



# WILLIAM FLOYD ESTATE

## *Historic Resource Study*



Jennifer L. Anderson



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## HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

*By*

Jennifer L. Anderson

*Presented to*

Fire Island National Seashore

*In Partnership*

*with the*

Organization of American Historians/National Park Service

Northeast Region History Program

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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*Cover Photo:*

“View of Floyd Estate,” 2015.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When offered the opportunity to prepare this Historic Resource Study, I readily accepted because, having already researched and taught about Long Island's fascinating history for over a decade, I was familiar with the Floyd Estate and eager to learn more. As I anticipated, the site provides a valuable case study of the region's social, political, and economic development. This project would not have been possible without considerable assistance and cooperation from the dedicated staff of the William Floyd Estate, who, under the auspices of the National Park Service at the Fire Island National Seashore, have stewardship over the site.

Foremost, I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Mary Laura Lamont who facilitated my on-site research and generously shared her knowledge of the museum's history. With her extraordinary grasp of the Floyd Estate's cultural and natural resources, she offered invaluable assistance in understanding its historic landscape and navigating its archives. She also shared some of her personal photos of the site (several of which are reproduced here with her permission). Since Mary Laura recently retired from the National Park Service after thirty years, I take this opportunity to acknowledge her dedicated stewardship of this important historic site. Many thanks as well to Denise Steinmacher, who likewise has devoted many years to interpreting the site's history to visitors, and to Chris Olijnyk, Interpretive Operations Supervisor for NPS Fire Island National Seashore, who facilitated my access to the site. I would also like to acknowledge and offer sincere gratitude to Matthew Montelione, who served as a research assistant and contributing writer on chapter 3. His previous scholarship about the Floyd family during the American Revolution has made a significant contribution to our knowledge about that important era.

In addition, I am grateful for the project oversight provided by Amanda Casper, Historian of the Northeast Region, whose insightful suggestions enriched the final report, and to Paul J. Zwirecki, Public History Manager for the Organization of American Historians (OAH), who offered great encouragement and support throughout the latter phases of the project. Lastly, I would also like to acknowledge Aidan J. Smith who helped initiate this project for the OAH prior to his untimely death in 2018. Aidan's dedication to preserving and sharing our cultural heritage is remembered with great appreciation.

# INTRODUCTION

## *Significance of the William Floyd Estate*

When the William Floyd Estate was added to the *National Register of Historic Places* in 1980, the nomination declared that its significance lay “primarily in its long association with General William Floyd (1734-1821), a signer of the Declaration of Independence.”<sup>1</sup> Extolling the “unique visual history of the continuous development of a rural eighteenth-century manor house that has remained in the possession of the original family,” the report described the site’s surviving buildings and key landscape features. But, for the most part, its emphasis centered solidly on William Floyd’s political career, particularly during the American Revolution. While a few other Floyd family members were also mentioned in passing, other people, free and enslaved, who lived and worked on the estate were largely overlooked—apart from a fleeting reference to the existence of “a row of simple white wooden crosses each bearing a single name of a slave.”

Although the role of William Floyd remains prominent in the site’s public profile, the National Park Service (NPS) has since broadened its presentation beyond that initially narrow hagiographic focus. The NPS’s 2017 *Visitor Experience Plan* reflected this more inclusive approach, stating that the Floyd family’s “multigenerational tenure on the property not only tells their story but also reflects the dynamic social, economic, and political changes that took place over time on Long Island and throughout the nation.”<sup>2</sup> Among the most extraordinary factors driving those changes was the early presence on the site of Native Americans, enslaved Africans, and Europeans who participated in its development, both before and after the founding era of the United States. In short, the site was a microcosm of the intensive cross-cultural engagements that were wide-spread and consequential throughout the Northeast during this formative period. The Floyd Estate

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<sup>1</sup> On October 9, 1965, Public Law 89-244 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to accept the donation of the William Floyd Estate (known as the “Old Mastic House”) from a descendant to the National Park Service (NPS). It became part of the Fire Island National Seashore (established 1964) and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. Anne Booth, “Nomination Form for the National Register of Historic Places Inventory for the William Floyd Estate” (July 1977), National Archives, Washington, D.C. <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/0af8ce20-0d2e-4466-add7-1087d9ebb103>. Lee E. Koppelman and Seth Forman, *The Fire Island National Seashore: A History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> *Fire Island National Seashore Visitor Experience Plan: Engaging the Public through Interpretation, Education, and Volunteerism* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, June 2017), 10, [https://www.nps.gov/fiis/getinvolved/upload/VEP\\_FINAL\\_6\\_26\\_17\\_interactive-v2.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/fiis/getinvolved/upload/VEP_FINAL_6_26_17_interactive-v2.pdf).

thus offers a remarkable window onto how this convergence of diverse people impacted the formation of the region and the nation—an important story that is still unfamiliar to many Americans.

## *Project's Scope and Goals*

In 2016, the Organization of American Historians entered into a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service to prepare a new and updated *Historic Resource Study (HRS)* for the William Floyd Estate. As defined in the initial proposal, this project's purpose is to “provide a new narrative history of the site, embracing social, political, cultural and economic themes that contribute to the property's significance while providing accurate baseline information that will place the extant cultural resources of the park within larger historical and geographic contexts.” Its scope of work includes to “identify, describe, analyze and interpret the historic contexts essential to understanding relationships between the property's extant cultural resource and the local, regional, and national themes and events associated with the agricultural use and management of the property.”<sup>3</sup>

By situating the Floyd Estate's inhabitants within more varied historical contexts, this *HRS* underscores how their experiences can serve as a prism through which to consider local, regional, and national history. It also reveals how past social, political, economic, and environmental conditions informed individuals' experiences and identities in meaningful ways. As detailed below, substantial scholarship has been published in recent years on subjects that are pertinent, directly or indirectly, to interpretation of the Floyd Estate. By revisiting historic sites with fresh eyes, particularly considering current interests, concerns, and priorities, we gain new insights into how the past informs the present and future. Accordingly, the purpose of this *HRS* is to provide a more nuanced, deeply contextualized site narrative that will enhance our appreciation for the Floyd Estate's historical significance and educational potential. With that goal in mind, the following thematic chapters attempt to interweave archival materials with a synthesis of the latest scholarly research in an accessible, user-friendly format.

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<sup>3</sup> “Proposal for Historic Resource Study (HRS) of the William Floyd Estate (2016),” Organization of American Historians and National Park Service.

## *Chapter Outline*

### **CHAPTER 1: FOUNDATIONS OF THE NATIVE WORLD AND INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS ON LONG ISLAND**

provides an overview first of precontact Native land uses, settlement patterns, and modes of subsistence on Long Island and then of early encounters between its indigenous peoples and European settlers during the seventeenth century, laying the foundation for the later Floyd Estate.

### **CHAPTER 2: ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND LABOR ON THE FLOYD ESTATE**

examines the site's development, under the auspices of several Floyd proprietors, during the eighteenth century (up to the Revolution) and the integral roles of the Unkechaug Indians, enslaved Africans, and Europeans who composed its workforce.

### **CHAPTER 3: CHOOSING SIDES: IMPACT OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

focuses on the war years (1776-1783) when the British occupied Long Island, disrupting the lives of all its inhabitants—from large landowners (such as the politically-divided Floyd family) to humble laborers, free and enslaved.

### **CHAPTER 4: SOCIAL RELATIONS ON POST-REVOLUTIONARY LONG ISLAND**

analyzes how the social, political, and economic transformations of the New Nation era (late 1780s-1810s) affected the inhabitants of the Floyd Estate, especially after passage of New York State's Gradual Abolition Act in 1799.

### **CHAPTER 5: CHANGING CONDITIONS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

highlights the shifting terrain of labor relations and competing land uses during the early- to mid-nineteenth century, culminating in the Floyd Estate's shift from functioning as a productive agricultural enterprise to solely recreational use as a summer home.

## *Note on Sources*

The Floyd Estate is fortunate to have a significant archival collection that spans from the late seventeenth century to the twentieth century. Wherever relevant, this report draws on these unique primary sources to document the lives of Floyd family members and other people involved with the estate and to reconstruct its day-to-day operations. As is to be expected, however, the surviving papers, especially from the early colonial era, are fragmentary and incomplete so their meaning is sometimes rather opaque. At times, only hints about the past and impressionistic glimpses of former lives can be gleaned from the archives. In particular, since the Native and enslaved African people affiliated with the site left few, if any, written records, information about their experiences can only be extrapolated through careful reading “against the grain” of documents related to the Floyds' various concerns, such as legal cases, business records, and personal

correspondence. Apart from archival sources, oral traditions from descendants of Long Island's early inhabitants also offer valuable ethnographic information and historical memories.

In terms of other kinds of evidence, archaeology can often yield actual physical artifacts and provide insight into material conditions. Unfortunately, archaeological investigation on the grounds of the Floyd Estate thus far has been quite limited. We must therefore take into consideration archaeological excavations of other proximate Native and colonial sites on Long Island. During the 1970s and 1980s, several key excavations were completed in the region, notably those supervised by Dr. David Bernstein, emeritus professor of Archaeology at Stony Brook University, and their findings remain useful. More recently, Dr. Stephen Mrozowski of the University of Massachusetts-Boston led a multi-year archaeological field school at Sylvester Manor, located on nearby Shelter Island and roughly contemporary with the Floyd Estate. Several members of his team have recently published studies of their findings.<sup>4</sup>

To situate the Floyd Estate within larger contexts, the *HRS* draws as well on an extensive range of secondary literature, including many new and recent publications. Some of these works relate specifically to Long Island—most notably Mac Griswold's remarkable study of Sylvester Manor, entitled *The Manor: Three Centuries at a Slave Plantation on Long Island* (2013). Natalie Naylor has also published several books on local history, including most recently one about women's experiences. The *Long Island History Journal* (now available online), one of the only venues publishing original new research on local and regional history, has also been a valuable resource.

Of particular importance, given its direct relevance to the Floyd Estate, is the ground-breaking research of Dr. John A. Strong. He has published numerous books and articles about Native history on Long Island, including two articles co-authored with Mary Laura Lamont that analyzed early Floyd account books. In 2013, after gaining access to previously unavailable archives and with generous assistance from tribal members, Dr. Strong published *The Unkechaug Indians of Eastern Long Island*, the first comprehensive history of Mastic's indigenous inhabitants. Without doubt, his scholarship goes a long way "to bring the Unkechaugs out of the shadows of history and to establish a permanent record of their struggle to survive as a distinct community."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Under the direction of Dr. Stephen Mrozowski, archaeological investigations were conducted at Sylvester Manor from 1998 to 2006; excavated artifacts were subsequently analyzed at the Andrew Fiske Memorial Center for Archaeological Research at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. Katherine H. Hayes and Stephen A. Mrozowski, ed., "Special Issue: The Historical Archaeology of Tylvester Manor," *Northeast Historical Archaeology* Vol. 36 (2007).

<sup>5</sup> John A. Strong, *The Unkechaug Indians of Eastern Long Island: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), preface.

Other secondary sources that have proved useful focus more broadly on New York or southern New England. The reason for the latter is that, until the mid-nineteenth century, eastern Long Island, in many ways, was an extension of that region. Divided only by Long Island Sound, Native inhabitants on both sides cultivated strong connections with each other, regularly traversing the short distance across the water. Likewise, many of the first English settlers on Long Island moved there from earlier settlements in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. They imbued the island's East End (now Suffolk County) with the same Anglo cultural imprint as the rest of New England and retained ties with their former communities. Much of their trade also initially flowed through larger seaports there, such as New London, New Haven, and, especially, Boston. Meanwhile, the island's West End (now Nassau County) reflected a much stronger Dutch influence, even after the English takeover of New Netherland in 1664.<sup>6</sup> For a time, some East End towns even advocated political annexation with Connecticut. Although Long Island ultimately remained part of New York State and, with the advent of the railroad in the mid-nineteenth century, the East End became more linked with other parts of the island and, importantly, with New York City, its orientation toward New England remained strong for most of the period covered in this report. Hence, this report draws on groundbreaking recent studies of southern New England's environmental history and of Algonquian-speaking peoples, precontact and postcontact, and their interactions with English settlers. Notable works cited here include those by Nancy Shoemaker, David Silverman, Andrew Lipman, Christopher Pastore, and Margaret Newell.

New approaches to interpreting the American Revolution have also enriched our understanding of its profound impacts on New York and British-occupied Long Island. Accomplished scholars, such as Maya Jasanoff, Ruma Chopra, Judith Van Buskirk, Natalie Naylor, John Staudt, and Thomas Slaughter have shed new light on the previously understudied perspectives of Loyalists, Native Americans, and African Americans aligned on both sides of the conflict, as well as women and other noncombatants.

Over the last decade, another area of burgeoning research relates to the history of slavery in the North—from its introduction in the seventeenth century to its slow demise in the nineteenth century. The resulting plethora of books and articles offers a more comprehensive overview of its trends and patterns than has been previously available. Several historians have also focused specifically the role of chattel slavery in New York and Long Island, including Richard Moss, Lynda Day, Leslie Harris, Ira Berlin, Shane White, Vivienne Kruger, David Gellman, and Graham Hodges. Although this report incorporates

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<sup>6</sup> While outside this study's scope, the Dutch era is covered in Susanah Romney, *New Netherland Connections: Intimate Networks and Atlantic Ties in 17th-century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); and Oliver A. Rink, *Holland on the Hudson: An Economic and Social History of Dutch New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

substantial evidence relating to enslaved persons specifically on the Floyd Estate, many details about their lives remain unknown given the fragmentary nature of surviving archives. The deeper historical context about northern slavery recently provided by historians is thus essential to our understanding of the contributions and experiences of African Americans, enslaved or free, on the estate and, more generally, in the region.

To orient readers to the Floyd Estate's extant historical landscape, chapter 2 references five interpretive zones: (1) Southern Fields; (2) Northern Woodlands; (3) Main House; (4) Outbuildings; and (5) Cemetery. Based on existing sources, these designations roughly correlate with the site's spatial organization during the long period, from the early eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, that it functioned as a large working farming, a prominent countryseat, and the dwelling place for a large and diverse array of people. Since the site was continuously occupied for over three hundred years, however, this schema is impressionistic at best, since its physical structures, landscape features, and overall appearance have undergone numerous changes.

Given the diversity of people whose lives converged at the Floyd Estate over that long span of time, it's likewise difficult to interpret how they navigated, engaged with, and most importantly, perceived its built environment, natural setting, and surrounding community, particularly as evidence is so fragmentary and uneven. We can intuit, however, that their experiences would have been informed by their personal backgrounds, individual roles, social status, and relationships with the place and its other inhabitants. We all know firsthand that the landscapes of our own lives are complex, mercurial, laden with memories and associations, and colored by our age at the time, our personal values and priorities, our human connections, contemporary events and attitudes, and much more.

Likewise, in presenting the Floyd Estate, interpreters are encouraged to consider the estate from varied perspectives—of enslaved African American workers, constantly toiling but reaping few rewards; an indentured Unkechaug child torn from her family and forced to grow up within an English household; the affluent owners whose power and influence manifested in their abundant material world; or the Native American neighbors, suffering the cultural upheaval and inherent violence amidst colonization of their ancestral homelands. Yet here it is important, once again, to reiterate that, in many cases, historians' ability to flesh out their biographies is limited, especially for those who were socially marginalized at the time. Many voices are silenced or simply absent from the archives; documentation is sparse or nonexistent, leaving significant details unknown. A person's whole life might be memorialized only by a name on a list or represented by an anonymous number in a census. Nevertheless, these individual threads—representing the stories of the people who lived and worked there over generations—interweave to form the larger tapestry of the Floyd Estate's remarkable history.

## Introduction

<b>PROPRIETORS OF THE FLOYD ESTATE</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Dates of Occupancy</b>
Richard Floyd II (1664-1738), son of Richard Floyd I (1620-ca. 1700)	1718-ca. 1724, bought land from William Smith
Nicoll Floyd I (1705-1755)	ca. 1724-1755; built house ca. 1724-1729 (year he married)
William Floyd (1734-1821)	1755-1803
Nicoll Floyd II (1762-1852)	1803-1843
John Gelston Floyd (1806-1881)	1843-1881; received title in 1852
John Gelston Floyd, Jr. (1841-1903)	1881, received house, land divided among 5 heirs; by 1890s, estate became a summer home, rather than a working farm.
Cornelia Floyd Nichols (1886-1977)	1903, inherited estate with siblings William and Rosalie; 1975, transferred property to the NPS.



## CHAPTER ONE

# FOUNDATIONS OF THE NATIVE WORLD AND INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS ON LONG ISLAND

**T**he William Floyd Estate is located on the ancestral homeland of the Unkechaug people, the region's original inhabitants. Their territory formerly encompassed several thousand acres in what is now the Town of Brookhaven. They still live on a fifty-five-acre reservation about a mile to the northeast, adjacent to Poospatuck Creek. Although its sovereign status has long been officially recognized by New York State, the Unkechaug Nation has faced repeated efforts to deny its people's indigenous status and usurp their land. In the face of enormous challenges, the Unkechaug have sustained their distinctive cultural heritage and tribal identity and vigilantly protected their remaining land.<sup>1</sup>

Given the remarkable continuity of the Unkechaug people's unbroken presence—dating back thousands of years—on the south shore of Long Island, their history is essential to understanding local and regional development as well as the specific context of the Floyd Estate. From their first encounters with Europeans, the Unkechaug, like other indigenous populations throughout North America, faced intense pressure from the newcomers' desire for land and natural resources. Moreover, their very different worldviews resulted in many conflicts and misunderstandings that had long-lasting consequences. As Europeans established a permanent presence, colonization precipitated a cascade of social, demographic, and ecological changes that ultimately transformed life on Long Island for all concerned. By the time the Floyd family established a foothold on Long Island, the area had already undergone tremendous changes. This chapter traces the trajectory from the development and initial living conditions of Native communities, to

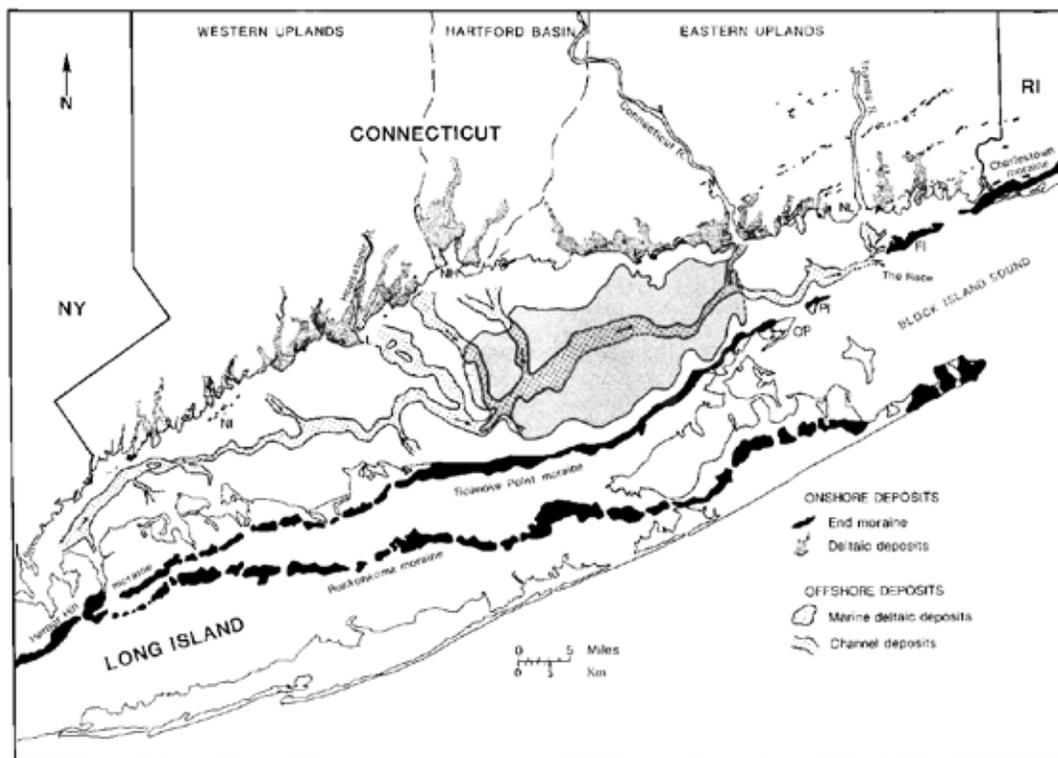
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<sup>1</sup> Many early historical accounts referred to the Unkechaug people as the Poospatucks (or Poosepatucks), after the place name of their main village and the adjacent creek. The Unkechaug Nation is recognized by New York State, as per N.Y. Indian Law Article 10, sections 150-53. For more information, see the Unkechaug Nation's official website at <https://unkechaug.wordpress.com>.

early Native-European interactions during the seventeenth century, to the gradual dispossession of Native populations from their ancestral lands during the early eighteenth century, when the Floyd Estate was founded.

### *Native Land Uses, Settlement Patterns, and Lifeways (pre-contact)*

The presence of human beings on Long Island dates back at least ten thousand to twelve thousand years to the end of the Pleistocene Epoch (Ice Age), when much of North America was still encased in a vast glacier. Amid a warming trend, the ice sheet slowly retreated, leaving behind enormous accretions of sand, gravel, and boulders. These glacial moraines, built up over an earlier foundation of base rock, formed low-slung barrier islands that extended intermittently along the Atlantic coast. In successive phases, the Ronkonkoma Moraine and the Harbor Hill Moraine left deposits that created the attenuated land mass of Long Island that, as its name suggests, stretches approximately 118 miles east to west, but only 23 miles north to south.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 1.1A:** Map of Long Island’s Geology, showing post-glacial deposits. Source: Ralph S. Lewis and Janet R. Stone, “Late Quaternary Stratigraphy and Depositional History of the Long Island Sound Basin: Connecticut and New York,” *Journal of Coastal Research* 11 (Fall 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Patrick J. Lynch, *A Field Guide to Long Island Sound* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).



Figure 1.1B: Map of Indian Nations' Territories on Long Island. Source: Wikipedia.

Most of Long Island has a relatively low elevation, but its topography reflects the earlier effects of receding glaciers. A ridge of hills, residue from the Ronkonkoma Moraine, runs like a spine roughly down the center of the island from eastern Nassau County to the end of the South Fork at Montauk Point.<sup>3</sup> Extending northward from this spine to Long Island Sound, the North Shore has hills, rocky shores, high bluffs, and multiple bays, coves, and necks of land—carved out by glacial scouring. Extending southwards to the Great South Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, the South Shore, a glacial plain created by outflows of melt water and sediment, has flat, sandy terrain. The island's four main rivers—the Connecticut, Carmans (Connecticut), Peconic, and Forge—are also concentrated in this area.

As the ice receded and the climate became more hospitable, the first humans ventured across North America to the Atlantic coast. Paleo-Indians, as these early migrants are called, were primarily hunter-gatherers and lived in small, highly mobile groups. They gradually made their way into the Northeast as their hunting forays followed the mammoths, mastodons, giant sloths, and other preferred prey that dispersed into newly accessible territories.

By around 10,000 BC, however, the megafauna dwindled in numbers and most species went extinct, primarily as a result of climate change (although overhunting may have been a contributing factor in some places as well).<sup>4</sup> Paleo-Indians were thus forced to adapt to changing conditions and seek out alternate food sources. Fortunately for those who had made their way to the Eastern Seaboard, the warming environment proved quite suitable for human habitation with ample deciduous forests, grasslands, ponds, rivers, lakes, marshes, and coastal estuaries.

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<sup>3</sup> J. Bret Bennington, "New Observations on the Glacial Geomorphology of Long Island from a Digital Elevation Model (DEM)," Long Island Geologists Conference, Stony Brook, New York, April 2003; Gil N. Hanson, "Evaluation of Geomorphology of the Stony Brook-Setauket-Port Jefferson Area Based on Digital Elevation Models," 2002, [http://pbisotopes.ess.sunysb.edu/reports/dem\\_2/](http://pbisotopes.ess.sunysb.edu/reports/dem_2/); Gil N. Hanson, ed., *Geology of Long Island and Metropolitan New York*, Long Island Geologists Program, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY, 1995; Leslie A. Sirkin, "Wisconsinan Glaciation of Long Island, New York, to Block Island, Rhode Island," in *Late Wisconsinan Glaciation of New England*, ed. Byron D. Stone and Grahame J. Larson (Dubuque: Kendall Hunt, 1982): 35-59.

<sup>4</sup> Jack M. Broughton and Elic M. Weitzel, "Population Reconstructions for Humans and Megafauna suggest Mixed Causes for North American Pleistocene Extinctions," *Nature Communications*. 9, no. 5441 (2018); J. Tyler Faith, "Late Pleistocene Climate Change, Nutrient Cycling, and the Megafaunal Extinctions in North America," *Quaternary Science Reviews* 30, no. 13-14 (June 2011): 1675-80; Matthew T. Boulanger and R. Lee Lyman, "Northeastern North American Pleistocene Megafauna Chronologically Overlapped Minimally with Paleoindians," *Quaternary Science Reviews* 85, no. 1 (Feb. 2014): 35-46.



**Figure 1.2:** View of wetlands, on southern shore of Floyd Estate, circa 2015.  
Photo Credit: Mary Laura Lamont.



**Figure 1.3:** View of Home Creek, on northeast edge of Floyd Estate, circa 2015.  
Photo Credit: Mary Laura Lamont.

Not least on Long Island, the same geological processes that had formed its landmass also shaped its distinctive physical landscape that provided all the necessities of life close to hand. Although traces of former Paleo-Indian campsites have been discovered in Connecticut, West Chester, and Staten Island, none have been identified on Long Island, where changes of sea-level likely long since submerged them. Nevertheless, these early people's transient presence there has been confirmed by archaeological evidence, such as their characteristic fluted projectile points which have been found in at least sixteen locations in Suffolk County.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 1.4:** Indian Projectile Points, paleo period: Clovis-style point (left) found in Greenport and Folsom-style point (right), found in Cutchogue. Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.

Their descendants, now termed Archaic Indians by archaeologists, made use of a wider array of food sources that were available in abundance. No longer in constant pursuit of super-sized prey, they developed a more sedentary lifestyle, although they still migrated seasonally between the coast and the interior, depending on what resources were available. Adaptation to this “more local and eclectic Archaic way of life could sustain about ten times as many people on a given territory as could the Paleolithic predation on herds of great beasts.”<sup>6</sup> The human population consequently exploded and dispersed widely across southern New England.

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<sup>5</sup> Suzanne Cherau, et al., *Cultural Resources Inventory Long Island Sound - Dredged Material Management Plan, Vol. 1* (Concord, MA: US Army Corps of Engineers, 2010), 19.

<sup>6</sup> Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 8-10.

By the mid- to late-Archaic period (3,000-1,000 BC), the entire region was heavily settled as small groups of people embedded themselves within particular locales.<sup>7</sup> Over many generations, these kinship lineages cohered into separate nations (or tribes), socio-political entities that each occupied a defined geographical area and developed a shared sense of identity. With each succeeding generation, these groups solidified their territorial claims and developed strong affinities with the place that their children were born and their elders were buried. Deeply rooted to the earth in their chosen locales, they came to regard the land as sacred and themselves as an integral part of it.<sup>8</sup>

During this period, Long Island saw the emergence of over a dozen Indian nations, each of which “possessed adjoining but bounded homelands that were central to their identities as separate peoples.”<sup>9</sup> Although over time they developed separate languages or dialects, they all belonged to the same Algonquian language group; consequently, the various tongues of the Massachusetts, Pawtuckets, Wampanoags, Narragansetts, Nipmucks, Mohegans, and Pequots were mutually comprehensible. In addition to this common linguistic heritage, Long Island’s indigenous peoples also shared kinship ties, strong cultural affinities, trade, and other kinds of exchanges with their New England counterparts, although those relationships were not always peaceable or equitable.<sup>10</sup> This report focuses primarily on those who inhabited the eastern end of Long Island, especially the Unkechaugs, Shinnecocks, Montauketts, and Manhansets (on Shelter Island).

As this suggests, their lives were not homogenous, static, or ahistorical. To the contrary, the scholarly consensus is that “prehistoric settlement patterns were complex, variable over time, and probably not uniform throughout southern New England . . . [such that] different subsistence activities involving different species of plants and animals occurred at different times of year.”<sup>11</sup> On Long Island, the Native inhabitants effectively adapted their society and culture to suit their physical environment. While abundant natural resources, relatively moderate climate, and accessible terrain all added to its appeal as a place of habitation, the island’s most salient feature was the proximity of water on all sides—Long Island Sound, the Great South Bay, and the Atlantic Ocean. These bodies of

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<sup>7</sup> David J. Bernstein, “Patterns in the Prehistoric Use of Non-agrarian Botanical Resources in the Long Island and Block Island Sound Region of Eastern North America,” in *Hunter-Gatherer Archaeobotany: Perspectives from the Northern Temperate Zone*, ed. Sarah L. R. Mason and Jon G. Hather (New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Anne-Marie E. Cantwell and Diana diZerega Wall, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), Ch. 5. For more on Native archaeological sites on Long Island, see Cherau, et al., “Cultural Resources Inventory Long Island Sound.”

<sup>9</sup> Jean M. O’Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650-1790* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 16.

<sup>10</sup> Donna Gentle Spirit Barron, *The Long Island Indians and their New England Ancestors: Narragansett, Mohegan, Pequot & Wampanoag Tribes* (Bloomington: Author House, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> David J. Bernstein, *Prehistoric Subsistence on the Southern New England Coast: The Records from Narragansett Bay* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1993), 127.

water, along with their dynamic coastal zones, influenced almost all facets of daily life, as well as the cultural practices and spiritual beliefs, of all those who made their home on this island.<sup>12</sup>

From the Early Woodland (1,000 BC-300 AD) to the Late Woodland (950-1,500 AD) periods, Long Island's inhabitants seem to have enjoyed relative social and political stability. During this period, they established highly effective, sustainable modes of subsistence that allowed them to thrive. Depending on the season, they relocated within their respective geographical territories to avail themselves of the land's resources from the island's coast to its interior. Their regular activities included hunting for large animals, especially white-tailed deer, and many kinds of small animals and birds. They also harvested a broad range of natural products for food and other utilitarian purposes. Archaeological evidence reveals that they routinely harvested and consumed over two dozen different wild plant species, including various kinds of nuts, berries, fruits, seeds, roots, and tubers.<sup>13</sup> They also utilized grasses, reeds, bark, and other kinds of natural fibers to fabricate fishing nets, mats, textiles, and as materials for constructing dwellings.

For the most part, the dynamics of daily life for the Unkechaug and other Algonquians reflected a division of labor along gender lines. Characterizing their spheres of labor as separated "experientially and spatially," historian Kathleen Bragdon explains: "Men were concerned primarily with activities that took place away from the homestead: deep-sea fishing, hunting, the manufacture of tools, trade, and warfare. Women's work centered around the domesticated, familiar, social spaces: clearings, tidal pools, clam banks, and shallow ponds."<sup>14</sup> Importantly, with the advent of agriculture, women took the lead on planting corn and other crops; thanks to their skills and knowledge as cultivators, they produced both essential sustenance and valuable surplus to store or trade. As the primary agriculturalists in their communities, Native women's "intense use of land established and maintained their rights to it."<sup>15</sup> In addition, Algonquian women managed numerous other aspects of food production, home manufacture, and domestic life, including: gathering and processing natural foodstuffs; processing and preserving meat and hides; fabricating clothing and personal ornaments; and small-scale craft productions,

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<sup>12</sup> Christopher L. Pastore, *Between Land and Sea: The Atlantic Coast and the Transformation of New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Bernstein, "Patterns in the Prehistoric Use of Non-agrarian Botanical Resources."

<sup>14</sup> Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 123.

<sup>15</sup> Trudie Lamb Richmond and Amy E. Den Ouden, "Recovering Gendered Political Histories: Local Struggles and Native Women's Resistance in Colonial Southern New England," in *Reinterpreting New England Indians and the Colonial Experience*, ed. Colin Calloway and Neil Salisbury (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2003), 81; Robert S. Grumet, "Sunksquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen: Middle Atlantic Coastal Algonkian Women During the 17th and 18th Centuries," in *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock (New York: Praeger, 1980), 43-62.

including weaving, basketry, pottery, and wampum making (which, as discussed below, had special political and economic significance). They also filled vital roles as primary caregivers for children, the elderly, and the disabled, and as nurses and healers for the sick.



**Figure 1.5:** Projectile Points, archaic period, eastern Long Island.  
Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.



**Figure 1.6:** Ax Head, archaic period, eastern Long Island.  
Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.



**Figure 1.7:** Hammer Head, stone, archaic period, eastern Long Island.  
Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.



**Figure 1.8:** Knife, stone, archaic period, eastern Long Island.  
Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.



**Figure 1.9:** Pot, with round bottom, ceramic, archaic period, eastern Long Island. Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.



**Figure 1.10:** Pot, ceramic, archaic period, eastern Long Island. Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York. Photo Credit: Jeremy Dennis.



**Figure 1.11:** Mortar and Pestel, stone, archaic period, eastern Long Island. Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.

Within Algonquian traditions, complementary gender roles reflected social and ecological rhythms that varied by season, location, and availability of resources.<sup>16</sup> As recent historical research underscores, however, these gender divisions were not entirely rigid or hierarchical—a fact that, during the colonial era, rankled European men unaccustomed to trading or negotiating with female counterparts. For while Native men and women, “on a formal—or ideological—level took responsibility for different tasks arranged in a strictly complementary scheme, . . . exigencies of the day, common needs, and individual proclivities influenced who did what at any given time.”<sup>17</sup> On Long Island, Unkechaug, Shinnecock, and Montauk women, especially those from esteemed lineages, were empowered as “sunksquaws [female leaders], shamans, traders, . . . respected elders[, and] agricultural specialists, protectors of tribal land rights, and sustainers of the traditional culture. In the twenty-first century, they are among the leaders of their community as mothers, wives, teachers, lawyers, nurses, entrepreneurs, community and social activists, and honored elders.”<sup>18</sup>

Given the natural bounty of Long Island, the questions of when and to what degree its indigenous inhabitants adopted agriculture as a primary mode of subsistence remain subjects of scholarly debate. Elsewhere in North America (including in adjacent mainland regions), indigenous peoples had begun to cultivate maize (corn), beans, and squash by around 1,000-1,500 BC. As these new crops were integrated into their foodways, the diets of native Long Islanders became more diverse and nutritious, enhancing overall health and food security. Several archaeologists, however, contend that the indigenous inhabitants of Long Island seem to have adopted agriculture as a “primary subsistence activity” somewhat later than their mainland counterparts, possibly not until after European contact.<sup>19</sup> If that was the case, it was likely because they had less need and therefore less incentive to grow more of their food when the ocean offered a seemingly endless cornucopia of marine resources.

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<sup>16</sup> Kees-Jan Waterman and Jan Noel, “Not Confined to the Village Clearings: Indian Women in the Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1695–1732,” *New York History* 94, No. 1-2 (Winter/Spring 2013): 40-58; Gail D. MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements: Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Gunlög Fur, *A Nation of Women: Gender and Colonial Encounters Among the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 61.

<sup>18</sup> Natalie A. Naylor, *Women in Long Island's Past: A History of Eminent Ladies and Everyday Lives* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), 21; Bernice F. Guillaume, “Women’s Lives at the William Floyd Estate and Poospatuck Indian Reservation, 1800-Present,” in *Long Island Women: Activists and Innovators*, ed. Natalie Naylor and Maureen O. Murphy (Interlaken, NY: Empire State Books, 2008), 78-95.

<sup>19</sup> Lynn Ceci, “Maize Cultivation in Coastal New York: The Archaeological, Agronomical, and Documentary Evidence,” *North American Archaeologist* 11, no. 2 (Oct. 1990): 147-76.



**Figure 1.12:** Small Paint Pot, ceramic, archaic period, eastern Long Island.  
Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.



**Figure 1.13:** Ornament, sunburst with face, stone, archaic period, eastern Long Island.  
Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.



**Figure 1.14:** Pipe Bowl, archaic period, ceramic, eastern Long Island.  
Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.

Year round, Long Island's indigenous inhabitants availed themselves of this plethora, catching, processing, and consuming all kinds of sea creatures, plants, and waterfowl.<sup>20</sup> During the summer months, families even set up beach encampments to avail themselves more readily of this natural seafood buffet. Given the multitude of fish in surrounding waters, fishing was a major activity; favored locations for weirs were used by the same families every season (and jealously guarded when European colonists later attempted to edge in on them). Early English accounts of America often expressed astonishment at the numbers, size, and variety of fish in the adjacent waters; all the more so, since many of their home waters were already heavily overfished, particularly as fish consumption increased during the medieval period.<sup>21</sup> In his 1616 promotional tract for New England, for example, John Smith marveled at the fishing grounds' menu of options:

In March, April, May, and halfe June, here is Cod in abundance; in May, June, July, and August, Mullet [fish] and Sturgeon, whose roes doe make Caviar . . . . Herring, if any desire them, I have taken many out of the bellies of Codds, some in nets; but the Salvages [Indians] compare their store in the Sea, to the haire of their heads: and surely there are an incredible abundance upon this Coast.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Kent G. Lightfoot and Robert M. Cerrato, "Prehistoric Shellfish Exploitation in Coastal New York," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 15, No. 2 (Summer 1988): 141-49.

<sup>21</sup> W. Jeffrey Bolster, *The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), ch. 1.

<sup>22</sup> John Smith, *A Description of New England* (London: Humfrey Lownes, 1616), <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas>.

As this quote suggests, some kinds of fish were always available, whereas others were only to be found during their migratory seasons. Anadromous species, such as shad, striped bass, sturgeon, and alewives (a type of small herring, also called menhaden), returned from the deep ocean every year, clogging freshwater streams and rivers as they returned to spawn in the same waters where they were born. Catadromous species, such as eels (which were considered fine eating), made the opposite trek, departing from the brackish estuaries and freshwater rivers and streams around Long Island to remote spawning grounds in the ocean.<sup>23</sup>

While these comings and goings seemed mysterious, Native people throughout the Northeast carefully observed such transits so they could anticipate and take advantage of convergences of fish. In southern New England, according to John Winthrop Jr., the indigenous inhabitants even coordinated their spring planting with the “time of the coming up of a Fish, called Aloofes [i.e., alewives] into the Rivers.” He took particular note of how, when the “Ground is bad or worn out, the Indians used to put two or three of the forementioned Fishes, under or adjacent to each Corn-hill, whereby they had many times a Crop double to what the Ground would otherwise have produced. The English have learned the like husbandry, where these Aloofes come up in great plenty.”<sup>24</sup>

On Long Island, the Native inhabitants also had a particular fondness for turtles which thrived in the area. In their traditional cosmology, the Unkechaug regard the turtle as a totem and refer to themselves as the “Turtle People.”<sup>25</sup> Turtles also provide sustenance in the form of eggs and meat, a culinary treat that continued to be enjoyed in the twentieth century when local fishermen still sold snapping turtles to “the Poosepatuck Indians who

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<sup>23</sup> While seasonal patterns were well known on Long Island, many species’ migrations were not mapped until the nineteenth or twentieth century; the American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*), in particular, confounded scientists because its spawning grounds in the Saragasso Sea were unknown until 2015. Jason Bittel, “Epic Eel Migration Mapped for the First Time,” *National Geographic*, Oct. 27, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> John Winthrop Jr., “The Culture and Use of Maize,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 12, no. 142 (1678): 1065-68; Stephen A. Mrozowski, “The Discovery of a Native American Cornfield on Cape Cod,” *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 22 (Fall 1994), 58; Richard Levine, “Indians, Conservation, and George Bird Grinnell,” *American Studies* 28, no. 2 (Fall 1987), 54.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Newman, *On Records: Delaware Indians, Colonists, and the Media of History and Memory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 192-93; John A. Strong, *The Unkechaug Indians of Eastern Long Island: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), xiii, 83, 236.

prize the flesh.”<sup>26</sup> Turtle shells were also repurposed as bowls, ornaments, and other articles. Such prized items were even included, along with other grave goods, in Native burials, such as the turtle-shell bowl unearthed from an ancient Shinnecock grave.<sup>27</sup>



**Figure 1.15:** Turtleshell Bowl, archaic period, eastern Long Island.  
Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.

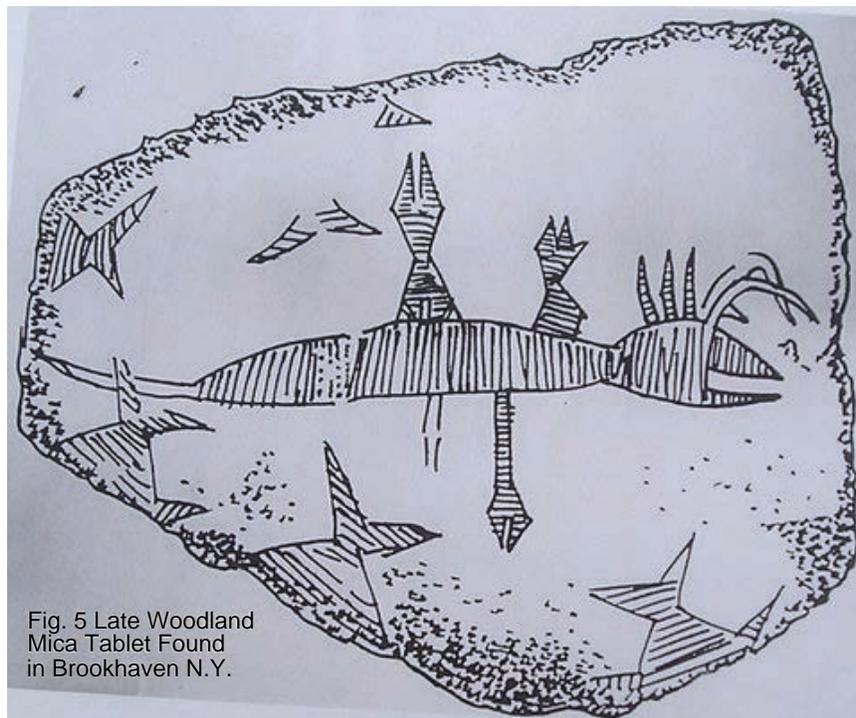
Another vital natural resource the Native inhabitants relied upon were whales, especially Right Whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*), which could be up to fifty-two feet long, that migrated every year along the south shore of Long Island. When one of these massive creatures washed ashore or swam close enough to the shore to be killed, they provided large quantities of meat and oil, but also bones and baleen, useful in making utensils. Since whales brought such an abundance of life-sustaining resources, many Native peoples considered them sacred. As David Martine, Director of the Shinnecock Cultural Center explains, “Long Island Indians, the Shinnecock, Montauk, Unkechaug, and other Long Island Native Americans felt a deep spiritual connection with the creatures of the sea. . . [and] an almost psychic bond with the whale, . . . [which] was considered to be the ‘gift of Moshup’ who lived on Cape Cod. Moshup was believed to be a giant and a symbol for the

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<sup>26</sup> Frank G. Speck, “Reptile Lore of the Northern Indians,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 36, no. 141 (1923): 273-80.

<sup>27</sup> Mark Harrington, “An Ancient Village Site of the Shinnecock,” *Anthropological Papers American Museum of Natural History* 22, pt. 5 (1924): 227-83; Alanson Skinner, “Exploration of Aboriginal Sites at Throgs Neck and Clasons Point, New York City,” in *Contributions from the Museum of the American Indian*, Vols. 5-6 (New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1919), 79-90, 96-98.

Creator.”<sup>28</sup> Hence, the taking of a whale “was a community affair,” cause for celebration and thanksgiving as its meat would be consumed and shared in the context of religious rituals.<sup>29</sup> Distributing meat and oil as gifts also strengthened social bonds. A descendant of Lion Gardiner (the first English settler on Long Island), for example, described Montaukett Indians holding “a great and prolonged powwow or religious festival” during which whale tails and fins were roasted and eaten “to gain the favor of Cawhlutoowut, their most powerful deity.”<sup>30</sup> Archaeologists have also interpreted a Late Woodland mica tablet inscribed with whale-like figures, found in Brookhaven in the nineteenth century, as further material evidence Native belief in the spiritual power of whales.



**Figure 1.16:** Tablet, with whale pictograph, mica, archaic period, eastern Long Island; found in Brookhaven in the 1840s. Courtesy of the New York State Museum, Albany, New York. Line drawing by David Bunn Martine, reproduced with permission from *Long Island History Journal*; published originally in John A. Strong, “America’s Early Whalers: Indian Shore Whalers on Long Island, 1650–1750,” *Long Island History Journal* 25, no. 1 (2016).

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<sup>28</sup> David Bunn Martine, “Reminiscences of a Shinnecock-Montauk Whaling Family,” *Long Island History Journal* 25, no. 1 (2016).

<sup>29</sup> Martine, “Reminiscences.”

<sup>30</sup> John A. Strong, “Indian Whalers on Long Island, 1669-1746,” *Long Island History Journal* 25, no. 1 (2016): 1-18.

Native hunters on Long Island focused mainly on shore-based whaling, opportunistically catching any whales that swam close to shore or accidentally stranded upon a beach (called “drift whales”). Although later accounts emphasized the remarkable canoeing expertise and well-honed spearing skills of many Indian men in coastal regions, no conclusive evidence exists from the pre-colonial era of them pursuing whales far out on the open ocean or targeting species, such as sperm whales, which inhabit deeper waters. Nevertheless, as discussed below, Native knowledge and experience with whaling was later highly valued and exploited by colonial whaling companies.

Among the most abundant and readily available sources of nutrition was shellfish—including clams, mussels, oysters, whelks, and scallops. Oysters, for example, which grew much bigger than usually seen today, massed together to create large shoals and at low tide could be plucked by hand. Judging by the mounds of cast-off shells that accumulated, Native people consumed shellfish in copious quantities. In fact, the physical evidence of their habitation sites “most frequently encountered on Long Island are shell midden sites that are located on marshy bay islands or near the mouths of creeks draining into shallow coastal bays. . . [The mounds] are composed entirely of shell (predominantly clam shell) interspersed with relatively few artifacts, such as stone net sinkers and spear heads.”<sup>31</sup>

An important and distinctive aspect of Algonquian peoples, including those on Long Island, was that they regarded themselves as an integral part of the natural world. They traversed lands and waters, using natural resources as needed and according to beliefs and customs, but generally did not consider themselves as having exclusive personal or permanent proprietorship over them. “Because Indians moved their fields every few years to avoid soil exhaustion, land ownership shifted with land use as well as the seasons,” as historian Jean O’Brien explains, “ideas about property rights in hunting, fishing, and gathering related to ecological use. Group members enjoyed the privilege of harvesting many resources wherever they found them, which in effect conferred their possession to them, although individuals or kin groups might enjoy exclusive ownership of traps, nets, and sometimes the location where they were placed.” Their “principles of mobility existed alongside notions of fixity,” as they moved among home sites, visited relatives, and relocated periodically to avail themselves of seasonal resources.”<sup>32</sup> Long houses and wigwams, their traditional housing forms, were perfectly adapted to this mode of life. Assembled using a structural framework of bent saplings, covered with bark sheets and woven reed mats, they could be readily dismantled, moved, and reassembled wherever their owners moved.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Late Woodland shell midden sites have been found in Willets Point, Seaford, Secogue, Merrick, and Massapequa. Cherau, et al., “Cultural Resources Inventory Long Island Sound.”

<sup>32</sup> O’Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees*, 21.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton, *Native American Architecture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), ch. 1.



**Figure 1.17:** Traditional Shinnecock Wigwam, photograph, circa 1890, reproduced from David Bunn Martine, “Reminiscences of a Shinnecock-Montauk Waling Family,” *Long Island History Journal* 25, no. 1 (2016).



**Figure 1.18:** Woman with infant sitting in front of wigwam, detail of stereograph, location unknown, circa 1865. Courtesy of the Library of Congress (item #12511-2-5).

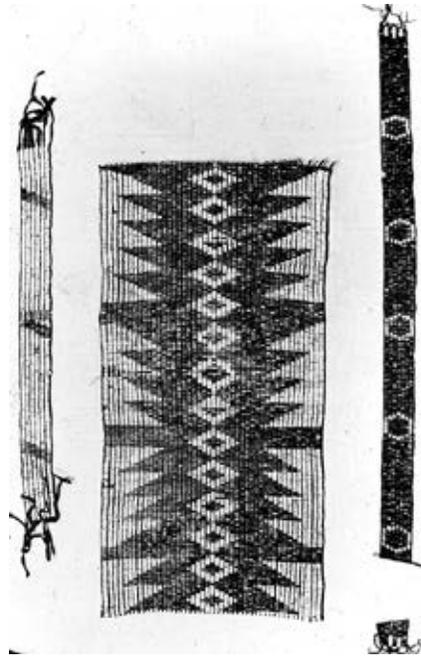
One of the more distinctive aspects of coastal communities around Long Island Sound was their traditional craft of making wampum—small, cylindrical beads, made from the shells of whelks and hard-shell quahog clams. Available in white, black, and various hues of purple, the beads were typically strung together or woven into patterned bands and tapes. Considerable time and labor, often from women, was required to fabricate these colorful beads; each one had to be cut out of a shell blank, smoothed and polished, and then carefully drilled through the center from each side to create a hole so it could then be strung into necklaces or woven into bands. Deeply appreciative of its special aesthetic qualities, Native peoples regarded wampum, rather than merely a form of personal adornment, as invested with spiritual powers and social prestige which were bestowed on the wearer. Prominent persons, such as tribal leaders and their close kin, wore multiple strands of wampum for ceremonial occasions. To honor the deceased, the special beads were even placed into the grave at the time of burial.

Gifts of wampum, often intricately woven into belts, served important interpersonal, social, and diplomatic functions. Depending on the color, number, and pattern of beads in them, wampum belts functioned simultaneously as symbolic mnemonic devices to memorialize important events or agreements as well as vehicles for conveying messages, cementing relationships, forging agreements, compensating losses, and assuaging sorrows. Angela Haas, a specialist in communication technologies, has described wampum as analogous to modern hypertext because of the “virtual” way bead sequences linked, visually and aurally, with memories, oral histories, and historical data. Specially trained individuals served as wampum ‘readers’ who could recall “inherited knowledge by tracing the embedded stories ‘told’ by wampum. . . . Whether it is a treaty belt, peace pact, a welcome belt, condolence string, or adoption belt, it is presented to all affected parties . . . and renewed by regularly revisiting and re-‘reading’ wampum vis-à-vis community memory and performance. . . . to remind us of our commitments. . . .”<sup>34</sup> Native leaders, for example, exchanged wampum belts to forge alliances between tribal groups. As such, wampum belts “not only recorded but also created peace, both in diplomatic and law-giving acts and also in other vitally-important historical and ongoing ceremonies.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Angela M. Haas, “Wampum as Hypertext: An American Indian Intellectual Tradition of Multimedia Theory and Practice,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2007), 90-91; Penelope Myrtle Kelsey, *Reading the Wampum: Essays on Hodinöhsö:ni’ Visual Code and Epistemological Recovery* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014), introduction.

<sup>35</sup> David Graber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value* (New York: Springer, 2001): 117-50; Jessica R. Cattellino, “From Locke to Slots: Money and the Politics of Indigeneity,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 60, no. 2 (April 2018): 274-307; Clara Sue Kidwell, “Native American Systems of Knowledge,” in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2008): 87-102; Tom Arne Midtrød, *The Memory of All Ancient Customs: Native American Diplomacy in the Colonial Hudson Valley* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 36-39; Newman, *On Records: Delaware Indians, Colonists, and the Media of History and Memory*, 122-23, 163-64.



**Figure 1.19:** Wampum Belt, Onondaga, mid-eighteenth century, woven shell beads sourced in Long Island and other coastal regions. Wampum belts, such as this example, were widely used in Native diplomacy and trade during the pre-contact and colonial eras. Courtesy of the New York State Museum.

Over many generations, strong cultural affinities developed among the Algonquian-related peoples of the Northeast. The Indian tribes on eastern Long Island had especially close ties with those in southern New England, just across Long Island Sound. Most importantly, intermarriages and kinship bonds fostered positive engagement and mutual regard among different groups. During times of peace, trade also flowed among these groups as they exchanged various materials, handcrafts, and desirable natural resources. When significant competition or conflicts arose, however, stronger polities would seek to dominate weaker ones as a means of consolidating regional power. At various points, for example, Indian nations on Long Island—sometimes voluntarily and other times out of necessity or under duress—made alliances with tribes in southern New England where all parties were on roughly equal footing. At other points, they ended up in a subordinate status to more powerful nations, such as (for a time) the Pequots, that demanded tribute (usually in the form of large quantities of wampum) in return for peace and protection. Consequently, one factor that later figured significantly into Native calculations of how to deal with Europeans was their potential impact on existing geopolitical relations and the balance of powers among vying Indian nations.

Beyond the sphere of southern New England, the Native peoples of Long Island also tapped into more extensive exchange networks over time that connected them with Algonquian peoples much farther from the seaboard; on the far edge of their language

zone, the local inhabitants, in turn, served as middlemen to trade with non-Algonquian people deeper in the interior.<sup>36</sup> The pre-contact strength of prehistoric Native networks can be traced through the appearance of exotic goods far from their points of origin. Excavations on one Long Island site, for example, yielded jasper and argillite (used for making projectile points) and steatite (used to make cooking pots) that were likely quarried in southern Pennsylvania.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, materials sourced on Long Island have been found at sites quite far away. Wampum beads, for example, have found on archaeological sites from indigenous populations in land-locked areas hundreds of miles from any source of shells. Although how exactly they arrived there is uncertain, their presence attests to the existence of some avenues of long-distance exchange, possibly involving multiple transactions, such that the precious beads went from hand to hand, eventually ending up far from their point of origin.

More prolonged cultural engagement and possibly migration are indicated by the wide geographical distribution of the so-called Orient style; named after the North Shore site where it was initially identified, the Orient style, ranging from circa 1040 BC to 760 BC) is considered “native to Long Island” because its “characteristic fishtail projectile points and soapstone pot fragments have a nearly island-wide surface distribution,” including at burial sites. Yet occasional Orient-style artifacts have also been identified in prehistoric archaeological sites in New York (including Manhattan, Staten Island, the Hudson River Valley, and the Catskill region) as well as in New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Lynn Ceci, “The Value of Wampum among the New York Iroquois: A Case Study in Artifact Analysis,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 38, no. 1 (1982): 97-107; Lynn Ceci, “Native Wampum as a Peripheral Resource in the Seventeenth-Century World” in *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, ed. James D. Wherry and Laurence M. Hauptman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993): 48-63; Marc Shell, *Wampum and the Origins of American Money* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> William A. Ritchie, *The Archaeology of New York State* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2014).

<sup>38</sup> Ritchie, *The Archaeology of New York State*.



**Figure 1.20:** Orient-style Projectile Point, archaic period, eastern Long Island.  
 Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.

As these examples underscore, the Indian peoples of Long Island were quite entrepreneurial. They proactively sought to trade readily available natural resources as well as their own manufactures for other materials and wares that they did not have access to, but needed or desired. In the process, they interconnected with a larger world of Native social relations and exchange. During the early seventeenth century, when the Native inhabitants along the northeastern seaboard began trading with the Dutch, who played a pivotal role in expanding long-distance trade and the circulation of wampum, and then increasingly with the English, these same ancient trade routes were “conduits for the distribution of European goods.”<sup>39</sup> Long before most Indian peoples in the interior of North America ever encountered any actual Europeans, they had begun to assimilate aspects of their material culture.

Native peoples had a very different approach to life that emphasized the dispersal rather than the accumulation of material goods. Whereas Europeans regarded amassing personal property as the quickest avenue to wealth and influence, sachems and sunksquaws gained authority based on how consistently and magnanimously they provided for their people; so rather than keep gifts for themselves or hoard desirable items, effective leaders distributed them to their followers, promoting harmony and unity. Tribal members, in turn, respected and were loyal to such leaders.<sup>40</sup> When everyone shared in the prosperity

<sup>39</sup> Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England*, 92.

<sup>40</sup> David Jaffee, *People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History and Memory, 1630-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 34-35.

during good times, they remained unified and had greater forbearance during challenging times—as long as leaders retained their reputation for fairness, honesty, and beneficence. In his study of Native diplomacy, Tom Arne Midtrød described generosity as “a central social virtue in Native American societies, acting as glue binding the social order together. Refusing to give or share was a fundamentally antisocial act, tantamount to denying the existence or significance of social ties. Spurning proffered gifts meant denying the importance of reciprocal relations, a threatening gesture in a social order built to a large extent on mutual obligations.”<sup>41</sup> They applied the same philosophy when negotiating diplomatic relationships among different Indian nations and later with European imperial powers.<sup>42</sup>

### *Impacts of Early Indian-European Interactions*

Long before the progenitor of the Floyd family arrived in the 1660s, Long Island’s Native inhabitants had already endured decades of upheaval precipitated by Dutch and English traders and settlers. The cumulative effects of growing reliance on European trade goods, especially guns and alcohol, internecine conflicts among Native groups, devastating diseases, and then two terrible wars with the English, upended almost every aspect of Indians’ traditional modes of life, belief systems, family structures, and social relations. The sheer volume, rapidity, and pervasiveness of these disruptions overwhelmed the ability of many communities to adapt to changing conditions, leaving them less independent and vulnerable to many kinds of exploitation by their English neighbors.

One of the most disastrous consequences for Indians of initial contact with Europeans was the inadvertent transmission of contagious diseases. Having never been previously exposed to alien germs, everyone in Native communities was at risk; even a common cold or flu, weathered by Europeans without difficulty, could be fatal. More serious diseases, such as smallpox, proved especially virulent for Native populations that had not yet acquired immunity. As deadly epidemics raged through New England, Natives suffered horrific rates of infection and mortality. While scholars still debate exactly how many died, they agree that the result was an “epidemiological tragedy of monumental proportions and that without such a calamity European conquest and colonization would

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<sup>41</sup> Midtrød, *The Memory of All Ancient Customs*, 37-38.

<sup>42</sup> For more on cultural continuities with the Unkechaug Nation today, see Seth M. Low and Dana H. Taplin, “Final Report Ethnographic Overview and Assessment: Fire Island National Seashore” (2006), <http://www.npshistory.com/publications/fiis/ea.pdf>.

have been much more difficult if not impossible.”<sup>43</sup> Repeated bouts of smallpox, for example, had mortality rates of 50 to 90 percent, whereas it was typically only about 10 percent among the English. An outbreak in 1633 is estimated to have decimated a third of the Native inhabitants around Long Island Sound.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, as Paul Kelton argues, “epidemics and massive death tolls among indigenous peoples occurred not simply due to their virginity to European- and African-introduced germs. Colonialism *created* conditions in which many diseases could spread and in which those diseases produced extremely high fatality rates.”<sup>45</sup>

After the initial scourge of epidemics subsided, traditional indigenous ways of life were also transformed by the introduction of a vast array of new technologies, manufactured wares, and other imported commodities introduced by Europeans. Native peoples attempted to assimilate these novelties into their subsistence modes of life and to make sense of them within their own frames of reference. When confronted with the unfamiliar, as one historian has explained, “Indians found ways to put European technology into their own systems of thought. They often reasoned by analogy, adopting new goods when they recognized similarities to things that they already used. . . . Indians also reasoned by metaphor, organizing categories of beings by their relationship to the physical world around them and seeing physical phenomena as manifestations of spiritual power.”<sup>46</sup> Native communities in many cases initially welcomed or at least tolerated transitory visits from European sojourners and itinerant traders, as long as they yielded useful items and had few apparent downsides. Indeed, as historian James Merrel points out, they typically entered into trade with Europeans with “genuine enthusiasm, even a kind of cosmopolitanism that was at least as important as fear of adverse consequences in motivating Indians to enter into exchange.”<sup>47</sup>

With more sustained contact and trade with Europeans, however, Native people became increasingly enamored of and reliant upon manufactured imports that could only be had through the marketplace. As their traditional arts-and-crafts skills became obsolete and forgotten, Native people became ever more enmeshed within the broader Atlantic

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<sup>43</sup> Paul Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement: Biological Catastrophe in the Native Southeast, 1492-1715* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), xvii; Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 59-62; Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 64, 71; Catherine M. Cameron, Paul Kelton, and Alan C. Swedlund, eds., *Beyond Germs: Native Depopulation in North America* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> David Silverman, *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>45</sup> Emphasis added. Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, xvii.

<sup>46</sup> Kidwell, “Native American Systems of Knowledge,” 89.

<sup>47</sup> Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Jaffee, *People of the Wachusett*, 35.

economy. In the process, many aspects of their own culture were undermined by exposure to the very different value system of the newcomers. When early Dutch and English traders arrived in the Long Island Sound region, for example, they needed some form of currency to facilitate trade because European coinage was in short supply. They thus immediately latched onto wampum as a convenient substitute.<sup>48</sup> As the fur trade expanded farther inland, European traders discovered that wampum was also in particular demand among Native consumers, especially among the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, who used the shell beads for mourning rituals and other ceremonies. Without direct access to raw materials needed to make their own, they hunted beaver and other animal pelts to exchange for wampum imported from the Atlantic coast as well as other manufactured goods imported from Europe.<sup>49</sup>



**Figure 1.21:** Trade Pipes, molded clay, English, late seventeenth century, found in eastern Long Island. Courtesy of the Southold Indian Museum, Southold, New York.

In 1674 Rev. Gookin described Native women wearing “bracelets, necklaces, and headbands, of several sorts of beads, especially of black and white wampum, which is of most esteem among them, and is accounted their chief treasure. . . With this [wampum,] they pay tribute, redeem captives, satisfy for murders and other wrongs, and purchase peace with their potent neighbors . . . [I]n a word, it answers all occasions with them, as

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<sup>48</sup> Graber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value*, 119.

