

Transcript of Lecture
Delivered by:
Constance Ayers Denne, Ph.D.
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Writers of the East End: Responses to a Special Place

When I was invited to give this lecture on the writers of the East End, I wondered for a long time how it would be possible to make a selection from among the hundreds of writers associated with this area. Finally, narrowing my focus, I decided to talk about those writers for whom the eastern end of Long Island was a special place. I wanted to emphasize those writers whose art conjured up a vision of the particular character of the East End and who, through their work, provided a record of this unique American place. And the order of presentation? That was easy. I would use the order of time. After all, this lecture is a part of the celebration of the tricentquingenary of the town of East Hampton, so an historical approach seemed appropriate.

We begin, then, not at the very beginning, but in 1723, with the birth in Connecticut of a Mohegan Indian who later came to Montauk, Samson Occum. Samson Occum, a preacher and a poet and writer, although a great respecter of tribal culture, was converted to Christianity in 1741, at the age of eighteen. His early years were spent as a teacher in Connecticut, his birthplace, but in 1749 he became a schoolmaster to the Montauk tribe, marrying Mary Fowler, a Montauk Indian. He was ordained by the Long Island Presbytery in 1759. A few years after his ordination, he wrote an "Account of the Montauks," an appreciative consideration of the customs, values, and beliefs of the Montaukets. Occum describes the conventions surrounding marriage and the naming of children; the tribal Gods; the group's perspective on death, burial, and mourning; and their perceptions concerning the future state of the soul. It is altogether sympathetic and, at the same time, a fine piece of writing. Nowadays, one might consider Occum an activist in the cause of Indian rights, for he was adamantly opposed to white encroachment on Indian territory. This had made him extremely unpopular in Connecticut, but he was more effective in New York and succeeded in preserving Indian possessions here. Among his many accomplishments, Occum also wrote a widely-anthologized hymn that is familiar to church-goers of his persuasion: "Awaked by Sinai's Awful Sound" (Niles 7). A review of his life, which Nath. Niles published anonymously, reveals a very interesting incident and an achievement for which Occum gets little credit, for it is not generally known. As a young man, when he was teaching the Indians of Connecticut, he

developed the idea for a charity school for Indians. The idea caught on with his superiors among the clergy, and he was sent to England in 1765 to collect funds for this school. He was wildly successful, collecting more than \$40,000 from various sources but not from the English clergy. However, it was never used to create the school that Occum had envisioned for the Indians. It was used instead to found a college, Dartmouth College. Niles writes that he was "virtually the founder of Dartmouth College" (3-4). Occum must have been disappointed, but one gets the sense that he probably was not too surprised. In one of his letters from England he had written: "I waited on a number of bishops and represented to them the miserable and wretched situation of the poor Indians. . . . But they never gave us one single brass farthing" (4-5). The bishops did not seem interested in evangelizing the Indians. Occum found them "very indifferent whether the poor Indians go to heaven or hell" (5). Despite a slight pang of conscience ("I can't help my thoughts"), he asserts: "I am apt to think that they don't want the Indians to go to heaven with them," and imagining the salvation of some of his brethren, he manages a slight dig: "I believe they will be as welcome there as the bishops" (5).

One year before Samson Occum died, John Howard Payne -- poet, playwright, and actor -- was born, in 1791. He was not born in East Hampton, for his family had moved to New York City eight months before his birth; but his maternal ancestors, the Isaacs family, had resided in the village for generations, and he was a frequent visitor as a child (Overmyer 19 and 26). His grandfather, Aaron Isaacs, until he was converted by the Presbyterians, was East Hampton's only Jewish citizen. His daughter Sarah had married William Payne of Massachusetts, and their first home was in East Hampton (Overmyer 20-21). It is, therefore, altogether fitting that the small, colonial, salt-box house on Main Street should have become a shrine to Payne. Now, of course, it is known by the name of the song Payne wrote for the operetta "Clari or the Maid of Milan," which premiered at Covent Garden in the spring of 1823: "Home, Sweet Home" (Overmyer 211). Payne's collaborator was Henry Rowley Bishop, who wrote the music. Clari, a simple maid, is the character who sings the song in the palace of the Duke who is to become her husband, and when she is asked by her maid where she learned it, Clari tells her: "It is the song of my native village" (Overmyer 212). In case there is anyone in the world who does not know the lyrics to this famous song, let me recite one verse here:

'Mid pleasures and palaces, though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!
A charm from the sky seems to hallow us there,
Which, seek through the world, is ne'er met with

elsewhere. This and the additional verses are followed by the well-known refrain: Home, home, sweet, sweet home -- There's no place like home, there's no place like home!

Clearly, Payne identified with and had warm memories of East Hampton. When he was nearly fifty and writing to his sister-in-law from Georgia, where he was furthering the interests of the Cherokees, who were being forced to cede their territory and faced removal, he referred to himself as "a staid East Hamptoner" (Overmyer 327). The last papers that Payne prepared for the Cherokees were, he wrote in 1838 to his brother Thatcher: "sealed with the seal given me by Aunt Esther -- her father's seal." Her father was, of course, Payne's East Hampton grandfather, Aaron Isaacs. The seal must have contained a Jewish symbol, perhaps a Star of David, for Payne added: "if they [the American Indians] were part of the Ten Tribes . . . the stamp would be a part of the family arms -- an omen of our all coming together at last." (Overmyer 322). This gesture speaks well of the influence of his East Hampton heritage on John Howard Payne's later life. We turn now to another East End village, Sag Harbor. Sag Harbor has a long history of an interest in writing. A Literary Society was organized there, February 9, 1807. Its constitution stated that all members were to treat each other with decency and respect. The group was "to consist of disputation, composition, declamation and examination upon geography, astronomy, and such other exercise as a majority shall appoint." The treasurer's duties, along with handling the dues and other financial matters, included providing stationery, fuel, and candles. (Members would also be tried for gambling or intoxication and fined for each) (Zaykowski 56). The Literary Society was still in existence in the 1850's and met in the Bethel Baptist Church (Zaykowski 174).

