

# CHAPTER V

## THE FEDERAL PERIOD: 1783-1861

AFTER THE REVOLUTION, Staten Island again became a peaceful community, largely dependent upon farming and fishing. There was little money and the small landowners made and grew practically everything they needed. Many of the wealthy British sympathizers had gone to Canada, and their large estates were subdivided. The Islanders were free to develop village life which had been discouraged by the British during the War.

The Post-Revolutionary Period on Staten Island was one of steady growth, although the rate was slow compared to that of Manhattan and Brooklyn. The following census figures reflect the population changes (28):

1783.....	3,500	1830.....	7,082
1800.....	4,564	1840.....	10,965
1810.....	5,347	1850.....	15,061
1820.....	6,135	1860.....	25,492

## RESTORATION OF OFFICIAL BUILDINGS

Concern for restoring what had been destroyed and growth in population necessitated the erection of new public buildings in the County Seat of Richmondtown after the Revolution (28). A large inn built in 1820 near the intersection of Richmond Road and Arthur Kill Road (Richmond County Hall) helped accommodate the population growth and afforded facilities for stage coach travelers.

A new courthouse was completed in Richmondtown by 1794 and stood until 1944 when it was destroyed by fire. Foundation stones are still in evidence at Arthur Kill Road near the Treasure House. Until a second County Courthouse could be built, the home of Dr. Thomas Frost was used for court purposes. In the Richmondtown Restoration, the Boehm House\* in Great Kills will be moved next to the Voorlezer's House to represent Dr. Frost's home.

The Third County Courthouse,\* on Center Street, was built in 1837 and was used until 1920. This building now houses collections of the His-

torical Museum, particularly firefighting equipment of the old Volunteer Firehouses.

The First County Clerk's and Surrogate's Office was built in 1828 on the corner of Richmond and Arthur Kill Roads adjoining the jail which had been constructed in 1729. These buildings were destroyed by fire in 1895. In 1848 the Second County Clerk's and Surrogate's Office was erected and used until 1920. This is now the Museum of the Staten Island Historical Society which contains a library, costumes, house furnishings, tools, etc., that pertain to the growth of the Island.\*

In 1801 the Public Stocks were erected. In 1860 a new jail was built to the rear of the Third County Courthouse, which stood until 1896. It was replaced by a modern jail that was demolished in 1957.



*County Clerk's and Surrogate's Office, Richmondtown*

### REBUILDING FORTIFICATIONS

The fortifications at the Narrows (now Fort Wadsworth), which had been damaged during the Revolution, were restored. By 1808 Signal Hill was protected by Fort Richmond at the edge of the Narrows (present site of Battery Weed), Forts Morton and Hudson on the slopes of the Hill, and Tompkins on the peak of the Hill (26).

With the threat of the impending War of 1812, however, these earthwork defenses were inadequate and Daniel D. Tompkins, Governor of New

York between 1807 and 1817, appropriated \$125,000 for the erection of stone fortifications. The new Forts Tompkins and Richmond, built of red sandstone, were completed in 1814, manned, and dedicated with great ceremony. This dedication is depicted in murals at the Staten Island Community College Library at 30 Bay Street and in Borough Hall.\*

Fort Tompkins was built in the same style as Castle Williams on Governors Island which is used today as a military stockade. Fort Richmond was half-moon in shape, as is Battery Weed today.

To strengthen fortifications along Lower New York Bay, Fort Smith was erected on the hill at Prince's Bay near the lighthouse on Mount Loretto property.\* Much of this hill has been eroded by tides and rain. Bayles says the stones from the blockhouse were used later to construct the present lighthouse, now the residence of the director of Mount Loretto (3).

After the War of 1812, the fortifications at the Narrows were neglected and by 1835 were unfit for use. In 1847 the federal government purchased the military post, tore down the old red sandstone forts and constructed Forts Tompkins and Richmond (known as Battery Weed since 1902). Fort Tompkins is now used as an office building.\* The new forts were not completed until 1861 at which time the first troops were garrisoned there.\*

### GOVERNOR TOMPKINS\*

At the close of the War of 1812, Governor Tompkins bought considerable land on Staten Island and built a mansion on Fort Hill, near present Fort Place (3). There he entertained many notables. Tompkins also built a home on St. Mark's Place for his daughter in 1821. Known as Marble Hall, this mansion later became part of the St. Mark's Hotel, and, in 1889, of the Hotel Castleton (29). When Marquis de Lafayette returned to America in 1824 to tour the country, Staten Islanders gave him a hero's welcome at Nautilus Hall, Tompkinsville. Tompkins, who was then Vice-President of the United States (1817-1825), headed the committee. P.S. 15 Richmond, is named the Daniel D. Tompkins School.

### SLAVERY

Slavery gradually disappeared on Staten Island after the Revolution, as it did in other parts of New York State. On March 29, 1799, the State Leg-

islature provided "that every child born of a slave within this State after the fourth of July next shall be deemed and adjudged to be born free" (47). Masters were required to register the names of all such children born after July 4, 1800. A fee of 12¢ was charged for each name registered and a fine of \$5 was imposed for failure to do so. Slavery on Staten Island was abolished July 4, 1825, two years before abolition in the entire state (28).

Governor Daniel D. Tompkins, long an opponent of slavery, wrote to the New York State Assembly on January 28, 1817 urging that complete abolition be accomplished in this state by July 4, 1827. A facsimile of part of this letter appears in the Official Document Book of the New York State Freedom Train (47). In the same book appears a reproduction of a page from the account book of the town of Southfield, Richmond County, indicating the cost of feeding, clothing, and caring for children of slaves born after the Law of 1799.

### COUNTY GOVERNMENT

After the Revolution, Staten Island was still designated as the "County of Richmond," but it was then in the "State of New York," rather than in the "Province of New York." The chief officers were the county judge, sheriff, treasurer, and clerk. Each of the four divisions of the Island (North, South, and West Divisions, and Castleton) had its own supervisor and minor officials. The Supervisors met and decided upon matters affecting the County; the minor officials managed the town affairs.



*Design on Borough flag*

The design for the seal of Richmond County was ordered by the Court of Common Pleas in 1786 at a meeting in the home of Dr. Thomas Frost (29). In the center were two doves, a large "S" (meaning *Signum*) and "N York." Around the seal was inscribed "Richmond County." This design was adapted on the Borough flag in 1948.\*

## GROWTH OF VILLAGES

In 1788 official towns were designated with specific boundaries – Northfield, Southfield, Westfield, and Castleton. Within each township were little villages. In 1860, Middletown was created from parts of Castleton and Southfield.

The village of Tompkinsville was developed about 1815, chiefly through the efforts of Governor Tompkins and was named in his honor.\* The names of his children are remembered in the street names Hannah and Minthorne. By 1836 Tompkinsville had doubled its population.

The Governor's son, Minthorne, with William J. Staples, purchased land from Cornelius Vanderbilt and his family in 1833 and developed the village of Stapleton. Three years later the village of Richmond was laid out by Henry I. Seaman.

In 1834 Thomas E. Davis formed the New Brighton Association and bought land between Old Quarantine (Tompkinsville) and Sailors' Snug Harbor, renaming the area New Brighton after the well-known seaside resort in England. He planned the streets, constructed Richmond Terrace, and erected many fine homes in the Greek classic style.

On the Island's south and west shores typical American rural communities continued to prosper. By 1835 a village of considerable size had grown up around what had been known successively as The Burying Place, Decker's Ferry, Ryerss' Ferry, and Mersereau's Ferry. The Reverend Brownless of the Reformed Dutch Church suggested the name of Port Richmond, which was adopted (42). Previously known as Blazing Star, Rossville became a thriving village in the 1850s. Cabbages and strawberries grown there were sent by steamboat to New York (22).

Tottenville, known as Bentley, was a fishing village with a few scattered farms. New Dorp continued as a small village devoted to farming. Bloomingview (Huguenot), Long Neck or New Blazing Star (Travis), Great Kills, and Prince's Bay retained their identities as separate communities. In the 1850s Kreischerville (now Charleston) grew up around the brick factory there, just as Factoryville (now West New Brighton) had developed around the factories built there earlier in the nineteenth century.