<sup>49</sup> Lisa Tanya Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 54-56.

*gold and silver doth with us.*<sup>50</sup> He also noted that Indian consumers “delight much in having and using knives, combs, scissors, hatchets, hoes, guns, needles, awls, looking-glasses, and such like necessaries, which they purchase from the Dutch and English . . . and then sell them their peltry for their wampum.”<sup>51</sup> From his perspective as an Englishman, Gookin clearly equated wampum with money and did not fully recognize the deeper spiritual significance it held for Indians.

The monetization of wampum had a major impact on the Unkechaug, Montauks, and Shinnecocks, who were among its main producers, since the waters surrounding their island home abounded with the requisite species of shellfish. Recognizing an opportunity, the Pequots and then the Narragansetts attempted to subjugate them to monopolize access to the desirable shell beads. By the 1620s, for example, the Pequots extended their tributary network throughout eastern Long Island to extract additional wampum which “conquered sachemships gave . . . as a sign of their subordination but also of fealty, as their sovereigns were obligated to protect them.”<sup>52</sup> Then the Dutch and, in short order, the English went from acting as middlemen to hedging in on the business. To meet the growing demand, they pressured coastal Indians to expand production, even providing metal awls to speed the manufacturing process.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, vast quantities of wampum were “minted” on Long Island and circulated far into the interior. Wampum from the East Coast has been found in Native sites from the Great Lakes to the Ohio River Valley and beyond. In the 1660s, Nicholas Perrot, a French trader based in Montreal, described how upon the death of an Algonquian man, his family “clad him in the best clothes, placed his weapons and articles of war beside him, and surrounded him with necklaces of wampum and glass beads.”<sup>54</sup> The English even demanded coastal Indians, especially around Long Island Sound, pay tribute to them in wampum.

As an indigenous art form adapted for non-indigenous uses, wampum “offers an illuminating example of a syncretic article imbibing native and European intermixture.”<sup>55</sup> It is important to note, however, that even after its successful monetization by Europeans, wampum continued to be used in symbolic ways in cross-cultural contexts, especially in diplomacy between Native Americans and Europeans. Today, Native Americans in the

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<sup>50</sup> Emphasis added. Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England* (Boston: Apollo Press, 1792), 152.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Petto, “Dark Mimesis: A Cultural History of the Scalping Paradigm” (PhD Diss., University of British Columbia, 2018), 183.

<sup>53</sup> David Murray, *Indian Giving: Economies of Power in Indian-White Exchanges* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), ch. 5.

<sup>54</sup> On importation of wampum to the interior, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 102.

<sup>55</sup> Gail D. MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements: Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 35-36.

Northeast still regard wampum as imbued with multivalent meanings and spiritual significance.<sup>56</sup> On Long Island, the Unkechaugs have even revived its manufacture on the Poospatuck Reservation, preserving their earlier tradition and supplying the ceremonial needs of many Native communities.

Another significant impact of the expansion of the Indian trade was the introduction of European firearms, which were quickly adopted by Native men for use in hunting and warfare. Although the English were initially hesitant to supply them, Dutch merchants quickly responded to supply the emerging market. Over the coming decades, an extended arms race began as Indian peoples throughout North America set aside traditional weaponry, such as bows and arrows, and began stockpiling guns and ammunition. On eastern Long Island, English settlers worried that Indians were “at least as plentifully furnished as they themselves, as apt to give volleys of shot in their entertainments and compliments, and by exercise have become good marksmen . . . [And they have] grown insolent and injurious against the English.”<sup>57</sup> During times of regional unrest, colonial officials thus repeatedly confiscated Indians’ guns to prevent their involvement if open warfare broke out across Long Island Sound between their allies and the English or other hostile tribes.

Alcohol was another European product with serious negative consequences for Native peoples who proved especially susceptible to its intoxicating effects. Although both the Dutch and the English banned the sale of alcohol to Indians early in the seventeenth century, enforcement was weak so many shopkeepers, tavern owners, and traders, among others, continued to profit from the illegal practice.<sup>58</sup> Alcoholism consequently became a serious problem with terribly destructive effects on Indian families and communities. Alcohol also featured prominently in the fur trade as well as in diplomacy and land sale negotiations. Throughout the colonial period, settlers, government officials, and land speculators, after lubricating negotiations with large quantities of rum, would take advantage of Indians’ inebriation to secure sweetheart deals on vast tracts of Indian lands, circumventing proper chains of tribal authority and colonial regulations.

Overall, the systematic dispossession of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands was one of the most consequential and far-reaching effects of the European incursion. With growing numbers of settlers, demands for more land only intensified during the latter half of the seventeenth century. Moreover, even when alcohol did not figure into the equation, the English typically did not offer a fair market rate for what the land was worth. In many cases, they bought valuable Indian land for a pittance, only to

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<sup>56</sup> On wampum made by contemporary Unkechaug artisans, see <http://www.wampummagic.com/about>

<sup>57</sup> Silverman, *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America*.

<sup>58</sup> Peter C. Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 44-45.

quickly resell it to incoming settlers at an enormous profit. In one recorded sale, for example, a group of Shinnecock men and women sold a substantial tract in Southampton to Thomas Topping, along with the rights to all “whales, that shall by God’s providence, be cast up from time to time.”<sup>59</sup> In return, he paid them “four score fathoms of wampum.” Since few Shinnecoeks were literate, signing their names with marks, it is questionable whether they fully understood the terms of such unequal exchanges.

Moreover, Native people seldom fully comprehended (or accepted) that such land transfers required them to literally vacate those parts of their ancestral lands forever, as well as to lose any rights to use its resources in perpetuity—certainly not in the sense that the English intended. Inevitably, these irreconcilable world views resulted in growing hostilities between the groups. As Indians were displaced from their ancestral lands, they struggled to sustain themselves and their progeny in the face of increasing challenges. They also vied with other Indian groups, jockeying for any slight advantage, coming into conflict with each other as well as with settlers and colonial authorities. Throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century, southern New England’s political landscape had a “multipolar character, involving not monolithic groups of Indians and colonists . . . but shifting coalitions of tribes and colonies that often pit Indians against Indians and colonists against colonists, as one emergency bled into another.”<sup>60</sup>

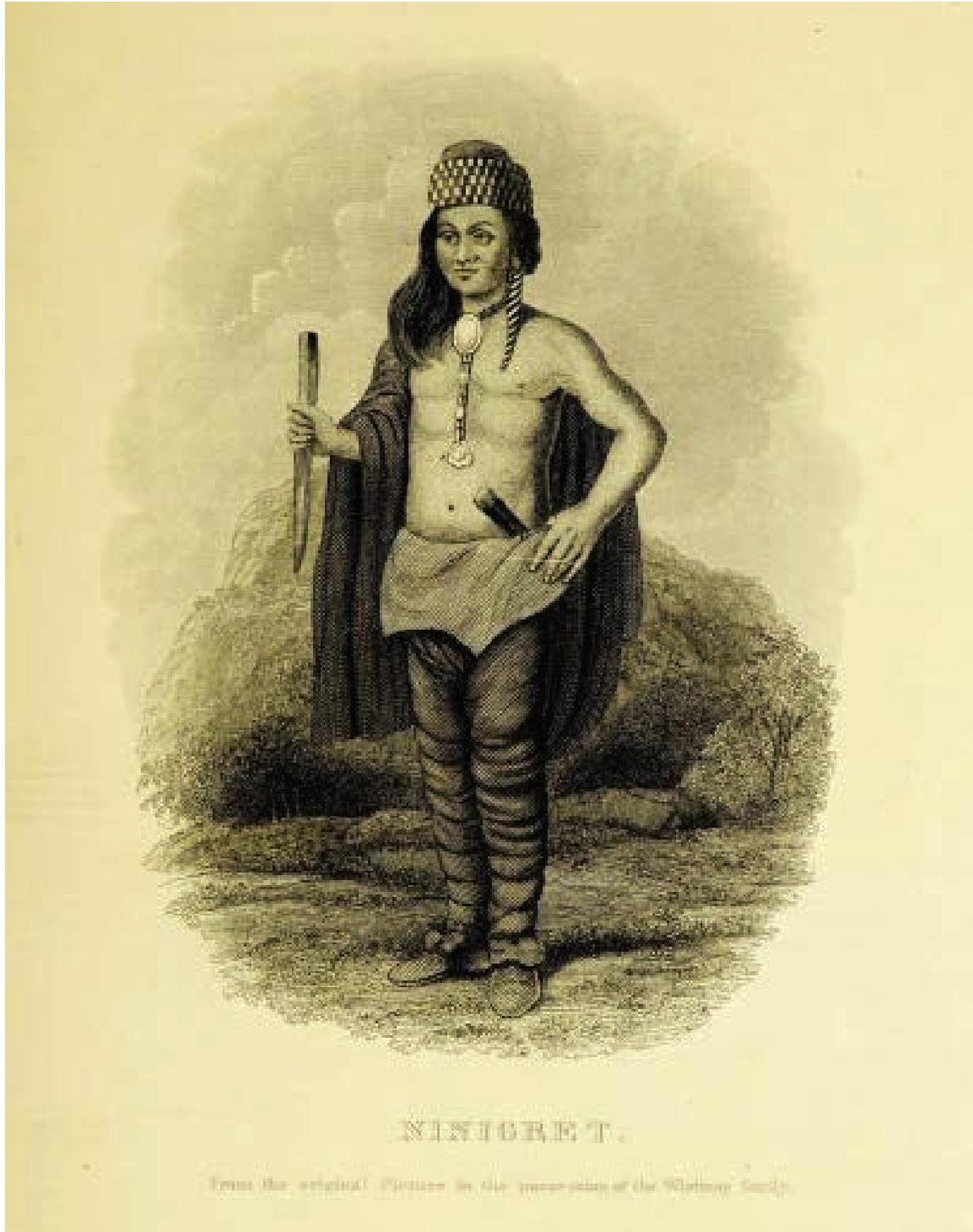
In 1636, long simmering differences between the powerful Pequots and an alliance between the Narragansetts, Mohegans, and English settlers finally exploded into open warfare in Massachusetts and Connecticut. For fourteen months, much of southern New England was embroiled in horrific violence. Native attacks destroyed almost half the English settlements. The English, in turn, waged a ruthless offensive against the Pequots, including combatants and non-combatants. They wiped out entire Pequot villages and burned their cornfields, leaving survivors to die of starvation or disease. The war culminated with an infamous massacre in Mystic, Connecticut, where English forces set fire to a Pequot village and killed anyone who tried to escape the flames. Including men, women, and children, an estimated one-quarter of the Pequot population died.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Henry P. Hutchinson, ed. *Records of the Town of Brookhaven up to 1800* (Patchogue, NY, 1880), 8. Original records in Town Clerks Office.

<sup>60</sup> Julie A. Fisher and David J. Silverman, *Ninigret, Sachem of the Niantics and Narragansetts: Diplomacy, War, and the Balance of Power in Seventeenth-Century New England and Indian Country* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), xix.

<sup>61</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *Before the Revolution: America’s Ancient Pasts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 166; Andrew Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015); Andrew Lipman, “‘A Meanes to Knitt Them Togeather’: The Exchange of Body Parts in the Pequot War,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series, 65, no. 1 (January 2008): 3-28.



**Figure 1.22:** Portrait of an Indian Sachem in New England, ca. 1681, reproduced in Increase Mather's *Early History of New England*. Although previously identified as Ninigret, the name of this Sachem is uncertain. (Boston, 1864).

Fleeing for their lives, some survivors were able to reach safety on Long Island. Others were taken captive by the English and later sold into slavery in the West Indies or distributed among colonial households to serve long involuntary terms as indentured

servants.<sup>62</sup> As historian Alden T. Vaughan has pointed out the “effect of the Pequot War was profound . . . . The destruction of the Pequots cleared away the only major obstacle to Puritan expansion. And the thoroughness of that destruction made a deep impression on the other tribes.”<sup>63</sup>

Although these events unfolded mostly across the sound, violence has a way of spilling over so Native communities on Long Island inevitably were impacted, directly and indirectly. Only three days after the devastating attack at Mystic, the Montaukett sachem Wyandanch visited the English fort in Saybrook to confer with its commander, Lion Gardiner. When Wyandanch reportedly asked if the English “were angry with all Indians,” Gardiner replied, “No, but only with such as had killed Englishmen.” In the hopes of resuming trade and avoiding English retribution, Wyandanch agreed to Gardiner’s demand for “the heads of Pequot asylum-seekers, and those of any Indians who had killed Englishmen. Shortly thereafter, Wyandanch sent 12 Pequot heads to Saybrook, for which Gardiner gifted him with trade goods.”<sup>64</sup> At that point, according to Capt. John Mason, one of the officers in the late war, “The Pequots [had] now become a Prey to all Indians. Happy were they that could bring in their heads to the English . . . [which] came almost daily to Windsor, or Hartford.” In 1637, John Winthrop noted that “still many Pequods’ heads and hands [coming] from Long Island and other places.” Whatever compunctions Wyandanch may have had about committing his people to this violent campaign, he likely saw no alternative but to concede to Gardiner’s vengeful terms, what historian Andrew Lipman aptly described as “the price of admission into an English protection and trade racket.”<sup>65</sup>

During the late seventeenth century, rival polities regularly clashed as their sachems sought to assert regional dominance over other groups and, to the degree possible, turn the European presence to their advantage. In the wake of the Pequot War, Ninigret, the sachem of the Niantics and Narragansetts, directly benefitted from the destruction of the Pequots. Not content with his expanded realm, he attempted to subjugate the Shinnecock through an attempted assassination of their sachem. Then in 1638, his warriors tried instead to intimidate the neighboring Montauketts by terrorizing the people and humiliating their sachem. After the Montauketts offered up a substantial tribute of wampum, Ninigret’s men went off to strong-arm other Native communities, ranging “up and down the island, robbing and pillaging.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Margaret Ellen Newell, *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York: Liveright, 2017).

<sup>63</sup> Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1965), xvii.

<sup>64</sup> Petto, “Dark Mimesis: A Cultural History of the Scalping Paradigm,” 215.

<sup>65</sup> Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier*, 140.

<sup>66</sup> Fisher and Silverman, *Ninigret*, 44.

To quell these kinds of predatory activities, Miantonomo, sachem of the Narragansetts, who came to dominance following the Pequot's defeat, sought to convince the fractious tribes in coastal New England to set aside their differences and unite against the overseas invaders as a common enemy. In 1642, he reportedly gave a speech on Long Island before a gathering of regional sachems, in which he warned that unless "are we all Indians as the English are, and say brother to one another; so must we be as one, as they are, otherwise we shall be all gone shortly." To convince others of his earnestness, he proposed to "kill an Englishman & send his heade & hands to Longe Iland," and urged the Indian nations of Long Island to do likewise as "a meanes to knit them together."<sup>67</sup> In colonial America, formal exchanges of body parts from slain enemies, such as Miantonomo proposed, were carried out both by Indians and Europeans, but the meanings they attached to such acts significantly differed; for whereas Native peoples considered this ritual to be a potent spiritual and symbolic means of affirming alliances, Europeans regarded them as an effective means of asserting dominance and terror to crush any remaining resistance and deter other would-be opponents. In this case, when colonial officials in Massachusetts got wind of Miantonomo's plan, however, they arranged for a rival sachem to have him killed, along with his dream of a Pan-Indian alliance.

In the 1650s Ninigret predictably launched another series of attacks on the Montauks, Shinnecocks, and other Indian nations on Long Island; desperate for protection, they in turn curried assistance from English colonial officials in New Haven. Ninigret's motivation for this foray were three-fold: to avenge Long Islanders' attacks on his people during the late Pequot War; to force them into a permanent tributary status to help underwrite his military ventures and political ambitions; and to send a warning to the English not to interfere further in Native diplomacy.<sup>68</sup> Colonial officials did not get the message, however, but continued to exacerbate internecine conflicts among the Native peoples through their strategy of divide and conquer.

### *Impacts of Colonization on Long Island's Native Peoples*

During the seventeenth century, the expansion of English colonization, first in New England and then on Long Island, dramatically reshaped almost every aspect of Native Americans' lives—including economic, political, social, religious, cultural, demographic, and environmental dimensions. In some cases, these changes stemmed from deliberate English efforts to impose their own cultural values and ideologies, including their legal and private property systems, to undermine or erase Native traditions. In other cases, they unfolded as unanticipated consequences of English actions. In the face of this onslaught,

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<sup>67</sup> Quoted in William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 162-63; Lipman, "A Meanes to Knitt Them Togeather," 4.

<sup>68</sup> Fisher and Silverman, *Ninigret*, 79-80.

Indian peoples resisted and fought back in every way they could, including waging two major wars that ended in calamity. Unable to turn back the English tide, they had to figure out how to adapt and survive the cumulative negative effects of colonization, which were multi-faceted, far-reaching, long-term, and deeply consequential.

From the outset in British America, one of the primary means by which colonial governments sought to control and manage their inhabitants was through the legal system, which increasingly targeted people of color.<sup>69</sup> Within a year of taking over New Netherland from the Dutch in 1664 (and renaming it in honor of its new patron, the Duke of York), colonial authorities passed the Duke's Law, which aimed to govern the relationship between masters and indentured servants, then still mostly English or European ethnicities, as well as to curb runaways. As originally formulated, however, the Duke's Law treated all servants as similar, based on the assumption that they were only "temporarily serving in bondage, a bondage to which, presumably, they had freely contracted."<sup>70</sup>

Over the next half century, however, legislators at the town, county, and colony (later state) levels passed numerous laws to more closely regulate the behavior, movements, and social interactions specifically of "Indian, negro, or mulatto servants and slaves." They could be arrested and charged for everything from minor thefts and unpaid debts to vagrancy, drunkenness, or insolence. Moreover, they often "received harsher punishments than whites for identical crimes in the eighteenth century—for example, whippings *and* fines, rather than one or the other." They were also disproportionately sentenced to various forms of what historian Margaret Newell terms "judicial enslavement," whereby even minor infractions could result in long terms of involuntary servitude.<sup>71</sup>

As the legal system became increasingly racialized and harshly punitive, it had devastating effects on people of color, including growing poverty and debt peonage, often resulting from crushing court-imposed fines; extensive family separations due to incarceration, coerced indentures, and deportations; endemic corporal and psychological violence; and numerous hardships resulting from pervasive, institutionalized white supremacy. For white settlers, on the other hand, these same legal mechanisms rebounded to their economic benefit by putting Indian lands and labor at their disposal. In 1693, for example, after two Indians on Martha's Vineyard were found guilty of stealing a small sum from Matthew Mayhew, he was permitted to sell their court-imposed indentures to a buyer in Southold, Long Island—forcing them to leave their homes and work seven years each on

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<sup>69</sup> Margaret Ellen Newell, "The Changing Nature of Indian Slavery in New England, 1670–1720," in *Reinterpreting New England Indians and the Colonial Experience*, ed. Colin Calloway and Neil Salisbury (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2003), 126-27.

<sup>70</sup> Carl Nordstrom, "The New York Slave Code," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 4, no. 1 (1980): 7.

<sup>71</sup> Newell, "The Changing Nature of Indian Slavery," 126-27.

an island over two hundred miles away.<sup>72</sup> In short, the power and control of white male freeholders in colonial New York were consistently bolstered by a legal regime biased to favor their economic and political interests and to relegate people of color—free, indentured, and enslaved—into subordinate caste-bound categories.<sup>73</sup>

Another pernicious practice that undermined Indian communities' social stability and cultural continuity was the practice of indenturing their children, whether forcibly imposed by colonial officials or initiated by struggling parents. Rooted in English poor law, this legal mechanism involved placing orphaned or needy children in local households for specified terms of domestic servitude; while rife with abuses, the system was promulgated under the guise of social welfare, ostensibly to offset the expense of caring for indigent children, while providing them with basic education and training for some future livelihood. In the case of Indian and African American children, however, indentured servitude also forced cultural assimilation. Living within colonial households, they were expected to learn and adhere to Anglo standards of behavior, dress, and language, and to accept their lowly place within the social hierarchy. But colonial householders took on indentured children foremost because it was profitable. Throughout their terms of service, these youngsters labored primarily for their master's benefit. A recent study of colonial Rhode Island, for example, revealed that "Indian and African American boys were often bound out for longer terms than Anglo-American boys, while simultaneously receiving lesser training and eventual payment. Indian and African American girls were particularly disadvantaged—bound out at younger ages than boys, for longer terms than Anglo-American girls, and for fewer benefits in education, training, and payment than all other bound children."<sup>74</sup> Under a legal veneer, child indentures thus facilitated both cultural subjugation and economic exploitation of the most vulnerable.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>73</sup> Christopher N. Matthews and Allison Manfra McGovern, eds., *The Archaeology of Race in the Northeast* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 216-18.

<sup>74</sup> Ruth Wallis Herndon and Ella Wilcox Sekatau, "Colonizing the Children: Indian Youngsters in Servitude in Early Rhode Island," in *Reinterpreting New England Indians and the Colonial Experience*, ed. Calloway and Salisbury (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2003), 139.



Official records, and the work of some later historians, have tended to characterize indentured children as victims of parental neglect or abandonment. Yet even while struggling to survive, most Indian parents indentured their children only as a last resort and, even then, tried to protect them by placing them in a promising situation.<sup>75</sup> Given that context, we must be very skeptical of the notion that that minor children—or their parents on their behalf—entered into these contractual arrangements on a truly voluntary basis.

Importantly, indentured children placed into Anglo-American households were not necessarily completely cut off from their Indian heritage. In some cases, they ended up in places where other Indian men and women were in the vicinity, even laboring within the same household. According to Native oral traditions, such elders took it upon themselves to coach displaced Indian youngsters in traditional beliefs and ceremonies. Some mothers even managed to place their children in the same household where they worked or, at least, nearby; in the nineteenth century (as detailed in chapter 5); for example, a few female servants on the Floyd Estate brought their infant or young child along when they worked. Moreover, given its close proximity to Poospectuck, indentured Unkechaug children sometimes worked there during the day, but returned home at night. When a defenseless child lacked such oversight or moral support, however, they were left extremely vulnerable to deculturation and other forms of exploitation and abuse, especially since the line between an involuntary indenture and full-on slavery was gray. To a significant degree, as discussed in the next chapter, the Floyd Estate's labor force was shaped by these legal practices and the resulting economical and social conditions.

Another important tactic of colonization used by English settlers involved promoting their own religion and culture, while trying to suppress those of Native Americans. After a slow start, the evangelizing efforts of Christian missionaries began to find more receptive audiences within some Indian communities, especially those most ravaged by the effects of colonization, disease, and war, who sought spiritual solace. One of the most influential missionaries was Rev. John Eliot (1604-1690) of Roxbury, Massachusetts, who pursued his ministry in southern New England and later Long Island and translated the Bible into Algonquian for the first time. His proselytization efforts received a major boost when the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England was chartered by Parliament in 1649. To facilitate its larger goal of religious conversion, the Society also encouraged instruction in English language and literacy skills so Indians could understand sermons and read the Bible. Hence, even apart from their religious objectives, the broader cultural impact of Society for the Propagation of the Gospel-sponsored activities was quite significant. When the Society was founded in London, the name Richard Floyd appears as a charter member and served as its treasurer for the decade prior

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<sup>75</sup> Herndon and Sekatau, "Colonizing the Children," 152.

to his death in 1659.<sup>76</sup> Although evidence is inconclusive, it is possible that this Richard Floyd was related to the branch of the Floyds on Long Island; if so, it might shed light on how they ended up there at a time when it was still a frontier, since he would have been well appraised of conditions there.

During the decades prior to their arrival, however, the compounded effects of the Pequot War, the increasingly punitive legal system (including involuntary indentured servitude), and the Society's campaign to "propagate the gospel" resulted in considerable disruption for Native people. The biography of Cockenoe, a young Montauk from Long Island, offers a vivid example of how individuals were affected by these events. During the waning days of the Pequot War, he was visiting some kin in Connecticut when the colonial militia swept through the area and arrested all Native men of fighting age, whether or not they were combatants. Despite denying any involvement in the conflict, the teen-aged Cockenoe (exact birth date unknown) was nevertheless treated like a prisoner of war.<sup>77</sup> At the time, the English sent most surviving Pequot boys and men, who were not killed outright or later executed, into bondage in the West Indies; Pequot women and girls were "disposed about in the towns" to provide labor in colonial households.<sup>78</sup> Since he was not a Pequot, Cockenoe fortunately was spared deportation but instead was granted "as part of the spoils of war" to work in the household of Sgt. Richard Callicott, a prominent military man in Massachusetts.

During this period, English colonial officials routinely forced vulnerable Native people into various forms of bonded servitude, especially women, children, and youths, such as Cockenoe, who were taken captive, displaced by war, or deemed indigent after their homes, families, and means of subsistence were destroyed. Technically, their legal status was as involuntary indentured servants required to labor for an assigned master for a fixed term of years or, in the case of children and teenagers, until they reached the age of twenty-five. Ample historical evidence confirms, however, that this system was rife with abuses and some individuals never secured their rightful release. Prisoners of war, in particular, fell into a legal gray area given the prevalent belief in Europe and colonial America that enslaving those captured in a 'just war' was an acceptable practice; consequently, they often

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<sup>76</sup> *The New England Company of 1649 and John Eliot* (Boston: Prince Society, 1920), 12; Frederick L. Weis, "The New England Company of 1649 and its Missionary Enterprises," *Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, 38 (1947-1951): 135-52.

<sup>77</sup> Since Cockenoe was free by circa 1649 and indentures usually expired at age 25, he would have been about 14 when captured. Although some historians have described him as a child, in the historical context of the time, he was considered of "fighting age" since teenage males fought on both sides in the Pequot War. Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 94-96; Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 151, 260; Eric B. Schultz, and Michael J. Tougias, *King Philip's War: The History and Legacy of America's Forgotten Conflict* (Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press, 2017); George M. Bodge, *Soldiers In King Philip's War: History of the American Colonies and Wars with Native Americans, 1620 to 1677* (Boston: David Clapp, 1891), xxiv.

<sup>78</sup> William W. Tooker, *John Eliot's First Indian Teacher and Interpreter: Cockenoe-de-Long Island* (London: Henry Stevens' Son and Stiles, 1896), <http://www.gutenberg.org>.

faced much longer or even open-ended terms of service which amounted to life-time bondage. For the most part, individuals held in bonded servitude past their proscribed terms had little legal recourse.<sup>79</sup>

During his time working in Callicott's household, Cockenoe learned English and some Massachusetts, an indigenous language similar to his own tongue. His presence soon drew the attention of Rev. Eliot who lived nearby. Upon meeting him, Eliot later recalled thinking, "This Indian is ingenious, can read, and I taught him to write, which he quickly learnt, though I know not what use he now maketh of it. He was the first that I made use of to teach me words, and to be my interpreter."<sup>80</sup> After securing his freedom from Callicott after approximately eleven years, the young Montauk soon made himself indispensable to Eliot, who later described him as a "pregnant [i.e. quick] witted young man, . . . who pretty well understood our language, better than he could speak it, and well understood his own language, and hath a clear pronunciation: Him, I made my Interpreter. By his help, I translated the Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and many Texts of Scripture."<sup>81</sup>

In addition, Cockenoe accompanied Eliot on preaching tours, mediating the communication and cultural gulfs between curious audiences and the determined minister. When their efforts to explain the Gospel were not understood, Eliot and his fellow missionaries turned for assistance to the young Montauk, "who could oftentimes express our minds more distinctly than any of us could."<sup>82</sup> To facilitate religious conversions, Rev. Eliot also devoted considerable energy to Indian children to read and write. Convinced that education was "absolutely necessary to carry on civility with religion," he paid a local schoolmaster and colonial women in Massachusetts to carry on these lessons.<sup>83</sup> By promoting literacy, he hoped to make the Bible and other religious texts accessible to his pupils, preferably in English but, failing that, in his pupils' mother tongues. Initially, Eliot's proselytizing efforts seemed to make inroads. Yet as noted, many of his early followers were survivors of the recent smallpox epidemic and war refugees, traumatized and displaced from their original homes; as such, they understandably may have been especially receptive to the missionary's inspiring message of brotherly love and the concept of resurrection that promised spiritual reunion with lost loved ones. With his encouragement, the Praying

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<sup>79</sup> Russell M. Lawson, *Servants and Servitude in Colonial America* (New York: ABC-CLIO, 2018), 20.

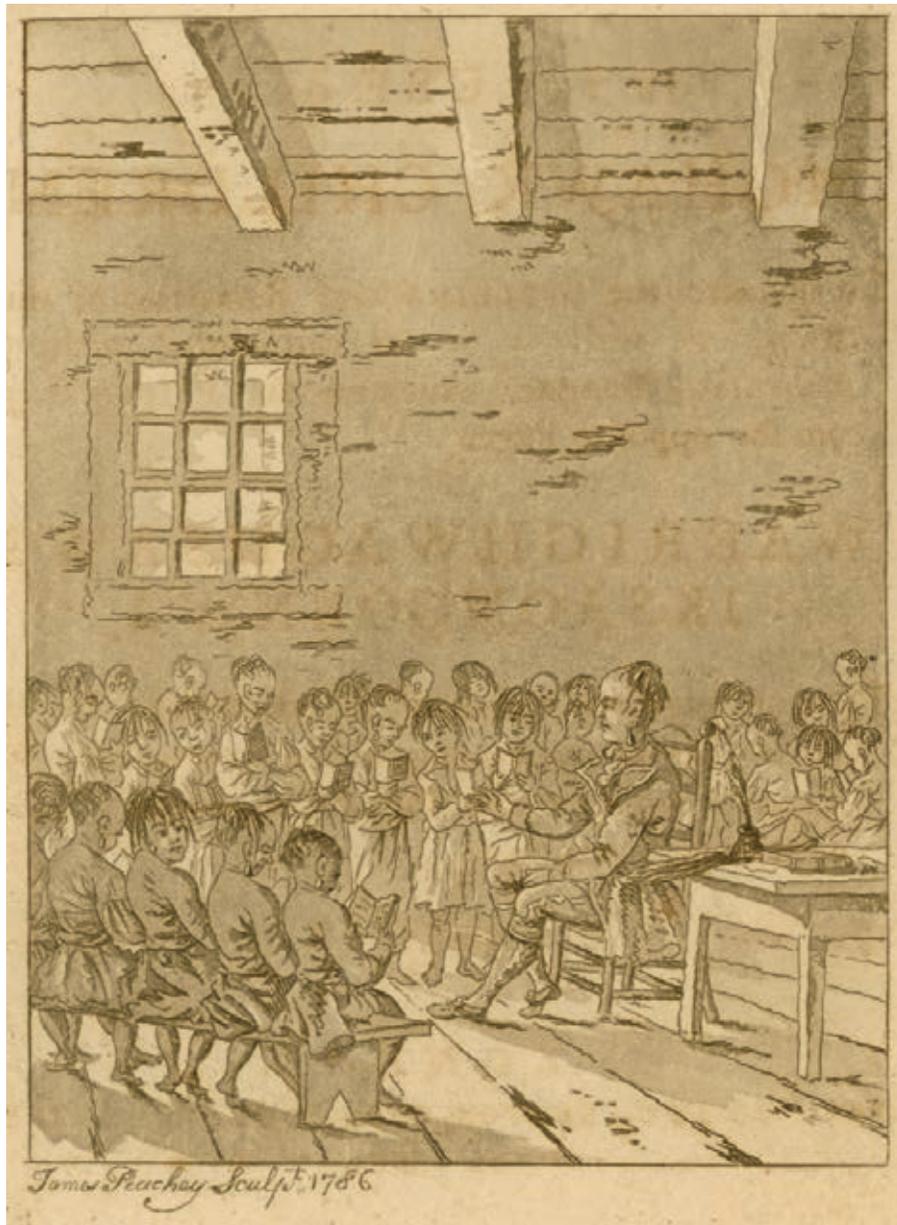
<sup>80</sup> Letter by John Eliot, Feb. 21, 1649, quoted in Tooker, *John Eliot's First Indian Teacher*, 11-12.

<sup>81</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "pregnant witted" then meant "quick-witted, of unusual capacity, and full of promise." John Eliot, *Indian Grammar Begun* (Cambridge, MA: 1666; reprint Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 2001), 66-67; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 260.

<sup>82</sup> Eliot started learning and preaching in Native languages in the 1640s and published the first Bible in an Algonquian language in 1663. Tooker, *John Eliot's First Indian Teacher*, 15-16.

<sup>83</sup> E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 50-53, 402.

Indians, as Native converts became known, began establishing English-style settlements (known as Praying Towns) in New England, comprised solely of fellow converts, beginning with Natick, founded in 1650.



**Figure 1.24:** Image of Mohawk School, circa 1786, illustration from Daniel Claus, *A Primer for the Use of the Mohawk Children* (London: C. Buckton, 1786). Courtesy of John Carter Brown Library, Brown University. This image depicts an early Indian classroom of the type introduced on Long Island in the late eighteenth century to promote literacy as part of Christian missionary efforts.

While focused mainly on Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, the Society underwrote outreach to Long Island as well. In the 1670s, for example, Rev. Thomas James, minister of the First Congregational Church in Easthampton from 1650-1696, assisted by the Rev. James Fitch of Connecticut, launched their own literacy campaign among Native communities. Despite the missionaries' best efforts, however, most Indians on Long Island initially remained unmoved by the missionaries' spiritual message, preferring to adhere to their own beliefs or perhaps to only selectively adopt strands of Christianity.

Rev. Fitch, for one, fretted that the souls in his charges showed little "inclination to learn the knowledge of God."<sup>84</sup> Even after shifting his attention back to prospective Indian converts closer to his home, he complained that they "did generally show an averseness, yea a perverse contempt of the word of God; and at present, they will not yield to any settled hearing or attendance upon the ministry of the word." Quite accurately, Rev. Gookin attributed this resistance to their sachems' fear of losing control over their people and of eroding traditional spiritual beliefs, but he dismissed their religion as "heathenish devil worship."<sup>85</sup> Despite these early missionaries' poor showing, the evangelical movement did gain traction on Long Island later in the eighteenth century, facilitated by ordination of several Unkechaug and other Indian ministers.

But individuals, such as Cockenoe, who learned to navigate both English and Native worlds, became important intermediaries, although neither side fully trusted them. Whether or not Cockenoe became a true believer in his espoused faith, his religious studies enabled him to learn English. By 1649, Cockenoe had left Rev. Eliot's employ and parlayed his linguistic abilities into a successful career as an interpreter in Massachusetts. Yet he apparently longed to return home to the island of his birth.

After more than a decade living among the English, Cockenoe made his way back to Long Island, only to find that much had changed during his long absence; many of his family were gone and the extent of colonial settlement was greatly expanded. In short, he had to rebuild his life largely from scratch. Once again, however, his ability to navigate between the Native and English worlds proved useful. He readily found employment as an interpreter and land surveyor. Over the subsequent decades, his name appears as a witness on many land deeds and contracts as he facilitated multiple transactions between Indian sachems and the English. After marking out the boundaries of a tract acquired by the Town of Huntington in 1658, for example, his payment consisted of "one coat, four pounds of powder, six pounds of lead, one dutch hatchet, as also seventeen shillings in wampum."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> James Fitch to Daniel Gookin, Nov. 20, 1674 in Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England*, 208-209.

<sup>85</sup> Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England*, 209.

<sup>86</sup> Tooker, *John Eliot's First Indian Teacher*, 31-37.

With his situation somewhat secure, he then elevated his status by marrying a prominent Shinnecock woman, who later became a female sachem when her brother died. Accordingly, Cockenoe also began to be called upon to advocate on behalf of his fellow Indians; in 1652, for example, he helped the Yougcho, the Manhansets' sachem register a formal protest against Nathaniel Sylvester over the earlier sale of Shelter Island.<sup>87</sup> At other times, however, Cockenoe sided with the English, if it seemed more politic or remunerative to do so.

Another major conflict, Metacom's War (also known as King Philip's War) broke out in 1675-1676 which once again brought a tide of brutality and bloodshed to coastal New England as the Pequots and Mohegans fought alongside the British colonists against an alliance of Algonquian forces, led by Metacom (known as Philip by the English) that included Wampanoags, Nipmucks, Pocumtucks, and Narragansetts. As tensions heated up across Long Island Sound, colonial officials seized the guns from Indians on the East End out of fear that they might side with the warring Indian nations across the sound. Cockenoe, who was Wyandanch's adviser at the time, signed and likely penned a petition requesting the English to return their guns, but to no avail.<sup>88</sup>

According to historian Daniel Richter, Metacom's forces attacked over 50 out of 90 New England towns, and destroyed at least 12 (other historians state numbers as high as 25). This war truly took on a performative aspect as warriors, drawn from the united Indian nations, attacked every defining aspect of colonialism as well anything that symbolized English tools of cultural hegemony. Consequently, Indians killed not just English settlers but also their livestock, much hated for invading their corn fields and gardens. Mocking the English taste for Indian land, "some warriors buried New England prisoners up to their necks, taunting 'let us now see how you will grow when Planted into the Ground.' . . . In revenge for decades of English belittling of the manitous and Algonquian religious rites, Bibles were torn up and the colonists' religion insulted."<sup>89</sup> Amidst the hideous violence that ensued across New England, colonists, in turn, began to demonize *all* Indians, even former friends and allies. Even the Praying Indians, who had converted to Christianity and adopted English ways of life, seemed equally suspect and dangerous. Consequently, colonial officials indiscriminately rounded and confined large numbers of Native men, women, and children.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Katherine H. Hayes, *Before Race: Europeans, Africans, and Indians at Long Island's Sylvester Manor Plantation, 1651-1884* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 36.

<sup>88</sup> Lepore, *The Name of War*, 262.

<sup>89</sup> Petto, "Dark Mimesis: A Cultural History of the Scalping Paradigm," 23.

<sup>90</sup> Lepore, *The Name of War*, 140n42; Lauric Henneton, "Rumours, Uncertainty, and Decision-making in the Greater Long Island Sound," in *Fear and the Shaping of Early American Societies*, ed. Lauric Henneton and Louis Roper (New York: Brill, 2016), ch. 5; Thomas S. Kidd, *American Colonial History: Clashing Cultures and Faiths* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

Under Metcom's extraordinary leadership, his warriors' fierce resistance was the last major attempt by Indians to drive the English out of southern New England. When the war finally ended after Metacom was killed, the balance of power had shifted inexorably in favor of the English. This moment marked a critical turning point in early American history; thereafter, few English colonists could still envision any peaceful co-existence with autonomous Algonquians; rather, they were a problem that could only be solved through subjugation, or preferably, though removal and erasure.

For at least 3,000 years prior to the English arrival, Setauket had been the domain of the Setalcotts. Indeed, some of their descendants still live there today. The area, located on Long Island's northern shore (about 20 miles northwest of Mastic), appealed to them for most of the same reasons that later attracted the English; namely, its sheltered location, arable soil, abundant woodlands, ample freshwater, and ready access via Long Island Sound to the Atlantic Ocean. Particularly desirable to the English, however, were the nearby salt meadows that promised ample hay for their livestock. During the summer, they typically left their cattle to roam, grazing wherever they wandered, but good stores of fodder were needed to sustain them during the winter months. As occurred throughout greater New England, when the first English settlers began to make inroads in the area, frictions quickly ensued when their free-ranging cattle and pigs trampled Indians' gardens and maize fields; the Indians, in turn, understandably reacted by killing the offending beasts. To expand the acreage available for cultivation, the settlers, meanwhile, almost immediately began to press the indigenous inhabitants to yield up more of their ancestral territory.

In a nutshell, historians define the concept of "settler-colonialism" as a recurrent pattern whereby people intrude on territories inhabited by existing populations with the explicit goal "of seizing and establishing property rights over land and resources [that] required the removal of indigenes, which was accomplished by various forms of direct and indirect violence . . . . Settlers sought to control space, resources, and people not only by occupying land but also by establishing an exclusionary private property regime and coercive labor systems, including chattel slavery to work the land, extract resources, and build infrastructure."<sup>91</sup> With their lives upended by the onslaught of Anglo settlers and colonial infrastructures, the First Peoples of Long Island for their part could no longer survive solely off their ancestral lands or join in multilateral Indian military campaigns as their forbears had done. Nevertheless, their strong ethnic and kinship ties, cultural affinities, and shared spiritual beliefs, as well as their shared experiences of violence,

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<sup>91</sup> Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 2015): 52-72; Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* (London: Cassel, 1999); Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014); O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees*.

evangelization, cultural disruption, and psychological trauma, “helped forge an interdependence and cohesion that was, if nothing else, more intense and accelerated than would have been otherwise.”<sup>92</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century, this process, which historian Jean O’Brien aptly termed “dispossession by degrees,” was well under way. By the 1660s, when the progenitor of the Floyd family arrived in eastern Long Island, the foundation had thus already been laid for the expansion of settler-colonialism that would unfold during the next half century.

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<sup>92</sup> Linford D. Fisher, “Religion, Race, and the Formation of Pan-Indian Identities in the Brothertown Movement, 1700-1800,” in Gregory D. Smithers and Brook N. Newman, *Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 157.



## CHAPTER TWO

# ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND LABOR ON THE FLOYD ESTATE

**A**fter decades of settler-colonialism, Long Island had already undergone tremendous change by the mid-seventeenth century. As seen in the last chapter, Unkechaugs, Shinnecocks, Montauketts, and other Indian nations found their ancestral homelands under enormous pressure from the expanding English presence. Colonial officials, land speculators, and would-be homesteaders constantly hounded them to cede more territory. Although some of its earlier frontier characteristics remained, the narrow island now thronged with Indian and English settlements, often squeezed into uncomfortable proximity. Moreover, decades of oppressive English legal, economic, and cultural practices had also taken a terrible toll on Native communities and traditional ways of life. Yet short of abandoning their beloved island to seek refuge somewhere in the interior, they had no choice but to find some viable accommodations to co-exist with these unwelcome intruders; circumstances dictated that, like it or not, they had become neighbors.

At the root of many of the ensuing conflicts between the English and Indians remained their very different and incompatible concepts of property rights. The English “conferred ownership of land on individuals, and provided a means of reproducing a hierarchical society in fixed and ordered places. . . . underpinned by a legal system that enforced exclusive ownership and contained bureaucratic procedures for property transfers and inheritance of property.”<sup>1</sup> For their part, Native peoples rejected, resisted, or often just ignored these alien concepts wherever possible. Colonial officials, in turn, resorted to increasingly draconian measures to appropriate more Indian lands and to force their indigenous inhabitants into compliance with the new social order. Consequently, many Native peoples ended up relegated to various subordinate capacities within Anglo-controlled enterprises. With their ancestral homelands reduced to mere remnants, the Native peoples’ most reliable asset—and, increasingly, their *only* asset—became their own labor and that of their children.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean M. O’Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650-1790* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 22.

Situating the Floyd Estate within the broader context of colonial New York and British North America, this chapter covers: (1) Richard Floyd I's initial land acquisitions, that established his family's foothold on eastern Long Island; (2) development of the estate's work force and productive activities under three successive proprietors—founder Richard II, his son Nicoll I, and grandson William; and (3) an evidence-based description of the estate that reimagines its working landscape. After its initial settlement period, the estate, established circa 1724, followed a historical trajectory through the early 1760s that was characterized by a high degree of continuity, apart from generational changes of ownership. By the mid-1760s, however, the political situation in the colonies deteriorated, leading eventually to the rift with the Crown. This chapter thus concludes on the eve of the American Revolution, a major disjuncture that would have momentous consequences for everyone on Long Island.

### *Richard Floyds I's Long Island Foothold*

An immigrant from Wales, Richard Floyd I (1620-c. 1700) was among the early settlers in Setauket, the first English settlement in the Town of Brookhaven. After arriving in New England, he moved to Long Island circa 1656, settling initially in Huntington. By 1667 (judging by his first appearance in the town records), he had moved to Setauket and in 1668 was listed as a “townsman.”<sup>2</sup> Given his ambitions, he arrived at a particularly propitious moment to avail himself of multiple opportunities to acquire vast tracts of Indian lands. In the process, he not only gained wealth and status during his lifetime but set up his progeny to ride his coattails. Thanks to that fortunate head start, they joined the small but powerful cadre of elite propertied families on Long Island who monopolized prime real estate, often to the detriment of later arrivals.

Before the Floyd Estate was established, William “Tangier” Smith, a well-connected settler (and the Floyds' future neighbor), began buying up Unkechaug lands during the 1680s, usually negotiating directly with sachem Tobacus and fellow tribal elders. In 1691, they agreed to sell him the neck of land in Mastic that became his family seat. He also snapped up tracts previously acquired by other colonists and the Town of Brookhaven. In 1693, when Governor Dongan required an assessment of earlier Indian land deals, Tangier applied to have his land holdings reviewed. Not surprisingly, as he and the governor were old friends, he was duly awarded a royal patent that officially confirmed his title; in

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<sup>2</sup> John A. Strong and Mary Laura Lamont, “The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1686-1690: A Search for Authorship and Historical Significance” *Long Island History Journal* 24, no. 1 (2015); John A. Strong and Mary Laura Lamont, “The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1719-1732: Insights into Changing Times in Colonial Brookhaven,” *Long Island History Journal* 27, no. 1 (2019); Christopher Matthews, “The Jacob and Hannah Hart Home Site, Setauket, NY” and Bradley D. Phillippi, “Archaeological Excavations at the Thompson House: A Preliminary Report,” in “Mapping African American History Across Long Island,” ed. Jenna W. Coplin, *Long Island History Journal* 23, no. 2 (2013); Robert E. Lewis, Christopher N. Matthews, and Judith A. Burgess, “The Bethel-Christian Avenue-Laurel Hill Historic District,” *Long Island History Journal* 23, no. 2 (2013).

addition, it conveyed manorial rights which, although mostly symbolic as a throwback to feudal England, nevertheless allowed him to style himself as the Lord of the Manor of St. George, as his new estate was called. Significantly, the patent also gave him “the exclusive right to buy all of the Indian land that had not yet been purchased” in southern Brookhaven.<sup>3</sup> Justifiably fearful that these provisions made one man too powerful and would discourage future settlement, the townspeople in Brookhaven challenged the arrangement. Ultimately, he prevailed but only after making a legal contract with the Unkechaugs to deed some of their land back to them, in exchange for them vouching for his other claims. That agreement, as we shall see, proved of great historical significance because part of the land in question became the Poospatuck Reservation, which survives to this day. Apart from that parcel, Tangier Smith controlled over 80,000 acres of Unkechaug land by the end of the seventeenth century. While not on the same scale, Richard Floyd acquired vast tracts as well.

In the decades following his arrival, Richard Floyd I methodically bought up more land—tract by tract—eventually accumulating several thousand acres. He became adept at spotting promising deals. His purchases were both opportunistic and strategic, aimed at consolidating his landholdings and anticipating the future needs of his expanding farming and livestock operations. When he acquired additional salt meadows in 1664, for example, he likely calculated that his herds would soon require more fodder and grazing space.<sup>4</sup> Over the coming years, he repeatedly snapped up more shares of land that the Town of Brookhaven appropriated from local Indians by various means and then sold or reallocated to the townspeople. In July 1675, for example, he traded one piece of land for another, on “a little Neck Eastward of Unkechaug upland and meadow,” that he apparently considered a better location.

When Richard Floyd I first began amassing real estate, however, a significant portion of what was available after a quarter century of colonization was already in the possession of other English settlers, previously acquired from Indians usually through dubious, one-sided transactions that favored buyers. Some tracts, in fact, had passed through several prior owners before him. In 1684, for example, he purchased 500 acres on Pattersquash Neck from John Jennings. In the document recording the sale, Jennings explained how the land, had come into his hands:

Know all men . . . that I, John Jennings of Southampton, Marshall, having several fees due me from the County. And the Worshipfull Court of Sessions having given and granted unto [me] . . . the land that was fallen into the Court of

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<sup>3</sup> John A. Strong, *The Unkechaug Indians of Eastern Long Island: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 85-86.

<sup>4</sup> Henry P. Hutchinson, ed. *Records of the Town of Brookhaven up to 1800* (Patchogue, NY, 1880), 10.

Session for the default of [Mahaine], an Indian, for his nonpayment of his fine and Court charges. I, the said John Jennings, for sell the same to Lieut. Richard Floyd of Brookhaven.<sup>5</sup>

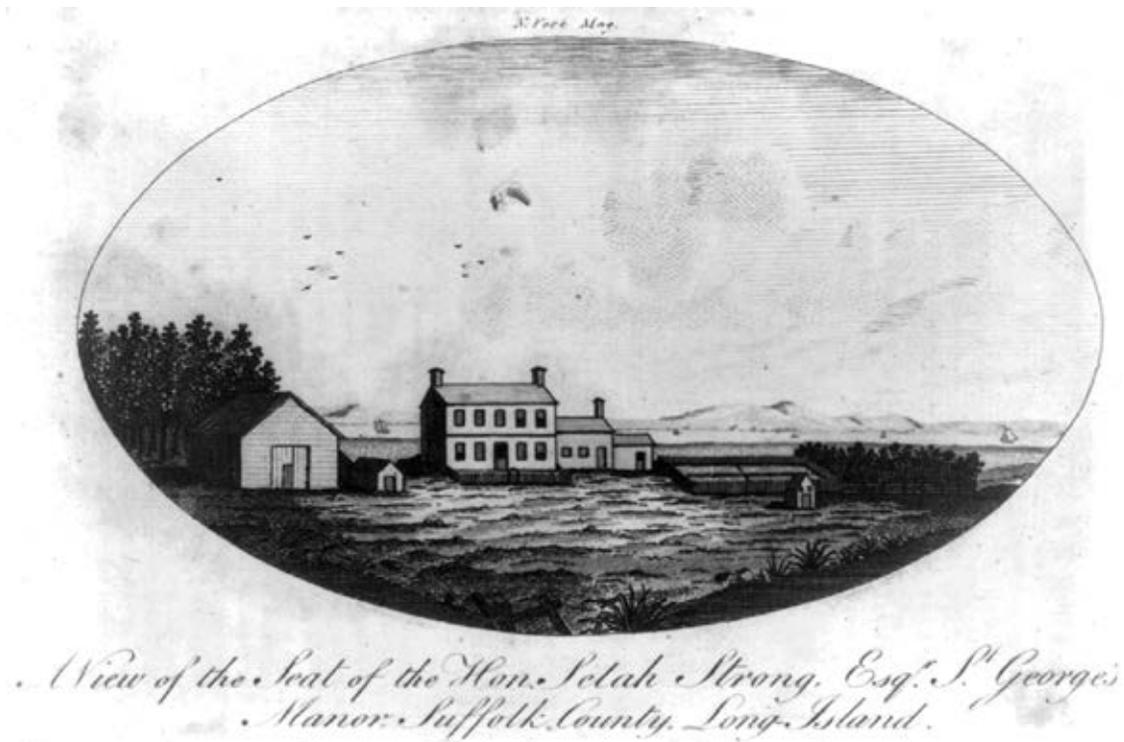
35113

At a meeting of the Trustees of the freeholders & Commonality of the Towne of Brookhaven upon the 27<sup>th</sup> Day of November 1693 Present Justice W<sup>th</sup>hall William Jeane Raffe Dayton Daniel Brewster Abraham Dayton of William Smith did then cause his Patent to be read before aforesaid Trustees and each & every of them did declare that they had nothing to object against the limits bounds powers privileges within the said Patent contained Also said William Smith did Covenant and agree for himselfe & his heirs for Ever with the Trustees of the Towne of Brookhaven and their heirs & Successors for Ever that for and in consideration of forty & two shillings in money by him the said Smith in hand paye for the use of the Towne they doe for ever acquit the said Smith and his heirs for Ever from any or all quit rent due from the Little Neck & his home lots.

Richard Woodruff  
 Daniel Brewster  
 Raffe his R. Dayton  
 Abram his R. Dayton  
 Marke  
 William H<sup>th</sup> Jeane  
 Timothy Brewster Clerk

**Figure 2.1:** Brookhaven Trustees’ approval of William “Tangier” Smith’s patent for St. George’s Manor, November 27, 1693. Courtesy of the New York State Archives (item #A1894-8-V039-113). In the 1680s, William “Tangier” Smith acquired an extensive tract of land in Mastic, where he established St. George’s Manor (named after the patron saint of England). In 1693, the Trustees of the Town of Brookhaven confirmed his patent, indicating that they “had nothing to object against the limits, bounds, powers, and privileges within the said patent contained.”

<sup>5</sup> Strong and Lamont, “The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1719-1732.”



**Figure 2.2:** “St. George’s Manor, Suffolk County, Long Island,” [1792], Cornelius Tiebout. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. This image depicts the ample house built by Tangier Smith’s grandson around 1730, as the centerpiece of their vast estate, located near the William Floyd Estate.

Since the land in question, a “well-situated and desirable expanse of natural meadows,” was located in the very heart of their ancestral home, the Unkechaugs had been loath to part with it, except out of absolute necessity. And, indeed, the backstory of this transaction reveals the increasing difficulties Long Island’s indigenous inhabitants faced during this period of aggressive colonial expansion. Apparently, Mahaine found himself in dire straits after receiving a hefty fine for some trifling offense. Some historians have theorized that his legal and financial woes may have stemmed from debts accrued while he worked on a colonial whaling crew.<sup>6</sup> Others posit that he may have been fined for attending a traditional powwow, defying the 1681 ban on Indians holding “disorderly riotous and tumultuous meetings or assemblies in any town or place on Long Island.”<sup>7</sup> Whatever the case, Mahaine, unable to pay the punishing fee, ended up in jail. Rather than let his kinsman languish there, Tobacus, the Unkechaug sachem, agreed to hand over some land to town officials in Southampton in exchange for Mahaine’s release.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Unfortunately, this kind of exploitative transaction was far from unusual during this period. Colonial authorities, under the auspices of the English legal system, asserted control over the local Indian inhabitants by routinely stepping up fines and punishments for misdeeds or nonpayment of debts; even minor infractions could result in a hefty fine or, if not paid, in a prison sentence or a court-ordered term of involuntary servitude until the debt was paid off. Ostensibly intended to uphold public order and regulate dealings between English settlers and their Indian neighbors, this system became a convenient means of appropriating Indian land. Since individual Indians who ran afoul of colonial laws were rarely able to pay the usurious fines, tribal leaders, whenever possible, intervened to assist them; in many cases, such as this one, that required tapping into their most valuable asset—namely, their ancestral lands—to raise the necessary funds. After Tobacus rescued his fellow tribal member by parting with a tract of prime real estate, Richard I proved the eventual indirect beneficiary of this earlier coercive arrangement. Indeed, by then Richard I had gained considerable leverage over the Unkechaugs because many of them were in debt to him, employed by him, or, in some cases, both.



Since Richard I had limited literacy, signing his name with just a mark, his son Richard II (1664-1738) helped him with record keeping and gradually assumed a larger role in the family business. Their extant account books, which span from the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth century, reveal that they engaged in extensive commerce with their neighbors, especially the nearby Unkechaugs. Local men and women were regularly charged for purchases of foodstuffs, clothing, rum, cider, and other items. To pay for these acquisitions, they typically bartered or received credit for deliveries of produce, domestic manufactures (such as homespun cloth), and other saleable handicrafts that they made. In 1690, for example, an Unkechaug man named Pamatqua paid for goods worth 6 shillings with six pounds of feathers.<sup>8</sup> Like many colonial settlers, the Floyds' small-scale mercantile trade with local Indians, including illicit alcohol sales, grew into a steady and lucrative business. The Indians, on the other hand, often ended up in debt to the Floyds, never quite able to get ahead or pay off their accounts.<sup>9</sup>

At the time, the younger Richard had begun organizing his own whaling companies, usually in partnership with William Smith and other Brookhaven investors. Since whale oil, bone, and baleen were valuable commodities, in high demand back in Europe, whaling was, by far, the colonists most profitable activity. So much so, in fact, that colonial officials in New York repeatedly tried to enrich the public coffers by imposing export duties on whale products and requiring that all outbound vessels pass through New York City to ensure payment. Without meaningful enforcement, however, these laws proved ineffectual, and may even have backfired. The resentment generated by these early efforts to corral Long Island settlers is reflected in a 1703 report from then Governor Cornbury to the Board of Trade back in London:

[T]here has for some time been no Trade between the City of New Yorke and the East-end of Long Island, from whence the greatest quantity of Whale oyl comes. And indeed, the people of the East End . . . are not very willing to be persuaded to believe that they belong to this province. They are full of New England principles. They choose rather to trade with the people of Boston, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, than with the people of New Yorke.<sup>10</sup>

By then, Samuel Mulford, another owner of an East Hampton whaling company, had waged combat on behalf of Long Island's whaling companies against these heavy-handed policies, including making two voyages to England to complain directly to the Lords of Trade who finally retracted some of the restrictions.

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<sup>8</sup> John A. Strong, *America's Early Whalers: Indian Shore Whalers on Long Island, 1650-1750* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018), 93-94.

<sup>9</sup> Strong and Lamont, "The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1686-1690;" Strong and Lamont, "The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1719-1732;" Strong, *America's Early Whalers*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Jay Dolin, *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 57-61.

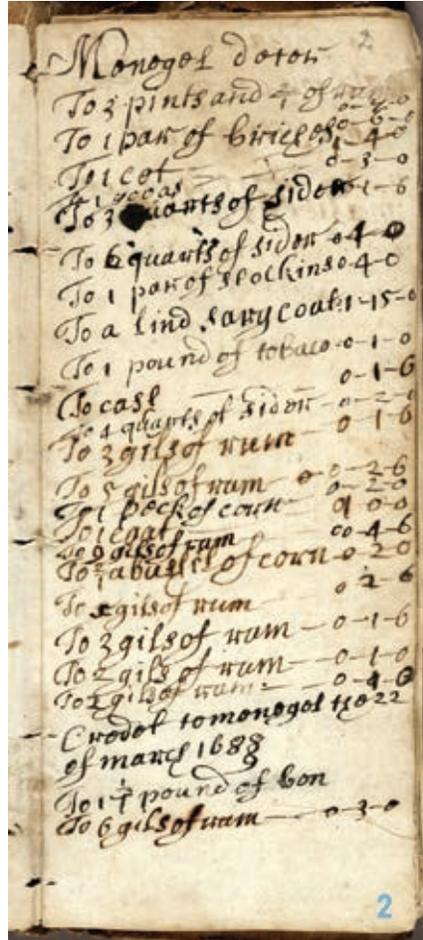
In addition to its importance to the regional economy, whaling also became a major source of employment. Given their long traditions of hunting and butchering whales, the Unkechaug, Shinnecock, and Montauk communities supplied most of the skilled labor needed. At the time, whaling was a seasonal enterprise, carried out close to shore, since every year several whale species migrated through Long Island waters. Even so, maneuvering the six-man whale boats in pursuit of the giant creatures was dangerous work. To recruit the most skilled and experienced whalers for the upcoming season, colonial whaling companies tried to coax whalers to sign employment contracts early, offering incentives such as generous credit and pay advances.

Accordingly, the whalers, under contract with Ricard II, also show up in the Floyds' account books. To outfit themselves for the upcoming season and provide for their families in the meantime, Indian whalers often purchased equipment and supplies from their employers, who extended credit on prohibitive terms. During the 1688 season, for example, ten out of his thirteen whalers acquired coats to keep them warm aboard ship; one of the men, Monogos (also spelled Meneges) was charged for a more expensive lined coat, as well breeches, stockings, corn, tobacco, and regular quantities of cider and rum. In 1722, a man known as Phil Indian bought "leather for shoes," "three gills and a half of rum, and one shirt." James Indian was credited with working 10 days and debited for molasses, cider, paper, powder and shot, and one shirt.<sup>11</sup> The men on Richard II's whaling crews also made regular use of his "company store" for necessary equipment, such as harpoons. As the whalers ran up steep tabs, however, they often ended up in debt, even after months of arduous labor at sea. If they did not have the resources to pay for their necessities up front, the English were only too happy to extend them more credit. In 1720, for example, despite a successful whaling season—when "an estimated fourteen whales had been killed off Long Island"—Washam, an Unkechaug man, still "ended the season in debt for twelve quarts of cider, fourteen pecks of corn, six quarts of rum, a new homespun shirt, and a yard of blue . . . cloth."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "Richard Floyd Account Book, 1720-1732" (HM599 61), Huntington Library and Archives, Huntington, CA.

<sup>12</sup> Strong and Lamont, "The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1686-1690;" Strong, *America's Early Whalers*, 82.



**Figure 2.4:** Richard Floyd I's Ledger, circa 1688, account of "Monogol debtor." Monogol, an Unkechaug whaler, worked on one of the Floyds' whaling crews. As was typical, he received most of his compensation in the form of food, clothing, and other supplies from the Floyds' stores. During the 1688 season, his purchases included britches, coats, stockings, corn, rum, and cider. Courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

The Floyds' success in parlaying their initial foothold into a substantial estate thus stemmed in large measure from their ability to leverage Indians' economic vulnerability. As on a slippery slope, the more Indians relied on buying imported goods and commodities, the more enmeshed they became in English economic system.<sup>13</sup> Increasingly, Indians who were unable to pay their colonial creditors had only a few options, each of which had drawbacks: sell off their ancestral lands, piece by piece; enter the colonial labor force, thus ceding some personal autonomy; or scrape by on whatever they could grow, forage, make, or sell.

<sup>13</sup> Strong and Lamont, "The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1719-1732."