Whether James Fenimore Cooper knew about the Literary Society or not in 1819 there is no way of knowing. We do know, however, that at that time he was in Sag Harbor about to begin a whaling enterprize. He had just purchased a whaling ship, the Union, which had been "fitted out for three voyages to Brazilian waters in the next three years" (Beard I. 24). He "owned the ship and two-thirds of her outfit" (Beard I. 43). The system of shareholding was his original idea, but he alone took charge of all the details of the business. Cooper had had a lengthy association with ships. In 1806 his father had "arranged for him to sail before the mast aboard a merchant vessel, The Stirling, which carried him to London . . . [and] Spain, and back to London." (Beard I. 5-6). He received a warrant as a midshipman in 1808 and was assigned first to the Vesuvius and later to the Sloop Wasp 18. The latter kept him ashore in New York City. There, in 1810, he met Susan Augusta De Lancey and after a year's furlough "left the

Navy forever, though his heart never forsook it" and married (Beard I. 6).

By 1819, Cooper, now thirty and with a wife and children, had settled down on Angevine Farm near Scarsdale in Westchester County, a De Lancey family property. Susan De Lancey also had many relatives in Sag Harbor and on Shelter Island, among them the Derings, Floyds, Nicolls, and Sylvesters, and the young couple were frequent visitors to the East End (Berbrick 6-7). In 1819, Sag Harbor was a major American whaling port. Understandably the ambitious young ex-sailor saw the possibilities and answered again "the call of the running tide" (Walker 10). He enlisted one of the Dering relatives, sold a portion of the shares, hired Captain Jonathan Osborne of Wainscott, purchased outfittings from the Hommedieu family, organized the maiden voyage, and literally waited for his ship to come in. His letters from Angevine Farm reveal that he would set out for Sag Harbor as soon as he heard of the Union's arrival. The results were disappointing, however, and he eventually abandoned the business. He was soon to achieve far greater success as a writer than as a whaler.

The career of the novelist came about as the result of a challenge by his wife. One evening, while reading a novel to her, he threw it aside in disgust saying: "I could write you a better book than that myself." Susan encouraged him to do it (S. F. Cooper 38). The rest, as they say, is history. *Precaution*, his first novel, was published in 1820. *The Spy* followed in a year. In 1823, he launched *The Leather - Stocking* series with *The Pioneers*. Many of his novels have nautical themes, subjects, and settings known to East Enders. *The Water-Witch* (1830), *Miles Wallingford* (1844) and *Jack Tier* (1848), use the Montauk area. Whaling or references to it occur in *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Pilot* (1824), *The Water-Witch*, *Home as Found* (1838), *The Pathfinder* (1840), *Afloat and Ashore* (1844) and *Jack Tier* (Berbrick 15-25; Ringe 11-13).

In 1849, just two years before his death, Cooper wrote *The Sea Lions*. Although it is about sealing, it is set in 1820 and incorporates many of Cooper's memories of his whaling days in Sag Harbor. Melville reviewed the novel when it came out, found it to be one of Cooper's "happiest" and warmly recommended it (Grossman 235). For East Enders, it is of interest for what it tells us about Sag Harbor in Cooper's day:

The eastern end of Long Island lies so much out of the track of the rest of the world, that even the new

railroad cannot make much impression on its inhabitants, who get their pigs and poultry, butter and eggs, a little earlier to market than in the days of the stage-wagons, it is true, but they fortunately, as yet, bring little back. . . . The Sea-Lions (19) Cooper bemoaned so-called progress:

It is to us ever a painful sight to see the rustic virtues rudely thrown aside by the intrusion of what are termed improvements. A railroad is certainly a capital invention for the traveller, but it may be questioned if it is of any other benefit than that pecuniary convenience to the places through which it passes. How many delightful hamlets, pleasant villages, and even tranquil country towns, are losing their primitive characters for simplicity and contentment, by the passage of these fiery trains, that drag after them a sort of bastard elegance. . . . (The Sea-Lions 16)

The Sea Lions reveals a little human interest information as well. Through Cooper, we learn something of the local female view of the sailors: It may be a little lessened of late, but at the time of which we are writing, or about the year 1820, there was scarcely an individual who followed this particular calling out of the port of Sag Harbor, whose general standing on board ship was not as well known to all the women and girls of the place, as it was to his shipmates. (The Sea-Lions 14)

There is an additional bit of information about Cooper's association with Sag Harbor that has tantalized scholars for years. It has been speculated that Captain David Hand is the prototype for Natty Bumppo of *The Leatherstocking Tales*. Sag Harbor residents thought so when they read *The Pioneers*, especially because of his peculiar laugh. Cooper declared him to be fictional. I however, incline toward the view that there is a good bit of David Hand in *Leatherstocking*. Cooper regularly used his experiences in his art, and it is not beyond imagining that the author recollected and used several aspects of this colorful old captain in his portrait. It is possible today to visit David Hand's house in Sag Harbor as well as his grave in Oakland Cemetery. Captain Hand outlived five wives. His epitaph, which he wrote himself reads: Behold ye living mortals passing by How thick the partners of one husband lie. (Berbrick 42-43)

East Hampton's first important woman writer was Cornelia Huntington, who lived from 1803 to 1890. To read the introduction to her *Odes and Poems* is to agree that she was indeed a marvel. She more than shone in an East Hampton that during her youth "sparkled with learning and genius," according to Henry P. Hedges (9). Hedges himself, in addition to being an attorney and judge, was a writer with a scholarly

bent. He had written *A History of the Town of East-Hampton* in 1897. A life-long friend of Huntington, he provided the introduction to this collection of her poetry, which was also a memorial to the recently-deceased author. The poems are various: patriotic, celebratory of special events (she wrote an ode to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the settlement of East Hampton), lyric, elegiac, and humorous. One amusing poem, "Woe, Woe, To Thee, Sea Spray" was occasioned by her reading a rather severe criticism of her novel in a church paper. In the poem, she defends "that wicked old woman, down on the 'East End'" (88). Especially delightful are her letters in rhyme, for they contain news of East Hampton in a light-hearted vein and reveal her brightness and wit.

