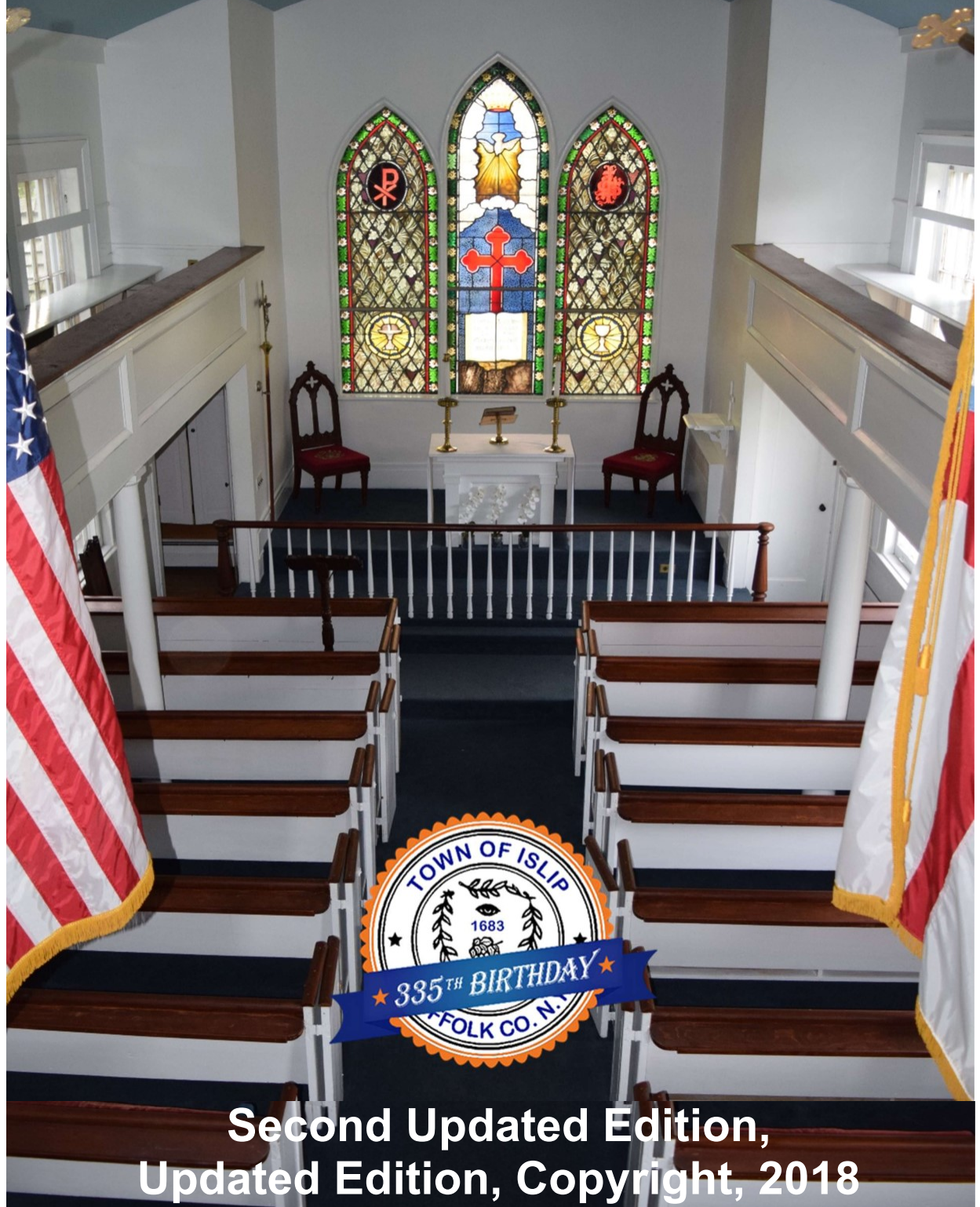


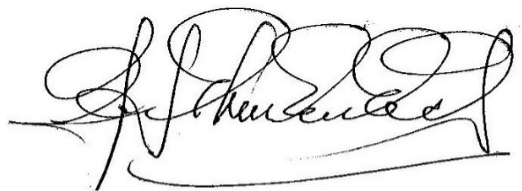
St. John's Episcopal Church – Islip's Mother of Churches



Second Updated Edition,
Updated Edition, Copyright, 2018

Forward

Three hundred and thirty-five years ago 26-year-old William Nicoll met with “Winnaquaheagh, Sachem of Connetquot” and purchased the first parcel of land in what would be Islip Town and names it “Islip Grange.” He would build a home on that land in 1701 and had church services celebrated for his family, tenants and servants in that home. His grandson, the third proprietor, also named William, 82 years later would have a chapel built on the approximate center of the Nicoll holdings. That small brown wood-shingled church on the northside of Montauk Highway in Oakdale is still a place of worship, today is often overlooked by those who rush by, but that building has been a silent witness to the growth of the Town of Islip. In its churchyard rest members of the families that built the Town. It is also a reminder and remainder of the colonial era estates, and the impact of the Nicoll and Ludlow families on the early history of the Town. For over two hundred years that family would care not only for the church but also for their beloved Islip. The story of this church and those who loved her is also the story of the Town of Islip. This second edition is very much a work in progress as more and more details are discovered every day. This is not a polished and finished work as it is hoped that this will spur interest by those who read it to know more about this survivor and the impact it had on local, state and national history. I want to thank two members of the Town Clerk’s staff who have helped to get this effort to where it is now – Shirleyne Millien St Pierre and Chris Albergo. Olga Murray, Islip Town Clerk who has encouraged the effort to gain more insight into the early history of the Town and find the records that shed light on the origins of the Town as well as St. John’s. Angie Carpenter, the Islip Town Supervisor by appointing me to the office of Town Historian has given me the opportunity to explore the history of the town I love and this wonderful relic that I have lived around the corner from for over 46 years. Maryanne Almes and the members of the Oakdale Historical Society have supported the effort and the church with programs, work and providing a new fence to enclose the churchyard. Finally, special thanks to Denise Conte who has lovingly cared and worked to not only restore St. John’s but also to gain community support and to support the community by maintaining St. John’s as a place of mission and love in service to God.



