

The following story is a mix of fact and imagination. We invite you to enjoy this most recent "History as You Like It" essay and let your creative sparks fly.

Masts on Main Road

By Joel Reitman

This is a story about a young man who lived in an English Settlement on Long Island around the mid-1600s. We will give him a name, Maxwell Terry. Actually, there was a family among the first Southold settlers named Terry, and their plot of land was about where Max might have lived. The only thing not real is Max. However, his story is probably typical of young men that would be like him. So, let's meet Max.

Max was born in Essex, England, son of a Puritan sheepherder. He was one of the older children of what would eventually become ten siblings. Maxwell and his family were members of John Youngs (Yonges) church.

Reverend Youngs left England looking for religious freedom, and it's often said that he also left for financial independence. Reverend Youngs and his family came to settle on Long Island, he had talked Maxwell's father to do likewise. About a year later, Maxwell and his family made their way across the Atlantic Ocean on a ship called the *Love*. For Maxwell the crossing was memorable for its sheep-like odors and that ever present feeling that overcomes one during rough seafaring days. None of these gut-wrenching experiences ever deterred Maxwell from wanting to follow the sea, either by being onboard a ship or just by being near those majestic sailing vessels. Besides, Maxwell was looking forward to reuniting with Nathaniel, his school mate from England.

Reverend Youngs assigned Maxwell's family to a plot of about 4 acres, which was the same as everyone else, except for Reverend Youngs who had 6 acres. There was one road in the new settlement that ran east to west, and it was called 'The Street.' Maxwell's family plot was near the angle of 'The Street' where it turned south near what was called Tuckers Lane. Across 'The Street' was the property of the Dickerson's and down 'The Street' was the property of Lt. John Underhill, a very wealthy and daring man. At the time, Yennecot, which became known as Southold, had a population of about 180. Maxwell's family parcel was typical of the area with a very fertile soil and heavily forested. However, there was no need to clear the land as it was already cleared by the peaceful Corchaugs. A creek ran beside the Terry property, and when Max would be out looking to gather the many wild berries he would pause at the bridge that crossed over the creek and fish for Menhaden. Whaling was one of the mainstays of the early settlers' livelihood due to the abundance of Menhaden.

Maxwell's day was typical for every settler, rising at dawn and working until dusk. Max was consumed with his responsibility of caring for the two sheep his family had brought over with them. The rest of his day was all about tending to the fences that kept the sheep at home, maintaining the family vegetable garden - which was the source of the family's food and also treats for his sheep. He also constructed a shelter for the sheep, with the help of an older brother who had become an apprentice to the settlement's carpenter, William Salmon. Max was also given the responsibility of teacher to his younger siblings of what he learned at Mr. Nicholas Eades's school.

Sunday was a day to spend at Reverend Youngs's Church. One Sunday, Nathaniel Moore asked Max to walk down to the creek with him and see his father's latest project. The Moore family came here in

1641, before Max's family, and the Moore family consisted of 8 children and Moore's wife Martha, who was a sister to the Reverend Youngs. Nathaniel was an assistant to his father's shipyard.

So, that one Sunday, the two young men walked along 'The Street' past Reverend Youngs's home where the road began sloping down toward the creek. Maxwell had often noticed two masts looming over the Moore's home and wondered exactly what kind of ship it was. He never had time to investigate as he was preoccupied getting to and from Mr. Eades's school.

As Maxwell turned the corner at the Moores' house, he finally got a good look at the two masts. It was just as he had envisioned it, a two masted whaling ship. As the two young men continued along the creek road, Max saw a busy shipyard full of finished and unfinished sloops preparing to go whaling. In the background the shimmering waters of the bay seemed to be calling Max. Maybe one day, Maxwell thought, he could be joining the whaling ships at sea.

Credit to: Melissa Andruski of the Southold Free Library for finding appropriate literature.
And to the: Seventh Grade Class Southold High School Class of 1965 for their publication, "Southold in its early Years"