THE FREEHOLDER

WINTER 2003 THE OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOUNDED 1960

THE HISTORY MAGAZINE OF THE TOWN OF OYSTER BAY

Editorial

My sincere thanks to all who were involved in making our fall exhibit, journal, and events such a success!

They were too numerous to mention in this small space, but thanks to all who shared their reminiscences and loaned their precious artifacts, enabling us to present a more complete picture of recreation in Oyster Bay. Thanks also to those who attended the events or took ads in the journal. Your support of the Society will allow us to bring you more and better programs.

Thanks especially to our committee members who toiled endlessly topull it all together, in particular my co-chair Maureen Monck whose assistance was invaluable in all areas. And again, special thanks to Harry Dickran and his staff at Levon Graphics for a jaw-dropping job on the journal.

THE FREEHOLDER
of the
Oyster Bay Historical Society
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Editorial Staff
Editor: Thomas A. Kuehhas
Contributing Editors: Elliot M. Sayward
Richard F. Kappeler
Rick Robinson
John Hammond
Arlene Goodenough

Address Editorial Communications to:
Editor, The Freeholder
P.O. Box 297
Oyster Bay, NY 11771
Email us at OBHistory@aol.com

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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.

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ABOUT OUR FRONT COVER

The entire student body of the lower school is shown lined up outside the 1871 schoolhouse on School Street, c. 1875. Although she would have been one of the teachers of this section of the school, Miss Julia Thurston is not identified in the photograph. For more on Miss Thurston's long career in the Oyster Bay schools, see p. 3. Nassau Co. Museum Coll., Long Island Studies Institute.

THE POST RIDER

To the Editor,

Here is a bit of local color for the readers of *The Freeholder*:

I knew a Ludwig Riemenschneider years back. He was a boy who graduated high school during the Great Depression and went to Grumman, in Bethpage, seeking employment.

Grumman was looking for machinists at the time and was overwhelmed with applicants. Lou was interviewed by a heavy-set old German master machinist who was unimpressed with this raw kid in front of him until he asked, "Vot is your name, poy?"

Instantly on hearing "Ludwig Riemenschneider," he bellowed, "Ludwig Riemenschneider? Dots a Cherman name! You're hired, poy!"

Hope you enjoy this as much in the reading as I did in the hearing!

Sam Berliner, III

To the Editor,

I recently visited Oyster Bay and stopped at Sagamore Hill. I came across your publication *The Freeholder* and found it very interesting. I would like it if you could keep me on your mailing list. As a historian I would be very grateful. Thank you for your help and concern.

Pat Lidane

Dear Mr. Lidane,

It was gratifying to hear from a fellow historian that you enjoyed the copy of The Freeholder that you found at Sagamore Hill. From time to time, we place extra copies of our quarterly magazine there and at other locations so that individuals like yourself might become familiar with The Freeholder through perusal of a complimentary copy. However receiving the magazine on a regular basis is a benefit of membership in the Oyster Bay Historical Society. See the center section of The Freeholder, or log on to our website, for membership information.

THE LEGACY OF JULIA L. THURSTON

by Stacie L. Hammond

Ed. Note: This article was researched and written by Stacie Hammond as part of an internship she completed at the Society. It has been edited to fit within the cramped confines of the magazine.

For 77 years, the Oyster Bay High School has provided the Julia L. Thurston Scholarship Award for excellence in English. During the school's presentations of awards and scholarships in previous years, many students have witnessed the Julia Thurston award being announced, but how many stopped to wonder who Miss Julia L. Thurston was?

Julia L. Thurston was born in Oyster Bay on January 30, 1849; a sister named Isabelle, called Belle, was born on February 8, 1855. Their parents, William and Mary Ann Thurston, were among the first ten members of the First Presbyterian Church when it was founded in 1844. Julia, Belle, and their parents all sang in the choir at the church. Julia lived with her family in a house on Hamilton Avenue; not far from Orchard Street where Julia attended school, at Miss Earle's Private School for Girls.

Sarah Haviland Earle, born in Oyster Bay in 1807, and her niece, Mary Earle, born here in 1836, were the teachers at this small school. Sarah H. Earle was a daughter of Reverend Marmaduke Earle, pastor of the Baptist Church on West Main Street and first principal of the Oyster Bay Academy. The Edmund Hall Academy, as it was formally known, was established in 1802 and answered the village's cry for "more formalized schooling." Residents of the village wanted a more structured and organized environment in which their children could be educated - a building that would serve as a regular school. Before the academy was formed, students relied mainly on home schooling. The building that housed the academy was erected in 1802 and is now the rectory for Christ Church on East Main Street.

Miss Julia L. Thurston

When the New York Public School System was established in 1823, the academy became Oyster Bay's first public school. Sarah H. Earle was a teacher at the academy for many years; she was the first woman to teach in Oyster Bay's public schools. Mary Earle, granddaughter of Rev. Marmaduke Earle, and niece of Sarah H. Earle, is said to have taught for many years at the academy as well. Mary wasn't born until 1836, so she would have been only thirteen years old when the academy was dissolved in 1849. Since Mary Earle couldn't have taught at the academy on East Main Street, it is clear that she must have taught at another location: Orchard Street.

In 1724, a plot of land was donated to the Baptist Church by Caleb Wright. The plot included the land on which the Baptist Church would stand on West Main Street and extended back to Orchard Street. On this land, the first Baptist Church was built in 1724 and in 1807, a new church building was erected to replace the 1724 church. In 1908, the 1807 church building was moved back on the property and a bigger, more secure building was constructed in its place. That building remains today; it is now known as the church of the North Shore Assembly of God. Further

down on Orchard Street, toward Spring Street, another plot of land was given to the Church; it was on this land that the cemetery would come to be located and also where a house was to be built for church use.

Sometime between 1849 and 1859, in the house that was built at 64 Orchard Street on the property of the Baptist Church, Miss Earle's Private School for Girls was established. Curtin's Directory of Oyster Bay residents during 1868-69 shows both Mary and Sarah Earle listed as teachers; Mary residing at Orchard Street, and Sarah at South Street. An 1859 map of Oyster Bay, detailing names and streets, shows a building on Orchard Street labeled as a school. A similar map of Oyster Bay dated 1873 shows the same school on Orchard Street. Sarah H. Earle instituted the school on Orchard Street after the academy was closed down in 1849, and a few years later her niece Mary began to teach there as well. Miss Earle's school operated until 1873, and perhaps longer.

The house that was used for the Orchard Street school still remains. Behind it is the small graveyard where Rev. Marmaduke Earle, his wife Mary, and some of their children were buried; one child named Mary, born in 1805, lived only seven months. Miss Sarah Haviland Earle was laid to rest in 1882, in the earth behind a building in which she formerly taught.

When the academy was shut down in 1849, the Oyster Bay school district built a new schoolhouse on South Street. Many women taught at the new public schoolhouse. In 1865, as the Civil War ended and the Union had been preserved, the Oyster Bay School District changed from District #2 to Union Free School District #9. At the same time, plans were developed to build a new schoolhouse at Weeks Avenue and School Street, which was completed in 1871.

In 1869, the education committee recommended that Miss Julia L. Thurston replace the departing Miss G. M. Knapp. Julia L. Thurston studied English at Columbia University in addition to her previous education at Miss Earle's school on Orchard Street. Her first teaching job was at the small school in Brookville, NY. After nearly two years there, her application was accepted at the Oyster Bay public school; her beginning salary was $400. From January 3, 1870, to the end of that year, Julia Thurston taught at the small wooden schoolhouse on South Street and from January 1, 1871, to 1902, she taught in the two-story schoolhouse that was built on the corner of Weeks Avenue and School Street. From 1902 to June 1924, she taught at the high school on the corner of Anstice Street and Weeks Avenue.

By 1874, Miss Thurston was the First Assistant Principal. M.A. McDonald was the Principal; Miss Susie Downing was Principal of the Primary students and Miss Laura W. Betts was the Assistant Principal of the Primary. "Entertainments" were often performed at the schools for the community and 25 cents was charged for admission; the money collected helped pay for supplies and apparatus for the school, such as the school bell. In one such "entertainment" performed on May 7, 1874, the students engaged in song, performed dialogues, read compositions, played musical instruments, and Miss Thurston led her class in "exercises in calisthen-

This building on Orchard Street, adjacent to the old Baptist/Quaker cemetery, served as home and school for Miss Sarah H. Earle.

ics."

When Miss Thurston started teaching at the 1902 high school, she carried with her the same respect and regard for her students. She was a beloved English teacher at the old high school and was honored with overwhelming praise and recognition on many occasions. An Oyster Bay High School Annual from 1912 was dedicated to Julia Thurston as follows: "To Our Preceptress, Miss Julia Thurston whose kind assistance and sympathy has been a constant source of inspiration, we affectionately dedicate this work." In the same yearbook, it is noted that on Monday, October 9, 1912, Miss Thurston had turned over her English IV class to a Miss Ransom, and that Miss Thurston's students were disappointed and expressed sadness at losing their beloved teacher.

