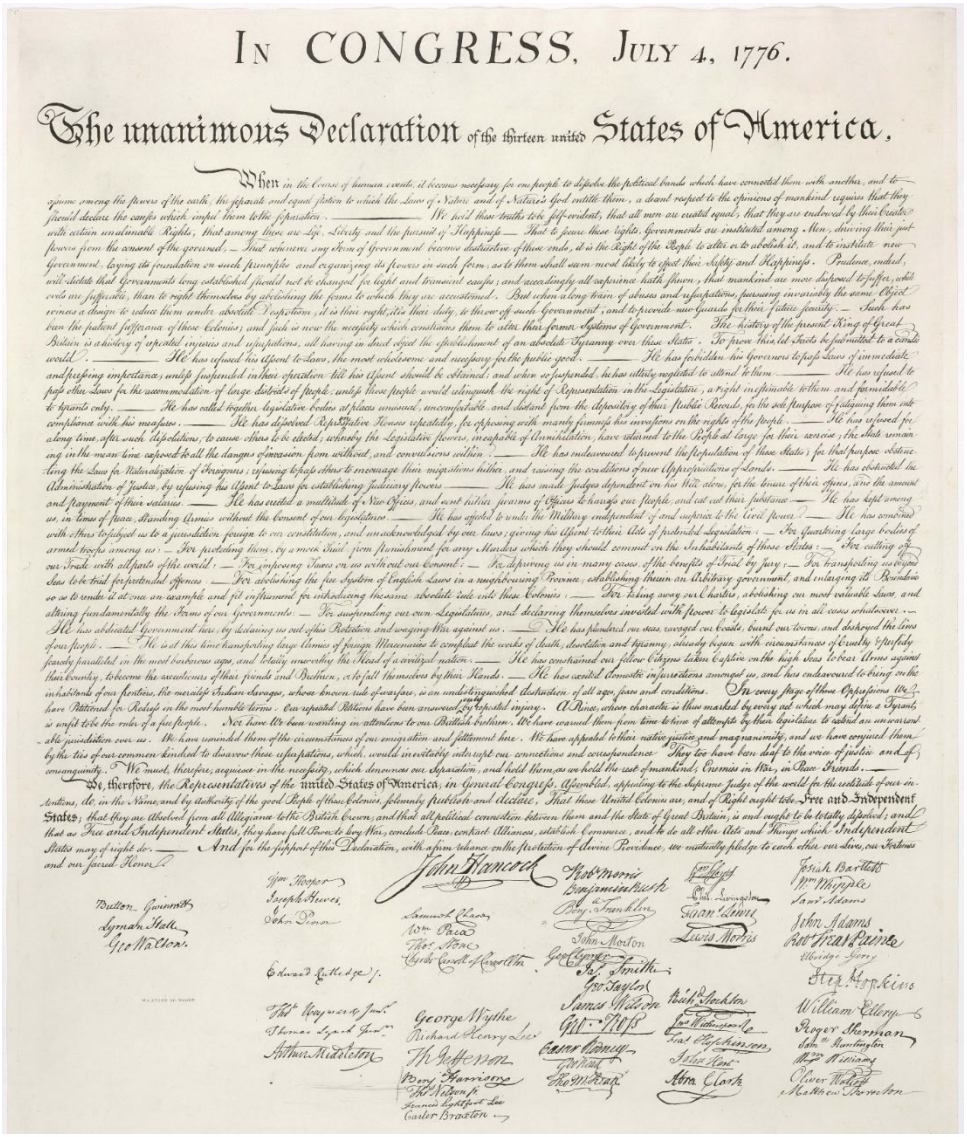
THE DOUGLASTON AND LITTLE NECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving and protecting the historical significance of Douglaston and Little Neck and adjacent nature preserves.



IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. — We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world. — He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. — He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. — He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only. — He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures. — He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people. — He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within. — He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of lands. — He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers. — He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries. — He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their substance. — He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures. — He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power. — He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation: — For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: — For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States: — For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world: — For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent: — For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury: — For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences — For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies: — For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments: — For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. — He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us. — He has plundered our Seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our Towns, and destroyed the Lives of our People. — He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation. — He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands. — He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions. In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends. —

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. — And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

John Hancock

Josiah Bartlett, Wm Whipple, Saml Adams, John Adams, Robt Treat Paine, Elbridge Gerry, Step Hopkins, William Ellery, Roger Sherman, Sam'el Huntington, Wm Williams, Oliver Wolcott, Matthew Thornton

Wm Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn

Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, Geo Walton

Edward Rutledge, Thos Heyward Junr, Thomas Lynch Junr, Arthur Middleton

Samuel Chase, Wm Paca, Thos Stone, Charles Carroll of Carrollton

George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Th Jefferson, Benj Harrison, Thos Nelson jr, Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton

Robt Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benj Franklin, John Morton, Geo Clymer, Jas Smith, Geo Taylor, James Wilson, Geo Ross

Caesar Rodney, Geo Read, Tho M:Kean

Wm Floyd, Phil Livingston, Frans Lewis, Lewis Morris

Richd Stockton, Jno Witherspoon, Fras Hopkinson, John Hart, Abra Clark

Josiah Bartlett, Wm Whipple, Saml Adams, John Adams, Robt Treat Paine, Elbridge Gerry, Step Hopkins, William Ellery, Roger Sherman, Sam'el Huntington, Wm Williams, Oliver Wolcott, Matthew Thornton

Happy 250th Birthday to the USA

This special 16-page edition of the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society newsletter is devoted to our nation's **semiquincentennial**—also called the **bisesquicentennial**, the **sestercentennial**, or the **quarter millennium**. It focuses on people and events in our local area during the Revolutionary War period: Francis Lewis who signed the Declaration of Independence and lived in Whitestone, the Van Wyck family who lived on the Little Neck peninsula, James Duane who is an ancestor of one of our board members, the Battle of Long Island, the Battle of Golden Hill, the Culper Spy Ring, and more. We also include listings of many local special events and exhibits dedicated to this milestone. We hope you enjoy learning this local history and encourage you to become a member of the DLNHS.

A Message from the President, Peter Reinharz

This is a very special year for the United States of America. It is our Nation's 250th birthday and there are celebrations taking place across all 50 states to honor the founding of the world's greatest nation. We live in a country where we are free to think what we like, to say what we want, and we get to choose our public officials every November.

From the time of the American Revolution, through the conflict of a civil war, and from the recoveries from the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression to the liberation of Europe – two times! – during the 20th century, the United States has consistently served as a model for the rest of the civilized world.

Twice a year the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society (DLNHS) newsletter offers residents information about the history of the area, from the native Americans who first called this place home, to suburbanization of rural farmland in the 20th century. In this special bisesquicentennial issue, we focus on the Revolutionary War era.

DLNHS does even more than just publish a newsletter. We also participate in many community activities, including the annual Jane's Walk (through the Municipal Arts Society) and Open House New York where we provide walking tours led by architects and historians, explaining the development of our neighborhoods, and the zoning, social movements and architectural styles that shaped each neighborhood. These tours give attendees a glimpse of life in 19th and early 20th century New York and how these neighborhoods and buildings have survived—and thrived—into our own time.

And if you want to better understand the changes that have been made in the region in the last 100+ years, stop by our booth at the Douglaston Winter Festival each December, which is held at the Douglaston Village near the Long Island Railroad stop. Last year we had beautiful old photos of the region from the early 20th century, and held a contest to identify those places (not to mention cider and cookies).

We are also a "hands on" group, working—literally—with other local organizations. For example, each fall DLNHS volunteers join the Douglaston Garden Club and the Westmoreland Association for the annual cleanup and planting at Glenwood Landing Park in Little Neck.