## *Indian and African Labor in Seventeenth-century Long Island*

Even before the Mastic estate was founded, the Floyds began farming in other areas, so building a solid workforce was a top priority. All their savvy land acquisitions would be worth little, without sufficient hands to put their many acres into productivity. By the late 17th century, as efforts to solicit more indentured English and European servants proved insufficient, colonial New Yorkers increasingly turned to the indigenous inhabitants to meet their labor needs. On Long Island, Native men typically worked as farm hands, woodcutters, mariners, whalers, or day laborers, compensated with goods or credit. Apart from those with exceptional skills (such as whaling expertise) who could negotiate better terms, these men often entered into disadvantageous labor agreements with colonial employers who offered low pay in return for an entire season of labor. Without the same range of options and relatively less mobile, Native women and children usually ended up working in English households as servants, indentured or paid. The legal status of such persons, however, is often unclear from the archives. In 1712, for example, John Hampton of Southampton sold John Wick “One Indian woman commonly called by the name of Sarah, and one Indian boy called by the name of Abel” for £21, 12s, a transaction that suggests they were regarded as chattel slaves.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, various forms of “judicial enslavement” continued to ensnare disproportionate numbers of Native people in involuntary servitude, whether for defaulting on debts, as punishment for some offense, or, in the case of indigent persons by order of the Overseers of the Poor.<sup>15</sup>

Desperate to put their newly acquired lands into productivity, northern landowners, or at least those who could afford to, turned to the transatlantic slave trade as a new source of labor. Slavery was initially introduced to western Long Island by the Dutch, who as early as 1626 began importing Africans to New Netherland via their established trade routes. During this early period, the number of Africans was so small that they enjoyed a relatively high degree of latitude, even though they were officially owned by the Dutch West India Company. Some even secured a status known as “half-freedom,” which permitted them to work for themselves and establish homesteads on the outskirts of New Amsterdam; however, they remained liable to the Company for annual labor drafts and their children remained enslaved.<sup>16</sup> After the English took over New York in 1664, the

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<sup>14</sup> Entry for May 3, 1712, from William S. Pelletreau and James A. Early, eds., *Record of Southampton, being Abstracts of ... Deeds*, vol. 6 (Sag Harbor: John H. Hunt, 1915), 61.

<sup>15</sup> John A. Sainsbury, “Indian Labor in Early Rhode Island,” in *New England Encounters: Indians and Euro-Americans, ca. 1600-1850*, ed. Alden T. Vaughan (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999), 262.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Moore, “A World of Possibilities: Slavery and Freedom in Dutch New York,” in *Slavery in New York*, ed. Ira Berlin and Leslie Harris (New York: New Press, 2005), 45.

Dutch precedent of allowing Africans to transition out of bondage and build independent lives was immediately ended. In its place, as discussed below, the English would institute a much more rigid set of social relations, increasingly codified in law.

On eastern Long Island, which was controlled by the English, the first (documented) Africans were imported circa 1650 by Nathaniel Sylvester and several business partners to build a provisioning site for their Barbadian sugar plantations.<sup>17</sup> Wrenched from their homes in West Africa, these displaced people had already endured the trauma of the Middle Passage and West Indian slave markets and sugar plantations. Forcibly relocated to Shelter Island (situated between Long Island's forks), they may have found the alien environment quite strange and disorienting at first. Likewise, the Manhasset Indians, Shelter Island's indigenous inhabitants, were likely baffled by these newcomers and by Sylvester's scheme to transform their island—the size of Manhattan—into one large plantation. Although the Manhassetts had previously sold the land to an absentee English owner, they still lived there as they had always done. Only now did they feel the true impact of colonization, particularly as many of them ended up working on Sylvester Manor alongside European indentured servants and enslaved Africans—all to produce food and supplies for Sylvester's other slaves on a sugar plantation two thousand miles away!

Although slightly earlier, Sylvester Manor provides a useful point of comparison with the nearby Floyd estate. Archaeological investigations recently undertaken there have shed considerable light on the broader region's social and economic relationships during the early settlement period, for which documentary evidence is scant. Most intriguing, its artifactual record offers clues to a remarkable level cultural hybridity that eventually emerged from interactions among the Native, European, and African inhabitants of Sylvester Manor—discernable in tools, foodways, ornamentation, ceramics, and fabrication techniques. On the one hand, the predominance of artifacts of European origins suggests the high degree to which enslaved African and Indian workers were expected to adapt to their masters' material culture. Even after they immigrated to Shelter Island, Nathaniel and his wife Grizzell, who were of Anglo-Dutch extraction, surrounded themselves with personal and household possessions that both reflected their ethnic background and current European styles and fashions. They brought some items from home; others were acquired later through their extensive trade connections which gave them access to wares from England, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Spain, the Mediterranean, and elsewhere. The eclectic mix of manufactured objects excavated at the Manor underscores what a relatively cosmopolitan lifestyle the Sylvesters maintained, despite being far removed from their urbane roots.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Mac Griswold, *The Manor: Three Centuries at a Slave Plantation on Long Island* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Griswold, *The Manor*.



**Figure 2.5:** Sylvester Manor, Shelter Island, built circa 1730, photograph circa 2013. Courtesy of Mac Griswold. Photograph by Andrew Bush. This house was built circa 1730, replacing an earlier structure. The estate was founded on Shelter Island in 1650 by Nathaniel Sylvester and his partners who brought enslaved Africans there to cultivate foodstuffs to provision their sugar plantations on Barbados.

On the other hand, the archaeological record also reveals examples of creolization where Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans creatively melded aspects of their different cultures. A Manhansett ceramic pot excavated at Sylvester Manor, for example, had a traditional Algonquian form, except for the addition of a European-style handle. Mortar was made using English methods, but with the novel addition of Caribbean coral. Other shards of pottery, while appearing outwardly quite similar to Native types from across southern coastal New England and Long Island, actually contained a mixture of clay and utilized a fabrication method that required much higher firing temperatures; archaeologist Katherine Hayes argues this is evidence of experimentation with producing high-intensity fires, a skill that some African men gained through traditional African iron-working or managing sugar boilers on Caribbean sugar plantations.<sup>19</sup> In a creative

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<sup>19</sup> Katherine H. Hayes, *Before Race: Europeans, Africans, and Indians at Long Island's Sylvester Manor Plantation, 1651-1884* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

synthesis, African, Native American, and European influences contributed to a gradual process of learning and sharing as people survived and adapted to their changed circumstances.

In 1672, Richard Floyd I became the first slave owner in Setauket, when he bought “a Negro man named Antony” from Robert Hudson of Rye, New York.<sup>20</sup> In a complex transaction, Floyd paid for Antony with two deliveries of “wheat or pork and beafe,” totaling 76 pounds sterling, delivered straight to Hudson’s creditors. Then in 1674, for some reason, the new master turned around and sold his lone slave to John Hurd of Stratford, Connecticut—perhaps he was dissatisfied with Antony’s work or just stood to make a quick profit.<sup>21</sup> One can only wonder how Antony felt about being exchanged for a load of grain or some hunks of meat and transported across Long Island Sound, only to be abruptly shipped back across the same watery passage two years later.

At the time, enslaved Africans comprised a relatively small, but growing, percentage of colonial New York’s population. By 1698, for example, they were 12 percent (1,053 out of 9,314) on Long Island (then subdivided into Kings, Queens, and Suffolk Counties); by comparison, at the same time, enslaved Africans were 70 percent in Barbados, 75 percent in Jamaica, and 15 percent in the Chesapeake (which was at the beginning of an upsurge, increasing to 25 percent by 1720 and 40 percent by 1740, while New York leveled off at between 15-34 percent depending on the county).<sup>22</sup> Although it is not known how many enslaved Africans Richard I or Richard II ultimately acquired, they likely considered human chattel to be a good investment; not only could an enslaved person be sold at any time, as in the case of Antony, but, in the meanwhile, their masters could harness his or her labor to improve their own station in life.

### *Establishing the Estate: Nicoll Floyd I, Proprietor*

By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, England’s more direct involvement in the transatlantic slave trade increased the flow and reduced the prices of slaves being imported to the northern colonies; even so, most landowners in the region, including on Long Island, usually could afford only to acquire one or two enslaved people. In a reinforcing cycle, however, elite families, like the Floyds, acquired more land and more hands, which, in turn, enabled them to buy *more* land and *more* hands—at each turn building their wealth and social capital. In the process, they also built considerable political

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<sup>20</sup> Hutchinson, ed., *Records of the Town of Brookhaven* up to 1800, 29.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>22</sup> Abigail L. Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 161; Allan Kulikoff “The Origins of Afro-American Society in Tidewater Maryland and Virginia, 1700 to 1790,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1978), 229; Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (New York: Harvard University Press, 2009), 110.

power with a sphere of influence that extended beyond their immediate community to the colonial administration. In 1684, for example, in an effort to regularize some of the earlier questionable land transactions, Governor Thomas Dongan directed Brookhaven and the other Long Island towns to petition for new patents, which involved confirming colonists' earlier deeds and buying any remaining Indian land within their borders.<sup>23</sup> Two years later, the governor duly issued Richard I a new patent confirming his private land holdings; in return, he and his heirs, as a symbolic gesture of fealty to the Crown, were required to pay an annual quitrent of "two bushells [sic] of good merchantable winter wheat."<sup>24</sup> Since the Unkechaugs first had to affirm his ownership, as Strong and Lamont point out, it "would have been an opportune time . . . to drive a hard bargain and perhaps even reclaim some of their lands. This did not happen, in part because . . . many of the Unkechaug depended on their English employers for their economic survival."<sup>25</sup>

As part of his 1684 bid to impose greater order over colonial New York's recalcitrant subjects, Governor Dongan also decreed New York City to be the "sole port of entry for the province." By thus forcing the inhabitants of Long Island and other hinterlands to clear all their maritime commerce through Lower Manhattan, he hoped to streamline the collection of custom duties, curb suspected smuggling, centralize the colonial administration, and strengthen the city into the colony's primary economic hub.<sup>26</sup> On eastern Long Island, however, colonists loudly protested the sudden dictate that they detour all their vessels to the harbor of New York rather than closer New England ports. Although the policy consequently proved short-lived, their furious response revealed the high degree of autonomy from colonial oversight they had come to expect, foreshadowing their later resistance in the mid-eighteenth century to what, in their eyes, seemed like even more outrageous impositions on their home rule by Crown officials and Parliament.

Following his father's death around 1700 (exact date uncertain), Richard II (1664-1737) inherited a fortune in land. Nevertheless, he continued to build his real estate portfolio—including the land that he later gave to his son Nicoll Floyd I to establish the Floyd Estate. In 1705, for example, Richard II and a partner bought a tract near the Carman River from a group of eight Unkechaugs, several of whom appear in his ledger as "recipients of English goods in payment for services" as well as signatories on other land transactions.<sup>27</sup> Then in 1718, he purchased over 4,400 acres in Mastic, which became the

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<sup>23</sup> Strong and Lamont, "The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1686-1690."

<sup>24</sup> Patent issued to Richard Floyd by Capt. Thomas Dongan, General Governor, New York, Jan. 12, 1686, Early Floyd Family Papers (Box 1, Folder 2), William Floyd Estate Archive, Fire Island National Seashore, here after WFEA; Strong and Lamont, "The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1686-1690." See also Matthew M. Montelione, "Richard Floyd IV: Long Island Loyalist," *Long Island History Journal* 24, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>25</sup> Strong and Lamont, "The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1686-1690."

<sup>26</sup> Michael G. Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 107-108.

<sup>27</sup> Strong and Lamont, "The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1686-1690."

Floyd Estate, from the son of Tangier Smith.<sup>28</sup> At the time, Richard II doubtless would have been happy to take over all of the Unkechaugs' remaining lands—but for Tangier Smith's earlier agreement with them. In 1700, amidst the controversy over his royal patent, Smith quite remarkably granted 175 acres in Mastic *back* to the Unkechaug people. At the time, their leaders insisted that he make a legally binding commitment that “their children and the posterity of their children forever shall, without molestation from me or my heirs or assigns . . . plant and sowe forever” and that no one could ever “sell, convey, or alienate this planting right or any part thereof to any persons whatsoever.”<sup>29</sup> Tangier Smith's motives were by no means disinterested, of course, since in exchange they confirmed his ownership of other tracts of Unkechaug land. He and his descendants also benefitted greatly by guaranteeing convenient access to a ready pool of Indian labor. Much to the Floyds' on-going chagrin, however, this agreement, although later infringed upon, enabled the Unkechaugs to establish the Poospatuck Reservation, thus preserving the core of their ancestral homeland.

Nonetheless, by then, Richard II already enjoyed considerable wealth and social status as one of the largest landowners in Suffolk County. Most notably, his fellow freeholders elected him as a Trustee for the Town of Brookhaven, which gave him a direct hand in many local affairs. In 1697, for example, he shared the responsibility of interviewing candidates for a new Presbyterian minister and then issuing an invitation to the Rev. George Phillips, out “of our Duty to Almyty god & being desierous to have his word preached amongst us & having had some good Experience of [Phillip's] abilities and good Inclination to us.”<sup>30</sup> Richard II was then appointed the official fee collector to pay the minister's annual salary of £40 pounds, plus a hundred-acre farm with a house.<sup>31</sup> Since the town hall was being used for improvised religious services, Richard II also took the lead on building a Meeting House.<sup>32</sup> At a public gathering in August 1714, the new building was dedicated “to promote & propagate the Honor of Almyty God, . . . and no other uses what soever.”<sup>33</sup> Out of “his good affection and desire to advance and incourage the public interest,” Richard II then donated a half-acre plot to the town to serve as a cemetery.

Through this kind of highly visible patronage, Richard II, like other of Long Island's wealthy patriarchs, significantly bolstered his political influence. During the early eighteenth century, many elected offices and colonial sinecures became almost dynastic,

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<sup>28</sup> Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 86-88.

<sup>29</sup> Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 140, 154.

<sup>30</sup> Hutchinson, ed., *Records of the Town of Brookhaven up to 1800*, 64-65.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 69, 140.

<sup>32</sup> On new meeting house, Aug. 28, 1710, see Hutchinson, ed., *Records of the Town of Brookhaven up to 1800*, 102, 104.

<sup>33</sup> Hutchinson, ed., *Records of the Town of Brookhaven up to 1800*, 104.

passing down though the male line within a handful of elite families, including generations of Floyd men. During the colonial period, in the words of one historian, Suffolk County thus “consisted of stratified, parochial communities, in which a few prominent families dominated local elective and appointive political offices.”<sup>34</sup> As their sphere of influence grew, they gained considerable leverage as well over less-affluent inhabitants, including their tenants, small-scale yeoman farmers, and, especially, people of color who were already marginalized.

Emboldened by his success, in 1730 Richard II approached William Smith, who had inherited the Manor of St. George from his father Tangier in 1705, with a scheme to acquire a portion of the Unkechaugs’ protected lands. When the younger Smith expressed no qualms, Richard badgered tribal members—including whalemens James, Phillip, and Will, who were in his employ—to convince their sachem to sell him a hundred acres for the paltry sum of “twenty Dutch blankets, four barrels of cider, and three pounds.” As one of the region’s most powerful (if parsimonious) figures, Ricard II obviously had considerable powers of persuasion that allowed him to dominate others. With their territory now reduced to about 75 acres (only 50 acres by century’s end), the Unkechaugs’ ability to live sustainably off their land was seriously compromised. But Tangier Smith’s legal covenant apparently still carried some residual weight or Richard would undoubtedly have broken it. The Poospatuck amazingly survived what might otherwise have been a hostile takeover and the Unkechaugs remained in their traditional dwelling place—but now with the Floyd family firmly fixed as their neighbors and employers.<sup>35</sup>

## *Life and Labor on the Floyd Estate in the Early Eighteenth Century*

In 1724, at age nineteen, Nicoll Floyd I (1705-1755) took charge of his father’s new landholdings in Mastic. While the exact date is uncertain, sometime between 1724 and 1729, when he married Tabitha Smith, he built the main house (most of which is still extant).<sup>36</sup> Over time, they expanded the original structure to accommodate their growing family, which eventually included eight children. In developing this new property, he too

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<sup>34</sup> John G. Staudt, “Suffolk County,” in *The Other New York, The American Revolution Beyond New York City, 1763-1787*, ed. Joseph S. Tiedemann and Eugene R. Fingerhut (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 64.

<sup>35</sup> Strong, *America’s Early Whalemens*, 156.

<sup>36</sup> Janice Hodson, “William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report, Vol. 1: Historical Data” (National Park Service, 2011), 8, 14. See also Setha M. Low and Dana H. Taplin, “Ethnographic Overview and Assessment” (2006); “Cultural Landscapes Inventory” (2006); and Ricardo Torres-Reyes, “Historic Resource Study: The William Floyd Estate” (1974).

joined the ranks of Long Island's large landowners who were establishing plantation-style agriculture, producing commodities for overseas markets, and securing the necessary labor not only from local Indian communities but also through the transatlantic slave trade.



**Figure 2.6:** Detail of “Map of the Town of Brookhaven in the County of Suffolk. From an actual survey of the west lines of said town...,” 1737, by Isaac Hulse, Surveyor of Brookhaven. This is a nineteenth-century copy of the 1737 original. Courtesy of the New York State Archives (item # NYSA\_A0273-78\_352B)

From the outset, British colonial subjects on eastern Long Island were woven into a larger maritime economy—not only locally but also regionally and transnationally. While determined to supply what they could of their own needs, they were never truly self-sufficient or divorced from the marketplace, belying early twentieth-century descriptions of the region as a sleepy backwater. To the contrary, most of the inhabitants appreciated the “cultural values of interdependence” and, already proto-capitalists, looked to the broader Atlantic market in hopes of profitably trading their surplus and accumulating wealth. Consequently, by the early eighteenth century, Long Island had become a major exporter of

agricultural staples, often trans-shipped via Boston or, now willingly, via the growing metropolis of New York City to elsewhere within the British empire, especially the Caribbean sugar islands.



**Figure 2.7:** “The South Prospect of the City of New York in America,” after William Burgis and Thomas Bakewell, [1761]. Print; 6 x 20 ½ in. Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. This mid-eighteenth-century image shows the skyline of New York City, a busy seaport that became an important market and transportation hub for Long Islanders, including those on the Floyd Estate, during this period. After recovering from the enormous disruption of the British occupation during the American Revolution, New York City would eventually outstrip Boston and Philadelphia as the center of regional and overseas commerce in the Northeast.

As historians have shed light on this process, as David Jaffee points out, “the mythic image of the hardy, self-sufficient yeoman who produced all the food and goods necessary for his family has been replaced by an understanding of the complex network of exchange of goods and services that made up the local exchange economy, which was embedded in a complex web of social relationships.”<sup>37</sup> Despite its bucolic surroundings, the Floyd Estate reflected these larger regional trends, slowly developing into a center of productivity, employment, communication, and exchange.

The working people of the Floyd Estate, of course, were essential to its operations and made that success possible. The mixed labor force included a cohort of enslaved African men, women, and children who lived and worked on the estate—possibly transferred there by Richard II or later purchased by Nicoll. Their labors were shared with Indian workers, mostly from nearby Poospatuck, but probably on a more transient or seasonal basis. During this early period, however, the exact numbers of people owned or indentured by Nicoll I are uncertain. As of 1755 (when he drew up his Will), however, he controlled enough “Negro or Indian servants” to operate not one, but two large farms—the estate in Mastic and another one in Smithtown. An educated guess is that he owned around 10 to 12 persons—a relatively large concentration for the area; more specifically, at least six

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<sup>37</sup> David Jaffee, *People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History and Memory, 1630-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 153.

were female (since he bequeathed one to each of his six daughters), including girls named Lydia, Indgo, and Jip. In 1751, Nicoll I also purchased “half a Negro boy named Philip,” along with a piece of land, for £149, from the estate of the late Henry Smith.<sup>38</sup>

Frustratingly little is known about the people of the estate, apart from the Floyds, *especially* for these early years. In many cases, neither their names, nor, as noted, their numbers are known. Furthermore, with the few exceptions highlighted here, the archives are almost completely silent on significant details about these individuals and their identities—such as their exact ages, birth places, backgrounds, ethnicities, marital status, familial relationships, skills, and personalities. Moreover, depending on the time period, their legal statuses can also be quite ambiguous. In the early eighteenth century, for example, on the rare occasions when the Floyds specifically mentioned their workers, such as in their wills, they tended to refer to them collectively as “Negro and Indian servants;” evidence suggests, however, that whereas the said “Negro” servants usually were held in permanent bondage (although later some freed Blacks remained on the estate), the “Indian servants” might have been: illegally enslaved; voluntarily indentured; involuntarily indentured; or wage workers, either under short-term contracts (as with whalemens) or hired on a casual basis.

While again the paper trail is lacking, the buying and selling of people—such as the transaction involving young Philip (or at least half of him)—became a normalized part of doing business for the Floyds during the early eighteenth century. Most seasons, Nicoll also contracted Indian men (mostly Unkechaugs, but possibly Shinnecocks as well) to serve as crews for his whaling company, but how many six-man crews he fielded at any given time is uncertain. By the standards of the day, however, the Floyds, endowed with both ample land and labor, were now ensconced in the top social tier of the colonial hierarchy.

From the perspective of the enslaved people on the estate, their relatively large cohort may have allowed for more mutual support and companionship than usual in rural New York, where more typically enslaved people, living one or two within white households, faced a high degree of loneliness and isolation.<sup>39</sup> Since little is known about how the estate’s early inhabitants spent their non-working hours, we can only guess at how they may have sought personal fulfillment and social engagement. Perhaps they just enjoyed each other’s company during mealtimes in the kitchen or by the fire in the evenings, carving out their own space within their master’s house. Perhaps on other days, they interacted with their counterparts on adjacent estates and villages within the surrounding area, including in Poospatuck.

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<sup>38</sup> Note regarding balance due to William and Ruth Smith from Nicoll Smith, May 15, 1751, Early Floyd Papers, WFEA. Also cited in Hodson, “William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report, Vol. 1,” 14.

<sup>39</sup> Richard S. Moss, *Slavery on Long Island: A Study in Local, Institutional and Early African-American Communal Life* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 72

To place the estate within the larger context of the slave system in colonial New York, it is important to understand the changing racial demographics and legal provisions. Most significantly, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the enslaved African and African American population increased rapidly, as a result of more direct British involvement in the transatlantic slave trade that boosted supply and lowered costs. Their growing numbers consequently raised white fears of possible slave uprisings. At several critical points during this era, slave revolts occurred, or were suspected, such as in Queens in 1708 and New York City in 1712 and, most significantly, in 1741. In response, colonial officials would crack down on minor infractions and, at least temporarily, increase enforcement of the many laws intended to prevent slaves from fraternizing, conspiring, or attempting to revolt. In 1741, for example, after a series of suspicious fires broke out in Lower Manhattan, over 160 people were arrested, tortured to extract confessions, and, in most cases, severely punished, deported, or executed. In the end, thirty black and four white men and women found guilty of direct involvement were hanged or burned alive. In the wake of each incident, colonial officials reacted with similarly brutal reprisals, executing, maiming, or deporting anyone—white or black, free or slave—suspected of involvement.

In 1730, colonial officials consolidated the myriad race laws enacted over the previous decades into a formalized Slave Code, reminiscent of those in Barbados and other slave societies with which they were familiar.<sup>40</sup> More than ever, the legal system now regulated almost every aspect of enslaved people's lives. Among other restrictions, they could not legally marry; own, buy or sell property on their own account; enter into contracts; possess or carry guns or other weapons; serve on juries or testify in court against whites; gather in groups of more than three; absent themselves from work or attend social events without their master's permission; or travel at night or range more than a mile from their master's home without a pass.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, any white person who entertained, aided, or abetted a slave in any illicit activities was also liable for severe penalties.

In the long run, perhaps the most devastating aspect of New York's Slave Code was that it effectively sealed off most potential avenues to freedom. Those born or sold into bondage now typically remained so for life and enslaved mothers passed that legal status on to their children. The few Africans and African Americans who managed to secure their freedom, through manumission by their owner or by purchasing themselves, faced a difficult and uncertain future because the race laws conspired to limit their mobility and

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<sup>40</sup> "An Act for the more effectual preventing and punishing the conspiracy and insurrection of negro and other slaves for the better regulating them," 1730, Laws of 1730, series A0212-78, vol. 12., ch. 560, item # NYSA\_A0212-78\_V12\_L1730\_Ch560 (New York State Archives, Albany).

<sup>41</sup> Jill Lepore, "The Tightening Vice: Slavery and Freedom in British New York," in *Slavery in New York*, ed. Ira Berlin and Leslie Harris (New York: New Press, 2005), 76-84.

economic opportunities. Over time, white New Yorkers began to take for granted the presence in their society of a permanent laboring underclass, which they justified by defining “blacks as inferior to other racial groups and thus deserving of enslavement.”<sup>42</sup> Consequently, on the books at least, New York’s Slave Code comprised “the harshest criminal laws and penalties enacted by northern colonists.”<sup>43</sup> Its underlying goals, of course, were to keep people of African descent in a permanent state of bondage and to disrupt any inter-racial relationships or solidarities.

At the same time, it is important to note, these legal prohibitions represent the reaction of colonial officials to what enslaved and free people of color were *actually* doing. Ample evidence reveals that, whether in bustling New York City or rural Long Island, they routinely socialized in groups, travelled beyond their master’s immediate purview, attended religious and other gatherings, marketed their produce and handicrafts, earned money by hiring themselves out in their off-hours, and, most importantly, forged kinship and community bonds, including sometimes with other working-class whites and free people of color—all *in spite of* the new Slave Code and the earlier tangle of laws. Moreover, in practice, strict enforcement of such a superfluity of rules and regulations was intermittent and uneven, especially in rural areas. As long as labor productivity was not impacted and no hints of unrest reached them, individual masters often turned a blind eye on their slaves’ illicit activities, especially when it served their own convenience (such as allowing slaves to hunt for their own food) or channeled slaves’ energies into seemingly harmless diversions.

Pulling back our lens to consider the larger context of Long Island, we find telling clues about the interactions and relationships among various members of the laboring class—free, indentured, or enslaved—that characterized their social networks. They clearly pursued a variety of independent activities, entertainments, and amusing diversions—both covertly and, sometimes, quite openly—that, if exceeding customary norms, did occasionally give rise to tensions with their masters, managers, or employers. Amidst an alarming smallpox outbreak in 1732, for example, the Trustees for the Town of Brookhaven tried to reduce its transmission by requiring all masters “to keep & restrain their servants & slaves from absenting themselves by night” and by strictly prohibiting the “selling or otherwise disposing to any Indians, Indian servants, or negro slaves, any manner of strong drink . . . to prevent all which disorders.” The fact that the public health emergency precipitated a crackdown suggests that, in fact, they were accustomed to traversing the countryside, availing themselves of local taverns, and occasionally enjoying their drink to

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<sup>42</sup> Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>43</sup> Moss, *Slavery on Long Island*, 93; Grania Bolton Marcus, “Discovering the African American Experience on Long Island,” in *Exploring African-American History: Long Island and Beyond*, ed. Natalie A. Naylor (Hempstead, NY: Long Island Studies Institute, 1995), 1-20.

excess, even though laws against selling alcohol to Indians had long been on the books. To curb these activities, any “Indian servant or negro slave” now apprehended after dark or “other Indian found Drunk at any other time,” would be “sentenced to be public whipt,” unless they or their master paid a fine.<sup>44</sup> As this example attests, whenever the social order was threatened by enslaved individuals or groups, the repressive laws were on the books, in place and ready, so repercussions were immediate and dire. Fear of family separations, capital punishment, whippings, dismemberment, or deportation to the sugar islands all served as major deterrents to more serious crimes and revolts.

Nevertheless, over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries on Long Island, African Americans and Indians, whatever their legal status, increasingly managed to gather together, at least periodically, to celebrate holidays, participate in religious observances, and attend funerals, weddings, and other important social rituals.<sup>45</sup> The importance such activities held for them is underscored when one considers that they pursued them in spite of considerable obstacles—including limited free time, long distances since they were quite geographically dispersed, and numerous slave laws specifically designed to prevent precisely these kinds of activities and potentially subversive relationships. By the mid-eighteenth century, not coincidentally, the Town of Brookhaven already saw a high degree of intermarriage between its Native and African American populations. Likewise, several families associated with the Floyd Estate, in some cases over multiple generations, developed kinship ties with the Unkechaug and other Native communities.

Such relationships, in turn, complicated the racial caste system on Long Island; by analyzing local militia rosters, for example, historian Edward Knoblauch demonstrated “the high degree of complexity, inconsistency, and arbitrariness of racial categories at the time: Many individuals’ names included ‘Indian’ as an identifier—such as Simon Indian, Harry Indian, and Tim Indian—and a physical description (for example, ‘light complexioned Indian’ or ‘light colored Indian’) . . . members of the same family were variously described as Indian, Mulatto (indicating mixed African and White parentage), or Mustee (indicating mixed African and Indian parentage); in other instances, the very same individual was described in one document as a ‘Brown Indian’ and in another as ‘Mustee.’<sup>46</sup> While colonial officials struggled with how to categorize and control an increasingly diverse subaltern population, the strong social bonds between African and Indian peoples, as well as children born of mixed heritage, helped bridge their cultural differences. Without

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<sup>44</sup> Minutes of Trustees’ Meeting, April 10, 1732, in *Records of the Town of Brookhaven up to 1800*, ed. Hutchinson, 124-25.

<sup>45</sup> Graham R. Hodges, *Root and Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

<sup>46</sup> Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 136-37; Edward Knoblauch, “Mobilizing Provincials for War: The Composition of New York Forces in 1760,” *New York History* 78, no. 2 (April 1977): 147-72.

these mutually supportive relationships, which became vitally important for the survival of people of color on Long Island, the institution of slavery would have been even more horrible and dehumanizing.

During Nicoll I's proprietorship, the Floyd Estate in Mastic developed into a flourishing agricultural enterprise. Like most local farms, it produced a range of crops (including corn, wheat, rye, oats, and flax) and livestock (including cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses).<sup>47</sup> In addition to its working population, the estate also saw considerable comings and goings of different people from the surrounding area. Until they could buy their own property (which often required relocating to areas with fewer large estates), for example, white tenant farmers leased land from the Floyds to cultivate, often paying their rent in produce. As the archives attest, a regular stream of itinerant craftspeople, local tradesmen, merchants, and other visitors also passed through.

In particular, the Unkechaugs in neighboring Poospatuck continued to have extensive dealings with the Floyds, intertwining commerce, labor, shared land uses, and other kinds of personal and business interactions. In 1759, for example, Ocus Indian supplemented his income by hunting for deer and selling their skins to the Floyds for leather.<sup>48</sup> Like his father, Nicoll continued to launch whaling designs (as each venture was called), even though competition for crews was more fierce than ever; although the problems of debt persisted, the most experienced whalers, such as a skilled harpooner, could now demand a "lay" (a share) of all the whales caught during the season. Nevertheless, Nicoll I kept his hand in, even transferring "all my Whaling Tackling with all my Indians for that design" to his son when he died.<sup>49</sup>

Importantly, the Unkechaugs' dealings with the Floyds were not completely one-sided. As in their arrangement with Tangier Smith, who deeded land back to them, they gradually negotiated "a reciprocal relationship . . . that enabled their core community to maintain its cohesion, whereas the other Algonquian tribes were disappearing from their original homelands to seek work wherever they could find it."<sup>50</sup> This kind of mutuality is suggested in a 1685 deposition related to a dispute over a particular beach, claimed by both William Smith and the Town of Brookhaven. The Unkechaug leaders insisted that they, in fact, still owned the beach in question, but gave leave to townspeople to process whales and cut firewood there, while "the Col. Floyd's family to this day keep horses upon it on the Town Right."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Nicoll Floyd's "Last Will and Testament," signed March 5, 1755 and entered into probate Feb. 14, 1757, Early Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 22), WFEA.

<sup>48</sup> Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 140.

<sup>49</sup> Nicoll Floyd's "Last Will and Testament," signed March 5, 1755 and entered into probate Feb. 14, 1757, Early Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 22), WFEA.

<sup>50</sup> Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 117-18.

<sup>51</sup> Document relating to Beach Rights, 1685, Richard Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 1), WFEA.

Another undated document (circa 1850-1870) in the estate archives states that the Unkechaug “have erected wigwams and houses without objection on the part of Floyd or his heirs. They had cut their wood (and underwood) from the land of Floyd without objection. After the Indians have gathered their corn, Floyd turns in his cattle to pasture and also in the spring before planting.”<sup>52</sup> As indicated by the mention of Indians transitioning from wigwams to houses, some of these mutually agreeable arrangements apparently persisted well into the nineteenth century. Within the context of settler-colonialism, however, a significant power imbalance still suffused most of the Unkechaugs’ interactions with the Floyds and other white landowners and employers.

### *People as Property*

When Nicoll I drew up his will in 1755, he carefully specified how his worldly estate was to be conveyed to his progeny. Reflecting the patriarchal bent of gender relations in colonial America, he divided his assets unevenly between his male children (soon-to-be heads of households), favoring the eldest as dictated by primogeniture, and his female children (soon-to-be wives and mothers). Hence, as the first-born son, William received the largest share, namely the 4,400-acre Mastic estate, along with “all my Negro or Indian servants on the farm at South whether Male or Female that shall not be otherwise disposed of by me.” In addition, William received all of its “cattle, sheep, hogs, or horses, and all my farming utensils, smiths tools, with all my Whaling Tacking with all my Indians for that design with all my Negro or Indian Servants.” Nicoll’s younger son Charles received the Smithtown farm, with all of its livestock, farming implements, and “all my servants there (belonging to the place) Negro or Indian Male or Female.”<sup>53</sup> To the frustration of future historians, however, the will did not specify what their precise legal status was (since Indians may have been indentured rather than chattel slaves; and whalemens presumably were only under contract) or any other personal details about them. Nevertheless, its revealing that Nicoll assumed future heirs and executors would have no difficulty determining which people “belonged” to each of his farms.

While apportioning ample lands to his sons, Nicoll I left each of his six daughters—Ruth, Tabitha, Charity, Mary, Catherine, and Ann—a “Bed and reasonable furniture for same,” a sum of £650 to be paid when they married or turned 21, and “a negro Girl”—even specifying which daughter was to receive the girls named Lydia, Indgo, and Jip. On colonial Long Island, this kind of arrangement was very typical among large and middling male landowners. To provide for their wives, daughters, and other (usually unmarried) female

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<sup>52</sup> Undated, Papers of John Floyd Gelston (Box 1, Folder 23), WFEA.

<sup>53</sup> Nicoll Floyd’s “Last Will and Testament,” signed March 5, 1755 and entered into probate Feb. 14, 1757; Executors’ Memorandum, March 28, 1755, Early Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folders 22 and 26), WFEA. For transcription of Nicoll’s Will, see Torres-Reyes, “Historic Resource Study,” Appendix B, [http://npshistory.com/publications/fiis/floyd\\_estate\\_hrs.pdf](http://npshistory.com/publications/fiis/floyd_estate_hrs.pdf).

kin, they might leave them a little land (or the use of it), but more typically they provided an inheritance of moveable property, including quite often human beings. In 1716, for example, John Cook of Southampton divided his lands among his four sons and left his daughter “one cow, four silver spoons, and a negro man.”<sup>54</sup> In 1721, Anthony Ludlam distributed five “negro boys”—Cesar, Cose, Firns, Peter, and Stephen—among his four daughters and eldest son, but only the latter inherited land, livestock, and tools as well. The same pattern persisted three decades later when Samuel Thompson of Brookhaven left his daughter Mary “two silver spoons” and a “negro girl,” but instructed his executors to sell several other enslaved children with the proceeds to benefit his daughter Susanah, probably because she was still a minor.<sup>55</sup> In nearby East Hampton in 1745, Matthias Burnett left his wife the use of two rooms in his house, some silver plate and money, and “My Indian girl,” but left “my Indian boy and my negro boy” to his grandson.<sup>56</sup> Through these means, affluent white families on Long Island, and elsewhere in the North, magnified and conveyed their wealth, from generation to generation, through a dehumanizing process that reduced living, breathing human beings to chattel property.

Very similarly, in 1767, Richard Floyd III (Nicol I’s brother) bequeathed nearby Pattersquash farm and prime tracts in the Manor of St. George to his eldest son Richard IV and another valuable farm to his son Benjamin. Once again, the land came ready stocked with “all my negro and Indian servants,” livestock, farming implements, and household furnishings “belonging to said premises.” Richard III specified, however, that his wife Elizabeth was to receive “my negro boy Tice” and “my three negro Wenches Jude, Zipporah, and Kate, but not Kate’s child, for that I give to my son Benjamin.” With thoughtful regard for his own womenfolk, Richard required his grown sons to take care of all living expenses for their mother and sister Mary (as long as they were unmarried), including “necessaries for my three wenches while they live with my wife.”<sup>57</sup> His tenderness only extended so far, however, since he apparently did not hesitate to separate a mother and child. For her part, Kate had to live with the horrifying awareness that, upon her master’s death, her child would be ripped from her.

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<sup>54</sup> Will of John Cook (1716) and Will of Anthony Ludlam (1721) in “Abstracts of Wills on File in the Surrogates Office, 1708-1728, Vol. 2,” in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1893* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1893), 203-4, 289-90.

<sup>55</sup> Cited in Patricia and Edward Shillingburg, “The Disposition of Slaves on the East End of Long Island from 1680 to 1796,” 2003, [https://www.shelter-island.org/disposition\\_slave.html](https://www.shelter-island.org/disposition_slave.html).

<sup>56</sup> Will of Matthias Burnett, 1745, in “Abstracts of Wills on File in the Surrogates Office, 1744-1753, Vol. 4,” in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1903* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1903), 74.

<sup>57</sup> Will of Richard Floyd, signed Feb. 22, 1768; proved March 17, 1784 in “Abstracts of Wills on File in the Surrogates Office, 1782-1784, Vol.12,” in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1903* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1903), 336-39, [https://archive.org/stream/collectionsofneww36newy/collectionsofneww36newy\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/collectionsofneww36newy/collectionsofneww36newy_djvu.txt).

Indeed, examples abound of enslaved people being thus regarded by their masters as capital investments and their fates dictated with little or no regard to their feelings or familial bonds. Under the cruel logic of the capitalist slave market, such bequests of human beings were expected to increase in value thanks to high prices driven up by the demand for labor; and, in the case of enslaved women, by virtue of their reproductive potential; any children they produced would inherit only their legal status as slaves, thus adding to their masters' wealth. This heartless calculus is starkly evident in one case where a Hempstead man, unable to equally allocate his slaves, left one daughter "a negro girl called Nanny," with instructions that his other daughter be given "the first girl that Nanny shall hath . . . [as soon as] it is fit to wean."<sup>58</sup> Any notion that slavery in the North was somehow benign compared with the Caribbean or the South are belied the violence and inhumanity inherent in tearing African American families apart. As the archival record amply proves, slave masters, again and again, made decisions that ruthlessly separated wives from husbands, parents from children, brothers from sisters. The mind-blowing magnitude of family separations becomes clear when one considers that on Long Island an estimated three-quarters "of enslaved African children under ten years old were sold and split from their families."<sup>59</sup>

Underscoring that harsh reality, individuals enslaved on Long Island, often at great personal risk, found ways to resist and even escape bondage, despite the dangers and harsh punishments if caught. On June 3, 1754, for example, Daniel Brewster, one of the Floyds' Brookhaven neighbors, advertised in the *New York Mercury* for the return of "a negro fellow named Jerry," described as "26 years old, about five feet seven inches high, well made, can talk good English, is a sly cunning fellow, and can play well the violin."<sup>60</sup> After running away in mid-March, Jerry was apprehended a month later in Flushing, but managed to escape the next day and had since eluded capture. His owner's decision to place his notice in a New York City paper suggests he suspected Jerry of still being in the metropolitan area. In the autumn of 1761, another regional newspaper advertised for the return of "William Negro slave with gray Beard and Hair" who ran away from his owner "George Townshend in Oyster Bay" and "Loo, Negro slave, age c. 30" who fled his owner

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<sup>58</sup> "Abstracts of Wills on File in the Surrogates Office, 1708-1728, Vol. 2," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, 326.

<sup>59</sup> Moss, *Slavery on Long Island*, 24-48.

<sup>60</sup> *New York Mercury*, June 3, 1754.

John Gosline of Newtown, L.I.”<sup>61</sup> According to a 1789 newspaper advertisement, another owner sought the return of a fifty-year-old man named Bill, “brought up near Hempstead,” and “acquainted with farming in every branch to a nicety.”<sup>62</sup>

Typically, individuals who fled Long Island, such as these, found their way to the bustling city where they could more easily “disappear” among its diverse populace, connect with sympathetic members of its free black community or antislavery whites, and seek illicit employment as a carter, domestic servant, workshop assistance, street cleaner, or similar low-level jobs. Some self-liberated men headed straight to the crowded waterfront in hopes of signing on with an out-bound vessel, since ship captains in need of able-bodied sailors, might overlook their legal status. Given his proficiency on the violin, Jerry may well have been in demand as a musician at the city’s numerous working-class taverns.<sup>63</sup> In November 1765, a man named Caesar ran away from “the manor in Eaton in Suffolk County.” His master, John Hobart, advertised for his return in the *New York Gazette*, describing him as “about 40 years of age, 5 feet 8 inches high, has thick lips, bandy legs, walks lame, and speaks very bad English.” Alerting readers that Caesar was probably headed back to his former post in New Jersey, Hobart warned that the fugitive absconded “in the company of one Thomas Cornwall, who calls himself a Bristol man, and who it is feared has forged a pass for the negro.”<sup>64</sup> Given his master’s suspicions about his intended destination, Caesar likely hoped to reunite with loved ones he had been forced to leave behind; apparently, he made his escape thanks to a rare instance of inter-racial solidarity with an English working-class immigrant.

While some enslaved people ran away, others fled *to* Long Island, perhaps to escape an abusive owner or, if they had been sold away or leased out to work elsewhere, to reconnect with family members and friends, if only briefly. Such may have been the case in 1760 with “Wall, Negro slave, born at Oysterbay, L.I., age c 40,” who abandoned his post in New York City on the day after Christmas. In 1764, a man named Joe ran away from New Jersey and “hired himself as a free man to a Butcher” in New York City and Westchester; when his owner pursued him, Joe “getting notice of it, went off and is probably lurking or concealed in the Neighborhood, Long Island or New York.”<sup>65</sup> Despite such efforts to resist or escape bondage, slavery as a legally sanctioned institution persisted in New York until

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<sup>61</sup> Kenneth Scott, ed., *Genealogical Data from Colonial New York Newspapers* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2000), 77, 82-83.

<sup>62</sup> Cited in Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 22.

<sup>63</sup> Scott, ed., *Genealogical Data from Colonial New York Newspapers*, 77, 82.

<sup>64</sup> *New-York Gazette*, Dec. 5, 1765, cited in Graham R. Hodges and Alan E. Brown, eds., *Pretends to be Free: Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 135.

<sup>65</sup> Cited in Graham R. Hodges, *Root and Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 118.

the early nineteenth century. Men, women, and children of African descent continued to be routinely bought, sold, moved, or leased out by their ostensible owners, and, in many cases, bequeathed from one generation to the next along with other property.

## *Life and Labor on the Floyd Estate in the Mid-Eighteenth Century*

In 1755, Nicoll I and Tabitha Floyd both died suddenly, possibly of typhus. Their eldest son, William Floyd (1734-1821), as was customary (and as earlier specified in Nicoll I's Will), received the bulk of his father's earthly estate, including the Mastic house, along with all its "Negro or Indian servants," livestock, agricultural and blacksmith tools, and household furnishings.<sup>66</sup> At age twenty-one, he was now responsible for a large number of dependents including his younger siblings and his father's bondspeople. Having grown up in Brookhaven, William was part of a tight-knit kinship circle. His cousin Richard IV (1731/2-1791), for example, lived on a neighboring estate. The cousins were both educated in country schools and groomed for their future roles as country gentlemen and members of the political elite. As young men, they undoubtedly attended lavish dinners at one another's homes, had friends in common, and participated in joint hunting parties. As they came of age, they likely trained alongside the local militia.<sup>67</sup> With his parents' sudden death, however, the relatively carefree days of William's youth ended abruptly as he had to take responsibility for his younger siblings. Five years later, he married Hannah Jones in 1760. Then between 1762 and 1767, they had three children of their own—Nicoll II (1762-1852), Mary (1765-1852), and Catherine (1767-1832).<sup>68</sup>

When Nicoll I died, the people that he claimed as property received no inheritance; they received only a new master, as young William now gained patriarchal authority over everyone within the household, whatever their status. By 1776, according to a town census, ten enslaved men and women lived on the estates (probably most inherited from his father), plus two children under age 16.<sup>69</sup> While the chronology is uncertain, later anecdotal sources specifically mention individuals named Tom, coachman Harry Howard, Lansom Frank, Pomp, and women named Phillis, Jamima, and "Pomp's wife" (name unknown).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Nicoll Floyd's "Last Will and Testament," signed March 5, 1755 and entered into probate Feb. 14, 1757, Early Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 22), WFEA.

<sup>67</sup> "An Abstract of the Militia Roles Returned to the Honourable James De Lancey Esq. Governor of New York Anno 1758 by Richard Floyd Esq. Colonel of the Regiment of Militia Foot for Suffolk County consisting of two Battalions," 1758, Museum of the City of New York.

<sup>68</sup> Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report*, 16.

<sup>69</sup> *Census of Suffolk County, 1776*, 6. Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 103-31.

<sup>70</sup> These names of enslaved persons, purportedly owned by William Floyd, appear in Jones Pomroy, *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County* (Rome, NY, 1851); Jan DeAmicis, "Slavery in Oneida County, New York," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 27, no. 2 (2003): 69-134.

At the same time, by comparison, Richard IV, who lived in an opulent house on 900-acre Pattersquash farm with his wife Arabella and their three children, also owned twelve bondspeople, including seven children under age 16. As such the cousins were among the largest slaveowners in Suffolk County.<sup>71</sup>

By the mid-eighteenth century, Long Island's enslaved population had grown to 34 percent in Kings County, 17 percent in Queens County, and 14 percent in Suffolk County. At that juncture, New York had more enslaved Africans than any colony north of Maryland. For the most part, the majority were still owned in small numbers by white owners.<sup>72</sup> Along with the Hudson Valley and southern Rhode Island, however, Long Island had some of the largest slaveholders in the North, who, like the Floyds, owned larger numbers of slaves which made possible these regions' distinctive plantation-style agriculture.

The overall significance of slave labor to New York's economy, as well as its uneven distribution, during this period is underscored by the debates over a proposed tax on slaves. In 1755, Lt. Gov. James De Lancey proposed the tax to strengthen the colony's defense after the French and their Indian allies defeated the British at the Battle of the Monongahela (near Pittsburgh), which ended up sparking the Seven Years' War. To stress the severity of the crisis, De Lancey warned the Colonial Assembly that the only way to rebuke "the Pride of the French, curb the Insolence of their Indians, and confirm and animate ours, is immediately to raise more Troops. . . in the Defense of our Religion from Popery, our Persons from Slavery, and our Property from arbitrary Power." To save his fellow citizens from these French horrors, he proposed to charge slave owners a "Poll Tax of Ten Shillings for every Slave from fifteen to fifty Years of Age." Significantly, he insisted that the law could not "be thought heavy, as none but Persons of some substance possess Slaves and the Tax will fall equally according to Men's Abilities."<sup>73</sup> In a later speech, he claimed that since "the Price of Labor is now become so high, Owners of Slaves reap such Advantage, that they cannot possibly complain of a Tax on them."<sup>74</sup> While that description certainly applied to him and other wealth patricians, like the Floyds, smaller slaveholders rejected that characterization and vehemently opposed the tax.

In an effort to assuage them, De Lancey sought to elicit his fellow citizens' sense of racial superiority by suggesting that, presumably by making slaveholding more expensive, his proposal would "naturally tend to Introduce white Servants, which will augment the

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<sup>71</sup> Will of Richard Floyd III, 1760, Museum of the City of New York.

<sup>72</sup> Moss, *Slavery on Long Island*, 72; Lynda R. Day, *Making a Way to Freedom: A History of African Americans on Long Island* (Interlaken, NY: Empire State Books, 1997); Alan Singer, "Slavery in Colonial and Revolutionary New York: Complicity and Resistance," *Long Island History Journal* 20, nos. 1-2 (Fall 2007-Spring 2008): 165.

<sup>73</sup> James De Lancey, Aug. 5, 1755, in *Journal of the Legislative Council of the Colony of New-York [1691-1775]*, vol. 2 (New York: Weed, Parsons, 1861), 1057, 1209.

<sup>74</sup> James De Lancey, Dec. 7, 1757, *ibid.*, 1308.

Strength of the Country.”<sup>75</sup> At the same time, intriguingly, he also suggested taxing tea, as a means of both raising more revenues and reducing consumption of a “superfluity of pernicious Consequence to the Health and Purses of the People.” Whether or not his efforts to bridge class differences with racist or moralizing arguments made the difference, the Colonial Assembly passed the Poll Tax earmarked to finance the military, but continued to rely on voluntary lotteries, rather than taxes, to raise funds for civic projects (such as founding a college).

Since agriculture was the *raison d'être* of the Floyd Estate, the last section of this chapter will look more closely at how that shaped its inhabitants' daily lives. By way of context, it is important first to understand some of the typical characteristics of agricultural labor in early America. Most fundamentally, it required a deep and abiding awareness of the seasons, weather, and changing environmental conditions. Throughout the Northeast, whether on a small farm or a large estate, agricultural workers faced constant pressure, from April to early November, to maximize what they could produce during the warm months. From late November through March, when winter cold set in and the darkness came early, the men and women continued to work, if at a slightly reduced pace. While the ground was frozen and the fields lay fallow, they could catch up on other necessary projects that had been postponed until the off-season (such as mending fences, cutting wood, making repairs, or processing wool and flax) as well as other winter-oriented activities, such as harvesting ice or hauling logs using sledges.

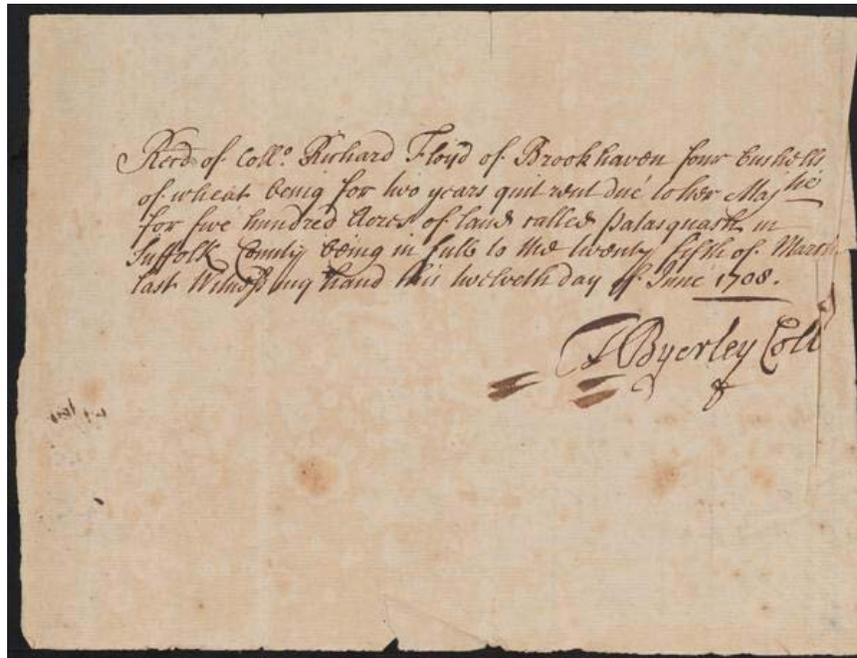
On the Floyd Estate, after the land was initially cleared, hundreds of acres (although exact numbers are uncertain) were devoted to cultivation, adhering closely the general pattern of agricultural development in Long Island. Although the amount of acreage in use and specific crops varied over time, the estate grew a mix of fruits, vegetables and grains, especially corn, rye, and wheat. Although from a later period, Samuel Thompson's careful records of his Setauket farm operations suggest the variety and pace of work required; his seven bondspeople (about half as many as the Floyds) worked twelve months a year and six days a week, with Sundays off. Their tasks included, among others, “threshing oats, dressing, crackling and swingling flax, sowing clover seed, mending fences, and plowing cornstalks on the forty-acre lot, sowing flax, planting cherry trees, digging up potatoes and dunging and tending the vegetable garden.”<sup>76</sup> As that description suggests, although labor conditions for enslaved people in the North were relatively less brutal than the relentless grind of a sugar plantation, slaveholders generally sought to extract as much work as possible from their captive labor force. During this period, Long Island developed into one of British America's primary wheat-producing regions, supplying large quantities

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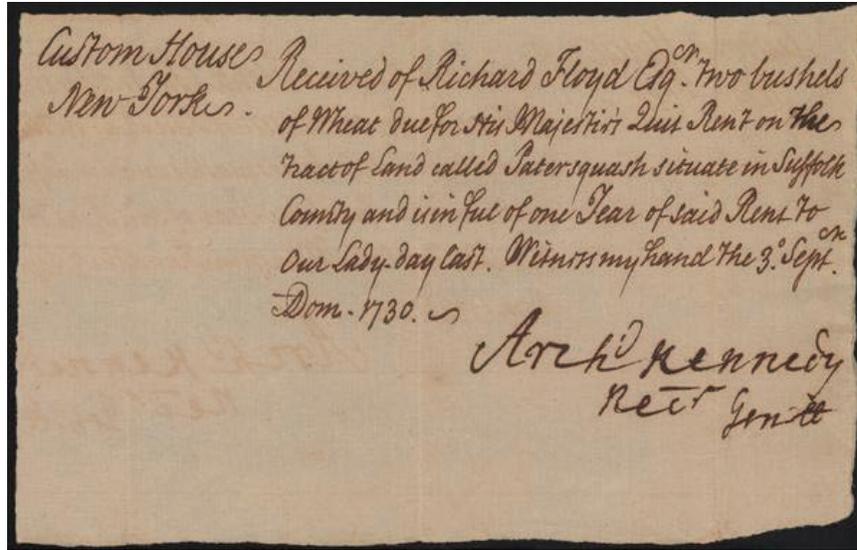
<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> White, *Somewhat More Independent*, 94.

of flour both to the local populace and export markets, especially in the West Indian sugar islands. As early as 1708, receipts record the Floyds routinely paying their annual quit rents with bushels of wheat.



**Figure 2.8:** Receipt for Quit Rent, June 12, 1708, “received of Coll. Richard Floyd of Brookhaven.” By the early eighteenth century, wheat had become one of Long Island’s most important crops. As this receipt indicates, the Floyds paid their quit rent in wheat, here specifically “four bushells [sic] of wheat being for two years quit rent due to Her Majesty [Queen Anne] for five hundred acres of land called Pattersquash in Suffolk County,” Courtesy of the William Floyd Estate Archives, National Park Service.



**Figure 2.9:** Receipt for Quit Rent, September 3, 1730, “received of Richard Floyd Esq.” In this later receipt, Richard Floyd paid “two bushels of Wheat due for His Majesty’s [King George II] Quit Rent on the Tract of Land called Patersquash in Suffolk County and is in full of one Year of Said Rent. . .,” Custom House, New York, signed Arch Kennedy. Courtesy of the William Floyd Estate Archives, National Park Service.

Although there is no record of how much the estate produced, the workers apparently managed to grow enough wheat and other crops to provision the estate and produce a merchantable surplus, probably equaling that of similarly sized properties. As a snapshot, in 1754, Nicoll Floyd sold 50 bushels of wheat to one buyer. Although no evidence has been found of the Floyds specifically consigning shipments of wheat to the Caribbean, it is highly likely that some portion ended up there given the patterns of trade at the time, perhaps transshipped via merchants in Boston and New York with whom they had dealings. Rather than become over-reliant on a single crop, as some Long Island farmers did to their folly, however, the Floyd Estate grew other crops as well. In November 1774, for example, William consigned 40 bushels of flax seed to Andrew Baron aboard a ship owned by William Wallace.<sup>77</sup>

Although less rigid in colonial settings than in England, gendered patterns persisted in the realm of agricultural labor in early America. Typically, male workers would have handled most activities related to agriculture and livestock management. Some enslaved men also enjoyed a measure of mobility—including traveling around the island on errands, transporting goods or livestock to market, sailing or driving the Floyds wherever they wanted to go, and regularly transporting shipments of cordwood and other produce to the city and other seaports. Moreover, whenever William Floyd traveled or had business in New York, Albany, or Philadelphia, including weeks-long stretches when Congress was in

<sup>77</sup> Receipt, Nov. 15, 1774, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 50), WFEA.

session, he usually was accompanied by at least one manservant and possibly a coachman or groomsmen. When not actually attending to the needs of their master (or his horses), these men could have savored a taste of city life and the mix of company at various hostelrys where they lodged.<sup>78</sup> Returning to Mastic, they could regale their co-workers on the Floyd Estate with the latest news from the nation's cosmopolitan centers.

By contrast, the responsibilities of women on the estate, especially those with young children, allowed for considerably less mobility. Charged with daily duties such as milking, making cheese and butter, cooking meals, as well as caring for their own children, if any, women likely had relatively few chances to venture far from the estate, except very briefly. To a significant degree that reflected the general social constraints on women of all classes, but especially for those who did not have the status that accrued from a recognized marriage or the security afforded by other male protectors.

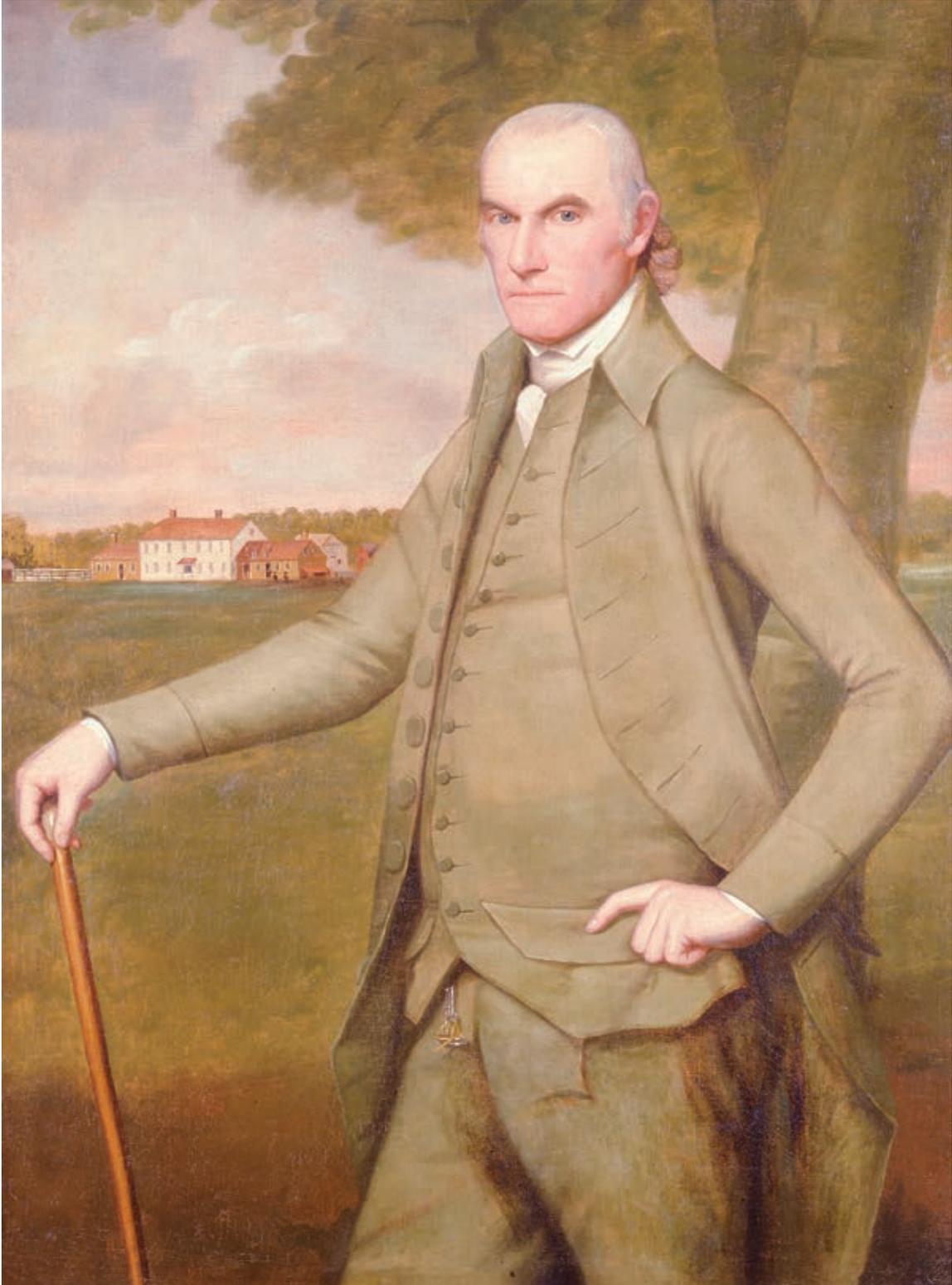
Just as slavery had become important to the colony, William Floyd considered it an integral part of his patrimony and his agricultural enterprise. If one looks closely at his 1792 portrait, for example, observant eyes will discern three tiny figures of black people by the side door of their master's large white house. Although relegated to the background, their inclusion nevertheless reflects their constant presence on the actual physical landscape for much of the estate's history and their vital contributions to the Floyds' dynastic wealth and status.