Huntington was persuaded when she was fifty-four, to publish the novel she had written, entitled *Sea-spray: A Long Island Village* (1857). *Sea-spray* was the village of East Hampton. She published it pseudonymously, using the name Martha Wickham, the family name of former residents of her home. *Sea-spray* is a typical nineteenth-century novel of manners. It has a seasonal structure, allowing her to include in her narrative the various activities associated with particular months. For example, in June, the summer people arrived. In winter "Sea-spray was a sad, dull place . . . it afforded no resources . . . no place for amusement . . . no lectures . . . no pleasant reading room. . . . The great temperance reform had put a dead stop to all roosting games. . . . The last great revival had dealt the death-blow to dancing . . . and whist was voted out of the village" (*Sea-spray* 148). If one were lucky and Town Pond froze, there was ice skating! The novel describes representative village events, such as holidays, family problems, shipwrecks, politics and elections, and town meetings. Huntington reproduces the speech of the different classes and of Dury, an Indian cook, who serves as a kind of Greek chorus of experience and common sense. Thus, the reader can actually hear the residents of *Sea-spray*. Early in the novel, Huntington provides a description of *Sea-spray* and its year-round residents in the nineteenth century, after the summer season has ended: There was nothing remarkable in the simple, unpretending village of *Sea-spray*, which stretched itself about a mile from the Atlantic shore, on the eastern extremity of Long Island: the main street lying in a little miniature valley, the rise on either side being so slight as to be scarcely perceptible. There was nothing picturesque in the surrounding scenery: the fields lay in one flat, unbroken level, and there was neither a brook nor a rock within an hour's travel of the street; but the dash of the eternal wave was always sounding amid its solitudes, and the solemn and monotonous roar had, perchance, had its influence in subduing and sobering the spirits of the inhabitants, and imparting to their characters that quiet, unimpulsive sluggishness, for which, more than anything else, they were

distinguished. Stretched far away into the ocean, shut out by their isolated position from any entangling or exciting relations with the busy, bustling world around them, the villagers pursued quietly and contentedly their own usual avocations, and dreamed away a harmless and noiseless existence; dwelling soberly where their fathers had dwelt, treading patiently the paths their fathers' steps had beaten, tilling the same fields, sheltered by the same roofs, believing in the same stern creed, worshipping in the same gray old temple, and finally lying down in death almost in the same green graves. Still there was a beauty and a charm in their unobtrusive simplicity, in their perfect innocence of all new-fangled improvements, in their pertinacious faith in windmills, and devout abhorrence of steam and all its noisy abominations. There was fear now, however, that the spirit of innovation had begun to creep stealthily among them; the "brushing up" mania had broken out here and there, and in several places along the street snug little edifices might be seen, in all the gloss and glory of fresh paint and side-lights, staring pertly at their grim gray old neighbors across the way, and turning up their puggish little portico noses in defiant scorn of the long, low, rickety roofs that confronted them; barns had marched sullenly back from the front line, and wood-piles had retired indignantly to the rear, to give place to painted pickets and ornamental shrubbery.

Steamboats, railroads and turnpikes had brought the world nearer, and the restless, itinerating tendency of the times had brought troops of seekers after change to explore all the sweet secluded nooks and shady retreats of Sea-spray, and to claim and take possession by right of discovery. But those who came to rusticate and rest--to breathe the pure sea air--to forget the stifling city heats in the blessed ocean breeze, and bathe the fevered brow and the languid limb in the dashing ocean wave, had fled with the flowers and the singing summer birds; and the deserted haunts of the summer loungers were silent now, save when the fallen leaves rustled along the paths, or the wintry wind moaned through the bare branches of the trees. It was evening, calm and serene, and no sound disturbed the silence, except the sharp stroke of an axe in the distance, busy in thrifty forecast for to-morrow's fuel, or the slow groaning wheel of a loaded wagon, late on its homeward way. (9-11) Interesting as the many descriptive and topical aspects of the novel are, the modern reader will undoubtedly find herself following the story line that concerns Mr. and Mrs. Copperly and their two children, Sike and Godwin. Huntington had read the English feminist Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and she satirizes the misuse of her ideas through the character of Mrs. Copperly, who has "the spirit of Mary Woolstonecraft [sic] in . . . [her] heart" (182). She is a rabid feminist, neglects her husband and children, talks a great

deal, and she is a writer. She is one of those "scribbling women" of the nineteenth century who received so much ridicule. Her husband is required to take care of the baby while she writes, and he is perpetually exhausted. Even when guests arrive, she will not interrupt her writing, justifying her behavior firmly: "Those lovely visions of fancy . . . are so airy and evanescent -- if they are not caught on the wing, gentlemen . . . we are so liable to lose them" (171). She is preparing a lecture for the "Association for the Assertion and Vindication of Woman's Rights." Even though her husband is not well, the "shackles of domestic cares" will not deter her (172). Emancipation is her sacred cause. If her husband coughs, she shoves the spittoon closer to him with her foot. Even the suggestion that her husband is dying cannot take her attention from such issues as equal civil rights, political privileges for women as opposed to subjugation, and the evils of male supremacy. Poor Mr. Copperly is an object of sympathy. His wife is no longer what she was when he married her: "The wild notions of the day have ruined her" (176). All he wants to do is die. At the end of the novel, when the author ties up all the loose strings, the reader learns that Mr. Copperly has "laid down the weary burden of life . . . only praying to be permitted to sleep and be at rest" (459). The zealous Mrs. Copperly has left him to die, while she attends conventions and carries out "measures for amelioration and reform" (459).

Huntington is satirizing the extremist, the zealot, who neglects family to pursue a cause. She herself seems to have a balanced view of the burdens of keeping house. Her diary entry of December 18, 1826 reveals her pleasure in tasks completed: "I have been busily employed . . . in various domestic duties--such as making sausages, candles and mince pies, etc. etc--and now having plenty of beef, port, lard, and tallow laid up for many days I intend to 'eat, drink, and be merry' that is so far as I can do so and sin not." She shows a little more spirit in her diary entry of December 23, 1826: "I have had a party this week and heaven deliver me from ever being doomed to linger through another such a miserable evening. I had rather reap an acre of barley, than to be condemned to be 'Lady Hostess' to people, who will neither afford nor receive entertainment, and I am now fully resolved never to give another party until I am married." Huntington never married. (Although it is not clear whether Huntington was a feminist or not, she undoubtedly would have enjoyed reading Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*.)