And—last but not least—we support landmarking, including the continuing protection of our two New York City landmark districts, the Douglaston Historic District and the Douglaston Hill Historic District. The Architecture Committee of DLNHS offers free professional advice to homeowners to help them get through the filing process for the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). We also review local projects and offer testimony at public hearings of the LPC.

To get all this done, the DLNHS relies on its all-volunteer Board of Trustees, who do research, write articles, provide tours and work on various education programs for children and adults provided by DLNHS.

But we need YOUR help! All this work and programming takes not only dedicated effort, but money. We ask everyone who receives a copy of this newsletter and enjoys it to join our organization. Your $40.00 annual membership fee helps us produce the newsletters and the programs that have been serving our community for decades. Go to our website at www.dlnhs.org.

Additionally, we ask that you consider making a tax-deductible donation to DLNHS to help cover the growing costs of our organization. Without your support the DLNHS cannot continue to provide information and programing that keeps our residents informed and that helps us preserve our community and way of life.

Thank you for your support! I look forward to seeing you at our Annual Meeting on Saturday, June 6 at the Community Church of Douglaston. Look for an email or check the website next month for details.

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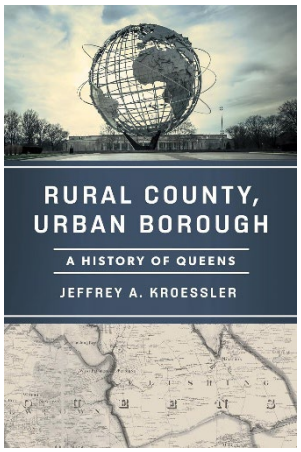
DLNHS Events

2026 DLNHS Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting will be held on **Saturday, June 6 at 2 pm** at the Community Church of Douglaston. Award-winning architect and historic preservationist Laura Heim will talk about the book *Rural County, Urban Borough: A History of Queens*, written by her late husband, historian Jeffrey A. Kroessler. The book is a history of place, charting the rapid transformation of the Queens landscape, and how people from all backgrounds came here to shape unique communities and neighborhoods. It identifies what drove the borough's development, from infrastructure, architecture, and transportation to technological innovation and urban planning.



All are invited to attend.

2026 Janes Walk NYC

Join DLNHS for our annual Jane's Walk on **Sunday, May 3, at 3 pm**. This year we will stroll through the Douglaston Historic District to explore Tudor Revival and English Cottage architecture that permeates the community. Popular from the late 19th to mid-20th century, the styles were inspired by medieval English houses. Notable features included masonry exteriors with half-timbering (i.e., the distinctive wooden "stripes" of a Tudor), prominent chimneys, steeply pitched roofs and gables, and multi-paned (often leaded) windows. Our Fall 2026 newsletter will include an article featuring eight notable examples of Tudor houses in Douglas Manor.

Advance registration at the Municipal Art Society of New York website at mas.org is required.

2025 Winter Festival

On December 13, 2025, the DLNHS joined other civic groups at the Annual Douglaston Winter Festival, held at the Douglaston LIRR station. This year, the DLNHS held a special contest open to all attendees at the festival. The contest featured four large aerial photographs taken in the 1930's of the Douglaston/Little Neck area. Contestants were asked to identify locations featured in these historical photos, and all correct answers were placed into a raffle. Because the photos were taken so long ago, the community looked very different in the pictures. Contestants had to look carefully at the photos to see if they could find identifying features in the aerial landscapes. The winner of the contest was Leonardo Dobry, a local teen with a keen eye for details. Leonardo received a basket with books and a DLNHS mug for his skillful identification of each landscape. Congratulations to Leonardo and his family!

DLNHS Board Members and
Photo Contest Winner Leonardo Dobry

2026 Queens Library exhibit and talks

The DLNHS is planning to mount an exhibit and sponsor a series of talks at our local library **in June**. The event is still in the planning stages. It will feature additional aerial photos from the series that were displayed at the Winter Festival and presentations about life in the Douglaston and Little Neck area during the time of the American Revolution.

Check our website, www.dlnhs.org, for future announcements about the event content, time and hours.

Please Support the DLNHS

These events and this newsletter are funded by memberships and donations.

Please consider joining the DLNHS if you are not yet a member (see p. 15). Or use this QR code to make a one-time donation to support our activities. Thank you.

Francis Lewis, American Patriot – and our Former Neighbor

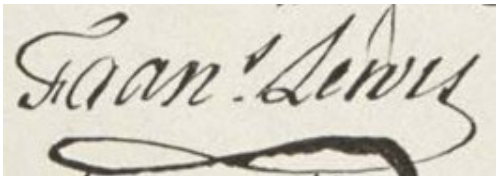
For those of us who live in the Douglaston-Little Neck area the name Francis Lewis denotes a major north-south thoroughfare connecting Bayside and Whitestone to southeastern Queens and the name of a local New York City high school. But who was Francis Lewis? And why does his name adorn a major road in Queens and a high school?

Some of you may know that Francis Lewis was a signer of the Declaration of Independence—the only one from Queens. But most people don't know much more about him. Lewis' actions before and during the Revolutionary War were critical to the establishment of a new American nation, but his loyalty to the cause cost him his home, his fortune and the life of his wife.

Francis Lewis was born in Wales in 1713 and tragically lost both parents before his fifth birthday. He was raised by an aunt who sent him to Scotland to study. His early lessons focused on England's oppression of the Welsh people, leading to Lewis' hatred of the British which eventually played an important role in his later life as an American revolutionary. Lewis' granddaughter wrote in a memoir that Lewis vowed "Never to serve England or be an Englishman."

During Lewis' later formal education at Westminster in London, he concentrated on the principles of commerce and business. At age 21, he received an inheritance from his parents and used the money to purchase goods that he took to New York for sale. But the New York market couldn't afford the London prices that Lewis was asking.

Lewis met Edward Annesley, a New York merchant of Welsh descent with many business connections. Annesley advised Lewis to sell the goods in Philadelphia, which was a far more prosperous city than New York in 1735. They soon formed a business partnership for the importing and sale of goods throughout the colonies. Additionally, Lewis married Annesley's sister, Elizabeth, a well-educated woman. She loved to study, read and discuss business and politics with her husband.



FRANCIS LEWIS' SIGNATURE
FROM THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

After Annesley's death in 1743, Lewis continued to build a thriving mercantile business and a reputation for honesty and fairness. The Crown appointed him as a trustee in bankruptcy proceedings, and he was later awarded a contract to supply uniforms and materials to the British army during the French and Indian War.

While delivering goods at Fort Oswego, New York in 1756, Lewis was among those captured when the fort was attacked and overtaken by French forces. He was one of 30 prisoners selected to be sacrificed by local Indians in celebration of the victory, but he managed to convince the Indians—purportedly using his native Welsh language— to release him to the French Governor in Montreal. The French sent him to prison in France, where he remained until the end of the war in 1763.

When Lewis returned to New York, he began rebuilding his business. He was highly successful and built a large mansion on his 5,000-acre estate in what is now Whitestone, where he filled his home with books and art. He and Elizabeth raised three children there.

However, Lewis' focus changed from business to revolution in 1765 when Parliament passed the Stamp Act, a tax provision that required a surcharge on certain goods and periodicals. Lewis became a New York delegate to the Stamp Act Congress, a group of citizens who produced a proclamation condemning Parliament for the new tax. When Parliament responded with its Declaratory Act forbidding the colonists from offering any opposition to Parliament's actions, Lewis closed his business and retired to his Whitestone estate, where he concentrated on planning for the Revolution.

Lewis was also a member of the New York Sons of Liberty, a group formed to resist the British government and separate from Great Britain. Among their actions were erecting Liberty Poles—high wooden posts designed to humiliate British officials and soldiers. This agitation led to the Battle of Golden Hill in lower Manhattan in January 1770, often cited as the first real conflict of the American Revolution and a precipitating factor in the Boston Massacre six weeks later. (For details see *Huzzah!* p. 10).