**Figure 2.10:** Detail of enslaved workers and house in portrait of William Floyd, 1792, by Ralph Earl. Original portrait is at Independence National Historical Park, National Park Service. Courtesy of William Floyd Estate, National Park Service.

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<sup>78</sup> Receipt, Jan. 24, 1784, paid £4.4 to Rachel Williams for “2 Weeks Board of his Servant,” William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 50), WFEA.



**Figure 2.11:** Portrait of William Floyd, 1792, by Ralph Earl. Oil on canvas. Original portrait is at Independence National Historical Park, National Park Service. Courtesy of the William Floyd Estate Archives, National Park Service.

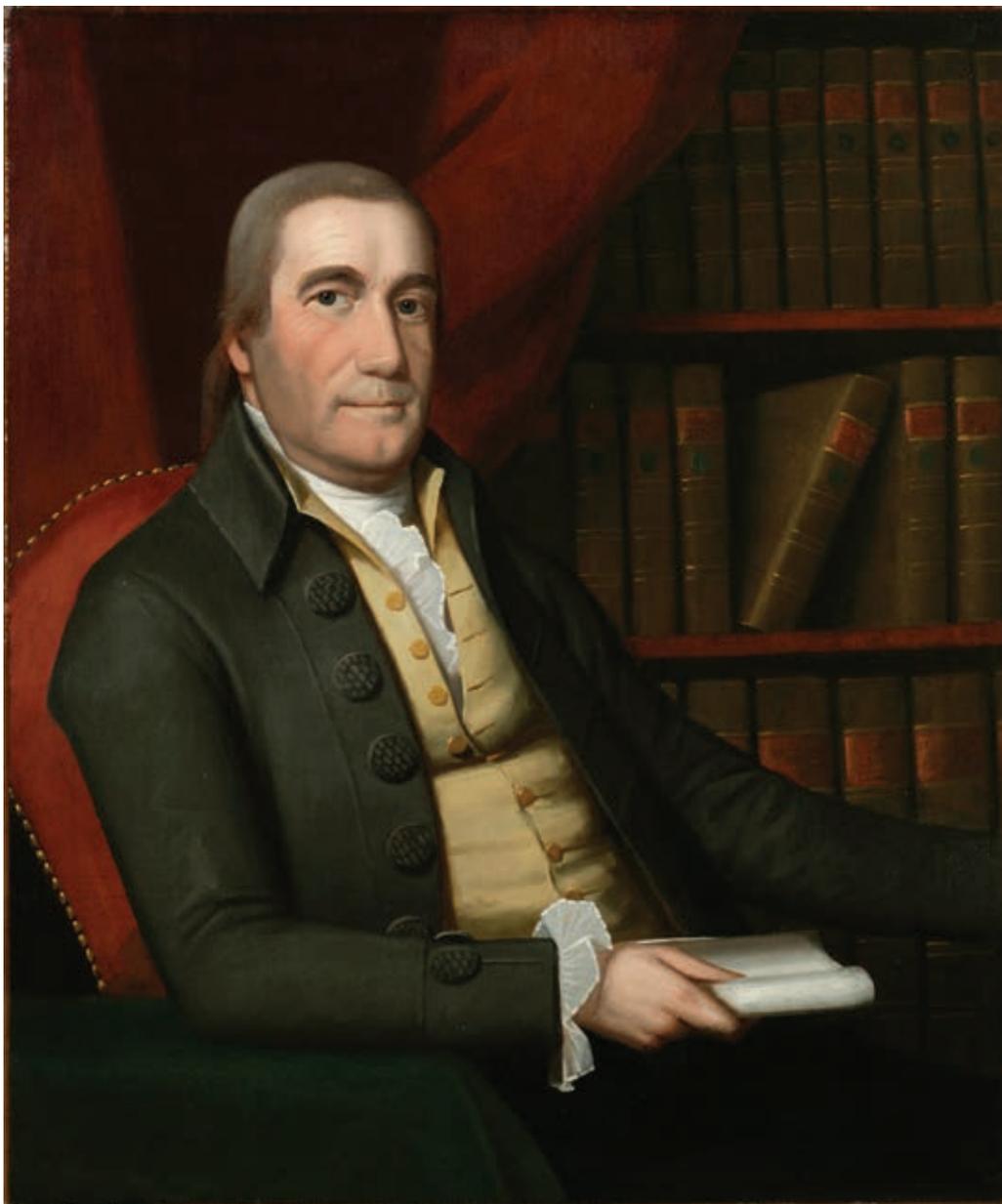
For the most part, William and Hannah Floyd, although relatively conservative in their tastes, maintained the level of refinement and respectability expected of people of their elite status. They were among the regular clientele, for example, of Elias Pelletreau, the leading silversmith on eastern Long Island. After apprenticing in New York City with the master artisan and fellow Huguenot Simeon Soumaine, Pelletreau returned to Easthampton around 1750. Since Hannah's parents were also among his patrons, she was already familiar with his elegant wares. Following their marriage, the couple periodically made additional purchases from the silversmith's workshop, including, for example, "a set of stone jewels" and a "shell snuff box" in 1761. In a typical transaction, a few years later, William bought a yoke of oxen from the silversmith while also owing him "for the balance on a necklace of beads [and] shell sleeve buttons for one of his daughters."<sup>79</sup> By the standards of the time, the Floyds owned considerable household silver, including spoons, tankards, and porringers, some of which Pelletreau made and occasionally repaired. They even adorned their children's shoes with silver buckles, reflecting love and indulgence toward their progeny but also an expectation that the whole family adhere to elite standards of dress. By contrast, of course, their enslaved workers were not afforded silver shoe buckles, but heavy-duty footwear and basic clothing that they made or that was issued by Floyd.

Like previous generations of Floyd men, William engaged in local religious and civic affairs, as was expected of him. He was also elected to serve on the Board of Trustees for the Town of Brookhaven in 1769. Although initially elevated to public office largely by virtue of his family's standing, he proceeded to earn a positive reputation as a "competent and trustworthy citizen." His political career was significantly boosted by his sister Charity's husband, Ezra L'Hommedieu, an influential Southold lawyer.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Deborah Dependahl Waters, "Ties That Bind: Clients of the Pelletreau Shop, 1760–1817" in Dean F. Failey, *Elias Pelletreau, Long Island Silversmith and Entrepreneur, 1726–1810*, ed. Jennifer L. Anderson (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Preservation Long Island, 2018).

<sup>80</sup> Ezra L'Hommedieu married Charity Floyd (William Floyd's sister) in 1765; Charity died in 1785. In 1803 he was remarried to Mary Catherine Havens, with whom he had one daughter, Mary Catherine L'Hommedieu. "Guide to the Sylvester Manor Archive, 1649-1996," MSS 208, Sylvester Manor Archives, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University, New York, NY.



**Figure 2.12:** *Ezra L'Homedieu*, 1792, attributed to Ralph Earl, oil on canvas; original is at New-York Historical Society and copy at Sylvester Manor. Courtesy of Sylvester Manor.

The two men would remain friends and allies through many travails. At the same time, William seemed to drift away from his cousin Richard IV, despite their many commonalities. In particular, their different branches of the family diverged over religion. Their fathers and their mutual grandfather had been heavily involved in establishing and maintaining the Caroline Church in nearby Setauket. Yet while Richard IV's side of the family remained devout Anglicans, William joined the Presbyterians, although perhaps out of a sense of fealty he continued to contribute toward maintenance of the Caroline Church. In September 1761, for example, William paid the sum of £35 toward its renovation fund.

Although it is unclear to what extent religious differences informed their later political views, Richard IV remained a Loyalist, as was typical for Anglicans, while William, like most Presbyterians, became a Patriot.<sup>81</sup>

As an elite white woman, Hannah Floyd, like other married Floyd women, was her husband's helpmate, taking charge as needed in his absence and freeing him to pursue his political career. While often obscured in archival sources, white women played key roles in household management and domestic production throughout colonial America. In the early settlement era, with labor in short supply, they often joined their husband, children, and servants in the fields. But with the expansion of slavery, white women were freed from fieldwork and other onerous labors, apart perhaps from assisting during the harvest and other busy seasons. On smaller farms, they still undertook all aspects of domestic labor while also contributing significantly to the household economy—for example, by keeping chickens, gardening, and making butter and cheese—providing for their families and selling the surplus. As the female head of an affluent slave-holding family, however, Hannah was fortunate to take mainly a supervisory role as mistress of the house, overseeing the enslaved people and servants in her charge.

Throughout the various stages of their lives—as daughters (especially if unmarried), sisters, wives, and mothers—white women were also expected to provide essential caregiving to children, the elderly, the ill, and the disabled. In many cases, especially in rural areas where schools and tutors were lacking or unavailable, they took charge of their children's education and religious training. By at least the early 19th century, some of the Floyd women extended their teaching efforts to include Bible lessons for the children enslaved or indentured in the household, as well as Unkechaug children in Poospatuck. When circumstances required, white women took on major additional responsibilities, such as when a male head-of-household was away due to military or civic duties, incapacitated, or deceased. On neighboring St. George Estate, for example, Martha Smith took over her husband Tangier Smith's whaling company after he died; under her management, it continued to average 20 whales per season.<sup>82</sup>

In *Emancipating New York*, David Gellman describes colonial Long Island during the eighteenth century as “a unique provincial society in which race-based power intersected with ethnic diversity as well as hierarchies of inherited wealth, prestige, and influence.”<sup>83</sup> At the same time, few of its inhabitants could imagine an existence separate from Great Britain. If anything, as historian Timothy Breen points out, most Americans during this era aspired to become *more* British and cleaved closer than ever to their

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<sup>81</sup> Caroline Church Receipt, Richard Floyd III to William Floyd, 1761, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 21), WFEA.

<sup>82</sup> Nomi Dayan, *Whaling on Long Island* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2016), 45.

<sup>83</sup> David N. Gellman, *Emancipating New York: The Politics of Slavery and Freedom, 1777-1827* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2006), 19.

“mother country.”<sup>84</sup> Wealthy and middling Americans avidly followed the latest London styles and fashions and consumed vast quantities of English manufactured goods. For the most part, they were content to work within the imperial structure to address any problems, while jealously guarding their local autonomy. As explored in the next chapter, however, in the 1760s the civic unrest over British policies, initially centered in urban seaports like Boston and New York City, soon permeated Long Island as well, upending the lives of all its inhabitants.

### *Spatial Organization of the Working Landscape*

Today, visitors arriving at the Floyd Estate experience a very different landscape than during earlier chapters of its long history. Following a winding pathway from the parking lot through over-hanging trees, they emerge onto a wide meadowed glade; to the left, on a slight rise, stands the Floyd’s stolid old house and, to the right, a grassy sward slopes down to a wall of dense woodlands, where through a single break in the trees, Long Island Sound’s blue waters can be glimpsed. On a typical day, the timeless scene is of one of a verdant park, wrapped in deep peace and tranquility. Yet this same place would have made a very different impression during its earlier existence as a working farming, a prominent countryseat, and the dwelling place for numerous inhabitants.

To help reimagine its formerly lively character—with all the busy, messy, noisy, smelly aspects that implies—this section suggests how the Floyd Estate may have appeared during the mid- to late-eighteenth century. To facilitate interpretation, it divides the estate’s historic landscape into five interpretive zones: (1) Southern Fields; (2) Northern Woodlands; (3) Main House; (4) Outbuildings; and (5) Cemetery. Based on archival sources, historic maps, architectural features, and other evidence, these designations roughly correlate with the site’s spatial organization in terms of its past occupants’ productive activities and social relationships. Given the fragmentary documentation and myriad later changes, which are to be expected over the course of generations, however, this schema, while evidence-based, is inherently artificial and impressionistic. As noted in the introduction, it should therefore be considered an informed approximation.

All agricultural workers in the North—whether enslaved, indentured, or wage-based—typically performed a wide array of tasks, dictated to a large degree by the seasons and the climate. Although we do not know exactly what the Floyd Estate workers’ daily routines involved, numerous productive activities are mentioned in the archives, although often only as oblique references, such as on a receipt or a passing mention in a letter. From a list of produce destined for market, for example, we know that the estate sold butter, lard,

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<sup>84</sup> T. H. Breen, “Baubles of Britain: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 119, no. 1 (1988): 73-104.

and cider—with that knowledge, we can logically infer that the workers were also caring for cows and processing their milk, butchering pigs and rendering their fat, and collecting apples from the orchard and extracting their juice with a cider mill.

To perform the myriad employments mentioned below, the men and women who worked on the Floyd Estate clearly possessed a wide range of knowledge, proficiencies, and specialized skills, developed through long experience and passed down from elders to the young. Although many aspects of their lives remain hidden and probably irretrievable, as Mac Griswold reminds us, “social identity is shaped and constantly reshaped in the practices of daily life,” such that even “the smallest details give insight into the qualities and skills required for daily life and work.”<sup>85</sup> From mentions of blacksmithing tools, conveyed to William Floyd in his father’s will, and of a blacksmith’s shop, for example, we can deduce that least one of the men was probably trained as a blacksmith; on a busy working farm, someone with the ability to shoe horses, mend tools, or fabricate hardware and fixtures as needed would have been highly valued. Building well-designed boats, coopering sound barrels to contain cider or wheat, framing a new barn, training a team of young oxen, safely felling a massive tree, navigating a sailing vessel through the Sound’s notorious shoals, plowing straight furrows, and successfully cultivating multiple crops all required different kinds of expertise.

Likewise, the women who worked on the estate juggled a remarkable range of responsibilities that involved specialized knowledge, skills, and proficiencies. Preparing even a simple meal over an open hearth or baking a loaf of bread required carefully manipulating fires to control temperatures and coordinate cooking times, and utilizing kitchen technologies and equipment (such as heavy iron pots, cranes, hooks, rotisserie spits, portable reflecting ovens, and built-in beehive ovens) which, by modern standards, were rudimentary and cumbersome.<sup>86</sup> Nursing the ill with only the pharmacopeia of medicinal plants cultivated on site or foraged from the wild also required a high level of ethnobotanical knowledge, an area where Native Americans and African Americans, especially women initiated as traditional healers, were acknowledged to excel, even by many white doctors.<sup>87</sup> Importantly, what emerges from this mental exercise is not only a fuller picture of the inhabitants’ lives on an eighteenth-century northern plantation, as recalled by the historic landscape, but also their integral role in building the agricultural and maritime enterprises that became Long Island’s economic backbone.

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<sup>85</sup> Griswold, *The Manor*, 168.

<sup>86</sup> Jennifer Jensen Wallach, Lindsey R. Swindall, and Michael D. Wise, *The Routledge History of American Foodways* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016).

<sup>87</sup> Londa Schiebinger, *Secret Cures of Slaves: People, Plants, and Medicine in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

## *Southern Fields*

According to family tradition, William Floyd and his successors always maintained a clear rough-mown area in front of the main house, framing its formal entryway, which they referred to as the “Pigthle,” an archaic English term meaning an enclosed piece of land set off from adjacent fields. With this slightly aristocratic conceit, William perhaps hoped to create the illusion for approaching visitors that his dignified house stood in a circle of calm and order. From that vantage point, he and other members of the Floyd family could also enjoy a sweeping vista of fields and meadows (now mostly wooded), stretching from left to right, all the way down to the salt marshes, shoreline, and sparkling waters of Long Island Sound.



**Figure 2.13:** View of Main House and “Pigthle,” circa 2015, William Floyd Estate.  
Photo Credit: Mary Laura Lamont.

For the enslaved African and Unkechaug workers, this landscape may have seemed rather less picturesque since one of their main jobs involved keeping the “Pigthle” mown and transforming the adjacent acreage into cultivated fields. Amidst their toils, they might well have glanced up to see Floyd surveying them and the rest of his domain from his favorite perch. Given their lowly status in the colonial hierarchy, they would have known better than to be caught neglecting their assignments, absconding from the estate, or intruding into his personal space without permission. With only a few strides, however, he could step from the hub of his country seat into their workplace, switching hats seamlessly from his role as a refined member of the local gentry to his role as their owner and taskmaster.

Throughout the growing season, the estate workers devoted most of their time to tending the fields and carrying out the numerous tasks involved with agriculture, which in eastern Long Island included considerable attention to enriching the soil’s fertility.

Sustaining arable land, especially over generations of use, was essential to coax a good crop from the earth. Every spring, the men prepared the fields for planting, cleared away any debris or rocks churned up from the previous year, and hauled manure—nature’s fertilizer—from the barns to dress the fields. Like other Long Island farmers and the Unkechaug before them, Floyd workers collected seaweed from the beach and laid out nets in the Sound to catch menhaden to deck the fields as added sustenance. Using oxen- or horse-drawn plows, they would turn up the soil, lay out careful furrows, then strew seeds by hand, and harrow them in. As the days lengthened and grew warmer, they would weed, drive off crows, and hope for rain. As summer rounded into autumn, they made a final push to bring in the crops and either store them for winter or ready them for transport to market. During the harvest and other busy times, the enslaved women and children likely joined the men in the fields.



**Figure 2.14:** View of southern fields of William Floyd Estate, circa 2015,  
Photo Credit: Mary Laura Lamont.

The southern zone also included extensive meadows for grazing cattle, sheep, and draft animals, including oxen used for hauling and plowing and some horses, used mainly for riding and pulling carriages. With so many hungry animals, it was very important during the summer to stockpile enough fodder to sustain them through the winter. Extending almost to Poospatuck, the Floyds lands included a patchwork of cultivated fields and meadows used for grazing and growing hay. Thanks to its coastal location, salt meadows were also readily accessible along the shoreline. When not tilling the fields or tending the animals, workers would gather wild grasses from these natural meadows to supplement the winter stores.

Workers of African or English origins would likely have been accustomed to keeping livestock—such as pigs, cattle, and sheep—to provide meat, dairy products, and other useful materials (like hides or wool). For the Unkechaugs, Shinnecocks, and other indigenous peoples on Long Island, however, the concept of tending herds of livestock would initially have been completely alien; traditionally, they were hunters and did not make use of domesticated animals (except dogs) prior to the colonial era. In fact, problems with settlers' errant cattle and pigs trampling Indian fields and getting shot for trespassing became a major source of tension between Indians and the English throughout the Northeast.<sup>88</sup> At the Floyd estate, the Unkechaug workers would thus have had to quickly learn how to care for their employers' flocks and herds. For much of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the estate concentrated heavily on livestock management as local sales and exports of meat became major sources of revenue.

### *Northern Woodlands*

Records show that the zone immediately northeast of the house included apple, pear, and peach orchards, which provided fruit for eating, baking, making preserves, and, most remunerative, pressing cider. Judging by the estate records, the Floyds sold large quantities of cider, undoubtedly fermented, that found ready buyers, including many Unkechaugs despite long-standing colonial restrictions on selling alcohol to Indians. In the 1680s, for example, Monogos, an Unkechaug whaleman who worked for Richard Floyd II, regularly bought estate-made cider by the quart (32 oz.) or the gallon (138 oz.), whereas his purchases of imported West Indian rum never exceeded a few gills (4 oz.) or pints (16 oz.).<sup>89</sup>

Although not documented, it is quite possible that somewhere in this area, adjacent to where slave cabins were later built (as discussed below), the enslaved inhabitants may have planted small gardens for themselves on unused scraps of lands. At Sylvester Manor, for example, an area set away from the main house was designated as the “Negro garden” and used for planting corn and other produce.<sup>90</sup> Considered the norm on larger Caribbean islands, where slaves were expected to grow much of their own food, the practice was permitted by some northern slaveholders since bondpeople who supplemented their own diets had better health; in some cases, they were also permitted to earn money by selling their produce (despite legal restrictions on slaves trading on their own account).

Beyond the orchards, large tracts of woodlands were left standing to provide a reliable supply of timber and fuel. Among the enslaved men's more grueling tasks were felling, loading, and transporting massive trees for construction on the estate or for sale.

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<sup>88</sup> Griswold, *The Manor*, 161-63; William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 128-32.

<sup>89</sup> Strong and Lamont, “The Richard Floyd Account Book, 1686-1690.”

<sup>90</sup> Griswold, *The Manor*, 178.

Given the importance of these products, the woodlands were never cleared but selectively cut. By the early 19th century, the Floyds periodically replenished them by planting useful tree species. Logging typically was done in the winter since heavy loads were easier to move on sledges across snow-beaten paths. Another major activity was cutting cordwood, usually out of smaller trees or brush, for use as fuel. The men would haul stacks of cordwood to several landings, conveniently located at intervals along the Great South Bay, and load them on shallow draft boats headed to regional markets. Although its profit margin was low, cordwood, sold in bulk, was among the estate's most reliable commodities since consumer demand rarely flagged, especially in New York City, which had an insatiable appetite for fuel.



**Figure 2.15:** View of woodlands, circa 2015, William Floyd Estate.  
Photo Credit: Mary Laura Lamont.

By the late eighteenth century, another feature of the woodland zone was a boat-building workshop, probably started by William Floyd's son Nicoll II; its location was indicated on a later estate map that noted the "Great Boat Place," adjacent to Home Creek. Unfortunately, little detail survives to indicate its scale or longevity, apart from occasional purchases of items such as cedar planks and iron fittings that might have been related to this maritime enterprise. While large sea-faring vessels were constructed elsewhere on the island, such as in Sag Harbor, Greenport, and Northport, the estate's boat-builders focused on making smaller craft, including flat-bottomed boats that could navigate the shallow waters of Long Island Sound. Especially in the early eighteenth century, before the island had adequate roads, such boats provided essential transportation, regularly traversing the coastline to visit neighboring communities, engage in short-distance trade, bring produce to markets, and deliver export cargos to larger seaports for consignment on outbound

vessels. Before 1794, when the first federal post office was established in Suffolk County, its residents “depended upon neighbors and ship captains visiting New York City or other hamlets along the way to pick up their mail and transport purchases.”<sup>91</sup>

## *Main House*

The main house, a two-story wood-frame structure, served several simultaneous functions. Firstly, of course, it served as a home to the Floyd family. Consistent with eighteenth-century concepts of elegance and refinement, its impressive size and formal style reflected the status of its elite owners.<sup>92</sup> While as previously noted, the original structure dates to circa 1724-1729, the extant structure, which now contains twenty-five rooms, was expanded with several additions over the years. Very typical of New England houses of the era, its downstairs layout featured a large entry hall, front parlors, dining room, and other public chambers, while bedrooms and other private chambers were upstairs.<sup>93</sup>



**Figure 2.16:** Front of Main House, circa 2015, William Floyd Estate.  
Photo Credit: Mary Laura Lamont.

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<sup>91</sup> Dean F. Failey, “Building a Business,” in Failey, *Elias Pelletreau, Long Island Silversmith and Entrepreneur, 1726–1810*, ed. Jennifer L. Anderson (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Preservation Long Island, 2018).

<sup>92</sup> Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1993).

<sup>93</sup> For more detailed discussion of its architecture and furnishings, see Hodson, “William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report, Vol. 1: Historical Data.”

Secondly, the house sheltered some, if possibly not all, of the enslaved and indentured workers. As was typical in the North, they likely would have taken their meals in the kitchen ell and slept in back rooms or the large garret, warmed only by the brick chimney stack. By the early eighteenth century, it was “common practice in the Northeast for slaves to occupy separate, usually ancillary spaces within their master’s household.” Since most slaveholders in the region owned only a few slaves, they generally did not see the need to invest in building separate slave housing, as was done in the South and the Caribbean, “where plantations were characterized by distinct slave quarters, if not entire slave villages, constructed to house the dozens or sometimes hundreds of slaves.”<sup>94</sup> A few exceptions on Long Island can be noted in the case of larger estates with a dozen or more slaves, where archaeological evidence suggests separate slave quarters may have existed in the eighteenth century (although none survive), including Rockwood Hall (Lawrence), Sylvester Manor (Shelter Island), and possibly also Lloyd Manor (Huntington).



**Figure 2.17:** Stairs to Attic, Main House, circa 2015, William Floyd Estate.  
Photo Credit: Mary Laura Lamont.

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<sup>94</sup> Jenna Coplin, ed., “Mapping African American History Across Long Island,” *Long Island History Journal* 23, no. 2 (2013); Christopher Matthews and Ross Rava, “An Archaeological View of Slavery and Social Relations at Rock Hall, Lawrence, New York,” *Long Island History Journal* 23, no. 2 (2013).

Judging by the several additions on the house, the Floyds, at least initially, considered it more economical and perhaps more convenient to just expand the existing structure as needed to accommodate their expanding household. Larger than average for the area, the main house, along with the other outbuildings (discussed below), could have accommodated the dozen or more people owned by the Floyds, although perhaps at uncomfortably close quarters with each other and with Floyd and his family. Little evidence survives of the personal relationships between the enslaved workers and the Floyds. Dwelling under the same roof, they would have presumably known each other very well, as witnesses to, and sometimes participants in, all the routines and intimacies of domestic life. At the same time, there remained an unbridgeable difference in their status, even though enslaved people played such integral roles within the Floyd household.

Thirdly, the house was also the nerve center for domestic activities and household production, which were largely the purview of the estate's female workers. While not precluded from general farm work, their domestic responsibilities were many and varied. Every morning, they likely cleaned and tidied the Floyds' bedchambers, emptying the chamber pots and shaking out feather mattresses, and, time permitting, their own straw pallets as well. In addition, they would have routinely swept the floors, mopped away any muddy footprints, and dusted the fine furniture. After the long winter, they may have turned the house out for a more extensive spring cleaning, scrubbing down the woodwork and washing windows.

While the mistress of the house played a supervisory role, the kitchen, which was relocated and upgraded at least four times, and other behind-the-scenes service areas, were largely the domain of the enslaved women and servants. On average, they were responsible for feeding and clothing over two dozen people (including the Floyd family and all the workers) every day. In addition to housekeeping, they must have been constantly busy—building fires, dressing meat and fowl, preparing and preserving foodstuffs, cooking, baking, cleaning, laundering, sewing, mending, and myriad other household tasks. During the warmer months, many of these activities, especially laundry and food processing, would have been done outside; the women's workspace thus encompassed the yard and outbuildings, as well as the chicken coop, kitchen gardens, and orchards.

In an unpublished memoir of her childhood, Cornelia Floyd Nichols, the last Floyd to live in the house, recalled how its service areas “hummed with spinning of wool and linen, candle making, churning and the making of sausages, lard and head cheese.”<sup>95</sup> As that quote suggests, the women contributed to estate's economic success through small-scale food processing and textile production. Adjacent to some of the “negro quarters,” located above a former kitchen space, a large open room served as the “spinning chamber.”<sup>96</sup> On

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<sup>95</sup> Cornelia Floyd Nichols, “Letters to My Great-Great Granddaughter,” 1934, unpublished memoir, William Floyd Estate Archives.

<sup>96</sup> Cited in the “Historic Structure Report,” vol. 1, 23-24.

rainy days and during the winter months, the women would have set their hands to processing the large quantities of wool and flax produced on the estate. They acquired considerable skill and proficiency with spinning wheels and looms, producing enough homespun fabric (used for shirts, shifts, and bedsheets) both to outfit everyone in the household and to sell the remainder.

## *Outbuildings*

Compared with the manicured “Pigthle” in front, the house’s back and side yards would have been busy, utilitarian spaces, dominated by the various outbuildings needed to support the estate’s diverse productive activities. Since this constellation of ancillary structures changed over time, their exact number, locations, appearance, and uses during William Floyd’s tenure are unknown. In early America, it was not unusual for vernacular structures to be moved, modified, repurposed, or rebuilt to meet changing needs, including using recycled materials from earlier buildings. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, contemporary descriptions of the estate indicate at least fourteen outbuildings were clustered behind the main house. By comparing these later descriptions with earlier archival evidence, historian William Maxwell pieced together this approximate layout of the estate’s working landscape:

West of the house stood the well and the blacksmith’s shop. In the rear, barns for cows, calves, horses, and sheep, as well as a granary, two corn cribs, a woodshed, houses for hens and geese, a smoke house, sheds for sheltering carts, and a carriage and harness house roughly encircles a central green. There was doubtless a shop for the shoemaker, who came once a year . . . The hog pen was a short distance in the orchards; it had been made by digging out an area sufficiently deep to keep the swine from climbing out. . . . At the ‘brick-kil lot’ all the bricks were made. . . . The Negro servants lived in cabins scattered round but within a mile of the main house.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Maxwell’s description was based, in part, on the recollections of the caretaker Charles Ross, who arrived at the estate in 1876. William Maxwell, *A Portrait of William Floyd. Long Islander* (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, 1956), 8-9.

Economic Activities and Labor on the Floyd Estate



**Figure 2.18 a-b:** Outbuildings on William Floyd Estate, including (a) old barns; and (b) old workshop, circa 2015.  
Photo Credit: Mary Laura Lamont.



**Figure 2.18 c-d:** Outbuildings on William Floyd Estate, including (c) corn crib; and (d) pathway to the barnyard, circa 2015. Photo Credit: Mary Laura Lamont.

Since all these outbuildings served a wide range of essential utilitarian activities, the servants and enslaved people would have spent considerable time working and socializing in and among them. On any given day or hour, for example, the women might have killed and plucked chickens for a stew, boiled heaps of dirty laundry over open fires and hung

everyone's linen undergarments out to dry; or sloshed buckets of milk from the cattle barn to the dairy to make butter and cheese. During November and December, after the pigs and beef cattle had been fattened over the summer but before the onset of deep winter, the men would butcher some of them; again, the women would spring to action to help process the meat, transforming the backyard into a hellish scene of spurting blood, hot grease, and steaming pots.<sup>98</sup> At some point, a high board fence was erected to enclose the outbuildings, screening them off from the main house.<sup>99</sup> The Floyds apparently desired a greater sense of separation between their genteel home and the working guts of the farm.

As Maxwell's description notes, according to oral tradition, several slave cabins eventually were added to the estate's complement of ancillary structures, located near the orchards but at a discreet distance from the house. Given the dearth of evidence about these buildings, long since torn down, no details are known regarding their size, appearance, or amenities, or even when exactly they were built or under which proprietor. Nevertheless, several anecdotal sources from the late nineteenth century retrospectively confirm their earlier existence. Most likely, they would have been small, modestly furnished, and basically utilitarian. When making this addition, the Floyds were in step, as historian Graham Hedges has shown, with other wealthy households in New York and New Jersey that, by the late eighteenth century, trended away from the earlier forced familiarity in favor of more physical separation between enslaved people and slaveholders.<sup>100</sup>

## *Cemetery*

Another significant feature on the landscape is the Floyd family cemetery, located farther north of the house. Established in 1755 by William Floyd with the graves of his parents, Nicoll and Tabitha Floyd, this plot became the final resting place for generations of Floyd descendants. Over many years, as detailed in the "Cultural Resource Study" (1998), the quarter-acre fenced cemetery grew to contain over 58 gravestones of Floyd family members, as well as two servants.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Griswold, *The Manor*, 161-63.

<sup>99</sup> For more details on the built landscape, see the "Cultural Resource Study for the William Floyd Estate" (National Park Service, 1998).

<sup>100</sup> Graham Russel Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665-1865* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 22.

<sup>101</sup> "Cultural Resource Study for the William Floyd Estate," 75.



**Figure 2.19:** Floyd Family Cemetery, 2015. Photo Credit: Steven L. Markos

Other enslaved people and other non-family members were excluded from the family plot. Presumably those whose days ended on the estate were buried elsewhere on the property, possibly without permanent markers. In a well-shaded spot, separate and apart from the Floyd’s cemetery, stands a row of seven low crosses, made of wood and painted white; each cross bears the name of a man known to have been enslaved on the estate—including Harry, Charles, Caesar, Lon, Sam, Isaac, and Pompey—but curiously, no women, although presumably some crosses may be missing (and some appear to be later replacements). While there is no site-specific archival evidence confirming when these crosses initially were installed, they may date as early as the 1890s when other Long Island estate owners made similar commemorations.<sup>102</sup> Although the spot is customarily known as the Slave Cemetery, it has not been empirically confirmed whether the modest wooden crosses mark the actual locations of human remains.

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<sup>102</sup> On use of historical markers, see Katherine H. Hayes, *Before Race: Europeans, Africans, and Indians at Long Island’s Sylvester Manor Plantation, 1651-1884* (New York: University Press, New York, 2013), ch. 5.



**Figure 2.20:** Crosses dedicated to Enslaved Men, William Floyd Estate, circa 2015.  
Courtesy of the National Park Service. Photo Credit: Xiomáro.

Another possibility that must be considered, particularly in light of their estimated installation date, is that the crosses are cenotaphs (monuments to persons buried elsewhere), perhaps intended as a memorial erected by later Floyd descendants during the Victorian era. In the 1890s, antiquarian interest in Long Island’s early inhabitants inspired similar gestures that sentimentalized the relationship between white landowners and their supposedly faithful “negro servants” or, equally spurious, purported to record the disappearance of the region’s Native peoples. Around the same time, for example, the owners of Sylvester Manor installed a large natural stone marker denoting the “Burying Ground of the Colored People of the Manor since 1651” and proudly claimed that Isaac Pharoh, their life-long servant who lay there, was “the last of the Royal Family of the Chief of the Montauks.”<sup>103</sup> In that burial ground as well, no carved gravestones are present, since less expensive, nonpermanent markers generally sufficed for non-elite persons. On the Floyd Estate, as of this writing, further investigation is required to confirm the presence of human remains. However, this much can be said—in death as in life—the racialized social hierarchy of the Floyd Estate was inscribed on the landscape and in memory.

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<sup>103</sup> Hayes, *Before Race: Europeans, Africans, and Indians at Long Island’s Sylvester Manor*, 152.



## CHAPTER THREE

# CHOOSING SIDES: IMPACT OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

**O**n July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress officially ratified the Declaration of Independence, laying out American grievances against British rule and dashing any hopes for a peaceful resolution.<sup>1</sup> While representatives from twelve colonies enthusiastically approved the measure, the New York delegation—including William Floyd, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris, and Philip Livingston (who was on its drafting committee)—abstained from voting. Still awaiting instructions from the New York Provincial Congress, the men found themselves in an awkward position, unable to act on their own accord and surrounded by murmurings of obstructionism to the Patriot cause.<sup>2</sup> After many pleas for guidance, they were relieved a week later when New York’s Provincial Congress sent word to vote in favor of the now “unanimous declaration.”<sup>3</sup> The delay probably frustrated William Floyd who already favored separation from Britain; as he explained to a friend in a May letter, with “little or no hopes” remaining for reconciliation, “we ought to be in a Situation to preserve our Liberties another way.”<sup>4</sup> By the time he affixed his signature to the actual parchment document on August 2, the Royal Navy had descended upon New York harbor; only three weeks later, 20,000 British and Hessian troops were assembled in Brooklyn—bringing the war to Long Island’s doorstep.

Although the decision to part ways from Great Britain was not an easy one for any of the colonies, New Yorkers’ apparent foot-dragging raised suspicions among their more fervently separatist countrymen. Yet considering that their strategically located colony was

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<sup>1</sup> As noted in the “Acknowledgements,” Matthew Montelione assisted with research and writing for this chapter. See bibliography for his publications on Long Island Loyalists during the American Revolution.

<sup>2</sup> On New York delegates’ role in ratification and signing process, see Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2012); Garry Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2017); John R. Vile, *The Declaration of Independence: America’s First Founding Document in U.S. History and Culture* (New York: ABC-CLIO, 2018), 187, 334.

<sup>3</sup> “Declaration of Independence,” July 4, 1776. For complete transcript, see <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

<sup>4</sup> William Floyd to New York official John McKesson, May 1776, quoted in Larry Lowenthal, *William Floyd: Long Island Patriot* (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, 2013), 40-45.

one of the likeliest targets of a full-scale British invasion, its leaders' initial caution is understandable. Moreover, considerable ambivalence remained among its citizenry about the best course of action. From Manhattan to Montauk, from the Hudson Valley to Albany, New Yorkers held widely differing views. Even after a decade of growing tensions, leaving Britain's fold seemed an extreme step; after all, being part of the world's greatest imperial power still had definite advantages, whereas running afoul of its massive military seemed ill advised, if not reckless. Moreover, as British subjects, they were keenly aware that defying the King quite literally constituted treason. While some still hoped to buy time for a compromise to be hammered out, others greeted the Declaration with ebullience or, at least, grudging resignation. As the King stubbornly refused further concessions and Parliament tried to coerce colonial compliance, however, the negative aspects of imperial rule became more readily apparent.

When hostilities finally broke out—and British forces immediately occupied New York City and their home terrain—all Long Islanders faced a harsh new reality that, in many cases, forced them to make fateful decisions. For white men, including those of wealth and privilege like William Floyd, that meant choosing to which side they would swear a loyalty oath and potentially take up arms to defend. Non-combatants had to consider whether to hunker down in hopes of avoiding danger, seek refuge behind British lines, or abandon their homes and flee to Patriot-held areas. Native Americans and enslaved Africans, who at first may not have seen any direct stake in the war's outcome, also had to assess its potential consequences for themselves and their loved ones. Yet as the war exploded, Long Islanders fractured, with varying degrees of commitment and sympathy, between Loyalists (or Tories), who supported the Crown, and Patriots (or Whigs) who favored independence. In the process, many friends, neighbors, and families were torn apart; even those who kept their heads down, in hopes of remaining neutral, could not escape the strife. The Floyds' kinship circle, for one, was permanently riven.

This chapter examines the impact of the American Revolution on the inhabitants of the Floyd Estate and, more generally, in Long Island and New York. The first section provides an overview of the growing tensions between the colonies and the Crown in the pre-war years. The second section examines how Long Islanders were compelled to choose sides as the conflict intensified. The third and fourth sections respectively compare the impacts of the war and then its dramatically different outcomes for the Floyds as well as other Long Islanders. The chapter draws on several key works about Long Island during the American Revolution, including Larry Lowenthal's *William Floyd: Long Island Patriot* (2013) and Joseph S. Tiedemann and Eugene R. Fingerhut's *The Other New York: The American Revolution beyond New York City, 1763-1787* (2005) which focus on Suffolk County. In addition, Thomas P. Slaughter's *Independence* (2014) and Maya Jasanoff's *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (2011), among others, offer broader context and insight to the motivations of various participants. Two classic works

that, while antiquarian in approach, remain useful are Henry Onderdonk, Jr.'s *Revolutionary Incidents of Suffolk and Kings Counties* (1849) and Frederic G. Mather's *The Refugees of 1776 from Long Island to Connecticut* (1913). In addition, Thomas Jones's *History of New York during the Revolutionary War* (1879), although written and published later, offers a first-hand account of the war and the British occupation of Long Island from the perspective of a local Loyalist; since Jones fled to England during the war (where he remained) and his American property was confiscated, however, his version of events, while informative, is clearly biased and flavored with bitterness.

## *Growing Tensions*

In the decade leading up to the Revolution, most Long Islanders, while aware of the discontent simmering elsewhere, focused primarily on issues impacting their own region. In Suffolk County, for example, inhabitants initially were “more concerned with agricultural pursuits and the weather than with political strife.”<sup>5</sup> But tensions with Britain had already begun to percolate in many of the urban seaports. Many of the frustrations that colonial New Yorkers expressed harkened back to earlier conflicts over self-rule. In the early eighteenth century, whenever the Crown or Parliament tried to rein in their activities, the colonists pushed back, protesting or just ignoring any imperial policies that seemed to threaten their prerogatives. In New York, religious differences added to the growing sense of disconnect since its many non-conforming colonists eschewed the official Church of England. In the late 1740s, however, Parliament began to worry that, given the lax enforcement of British laws and policies in the colonies, their inhabitants were becoming arrogantly self-sufficient and recalcitrant—ignoring or skirting English edicts, avoiding customs duties, and brazenly participating in smuggling and other illegal activities. They feared that if colonists began to regard “benign neglect as a constitutional right,” any attempts to rein them in would provoke resistance or perhaps even rebellion.<sup>6</sup> But as Parliament's policies became more punitive, Americans began to feel greater solidarity with fellow Americans across colonial borders. Unlike the Loyalist strongholds of Queens and Kings Counties, almost half of Suffolk County's citizenry ultimately aligned with the Patriots.

The major turning point in relations between the colonies and the metropole was the Seven Years' War (also called the French and Indian War), a grueling conflict that, in fact, dragged on for nine years from 1754 to 1763. What began as a local dispute in the Ohio River Valley burst into a major conflagration between France and Britain for control over

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<sup>5</sup> John G. Staudt, “Suffolk County,” in *The Other New York, The American Revolution Beyond New York City, 1763-1787*, ed. Joseph S. Tiedemann and Eugene R. Fingerhut (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 65.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas P. Slaughter, *Independence: The Tangled Roots of the American Revolution* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2014), 69-72.

North America. In hopes of shifting the regional balance of power in their favor, both imperial nations sought military assistance from Native American allies: the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy aligned with the British while the Algonquins backed the French. On Long Island, as historian John Strong reminds us, often “forgotten or unappreciated when considering the devastating impacts of settler-colonialism is that, in hopes of building an amicable relationship, Unkechaug men actually fought alongside the British. During this decisive conflict, over one hundred men identified as Indian appear on the muster rolls for Suffolk County, including many Unkechaugs, Shinnecocks, and Montauketts.”<sup>7</sup>

When the Seven Years’ War (French and Indian War) finally ended, the British emerged victorious. Under the 1763 Treaty of Paris, France lost all its territories east of the Mississippi River, leaving Britain as the preeminent power in North America. Initially, many colonists proudly rejoiced over the British triumph and the end of French threats.

Yet the war left the Crown with depleted coffers, an enormous war debt, and a newly expanded empire that was costly to supply, protect, and govern. Consequently, Parliament looked toward the colonies, the prime beneficiaries of the expulsion of France from North America, to offset the war-related expenses as well as to contribute more to the cost of their own defense. The colonists, in turn, deeply resented the resulting policy changes and increasingly questioned their place within the British empire.

For most Native Americans (including Britain’s allies), however, the geopolitical realignment proved a devastating blow since they could no longer play one empire off another. In a conciliatory gesture, and in hopes of preventing future conflicts, King George III issued the Proclamation of 1763, reserving land west of the Appalachian Mountains for Indians and restricting unbridled westward expansion by land-hungry settlers and speculators. Although the poorly enforced policy proved ineffective, the colonists nevertheless decried what they considered inexplicable appeasement of the Indians and yet another example of unwelcome interference in their affairs.<sup>8</sup> While government officials in London seemed bewildered by their virulent response to this modest attempt at peacekeeping, the colonists feared it signaled the end of benign neglect and a shift toward greater imperial control.

To generate more revenues to pay Britain’s war debt and defense costs, as well as to rein in the unruly colonists, Parliament passed a series of laws between 1764 and 1774, imposing new tax policies, regulating trade, and imposing greater imperial oversight. Each of these measures raised the hackles of colonial freeholders for infringing upon their customary autonomy and presumed rights as British subjects. At first, these changes mainly

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<sup>7</sup> John A. Strong, *The Unkechaug Indians of Eastern Long Island: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 135.

<sup>8</sup> Slaughter, *Independence*, 162; Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 21-26, 77.

affected urban centers, such as New York City and Boston. City merchants, for example, particularly resented the clampdown on illicit foreign commerce, since many of them traded extensively with France, even during the late conflict, as well as other nations. Increasingly, however, Long Island and other rural hinterlands were also affected.<sup>9</sup> The strategy that Parliament hoped would consolidate the empire backfired, giving rise to protests, demands for concessions, and, more alarming, even calls for self-rule; across the Eastern Seaboard, colonial subjects began to look more toward each other for support than toward their intransigent mother country.

One of Parliament's first measures, the Sugar Act of 1764 actually reduced the duty on British sugar and molasses rather than French or Dutch supplies to encourage their consumption. For the first time, however, collection of the duty would be strictly enforced. While intended to curb smuggling and support British commerce, the law was perceived by most colonists as economic interference and an attack on personal liberty. Samuel Adams denounced the policy as so onerous that "it will be scarce possible for us to earn our bread. . . . For if our trade may be taxed, why not our lands? Why not the produce of our lands and everything we possess or make use of?" The Act, he declared, "annihilates our charter right to govern and tax ourselves. . . . It strikes at our British privileges which, as we have never forfeited them, we hold in common with our fellow subjects who are natives of Britain." Others agreed but took a more mollifying tone. In critiquing the policy, for example, the prominent lawyer James Otis Jr. first affirmed that colonists' "affection and reverence for their mother country is unquestionable" and that Parliament had "undoubted power and lawful authority to make acts for the general good," but then queried, "can there be any liberty where property is taken away without consent? Can it with any color of truth, justice or equity be affirmed that the northern colonies are represented in Parliament?" No, he concluded, the tax was "absolutely irreconcilable with the rights of the Colonists as British subjects, and as men."<sup>10</sup>

Later that same year, Parliament passed the Currency Act, banning colonial governments from issuing their own paper money. With troops still stationed in the colonies, they also enacted the Quartering Act, shifting the expense of feeding and housing all the soldiers onto local communities. Although ostensibly there to protect colonists from Native Americans and external enemies, the presence of a standing army instigated considerable conflict with the local population, including at least two major clashes between civilians and redcoats in New York in 1766 and 1770.<sup>11</sup> Most notoriously, the Stamp Act, passed in March 1765, levied duties on most printed material, including newspapers, broadsides, pamphlets, and legal documents, which had to be paid for with

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<sup>9</sup> Tiedemann and Fingerhut, *The Other New York*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> James Otis, *The Rights of the British Colonies* (Boston and London, 1764).

<sup>11</sup> Tiedemann and Fingerhut, *The Other New York*, 6.

British coins. Although the measure hit merchants, lawyers, and printers the hardest, almost everyone's pocketbooks felt the pinch. Widespread protests ensued across the colonies. On Long Island, for example, local men, calling themselves Sons of Liberty, rallied to oppose the Stamp Act.<sup>12</sup> Even after the law was later repealed, lingering anger toward British rule persisted.

From the vantage point of the metropole, the colonists' aggravation seemed little justified relative to the protection, resources, and prestige they received as part of the British Empire. Moreover, from their perspective, the colonists seemed quite able to pay their fair share. Ironically, during the Seven Years' War, British officials serving in the colonies had received rather inflated impressions of the standard of living enjoyed by the inhabitants who, in fact, had striven to impress them. One observer, for example, remarked that the colonists "spend full as much [on] the luxurious British imports, as prudence will countenance, and often much more." John Dickinson, the Pennsylvania lawyer and pundit, tried to counter the misconception, "industriously propagated in *Great-Britain*, that the colonies are wallowing in wealth and luxury." Despite outward appearances, he insisted, most Americans were poor and could not afford additional taxes.<sup>13</sup>

Despite some efforts to placate the colonists, Parliament ended up further alienating them by passing the Townsend Act in 1767, which imposed customs duties on tea, paper, paint, and other goods; although they were removed two years later, except for the one on tea. When Parliament approved the Tea Act in 1773, creating a monopoly for British tea (less popular than smuggled Dutch tea) in a bid to help the East India Company out of bankruptcy, colonists' ire was roused once again. When an East India Company ship arrived in Boston that December, however, a group of protestors, disguised as Mohawk Indians to conceal their identities, destroyed 340 chests of tea, worth an estimated £9,659. To punish the Bostonians, King George III passed the Coercive Acts on March 25, 1774, which closed the city's port, halting commerce and idling hundreds of workers. The King also attempted to alter the colony's charter. This punitive step, however, only served to unite the colonies in sympathy with beleaguered Massachusetts. On April 22, 1774, for example, when the *London* arrived in New York harbor, an angry crowd awaited; determined to throw their own "Manhattan Tea Party," several men, without even troubling to disguise themselves, boarded the vessel and threw eighteen chests of tea into the river.<sup>14</sup> From New Hampshire to Georgia, meanwhile, the inhabitants boycotted British tea and raised money to feed the people of Boston.

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<sup>12</sup> Joanne S. Grasso, *The American Revolution on Long Island* (Charleston: The History Press, 2016), 46.

<sup>13</sup> T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 10-11.

<sup>14</sup> Barnet Schecter, *The Battle for New York: The City at the Heart of the American Revolution* (London: Walker, 2002), 25-45.

In Suffolk County, local farmers, merchants, and mariners were especially indignant and, in many cases, personally affected by the closing of Boston's port. Given their deep economic and cultural ties dating back to the mid-seventeenth century, the inhabitants shared common interests with New England. They nurtured a particularly close relationship with Connecticut which, thanks to their geographical proximity across Long Island Sound, facilitated an easy flow of people and goods between them. Religious affinities reinforced their bond since several denominations fostered cross-regional engagement. Most notably, the Presbyterians, then prevalent in Suffolk County, had several prominent ministers—including Benjamin Tallmadge of Setauket, Ebenezer Prime of Huntington, and Samuel Buell of East Hampton—who had connections and preached regularly in both locales.

Since Presbyterians tended to oppose imperial rule, many historians credit them with swaying public opinion toward the Patriots and independence. As early as September 1774, Henry Hulton, one of his Majesty's customs commissioners in Massachusetts, worried that "Independent Ministers kept the people's passions ever in a flame," by giving sermons soaked with "resentment against the King, and Parliament, whom they charged with everything tyrannical, and unjust." Indeed, Presbyterian ministers reportedly were soon exhorting their congregations "to fight and die for their liberties;" purportedly, one even concluded a prayer by urging God to cast the Tories "into the bottomless Pit, where the smoke of their torments may ascend for ever and ever." By 1776, Charles Inglis, an Anglican rector in New York City, accused his Presbyterian counterparts on Long Island of inflaming passions and promoting "all the measures of Congress, however extravagant." Meanwhile, they accused the Anglicans of doing the exact opposite.<sup>15</sup> In Brookhaven, most Presbyterians tended to side with the Patriots while most Anglicans tended to remain Loyalists.<sup>16</sup>

As historian Larry Lowenthal points out, William Floyd and his associates in eastern Long Island were among the first Americans to respond proactively to the crisis in New England. At a gathering of Brookhaven freeholders on June 13, 1774, moderated by William Smith, the attendees passed a resolution stating that "blocking up the port of Boston is unconstitutional and has a direct tendency to enslave the inhabitants of America and put an end to all property."<sup>17</sup> They also agreed that "if the Colonies all unite and strictly adhere to a non-importation agreement with Great Britain and the West Indies, and have no trade with them, we should have great reason to expect in a short time, a repeal of that

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<sup>15</sup> Staudt, "Suffolk County," in Tiedemann and Fingerhut, *The Other New York*, 64-66.

<sup>16</sup> Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides: Loyalists in Revolutionary America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 66-68.

<sup>17</sup> Françoise Furstenberg, "Beyond Freedom and Slavery: Autonomy, Virtue, and Resistance in Early American Political Discourse," *Journal of American History* 89, no. 4 (March 2003): 1295-1330.

oppressive act.”<sup>18</sup> They then elected William Floyd, his neighbors William Smith, Nathaniel Woodhull, and Josiah Smith, and three others to represent their region in New York’s new 51-member Committee of Correspondence to plan a coordinated response with the other colonies. At that point, few voices called for independence from Britain. As the elected representatives convened in Manhattan, their focus remained firmly on trying to defuse the crisis and negotiate a peaceful compromise.

Arriving in New York City, William and his colleagues found themselves in “a turbulent microcosm of the divisions that split the colony,” a setting quite unlike their usually bucolic surroundings. Committee members sent letters to each county requesting that they appoint delegates to what became the First Continental Congress; William Floyd was promptly selected to represent Suffolk County, which he did from September 5 to October 26, 1774. When Congress convened in Philadelphia, its members agreed to boycott British goods but still expected to broker a peaceful resolution. During this meeting, influential leaders from all the colonies, including William Floyd, discussed their shared concerns, an essential first step in forging “the confidence in one another that would soon become essential in the struggle to form a new nation.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For full text, see Henry Onderdonk Jr., *Revolutionary Incidents of Suffolk and Kings Counties* (New York: Leavitt & Co., 1849), 13 (item #532).

<sup>19</sup> Lowenthal, *William Floyd*, 27.

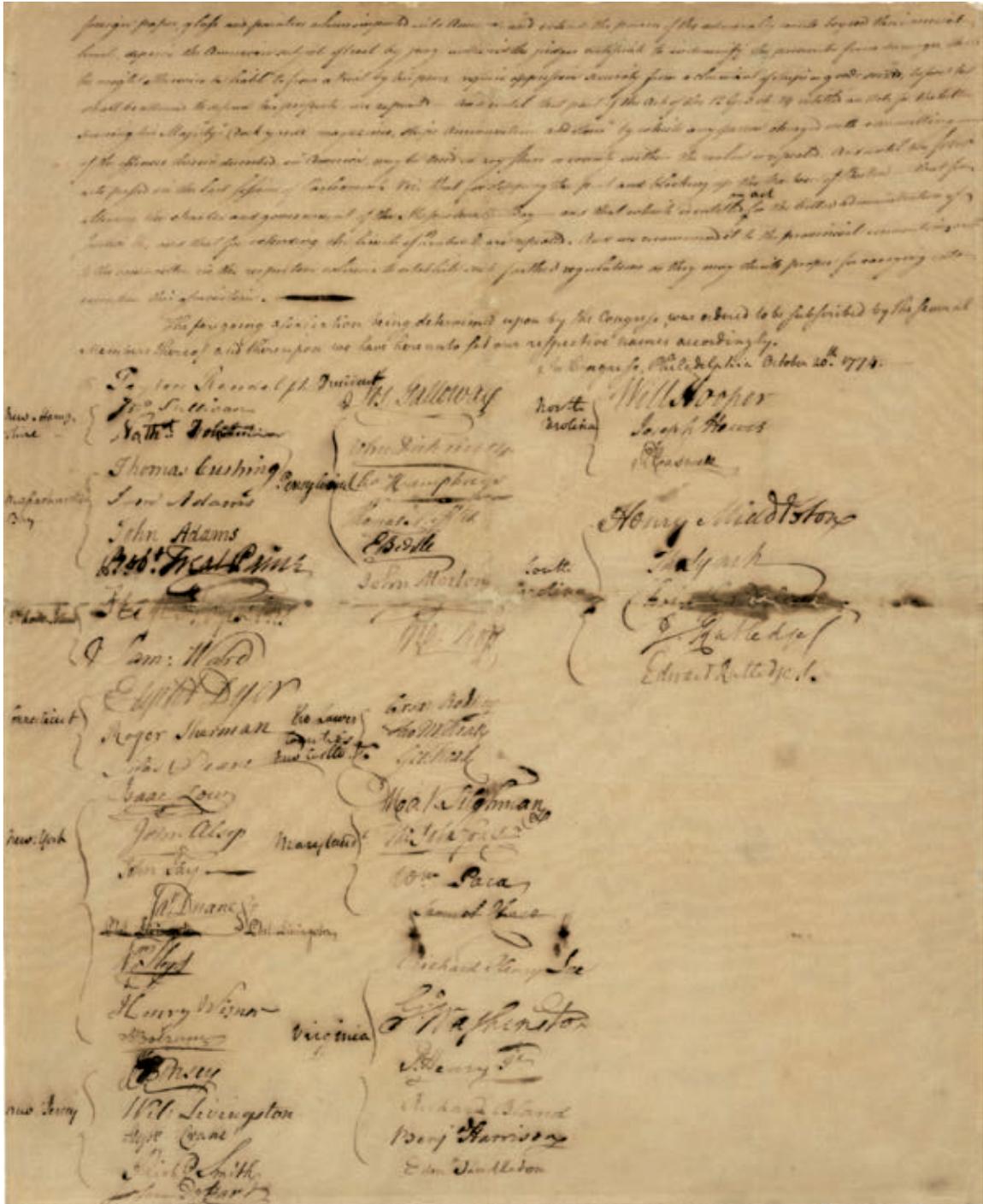


Figure 3.1: William Floyd's signature on the Articles of Association, October 20, 1774. Courtesy of the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

In 1775, the New York Committee launched its boycott of British goods and appointed inspectors to monitor the harbor and turn away British vessels before they could unload their cargoes. On February 9, for example, at Robert Murray's wharf, located at the foot of Wall Street, a rebel mob seized the captain of the *James*, marched him through the

streets before jeering crowds and back to his ship, which departed without unloading its cargo. As such incidents emboldened the Patriots, Lieutenant Governor Cadwallader Colden conceded that the “success which the violent party have had in preventing [British vessels] from landing their cargoes . . . has chagrined me a good deal.”<sup>20</sup> Rejecting British goods, as well as social activities associated with them, became highly politicized as leading Patriots sought to wean the populace away from many of the consumption-based aspects of British culture that they formerly encouraged and that had propelled many of them to wealth and status.<sup>21</sup> At this juncture, William Floyd and most of his fellow congressmen still eschewed violence, convinced that they could leverage the colonies’ economic importance to the empire to demand political changes, even petitioning the Crown for relief.

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<sup>20</sup> Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 40-45.

<sup>21</sup> On the politics of non-importation and non-consumption of British goods as expressions of emerging American nationalism, see Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, ch. 6.

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To the King's most Excellent Majesty.

The humble Petition of the General Assembly of the  
Colony of New York.

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects, the General  
Assembly of the Colony of New York, beg leave most humbly to approach  
your Majesty.

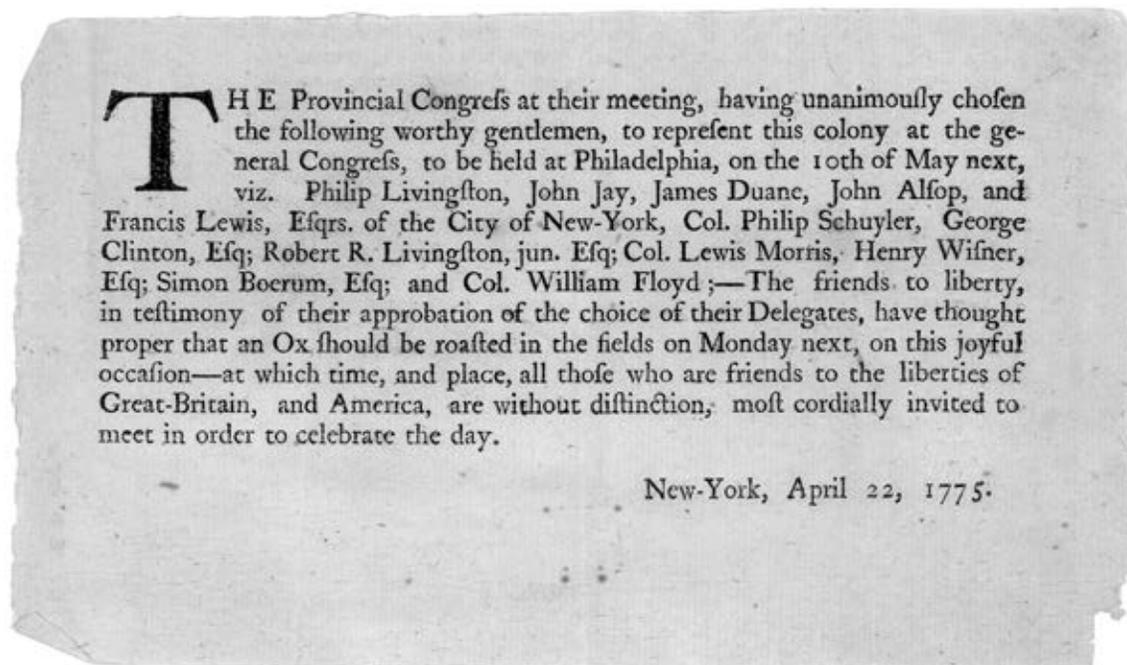
Inviolably attached to your Royal Person and Government, to which we  
are bound by the strongest Ties of Duty and Affection, and in the fullest  
Assurance that your paternal Care is extended over all your People, as well  
the Inhabitants of the new Worlds, as those who flourish and are happy  
under your more immediate Influence in the old; we are emboldened to  
throw ourselves at your Majesty's Feet, humble Petitioners, in Behalf of  
the loyal Colony which we represent.

Vouchsafe then, most gracious Sovereign, to attend to the Prayer of your  
faithful Subjects, and while we are pleading our own Cause, and the Cause  
of Liberty and Humanity, design to consider us as Advocates for our Sister  
Colonies also.

The present unhappy and unnatural Disputes between the Parent  
State and your Majesty's American Dominions, give us the deepest and most  
unfeigned Concern. We lament it as one of the greatest Misfortunes, that the  
happy and peaceful Harmony, which has hitherto subsisted between us, should now  
by

**Figure 3.2:** "Petition from of the General Assembly of New York to His Majesty, George III," March 25, 1775. Courtesy of the National Archives, Washington, D.C. In this petition to King George, members of the New York Assembly politely expressed their grievances against colonial rule in hopes of a peaceful resolution. At the time, they still assured their "Most Gracious Sovereign," that they did "not mean to become independent of the British."

Throughout the colonies, however, others resorted to force to express their anti-royalist views. Numerous shocking incidents, for example, occurred in Massachusetts against known or suspected Loyalists, including even their children. According to Henry Hulton, a “little boy belonging to the Admiral’s Ship, was thrown down by a person who swore he would break his leg, and then he took it up, and wrenched it till it” snapped. In another case, a “child of Captain Holland’s, the Engineer, was seized at his own door by a man who with both of his hands squeezed his throat . . . [while] saying, he was a tory child and should be served so.” Women also faced abuse for their Loyalist associations, such as Mrs. Oliver, wife of a chief justice, who was not permitted to see or write to her husband when he was detained in Boston. As a government official, Hulton was aghast at the “various modes of persecution, and torture, practiced on those who were deemed by the People unfriendly to American liberty.”<sup>22</sup> For their part, Long Islanders watched with growing alarm as government officials in Boston tried to squelch dissent. In April 1775, tensions came to a head with the armed confrontation between the British army and colonial militias at Lexington and Concord. While long in the making, this first major instance of colonial bloodshed ignited the American Revolution.



**Figure 3.3:** Announcement of New York’s Delegates to the first General Congress, including William Floyd, April 22, 1775. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (item # Evans 14416LC-USZC4-4099). Only three days after the violent confrontation between British troops and colonial militiamen at Lexington and Concord, New York selected delegates to represent them at the colonies’ first general Congress.

<sup>22</sup> Chopra, *Choosing Sides*, 66-68.

## *Choosing Sides*

In the decade preceding the onset of war, Long Island's populace slowly fractured over appropriate goals and tactics in seeking redress from Britain. During this period, the Floyd family tree branched in very different directions, as exemplified by William Floyd and his cousin Richard Floyd IV. Despite their shared common heritage, similar backgrounds, and deep commitment to home and family, their religious affiliations and political views diverged until they ended up on opposite ideological poles—as William embraced the cause of independence and Richard remained duty-bound to his King.<sup>23</sup> While sources do not reveal how much, if at all, the Floyd cousins stayed in touch during the war, the conflict ultimately led to their permanent alienation.

After serving in the First Continental Congress, William already firmly identified as a Patriot by the time serious hostilities broke out. Yet his motivations to make such a risky choice seem uncertain. Members of elite families, such as the Floyds, who owed much to the past generosity of royal officials (and in some cases had served in those roles), benefitted more than most from the imperial system, and were relatively insulated from the negative aspects of its policies. Hence, as his biographer Larry Lowenthal points out, “they were not among the merchants, smugglers, and speculators in frontier land. . . who stood to gain directly from the overthrow of royal government. Taxes levied by Parliament might be a nuisance, but they were both inconsequential and predictable.” Moreover, committing treason by opposing the Crown and challenging the world's mightiest empire seemed ill-advised. Like many Revolutionary leaders, however, William seemed convinced that not only their rights as British subjects, but their very liberty, were under threat; since William, like many of the Founders, was himself a slaveholder, the Patriots' heated rhetoric about British efforts to enslave them may have carried added significance.<sup>24</sup>

Due in part to his family's status in Brookhaven, William was appointed Colonel in Suffolk County's Patriot militia as early as 1775. It was organized at the behest of Muster Masters of the Troops Capt. Timothy Carll, Col. Phineas Fanning, and Col. David Mulford. Although short on weapons and supplies, they planned to join forces with the Continental Army that was taking shape across the colonies. The Patriot militia of Suffolk County consisted of two regiments—the Western, led by William, and the Eastern, led by Col. Nathaniel Woodhull (his brother-in-law and neighbor in Mastic). In August 1775, the New York Provincial Congress sent them 300 pounds of powder and they began training across Suffolk County and in Connecticut.<sup>25</sup> Upon inspecting the troops now under his command,

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<sup>23</sup> For more detail, see Matthew M. Montelione, “Richard Floyd IV: Long Island Loyalist,” *Long Island History Journal* 24, no. 2 (Dec. 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Furstenberg, “Beyond Freedom and Slavery,” 1301-2, Larry Lowenthal, *William Floyd*, 32.

<sup>25</sup> Frederic Gregory Mather, *The Refugees of 1776 from Long Island to Connecticut* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1972; originally printed in New York, 1913), 88.

William reported that the men “were about two-thirds furnished with bayonets, and the others are getting them as fast as they can be made. They are furnished with half pound of powder and two pound of ball per man and a Magazine in the Regiment to furnish them.”<sup>26</sup>

Shortly thereafter, however, William was elected to represent New York at the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Handing off his command of the militia, he served there continuously from April to October 1775 and then sporadically until 1783, helping provide essential political leadership during this time of crisis. Meanwhile, his fellow Long Islanders also faced the monumental choice of whether to rebel, remain loyal, or lay low in hopes the turmoil would soon end. Who ultimately identified as Patriots or Loyalists depended on numerous factors, such as their social, economic, religious, and political backgrounds. Moreover, this dilemma cut across class, race, and gender lines, affecting everyone—wealthy and poor whites, enslaved and free Africans and African Americans, and Native Americans—in one way or another. According to Dr. Benjamin Rush, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, Americans’ choices were “actuated by very different motives in their conduct, or by the same motives acting in different degrees of force.” In his estimation, Loyalists were driven by “an attachment to power and office,” “kingly government,” “British commerce which the war had interrupted,” or their commitment to the Church of England (and fear of a Presbyterian takeover). Admitting that not all Loyalists were equally bad, he considered the “furious” extremists as worse than “Writing and talking Tories,” and those who were “Silent but busy . . . in disseminating Tory pamphlets.”<sup>27</sup>

On the Patriot side, Dr. Rush likewise differentiated among “Furious” rebels (who enjoyed tarring and feathering Tories, but were generally cowardly, shrinking “from danger when called into the field by pretending sickness or some family disaster”), those desired to possess “the power of our country,” those who hoped to avoid paying their debts by overthrowing the Crown, and those who had a “sincere and disinterested love of liberty and justice.” While deriding “timid” Patriots, whose resolve wavered “with every victory and defeat of our armies,” he lauded “Staunch Whigs” (such as William Floyd) who were “moderate in their tempers, but firm, inflexible, and persevering in their conduct.” Even those who had “no fixed principles and accommodated their conduct to their interest, to events, and to their company,” Rush acknowledged, served a purpose in protecting both sides “from the rage of each other, and each party always found hospitable treatment from them.”<sup>28</sup> He did not, however, acknowledge the contributions—on both sides of the

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<sup>26</sup> William Floyd, “Return of the 1st Regiment in Suffolk County, April 5, 1776 (Mil. Ret. 27. 99), transcribed in Appendix G of Mather, *The Refugees of 1776 from Long Island to Connecticut*, 991.

<sup>27</sup> Chopra, *Choosing Sides*, 65-66.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 37, 65-66.

conflict—of the many courageous women who supported the home front, African Americans who took up arms, or Native American allies who proved invaluable at many critical junctures.

In April 1775, after the battles of Lexington and Concord, the anxious Continental Congress ordered Patriot leaders throughout the colonies to go on the offensive. To cement their local support and bring men with royalist sympathies into line, local committees forced all white male inhabitants to sign the Patriot Association, a sworn oath promising support of the independence movement. For example, one such pledge read: “We, the Freeholders and Inhabitants, being greatly alarmed at the avowed Design of the Ministry, to raise a Revenue in America; and, shocked, by the bloody Scene, now acting in the Massachusetts Bay, DO . . . resolve . . . to adopt and endeavour to carry into Execution, whatever Measures may be recommended by the Continental Congress.” Even at this late date, the Patriots’ stated goals were merely to keep “Peace and good Order” and protect “the Safety of Individuals, and private property,” until a reconciliation with Great Britain was achieved.<sup>29</sup>

In Suffolk County, William helped establish the Brookhaven Committee of Observation and became its chairman by late summer 1775. The members immediately expressed concerns about Loyalists in their area, especially Richard Floyd, Benjamin Floyd (Richard’s younger brother), and the Anglican minister Rev. James Lyon, who opposed their every measure, tried to “seduce the ignorant about them,” and “damn[ed] all Congresses and committees, wishing they were in hell.” As those who resisted were threatened with mob violence, some wealthy Loyalists reluctantly signed in 1775, as did Benjamin Floyd, only to recant the next year following the British takeover of Long Island. Richard Floyd, however, refused to sign.<sup>30</sup> The Loyalists, in turn, attempted to extract loyalty pledges from their opponents and other non-politically aligned inhabitants, especially during the war when the British controlled New York.

Remarkably, over 90 percent of those eligible in Suffolk County signed the Association. Although some did so under duress, the majority were enthusiastic to demonstrate their strong solidarity and common purpose with the other rebellious colonies. As one of only 236 men in Suffolk County labeled as Non-Associators, Richard Floyd seemed more wed to his identity as a British subject and convinced of the Crown’s ultimate power and authority.<sup>31</sup> Assuming that the rebels would be quickly crushed, he and other Brookhaven Loyalists (notably James Lyon and Dr. George Muirson) denounced the

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<sup>29</sup> Lowenthal, *William Floyd*, 29.

<sup>30</sup> Onderdonk, *Revolutionary Incidents of Suffolk and Kings Counties*, 1058-60.

<sup>31</sup> *Census of Suffolk County, 1776, Excerpted from Calendar of Historical Manuscripts Relating to the War of the Revolution* (Lambertville, NJ: Hunterdon House, 1984), 6; Mather, *The Refugees of 1776*, 1054-61.

Patriots and vowed to aid British forces by furnishing their “men-of-war and cutters with provisions.” Although how much material aid they actually provided is unknown, their outspoken beliefs made them a target for Patriot retribution.<sup>32</sup>

Sometime in late 1775, for example, Richard Miller, a judge of the Court of Common Pleas, was forced into hiding for his activities as a member of Brookhaven’s Loyalist Committee, which included also Richard and Benjamin Floyd. On January 5, 1776, Miller wrote to Benjamin, from an undisclosed location, that he longed “to see all my good friends once more,” but he dared not return home since the Patriots had issued a twenty-shilling reward for his capture. Disgusted at the thought of either serving “three months Imprisonment” or signing “the association paper” and paying a fine, he defiantly claimed that, even if they could find him, “they have not have courage enough . . . to attempt to take me, neither do I think their force is sufficient.” Anticipating the British occupation, he awaited “better times and much better Liberty than Committee Liberty,” when Long Island would be “taken by our party Early in the Spring and kept as a place of rendezvous for them and then undoubtedly we shall have liberty . . . to speak openly without fear of Congress or Committee.”<sup>33</sup> When Daniel Roe, a captain in the Patriot army, offered an additional “ten pounds” for his capture, Miller even mocked the notion that “the poor Devil has not got so much money . . . if he had he would buy himself a new pair of Britches before the next Committee Meeting.” In 1776, however, Roe’s men captured Miller somewhere in Brookhaven and promptly executed him.<sup>34</sup> Rev. James Lyon, former rector of the Caroline Church in Setauket, was suspected of collaborating “with those in other parts of the country, who are inimical . . . [to the Patriot cause, and] able to do great mischief.” Accordingly, in August 1775, the Patriots placed the minister “under guard in Wooster’s Camp,” although he was later released and permitted to resume his duties.<sup>35</sup>

American anger with the British intensified in 1775 when, in a strategic move, the British began offering freedom to able-bodied enslaved men in exchange for their military service. Lord Dunmore, Virginia’s royal governor, initiated this new policy after a group of enslaved men offered to assist him in exchange for their freedom. After initially rejecting such a radical move, he changed his mind after the Patriots forced him to flee the capital and take refuge on a British warship stationed offshore. Only then did he issue his famous

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<sup>32</sup> Benjamin F. Thompson, *History of Long Island from its Discovery and Settlement to the Present Time* (2 vols., New York: Quinn & Boden Co., 1918), I, 322; Dwight Holbrook, *The Wickham Claim* (Riverhead, NY: Suffolk County Historical Society, 1986), 52.

<sup>33</sup> “A Brookhaven Tory’s letter addressed to Major Benjamin Floyd at Brookhaven,” Jan. 5, 1776, Floyd Papers, Historian’s Collection, Town Hall, Brookhaven; Osborn Shaw, ed., *Records of the Town of Brookhaven, Book C, 1687-1789* (New York: Derrydale Press, 1930).

<sup>34</sup> “A Brookhaven Tory’s letter addressed to Major Benjamin Floyd at Brookhaven,” Jan. 5, 1776, Floyd Papers, Historian’s Collection, Town Hall, Brookhaven; Onderdonk, *Revolutionary Incidents*, 54.

<sup>35</sup> Staudt, “Suffolk County,” 66. Thos. Helme to Congress, Aug. 3, 1775, in Onderdonk, *Revolutionary Incidents*, 20.

proclamation, declaring “all indentured Servants, Negroes, or others . . . free, that are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining his Majesty’s Troops . . . for the more speedily reducing this Colony to a proper Sense of their Duty, to his Majesty’s Crown and Dignity.”<sup>36</sup> Since *all* of the rebellious colonies relied upon enslaved labor to some degree, the move served a dual purpose for the British—enhancing their own military strength while weakening their opponent. Both Patriots and Loyalists, meanwhile, denounced the Dunmore Proclamation as an egregious attack on their property rights. Individual slaveholders feared, correctly as it happened, that many of their own slaves would be enticed to run away and join the fight against them. On Long Island, for example, outraged residents in Huntington purportedly burned an effigy of Gov. Dunmore, with its face “black like his Virginia regiment.”<sup>37</sup>

As enslaved persons harkened to Dunmore’s clarion call, a trickle of runaways turned into a “tidal flood, their sheer numbers overwhelming the army . . . to become a mass resistance movement.”<sup>38</sup> In 1779, the Phillipsburg Proclamation expanded the policy to include all those in bondage (not just men). An estimated 20,000 people—including men, women, and children—ultimately freed themselves, seeking refuge behind British lines wherever they could. The War for Independence, as historian Gary Nash aptly describes it, thus also became “the greatest slave rebellion in American history.”<sup>39</sup> Never supportive of a full-scale general emancipation, the British initially tried to placate Loyalist slaveholders by restricting African volunteers to supporting non-combat roles; as the war intensified, however, they found need to arm the men, who bravely fought on the front lines alongside British and Hessian soldiers. Despite strong opposition from colonial slaveholders, the Patriots likewise were forced to seek reinforcements by recruiting Black soldiers with promises of freedom.<sup>40</sup>

By mid-1776, Patriot paranoia of their neighbors and slaves was at a high across the colonies. On Long Island, William Floyd and other members of the Brookhaven Committee formed a new Committee of Safety to harass and silence Loyalists using intimidation, physical violence, and other extra-legal tactics. In addition, they established their own unauthorized legislative body that followed orders from the Continental Congress and Provincial Conventions. In this atmosphere of fear and dissension, anyone with a hint of

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<sup>36</sup> For full text, see <https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/docs/DunmoresProclamation.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 23; Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 220.

<sup>38</sup> Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 119.

<sup>39</sup> Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 231.

<sup>40</sup> Chopra, *Choosing Sides*, 41.

royalist sympathies, regardless of their social status, was suspect. The Committee of Safety, for example, interrogated Andrew Patchin, a local farmer and militiaman, after he voiced complaints about the new Congress in “very abusive and vilifying Language” and, perhaps more offensive in their eyes, “particularly Dam’d Colonel William Floyd . . . [for returning] from the Congress on purpose to make Disturbance and the Divil [sic] would have him, for he would go to Hell for what he had done.” Given his elite status and political prominence, William Floyd seemed to become a lightning rod for the frustrations of those, such as Patchin, who were farther down the social ladder; such incidents illuminate both “how ordinary Americans were drawn into revolutionary politics” and how complex issues of class influenced social relations in Suffolk County. After fortunately receiving only an admonishment, Patchin continued to be monitored by the Patriots, although his political affiliation and post-war fate are unknown.<sup>41</sup>

Thomas Fanning, a close friend of Richard Floyd, also drew scrutiny for his regular correspondence with his brother Edmund Fanning, Governor William Tryon’s personal secretary and a fellow Loyalist. To make an example of him, the Committee of Safety forced Thomas Fanning to appear before them “with all the Letters” from his brother “received within three months,” which may well have contained British intelligence. At the hearing, however, he refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the proceedings or to share the letters, proclaiming he would rather have “his flesh all pul’d off with hot pincers”<sup>42</sup> Like Patchin, he was also accused of a speech-related offence for stating that the colonies would “never have any Peace” until “five or six of them damned Scoundrels on the Congress,” including John Hancock and Samuel Adams, were hanged. When another of his statements was quoted—that if he had “a hundred Lives, he would venture Ninety and Nine of them on the side of the King’s Forces, rather than one on the part of Congress”—Thomas Fanning proudly affirmed the sentiment and wildly challenged any three Committee members, “if they dare,” to a pistol duel. He was taken to New York to be tried, but evidence is inconclusive as to his sentence.<sup>43</sup>

By the spring of 1776, hopes of reconciliation with Britain dimmed and a political divorce began to seem unavoidable. In July, as noted above, with the New York delegates’ belated yea votes, the Declaration of Independence was unanimously approved. Only a month later, over a hundred British ships—the largest military force ever seen in North

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<sup>41</sup> “Copy of the Minutes of the Committee of Safety of the Town of Brookhaven . . . April 16, 1776 to June 25, 1776,” pp. 1-15, East Hampton Public Library; T. H. Breen, *The Will of the People: The Revolutionary Birth of America* (New York: Belknap Press, 2019), 106-7.

<sup>42</sup> “Copy of the Minutes of the Committee of Safety of the Town of Brookhaven,” 1-15; copy of “1775 Tax List,” Tax and Assessment Lists, 1665-1799, Town of Brookhaven; *Book of Common Pleas, 1760-1773*, Riverhead County Clerk’s Historical Documents.

<sup>43</sup> “Copy of the Minutes of the Committee of Safety of the Town of Brookhaven,” 1-15. Thomas apparently was detained briefly, if at all, since he accompanied Richard Floyd IV to New York in autumn 1776.

America—cruised into New York harbor and landed unchallenged on Staten Island. From there, General William Howe, Commander-in-Chief of the British, set his sights on Long Island in order to cut off access to New York City.



**Figure 3.4:** “A View of New York, Governors Island, the River, &c., from Long Island,” depicting deployment of British troops in August 1776, prior to the Battle of Long Island. Engraved by Pierre Charles Canot. Courtesy of Swann Auction Galleries.

In late August, General Howe—along with his brother Admiral Richard Howe, General Charles Cornwallis, and General Henry Clinton—led an army of roughly twenty thousand troops against the ragged and ill-supplied Continental Army. British forces included around four thousand Hessians and Virginia’s Ethiopian Regiment, which was organized in the wake of Dunmore’s Proclamation. Howe’s early tactics confused General George Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army. Initially unsure of Howe’s intentions, Washington delayed sending reinforcements from Manhattan to Long Island, until it was too late. Royal troops quickly crushed his men, hunting them down across the island’s sandy shores, marshes, and meadows. Many civilians, caught in the maelstrom, had “their houses, fields, and gardens burned or pillaged by one side or the other.”<sup>44</sup> By August 29, the overwhelming force of the British and their allies crushed the

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<sup>44</sup> Schechter. *The Battle for New York*, 153.

Patriot forces, killing or wounding upwards of two hundred and taking over nine hundred prisoners. They also captured three Patriot generals, including General Nathaniel Woodhull (William Floyd's brother-in-law and neighbor) who was wounded while trying to escape and later died in prison of gangrene. His wife had the terrible task of retrieving her husband's body, since as Ezra L'Hommedieu caustically observed, the British "were so generous to his lady as to indulge her with liberty to carry home the general's corpse and bury it with decency."<sup>45</sup> The British, for their part, reported only 61 killed, 267 wounded, and 31 captured or missing. In short, the Crown won a resounding victory at the Battle of Long Island, leaving the Patriots bewildered and, for the time, downtrodden.<sup>46</sup>



**Figure 3.5:** "The British landing at Kip's Bay, New York Island, 15 September 1776," detail of print by Robert Cleveley, 1777. Courtesy of National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London (image # PAH9491).

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Natalie A. Naylor, "Surviving the Ordeal: Long Island Women during the Revolutionary War," *Long Island History Journal* 20, no. 1-2 (2007): 117.

<sup>46</sup> Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 153. Although evidence is inconclusive, some historians have argued that Woodhull's actions were suspect due to divided loyalties. Lowenthal, *William Floyd*, 46-61.



**Figure 3.6:** “Retreat at Long Island” (August 27, 1776): Withdrawal of the Continental Army of George Washington,” ca. 1860, engraving by J. C. Armytage, after a painting by M. A. Wageman. Courtesy of the National Archives. This print depicts George Washington directing the retreat of his forces across the East River in the aftermath of his army’s defeat in the Battle of Long Island.

The British failed, however, to deal a permanent blow to the rebellion. When General Howe opted to refrain from storming the Patriots’ defenses, the remnants of the Continental Army retreated over the East River and into New York City on the foggy night of August 29, thus surviving to fight another day. When General Clinton later took over the British command, he faulted General Howe for that ill-advised decision for extending what might otherwise have been a brief conflict. At the time, however, Howe decided to dig trenches and lead a formal siege, rather than risk the lives of his troops with a frontal attack (as happened a year earlier at Bunker Hill where hundreds of British soldiers died). In vain, he also hoped, after such an embarrassing defeat, the Continentals would lay down their arms.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the British victory on Long Island put the Patriots on the defensive for the beginning of the war.

Having successfully taken control of the surrounding area, the British established their military headquarters in New York City. For the rest of the war, the occupied city became a haven for Loyalists, white and black. Enslaved Africans greeted the British as

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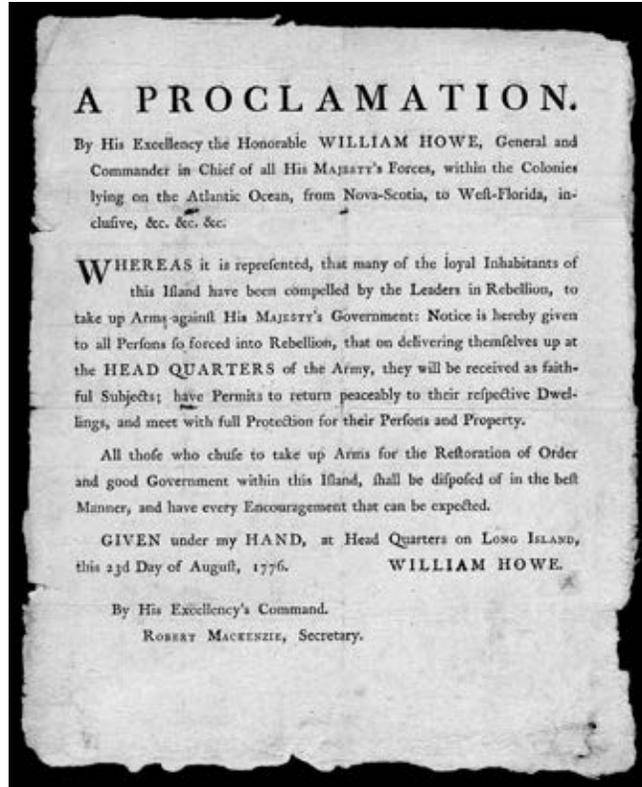
<sup>47</sup> Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 126-167.

liberators; one British soldier described “black children of slaves hugging and kissing each other” with relief. To some degree, black New Yorkers were treated legally as British subjects; in some cases, for example, the city court rejected claims by white Loyalists to retrieve their runaway slaves.<sup>48</sup>



**Figure 3.7:** “News from America, or the Patriots in the Dumps,” political cartoon from *London Magazine*, November 1776. Courtesy of Swann Auction Galleries. This cartoon, printed in a popular London magazine, celebrates the British victory in the Battle of Long Island and their subsequent occupation of New York. The characters depicted include General William Howe (center) who led the British forces; gloating English politicians and King George III (right); and distressed Patriots (left), including a distraught woman holding a Liberty cap.

<sup>48</sup> Chopra, *Choosing Sides*, 37-40; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 193.



**Figure 3.8:** “A Proclamation by His Excellency the Honorable William Howe,” August 23, 1776, broadside, New York. Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society Library. Upon arriving on Long Island, Gen. Howe, the British commander, issued this general amnesty to any “loyal Inhabitants of this Island” who were “compelled by the Leaders in Rebellion to take up Arms against his Majesty’s Government” and encouraged Loyalists to join in opposing the Patriots.

After the Battle of Long Island, the Loyalist militia readied themselves to hold off Patriot forces. In December 1776, Richard was promoted to the rank of Colonel by Governor William Tryon, who expressed great confidence in his “Loyalty, Courage, and Readiness . . . [to do] his Majesty good and faithful Service.” At forty-four years old, Richard now commanded the Loyalist militia responsible for providing the British forces in Suffolk County with manpower, sustenance, wood, and other supplies. He and his men were also tasked with building forts as well as protecting and policing the local civilian populace.<sup>49</sup>

William Floyd, meanwhile, was engrossed by his congressional responsibilities, involving financing and provisions issues that plagued the Continental army and governing the fledgling nation. He had arrived back in Philadelphia on November 14, 1776. Only two

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<sup>49</sup> William Tryon to Richard Floyd IV, appointment to Colonel of the Regiment of the Militia in Suffolk County, AO 13/12/454-466, David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

days later, General Washington retreated from New York, after losing 2,500 men in the failed attempt to hold Fort Mifflin in northern Manhattan. Shortly thereafter, the British forced the Patriots to hastily abandon Fort Mifflin in New Jersey as well, leaving their cooking kettles still simmering. After these inglorious defeats, many Continental soldiers deserted, and Congress struggled to conscript more men and to raise funds for food, supplies, and weapons.<sup>50</sup>

By the Christmas season, however, the war took an encouraging turn with Washington's victories at Trenton on December 26 and Princeton on January 3. In late March, New York officials ordered William Floyd, and his fellow delegates Francis Lewis and Lewis Morris, to travel to Kingston and participate in drawing up New York's first state constitution; it was approved on April 20, 1777, establishing a 70-member Assembly and a 24-member Senate. Governor George Clinton (and a fellow delegate in Congress) appointed William and his brother-in-law Ezra L'Hommedieu to represent the southern district, although neither man remained on Long Island during the British occupation.<sup>51</sup>

The summer of 1777 proved tumultuous for New Yorkers, as General John Burgoyne led the British and their Iroquois allies to capture Fort Mifflin in July. Advancing southward, they burned Kingston to the ground, forcing the state government to relocate to Poughkeepsie, where it operated for two years. When the Continental forces succeeded in surrounding General Burgoyne in October, however, he was forced to surrender at Saratoga. That much-needed American victory proved to be a tipping point in the war as British morale deteriorated and French forces arrived to bolster the Patriots.<sup>52</sup>

## *Brookhaven under British Occupation*

As the British moved to impose martial law and occupy Long Island, thousands of residents with Patriot sympathies fled to Connecticut, northern New York, or elsewhere. In Suffolk County, however, an estimated 5,000 inhabitants with Patriot sympathies—almost half its population of 13,000 (free and enslaved)—went into exile for the rest of the war. Most were forced to abandon not only their homes, but also their standing crops, livestock, and many personal belongings.<sup>53</sup> Civilians who remained, for whatever reason, suffered abuses both from the standing army and from Patriot raiding parties. With Long Island in British hands, the Brookhaven Committee of Safety, organized by local Patriots, disbanded as most of its members either joined Continental forces or fled into exile.

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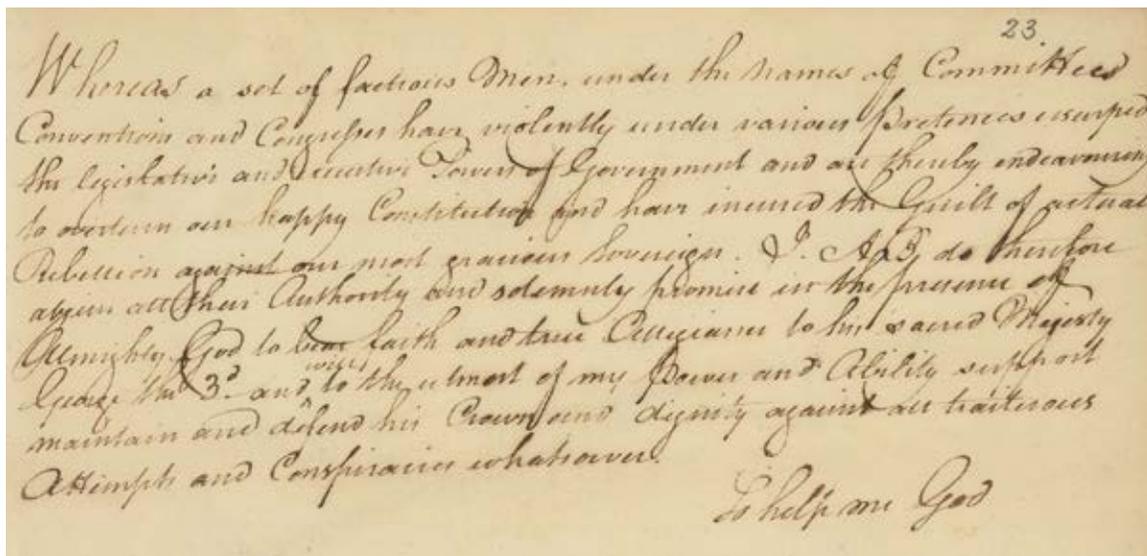
<sup>50</sup> George C. Daughan, *Revolution on the Hudson: New York City and the Hudson River Valley in the American War of Independence* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016).

<sup>51</sup> Lowenthal, *William Floyd*, 62-71.

<sup>52</sup> Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2014).

<sup>53</sup> Staudt, "Suffolk County," in Tiedemann and Fingerhut, *The Other New York*, 64.

Meanwhile, the British imposed martial rule and occupied the entire island. Assuming the rebellion would soon end, local Loyalists rejoiced and tried to reassert their dominance. Once established on Long Island, the British sought to force any white male civilians who remained in the area back into the royal fold. In September 1776 the Loyalist militia began rounding up any Associators, who had not fled, and compelling them to “take the Oath of Allegiance to the King and to Sign a Role of Submission Disclaiming and Rejecting the Orders of Congress.”<sup>54</sup> Richard Floyd helped deliver the pledges collected in Suffolk County to British officials in New York City.



**Figure 3.9:** Oath of Allegiance to King George III, November 11, 1775. Courtesy of the National Archives, Washington, D.C. During the American Revolution, British and Patriot leaders both required, and sometimes coerced, American (white, male) freeholders to swear oaths of allegiance to their side. This Loyalist oath, for example, required swearers to condemn the “Rebellion against our most gracious Sovereign,” to promise “in the presence of Almighty God to bear faith and true Allegiance to his sacred Majesty George the 3rd,” and to “defend his Crown and dignity against all traitorous Attempts and Conspiracies whatsoever. So help me God.”

<sup>54</sup> Oliver De Lancey to Col. Phineas Fanning, Sept. 2, 1776. *The Online Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies*, <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/rhist/suffcomil/scomlet2.htm>. Oliver De Lancey, Brig. Gen'l., to the Inhabitants of Suffolk County, Sept. 5, 1776, in Onderdonk, *Revolutionary Incidents*, 47.

To His EXCELLENCY  
W I L L I A M T R Y O N, Esq;  
Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over the Province of NEW-YORK  
and the Territories depending thereon AMERICA; Chancellor and Vice Admiral  
of the same, &c. &c. &c.

May it please Your EXCELLENCY,  
WE the Inhabitants of the County of SUFFOLK, beg Leave to congratulate your Excellency on your Return to the Capital of your Government; and to assure you, that we feel the sincerest Joy on this happy Event, which opens a Prospect, that we shall once more experience the Blessings of Peace and Security under His Majesty's auspicious Government and Protection—Blessings which we formerly enjoyed under your Excellency's mild Administration, and which we ardently wish to have renewed.

Persevering in our Loyalty and unshaken Attachment to our gracious Sovereign, in this Time of Distress and Trial, and anxious to testify our Affection for him, we have embraced the earliest Opportunity to petition the King's Commissioners, that They would restore this County to His Majesty's Peace, altho' many of the most respectable Inhabitants and a much greater Number of the inferior Classes have been driven off by the Calamities of War, or sent Prisoners to New-England, and other distant Parts, yet we hope that the Numbers still remaining and who have voluntarily subscribed, may be deemed sufficient to intitle this District to His Majesty's Grace, whilst the sufferings which our absent fellow Inhabitants undergo for the Royal Cause, plead in their Behalt with the Commissioners,—From whose well known Humanity, Benevolence and enlarged Sentiments, we have the most flattering Expectations.

To your Excellency we naturally look up for Assistance, we therefore request that you would be pleased to present our Petition to the Commissioners; and otherwise exert yourself that the Prayer of it may be granted; as it is our fervent desire, and what we esteem the greatest earthly Felicity, to remain Subjects of the British Government—In Union with the Parent State.

Signed by Desire, and in Behalf of the Inhabitants of the County of SUFFOLK.

By RICHARD FLOYD,  
THOMAS FANNING,  
FREDERICK HUDSON.

SUFFOLK County, 28th November, 1776.

NEW-YORK, 2d December, 1776.

Figure 3.10: Letter from Richard Floyd, Thomas Fanning, and Frederick Hudson to Governor William Tryon, November 28, 1776. Reproduced from the Microfilm Collection of the Institute for Colonial Studies, State University of New York at Stony Brook, reel HK (Stony Brook, NY: The Institute, c. 1965). In this letter, Richard Floyd (William Floyd's Loyalist cousin) and his associates wrote to the royal governor of colonial New York to assure him of their allegiance to the Crown and to seek assistance for their fellow Loyalist inhabitants on Long Island who had not fled after the British occupied the region after the Battle of Long Island.

Suffolk County's Loyalist Militia, led by Col. Richard Floyd from 1776 to 1783, policed the countryside but could not patrol all of the island's extensive coastline. Hence, Patriots exiled in Connecticut and other marauders began regularly crossing Long Island Sound on raids to rob and terrorize civilians, irrespective of their political affiliations. For instance, William Phillips, the local man who Floyd hired to oversee the Mastic estate, later joined Caleb Brewster, a rash adventurer from Setauket, in leading whaleboat raids across Long Island Sound to attack the households of avowed Loyalists, including Richard Floyd.

In July 1779, for example, *Rivington's Royal Gazette* reported that the raiders and several local sympathizers feasted “at the house of Benj. Havens at Moriches,” northeast of Mastic.<sup>55</sup> Loyalists, in turn, retaliated by raiding the Patriot-held Connecticut coast.

With her husband serving in the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Hannah Floyd fled with their children to Middletown, Connecticut, where they joined many Long Islanders also in exile. After their departure, the estate was left in the care of William Phillips, to oversee their Mastic estate. At least during the war's early years, Phillips communicated regularly with his employer. When the British forced him to swear an oath of allegiance to the Crown and allowed two Loyalists to take possession of the Floyds' house, however, Phillips also fled to Connecticut. According to William Floyd, “after the Enemy got possession of New York and Long Island, two persons (and as I am told Tories) who fled to the Enemy from this state, obtained a permit of Governor Tryon to take possession of my Estate which they did, and turned off the steward that I had on it who was obliged to leave the Island and come to this state for safety.”<sup>56</sup>

While most accounts suggest that after Phillips' departure, the estate was left abandoned, a later anecdotal account by a Floyd descendant indicates that William instructed Stephen, one of his enslaved workers, to remain on the property “to be a witness to all the enemy did.”<sup>57</sup> In the absence of any corroborating evidence, it is unknown if Stephen was, in fact, left behind or, if so, how long he remained at his post or what he observed. Since his name does not appear in later archives, another tantalizing possibility, although pure speculation, might be that he seized the opportunity to seek his freedom, as did many others. No other extant records reveal what happened to Floyd's enslaved workers who remained in the area during the war, suggesting that they were left largely to their own devices and some may have liberated themselves.

By 1782, over three thousand African Americans, including many from Long Island, had taken refuge from their masters in British-occupied New York City.<sup>58</sup> That number included, for example, Pomp, who ran away from Southampton to take his chances with the British; his master Elias Pelletreau, the silversmith patronized by the Floyds, later claimed £300 in compensation for “my Negro man” who was “stolen” by the enemy. Such a large sum suggests that Pomp, long trusted by Pelletreau to work in the silver shop and make deliveries, was particularly skilled and valuable. Not all enslaved people, however, could avail themselves of the opportunity to secure their freedom even amidst the chaos. A young woman named Peg, for example, purchased by Pelletreau in 1766 for £35,

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<sup>55</sup> Onderdonk, *Revolutionary Incidents*, 84.

<sup>56</sup> Lowenthal, *William Floyd*, 98-101.

<sup>57</sup> Sarah Turner Floyd, “Sunny Memoirs of Mastic,” ca. 1886, unpublished manuscript, William Floyd Archives; see also discussion of Stephen in Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 149.

<sup>58</sup> Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 202-3.

accompanied her master's family into exile in Connecticut, whether voluntarily or not. Without Pomp's skills, mobility, or life experience, she probably saw little chance to escape in the unfamiliar surroundings.<sup>59</sup>

Another person who found herself trapped by circumstances was Zipporah, one of a dozen enslaved persons that Loyalist Richard Floyd inherited from his father. After the war, it came to light that, as the tide of the war turned and his property was about to be confiscated, he secretly transferred her ownership to John Peters of Hempstead and the others to his brother and son. Zipporah thus remained in bondage, even while her former master was exiled in Canada. But for his subterfuge, as Vivienne Kruger points out, Zipporah would likely "have been entitled to freedom if she had remained unsold by the Commissioners of Forfeitures in 1786 (when all such slaves were freed by the state)."<sup>60</sup> Instead, she remained in bondage for another sixteen years before she had another opportunity to gain her freedom.

The Floyds, meanwhile, settled down in temporary quarters in Middletown, Connecticut. Along with several of his Brookhaven neighbors, William requested permission from Connecticut governor Jonathan Trumbull to retrieve whatever remained of his moveable property on Long Island. Dated April 19, 1780, his petition (which was granted) stated that the Loyalists had already seized "a considerable quantity of stock of Different kinds, the greatest part of my Household furniture, and all my farming utensils, with some beds and bedding with other cloathing." He wished to "obtain a permit to send on to Long Island some carefull persons for the purpose of taking and Bringing off all such stock as they may find in his Estate, and such other things as they may find on the farm or in the house."<sup>61</sup> Based on later descriptions, the entire estate—including the main house, outbuildings, fences, fields, and woodlands—all sustained significant damage that would take years to restore. The fact that William Floyd's estate was not destroyed completely may have been thanks to the influence of his Loyalist cousin. Larry Lowenthal speculates that the kinsmen may have mutually agreed in advance that, whatever the war's outcome, their properties would remain in the Floyd family. If they had made such an alliance, it certainly

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<sup>59</sup> "Pelletreau Account Book No. 3, 1766–1776," Pelletreau Family Papers (Folio 5, ARC.142), Brooklyn Historical Society, Brooklyn, NY; "Pelletreau Account Book No. 2, 1760–1766," (MSx/CF/2), Long Island Collection, East Hampton Public Library, East Hampton, NY. Cited in Deborah Dependahl Waters, "Ties That Bind: Clients of the Pelletreau Shop, 1760–1817" in Dean F. Failey, *Elias Pelletreau, Long Island Silversmith and Entrepreneur, 1726–1810*, ed. Jennifer L. Anderson (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Preservation Long Island, 2018).

<sup>60</sup> Vivienne Kruger, "Born to Run: The Slave Family in Early New York, 1626 to 1827" (PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1985), ch. 11.

<sup>61</sup> Frederic Gregory Mather, *The Refugees of 1776 from Long Island to Connecticut*, 905.

would have behooved them both to make any efforts possible to protect and preserve their respective estates. Considering the cousins' apparent rift and the lack of supporting evidence, the existence of such a pact seems unlikely.<sup>62</sup>

Relations between the British forces and Long Islanders, whatever their political persuasions, quickly became antagonistic. Military officials expected the local populace to supply the army with massive quantities of provisions, livestock, and timber for construction and fuel. They also impressed men, horses, and wagons into service to transport supplies. Richard Floyd and other Suffolk Loyalists readily answered the call, assuming that they would be paid in full for their contributions.<sup>63</sup> Richard, for example, delivered "two horses worth sixty pounds, and a wagon worth twenty pounds," but received only a promise of future payment. Despite Governor Tryon's intervention on his behalf, he was still seeking compensation seven years later.<sup>64</sup> To ensure ample fuel during the winter months, the British army also hired local men as "wood-cutters, wood-pilers, carriers, cartmen, wagons, ox carts, drivers, overseers, and inspectors." Thomas Jones, the prominent Loyalist, smugly dismissed them as "an ignorant set of people," including "Germans who spoke little English. . . negroes, and Indians." Many of them, unable to read or write, were "cheated out of amazing sums" by deceitful barrack-masters. By 1778, unpaid receipts piled up in the British pay office, "signed with the marks of Cato, Caesar, Scipio, Pompey, Jack, Tom, Harry, Quash, Cuffee," and other enslaved Africans.<sup>65</sup> All over the island, meanwhile, including on the Floyd estate, woodlands were stripped of valuable timber, often without compensation to the landowners. On the other hand, some unscrupulous British officers, who took advantage of their positions, departed Long Island "richer than half the princes in Germany. . . [and] leaving successors to make their fortune in the same manner."<sup>66</sup> As the war drew on, such offences began to alienate even devoted Loyalists toward the British forces.

With so many men away, serving in the military or in other wartime service, women who stayed in the occupied region throughout the war suffered considerable hardship. As historian Natalie Naylor explains, they "assumed more responsibility for the outdoor work on farms. They had always been in charge inside the house and tended the kitchen garden

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<sup>62</sup> Lowenthal, *William Floyd*, 91-105.

<sup>63</sup> Onderdonk, *Revolutionary Incidents*, 44-45.

<sup>64</sup> Jones, *History of New York*, 331-36. Col. Richard Floyd IV's claims, Aug. 1783, AO 12, vol. 110, pp. 160-61, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax. Thomas Jones estimated that Richard lost £80, ten pounds more than what the colonel later requested.

<sup>65</sup> Since these were very common names, however, it is not known if any of the receipts in question referred to Floyd slaves with the same names. Jones, *History of New York*, 334.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

with its herbs and vegetables, as well as chickens and dairying. But when wartime disrupted regular routines, women found ways to cope.” For many, “this experience of independence and greater responsibility during the war may have had lasting effects on family life.”<sup>67</sup>

Although politically disenfranchised, many white women actively supported the war effort—providing meaningful moral and material support on both sides of the conflict. During the tense standoff prior to the war, female sympathizers protested British taxation policies by participating in consumer boycotts and supported the Patriots’ cause as boosters of domestic-made products, including making homespun cloth. With the onset of hostilities, women across the political spectrum made sacrifices and provided vital medical supplies and foodstuffs to their soldiers. To save more food for their fighting men, for example, the Associated Loyalists at Lloyd’s Neck advocated reduced rations for women and children. At least one Patriot woman, Anna (Nancy) Strong “was probably involved in the famous Culper Spy Ring,” helping signal whaleboat raiders where they could safely land. Likewise, on both sides, some women joined their husbands in the military, usually behind the front lines, assisting with nursing, cooking, and laundry. While all women were vulnerable during the conflict, a few were specifically targeted by the opposing side based on the political affiliations of their menfolk. In September 1776, for example, Elizabeth Francis, wife of a Patriot, was taken prisoner by the British for several months in abysmal conditions. Although her health was destroyed, she was finally released, but only after General Washington kidnapped two prominent Loyalist women to exchange for her.<sup>68</sup> African American and Indian women, by contrast, may initially have felt less of a personal stake in the conflict’s political outcomes. But amidst the ensuing chaos, they too experienced the direct effects of violence and deprivation on their families and daily lives; as discussed below, however, some enslaved people, including women and children, seized the opportunity to escape bondage.

In the meantime, however, the entire civilian population of Suffolk County remained easy prey not only for British occupation forces but also for exiled Patriots bent on sabotage and marauding pirates. The latter two groups regularly launched night raids to steal supplies, kidnap people, and wreak general havoc. According to one account, they stole the inhabitants’ “furniture, linen, wearing apparel, money, negroes, rum, wine, sugar, and salt” and, rather than leave anything of value for the British to seize, they killed any remaining livestock, burned stores of hay, “oats, wheat, rye, and Indian corn,” and scuppered any “wood boats, hay boats, coasters, [or] canoes.” Although from 1776 to 1777 the British built and manned two forts (in Huntington and Setauket) to guard the island’s vulnerable northern coastline, the whaleboat raiders easily evaded detection. In the spring

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<sup>67</sup> Natalie A. Naylor, *Women in Long Island’s Past: A History of Eminent Ladies and Everyday Lives* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), ch. 3.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* For more on women’s war-time travails, see Joy Day Buel and Richard Buel, *The Way of Duty: A Woman and Her Family in Revolutionary America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995).

of 1778, Sir Henry Clinton, to the horror of local Loyalists, ordered the destruction of both forts and redeployed his men, along with all “stores, provisions, and artillery,” to New York City in preparation for an anticipated French and Patriot joint attack. Their departure left Suffolk residents more exposed than ever.<sup>69</sup>

While struggling to defend the Crown, Richard Floyd IV found himself unable to protect his own family from abuse from the Patriots, even in a center of British power. In November 1777, for example, his sixteen-year-old daughter Elizabeth was in New York City visiting her friend Charlotte De Lancey (daughter of Loyalist general Oliver De Lancey) when Patriot ruffians attacked the De Lanceys’ opulent residence. They “abused and insulted” Mrs. De Lancey “in a most infamous manner,” struck Charlotte “several times with a musket,” set fire to the house, and attempted to throw a burning sheet over Elizabeth as she tried to escape. Barefoot and wearing only nightgowns, the girls fortunately managed to flee, scrambling through thorny hedges and brambles. After hiding in a nearby swamp, they finally took refuge with a friendly neighbor.<sup>70</sup>

Back on eastern Long Island, Patriot raiders likewise targeted known Loyalists. By August 1776, Richard IV was the only freeholder still in Mastic and entertained the British officers on several occasions. He thus likely found it unnerving when, in November 1776, Samuel Glover was captured in Mastic while on a mission to impress men, wagons, and horses for “His Majesty’s service.” Even more alarming, Richard’s close friend, Major Frederick Hudson of Wading River, was “taken & carried to New England a Prisoner” in December 1777. To secure his release, Richard and several of his colleagues petitioned General Clinton to consider Hudson’s “unhappy Situation, and if possible . . . Direct some method whereby he may be restored to his Family, his Friends, . . . [and] this county.” They particularly emphasized that “that the whole of these calamities are come upon him for his Loyalty.”<sup>71</sup> Hudson was later returned to Long Island, only to have his home plundered again by a “party of rebels, with their faces blacked.”<sup>72</sup> In June 1779, after receiving yet another request from British officials to draft more men for the county militia, Richard explained that local conditions were too dangerous to comply “without Laying myself so Exposed that I must quit my residence here, as I have not been able to lodge in my house this three weeks past and plundered within that space. . . . Rebels being frequently in and

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<sup>69</sup> Jones, *History of New York*, 266-71.

<sup>70</sup> Oliver De Lancey (1708-1785), one of New York’s wealthiest Loyalists, was appointed brigadier general on Sept. 4, 1776. He recruited over 2,000 soldiers from Long Island and Connecticut to serve in his brigade. Thomas B. Allen and Todd W. Braisted, *The Loyalist Corps: Americans in Service of the King* (Takoma Park, MD: Fox Acre Press, 2011), 32-33.

<sup>71</sup> Onderdonk, *Revolutionary Incidents*, 56. Memorial on behalf of Maj. Frederick Hudson, by Richard Floyd, Benjamin Floyd, James Lyon, Cyrus Punderson, and John Bailis, to Sir Henry Clinton. March 10, 1778, Henry Clinton Papers, vol. 32, p. 1, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>72</sup> Onderdonk, *Revolutionary Incidents*, 75-86. While evidence is inconclusive as to when exactly Frederick Hudson secured his release, his house was plundered at least four times after his return.

about the county and continually cruising the South Bay ready to catch any officer that shall be found openly exerting themselves in behalf of Government.” While he attempted to evade capture, his Pattersquash estate sustained three raids, in which “cattle, sheep, and several of his slaves” were carried off.<sup>73</sup>

In October of that year, the Patriots’ Legislature passed the New York Act of Attainder, which allowed for confiscation of Loyalists’ land and other property on the grounds that they were “enemies to this State.” The law also banished them forever from New York, under pain of death. Over fifty individuals were subsequently “convicted and attainted,” *in absentia*, including, not surprisingly, Richard Floyd, who was now a wanted man.<sup>74</sup> As long as the British occupied southern New York, however, he remained relatively safe, apart from his property losses and the aggravation of periodic whaleboat raids. British authorities even allowed the families of some exiled Patriots to stay in their homes, usually by virtue of their personal connections. Ruth Smith, one of the Floyds’ neighbors, for example, remained with her children at the Manor of St. George for at least two years after her husband William Smith fled to upstate New York around 1776. Writing to her husband on April 24, 1778, she expressed gratitude for “the help and Advice of some good friends,” most notably Thomas Fanning, her kinsman and a prominent Loyalist, who was “so kinde as to let us have a half a dozen milch cows.” Another friend loaned her “a yoke of too oxen,” originally acquired for the British, to plow their wheat fields and “rase our Bread.” Nevertheless, she feared for their son’s safety from the “enraged” redcoats.<sup>75</sup>

In Mastic, meanwhile, the Unkechaug community—apart from the men who enlisted in the Patriot militia—remained largely in Poospatuck, sticking close to home and subsisting off their land. Some even continued to work for the few landowners who had not fled. With her husband away, for example, Ruth Smith was only able to keep their fields under cultivation thanks to the continued efforts of Unkechaug workers (and probably some enslaved Africans), who she described as behaving themselves “very well.” With the

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<sup>73</sup> Coll. Richard Floyd to His Excellency Lt. Gen. Daniel Jones Commanding in N. York. June 12, 1779, Henry Clinton Papers, vol. 60, p. 45, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan; Jones, *History of New York*, 268.

<sup>74</sup> “The New York Act of Attainder, or Confiscation Act,” in *Digital Collection of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick*, <http://archives.gnb.ca/Exhibits/FortHavoc/html/NY-Attainder.aspx?culture=en-CA>. Holbrook, *The Wickham Claim*, 88-98.

<sup>75</sup> Ruth Smith to William Smith, April 24, 1778, reel HK, *Microfilm Collection of the Institute for Colonial Studies, State University of New York at Stony Brook* (Stony Brook, NY: The Institute for Colonial Studies, 1965). See also Judith L. Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

Floyds and so many others in exile, however, the Unkechaugs would have had less employment than usual on area estates. Instead, they likely met their needs by supplying wage labor, foodstuffs, timber, and other natural resources to the British army.<sup>76</sup>

In the latter years of the war, the British largely left the inhabitants of Suffolk County to their own devices, emboldening the Patriots to harass remaining Loyalists. Thomas Fanning, for example, was abducted and taken to Connecticut in June 1778. Given his outspoken royalist sentiments, Benjamin Floyd, then Brookhaven town supervisor, became a target. In September 1778, however, Governor Tryon deployed to eastern Long Island with 1,000 soldiers to “secure the peaceable behavior of the disaffected inhabitants” (which, at the time, numbered roughly 2,677). The local populace was further angered, however, when the British requisitioned “about 1,000 fat cattle for the army.” To incentivize them to turn Patriot raiders, General Tryon offered rewards of “two Guineas for every Rebel, . . . three Guineas for every Whaleboat without sails, and five Guineas if with her sails and Oars.” After entertaining the general and his officers at his home, Benjamin Floyd was dismayed to discover that the rank-and-file British soldiers had ransacked “all his apples, his Indian corn, potatoes, turnips, cabbages, the greatest part of his poultry, and burnt up all his fences.” Shortly thereafter after, he too was kidnapped by a Patriot raiding party that carried him off to Connecticut in the middle of the night.<sup>77</sup> Likely thanks to his family ties and connections with influential Patriots, he was released unharmed, although robbed of all his furniture and £1,000 in cash.<sup>78</sup>

In 1778 and 1779, William continued to serve both in Congress and in the New York State government. After he returned to Philadelphia from visiting his family, his wife wrote to him that “many have been my fears about you. . . but thanks be to Heaven that kept you from falling into the hands of your Enemies. I have been very unwell since you left home but am now in prity good health.” She assured him that their daughters, Mary and Catherine (affectionately known as “Kitty”) were also well and finding time to read and write at home. Their eldest son Nicoll was probably with his father, since a later letter from Ezra L’Hommedieu asked William to “remember me to Nicoll.” In April 1779, Hannah, Mary, and Kitty visited them in Philadelphia.<sup>79</sup>

During this same period, many New Yorkers were suffering greatly from hardships of war. Although William solicited help from the other states, little assistance was forthcoming. In December 1779, he warned Governor Clinton that, while “very Sensible of

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<sup>76</sup> Ruth Smith to William Smith, April 24, 1778, reel HK, *Microfilm Collection of the Institute for Colonial Studies*; Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 148.

<sup>77</sup> Onderdonk, *Revolutionary Incidents*, 76; *Online Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies*, <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/facts/ofrproc1.htm>. Allen and Braisted, *The Loyalist Corps*, 77. Alexander Rose, *Washington’s Spies: The Story of America’s First Spy Ring* (New York: Bantam Books, 2006), 130-31.

<sup>78</sup> Jones, *History of New York*, 268-69.

<sup>79</sup> Lowenthal, *William Floyd*, 62-71.

... Extraordinary Exertions of our State... the members do Say, many Clever things of our State; But when we talk of Compensation for the Sacrifices that has been made by the [state] already, then they Incline to be Silent, so that tho' it is Just a Compensation Should be made, yet I am fearful whether we Shall be Ever able to obtain it." In fairness to the other states, they were also paying for armies and supplies and saddled with their own debts and financial woes, making it hard to give New York special treatment despite its unique circumstance.<sup>80</sup> Worse still, under the new Articles of Confederation (adopted in 1778), New Yorker landowners, even while in exile, were expected to pay taxes on their property to the new government. Hence, the Brookhaven Committee, which persisted in reduced form, issued at least six warrants to collect taxes "on the Estates of the Inhabitant Freeholders."<sup>81</sup> Even though his estate was not generating any income, William thus owed about £2 in taxes. Like many Long Islanders, he and his family faced financial problems throughout the war.<sup>82</sup>

After the especially harsh winter of 1779-1780, when the British army in New York City almost ran out of fuel and many perished from extreme cold, Governor Robertson ordered "the Inhabitants of Southold, Southampton, and East Hampton" to cut "3,000 Cords of Wood" (about one month's supply) from the "Wood-Lands late belonging to William Smith and William Floyd."<sup>83</sup> At that point, few hastened to follow this directive; according to Thomas Jones, "Not a laborer turned out, not a stick of wood was cut; nor did military executions ever take place. The proclamations... [were] mere farces. The loyalists laughed at them, the rebels despised them, and by both they were held in contempt."<sup>84</sup> The British nonetheless extracted substantial timber from Smith's Manor of St. George, where they were in the process of building a fort. Unkechaug laborers and enslaved Africans provided much of the necessary labor to construct the fort, including digging ditches, cutting timber, and erecting surrounding abatis (barricades of sharpened posts). Located on the westernmost point of the Mastic Peninsula, Fort St. George, as it was named, was completed in 1780 and consisted of a "triangular inclosure of several acres of ground, at two angles of which was a strong barricade house, and at the third, a fort, with a deep ditch and wall encircled by an abatis of sharpened pickets, projecting at an angle of 45 degrees."<sup>85</sup> Although well situated to guard the South Bay, this elaborate military installation proved short-lived.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> County rate for 1778, reel HK, *Microfilm Collection of the Institute for Colonial Studies*.

<sup>82</sup> Paul H. Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress: 1774-1789* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1977), 332-33.

<sup>83</sup> Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 329-30; Milton M. Klein and Ronald W. Howard, eds., *The Twilight of British Rule in Revolutionary America: The New York Letter Book of General James Robertson, 1780-1783* (Cooperstown: New York State Historical Association, 1983), 119-20.

<sup>84</sup> Klein and Howard, *The Twilight of British Rule*, 119-20. Jones, *History of New York*, 25-26.

<sup>85</sup> Benjamin Tallmadge, *Memoir of Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge* (New York: Thomas Holman, 1858), 39-40.

Meanwhile, violence surged on Long Island as Patriot whale boat raiders and pirates continued their indiscriminate predations on the inhabitants. In summer 1781, for example, according to Caleb Brewster's report to Governor Clinton, two whaleboats staged a midnight attack on the home of Capt. Ebenezer Miller, who was not a Loyalist and had, in fact, signed the Association pledge. When Miller opened his door, the raiders demanded his arms which he promptly surrendered. Upon hearing the commotion, however, his son peeked out of an upstairs window and one of the men, "without ever speaking to him, shot him dead in the window."<sup>86</sup> Others were randomly robbed, beaten, tortured, and murdered as well. As gratuitous violence escalated, a climate of fear descended on the island.<sup>87</sup>

Although a leader of the whaleboat raids, Brewster was also a Suffolk native and seemed genuinely concerned about such gratuitous violence directed randomly at civilians. The problem was exacerbated, in part, by the governors of Connecticut and New York issuing privateering licenses that gave their holders a legal veneer to attack enemy ships; at least on paper, they were also liable for illegal harassment of civilians, but that provision was only weakly enforced.<sup>88</sup> By the summer of 1780, for example, Connecticut commissioned at least thirteen whaleboats "to cruize in the Sound," each operating under a bond of £2,000.<sup>89</sup> When the licensed privateer Peter Griffin was apprehended after "repeated complaints of your doings in making unlawful and improper depredations on the inhabitants of Long Island," he received only a mild reprimand.<sup>90</sup> In 1781, a few other captains were decommissioned for having "unjustly and cruelly plundered many of the friendly inhabitants there, brought off their effects, and have not caused them to be libelled and condemned in course of law."<sup>91</sup> After receiving complaints from Governor Clinton of New York that respectable Long Islanders had been "divested" of their goods "by Parties acting under Commission from your State," Gov. Trumbull in Connecticut tried unsuccessfully to quell the illicit raids, straining relations between the usually neighborly states.<sup>92</sup>

The tide of the Revolution turned after General Washington, aided by French allies, forced General Cornwallis to surrender at Yorktown, Virginia, on October 19. The impressive victory destroyed British morale and signaled the beginning of the end of the

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<sup>86</sup> Lt. Caleb Brewster to Gov. Clinton regarding "Several Atrocities Committed on Long Island by Boat Parties," Aug. 20, 1781, *Public Papers of George Clinton, Vol. VII* (Albany: State of New York, 1904), 233-34.

<sup>87</sup> Wallace Evan Davies, "Privateering around Long Island during the American Revolution," *New York History* 20, no. 3 (July 1939), 272; Tallmadge, *Memoir*, 39-40; Richard F. Welch, *General Washington's Commando: Benjamin Tallmadge in the Revolutionary War* (McFarland & Co., 2014); Jackson Kuhl, *The Whale-boat Men of Long Island Sound*, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2013/11/whale-boat-men-long-island-sound>.

<sup>88</sup> Kuhl, *The Whale-boat Men of Long Island Sound*.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Jonathan Trumbull to Peter Griffin, Aug. 4, 1778, *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut* (2 vols., Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1895), II, 107.

<sup>91</sup> *Public Records of the State of Connecticut*, 110.

<sup>92</sup> Lowenthal, *William Floyd*, 99-105.

war. While officials in the British headquarters in New York City scrambled to respond, the whaleboat raiders, taking advantage of the confusion, only escalated their attacks. In addition to heaping intolerable “Insults and abuse” on the residents of Suffolk County, by William’s estimate, they stole upwards of £100,000 in property (including cash, clothing, silver plate, and furniture). Amidst that reign of terror, in his words, “Every man of property there when he lays down to Sleep is under apprehension of being alarmed by a body of armed men Round his house. . . for the avowed purpose of Robbing him.” Anyone who refused to open the doors would receive “a volley of Balls through his house, by which many women and Children have very narrowly Escaped their lives. Some of our best friends who have been serving us the whole war they have whipt most severely. Some they have made to Ransom their houses from fire, with hard money.” In line with Caleb’s reports, William heard of “several Instances where they have after Robing the houses hung the people up by the Neck, until they have been nearly dead.” Despite his disgust, it bears mentioning that William took a hand in earlier privateering ventures as well; in 1777, for example, William and his brother-in-law Ezra L’Hommedieu invested £443 to acquire 1/8th share in the Sloop *Montgomery* and in 1782, William congratulated Ezra on his “share of a prize captured by his vessel would amount to 12 or 1500 dollars.”<sup>93</sup>

### *The High Costs of War*

In the spring of 1781, William was back in Philadelphia when word came that Hannah was gravely ill. Although he hastened back to Middletown to care for her, she died at age forty-one on May 16 and was buried in Connecticut. Her death dealt a painful blow to William, who became a widower responsible for three teenaged children. Even after such a great loss, he was re-elected later that year and continued his public service. With the war’s end on the horizon, William and his fellow Congressmen remained anxious in the months leading up to the peace treaty. After their campaign to capture the southern colonies failed, the British moved to evacuate their forces from Charleston, South Carolina, in December 1782. They were accompanied to New York City by thousands of Loyalists, white and black, who remained under royal protection. Ultimately, 3,000 freed African Americans, including some from Long Island, evacuated with the British, listed in a massive ledger, known as the “Book of Negroes.” Many of them were later transported to Nova Scotia, Jamaica, England, and elsewhere.<sup>94</sup> Patriots long exiled from Long Island impatiently awaited the British withdrawal so they could return home after eight years of grueling war.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>94</sup> Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (Vintage Books, 2012), 75-77; Richard S. Moss, *Slavery on Long Island: A Study in Local, Institutional and Early African-American Communal Life* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 166.



During the winter of 1782-1783, William Floyd continued to represent his constituents, but now brought his children along to Philadelphia. The family took up residence at the same boarding house where he normally stayed when Congress was in session. Located conveniently near the state house, it attracted many Congressmen, including Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who all worked together during the day and then socialized in the evenings. In January 1783, however, his son Nicoll, now eighteen years old, became quite ill, with a lingering fever that persisted for months. His “very Low, weak State” must have greatly troubled William despite the prospect of peace.



**Figure 3.12:** “First Assembly of Congress,” 1782, engraving from M. Hilliard d’Auberteuil’s *Essais historiques et politiques sur les Anglo-Américains* (Brussels, 1782). Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University (item # 34299-2).

Less serious but still concerning, the boarding house setting, with its preponderance of male residents, brought his daughters into a more public setting than their dutiful, but distracted father might have preferred. Before long, fifteen-year-old Catherine (Kitty) Floyd attracted Madison’s attention. With encouragement from Jefferson, he avidly pursued a courtship. In April 1783, shortly before the Floyd family departed at last for Long Island, James and Kitty became engaged. On the eve of their separation, the newly betrothed pair exchanged miniature portraits and he even accompanied them part of the way on their homeward journey.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> James Madison, *Papers of James Madison* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 105, 258, 270, 328.



**Figure 3.13:** Miniature portrait of Catherine “Kitty” Floyd, 1783, watercolor on ivory, by Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827). Courtesy of the Library of Congress (image # LC-USZC4-4099).

At age thirty-two, Madison, ardent and anxious to marry, immediately began planning their wedding. To his dismay, however, Kitty’s feelings proved lukewarm; after three months, she broke off the engagement and later married William Clarkson, another young man that she met while in Philadelphia. Jefferson tried to console his friend noting that “I sincerely lament the misadventure which has happened, from whatever cause it may have happened. Should it be final however, the world still presents the same and many other resources of happiness, and you possess many within yourself. Firmness of mind and unremitting occupations will not long leave you in pain.” Clearly confounded by the sudden turnaround, Jefferson mused that no event “has been more contrary to my expectations, and these were founded on what I thought a good knowledge of the ground. But of all machines ours is the most complicated and inexplicable.”<sup>96</sup>

While this personal melodrama played out, larger events were unfolding on the world stage. By early 1783, negotiations for a peace treaty to end the multi-lateral war were underway in Paris. Thomas Jones, the Long Island Loyalist, who had gone to England

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<sup>96</sup> “To James Madison from Thomas Jefferson,” April 14, 1783, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-06-02-0243>.

during the conflict, reflected the uncertainties involved with the negotiations, writing to his sister back in New York that, “during the course of the Summer, either a peace or truce will take place with America,” and the moment “we get account of it here I shall embark for my native county.” Jones and thousands of others would be ultimately disappointed.<sup>97</sup>

The Treaty of Paris, signed on September 3, 1783, offered little protection for Loyalists. Its provisions, for example, left it up to individual states to determine whether or not to compensate them for lost property, but precluded anyone who had taken up arms against the United States.<sup>98</sup> The British people, however, had no desire to see their taxes raised to provide more aid to Loyalists; hence, as William Floyd explained, the government ministers agreed to the bare minimum, just enough that the king “might say to the Tories, that he had attended to their Interest as far as Lay in their power.” While pondering the Loyalists’ fate, however, William made no mention of Richard; nor is there any evidence that he ever tried to use his considerable political sway to intervene on his cousin’s behalf.

In late November 1783, the British at long last evacuated New York, their stronghold throughout the Revolutionary War. With their ships went the final remnants of imperial power in what became the United States of America. As expected, most of the surviving New York Loyalists, previously flagged by the Patriots in the 1779 Act of Attainder, joined in the departure; in most cases, never to return. To avoid capture, Richard Floyd remained in hiding, having been forced to leave his children and his wife behind on Long Island.<sup>99</sup> Taking refuge with friends in New Jersey, and—of all places—Connecticut, he held out hope that the Act of Attainder that stripped him of his land and assets, including six slaves, might be repealed.<sup>100</sup> While his cousin apparently did not intervene on his behalf, Richard reached out to other close friends in Suffolk County to vouch for his losses. On October 14, 1783, for example, Henry Nicoll and Samuel Carman appeared before a notary to testify that “they are well acquainted with the extent and value of the Real Estate of Richard Floyd, Esq. Colonel of Militia under the Crown” and estimated that his “Lands, Farms, and improvements now thereon. . . are, bonafide, worth, at a very moderate valuation Nine thousand Seven hundred & fifty Pounds, current money of New York.”<sup>101</sup> In November 1783, Thomas Jones reported that “it is the opinion of many people that Mr. Floyd will get his Estate again.” That optimistic prediction proved incorrect.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Thomas Jones to Arabella Floyd, May 5, 1782, Jones Papers, Museum of the City of New York.

<sup>98</sup> Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 78-87.

<sup>99</sup> Jones, *History of New York*, lxviii.

<sup>100</sup> G. G. Ludlow and George Duncan Ludlow to Col. Dundar and Jeremy Pemberton, April 16, 1786, AO 13/12, Nova Scotia Archives.

<sup>101</sup> Testimony for Richard Floyd IV’s property, notarized by Thomas William Willett in the City of New York, Oct. 14, 1783, AO 13/12, Nova Scotia Archives.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Jones to Arabella Floyd, Nov. 4, 1783, Jones Papers, Museum of the City of New York.

Instead, state officials moved to sell Loyalist properties to raise much needed revenues. On August 5, 1784, Benjamin Tallmadge and Caleb Brewster paid £730 for Richard's Middle Island farm (northwest of Mastic), reserving "Four Lots and one third of an Lot containing Three hundred and Twenty Acres or thereabouts" for William Floyd. They also purchased "Four Lots containing Thirty two Acres more or less," for £288, the lands being "Forfeited to the People of this State by the Attainder of Richard Floyd." Unlike his elder brother, Benjamin Floyd (who seemed to play both sides under British occupation) was permitted to keep his property and remain on Long Island. He generously purchased Richard's Pattersquash farm so his wife Arabella and their children could remain in their home. Any hopes that the family would be reunited there were dashed, however, when Arabella passed away in 1785, Richard went into exile in New Brunswick, Canada in 1786, and their son David was banned from inheriting his Loyalist father's estate.<sup>103</sup>

According to Maya Jasanoff, most refugees to New Brunswick "arrived with few possessions to prepare them for the conditions" that they would experience in the cold northern wilderness. Richard Floyd was eventually allotted £2,310 by the Loyalist Claims Commission.<sup>104</sup> Although he never again amassed the landholdings or regained the elite lifestyle that he enjoyed in Suffolk County, he was able to acquire a farm and livestock, but only one enslaved person—"a Negro Wench."<sup>105</sup> In February 1791, around his fifty-ninth birthday, Richard Floyd died, never again seeing his family or setting foot on his native Long Island.<sup>106</sup>

As discussed in the next chapter, William Floyd and his children returned to find Long Island much altered after the prolonged conflict. Many of their kin and former neighbors were dead, permanently displaced, or in political exile. Apart from a small number who likely accompanied the Floyds to Connecticut, other persons enslaved or indentured on the estate may have long since freed themselves and fled, although records are unclear. But quite remarkably, the old Mastic house was still standing, if damaged, and,

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<sup>103</sup> Peter Wilson Coldham, *American Migrations: The Lives, Times, and Families of Colonial Americans Who Remained Loyal to the British Crown, 1765-1799* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2000), 231. Copy of "Land Forfeited to the People of this State by the Attainder of Richard Floyd IV," Aug. 5, 1784, Historian's Collection, Town of Brookhaven.

<sup>104</sup> Claims examined by the Commissioners in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Canada, circa 1789, AO 12/109, National Archives, London, United Kingdom. "An Inventory of the Estate of Richard Floyd Esq. Deceased, Taken by Samuel Ryerson, John Thompson, and John Simonson... in Maugerville, March 21, 1791," Hubbard Family Papers, New Brunswick Museum, St. John.

<sup>105</sup> Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 161-62. "An Inventory of the Estate of Richard Floyd, Esq., Maugerville. March 21, 1791," Hubbard Family Papers, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

<sup>106</sup> Copy of A Memorandum of Baptisms, Marriages, and burials performed by John Beardsley... Rector of Maugerville, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

at least some of the Floyds' former Unkechaug workers remained in the area and were likely eager to be reemployed.<sup>107</sup> While the Floyds thus fared better than most, the region would take many years to recover from the economic hardships and maelstrom of war.

With the benefit of hindsight, the outcome of the American Revolution and the emergence of a new nation are often characterized as inevitable, if not foreordained. Yet at the time, all Long Islanders faced difficult choices. After the war, however, Patriots extended little sympathy to those who sided with the British; indeed, at least publicly, they tended to demonize Loyalists, even among their own kinsmen, painting them all with the same brush as cowards and traitors. In recent years, however, historians have revisited this period to offer a more nuanced interpretation of the complex, often well-founded reasons that some people opted to remain loyal subjects of the Crown while others rejected British rule.

Comparing the different outcomes of the conflict for the various members of the Floyd family underscores what was at stake. As a faithful British subject who stood by his allegiance to the Crown, Richard lost everything—his elite status, his property, his family, and, very nearly, his life. As one of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, however, William took an enormous, calculated risk, committing an act of treason that could just as easily have cost him everything. Instead, he quickly regained his footing as a member of the political and social elite, well positioned to reap the bounty of New York State's economic development. The meaning and consequences of the American Revolution were considerably more ambiguous, however, for African Americans who remained in bondage—including, as we will see, for those owned by William Floyd and the exiled Richard Floyd. Yet in the wake of the conflict, they armed themselves with a new language of liberty, deploying the Founders' own words that "all men are created equal" to attack the institution of slavery. For Native Americans, on the other hand, the defeat of the British and the rise of the United States proved devastating for their continued autonomy. No longer able to play one European nation off another, the dispossession of Indians from their ancestral lands greatly intensified, especially in upstate New York.<sup>108</sup> Whoever they were and whatever their perspective on the late conflict, Long Islanders would face new challenges along with the growing pains of a young nation.

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<sup>107</sup> Lowenthal, *William Floyd*, 106-31.

<sup>108</sup> Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 6-10, 16.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# SOCIAL RELATIONS ON POST-REVOLUTIONARY LONG ISLAND

**W**hen hostilities finally ended in 1783, Long Islanders confronted the daunting task of recovering from the ravages of the war. Whether they had stayed and weathered the British occupation or were now returning from a long exile, most inhabitants were traumatized and impoverished after years of violence, death, and dislocation. Across the island, widespread chaos and destruction had taken a tremendous toll—including innumerable houses and public buildings burned or ransacked, livestock killed or seized, foodstuffs and household goods pillaged or requisitioned by forces on both sides as well by self-serving opportunists. Moreover, disrupted trade, agricultural stasis, and population losses, including the departure of many Loyalists, had left the economy in tatters. While freeholders struggled to repair their damaged homes and farms, secure workers, and replace or seek compensation for lost property (including enslaved people who self-emancipated), others were less sanguine about merely restoring the status quo; inspired by the same self-evident truths that so animated the Founding Fathers, enslaved people and others excluded from full citizenship began to assert their rights to liberty and equality, which remained frustratingly out of reach in the new nation.

During the 1780s and 1790s, three major currents of change ensued that created considerable flux and uncertainty across the state of New York, with particular salience for Long Island. First, thanks to the advocacy of an interracial alliance of antislavery activists, the State Assembly passed the Gradual Abolition Act in 1799, which began to phase slavery out of existence over many years. While benefitting slaveholders by allowing more time to transition to a solely wage-based labor system, this compromise measure merely prolonged the suffering of those still in bondage. Second, throughout the Northeast, farmers, large and small, confronted economic and environmental problems, which required a willingness to adapt and innovate to survive. Third, the growing white population, including William Floyd and other influential men, focused on acquiring more land, even trying to push Native peoples off Long Island altogether, and, failing that, buying up vast tracts in newly opened Indian territories in upstate New York.

Yet despite the erosion of many traditional forms of hierarchy, patronage, and authority, wealth and landownership on Long Island remained relatively concentrated within the same small circle of well-established families; accordingly, their scions, including William Floyd and later his son Nicol II, continued to enjoy disproportionate social and political influence. Although some of their peers modulated their views on abolition during this era, the Floyds remained fully committed—financially and ideologically—both to the institution of slavery and to the continued expansion of settler-colonialism. While unwilling to voluntarily manumit their enslaved workers, they responded proactively to economic and environmental problems by investing in agricultural improvements and diversifying their assets into nonagricultural enterprises, including maritime trade, whaling, and early industry.

### *Reviving the Post-War Estate*

In the spring of 1783, when William Floyd, still only recently widowed, and his children returned to Long Island after their long absence, they found the Mastic estate in complete disarray. According to one account, it was “despoiled of almost everything but the naked soil, through the malice and cupidity of the Tories who had resorted thither for plunder.”<sup>1</sup> The main house and outbuildings, in particular, received rough usage at the hands of British soldiers stationed on the site and a pair of Loyalist squatters who holed up there for some months, before carrying off whatever remained of the Floyds’ furnishings. On top of that indignity, British raiding parties had torn up fences and stripped the woodlands for timber and fuel. After many missed planting seasons, the neglected fields and meadows were also overgrown with saplings and weeds. Although tremendous effort would be needed to return the despoiled estate to its formerly prosperous condition, the Floyds were more fortunate than most since they remained in possession of extensive landholdings and, as before, had ready access to labor, although it is unclear exactly who among the former enslaved and hired workers remained after the war.

Judging by the 1790 census, however, the estate’s workforce soon rebounded to pre-war levels. With the men’s hands back to the plow, the harrow, and the flail, the cultivated fields began generating revenues once more. On the domestic end, the female enslaved and hired workers resumed the innumerable tasks required to feed and clothe everyone living on the estate. Since neither of the Floyd daughters remained in Mastic for long, the women were probably expected to manage the household with little oversight, at least until their master remarried. For his part, William resumed his familiar roles of master, gentleman farmer, and, before long, statesman, as local freeholders re-elected him

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<sup>1</sup> John Sanderson, *Biography of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence* (Philadelphia: R.W. Pomeroy, 1823), 145.

to represent their interests in the State House and later in Congress. His political career, in turn, was facilitated by his workers (overseen by twenty-one-year-old Nicoll II) who operated the estate in his absence, freeing him to focus on governing.

To ensure his family had a comfortable dwelling, one of William's top priorities upon their return was to refurbish the main house. Taking the opportunity to remodel, he expanded the house by adding a new wing with a parlor, presumably to facilitate revived entertaining.<sup>2</sup> Judging by the flurry of receipts as life got back to normal, he and his children also resumed enjoyment of luxury goods that they eschewed during the pre-war consumer boycotts and that were unavailable during the war. At the time, of course, patriotic Americans had embraced these shared sacrifices which reinforced their emerging sense of a national identity; many, for example, vowed to wear only homespun rather than English textiles and to use only local maple syrup instead of West Indian sugar. But now the Floyds restocked their cupboards with treats such as English snuff and sherry, Chinese teas, and white sugar by the loaf.<sup>3</sup> Mary and Kitty refreshed their wardrobes as well, hiring Rachel Pinto, the local seamstress, to make a "pink silk gown and coat," "a crimson silk gown and coat," and "a striped silk gown and coat with a white flounce."<sup>4</sup> Like other upper-class Americans, English goods and fashions still evoked the "civilized refinement to which they aspired."<sup>5</sup>

The winter after the Floyds' return from exile was a season of celebration across Long Island. According to Benjamin Tallmadge, "the joy of the Whig population throughout the island was literally unbounded." Although the dashing war hero enjoyed celebrity status and was much in demand, "private hospitality and public honor were most liberally bestowed on any man who had served in the revolutionary army." Apart from a few who fixated on exacting revenge from remaining Loyalists, most Long Islanders were content to leave their fate to the legal system, preferring to express gratitude to Patriot veterans and begin looking ahead.

Amidst these "most pleasing and delightful visitations," Benjamin Tallmadge and nineteen-year-old Mary Floyd apparently met and fell in love. Finding in her "a *companion* and *friend*, the most desirable, in my view, had I been privileged with a choice from her

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<sup>2</sup> For more detail on phases of architectural change to the house, see Janice Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report, Vol. 1: Historical Data* (National Park Service, 2011); and Ricardo Torres-Reyes, *Historic Resource Study: The William Floyd Estate* (National Park Service, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> Receipt for luxury foodstuffs paid to merchant David Gelston, May 9, 1795, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 53), WFEA.

<sup>4</sup> Receipts for dresses made by seamstress Rachel Pinto, Feb. 27, 1784 and Feb. 11, 1785, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folders 50 and 52), WFEA.

<sup>5</sup> Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 92.

whole sex,” he seemed delighted to commence “the life and duties of a married man.”<sup>6</sup> By any measure, theirs was an auspicious match. As the son of the Congregational minister in Setauket, Tallmadge came from an upstanding family and was educated at Yale University. During the war, he also earned a reputation as a stalwart patriot. Although he likely could have avoided military service, he immediately volunteered—in his words, “full of zeal in the cause of my country”—and served with distinction in the army.<sup>7</sup> For William Floyd, it was probably a proud moment to see his oldest daughter, who held the family together after her mother’s death, wed at last, especially to the gallant leader of Washington’s spy ring. For his part, Tallmadge seemed admiring of Mary’s status as daughter of an esteemed congressman; nor did it hurt, as Tallmadge mused, that her father was also “a man of very extensive landed possessions on the island.”<sup>8</sup>

In the spring of 1784, the estate was aflutter as its inhabitants prepared for not one, but *two* weddings. First, on March 16, Mary Floyd and Benjamin Tallmadge were married. As befitted such a special occasion, her father hosted a “most sumptuous entertainment to a great number of invited guests.”<sup>9</sup> As an additional wedding gift, he ordered Elias Pelletreau, Long Island’s leading silversmith, to make an elegant pair of silver Cans for the young couple.<sup>10</sup> According to his bill, the silversmith charged the hefty sum of £20 (about \$4,000) for this lavish commission.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Tallmadge, *Washington’s Spymaster: Memoir of Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge* (New York: 1858; reprint 2014), 70.

<sup>7</sup> Wesley Tanner Sparks, “Trying Men’s Souls: A Study on What Motivated Eight New England Soldiers to Join the American Revolution,” (MA Thesis, University of Maryland, 2012), 85-86.

<sup>8</sup> Tallmadge, *Washington’s Spymaster*, 70.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 71. Charles Swain Hall, *Benjamin Tallmadge, Revolutionary Soldier and American Businessman* (New York: AMS, 1966), 88.

<sup>10</sup> Receipt for silver Cans paid to Elias Pelletreau, June 16, 1784, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 50), WFEA. One of this pair of silver Cans is now at the New-York Historical Society (1950.341) and the other is at the Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Connecticut (1983.169). Dean F. Failey, *Elias Pelletreau, Long Island Silversmith and Entrepreneur, 1726–1810*, ed. Jennifer L. Anderson (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Preservation Long Island, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Sum estimated by adjusting value of £ in 1784 to 2020 equivalent in U.K. Inflation Converter <https://www.in2013dollars.com/UK-inflation>; converting to U.S. dollars with XE Currency Converter <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter>.



**Figure 4.1:** Silver Can, one of a pair made for Mary Floyd Tallmadge, ca. 1784, by silversmith Elias Pelletreau of Southampton, New York, engraved with her initials “MF” (6 ¼ x 5 ¾ x 3 ¾ in.; weight 14 oz. troy). Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society, gift of Mrs. Waldron Phoenix Belknap Sr. (item #1950.341). Photo credit: New-York Historical Society.

After their nuptials, the newlyweds moved to Litchfield, Connecticut, where Benjamin became a successful businessman.<sup>12</sup> Before leaving, however, they “bid a final adieu to Long Island as our home” by taking a trip to visit all their family, friends, and favorite places. Perhaps recalling peaceful childhood scenes, they seemed to share an abiding fondness for the island, even though, as Tallmadge explained, “I had not made it a place of residence since I entered college . . . and as for my beloved partner, she had never seen her father’s house since the family left it in the year 1776 when the British took

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<sup>12</sup> Hall, *Benjamin Tallmadge*, 3-7.

possession of it and New York.”<sup>13</sup> At the same time, Mary’s long sojourn in New England may have eased any apprehensions about moving there permanently with her new husband.

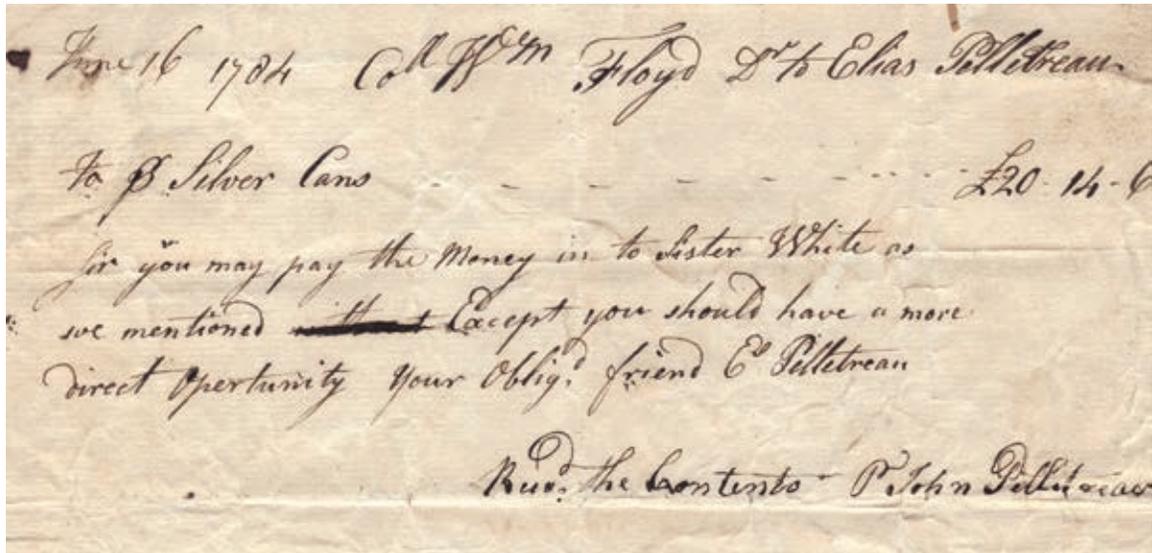


Figure 4.2: Elias Pelletreau’s Bill to William Floyd, June 16, 1784 (received by John Pelletreau), for the pair of Silver Cans made for Mary Floyd Tallmadge. Courtesy of the William Floyd Estate Archives, National Park Service.

Just two months after Mary and Benjamin’s special day, everyone on the Floyd Estate scrambled to prepare for the second wedding. This time, on May 16, 1784, William Floyd married Joanna Strong. Although they purportedly met while still in Connecticut, she was from nearby Setauket and, like her betrothed, hailed from a prominent Long Island family with New England roots. Within a few years, they welcomed two daughters into the world, Anna (1785–1857) and Elizabeth (1789–1820). After tragically losing Hannah during the war, this propitious union must have seemed like a hopeful turn in William’s life. Meanwhile, of course, the estate’s domestic workers presumably had to adapt to the standards and expectations of the new mistress of the house.

Over the next decade, William and Joanna made additional improvements to the Mastic house. Numerous receipts, for example, document a major renovation between 1790 and 1791, requiring loads of stone, timber, and “hair to make mortar.”<sup>14</sup> In addition, they replaced one of the hearthstones and installed new chimney pieces (i.e. mantelpieces). Other receipts were for replacement shingles, red and white lead paint, new locks and

<sup>13</sup> Tallmadge, *Washington’s Spy Master*, 67.

<sup>14</sup> Receipt for 12,000 shingles for £49, April 22, 1790; receipts for locks and hardware, sash line, sash weights, and chimney pieces, May 12 and 24, 1790; Receipts for transporting stones, boards, and other building supplies, June 7 and 10, 1790, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 53), WFEA. Receipt for 100 boards, Oct. 17 and 19, 1791; receipt for lead paint, April 21, 1791, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 28), WFEA.

latches for interior doors, as well as glass panes, sash weights, and sash lines for windows. As a last finishing detail, an iron knocker was added to the front door. As such expenditures suggest, William's efforts to revive the estate's productivity apparently also proceeded apace. Indeed, by 1795 at the latest, he seems to have fully recovered from the financial setback of the war; at that juncture, according to tax assessments, he ranked third on the list of Brookhaven's property owners, with \$5,500 in real estate.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps most symbolic of his renewed fortunes is the portrait of himself that he commissioned around 1792.<sup>16</sup> As art historian Margaretta Lovell points out, "unlike other items of expense and display—such as clothing or silver teaware, which retained commodity value after purchase, portraits cost substantial amounts but had no residual market value."<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, those who could afford such superfluities often desired to record images of themselves and their loved ones for posterity. For this important assignment, William Floyd retained the New England artist Ralph Earl (1751-1801). Although now one of the best known early American artists, Earl's reputation had suffered due to his Loyalist sympathies. Forced to flee to England during the war, he had recently returned to Connecticut, where many Long Island families still had ties, and begun cultivating patronage among the local elite in hopes of rehabilitating himself. In 1790, in fact, he painted a magnificent portrait of Mary Tallmadge with two of her children, Henry and Maria (and another one of her husband and their first-born son).<sup>18</sup> Reflecting her status as a member of the upper social echelon, Mary is depicted wearing a gorgeous blue silk gown, lavishly trimmed with buttons, cording, and ruffles.<sup>19</sup> Her accessories include a wide lace shawl and an ivory fan, and her elaborate bouffant hairstyle (likely a wig) is adorned pearls, feather plumes, and flowers. In short, she embodies the height of elegance and fashion. As was customary, the little girl and boy are clad alike in long, white muslin gowns. Earl's sensitive rendering of their faces attests to his artistic abilities, which helped him quickly regain popularity in New England.

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<sup>15</sup> Town Records of Brookhaven, cited in Lowenthal, *William Floyd*, 115.

<sup>16</sup> While a copy of Ralph Earle's portrait of William Floyd hangs at Floyd Estate, the original painting is in the collection of Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Doris Devine Fanelli and Karie Diethorn, *History of the Portrait Collection, Independence National Historical Park* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 2001), 130-31.

<sup>17</sup> Margaretta M. Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 45-46.

<sup>18</sup> The Earl portrait, signed and dated 1790, is in the collection of the Litchfield Historical Society in Litchfield, Connecticut (gift of Mary Floyd Tallmadge Woodruff Seymour, 1917-04-2). Laurence B. Goodrich, *Ralph Earl, Recorder for an Era* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976), 1, 68.

<sup>19</sup> Mary and Benjamin had seven children before her death in 1805 at age 41.



**Figure 4.3:** Portrait of Mary Floyd Tallmadge with Children, by Ralph Earl, 1790. Courtesy of the Litchfield Historical Society, Litchfield, Connecticut (item #1917-04-2).

Since Earl actively pursued commissions from decorated military officers and prominent political figures, including several signers of the Declaration of Independence, it is quite possible that he solicited William to have his portrait done; or perhaps, he was sought out by William after seeing the admirable painting of Mary and her children. Whatever the case, the resulting image offers some insight to the elder statesman, since how individuals presented themselves in their portraits usually involved intentional self-fashioning. The painting of William shows a tall, lean figure—soberly clad in an unadorned green suit, plain white shirt, and neck stock—who stands solidly planted, with his hand clasped over a gold-knobbed cane. With his sharp features, intense eyes, and quizzical, almost baleful glance, he strikes most viewers as rather stern and austere, but with a commanding presence. Significantly, he is posed in front of the Mastic house, rendered in minute detail, along with three slaves, barely visible on the right by the service entrance. Accessorizing with his prized house, the crowning gem of his estate, as well as some of the people “belonging” to it, underscores the degree to which William Floyd considered them as both integral to the landscape of his life and to his self-image as a successful patrician. Even in a society without a formal aristocracy, elite families used portraiture to document their lineages and heritable wealth in a tangible form, as seen here with Earl’s memorialization of three generations of Floyds. It bears mentioning, however, that—apart from the anonymous figures in his painted background—no known images of the working people of the estate survive prior to the late nineteenth century.

### *Daily Life for the Floyd Estate’s Working People in the Late-Eighteenth Century*

From circa 1790 to 1803 (when William relocated with his slaves to Oneida), the overall number of workers on the Floyd Estate seemed to stay relatively constant, averaging an estimated total of 20 to 24 persons; initially, at least half were in bondage or indentured, but the balance increasingly shifted from slave labor toward wage labor (with a few residual child indentures that were phased out last). As of the 1790 Federal Census, 14 enslaved people plus 5 “other free persons” (non-white) were recorded as residing in the household of William Floyd.<sup>20</sup> Thus far, the names of 19 enslaved individuals from this era have been gleaned from the archives; it is unclear, however, if they correlate with those enumerated in the census or what each one’s specific legal status was:

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<sup>20</sup> Federal census, 1790. The first seven people listed are mentioned in an early 19th-century history of Oneida as having accompanied William Floyd when he moved there in 1803; however, that account is anecdotal, so may not be accurate. Pomroy, *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County* (Rome, NY, 1851); Jack, Gin, Hagar, Rachel, Abby, and Harry (again) are listed on Daniel Hammod’s bill for shoes, 1800, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 54), WFEA. Rueben was purchased in 1786; the other names appear on memorial crosses. Cato is discussed in Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 156, 180.

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1) Tom                         | 11) Rachel  |
| 2) Harry Howard, coachman      | 12) Abby  |
| 3) Lansom Frank                | 13) Charles   |
| 4) Pomp (also spelled Pompey?) | 14) Ceasar  |
| 5) Pomp's wife (name tbd)      | 15) Lon   |
| 6) Phillis                     | 16) Sam   |
| 7) Jamima                      | 17) Isaac   |
| 8) Jack                        | 18) Phillip – bought by William Floyd in 1788.              |
| 9) Gin                         | 19) Cato – possibly owned and later freed by William Smith. |
| 10) Hagar                      | *See also Appendix.   |

As the head of this extended household, William Floyd seemed to embrace the philosophy of paternalism. At the time, slaveholders and pro-slavery advocates—from the Caribbean to the North—faced growing criticism that slavery was morally repugnant, violent, and inherently dehumanizing. To counter such arguments, they claimed slave “masters” should be thought of as fatherly caretakers in whose hands the “peculiar institution” was not only benign, but advantageous to its victims. They regarded enslaved people (who, keep in mind, were usually denied education) as ignorant, childlike, and incapable of surviving on their own if abolition succeeded. According to its apologists, any problems with the slave system stemmed from the misdeeds of a few bad actors and were best remedied by encouraging individual slaveholders to adopt better management practices and by imposing stronger state regulation to curb the worst abuses. Under the yoke of their protection, they insisted, African Americans were better off than the “savage” inhabitants of Africa or even the English working poor.

Whether or not he was specifically influenced by these public debates, William shouldered considerable expense to provide what, at least in his view, constituted sufficient food, clothing, shoes, and medical care for all of his dependents—including his growing family, slaves, and any servants residing within his household. When any of them became ill, for example, he paid for medical care, including doctor visits and “sundry medicines.” In the 1790s, his standing account with a local doctor included payment for a visit to inoculate not only the Floyds’ young daughter but also eleven enslaved people against smallpox.<sup>21</sup> As had long been customary on the estate, William also arranged once a year for an itinerant cobbler to make and repair shoes for everyone; in 1794, for example, a receipt indicates that Josiah W. Raynor stayed “until all hands [or feet!] were supplied” and,

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<sup>21</sup> Account with Daniel Robert, 1792-1795, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 53), WFEA.

in 1800, Daniel Hammod spent three days outfitting the Floyd family members with two pairs each and the workers—Jack, Harry, Gin, Hagar, Rachel, and Abby—with one pair each.<sup>22</sup>

While providing such necessities involved considerable expense, William had a vested interest in keeping his workforce in good condition to ensure its continued productivity. Despite his apparent efforts to play the benevolent patriarch, of course, he could not control the hearts and minds of those he putatively owned. Nor were social relations in the area without tensions. In 1790, for example, he was forced to pay “the Sum of sixteen pounds being monies stolen. . . by his Negro in the year 1786” from neighbor Jonathan Havens; the time lag between the purported theft and its resolution suggests that the accusation festered between the neighbors. But in the end, Floyd had to pay up, as he was ultimately responsible for the actions of all those under his authority.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, several Unkechaug workers apparently returned to the Floyds’ employ after the war, including militia veterans “Indian Harry” and “Indian James” (who appeared on muster rolls as Harry Floyd and James Floyd, since per custom they borrowed their employer’s surname).<sup>24</sup> Other Unkechaugs who, at various points, also secured their livelihood on the estate included Sam Job, Hannah and Sunny Hannibal, Silas and Charity Arch, Doll (wife of Cato), and several members of the Cuffee family. Hired by the day, week, or season, they usually received wages (such as Solomon Bishop who was paid £37 in November 1794 for his “summer’s work”); or, as in past generations, they could accumulate credit or barter their labor for goods or other necessities. During the post-war era, the Floyds likewise continued to invigorate the local economy by hiring area residents to provide a variety of good and services. In addition to the doctor, seamstress, and cobbler mentioned above, for example, Mrs. Conklin regularly took in their “washing and mending” and Obadiah Hudson handled the noxious work of tanning hides from the estate’s cattle to make leather.<sup>25</sup>

During the last decades of the eighteenth century, the diverse working people on the Floyd Estate increasingly developed their own kinship and social networks that went beyond the estate’s physical boundaries, following a trend that, although undocumented, may have begun much earlier. In particular, the Unkechaug who commuted from Poospatuck fostered engagement between their co-workers and the adjacent community. Thanks to their small but reliable income, they could also devote more attention, beyond

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<sup>22</sup> Receipt for Josiah W. Raynor for shoemaking, Feb. 14, 1794; and Daniel Hammod’s bill for shoes, 1800, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folders 53 and 54), WFEA.

<sup>23</sup> Receipt to Jonathan N. Havens from William Floyd, April 11, 1790, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 54), WFEA.

<sup>24</sup> Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 141.

<sup>25</sup> Receipt for paying Mrs. Conklin, Aug. 16, 1794; receipts for payments to Obadiah Hudson for preparing hides, Feb. 14, 1794 and Nov. 27, 1795, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 53), WFEA.

the working day, to religious and cultural affairs, social events and entertainments, and useful pastimes, such as hunting, fishing, basketry, or making handicrafts for subsistence or sale.

More generally, by the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Black New Yorkers, free and enslaved, as well as other free people of color enjoyed dynamic social lives—in spite of the oppressive legal regime. Such festive occasions as Dutch-inflected Pinkster celebrations, Election Days, and June picnics became annual community events. While mostly concerned with monitoring his slaves' productivity, Samuel Thompson, the Setauket farmer, in 1800 described them participating in numerous community events around Brookhaven, such as New Year's Day celebrations, summer "strawberry frolics," and large-scale religious revivals, including thronging to hear sermons by Paul Cuffee, "the black man Paul."<sup>26</sup> These gatherings, in turn, became important sites for cultural and "musical exchange where role playing, ritual behavior, and social function mirrored both Afro-Caribbean and northern Black festival behaviors."<sup>27</sup> Enslaved fiddlers, banjo players, and other musicians, in particular, enjoyed an unusual level of mobility since they were regularly invited to perform at social events, white and black. Since they performed both African- and European-inflected songs and dances for their audiences, music historians have described the resulting "back-and-forth mutual influence" as an example of creolization which shaped Americans' shared musical traditions.

While supporting his family as an estate worker, Paul Cuffee pursued the ministry. Inspired by his grandfather, Rev. Peter John, and by the evangelical fervor spreading across the region at the time, the younger Cuffee was ordained in 1790 into the Congregational Church. Like his grandfather before him, Rev. Paul Cuffee was instrumental in nurturing the Unkechaug church at Poospatuck, which still has an active congregation. With the support of the New-York Missionary Society, he expanded his ministry well beyond Mastic, serving Native people in scattered settlements across the region, including many too small to have their own church. Of particular significance to the broader history of Long Island, the Cuffee family, including strong branches within the Shinnecock and Montaukett nations, played a critical role in supporting Native American communities that increasingly looked "to mission churches for spiritual solace and to sustain their language and culture."<sup>28</sup>

By this time, not coincidentally, Brookhaven already saw a high degree of intermarriage between its Native American and African American populations. In his analysis of militia muster rolls, for example, historian Edward Knoblauch observed "the

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<sup>26</sup> Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 95.

<sup>27</sup> Christopher J. Smith, *The Creolization of American Culture: William Sidney Mount and the Roots of Blackface Minstrelsy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 186.

<sup>28</sup> Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 133, 142-48, 150-52.

high degree of complexity, inconsistency, and arbitrariness of racial categories at the time. Many individuals' names included 'Indian' as an identifier—such as Simon Indian, Harry Indian, and Tim Indian—and a physical description (for example, 'light complexioned Indian' or 'light colored Indian'). In some instances, members of the same family were variously described as Indian, Mulatto (indicating mixed African and White parentage), or Mustee (indicating mixed African and Indian parentage); in other instances, the very same individual was described in one document as a 'Brown Indian' and in another as 'Mustee.'"<sup>29</sup> The same complexity was evident at the Floyd estate as several extended families, interconnected by marriages and kinship ties, contributed to its operations, in some cases over multiple generations. Importantly, as John Strong points out, during this period, marriages between enslaved men and Unkechaug women, such as the union between Cato and Doll, had the added benefit that their children would be born free.<sup>30</sup> In the face of colonialism, these interpersonal connections became vitally important for the survival of people of color on Long Island, both during and after the eras of slavery and Indian removals.

Yet as long as enslaved people remained fungible property in the eyes of law, no bonds of love or affection that they forged could ever be truly secure. Indeed, even as antislavery activists began to change hearts and minds on the subject, the Floyd Estate remained in thrall to the slave system, with all of its inherent cruelties. Even as other white New Yorkers of their class embraced abolition or, short of that, just quietly manumitted their bondspeople, several Floyd family members instead *added* to their slaveholdings by various means. In 1788, for example, William purchased a boy named Phillip from Jonathan Smith for £55.<sup>31</sup> When Mary Floyd Tallmadge and her new husband set up housekeeping in 1784, they immediately acquired "two Negro boys," including seven-year-old Prince. In addition, her husband indentured a free Black boy named Ebo from his mother in 1785 and contracted Cash Africa, a Patriot veteran who earned his freedom during the Revolution, as his manservant.<sup>32</sup> When Mary desired more help after the birth of their first son, the couple bought "a Negro slave girl named Jane" from her uncle Ezra L'Hommedieu.<sup>33</sup> Having grown up in a slave-owning household, Mary clearly expected to continue her accustomed lifestyle after her marriage. Transactions such as this one, involving the sale of a thirteen-year-old girl from Long Island to New England—over a

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 136-37; Edward Knoblauch, "Mobilizing Provincials for War: The Composition of New York Forces in 1760," *New York History* 78, no. 2 (April 1977): 147-72.

<sup>30</sup> Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 180.

<sup>31</sup> Receipt for Phillip, July 28, 1788, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 23), WFEA. Cited in Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report*, 23.

<sup>32</sup> Alain C. White, *The History of the Town of Litchfield, Connecticut, 1720-1920* (Litchfield, CT: Enquirer Print, 1920), 152, 154.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 151.

hundred miles away from her family and friends or anything familiar—underscore a very common practice in the North of enslaved individuals being forcibly transferred, sometimes repeatedly, within their owners’ extended kinship networks. As such, significant personal events in a slaveholder’s life—such as bankruptcy, death, or, in this instance, marriage and a birth—could spell disaster for those under their control who could be rented out, randomly moved around, or, most terrible, sold far away to another part of the world, never to see their loved ones again.<sup>34</sup>

Like his sister, Nicoll II likely grew up assuming his future included becoming a full-fledged slave master. As a young man, he began to fulfill that destiny. In 1786, for example, he paid Zophar Hawkins £33.14 “for a Negro girl.”<sup>35</sup> In 1792, he acquired a “negro man named Reuben,” owned by a Southold woman. At the time of the sale, Reuben was leased out to work on Shelter Island so the wages owed for two months of his labor were later paid to Nicoll, as his new master.<sup>36</sup> Then in September 1799—six months *after* passage of the law that would eventually spell the end of slavery in New York—Nicoll bought yet another person, this time a “Negro girl named Rose about sixteen years of age for £55.00” from Robert Homan.<sup>37</sup> By the 1800 Federal Census, Nicoll II had acquired 5 people; his father, meanwhile, still owned 10 people (down from 14 in 1790)—making him still one of Brookhaven’s largest slaveowners.<sup>38</sup> [See Appendix.]

## *Manumission and Changing Labor Relations*

Changing labor relations on Long Island, most importantly the gradual abolition of slavery, had significant implications for the Floyds, as long-term slaveowners, but vastly more so for the people held in bondage on the estate. Antislavery sentiments had been percolating in the North by the mid-eighteenth century, although the Quakers, who had a significant presence on Long Island, expressed opposition much earlier. In the late seventeenth century, when many Quakers still owned slaves, a few voices began to rail against the practice as antithetical to their belief in spiritual equality, resulting in a policy requiring adherents to divest from owning slaves or consuming slave-produced goods.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Receipt from Robert Homan for “Negro girl named Rose,” Sept. 4, 1799, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 4, Folder 35), WFEA.

<sup>35</sup> Notation on envelope regarding purchase of “Negro girl” from Zophar Hawkins, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 4, Folder 7), WFEA.

<sup>36</sup> Document relating to purchase of Reuben, June 6, 1792, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 4, Folder 35), WFEA.

<sup>37</sup> Receipt from Robert Homan for “Negro girl named Rose,” Sept. 4, 1799, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 4, Folder 35), WFEA.

<sup>38</sup> United States Federal Census of 1790 and 1800, accessed through *Ancestry.com*. Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report*, 22.

<sup>39</sup> Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

The American Revolution proved a critical turning point, at least in the North, as it inspired increasing numbers of people to question slavery on moral and economic grounds. Some were inspired by the Patriots' rhetoric denouncing the "slavery" supposedly imposed by the British Empire on its colonies as well as new Enlightenment ideas about liberty and the "rights of man." Others increasingly favored "free labor" or, more accurately, wage labor—preferably that of white men—but feared that its expansion and efficiency would be hindered by continued proximity to slave labor. Whatever the motivation, this upsurge in antislavery sentiment represented an extraordinary attitudinal shift against a form of exploitation that had long been normalized and taken for granted.

Even before the war ended, several of the new states took steps to end slavery. As early as 1777, Vermont, which had only a tiny enslaved population, mandated immediate emancipation in its new constitution. In Massachusetts, the State Supreme Court declared slavery unconstitutional in 1783, after several enslaved persons sued for their freedom. Mum Bett, one of the plaintiffs, marked this auspicious victory by renaming herself Elizabeth Freeman. Other states sought to wean off their long reliance on slave labor in a more slow-paced, incremental fashion, stretched out over years or even decades. Supporters of this gradualist approach often characterized it as a humanitarian measure intended to ease enslaved persons into self-sufficiency, rather than cast them suddenly adrift without adequate preparation. While some individuals may have sincerely believed that magnanimous interpretation, the primary motivation indisputably was economic. To minimize the expense and disruption for businesses and households, such as William Floyd's, still dependent on coerced labor, state governments aimed to drag out the manumission process as long as politically feasible. Gradual manumission laws—designed to phase out slavery over a period of years—were enacted in Pennsylvania (1780), Rhode Island (1784), Connecticut (1784), and, belatedly, in New York (1799).<sup>40</sup>

Compared with other northern states, New York addressed the issue of slavery at a glacial pace. African Americans, especially free Blacks, demanded manumission and the full rights of (male) citizenship. In the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, however, only veterans who fought with the Patriots were granted immediate freedom, forcing them to buy family members from their former masters. Slave owners were permitted to voluntarily manumit individual slaves, but only after posting a £200 bond (a huge sum at the time) to ensure none became indigent and reliant on public charity.<sup>41</sup> While intended to deter irresponsible slaveholders from off-loading the long-term care of elderly or disabled slaves onto community coffers, the high cost of posting bond deterred even well-intentioned slaveholders who genuinely desired to free the people they owned.

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<sup>40</sup> Leslie H. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 56.

<sup>41</sup> Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 57.

The delay in abolishing slavery in New York State resulted largely from fierce political resistance on the part of representatives from key slave-holding regions, especially Long Island and the Hudson Valley. By 1786, Long Island's population had grown to about 30,000, including 15 percent enslaved African Americans, of whom about half were concentrated on the East End. To put that in perspective, although the general population had tripled since the 1690s, the number of black inhabitants remained relatively stable, increasing by only 3 percent. (By the mid-nineteenth century, however, their percentage declined relative to the growing influx of new European immigrants.)<sup>42</sup>

Even while Long Island remained a bastion of slavery at the time, some residents did actively promote antislavery efforts on the state and national level. Local Quakers, for example, supported the New-York Manumission Society, founded in 1785 in New York City. Initially organized to combat the growing problem of free Blacks being kidnapped and sold back into bondage, the Society was founded by an unlikely alliance between Quakers and some of the city's leading power brokers. Among its members were quite a few slaveholders who, seeing the writing on the wall, hoped to influence gradual emancipation policies in their favor.<sup>43</sup> Others embraced the antislavery movement for less self-interested motives based on sincere religious beliefs or republican values. Thomas Tredwell, for example, came from one Long Island's largest slave-holding families; his own mother possessed 26 persons—from age 1 to age 60—valued at £853 in 1773.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, he strongly opposed slavery and, as a participant at New York State's Constitution Ratification Convention in 1788, advocated unsuccessfully to include abolition in the new constitution.<sup>45</sup>

The New-York Manumission Society's main objectives were to ban exportation of slaves from New York, to curb slaveholders' powers, and to expand legal protections and political rights for African Americans. One of its first initiatives in January 1785 was to circulate a petition demanding passage of an abolition bill that was pending before the state legislature. While not changing the status of those already in bondage, the bill proposed to manumit "any Negro, Mulatto, Indian, Mustee, or . . . any person . . . commonly reputed

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<sup>42</sup> Richard S. Moss, *Slavery on Long Island: A Study in Local, Institutional and Early African-American Communal Life* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 72; Alan Singer, "Slavery in Colonial and Revolutionary New York: Complicity and Resistance," *Long Island History Journal* 20, nos. 1-2 (Fall 2007-Spring 2008), 165.

<sup>43</sup> After 1809, the Society finally banned slaveowners after its membership. Paul J. Polgar, *Standard-Bearers of Equality: America's First Abolition Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 54; Nicholas P. Wood, "A 'Class of Citizens': The Earliest Black Petitioners to Congress and Their Quaker Allies," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (Jan. 2017), 109-44.

<sup>44</sup> Singer, "Slavery in Colonial and Revolutionary New York;" Catherine Ball, "Thomas Tredwell of Smithtown (Long Island), Princeton (New Jersey), and the North Country," *Social Science Docket* 7 (Summer-Fall 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Alan J. Singer, *New York's Grand Emancipation Jubilee: Essays on Slavery, Resistance, Abolition, Teaching, and Historical Memory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), 15; Stephen L. Schechter, ed., *The Reluctant Pillar: New York and the Adoption of the Federal Constitution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1985).

and deemed a slave,” born in New York after enactment of the law.<sup>46</sup> Although at the time, Aaron Burr demanded that immediate freedom be granted to *all* slaves, others rejected that notion out of hand as too radical. Following the example of Pennsylvania and Connecticut, the legislation required every freed person to serve their mother’s master as an indentured servant for a multi-year term (until age 22 if female and age 25 if male).

A major stumbling block to the bill’s passage soon emerged, however, when antislavery and proslavery factions clashed over the degree to which freed African American men should receive equal rights of citizenship. More egregiously, its opponents managed to insert several overtly racist amendments, such as prohibitions on interracial marriage and on persons of color serving as witnesses or jurors in court cases involving white defendants. By thus muddying the water, their maneuvers convinced several progressives to vote against the bill, rather than enshrine those provisions into law. To the disappointment of many, the law failed to pass. But antislavery proponents in New York resolutely continued their efforts, achieving such incremental measures as the 1788 state ban on the slave trade.

But given the state’s relatively large enslaved population and the powerful lobby of their enslavers, the goal of abolition remained elusive. The failed attempt in 1785, as one historian concludes, “turned out to be a high-water mark for legislative support for gradual manumission, not to be approached again until the mid-1790s. Race, citizenship, public finance, and political priorities would combine to thwart mounting public denunciations of slavery until the very end of the eighteenth century.”<sup>47</sup> Undeterred by this initial setback, African Americans, with the support of white allies, continued over the next decade to demand their full civil rights, additional legal protections against racial discrimination, and freedom for their brethren still in bondage. Working together, they forged a strong interracial coalition that served to undermine the continued viability of the peculiar institution in New York and slowly bolstered the ongoing antislavery fight.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, in 1799, the “Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery” passed; little opposition was raised this time compared with the earlier attempt. Years of advocacy had finally paid off as public sentiment had solidly shifted. As its name implies, the new law provided for a slow transition ostensibly to prevent the economic jolt of immediate abolition. The law thus specified that “Any Child born of a slave within this State after the fourth day of July next, shall be deemed and adjudged to be born free”—but was still required to serve their mother’s master, until age of 28 if male and until age 25 if female. Hence, until they came of age, they remained under their master’s control. Upon the

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<sup>46</sup> David N. Gellman, *Emancipating New York: The Politics of Slavery and Freedom, 1777-1827* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2006), 48.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-53.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

specified day, anyone already in bondage would remain so. To avoid the backlash that stymied the previous attempt, however, proponents of this measure doggedly avoided discussion of such contentious issues as the legal and civil rights of freedmen.<sup>49</sup>

While an important breakthrough, the “Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery” nonetheless was an inherently conservative social reform. Based on a completely arbitrary calculus, its impact on the lives of individuals dramatically differed, depending merely on what year they happened to be born. At the time, proponents claimed that its incremental approach benefitted the young by providing a term of apprenticeship to prepare them for adulthood as free people. A less rose-colored view, however, suggests this foot-dragging approach served more cynical ends, namely to compensate slaveowners by allowing them to keep “their younger slaves in bondage for their most productive years.”<sup>50</sup> Eighteen years later, a new law modified the earlier provisions, such that “all children of either sex born to slave mothers after March 31, 1817 and before July 4, 1827 were to be freed after the age of 21. All slaves born before July 4, 1799 would be freed on July 4, 1827.” Hence, a child who had the misfortune to be born on July 3, 1827 could theoretically remain an indentured servant until July 3, 1848.

As slavery began to be phased out of existence, many New York slaveholders either manumitted their slaves early or, in order to recoup part of their investment, sold them within the region or illegally across state lines. By 1800, for example, Ezra L’Hommedieu (William Floyd’s brother-in-law, attorney, and close friend) had freed all his slaves, although whether his motives were humanitarian, pragmatic, or some combination, is unknown. In 1805, silversmith Elias Pelletreau, who counted the Floyds among his regular patrons, likewise manumitted his slave Sarah in Southampton (although he had earlier demanded £300 compensation from the British for his slave Pomp who ran away during the war).<sup>51</sup> According to Brookhaven Town Records, between 1795 and 1831, 46 slaveholders, including members of prominent families such as the Woodhulls, Strongs, and Smiths (but not the Floyds) manumitted at least some of their slaves—after paying a bond and legally certifying them to be “under fifty years of age and capable of providing for themselves”—for a total of 66 freed persons.<sup>52</sup>

Not all Long Island slaveholders agreed with their decision, however, and held onto their slaves for decades more—as long as it remained profitable and legal to do so. At Sylvester Manor, for example, the last documented slave, a man named Newport, was not

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<sup>49</sup> “Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery,” 1799, *New York State Archives Digital Collection*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *The Third Book of Records for the Town of Southampton* (Sag Harbor, NY: John H. Hunt, 1878), 370, cited in Waters, “Ties that Bind,” 19.

<sup>52</sup> *Slavery in Brookhaven Town from History of Suffolk County 1882*. List is transcribed in <http://longwood.k12.ny.us/cms/One.aspx?portalId=2549374&pageId=5746203>

manumitted until 1821.<sup>53</sup> Unless additional evidence emerges to the contrary, the Floyds seem to have been in the latter camp that opted *not* to free the human beings that they held as chattel. In fact, they seem to have retained and, as noted above, even increased their investment in chattel slavery, as long as it remained legally sanctioned. The men and women still enslaved on the Floyd estate no doubt had very different views on the issue. Even in rural Long Island, word spread quickly about the ongoing antislavery advocacy by free black and white activists and the excruciatingly slow-turning wheels of political change.

### *Improving Agriculture and Diversifying Enterprises*

Quite apart from labor issues, William and Nicoll Floyd also had to address worrisome problems that threatened their primary source of income, namely agriculture. Since serious environmental problems, stemming from long-term, intensive cultivation, had long plagued Long Island. Careful land management was required to prevent damage to the land from soil depletion or over-grazing. Meadows, for example, had to be replenished periodically by planting clover and other grasses. And, as noted above, a range of soil enrichment strategies were pursued, including shifting grazing sites and recycling animals' manure as fertilizer. For many decades, such approaches proved effective, but crop yields slowly declined. By the late eighteenth century, as these endemic issues became more acute and new ecological problems arose, the best methods of cultivation, fertilization, and pest control to achieve a sustainable balance of land uses became a subject of major debate, including among William Floyd's fellow landowners and intellectual peers.<sup>54</sup> The post-war task of reinvigorating agriculture on the Mastic estate took considerable effort by William Floyd and his workers. As Andrea Wulf argues, many influential men in the early Republic—or "Founding Gardeners," as she called them—were deeply influenced by enlightenment ideas of improvement.<sup>55</sup> They promoted scientific agriculture as a patriotic duty to advance the prosperity and self-sufficiency of the young nation. On Long Island, William Floyd and others in his social circle, who regarded themselves as gentlemen farmers, certainly adhered to this dictum. Their interest was not, however, an abstract or theoretical one. To the contrary, they shared acute anxiety about declining agricultural yields in their immediate region, which were becoming evident even before the war.

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<sup>53</sup> "Overseers of the Poor Certification of London's Fitness for Manumission," Oct. 16, 1821, Shelter Island Historical Society, Long Island, NY.

<sup>54</sup> Jennifer L. Anderson, "Laudable Spirit of Enterprise: Re-Negotiating Land, Natural Resources, & Power on Post-Revolutionary Long Island," *Early American Studies* (Spring 2015): 413-42.

<sup>55</sup> Andrea Wulf, *Founding Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 94-95.

In 1785, when William Floyd was elected as an Honorary Member of the newly-established Philosophical Society for Promoting Agriculture, he thus had both intellectual and practical reasons for supporting its endeavors.<sup>56</sup> Since it was based in Philadelphia, he probably did not attend regular meetings, but received its publications and likely corresponded with fellow members, who included such luminaries as General John Cadwallader, Dr. Benjamin Rush, Timothy Pickering, and Benjamin Franklin. For a time at least, these men's shared passion for science and natural philosophy bridge deepening political differences. New Englander Timothy Pickering, for example, who served as president of the new society (and signed William Floyd's membership certificate) later became a leading Federalist, which put the two men in opposing political parties.

Perhaps an even greater influence on William Floyd, however, was closer to home—namely, Ezra L'Hommedieu, whose passion for scientific agriculture far exceeded his own. Convinced of the need for a more locally focused organization, L'Hommedieu helped found the New York Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures in 1791, assisted by such eminent men as Robert Livingston (appointed its first president), Simeon De Witt, and Dr. Samuel Mitchell, a fellow Long Islander.<sup>57</sup> After the Philosophical Society launched a journal to circulate new research, L'Hommedieu published a series of articles on such topics as how to grow daisies and red clover for hay and how to cure porpoise skins for shoe leather.<sup>58</sup> He also devoted considerable attention to publishing his experiments with various kinds of fertilizers, especially involving the use of fish and seaweed, to combat the serious problem of soil exhaustion that impacted many parts of the island. William Floyd seems to have followed his brother-in-law's activities, which might explain why the shoemaker's bill in 1790 included making a pair of "porpoise shoes."<sup>59</sup>

William Floyd likely also sought out L'Hommedieu's advice in the late 1780s and 1790s, when they confronted yet another ecological dilemma—this time in the form of an invasive species. Even before the war ended, western Long Island had begun to be plagued by a previously unknown insect, which came to be known as the Hessian fly (because Hessians troops were suspected of having introduced it), which was steadily advancing toward the East End. Unfortunately for local farmers, these pesky flies were especially attracted to wheat, the region's most important crop; although they attacked other crops as well, they preferred to lay their eggs on tender wheat stalks, killing them before they could

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<sup>56</sup> Certificate of "Honorary Membership for William Floyd for Philosophical Society for Promoting Agriculture," Aug. 5, 1785, signed by Timothy Pickering, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 2), WFEA.

<sup>57</sup> "Annual Address, prepared and read May 25, 1871, before the Albany Institute," by O. Meads, in *Transactions of the Albany Institute*, Vol. 7 (Albany: State of New York, 1871), 8-9.

<sup>58</sup> *Transactions of the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures, for New York State* (2 vols., New York: Childes and Swaine, 1792-1794), I, 95.

<sup>59</sup> Account with Zebulon Jessup, shoemaker, Feb. 29, 1789-Dec. 24, 1790, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 52), WFEA.

grow to maturity.<sup>60</sup> By 1786, the Hessian fly had advanced to Long Island's East End, ravaging farmers' wheat fields and raising fears that the economy would suffer.<sup>61</sup> Keeping an eye on its advance, the New York publisher Matthew Carey warned that unless a remedy was found, "the whole continent will be over-run—a calamity more to be lamented than the ravages of war."<sup>62</sup> By 1788, George Morgan, a New Jersey gentleman farmer who shared L'Hommedieu's agricultural interests, requested federal assistance from President Washington to redress the "Ravages made in Connecticut, New York & New Jersey by the Hessian Fly . . . [whose] Progress southward is alarming to the Farmer."<sup>63</sup> Within months, deficient harvests—exacerbated by uneven distribution, hoarding, and price gouging—led to soaring wheat prices and food shortages, especially in the West Indies, which still relied on Northern food imports, raising fears there of hunger and slave uprisings.<sup>64</sup>

Given the rapidly expanding range of the Hessian fly, these problems became matters of national concern as well. In the spring of 1791, Thomas Jefferson, then Secretary of State, and his good friend James Madison toured Long Island as part of a longer fact-gathering expedition that encompassed several states. Jefferson had recently been appointed chair of the American Philosophical Society's new Hessian Fly Committee. Armed with questionnaires to interview local farmers, his main objective was to gather as much information as possible about the spread of this invasive pest throughout "the whole of Long Island, where this animal raged much."<sup>65</sup> Since Jefferson and Madison were longtime friends and colleagues from his days in Congress, William Floyd was delighted to welcome them at the Mastic house. Recalling that James Madison had been briefly engaged and then jilted by Kitty Floyd, one cannot help but wonder if he was apprehensive about encountering the Floyd women again or if the Hessian fly provided adequate distraction. In any event, during their visit, the men enjoyed the Floyds' hospitality and consulted with Ezra L'Hommedieu, who by then had become somewhat of a Hessian fly expert.<sup>66</sup> In

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<sup>60</sup> Philip J. Pauly, "Fighting the Hessian Fly: American and British Responses to Insect Invasion, 1776-1789," *Environmental History* 7, no. 3 (July 2002): 485-507; Brooke Hunter, "Creative Destruction: The Forgotten Legacy of the Hessian Fly," in *The Economy of Early America*, ed. Cathy Matson (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 236-62; Kim Todd, *Tinkering with Eden: A Natural History of Exotic Species in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), 40-43.

<sup>61</sup> Todd, *Tinkering with Eden*, 40-43.

<sup>62</sup> Cited in Pauly, "Fighting the Hessian Fly," 490.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from George Morgan to George Washington, July 31, 1788, *Founders Online*.

<sup>64</sup> Anderson, "Laudable Spirit of Enterprise."

<sup>65</sup> Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin S. Barton, May 12, 1791, *Founders Online*.

<sup>66</sup> Letter from Jefferson to fellow APS Committee members, May 12, 1791, *Founders Online*; Andrea Wulf, *Founding Gardeners*, 93.

collaboration with Thomas Dering and Jonathan Havens of Shelter Island, he had already been investigating its life cycle and testing various cultivation and pest control methods, with assistance from their enslaved workers as well as other local farmers.<sup>67</sup>

In the fall after Madison and Jefferson's tour, L'Hommedieu sent Jefferson a packet containing "Stubble of the yellow bearded wheat," with directions to carefully open "the Straw near the Roots and first Joints . . . [to] find many of the Insects in their chrysolis State still alive."<sup>68</sup> Along with these critters, he enclosed a report, authored by Thomas Dering and Jonathan Havens, detailing the trio's shared research, dating back five years to their first encounters with their nemesis, along with recommendations for how to reduce infestations.<sup>69</sup> Clearly impressed with their follow-up report, Jefferson commended their work for throwing "more light on the subject of the Hessian fly, than anything I have before seen."<sup>70</sup> Although it took several years, Long Islanders eventually developed successful strategies to minimize, if not eradicate, the Hessian fly problem, which allowed wheat production to resume.

Rather ironically, however, the most significant outcome of Jefferson's Long Island sojourn had nothing to do with his scientific mission; rather, it came about quite serendipitously when William Floyd took the two men on an outing to the nearby Unkechaug village.<sup>71</sup> Long fascinated with Indian languages, Jefferson had been gathering vocabularies from different tribes for several years with the intention of publishing a comprehensive monograph. Seizing on the chance to add another language to his collection, he spent several hours asking a few of the Unkechaugs they met for their words for various items. According to his later notes, "This Vocabulary was taken by Th: J. June 13. 1791. in presence of James Madison and Genl. Floyd. There remain but three persons of this tribe now who can speak its language. These are old women. From two of these, brought together, this vocabulary was taken. A young woman of the same tribe was also present who knew something of the language."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Anderson, "Laudable Spirit of Enterprise."

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Ezra L'Hommedieu to Thomas Jefferson, Sept. 10, 1791, *Founders Online*.

<sup>69</sup> Havens and Dering, "Observations."

