

ORIENT ESSAYS

Excerpted from:

Historical Review

A Word and Picture Journey into Orient's Past, The Historical
Society's Formation, Activities and Museum

Oysterponds Historical Society, Inc.
Orient, Long Island, New York
July, 1959

Introduction

GEORGE R. LATHAM

DURING the late summer of 1943, a small group of eight or ten persons met at the writer's home in Orient to discuss the possibility of forming an historical society in the village. The significance of Orient and the adjacent communities, from an historical point of view, lay in the fact that they were largely populated by direct descendants of the original settlers of three centuries ago—a phenomenon fast disappearing in American life. Throughout their history, these settlements have played their part in the maritime, agricultural, cultural, and religious life of our country. Furthermore, many relics of Indian life have been found in Orient, both of historical and anthropological interest. Concern was felt over the gradual but constant disappearance from Southold Town of Indian artifacts, documents, family records, implements and other antiquities of the early settlers. As a result of the discussion, an organization was formed during the following year, and the minutes of the first meeting disclose that the following business was transacted:

A Village Meeting was held on July 1, 1944 at the Orient Fire Hall to consider and discuss the proposition of incorporating an Historical and Genealogical Society and Museum. There were about one hundred persons present. The idea was presented and it was announced that the Vail homestead on Village Lane was for sale for the sum of \$4500. The house was once a tavern and had been owned by Augustus Griffin, author of Griffin's Journal. Slips were passed around with the request that each person so inclined indicate the amount they would be willing to contribute toward the project. The total subscribed was \$2474.

It was voted to proceed with the formation of a Mem-

bership Corporation to be known as the Oysterponds Historical Society and the following were elected to serve for one year as Charter Officers and Directors:

Charter Trustees

MRS. DOUGLAS KNOX MRS. HENRY F. J. KNOBLOCH
GEORGE R. LATHAM

Charter Officers

A. NELSON CHAPMAN, *Pres.* GEORGE R. LATHAM, *Treas.*
MRS. WALTER E. PRINCE, *Sec.*

Charter Directors

L. VINTON RICHARD MRS. HENRY F. J. KNOBLOCH
HARRY SHAW NEWMAN ELLIOTT A. BROOKS
MRS. S. WENTWORTH HORTON MRS. WALTER F. KLUGE

Yearly dues of \$1.00 were suggested in order to attract as many members as possible. Mrs. Douglas Knox, Mrs. Henry F. J. Knobloch, Mrs. Allan Heath and Mrs. Spencer Terry offered to canvas the community for members. A Committee was authorized to negotiate with the heirs of the Vail estate and enter into a contract when sufficient funds were raised to purchase the property.

On August 12, 1944 the first formal meeting of the Society was held and the Committee reported 322 adult and 62 junior members and total contributions of \$4907.75. With this fund available, the Village House was subsequently purchased and a museum established. Almost immediately a vast quantity of material was contributed and placed on display under the direction of the Society's first president, A. Nelson Chapman. His classification and arrangement of the articles, and his continuing help and advice on historical data has been invaluable to the society. From the beginning in 1944 and continuing until the end of both of their lives, Herbert M. Hale and Elliott A. Brooks contributed much to the society; Hale as cartographer, historian and Chairman of Building and Grounds and Brooks as amateur archaeologist and lifelong collector of Indian artifacts.

In the review that follows, the Oysterponds Historical Society provides a history of Orient, descriptions of the museum exhibits and pertinent facts regarding the Society's acquisitions and development. It is a further step in the fulfillment of its function of discovering and preserving for the future the story of these settlements of the Town of Southold, New York, whose inhabitants have played their part in the life of our country and contributed to our national heritage.

The Families of Orient

NELSON AND MARY CHAPMAN

TEN or more generations successively living in one community is almost unheard of in this country; yet in Orient this is not only common, it is taken for granted. New England towns point proudly to a few survivors of their earliest families, but here such an origin is treated casually, being the rule rather than the exception. Old Orient family names are represented by about 90 of the approximately 219 families living in Orient throughout the year or as regular Summer residents. There are an additional 23 families where the wife is from an early family, and there are a number of families one or more generations removed from the early family names. Thus, over half of the population are descendants of the early settlers.