In May 1774, Lewis and other merchants organized the Committee of Fifty-One, a group of pro-revolutionary New York activists that nominated delegates to the First Continental Congress. Lewis was not a delegate to the First Congress, but in March 1775 he was selected to serve as a New York delegate to the Second Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia.

One of Lewis' initial tasks was to help raise funds and provide material and logistics for the first American military hospital. Because of Lewis' mercantile background he was also tasked with helping to provide uniforms and supplies for the Continental army. George Washington relied heavily on Lewis' expertise since Lewis had done similar service for the British army during the French and Indian War.

But Lewis is best remembered as one of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence. He was in attendance on July 2nd, 1776, when the resolution calling for independence was introduced and on July 4th when the Declaration of Independence was formally adopted by the Congress by the votes of all the delegates, except those from New York. The New York delegates could not vote as they were waiting for instructions from their colony's leadership, and those instructions had not reached Philadelphia by July 4th.

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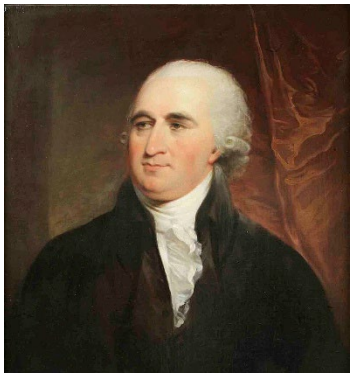
James Duane, a Founding Father

I am a descendent of James R. Duane, a founding father who was a trusted confidant to George Washington and also the first post-colonial mayor of the City of New York.



JAMES DUANE

Born in the Province (Colony) of New York in 1733, Duane studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1754. He became Attorney General of New York in 1767. When revolutionary fever was rising in the colonies, Duane was a conciliator who worked to settle the differences between England and the American colonies. It is critical to emphasize, however, that he was by no means a loyalist. Once blood was shed at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, on April 19, 1775, Duane became a leader in the War for American Independence. At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, as it is commonly known in the United States, he was a member of the Committee of One Hundred, the de facto government at that time of what is now New York City. In this role, Duane successfully advocated for the Committee of One Hundred to encourage all inhabitants to arm themselves at the outset of the American Revolutionary War.

Duane was a New York delegate to both the first and second Continental Congresses and the Confederate Congress during the period from 1774 to 1784—only 11 of 343 delegates served in all three Congresses. When General George Washington was facing great difficulty in financing the colonial army in 1776, Congress turned to Duane, to raise the needed funds. Although Duane was part of the New York delegation in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was ratified, he was not present to sign the document in August of that year. Duane served on the committee which revised the original draft of the Articles of Confederation (the forerunner to the US Constitution) in Philadelphia and was a signer of the document in 1781.

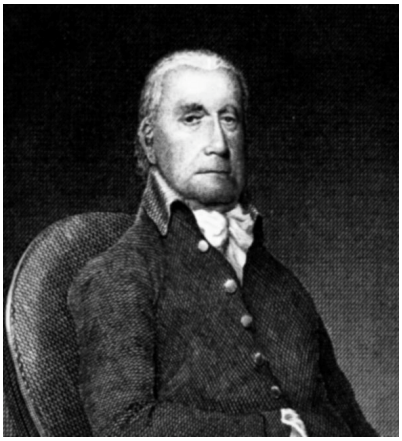
Duane also served multiple roles in New York. As a member of the Provincial Congress, he helped draft the first constitution of New York and participated in negotiating the Indian Treaty in Albany, NY in 1776. When the British evacuated New York in 1783, Duane became a New York State Senator. With New York City in disarray after the war, municipal leaders wrote to Governor George Clinton in January 1784, requesting that Duane be appointed mayor of the city. As a result of their winning appeal, he became the first post-colonial mayor of the City of New York. In 1789, President George Washington appointed Duane as the first United States Federal District Court Judge for New York. He faithfully served in that capacity until his retirement in 1794.

James Duane merits remembrance among the remarkable people in the fight for American independence and the birth of the United States. I am proud to have him in my family tree.

-by John F. Duane

Francis Lewis, Local Patriot *continued from page 4*

Lewis paid a heavy toll for his revolutionary activities. In the autumn of 1776, following the Battle of Long Island, British forces learned that the wife of a prominent revolutionary and signer of the Declaration of Independence, Elizabeth Lewis, was living on an estate just a few miles away in Whitestone. British cavalry troops pillaged the Lewis mansion and burned it to the ground. Elizabeth was captured and imprisoned. She was freed several months after her capture in a prisoner exchange arranged by General George Washington, but she had contracted tuberculosis during her imprisonment and succumbed to her illness shortly after her release. Lewis was grief-stricken by the loss of his wife and some say he never recovered from losing Elizabeth.



FRANCIS LEWIS

Her death wasn't the only casualty of the war for Lewis. His only daughter, Ann, fell in love with Captain George Robertson of the British Royal Navy. Lewis tried to prevent the marriage, but the two secretly wed at a private ceremony and moved to England. Lewis and his daughter never reconciled.

Lewis also lost much of his fortune during the war. Following the war, Lewis lived a simple life with family in Manhattan until his death on December 30, 1803. Had he lived just one more year, Lewis would have been able to see his younger son, Morgan, win the election for Governor of New York in 1804.

Lewis is buried among other American Revolution patriots at Trinity Churchyard in lower Manhattan. The exact site of Lewis' grave is unknown, so a plaque has been placed in the general area of the grave marking the burial site of one of the American Revolution's greatest heroes. The next time you're downtown in the financial district, take a few minutes to stop by the cemetery of Trinity Church to pay your respects to one of America's great patriots—who just happens to be our former neighbor.

-by Peter Reinharz

Hiding in Plain Sight: The Van Wyck Farmhouse and the American Revolution

As you head north into Douglas Manor, there is a long, graceful bend in West Drive where a 14-foot-high evergreen hedge screens from view a well-known "secret"—the 1735 Cornelius Van Wyck farmhouse. It is a rare survivor, one of the few buildings in New York City that date from before the American Revolution.

1965 VIEW OF THE FARMHOUSE FROM ALSTON PLACE
COURTESY OF NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

While the Dutch Colonial house itself has often been described, less known is its family's role in the American Revolution, in particular the three sons of Cornelius Van Wyck—Stephen, Cornelius II, and Gilbert—and his two daughters, Mary and Catherine.

It is a not uncommon story of siblings who were divided by loyalties to King George III and the American cause, as well as the perils of being rebels in the midst of British-occupied Queens during the time of the Revolutionary War.

The elder Cornelius Van Wyck who built the farmhouse was the third generation of a Dutch family that came to what was then New Amsterdam in 1660. The English took over in 1664. Cornelius, who was born in 1702, was culturally Dutch but legally British.

He built a three-room farmhouse on a 125-acre tract of land on what was then known as the Little Neck peninsula. Cornelius's father Johannes purchased the land from early English settlers who violently drove out the native Matinecock tribe in the mid-17th century and took their ancestral land.

Cornelius died in 1769—before the Revolutionary War began. He left the house and farm to his eldest son Stephen who expanded the house close to its present size in 1770. At the time, the Little Neck Van Wycks would be described as "prosperous" farmers. They were prosperous but not rich like other branches of their own Van Wyck family who had significant land holdings in the Hudson Valley and Huntington, Long Island.

Stephen and Cornelius II were the sons of Van Wyck and his first wife Mary (Hicks); Gilbert, Mary, and Catherine were their half-siblings from Cornelius's second marriage to Deborah Lawrence after Mary died. When the war broke out in 1775, Stephen and Cornelius aligned with the patriots and Gilbert with King George III. To complicate matters further, Gilbert was a Captain in the British militia, stationed in Flushing. The loyalties of the sisters and their husbands are not documented, but there are some hints.