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noted taken by George J. Munkenbeck



The Nicoll Patents and Islip Grange

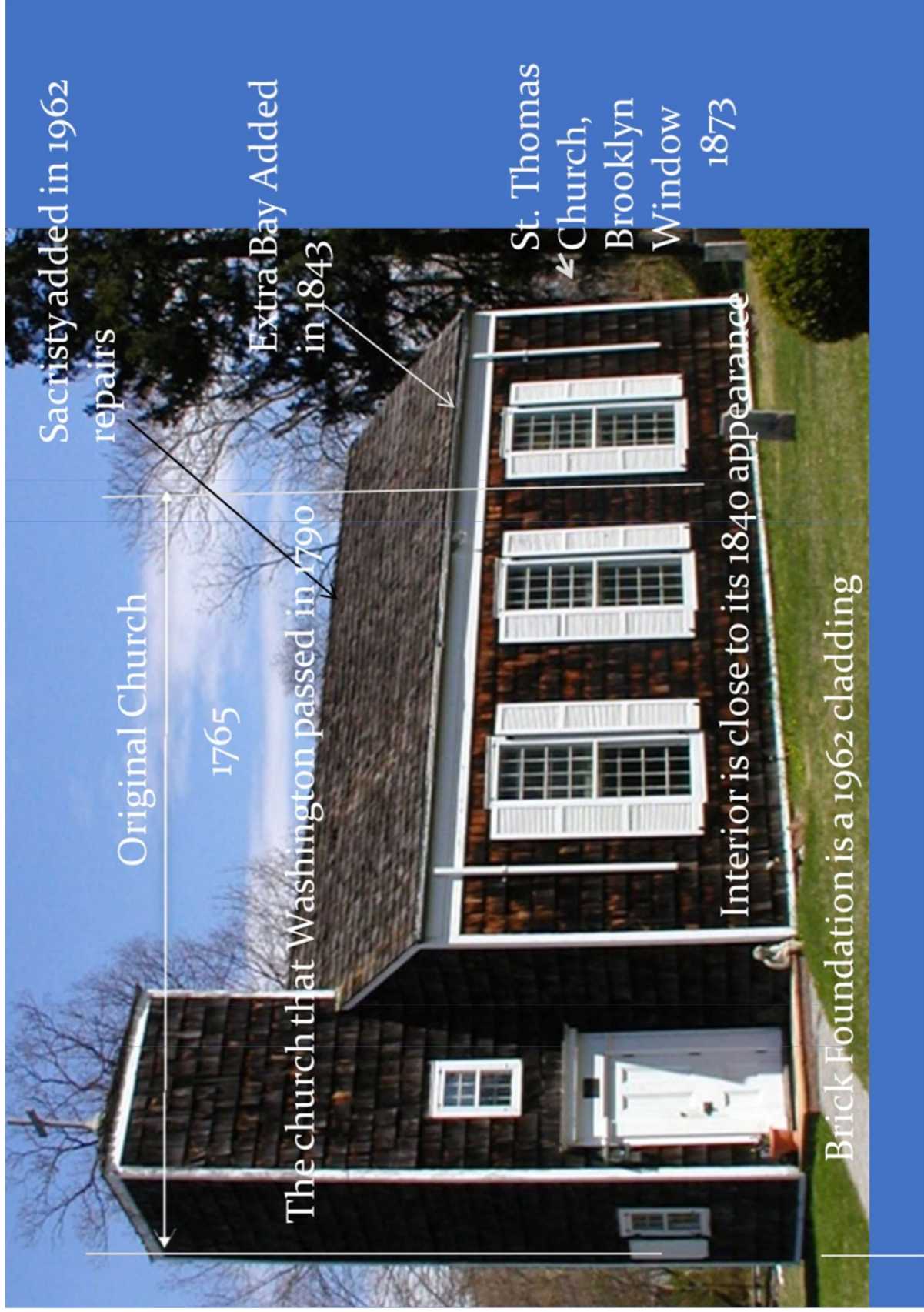


The boundaries of the Town of Islip are defined by royal patents issued to five families. These royal patents granted not only the land after purchase from the native tribes, but in the case of Islip, they allowed the grantees to treat the property as a landed estate as in England. Not true manors, as some of the other grants by the Crown on Long Island were, but they might as well have been due to their isolation from the government in New York City. The original

grantees were William Nicoll whose name for his holdings was Islip Grange¹, now shortened to Islip, Andrew Gibb, Thomas and Richard Willets, Stephen Van Cortlandt and John Mowbray. These patents prevented the Towns of Smithtown, Huntington and Brookhaven from exercising their right to govern parts of Islip and the force of the royal patents² was such that the action, giving the right to form a government made by the Colonial General Assembly in 1710 fell flat.³ Since most of the land was owned by the patentees, and in fact, William Nicoll had most of the property (of the approximately 72,000 acres that comprise Islip, the Nicoll family held patent to over 50,000 acres), and the additional fact that the small number of voters decided that there was little business to be conducted, no town offices were even elected until 1720, when the 31 freeholders (male property owners and therefore voters) in the town got together in April and elected men to the offices. It is not a big surprise that four of the five had the last names Nicoll, Willet and Mowbray! Since that time the Town Board has met regularly, and minutes have been kept. Islip remained a hard to reach and mainly underdeveloped place for much of the 18th Century due to those large land holdings controlled by the patentee families and lack of good roads. Most people who lived here worked in maritime pursuits on the Great South Bay as well as some subsistence farming to supplement the bounty from the waterways. It was the waterways and the ocean that were the connection to the outside world in the early days of the Town. Until 1735, there was no road connecting the small population centers of the southern portion of Islip Town⁴. The relative isolation of Islip Town and its scattered population which would impede the establishment of congregations and thus houses of worship.

St. John's Church Gets a Building

Some sources claim that the congregation traces its roots to a divine service held at Islip Grange possibly as early as 1698. We know that William Nicoll (The first patentee) supported Anglican church construction as early as 1717 because it is noted that he contributed to a building fund for a church in Huntington.⁵ Ironically, until St. Johns was built there was no church building of any denomination within the five royal patents that made up what is the present-day Islip Town. This was not due to a lack of



Sacristy added in 1962
repairs

Original Church

1765

Extra Bay Added
in 1843

The church that Washington passed in 1790

St. Thomas
Church,
Brooklyn
Window
1873

Interior is close to its 1840 appearance

Brick Foundation is a 1962 cladding

religious fervor but rather the relative isolation and scattered nature of settlement in the area that would become the Town of Islip.⁶

William Nicoll (1715-1780), the third Patentee of Islip Grange), grandson of the original patentee, chose a site for a chapel on the north side of the South Road at the approximate center of his lands. In the church's historic structure report the writer noted that, "Historically, Charlotte Church (the original name for St. John's) is an anomaly. It did not result from the mandate of a governing body that proscribed its construction for the benefit of the settlement, nor was it the product of an active body of parishioners that agitated for a church of their own. It was constructed essentially as a private chapel by a wealthy and isolated land owner whose proprietary responsibilities extended over his immediate family, his servants and slaves, as well as tenant farmers and neighbors. Given the remoteness of South Shore settlements in and near Islip Grange in the mid- to late 18th century, it seems logical that William Nicoll, the largest landowner and a member of the Anglican Church, should build a church that was suitable for the needs of his extended "family." In this design, it is likely that William's wife Joanna⁷, whose devout and charitable life was sadly cut short at the age of forty-nine, may have had an influence. It may also be that his stepfather, the Reverend Dr. Samuel Johnson D.D., who was the first minister of St. John's Episcopal Church in Stratford, Connecticut, inspired William to "bring the gospel" to his remote Long Island estate after he left his stepfather's household in the mid-18th century."⁸

The church was originally given the name of Charlotte Church in honor of Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, wife of King George the Third of Great Britain, Ireland and Hanover. She sponsored the church and made a gift of a Bible and silver communion set to them. While this was an Anglican (Church of England) and now Protestant Episcopal Church, it has always been a house of prayer for all seeking to worship God, and until the mid-Nineteenth Century the only church building within the boundaries of the Town of Islip.