Herman Melville has a tangential connection with the East End. His short story "Benito Cereno," about a slave revolt at sea, was serialized in the October, November, and December 1855, issues of Putnam's Monthly. His main source, as Horace Scudder has shown, was Chapter 18 of Captain Amasa Delano's

Narrative of Voyages and Travels, in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. (1817) (Lauter 2454). However, three significant events took place which furnished Melville with additional material for his tale: The Santo Domingo uprising of 1791-1804, led by Touissant L'Ouverture; the slave revolt on board the American domestic slave-trading brig *Creole* in 1841; and the revolt which impinges on the East End -- the slave revolt on board the Spanish slave-trading schooner *Amistad* in 1839. Jean Fagan Yellin has demonstrated how this uprising supplied Melville with details for his story. Thanks to Steven Spielberg's 1997 film *Amistad*, the narrative is now well known: fifty-three kidnapped Africans, led by the West African Cinque, mutinied near Cuba, killed the Captain and some members of the crew, and demanded that their Spanish owner, a former captain, return them to Africa, under pain of death. He deceived them by changing course at night and sailing north instead of east. Two months later the *Amistad* landed on Long Island, at Culloden Point, to be exact. Officers from the American brig of war *Washington* arrested the rebels. They remained in jail until the Supreme Court freed them two years later, after John Quincy Adams, former President and abolitionist, had argued successfully that rather than being guilty of the charge of piracy, the Africans themselves had been illegally kidnapped from Africa and the slave-trading captain was therefore a pirate (2500-01).

The East Hampton Star reported on August 6, 1998, that on Saturday, the first of August, "members of the Eastville Community Historical Society and Mayor Pierce Hance of Sag Harbor dedicated a plaque honoring the men of the slave ship *Amistad*" (Hewitt I 7). The brass plaque now overlooks Block Island Sound from the lawn of the Montauk Lighthouse, where, according to Jo Anne Carter, the Society's president, more people will see it. Someday, however, it may be moved to Culloden Point off which Cinque and his men anchored almost one hundred and sixty years ago. Culloden Point, Montauk was the site of an event that touched the feelings and the imagination of one of America's greatest writers, and he immortalized the experience in "*Benito Cereno*."

In 1819, the year that James Fenimore Cooper had purchased the whaling ship *Union*, Walt Whitman, "America's epic poet," was born on Long Island on a farm near Huntington (Miller 65). He had a life-long love for the place of his birth. More than that, he felt that this rural world had shaped him, and he in turn mythologized it as Paumanok. As Whitman's most recent biographer has pointed out: "Paumanake (land of tribute) was the name used by some of the east end tribes. The original deed to the Easthampton [sic] settlers assigned this name to the island, and the chiefs of the Montauk and Shelter Island tribes

were styled Sachems of Paumanacke" (Reynolds 19). Of Paumanok, Whitman wrote, in his poem of the same name: Sea-beauty! stretch'd and basking! One side thy inland ocean laving, broad, with copious commerce, steamers, sails, And one the Atlantic's wind caressing, fierce or gentle--mighty hulls dark-gliding in the distance. Isle of sweet brooks of drinking-water--healthy air and soil!

Isle of the salty shore and breeze and brine! (Leaves of Grass 507) Whitman is, of course, associated with the entire island but he knew eastern Long Island, for his sister Mary lived in Greenport, and he used it poetically in important and meaningful ways throughout his entire life. Just four years before his death in 1892 he included, in a later edition of Leaves of Grass, the poem "From Montauk Point": I stand as on some mighty eagle's beak, Eastward the sea absorbing, viewing, (nothing but sea and sky,) The tossing waves, the foam, the ships in the distance, The wild unrest, the snowy, curling caps -- that inbound urge and urge of waves, Seeking the shores forever. (508)

He was no longer living on Long Island, and had settled in Camden, New Jersey, but he still recalled the excursions he had taken on eastern Long Island as a young man and had written about in the New York Sunday Dispatch in the 40's (Reynolds 127). Later there had been other summers in Greenport with his sister, in 1855 and 1861, when he was able to relive his boyhood wandering the beaches and farms, fishing, and sailing (Reynolds 342 and 407).

When Whitman was 70 "in the early candle-light of old age," he wrote a Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads (Leaves of Grass 561). He devotes a section to his early reading. After his sixteenth year he liked to do his reading out in the country or at the seashore. The Bible, Shakespeare, Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Dante, for example, he read in the woods. "The Iliad," he writes, "I read first thoroughly on the peninsula of Orient, . . . in a shelter'd hollow of rocks and sand, with the sea on each side." He was not overwhelmed by these "mighty masters" he concludes, "because I read them . . . in the full presence of Nature, under the sun, with the far-spreading landscape and vistas, or the sea rolling in" (Leaves of Grass 569). The sea always had a fascination for Whitman. In Specimen Days, an autobiographical work, Whitman describes his boyish wish to write about the seashore: "that curious, lurking something, . . . which means far more than its mere first sight, grand as that is -- blending the real and ideal." He writes about haunting the "shores of Rockaway or Coney Island, or away east to the Hamptons or Montauk." He remembers that once "by the old lighthouse, nothing but sea-tossings in

sight in every direction as far as the eye could reach, . . . I felt that I must one day write a book expressing this liquid, mystic theme" (Berbrick 150). The Montauk Lighthouse, then, can be said to have given Whitman a seminal poetic epiphany. But he never forgot the real joy of seashore life -- swimming, lobstering, eeling, and clamming, and, of course, eating the fruits of the sea. Like Cooper, Whitman also had absorbed the unique people, from relatives to farmers and fisherman he had met during his rambles on Long Island as a boy and in his early manhood. These people became prototypes of the universal characters who populated his future poetry. It is impossible to read the section of *Leaves of Grass* entitled "Sea-Drift" without feeling the enormous impact that the imagery of Long Island had on the poet's imagination: bird, sands, fields, briars and blackberries, yellow half-moon, waves, lilac, grass, seashore, sun, sea, moon, stars, beach, moonbeams, breakers, woods, spray, leaves, moonlight -- all of these appear in the opening poem "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," (246-63). Elsewhere in *Leaves of Grass*, in "A Paumanok Picture," he creates a poetic painting of ten fishermen haul-seining in the sea, a scene that might have been captured in oil or watercolor by an artist painting on an East End beach (461).