This conundrum was a common one during the Revolution—one family split by varying loyalties. For some in this predicament, loyalty to the Crown may have been a choice based on hedging their bets that the British would prevail. Or a belief that things would somehow go "back to normal." For others, like Cornelius II and Stephen, British rule was unacceptable, and they committed themselves to helping the patriots overthrow the government.

Stephen and Cornelius II are described in some historical accounts as delegates from Queens County to the Continental Congress, but neither Stephen nor Cornelius attended the First or Second Continental Congress. Rather, they served as correspondents for the local Patriot Committee for the Continental Congress. Although there is no clear documentation of what they did as correspondents, it is likely that they sent letters clandestinely with information to help the rebel cause, attended secret sessions with other rebels to undermine the British government, and did other secret work by proxy for fellow rebels.

They may also have helped John Hicks, who was the local contact for the secret Culper Spy Ring, to pass on information (See *Washington Spy Trail*, p. 13). The spy ring was a series of rebel contacts at locations that stretched from Manhattan to Long Island, passing through Little Neck to the end point in Oyster Bay.

It is not known where Cornelius II lived during the Revolution, other than that he remained in the area. But to be a rebel and actively involved in efforts to overthrow the British government, as Stephen and Cornelius II were, was to live in a world of uncertainty, as well as the fear of death for themselves and severe consequences for their families.

If caught, they were traitors. As such, they could be publicly hanged or bayonetted to death as a warning to others. Their property could be confiscated, destroyed, or commandeered by the British without notice. They could be forced to swear loyalty to the King. If they refused, they

1932 VIEW OF THE FARMHOUSE FROM THE BAY
COURTESY OF NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

could be sent to one of the notorious prison ships in New York Harbor, where more than 12,000 prisoners died from the horrific conditions there during the seven-year course of the War. There are several factors that may have helped insulate the patriot Van Wycks somewhat from British oversight. Because of the family's prominence as descendants of early Dutch settlers, and their relation to other English settler families (the Hicks family, for example) they may have been left alone—as long as they "appeared" loyal.

Geography may have helped, too. They were somewhat removed from the British garrisons stationed at Flushing and Brooklyn. If they didn't show open acts of rebellion, the British may have had little need to go after them. And their loyalist brother Gilbert may have played an unseen role as well.

Cornelius II died in 1784, a year after the War ended. Most revealing about the brothers' relationship is that Gilbert and Stephen were named as co-executors of Cornelius's estate, indicating a warmer relationship than their political differences might suggest. There is the possibility that Gilbert may have ensured the protection of his brothers and the family farm at Little Neck during his tenure as Captain during the Revolutionary War. Although this is not known, it remains a real possibility.

Gilbert chose to stay in Flushing after the War and did not flee to British Canada as many loyalists did. He died in 1811. Mary lived with her husband in New Jersey and died there in 1796. Catherine, however, was married to a loyalist. When the War ended, they fled to British Canada. She died in Ontario in 1813.

Stephen died in 1807. His heirs sold the farm in 1813 to another descendant of early Dutch settlers, the wealthy New York City merchant Wynant Van Zandt and his wife Maria. The Van Zandt's lived in the old farmhouse until 1819 when they completed construction of a mansion at the center of the peninsula.

Since then, the Cornelius van Wyck house has served as a gate house for the Van Zandt family, and then a gate house and sometime guest house for the Douglas family who bought the property in 1835. With the development of the Douglas Manor subdivision in 1906, the farmhouse became the home of the Douglaston Country Club. The Club renovated and added on to the house. In 1921 the Club sold the farmhouse for private use and moved into the larger, grander, Van Zandt-Douglas mansion.

The 1921 buyer of the farmhouse, Edward Wicht, had all of the additions removed and the interior painstakingly restored to its Colonial-era roots. Two generations of the Larson family followed Wicht. They owned the house from 1933 until 2017, when it was sold to the Van Wyck House LLC. The house has recently undergone another careful restoration under the stewardship of former Douglaston resident Peter Ermish, who is president of the LLC.

Today, the Cornelius van Wyck house still commands its original position on a high point overlooking Little Neck Bay, surrounded by a lush garden. Architecturally, the house looks much as it did when the Revolutionary War began. The house is a gentle reminder of one family's role in the American Revolution that began 250 years ago.

-by Kevin Wolfe

The Van Wyck Farm

The Van Wyck's success was in part tied to the farm's waterfront location.

Agricultural staples of farms in the area were typically salt hay, harvested from the adjacent salt marshes, and crops like corn, rye, oats and orchard fruits. Farmers also harvested oysters and clams from the bay. These items would be sold at public markets in lower Manhattan, transported there via the East River.

Farmers used one- or two-masted shallow draft boats that could be rowed or sailed. The trip to the South Street markets took 3 to 5 hours each way depending on weather and tides. They might make the trip once or twice a week during the growing season and sporadically during the winter months, when they brought oysters and clams, firewood and wooden barrels they made.

Once the British occupied New York in 1776, commerce changed dramatically. Suddenly all of the famers' movements and the sale of their goods were not only monitored and controlled by the British but their produce, meat and firewood were also used for the British troops garrisoned there. Patriots had to sell—or have confiscated—their goods, to the British they were trying to overthrow.

Once the war ended, moving and selling farm goods may have returned to pre–Revolutionary War "normalcy" for a short time. But agriculture on Long Island—especially in the Van Wyck's part of Queens—was about to change dramatically.

Between 1790 and 1810, farmers began growing more delicate crops like asparagus and strawberries to meet demands of the more sophisticated burgeoning population in Manhattan. The Van Wyck farm could deliver this "luxury" produce within hours of harvesting, traveling the East River water route.

Agriculture was forever transformed in 1813 when Stephen Van Wyck's heirs sold the farm to Wynant Van Zandt, one of many wealthy New York City residents looking for country retreats to escape urban ills. This ushered in the era of the "gentleman" farmer, a wealthy man who didn't depend on the farm for income. Instead, Van Zandt enjoyed his acreage recreationally while also keeping it in agricultural production, likely using tenant farmers, hired labor or enslaved people.

-KW

Revolutionary War Milestones

April 19, 1775 – First battles at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts

July 4, 1776 – Declaration of Independence is signed in Philadelphia

August 27, 1776 – Battle of Long Island; British take over New York City and Long Island

October 19, 1781 – British General Cornwallis surrenders at the last major battle in Yorktown, Virginia

September 3, 1783 – Treaty of Paris is signed to officially end the war and recognize the new nation

November 25, 1783 – British Evacuation of New York City

Local Revolutionary War Context

In the aftermath of the British victory at the Battle of Long Island in August 1776, the communities of Little Neck and Douglaston—then part of the Town of Flushing—fell under British occupation. This military presence persisted until 1783.

Local residents, including individuals such as Phillip Udall who had signed the Flushing Remonstrance and Cornelius Van Wyck, had settled in the Little Neck-Douglaston area long before the outbreak of the American Revolution. Many early residents were farmers. During the British occupation, livestock, firewood, and crops were routinely confiscated from farms.

Unlike other parts of New York, much of Queens County—including its eastern sections—harbored strong Tory (British loyalist) sympathies, making the area a "safe" zone for British forces after 1776.

Throughout the British occupation from 1776 to 1783, the shores of Little Neck Bay and nearby Flushing Bay were heavily patrolled by British troops. This waterfront saw continuous foraging for supplies and timber, which were sent to sustain the British army stationed in New York City.

While British occupation might appear to have been a "quiet" period, for residents of Douglaston and Little Neck it was a time of smuggling, surveillance, and survival. The location along Little Neck Bay made these neighborhoods a vital "back door" between British-held Long Island and Patriot-held Connecticut.

During the Revolutionary War, churches were frequently seized by British troops to serve as barracks or stables. Although Zion Church was built in 1830, the churchyard holds the remains of early settlers from the Revolutionary period.

