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Staten Island and Its People

A HISTORY

1609-1929

By
William
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for the Borough of Richmond; Research Associate, American
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"Staten Island Names, Ye Olde Names and
Nicknames," "The Conference or
Billopp House," Etc.*

VOLUME I

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shingle-sided building in what is now West New Brighton. The negroes gathered from all parts of the Island, many singing a song composed for the event, of which the following verse has been preserved by Morris II:47:

De Lo'd am good to de culled folks,
 Shout, glory, hallelujah!
 He makes us free wid de mighty strokes,
 Shout, glory, hallelujah!
 He bresses all dat He t'inks deserves
 Freedom from marsa what he serves;
 So, brudder, exercise yo' nerves—
 Shout, glory, hallelujah!

Speeches were made by prominent officials; and the committee in charge entertained with dignity and respect the officials and leading citizens of the county. Scores of old masters mingled in the crowds of happy negroes, some of whom did not retrace their steps across the wooded hills of the Island until after midnight.

In a future chapter the subject of fraternal organizations will be covered, but at this point it is in chronological order to record the first communication on the evening of July 6, 1825, of Richmond Lodge, No. 384, Free and Accepted Masons, Benjamin Wood, W. M., Augustus S. Lawrence, S. W., John S. Westervelt, J. W., James H. Ward, secretary, and Richard Harcourt, treasurer. The following candidates were proposed: John N. Tucker, Henry Barger, Henry H. Hibberton, John T. Merrell, Daniel Simonson, Denyse Denyse, Jr., Robert Hazard, Benjamin Dodge, Leonard Parkinson, Daniel Clawson, Augustus Proalle, Stephen Kittletas, and John Clawson. It will be noted that many of these men were not of the old Staten Island families; and the opposition among such to Masonry had, in fact, defeated previous attempts to organize a lodge. The feeling against the Masons had at times been intense.

In 1829, the farm of Stephen Martino, on that part of the old Manor Road, now unfortunately called Brielle Avenue, containing between ninety and one hundred acres, was purchased for about \$3,000 for the establishment of a county poor-house. This farm still remains the center of the present farm colony. For many years it was economically managed, Dr. Crowell Mundy for instance having "attended the paupers and furnished the medicines for the same" for \$19.50 per annum. In 1832 the annual requisition for maintenance of the institution was \$800; the number supported was 38; and salaries of keeper and other officials was \$499.33.

In 1832, New York was visited by Asiatic cholera; over 3,000 people died between July and October. Staten Island did not escape as the mute testimony of some gravestones shows. In consequence of fear of the disease spreading from the Quarantine hospitals, a cholera hospital

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Doctor Richard Henderson has agreed to attend the Poor in the Poor House for the Year from this date for Six Dollars.

John Dubois has Bid three Pounds three Shillings for the Poor house lot from this time Untill the first of December next.

March 14th, 1808. The Poor House Lot Being Rented to Michael Con for the sum of Eleven Dollars and Twenty seven Cents payable the first of May next, Rented Untill the first of December next for Pastureing. \$11.27 Received the sum of.

May 26, 1812. Bernard Egbert has agreed to Give Six Dollars for the Poor house Untill the first of December next.

November 2nd, 1818. It is agreed by and between the Supervisors of the County of Richmond and Lawrence Crips that he Lawrence Crips Shall and will make all the Fence between his Land and the poor house lot and keep said fence in repair for Ten Years from this date for and in Consideration of the Sum of five Dollars which he doth hereby acknowledge that he has received. In witness whereof he has herewith set his hand in presence of Richard Conner.

LAWRENCE CRIPS.

May 14th, 1821. The Supervisors of Richmond County has agreed with Abraham Auten that he shall pay for the poor house lot for 1819 \$2.00, for 1820 \$2.00, and for 1821 four Dollars. Total Six Dollars to be paid in November next.

Settled the above account of Abraham Auten for Six Dollars Dec. 23, 1822.

RICHARD CONNER, Clk.

Following an act of Legislature authorizing a tax not exceeding \$4,000 to provide for the establishment of a county poorhouse, the farm of Stephen Martino, containing about a hundred acres was bought in 1829. This was on the old Manor Road and is still in use under the name of Farm Colony.