Some surviving surnames from families that came to old Oysterponds Lower Neck before 1700 include: Tuthill, King, Terry, Vail, Young, Petty, Beebe and Rackett. The Browns, Moores, Glovers, Conklins, Paynes, Budds and Mulfords are represented by numerous descendants through maternal lines, although, in most cases, the last of the males of these names were still here up to a generation ago. Other early Southold settlers, branches of whose families came to Orient at later dates, are: Horton, Luce, Cleveland and Havens. The former two family names remain today while the latter two have only descendants of other names. In such a small community intermarriage was inevitable, with the result that today's possessor of an early name can trace his descent from many other early Orient families as well. Another result has been the formation of complex degrees of relationship, so that neighbors are often cousins through two or more lines of descent. The majority of the children in Orient's school are cousins, from first to twelfth, but they are usually unaware of the more distant relationships.

Between 1750 and 1850 a number of new families came whose children married descendants of old families, adding an infusion of new blood at that time. Such families include the Tabors and Lathams whose descendants have clung to Orient with even more tenacity than most of their predecessors. The Dyers, Potters, Hallocks, Ways and Edwards also came during this period. In the past hundred years newcomers of various national origins have grafted their lines onto these predominantly English family trees so that today there are descendants of original settlers bearing Irish, German and Polish surnames.

About 123 years ago a thoughtful member of the Terry family began keeping records on the marriages, births and deaths that occurred in Orient. This work was faithfully continued by others of the Terry, Young and Tuthill families, and today two original copies of these records exist. The entries are very complete from 1836 to 1907. Unfortunately, the first book, which began prior to 1800, has been lost.

For the past two years, the Genealogical Committee of the Historical Society has been preparing a card file on all of Orient's citizens, starting from the beginning of the settlement in 1661. The Terry-Tuthill record books form the nucleus of this index. Other sources used for names and dates include: census and tax lists, Bible and church records, deeds and wills, Griffin's Journal and published genealogies and tombstone inscriptions.

This ambitious project is far from completion, but already includes entries on about 2000 of the former inhabitants. Even though the population has seldom exceeded 600, the project has not been easy. It has been necessary to disentangle the various family lines, and to separate the many individuals with identical names. There were many Richard Browns, Thomas Terrys and Samuel Beebes, and as many as three men of the same name were contemporaries. The problem of determining which of the similarly named contemporaries married which wife or wives has not been solved in all cases, nor has the proper listing of their children been completely worked out. The final result of this indexing will be a unique and valuable

record, of use to both historians and genealogists. The Society would welcome the loan of old papers or documents pertinent to this indexing.

Although there is the usual lack of interest in genealogy here that one finds elsewhere in the country, no one could help but be intrigued with the following bit of history and lore. Three of the first half-dozen men to come from Southold and settle here were Samuel King, John Tuthill and Richard Brown. They were a recognized triumvirate in all affairs and each became an important man in Southold Town. They were steadfast friends and Richard and John married Samuel's sisters. John and Samuel each had four children with similar first names, John, Dorothy, Mary and Abigail. John also had three children which were named the same as three of Richard's children, Hannah, Mary and Abigail. Richard had four children with names identical to four of Samuel's children, William, Hannah, Mary and Abigail. These three men were of the second generation of their families in America, and today they have descendants of the twelfth generation, living on the land each had tilled.

Another example of longevity of family ownership of land is the Terry farm near the village of Orient. The present Terry owner is the eighth of the name in direct descent, and tenth from the original owner through Moore line descent.

Descendants of old Orient families have dispersed throughout the United States, and many of the early emigrants were the first settlers of Cape May, Morristown and Elizabeth, New Jersey and Orange County, New York. Here in Orient there is a wealth of information on ancestry waiting for the interested Vail from Vandalia, Brown from Buena Vista, Cleveland from Cleveland or Tabor from Tallahassee.