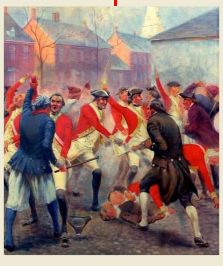
-Pam Broderick

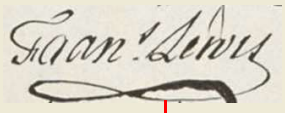
Timeline of significant events in Newsletter Articles

1637 Thomas Foster land grant near Alley Creek. Image shows original one-room stone house with 1663 addition at rear. (See *Revolutionary Roads*, p. 12)

1735 Van Wyck Farmhouse built on Little Neck peninsula. (See *Hiding in Plain Sight*, p. 6)

1770 Battle of Golden Hill in lower Manhattan. One of the first clashes between British soldiers and colonists. (See *Huzzah!*, p. 10)





1776 Declaration of Independence signed by delegates including Francis Lewis. (See *Former Neighbor*, p. 4)

The Battle of Long Island

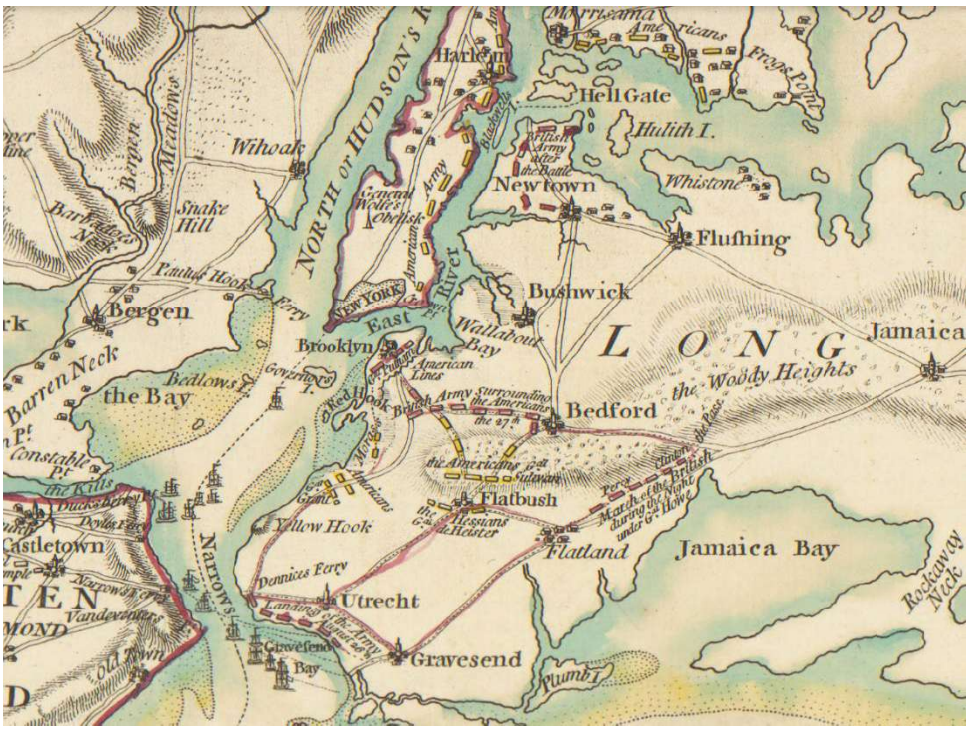
The Battle of Long Island, also called the Battle of Brooklyn, followed the American victory at the Siege of Boston. In March 1776, the British were forced to evacuate New England.

But the Americans would not be as successful in their attempt to secure New York.

General Washington recognized that the port of New York was an ideal place for the British to secure its massive naval fleet so he relocated his army in April 1776 from Boston to New York. He set up headquarters in lower Manhattan and moved most troops to Brooklyn where he expected the British to begin the attack. In June the British army began landing in Staten Island, and in August General Howe began moving the 32,000 men under his command across the Narrows into the area of Gravesend, Brooklyn.

On August 27th, General Howe's army attacked the smaller American force. The Americans were overmatched and retreated to the area now known as Brooklyn Heights. Howe managed to surround the Continental Army and had them backed up against the East River and New York Harbor. The British set up for a long-term siege, but the Americans, on the night of August 29th, managed to escape by covertly crossing the East River to Manhattan, landing in the current area of Kips Bay.

The Battle of Long Island was a huge loss for the Americans. The Continental Army lost over 300 men, while the British lost about 60 men. But more importantly, the Battle of Long Island made it clear to General Washington and other American leaders that the war was going to be a long and bloody campaign.



LOCATIONS AND MOVEMENTS OF AMERICAN AND BRITISH FORCES EXTRACTED FROM A 1776 MAP BY SAMUEL HOLLAND

Evacuation Day

After the Continental Army was defeated at the Battle of Long Island, New York was occupied by the British for over seven years until after the end of the war. On Nov. 25, 1783, British forces evacuated New York City and General George Washington led the Continental Army from his headquarters north of the city south through Manhattan to the Battery. For over 100 years, Evacuation Day was one of the City's most important holidays, rivaling the Fourth of July with fireworks, parades and patriotic displays.

EVACUATION DAY AND WASHINGTON'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY IN NEW YORK CITY

1784 James Duane appointed first post-Revolutionary mayor of the City of New York. (See *Duane*, p. 5)

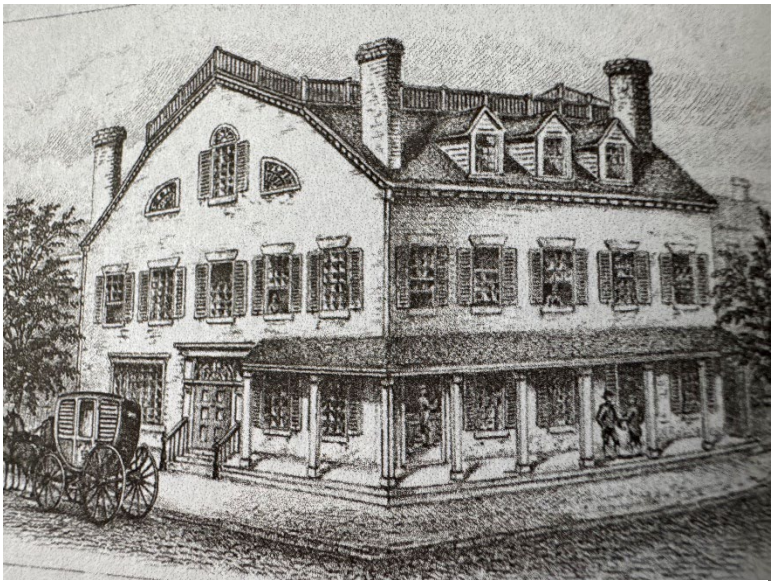
1790 George Washington visits the Alley and travels along Northern Blvd. to thank his patriots and spies. (See *Revolutionary Roads*, p. 12 and *Spy Trail*, p. 13)

1860-1907 Thriving shellfishing industry in Little Neck Bay – naming of Littleneck Clams. (See *Shoreline*, p. 13)

"Huzzah!" New York Taverns, Fermenting the American Revolution

In the 1700s, a long time before the existence of social media, New York taverns served as a place to obtain the latest news, find like-minded people, debate political issues and handle commercial transactions. (As an added benefit, the social interaction was in-person and drinks were plentiful.)

A tavern in the 1700s differed from what we envision when we think of a tavern today. Some taverns resembled the finest houses of the era with a large meeting room to accommodate many guests. For instance, Samuel Fraunces' tavern in lower Manhattan, where in 1783 General George Washington bade farewell to his officers (and which you may have visited on a school field trip) was originally a private mansion built for the De Lancey family in 1719. It was converted to a tavern in 1762, having served first as a residence, then as a business and warehouse. Many taverns were less lavish–they were just one or two small rooms in a private house that served as a secondary source of income for a homeowner who might be a merchant, an artisan or a craftsman.