When the ten members of Oyster Bay High School's class of 1912 graduated, Miss Thurston said to her departing students, "I dare not wish you a life all sunshine, because the flowers on which the [sun] is constantly shining are worthless. May you have enough of a shadow to cause you to grow brave to attempt, and strong to endure." Miss Thurston had a unique sincerity and compassion for her students and their well being. Miss Thurston's students esteemed her highly for her many contributions to the school and to the community as a whole.

Miss Thurston was loved not only by her students but by all who knew her. She was an active member of the community; she attended church regularly and was one of the founding members of the Woman's Club of Oyster Bay. The Woman's Club was formed in 1896; its first meeting was held in the home of Dr. Peter Frye on January 14 of that year. The Woman's Club offered entertainment to women in the form of poetry and music and it also offered education in many areas. The group was formed during a lull in the women's suffrage movement, although across the nation women often met to educate themselves about politics in those changing times; women in Oyster Bay were no exception. The women's suffrage movement gained much momentum and its ideas reached a myriad of women in many different places, including Long Island. Prominent suffragist Rosalie Jones was born in nearby Cold Spring Harbor in 1883; by 1911 she was passionately fighting for the right for women to vote.

Miss Sarah C. Frye was the founder of the Woman's Club and was honored on January 17, 1929, at a Founder's Day meeting. Miss Julia L. Thurston had written a letter that was read at this meeting praising the "faithfulness" of the club's earliest members, and admitting her previous uncertainty about the formation of the club; that it might "cause much hardship for the men." The Woman's Club proved to be successful; they were celebrating the founders of the club 33 years after its first meeting and nine years after women finally claimed their right to vote.

Miss Julia Thurston spent half a century teaching in the Oyster Bay schools and she never failed to inspire and encourage her students to achieve their goals. Miss Julia L. Thurston retired from teaching in June 1924, at which time a prize fund was established in her name. A memo about the prize fund described the scholarship award as quite appropriate, "for as Miss Thurston was always trying to awaken interest and encourage improvement, so the idea is now to continue that influence under her name, in the form of the Julia L. Thurston Prize Fund for excellency in English." Alumni of the high school and former pupils of Miss Thurston sent contributions to this fund along with their responses to a circular letter that was sent to them by Peter and Gertrude Layton. Gertrude (Miller) Layton was one of Miss Thurston's students; she graduated with the class of 1912. Many letters were sent back to the Laytons acknowledging the warm affections that these individuals felt for their former teacher; many had mailed checks for the prize fund as well. Some contributors to this original fund were: Evelyn Mollineaux, Leonard Wood Hall, Charles and Frank Ludlam, Belinda Tappan, Oscar Summers, William McCoun, and Edith Bermingham who donated $100, a great deal of money at the time.

A ceremony was held in Miss Thurston's honor on June 14, 1924, in the old High School Auditorium. An orchestra of former students played a few musical selections and a chorus of alumni joined the orchestra in performing songs. Some former pupils performed instrumental solos or vocal solos, and many made speeches or remarks in homage to their former teacher. The Board of Education presented an engrossed resolution to Miss Thurston and the President

The wood frame school building, built on School Street in 1871, was quickly outgrown by the burgeoning student body, necessitating the building of the High School on Anstice Street by 1901.

of the Board, Mr. John F. Bermingham, made remarks about her devotion, sense of duty, and how helpful she had been to him during his tenure. Leonard W. Hall presented an engrossed tribute written by former pupils to Miss Thurston; the tribute detailed the compassion and kindness Miss Thurston showed to all her students. One part of the tribute read: "Textbooks are meaningless symbols until touched by the magic of the good teacher and imbued with life in the miracle of thought, appreciation and expression." The High School Faculty gave Miss Thurston a bouquet of roses asserting that a rose represented "love in the fullest measure." There were fifty-four roses--one for each year of Miss Thurston's service in the Oyster Bay Schools. Miss Thurston gave a speech in response to the many accolades she received, which was followed by a piano solo by one of her former students. At the end of the ceremony, a check for $585 was presented to the high school; this was the birth of the Julia L. Thurston Scholarship Award for excellence in English.

In November 1924, Miss Thurston moved to Baltimore where she took up residence with her sister Mrs. Belle Swan; wife of William Lincoln Swan. Two years later, on December 3, 1926, Julia Thurston returned to Oyster Bay and was greeted with a warm reception held in her honor at the old Oyster Bay High School. Some of her former students made speeches and short addresses praising Miss Thurston. Leonard Wood Hall, the local district's Assemblyman in 1926, said that, "no matter how distant Miss Thurston's residence might be therefrom, her real home was in the hearts of those whom she had befriended and helped to manhood and womanhood, and that Oyster Bay would always consider her its own."

By February 1929, Oyster Bay's new high school building, on East Main Street, was completed and open for business. Miss Julia Thurston was invited to the new high school building to speak to the graduating class of 1930. Miss Thurston indicated how pleased she was to be attending the ceremony in the words of her speech; after welcoming everyone that was present she said, "I am lacking in appropriate words to express to you the pleasure I feel in being with you tonight." Miss Thurston was happy to make the trip from Baltimore to participate in the graduation ceremony, she said, "as commencement has come year after year, my thoughts have turned toward the school and my home town and I have longed to be with you." In her address, Miss Thurston recalled how difficult it was to "establish a high school department." She mentioned the struggles that she and one other teacher went through to produce a graduating class of four girls, whom she referred to as "the pioneer class of the Oyster Bay High School." Miss Thurston concluded her speech with a quote from William Shakespeare's Hamlet, spoken to Laertes by his father Polonius,

"To thine own self be true and it must follow as the night the day-Thou canst not then be false to any man."

In October 1933, a portrait of Miss Julia L. Thurston was given to the Oyster Bay High School by William T. McCoun and Chauncey Clarke, two of her former pupils. The portrait was unveiled at a formal presentation that took place in the high school auditorium. Mr. McCoun made a speech expressing his appreciation and gratitude for the generous guidance and encouragement that Miss Thurston bestowed upon all of her students and presented the portrait to the school stating that it shall be "hung and forever preserved in the Oyster Bay High School as a perpetual remembrance of the splendid services which has been rendered to the people of this community by Miss Thurston." It is clear that Miss Thurston made a lasting impression on her students; almost ten years after her retirement she was still being honored and remembered with affection.

In 1935, another former student, Mill Neck Judge Harry W. Ludlam, stopped off to visit her on his way home from a trip to the South. Judge Ludlam spoke with Miss Thurston about the state of affairs in Oyster Bay and other current events of the time. He recalled that she was delighted to discuss former students of hers, and that she could remember small details about each and every pupil she taught. She also took pride in the fact that she never had to send a student to the Principal's office, and she never had angry parents complain to her about how their children were disciplined. Judge Ludlam brought back with him Miss Thurston's best and warmest wishes to "all her friends in Oyster Bay." In 1937, Gertrude Layton invited Miss Thurston to the 25th reunion for the class of 1912. In a heartfelt letter dated June 18, 1937, Miss Thurston made her apologies for not being able to attend the reunion. She wrote, "It would give me the greatest pleasure if I could be with you and take each of you by the hand. Since that cannot be, I must be content with greeting you by this silent medium and wishing you God speed." She noted that she always kept her hometown in her heart and that she never forgot her students and the time that she spent with all of them. Miss Thurston requested that Mrs. Layton share the letter with all who were in attendance at the reunion and to give them her kindest and warmest regards.

In a letter dated January 27, 1939, Leon Deming, former Superintendent of Schools, wished Miss Julia L. Thurston a happy birthday (her birthday was January 30). Miss Thurston wrote a letter back to Mr. Deming thanking him for his concern and sincere birthday greeting. She noted how Oyster Bay was and will always be in her heart, "the dear old town, and the dear old school, how they linger in my memory, the dearest spots on earth." Miss Thurston turned ninety years old on that birthday, and she said that she was "abundantly able to care for [her]self, and to do [her] bit for others."

Miss Julia L. Thurston died two years later, on April 23, 1941. She died in Baltimore, but her body was brought back to Oyster Bay for funeral services at the Presbyterian Church. She was buried in the Locust Valley cemetery, in the family plot. The news of Miss Thurston's death struck the hearts of many Oyster Bay residents. Doug Disbrow, a former student of Miss Thurston's, expressed his sentiments regarding the profound impact that she had on the community in his regular column in the Oyster Bay Guardian. He mentioned how the majority of Oyster Bay residents mourned her death just as he did. He praised the legacy she left as a teacher and also as a friend. Mr. Leon Deming wrote an editorial in the same issue of the paper; he discussed a visit he had with her, and the 1939 birthday letter he sent to her in which he had written, "I wonder if you know how fine and useful your life has been. You have given a great deal of it to this community." Mr. Deming went on to compliment Miss Thurston's character as a teacher and as a human being. Yet another tribute to Miss Thurston appeared in that issue; this one authored by "An Old Friend." This "old friend" made reference to Julia L. Thurston's "strong personality, and her cheerful willingness to give and give of herself," to her "keen sense of humor," and to "the clever, inimitable way she could relate an anecdote…"

Miss Julia L. Thurston died unmarried just as many other very important women in teaching did, including Sarah Haviland Earle. In earlier days, women were not permitted to hold a job as a teacher if they were married.