Other areas also developed, including the Clove Valley\* section. In 1832, a New York City merchant, John King Vanderbilt, purchased an 80-acre farm in the Valley and within a few years several large homes were

built there by his relatives (60). In the section on homes of this period, it will be noted that other localities on the Island were developed before the Civil War.

In the latter part of the 1700s the families were chiefly descendants of the early Huguenots, Dutch, and English settlers. Each had his own farm, orchard, and woodlot, with nearby salt meadows supplying bedding for the cattle. Before long, however, there was a migration to the Island from different parts of the United States, especially from New England. Immigration from Ireland, because of the potato famine between 1845 and 1847, and from Germany because of the political Revolution of 1848 increased the population. Many of the Germans worked in the breweries and in the dyeing and shipbuilding trades.

Between 1814 and 1861, wealthy bankers and brokers from the East, as well as internationally known figures, came to the north and east shores of Staten Island, and created a cosmopolitan social life previously unknown there. They brought with them many Irish servants who remained on the Island after the demise of their masters.

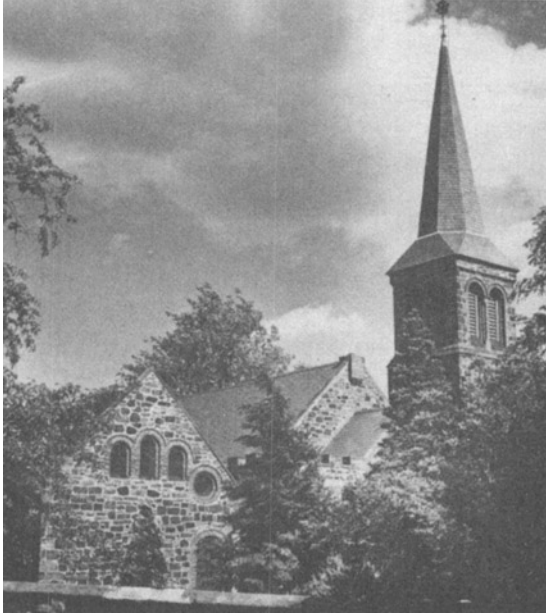
### DEVELOPMENT OF CHURCHES TO 1861

With the increase and diversity of population came the growth of many church organizations. The churches damaged during the Revolution were rebuilt and many new churches organized. St. Andrew's in Richmond-town was repaired around 1787 but had to be rebuilt again in 1867 and in 1872 after two severe fires. Today's Norman-Gothic style edifice, although partially built on the original walls of 1712, bears little resemblance to the first church (20).\*

#### REFORMED DUTCH CHURCHES

The Reformed Dutch Church in Port Richmond, in ruins after the Revolutionary War, was rebuilt in 1786 and again in 1844. This third church, reminiscent of the Greek Revival style of architecture popular in the 1840s, still stands.\* A chapel was added in 1898.

In 1808 a Reformed Dutch Church was built on the corner of Center Street and Arthur Kill Road to replace the one destroyed during the Revolution. This was used until 1887. In the Restored Village at Richmond-town, an old Dutch Church in hexagonal style will be reconstructed.



*Church of St. Andrew, Richmondtown*

In 1820 the Reformed Dutch Church of Tompkinsville was founded at the Quarantine Station. Three years later a church was built in Tompkinsville upon a triangular tract of land given by Governor Tompkins (at Richmond Turnpike, now Victory Boulevard, Van Duzer and Griffin Streets). In 1864 a new building was dedicated at the present location on St. Mark's Place, St. George. Now this is called the Brighton Heights Reformed Church.\* At night the illuminated spire is seen from a considerable distance and from the ferry as one crosses Upper New York Bay.

#### METHODIST CHURCHES

The Woodrow Church,\* oldest Methodist Episcopal Church on Staten Island, and one of the oldest in the country, was organized in 1787. It was built by contributions of 87 persons on land given by Abraham Cole. Previously the congregation had been served by Bishop Francis Asbury\* and other circuit riders from New Jersey who had preached at the home of Peter Van Pelt (11). The list of original contributors contains the names of families still prominent on the South Shore section of Staten Island.

Among them are: Androvette, Bedell, Cole, Dissosway, DuBois, Journeay, Laforge, Seguine, Sleight, Totten, Winant, and Woglom. These family names are also remembered in street names on the Island. In 1795 Nancy Dissosway presented the Church with a Holy Bible that was printed in 1792 and is still in its possession.

The original church was one-story high, with galleries on two sides and at the end that were reached by stairways. Heated bricks and foot warmers furnished the only heat for the parishioners until stoves were installed about 1822. Men sat on the right hand of the preacher and women on the left. Lightning struck the building in 1832. The present structure was erected in 1842 in the Greek Revival style, with four large columns supporting the roof over an open porch in front. The bell tower was built in 1876.



*Woodrow M. E. Church*

One of Woodrow's most famous ministers was Rev. Henry Boehm, called Father Boehm, who traveled with Bishop Asbury. A minister for 74 years, he served one year as a pastor of Woodrow (12). During the last years of his life he resided with his granddaughter in a house that is still standing on Arthur Kill Road at the foot of Giffords Lane where he lived to be a centenarian. He is buried on the left of the walk as you enter the graveyard adjoining the Woodrow Church.\* Many pioneers of the South Shore section of the Island, including several Revolutionary War veterans, also are buried in this cemetery. The parsonage, still standing, was erected in 1850 and was enlarged in 1861.

Many people walked to church in the early days and as other hamlets



developed, parishioners desired more convenient places of worship. This led to the organization of several churches throughout the Island. Methodists in Westfield (Tottenville) met in a Tabernacle on Amboy Road, near Richmond Valley, as early as 1822. In 1841 they erected Bethel Church\* on Amboy Road, at its present site, and rebuilt it in 1867. The brick building standing today was erected after a fire in 1886 (18). St. Paul's M.E. Church in Tottenville was organized as an outgrowth of Bethel M.E. in 1856 and a chapel was dedicated three years later. A new church was built in 1883.

In 1802 the Methodist Episcopal Church of Northfield was erected on Richmond Avenue, New Springville. It was replaced in 1849 by the Asbury Methodist Church\* which is still standing.

The present Kingsley Methodist Episcopal Church at 186 Cebra Avenue, near St. Paul's Avenue, Stapleton dates its organization back to 1835 when it was incorporated under the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Tompkinsville and was served by the Reverend Henry Boehm on the "circuit" plan. A church building was completed in 1838 on property given by Caleb T. Ward. In 1855 a new edifice was erected which became known as Stapleton Methodist Episcopal Church. When this building was remodeled in 1870, the name was changed to Kingsley M.E. Church.

In 1839 the Mariners Harbor Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated. By 1869 a larger church was needed and this became the Summerfield Methodist Church, now at 100 Harbor Road, Mariners Harbor.

Long Neck (now Travis) also was served by a Methodist Church as early as 1843, although members of the congregation had met previously in the home of John Wood. The Long Neck Chapel at 4117 Richmond Turnpike (now Victory Blvd.) was used until 1868 when it was sold to School District No. 3 of Northfield for a schoolhouse. The incorporation of the present Dickinson Methodist Church dates back to 1865, the building at 3980 Victory Blvd. to 1871.

Trinity Methodist Church, originally called "Pond Church," was erected in 1839 on Pond Road (Jewett Avenue) and Cary Avenue, West New Brighton. In 1853 a new edifice was built on Shore Road (Richmond Terrace) and Dongan Street and renamed Trinity (3). This burned to the ground in 1909 and the church was relocated at the corner of Delafield Avenue and Elizabeth Street, West New Brighton in 1912.