The original building can still be made out. It was a two-bay (meaning windows) wood-shingled building with a fully integrated bell tower on the front facade and a gable roof. This form of construction is a transitional type that represents an earlier stage of church design that rapidly evolved into what we see today with the steeple integrated into the front facade and not as an almost separate structure. Only Setauket's Caroline Church "combines the antiquity and uniqueness of form embodied by Charlotte Church."

Today, it is a three-bay, one-story church with the original square bell tower/vestibule and a modern sacristy extension added on the north side. All the modern changes in siding and roofing (machine made cedar shingles replacing hand split shakes), door and window repairs does not hide the early colonial style of this church. The early church framing especially that which is still visible in the attic, preserves the integrity of its 18th Century construction period.⁹ We do know that there was an "enlargement" of the structure just after the Revolution, another enlargement in 1843, more work done in the 1870's, a restoration in the mid-Twentieth Century and additional work done to restore the structure in the recent past.

Just How Old is St. John's?

The November 15, 1896 issue of the Brooklyn Eagle stated that St. John's goes back to 1698, but that may be the date of a service held on the Nicoll land, Islip Grange, but most of the sources agree on 1765 as a construction date. Other sources give construction dates of 1766, 1769 and "ten years before the Revolution." William Nicoll's wife's¹⁰ obituary of 1772 notes that there was still no church building, so it is also possible that it was built in 1772-1775. From most references and other evidence, the date of 1765 seems to be the most reliable. No matter which date is correct, it was definitely built before the Revolution and is the first church building in Islip Town and the second oldest in Suffolk County. The 1757 census shows that the number of adult males (that would probably also be close to the eligible voters) was less than 100 in Islip Town, and that population was spread thinly across the patentee's lands. It is no wonder that the date is somewhat uncertain as there was no easy way to gather or pass news with no newspaper in Islip Town.

Supporting the 1765 date is an entry in the journal of the Reverend Samuel Seabury¹¹ commenting on a "journey to Islip about forty miles from Jamaica, preached there . . ." He goes on to note ". . . and on one occasion baptized four white children, one negro adult, and five negro children." It is believed that the altar in the church today is the same one on which those first services were performed. At that time the services were held occasionally, only when an Anglican clergyman was in the area. Both the Caroline Church in Setauket and the Charlotte Church in Islip were a single station and had one clergyman was assigned to cover both. The first rector to this charge was the Reverend James Greateon. Services here in Islip were dependent on that cleric riding down from Setauket to Islip on horseback, so services were intermittent here. In fairness to Reverend Greateon, it is also important to note that there was a settlement at Setauket and a home for him there, while here at Islip the chapel was in the center of the Nicoll holdings and few structures or people were nearby, the closest "civilization" was more than likely the grist mill that still stands in Connetquot State Park Preserve.

Revolution then a New Nation and Name

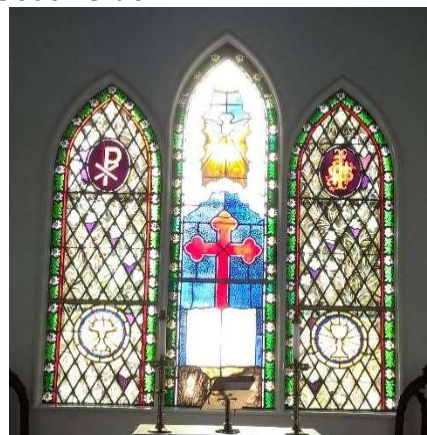
During the Revolution life in Islip Town it was under military occupation by the British and the little shingled church was used as a military outpost. When the British finally evacuated New York in 1783, St. John's was left in bad shape. The damage caused by the troops and the separation from Britain caused the parishioners to vote to change the name of the church to St. John's.¹² This was done under the leadership of the Reverend Thomas Lambert who had charge of St. John's at that time. During his tenure the building was refurbished and "enlarged." It would be this version of the building that George Washington saw during his Long Island tour. The first entry in the marriage record for 1783 combined with the previously noted entry of Reverend Seabury gives us a glimpse into the population of Islip Grange at that time. It recorded a marriage ceremony held for "York, a Black servant to William Nicoll, Esq. and Elizabeth, a free Indian Woman." Islip's population was small but ethnically mixed. In a detailed letter written by Islip Town Supervisor Nathaniel Conklin on January 11, 1798, he also noted this, "There are in this Town about one hundred and twenty dwelling [dwelling] houses twenty-five of which

Indians, Mustees¹³ and free Negros live in.”¹⁴ Reverend Lambert in a January 15, 1784, entry recorded that a “Charity Sermon” was preached “for the Poor of Islip & other distressed Persons Not belonging to that Township. The sum of 3 pounds 9 pence was collected.” Many in the Town were left in dire straits. Among those who were hard hit was the Nicoll family. Basically, land rich and cash poor, William (4th Proprietor, 1756-1795) had to apply to the legislature for an act for relief from the terms of his father’s will that required the holdings to be inherited and kept as a whole. This was done and part of what was sold was the area that now comprises the hamlets of Sayville and Bayport.

After the sales, the Nicoll family holdings were still approximately 40,000 acres.¹⁵ St. John’s was admitted to the Diocese of New York of the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1788.¹⁶ The area was still sparsely settled and Supervisor Conklin’s letter mentions St. John’s, “There is but one house in this town built for public worship and that a small one, and that stands on the northside of the South Country Road, and belongs to the Episcopalians, but they have no settled minister, no stated preaching in it.”¹⁷

In 1816, Bishop Seabury asked to have his son Charles assigned to the churches in Seatauket and Islip. He would hold that position until 1842. During his tenure the area was visited by Methodist circuit riders and a class meeting was formed in Oakdale at the home of Jonas Newton. That 1833 effort was followed by the erection of a 20 by 40-foot church in Sayville in 1847. The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Sayville was an attractive alternative for worship as a circuit rider from Patchogue regularly held services there rather than the continuing intermittent services at St. John’s. From that time on other denominations constructed houses of worship in the eastern portion of Islip Town. Reverend D. F. M. Johnson was assigned in 1843 and under his leadership the church was once again enlarged but the original lines of the structure were preserved. The gallery and rear balcony have been preserved to this day where tradition has it that “the servants, free Blacks. slaves, Native Americans and children worshiped.” At that time Islip was still quite rural and was still difficult to reach from the west except by boat or by taking a train to Ronkonkoma or other stations on what we now call the Long Island Rail Road main line and then taking a stage or walk to the bay. It was in 1866 that a group of wealthy men saw the recreational and vacation opportunities in the relatively undeveloped Town of Islip. The period following the Civil War saw the development of the Southside Sportsman’s Club (now, Connetquot River State Park Preserve). Prior to this time, hunting and fishing parties were not uncommon, but the remoteness of Islip made them an effort. It was the construction of the South Side