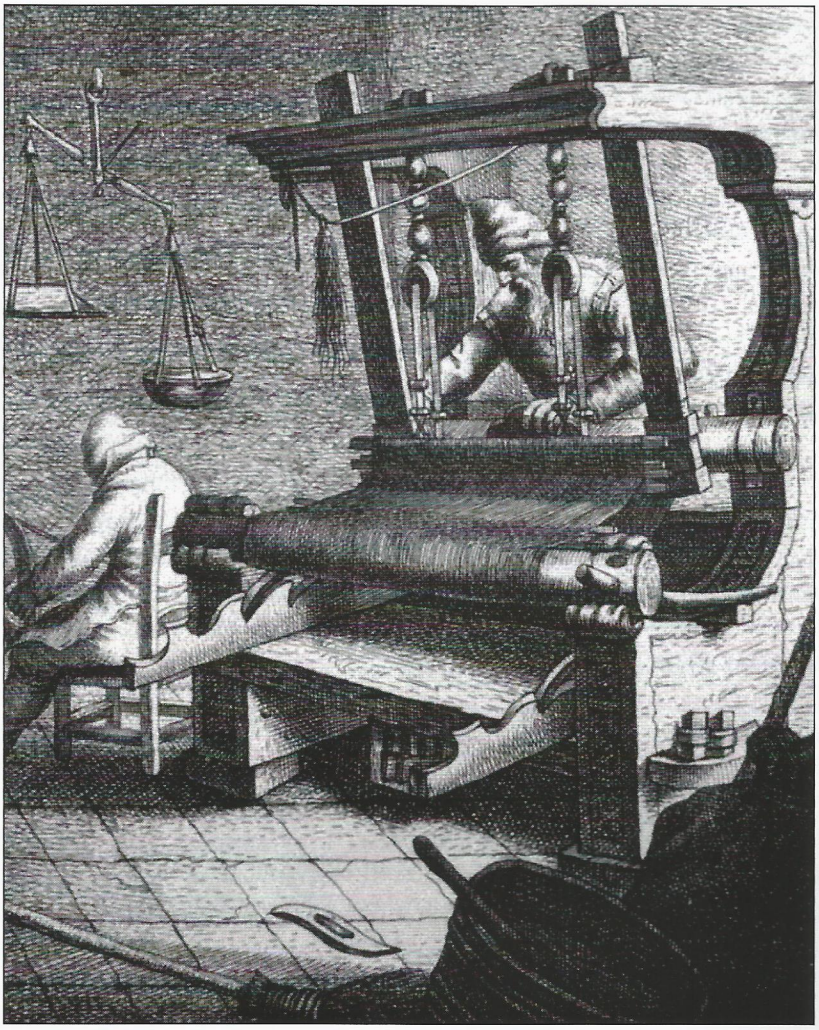
continued on p. 16

A WEAVER IN OYSTER BAY

by Elliot M. Sayward

Had you arrived in a Time Machine at the landing place in Oyster Bay Town sometime near the beginning of the 18th Century and made your way through the settlement you would, as you passed the house of Samuel McCoun, have heard a repeated thump, thump noise that would probably have puzzled you. The noisemaker would have been Sam McCoun himself. The noise, which was likely to continue throughout the day, was produced by his wielding of the "beater" that hung in his loom. The beater was used to tighten down into his steadily growing length of fabric each successive thread of which his shuttle deposited as he threw it back and forth between the yarns of of the warp that ran the long way of the loom and were the foundation for the cloth being made. Sam was a weaver and perhaps you might be wondering a bit that he was working at a craft which in most houses belonged to women. But Sam was a professional weaver and wove not just for his own household but for anyone who needed cloth and could supply him with the makings in the form of threads and yarns

Weaving is, and probably always has been, a craft for anyone, male or female, who wants to work at it , always depending on the culture in which it is practiced. In the culture to which Sam McCoun belonged weaving was practiced by a large number of professional male weavers. This was also true in the countries from which most of the settlers of New York sprang, Great Britain and Holland. If, in your passage through school you were introduced to George Eliot's Silas Marner you are now remembering that Silas was a weaver in England whence originated many of the early Oyster Bay settlers. In his time, a hundred years or more later than our visit, a substantial work force of Englishmen were still professional weavers working in their own homes.



A weaver is shown at his loom in this early seventeenth century etching by Dutch artist Jan Van Vliet. Samuel McCoun's loom would have looked somewhat similar to this one.

Alice Morse Earle, who usually knew what she was talking about, said that professional weavers were "a universally respected class and became the ancestors of many of the wealthiest and most influential citizens of today" (early 20th Century). Those who have read George Eliot's tale know that was not necessarily true in England.

Professional weavers in McCoun's time would have received much of their yarn from household spinners and turned it into cloth at so much a yard. They also bought or traded for yarn on their own accounts and transformed it into cloth that they sold both at whole sale and

retail.

Let us consider Sam McCoun who is recorded as a weaver at Oyster Bay. He was born at Westerly, Rhode Island about 1667 and died at Oyster Bay probably not long before March 26, 1759, when his will was proved. He had arrived in Oyster Bay by 1695, perhaps somewhat earlier. He is shown to have bought land in Oyster Bay from David Underhill during the period 1693 to 1697. What information do we have about his life there?

During his residence in Oyster Bay he is known to have held many public offices. At one time he was a Justice of the Peace for Queens County. In his last will dated December 25, 1749, Sam does not mention the disposal of his weaver's equipment leaving us to wonder if he had not in his latter years concentrated on "husbandry," the farming of his large land holdings. He left his farming equipment to his son Daniel McCoon (they spelled it both ways) and his grandson of the same name along with an apportionment of his various Oyster Bay land holdings. Like a number of other settlers in Oyster Bay, Sam seems to have been interested in increasing his original holdings and from time to time, taking advantage of the development of the town by selling some of what he had acquired.

Nevertheless he saw himself as a weaver, not a land speculator, for he describes himself that way in more than one document. We may therefore assume that he practiced his trade for many years. For example, we may note a document of February 16, 1710/1711, in which he is called a weaver

In 1709 Sam was Surveyor for the township. If this means he was an official charged with land measurement it means he could "run" land, that is, use surveying instruments. He would have owned a compass and chain for the purpose and these would have meant extra income to him and not only in Oyster Bay. Land sales were frequent throughout the Island and a formal survey, for which a fee could be charged, was necessary in order to avoid disputes.

In 1714-1715 Weaver McCoun was keeper of the Town Pound. This entailed rounding up stray livestock, penning it up and holding it till called for by the owners, fines in hand.The nearest thing to this office still serving us today is the dog catcher. However, capturing a wild and free running bull would have been rather more dangerous than enticing a lap dog into the back of a truck.

McCoun's many appearances in the records of Oyster Bay unhappily tell us very little about his work as a weaver. But we can learn a good deal about early weaving from other sources and this will enable us to get a general notion of what his craft life must have been like.

He could procure yarn on his own account, turn it into fabric and sell it either wholesale or retail. Or he could accept the yarn of others and on their instructions and at a price fixed in advance, weave it into the kind and quantity of textiles wanted. Lastly if business were slack he could call at the houses of neighbors who owned looms but were too busy to use them and contract to do their weaving for them. Like the tailor and the shoemaker who "whipped the cat" in this manner, he would then be provided with meals and a bed, if necessary. He would surely have enjoyed a certain amount of socializing till the job was done. He would be supplied with yarn and the use of the loom and paid for his labor when finished.

Well, what kind of textiles did Sam weave? That was determined by two considerations, the nature and diameter of the filaments used and the manner in which they were assembled in the loom. In those days there were four important filaments in use: wool, flax, cotton and silk. Sam could probably have woven any of them but silk and cotton were scarce, if available at all at his level. Before we take a quick look at some of the fabrics made in his day, let us note one that it was illegal for him to weave. That was sail cloth or canvas. Although he was a resident of a town that was a harbor for shipping he did not make the material which supplied sails, unless surreptitiously, because English law forbade him to, reserving that element of the trade to his brother weavers in England. There were other restrictions as well but there was incomplete enforcement and that diminished the farther the American weaver was located from the centers of authority.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE FREEHOLDER

ASK UNCLE PELEG

Dear Uncle Peleg:

I wondered what was the meaning and history of the phrase, "Davy Jones's Locker." So I looked it up in my dictionary. It said Davy Jones was a humorous name for the spirit of the sea. And Davy Jones's Locker was the bottom of the sea, the graveyard of drowned sailors. But it didn't say where the phrase came from or why that name was used etc. Can you add to the little I've learned?

Cliff Goodman

The first mention of Davy Jones in print appears to have been in the novel Peregrine Pickle written by Smollett about 1750. It has been suggested that Jones is a corruption of Jonah, the prophet who was briefly domiciled in the belly of a whale. Jones and David are common names in Wales (no pun intended) and the name may have been the invention of Welsh sailors. Nobody really knows. Smollett suggested he was a fiend who presided over the evil spirits of the deep.