EPISCOPAL CHURCHES

St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church, Clifton (now Rosebank), was founded in 1843, but the cornerstone of the present building was not laid until 1869 (8).\*

St. Luke's Episcopal Church on Arthur Kill Road, Rossville, was dedicated in 1844, with a few pews set aside for Negroes from Sandy Ground. Jasper F. Cropsey was the architect. This church had been organized in the home of Colonel William E. Ross in the previous year. The building was demolished in 1961.

The present Church of the Ascension (Episcopal), at 1 Kingsley Avenue, West New Brighton, dates back to 1800 when the Trinity Chapel was built on Richmond Terrace. This was affiliated with St. Andrew's Church until 1819 when it became a separate parish.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church on Richmond Avenue (now St. Paul's Avenue), Tompkinsville, was organized at the Planters' Hotel in 1833. The first church was built on ground given by Caleb T. Ward, after whom Ward Hill was named, and was used until 1861. The cornerstone of the present building at 225 St. Paul's Avenue was laid in 1866.\*

Christ Church Episcopal, at 76 Franklin Avenue, was founded in 1849 at a meeting in Belmont Hall, New Brighton. A Gothic style edifice was erected the following year. The present church was consecrated in 1905.

In 1848 Dr. Samuel Elliott, famous eye specialist, erected a church in Elliottville (now Livingston). This was the beginning of St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church which was built in 1853 on property given by William Bard at Davis and Castleton Avenues, West New Brighton.

St. Simon's in the Clove Episcopal Church was opened as a mission church of St. John's of Clifton in 1854 and did not become a separate parish until 1955. The first services were held in a little building on Targee Street, Stapleton, then in the unoccupied First Baptist Church which was later moved to Rhine Avenue near Steuben Street, Concord, and then to a site near Clove and Richmond Roads, where a new building was constructed in 1940. This was in the path of the new Clove Lakes Expressway, so in 1960 the present building was erected at 1055 Richmond Road, Concord.

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### BAPTIST CHURCHES

A Baptist congregation was organized in 1785 but it was not until 1809 that the first Baptist Church was erected on the Island. The "Clove Meeting House" was built on the hillside near the corner of Clove and Richmond Roads. A few gravestones remain at the site, although the building was demolished in 1877.

About 1835 a Baptist Meeting House was built in Fayetteville (now Graniteville) adjacent to the present Hillside Cemetery on Richmond Avenue. The building was demolished after the North Baptist Church was organized. Another Graniteville Baptist Church was erected about 1858. The congregation disbanded in 1882. This building, located on Willowbrook Road near Forest Avenue, became the Graniteville Methodist Church in 1914. It has recently been acquired by a Pentacostal group.

The North Baptist Church, Port Richmond, organized by members of the congregation from the church at Fayetteville, was dedicated in 1843. This is now known as the Park Baptist Church. Some members left this church in 1857, organizing the Mariners Harbor Baptist Church. In 1845 the West Baptist Church was founded in Kreischerville, and in 1860 the South Baptist Church was erected in Tottenville (8).

### ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES

The first Catholic Church on Staten Island was St. Peter's Church, now at 53 St. Mark's Place, New Brighton. This was organized in 1839 in a small remodeled factory at Richmond Terrace and Lafayette Avenue, New Brighton. The parish included all of Staten Island and part of New Jersey. Within a few years a church was built on land given by the New Brighton Association. This edifice was dedicated in 1849 and St. Peter's Cemetery was established within a few years. The present St. Peter's Church\* was erected between 1900 and 1903.

Prior to the Civil War, three other Catholic Churches served the parishioners on Staten Island – St. Joseph's in Rossville, dedicated in 1851; St. Mary of the Assumption in Graniteville (now Port Richmond), erected in 1853; and The Church of St. Mary on New York Avenue, Clifton (now called Bay Street, Rosebank), organized in 1852.

St. Mary's Church was built in 1857. In 1862 the pastor, Reverend John Lewis, purchased seven acres of land of the Parkinson Estate and laid it out as a cemetery (8). P.S. 46 is adjacent to St. Mary's Cemetery. The first

Catholic Parochial School on Staten Island was organized in St. Mary's Parish in 1853. A new building was erected in 1865 and ten years later had an enrollment of 400 pupils. The present school was built in 1910. Father Lewis served as pastor of St. Mary's for 35 years and is interred near the north entrance of the church.

St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Graniteville (now Port Richmond) was built as a mission church of St. Peter's with the contributions of laborers in the "granite quarries." Later it became a mission church of St. Joseph's in Rossville which it remained until 1877. The present church was erected in 1883.

Before these Catholic Churches were built, it is believed that a priest from Brooklyn conducted services in a frame and stone building standing on Giffords Lane, Great Kills, sometimes known as the Holy Spring House.\* The spring still flows in the basement of this little house.

#### MORAVIAN CHURCHES

The present Moravian Church\* in New Dorp was dedicated in 1845. Built in 1763, the original building, which was described in the chapter on the Colonial Period, is now used as the cemetery office. The new building was enlarged in 1955 and 1956.

#### CHURCH OF THE HUGUENOTS

The Church of the Huguenots was organized in 1849 in Bloomingview (now Huguenot). Two years later the little "Brown Church" as it was known, was built on property given by the Hon. Benjamin P. Prall who was a direct descendant of Pierre Billiou, leader of the 1661 settlement. This little church stood until 1918 when sparks from a train engine set fire to the roof. The present church was erected in 1924 and is known as the Huguenot Reformed Church.

#### UNITARIAN CHURCH

A Unitarian Church was organized in 1851 at the home of Minthorne Tompkins, son of Governor Daniel Tompkins, and held meetings at the Tompkins Lyceum until a church was erected on Richmond Turnpike (Victory Boulevard) and Cebra Avenue in 1853. The congregation dwindled and in 1865 the building was sold. After a population increase in New

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Brighton, the group reorganized and a church building was erected in 1868 at Clinton Avenue and Second Street. It was in this edifice that George William Curtis conducted services in the absence of a preacher.

### LUTHERAN CHURCHES

In 1852 St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church bought a building on Jewett Avenue, previously owned by Trinity Methodist Church. In 1901 a new church building was erected. From the beginning, St. John's Lutheran conducted a parochial school (8). The school was closed in 1908 but reopened in 1952. In 1856 the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Stapleton (now Trinity Lutheran) was opened. The congregation also maintains a parochial school.

### PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES

As early as 1717 there was a Presbyterian meeting house at Stony Brook, used until 1769. The First Presbyterian Church of Edgewater (now Stapleton), Brownell and McKeon Streets, was organized in 1856 by 26 members. In 1867 this group was joined by the congregation of the Presbyterian Church at Clifton which had been organized by members who had left the Reformed Dutch Church at Tompkinsville (8). The present church on Tompkins Street was erected in 1894.

### HOMES

At the close of the Revolution, Staten Island was a community of about 276 homes. However, the growth in population stimulated new construction and different styles of architecture began to appear (41). There was a trend toward the larger two-story house, although the one-story and the one-and-a-half-story building continued. Timber and brick became more popular than the native fieldstone. There were larger windows with fewer and larger panes of glass. Usually there was a full-length veranda in the front, and often in the rear also. The Woodrow House\* (1810) on Woodrow Road, south of Arthur Kill Road, Greenridge, is representative of a one-and-one-half-story style with sweeping roof and two verandas.

Later the more ornate doorway appeared. This had side windows and fan lights overhead, and opened into an entrance hall with a staircase leading to the second floor. The Moore House\* at 3531 Richmond Road

exemplifies this style. This was the second parsonage of St. Andrew's Church, built in 1818 on the site of the first.

The kitchen\* continued to be the all-important family room. Cooking was still done in the large open fireplace. Swinging cranes held kettles and pots. The tin "Dutch oven" open on one side to the blazing fire also was popular, as was the brick oven built into the fireplace.

A small cottage of this period is the Beaver Cottage,\* built in 1875 on Richmond Road, Dongan Hills (now opposite the Berry Apartments). Another plain cottage is the Finley House in Egbertville, built about 1790 by the Egbert family as their residence and cooper shop. This will be moved to Richmondtown and restored as the Cooper's House.\* An interesting feature is the oven which extends outside the house. Nearby on Richmond Road is the Seaver House,\* built about 1800, and now being restored by a private owner.

The Simon Swaim House (1760), originally a 90-acre farm along King's Road (now Richmond Road), will be restored as a typical eighteenth century farmhouse in the planned Richmondtown Restoration. Another farm of the 1830s is to be restored around the homestead known as the Decker Farm\* on Richmond Hill Road, now owned by the Historical Society. Considerable planting has been done there already.

A typical farmhouse still standing is the Burbank House\* (1800) which was erected on Todt Hill Road on land that was once part of the Governor Dongan grant. As the home of Abraham Burbank, supervisor of the town of Castleton from 1793 to 1798, this house is marked with a D.A.R. plaque.

There are several homes along Amboy Road\* from Prince's Bay to Tottenville which were built between 1820 and 1860 and are kept in excellent condition. Many of these were erected by oystermen. Other large homes are along Arthur Kill Road\* between Rossville and Richmond Valley, and along Victory Boulevard\* near Signs Road, Travis.

In the 1830s many homes were built in what was known as the Greek-Revival type of architecture with large columns, some simple Doric, others fluted or paneled. Among these are the Ward-Nixon House\* (1830) on Ward Hill; the Tyler House\* (1835) in West New Brighton where President Tyler's widow lived for many years; the Biddle Mansion\* (1840) in Tottenville; the Tysen House\* on Sailors' Snug Harbor property; the Seguire Mansion\* (1845), Prince's Bay.

Several other buildings were constructed in this Greek-Revival style or a modification of it. Among those still standing are The Third County Courthouse\* on Center Street, Richmondtown; the buildings at Sailors' Snug Harbor\* (1831); the original Marine Hospital Buildings\* in Clifton (1837); Woodrow M.E. Church;\* Staten Island Reformed Church;\* the Bennett House\* (1837), Richmondtown, now used as a general store; The Stephens House\* (1837), Richmondtown, used as a general store for about a century and to be restored as such.

Many wealthy New Yorkers and Southern planters built stately homes in the Greek Revival style along Shore Road (now Richmond Terrace). This became known as Temple Rd. Columbia Hall,\* erected about 1835, and the building adjacent to it remain.

Another architectural style popular between 1840 and 1860 was the Gothic type with steep roofs, gables, and carved woodwork (41). Several houses were built in this style in Clove Valley\* about 1840. Two were constructed by the Brittons who operated a mill on Britton's Pond which was formed by damming Clove Brook. Ice was harvested there also (36). The house at 1015 Clove Road, built by Henry Britton, is now the home of John Franzreb who operates Clove Lakes Stables.\* The home of the late Abraham Britton is across the road at 956. A steep-roofed Gothic cottage stands at 1336 Clove Road at the corner of Schoharie Street, Sunnyside. Just before the Civil War, Captain Allen,\* a retired sea captain, lived there (60).

William H. Ranlett, the architect, designed and built several Gothic cottages on Staten Island. He lived in the one that is still standing at 508 Clove Road, West New Brighton (1845). Another on Davis Avenue West New Brighton, erected in 1848, was the home of Dr. Samuel Elliott, and later of Sidney Howard Gay, an abolitionist. The original building of St. Joseph's Hill Academy for Girls, Arrochar, is a house of this type. Built in 1850, it was then known as "Clar Manor." The parsonage of the Reformed Dutch Church on Arthur Kill Road, Richmondtown, erected in 1855, is of this design and will remain as part of the Restored Village. Many churches constructed on Staten Island at this time were influenced by the Gothic style.

The Italian villa style of architecture, featuring a square building with a cupola or captain's lookout on top, was popular on Staten Island

between 1845 and 1860 (41). Examples of this are: the Goodhue Home\* (1845) on Clinton Avenue, New Brighton (Robert and Sarah Goodhue were among the founders of the Unitarian Church on Staten Island); the Alexander House, summer home of Junius Brutus Alexander, southern cotton grower, now the Richmond County Country Club\* on Flagg Place, Dongan Hills; the Wyeth House\* on Meisner Avenue, Egbertville, home of Judge Nathaniel Wyeth, Jr., who was a member of the State Legislature; and the Parkinson House\* (1854) on Richmond Road, New Dorp, built on the site of the Rose and Crown Tavern,\* which was British Headquarters during the Revolution.

Several large, elegant homes were erected on Staten Island before the Civil War. In 1850, Colonel William Ross built a wooden replica of Windsor Castle, in park-like surroundings at Blazing Star (now Rossville). Stained glass windows opened onto balconies overlooking Arthur Kill. This beautiful home, renamed Lyon Mansion, was sold to Governor Lyon of Idaho who died there in 1875 (22). The building was demolished about 1920. Next to the Ross Castle was the Mason Mansion, a 30-room Italian villa style building of great elegance.

In the early 1830s, Major George Howard, who was then Keeper of the Stores at the Quarantine, Tompkinsville, bought 42 acres of land "between Eddy and Louis Street and between Richmond Turnpike (Victory Blvd.) and Howard Avenue (38)." He erected a large home on the Eddy Street corner which he sold a few years later to John Anthon, who, with his son Charles Anthon, gathered historical information on Staten Island which was later published by the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences and is referred to as "Anthon's Notes." Howard then built a house which is still standing on St. Paul's Avenue opposite Hannah Street.

Madame Suzette Grymes, widow of Governor Claiborne of Louisiana, who had married John Randolph Grymes of New Orleans, came to Staten Island in 1836 and erected a beautiful home on the hill which bears her name. The entrance to Grymes Hill at that time was from Richmond Road. She added to her property in 1839 and in 1846, calling her entire estate *Capo di Monte*, meaning "top of the mountain." In 1858 she sold her home to William Butler Duncan, after whom Duncan Road was named (29). Several other beautiful mansions were erected on Grymes Hill,\* many of which remain today (15).



Sir Edward Cunard, manager of the Cunard Line, built a large brick Victorian style mansion on Grymes Hill, commanding a view of the waters surrounding New York City, calling his property *Bellevue*, meaning "superb view." His home, erected in 1851, was the scene of many social affairs. As part of Wagner College, this building is now known as Cunard Hall.\* Wagner College also purchased the General William Green Ward Home,\* built about 1860 and named *Oneata*, a Seminole word meaning "kissed by the dawn" (19). This mansion, located on the West Campus, is the Music Building of Wagner.

At the foot of Grymes Hill, on Clove Road, at the corner of the present Howard Avenue (previously known as Serpentine Road) was the Nichols House, built between 1852 and 1854 and purchased by Mr. Nichols in 1864. Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of Central Park, landscaped this estate, known as *Vale Snowden*. Many rare trees and shrubs planted on the ground remain, as do parts of the stone wall which surrounded the property (29).

### HOTELS AND INNS

Several large hotels were erected in the St. George-New Brighton area before the Civil War. The residence of Thomas E. Davis was used as a section of the fashionable Pavilion Hotel\* which was on Richmond Terrace, just below St. Peter's Church. Additions were made, including a 200-foot colonnade in front of the building. This was a 300-room, six-story hotel, with a large ballroom that attracted many notables, such as President Martin Van Buren and Henry Clay. Many Southern plantation owners and well-known people from foreign lands frequented the hotel. Wealthy New Yorkers, especially in the summer, came to escape the heat and to enjoy the luxurious facilities. Jenny Lind, the Swedish singer, was a frequent guest there when she was singing at Castle Garden (Fort Clinton, Battery Park). Adelina Patti, who was introduced to America by Max Maretzek, also stayed at the Pavilion. During the Civil War, Confederate officers sent their wives and children there for safety (30). The building was closed in 1900 and was demolished in 1904.

There were several other popular hotels on the Island. The two-story brick Planters' Hotel,\* built in 1820, patronized by wealthy Southerners, is still standing at the corner of Bay and Grant Streets, Tompkinsville.

The Patten House was built in 1840 on Richmond Plank Road (now Richmond Road) at the head of New Dorp Lane which was used then as a straight mile race track from that point to the beach (45).



*Cunard Home (now part of Wagner College)*

The Port Richmond or St. James Hotel at 2040 Richmond Terrace, Port Richmond, was built about 1795 as the private home of Gozen Ryerss who operated the ferry after the Revolution. It was there that Aaron Burr (Vice-President of the United States 1801-1805) lived during the last year of his life, dying there on September 14, 1836. This building stood until about 1944 (39).

Inns also were very popular during this period when the stagecoach was the chief mode of transportation and travelers needed accommodations en route to Philadelphia from New York. Names of many distinguished people are found on the guest lists. Among the inns were Bodine's Inn at Castleton Corners; Butler's Tavern on Morningstar Road, Graniteville; Rossville Hotel (1825) at Blazing Star Ferry; the Oakley House at the foot of the present Rossville Avenue (then Shea's Lane); and the Coclestown Inn at Richmondtown (1755-1836). A typical inn of this period is preserved in Killmeyer's Hotel\* (1859), now Simonson's Tavern in Charleston.

## INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

Farming continued to be important on Staten Island after the Revolution. In 1829, James Stuart in *Three Years in North America*, after a visit to the

## CHAPTER V

Island, wrote of “comfortable-looking farmhouses amidst rich valleys and lands and orchards abounding in fruit . . . ” and of the “extraordinary quantity of cherry trees” (65).

However a definite pattern of industrial growth began to take shape. During the Revolution, the British had discouraged industries, but after the War the Islanders were free to develop industrial as well as village life. Gristmills, sawmills, and blacksmith shops continued to be as important as they had been during the Colonial Period.

### OYSTERING

From the time of the first settlement, oystering had been carried on in Staten Island waters. By 1840 the beds were exhausted, so oyster seed and immature oysters were brought from bays in Long Island and New Jersey, and finally from as far south as Norfolk Bay, Virginia, and Chesapeake Bay, Maryland. These were “planted” at Prince’s Bay and in the Kill Van Kull from Mariners Harbor to Port Richmond (25).

Many of the wealthy oyster captains built large two-story colonial type wooden homes with Greek Temple columns along the Shore Road (Richmond Terrace) from Mariners Harbor to Port Richmond facing the Kill. A few of these houses still stand along the Terrace. Often as many as 40 or 50 sloops would be moored in the Kill opposite what came to be known as “Captain’s Row.”\*

The oyster captains from Staten Island sometimes hired Negroes from around Snow Hill, Maryland, to come back with them to prepare the beds and plant the oysters. It was a group of these Negro oystermen and their families who settled in Sandy Ground in the late 1830s or early 1840s. Sandy Ground is a small community bordering on Bloomingdale Road between Drumgoole Boulevard and Arthur Kill Road. During the Civil War oystering\* was a thriving business on the Island because it was not possible to get oysters from the South (25).

### BASKETMAKING

Basketmaking was carried on during this period by a few men skilled in the craft. The Morgans\* were among these craftsmen and built a home in New Springville about 1810. This will be moved to Richmondtown and used as a basketmaker’s shop. Many of the oystermen made the baskets

they needed in their trade, but others depended upon the local basket-maker. Small baskets were needed also in harvesting the strawberries which were grown on the Island, particularly in Rossville, and shipped to Manhattan by steamboat. Some baskets and tools used in the craft are displayed at the Historical Museum\* (23).

#### FACTORIES

As various industries developed, the rural character of Staten Island began to change. Factories developed on the north and east shores. In 1819, a group of men from Boston started a cloth dyeing factory, Barrett, Tileston and Company, at Richmond Terrace and Broadway, Factoryville (now West New Brighton) which brought many New Englanders to the community who were skilled in this field. This company was reorganized in 1825 as the New York Dyeing and Printing Establishment. In 1850 Colonel Nathan Barrett, uncle of Major Clarence T. Barrett,\* started another such factory on Cherry Lane (now Forest Avenue) near Barrett Avenue. This is the location of the Sears Roebuck Store today. Later the two companies merged into the well-known Barrett-Nephews Company.

There were many small industries manufacturing a variety of products. In 1833 a gun factory operated by Joseph Hall was located in New Brighton, between Franklin and Lafayette Avenues, but moved to the Willowbrook section near Victory Boulevard two years later, giving the name of Gun Factory Road. Flour mills, and a wallpaper factory were also developed. The Jewett White Lead Works (later National Lead Company) in Port Richmond dates from 1842. In 1838 the Staten Island Whaling Company, which processed whale oil, began operation. In 1844 the Crabtree and Wilkinson factory (later Irving Manufacturing Company) on Jersey Street began production of silk bandannas and commemorative scarves. The Louis De Jonge Company\* started the manufacture of colored, coated, and embossed papers about 1850 in a plant on Richmond Turnpike (Victory Blvd.) and Austin Place. The firm has been located at 330 Tompkins Avenue, Rosebank since 1918.

The Rosebank plant of the New York Paraffin Candle Company came to Staten Island at this time also. Antonio Meucci was a factory superintendent (56). General Joseph Garibaldi, in exile here at Meucci's home, was employed by this factory (10). In 1851 these two men opened a brew-

ery in Rosebank (later known as Bachmann's Clifton Brewery). They lived in a home which has been preserved at 420 Tompkins Avenue.\*

Jewelry boxes were manufactured in Graniteville until the 1950s, the last owner being Louis Ettlinger and Sons. A carriage and wagon factory was built in Richmondtown in the 1850s by Marsh and Nolan and will be restored as part of the Richmondtown Village.

#### USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources of the Island resulted in some industrial development at this time. The trap rock (erroneously called granite) in an area from the plaza of Bayonne Bridge to Victory Boulevard and Travis Avenue created the Staten Island Granite Company, organized in 1841. Trap rock for road and wall building was quarried there until 1896.

Natural clay gave rise to several firms which were engaged in brick-building by 1840. In 1854 Balthasar Kreischer, who had migrated here from Germany, began making firebrick for furnaces, stoves and ovens (1). This business continued in the family until the 1930s. The American Brick Company and Dolan Brick Company on Arthur Kill Road (around Fresh Kills section) also made common brick.

The Atlantic Terra Cotta Company\* on Arthur Kill Road, Tottenville (at Atlantic Railroad Station) made terra cotta building ornaments until the firm closed during the 1930s.

Some open iron mining activities were undertaken in the areas of Todt Hill, Ocean Terrace\* and at the southern end of Jewett Avenue, about the year 1833. This activity is remembered in the street name of Iron Mine Drive. The iron was used in the manufacture of red ochre paint and also as flux to be mixed with other ores. Many rocks containing iron ore are found on Staten Island today, some being used in rock gardens of the homes.

A rather ingenious use of a natural resource was the crushing of quartz pebbles from the beach sands at Tottenville by a sandpaper factory, operated by James Pike Gage near the shore at Page Avenue in the early 1860s. Horses were used to drag a millstone which crushed the pebbles. The finished sandpaper was shipped out from nearby docks (35).

Ice harvesting on many of the Island ponds was another lucrative industry. Clove Lakes (then Britton's Mill Pond), Silver Lake (before it became a reservoir), Crocheron's Pond at Bulls Head, Winant's Pond and

Killmeyer's Pond were among those used for this purpose. Large blocks of ice were marked out, sawed, and stored in icehouses. One icehouse stood at the present location of Clove Lakes Park Restaurant until it burned in 1920 (58).

#### BREWERIES

Breweries have been an important part of the industrial scene on Staten Island for a long time. Before the Civil War one of the largest was Bechtel's Brewery\* in Stapleton, at the head of Broad Street founded in 1853 by John Bechtel who sold it to his son, George, in 1865. Another was the Constanz Brewery established in 1852 by August Schmid. In 1875 this became Monroe Eckstein's Brewery, Manor Road, Four Corners, opposite Todt Hill Houses.

Records indicate that a Captain Thomas Lawrence had a distillery in New Brighton before 1815. He built a home on the southwest corner of Westervelt Avenue and Shore Road which later became the Belmont Hotel. This was razed in 1900.

#### OTHER OCCUPATIONS

The shopkeeper had his role in community life and there were many small general stores in the areas of densest population. Harness making and horseshoeing continued to be important trades as they had been during the colonial period. Shipbuilding also continued to flourish.

#### GAS MANUFACTURE

Plans for the manufacture of gas on Staten Island date back to 1855, but it was not until April 1857 that gas flowed through the mains to thirty customers. By August 1860 seventeen miles of mains had been laid and 350 customers were served. The manufacturing plant was located near Townsend's Dock, Clifton. The first mains were laid to Factoryville (West New Brighton), then to Port Richmond, branching off to Richmond Turnpike (Victory Blvd.) and Serpentine Road (Howard Avenue), and finally along Clove Road. The Civil War halted further extension of service. In 1863 gas lighting was installed on the *Westfield* and *Northfield* ferries. Gas receivers were filled at the gas company and carried to the boats each day. Street lighting by gas did not come to Staten Island until 1865.

## BURNING OF QUARANTINE

Community action has often been aroused on Staten Island. An example of this was the burning of the Quarantine hospitals, first at Seguine's Point, Prince's Bay in 1857, and then at Tompkinsville the following year (40).

The citizenry became alarmed over the spread of yellow fever. As immigrants stopped at Quarantine (near present site of St. George Coast Guard Base), victims of this dread disease were removed from the ships and hospitalized on the Island. Men who worked on the docks were free to return to their communities and homes, and consequently the epidemic spread to the general populace (40).

A large group of incensed citizens met and determined their course of action. They descended upon Quarantine, broke down the walls, removed the patients, and then burned the buildings. The Governor of the State sent militia to the Island, and the county had to pay for the property destroyed.

Later the State built two artificial islands off South Beach, Hoffman and Swinburne Islands,\* and transferred the Quarantine Hospitals there. These islands finally were abandoned in 1937.

## NEWSPAPERS

Several newspaper attempts were started before the Civil War. The first were chiefly literary, but they gradually carried more local news. According to Leng and Davis, the earliest newspaper on Staten Island was the *Richmond Republican*, dating back to 1827 (28). This was edited by Charles Baldwin who had offices on Griffin Street, Tompkinsville, but was printed in Manhattan. Four years later William Hagadorn became the owner and changed the name to *Richmond County Republican* and then added to the title *Saturday Morning Advertiser*. By 1833 the name had been changed to *Richmond County Free Press*. William Hagadorn's son, Francis L., became editor and proprietor of the first newspaper which was printed on the Island. This was the *Richmond County Mirror* which lasted from 1837 until 1839. Other attempts were the *Sepoy* (1859), the *Staten Islander*, the *Richmond County Gazette*, and *Richmond County Sentinel*. Copies of these old newspapers have been microfilmed and may be seen at the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences Library.\*

In 1849 Francis Hagadorn and Company established an independent mail route, called the Staten Island Express Post, because of dissatisfaction

with the Post Office services. Mail boxes were located at various places where the *Staten Islander* was sold. Letters were collected by post riders and delivered to destinations on Staten Island or taken to connecting expresses such as Boyd's City Dispatch Post or Adams and Wells Expresses. Elliott Burgher\* gave a collection of Staten Island Express Covers of the period from 1850 to 1860 to the Historical Museum (7).

### COMMUNICATIONS

During the earlier periods, messages had been sent from Signal Hill (Ft. Wadsworth) to Manhattan by means of a crude system of black and white kegs or large balls on a flagstaff. By 1801 this had been replaced by a semaphore station there, a system of movable arms on a pole. At one time there were ten such arms, each signifying a different numeral, and operated by rope and pulley. Information on the names of ships arriving and their cargoes was relayed from Sandy Hook, New Jersey to Staten Island and then to a building in Bowling Green Park, Manhattan (50, 51). This system was used to ensure docking facilities.

The magnetic telegraph, first used between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, May 24, 1844 was introduced on Staten Island in June 1860. The lines crossed under Kill Van Kull from Bergen Point, New Jersey to Port Richmond, and along the shore to Quarantine (Tompkinsville). The cost was 25¢ for the first 10 words and 20¢ for each additional 10 words. During the Civil War the lines were extended to Tottenville and under the Arthur Kill to Perth Amboy, New Jersey (69).

### INSTITUTIONS

Several large institutions, built on Staten Island before the Civil War, are rendering service today. Four of them were related to the care of seamen and their families.

#### SEAMEN'S RETREAT

In 1831 New York State purchased forty acres of land in the present Clifton area to build a Seamen's Retreat for ill and disabled seamen. At that time a state tax was imposed upon all seamen entering the Port of New York and placed in the Seamen's Retreat and Hospital Fund. This practice continued until about 1881. The original three-story hospital building, completed in



1831, has been demolished. However, the granite buildings facing Bay Street, erected in 1837, in Greek Temple style, are being used for the Out-patient Clinic of the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital.\*

The City of New York took over control of the Seamen's Retreat in 1878 and leased the property to the Marine Hospital Service (now the Public Health Service) five years later. In 1903 the federal government purchased the property. In 1935 the main part of the new hospital known as the Marine Hospital was completed, facing Vanderbilt Avenue. When it opened, it was the tallest building on Staten Island, the center tower rising to 160 feet from the ground. Since then additional wings have been added. The present bed capacity of 839 is in sharp contrast to the original facilities for 34 patients in the Seamen's Retreat in 1831.

#### SAILORS' SNUG HARBOR

In 1833 Sailors' Snug Harbor\* opened in New Brighton as a home for "aged, decrepit, and worn-out seamen," under the provisions of a will executed in 1801 by Alexander Hamilton for Captain Robert Richard Randall. The income from leasing Randall's 21-acre farm, bounded by 5th Avenue, 10th Street, 4th Avenue and 8th Street, Manhattan built this retirement home and will continue to maintain it. The main building erected in 1833 in Greek Revival style is now the administration building, one of five dormitories facing the Kill Van Kull (49). Throughout the years about fifty other buildings were constructed on the large acreage, formerly the David Houseman Farm. Originally a large farm including a dairy herd was maintained at the Harbor, but this was discontinued many years ago. Now there are many flower gardens, large trees, a fish pond, fountain, and greenhouse around the well-cared for grounds of 30 acres. A bronze statue of Captain Randall,\* the work of Augustus St. Gaudens, occupies a prominent position on the front lawn. A little church built in 1855 is still used for services on Sundays and for daily meditation. Many facilities are available for the men in the hobby and craft shops, in the library, in the Recreation Hall and Music Hall. At one time as many as 1,000 seamen resided at Sailors' Snug Harbor, with several men in a room, but social security and pension plans have decreased the need for the facilities provided by Captain Randall, so that now only 325 men reside there, each with his own room.

### MARINERS' FAMILY HOME

Aged women relatives of seamen have been cared for since 1854 in The Mariners' Family Home\* at 119 Tompkins Avenue, Stapleton on property adjacent to the Old Seamen's Fund and Retreat Hospital. This Victorian type mansion was built with State funds, but is maintained by voluntary contributions. "The Family" now consists of about 20 members, but at one time as many as 60 women resided there.

### SOCIETY FOR SEAMENS' CHILDREN\*

The Society for Seamen's Children was organized in 1846 and opened a home in Port Richmond for the care and instruction of needy children of seafaring men. The following year it moved to Stapleton, but soon outgrew the facilities there. In 1850, therefore, it leased land from Sailors' Snug Harbor, adjacent to St. Vincent's Hospital, and erected a large four-story home on Castleton Avenue. This housed the children for many years. Now the Society places children in foster homes. The building, remodeled, is used by the Staten Island Mental Health Society.

### COUNTY POOR HOUSE

A County Poor House was established in 1829 on Manor Road (that section presently called Brielle Avenue). This is now part of the Sea View Hospital and Home.\*

Before 1829 the aged poor had been boarded in private homes at the expense of the County. Some historians claim that a building in Richmondtown, originally built as the Gaoler's House was referred to as the "County House" in 1792 and later as the "Poor House." This was demolished in 1827.

