a fireplace, rocking chairs and a portrait of the colonel. Today,

with the exception of the addition of heat and electricity, the two-room library is virtually unchanged. Originally there were no slats between the columns on the porch, and the front window was of stained glass. There may be libraries more spacious, well stocked and equipped, but few could be more charming.

The building is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10 A.M. to 1 P.M., except holidays. There are approximately 6,000 volumes printed before 1950 and many relate to the history of Long Island. For information, call (516) 798-8047 or (516) 799-4676.

GERMAN GENEALOGY GROUP OF L.I. FORMED

The German Genealogy Group was founded in early 1996 to provide mutual support among those interested in researching their Germanic ancestors.

Members receive a monthly newsletter, addition to the Surname Directory, computer matching from their data base, a mentoring service to guide new genealogical researchers, and translation and interpretation of documents.

The German Genealogy Group meets on the first Thursday of each month, September through June, at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, The Family History Center, 160 Washington Ave., Plainview. Annual dues are \$15. Send dues or a request for more information to Donald E. Eckerle, 24 Jonquill Ln., Kings Park, NY 11754-3927.

LATEST DONATIONS TO HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S COLLECTIONS

The Oyster Bay Historical Society has received a number of important donations to its collections over the course of the last few months.

Mr. Charles Ellis of Huntington Station donated a wooden sign to the Society from the old "Oyster Bay Ski Center" which was located in the vicinity of Renville Court, off of the Glen Cove Road, and was in operation through the 1950s.

Louis and Nancy Cappellino, formerly of Northport, donated an eighteenth century wool wheel to the Society in memory of their son Matthew Michael DeNunzio. In very good condition, it has

already been placed in the museum's one-room house setting.

The Rehkamp Family, of Mil Neck, donated a number of items which had been associated with the former Kaintuck Farm, which was located on their property, including a sign with the "work rules" of the farm, a painted cabinet for horse grooming equipment, a carved pew end from the chapel which had been located in the main house, a blue porcelain road sign, with "Locust Valley Depot, Glen Cove" in white lettering, and two map storage cases for our archival storage area.



PLEASE SUPPORT THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL APPEAL!

By now you, our members, will have received our request for year-end donations in the mail. We ask that you support this fund-raising campaign as generously as possible.. We need your help in order to keep offering our prog rams, events, and publications!

THE SOCIETY APPRECIATES SUPPORT FOR *THE FREEHOLDER*

The Oyster Bay Historical Society thanks all those who have commented on *The Freeholder*, both in writing and orally.

Sillia Rossler, a Society member from Rochester, NY, wrote, "*The Freeholder* is a great publication. I especially enjoyed the article on dutch ovens and Aunt Eek on the old wagon wheel. Keep up the good work!"

Christine Neilson, a long-time member and former trustee, called on the Editor to say how much she enjoyed

the first two issues of *The Freeholder* and that she loved "the diversity of the articles." (See the Letters to the Editor on p. 2 for more comments on *The Freeholder*.)

Word continues to spread about our magazine. Requests for subscriptions have come from Suffolk County libraries, the Queens Borough Public Library, and even from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin!

But the best news of all is that *The Freeholder* was brought to the attention

of the owner of a printing establishment by one of our well-placed friends. The owner of said business has agreed to print *The Freeholder* for the Society...gratis! We give our anonymous donor a heart-felt "Thank You!" and the same to our friend. Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus!

We greatly appreciate your encouragement and trust that you will continue to enjoy the upcoming issues we have planned for you.

YESTERDAY IN OYSTER BAY

Charles Reichman, Editor

Letters-to-the-Editor are always a delight to receive and Elgin Drawly's was especially so for this staff member of *The Freeholder*. In his scholarly communication published in the last issue (Fall 1996, Page 7) Mr. Drawly poses what he calls, one question (the meaning of then word, lumber) and a second query (which he dubs, a suggestion). Both are challenging and deserve equally sophisticated explanations. But before I do that, I should like to greet Mr. Drawly as an obviously fellow devotee of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the source of his definition of the word, lumber.

According to my Third Edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word lumber has one of four definitions: (1) It could refer to articles such as furniture that have fallen in desuetude; (2) odds and ends comprising a variety of items including remnants and pieces; (3) useless or "cumbersome" [cumbersome] material, and (4) timber that was especially sawed for market sale and use.