The keepers in the early years of this institution were Isaac Britton, 1830-32; Randolph Drake, 1833; Japhet Alston, 1834-36; John B. Wood, 1837-43; Joseph Sharrett, 1844-47; Stephen Crocheron, 1848. Dr. Crowell Mundy was the county physician, 1830-49. During this period the cost of maintaining the institution ranged from \$800 to \$2,000. Dr. Mundy received \$50 a year, the keeper and other officials in 1832, \$499.33, gradually increased in later years. The number of paupers increased from twenty-six in 1832 to eighty in 1846. A cholera hospital was established in 1832, a new house built of stone gathered on the farm was built by David Moore, and in 1837 an addition containing cells for the insane was added which were improved in 1844. The proceeds of the farm in 1837 was said to cover the cost of clothing and provisions for the inmates.

Going back a hundred years into the past it is gratifying to observe the circumspection with which the supervisors of 1829 proceeded to established the present Farm Colony. There was first published in the "Richmond Republican" of March 7, 1829, the following:

NOTICE.

The citizens of Richmond County are requested to take notice, that meetings will be held in the several towns of this county, on the 9th of March next, at 3 o'clock P. M. for the purpose of receiving and acting on the report of a General Committee—called to

take into consideration the situation of the poor of the said county. The meetings will be held at the following places, viz: at Egbert Haughwout's Inn in Northfield; at John Laforge's in Castleton, at Aaron Simonson's in Westfield and at the County Hall in Southfield. Dated Richmond, Feb. 23, 1829. By Order of the Committee,

L. R. MARSH, Sec'ry.

By October 20, 1829, Richard Conner Clk by order of the "bord" of supervisors had prepared an advertisement which has been preserved, still showing the holes in the four corners of the sheet by which it was attached to some public place. An illustration of the poorhouse to be built painted in water color is at the top of the paper; then follows:

MECHANICS TAKE NOTICE.

The supervisors having purchased the Farm late of Stephen Martino deceased for the Poor, of Richmond County; and are desirous of having an addition built to the house for their better accommodation; of 26 feet in length by 18½ feet in width; 12 feet Posts; with a partition through it; a chimney and fireplace of good Brick; and to be completely furnished above with Bed rooms; The Roof to be on a level with the present house and to be covered with good 3 feet Cedar Shingels; The Building to be Inclosed with good White Pine Boards; The Floors to be of good 1½ Inch Pitch Pine Plank; with one door and two Windows in front and one in the rear below, and two small Windows in the end above. With good White Oak sleepers, and the other timber to be of lasting Wood, which can be cut on the Farm, also a good Stone foundation under the Whole.

The Supervisors will meet on Monday next at 2 P. M. at the Richmond County Hall, in Richmond Town; and will be ready to receive proposals from Undertakers for the Building of the same.

October 26: Adjourned until Thursday next one o'clock P. M.

N. B. a suitable person wanted to superintend the Farm &c.

& the building Walls, to be filled in with Brick or Clay. The Whole to be completed in a workmanlike manner.

The next step was a contract dated November 10, 1829, with F. B. Allen to construct the building for \$350. This contract, which also has been preserved, is even more explicit in its specifications. The final step was the following:

Articles of Agreement indented made the first day of January in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and thirty — Between the Supervisors of the County of Richmond for the time being of the one part and Isaac Britton of the town of Southfield in said County cordswainer of the other part.

The said Isaac Britton for the Consideration of four shillings and six pence each a week doth covenant promise and agree, to and with the said Supervisors and their successors by these presents, in manner following, that is to say that the said Isaac Britton shall and will keep the Poor of said County in the Poor House in the town of Northfield from the date hereof Untill the second Tuesday of April next and he is to have the profit of such labour as such poor is able to do. He the said Isaac Britton is during said term to find them with good sufficient victuals such as meat soups and vegetables; and he is to be there daily and every day and is to cause order to be in said house, and any that will not behave orderly is to be put by themselves and locked up untill they will promise to be orderly; and the said Isaac Britton is to see that the house and the poor