In June 1846, Whitman made a one-day round-trip by railroad to Greenport, from Brooklyn, and in addition to praising the town, the fishing, and the farmers, he complimented the L.I.R.R. and its dining car. (Whitman's may be the last compliment that the L.I.R.R. has received). Whitman marveled at the mechanical achievements that enabled him to take "'a flying picnic' a hundred miles away and return the same day" (Allen 77). He made a lengthier visit to Greenport in the summer of 1851. Two articles in which he wrote about summer resort life around Greenport as well as his own vacation pleasures, "swimming, eating bluefish (his favorite dish), and talking and rambling with the country folk, especially unsophisticated ones," grew out of this stay (Allen 111). On one of his stays in Greenport, he had visited Montauk Point by boat (Allen 77). He knew Shelter Island and Orient, but Montauk Point "was one of Whitman's favorite places" (Berbrick 190). In fact, he could be lyrical about it in his writing, enumerating its beauties: "the soil was rich, the grass green and plentiful, and it had 'the best patches of Indian corn and vegetables I saw last summer' all 'within gun shot of the salt waves of the Atlantic'" (Berbrick 190). Montauk Point, with its lighthouse on Turtle Hill, was a setting that elicited a special response from Whitman, and it comes as no surprise to learn that it is "the only Long Island town honored by its own poem, 'From Montauk Point,'" mentioned earlier (Berbrick 191). In his "Brooklyniana" Whitman looks to Long Island's past. He recounts the history of Gardiner's Island with

its patriarch Lion Gardiner and his Dutch wife. He was especially fascinated by the friendship between the royal Montauk Indian Wyandanch and Gardiner, and he tells the now well-known story of Gardiner's facilitating the ransom of Wyandanch's daughter, a story given a date, 1654, by Morton Pennypacker, whose library is the nucleus of the Long Island Collection. This friendship between a white engineer, Gardiner, and the ruler of thirteen Long Island tribes captured the great democratic poet. Whitman laments the loss of the old settlements, all gone save for Shinnecock and Montauk, the latter of which was in Whitman's day merely a shell of its old situation, when it "was the center of Indian civilization . . . and . . . included the holiest of their burial places." Whitman also describes in detail "the remains of aboriginal fortifications, now called Fort Hill" (Berbrick 179-82). The East End owes Whitman a debt of gratitude for his role as an historian of the area.

Whitman's magnanimous & democratic imagination comprehended all of Long Island, recreated it poetically as Paumanok, and, in so doing, created an epic of America. Real and literary experiences today still resonate with the poetic insights of one of our greatest poets. Those of us who live on the East End pass our lives in the presence of those images catalogued in his poetry and made visible and universal through his art.

The next writer I wish to discuss, Olivia Ward Bush-Banks (1869-1944), a poet, playwright, and journalist, lived here very briefly. She was born in Sag Harbor to Abraham and Eliza Draper Ward. Both parents were free blacks residing in Southampton Township. The Ward family had been free since 1810, the Drapers since 1830. Both of her parents were also descendants of the Montauk tribe. Her mother died when she was nine months old, and her father moved to Rhode Island, where he placed her in the care of her mother's sister. It was she who kept their Montauk Indian and African-American heritage alive (Guillaume, "Olivia Ward Bush" 32). From this "ethnic combination on eastern Long Island . . . emerged an extraordinary woman and writer" (Guillaume, "Introduction" 3).

Throughout her life, in Rhode Island, Chicago, and New York, Bush-Banks revealed her pride in her dual heritage. Although not a resident of Long Island, she was, at one time, "tribal historian" to the Montauk tribe, and, as an adult, she regularly "attended pow-wows and other native gatherings on Long Island" (Guillaume, "Introduction" 7). She was photographed in tribal dress at the 1931 Indian meeting in Sag Harbor (Guillaume, "Introduction" 7). Bush-Banks' play *Indian Trails*; or, *Trail of the Montauk*

reflects her Native American background and raises several issues relating to the extinct Montauk language and to the survival of Montauk culture (Guillaume, Summary). Her poem "Morning on Shinnecock" expresses the nostalgia, yearning, and apprehension evoked by her "African-Indian duality" (Guillaume, "Introduction" 11).

Bush-Banks' work bears a relationship to the best work of the Harlem Renaissance. The character Aunt Viney, in Bush-Banks' twelve Aunt Viney's Sketches, recalls but predates Langston Hughes' Jesse B. Simple as she "upholds the validity of traditional (black) values [political, cultural, and religious] in an urban world" (Guillaume, "Introduction" 18). Bush-Banks, like Claude McKay, celebrates the purity of primitivism. Like Charles W. Chesnutt, she records vanishing agrarian folkways; and like Zora Neale Hurston, she courageously preserves in her work regional dialect that might otherwise have been lost.

Charles de Kay, novelist, translator and critic, writing almost a half century after Cornelia Huntington published *Sea-spray*, paints an exceedingly well-rounded portrait of the East End's "restful" resort, East Hampton, in two of his essays. Both articulate his fears of future change.