Dear Uncle Peleg:

In an English program on TV a character said he had been driven to a meeting in a "Handsome Cab." What kind of a vehicle is that? I looked it up but I couldn't find a definition. My mother said : "Why don't you ask Uncle Peleg?" I said, "Who?" So she told me.

Lisa Y.

You couldn't find it because you misunderstood the first word. It's not "Handsome," it's "Hansom." The name of the designer of the cab is variously given as Aloysius or Joseph A. Hansom. The vehicle is a two-wheeler. The driver sits outside and behind the passenger compartment and can communicate with his fare through a small trap-door in the roof.

In the Winter 2002 issue of The Freeholder your Uncle was asked to identify an implement, apparently of wood, illustrated in a clipping from a box of old paper items found at a tag sale by Ed Hall. It is sad to report that we failed the identification and fumbled and bungled in the process The implement was not used in cleaning out a coal furnace, our best guess, but was a scoop employed in the digging of the Erie Canal. Looking through a study of various aspects of early American technology we have since noticed a picture credited to Rees' Encyclopedia (surely not an early edition) showing the scoop along with a long handled contractor's shovel. It was not made clear exactly how the scoop was used and we must risk another guess. Perhaps its purpose was bailing out mud and water that had become too loose and liquid for a shovel during the excavating work. Rain, springs and casual standing water would have been no small problem for the diggers of Clinton's Big Ditch.

A hansom cab is visible to the left center of this late nineteenth century view of a bustling London intersection.

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 in ***The Freeholder.***

20TH CENTURY RECREATION EXHIBIT & EVENTS A SUCCESS!

by Walter G. Karppi

There is still time to see the exhibit on recreation in Oyster Bay at the Oyster Bay Historical Society's home, the Earle-Wightman House at 20 Summit St. The exhibit, which runs through February, is entitled "Recreation During the Twentieth Century in Oyster Bay: From Doing to Viewing." It looks at recreation in a world where the automobile, the airplane and television have changed the way people perceived recreation over the past 100 years. The exhibit opened on an otherwise dark, dismal and rainy Sunday, which was brightened up considerably by the opening lecture held at the Oyster Bay Community Center and the reception at the Earle-Wightman House.

Exhibit co-Chairperson Dr. Maureen Monck thanked the individuals who helped make the event a success beginning with Marie Claire Pittis who graciously hosted a cocktail party at her waterfront Cove Neck home. She thanked OBHS Treasurer Linda Morgan, Trustee Adelaide Beatty and the many others for generously lending artifacts and thanked those who gave interviews for the exhibit journal, and helped in creating the displays. That included her co-chair, Thomas Kuehhas, OBHS director, for his efforts in interviewing people, collecting items and assembling all into a coherent and compelling presentation.

A grand time was had by all at the kick-off cocktail party held at the waterfront home of Mrs. Robert Pittis, shown above with Society administrative assistant Walter Karppi and Fall exhibition co-chairs,Dr. Maureen Monck and Tom Kuehhas. A mix of fine hors-d'oeuvres, wine, and light recreational activities like badminton and croquet, made for a fun-filled outing.

Mr. Kuehhas was the moderator and guide for the subsequent round-table discussion which featured three knowledgeable panelists. Elizabeth Roosevelt, a life-long Cove Neck resident, photographer and sailor, spoke of boating and the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club. John Hammond, author of the book, *Oyster Bay Remembered*, the *Guardian* column "Village Views" and whose family had lived in the Oyster Bay area for many generations, concentrated on recreational activities in the village. The third panelist was "Sports Parade" writer, Cove Neck's Rick Robinson, who spoke on the impact that television has had on sporting activities in Oyster Bay.

Ms. Roosevelt talked of the history of the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club, the design of the club's burgee and the races that were held in the early days of the group. The evolution of the various racing crafts and the contests in which they sailed were nicely covered.

Mr. Hammond discussed the many and varied recreational activities that were available at the dawn of the 20th century, including such indoor activities as bowling, pool, playing cards and board games. Golf, baseball, track and field events, fishing, bicycling, basketball, and horseback riding comprised some of the outdoor activities. Wintertime had its own sports such as ice skating, bobsledding and skiing. The bobsleds were huge affairs - some capable of carrying as many as 24 men. These were

A capacity crowd engulfed the exhibition opening at the Earle-Wightman House on Sunday, Nov. 18th. Enjoying a look at the exhibition are Beverly Mohlenhoff, Franklin Flower, Lillian Soricillo, and Ada Flower.

just some of the highlights of the vast variety of sports available to the local public.

Mr. Robinson was then introduced to discuss the profound effect that television has had on our lives. He mentioned an item on display at the Earle-Wightman House, a 1948 RCA 10" TV set. The cabinet holding the set is enormous in relation to the size of the picture viewed. It was also crafted from fine wood, as a piece of furniture would be, and not the metal or plastic units seen today. A set of this type would cost between $300 and $400 which, in those days, amounted to many weeks' wages for the average worker.

After the presentations the floor was thrown open for questions and discussion. A lively exchange ensued that seemed to end too soon. At this point Mr. Kuehhas ended the round-table discussion and invited all to adjourn to the Earle-Wightman House for the opening of the exhibit and to enjoy a champagne reception.

Museum hours are Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Call (516) 922-5032 for directions and further information.

OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Categories of Membership

Individual	$ 25	Business	$ 50
Family	$ 35	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 (516)922-5032 for more information on joining the Society.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

The Oyster Bay Historical Society is seeking volunteers to assist with the educational programs offered to students of area schools at the historic Earle-Wightman House.

This acclaimed hands-on program has grown in just a few years to the point where we are now providing New York State curriculum -based education programs to over 1500 students per year. However with this success comes the increased need for able volunteers capable of giving the program. If you have an interest in history, can devote two to four hours per week, and enjoy seeing tangible results produced by your efforts, please contact Director Tom Kuehhas at 922-5032.

RAYNHAM HALL MUSEUM HIRES NEW DIRECTOR

Raynham Hall Museum hired Sarah K. Abruzzi as their new Executive Director on November 18, 2002. Ms. Abruzzi grew up in Port Jefferson, NY, and spent the past three years in Charlotte, NC. While in Charlotte, Ms. Abruzzi worked as an Education Coordinator at Reed Gold Mine State Historic Site and Historic Rosedale Plantation. While in Charlotte, Ms. Abruzzi also held the position of Special Projects Coordinator/ Collections Manager at Historic Latta Plantation. Ms. Abruzzi graduated with a degree in Anthropology from

Visit the Oyster Bay Historical Society's NEW website! www.oysterbayhistory.org

the University at Albany (SUNY) in 1998 and worked as an archaeologist at the New York State Museum in Albany before moving to Charlotte.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT EXHIBIT AT MUSEUM OF ART

The Nassau County Museum of Art has mounted a varied exhibition of works and artifacts dealing with the life and times of our 26th President. Into his 60 years Roosevelt managed to cram the careers and adventures of several lesser human beings. Theodore Roosevelt was a writer, historian, explorer, big-game hunter, soldier, conservationist, cattle rancher and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and the Medal of Honor!

The exhibit neatly captures not only the various phases of Roosevelt's life but also depicts the environment in which he lived. He believed in the "Strenuous Life" which in fact was the title of one of the 35 books authored by him. There is a twofold tie-in with the Oyster Bay Historical Society. Firstly, he was, and is, Oyster Bay 's most famous resident. Secondly, the Society's current exhibit, "From Doing to Viewing" depicts many of the activities that he would have participated in. He himself was most definitely a "Doer" and not a "Viewer."

Born with an unimpressive physique he was, as a child, sickly and prone to illness. Encouraged by his father and his own determination, he grew into robust manhood through physical outdoor exercise. Besides challenging himself physically he also possessed an impressive intellect and was an omnivorous reader and student. He was probably the best-read man up to his time to have occupied the Presidency. Patron of the arts and an environmentalist long before it was popular, he was a "Trust Buster," using his office to control big business.

"TR" at his desk.

Through artworks, memorabilia, fashions, documentation and furnishings the exhibit explores his life and times. "The World of Theodore Roosevelt" is an original exhibition organized by important periods in his life. Roosevelt's life is depicted in the New York City of townhouses and immigrants, out west in the Badlands of the Dakotas, as a reform politician, as a scourge of business abuse, Spanish-American War hero, governor of New York, vice-president and president, creation of the Panama Canal, as a progressive, as a supporter of America's entry into World War I and living in Oyster Bay.

Many of the works are by artists who were contemporaries of TR and knew him personally such as Remington, Saint Gaudens, MacMonnies and the sculptors Fraser, Kelly and Proctor. Also works by the noted photographer Jacob Riis are shown. Memorabilia includes an actual "Big Stick" representing his foreign policy. There is an original Stieff Teddy Bear on display. Contemporary cartoons, editorial and newspaper accounts serve to give a flavor of his life and times.

Many thanks to Harry L. Dickran of Levon Graphics Corp., Route 109, East Farmingdale, for printing The Freeholder for the Society.

His generosity allows the magazine to reach a much wider audience than was heretofore possible. Please patronize our sponsors!

The Society now has available a "1900 View of Oyster Bay," which shows every building in existence at that time and includes a list of businesses and prominent residences. Eminently suitable for framing, this print is a great bargain at $20 plus shipping. Contact the Society at (516) 922-5032 to order yours today!