RENDERING OF FRAUNCES TAVERN AS IT MAY HAVE APPEARED IN 1777

There were many taverns in New York in the early- to mid-1700s. New York was a large city for the time (in 1756 the population was approximately 13,000 and by 1771 it had grown to 22,000) blessed with a deep-water port. Taverns were where news from overseas or the other colonies was first heard as sailors and sea captains would retire to taverns for food, beverages and entertainment. Mail and newspapers were delivered to taverns. Overland visitors would lodge in taverns that had overnight accommodations.

New York's supply of clean drinking water was limited, so beer, cider, wine and rum (made from molasses shipped from the West Indies) were consumed by many residents. (In 1768 New York had 17 distilleries each producing 45,000 gallons of rum annually or 6.7 gallons per New Yorker, not all of whom drank.) By 1771 there were 365 liquor licenses, or one tavern for every 60 residents (or one tavern for every 13 white males, as many taverns would not admit women, slaves or apprentices). Taverns provided a gathering spot for sociability, for celebrating, for ethnic group gatherings or for ribald behavior. If one could drink well, survive drinking many toasts ("Huzzah!"), and rise from the floor to drink one more, then that person's company would be welcomed at the tavern.

This drinking fraternity had the effect of lowering social class barriers between property owners, laborers, local officials, merchants, soldiers, sailors, artisans and shopkeepers, which became important in the years closer to the American Revolution when political discussions in taverns took on a sharper edge. This culture could embolden people to voice opposition to perceived injustices, such as taxation without representation, seeding the patriot cause—but also to mob violence or hostile confrontations with soldiers or British Crown officials, as happened as well.

As New York tavern society developed in the mid-1700s, social and political clubs also began to form and meet in taverns and coffee houses (coffee houses served both coffee and alcohol, coffee being a political drink statement since British tea was taxed). Social clubs were often organized to advocate for civic ideals and commerce or, for some high-minded organizers, for the purpose of tamping down the results of intoxication which those organizers felt threatened decorum and social hierarchy. These social clubs often evolved to include political activities.

Political clubs existed across the spectrum from patriots (others called them radicals) to loyalists as well as moderate groups that tried to achieve a balance between preservation of loyalty to the Crown and redress of inequities voiced by the colonists. Sometimes patriots on one side of the spectrum would align on an action and other times they would quarrel or try to recruit each other's members. Patriot groups did try to peacefully advocate through petitions, pamphlets and speeches. Some even maintained a militia to try to quell acts of disobedience that turned violent (such disobedience often starting out from taverns). Yet at the same time radical patriots saw the usefulness of disorderly conduct to intimidate Crown officials or to provoke soldiers into actions that would further inflame citizen anger.

One of the most influential Patriot clubs that met in taverns was the Sons of Liberty, also known as the Liberty Boys in their early years in New York. The Sons of Liberty was formed in 1765 and operated as a secret society before adopting open meetings at the end of that year. It was a well-organized group that kept records and communicated its operating model with like-minded groups in the other colonies.

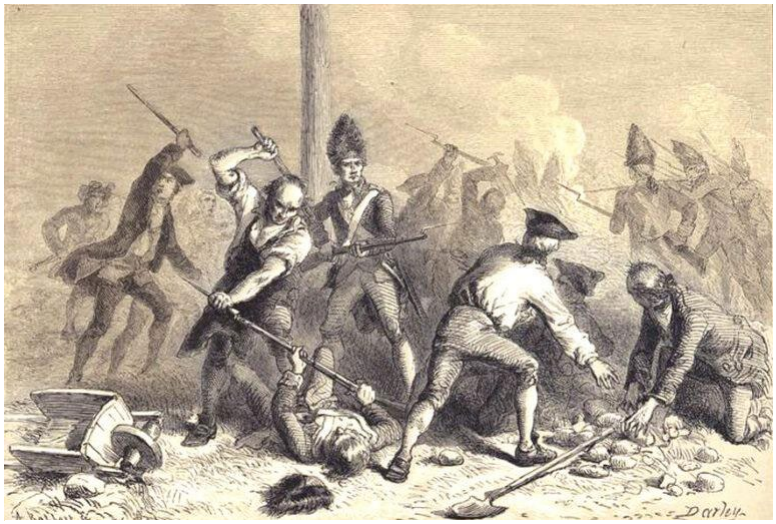
The reviled Stamp Act, signed into law by King George III on March 22, 1765, was a tipping point in coalescing dissent in the colonies, and especially New York as a merchant city. Over 200 merchants and retailers met at the Province Arms tavern and signed a non-importation treaty pledging not to buy British goods. When the stamped papers arrived from Britain indicating that the tax must be paid, an agitated mob poured out of taverns and coffee houses and marched to the home of Major James—who had boasted that he would enforce the Act—broke in, and made a bonfire of his furniture and fixtures.

On March 18, 1766, the King assented to a repeal of the Stamp Act. The Sons of Liberty held an impromptu celebration on the Commons (the site of the current City Hall Park) then retreated to a tavern where 28 toasts were drunk (one toast for each year of the King's age). Rounds of toasting ("Huzzah!") usually started with a toast to the King and then branched out to celebrate local people or causes (e.g. liberty).

Around this time a Liberty Pole was erected on the Commons. (The concept of a Liberty Pole originated in Rome; it consisted of a freed slave's cap on a spear to symbolize liberation.) British soldiers cut the Liberty Pole down a few months later, viewing the pole as a sign of disrespect to the Crown. A second Liberty Pole was quickly erected and was again cut down by British soldiers. This was followed quickly by the erection of a third Liberty Pole. During tavern celebrations on the anniversary of the repeal of the Stamp Act, soldiers cut down the third pole. The next day a fourth pole was erected, much larger and encased in iron to thwart its destruction.

The sequence of repeated erection and destruction of the Liberty Poles led to friction between tavern-goers and soldiers. In 1770, when soldiers tried to cut down the fourth Liberty Pole, the Sons of Liberty were meeting at De La Montagne's tavern across the street. The tavern-goers cried "fire" which brought out a large number of citizens who taunted the soldiers. The soldiers reciprocated by firing their muskets into the tavern, then broke into the tavern, assaulted an employee and broke some furnishings. A few days later the soldiers not only cut down the Liberty Pole but also cut it into pieces and deposited them in front of the door to De La Montagne's tavern.

This led to a mass outrage, certainly encouraged by the patriots, and a few days later (and weeks before the Boston Massacre was to occur) a violent battle near Nassau and John Streets (then called Golden Hill because of a nearby wheat field) occurred sparked by Sons of Liberty leader Isaac Sears' attempt to arrest soldiers who were posting handbills. More troops arrived, as did citizens who came out of taverns and other buildings. In the confrontation, the soldiers drew their bayonets, and the Sons of Liberty and others flung brickbats; during the melee there were many injuries and possibly one civilian death. After things calmed down, and after his petition to erect another Liberty Pole on public land away from the Commons was denied, Isaac Sears purchased a private sliver of land near the Commons, and a much larger Liberty Pole was erected. Being on private property, it stood unmolested until 1776 when Washington evacuated his army from New York. In 1921 a Liberty Pole was erected on the Broadway side of City Hall Park where it stands today.



19TH CENTURY ETCHING OF
THE "DEFENSE OF THE LIBERTY POLE IN NEW YORK"

In the final years leading up to the American Revolution, political discourse became more emotionally charged, and in taverns radical patriots prevailed over moderates. Phrases like "Liberty" and "Freedom" could be used by the patriots to win over undecided citizens as a reasoned approach to self-governance, or they could be used to incite disruptive, unruly behavior, perhaps equally as effective toward the patriots' ends. As political tensions increased, the moderate faction eroded and two ways of thinking prevailed: patriot or loyalist. Many taverns now became frequented by only one or the other faction, and the patriot taverns continued to help sow the seeds of the American Revolution.