De Kay had both an East Hampton and a New York City home, and thus was the first of the second-home literary celebrities now so common here. He had been known as the "Charmer of New York" in the 1870's, when he was in his twenties and had newly arrived to make his way socially and in literary circles. Educated in Europe and a Yale graduate, he ornamented salons both abroad and in New York. He knew Henry James, Whistler, and Robert Browning in Venice. In 1876, he took over the post of literary and art editor of *The New York Times* until 1894. In 1899, he founded the National Arts Club and was elected a member of the Institute of Arts and Letters in 1906. He was also art editor of *The New York Evening Post* during 1907 and associate editor of *Art World* from 1915-1917. His obituary quotes an admirer, Robert Underwood Johnson, who thought de Kay was "the master of more branches of knowledge than any man I have ever met - - art, science, philosophy, Oriental lore, to general literature. . . He was not only intellectual but the master of half a dozen languages and of a rare scholarly precision of statement. I doubt if he was ever caught in an error of fact." This is high praise indeed. De Kay's wife was an interesting person in her own right. Four years after her husband's death, Cholly Knickerbocker chose her as one of his subjects for a series of articles entitled "These Fascinating Ladies," which appeared in *The New York Journal American*. Known as a great hostess, traveler, actress, and an

accomplished amateur in all the arts, she was also, according to Knickerbocker, a "live wire." She made her mark in East Hampton as well. She both designed and supervised the construction of the first concrete house in East Hampton for her family of eight lively children. It is believed that Frances Hodgson Burnett wrote Racketty-Packetty House about the deKay family. The eight fun-loving dolls who live in the house correspond to the eight deKay children, one of whom married the poet John Hall Wheelock, and Burnett had known the family in East Hampton. It has been speculated that she might have seen the garden that inspired *The Secret Garden* here, but there is no definitive corroboration of that.

De Kay's earliest piece on East Hampton appeared in 1898. It was entitled "East Hampton the Restful." Why is the village restful? Because, de Kay writes: "[P]eople have so far avoided the absurdity of repeating in Summer the same things they do in Winter" ([1]). There are other reasons too: "The law as to the sale of liquor has been enforced; the one man in the township who is charged with selling it in secret has failed and his store is closed" ([1]). And an active game society has discouraged boys with guns, so that at the time de Kay is writing, "robins and catbirds are capable of perching on the cord of your hammock as you lie in the ocean breeze" ([1]). East Hampton is now "peaceful, sleepy, bucolic" ([1]). But de Kay wonders how long East Hampton will retain this soothing atmosphere: "The railway now gives access to thousands, whereas in former years only hundreds cared to brave the tiresome six miles of dust to and from Bridgehampton station" ([1]). The thought of the "thousands" making their way to his village stirs fear in de Kay's soul. He knows that East Hampton is the most appealing resort:

None of the old towns that dot the seaward side of Long Island has quite the same air of quiet and picturesqueness that East Hampton presents. Southampton is too crowded and fashionable, West Hampton and Quogue too monotonously flat, Amagansett too straggling and unkempt, Bridgehampton commonplace by comparison. ([2]) Even East Hampton's beach, which is not fashionable, has appeal, for it is a place where "men, women, and children go to bathe without caring for looks or asking what is the correct thing in bathing suits" ([1]). He fears large numbers of tourists. If "large hotels" and "very costly country places" are built, de Kay foresees that "the quiet, homelike, easy-going air of the place will be destroyed and those who know and love East Hampton will regretfully turn their backs and seek some other place where there is a chance for rest and pensive sojourn among country sounds and picturesque views of shore and sea" ([2]).

There is another threat. While the settlers of two centuries earlier, knowing the "severity of nature" did not plant their homes close to the sea, city folks "cannot get close enough" and they are building summer houses "near or directly on the dunes" ([2]). De Kay regrets the "trend of villa building," that is invading both the bathing beach and Georgia Lake and Wainscot" ([2]). Nevertheless, he includes in his essay a lovely image of East Hampton's wide Main Street with its "elms, chestnuts, catalpas and ailanthus trees," its old mills, and its pond, "fringed with willows" ([1]). When he mentions Home Sweet Home, incorrectly citing it as the place where John Howard Payne spent his last years, he foreshadows the subject he will address in another essay five years hence: the emerging architecture of East Hampton. He describes the "very bare, small and simple" salt box and in a challenging tone, adds: "there is no reason to suppose that bay windows, balconies, loggias, turrets, and fancy finials would have made his own home sweeter" ([1]).

Despite the passage of time and the inevitable growth and changes, de Kay still loves East Hampton in 1903. Primarily a paean to the unpretentious cottages of East Hampton, "Summer Homes at East Hampton," which was published in *The Architectural Record*, says a great deal about the life as well as the landscape of the area. Noting the expansive heavens of East Hampton and the ever-present and eye-catching clouds, he provides a loving portrait of the landscape: "A line of wooded hills on the one hand, a low undulation of dunes on the other; here a glimpse of lake or pond, there the blue of ocean served up between two sand hills, as in a bowl; here a wedge of wind-clipped trees hiding a village street, and yonder a long vista of arable lands, pastures and salt marshes -- there is the landscape in and near East Hampton!" (21-22). De Kay compares the village to the ocean itself: "so surrounded is it by salt water, so gentle are the fogs and insinuating rain veils that come and go, so constant the breezes right off the sea. Its climate makes one very sleepy the first day and ravenously hungry the second" (28-29). He writes about the "very un-American absence of snap and restlessness in the air" (22). He notes that the individual "walks slower instinctively and turns contemplative" (22). Many different types of people respond to the scenic charms of East Hampton, he asserts: It "is a place where the pressure of anxiety relaxes and the most strenuous begins to dream, where . . . people neither labor to entertain nor ask for the excitements of fashionable or merely vulgar seaside resorts" (22). "Writers," he says, have chosen this end of Long Island, owing to its remoteness and beauty, a beauty that does not challenge instant admiration by scenery on a colossal scale, but on the contrary, wins its way to one's heart quietly. . . ."

(21).

Finally, de Kay applauds the collective wish of the summer visitors not to build the more costly homes they could have afforded but rather to conform to "the spirit of the place" and "simple living" (22). It is interesting that in 1903 de Kay finds that "the only fear that seems to haunt the summer folk in the old camping ground of the Montauks is a speculation whether the time may come for the advent of those who build great places and try to out-do their neighbors in luxury, thus gradually destroying the informal, easy-going life by the sea which still puts East Hampton apart from many other less fortunate watering places" (22-23). How contemporary that fear sounds and how prescient the warning.