Since the source from which the Hendrickson historical morsel was extracted included no other information, anecdotal or otherwise, I decided to go for the meaning of lumber as we understand it today and not in 1649: sawed timber converted into finished lengths and breadths of board and planks. Admittedly, this was guesswork on my part.

As to Mr. Drawly's suggestion that I failed to weigh the possibility that "a sale of property to a relative, when the owner was moving away, was a means to procure cash for the move

without having to wait a long time for a buyer to be found." I'm completely ignorant of this financial maneuver; never heard or read about it. My source, also, was mute on the subject. In addition, there was no time to dig further into the transaction.

Thanks for writing, Mr. Drawly, and for bringing this information to our attention. "Yesterday in Oyster Bay" is intended to offer a brief peak into the lives of Oyster Bay residents in the 19th century and earlier. How they farmed, other occupations pursued, kinds of tools they employed, the wagons, carts, carriages they drove, etc. etc. All those snippets, will, of course, be gleaned from perusals of Long Island regional newspapers, but it is nice to hear other illustrations of daily life from our readers.

ROLL OUT THE BARREL

By Dan Baxter

Among the inhabitants of Oyster Bay in its third decade was Joseph Ludlum who was a cooper. He may have been there



A Cooper W.C.F.

earlier and he may not have been the only cooper there, but he is the only and earliest that investigation to date has uncovered. Van Santvoord Merle-Smith made a list of every freeholder and occupation from 1653 to 1702 and only Ludlum appears.

Wherever commerce had begun, coopers were very important. Their product was staved containers of the sort we commonly call barrels today but in a variety of sizes. Other kinds of cooperage ranged from buckets to tubs.

Though commerce also employed such containers as bales, sacks, boxes, and so forth, the cooper's product was the most commonly used, being strong, durable, easily handled and protective from pilferage, insects, damp, dirt and handling damage. A measure of the barrel's effectiveness is that they have been with us from at least Roman times till now, although modern materials are gradually reducing their employment. Coopers built barrels from a variety of woods, depending on availability and the purpose of the container. The most preferred wood for liquid contents was oak. Supplementary materials were few, iron for hoops being the most common non-wood item.

The cooper worked with very special tools, many of which would puzzle the average citizen of today but which were exceedingly effective in the hands of a well trained worker. Tool names were also strange. In the cooper's kit were crozes, howels,

continued on p. 16



THE GATHERING PLACE



"The Gathering Place" is the department of the magazine housing contributions of an historical slant but short length that might otherwise be lost among the longer pieces. To our members who are not ready to attempt long or deeply researched articles, this is the place for your notions and comments, however brief.

THE DUTCH NEXT DOOR

From Sकेates and
Sकेetes to Skates

By Lee Myles

On December 1, 1662, Samuel Pepys informed his Diary that he had been to St. James Park "where I first in my life, it being a great frost, did see people sliding with their Sकेates, which is a pretty art." At the time he wrote the verb "to skate did not exist. No Englishman had yet spoken of "skating" or "skaters."

John Evelyn, whose 17th century diary is not as famous as Pepys' but has much of great interest, wrote on that December 1st of the "sliders on the new canal in St. James Park" and of

the gentlemen "with their Sकेetes after the manner of Hollanders." These gentlemen are thought to have been royalists who had been in exile in Holland until the return of Prince Charles to England to become Charles II, and had there learned to skate.

The earliest references to skates in the *Oxford English Dictionary* have to do with the Dutch connection. Their message, though not explicitly stated, is clear enough. Skating was introduced to the English by the Dutch. Many Dutch folk settled in England before the time of Pepys and Evelyn, so it is possible that skating had already been introduced on a limited basis in odd corners of the Kingdom



De Schaatsmaaker.

before the Restoration. No matter. It did not become a common activity in England or in America until it was given its impetus in both places during the 17th century by the Dutch. William Elliot Griffis, who was the Domine of the Dutch church of Schenectady tells us that "from the first generation of settlers, the Dutch-American towns were noted for ... skating."