<sup>70</sup> Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Ezra L'Hommedieu, Dec. 22, 1791, *Founders Online*.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, second series, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. 2, ed. James A. Bear Jr. and Lucia C. Stanton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 808–60; "Memorandum Books, 1791," *Founders Online*.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 20, *1 April–4 August 1791*, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, 467–470); "Jefferson's Vocabulary of the Unquachog [sic] Indians, [June 14, 1791]," *Founders Online*.

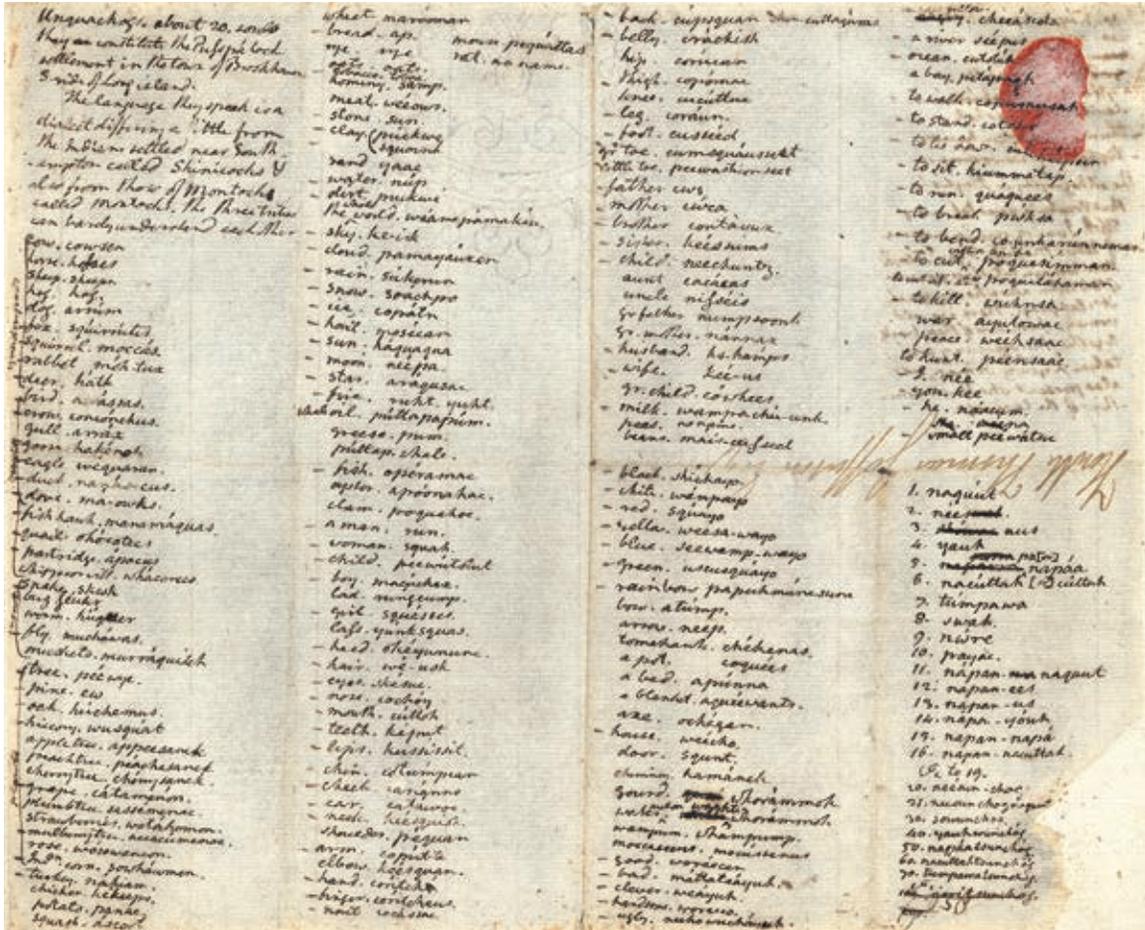


Figure 4.4: Thomas Jefferson’s Unkechaug Vocabulary, 1817. Courtesy of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

Unfortunately, much of Jefferson’s language research was later lost during shipping. As he lamented, “An irreparable misfortune has deprived me of the Indian vocabularies which I had collected. . . . [This] package, on account of its weight and presumed precious contents, was singled out and stolen. The thief, being disappointed on opening it, threw into the river all its contents . . . Some leaves floated ashore and were found in the mud, but these were very few, and so defaced by the mud and water that no general use can ever be made of them.” Although many of his notes were lost, the list of common words and phrases that Jefferson compiled that day in Poospatuck is now one of the few surviving written records of the Unkechaug language and has thus proved useful in on-going language revival efforts.<sup>73</sup> As historian Natalie Naylor points out, however, while Jefferson painted a rather self-congratulatory version of events, the Unkechaug women, who

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series, vol. 1, March 4, 1809 to Nov. 15, 1809*, ed. J. Jefferson Looney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 555–57; Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin S. Barton, Sept. 21, 1809, *Founders Online*.

generously shared their language, played a critical role as “transmitters of traditional culture”—but for their contributions, this important knowledge would likely be completely lost.<sup>74</sup>

Faced with the vagaries of farming, William and Nicoll Floyd, who remained his father’s stalwart assistant, also saw advantages in diversifying into a range of other enterprises. Their ability to do so was aided both by their valuable connections, which brought new opportunities their way, and by their flexible workforce, which could be redirected as needed. As the turn of the century neared, they expanded on previous activities and launched some new initiatives. Although the archival evidence is scanty, some of these undertakings appear to have been successful, while others were more experimental and short-lived.

Given their island location, maritime activities, especially fishing, whaling, shipbuilding, and merchant-trade, were all critical to the regional economy. The Floyds became involved in all four to varying degrees, either as their own commercial undertakings or as investors in joint ventures. Nicoll, for example, invested in merchant trading, which involved buying shares in out-going vessels and, on their return, buying large quantities of commodities wholesale that he could then resell at a profit. In 1796, for example, he secured a half interest in venture cargo—including 38 hogsheads of sugar, 73 bags of cocoa, and 154 bags of coffee—which was consigned aboard the Brig *Silvena* bound for markets in Amsterdam.<sup>75</sup>

During this period, industrialization was making inroads on Long Island, but remained an under-developed sector of the economy. One of the main obstacles to its expansion was the lack of readily available, inexpensive energy sources. On the East End, Nathaniel Dominy established his family of accomplished cabinetmakers as experts in designing and building windmills to harness the winds off the Atlantic.<sup>76</sup> Thanks to that specialty, Dominy-made windmills soon dotted the landscape. But compared with New England where water-driven mills and factories were springing up all over, Long Island had fewer creeks and rivers suitable to power them. Hence, when opportunity arose to gain access to some prime mill sites along local waterways, William and Nicoll II seem to have jumped at the chance.

Around 1790, Nicoll set up the area’s first iron forge with plans to smelt pig iron. According to the census that year, the forge represented his main asset, apart from his then house and a little land. While no documentation survives to indicate what went wrong, the

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<sup>74</sup> Natalie A. Naylor, *Women in Long Island’s Past: A History of Eminent Ladies and Everyday Lives* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012).

<sup>75</sup> Invoice for cargo on Brig *Silvena*, with note from John Cross Jr. making over “unto Nicoll Floyd the whole of my one half of the within Invoice,” Sept. 24, 1796, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 54), WFEA.

<sup>76</sup> Anne Frances Pulling and Gerald A. Leeds, *Windmills and Water Mills of Long Island* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 1999), 12-16.

forge apparently was a complete failure, apart from bestowing a new name on the Forge River. By 1794 to 1795, the Floyds established the Swift Stream Works, a saw and grist mill complex (on what is now the Forge River). This proto-industrial venture required considerable capital investment, including £150 to Jonathan Haven for the “Stream and Sawmill” and £50 to Matthew Raynar for another stretch of the stream. After securing the property and water rights, William hired skilled masons, a cooper, and a millwright to install new water wheels, mill stones, and a mill saw.<sup>77</sup> Several day laborers—including Joseph Sawyer, “Will Negro,” and Paul Cuff—helped with construction.

Particularly intriguing, William also paid a hefty £30 fee for the rights to install a newly patented type of water wheel; the patent certificate, signed by its inventor himself, James Macomb of New Jersey, stated: “I do hereby authorize [William Floyd] to build two of my patent horizontal wheels for the use of Gristmills.”<sup>78</sup> Macomb’s 1791 patent was the first one ever granted for a water wheel—issued only a year after the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office was established; its “horizontal, hollow water wheel to create hydropower for mills” promised improved efficiency over traditional versions.<sup>79</sup> William’s decision to adopt this novel technology, despite the added expense and risk, suggests that he stayed abreast of technical and scientific advances. He also clearly was intrepid enough to take a chance on something new in hopes of gaining an economic advantage. Once up and running, the Swift Stream Works which, as noted, apparently included a sawmill and a grist mill, would have allowed the Floyds to grind grains and process timber from their own estates and, more importantly, to generate substantial revenues by charging fees for these services to other people. Since no other records relating to these mills have been found, however, its uncertain what the scale or longevity of these operations were, so this may be an area for future research.

### *Preserving Poospatuck and Land Speculation*

During this transitional period, the Floyds’ most important asset continued to be their extensive landholdings; even more so, after they eventually ceased to own human beings as property. So even while various entrepreneurial enterprises diverted some of his attention in 1780s and 1790s, William concentrated most of his energies on expanding and consolidating his landholdings. In particular, he was determined to own the entire area around the Mastic estate, which would mean taking over the Poospatuck Reservation. To

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<sup>77</sup> Receipt for purchase of mill stones from David Gelston, May 9, 1795; Receipt for purchase of a mill saw from Lyde & Rogers, April 21, 1794; Receipt paid to Moly and Cuyler for Mill Stones and to Mr. Geyer for inspecting them, 1795, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 53), WFEA.

<sup>78</sup> Receipt paid to James Macomb for authorization of mill wheels, April 22, 1794, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 53), WFEA.

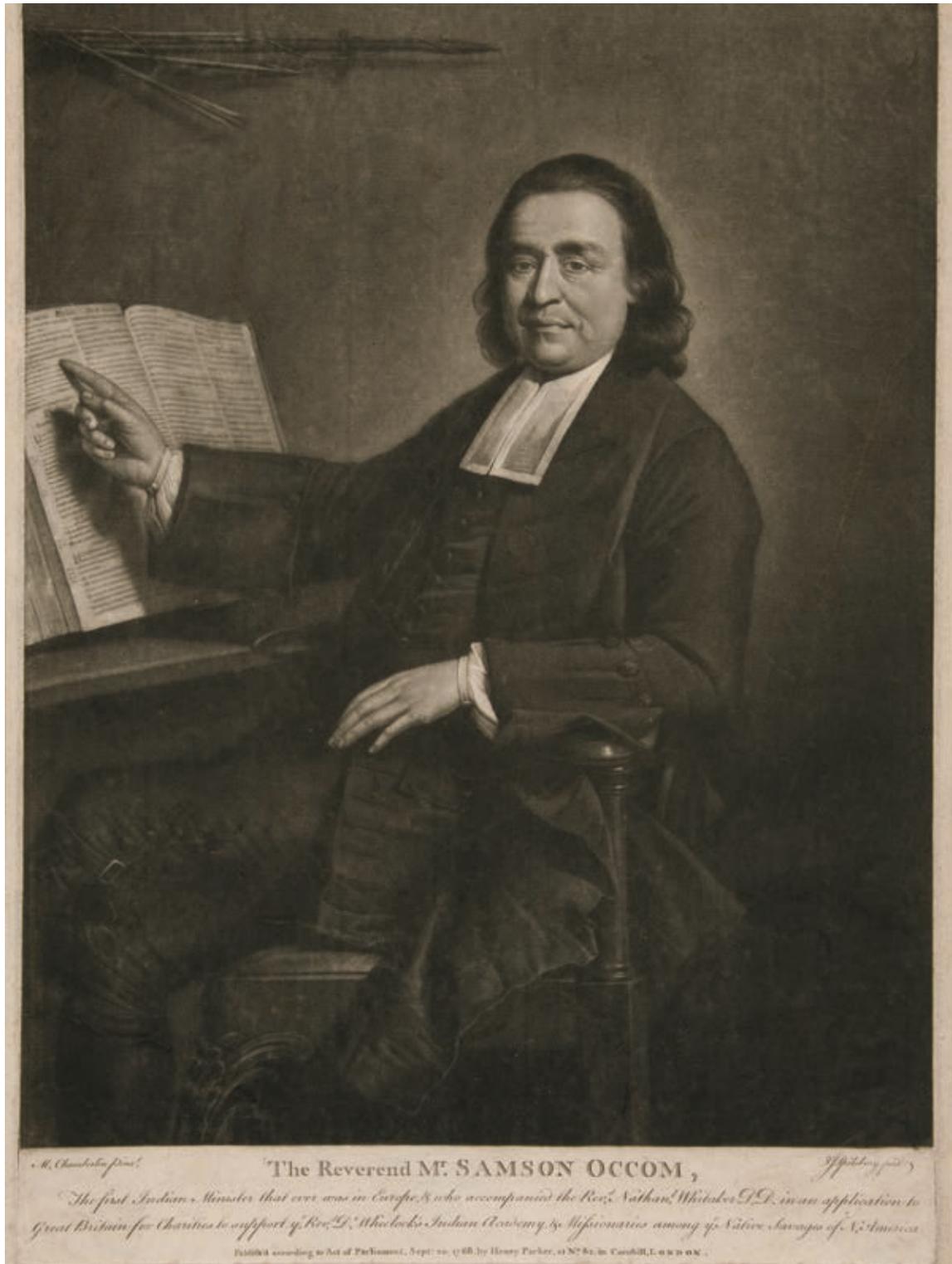
<sup>79</sup> Thomas Green Fessenden, *The Register of Arts, Or A Compendious View of Some of the Most Useful Modern Discoveries and Inventions* (Philadelphia, PA: C. & A. Conrad Co., 1812), 383.

accomplish that goal, of course, he would first have to force out the Unkechaug people who lived there. He thus launched an aggressive multi-front campaign to persuade them, by one means or another, to yield their remaining lands to him.

At the time, the Native peoples of Long Island were under ever more pressure. In the 1780s, for example, Rev. Samson Occum, a Mohawk missionary, connected through marriage with the Montauketts and the Shinnecock, became a vocal advocate for Indian rights on Long Island. To call attention to the Montauketts' plight, he penned a petition on their behalf to New York State officials in 1785. After congratulating them on winning their independence from Britain, the petition denounced their English forefathers for taking "advantage of the Ignorance of our Fore Fathers" to steal or unfairly acquire Indian lands. After detailing other abuses, it demanded compensation in the form of some cattle, sheep, and hogs to provide impoverished Montauketts with a livelihood. Two years later, Rev. Occum composed another petition, this time on behalf of the Shinnecoeks, that similarly lamented: "We have a little bit of Land that we call our own, but the English have got all the profit of it, they claim all the grass and the feed, and we can't keep any Creatures; we can only plant a little Corn, beans and Pumpkins, and that's all, and we think we are usd [sic] very hard; would they be willing to be usd [sic] in this manner?"<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Samson Occum, *The Collected Writings of Samson Occum*, ed. Joanna Brooks and Robert Warrior (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 150-53.



**Figure 4.5:** “Reverend Mr. Samson Occom,” 1768, mezzotint, by Jonathan Spilsbury (after a portrait by Mason Chamberlin), London, England, 14 x 10 in. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. This print is based on a portrait of Rev. Occum made in 1768 when he toured England to raise funds for Rev. Wheelock’s Indian Academy (now Dartmouth College).

Significantly, William's effort to gain control of Poospatuck coincided with another very aggressive campaign to force Native peoples off Long Island altogether. Prior to the Revolution, state officials and private boosters (including Ezra L'Hommedieu) proposed establishing a reservation where displaced Natives from across New England could be relocated. After the war, the new settlement, called Brothertown, was founded in Oneida, New York and populated with refugees from numerous war-torn Indian nations. Since most were Christian converts, they tried to forge a pan-Indian identity around their new beliefs and to discourage intermarriage with non-Indians.

In 1789, some unnamed "gentlemen on the island," who may well have included William, purportedly offered to provide a year's provisions to the Montauketts if they would leave Long Island and move to Brothertown; after sending representatives to visit the settlement, the Indians stoutly refused out of fear that their people would "suffer and come to poverty . . . [in a] part of the world where there were no oysters or clams."<sup>81</sup> Although a few Indians did move to Brothertown, the majority opted to stay on the island where their ancestors' remains were buried, to preserve their living culture, and to protect their treasured lands. It was a wise decision since the Brothertown experiment proved short-lived.

Apparently undeterred, William Floyd called a meeting in 1789 with eight Unkechaugs—most of whom worked for him—and convinced them to "confirm his father's questionable purchase of one hundred acres of Unkechaug land over a half century earlier." Just as his father had done in 1730, he prodded them to sell him all their other tracts, including the one given to them in perpetuity by Tangier Smith. As historian John Strong points out, "It's hard to imagine a more uneven negotiation . . . Floyd, from his position of wealth and power, pressed the small Unkechaug community, which was struggling to survive, to confirm the bad deal of 1730 and to sell another parcel of the 1700 reservation grant for a fraction of its worth."<sup>82</sup> Encountering unified resistance from tribal leaders, William tried to circumvent them by approaching individual Unkechaugs, offering them short-term goods and credit in exchange for their land. As he knew full well, however, it was illegal in New York State for individuals to buy land directly from Indians, without prior approval of the state legislature. Given his status, he probably assumed no one would question his actions.

The Unkechaug leaders' determination to resist Floyd's inducements reflect their acute awareness of the ruinous impacts that dispossession from their ancestral lands had on other Native peoples, including neighboring Indian nations. Fearing a similar outcome, the Unkechaug leaders, with great determination, managed to keep a united front and block Floyd's scheme. Thwarted in his attempt to annex Poospatuck, he redoubled his land

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<sup>81</sup> Samuel Kirkland, April 17, 1789, quoted in Anderson, "Laudable Spirit of Enterprise," 439.

<sup>82</sup> Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 153-56.

speculations in the newly opened frontier of upstate New York. Through this renewed bid to expand his landed empire, William Floyd linked Long Island with larger patterns of westward expansion and Indian removals that reshaped America in the nineteenth century.

Indeed, even before exhausting his efforts to take over Poospatuck, William was already involved in extensive land speculation in upstate New York, especially in the Oneidas' former territory. From the 1790s until his death in 1821, he profited handsomely from reselling Indian lands that he acquired for free or next to nothing; in the process, he accumulated vast landholdings—in addition his Long Island estate—which he, in turn, bestowed on his heirs. Importantly, William Floyd's access to so much land was directly attributable to his political career. Especially during his tenure in the State Senate from 1777 to 1788, when he was appointed as an Indian Commissioner, he was privy to insider information and advance knowledge of newly available lands. Underscoring the tight-knit nature of Long Island's political class, his brother-in-law Ezra L'Hommedieu was both a fellow state senator and a fellow member of the Indian Commission. Not surprisingly, the pair, as longtime friends and allies, also collaborated on various land speculation schemes.<sup>83</sup>

Since powerful families, such as the Floyds, monopolized so much land, often preferring to rent rather than sell off parcels, a considerable number of unpropertied white men opted to leave Long Island with their families during this period. Reluctant to remain as tenants or employees, they hoped to find greater opportunities by getting in early as pioneers in less-settled regions. The appeal of westward migration derived foremost from the possibility of acquiring their own land. Tenancy had long carried a "stigma of dependency" in colonial America, as historian John Brooke points out, "American culture placed profound value on the status of propertied independence, linking it with the capacity for self-governance and autonomy. Those adult white males who were merely tenants occupied an ambiguous status, more limited than freeholders, but certainly higher than women in coverture, children, servants, and slaves."<sup>84</sup> As long as "property ownership conveyed status as a citizen," they faced difficulties securing political influence and the social capital that came with it. Consequently, they were ready customers for William Floyd's real estate dealings as they swelled out-migration from Long Island.

William's interest in land speculation was piqued when he was awarded a grant of 10,000 acres along the Mohawk River as a reward for his war-time service.<sup>85</sup> Without other means of paying its many veterans, New York State had begun compensating them with similar land grants in remote reaches of the state, much of which, in reality, was still Indian

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<sup>83</sup> Ezra L'Hommedieu served in the New York State Assembly (1777 to 1783) and in the State Senate (1784-1792 and 1794-1809). "Guide to the Sylvester Manor Archive, 1649-1996," MSS 208, Sylvester Manor Collection, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University, New York, NY.

<sup>84</sup> Brooke, *Columbia Rising*, 152.

<sup>85</sup> Larry Lowenthal, *William Floyd: Long Island Patriot* (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: SPLIA, 2013), 107.

territory.<sup>86</sup> To actually initiate settlement there, however, would require the removal, by one means or another, of the Native inhabitants who claimed those lands by ancient birthright. To achieve this objective, state officials formed the Indian Commission ostensibly to reestablish diplomatic relations with the region's many Indian nations, a difficult task given the lingering resentments among those that fought on opposite sides during the recent war. Of the Six Nations, for example, the Mohawks, Cayugas, Senecas, and Onondagas allied with the now-ousted British, while the Oneidas and most of the Tuscaroras allied with the Patriots.

Yet whatever their former allegiances may have been, Indian nations in North America nonetheless all suffered the same consequences; when the French departed after the Seven Years' War and, subsequently, when the British lost the American Revolution, Indian nations could no longer take advantage of strategic alliances or play one vying imperial power off another.<sup>87</sup> With the birth of the United States, the economic and diplomatic leverage of America's first peoples was thus severely reduced, particularly as each state had its own growth-oriented agenda and the federal government had less incentive (and arguably less ability) to curb extra-legal incursions by settlers into Indian territories.<sup>88</sup> To prevent frontier violence, honor its own treaties, and assert authority over its wayward subjects, the British government had taken measures to contain Americans within the boundaries established after the Seven Years' War, such as the Proclamation Line of 1763 which banned settlement beyond the Appalachians. With those policies now void, settlers and land speculators began pouring into the northwestern frontier of New York; the influx included many veterans who, having been introduced to the promising area during the recent military campaigns, accepted land grants from the state in compensation for their service. Predictably, these newcomers almost immediately came into conflict with the Native peoples already there, whose ancestors had made the region their home for generations past.<sup>89</sup> As historian Colin Calloway explains, Indian people were thus "deeply affected by the consequences of the Revolution" because ultimately "white

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<sup>86</sup> Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 285.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, prologue, 108-9, 273-82; Michael McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 17-18, 240-42; Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 6-10, 16.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 7-9; Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 21-22.

<sup>89</sup> William H. Siles, "Wilderness Investment: The New York Frontier during the Federal Era," in *World of the Founders: New York Communities in the Federal Period*, ed. Wendell Tripp and Stephen L. Schechter (Albany: New York State Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, 1990); John L. Brooke, *Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); and Laurence M. Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001).

Americans excluded Indians from the republican society [it] created. The new nation, born of a bloody revolution and committed to expansion, could not tolerate America as Indian country. Increasingly, Americans viewed the future as one without Indians.”<sup>90</sup>

Hence, in the spring of 1784, Governor Clinton invited representatives of each Indian nation to a meeting in hopes of resolving “the Differences which have unhappily arisen between You and Us in the course of the late war.” Using the metaphorical language of Native diplomacy, he emphasized his desire to open “the Path of Communication between You and Us” and to “remove all the Obstacles which lay in it and pluck up by the Roots all the Briars and Brambles with which it is overgrown, that we may freely pass and repass to and from each other.”<sup>91</sup> In a show of feigned sincerity, the governor solemnly punctuated his speech by presenting symbolic gifts of wampum strings and beads; his Indian counterparts, while politely accepting his offerings, remained reluctant to hand over more of their land. They suspected correctly that the primary objective of this diplomatic parlay was really to push out their people with as little resistance as possible.

When a multilateral treaty between New York State and all the Indian nations proved elusive, Clinton decided to negotiate unilateral or joint treaties separately with the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Tuscarora, Seneca, and Delaware peoples. Just in time to participate in the next round of negotiations, William Floyd was appointed to the Indian Commission on June 14, 1785.<sup>92</sup> The very next day, he accompanied Governor Clinton to Fort Herkimer in Schenectady in hopes of rekindling the treaty fire. Sachems and warriors from the Oneida, Tuscarora, and Mohegan nations were in attendance, as well as representatives of Long Island nations. The governor promised Native leaders that he would enforce the existing law requiring that all Indian lands be purchased by the state (which would then subdivide them for sale or distribution), not willy-nilly by private individuals in order to prevent “Frauds or Impositions that might be attempted to be committed on You by our White People.” In the next breath, however, he warned that their ancestral lands, “being contiguous to the settlements of the White People, will soon be of little value for hunting and the Price of it would enable you purchase Cattle and Utensils of Husbandry and improve your Lands at Home to greater Advantage.” The sachems stoutly refused, explaining that “we cannot part with so much of our Hunting Grounds, which are very dear to us.” In a conciliatory gesture, they offered instead to sell or lease some smaller tracts, but land-hungry settlers would not be placated for long.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, xv.

<sup>91</sup> Gov. George Clinton, April 6, 1784, *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs... [for] the State of New York* (Albany, NY: J. Munsell, 1861), 10.

<sup>92</sup> Meeting of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs, Albany, NY, June 14, 1785, *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, 83.

<sup>93</sup> *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, 86, 90-92.

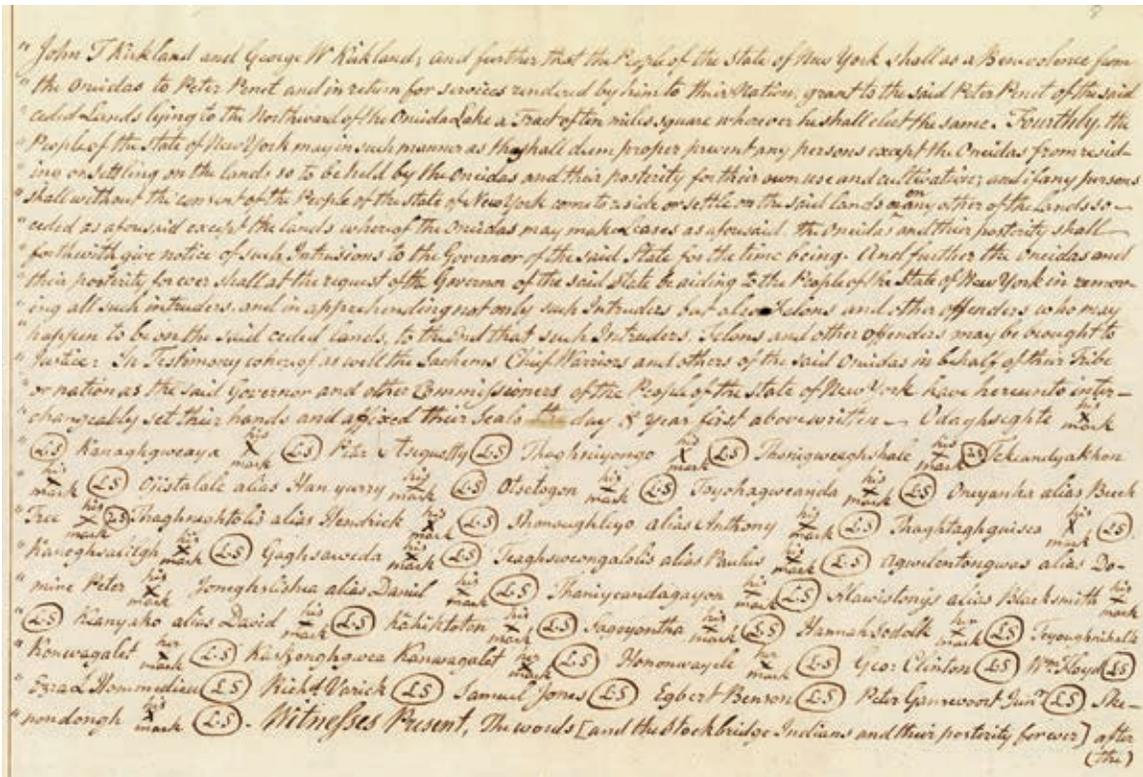


Figure 4.6: Herkimer Treaty of 1793 between New York State and Six Nations, with signatures of William Floyd and other representatives. Courtesy of the National Archives, Washington D.C.

From 1788 to 1791, the New York Indian Commission, consisting of William Floyd, Ezra L’Hommedieu, and five other men, continued to negotiate intermittently with the Six Nations. Amidst escalating violence and increasingly desperate conditions on the frontier, several Indian nations, including the Oneidas and Onondagas, eventually ceded their remaining lands to New York State—albeit on quite disadvantageous terms—in hopes of securing some guarantees of their future protection. Like most government officials involved in Indian affairs during this period, William Floyd clearly had a vested interest in the outcome of these proceedings. In the very locales under negotiation, he managed to accumulate extensive personal landholdings. Several of his colleagues and associates, most notably Ezra L’Hommedieu, likewise secured vast tracts in the same area. Judging by their voluminous correspondence, these men collaborated extensively in surveying, subdividing, and re-selling thousands of acres as smaller parcels.<sup>94</sup> They profited greatly, even as Indians were forced to relocate.

Recognizing the economic potential of the Commission’s undertaking, William jumped full bore into the land rush and, apart from a three-year term in the House of Representatives, focused mainly on state-level governance during the postwar era. In 1795,

<sup>94</sup> Extensive records of their land sales are in the Sylvester Manor Archives, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University.

he was tapped to run for Lieutenant Governor on a ticket with Robert Yates for Governor on behalf of the antifederalist Democratic-Republican Party.<sup>95</sup> After unanimously nominating this widely esteemed pair, their supporters touted them as consensus candidates, who were “most likely to unite the public voice in their favor, to compose the divisions among us, and promote the interests of our common country.” According to one endorsement, the duo was “so universally known and respected that it seems almost superfluous to offer anything to recommend them to . . . our fellow citizens.” William Floyd was especially lauded for having “long served the public in a variety of stations, with honor to himself and with the approbation of his country. His situation in life, his probity, his respectability, are such, that no reasonable objection can be made against him.”<sup>96</sup> Likewise, voters were promised that Yates, a state supreme court judge known for honesty and fairness, had “no personal revenge to gratify, no opponents to oppress, no politician to provide for, nor any promises for private purposes to be performed at the public expense.”

As members of the Democratic-Republican Party, Floyd and Yates (as well as George Clinton, the outgoing governor) shared a strong commitment to states’ rights. Having been involved in drafting the first constitution for New York State, they were also personally committed to its success. They had reservations, however, about the creeping reach of the federal government and initially opposed the proposed national constitution because it did not adequately protect states’ rights. Alexander Hamilton and his supporters sought to strengthen the federal government (especially its executive, judiciary, and taxation functions) to unify the disparate states, but Floyd and Yates feared his approach centralized too much power on the national level. Having fended off monarchical tyranny once in their lives, they had no interest in an over-reaching federal government that might infringe on the spheres of state and local governments which, in their view, were best situated to make decisions for their own constituents. As critics at the time (and later historians) hastened to point out, however, the cross-sectional coalition of the Democratic-Republicans that “promoted democracy in the North also protected the prerogatives of slave holders in the South.”<sup>97</sup> In a close election, Floyd and Yates were defeated by Federalists John Jay and Stephen Van Rensselaer. After the addition of the Bill of Rights somewhat assuaged his concerns, William endorsed the new Constitution. But as someone who benefitted very directly from access to power on the local and state levels, he clearly remained skeptical of any external entity that might alter the status quo, particularly as the federal government assumed oversight of Indian affairs in the West. As a member of the New York State Indian Commission, for example, William organized some assistance for

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<sup>95</sup> On the Democratic-Republican Party, the first U.S. opposition party, see *Encyclopedia Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Democratic-Republican-Party>.

<sup>96</sup> *Poughkeepsie Journal*, Poughkeepsie, NY, March 4, 1795.

<sup>97</sup> Padraig Riley, *Slavery and the Democratic Conscience: Political Life in Jeffersonian America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 9.

the struggling Brothertown settlement, but not enough to prevent the expulsion from the state of its inhabitants who had no legal recourse. In Oneida County, as elsewhere, the demands of white settlers for access to land outweighed any protests or even treaty-bound land claims by Indians.

Yet despite continued pressure to join the exodus from Long Island, the Unkechaugs stoutly fended off William Floyd's attempt to take over their Poospatuck reservation. Instead, they cleaved only closer to their ancestral home. Guided by leaders and ministers now adept at navigating the yawning gulf between Native and colonialist worldviews, they developed strategies to sustain themselves and their children, even as the white-dominated society marginalized them and other people of color. For many First Peoples, as historian Linford Fisher argues, the vital importance "of religion and collective agency in maintaining tribal sovereignty" can hardly be overstated.<sup>98</sup> Accordingly, as seen in the next chapter, the Unkechaugs survived by fiercely defending their remaining land but also by centering their community around their own church, reinforcing ties with other Indian nations and people of color, while also focusing on preserving their unique cultural identity.

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<sup>98</sup> Linford D. Fisher, "Religion, Race, and the Formation of Pan-Indian Identities in the Brothertown Movement, 1700-1800," in *Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas*, ed. Gregory D. Smithers and Brooke N. Newman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 157.

CHAPTER FIVE

# CHANGING CONDITIONS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

**A**s a new century dawned, Long Islanders redoubled their efforts to expand and diversify the region's economic base during the 1800s to 1820s. They also continued to grapple with numerous social, political, and environmental challenges, many of which were legacies of the past. Most significantly, of course, the legal status of African Americans still in bondage inexorably changed as New York's "Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery" (1799) came into full effect by 1826; during the intervening years, however, the law's incrementalist approach left many people, especially of those now born of enslaved mothers, in legal limbo, trapped in ambiguous states of involuntary servitude—yet each year brought them closer to freedom. Once manumitted, they finally gained self-determination and bodily autonomy. No longer could they be bought, sold, moved, traded, rented out, or bequeathed like chattel property; no longer could their children be torn away, their families separated, or their destinies dictated by the whims of putative masters. Slavery's demise as a normative, legal institution in New York was profoundly transformative for African Americans, in spite of the many challenges they faced in the post-emancipation era.

Meanwhile, New York was already influenced by the trend of democratization that would reshape the political landscape of America during the Jacksonian era. In 1821, the state removed all property requirements on suffrage, making its electoral system more egalitarian and accessible but only to white men, who gained greater access to the ballot box and to elected offices than ever before; on the other hand, the small number of free black men, who owned enough property to claim voting rights, were now disenfranchised on the basis of race (a discriminatory measure not repealed until 1869, with state ratification of the 15th Amendment).<sup>1</sup> In the absence of universal suffrage, all people of color as well as white women remained excluded from the full rights of citizenship and largely subordinate within a social order that still privileged white men.

Yet as a growing tide of immigration into the United States vastly expanded over the course of the nineteenth century, many more Europeans streamed into New York City.

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<sup>1</sup> Bennett Liebman, "The Quest for Black Voting Rights in New York State," *Albany Government Law Review* 11 (2018): 386-421.

Finding the urban environment hostile and unfamiliar, many of those who originated from more agricultural regions eventually found their way to still rural eastern Long Island (thus avoiding the rapidly suburbanizing areas closer to the city). Since native-born white Americans during this period increasingly resisted becoming field workers or household servants, many recent European immigrants jumped to fill those jobs, despite meager pay and arduous hours. Yet whereas persons of color generally remained stuck in such low-level jobs, especially as racial prejudice only increased in New York after the end of slavery, young white immigrants found them to be reliable stepping-stones from poverty to the working class and, then, the middle class. During the first half of the nineteenth century, this shift contributed to entrenched patterns of racial stratification and spatial segregation, the legacies of which remain evident on Long Island to this day. As historian Alan Taylor points out:

The slow pace of black emancipation stood in marked contrast to the rapid decline of indentured servitude for white people. . . . While white labor became free, indentured servitude for blacks surged as a halfway status to freedom allowed by masters. After the revolution, citizens rejected servitude for fellow whites but clung to it as still appropriate for blacks [as well as Indians and other free people of color].<sup>2</sup>

Even as more and more people secured individual manumissions, freed African Americans often encountered considerable difficulties in establishing independent households and improving their living conditions due to a variety of limiting circumstances. After years of bonded servitude, most had little (if any) savings, inadequate education, and no viable safety nets. Nor did they have access to credit or capital to buy land or start their own businesses. All these factors combined severely constricted the economic opportunities open to them and limited their social mobility and possibilities for advancement. Moreover, many white-dominated Long Island communities passed strict residency requirements and anti-vagrancy laws specifically to deter freed people from relocating to more promising venues or venturing far from the site of their former enslavement. Hence, out of necessity, many freed people were forced to remain—to one degree or another—affiliated with their former “masters” or the sites of their bondage. The Mastic estate was no exception, since many enslaved persons and their descendants remained within the Floyds’ orbit.

Even in the post-emancipation era, African and Native Americans on Long Island faced restrictions on their civil rights, financial hardships, and limited economic opportunities. Across the region, a rising tide of prejudice and discrimination on the part of many white inhabitants hardened into persistent patterns of systemic racism. For many people of color, these factors conspired to make it exceedingly difficult for them to achieve

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016), 457.

meaningful autonomy or to accumulate and retain property. In short, freedom did not necessarily equate with equality or power. Nor did the demise of chattel slavery mean the end of other forms of servitude.<sup>3</sup> Yet despite these obstacles, freed African Americans and Indians on Long Island, including some of those associated with the Floyd Estate, made significant strides during the first half of the nineteenth century in building homes, communities, churches, social groups, and mutual aid organizations of their own.

### *Life and Labor on the Floyd Estate in the Early Nineteenth Century*

In 1803, Nicoll II took charge of the Mastic estate after his father, for reasons discussed below, relocated his family, bondspeople, and other dependents to Oneida County. By then, Nicoll already had long experience overseeing its operations and managing its diverse workforce (although he did not take ownership until his father died in 1821). Hence, this transition from one generation to the next proceeded smoothly. Judging by Nicoll's correspondence and accounts, household routines remained little changed from his father's day. Still focused mainly on growing a mix of crops and raising livestock, the farm's seasonal activities continued on a predictable cycle—replenishing the meadows with clover and timothy seed and planting fields of wheat and flax in the spring; shearing sheep and butchering cattle in the fall.<sup>4</sup> On a regular basis, the workers carried out all the tasks involved with producing the “wool, flax, ham, lard, cider, eggs, cheese, butter, pork, corn, and cordwood” that Nicoll regularly shipped to New York City.<sup>5</sup> And, of course, the cobbler still made his annual visit to take care of the footwear needs of the extended household.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 5.1:** Detail of 1802 “Map of the State of New York,” by Simeon De Witt. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University (item #C-0122-6).

<sup>3</sup> Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Receipt for clover, timothy, and flax seeds, [1822], Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 28), WFEA.

<sup>5</sup> Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report*, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Household Receipts for 1826-1827, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 27), WFEA.

Upon his father's departure, Nicoll and wife Phebe Gelston Floyd also took over the main house. They were probably grateful to move into larger quarters because, since they already had five children since their marriage in 1789 and were living nearby in a smaller house that must have been bursting at the seams.<sup>7</sup>

During Nicoll's proprietorship (1803-1843), the estate's workforce remained quite diverse. As of 1810 census, ten people remained in bondage, even while many of Nicoll's peers manumitted their slaves sooner than law required. In 1820, correspondence regarding "the bills of sales for the blacks," suggests that even at that late date, Nicoll still opted to sell rather than free them. By contrast, the Unkechaugs—having lived, worked, and intermarried with African Americans for generations—embraced the antislavery movement, especially through activism with their church. Apparently, however, they were not able to sway their employer's views. Nevertheless, as full manumission took effect, the Floyd Estate shifted to a wage-based labor system, apart from occasional instances of Native children from the area who were still indentured to the Floyds. For the most part, however, the workforce combined some live-in staff and day laborers, drawn from nearby Poospatuck and other adjacent communities.

Yet for the reasons discussed above, many freed people did not find this new chapter of their lives easy, as they typically "graduated" into freedom with little education, no savings, no property, narrow job prospects, and few opportunities for advancement. The bondspeople formerly owned by Loyalist Richard Floyd, for example, had decidedly mixed outcomes after their erstwhile master fled the new nation. Zipporah endured sixteen additional years of bondage after Richard Floyd secretly transferred her to another owner to avoid having her confiscated by the Patriots. But then in 1802, after the dreaded sale of her child, she decided "to press for her own and the child's freedom though the auspices of the New York Manumission Society based on her status as a former slave on the confiscated Floyd estate."<sup>8</sup> While her eventual fate is unknown, other of Richard Floyd's former slaves, who were older and in poor health, fell into poverty. For example, after becoming too ill to work, Dick, "a superannuated negro," received financial assistance from Brookhaven's Overseers of the Poor from 1793 to 1795, while Guinea, "an old negro man," and Rose, who worked into her nineties, were boarded out by the Town of Oyster Bay, purportedly with another Floyd relative (although how or why that arrangement was made is unknown).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In total, they had eight children: William (1790-1885), Kitty (1792-1800), Augustus (1795-1878), Mary (1798-1887), David Gelston (1802-1893), Catherine (1804-1854), John Gelston (1806-1881), and Julia (1808-1879). Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report*, 25.

<sup>8</sup> Vivienne Kruger, "Born to Run: The Slave Family in Early New York, 1626 to 1827" (PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1985), ch. 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Meanwhile, all children born to enslaved mothers between 1799 and 1825, the transitional years of the Gradual Abolition Act, had to be officially registered by their masters in order to keep track of their future manumission dates. According to the records for the Town of Brookhaven, eighteen babies were born to enslaved women on the Floyd Estate; as masters of their mothers, William Floyd claimed ownership of two of these infants and Nicoll claimed ownership of sixteen—*twice* that of any other slaveholder, meaning that he profited considerably through the so-called “natural increase” of the men and women under his control. These children included four girls and fourteen boys, beginning with Rachel, born just seven months after gradual manumission was instituted. Her arrival was followed in subsequent years by Lew, Hector, Jim, Charles, Pomp, Isaac, Lil, and Ben, among others. Cyrus, born in September of 1825, was the last birth registered by Nicol Floyd. [See Appendix.] Since the Floyds’ total number of slaves did not increase by 18, it is likely that they sold or otherwise transferred ownership of at least some of these children. Given the paucity of archival evidence, however, little is known about most of their personal lives or post-manumission fates.

Nevertheless, these little ones were born into a very different social milieu than prior generations. They grew up fully aware that neither they, nor their future progeny, would remain in life-long bondage. Even while serving the lengthy terms of labor insisted upon by their masters, they could look forward to being manumitted in their mid-twenties. Their terms of coerced servitude quite literally had an expiration date, after which they could hopefully anticipate a brighter, more autonomous future. As New York crawled toward abolition, however, some enslaved individuals, finding the wait excruciating, rejected their subjugated status outright and actively resisted their master’s authority, including by refusing to work, neglecting or sabotaging his property, running away, trying to negotiate a self-purchase, or just demanding immediate manumission. Whether or not such incidents happened on the estate is unknown, but in other places enslaved persons self-liberated or successfully pressured their masters to free them earlier than intended.

Apart from now being paid wages, of course, freed persons who continued to work for their former masters would not have seen dramatic changes to their physical surroundings, living conditions, or range of activities as agricultural or domestic laborers. Circa 1827, for example, a young man named Ben was included in the Floyds’ annual shoemaker’s list, along with Isaac, Sam, and Harry Howard.<sup>10</sup> If he was the same Ben whose birth was registered in the Town of Brookhaven in 1809, he would have turned eighteen that year. Ben apparently earned his master’s confidence because he was often sent on errands. In 1831, for example, he delivered a harness for repair to a saddler in Jamaica, Queens, a long trip at the time if he went overland, quicker if he sailed.<sup>11</sup> Even after

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<sup>10</sup> Shoemaker’s receipt, circa 1827, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box. 2, Folder 27), WFEA.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Nicoll Floyd to Maltby Gelston, June 2, 1829, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 27), WFEA.

securing his freedom, Ben continued to work on the estate. Now, however, he did indeed receive wages rather than mere subsistence in exchange for his labor. In December 1851, for example, when Ben was in his early forties, Sarah Gelston Floyd paid him \$15 for cutting wood as part of a crew of hired woodcutters.<sup>12</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, establishing an independent household could be particularly difficult for working-class women, especially those of Indian and African heritage, who often faced precarious economic conditions; even more so, if they were unmarried or single mothers and lacked reliable support from a husband or other kin. The daily struggle for survival was perhaps hardest for mothers with young children whose options were even more limited. In 1818, for example, a young Unkechaug woman named Hannah sought the Floyds' assistance in finding a job. Augustus made inquiries in New York City, but their acquaintance there replied that "help is so plenty, it is impossible to get a place for Hannah, and the child is an insuperable objection."<sup>13</sup> No one was willing to hire a single mother with a youngster in tow.

Fortunately, the Floyds found a place for Hannah among their servants and she apparently remained on the estate, perhaps finding a modicum of security. When Sarah Floyd moved to the estate and became Hannah's new mistress, the two women seemed to develop an empathetic relationship. When Hannah's infant daughter died in 1849, for example, Sarah cancelled her own plans to stay and comfort the bereaved mother.<sup>14</sup> At some point, Hannah was permitted to move into one of the so-called "slave cabins." Decades later, visitors recalled "Aunt Hannah," as she was called, still living there into her eighties.

## *Diversifying Economic Activities*

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Nicoll II seemed very cognizant that farming was an uncertain business—given the vagaries of weather, crop failures, soil depletion, and destructive pests. Throughout his proprietorship of the Mastic estate, he thus continued to invest both in agricultural improvements and a mix of other enterprises, along similar lines as he and his father had begun together. Several of these ventures also created new employment opportunities for local workers. His attention increasingly was drawn toward ensuring that the land—still his family's primary source of income—remained fertile and productive. Since the 1790s, Long Island farmers had grappled with the ongoing challenges of soil exhaustion and declining harvests. Encouraged by Ezra

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<sup>12</sup> Letter from Sarah Floyd to John Gelston Floyd, Dec. 7 and 20, 1851, Papers of John Gelston Floyd, Sr. (Box 1, Folder 4), WFEA.

<sup>13</sup> Augustus Floyd to Nicoll Floyd, Dec. 8, 1818; quoted in Ellice B. Gonzalez, "From Unkechaug to Poospatuck" (1983), unpublished monograph prepared for the National Park Service (copy available at WFEA).

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Sarah Floyd to Nicoll Floyd, Oct. 20, 1849; quoted in Gonzalez.

L’Hommedieu’s enthusiastic endorsement, for example, they now routinely enriched their fields with vast quantities of seaweed and menhaden, to the degree that visitors to the island often complained of the stench. As these dutiful agronomists discovered to their dismay, however, over-use of fish oil eventually saturated the soil with deleterious effects.<sup>15</sup>

Forced to abandon or reduce their reliance on this cheap resource, East End farmers had little choice but to switch to more expensive commercial fertilizers (such as processed “fish guano” which contained less oil). To enrich his fields, for example, Nicoll Floyd turned to New York City, which every day produced tons of organic waste that required immediate disposal. Based in Lower Manhattan, his supplier Richard Corwin advertised “Farmers and gardeners supplied with stable (and other) Manure, at the shortest notice and at a reduced price.” The “other” referred, of course, to the smelly contents of the city’s innumerable back-yard outhouses and privies, which were blended with the aromatic droppings of battalions of urban workhorses.<sup>16</sup> While probably reluctant to bear the added expense of transporting night soil all the way from the city, Nicoll nevertheless ordered loads of this valuable ordure, which were promptly dispatched from Corwin’s Van Dam Street premises. Despite such efforts, declining fertility remained a chronic worry in many parts of Long Island, only somewhat alleviated by the advent of chemical fertilizers in the early twentieth century (which brought their own challenges).

To improve the quality of his herds, Nicoll also became interested in trading breeding stock with neighbors. In 1819, for example, Sylvester Dering, then proprietor of Sylvester Manor, promised that a mutual acquaintance, who owned a special lineage of white cattle, was willing “if he should have a bull calf of that color . . . to let you have it.”<sup>17</sup> Nicoll likewise continued to upgrade his flocks of sheep, even acquiring some valuable merinos which were prized for their high-quality fleece. In the meantime, he continued to seek out markets for his produce; as is often the case with farming, however, the returns could be quite unpredictable. One year, for example, he sold his wool to a mercantile company based in Cold Spring Harbor only to have its owners balk at paying him, claiming his price was too high and business was dull.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, he slowly built the estate’s livestock holdings; according to one early twentieth-century account, they included 200 cattle and 800 sheep, including 40 merinos.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> George Brown Goode, *American Fisheries: A History of the Menhaden* (New York: Orange Judd, 1880), 1-2, 208; H. Bruce Franklin, *The Most Important Fish in the Sea: Menhaden and America* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2007), 54-55.

<sup>16</sup> Receipt from Richard Corwin for manure, Sept. 1825. Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 26), WFEA.

<sup>17</sup> Sylvester Dering to Nicoll Floyd, Aug. 16, 1819, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 4, Folder 21), WFEA.

<sup>18</sup> Jones & Co. of Cold Spring Harbor to Nicoll Floyd, Oct. 4, 1832, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 27), WFEA.

<sup>19</sup> Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report*, 27.

Alongside his farming operations, Nicoll also initiated or invested in various maritime endeavors. In 1803, for example, he acquired a three-quarters share in the *Four Friends*, a 75-ton schooner, from Isaac Hedges of East Hampton. Nicoll covered many of the expenses for outfitting and provisioning the vessel over the next several years. He quickly bought out Hedges and later sold the vessel.<sup>20</sup> From 1820 to 1821, he was a part owner of the Sloop *Huntress*. Several of the Cuffee brothers commuted from Poospatuck to help repair and sail the vessel—including Obadiah, as a shipyard carpenter, and Joel, as a ship's hand (paid \$10 per month). Judging by receipts for “piloting into New York,” the *Huntress* plied a route along Long Island's coast to Manhattan—transporting people and farm produce to the city, returning with goods and supplies from urban wholesalers.<sup>21</sup> Nicoll also patronized urban merchants to outfit the ship, including, for example, purchases of Russia duck (heavy cotton cloth used to make sails), twine, and white line. He also hired the firm of Lawrence and Barnard, located along the waterfront in Lower Manhattan, to make the sloop's mainsail (which required 318 yards of Russia duck).<sup>22</sup>

In addition, Nicoll continued to pursue whaling, having previously partnered on several earlier voyages with David Gelston. Although still a major driver of the Long Island economy, as whaling became more globalized in the early nineteenth century, it also became a much costlier, higher-risk business than in the past. Over-hunting of the North Atlantic whale species led to the collapse of their populations, making the traditional modes of shore-based and short-haul whaling, pursued for generations by Native inhabitants and early settlers, now largely obsolete. Consequently, American whalers now pursued other deep-sea whale species which required sending vessels and crews on long, dangerous voyages to the Arctic and Pacific Oceans.<sup>23</sup> This reality, in addition to vastly increasing outfitting and supply costs, greatly magnified both the risks and the rewards of whaling.

After weighing the odds, Nicoll nevertheless was determined to keep his hand in this still potentially lucrative business. In 1832, for example, he received a letter from Charles Dering of Sag Harbor, soliciting his investment, stating: “You mentioned last spring that you had contemplated embarking in the whaling business. I observed that I thought it an unfortunate time from the number engaged and prices of oil.” As of his

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<sup>20</sup> Isaac Hedges selling ¼ share in Schooner *Four Friends* to Nicoll Floyd for \$62.50. Nicoll Floyd Papers, (Box 4, Folder 35), WFEA.

<sup>21</sup> Receipts for expenses related to the Sloop *Huntress*, Aug. 1820-Oct. 1821, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 5, Folder 16), WFEA.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Lawrence, sailmaker, was located on Hester Street; Benjamin Barnard was a shipmaster on Broadway and Cherry. William Mercein, *Mercein's City Directory, New York Register, and Almanac* (New York: William Mercein, 1820), 121, 279.

<sup>23</sup> For more on Long Island whalers during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Nancy Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers and the World. Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); and Nomi Dayan, *Whaling on Long Island* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2016).

writing, however, Dering changed his mind because, in the meantime, the price specifically of sperm whale oil had gone up three-fold compared to that of other species. After warning that it would not be easy to compete with larger whaling companies, Dering proposed a joint venture. While how much Nicoll invested is unclear, their correspondence negotiated how the company would be managed in minute detail.

Over the next decade, Nicoll remained deeply involved with whaling concerns but often worried that it was becoming a less certain business. When he sought advice about whether or not to continue, his grown son Augustus reminded him that, as “most of your children are entirely dependent on you for the means of subsistence,” to be cautious of “any prospect, however flattering, if coupled with any risk.”<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, in 1841, Nicoll outfitted the Bark *Camillus* for another whaling voyage, which required significant expenditures (including for carpenter’s tools, cooper’s tools, whaling gear, cabin furniture, dry stores, and other provisions). A contemporary inventory of the contents of the *Camillus* listed whale irons, lances, spades, mincing knives, and whale boats.<sup>25</sup> In addition to the *Four Friends* and *Camillus*, he also owned “the *Noble*, the schooner *Polly*, a half-share in the whaling brig *Eagle*; . . . [and] a three-quarters share of the *Italy* worth \$10,000 at his death” in 1852.<sup>26</sup> As historian Nancy Shoemaker has detailed, many young Indian men, including several members of the Cuffee family, expanded their horizons by signing on with whaling vessels that travelled the globe.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the failure of his short-lived iron forge, Nicoll II also remained committed to promoting industrialization, since relatively few mills were operating in Brookhaven in the early nineteenth century. Thus in 1812, he took over a papermill (probably on the Forge River), in partnership with James Snowden. According to their agreement, Nicoll would cover the start-up costs and Snowden would oversee its day-to-day operations in return for 1/6 of net proceeds; any remaining profits or losses would be divided equally between them.<sup>28</sup> Nicoll apparently preferred the role of silent partner. After two years, they let this arrangement lapse by mutual consent. In 1813, Snowden instead signed an eight-year lease for Nicoll’s sawmill (possibly the same one his father launched), including “half of the dam and ponds of water thereto belonging together with the land and appurtenances thereunto” for \$100 per year. Under this arrangement, Snowden assumed the greater risk, as he would be “responsible for maintenance and repairs,” including in the event of “any accident

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted by Cornelia Floyd Nichols, in “As Told by the Attic Letters,” 1952, pp. 22-23, unpublished memoir, William Floyd Estate Archives; Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report*, 26.

<sup>25</sup> Inventory Notebook for Bark *Camillus*, 1841, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 4, Folder 11), WFEA.

<sup>26</sup> Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report*, 27.

<sup>27</sup> Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers and the World*.

<sup>28</sup> Nicoll Floyd and James Snowden’s Articles of Agreement for papermill, Dec. 15, 1812. This agreement was ended by mutual consent on Dec. 31, 1814. Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 24), WFEA.

attending the sawmill or dam in being carried away or destroyed.”<sup>29</sup> During the nineteenth century, water-powered mills often were damaged or swept away by spring flooding. Fire was also a constant threat in wooden mill buildings since a stray spark caused by misaligned grindstones could ignite dust and grain stores.

In 1815, Nicoll launched yet another milling enterprise, this time with Nathaniel Smith and possibly a few others. Judging by a chart of local mills—grain, paper, and cotton—found among Nicoll’s papers, which lists the names of “grantors” and “Title vested in Whom,” the men tried to distribute their risk across several investors. In the case of this latest gambit, Nicoll and his partners secured rights to “the whole of [a] paper mill, with 3/8 of the pond of stream and land under water and 3/4 of the mill dam and . . . [the] gate with the privilege of raceway for papermill where it is, reserving privilege of drawing from the paper mill flu 1/8 of pond and stream not here by conveyed for the use of the cotton factory. . . .”<sup>30</sup> As this agreement suggests, careful negotiations over water rights were required to ensure that mills located on the same stream or river each received enough water to drive their water wheels.

When Nicoll Floyd II served as Brookhaven’s tax collector that same year, he recorded only five industrial enterprises operational in the area—1 cotton mill, 1 paper mill (owned by Snowden), 1 carding mill and 2 fulling mills (i.e. for carding and fulling wool).<sup>31</sup> Perhaps with an eye toward regional development, he also invested in the Huntington-Smithtown Turnpike Company in 1818. This private venture was intended to improve overland access across northeastern Long Island. When they issued stocks to finance the project, Nicoll initially invested. He quickly had second thoughts, however, and tried to sell back his shares, perhaps after realizing that the proposed road would not extend all the way to Mastic.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, no additional information has been located regarding the scale, longevity, or performance of these early industrial and infrastructure ventures, suggesting possible areas for future research.

### *William Floyd’s Westernville Venture*

Another significant new venture that impacted the Floyd family’s fortunes involved William Floyd’s on-going land speculations, including his establishment of a new estate in Oneida County. Although a slight geographical detour, his experiences there, as well as those of his slaves and other dependents, provide a useful point of comparison with

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<sup>29</sup> Lease to James Snowden and Co., April 8, 1813, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 5, Folder 3), WFEA.

<sup>30</sup> Document relating to mill agreement, April 15, 1813, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 24), WFEA.

<sup>31</sup> Tax Records for the First District of New York in the Town of Brookhaven, 1815, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 3, Folder 1), WFEA.

<sup>32</sup> George Phillips to Nicoll Floyd, June 8, 1818 and Oct. 17, 1818; Certificate for shares in the Huntington-Smithtown Turnpike Company, May 15, 1819, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 25), WFEA. Regarding iron forge, see Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report*, 25.

contemporaneous events back on Long Island. Amidst all his wheeling-and-dealing land sales in Oneida, he seemed to have caught frontier fever himself. Moreover, Nicoll II was waiting in the wings to take over the Mastic estate, as his rightful inheritance. Despite being almost seventy years old, William and Joanna became pioneers on the New York frontier. Their fresh start would, however, be made with slave labor.

In 1803, they moved upstate with their daughters and a small group of slaves—including Tom, coachman Harry Howard, Lansom Frank, Pomp and his wife, Phillis, and Jamima—to the site of their new homestead in Westernville.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, the estate's archives offer no hints as to how these individuals may have felt about being uprooted from the familiar settings of Mastic and the Floyd Estate, where they had likely spent their whole lives, and relocated to a completely strange and different place. Given the distance from Long Island to the New York frontier—a journey of over 300 miles—their involuntary dislocation may have resulted in considerable pain and sorrow since, for all practical purposes, they were permanently separated from friends and loved ones.

For the most part, the enormous feat of carving Floyd's new farm out of the forest fell on the shoulders of his bondspeople. During the first year or two, they would have been very busy—clearing land, splitting felled trees into rails and timber, building abodes for the Floyds and themselves, laying out roads, erecting fences, and planting fields, orchards, and kitchen gardens. William and Joanna's new house was probably a welcome change after the rambling old Mastic house. Built in one phase, the new house, with “a center hall, flanked by two rooms on each side on both floors,” had a more integrated design; however, it was not markedly grander or more fashionable. Indeed, to someone not well-versed in architectural design, the new house looks almost identical to the old one, still it would “have been considered ‘high style’ for the rural area.”<sup>34</sup> A second large dwelling, recorded in the 1814 tax records, may have been slave quarters.

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<sup>33</sup> Receipts, May 19, 1803 and May 26, 1803. William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 54), WFEA.

<sup>34</sup> John M. Dickey, *Historic Resource Study of the William Floyd Estate, Mastic Beach* (National Park Service, 1974)—this report was an assessment of the Floyd Estate prior to its proposed acquisition by the National Park Service. <http://www.generalwilliamfloydhouse.org/patriot.htm/>



**Figure 5.2:** William Floyd's House in Westernville, Oneida County, New York, built 1803, photographed circa 1933 for the "Historic American Building Survey" (HABS NY 5513). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

In short order, William Floyd was soon on par with William Cooper, another "aggressive and energetic developer" who famously established Cooper's Town around the same time period. Both men engaged in extensive land speculations and invested in their own properties. They also shared the dubious distinction of being among the first settlers to introduce slavery to these newly opened Indian territories. When William Floyd arrived in Oneida County, he likewise immediately became its largest slaveholder.<sup>35</sup> In Cooper's Town, at the same time, only 2 percent of the 62 white families owned enslaved African Americans, but usually only one or two. Striving to exude an aura of gentility, Cooper outfitted his household with a cook, chamber maid, valet, and butler.<sup>36</sup>

Apparently, however, not everyone was contented in Westernville. Reportedly, "soon after William Floyd arrived in Oneida County with his large entourage of slaves, . . . Harry Howard, the general's coachman, ran away to Canada and finally reached Long Island again."<sup>37</sup> If Harry resented his forced relocation, at least it brought him within a hundred miles of the northern border, beyond which freedom lay. However, his name also

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<sup>35</sup> Of the other 57 slave owners in Oneida County at the time, 40 only owned 1 person; 13 owned 2 or 3; and 4 owned 4 or 5. 1810 Federal Census. See also *New York Slave Records Index*: <https://nyslavery.commons.gc.cuny.edu/slavery-records>.

<sup>36</sup> Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 299-300.

<sup>37</sup> Jan DeAmicis, "Slavery in Oneida County, New York," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 27, no. 2 (2003): 69-134.

appears on later receipts on the Mastic Estate, that date after his master's death, so perhaps he really did find his way back to Mastic. Nancy Strong, Hannah's niece and companion, also disliked the isolation of the new homestead. According to William, the young woman became "so sick of her situation here that she has left us . . . to throw herself on her friends in New York. Poor child has felt like a fish out of water ever since she has been here."<sup>38</sup> As an unmarried woman with no independent means, however, she had a narrow range of life choices and was forced to depend on the beneficence of her friends and family for most of her life. Apart from absconding briefly to the city, she spent many years as the Floyds' loyal caregiver in return for little more than room and board.