Railroad of Long Island to Islip Town in 1868, that made the area accessible and thus the era of the great estates known as the First Gold Coast was born. An 1873 pamphlet issued by the railroad to build ridership by getting people to buy property and build homes along the right of way of the South Side Railroad, described Oakdale as follows, “(46 ¼ miles [measured from Bushwick, Brooklyn, the west end of the line]; 2 hours 29 minutes. Four trains each way daily.) has a small, scattered population, and boasts a school, post office and one of the oldest Episcopal churches (St. John’s) on Long



Island. Just south of the track may be seen the handsome residence of William H. Ludlow, Esq., ex-Assemblyman for this district.”¹⁸



During the renovations of 1873, a stained-glass window was installed over the altar (east) end of the church building. The window was a gift from St. Thomas Church in Brooklyn. This beautiful window contains two medallions both of medieval origin. One of these is an ancient Chi-Rho and the other contains a HIS symbol. The lower left-hand medallion shows a footed paten under the Eucharistic bread. This style of paten is a very old type once used by the Anglican church. In the back of the church is a Jardine organ that is said to be the oldest functioning organ in Suffolk County. The little church was rededicated on October 21, 1874 as St. John's of Oakdale. While church services remained infrequent, we do know that a service was held in the church to honor Admiral George Dewey, USN (the Commander at the Battle of Manilla Bay in 1898),

during his visit after the end of the Spanish-American War to his brother-in-law Nicoll Ludlow's home.

Once again, the little chapel resumed its quiet role as a place of intermittent worship and a churchyard for the community. Nicoll Ludlow and his brother Edwin, who both grew up in the shadow of the little church, left sums of money in their wills to maintain the church and the Ludlow plot. By 1928, St. John's was a "wayside chapel." In 1936, St. John's was under the charge of the Reverend A. W. Carrington, who was rector of Emmanuel Church in Great River and today, the rector of St. Mark's Church in Islip has St. John's in his care. Through the centuries the little chapel has had its ups and downs but while the Nicoll/Ludlow family is gone a small group of dedicated people keep it alive and active. In the latter part of the 20th century a sacristy was added to the northside of the structure

which cannot be seen from the road.



Today, the little church is still the only Christian church in Oakdale and while it may appear that it has little relevance to the modern community that surrounds it, the little brown church still hosts community outreach, Bible studies and worship services. As with all who age, family must care for them and in this case, it is fitting that the Mother of Islip Churches can look to her offspring and a growing group of residents for assistance – St.

Paul's Episcopal Church in Patchogue, St. Mark's Church in Islip, St. Ann's Episcopal Church in Sayville, Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Great River and the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Sayville (now, the United Methodist Church of Sayville). They are a continuation of a tradition stretching back to the 17th Century in Islip and they serve God in their communities on the foundations laid by little St. John's. Not a bad record for any

servant of God and best of all St. John's is still serving. Each week more information reveals more of the story of this survivor and Mother of Churches.



St. John's Episcopal Churchyard, Oakdale, New York

The one-acre St. John's Churchyard is a unique glimpse into burial customs and funerary art ranging from the time of the early Republic to the modern era. It is a churchyard that bridges the time from the burial place to the modern garden cemetery, all in a space of one-acre. This cemetery is also a repository of Islip Town's history as well as our nation's. These stones and church records are the only documentation that many of these people ever existed as the death records of the Town only go back to 1880. These historic and sacred grounds honor the memory of a soldier of the Revolution, a speaker of the New York State Assembly, a U. S. Navy Rear Admiral, the last owner to inherit the Islip Grange patent, and a Civil War hero of the Battle of Opequon Creek (Third Winchester).

What is the Difference Between a Burial Ground, Churchyard and a Cemetery?

Today, we use these words interchangeably but there is a difference and these terms describe differences in the attitude toward death as the centuries progressed. In Medieval times burials were temporary in that a person's remains would be removed to allow reuse of the grave space. The bones of those that had been buried earlier would be gathered up and either buried elsewhere or placed in an ossuary. These customs were like those of Biblical times or for that matter modern New Orleans. Only the wealthy could afford

elaborate tombs, burial in a church crypt (a group of tombs in a room under the church) or in tombs under the floor of a church. After the reformation there was a change in custom and graves slowly became the permanent property of the person buried there. This was the case in Britain and with the emphasis on the individual and the worth of one man in American culture, this was even stronger here. During times of war or pestilence mass burials were often done in an area out of the town with trenches cut and bodies stacked, but even during those times there were often detailed records made of the burials.

From earliest times there were separate grounds for different ethnic and religious denominations. Here in Islip Town we have separate cemeteries as well as cemeteries with separate sections set aside for specific religious groups. One example of this is the cemetery at Central Islip State Hospital that has a portion set aside for Jewish burials. Also, cemeteries have sections that are consecrated and often outside the cemetery are 'unconsecrated' grounds for the burial of those considered to be outside the community or those who may have been in the community but died in some way that was not in accordance with community rules or social values. Here at St. John's there does appear to have been burials on land that now is part of residential property to the east. There are newspaper mentions of British soldiers being buried in the churchyard, but no evidence to support that has been found to date.

The subtle differences in meaning referred to in the beginning of this section about the attitude toward death is evident in St. John's Churchyard. The 18th century saw an evangelical wave sweep Protestant denominations and as part of that, death came to be seen not as an end, but rather as a time of sleep and rest awaiting resurrection at Christ's second coming. Burial grounds were places that bodies were buried, and the gravestones simply stated, "Here Lies," "Buried," or "In Memory," with a date of death. Often there were skulls and bones carved on the headstone, basically to mark a place where a body was disposed of and perhaps some verse warning those who came by to live a good life. Often, these public burial grounds were poorly laid out and there was little maintenance. Family plots were on the farm or the yard behind the home and if the family was resident there was maintenance but as the years went on many of these were forgotten or abandoned. Today, we have several of these plots now under Town of Islip maintenance and care. Many churchyards were similar, especially if the congregation moved on, so basically these places were best described as disposal areas. In addition, the location of the grave also makes a difference as those nearest the church building were maintained but those further away were left to overgrow. This happened at St. John's until a dedicated handful of people who adopted this church as their own took an interest in the cleaning of the churchyard.

By the 19th Century, the change in attitude towards death also changed burial customs. First, they started planning the layout of burials and memorials and monuments. It also became custom in many of these new graveyards to align the burials so that the deceased was buried with their head at essentially the west end and their feet at the east end so that when Christ returns from the east the person would rise to greet Him face to face. Since the attitude toward death changed to a period of rest, the burying layout changed in other ways. Graves were laid out like beds with headstones and footstones and carvings with various meanings that said something about the person buried there. The

name for a burial place changed from burial ground or graveyard to cemetery – denoting a place of rest.

The 19th Century also saw the rise of planned “garden cemeteries” where there were paths for riding and landscaped to give the cemetery a park-like appearance. In addition, family plots were laid out, often fenced to imitate a residential lot. Families could (and did) come to these plots and have a picnic. A problem brought on by the Civil War was the fact that the remains of soldiers who died far from home might not be recovered to be buried at home. The large numbers of deaths brought about the National Cemetery system, once again an outgrowth of the American character trait that each person has a worth. The Victorian ideal was that everyone deserved a “good death,” that is one where a person is at home surrounded by friends and family. On the battlefields of the Civil War it was not uncommon for the burial details to find a soldier’s body surrounded by pictures of family and friends as well as letters set up around those who had been wounded and left to die. This reflected the desire for a “good death.” The families that had lost someone, whose remains they could not recover, often set up a memorial stone in the family plot to commemorate their missing soldier. It was here that the family could gather to remember him.

A law passed in 1845 in Islip Town ended the practice of family plots and burials at home and that drove the establishment of garden and union cemeteries around the Town of Islip. An example of that is Union Cemetery in Sayville which was established in 1845. The cemetery was formed by the congregations of the Methodist and Congregational churches as a jointly owned corporation and it remains so today. Ironically, the cemetery predates the building of a church building for either congregation!



A Path Through Islip and Burial Customs

History – Preserved in St. John's Cemetery

The map in this booklet is keyed to the list of graves also included. If we start at the bell tower on the west end of the church and walk to the north side of the church, we will find the earliest burials in the churchyard. The earliest burial that is memorialized¹⁹ is that of Elizabeth Terry who was buried here in 1795 in what is designated grave 31b in the northeast corner of the church building. That grave is adjacent to the grave of Jeremiah Terry who died in 1823. Just east of these graves are graves 1, 2, and 3. These early burials include the grave of Isabel Smith who died in 1796 – these tombstones are examples of 18th Century memorials and the earlier idea that people were buried in a burying ground and that the burial was only a disposal of a body. Plot 2, that of Jeremiah Edwards is a good example of this type of memorial stone. Many of these were created from soft stone such as sandstone²⁰ which could be easily worked but does not weather well.

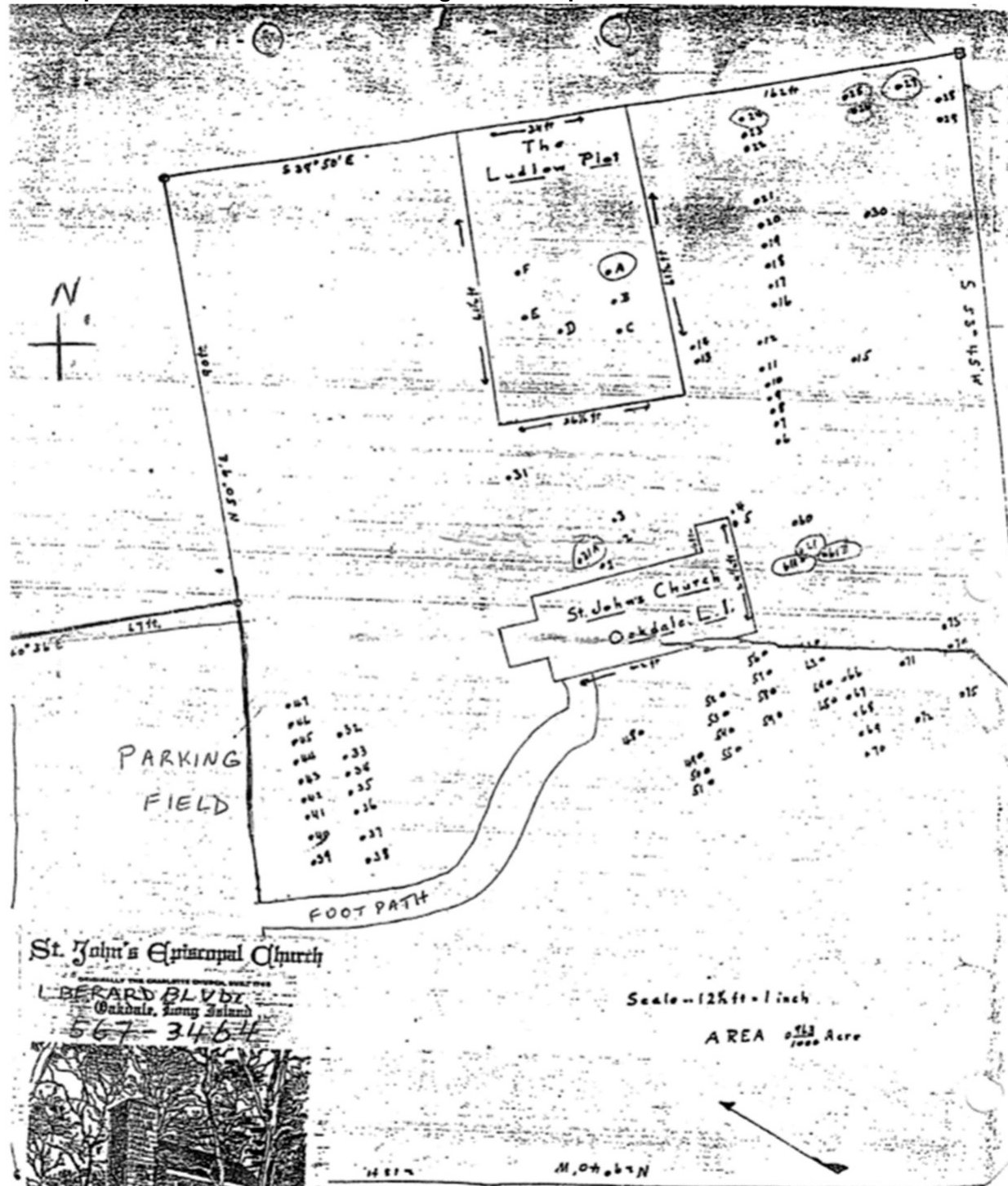


To the north of these graves is a family burial plot for the Ludlow family. This plot also contains in ground burial vaults, reflecting the wealth of the family who were direct descendants of William Nicoll the original holder of the royal patent to Islip Grange. The large marble slabs that close the tombs have weathered so that the lettering is hard to read. These in ground entombments are like the tombs found in churchyards and churches all over England and reflect the colonial era

customs even though these were constructed in the late 19th Century. This area of the churchyard is the closest spot to the Ludlow mansion and would have been in full view of the home. Buried here are six members of the Ludlow family. Including Frances Louisa Nicoll Ludlow²¹. Her husband, William Handy Ludlow, who in his life time served as the Speaker of the New York State Assembly and a Colonel during the Civil War is interred with her. He was brevetted to Major General for his work during the war in prisoner exchange negotiations and special assignments from President Lincoln. Three of the Ludlow sons also impacted the history of this country. Nicoll Ludlow, also a Civil War veteran, rose to the rank of Rear Admiral in the U. S. Navy and was involved in much of the effort to develop a modern navy after the Civil War. He is interred near his parents, his first wife and their son. The second son, Major General William Ludlow, was a close friend of General Custer and is said to be the last person to talk to him before the 7th Cavalry rode off to the Battle of Little Big Horn. William Ludlow was the engineer officer on the surveys of the Black Hills and Yellowstone and is considered one of those whose writing created not only Yellowstone National Park but eventually the National Park Service. He was interred here at St. John's, but his remains were moved to Arlington National Cemetery by his wife. Also, part of this family and this chapel's history was another son, Edwin Ludlow, who was a noted mining engineer and railroad builder.

Several towns and parks are named in his honor around the United States. He is not buried here.

Just east of the Ludlow plot are some mixtures of funerary art showing modern memorials as well as older ones. The graves here show the change in the upright tombstones where carvings were a part of the stone to tell something about the person buried there. The



KEY TO GRAVES IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH CEMETERY

NO.

1. Isabel Smith, 1796
2. Jemima Edwards, 1839 (1835)
("formerly wife of Henry C. Smith")
3. Henry C. Smith, 1802 (1805)
4. James M. Terry, 1812 (1817)
5. Edmond Terry, 1839
6. John Harvey Vail, 1916
7. Richard Udall Vail, 1909
8. Henry Sheldon Vail, 1857
9. Anna Strong, 1871
(d. of Harvey and Anne Vail)
10. Anne Udall Vail, 1890
11. Harvey Wentworth Vail, 1863
12. Henry M. Davis, 1851
(s. of Rev. Henry Davis)
13. Elizabeth Smith, 1877
14. William Smith, 1884
15. William Mazurle, 1859
16. George Graham, 1938 (no stone)
17. Mary Graham, 1938
18. William H. Brown, 1859
19. Eleazar Hawkins, 1853
20. E. Josephine Hawkins, 1854
21. Franklin Smith, 1871, and
Mary Smith, 1874
22. Sarah Jane Edwards, 1869
23. Lawrence Edwards, 1860
24. George E. Weeks, 1856 (no stone)
25. Caroline Ketcham, 1845 (1842) (no stone)
26. Penelope (Price), 1855
("relict" of George Price) (foot stone only,
no date)
27. Harry Smith, 1845 (foot stone only, no date)
28. Temperance Green, 1847 (M.T.G. foot stone only)
29. Thomas Green, 1834 (F.T.G. foot stone only)
30. Mary E. Bunce, 1853
31. Nancy Bell, 1822 (no stone)
- 31a. Jeremiah Terry, 1822
- 31b. Elizabeth Terry 1795
32. Deborah Snedecor, 1835 (1833)
33. Elizabeth Snedecor, 1835 (no stone)
34. Mary E. Snedecor, 1841
35. Edwin Snedecor 1846 (no stone)
- 35a. Lewis N. Snedecor, 1840
36. Elliphalet Snedecor, 1861
37. Sarah Seaman Snedecor, 1875 and
Cornelia Snedecor, 1880
38. John H. Snedecor, 1861 (1864)
(killed in battle of Winchester, Va.)
39. Obadiah Seaman, 1862
40. F.A.S. 1961
41. A metal monument, bearing various
names of Seaman family.
42. Mary Seaman, 1861
43. Matthew E. Seaman, 1845
44. Edward Seaman, 1845
45. Emily Seaman 1840
46. Hannah Douglass, 1833
47. John Douglass, 1830
48. William Terry, 1821 (1824)
49. William Brown, 1845
50. Ruth Brown, 1858
51. Samuel Brown, 1876
52. Amanda Terry, 1812
53. Martha Terry, 1834
54. Silas C. Terry, 1838
55. William J. Morris, 1852
56. Isaac Woodruff, 1813
57. Jacob Morris, 1855
58. Amanda Woodruff, 1835
59. Isaac C. Woodruff, 1838
60. William Nicoll, 1823
61. Sarah Greenly Nicoll
(1798-1887. w. of William Nicoll)
- 61a. Sarah Greenly Nicoll (1824-1830)
- 61b. William Nicoll, 1844 (4 weeks)
62. William Green, 1824
63. Mary Green, 1869
64. Mary Green, 1849
65. John D. Green, 1842
66. Nelson Strong, 1855 and
Louise Strong, 1885
67. Glorana Strong, 1839
68. William Strong, 1862
69. Edward Smith, 1843 (1845)
70. Hannah Maria Strong, 1815
71. Mary Ann Candee, 1859
72. Josephine Rogers, 1855
73. Harrison Clay Douglass, 1845
74. E.N.D. (foot stone only, no date)
75. Emma Strong, 1844

The Ludlow Plot

- A. William Ludlow, 1915 (Admiral, U.S.N.)
- B. Nicoll Ludlow, Jr., 1887
- C. Frances Mary Thomas Ludlow, 1873
- D. Frances Louisa Nicoll Ludlow, 1877 (1887) and
William Handy Ludlow, 1890
- E. Annie M. Hayes, 1891
- F. Newton Perkins Ludlow, 1858

ADDITIONAL INTERMENTS - Grave sites not plotted

- Sarah Woodruff, 1838 (no stone)
- Silas C. Seaman, 1886 (no stone)
- Franklin Seaman (no stone)
- Helen Hegeman, 1838 (no stone)
- Betsy Bell, 1793 (no stone)

NOTE: - Black dots indicate the head of the grave except in a few cases where the head cannot be determined.

Graves regularly extend toward the south-eastern boundary of the property, roughly parallel to the sides of the Church building, except graves E and F in the Ludlow plot, which lie north-east and south-west.

first of these on one of the more modern markers, a granite tombstone at grave 21 for Franklin Smith and his wife Mary A. Edwards, where ivy is used as a motif. This is because ivy is eternally green even in harsh conditions and therefore it is associated with immortality and fidelity. Ivy clings to a support, which makes it a symbol of attachment, friendship, and undying affection. Its three-pointed leaves make it a symbol of the Trinity.

Next is plot 22, Sarah Edwards, who died at the age of 68. The tombstone shows a rose in bloom, the rose was considered the queen of flowers at the time due to its fragrance. It was long associated with Venus the goddess of love and at first Christians were reluctant to adopt it as a symbol. It later became a mark of martyrdom, with a white rose indicating innocence. The thorns of the rose stand for man's fall from grace. In the Victorian era an open rose was a frequent motif on women's graves showing that she has lived a full life.

Plot 23, the grave of Lawrence Edwards, has a wheat sheave engraved on it. This symbolizes that the person buried here has lived a long and fruitful life. It usually indicates a life of over 70 years. Wheat is one of the basic foodstuffs and is thought of as a gift from God. This also is associated with immortality and resurrection because of its use as a harvested grain and the fact that the seed, the wheat itself, will produce a new crop of wheat.