Today, all of these taverns are gone, except for Fraunces Tavern, and unfortunately with their disappearance we lost places where today we could have wandered through and tried to imagine the tavern setting where the origin of our country was being debated. Perhaps for the celebration of the 250th birthday of America, we all should make a return field trip to Fraunces Tavern.

-by David Boccio

Fun Fact

Where is the oldest continually operating tavern in Queens? It's Neir's Tavern located at 87-48 78th Street in Woodhaven, Queens, established in 1829 and in its 197th year of continuous operation.

Revolutionary Roads: Old Paths of Little Neck and Douglaston

As we approach the nation's semiquincentennial, it is worth remembering that some of our busiest roads began as footpaths long before 1776. The story of American independence did not unfold only in lower Manhattan and distant capitals. It moved along the very ground beneath our feet here in Little Neck and Douglaston.

What we know today as **Northern Boulevard** was known as **Flushing and North Hempstead Turnpike** and then **Broadway** during its early years. It was once the principal east–west route along Long Island's north shore. Long before pavement and traffic lights, it followed trails made by the native Matinecock people who lived in settlements along the north shore of Long Island and fished in local waters, including Little Neck Bay. When Dutch and English settlers arrived in the 17th century, they widened the Native American paths into a colonial road linking Flushing with the eastern towns.

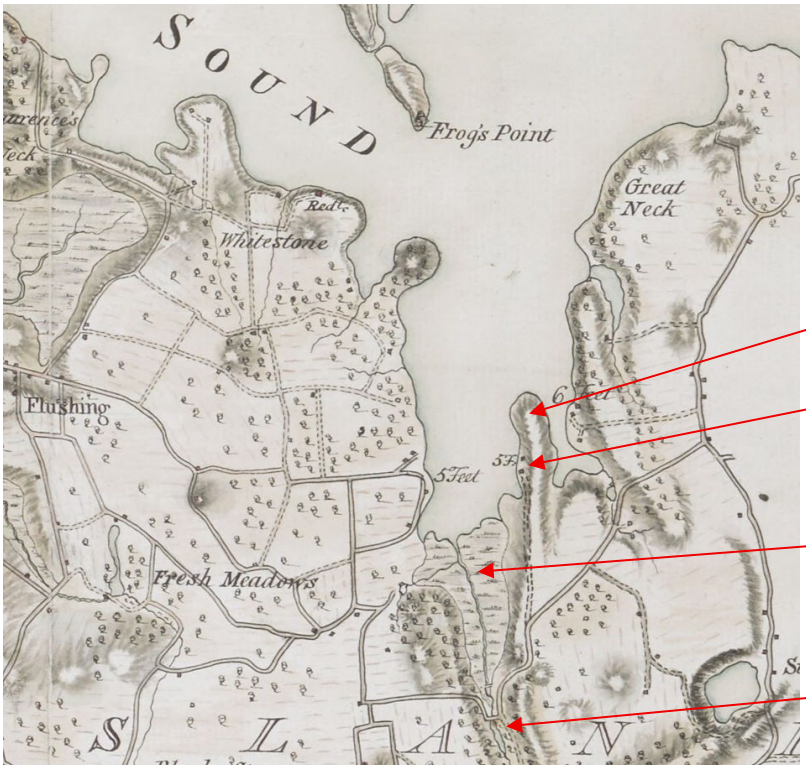
By the Revolutionary era, this north shore road carried farmers, militia, British troops, and Loyalist neighbors through what would become Douglaston and Little Neck. Queens was not uniformly patriotic in 1776, and roads like this connected communities whose loyalties were often divided.

Geography played a role in the layout of early roads. As shown in the 1781 map below, the road connecting Flushing and the Douglaston and Little Neck area detoured southward to cross Alley Creek at a location where the wide salt marsh narrowed, adjacent to the former Alley Pond. The area around this crossing came to be known as "**the Alley**." The first road crossing Alley Creek further north, along the current alignment of Northern Boulevard, was built around 1830.

One of the earliest white settlers in the area, Thomas Foster, was granted land in the Alley in 1637. Seven generations of the Foster family lived at this location, which was also the site of two mills during the Revolutionary War. According to some accounts, George Washington stopped at a tavern in the Alley during his tour of Long Island in 1790.

Marathon Parkway and **Little Neck Parkway** (formerly **Old House Landing Road**), trace old farm lanes that once ran north to the bay and south toward Jamaica. Their gentle curves still hint at a rural landscape of fields and shoreline landings rather than a modern grid.

Plans to widen Northern Boulevard in the 1920s aligned part of the new roadway through an ancestral Matinecock burial ground. After a lengthy dispute between the City and tribal members, the Native American remains were reinterred at Zion Episcopal Churchyard in 1931. To honor the Matinecock of the area, the intersection of Marathon Parkway and Northern Boulevard—just west of the old Indian cemetery site—was renamed **Matinecock Way** in 2018. This was the location of a 1656 confrontation between English settlers and Native Americans—a battle that drove the Matinecock off their native lands. The street sign erected there is a quiet reminder that many of these roads rest on layers of history far older than the Revolution.



1781 MAP OF LOCAL ROADS (SEE PAGE 16 FOR FULL MAP)

As we mark 250 years of independence, perhaps the best way to honor that history is simply to notice it. The next time we travel along Northern Boulevard or turn onto Marathon or Little Neck Parkway, we are following routes shaped centuries ago—roads that carried not only traffic, but the earliest chapters of our shared American story.

-by Rob Cangemi

Little Neck (now Douglaston) peninsula

Van Wyck Farmhouse

Approximate location of current Northern Blvd crossing of Alley Creek

Road crossing Alley Creek at "the Alley"

The Washington Spy Trail — Local Link to History

Did you know that not far from Little Neck/Douglaston, one of the first major battles of the Revolutionary War was fought? The Battle of Long Island, also known as the Battle of Brooklyn, was lost on the western edge of Brooklyn, as George Washington and the Continental Army tried to defend the port city of New York. After taking losses, the Continental Army retreated to Brooklyn Heights and the British dug in for a siege. On the night of August 29-30, 1776, Washington evacuated the entire army to Manhattan without the loss of supplies or a single life. Unfortunately for the Continental Army, they were eventually driven out of Manhattan and forced to retreat through New Jersey to Pennsylvania.

This left New York City and Long Island in British hands for the next seven years until the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783. British forces occupied the entire island—including Brooklyn and Queens–using it as a strategic base for supplies and housing troops. The island became a haven for displaced loyalists to King George who were fleeing persecution in neighboring colonies. Many locals were forced to take an oath to the king. Suffering under British occupation, many patriots fled Long Island but those who stayed often fought back by spying on the British. Some of them created the Culper Spy Ring, which moved secrets from Manhattan to Setauket.

Current day Northern Boulevard (NY Route 25A), a former Native American trail, was an important route for Revolutionary-era spies including Abraham Woodhull, Benjamin Tallmadge and Caleb Brewster. These spies smuggled important secrets from behind enemy lines to General George Washington and his Revolutionary forces. The inlets and coves along the North Shore provided the perfect way to smuggle secrets across the Long Island Sound. These hidden waterways were dangerous spots where the patriots operated boats to row intelligence to Connecticut and to General Washington that helped him win the war.

After the war, President Washington traveled the spy route along the North Shore of Long Island and back to Manhattan on April 21 to 23, 1790, to thank the patriots and his spies. He reportedly stopped at a tavern along Alley Creek in present-day Douglaston. His last stop was in Roslyn, where he had breakfast at the building that is today's Hendrick's Tavern restaurant and visited the nearby Roslyn Mill, currently undergoing restoration.