By contrast, William Floyd played a leading role in the upstate region's rapid economic development, especially through continued land sales.<sup>39</sup> Undergirded by wealth and an impressive network of influential connections, he quickly gained a similar level of respect and authority in his new community as he and his forbears had taken for granted on Long Island. By 1816, however, he could no longer keep up with the rigors of managing his farm. After getting word that his grandson (and namesake) was frittering his time away in Washington, the patriarch instructed the young man to "arrange your business as soon as you can & come & take the care here until your father is willing to come, then you shall have that estate at Mastic. . . ."<sup>40</sup> Since Nicoll had no interest in leaving Mastic, the younger William remained in Westernville.

Finally, on August 4, 1821, William Floyd passed away at age 87.<sup>41</sup> In his Will, he left the 4,400-acre estate in Mastic house to Nicoll II. Grandson William inherited the Westernville farm, however, he would be forced to share it with his widowed step-grandmother and her daughters and niece. In addition to house rights, the women received some furniture, household implements, regular farm produce, and the two enslaved women, Jamima and Phillis. In addition, the old general finally rewarded Nancy Strong for "the assistance which she gives us in our old age" with a \$1,000 bequest, along with free life-time tenancy in part of the Westernville house.<sup>42</sup> Frictions soon arose between these erstwhile housemates. Within a year, Joanna lodged a formal complaint against young William and Nicoll, claiming they kicked her out of the bedroom that she had used for the past 18 years and refused to provide the promised farm produce (namely, grain, flour, meat,

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<sup>38</sup> William Floyd to Nicoll Floyd, Nov. 4, 1804, Early Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 1), WFEA.

<sup>39</sup> Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report*, 21.

<sup>41</sup> "Inventory of William Floyd, late of Western County of Oneida and the State of New York," "Household Furniture," 1821, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 27), WFEA.

<sup>42</sup> The women received, for example, their choice of bedsteads and bedding, carpets, a "set of tea cups and saucers," a "half dozen silver tablespoons, half dozen teaspoons, also one half of the bed linen and table linen." William Floyd, "Last Will and Testament," signed Sept. 1, 1817; Codicil signed April 1821, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 26), WFEA.

poultry, vegetables, apples, maple sugar, butter, cheese, candles, firewood, wool, and flax).<sup>43</sup> After she died, Nicoll finally reached a settlement with Nancy Strong in 1828, agreeing to pay her \$100 per year in exchange for her house rights.<sup>44</sup>

Although bequeathed to their owner's heirs back on Long Island, some of William Floyd's former bondspeople and their descendants apparently settled in Oneida after slavery ended. As on Long Island, some of them found the transition out of bondage extremely difficult. An early history of Oneida County (self-published by Pomroy Jones in 1851), for example, claimed that an elderly freed woman regretted her freedom and missed living "with massa Floyd . . . [who] provided well for and always treated her kindly." Although claiming to share this tidbit "to show the feelings yet retained for him by the old servant," the author did not address the terrible dilemma this poor woman faced; after devoting her prime years to her master's care and benefit, she had nothing of her own to show for a lifetime of labor and was forced to beg "for the necessaries of life."

In her study of slavery in Oneida County, however, Jan DeAmicis confirmed that Lansom Frank, formerly of Long Island, "remained in the household of William Floyd as a free laborer for some years after emancipation, as most free Black Oneidans resided in white households in the two decades after slavery ended in 1827." By 1840, however, Frank had established his own household. In the 1850 census, DeAmicis identified several additional propertied people named Frank, possibly his kin, who also had acquired small farms. Alanson Frank, for example, lived with his Indian wife and children in an adjacent town; his land was "worth \$500, making him one of the most prosperous of Black Oneidans and eligible to vote."<sup>45</sup> While more analysis is needed for confirmation, this pattern suggests that, at least initially, land may have been more readily accessible to freed persons of color in Oneida than in Long Island.

### *Free African and Indian Communities on Long Island*

By the mid-nineteenth century, people of African American and Indian heritage on Long Island made significant strides in asserting their place within the larger white-dominated society—beginning even before slavery completely ended. Despite having little capital, education, or upward mobility, they strove to improve conditions for themselves and their children. Still without access to land, then the foundation of autonomy and economic security, unpropertied people, especially those coming out of bondage, faced considerable obstacles to advancement.

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<sup>43</sup> Joanna Strong Floyd to Nicoll Floyd, William Floyd, and George Huntington, Dec. 20, 1822, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 2), WFEA.

<sup>44</sup> Settlement with Nancy Strong, June 1, 1828, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 4, Folder 28), WFEA.

<sup>45</sup> Jan DeAmicis, "Slavery in Oneida County, New York," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 27, no. 2 (2003): 69-134.

With so much real estate, the Floyds, by contrast, actually utilized a relatively small portion for cultivation and grazing, even though they continued to employ a similar cohort of workers. Much of their remaining acres were either leased out to small tenant farmers, some pending sale under mortgages (which the Floyds often held), or simply lay fallow, awaiting future development. Increasingly, however, people hoping to improve their situation entered into various sharecropping arrangements with the Floyds, whereby they leased a small piece of land in exchange for paying rent or a portion of whatever they produced to the landlord. Whenever possible, free people of color, including many formerly enslaved, hoped to eventually gain ownership of the patch they worked. Consequently, over time, more of the Floyds' income came in the form of rent and mortgage payments.

As the time of his death in 1821, William Floyd had approximately 58 tenants who owed rent and he held mortgages (or bonds) for another 93 people on Long Island (and possibly elsewhere in New York).<sup>46</sup> The list included quite a few people of color, some of whom were his long-term employees: Cato Negro, Titus Brewster, Hannah Hannibal, Harry Job (described as "runaway"), Ephraim Negro, Jun Negro, Doctor Steve, Old Arch, Sam Job, Robert, Paul Cuff, Jerry Negro, Old Tom, Silas and Sunny Arch, Hannibal, Jim Cuff, and Ben Hamer, and the previously mentioned Unkechaug woman, named Doll (married to Cato).<sup>47</sup> Based on their various financial arrangements, some of the Floyd tenants may have been in the process of trying to buy the land that they had long farmed.

Some freed people on Long Island succeeded over time in scraping together enough money to buy a tiny house plot; others managed to save up for a few acres and established small farms. On eastern Long Island, one of the most important avenues for advancement available to people of color was to pool their meager resources to establish their own mutual aid organizations, schools, churches, and cultural institutions. During this period, for example, numerous early African Methodist Episcopal (AME) congregations were established on Long Island; in some cases, long before they were able to buy land to build a dedicated worship space, they gathered in their members' homes for religious observances.

Segregated by necessity or by choice, they tended to settle in groups, since white landowners often refused to sell land to them, except in less-desirable locations or marginal areas between established villages. By the early nineteenth century, several of the nation's earliest historically black communities in the United States developed on eastern Long Island, including several in the Town of Brookhaven which survive to the present day. In 1815, for example, the local Black populace in Setauket (where Richard Floyd once

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<sup>46</sup> "Inventory of William Floyd, late of Western County of Oneida and the State of New York," 1821, William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 27), WFEA.

<sup>47</sup> "Statements and Accounts Paid," 1759-1800, with appended list of "Bad Debts," William Floyd Papers (Box 1, Folder 27), WFEA.

acquired the first slave) dedicated their own cemetery; subsequently, the Bethel AME Church, was established in 1848, becoming the social and religious center of the Laurel Hill community, where many descendants of mixed Setalcott and African American heritage still reside.<sup>48</sup> Along the southern shore of Brookhaven, another community of free people of color sprang up in the hamlet of Bellport. At its heart was the African Methodist Episcopal Church, now one of the oldest Black churches on Long Island. Founded in 1838 by the Rev. Charles Carle, a former slave and self-taught minister, it stands on land that his former master, Charles Osborn, deeded for that purpose (with the caveat that the land “reverts to the Osborn family if it ever ceases to be used for that purpose”).<sup>49</sup>

In nearby Rocky Point, archaeologist Allison M. McGovern has studied the homesite of Prince and Elizabeth (Betsey) Jessup, which is quite representative of the material culture, domestic arrangements, and economic conditions of free Black families during this era. As McGovern points out, Prince was listed as ‘Negro,’ in the 1800 Federal census, heading a household consisting of eight ‘other free persons’ and “living alongside two other households consisting of free persons of non-white or racially-mixed heritage.”<sup>50</sup> As of 1815, Prince owned six acres, a two-room house, and a barn, valued at \$100. Based on the various tools listed in his probate inventory, McGovern concluded that Prince was likely employed as a woodcutter, carpenter, mariner, or day laborer. In addition to his wages, the family’s subsistence depended on their one cow, some chickens and geese, and whatever they could grow on their land. Since the beach was nearby, they could also fish, hunt for waterfowl, and harvest ample seafood, all for free. For persons of their status at the time, they had thus built a solid foundation. After Prince died in 1816, Betsey and their children remained in the house, but probably saw their living standards at least temporarily decline. Although their homesite was abandoned by 1840, for reasons McGovern could not determine, an African American community endured in Rocky Point into the early twentieth century.

For the Unkechaugs, as historian John Strong has researched in some detail, the first half of the nineteenth century brought a new level of assimilation, which he argues was symbolized by “the transition from wigwams to log cabins.”<sup>51</sup> Increasingly, the inhabitants of the Poospatuck reservation adapted from their traditional modes of subsistence, including hunting, gathering, and swidden agriculture, to more sedentary land uses, including keeping livestock and English-style farming with horses and plows. Likewise,

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<sup>48</sup> Christopher Matthews and Allison Manfra McGovern, “Created Communities: Segregation and the History of Plural Sites on Eastern Long Island,” *Historical Archaeology* 52 (2018): 30-50.

<sup>49</sup> Victor Principe, *Bellport Village and Brookhaven Hamlet* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 97.

<sup>50</sup> Although a man named Prince was enslaved by the Floyds, no evidence has been found to corroborate that this was the same person, particularly as it was a common name. Allison Manfra McGovern, “Rocky Point’s African American Past: A Forgotten History Remembered through Historical Archaeology at the Betsey Prince Site,” *Long Island History Journal* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2011).

<sup>51</sup> Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 162.

their traditional moveable dwellings were replaced by small wooden frame houses, usually with no more than two- or three-room houses, and often located near other family members. Hannah Edwards's cabin, for example, had "a floor of white sand" which she would refresh regularly by carrying sand from the beach.<sup>52</sup>



**Figure 5.3:** Martha Maynes and Son, ca. 1906, Poospatuck, copy of photograph owned by Walter Raynor of Patchogue, New York. Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (Negative #49395G).



**Figure 5.4:** Hannah Ben Edwards by her house in Poospatuck, circa 1885. Courtesy of William Floyd Estate, National Park Service.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 173.

The Unkechaugs also sent their children to school on the reservation, and many continued to be very active in the Poospatuck church. To this day, they continue to celebrate important cultural and religious events, including powwows and the annual June Meeting, which according to former Chief Lone Otter (Donald Treadwell), “celebrated the new birth of spring and the emergence of the green corn, but also marked the death of those Unkechaugs who died during the winter.”<sup>53</sup> To the present day, people of Unkechaug heritage still return to Poospatuck every year for these special occasions.



**Figure 5.5:** “June Meeting at Poospatuck,” June 1912, copy of photograph owned by Walter Raynor of Patchogue, New York. Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (negative # 49395B).



**Figure 5.6:** “Attendees at the June Meeting at Poospatuck,” June 1912, copy of photograph owned by Walter Raynor of Patchogue, New York. Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (negative # 49395C).

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

Dolly and Obadiah Cuffee were among the Unkechaugs who worked intermittently for the Floyds during the early nineteenth century. Along with several of his brothers, Obadiah worked as a farm hand for many years, and in Nicoll's boat-building workshop. In 1835, after Obadiah's first wife died, he married Dolly Brewster, already twice widowed. Since both already had children, they formed a melded family and moved into a small house on the reservation. Together they built a solid homestead, became deeply involved with the church, and several of their grown children eventually settled nearby. After Obadiah died, Dolly struggled financially, but successfully petitioned to receive a federal land bounty as a pension since her previous husband was a veteran.<sup>54</sup>

Importantly, even as Unkechaugs, such as Dolly and Obadiah, adapted to changing conditions, they continued to preserve their cultural traditions and defend their land rights. They also made creative use of local natural resources to provide for their families in sustainable ways. Hence, even while employed, at least part-time, by the Floyds and other propertied white families, they pursued their own subsistence activities as well as a variety of arts and crafts which provided additional sources of income. In addition to working as farmhands or woodcutters, for example, the men continued to hunt and fish. In typical scenes, evoked by these early twentieth-century images, Joe Ward is seen on his boat landing with his nets drying on a reel and Tom Hill is seen spearing eels at the mouth of Poospatuck Creek. Other images reveal their strong family ties and cultural connections with the Shinnecocks and Montauks, among others.



**Figure 5.7:** “Tom Hill Holding Eel Spear Near His Boat Landing: Net Reel, Row Boats and Duck Decoys Nearby,” April 2, 1910, photograph by Dr. Francis Harper. Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (item # BAE GN 4327).

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 171-78.

## Changing Conditions in the Nineteenth Century



**Figure 5.8:** Joe Ward spearing Eels on Poospatuck Creek, February 22, 1910, photograph by Dr. Francis Harper. Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (item # BAE GN 4329).



**Figure 5.9:** Joe Ward with his wife, by their house in Poospatuck, November 14, 1909, photograph by Dr. Francis Harper. Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (item # BAE GN 4334).



**Figure 5.10:** Charles Carl, an Unkechaug farm worker, with horse team, raking hay on the Davis farm, Long Island, circa 1930. Courtesy of the Longwood Public Library.

Many Native people, especially women, became itinerant craftspeople, eking out a livelihood by selling their handicrafts door to door to local residents. Using a variety of readily available natural materials, they wove baskets, eel pots, and other useful containers out of ash and oak splints, made mats and chair seats out sweet flag, cattail, rush, or corn husk, and fashioned brushes and brooms out of birch and hickory twigs. Although their prices were low, these kinds of useful household wares were always in demand, especially those that wore out quickly. With little upfront cost, craftspeople could make reliable earnings. Moreover, some artisans, such as basket makers, found they could charge more for items “specifically designed to cater to the Euro-American market.” By thus continuing ancient craft practices, even in modified forms, Native people retained aspects of their traditional economies, which “might be seen as a form of resistance to the dominant Euro-American economic and social systems.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Nan Wolverton, “‘A Precarious Living’: Basket Making and Related Crafts Among New England Indians,” in *Reinterpreting New England Indians and the Colonial Experience Boston*, ed. Colin Calloway and Neil Salisbury (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2003), 342-44.



**Figure 5.11:** Basket with handle, Shinnecock Reservation, circa 1902, plant fiber and bark (25 x 22 x 29 in.). Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History (item #50-3486). In 1902, curators from the American Museum of Natural History visited the Shinnecock and Unkechaug reservations to collect artifacts representative of their cultures (including Figures 5.11–5.14). For each artifact purchased, they recorded the name of the person who made or owned it and other details relating to its function and manufacture. This basket, which replicates an English form using traditional Native materials and fabrication methods, is typical of handicraft items that Shinnecock and Unkechaug people made specifically for sale to their neighbors on Long Island during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



**Figure 5.12:** Mortar and Pestle, wood and stone, circa 1860s, Shinnecock Reservation. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History (item #50-3489a, b). According to museum records, this mortar and pestle, very similar to earlier Native examples found on Long Island, was “used for pounding herbs, owned by Suki Thompson, who died about 1862, aged 90 years.”



**Figure 5.13:** Stirring Paddle, wood, circa 1902, Shinnecock Reservation, owned by Mrs. Mary Brewer. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History (item #50-3490). According to museum records, Mary Brewer stated that this paddle was “used for stirring a *suppawn* or corn meal mush.”



**Figure 5.14:** Scrub Brush, white oak, circa 1910, Shinnecock Reservation, owned by Mrs. Mary Brewer. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History (item # 50-3494). Inexpensive and utilitarian, hand-made scrub brushes, such as this example, were very useful for washing dishes and other items. Since they wore out and had to be regularly replaced, making and selling them became another reliable source of income for Shinnecock and Unkechaug craftspeople during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



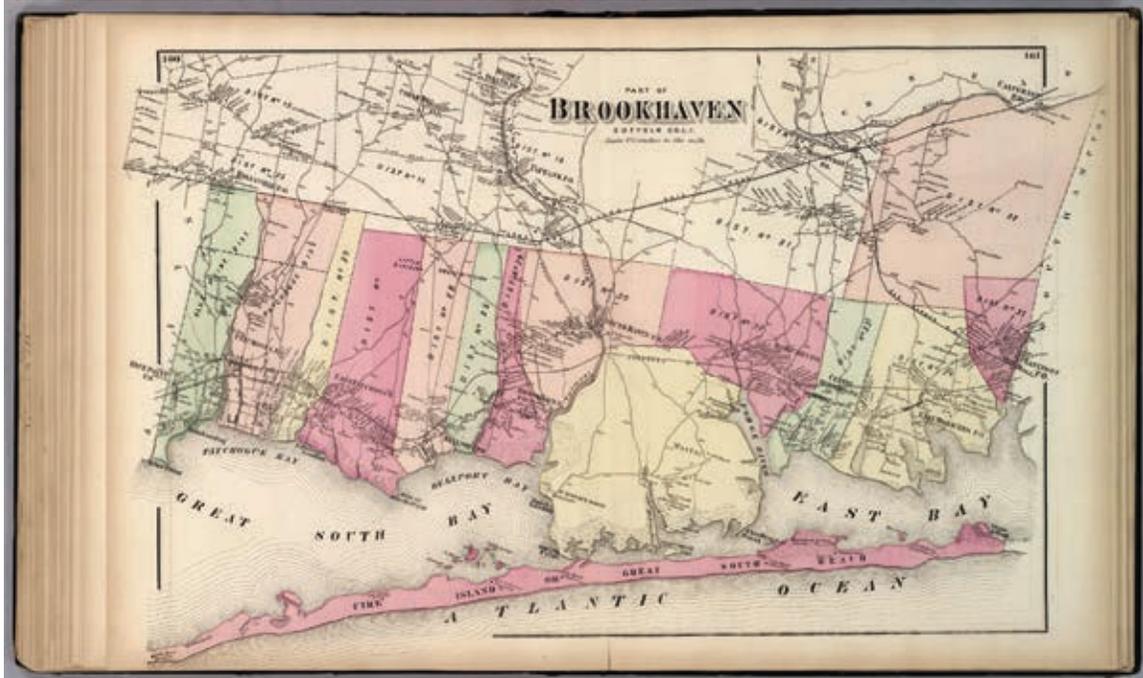
**Figure 5.15:** Eel Trap, reeds and wood, Shinnecock, early twentieth century. Courtesy of the author. Catching eels, in a trap like this one, provided both food and a source of revenue for Native peoples on Long Island.

### *A New Proprietor: John Gelston Floyd*

When Nicoll II retired in 1843, the Mastic estate once again had a new proprietor—namely, his son John Gelston Floyd (1806–1881), a lawyer in upstate New York. Upon returning to Long Island, he took over managing the farm, accompanied by his wife Sarah (nee Kirkland), daughter of a former mayor in Utica, and their six children. Following in his grandfather’s footsteps, John was soon elected to several public office, first as a State Senator (1848-1849) and later as a Congressman, where he served as Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> “Floyd, John Gelston (grandson of William Floyd),” *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* <https://bioguideretro.congress.gov/Home/MemberDetails?memIndex=F000223>.



**Figure 5.16:** Detail from 1873 Map of Brookhaven, F. W. Beers, *Atlas of Long Island, New York* (New York: Beers, Comstock, and Cline, 1873).

Despite that impressive title, John’s heart never really seemed to be in farming and running the estate usually took a backseat to his other commitments. His inattention occasionally caused serious problems. In 1845, for example, neighbor Charles Smith complained to John that “twelve or fifteen of your cattle are in my fields, having free access to my grain stacks and depastured [over-grazed] my clover which I had reserved for feed.” When the situation was not resolved, Smith sued Floyd in the Court of Common Pleas for damages to his “corn, wheat, rye, sprouts, and young growth after planting.”<sup>57</sup> In his defense, John mustered a few friends, as well as some of his own tenants, to testify that local custom had long dictated that cattle could roam freely on common lands and it was up to landowners to build their own fences if needed. Their depositions and the subsequent court proceedings raised such thorny questions as who was responsible for fences, how common lands were defined, and whether cattle could be accurately identified and tracked. Seven years later the contentious case was still under litigation.<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless, during the antebellum years, John Gelston Floyd managed to keep the estate largely in working order. According to the 1850 Federal Census, its estimated value then was \$30,000, including 3,000 acres (of which 700 were “improved” or under

<sup>57</sup> Charles Smith to Nicoll Floyd, Sept. 23, 1845, Nicoll Floyd Papers (Box 2, Folder 18), WFEA.

<sup>58</sup> “In the Supreme Court of the State of New York, Second Circuit: General Term Charles J. Smith, Respondent, against John G. Floyd, Appellant. Papers for the Court on Appeal (New York: Baker, Godwin, and Co., 1852). Papers of John Gelston Floyd, Sr. (Box 1, Folder 24), WFEA.

cultivation), livestock (valued at \$2,800), orchards, and its produce for the past year (including 110 bushels of wheat; 211 bushels of rye; 1,200 bushels of Indian corn; 1,000 bushels of oats; 1,200 pounds of wool; 300 pounds of butter; 150 tons of hay, and small quantities of fruits, potatoes, beans, and peas).<sup>59</sup> Within ten years, the estate increased in value to \$45,000, due in part to improved livestock holdings (valued at \$6,220).<sup>60</sup>

After moving to Mastic, Sarah Gelston Floyd was often homesick and missed her friends and relations back in Utica. Especially challenging, with her husband often in Washington, she was left periodically on her own to juggle their children, house, and farm. She regularly complained about the travails of rural life, especially her difficulties overseeing the farm staff and finding reliable domestic help. At that time, four non-family members remained living within the Floyd household—Martha Smith, Charlotte Smith, Isaac Smith, and Jerod Cuffee. According to the 1850 Census, they were all black, in their early twenties, unmarried, and able to read and write. During this period, the racial and class distinctions between the Floyds and the estate workers remained pronounced. Sarah often complained, for example, about what she perceived as their inadequacies and moral failings (which, of course, may reveal more about her demanding character than theirs). To her aggravation, for example, the cantankerous farm manager ventured out every night and slept late in the mornings, leaving the women without firewood to make breakfast. Judith, the cook, apparently amused herself and riled her employer by whipping up “little nice things for herself from morning to night, and therefore has no time to spend on our meals.” When Judith left or, more likely, was let go shortly thereafter, Sarah schemed to find “a decent white woman” to replace her.<sup>61</sup>

That same year, Rosalie, another single mother in distress, landed at the Floyd Estate. Abandoned by her husband in New York City, she ended up “very poor indeed and could not, with her baby, get work in the city.” After Rosalie’s previous employer vouched that she was “honest, truth telling, and quite smart,” Sarah agreed to hire her. But even having a husband did not guarantee financial security or family stability. In 1851, for example, Caroline Green of Poospatuck humbly implored the Floyds to “allow her husband to cut wood . . . this winter, as thereby she can get the money that he would otherwise waste.”<sup>62</sup> The following year, another local woman, Mrs. Hawkins, was hired to

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<sup>59</sup> United States Federal Census of 1850, Agricultural Returns for 1850 (for the year ending in June), John G. Floyd, Brookhaven, 281, line 16, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>60</sup> United States Federal Census of 1860, Agricultural Returns for John G. Floyd, Brookhaven, 25, line 33, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>61</sup> Letter from Sarah Floyd to John Gelston Floyd, Dec. 12, 1851, Papers of John Gelston Floyd, Sr. (Box 1, Folder 4), WFEA.

<sup>62</sup> Letter from Nicoll Floyd to John Gelston Floyd, Dec. 18, 1851, Papers of John Gelston Floyd, Sr. (Box 1, Folder 4), WFEA.

help cook for the summer help, including ten men who boarded in and eight day labors; in her case, Sarah permitted the young mother “to bring her little girl . . . [provided she] pay for her board in sewing, etc. She is a very neat, nice child.”<sup>63</sup>

During this period, another child was also present on the estate—Ben Edwards, a young Unkechaug boy, who was indentured by his parents to the Floyds; known as “little Ben,” he worked for them during the day, but went home each night. His family ties clearly were strong, since the Floyds complained they “never know where to find him.”<sup>64</sup> In another instance, Martha, a young girl of mixed Unkechaug and African American parentage, was ‘bound’ to the Floyds, until age 18. As compensation, her parents received fifty dollars and she was given a ‘freedom suit’ when her contract ended.<sup>65</sup> Other less fortunate Unkechaug children ended up indentured farther away which meant they could seldom return home. On Long Island, the labor of non-white children continued to be exploited through continued use of indentures, voluntary and involuntary, well into the nineteenth century, persisting even as “public sentiment was turning away from slavery.”<sup>66</sup> Toward the end of his proprietorship in 1881, John Gelston Floyd ended the still occasional practice of indenturing Indian children, finally completing the estate’s transition to a solely wage-based labor force. Since the estate’s records are focused primarily on those who remained on the estate, the fates of those who left and their descendants remain obscure, but hopefully will be the subjects of continued research.

As noted above, those who remained in the Floyds’ employ continued to board on site or reside nearby, including descendants of Unkechaugs and African Americans who intermarried and created strong and enduring kinship ties. As in earlier eras, they continued to participate in community gatherings and social events, like New Year’s Celebrations. Inspired by a fervent wave of evangelicalism sweeping the area, revival meetings were also a popular pastime. In 1852, for example, Sarah, in her inimitable fashion, complained that the “col’ [sic] folks are having ‘tracted meetings’ every night. They gather somewhere to relate their experiences; my women, of course, go, quite to my annoyance. Sometimes, I confess, if they seemed really benefitted, I should not mind, . . . yet all this is better than to meet for drinking and carousing.”<sup>67</sup> As her tone implies, the Floyds had a rather condescending attitude toward people of color, including their employees and close neighbors. At the same time, the Floyds retained an aura of dutiful paternalism that seems today almost feudal; they took pride, for example, in retaining

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<sup>63</sup> Letter from Sarah Floyd to John Gelston Floyd, May 4 and July 26, 1852, Papers of John Gelston Floyd, Sr. (Box 1, Folder 4), WFEA.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Strong, *Unkechaug Indians*, 183.

<sup>65</sup> Gonzalez, “From Unkechaug To Poosepatuck.”

<sup>66</sup> Herndon and Sekatau, “Colonizing the Children,” 154.

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Sarah Floyd to John Gelston Floyd, Feb. 12, 1852, Papers of John Gelston Floyd Sr. (Box 1, Folder 4), WFEA.

elderly individuals on the estate payroll long after their useful working days ended. In another gesture of *noblesse oblige*, Sarah took great satisfaction from teaching Sunday school for the children of the Poospatuck church.<sup>68</sup>

In 1857, John G. Floyd suffered a stroke, which abruptly ended his legal career and political service. When the Civil War began, his health deteriorated further, due in part to the stress of having two sons away serving in the Union Army, one of whom lost his life. Consequently, conditions on the estate deteriorated. By 1870, the estate was still assessed at \$30,000, including over 4,000 acres (but only 500 remained under cultivation) plus total produce of \$4,500, but the value of the livestock had fallen by almost half.<sup>69</sup> Despite his acquisition of 1,000 additional acres, the total property assessment remained unchanged from twenty years earlier. Based on these telling figures, the estate appears to have been in a steady decline.

Not surprisingly, the next generation completed the estate's eventual shift from a productive agricultural enterprise to a recreational summer retreat.<sup>70</sup> When John Gelston Floyd died in 1881, his property was divided among his five children. The Mastic house and 687 acres were inherited by John Gelston Floyd, Jr. By that time, most of the land was leased out for hunting and family members used the house only occasionally as a summer residence.

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<sup>68</sup> Author's interview with Mary Laura Lamont, National Park Service, Sept. 2019.

<sup>69</sup> United States Federal Census of 1870, Agricultural Returns for 1850 (for the year ending in June), John G. Floyd, Brookhaven, 17, line 26, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>70</sup> For more on late nineteenth-century period, see Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report* and the *Cultural Landscapes Inventory* (National Park Service, 2006) and Cultural Resource Study for the William Floyd Estate" (National Park Service, 1998).



**Figure 5.17:** “Beach Party Set in Motion,” 1856, by Katherine Floyd Dana, pencil sketch. Courtesy of William Floyd Estate, National Park Service. As a young girl, Katherine Floyd enjoyed sketching scenes, such of this one, of her friends and family enjoying various recreational activities at their summer home. For more on this period, see Mary Laura Lamont, “Land, Sea, and Sky: The Artwork of Old Mastic, 1791-1975,” *Long Island History Journal* 24, no. 2 (2015).

Some of the Unkechaug men who were skilled hunters became successful private guides for visiting hunting parties. But as the estate’s labor needs shrank, most of the former estate workers presumably had to find employment elsewhere. Instead, the Floyds became accustomed to hiring young Irish women, who often entered domestic service prior to marriage.<sup>71</sup> By that time, the population of Brookhaven expanded to include many European newcomers, especially from Ireland, Germany, and later Poland—whose children and grandchildren eventually acquired their own farms and helped expand the island’s agricultural diversity by cultivating potatoes and cabbages. This gradual demographic shift was evident on the Mastic estate as well.

As its years as an operating farm came to an end, the character of the Floyd Estate significantly changed as it ceased to be the center of productive activities. The fields and woodlands which had absorbed so much labor and generated so much affluence went into abeyance, shifting from a working landscape to a pastoral and recreational landscape. The house and yard no long hummed with the women’s spinning, churning, or candle making. But as we retrace the paths trod by the workers and the Floyds, revisit the dwelling spaces where they once coexisted, and try to understand the unique contexts of their lives, we can begin to reanimate the historical landscape with memories of their past endeavors.

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<sup>71</sup> Rachel M. McNair and Margaret M. Mulrooney, eds., *Fleeing the Famine: North America and Irish Refugees, 1845-1851* (New York: Prager, 2003); Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-1930* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 86-87.



**Fig. 5.18:** "Good Hunting," 1916, by Arthur B. Frost, illustration in *Scribner's*. Courtesy of William Floyd Estate, National Park Service, National Park Service. By the early twentieth century, as this image conveys, the Floyd Estate was no longer a working farm but still a popular destination for recreational hunters.

# EPILOGUE

As the Mastic estate slowly transitioned into a peaceful retreat for later generations of the Floyd family, its associations with William Floyd's social prominence and fame remained undiminished. By then, his place as a "Founding Father" was already firmly cemented in the hearts and minds of his countrymen. Even prior to his death, he was revered as one of four surviving Signers—the last living leaders of the Revolutionary generation. In 1821, for example, William Floyd, although too frail to attend, was the honoree at the July 4th celebrations for Oneida County, which were held at a local tavern. The event culminated with an oration, reprinted in the *Long Island Star* only two days after his death, which offered the elder statesman "unfeigned thanks for the share you had in establishing the liberties of your country and . . . [declaring] our national independence" and hailed his war-time sacrifices, as when he even reacted to his ruined estate with the composure and "conscious pride of a patriot who had done his duty."<sup>1</sup> Published with the speech was William Floyd's brief reply, graciously thanking his fellow citizens for recalling those who "laid the foundation for that extensive happiness and prosperity which the inhabitants of the United States enjoy." He concluded by expressing his profound hope that "the same happiness and prosperity may be enjoyed by generations yet unborn."<sup>2</sup>

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, even as the Founders were increasingly reified, many white Northerners began to re-write history, downplaying the complex role of slavery in their region, disavowing those who were forced into bondage and minimizing their contributions to its prosperity. Given his family history, the Honorable John Gelston Floyd, then proprietor of the Floyd Estate, seems to have developed an especially acute case of historical amnesia about the realities of slavery in the North. In May 1852, for example, he gave a revealing speech before the House of Representatives, entitled "Slavery and the Compromise Questions." At the time, a growing sectional rift was developing over the issue of whether slavery should be permitted to expand into western territories of the United States.

"As slavery never existed in the Northern States but to a very limited extent," Floyd brazenly claimed, "we derive our most correct notions on the subject, whether in a moral or political view, from distinguished writers in the South. . . who have had abundant

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<sup>1</sup> Address to William Floyd from citizens of Utica, July 4, 1821, *Oneida Observer*; reprinted in *Long Island Star*, Aug. 2, 1821.

<sup>2</sup> Reply to July 4th Address by William Floyd, 1821, *Oneida Observer*; reprinted in *Long Island Star*, Aug. 2, 1821.

opportunities to consider the institution in all its bearings.”<sup>3</sup> Insisting that slavery was a southern phenomenon (and that the only Northerners *not* against it were merchants or politicians with business interests there), he claimed that “the Almighty has established in the frosts and snows and chilling winds of the North, . . . making slave labor unprofitable, and, greatest of all temporal blessings, making white labor respectable; and in the burning heat and reeking miasmas of the South, making white labor reluctant, if not unprofitable.”

The rest of the congressman’s speech devolved into a diatribe denouncing any proposed compromises that might extend slavery into the West. His opposition stemmed, however, not out of empathy or concern about those still in bondage; to the contrary, he feared that white Americans would be harmed by exposure to the “ignorant, debased semi-brutish slaves of the South.” After implying that black people were closer to livestock than to whites, he alluded to the 3/5 provision of the Constitution (which gave the South greater representation by virtue of the slave population) as validating white supremacy: “Is there a Northern man here who will vote to reduce three of his free, white, intelligent constituents to the level . . . of five miserable negro slaves in the new territory? . . . [No] political contingency . . . shall induce me to give a vote which shall have the effect to increase representation based upon slave property.”<sup>4</sup> His first instinct was thus to reject any policy that allowed African Americans, even in bondage, to encroach on the superior rights of white workingmen. Rather ironically, given his views on the matter, it was precisely the *failure* to compromise—after repeated attempts during the antebellum years to accommodate sectional differences to preserve the tenuous peace—that ignited the Civil War and ultimately destroyed institutionalized slavery in the United States.

Back on the Floyd Estate, the archives reveal that, all politics aside, a gradual blossoming of nostalgia about the faithful, carefree “Negro servants” of the past crept into family lore, alongside continued notes of paternalism and persistent, overtly negative stereotypes about their neighbors who were people of color. As Janice Hodson points out, such evidence brings “to light the Floyds’ sometimes contradictory and often paternalistic attitudes” toward the working people on their estate.<sup>5</sup> Here again, the Floyds were not alone. Many upper-class white Northerners similarly sought to whitewash the degree to

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<sup>3</sup> Hon. John Gelston Floyd, “The Slavery and Compromise Questions,” May 19, 1852 speech, *Congressional Record* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Globe Office, 1852), 1, 9-10 in Papers of John Gelston Floyd, Sr. and Family, 1820-1917 (Box 1, Folder 28), WFEA.

<sup>4</sup> John G. Floyd, “The Slavery and Compromise Questions.”

<sup>5</sup> Hodson, *William Floyd Estate Historic Furnishings Report*, 7, 28.

which the region, much less their own forbears, had any complicity in, or profited from slavery—either directly as slave masters or, indirectly, through economic ties with the slave trade or the plantation complex.<sup>6</sup>

On Long Island, however, the promulgation of this sanitized version of the past—that ignored or minimized the harsh realities of slavery over two hundred years—had exceedingly pernicious effects; namely, both the attempted erasure of people held in bondage from public memory (despite their ubiquitous, but often obscured, presence in the archives) and the reprehensible tendency to treat their living descendants as outsiders who had no history there and did not belong. On the other side of that equation, as popular stories and hagiographic accounts of the American Revolution began to be written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, important men, such as William Floyd and other Founding Fathers, loomed ever larger in the origin narrative of the United States. Held up as paragons of virtue, their complicated, often conflicted roles also as slave owners were largely normalized and rationalized—surely, they were just “men of their time.” Yet many of their contemporaries *did* free the people they held in bondage on moral grounds well before the law required.

Although less well-known than George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, or Benjamin Franklin, William Floyd was firmly ensconced—during his lifetime no less—within the pantheon of “Founding Fathers,” and, even more exclusively, as a signer of the Declaration of Independence. To this day, he continues to be celebrated as one of Long Island’s most illustrious personages; so much so, that a library, parkway, and several schools are named after him.

Yet the many less-sung people, who lived and worked on the Floyd Estate, also contributed to its history and, by extension, to Long Island’s rich heritage. Until relatively recently, such ordinary and marginalized people were seldom seen as “makers of history” whose lives or perspectives were worthy of attention. While the focus of this report is historical, the staff of Floyd Estate should thus be encouraged to foster greater engagement with the surrounding community. Most importantly, eastern Long Island today is still home to descendant communities of people formerly affiliated with the Floyd Estate. Today, the Unkechaug Nation is recognized by New York State and is based on the Poospatuck Reservation.<sup>7</sup> They remain committed to sustaining their unique cultural identity and living traditions, for example, through on-going language revival efforts and wampum manufacture.

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<sup>6</sup> Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, Joel Lang, Anne Farrow, and Jenifer Frank, *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery* (New York: Random House, 2007); Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York: Liveright, 2016); Marc Howard Ross, *Slavery in the North: Forgetting History and Recovering Memory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Seth M. Low and Dana H. Taplin, “Final Report Ethnographic Overview and Assessment: Fire Island National Seashore” (2006) <http://www.npshistory.com/publications/fiis/ea.pdf>.

## Epilogue

As the extensive footnotes in this report emphasize, over the last two decades, scholars have sought to re-assess some of the messier and mythologized aspects of American history. In the process, they have put forth extensive evidence that proves how pervasive, integral, and vital the contributions of African Americans, Native Americans, and other people of color (whether free, indentured, or enslaved) have been in America, from the colonial period to today. While much remains to be learned, the remarkable history of the Floyd Estate—with its myriad connections to critical events, significant historical themes, and, most importantly, the life stories of its diverse inhabitants—offers a unique interpretive opportunity to offer its visitors a more accurate, compelling, and inclusive understanding of the past.

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# APPENDIX A

## Site Map



### EXISTING CONDITIONS THE WILLIAM FLOYD ESTATE / FIRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE

#### LEGEND

- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Park Boundary      | Estate Grounds        |
| Public Access Road | Hedge                 |
| Unpaved Road/Trail | Field                 |
| Boardwalk          | Tidal Wetlands        |
| Parking            | Woodlands             |
| Archeological Site | Buildings             |
| The Great Ditch    | Water                 |
|                    | Floyd Family Cemetery |

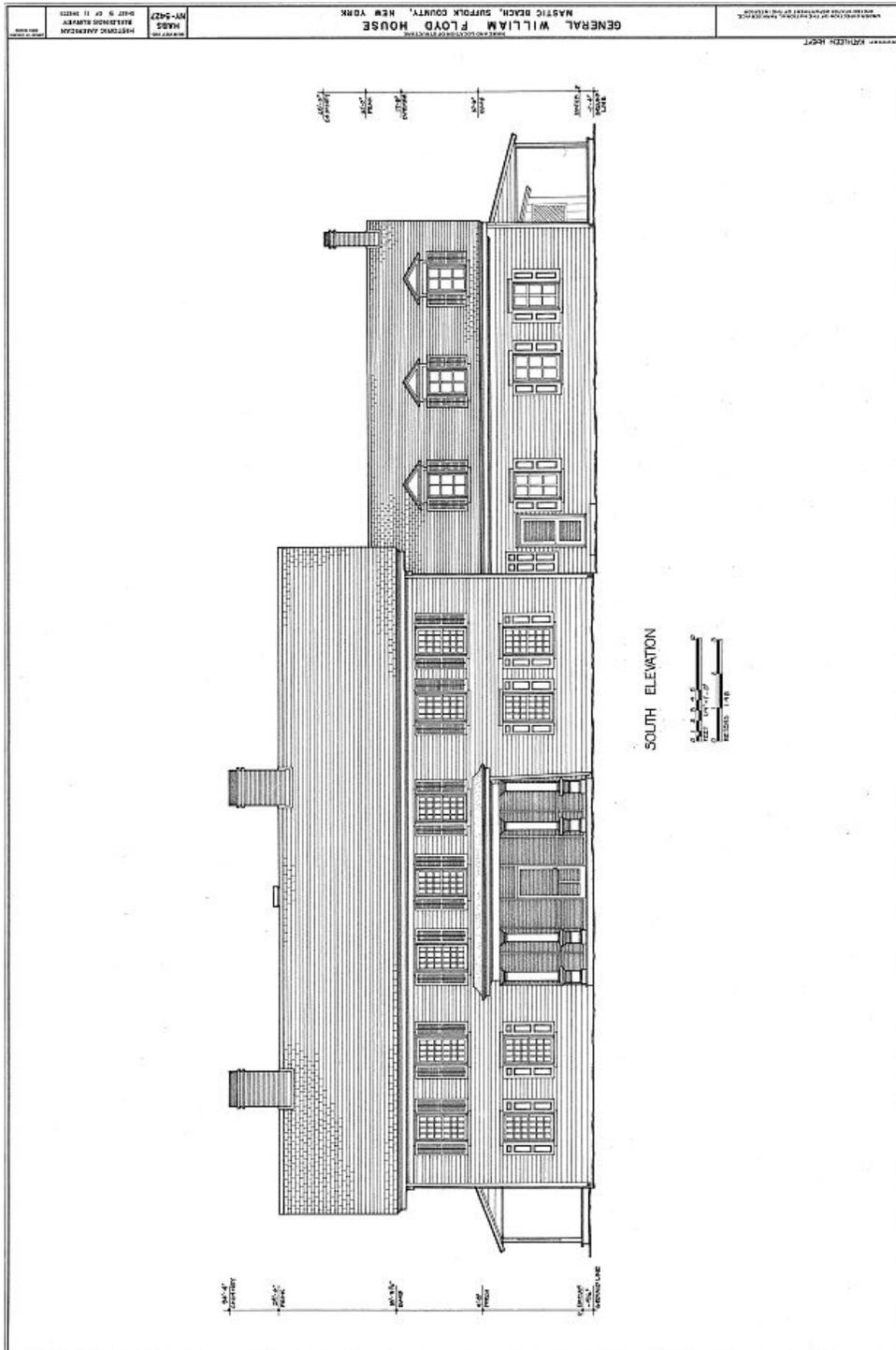




# APPENDIX B

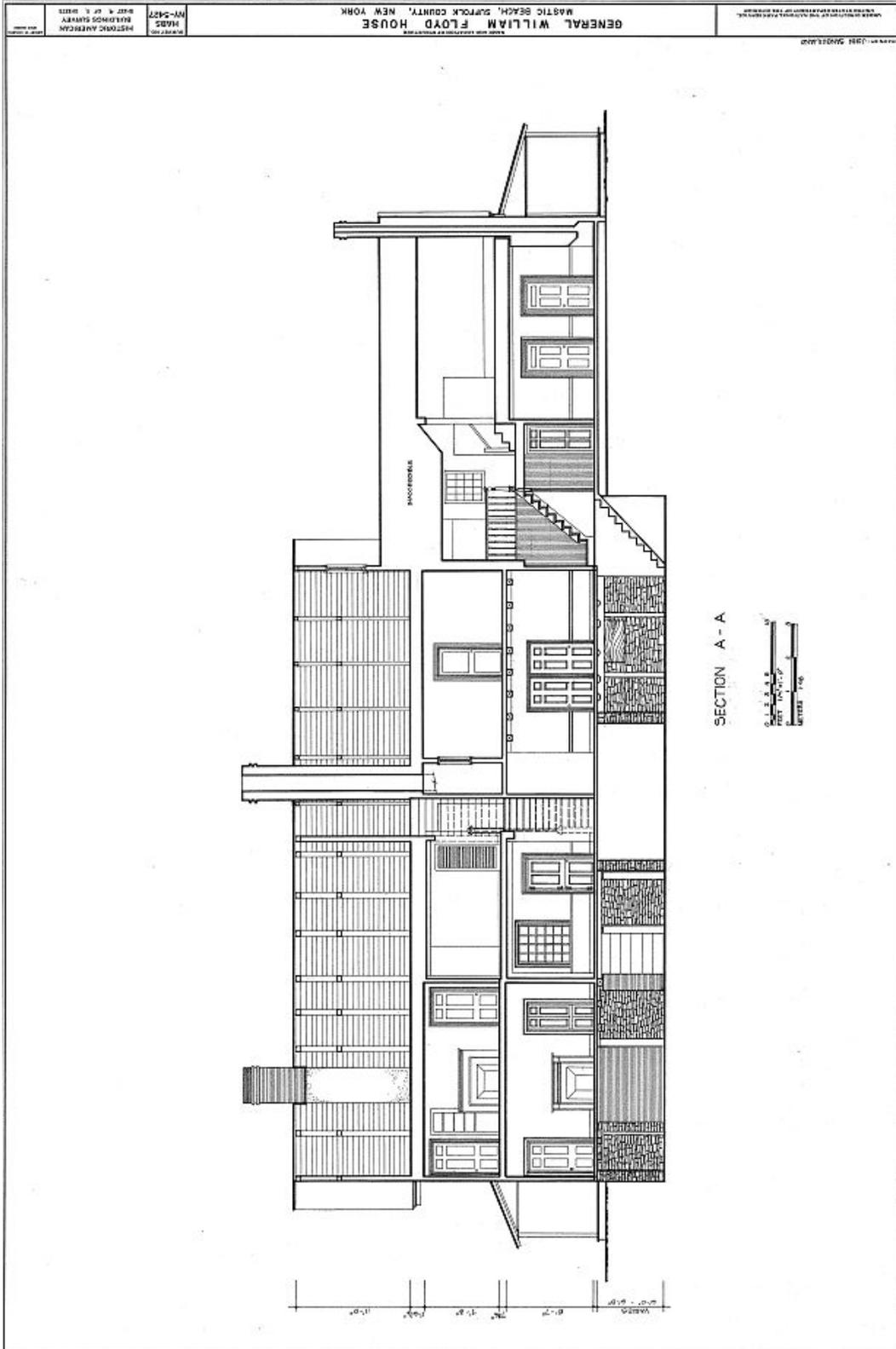
## Measured Drawings of Main House from Historic American Buildings Survey

### Appendix B.1

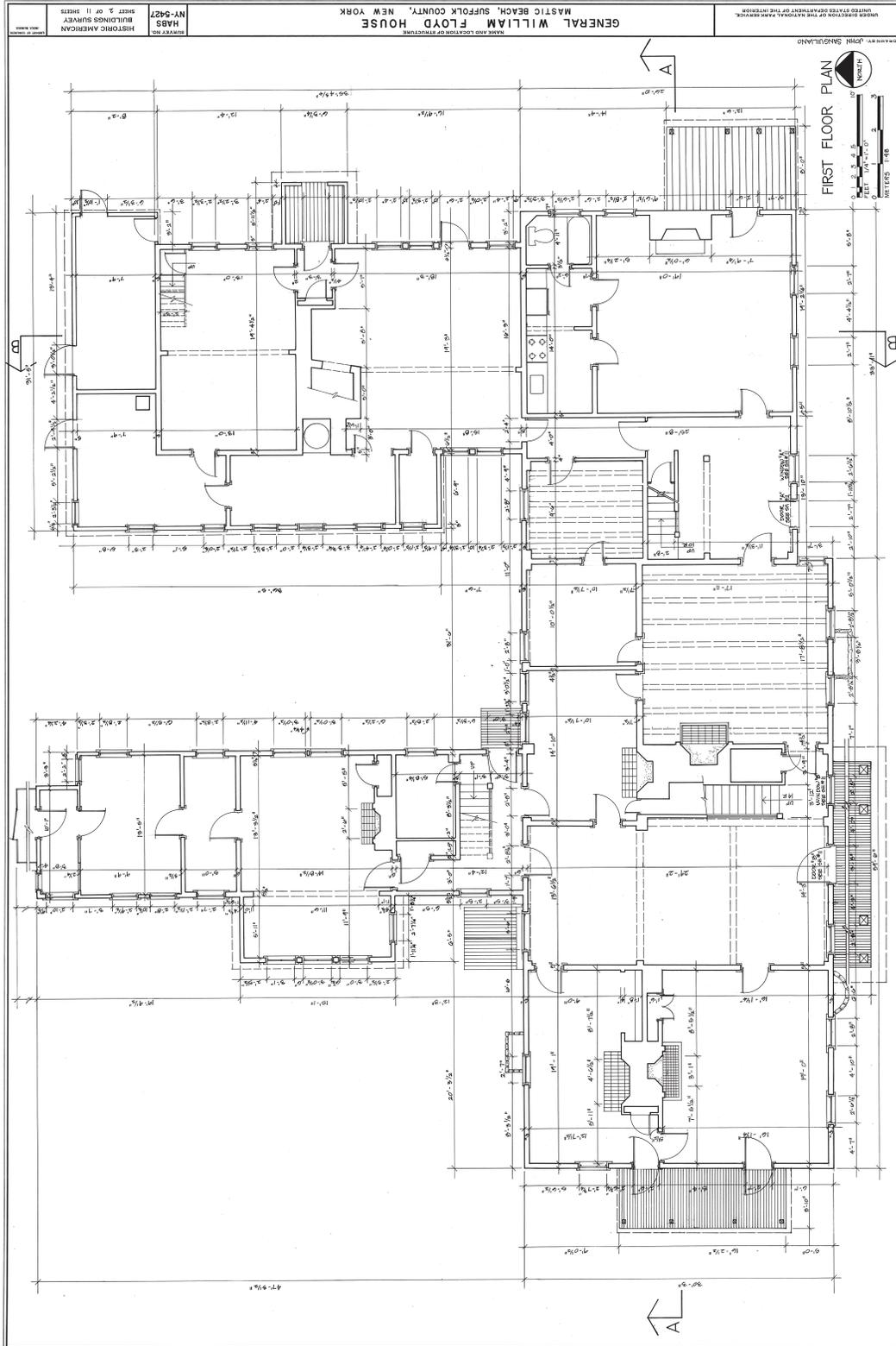




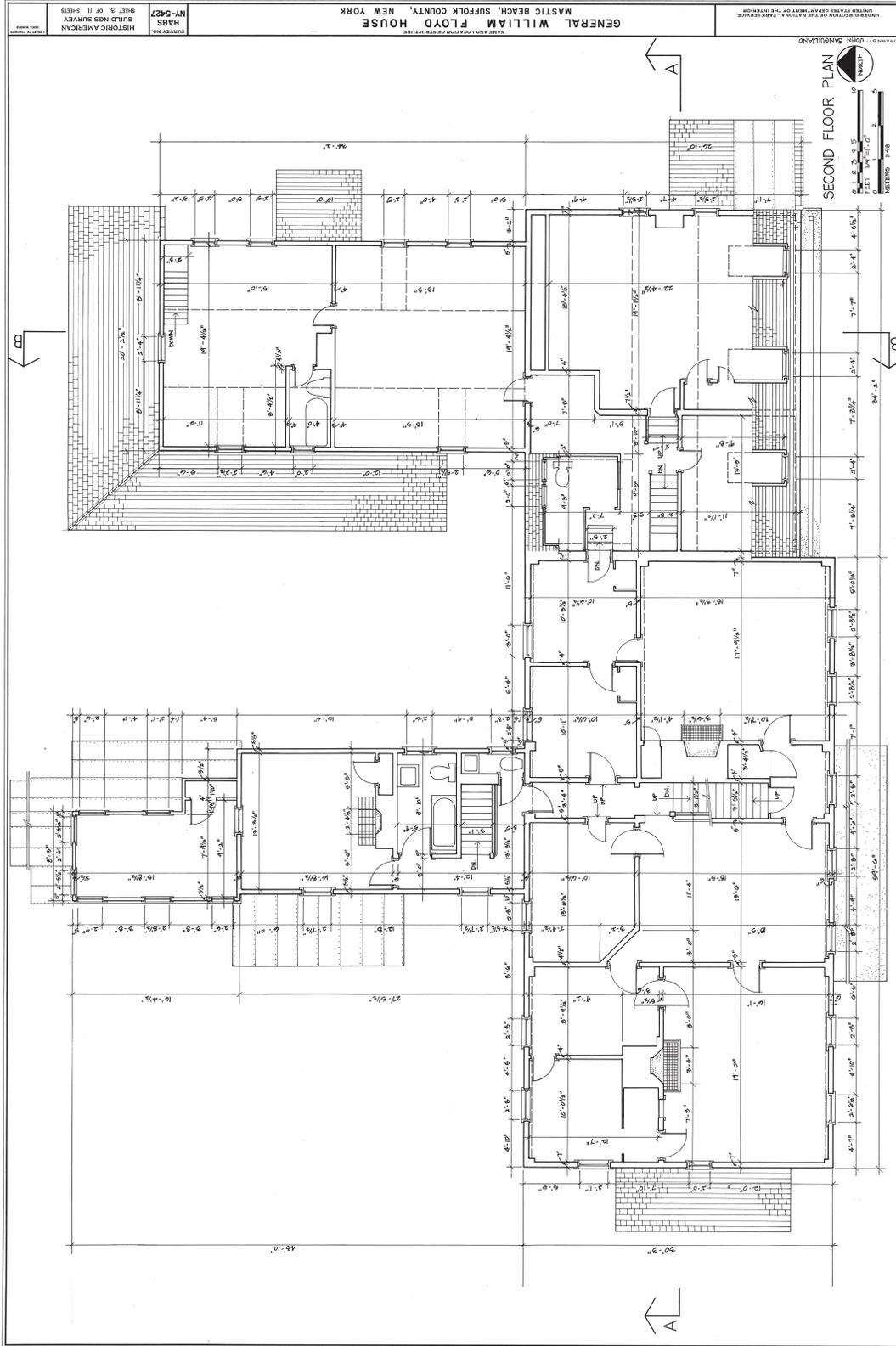
# Appendix B.3

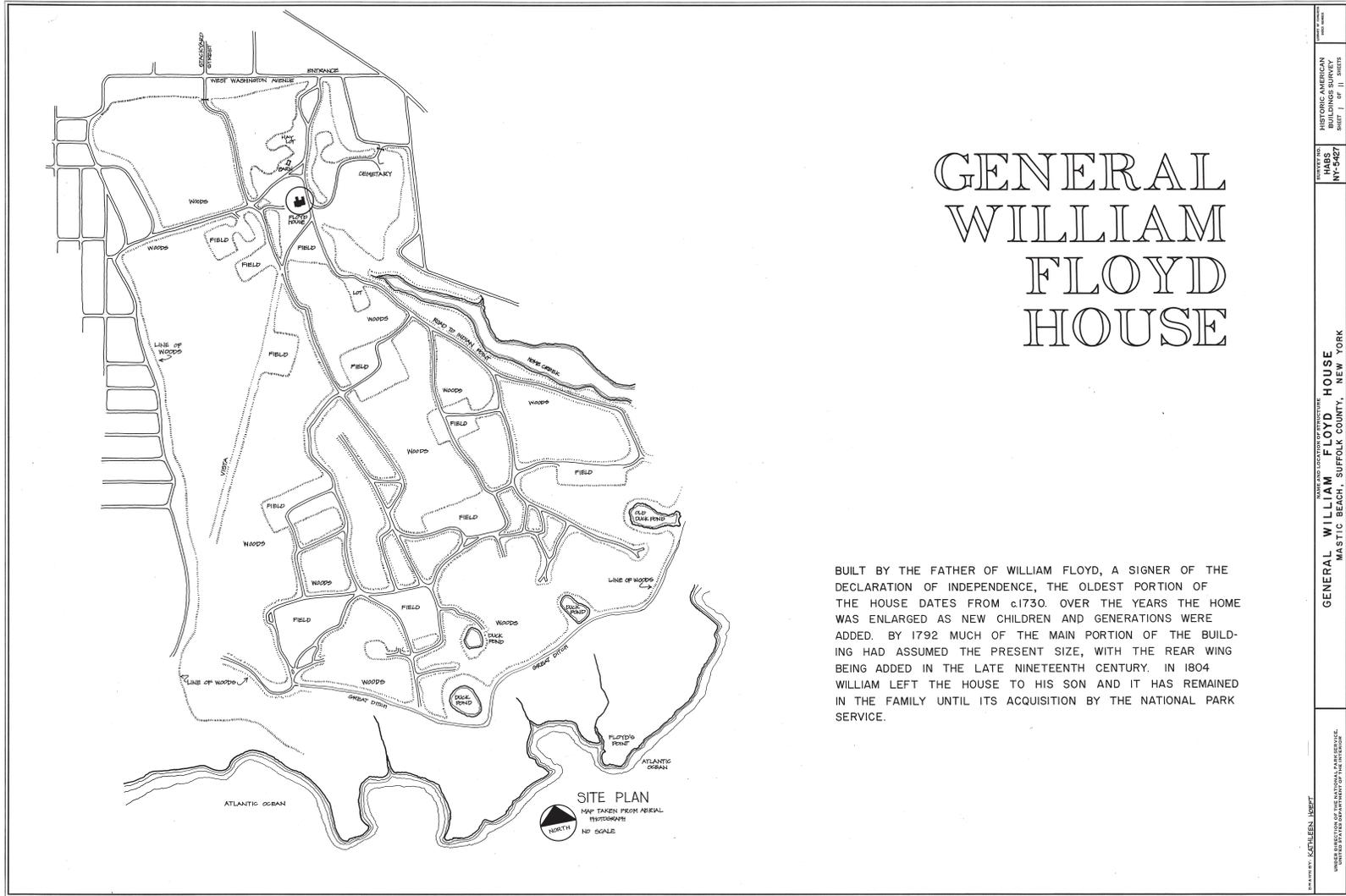


Appendix B.4



# Appendix B.5





# GENERAL WILLIAM FLOYD HOUSE

BUILT BY THE FATHER OF WILLIAM FLOYD, A SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, THE OLDEST PORTION OF THE HOUSE DATES FROM c.1730. OVER THE YEARS THE HOME WAS ENLARGED AS NEW CHILDREN AND GENERATIONS WERE ADDED. BY 1792 MUCH OF THE MAIN PORTION OF THE BUILDING HAD ASSUMED THE PRESENT SIZE, WITH THE REAR WING BEING ADDED IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY. IN 1804 WILLIAM LEFT THE HOUSE TO HIS SON AND IT HAS REMAINED IN THE FAMILY UNTIL ITS ACQUISITION BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.

HISTORIC AMERICAN ARCHIVES  
 MAPS NY-5427  
 GENERAL WILLIAM FLOYD HOUSE  
 11111 WASHINGTON ROAD  
 MASTIC BEACH, SUFFOLK COUNTY, NEW YORK  
 DRAWN BY KATHLEEN ROSE

## Appendix B.6

# APPENDIX C

## Documented Enslaved Africans on Floyd Estate

\* Chart includes only documented persons; if known, individual name, ages, and genders included.

Date	Number	Owner	Locale	Source	Names if known; Comments
1672	1 (known)	Richard Floyd I	Setauket	Town Records	Antony
1757	uncertain	Nicoll Floyd I	Brookhaven	Will	Bequeathed “all my negro or Indian servants” on his 2 farms to sons; a “negro girl” to each of 6 daughters.
1776	12	William Floyd	Suffolk County	Census	10 male & female, above age 16; 2 under age 16
	12	Richard Floyd (cousin)	Suffolk County	Census	5 male & female, above age 16; 7 under age 16
1784	7	Richard III	Brookhaven	Will	Jude, Zipporah, Kate, Kate’s child (unnamed), Tice (boy) transferred to other owners during Revolution.
1790	14	William Floyd	Brookhaven	Federal Census	plus 5 “other free persons” (non-white)
	0	Nicoll Floyd II	Brookhaven	Federal Census	
1800	10	William Floyd	Brookhaven	Federal Census	Others Free, except Indians [check]
	5	Nicoll Floyd II	Brookhaven	Federal Census	plus 9 “other free persons” (non-white)
1810	6	William Floyd	Oneida	Federal Census; Will	Per the census, also 4 free blacks. Possible names: Phillis, Jamima, Pomp, Bill, Tom, Henry Howard, Lansom Frank. Names are derived from later 19th century accounts, so may not be accurate.
	5	Nicoll Floyd II	Brookhaven	Federal Census	
1820	6	William Floyd	Oneida	Federal Census	

## APPENDIX D

### Slave Births on Floyd Estate registered pursuant to Gradual Abolition Act

Date	Name	Owner
1799, Oct. 3	Rachel	William Floyd
1800, Nov. 28	Lew	Nicoll Floyd
1801, Nov. 23	Hector	William Floyd
1802, July 4	Jim	Nicoll Floyd
1804, Nov. 24	Charles	Nicoll Floyd
1805, Aug. 17	Pomp	Nicoll Floyd
1806, June 22	Isaac	Nicoll Floyd
1807, Nov. 29	Lil	Nicoll Floyd
1809, March 5	Ben	Nicoll Floyd
1810, June 15	James	Nicoll Floyd
1812, Oct. 3	Richard	Nicoll Floyd
1814, March 1	Sarah	Nicoll Floyd
1814, Nov. 29	James	Nicoll Floyd
1818, Jan. 21	Sam	Nicoll Floyd
1818, Apr. 15	Elijah	Nicoll Floyd
1819, June 21	Charity Ann	Nicoll Floyd
1822, Apr. 1	Philip	Nicoll Floyd
1825, Sept. 12	Cyrus	Nicoll Floyd

\* Brookhaven Town Records indicate an overall total of 106 children were registered between 1799 and 1834.