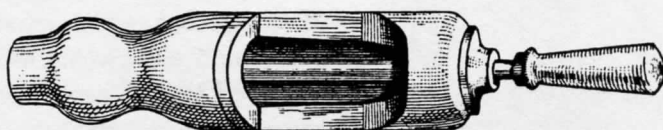
How early the Dutch were skating is still, as far as I know, to be determined. However, more than one of the 15th century pictures of the Dutchman from s'Hertogenbosch, Hieronymus Bosch, fully developed ice skates with iron blades and wooden soles. Bosch died in 1516. There is no special reason to suspect that he was picturing an innovation that occurred in his lifetime.

Though fully functional, ice skates had not reached the high quality of form and materials we know today. It is doubtful that much, if any, steel was used in their blades before the 19th century. Neither was iron always

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Your great grand parents knew these words. Do you?

1. Shagreen
2. Puntil
3. Fusee
4. Mourning ring
5. Tallboy
6. Saddle tree
7. Pencil case
8. What's it called?



Definitions on p. 20

used. We know that one of the substitutes was animal bone. J. Fitzstephen left a 17th century record of "many young men [who] ply upon the yce ... some tie bones to their feete, and under their heeles, and



shoving themselves by a little picked staff, [i.e. with an iron point] doe slide ... swiftly." Mary Mapes Dodge tells us that even more primitive equipment was in use as late as the 19th century. Poor Hans Brinker, who didn't win the trophy of The Silver Skates, skated on blades of hard wood until his fortunes improved.

After Bosch, there is much evidence of skating in the Low Countries that has come down to us from the painters and engravers of the 16th and 17th centuries. The artists of the Netherlands' Golden Age found the frozen waterways of their land a popular subject. Numerous ice-scapes crowded with skaters have been left to us. Among the earliest of those who treated winter activities was the Flemming, Pieter Bruegel, whose rendition of *Skaters Before the Gate of St. George* is preserved by an engraving from the atelier of Jerome Cock of Antwerp. It shows a large segment of the population of Antwerp frolicking on the ice or watching from the sidelines. The scene is much like one in our own time. Many other pictures from a multitude of artists including such names as

Ostade, Avercamp, Van der Poel, Van der Neer, Arents and Van Goyen have left us a rich collection of skating scenes. One of the most interesting of these bequests from the 17th century is an engraving of a tool and skate maker by Jan Luiken showing that skating was so widespread that a small industry had grown up to provide for it (see p. 14).

< 17th century Dutch skaters enjoy a day on the ice. For those becoming cold, thirsty or both, warming drinks are supplied either at a sit-down tent tavern or by an entrepreneur whose entire establishment is a packing box table, a ladder-back chair and a few bottles. Shown also is an item of cold weather clothing that we received from the Hollanders through the English. On the ice, near the center forefront of the picture and also worn by the man knocking back a shot of brandy wine, are muffs. Called "mof" by these frolickers, the hand warmer was introduced to English speakers by the Dutch, as were "brandewijn" and "vrolijk". Note the extemporized craps table run by an adult engaged in contributing to the delinquency of minors.

ANYONE FOR BOX-BALL?

By Rick Robinson

Finding someone who has never had a basketball in their hands is almost as difficult as finding someone who has never heard of Babe Ruth or Ebenezer Scrooge! And yet, but for a few chance occurrences at the YMCA School for Christian Workers in Springfield, Massachusetts, a simple indoor game devised by James Naismith in December of 1891 might be entirely different from the sport we know today.

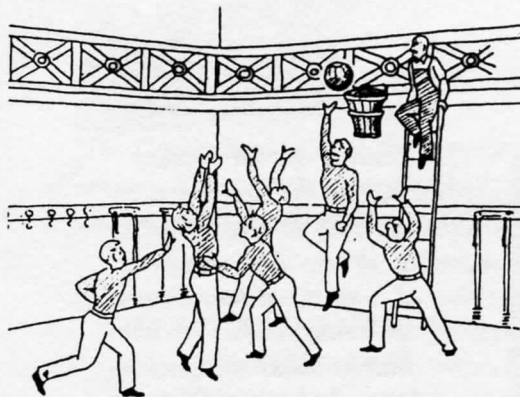
After creating his thirteen original rules, Naismith asked a school custodian to provide him with two boxes approximately 15 inches across that could be nailed to the lower edge of the gallery that encircled the YMCA gymnasium.

The only receptacles readily

available, however, were two half-bushel peach baskets and, by pure chance, these were attached ten feet above the gym floor. This regulation height for the basketball goal has survived to the present day, in spite of the increasing size of players, both male and female, over the past 100 years.

From the peach baskets, of course, came the name "basket-ball", as it was originally written -- although the new game might easily have been called box-ball, bushel-ball or peach-ball! As for the ball itself, Naismith chose the soccer ball (rather than the "fat" football of that era), and within a few years a bigger ball was introduced for easier bouncing/dribbling and shooting.

The original basketball was somewhat larger than today's model and had laces so that a rubber bladder



could be inserted or removed for repair. These primitive stitched-panel leather balls quickly lost their round shape and were often difficult to dribble. In fact, the game as played in 1891-92 did not foresee the art of dribbling and could best be described as an indoor version of "keep-away", with no limit on the number of players.

The ball had to be retrieved from the peach basket after each goal scored until a metal hoop and a closed basket of netting was eventually installed. This, too, required retrieving the ball until someone realized that a long open net would eliminate the problem. The size of the hoop or rim was soon established at 18 inches in diameter (1894) and has remained so ever since.

Backboards were unheard of in the early years until spectators in the upper balcony, or track area, of gymnasiums began interfering with shots at the basket. Initially, backboards were nothing more than screening, which quickly became dented and/or grooved, so that the ball was somewhat guided through the hoop. The solid backboard solved this problem in 1904, but many makeshift basketball courts -- indoors and out -- had no backboard at all. Again, the initial dimensions of four feet by six feet have remained unchanged except when a smaller fan-shaped backboard was used in some

all-purpose gymnasiums.

The first experimental basketball game involving women took place at the Springfield YMCA School (later Springfield College) in March of 1892. One of the participants so impressed James Naismith that she later became his wife! The rules of the new game spread rapidly among eastern YMCA centers and various colleges.

At Smith College in Northampton, Mass., then and now an all-girls school, the first contest among female collegians occurred on Feb. 22, 1893. Men were barred from attending, as it was considered improper for the young ladies to be seen in their gym-class bloomers and middie blouses.

A photo survives at Friends Academy in Locust Valley, L.I. of an early girls' squad clad in heavy, dark uniforms (bloomers, high stockings and long sleeved blouses) with "FA" emblazoned in large letters on the front of each blouse. By 1915, at the same school, the team wore headbands, short-sleeved white blouses and less-spacious bloomers than their predecessors.

As some readers may recall, women's basketball was originally much more restrictive than the men's game. Played six to a side, rather than the standard five, the girls' version placed three players from each team on either side of the center court line, and they were prohibited from crossing this divider during the contest.

In effect, the game was two games of three against three. Dribbling was also quite limited, compared to the men's game,

with the result that women's basketball was somewhat frozen in time until the 1960's.

A handful of state high school associations continued to play the "old game" into the 1980's, and in some instances the basketball season took place in the fall rather than winter months. Today, the women's game is essentially the same as the men's version, although the ball was slightly reduced in circumference a few years ago.

YESTERDAY IN OYSTER BAY *continued from p.13*

flagging irons, sun planes, cressets, truss hoops and many more tools with uncommon names and very special purposes unknown to other woodworkers.

While commerce was the largest outlet for the cooper's product., barrels, kegs, firkins and other casks were in regular use in many homes, as were tubs, keelers and churns. Food in those days was frequently stored in quantity and flour, meal, cider, salt, preserved meat and fish are only a few of the items which might have been found residing in staved containers in our ancestors' cellars and storage rooms.

Ludlum's presence in Oyster Bay suggests not that there was a big domestic market for his work but that commerce had begun in local products, and that these were being shipped or carted to some distance. We can interpret Joseph Ludlum's settlement in Oyster Bay as being of unique value to his contemporaries and their posterity. (See next issue for Joseph, Jr.'s 1729 inventory.)

CELTS & CELTIC-SPEAKERS IN COLONIAL NORTH AMERICA AND OYSTER BAY, Part I

By Gerald A. John Kelly

I'm a member of Coiste Fhistéip Gaeilge (The Irish Language Video Committee) of Scoil Gaeilge Ghearóid Tóibín (The Gerry Tobin Irish Language School) in Babylon, Long Island. Our committee of 20 or so has been researching the use of the Irish language in America during the colonial period. With the kind help of Arlene Goodenough and the Historical Society of the Massapequas, we've been able to find out quite a bit about Celts (especially Irish, Scots, and Welsh) who came to British North America and the Town of Oyster Bay before the American Revolution.

Rather than just make a list of Celts in colonial Oyster Bay, I think there's also a need to talk a bit about the multi-ethnic nature of the American colonies, the contribution of these Celts to the American cause during the Revolution, their motivation for overwhelmingly joining the American side, and the forces and motivations which began to bring Celts to British North America as early as 1585. It might also be fun to compare what we've learned in our research to what we were taught at school, which is where I'll start.

When our committee members talked about what we had learned as schoolchildren, we remembered that the Dutch colonized New Netherlands, the French colonized New France (which included much of Canada and most of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys from the Great Lakes down to Louisiana), the Spanish colonized New Spain and Florida, and the English colonized New England, the

mid-Atlantic colonies, and the South. No mention had been made in our textbooks of British or Irish Celts or their languages having any role in the European expansion into the Americas. Instead, we were taught that the settlers in the British colonies were ethnically English, that the Irish didn't come to America until the Great Hunger of the 1840s, and that was that.

Well, the actual facts are a bit surprising when compared to the distillation presented in high school social studies texts.

Take, for example, the British colonial governors of the Province of New York from the moment the British captured New Netherlands in 1665 until the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775 (or 1774 if you count the capture of Fort William and Mary and its gunpowder, later used at Bunker Hill, by New Hampshire men under John Sullivan in that year). The Gubernatorial ethnic breakdown includes four Dutch, three Scots, one Frenchman, and three Irish. Of the three Irishmen, Lord Cornbury (surname Hyde) and Cosby were Anglo-Irish and Dongan was a Gaelic Irish aristocrat who later was made Earl of Limerick. Dongan is an Anglicization of O Donnagáin ("Grandson of Small Brown One") which is usually anglicized as (O') Donnegan in the 20th century. When welcomed to New York in 1683 by the city's Irish merchants, Governor Dongan quite naturally gave his keynote speech in Irish Gaelic. English was not widely spoken in Ireland until after the Great Hunger of the 1840s, and

Irish Gaelic remained the language of Ireland's native Gaelic aristocracy until the Penal Laws of the 1690s drove them into exile or, as in the case of Governor Dongan after his return to Ireland, the grave. History records that this Gaelic Catholic aristocrat, who refused to bend under the Penal Laws, was killed in a "skirmish." Others who chose to remain in Ireland were simply assassinated.

Let's also examine the ethnic makeup of the Continental Army: German-speakers from Pennsylvania (the incorrectly-named "Pennsylvania Dutch"), conquered Dutch-speakers from what had been New Netherlands, conquered Swedish and Finnish-speakers from what had been New Sweden (parts of New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Maryland), conquered Spanish-speakers from what had been Spanish Florida, conquered French-speakers from the north and west (formerly New France), Gaelic-speaking Highlanders whose fathers had been humiliated at Culloden and whose grandfathers had risen up with the "Old Pretender" in 1715, Native American ("Indian") units, and plenty of Cymric-speaking Welsh and Gaelic-speaking Irish. Gaelic-speaking Scottish clans settled in Virginia and Georgia after Culloden. Gaelic-speaking Irish held portions of Virginia, the Carolinas, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. President Clinton's Irish ancestors are placed in the Carolinas in this period. The famous "Pennsylvania Line",

regarded as the backbone of the Continental Army and recruited from the Pennsylvania frontier, consisted of Irish Gaelic-speaking units and German-speaking units in roughly equal proportion. No wonder Lafayette, von Steuben, and Kosciusko barely needed to speak English. While the British officer corps looked down its collective nose at anyone without a Cambridge/Oxford accent, the Americans were happy to take their battle orders in any language, as long as the translation settled old scores and delivered revenge for past injustices. After Bunker Hill the British troops reported back to London that they had been cursed in Irish Gaelic by the Massachusetts and New Hampshire regiments on the summit. Naturally, there were plenty of Gaelic speakers on the British side who had easily understood the American Gaelic curses.

Luke Gardner in his 1784 report on the American Revolution to the Anglo-Irish Parliament in Dublin stated that "the major part of the American Army was composed of Irish; and that the Irish language was as commonly spoken in the American ranks as English ... (and) England .. had America detached from her by force of Irish emigrants." (The Parliamentary Register, Vol. III, Dublin, 1784).

Joseph Galloway, a Scots-American Tory (who had earlier represented Pennsylvania to the first Continental Congress) was asked by the English House of Commons in 1779 about the ethnic makeup of the Continental

Army. His reply was reported in the loyalist Royal Gazette in New York in the 27 October 1779 issue as follows: "There were scarcely one-fourth natives of America (in the Continental Army), about one-half Irish; the other fourth were English and Scotch."

It is a given that the Celtic contribution to the Continental Army is out of all proportion to their numbers in the over all colonial population. So why were there so many Irish and Scots (and also Welsh) in the Continental Army? Mostly because of what the United Kingdom's politics and armies had been doing to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales for the preceding 200 years: wars of genocide, religious pogroms, denial of the 'rights of Englishmen' (such as the right to jury trial, habeas corpus, the right to own land, engage in contracts, receive a commission as a military officer, or act as an attorney or other officer of the court), and wholesale land confiscations.

TO BE CONTINUED
IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF
THE FREEHOLDER

Letters to the Editor

continued from p. 7

England about then. But then the Dutch were already in Oyster Bay which started out as part of the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam. Just a brain tickler. Rita Cleary

When informed of our error in genders, Lee Myles said first, "Oops!" He followed this with a question to the editor, "Why did you change my wording?"

Backed into a corner, he said, "I knew it but I forgot!" He hopes Mrs. Cleary will convey his apologies to Mr. Blevins. Mrs. Cleary raises an interesting question regarding the arrival of the dutch oven in England with William III; we hope that someone will delve more deeply into the matter and share their findings in a future edition of The Freeholder. ED

To the Editor:

I was pleased to get the new issue of *The Free-Holder*, and to see the item about the Townsend Bible. Thanks for acknowledging the help of the Townsend Society.

I was especially interested to read Charles Reichman's article on "Carriage and Wagon Makers of Oyster Bay." Many of the names were familiar, especially Leonard Mott Hicks and the Waldrons, on whom I've done a lot of genealogical research.

I wanted to let Mr. Reichman and your readers know about a little-used resource: the Industrial (also called Manufacturing) Schedules, which exist for 1850-1880 and give useful information about people like carriage makers. The agricultural schedules are especially rich sources for Oyster Bay history. These schedules are available on microfilm at the Queens Borough Public Library in Jamaica, as well as here at the NYG&BS (although membership is required here to use them). The New York State Library holds the original records. I hope this is of some interest. Keep up the good work. Harry Macy, NYG & B

continued on p.20

AUNT EEK



Olde Things: Advice on the Care & Feeding of Antiques

Dear Aunt Eek,

While on vacation in Pennsylvania we purchased a relic described by the remaining family descendant as a "store cabinet". He reported that his Grandmother owned it in the 1800's. It stands about 6' tall on long spindly legs, has a locked door on the front, is covered entirely with screening and has several shelves inside. The whole is painted a very dull off white color and it has a slanted roof type top with a chimney(?) on top. We don't have any idea what it was but we are going to strip the paint, remove the shelves, the legs, and the screening, fit glass in the doors and use it to display our growing collection of earthenware. We tried to remove the paint with Red Devil paint stripper but it just sat on the surface and removed some dirt. Is there a paint remover that will penetrate this ghastly color or are we doomed to sand it all off? Thank You,

Mrs. Hilda Ward

Well, Aunt Eek couldn't sleep after reading this letter. We

contacted Ms. Ward and convinced her to cease and desist from her planned tyranny to this relic of the past. We suspected that what was about to be chopped and dropped was a genuine piece of early American kitchen furniture known as a 'Pie Safe'. Used to keep the flies and other hungry pests away from the delicacies while they were cooling, the pie safe has become a rarity among antiquities, and a real collectors find. Indeed the "chimney" on top helps to cause a draught as the air passes through the screening and over the pies. Piemaking, like canning, was a major part in the life of our ancestors who cultivated their own fruit. We have convinced Ms. Ward that her Ten Dollar treasure can indeed find a home with some eager kitchen collector who will likely pay her more than enough for her piece to buy a proper display cabinet with plenty left over for another trip to Pennsylvania. This still leaves the question of paint removal. These pieces were generally made from any kind of wood available. More often than not these simple, crudely made utilitarian pieces were made from common softwoods such as pine, and were intended to be painted when they were built. Indeed the early finish described and its resistance to common paint removers substantiates that claim. It is important to make careful determinations about original or older finishes before undertaking their removal. The original finish contributes much to the historic as well as the dollar value of these pieces.

Okay, as to actually removing the paint, where appropriate What you have described sounds like Casein paint, made from ingredients common to the farm and home of earlier times. One of the ingredients in your "off-white" color may well be cow's milk, a common binder in these kinds of finishes. Red Devil doesn't really stand a chance against these tough flat finishes. There are really powerful paint removers available such as Rock Miracle Brand which will indeed penetrate these finishes. Be especially mindful of the label warnings for proper use of these products.

P.S. The plan to alter this piece would not only have ended in an historic catastrophe, but would have undoubtedly failed as a mechanical endeavor. Without its interior shelving, likely the entire carcass would have had no integrity and would have collapsed around itself.

ASK UNCLE PELEG

continued from page 8

Diana and later the Virgin Mary. Nailing it up would then be an act of reverence. Frankly we don't know the source of the horseshoe belief and we doubt that anyone does. If one of our readers has a good scoop however, why not share it with us?

Please send your inquiries and comments to:

Ask Uncle Peleg, or
Aunt Eek

c/o Editor, The Freeholder
P.O. Box 297

Oyster Bay, New York 11771
email: OBHistory@AOL.com

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!

JANUARY

Sat., Jan. 11, 9:30-12:30 p.m.

Neat & Tidy Box Decorating Workshop

Decorate your own Early American box any way you'd like! Call 922-5032 to register now!

Tue., Jan. 28, 8:00 p.m.

20/20 Lecture

Michael Deering, Director of Friends of the Bay, will speak on the history of environmental planning -- or the lack thereof -- in relation to Oyster Bay Harbor and its waterfront.

FEBRUARY

Sat., Feb. 8, 9:30-12:30 p.m.

Theorem Painting Workshop

Theorem painting, which utilizes a series of stencils on a cloth ground, was a very popular pastime in America during the second quarter of the 19th Century. Call 922-5032 to register.

Tue., Feb. 25, 8:00 p.m.

20 /20 Lecture

Dr. Linda Day, college professor, author, and former museum curator, will speak about the history of "African-Americans on Long Island."

MARCH

Sat., Mar. 8, 10:00- 1:00 p.m.

Silhouette Portrait Workshop.

By appointment.

Silhouette portraits had a long history in America prior to the invention of photography. Call 922-5032 for appt.

Tue., Mar. 25, 8:00 p.m.

20/20 Lecture

Rita Cleary, novelist and researcher, on "The Techniques of Writing Historical Fiction." Her current work-in-progress is based on the Colonial history of Oyster Bay and Long Island in general.

Answers to Test Your Knowledge on p. 14

1. A kind of leather made from the skin of the shark or imitated with the skins of other creatures.
2. Also pontil, plinty. An iron rod for the holding and forming by spinning, of semi-molten glass.
3. Also fusil. A light musket or firelock often carried by military officers in the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries. Also the firearm of a fusilier.
4. A ring worn as a memorial of a deceased person.
5. A chest of drawers in two parts standing upon legs. Also a tall, stemmed goblet or a tall chimney pot.
6. The wooden framework of a saddle.
7. A holder, usually of metal, for a stick of graphite or other writing material. Also a case in which to keep or carry pencils.
8. A bottle corker.

Letters to the Editor

continued from p. 18

Our thanks go to Mr. Macy, a long-time member and supporter of the Historical Society, for sending us this information, along with a sample page and article on the schedules which he wrote for The NYG&B Newsletter of which publication he is co-editor. ED

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