Today you can visit several sites along the Washington Spy Trail that are open to the public. These include the Raynham Hall Museum, a key link for the Culper Spy Ring and Sagtikos Manor. Both houses served, temporarily and at different times, as headquarters for the British Army on Long Island. There are 26 signs marking the Spy Trail along the North Shore of Long Island from Great Neck to Port Jefferson. The first sign is located on Northern Boulevard, just east of the Queens/Nassau border.

For more information see: https://washingtonspytrail.com. *-by Margaret Wolf*

An Historic Timeline of the Shoreline of Little Neck Bay

One of the unique assets of our community is the shoreline of Little Neck Bay that provides recreational opportunities for boating, swimming and fishing. But prior to residential development in the early 20th century, the shoreline had many different uses.

1600s: The first inhabitants of the area, the native Matinecock people, fished from canoes and harvested shellfish along the shore. They also used the abundant shells along the shoreline to make their currency, wampum. The Matinecock were driven from their land in the mid-1600s by early settlers. But the large rock at the tip of the Douglas Manor peninsula known as "Big Rock" remains a sacred ground, revered by the descendants of these earliest residents.

1700s to early 1800s: The early British and Dutch settlers who farmed the land transported their produce to Manhattan by water because it was faster than overland routes. During the Revolutionary War, farming on the Little Neck peninsula continued uninterrupted despite occupation by the British. Farther east, rebels used the series of secluded coves along the North Shore to smuggle important secrets from behind enemy lines by boat to George Washington's army in Connecticut. Although there is no direct evidence, it is said that Little Neck's Van Wyck family helped the rebel cause, perhaps through their neighbor John Hicks, who was the local contact for the secret Culper Spy Ring. (See *Van Wyck*, p. 6 and *Revolutionary Roads*, p. 12.)

continued on page 15

Upcoming Events and Exhibits

Events across the entire country to celebrate our nation's 250th birthday can be found at the US Semiquincentennial Commission website at https://America250.org.

The New York State 250th Commemoration Commission website at https://nysm.nysed.gov/revolutionaryny250 provides a wealth of information too – click on both the "Additional Information" and "Events" links.

Here is a small sampling of events and exhibits in our local area. A more complete list will be posted on our website.

THESE ARE A FEW LOCAL **EVENTS**. FURTHER INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT THE SPONSOR'S WEBSITE.

Sponsor / Venue	Event	Date and Time
Great Neck Historical Society	Presentation: Divided Neighbors: North Hempstead in the Revolutionary War	Thur, Apr 23, 7:30 pm
Sons of the Revolution in the State of NY / Fraunces Tavern Museum	Battles of Lexington and Concord Dinner	Mon, Apr 27, 6:30 pm
Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum	America 250 Spring Lecture Series: New York Harbor in the Revolutionary War	Thur, May 14, 6:30 pm
Green-Wood Cemetery	Revolutionary Spirits – Trolley Tour and Distillery Visit	Several Sat, May–Oct, 11:00 am
Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society	Program focusing on the American Revolution and Queens County	June date/time tba see www.dlnhs.org
America250 & Times Square Alliance / One Times Square	First-ever July 4th Times Square Ball Drop	Fri, July 3, 11:59 pm
Sail4th 250 / Multiple piers in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Staten Island	International Parade of Tall Ships and free public ship tours	July 3 to 9, times vary
New York Historical	July 4th Family Day: Meet historical interpreters recreating NYC Life in 1776	July 4, Free child admission
Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum	Fleet Week New York 2026 — Military displays, demos, performances	July 5 to 8 10 am to 5 pm
U.S. Navy Blue Angels / Jones Beach State Park	Blue Angels headlined air show	July 5 and 6 10 am to 4 pm
Old Stone House / Prospect Park & Green-Wood Cemetery	Several events to commemorate 250th Anniversary of the Battle of Brooklyn	Aug 21 to 23

THESE ARE A FEW LOCAL **EXHIBITS**. FURTHER INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT THE SPONSOR'S WEBSITE.

Sponsor /Venue	Exhibit	Dates
Fraunces Tavern Museum	Path to Liberty and additional exhibits on the American Revolution and Founding Era	ongoing
New York Historical	Several exhibits including "Revolutionary Women"	ongoing
Museum of the City of New York	The Occupied City: New York and the American Revolution	opening May 1
King Manor Museum	What is America? Remembering the Bicentennial	opening May 2
New York Public Library	Display of the Declaration of Independence Declaring America: 1776 and Beyond	July 1 to 7 opening June 15
Brooklyn Public Library / Center for Brooklyn History	The Battle of Brooklyn: Fought and Remembered	through 2026

Become a Member of the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society
It's the best way to receive the latest news and learn more about local history

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Or detach and mail this form with your check made payable to:
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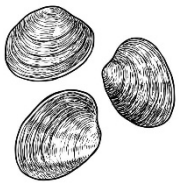
❒ Publications
❒ Community Relations

Historic Timeline of the Shoreline *continued from page 13*

Mid to Late 1800s: The shoreline took on more industrial uses although the area was still predominantly agricultural. Docks were built on both sides of the peninsula—at Alley Creek on the west side and on the east side at the northern end of today's Little Neck Parkway. At a dock in Little Neck owned by John Woolley (profiled in our Fall 2025 newsletter article about the Little Neck LIRR station), manure from the city's horse barns was delivered to farmers, and coal was delivered to a local coal yard for distribution. At today's Virginia Point, Peterson's Boatyard operated for three generations from the mid-1800s into the late 20th century, first building and servicing commercial fishing boats, and eventually storing pleasure boats.



From the 1860s to the 1890s, the local docks were the epicenter of a massive shellfishing industry, largely run by a Danish immigrant, Captain Christian William Kirkman. During this heyday, as many as 70 fishermen, many of them African American freedmen living in Little Neck, harvested clams and oysters that were shipped to Manhattan. The small hard clams from Little Neck Bay became so popular that they were served in top restaurants from New York to Europe, until industrial pollution ended harvesting in the early 1900s. Today, these clams (*Mercenaria mercenaria*) are still known as "Eastern Littlenecks" and remain the global size standard for that species.

The first recreational pier for swimming and boating at the site of the current Douglas Manor dock was built in the mid-1800s; the dock at this location has been rebuilt several times. William Proctor Douglas, who inherited the Little Neck peninsula (renamed Douglaston) and the former Van Wyck farm in 1862, popularized interest in sailing for sport and recreation. He won the America's Cup with his yacht *Sappho*, in 1871, garnering international fame. Through the end of the century, Douglas and his friends' pleasure yachts shared the Bay with commercial schooners, sloops and steamboats, moving cargo to Manhattan that also included flounder, eels and shad, all fished from our local waters.

1900s to today: Industrial uses of the shoreline waned as the area was developed as a residential community. From 1910 to 1920, a coal-fired power plant for an electric trolley line running along Northern Boulevard was located on the east side of Alley Creek with its own dock, between the Boulevard and the Long Island Rail Road tracks. Although the power plant building is long gone, timber remnants of its dock as well as the adjacent old coal dock along Alley Creek remain.

A significant amount of marshland flanking the peninsula on both sides was filled in for additional housing developments in the mid-20th century. As the environmental movement took off in the 1960s, however, other proposed developments, including a golf course at Udalls Cove, were defeated and much of the surviving wetlands were eventually designated as public parkland. The community now enjoys scenic vistas at many locations along the shoreline, and a rebounding wildlife population as a result.

-by Maura Wrynn

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This early map entitled "A Map of New York and Staten Islands, and part of Long Island; Surveyed by order of His Excellency General Sir Henry Clinton, K.B., Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's forces, 1781" shows New York during the Revolutionary War. A digital copy can be viewed online at argomaps.org—a portal that collates links to digitized maps of North America between 1750 and 1800. See page 12 of this newsletter for our local area on this map.

CONTEST: What does the dark band across Brooklyn and Queens represent? Email your reply to info@dlnhs.org. The person who emails the first correct reply will receive the book *The American Revolution: An Intimate History* by Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns.