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THE SOURCES OF THE LEGEND

We have seen in the April, 1948 *Historian* how the Billopp story seems to have originated about 1860, how it developed into a legend and how it became "history." If we now ask ourselves, "Is the story true?" it is apparent that our immediate reply can only be a Yankee counter-question, "which story do you mean?" For we can now realize that there is no single, accepted legend, but only series of interrelated and sometimes contradictory components.

Summarized briefly these are: (1) Captain (2) Billopp (3) in 1668 (4) in the *Bentley* a (a) sloop (b) ship (c) rowboat (d) yacht (5) belonging to (a) Billopp (b) the British Navy (c) the merchant service (6) (a) unarmed (b) armed with two guns (7) circumnavigated Staten Island by (a) sailing (b) rowing in (a) less than 24 hours (b) 23 hours 57 minutes (8) at the instigation of the Duke of York (9) to settle a dispute between the proprietors of New Jersey and the Duke as to the ownership of Staten Island. On the voyage, (10) a spirited contest, Billopp (11) used barrels to (a) gain sailing power, (b) roll the *Bentley* over the bars and (12) as a reward the Duke gave Billopp a manor of 1,163 acres on Staten Island which (13) Billopp named *Bentley* in honor of his vessel.

But, of course, there is a more fundamental problem and that is, "Is any of the story true?"

The solution is not simple. In trying to run down these clues three major points must be considered:

A The evidence of history contemporary with the time of the supposed navigation, c. 1668. B Evidence between 1668 and the time of the first written record, c.

THE HISTORY OF A LEGEND

By ROSWELL S. COLES

The origin, development and analysis of the story of Captain Christopher Billopp and the circumnavigation of Staten Island in 1668.

II

1860. C Credibility of the various writers responsible for the origin and dissemination of the legend.

Before taking up these problems, there are a few preliminary matters which should be touched upon. The first is that we must clearly distinguish between the reality of folklore and the reality of history. Both are real, both are true. No one can seriously deny that the Billopp story is the best known story about Staten Island, whether it is history or whether it was made up fifty, a hundred or two hundred years ago. But we must recognize these two types of writing just as we must always distinguish between our dreams (which are also *real*) and our

normal, waking activity. To fail to do this would place us in the position of the old sot who insisted that his pink elephants were real because he could see and hear them. This paper is concerned with history, not with a "good story."

The second point is that the Billopp story carries with it a certain amount of emotional appeal. This has appeared occasionally in the previous writings and was touched upon in a recent column in the *Advance* (July 6, 1948) in which the author anticipates an "attack" on me for daring to suggest the story is not founded in fact. It is true, unfortunately, that when one undertakes the study of a well known legend he is frequently considered a misanthrope, or a sort of intellectual Frankenstein bent on destroying the very framework of patriotism.

In this case, however, the purpose of the examination is to clear up as far as possible one factor in a rather large study of the boundary dispute between New York and New Jersey. This dispute began soon after 1664 and did not end until after 1833. In it, the Billopp story appears only in Staten Island accounts.

If there is any historical value to the story it should be incorporated into the larger histories of New York and New Jersey so that Staten Island can achieve its just fame. If not, it will be better if those of us who profess an interest in history to recognize its status, if for no other reason than for our professional self respect. At any rate it is a problem which must be settled by the impersonal process of establishing valid evidence, not by emotion or histrionics.

There is one other matter to be considered. It is found in any problem dealing with the origin of legends. The difficulty is this. If the story is the figment of the imagination of a later writer, no contemporary proof will ever



The Third Courthouse

Photograph by George H. Tredwell, c. 1890 (see page 22)

be discovered, no matter how long one searches. The historian is, of course, obligated to examine all the sources available but it is illogical to argue that because the historian has found nothing, the story is necessarily true as later recorded.

Proof in history rests, just as in law, upon rules of evidence which must be positive beyond a *reasonable* doubt and this proof is necessary before the story or legend can achieve the dignity of history.

The following two newspaper accounts indicate elements of all three of these primary conditions. The first is a feature story and the other an editorial, both from the *Advance*, dated July 8 and 9, 1935.

"Captain Billopp's Voyage a Fascinating Whopper! All-Day Sail Likened to George's Cherry Tree."

"Staten Island's greatest historical hoax, which takes its place with George Washington's cherry tree and Barbara Fritchie's flag, was perpetuated again yesterday when yachtsmen sailed around the Island in commemoration of the famous circumnavigation that Christopher Billopp made.

Historic characters in colonial costumes stood on the shore at the Billopp House in Tottenville to greet the daring mariners as, no doubt, historic characters would have greeted Billopp, had he made the mythical trip.

It was a good day, it was a good race, it was a good celebration but it was bad history.

The famous sail around Staten Island 350 years ago, by which Staten Island is supposed to have become part of the Colony of New York just never took place, historians now generally believe.

The story is interesting if not authentic: it relates how the disputed ownership of islands in New York Bay, claimed by both New York and New Jersey, were finally the subject of a treaty that gave New York all the islands that could be circumnavigated in 24 hours.

New Jersey, so the story runs, was putting over a fast one; only one island in the bay was worth anything and that was Staten Island. And Staten Island, it was believed could not be circled in a day.

Then the doughty Billopp raised the sail on his sturdy sloop, the Bentley. He started out and, while the Staten Island settlers, loyal to New York, held their collective breaths, he made the trip in a few minutes less than the required time.

Staten Island histories carried the story, but it has been repudiated in the latest and most exhaustive history, written by Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis. Leng and Davis show that a thorough research can

find no authentic basis for the legend. While this negative evidence is not conclusive, proof that the treaty that settled the ownership of New York Bay's lands, including Staten Island, did not come into being until long after Christopher Billopp's time.

How did the story start? It's blamed on a writer as most historical errors are blamed on writers. Parson Weems started the story of the cherry tree; John Greenleaf Whittier gave birth to the Barbara Fritchie story; and Billopp's sail is believed to have started in the mind of a Staten Island newspaper man.

"A New York daily paper many years ago carried a series of historic stories from Staten Island, written by a Staten Island man. Among these articles was the story of Christopher Billopp's sail, apparently used for the first time.

Years later a Staten Island history was written and the author, seeking the material, found the story of the sail. He incorporated it in his book and there it remained apparently authentic history, until Leng and Davis delved deeper and exploded the hoax."

"In Defense of Billopp"

"The Debunkers — those merciless pirates of history who give no quarter to pretty legends — have seized upon Captain Christopher Billopp.

They have swept the feathers from his cap, scuttled the good ship Bentley and spiked with their dirks the brave story of her 24-hour circuit of Staten Island.

Worse yet, a caption over a purporting expose in the public prints cries out; "Captain Billopp's Voyage a Fascinating Whopper!"

It's 210 years since the notorious old skipper died but no man who knew his temper would have written that line without a furtive glance at the door to spot the angry ghost of Billopp.

We can fairly hear fearful shouts of rage booming right now through the old manorial residence that overlooks Raritan Bay from the Bluff in Tottenville and we can fancy him mounting his horse for a call on the editor.

But, Pax Vobiscum, Captain Billopp; you deserve a better fate and so we stoop to retrieve some particles of truth from the shattered fragments of a famous yarn.

In 1900, the late Ira K. Morris, wrote in his "History of Staten Island" that the Duke of York — English ruler in America — was trying to decide whether New Jersey or New York had proprietorship here and finally decreed "all islands lying in the harbor of New York which could be circumnavigated in 24 hours, should belong to the Colony of New York."

It appears that Mr. Morris was taking liberties when he wrote that passage, for an investigation by Leng and Davis, contemporary historians, has failed to produce any concrete evidence to prop it up.

Nevertheless, Leng and Davis in their "Staten Island and Its People," published in 1930, failed to controvert Mr. Morris's version but cloak it with the mantle of "tradition" and "legend."

It is significant, however, that these later date analysts show nothing to gainsay the story that Captain Billopp did sail around the Island.

The popular conception of the incident is certainly wrong: his voyage — if he made it — settled nothing and it remained until after the Revolution for a boundary commission to say that Staten Island is part of New York."

(A)

CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE

In spite of all that has been written after 1860 about the circumnavigation we have no evidence earlier than that date to show that Billopp was on Staten Island prior to 1674, nor that he made any circumnavigation whatever at any time or under any condition. The known facts concerning Billopp on Staten Island have been covered by several writers. Edward C. Delavan, Jr. examined the subject in "The Disputed Claim of the Proprietors of East Jersey to Staten Island," published in the *Proceedings of the Staten Island Association of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. III, Oct. 1909. On page 47 Delavan concludes:

"That the circumnavigation of Staten Island by Christopher Billopp or any one else had any bearing upon the settlement of this disputed title is highly improbable. It presented questions to be settled by courts rather than by sailing craft; and it seems odd, that dispute having arisen, the Duke of York should have been willing to surrender a large island, but desirous of retaining a small one, as the result of a twenty-four hour sailing test.

Delavan also summarizes Billopp's history on the Island and it might be useful to append this paragraph to complete the record.

"The first grant of land on Staten Island to Billopp bears date 25 March, 1676 and was confirmed by patent dated 6 May 1687. The first was a mere grant of land. The second created the Manor of Bentley. Christopher Billopp was in July 1674, commissioned by Governor Andros, second lieutenant of a company of foot; (3 Col. Doc. 221); in August 1676, he desired to give up his commission (id. 239) from August 14, 1677 to 10 March 1679 he was commander and subcollector of Delaware Bay; on the latter date he was dismissed in disgrace. (12 Col. Doc. 580, 581, 587, 593, 594, 595, 599, 627, 613, 3 Col.

Doc. 275.) He was still angry with Governor Andros in 1680 (3 Col. Doc. 254), and in 1684 desired to sell his plantation (id. 356) on Staten Island, opposite Perth Amboy (id. 356). In December 1685, after James had ascended the throne, Billopp appealed to the King from a judgment of the Mayor's Court of the City of New York (id. 365, 366.) The manor of Bentley was created, as we have seen, in 1687."

Charles Farmer Billopp believed that Billopp may have received his grant for circumnavigation, (page 23):

"It is the writer's opinion that Staten Island was circumnavigated by Captain Billopp, who was an experienced seaman, after his arrival in New York with Andros, in some ship picked up in the New York harbor, which happened to be named the Bentley.

"There have been many stories told by Lossing, Whitehead, and other American Historians in regard to these grants of land. Some say they were given on account of the circumnavigation of the Island, and others as a reward for having saved the life of the Duke in a naval engagement. It is possible that one was a reward for one of these things and one for the other. But the fact remains it was an unusually large grant of land, and Billopp must have done something of unusual merit in the opinion of the Duke to have been thought worthy to receive such a handsome gift."

Actually, however, C. F. Billopp did no more than borrow the circumnavigation story from Morris: "... he is impelled to quote from Mr. Ira K. Morris, the author of 'A Biographical History of Staten Island,' Mr. Morris having assured the writer that his story of Christopher Billopp is founded on reliable data." (page 17)

And, on page 19, he confides: "The foregoing account is taken almost literally from Morris' 'Biographical History of Staten Island.' While it is very interesting there are some statements which do not exactly square with the documents in the case."

He goes on to show several errors which Morris made and adds other biographical material from other sources. Some of this is important to us. In 1671 Billopp was made a lieutenant in the English Navy and appointed to the *Portsmouth* and later to the *Bristol*. In 1673 he was promoted to the command of the fireship, *Prudent Mary* and in 1674 was made captain of the *Rainbow*, a "hired ship war."

If these records are correct it appears unlikely that Billopp could have come to America in 1668 in any capacity which would have made it at all probable for him to wield a great influence on the Duke of York. Certainly he could hardly have been a captain in the British navy, nor the Bentley a warship, since he was

appointed a lieutenant to the Portsmouth three years after. Further, the rather full documentation of his turbulent life on Staten Island subsequent to his arrival in 1674 with Andros, indicates that an earlier arrival and circumnavigation would likely have been recorded just as later events were. Billopp was that type man. These are, of course, hypotheses. The fact is that we have no record at all on which to base any assumption of his presence or his circumnavigation.

Mr. Davis, in his "*Conference or Billopp House*," was thoroughly familiar with the work done on the Billopp story up to that date (1926) and this was incorporated into *Staten Island and Its People* by Leng and Davis (1930). They agreed that while the story might be possible it certainly never settled the boundary question:

"During the administration of Governor Dongan, the claim of the Proprietors of East Jersey to Staten Island occasioned much correspondence. This claim arose from the wording of a grant made in 1665* by the Duke of York of land westward of Long Island bounded on the east by the Hudson River; if the Hudson River emptied through Arthur Kill, Staten Island was east thereof and in New York; but if the Hudson emptied through the Narrows; it was not. In 1672 Governor Carteret of New Jersey attempted to cut hay on Staten Island despite the purchase in 1670, from the Indians by Lovelace. In 1675, and again in 1681, Governor Carteret renewed his claims but unsuccessfully; and once more in 1684. In 1704, an equally unsuccessful attempt was made, interesting because, in conjunction with those of 1681 and 1682, it shows that the question was not settled by Captain Billopp sailing around the Island in 1676 and thereby earning the Manor of Bentley. Staten Island was never, in fact a part of New Jersey.

There is one piece of evidence which, on its face value, might indicate Billopp's earlier arrival. This is Ryder's map of 1670 which shows a house and the name "Billopp." This map has been examined in, "The Early Documents Relating to the Manor of Bentley and the Billopp House," by Charles W. Tuttle, in the *Proceedings of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. I, Oct. 1918, page 27. Evidence shows that "some of the names on the map would indicate a date later by about six years." For our purposes it is sufficient to point out that even if 1670 could be considered a correct date for the map it is still not early enough to account for 1668 as the date of the supposed circumnavigation. Mr. Davis also considered this matter in his *History of the Conference or Billopp House*, page 52.

*Should be 1664.

One other piece of evidence should be brought out here. Many Staten Islanders have been familiar with the circumnavigation story almost from the time of its first known printing, and there is a possible explanation for the absence of supporting documents. This was summed up by Mr. Gabriel P. Disosway, grandson of the author, in a conversation with me on September 10, 1948.

"The background of the story as it has been handed down for three generations in my family is that my grandfather got the story from the records in Albany when he was a member of the legislature representing Richmond County (1849 and later). These records were burned and there was no way of confirming them. My grandfather's notes were borrowed by Ira K. Morris from Ella Taylor Disosway, my aunt. Later when she tried to get them back, Morris told her that they had been burned in a fire out in Long Island."

We also agreed that it was more or less common knowledge that after Morris's death his own notes, which were kept in barrels, were burned.

However, the facts surrounding the "adjudging" as quoted by Clute may be read in several state histories of New York and New Jersey. For example, John Roman Brodhead, who was writing at the same time as Disosway, tells the story in his *History of the State of New York*, Vol. II, page 81 et seq. (1871 ed.) When, in 1664 Governor Nicholls learned of the New Jersey grant he wrote a long letter to the Duke telling him how prejudicial was this grant to the Duke. (Col. Doc. Vol. III, page 105 and also N. J. Archives First Series, Vol. I, page 46). He also wrote to Lord Arlington (Ibid. page 113;54). It was apparent that the seriousness of the grant was recognized on this side of the Atlantic. However no special consideration was given to Staten Island. The real problem was the return of *all* of New Jersey. As a matter of fact, as we have seen, Staten Island continued under the administration of New York without interruption. Samuel Maverick, one of the New England Commissioners, also wrote to Arlington in 1668 (Ibid. 174;57).

No answer seems to have been forthcoming from these letters which is, perhaps not surprising if we remember how well the Duke was occupied with the Dutch war, the plague and the fire of London.

Nicholls had tried to return to England for some time and did so in 1668. It appears beyond doubt that it was his presence in London which influenced the "adjudging" that Staten Island belonged to New York. As we read history of the times there seems to be little need for any circumnavigation or other explanation than that given. Brodhead says, "This letter of Maverick, in connection with Nicholl's personal representations on

1775	M ^r Abraham Spur Dr	
Septemb ^r 23	To making of a Coffin for your Son	16
1777	To making a Coffin for your wife	1 2
Decemb ^r	To making a Coffin for Mrs. Spur	2 12
1781 Novemb ^r		<u>4 10</u>

reaching London, caused the Duke to try to regain New Jersey. One point was promptly settled. As Nicholls had confiscated to his royal highness, in 1665, the estate of the West India Company in Staten Island, and as one of the outlets of the Hudson River ran around the Island, it was 'adjudged to belong to New York.' (page 149)

This is quoted from a letter from Maverick to John Winthrop, Jr., Governor of Connecticut, dated Feb. 24, 1668/9 and published in the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol. VII, Fourth Series, 1865, page 315.

"To the Worshipful John Winthrop Esqr. Gouverneur of his Majesties Collony of Connecticott, these present, Hartford. Per Mr. Butler.

Euer Honored Sir. — I wrote unto you about 20 days since, and gaue you a breife account of the newes we had by the first permissionated ship for this year; six dayes since arrived a second, and is the last will euer come on that account: the first came out before the permissions were recaled; this last Coll: Nicolls gott leaue for, with much difficulty. A letter from Coll. Nicolls to the gouernour imparts as followeth. Staten Island is adiudged to belong to N:Yorke . . ."

Brodhead's interpretation was questioned by the New Jersey historian, William A. Whitehead, in a pamphlet on the "Eastern Boundary of New Jersey, A review of the Hon. John Cochrane's Paper on the Waters of New Jersey, reprinted from the Newark Daily Advertiser, 1866. This is his explanation for the "adjudging." (page 14)

"Mr. Brodhead is of the opinion that, although the same words of conveyance were used in all these documents (two grants and two regrants) they cannot be assumed as conveying Staten Island, because Governor Nicholls, writing to Lovelace in 1669 informs him that 'Staten Island is adjudged to belong to New York;' but the well understood sentiment of Nicholls in relation to the transfer of any part of New Jersey to Berkeley and Carteret render it very

necessary to know *by whom* it was so 'adjudged.' It was not, certainly by any legal tribunal, or the question of title would, thereafter be definitely settled, but if 'We of this government,' as Dongan expressed himself, were the only arbiters, it is not surprising that the decision should have failed to meet with general acceptance. It cannot be fairly presumed that such a curtailment of the original limits of his grant should have been 'adjudged' by James, and nothing appear (sic) on the face of his subsequent grants to indicate any intention to change the boundaries . . ."

We need not concern ourselves here whether Staten Island actually was included in the New Jersey grant or not, nor whether the Duke of York or anyone else had a right to a unilateral interpretation of his grant to Berkeley and Carteret. What we are interested in is the total lack of evidence in these histories to show what Billopp had any part in the proceedings whatsoever.

The reason for the manorial grant to Billopp has been considered by many writers, some of whom, as we have seen, think that the grant might have been given for the circumnavigation. But grants were given rather extensively in New York State as well as other places during this time (Castle Manor was *our* other manor on Staten Island). Nicholls promised land to the captain of the Elias in 1664, for example, and we know that Christopher Billopp's father was a friend of Charles II. Friendship appears to be the very reason for the original grant of New Jersey to Berkeley and Carteret. It should be noticed that the first patent for 925 acres of land was made in 1676 and the manor was created in 1687, or 19 years later indicating the "reward" story unlikely.

As to the name "Bentley," there appears to be no evidence of a vessel by that name, no more than there is of any event connected with the circumnavigation. All we know is that the manor *was* named Bentley. It would be interesting if information could be found on this point.

(Continued on Page 23, Column 1)

JOHN SIMONSON'S ACCOUNT BOOK

By DOROTHY SMITH

It was on a day in March 1763 that 21-year-old John Simonson wrote his name with a flourish on the fly leaf of his new account book. Today that same inch-thick book, bound in fine ivory-colored leather, its yellowed paper bearing the watermark of a British maker, is a valued possession of the Staten Island Historical Society. It was the gift of Mrs. Emma Montgomery, a great-granddaughter of John Simonson. On its pages are recorded business transactions carried on over a period of 48 years which give the present day reader an interesting and often tantalizing flashback into the 18th century and the early 1800's.

John Simonson's book shows that he was a farmer, a cabinet maker, a seller of grains, meats and building materials, a lender of money and an appraiser and executor of estates, as well as a dealer in leather and a maker of shoes. He lived his entire life at Decker's Ferry, now Port Richmond, in a house that stood approximately at the present site of Richmond and Charles avenues. Shown on maps of the period as the second house from the Dutch Church on the same side of the old "stone road," the tract is marked as "Symeson." A picture of the house before it was razed many years ago is in the files of the Historical Society.

The Simonson family Bible records the date of John's birth as March 1, 1742. His parents were Johnnes and Suster Corsen Symontz. On the fly leaf of the Bible, which was printed in Amsterdam in 1702, is inscribed Johnnes Symontz's name. John was married twice. His first wife was his cousin, Mary, a daughter of Jacob Corsen. On October 8, 1780, a year after Mary's death, he married Gitty Swain. Gitty was the diminutive of Margaret.

John Simonson's account book shows that he met the needs of the inhabitants

along the North Shore and inland as far as Richmond. He could supply a cradle or a coffin, a tea table or a sled, timbers, shingles, hinges or screws and as a cordwainer he was skillful at making fine shoes and slippers. His financial transactions were conducted in pounds, shillings and pence and by barter. The pound in New York at that time rated approximately two dollars.

In starting the book he ruled out on four pages an alphabetical index of his customers but as there are only 25 names listed on these four pages it is obvious that he soon changed this method of bookkeeping and dropped into the habit of noting his accounts by the calendar year. He wasted none of his paper. There are no spaces on any page and as a result of this carefulness in the 48-year period covered by his accounts only 57 pages were used.

In the index Cornelius Barkelow has the distinction of being the first name listed. Then follow Adriaun Bancker, William Banker and three Corsens — Cornelius, Jacob and Richard. The last name in the index is that of Samuel Wade. In between are the families of Clendenny, Degroat, Dungan, Denike, George, Hilton, Lawrence, Mercereau, Parker, Speer, Sebring and Waters.

He seems to have been successful in collecting the amounts due him. The largest bill run up by any individual was that of Jacob Sebring, who had married Mrs. Simonson's sister Elizabeth. This account started in October 1779 and ran through to October 1784 when the full sum of 124 pounds 13 shillings and 8 pence was paid. A beaver hat at two pounds eight shillings, three pairs of cotton stockings for two pounds eight shillings, one dozen Barcelona "hankerchiefs" at seven pounds ten shillings, a piece of bandanna at four pounds and two pair of "crane neck spurs" at three pounds four shillings were among the articles purchased. Mr. Sebring was also charged for the expenses of three trips to Long Island in 1780.

If it were not for the item of April 26, 1778 "to the 1/3 part of a Scow that

was let with the place to James Duffe (husband of Mrs. Simonson's sister Cornelia) and taken for the use of the troops and lost" the present day reader of the account book would never suspect that John Simonson had lived on the Island during the time of its occupation by the British. To all appearances throughout the war the accounts were placidly and painstakingly kept. He was selling wheat and potatoes, velvet and callico, boards and "joices" for a boat, quarters of veal, beef and gammon and was buying quantities of "caves skins" and cow hides for his leather work. If he was selling to the British or to the Americans he was cautious enough to leave no records of such transactions.

Throughout the years there was very little fluctuation in the prices of such commodities as butter, meat and eggs. A pound of butter in 1771 was a shilling. Thirty years later it brought the same amount. A dozen eggs sold for two shillings; a quarter of veal for four shillings.

In his role as cabinet-maker John Simonson made a number of chests and tea tables. He also might have been called a wagon-maker since he records the making of carts, a riding chair and sleds. For Cornelius Corsen he made a "dresser" in June 1768 for which he received one pound nine shillings and three pence. Thirty years later he made a "desk with drawers to write on" for Dr. Lezere for one pound eighteen shillings. It would be interesting to know if any of his furniture is still in use.

Also in his role of cabinet-maker he was constantly called upon to make coffins. Several hundred he must have fashioned. Typical of the entries concerning this work was the account of Abraham Speer. On September 23, 1775, a coffin was made "for your son" for 16 shillings. Two years later a coffin "for your wife" for one pound two shillings; and then on November 5, 1780 "Abraham Speer's coffin" for two pounds 12 shillings. The account was settled by Abraham Speer, Jr., who paid with beef. During summer months the number of children's coffins increased. Winter took its toll of the

elderly. Ironically the last article finished by John Simonson a few days before his death was a coffin for the Widow Bush on August 11, 1811.

Toward the back of the book are three pages of accounts listing such items as amounts of interest paid on loans and notes held by John Simonson. He also records 90 pounds paid for "a Wench to Israel Decker for Mrs. Garrison"; 12 shillings paid to Joseph Perine for recording a mortgage; 14 shillings paid Dr. Halsey for doctoring Jacob Garrison. The Garrison entries were in connection with his work as executor of the estate. Also in this part of the book are five pages of records concerning John Simonson's partnership with John Decker which apparently lasted from 1801 to 1803. "Decker," the record showed, "agrees to Make Shoes on these terms and find himself . . . fine men's shoes . . . 4 shillings 6 pence — course men's at 3 shillings 6 pence and to make slippers 2 shillings 6 p." Such articles as brown holland lining, blue thread, spinnel and blacking, seal skin for binding the shoes, sole leather and one side of wax leather are listed in the final accounting of the partnership.

Several pages of the account book were used for notes on such subjects as how to cure the ailments of horses and cows, a felon, the bite of a mad dog, a cold or "umer that has fallen on the eye" and yellow fever. The latter cure was "to take salt & water to Soak the feet in, Sage tea to Drink for a Sweat, Horse Radish Leaves to the Head & feet."

Did John Simonson die of any of the illnesses for which he thought he had the cure? Did he have time to fashion his own coffin as he made those of so many of his friends and neighbors who had gone before? The record does not show nor does family tradition coming down through the generations know this part of the story. When he died in the summer of 1811 he was laid to rest in the burying ground of the Asbury M.E. Church; the church which he had helped to establish nine years before.

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The Third Courthouse

When this issue of the Historian reaches you, the old Third Courthouse, in Richmond, will have passed into the control of the Staten Island Historical Society.* While the City of New York will still hold title in the building, as in the building occupied by the Museum, the Society will have full jurisdiction over its preservation and use.

This beautiful old building, located on Centre Street almost opposite the Museum, was erected in 1837, and until the removal of the County business to St. George in 1920, was the center of the political and much of the community life of Staten Island. Since its latest rehabilitation, in 1933, it has been used at various times in part by the Red Cross, Campfire Girls, the Health Department, and other organizations.

The Courthouse, with its imposing facade, is a good example of early 19th Century building and much of the original interior hand-woodwork is still intact. In the large court room the judges'

banc remains practically intact, and the old bell that summoned generations of citizens still hangs in the tower. Unfortunately the old walnut "pews" or settees were removed from the main floor some years ago. This room will afford an attractive and historical auditorium for the increasingly large meetings and other functions of the Society.

While the main purpose of acquiring the building is to insure its preservation as an historical landmark, a number of the smaller rooms are available for exhibits from the Historical Museum which has far outgrown its present facilities. It also fits into the broader plans of the Society for the restoration of Richmond as a Colonial village and historical center.

*September 27, 1948

Meerschaum Pipes

One of the bequests recently received from the estate of the late Charles A. Lyman was a collection of exquisitely carved smoking pipes, some of which are illustrated here. It is impossible to date these pipes accurately since few examples of this work have reached America since late in the 19th Century.

Meerschaum has been used in the making of pipes almost since the beginning of the use of tobacco in Europe. In earlier times such large masses of this somewhat rare mineral, often mounted in gold or silver, were usually reserved for royalty, and modest specimens of true meerschaum bring relatively high prices to-day.

When first found, the meerschaum is soft but firm and lends itself to the most delicate and elaborate carving. The art reached its highest development in

Vienna about the middle of the last Century. These pipes are valued for the rich coloring gradually absorbed from the oils of tobacco during long smoking.

Meerschaum, which derives its name from the German, "sea foam," occurs chiefly in the neighborhood of the Adriatic sea. In its original state it is a snow-white, claylike material, often found floating in the water, and was considered by the ancients to be a petrification of the seafoam. In manufacturing, after being shaped or carved, the pipes are first baked to dry them, then boiled in milk, polished, and finally boiled in wax. Until they are completely colored, great care must be observed in handling, as the material is rather fragile and moisture from the hands or other sources mars the evenness of the color. Care also must be taken in purchasing, for smaller pieces and the waste from cutting are often compressed, turned, and sold for the genuine article.

—C. C. S.

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Some of the Lyman Pipes

(The Amber Stem of the large pipe is about one foot long.)

History of a Legend

(Continued from Page 20, Column 2)

The barrel story, first presented by Morris is a peculiar addition to say the least. A circumnavigation of Staten Island would mean sailing or drifting completely the 360 degrees of a circle. Adding barrels with their open mouths pointed toward the wind to gain sailing strength would do, perhaps, for a reach before the wind but voluntarily to beat up the Narrows or through the Kills with a deck load of barrels would be incredibly poor seamanship. An old blanket would have served much better. It is to be remembered that Billopp was an experienced navy man. Nor can the story suggested of rolling the "Bentley" over shoals on barrels appears anything but ludicrous.

In concluding part (A) we may summarize briefly. There is no available contemporary evidence to show that Billopp was on Staten Island before 1674 or that he made any circumnavigation of any sort, at any time, in any vessel. Contemporary evidence, on the contrary, indicates that Billopp was not a captain in 1668; that the ownership of Staten Island was decided in 1668 after the return of Nicholls to New York; that the settlement was not final, as far as New Jersey was concerned, and that the 19 year interval between the supposed sailing and the manorial grant casts grave doubt on the possibility of a connection between the "adjudgment" and the grant.

(B)

BEFORE THE LEGEND

One of the most serious considerations in our search for the facts is that there are at least four historical accounts of Staten Island and the Billopp House printed before the original version of the circumnavigation appeared.

Our earliest is, *A Lecture on the History of Staten Island; Delivered before the Tompkinsville Lyceum by Raymond M. Tysen, Esq., Tuesday, April 12, 1842.* (Biographical note, Leng & Davis, Vol. II, page 807.) Tysen was well aware of the dispute between New York and New Jersey over Staten Island and devoted a column on page II to the episodes in Governor Dongan's time (1683-1688). But he makes no mention of Captain Billopp nor the circumnavigation story.

The next account of the Billopp House is of great interest to us as it was written by Gabriel P. Disosway who, as we have seen, appears to have later been responsible for the navigation story. It was printed in *The New Pictorial and Family Magazine*, published in New York in 1846, and one year later it reappeared in *Information for the People*, published also by Sears. Mr. Davis has included in his volume, *The Conference or Billopp House*, (page 11) this account which is considered the first on the Billopp House. In contrast to later accounts, Disosway here gives Captain Billopp but three

lines: "More than a century ago a Captain Billopp, of the British Navy, took out a patent for the land embracing 921 (932, Davis note) acres which was increased by a second in 1600."

About 1850 John and Charles E. Anthon went about collecting items for a history of Staten Island which was never so published, but their "Notes" were edited by Charles W. Leng and published in the *Proceedings of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences*, beginning with Vol. III, Oct., 1924. The Anthon's gathered their material both from documentary sources and recollections of residents including Disosway himself (Leng & Davis Vol. III, page 107). Apparently the circumnavigation story was unknown at that time although they do quote the "gallantry in action" reason for the gift of land. (page 58.)

