

**ANNALS OF STATEN
ISLAND, FROM ITS
DISCOVERY TO THE
PRESENT TIME, PP. 239-464**

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Annals of Staten Island, from Its Discovery to the Present Time, pp. 239-464 by J. J. Clute

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STATEN ISLAND,

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BY

J. J. CLUTE.

"D"

"If we look for a spot which forever is blest
By Nature with her perennial smile,

.....
We never need leave our own green isle."

ANON.

NEW YORK:

Press of CHAS. VOGT, No. 114 FULTON STREET.

1877.

“H.”

HOSPITALS, BENEFICENT
INSTITUTIONS, &c.

seizure and confiscation of all British vessels within his reach, and early announced that the port of New Orleans should be wide open for the sale of the prizes of Yankee privateers. This was good news to a thrifty Scotch trader in that city named Randall, who had crossed the sea to make his fortune, and who now quietly fitted out vessels which took the sea as privateers, and brought him rich returns. There is no tradition of peculiar harshness in his captures, which could cause a curse to cling to his gold, which rapidly increased, and was invested in plantations in Louisiana. When he died, his only son inherited his estates.

This son, Robert Richard Randall, died three-fourths of a century ago; there is no record of his life, and there are none living probably who knew him. It was his custom to leave his Louisiana plantation every summer, and come to breathe the cooler airs of the northern coast, much as his successors in that region used to be seen at Newport and Saratoga before the war. Probably he was the counterpart of many a bachelor who may haply sit upon a pleasant piazza some sunny morning, snuffing the sea air, or the wind from the mountains; if any such there be, let him be the counterpart of Randall, and so provide that his may become a name of interest to the unborn bachelor of another generation, if not of gratitude to hundreds and hundreds of "aged, decrepid and worn-out" fellow voyagers of life.

Among the associates of Randall's summer sojourn by the sea, was a certain Mr. Farquhar, a family name which was familiar to New Yorkers in the beginning of the century, James Farquhar being the President of the Marine Society at the time of Mr. Randall's death. Farquhar was an invalid, and was compelled every year to go to a southern and softer climate, and it naturally occurred to the friends that it would be convenient if their estates lay in the air that was most agreeable to their health; they discussed the subject, and growing interested, compared their fortunes, which proved to be nearly equal, and after due consideration and debate, they agreed to exchange estate upon condition that Mr. Randall

should pay five hundred guineas to boot, which he did, and the properties were transferred at the close of the last century.

Mr. Randall was now a New Yorker—a plain, quiet citizen, of whom there are no traditions. Neither Dr. Francis nor President King, in their genial gossip of the city at the opening of the century, nor Mr. Valentine nor Miss Booth, in their pleasant histories, have preserved any anecdote which show that he was at all conspicuous among the solid gentry of the time, nor is there any portrait of him known; no doubt he wore his hair powdered and in a queue, and dressed in silk hose and breeches, with silver shoe and knee buckles, and broad-flapped coat and vest, like other gentlemen of that day. Mr. Randall was a suburban citizen of what was then the little city of New York. It was bounded on Broadway by Anthony Street, on the North River by Harrison Street, and on the East River by Rutgers Street; within these narrow limits was the city solid, but even the houses partook of the manners of the time, and stood apart in easy dignity, or were seated in green gardens and under pleasant trees. On Bowery Lane, stretching out of town through waving fields and cheerful orchards, farm-houses were to be seen even as far as Broome Street. The line of Broadway was the highland of the Island, and the hilly country about the site of the St. Nicholas hotel sloped gently westward, enlivened by the country seats of rich men. If, following that line, the traveler advanced, upon his way to Albany, as far as the present Astor Place, he encountered a paling which ended the road at that point, and to his inquiry received the answer that it was the line of the farm of a Mr. Randall, who had exchanged a Louisiana plantation for this estate of Mr. Farquhar, at Sandy Hill. The mansion house was a large yellow building, upon the spot where the Presbyterian church in Mercer Street stood. The rural character of the neighborhood long survived in the farm, which, within the memory of men, occupied the site of the New York Hotel.

In the large yellow house, on the first day of June, 1801,

Robert Richard Randall, "being weak in body, but of sound and disposing mind and memory," made his will. He had summoned General Hamilton and Daniel D. Tompkins as the lawyers to draw the paper. He directed that his just debts should be paid. He gave to the legitimate children of his brother Paul an annuity of forty pounds each until they were fifteen years old, and a sum of a thousand pounds to each son as he became twenty-one, and the same to each daughter upon her marriage. He bequeathed to his worthy housekeeper his gold sleeve-buttons and a life annuity of forty pounds. To his faithful overseer he left his gold watch and forty pounds down. Finally, he bequeathed to his servant his knee and shoe buckles, and twenty pounds down,—there he stopped. He had said nothing of the bulk of his property, and Hamilton and Tompkins waited his further directions. But Mr. Randall said simply that he had no other relatives, and did not know how to dispose of his property most wisely. He asked the advice of the lawyers, and Hamilton inquired how his fortune had been made! Randall answered that it had been made for him; he had inherited it from his father. Hamilton inquired how his father had acquired it? "By honest privateering," was Randall's reply. Hamilton then suggested that if no better disposition occurred to him, it would be proper to leave a fortune made upon sea, for the benefit of disabled seamen. Randall immediately felt the wisdom of the proposition, and assented, and it is to the benevolent sagacity of Alexander Hamilton that the establishment of the Sailor's Snug Harbor is due.

This account was derived from the late Issao Bell, who was foreman of the jury upon the trial of the suit to break the will, and effectually disposes of the romantic tradition, which is of a kind always popular, that a certain grim and gloomy Captain Randall, another Kidd and ravager of the seas, after a dark career of prosperous piracy, during which by countless murders and unimaginable atrocities, he amassed incredible wealth, became remorseful in his declining years, and in the vain hope of propitiating divine favor by good works,

left his ill-gotten booty to found a hospital for decrepid sailors.

Contestants to the will immediately arose when it was offered for probate, and among them was the bishop of Nova Scotia. For nearly thirty years the legal warfare between the heirs and the executors was continued, until the Supreme Court of the United States in March, 1830, sustained the will, and turned over the estate to the Trustees.

During all this time the property belonging to the estate had largely increased in value, and with a part of the accumulations thereof, the Trustees, on the 16th day of June, 1831, purchased from Isaac R. Housman, Esq., the splendid property now occupied by the Institution, on the North Shore of Staten Island, "containing one hundred and forty acres of land, salt meadow and marsh, be the same more or less," for the sum of ten thousand dollars, and immediately commenced the erection of suitable buildings thereon, and in August, 1833, the first inmates were received.

On the first day of May, 1835, the trustees purchased from Isaac, Joseph and Abraham Soria, twenty acres of land "by estimation," lying west of and contiguous to the first purchase for the sum of six thousand dollars, beside a small parcel or two, making a total of 164 acres, for the sum of \$16,000.

The principal structure is a massive cut-stone edifice, with a large wing on each side connected with it by corridors; there are numerous other buildings, all constructed in the best manner, for the accommodation of the inmates, beside a church, a hospital, and elegant residences for the officers. In front of the main edifice is a large monument erected to the memory of the founder, whose remains rest beneath it. The inscriptions on this monument are as follows:

North Side.

The Trustees of the Sailors' Snug Harbor erected this monument to the memory of Robert Richard Randall, by whose munificence this Institution was founded on the 21st of August, 1834.

East Side.

The humane institution of the Sailor's Snug Harbor, conceived in a spirit of enlarged benevolence, with an endowment which time has proved fully adequate to the objects of the donor, and organized in a manner which shows wisdom and foresight. The founder of this noble charity will ever be held in grateful remembrance by the partakers of his bounty.

South Side.

Charity never faileth.
Its memorial is immortal.

West Side.

The Trustees of the Sailor's Snug Harbor have caused the remains of Robert Richard Randall to be removed from the original place of interment, and deposited beneath this monument on the 21st of August, 1884.

The following Annual Report of the Trustees of the Sailor's Snug Harbor, presented to the Senate March 1, 1876, will give an idea of the resources of the institution :

RECEIPTS.

Balance of cash on hand 31st Dec., 1874.....	\$16,977 88
Cash received from Wm. T. Garner, for one year's rent of 35 acres of land on Staten Island, leased to him.....	200 00
Cash, changes made in the pay-rolls of the employes at the institution in 1875.....	37 52
Cash, for grease sold from the institution.....	245 28
Cash, for cabbages sold from the institution.....	19 00
Cash, for an empty oil barrel.....	1 00
Cash, E. C. Badeau, for extra tax on bill of prunes.....	1 32
Cash, Thomas Melville, governor, for money, etc., found among the effects of deceased inmates in 1875.....	81 58
Cash, from same, for sundries sold by him for account of the trustees in 1875.....	614 10
Cash, from officers and employes of the institution, for sundries sold them by the governor for account of the trustees in 1875.....	723 20
Cash, Joseph F. Waller, for one year's rent of the "old frame parsonage" to 1st November, 1875.....	800 00
Cash, Society for the Relief of Destitute Children of Seamen, for one year's rent of the "Childrens' Home," to 1st November, 1875.....	500 00