In the mid-nineteen seventies John Hall Wheelock, the son-in-law of Charles deKay, and an award-winning poet, died. He was ninety-one and had spent part of almost eighty-six summers in East Hampton in "the house in Bonac," the title of one of his poems. He had written that he did his best work in East Hampton. In all, he published eleven volumes of verse, a collection of criticism entitled *What is Poetry?* and, as an editor at Scribner's, numerous collections of the poetry of young unpublished poets. He discovered and was the first to publish in the *Poets of Today* series May Swenson, Louis Simpson, and James Dickey. *What Is Poetry?* includes the essays that served as introductions to these volumes. Together they show the range of Wheelock's interests and his knowledge of the poets of his own day: T.S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, W.H. Auden, Ezra Pound, and William Butler Yeats, as well as the classic poets.

Wheelock was a highly respected editor. He retired from Scribner's as a senior editor after forty-six years there. During his last fifteen years at Scribner's he wrote no poetry, taking up that vocation again only after he retired. He revealed his thoughts about the editing life in an introduction he wrote to his own edition of the letters of Maxwell Perkins, a co-worker at Scribner's and an editor who was "generally regarded as the most far-sighted and creative . . . of his time." Wheelock admired the fact that Perkins was able instantly to recognize "work of a high order." In his introduction he takes the reader behind the scenes and shows just why "Max" (and undoubtedly Wheelock himself) was so good as an editor: The job of editor in a publishing house is the dullest, hardest, most exciting, exasperating and rewarding of perhaps any job in the world. Most writers are in a state of gloom a good deal of the time; they need perpetual reassurance. When a writer has written his masterpiece he will often be certain that

the whole thing is worthless. The perpetrator of the dimmest literary effort, on the other hand, is apt to be invincibly cocksure and combative about it. No book gets enough advertising, . . . or it is the wrong kind. And, obviously, almost every writer needs money and needs it before, not after, delivery of the goods. . . . Through it all Max kept his countenance. (3)

Poets and critics alike valued Wheelock's work. In a tribute to him, which appeared in the Long Pond Review, the poet Vince Clemente quotes from a letter of Alan Tate's written on June 17, 1975: "John Hall Wheelock is one of the best poets in English" (Clemente 12). A later tribute, published in Paumanok Rising three years after Wheelock's death, reveals the great respect that a number of his contemporaries had not only for his work but also for the man (Clemente 81-113). Wheelock is very much a poet of the East End. In the "Foreword" to *Afternoon: Amagansett Beach* (the book, not the poem) he states: "Much of my work reflects the countryside of Long Island's South Fork and, more especially, of the area comprising Montauk, Springs, Amagansett, Wainscott, and East Hampton, an area affectionately nicknamed 'Bonac' by its native inhabitants" (7). Although Wheelock felt he was not entitled to call himself a "Bonacker," he confessed to being one "at heart" (7). Many of his poems are intimately related to his East Hampton home and the local area "its birds, and insects, its woodlands, dunes, and beaches" as well as to the shaping experiences of his life there (7). For example, "House in Bonac" resurrects his childhood in the old house that "lay there like a great ship foundered/

At the bottom of green sea-water" (*The Gardener* 69). He recalls: . . . the sound of his father's French horn From the little upstairs room, and his mother's gentle Irish voice reading aloud to them from *The Golden Treasury* or some story book, On rainy mornings in the first green of May --" (*The Gardener* 76) "Bonac" celebrates this "enchanted country" (*Afternoon: Amagansett Beach* 12). "Sunday Morning Moment" captures the welcome silence that comes at the end of the week: "It is Sunday morning,/ From Montauk Highway no murmur" (*Afternoon: Amagansett Beach* 23). "Afternoon: Amagansett Beach" describes in loving and perceptive detail a particular place with a special meaning for the poet: The broad beach, Sea-wind and the sea's irregular rhythm, Great dunes with their pale grass, and on the beach Driftwood, tangle of bones, an occasional shell, Now coarse, now carven and delicate -- whorls of time Stranded in space, deaf ears listening To lost time, old oceanic secrets. Along the water's edge, in pattern casual As the pattern of the stars, the pin-point air-holes, Left by the sand-flea under the receding spume, Wink and blink out again. A gull drifts over, Wide wings crucified against the sky --

His shadow travels the shore, upon its margins You will find his signature: one long line, Two shorter lines curving out from it, a nearly Perfect graph of the bird himself in flight. His footprint is his image fallen from heaven. (Afternoon: Amgansett Beach 21)

Here Wheelock had had his "first glimpse of the young girl who is now my wife, then Phyllis deKay, as she came toward me out of the surf" ("Letter to Mrs. Faster"). Their actual meeting is commemorated in "Aphrodite, 1906," composed in 1974. (This Blessed Earth 18). Wheelock could be whimsical as well. In "The Beetle In The Country Bathtub," he describes what is a universal experience for the dweller in the country:

After one more grandiloquent effort he slips back--
Slumping? Oh no, he may be down but he's never out
(Probably wishes he were); now, pondering a fresh attack,
He wheels his slender, simonized bulk about,

Fumbles at the slippery surface until he has come to grips,
Mounts, very slowly, with ever-increasing hope, and then
Mounts, more slowly, with ever-increasing hope--and slips
All the way down to the bottom of the tub again;

Lies there, motionless, pretty discouraged perhaps? not he--
It's dogged as does it, keep you chin up, don't take
No for an answer, etc.--he plots a new strategy,
The oblique approach. This, too, turns out to be a mistake.

The enamelled surface of his predicament
Resembles those pockets in time and space that hold
Sick minds in torture, his struggle is a long argument
With a fact that refuses to be persuaded or cajoled.

Midnight finds him still confident. I slink to bed,

Worn out with watching. The suave heavens turn
Blandly upon their axis, overhead
The constellations glitter their polite unconcern.

Toward morning, hounded by anxiety, slumberless,
I post to the scene. Where is he? The enamelled slopes below,
Vacant--the uplands, vacant--a bathtub full of emptiness,
The insoluble problem solved! But how? Something no one of us, perhaps, will ever know.