### SAMUEL R. SMITH INFIRMARY

At the beginning of the Civil War there was need for medical assistance for dependents of men who had been called into service. Through the efforts of the Richmond County Medical Society, particularly Dr. William C. Anderson, the first voluntary hospital on Staten Island was opened in 1861 as a dispensary "for the indigent and suffering sick" in a building at the corner of Bay Street and Union Place, Stapleton. This was named the Samuel R. Smith Infirmary\* in memory of Dr. Samuel Russell Smith

(1801-1851) who had lived at 85 Hannah Street, Tompkinsville, and brought patients to his home for treatment rather than traveling over bad roads to visit them. A Ladies' Auxiliary was founded in 1863 to raise money for the hospital and in the following year the Infirmary was moved to a site near the present parking lot of the Medical Arts Building (on the north side of Tompkins Avenue, now St. Mark's Place). Ralph Waldo Emerson is reported to have been a speaker at the opening of this Infirmary which was to serve the sick poor, no provisions being made for the patient who could afford to pay. The Women's Auxiliary has supported hospital activities since that time supplying linens, china, glass, and funds for many services. The growth of the Staten Island Hospital will be described in a later section of this report.

## EDUCATION

After the Revolution, greater educational opportunities were provided by the villages throughout the Island.

It is interesting to observe that three Islanders were appointed to the First Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, established in 1784 – Abraham Bancker, John C. Dongan, and Hermanus Garrison. The next Island representative was George William Curtis,\* after whom Curtis High School was named, who served in this capacity from 1864 to 1892. This representation from the Island indicates a very definite public interest in education which has continued to the present day.

Several private schools were organized before the Civil War, most of them short-lived. A church-attached school was Reverend Peter J. Van Pelt's Seminary on Richmond Terrace, near Richmond Avenue, opened in 1802 as a "seminary of learning." In 1812 he established what was probably the first Sunday School in the country. A Thomas Fardon had a boarding school for boys in Tompkinsville, and a Mrs. Reed had a Seminary for Young Ladies on Griffin Street, Tompkinsville (in 1829 known as Coddington's). About 1823 the Castleton House Academy for "young gentlemen" was established about two and a half miles from Tompkinsville (28).

Records show that there was a schoolhouse in the Tottenville-Rossville section in 1769 which was probably the forerunner of the Rossville District School dating back to 1796. The New Springville School (then Karle's Neck) erected around 1700 was enlarged in the early

1800s (demolished in 1890). In the 19th century it was known as District School No. 2, Northfield accommodating forty children (near the site of old P.S. 27 on Richmond Avenue).

There was also a public school in Castleton Corners as far back as 1784, located on Manor Road (near the site of old P.S. 29 which later became old P.S. 35). The 1889 building is now used as The Elim Gospel Tabernacle. Another schoolhouse, run by a Terrance Reilly, was at the intersection of Richmond Avenue and Richmond Terrace, Port Richmond. In a report of 1802, four other schools were named – Indian Hill (between Eltingville and Annadale), Smoking Point (near Rossville), Woodrow and Bentley.

In 1812 a school district was created in each of the four towns of Northfield, Southfield, Westfield, and Castleton, with a superintendent of schools in charge of the entire Island.

There was a school in Tompkinsville in 1815, in which Governor Daniel D. Tompkins showed a great interest, and one in Westfield (Tottenville) in 1822.

Henry Martin Boehm\* (son of Reverend Henry Boehm) was a schoolmaster in the Southfield School District No. 3 between 1840 and 1860, becoming Richmond County School Commissioner in 1860. His school was on Fresh Kills Road (Arthur Kill Road), Greenridge, near Richmond Avenue and later in the house on Arthur Kill Road and Gifford's Lane, Greenridge.

Portions of Schoolmaster Boehm's diary, reproduced in the *Staten Island Historian* make fascinating reading, particularly the section dealing with specific rules and regulations (64).

The year 1842 saw the dawn of the Public School System of New York State, providing free education for all children. Prior to this date the schools of New York City were under the Public School Society, a philanthropic organization established in 1805. Gradually the District Schools or Ward Schools disappeared. Prescribed courses were set by the State and qualified teachers were required. Harmon B. Cropsey became the first County Superintendent of Richmond in 1842, with 19 schools and 20 teachers under his supervision. These, except one, were one-room schoolhouses with all grades.

The school day of 1842 included scripture reading, arithmetic lessons, reading, geography, penmanship, spelling, dictation, and singing. The

centennial of the state school system was celebrated in 1942. At that time, a typical classroom session was conducted at the Voorlezer's House.\*

In 1845 a district school on Richmond Road near Van Duzer Street was in existence. By 1853, there were schools, not only in New Brighton, West New Brighton, Tompkinsville, Westfield (Tottenville), and Stapleton, but also in Old Place, New Springville, Newton (Great Kills), Bloomingview (Huguenot), Garretson (Dongan Hills, opposite the site of the present firehouse), Chelsea and Rossville (on the present City Yard on Rossville Avenue). A one-room stone schoolhouse stood on the property now occupied by the Mohlenhoff farm on Victory Blvd., Travis. The West New Brighton school was on the site of the present 1568 Richmond Terrace, but later was moved to Elizabeth Street and Cary Avenue.

There are few records available which give information about Staten Island schools prior to 1861. Mr. Frank Hankinson, former Superintendent of Schools on Staten Island, and Dr. Vernon B. Hampton, retired teacher, did research in this area in 1942 (14). Research carried on by Dr. Hampton disclosed that on September 20, 1861 a group of 36 teachers of the Island's 47, held a meeting presided over by Henry M. Boehm, the County School Commissioner, and founded the Richmond County Teachers' Association.

## TRANSPORTATION

Before the Civil War, stages operated between the various ferry landings and also into the interior of the Island. There were stages between Vanderbilt's Landing and Richmond and from Hillyer's Corners (near Richmond) to New Springville, Bulls Head, and Graniteville.

## ROADS

Roads were still unimproved dirt roads or plank roads, some retaining the names by which they had been known before the Revolution. King's Road became Richmond Plank Road between Vanderbilt's Landing and Rossville. Tollgates and tollhouses were established along the way to defray the cost of this improvement (2). One of these was at the intersection of Vanderbilt Avenue and Richmond Plank Road. Toll was one to five cents according to the distance traveled. Another tollhouse\* stood at Fresh Kills Road (Arthur Kill Road) and Shea's Lane (Rossville Avenue) (2).

Richmond Turnpike (Victory Blvd.), an important link in the stagecoach route to Philadelphia, was improved from Quarantine (Tompkinsville) to the New Blazing Star Ferry (Travis). Clove Road ran only from Shore Road (Richmond Terrace) to Richmond Plank Road. Manor Road continued as an important thoroughfare, as it had been earlier.

A toll bridge over the Fresh Kills at Greenridge was built by the Plank Road Company about 1850. This made traveling easier from the west shore to the east and south shores (from New Springville section to Greenridge). The county built another bridge in 1896. The present bridge was constructed at the same site in 1931.



*Stagecoach and travelers (mural in Richmond Borough Hall)*

#### SAILING VESSELS

Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, founder of the Vanderbilt fortune, had a fast sailboat operating between Manhattan and Staten Island in 1810. However the success of Robert Fulton's invention of the steamboat soon improved ferry transportation to and from the Island.

#### STEAMBOATS\*

Through the efforts of Governor Daniel D. Tompkins, the Richmond Turnpike Company was incorporated in 1816. Steamboat service between Quarantine (Tompkinsville) and Whitehall Street, Manhattan, replaced the sailing vessels known as "periaguas" (29). The *Nautilus* went into ser-

vice in 1817, making four trips daily. Stagecoaches traveled along the Turnpike from Quarantine to the New Blazing Star Ferry.\* Safely across the Kill Van Kull, the coaches continued through New Brunswick and Princeton to Trenton, across the Delaware River to Pennsylvania, and by way of Bristol to Philadelphia. One coach or chaise made the entire trip, the horses being changed en route. The advent of the steamboat shortened the trip between New York and Philadelphia from two days (three in winter) to twelve hours.

Cornelius Vanderbilt held the controlling interest in the Richmond Turnpike Company from about 1828. However, he had competition from the Tompkins and Staples Ferry from Tompkinsville and the People's Ferry from Stapleton (Townsend's Landing) to Liberty Street, Manhattan. In 1853 the two ferry companies merged with the Turnpike Company, under the name of the Staten Island and New York Ferry Company, with a fleet of five single-ended steamboats, remaining in existence until 1864 when the company was sold to the Staten Island Railway Ferry Company. These ferries left from Whitehall Street and made three stops on Staten Island – Tompkinsville, Stapleton, and Vanderbilt's Landing at Clifton.

Other steamboats operated from points on the North Shore to Pier 18, North (Hudson) River, stopping at Elm Park, Port Richmond, Factoryville (West Brighton), Snug Harbor, and New Brighton seven times a day. Steamboats plying between Keyport, New Brunswick, and Perth Amboy, New Jersey, and Robinson Street, Manhattan, stopped at Tottenville, Rossville, and Chelsea once a day (4).

Ferry service also continued under various ownerships between Port Richmond and Bergen Point, New Jersey (52); between Port Richmond and Manhattan; between Tottenville and Perth Amboy, New Jersey and between Long Neck (Travis) and Carteret, New Jersey.

#### RAILROADS

June 2, 1860 marked a new era in transportation on Staten Island with the advent of the first steam railroad, an enterprise of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt and his associates. The wood-burning locomotive pulled passenger cars from Vanderbilt's Landing (Clifton) to Tottenville. Five trips a day were made during the week, and three on Sunday. They connected with the new double-ended side wheelers, *Northfield*, *Middletown*, and

*Westfield* which ran hourly between 7 A.M. and 6 P.M. The Staten Island Railroad Company purchased the ferry to Manhattan in 1865, combining these two transportation methods.

### PERSONALITIES CONNECTED WITH STATEN ISLAND

About 1836, Dr. Samuel MacKenzie Elliott, the eminent eye specialist, purchased property around Bard Avenue and Richmond Terrace. Within ten years he had built some of the grey square stone houses still standing in that section, then called Elliottville (now Livingston), which became quite a literary colony. This was the Dr. Elliott to whom James Russell Lowell, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, N. P. Willis, and other famous men came for treatment.

To him also came Mrs. Francis George Shaw. Finding the climate agreeable, Mr. Shaw bought property between Bard and Davis Avenues, north of Henderson Avenue. He was a prominent philanthropist and civic leader, serving as a trustee of the Seamen's Retreat (now U.S. Public Health Service Hospital) and of the S. R. Smith Infirmary (Staten Island Hospital). After the Civil War, Mr. Shaw was influential in the establishment of the Staten Island Savings Bank which opened in 1867. All the Shaws were abolitionists. A daughter, Mrs. C. R. Lowell,\* widowed by the Civil War, tried the first plan of organized charity on the Island (16). Another daughter was married to George William Curtis, noted editor.

Francis Parkman, also a patient of Dr. Elliott, lived with the Shaw family for two years. His *Conspiracy of Pontiac* was published when he was a Staten Island resident (13).

Staten Island often has been a quiet retreat for literary figures who have written glowing descriptions of its natural beauty. Judge William Emerson, county judge of Richmond from 1841 to 1843, lived in that section now called Emerson Hill, Concord, then known as Dutch Farms. He was visited by his brother, Ralph Waldo Emerson,\* and many friends, including Henry James, father of the novelist of the same name. Henry David Thoreau came to Staten Island as a tutor for the children of Judge Emerson. In a letter of 1843 he wrote: "the whole island is like a garden and affords very fine scenery." He spoke of the beautiful cedar, gum, tulip, peach, and cherry trees and of the woods of honeysuckle (28, 63). In another letter, he spoke of the beautiful sight from Madame Grymes'



house looking into the Harbor. Grymes Hill and Emerson Hill still afford excellent views of the New York Harbor.

Prior to the Civil War and during the struggle, some well-known abolitionists were active on the Island (13). Among them was Sydney Howard Gay who lived in a cottage in West New Brighton. This little home was used as a station on the Underground Railroad, aiding runaway slaves to escape to Canada. During the War, Gay was the managing editor of the *New York Tribune*. His writings helped the success of the Republican Party and Lincoln's election in 1860. Among the prominent men who visited at the Gay home were John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, and William Lloyd Garrison. Other abolitionists who lived on the Island were Albert Oliver Willcox and his sons. Mr. Gay's daughter, Mary Otis Gay, married one of the Willcox sons (13). After the War, Gay became editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, but returned to Staten Island in 1872 to live on Davis Avenue, West New Brighton, until his death in 1888.

George William Curtis, famous essayist, editor, and lecturer, came to Staten Island in 1856. His novel *Prue and I* was written in his home at 234 Bard Avenue where he lived with his wife, the daughter of Francis George Shaw. This was the old Shaw Homestead and is still standing at the corner of Bard and Henderson Avenues.\* Curtis' praises of Staten Island were many. Perhaps the most famous is "God might have made a more beautiful spot than Staten Island, but He never did." Curtis was interested also in politics and became a delegate to the Republican National Convention in Chicago which nominated Lincoln. During the 1863 "draft riots," Curtis hid Wendell Phillips and Horace Greeley, both ardent abolitionists, in his Bard Avenue home to protect them from the angry mobs. He and Sydney Howard Gay were very close friends.

Curtis was a prominent figure in the Unitarian Church on Staten Island, often occupying the pulpit in the absence of the pastor. Curtis High School was named after him, as were Curtis Avenue, Curtis Court, Curtis Place and P.S. 19, Richmond.

Two well-known artists also made their home on Staten Island before the Civil War. One of these was William Page\* who came to the Island in the 1840s and lived in an octagonal house on Page Avenue, Richmond Valley. He was famous as a portrait painter. Jasper Francis Cropsey who

lived at 1922 Arthur Kill Road, was the "first Staten Islander to attain international reputation in art." He was a landscape artist and also an architect of note (59, 27).\*



*Home of George William Curtis*

Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), one of the first landscape architects, made his home in Eltingville, Staten Island, from 1848 to about 1860 in the Woods of Arden House near Hylan Boulevard. Olmsted turned the property into a wheat farm and also planted many fruit trees there. During a trip to Europe in 1850 he ordered 5,000 trees which he planted around his Eltingville home (5). Two Cedars of Lebanon and many other unusual trees stand today as a tribute to Olmsted's interest in agriculture and landscaping. He is best known as the designer of several parks, including Central Park, Manhattan; Prospect Park, Brooklyn; Fairmount Park, Philadelphia; and Franklin Park, Boston. The Woods of Arden House has a most interesting history dating back to 1700.\*

Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794-1877) was born on Staten Island, began his interest in transportation in a small sailboat venture, became a railroad magnate and millionaire, and maintained an interest in

the Island, contributing to many philanthropies. The Vanderbilt home was in Stapleton, not far from the site of the present Paramount Theater.\* His oldest son, William H. (1821-1885) was left the bulk of his father's estate, a sum of 90 million which he was able to double before his death. He had a successful farm on the site of the present Miller Field. The Vanderbilt name is remembered in the beautiful Vanderbilt Mausoleum which overlooks Moravian Cemetery,\* in the name of Vanderbilt Avenue, Clifton and in the many charities to which members of the family contributed.

Captain Jacob Hand Vanderbilt,\* locally known as Captain Jake, brother of Commodore Vanderbilt, owned a large mansion on the hill above Clove Valley on the site of the Augustinian Academy. His property was adjacent to that of Sir Edward Cunard. Captain Jake was in command of a steamboat at the age of eighteen, and rose to the presidency of the Staten Island East Shore Railroad and Ferry (3). He was well-known on the Island for his fast trotting horses.

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