Finally in this "pre-legend" group there is the story of the Billopp House in *The Little Corporal* published by William P. Hagadorn in Stapleton, September 17, 1853. The author says it was called the Billopp House, "because it was built by Captain Billopp of the Royal Navy. The lands around it, to the extent of about 1600 acres were given to Captain Billopp by King Charles II, in 1667." Hagadorn goes on to describe the conference of the American Revolution in some detail but he, like the others mentioned above, fails to mention the circumnavigation story.

This concludes the material of the pre-legendary era which has come to my attention. It is a reasonable deduction from the foregoing that the circumnavigation story was unrecorded, if not indeed, unknown from the time of its supposed origin up to at least 1853. If it were known at all it was a very closely guarded secret.

From the above records is it not difficult to escape the conclusion that, apart from the at present unsupported statements of Disosway and Morris, there is no real evidence to assume there is any truth in the circumnavigation story?

It is hoped to continue the search for material, and particularly that relating to the two historians, Disosway and Morris, for later numbers of the *Historian*.

THE BRITISH ARMY ON STATEN ISLAND DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

By DONALD R. SAINZ

(Part V)

Hesse Hanau Artillery Company under Captain Pausch.

The transports of this division, became separated after sailing. Those with the Hesse Hanau Artillery, arriving at Quebec July 29 but the Brunswick did not arrive until September 17, 1776.

The Hesse Cassel and Waldeck Regiments were also embarked in two divi-

sions. The first division left Cassel in March and arrived at Sandy Hook, August 15, 1776, 8000 strong, under the command of Lt. Gen. Philip Von Heister. It was composed of the following Hessian Regts.

Fusileer Regt. Du Corps, under Col. F. W. Von Wurmb
Fusileer Regt. Erb Prinz under Col. Fred. Von Hachenberg
Musketeer Regt. Prinz Carl under Col. J. W. Schreiber
Musketeer Regt. V Dittfurth, under Col. Von Bose
Musketeer Regt. V Donop, under Col. David Von Gosen
Fusileer Regt. V Lossberg (ALT) under Col. Von Lossberg
Fusileer Regt. V Knyphausen under Col. Von Borke
Musketeer Regt. V Trümbach, under Col. E. V Bishoffhausen
Musketeer Regt. V Mirbach under Colonel Loos
Grenadier Regt. Von Rall under Colonel Von Rall
1st Grenadier Batt. V Linsingen, under Lt. Col. Von Linsingen
2nd Grenadier Batt. V Block under Lt. Colonel Von Block
3 Grenadier Batt. V Minnigerode, under Lt. Col. Von Minnigerode
Yager Corps, 1 company, 138 men.
Artillery, 3 Companies, under Lt. Col. Hans H. V Eitel, 242 men in all 8000 men.

The second Hessian division with the Waldeck Regiment, left in May under the command of Lieutenant General, Baron Wilhelm Von Knyphausen, and arrived at Sandy Hook on October 18, 1776. It consists of the following Infantry Regts.

Musketeer Regiment V Wutgenau under Col. Heinrich J. Von Kospoth
Garrison Regiment V Wissenbach under Col. Von Horn
Garrison Regiment V Huyne under Col. Von Huyne
Garrison Regiment V Büna under Col. Rudolph Von Büna
Garrison Regiment V Stein, under Col. Franz Carl Von Seitz
4th Grenadier Battalion V Koehler under Lt. Col. Von Koehler
Yager Corp, 2nd Company, under Captain Ewald, in all about 4,500 men
Waldeck 3rd Inf. Regt. under Col. Hanxlede 750, Total 5250 men.

These Regiments constituted all the Hessian troops serving under General Howe during the campaigns and winter of 1776-1777 and those under Burgoyne in his campaign of 1777.

No further replacements or reinforcements of German troops until the following June. Each Infantry Regt. or Battalion had a name. Although each Regiment had its number, it was the custom of the German Princes of this period to name their Regiments after the Regimental Chief or one of the

Princes or General Officers. Due to the Regimental Commander often being changed or transferred it is difficult to identify the various Regiment in battle accounts at various periods of the war.

The first division of the Hesse Cassel which arrived off Sandy Hook August 15, 1776 constitute the various Hessian troops that landed on Staten Island in 1776. When Lt. Gen. Philip Von Heister was ordered to join Howe on Long Island he left a Brigade of these troops which along with the 14th foot from Virginia, some recruits and convalescents to secure Staten Island.

THE BRITISH PROVINCIAL TROOPS

That the Royalist or Tory troops were encamped on Staten Island in fairly large number is evidenced by the finding of their uniform buttons in Richmond especially those of the Royal Provincial Corp. While also recovered were buttons of The Queen's Rangers, or First American Regiment.

The following is a listing of Provincial Corps of the American Revolution.

Butler's Rangers — Raised in Tryon County, N. Y. in 1777, by Col. John Butler. Were hated for their barbarity by the Continentals' in Wyoming, Cherry Valley and the Mohawk.

De Lancey's Brigade, 1776 to 1783, recruited by Oliver De Lancey of New York, from among the Loyalist of New York, Westchester, Kings and Queens Counties of New York. De Lancey's Refugees or the Cowboys. Organized in 1776.