Also available are an 1833 map of Oyster Bay ($5) and a map of Gold Coast estates c. 1920 ($7.50). Shipping is additional.

The exhibit will remain until February 16, 2003, at the Nassau County Museum of Art located on Northern Boulevard in Roslyn Harbor. Museum hours are Tuesday through Sunday, 11 AM to 5 PM. Admissions are: adults $6, seniors $5, and children over twelve $4; members and children under twelve are free.

FARMINGDALE-BETHPAGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In late November, Dr. Natalie A. Naylor, Professor Emerita of Hofstra University and recently retired director of the Long Island Studies Institute, presented her popular slide lecture, "A Sense of Place: Long Island History and Heritage," at the society's meeting in the Farmingdale Public Library. Another talented lecturer, The Society's immediate past president Dr. Benjamin J. Giminaro, presented two talks on "Farmingdale of Yesteryear" to the Women's Club of Farmingdale on Nov. 7th and the Levittown Historical Society on Dec. 16th.

HUNTINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society will be celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, concurrent with the 350th anniversary of the Town of Huntington and the Town of Oyster Bay. The HHS was founded in 1903 by several local ladies to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Town. Today the Society owns four local properties included on the National Register, an extensive library and archives, and more than 250,000 photographic images dating back to 1870. Needless to say, the Town of Huntington and other local associations have events planned for the on-going 350th celebration.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE MASSAPEQUAS

The society's annual Holiday Open House was held at its headquarters, Old Grace Church, on Sunday, Dec. 8th from 2 to 4 P.M. The Society's new president is Gail Klubnick, who succeeded Donna Cohen. For a visit to the church building or other information, call (516) 799-2023.

CENTRAL PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Late last year, Ron Schweiger, official historian for the Borough of Brooklyn, presented a fascinating slide lecture at the Bethpage Public Library. The focus of the program was Brighton Beach, Coney Island and Sheepshead Bay, with slides depicting these areas from the late 1800s to the present.

AMITYVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

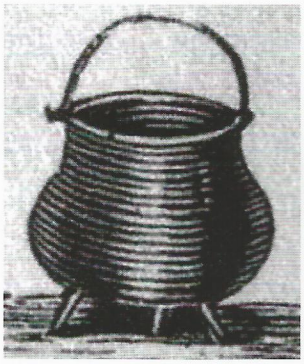
Outside improvements to the Lauder Museum continue with completion of the new iron fence and repaving of the parking area. Work on the building also continues, thanks in part to a sizeable grant obtained through the good offices of State Senator Charles Fuschillo, Jr. The Society is striving to complete repairs and improvements to the exterior, as the grant funds are intended for this purpose. The showing of 1950s movies resumed in late January and is returning by popular demand!

Society Director Tom Kuehhas with President Susan Peterson at the Society's annual Holiday Party. Kuehhas was presented with an appropriate gift and a specially-decorated cake marking his ten years of service to the Oyster Bay Historical Society.

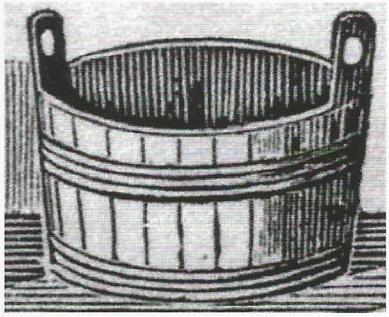
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

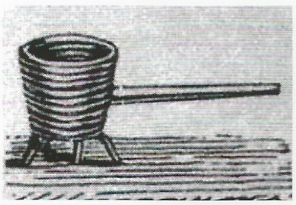
One of the interesting records from times past is the inventory of a decedent's possessions made for Probate purposes.The farther back in time they originated the stranger are many of the items set down. Complicate that by the hit or miss spelling of really early times and the natural interest of a document takes on the puzzling quality of a detective story. We read fifty or sixty such inventories recently and from them lifted fifteen for you to puzzle over. Read each item in the following list and define it in your mind if it is familiar or make your best guess if it's not. Then consult our definitions on page 23. Although several of the entries have more than one meaning we only offer one, so consider every meaning you can think of.

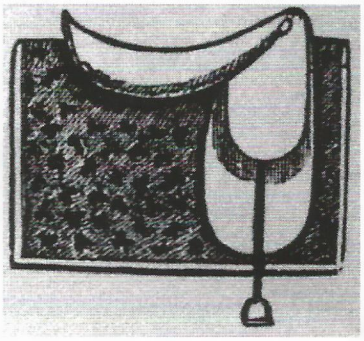
Articles found listed in 17th Century Inventories



1. Pannel (Found in connection with horse furniture)
2. Keeler
3. Forme
4. Posnett
5. Kneading trof
6. Trencher
7. Tray
8. Gally Pott
9. Pillow bear
10. Pillion
11. Cob irons
12. Powdering tub
13. Cheesefatt
14. Scupit
15. Fann







Answers will be found on p. 23.

THE GATHERING PLACE

"The Gathering Place" is the department of the magazine housing contributions of an historical slant but of 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
by Lee Myles
Take with a Grain of Salt

Some beer drinkers like to salt their beer so this bit of possible Dutch influence on the English language is for them. E. Cobham Brewer, who obviously had beer makers in his background, tells us in his *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* that the English phrase, "Half seas over" meaning drunk, is a corruption of the Dutch "Op zee zober" meaning over-sea beer and referring to a strong English brew. I'd feel happier about the claim if I could find "zober" in my Dutch dictionary. It does offer "sober" which means the same as our word of the same spelling but would change Brewer's interpretation of meaning of the phrase.

Sawmills, Sheep and Paint

Among the earliest American sawmills was the one built by the Dutch on Governors Island in New York Harbor about 1633.

Benson Lossing said in his *History of American Industries and Arts* that the Dutch introduced sheep to this country in 1625. They were apparently unsuccessful in establishing a sheep culture, however, for two decades later there were only sixteen sheep recorded in the Colony of New Netherland.

The Dutch are said to be the founders of the manufacture of white lead paint which they may have introduced in this country. If so, they must be listed among the earliest corrupters of our environment

The Old Grey Mare, She Ain't What She Used to Be

A proverb dating back to the beginning of the 16th Century is: The grey mare is the better horse. While the clear statement of the proverb is a comparison between a worthy wife and a worthless husband, Macaulay said,"I suspect [the proverb] originated in the preference given to the grey mares of Flanders over the finest coach horses of England."

Julia L. Thurston

continued from p.7

The idea was that if a woman were married, she would be expected to attend to the needs of her husband and most likely her children as well, and doing so would interfere with her job as a teacher. A woman was either a teacher or a wife and mother…not both. Owing greatly to the perseverance of preceding generations of determined women, times have certainly changed.

Miss Julia L. Thurston spent 54 years as a teacher in Oyster Bay schools, but in reality she spent a lifetime teaching. She taught every individual she encountered about kindness, patience, compassion, courage, and perseverance; it was inevitable-that's just the kind of person she was. She was a schoolteacher like no other and a remarkable woman. Her ideas and philosophies about life were timeless: work hard, believe in yourself, expect hardships in life, but learn from them because they will make you stronger. Julia L. Thurston left quite a legacy in the village of Oyster Bay. She left an indelible mark in the hearts of all who knew her.

June 2003 will mark 79 years since her retirement, and the Julia L. Thurston Scholarship Award continues to be given to students for excellence in English. The award has been given to at least one student at every high school graduation since 1925. In the early years, there was only one scholarship award given out per year, but as the prize fund grew and accumulated interest, it became possible to offer first and second prizes for the Julia L. Thurston Award. Among many other graduates of Oyster Bay High School, this scholarship was awarded to one former Oyster Bay student who went on to earn his fame writing prize winning novels: Thomas Ruggles Pynchon Jr.

Buildings that housed the high school may have crumbled and been rebuilt over the years; teachers, faculty, and students in the Oyster Bay schools have come and gone, but the fact that this scholarship has survived since 1924, and that her portrait still hangs proudly in the Oyster Bay High School, gives some comfort in the hope that Miss Julia L. Thurston will not be forgotten.

END OF THE LINE FOR THE CABOOSE

by Walter G. Karppi

Long Island Rail Road Caboose Number 12 has finally returned to its former home on the Island after a long, 41 year sojourn as a guest of the Shoreline Trolley Museum at East Haven, Connecticut. The museum operates under the auspices of the Branford Electric Railway Association and is a National Landmark. The caboose was originally acquired by the museum in 1961 and represents a vehicle that is, with the exception of a few special cases, all but extinct.

On July 25 Locomotive #35 board member Wayne Beers and Shoreline Trolley Museum board member Bill Wall assisted by members Denny Pacelli, Aldo Boggiato, Rob Paradis, Rich Slinsky, George Papuga, George Boucher and Shop Superintendent Ted Eickmann loaded the caboose onto a flatbed trailer owned by Silk Road Transport of Arkport, NY. Departing East Haven the truck arrived in New London in time for the 8:45 P.M. ferry arriving at Orient Point, Long Island, at 10:00 P.M. Arriving at the Town of Oyster Bay Department of Public Works facility at 1:00 A.M., the caboose was unloaded onto a temporary track where it awaits moving by the Friends of Locomotive #35 to their museum in Oyster Bay hamlet.

Long Island Rail Railroad caboose #12 was constructed in 1927 by the American Car & Foundry Company. It is an example of an interim style of construction. Preceding it were cabooses of all wood construction and following were cabooses of all steel construction. Number 12 is an example of a composite car - that is the frame, trucks and other underbody appurtenances were made of steel and the upper body was of wooden construction.

Caboose 12 at the end of its journey from Connecticut to Syosset. Plans call for its eventual move to the Oyster Bay Railroad Museum.

Bobbing along behind a string of freight cars, like an exclamation point at the end of a sentence, the caboose spoke loud and clear saying, "I am the end - this train is complete." Many of us remember the friendly brakeman standing at the end platform ready to return our eager waves as he rolled along behind his charge of a few or over one hundred cars. Why was the caboose developed in the first place? Why, after over one hundred years of faithful service, was it declared redundant? Hopefully this article will answer these, and other, questions and encourage the interest of the reader.

Although appended to a freight train the caboose is not meant for the haulage of goods. Fitted out to carry people in relative comfort neither is it a passenger car. A clue to its function can be found in its name, which derives from the Dutch word for a ship's galley. It has been known by other affectionate names such as cabin car, shack, bobber, waycar, crummy, etc. but its most usual appellation was that of caboose. Cornelius Vanderbilt, of New York Central fame, made his fortune in steamships and had acquired the title of Commodore. Perhaps he was the reason that a maritime word was introduced into railroad usage. Like many other items the caboose evolved over the years into its present form. As is common with many other inventions necessity was its mother. Economics and technology doomed the caboose in the name of progress.

In the early days of railroading trains, like ocean going vessels, carried both freight and passengers. Rail lines were short, cars light, speeds slow and crew requirements minimal. A train could get by with an engineer, fireman, brakeman and conductor all riding on the locomotive or one of the cars. As more powerful locomotives developed there was

an increase in the weight and speed of trains with a corresponding increase in the demands placed on the crew.

As both freight and passenger traffic grew in volume it became necessary to run separate trains for each category. Passenger trains generally ran on a faster schedule, made fewer stops and those made were of a shorter duration. Freight traffic on the other hand was slower, stops more frequent and of a longer duration. The crews of the passenger train rode in the coaches with their passengers. Freight crews found space where ever it was available on one of the cars or locomotive.

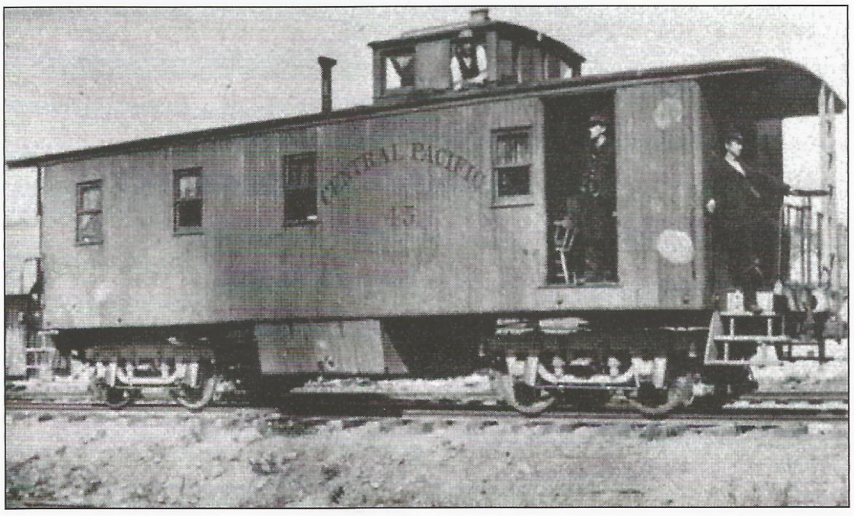
In the 1840s Nat Williams, a conductor on the Auburn & Syracuse line in upstate New York, commandeered an unused box car to use as his office. Fitting it out with an upended barrel for a desk and a wooden box for a chair and some other items it became a conductor's car or van as it was called in Canada and brake van in Britain. Having only side doors made entry and exit extremely difficult while the train was in motion. Installing end doors and platforms with steps solved this problem.

Crewmen on other roads made do with a surplus flatcar that supported a crude homemade shanty or shack riding on its deck. In either case the interior furnishings ranged from spartan to comfortable and were limited only by the imagination and ingenuity of the crews. Much depended on the time the crew expected to spend on the road. Short trips might only require a table, stove and a few chairs to suffice for their needs while long hauls might demand bunks, lockers, toilet and cooking facilities.

These two similar, but different, type cars gradually evolved into a box type car with platforms and doors at each end. Most roads eliminated the side doors, for safety reasons, while there were a few that retained them. The basic design of the caboose was now in place and it required but one modification to result in what was to become the most ubiquitous version of the caboose.

Legend has it that a Chicago & Northwestern freight conductor, T. B. Watson, was the originator of the lookout called the caboose cupola. One summer day in 1863, when his regular caboose was unavailable, Watson used an old boxcar instead. This car had a large hole in the roof and the whimsical Watson piled boxes and crates under the hole so he could sit atop them with his head and shoulders protruding through the roof. Viewing the endless cornfields, waving to young ladies, and keeping an eye open for possible problems with his train was an enjoyable experience for Mr. Watson. Finding this an excellent observation post he sought out the master mechanic upon arrival at his destination and suggested that an enclosed "crow's nest" be added to two cars then under construction. The official agreed and so the C&NW may have been the first railroad to operate cabooses with cupolas.

Before the advent of George Westinghouse's wonderful air brake, restrictions on the number of hours worked, and the invention of the automatic coupler, railroading was one of the most hazardous and dangerous occupations in which to be employed. The engine crew consisted of an engineer, who operated the locomotive while watching the track ahead, and fireman who maintained steam pressure in the engine. There was usually a "head-end" brakeman riding in the locomotive whose duties were to open and close switches, couple and uncouple cars, as required. Riding in the caboose, with the conductor, was a rear brakeman with duties identical to



Different railroad lines favored different styles of caboose.Above, a typical Central Pacific wood body caboose with cupola, built in 1872.

that of his front end counterpart and a flagman.

The necessary job of coupling cars was fraught with peril. The brakeman, now functioning as a switchman, had to stand between two cars, insert a link in the coupler pocket of the stationary car, hold it in place with a pin, signal the engineer to slowly back up, and, as the cars came together, line up the link so it would fit into the pocket of the backing car and drop a pin into that pocket to secure it. Losses of fingers, hands, arms and lives were commonplace. It was said that a brakeman in possession of all ten of his fingers was considered an inexperienced "greenhorn!"

In the days before the automatic air brake the brakeman's main job was to slow or stop the train when needed. When the engine and tender brakes were insufficient to do this the engineer would whistle for brakes. The head brakeman would climb out of the cab, over the tender and onto the roofwalk of the first car. Using the brake wheel, seen at the ends of cars, he would turn it until the brakes were applied to that car's wheels. He would then proceed to the next car and perform the same operation. Meanwhile, his caboose riding colleagues would be doing the same, advancing car by car towards the front.

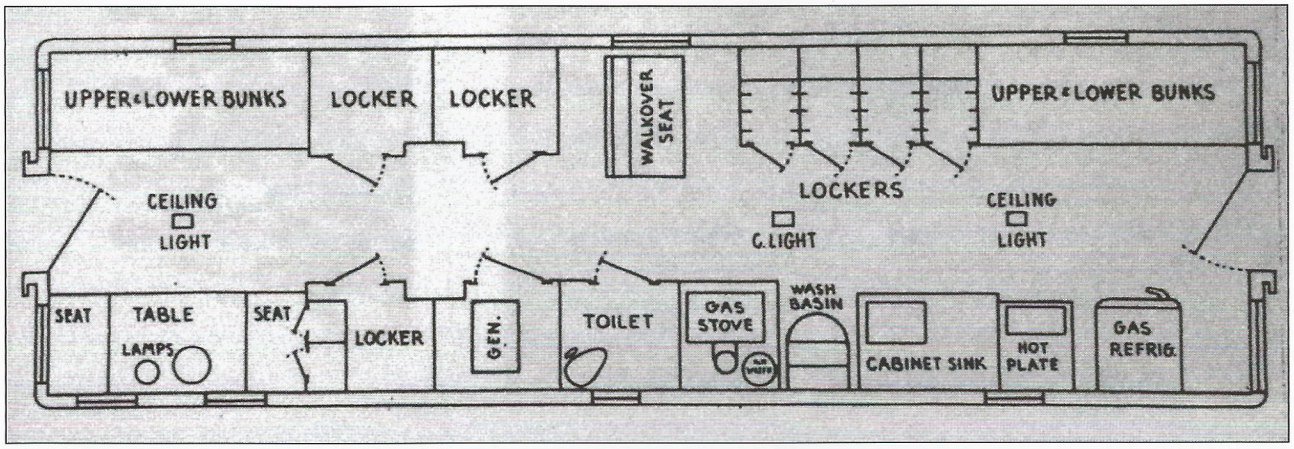
Running on the roofwalk of a rocking freight car, over a dozen feet above the ground, was a perilous feat even in daylight with good, dry weather but picture it being done at night during a howling snow storm with ice covering all surfaces with a slick, slippery coating! Those early railroaders were made of stern stuff, especially on lines which traversed mountainous territory! The caboose was not a luxury but a necessity to provide warmth, shelter, and food for these hardy souls.

The invention, and adoption, of automatic air brakes and automatic couplers eliminated these two most dangerous phases of railroad operations. The air brake enabled the engineer to have simultaneous control of all brakes on every car of the train. The automatic feature insured that should the train become parted the brakes would be applied to both sections without any action on the engineer's part. Automatic couplers eliminated the need of a person standing between cars as they were brought together. While still hazardous to the unwary and demanding undivided attention from crews, there was no longer the risk to life and limb that had existed at an earlier time.

Before the development of block signals to indicate whether a line was clear or occupied, the primary duty of the flagman was to signal following traffic whenever his train came to a stop. Even after the installation of block signals the flagman was still required to perform this job as an added safety precaution. If the stop was to be more than that of a short duration the engineer would sound one long and three short blasts on his whistle directing the flagman go out and protect the rear of the train. After walking back the required distance from his train, or far enough to signal a following train to come to a safe stop, he would watch for any traffic that might appear and signal it with the various devices at his disposal. The tools of his trade were: flags, lanterns, fusees and torpedoes.

Flags and lanterns are in common, everyday usage but perhaps the other two are unfamiliar to non-railroaders. A fusee is a flarelike device which has an ignition cap at one end and a spike at the other. When the protective cover is removed from the igniting end and struck against that end a brilliant flarelike light is lit. Most usually the color is red and it will burn for a specified time, in minutes, and cannot be extinguished by water, making it visible in rain or snow. When the engineer signals the flagman to return to his train he will uncap a fusee, light it and stick it into a tie end. If it is a five minute fusee and observed by a following train while still burning, it is an indication to that train that there is preceding traffic less than five minutes ahead of them. Torpedoes are explosive devices that are clamped to a rail. When a locomotive passes over them they explode with an extremely loud report that is heard over the noise of the engine. It was usually used when stops were of a long duration due to a breakdown or derailment.

The conductor, not the engineer, was in charge of the train and its crew. He functioned much like the captain of a ship. In many areas, particularly down south, he was called "Captain." The conductor was also responsible for knowing the contents and destination of each car to be dropped off and knowing when and where to collect cars ready to be picked



The layout of this mid-twentieth century caboose would be almost unrecognizable to a nineteenth century conductor. Life was simpler then!

up. His command post was the caboose. This is where he had all his waybills, schedules, did his paperwork and directed the operation of the train. In many cases the train crews would be on the line for days at a time. This necessitated having a place to sleep and eat which became the primary function of the caboose.

While freight cars may travel over many railroads besides their own to get to their final destination the caboose rarely if ever left its own road. That being said, however, the crew of that caboose might spend days away from home on their own road so, by necessity, their vehicle became a "home away from home." A caboose would be assigned to one conductor. The railroad company would furnish it with the basics, i.e.: a stove, bunks, closets, lockers, water tank, lavatory, etc. The crew would, from their own funds, supply the niceties. These would consist of bedding, foodstuffs, linens, utensils and the like limited only by their imagination and resources.

Externally, cabooses appeared in every color of the rainbow with the exception of purple and gold. Red was the most commonly used color both for its visibility and its association with danger. During the second half of the 20th century various lines became aware of its potential as a billboard carrying slogans "Everywhere West" (Burlington), "Mainline of Mid-America" (Illinois Central), etc. or safety messages.

As freight cars grew higher the cupola was no longer an aid in observing the train. Many times a trainman could only see the car immediately in front of his caboose. A solution was found in the design of the bay window caboose which, as its name implies, had a bay extending out from either side giving the crew a good view of the side of the train. Cabooses of the "extended vision" variety were also developed. These had a cupola on the roof which also extended over the sides like a bay window. This allowed observation from both the top and side positions of the car.

The caboose came in all shapes and sizes depending upon the use it was designed for. Ranging in size from tiny four-wheeled "bobbers" to lengthy drovers, and all sizes in between, there never was a nationwide standard caboose. Transfer cabooses were nothing more than a shed on a flat car used when transferring cars from one line's yards to another's. These were usually short hauls in metropolitan areas and the crews did not need cooking or sleeping amenities. Shelter and toilet facilities were all that were required. A drover caboose was indigenous to Western railroads and used on livestock (steers, pigs, sheep, etc.) trains and accommodated the cattlemen (drovers) as well as the train crew. They were fitted out with extra seats and bunks and had more windows. Some lines, not having enough passengers to justify running a coach, would carry passengers in a caboose fitted out with the appropriate seats.

Another function of both the head end and rear crews was to watch out for overheated journals, or "hot boxes", that would announce their presence by the smoke they produced as the train was in motion. After signaling the engineer to stop the train the

crew would locate the offending hot box and pack it with oily waste to cool and lubricate it. The journal was the brass bearing that an axle rode in at each of its ends. If the condition remained undetected while the train was running the bearing could fail, the wheel would then leave the track and a derailment would occur.

Today's trains are equipped with roller, rather than friction, bearings which have all but eliminated the problem. There are also strategically placed hot box detectors along many lines that will electronically detect the presence of an overheated bearing and allow the train crew to be notified.

Not only were cabooses considered non-revenue equipment they were expensive to maintain and replace. One major line estimated that it cost seventy cents a mile to operate a caboose, or about $1,300 per trip. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe, for one, estimated that it spent $36,000 a year to operate and maintain just one caboose. The replacement cost for a new one could be as much as $80,000. To a large railroad that might have well over a thousand cabooses this was a considerable outlay.

Although labor unions in general had agreed in principal to the elimination of the caboose the UTU, or United Transportation Union, citing safety issues, pressured several state governments to pass laws requiring cabooses on freight trains. These laws were repealed not long after passage, since it was found that cabooseless trains were responsible for fewer injuries than those equipped with them. Even with safety appliances like cushioned underframes and seatbelts the caboose riding crews were subjected to tremendous jolts, due to slack action, when the train started or stopped.

Slack action resulted from the difficulty of starting a long freight train all at once from a stop. As a rule the locomotive will back up against the train causing the cars to bunch up together. Then, when it moves forward, it is in effect starting one car at a time. While this works, and works well, the front of the train will be moving at a speed of four to five miles an hour giving the last car (the caboose) a pretty good snap when it moves. Generally, but not always, the crews can anticipate the jolt but when they don't some take a tumble.

Electronics also enabled the invention of "FRED", or Flashing Rear End Device, which allowed for the elimination of the caboose. Sometimes these were called "EOT" (End of Train) or "ETD" (End of Train Device). These were small boxes mounted on the coupler of the last car of a train. This device flashes a bright red signal at frequent intervals to warn following traffic. In addition, it also monitors air pressure in the train's air brake pipe line and transmits that, and other vital information, to the engineer at the front of the train.

Although the caboose is gone it is not forgotten. Hopefully LIRR caboose #12 will soon be on view at the Oyster Bay Rail Museum and, who knows, perhaps it will once more roll on the rails behind steam Locomotive #35. We all have our dreams!

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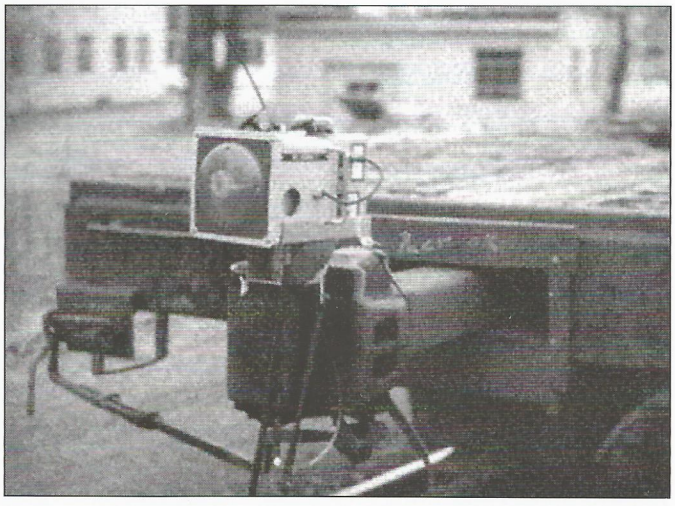
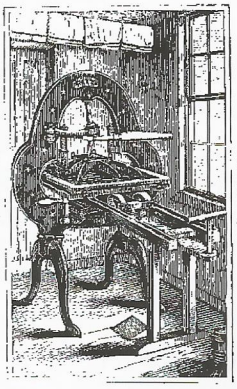


The EDT spelled the end of the line for the cabooose.

Blocklyn's Books



Book Reviews by Philip Blocklyn

Journeys On Old Long Island. Travelers' Accounts, Contemporary Descriptions, And Residents' Reminiscences, 1744-1893. Edited by Natalie A Naylor. LI Studies/Hofstra University and Empire State Books, 2002. 344 pp. B&W illustration. Index. $22.95.

What can contemporary travelers write about Long Island? There's always traffic (there is *always* traffic), or the spreading strip mall, or those curious mansionettes complete with faux appointments so faux even the faux is faux. So maybe it's better not to ask. Better maybe to wonder what struck visitors and residents alike in those days of yore, before the strip-mining of the Island.

So wonder no more. Natalie Naylor, former director of Hofstra University's Long Island Studies Institute, has assembled a selection of eighteenth and nineteenth century eyewitness descriptions of Long Island life and times. For the most part, the sources of these accounts are not readily accessible unless you are inclined to poke around in imposing mega-libraries, where the average layperson is usually not welcome to poke anyway.

Diverse as the assembled writers are, they nearly all of them convey a sense of Long Island's expansive landscape which has now disappeared for good. It can't be surprising that half the pieces note in passing or in some detail the Hempstead Plain. How could you miss it? The Plain (or less charitably, the Barren), was at its greatest extent over fifteen miles long and almost half as wide. Dr Alexander Hamilton in his 1744 journey described it as a sea where "latitude might be taken at noon day." Losing his way, he vainly sought direction from inhabitants "too wild to be spoken with."

By the nineteenth century, one of the Plain's great uses was as a commons for sheep turned out in the spring for grazing. Each fall, the sheep were brought back in, an occasion for a tremendous party called a Sheep Parting, surely a precursor of the island's modern Fall Festivals. Daniel Tredwell describes the event in 1839 as "a great frolic of the masculine persuasion." Offered in abundance were "cake, gingerbread, and vivant beer, oysters, watermelons by the wagonload... hot corn." Entertainments included "dancing, foot-racing, leaping and wrestling matches," along with politicians who "ventilated their righteous purposes of reform."

Walt Whitman too described the Plain of the 1830s, though in his much more bucolic terms:

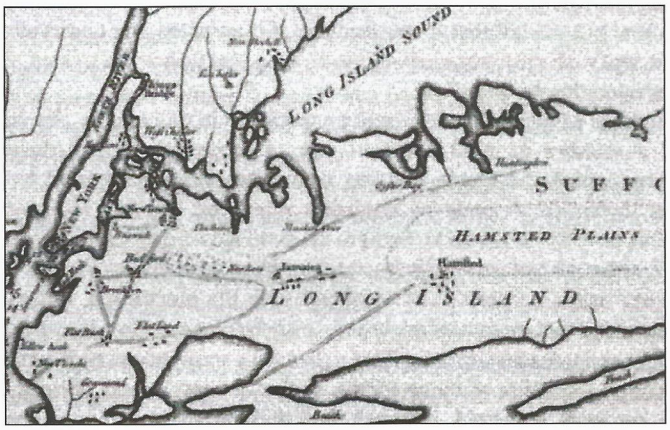
> I have often been out on the edges of these plains toward sundown, and can yet recall in fancy the interminable cow-processions, and hear the music of the tin or copper bells clanking far or near, and breathe the cool of the sweet and slightly aromatic evening air, and note the sunset.

By the 1860s, Whitman notes that the Plain's edges have been eroded by real estate speculation, much of which failed spectacularly. "Hicksville! That place of vanished greatness! 0, what a cutting up of lots and selling them off at high prices there was here!"

The Hempstead Plain of 2003? You can find its mortals remains stuffed into a little northwest comer of Eisenhower Park, fenced off and glimpsed fleetingly from the windows of cars whizzing by on Old Country Road. The grasses are tawny in late winter light, and golden against patchy snow.

Further reading: The Long Island Studies Institute has now published thirty titles dealing with the history of Long Island.

A 1776 map of western Long Island.



AUNT EEEK

Olde Things:Advice on the Care & Feeding of Antiques

Dear Aunt Eeek:

I have been collecting all sorts of old stuff since childhood, and I loved every minute of it. As time marches forward I find my world shrinking and the materials that I once found so readily available and affordable have all but disappeared. This I accept and understand. What I cannot accept and refuse to see is the kind of material that now is considered collectible. I am referring most specifically to that which is called "Art" by this brave new world. I call it junk! I call it absurd! I call it for what it is…a farce. This array of garish and unrelated material that finds its way onto the walls of "collectors" and "art museums" is nothing but trash. I visited an art museum recently and found a broken umbrella nailed to the wall. What kind of fools do they think we are? I hope that you will speak to this trend and help me to convince other collectors not to fall for this junk! I look forward to your comments and suggestions.

Susan Schaefer

Dear, Dear Susan,

I too have watched the world turn, and I too have seen the collecting world change. I have come to understand and accept that the only constant in the universe is change and quite surprisingly (especially to me) I have come to accept it, and actually embrace it. Coming from the pen of an olde time lover of olde time things this may sound a bit confusing and maybe even a bit disappointing to you and others who share your view. If you are old enough (and I am) to remember the advent of Rock and Roll you may remember the hullabaloo that surrounded Elvis and the Beatles. More than half of the population condemned their musical talents and offerings as trash not worthy of recording. Well I admit that I was one of them. Today I cannot listen to a Beatles ballad without marveling at the beauty and wonder of the sound and lyric. More to the point a 1962 Beatles or Elvis album and cover brings more attention on the market than a 1922 player piano roll.

More surprising yet is the Art world you refer to. It took me by surprise that I came to my knees in front of a splash of paint and a toilet bowl seat on the wall at the the Met. I simply had to let myself look with the eyes of a lover of expression and vision, which I have always worked to be The real challenge for the Art world is to get the world to look and understand just what is being offered. These pieces moved an artist who had something to say to creation, and our pleasure comes when we open our minds and souls to them. You may not like an umbrella on the wall but maybe you should go back and look again. You might see something there that you missed, or you still may reject it. Either way the trick is to look and to accept that Art and Beauty are not limited to the momentary. I dread that the day may come when the Art world or the Music world or the literary world decides that some or another offering is not acceptable for consumption.My father's world remembers a fellow and his gang who tried that brand of nonsense and it took the sense and sacrifice of the free world to put a stop to them.I may not like that umbrella, but I love that it is there and that it represents the everchangingand ever challenging tomorrow.

Answers to Test Your Knowledge, p.15

1. Panell. The cloth or pad placed under a saddle to protect the horse's back.
2. Keeler. A shallow tub used for household purposes. Frequently used to keel (cool) liquids.
3. Form. A long seat generally without a back. A bench
4. Posnet. A small, handled, three legged vessel for cooking or boiling.
5. Kneading-trough. A wooden trough or tub in which to knead bread dough.
6. Trencher. Originally a cutting board or other flat surface on which meat was cut but it also came to mean the utensil of wood, metal, earthenware or even bread from which food was eaten.
7. Tray. While it could have meant a flat utensil with a raised

continued on p. 24

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!

FEBRUARY
Museum hours.
Exhibition
Earle-Wightman House Museum
20 Summit St., Oyster Bay
Don't miss your last chance to view the exhibition entitled " Recreation During the Twentieth Century in Oyster Bay: From Doing to Viewing" at the Earle-Wightman House museum, which closes at the end of this month.
The variety of Oyster Bay's recreational experiences is documented in rarely-seen photos and artifacts that show how recreation evolved during the course of the century.

MARCH
Tuesday, March 25, 8 p.m.
20/20 Lecture
Masonic Lodge
West Main St., Oyster Bay
The long-running Spring lecture series kicks off with an overview of the three hundred year history of Christ Episcopal Church conducted by engaging speaker and author Dr. John A. Gable, who has been charged with writing the history of the parish. You'll be sure to walk away with a new appreciation for the venerable institution that is Christ Church.
Admission is free and refreshments will be served following the lecture.

APRIL
Tuesday, April 22, 8 p.m.
20/20 Lecture
Masonic Lodge
West Main St., Oyster Bay
What were the early days of the Oyster Bay settlement like? Who were those first European settlers? One can have no better guide to finding out the answers to these and other questionsthan our own local historian and author John Hammond. Join us as we begin the year-long celebration marking the 350th anniversary of Oyster Bay's founding (or is it?)
Admission is free and refreshments will be served following the lecture.

Test Your Knowledge, *continued from p. 23*
rim used for carrying plates, cups, glasses etc. as it is today, a tray in a 17th century inventory was usually a vessel of moderate depth hollowed out from a thick slab of wood and used to carry or contain materials in the kitchen, dairy or brew house.
8. Gallipot. A small earthen pot imported from the Mediterranean and used for ointments and medicines.
9. Pillowbere. A pillow case
10. Pillion. A woman's light saddle or pad fixed to the back of a saddle on which a second rider, usually a woman, might sit.
11. Cob-irons. The iron fixtures by which a spit was supported before a cooking fire.
12. Powdering tub.Tub in which meat is cured for preservation.
13. Cheese-vat. The vessel in which curds are pressed and shaped in making cheese.
14. Scuppet. A spade used for trenching.
15. Fan. A device for winnowing grain, that is, seperating the kernels of grain from the chaff.

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