Plot 24 north of the previous grave contains the remains of George E. Weeks, six months old, that also uses the motif of a rose, but here it is a rosebud. The use of seedpods and small buds serve to remind us of the fragile beginning of life. We are used to medical miracles, but in the 19th Century even minor conditions could end life and the number of children's burials in this churchyard demonstrates that fact of life in past times. Buds, especially those which are depicted as broken were common motifs to mark the grave of a child. The buds could be of any flower, but rosebuds were the most common ones used. Rosebuds also symbolize the passage of time.



In the row behind these stones is the marker for William Mazurie, 1764-1859, and as the stone states, "A native of France." This is a unique stone in that it would be more at home in a cemetery outside Paris than in rural Islip Town, but it reflects the European heritage of the man buried here. There appears to be an object missing at the top, likely an urn.

Keeping with medieval tradition, we find that there is a Nicoll plot directly behind the altar wall of the church. Here lies entombed (like their Ludlow relatives) the 6th owner of Islip Grange and the last by entailment²², William Nicoll, who died at the age of 24 in 1824. In his short life he served as Islip Town Supervisor, Inspector of Common Schools, and Overseer of Highways. Entombed alongside him are his wife Sarah Greenley Nicoll who outlived him by 63 years and his daughter Sara Greenley Nicoll who died at the age of six. She has the most unique memorial of any in the churchyard, a very rare cradle tomb.



Few of these have survived in other cemeteries, so we have a unique chance to look at this evidence of a change of mind towards the finality of death as this shows the new intent that death is only a sleep. Every year flowers grow out of the cradle and as far as anyone knows no one has planted them. Just in front of this is a tiny memorial for William Nicoll, the son of William Nicoll (the 7th of that name)²³ who died at the age of four weeks. Frances Ludlow buried in the Ludlow plot is the sister of William Nicoll (7th proprietor) and the daughter of William Nicoll (6th proprietor) and she and her brother spilt the remaining Nicoll lands, with him taking the remaining western portion, and her taking the remaining eastern portion (what is now Oakdale, Bohemia and West Sayville). The Ludlow estate was called "Riverside."



Just to the south in plot 71 is the burial place of Mary Ann Candee, who died in 1859. Hers is another marker with a rose carved into it.



One of the most heart-wrenching memorials in the churchyard is found at plot 52, the resting place of two-year old Amanda Terry. Inscribed at the bottom of her monument, now buried below ground level and awaiting restoration, is the alphabet, a memorial to a child that was just starting to learn her letters. Tradition holds that the carved alphabet was actually placed below ground originally as it was meant for her.

We will end at the Seaman/Snedecor section. This is right at the far west section of the churchyard next to the gate. Adjacent to the

path, the first stone in the eastern row is a memorial to John H. Snedecor and J. Chapman Snedecor. John H. Snedecor was a Sergeant in the 131st New York Volunteer Infantry who gave his life for his country in 1864 at the Battle of Opequon Creek (part of the Third Battle of Winchester, Virginia).

In the Terry portion of this plot of graves is a "white bronze" marker. This monument is in excellent shape which also is rare. The monuments were cast in zinc (the trade name white bronze sounded better) and were ordered from a

catalog and then cast plates were bolted on with the names of those memorialized. This monument carries the motifs of a wheat sheaf, wreath and cross with flowers. Here the monument also has daisies (or sunflowers) that often are used to designate children's graves and symbolizes innocence due to the simplicity of the flower. This is appropriately





used here as there are children's burials in this area. The daisy which can grow anywhere is also a symbol of the Virgin Mary because of the type of simple love she showed, and the fact that God's love can grow anywhere. The name daisy is a compilation of the name the flower was called in England, the "ee of the daie," or "days eye." Grave 39, Obadiah Seaman has both grape and laurel carved on it. In Victorian times these were symbols of abundance and immortality. Grave 42, Mary Seaman, has a weeping willow carved on it. While a weeping willow suggests grief and sorrow, it is also a symbol of immortality. It is associated with the Gospel because the tree will flourish and remain whole, no matter how many branches are cutoff – this is one of the most popular gravestone decorations of the late 18th and 19th centuries.

The Churchyard is well maintained and lovingly cared for and it is here that we can see the place where ordinary people who impacted this town and this country lie at rest.



Endnotes

¹ “Islip Grange” was the name that William Nicoll (1657-1723), the original holder of a group of royal patents to land that was approximately 60 square miles of present day eastern and central Islip Town. He took the name Islip from his family’s home town in England and Grange comes from the English medieval priories where a chapter house was accompanied by farm buildings, and the name became attached to the landed homes of the gentry when the monasteries were broken up. In 1701, he built a home on the west bank of the Connetquot River which he also named Islip Grange that gave him a legal right to be elected to the General Assembly of the Royal Colony of New York and represent Suffolk County. William Nicoll was well connected both by his own abilities and offices and by his and his children’s marriage into the most influential families of the colony, both English and Dutch. He served in the General Assembly from 1702-1718.

² A Royal, Crown or Letters Patent is a legal instrument published in writing by a monarch or government granting a right or group of rights to a person, place or corporation. These are used to grant a privilege, title, create an entity, municipality or office, or make appointments. In the case of Islip it granted exclusive rights to purchase land from the Native American tribes and created what can best be described as an English style estate. The Islip patents did not grant governmental powers, but since Islip was isolated the patentees acted as the local government in the beginning. Today, the letters patent of the monarchy have evolved in the United States to the Patent system and various executive orders. While the Royal Patents seem remote to us today, they are still the legal basis for land ownership, town boundaries and rights and regularly come into play in court cases such as disputes between and among the towns, state and federal government.

³ This act, entitled “An Act to enable the Precinct of Islip, in the County of Suffolk, to elect two Assessors, a Collector, Constable and Supervisor,” was passed on November 25, 1710.

⁴ The South County (also called Country) Road is the original colonial road through the southern part of Islip and is now known as Montauk Highway. The portion of the road from Bayard Cutting Arboretum to Sunrise Highway looks much as it might have looked when it was an unpaved road connecting the various developed areas of Islip Town in the 18th Century. The main road through Long Island, known as the “King’s Highway” only traversed two miles of the northern portion of Islip, and the main way down to the shore from the central portion of the island was via paths (we have examples of these roads in the so named “paths” today, i.e., Straight Path and Caleb’s Path). These paths allowed access to the bay and a way to drive stock to and from various meadows along the bay for summer grazing. It was not until the General Assembly passed an act on October 4, 1732, that a road would be built along the shores of the Great South Bay connecting the small settlements of Islip Town of the time. The town minutes record that the road was established on April 1, 1735 and the road commissioners were Richard Willets, Ananias Carll and George Phillips. The trip out from the city and the settlements to the west in Kings and Queens County (there was no Nassau until 1898) was still difficult as much of the road was not paved until just before World War I. The waterways of Islip were still the fastest way to travel east and west at that time.