In 1777 this Corp consisted of 4 troops of Light Dragoons and 7 companies of Infantry. Dragoons under Col. De Lancey were recruited from some of the best families in Westchester County and New York. Well organized for patrol duty in Westchester County serving through entire war. Became famous as the "Cowboys," as an additional duty called for their bringing in cattle and other supplies to the British Army in New York.

Emmerich's Chasseurs, 1776.

Was first Corp raised for patrol duty in Westchester County. When first organized it consisted of one musketeer company, one of riflemen, and one troop of Light Dragoons. Often acted in conjunction with Hessian Yagers and De Lancey's Refugees.

Johnson's Royal Regiment of New York.

This Regiment sometimes called the "Queen's Loyal Americans" and also as the "Royal Gruns" and the Royal Regiment of New York. In referring to their buttons they are often called the Royal Provincials. In the "History and Politics of Europe," published in London in 1782, this Corp is repeatedly referred to in battle accounts of 1781 as, "Robinson's Provincials." It was raised in 1776 by Sir John Johnson of New York from

Tories of Tryon County, New York and among Canadians. Number of men raised from time to time. In 1777 at Fort Schuyler it mustered only 138 men. Were hated for their brutality in the field. It is significant that while evidence of this hated Regiment was so numerous from Richmond, we also found proof of the Queen's Rangers or First American Regiment in the same camp as the latter corps, whose commander was called "The Bloody Simcoe" because of his hatred and brutality against the Continentals. From this one would get the impression that Richmond, S. I. was a camp reserved for "hard cases!"

Queen's Rangers — 1776-1783.

This famous Corps was first officially called "Rogers Corps." Much reduced in strength in 1777, placed under command of Captain Simcoe of the Grenadier Company of the 40th foot. Consisted at this time of 8 companies of riflemen and one company each of grenadier, Light Infantry, and Highlanders in their native dress. Thirty men were mounted in January 1778. In 1780, three troops of Light Dragoons were added to the Corps and Simcoe was promoted to Lt. Col. of Cavalry. Black was added to the feathers of their caps, by order of Gen. Clinton upon the death of Major Andre as Major Simcoe had been entrusted with the secret orders at the time.

Other Provincial Troops as listed in Lefferts work are:

American Legion, Benedict Arnold; Brig. Gen., Cavalry and Infantry.

Armed Boatmen, William Lace, Captain.

Batteaumen, Peter Van Alstine, Capt.

Black Pioneers, George Martin, Capt.

British Legion, Lord Cathcart, Col.

Bannastre Kaleyton, Lt. Col.

Bucks County Light Dragoons, Thomas Sanford Watson, Captain, with Queens Rangers in 1779. Attached to British Line Oct. 25, 1780.

Bucks County Volunteers, Evan Thomas, Captain, Riflemen.

Butlers Rangers, John Butler, Colonel. Caledonian Volunteers, raised in Philadelphia.

Chester County Light Dragoons, Jacob James, Captain. In British Line July 18, 1778.

De Diemar's Hussars, Frederick De Diemar, Captain. In Queens Rangers April 20, 1780.

De Lancey's Refugees, Col. James De Lancey.

De Lancey's Brigade, 1st Battalion, Brigadier General Oliver De Lancey, Colonel. John Harris Cruger, Lt. Col.

2nd Battalion, George Brewerton, Colonel.

3rd Battalion, Gabrel G. Ludlow, Colonel.

Emmerich's Chasseurs, Andreas Emmerich, Lt. Col., Cavalry and Infantry.

Furguson's (Rifle) Corps, Patrick Furguson, Major.

Florida Rangers, Lt. Col. Thomas Brown, 1781.

Georgia Light Dragoons, Archibald Campbell, Captain.

Georgia Loyalists, James Wright, Major.

Guides and Pioneers, John Aldington, Major, Beverly Robinson, Colonel.

Hierlihy's Corps' Timothy Hierlihy, Lt. Col.

King's American Dragoons, Benjamin Thompson, Lt. Col. (Lord Rumford)

King's (Carolina) Rangers, Thomas Brown, Lt. Col.

King's American Regiment or Associated Refugees, Edmund Fanning, Colonel.

King's Orange Rangers, John Bayard, Lt. Col.

Loyal American Rangers, William Odell, Major.

Loyal American Association, Hon. Timothy, Brig.; Formed in Boston, November 17, 1775.

Loyal American Regiment, Beverly Robinson, Col.

Loyal Foresters, John Connolly, Lt. Col.

Loyal Irish Volunteers, James Forrest, Capt. Formed in Boston, December 7, 1775.

Loyal King's Militia, 17 companies.

Loyal Newport Associators.

Loyal New Englanders, George Wightman, Lt. Col.

Loyal Nova Scotia Volunteers, Gov. Francis Legge, Colonel, later Col. John Pan.

Loyal Queen's County Regt., 17 companies.

Loyal Queens Light Dragoons, Stephen Hewlett, Captain.

Loyal Queen's Light Dragoons, Stephen Youngs, Captain. All under Archibald Hamilton as, Col., of the Queens County Militia, 1777-1783.

Loyal Suffolk County Militia.

Loyal Westchester Volunteers, Isaac Hatfield, Colonel.

(To be continued)



Three Bronze halves of Belt Clasps

Found at Richmond, Staten Island.