⁵ The Nicoll family had a long and close connection with church and faith. Matthias Nicoll, the first of this branch of the Nicoll family in America is thought to be the author of the Duke’s Laws, the first set of laws to govern the Colony of New York. It included a long section on church requirements and structure whose beginning stated, “Whereas the publique Worship of God is much discredited for want of painful & able Ministers to Instruct the people in the true Religion and for want of Convenient places Capable to receive any Number or Assembly of people in a decent manner for Celebrating Gods holy Ordinances These ensuing Lawes are to be observed in every parish (Viz.) 1. That in each Parish within this Government a church be built in the most Convenient part thereof, Capable to receive and accomodate two Hundred Persons.” While the law goes on to require several requirements for the community and it only covers Protestant churches, and is structured to favor the Church of England, it does not establish a state religion and so is a novel document for that time in that it recognizes the importance of religion as part of the life of a community but does not make the Anglican faith a requirement.

⁶ Islip Town Supervisor, Nathaniel Conklin, wrote the following about religion and religious institutions in the Town of Islip in his 1798 letter and this situation would more or less change little until approximately the 1840's: "Of Religious denominations in this Town there are Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptist, Methodist, and Quaker upon making some calculations it is supposed, that the Presbyterian are more in number, than of all the other denominations put together-there is but one house in this town built for public worship, and that, a small one and that stands on the north-side of the South County Road, and belongs to the Episcopalians, but they have no Settled minister, nor stated preaching in it-the Presbyterians on the north part of this town are united with the Church and Congregation of Smithtown, and those on the Southwest part are united with the Presbyterians of the South part of Huntington, and are styled the church and congregation of Islip, and Huntington South, they have a convenient meeting house, which stands on the north side of the South County Road, just within the limits of Huntington; these two congregations have a Settled minister, who lives at Smithtown, and preaches statedly one half of the Sabbath in the meeting house at Smith Town, and the other half in the meeting house at Huntington South-those on the Southeast part of this town are united with the Presbyterians of the Southwest part of Brookhaven, and attend public worship at a meeting house standing on the Northside of the South Country Road within the limits of Brookhaven; but they have no Settled ministers. The Methodists, meet and attend public worship at a meeting house standing near the northwest corner of the Patent of Winne Commack, just within the limit of Huntington-and the Quakers meet for public worship at a Friend's house, at a place called half hallow hills-within the limits of Huntington."

⁷ William Nicoll (1715-1780) married Joanna De Honneur (1731-1772) in 1750. She was noted as a devout and kind woman. They had two sons and three daughters all of whom lived into adulthood which in that time almost unheard of. In addition to being the third owner of Islip Grange, William was also a member of the General Assembly from 1739-1775, Suffolk County Clerk (1750-1755, and Islip Town Supervisor (1747-1775).

⁸ Studenroth, Zachary N. St. John's Episcopal Church, Oakdale, LI, NY, Historic Structure Report. 2005. Section 1.1 Pages 1-2.

⁹ Studenroth, Zachary N. St. John's Episcopal Church, Oakdale, LI, NY, Historic Structure Report. 2005. Section 1.1 Pages 1-2.

¹⁰ Joanna De Honneur

¹¹ In 1784, Samuel Seabury was consecrated in 1784 as the first American bishop of the Anglican communion.

¹² The name St. John's as was noted earlier was also the name of the first church that William Nicoll's (3rd patentee) stepfather, the Reverend Dr. Samuel Johnson served in Stratford, Connecticut. This may give a hint for the name chosen for Charlotte Church. The name change was decided in 1784 which was four years after the death of the 3rd proprietor. At that time the holder of the land patent was his son, William (4th proprietor, 1756-1795) Nicoll, who may have influenced the choice of name to honor his step-grandfather who had a great impact on the family and was a mentor to the 3rd proprietor.

¹³ A Mustee is a person of mixed native American and another race.

¹⁴ William Handy Ludlow married Frances Louisa Nicoll (1822-1887), the daughter of William Nicoll (the sixth proprietor of Islip Grange) and it would be his son, Nicoll Ludlow who would be the last member of the family to live in the home that was adjacent to St. John's. William Ludlow was very active in the government of the State of New York and served as Speaker of the New York State Assembly and was a veteran of the Civil War. It was his son, Nicoll Ludlow who would be the last member of the family to live in the home that was directly north of St. John's.

Bailey, Rosalie Fellows. The Nicoll Family and Islip Grange. Publication No. 20 of the Order of Colonial Lords of Manors in North America. New York. 1940. PP. 32-33.

¹⁶The Episcopal Diocese of Long Island was not organized until 1868.

¹⁷Conklin, Nathaniel, Supervisor of the Town of Islip, New York. Letter dated January 11, 1798 from the Archives of the State of New York describing the Town of Islip.

¹⁸That residence was just to the north of the church in what is today St. John's Place.

¹⁹Church records note that Betsy Bell was buried here in 1793 and there is also the mystery of the British soldiers that are supposed to be buried here.

²⁰This is often referred to as brownstone.

²¹Sister of William and she was the last Nicoll to hold title to the eastern portion of the remaining Nicoll royal patent lands. As noted previously, her son Nicoll Ludlow would be the last to live in the home adjacent to the church.

²²An entailment is the settlement of the inheritance of property over several generations so that it remains within a family or other group. In other words the property had to pass in total to one person, usually the eldest son.

²³Trying to keep all the William Nicoll's straight can be a challenge as all but one of the holders of the patent lands was named William (only the second patentee had a different name and he was named Benjamin in honor of the then Royal Governor, Benjamin Fletcher). The William buried here is William Nicoll, the sixth holder, who lived from 1799 – 1823 and married Sarah Greenly (1798-1887) in 1819. Their children were William Nicoll (the seventh of the name, 1820-1900), Francis Louisa Nicoll (1822 – 1887) and Sarah Greenly Nicoll (1824 - 1830). It is Sarah Greenly Nicoll who is buried in the cradle tomb in this plot. William the sixth holder of the patent was the last to receive it by entailment, which means that since he was the oldest son he received the property in total. He was the Supervisor of the Town of Islip (1822-1823), Supervisor of Common Schools (1822-1823), and Overseer of Highways (1823). His daughter, Francis Louisa married William Ludlow and is entombed in the plot described earlier. Now the reason he was buried there was that the Nicoll family plot that is now within Heckscher State Park was said to be swampy and it was felt by the family to not be a fit place for burial any longer. So, he is here as well as his daughter and much of her family. The Seventh Proprietor, also a William, married a cousin, Sarah Nicoll, their infant son William is buried here but he and his wife are buried in Emmanuel Episcopal Church's Cemetery in Great River. It is easy to see that it is a task to sort out which Nicoll is which as with many old Long Island families, names are used generation after generation often with several persons of the same name in the same family alive at the same time.

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