Unless he went down the drain? (Poems Old and New 152-53). All in all, Wheelock, according to the poet Dorothy Quick, combined "poetic genius, business ability, a warm sympathetic understanding of humanity with a real desire to help and an utter simplicity about himself and his work" (165). An East Hampton writer very different from Wheelock was Kip Farrington, Jr., a Hemingwayesque figure, who published prolifically on a variety of subjects. In the early 1930's he contributed an essay to *American Big Game Fishing*, a fifty-six dollar deluxe edition that proclaimed itself to be a "comprehensive, up-to-date, and lavishly illustrated work of unquestioned authority on all branches of the sport." It included a contribution by Ernest Hemingway as well, which suggests something of Farrington's status as a fisherman. Indeed, his *Atlantic Game Fishing*, which appeared a few years later, had an introduction by Hemingway. In addition to his love of fishing, Farrington was a great railroad buff. He traveled widely by rail and wrote at least eight books on the subject. This great outdoorsman was a keen conservationist, and on his trips throughout the United States on passenger and freight trains he observed bird life, ultimately producing *Interesting Birds of Our Country* in the mid-forties. During that same period he wrote *The Ducks Came Back*, the story of what he considered to be a "conservation miracle": a non-profit organization, *Ducks Unlimited*, had increased a declining duck population from 38 to 140 million. Farrington himself was something of a miracle. He was one of the world's leading fishermen and held a number of world records, he was salt water editor of *Field and Stream*, and he was called Mister Hockey for his skill at the game. He wrote a book on the subject entitled *Skates, Sticks, and Men*. What about the East End and the writing career of Farrington? He wrote two delightful books for children with local settings: *Tony the Tuna* and *Bill the Broadbill Swordfish*. Tony's story, about the danger of the long-lining and heavy haul-seining of Atlantic bluefish tuna is somewhat sad and might not do for sensitive children. Tony's sisters and brothers do not fare too well during the time Tony's large family

spends swimming between Montauk Point and Ambrose Light, feeding on Menhaden. Bill's story is much more cheerful. In fact it's a romance. Bill bears a striking resemblance to Fred Astaire. One day, as he swam in to shore off the Maidstone Club, he hears music, South American music. (This book was published in 1942. Think of the films of that vintage.) He falls in love with the rhumba, and every time he hears that music he's "gotta dance." Farrington, in all of his books, is very careful about the facts, but in *Bill The Broadbill Swordfish* he exercises poetic -- or maybe martime -- license. When he charts Bill's migrations, he has him transit the Panama Canal, which swordfish do not do. However, the author has been seduced by his own aquatic hero and wants to give him a happy and romantic ending. Bill makes his way to Chile where he meets Senorita Albacore, another swordfish, and after she exercises her feminine wiles and gets rid of Ronald Remora, the suckerfish that has been clinging to Bill's back all his life, they enjoy a Hollywood ending -- they marry and live happily ever after. Bill is still alive at the end of the story, now 1300 pounds but still enjoying listening to the music from the Grace Line ships that sail off the coast of South America. In both of these books, Farrington expresses his own love of the sea. In fact, in all of his books he communicates a great joie de vivre.

Other East End writers who have made the sea their subject are John Cole and Peter Matthiessen. Cole's memoirs *Fishing Came First and Away All Boats* have many settings familiar to East Enders. His book *Striper*, which is about fishing for striped bass, is concerned entirely with the East End. Peter Matthiessen's *Men's Lives* gives voice to the East End's beleaguered haul-seining fishermen and their families while at the same time giving life to the saga of the sea. *Men's Lives* was dramatized sensitively by Joe Pintauro and enjoyed enormous success when it was produced at the Bay Street Theatre in Sag Harbor.

Now we leave these male authors and turn to a prolific and cultivated woman, Jeannette Edwards Rattray. If Nettie Edwards (1893-1974) had not been such a willful young woman, the East Hampton Star would not be presided over by someone by the name of Rattray. According to Lucinda Mayo, "When Edwards decided in the summer of 1924, to accompany her friend Margaret Arnold to join her businessman husband in China, her father [probably not really wanting her to go at all] told her that the trip was fine as long as she paid for it herself" (71-72). She had just returned from a six-month visit to her brother, who was stationed with the navy in Constantinople. During this time she had visited Egypt and the Holy Land. "The [China] trip seemed out of reach; she was making only five dollars a column

for the Star. Edwards quickly lined up work as an East End 'stringer' and social correspondent for six Manhattan and three Brooklyn newspapers, and by November 6, she was sailing for the Orient" (Mayo 72). It was on this trip that she met Arnold Rattray. Continuing the practice that she had begun during the earlier trip to Turkey and the Middle East, she sent letters back home to her family and these were published in the Star: "Her Star letters were full of sights, sounds, and flavors; some of her contemporaries still remember her evocative worldwide menus" (73). The letter that probably created the greatest stir in the Edwards family was the one in which she announced her intention to marry Arnold Rattray. At her father's insistence, she brought him home for family approval, and they married on Christmas 1925. They eventually bought the Star from the Broughton family in 1935. Rattray had been writing a column for the newspaper each week, "Looking Them Over," and she signed it "One of Ours," the title of one of Willa Cather's novels. She continued to write her column for fifty years in all, even when she took over the paper as editor and publisher upon her husband's death in 1954. Rattray's columns are still a delight to read. She was a great traveler and her bylines over the years reflect that. She wrote from Japan, Ireland, Italy, Cuba, the Philippines, Scotland, and Wales, and her columns were often accompanied by photographs of her enjoying herself in some exotic place. Light, humorous, and anecdotal, her writing revealed both the writer and her life in great detail. She once wrote: "East Hampton people who read our paper know every move I make" (Mayo 66).

Rattray was an extraordinarily productive writer quite apart from her contributions to the Star. She loved the sea. Descended from whalers, she published a number of maritime works. She collaborated with her father in *Whale Off* to tell the story of how her grandfather and uncle captured "the last right whale on the eastern seaboard in 1907," the whale whose skeleton is in the American Museum of Natural History" (Mayo 66). Both *Ship Ashore!: A Record of Maritime Disasters off Montauk and Eastern Long Island, 1640-1955*, and *The Perils of the Port of New York: Maritime Disasters from Sandy Hook to Execution Rocks* have received high praise. Lloyd Becker has called them "two essential studies of Long Island maritime history . . . [but] . . . not history in the traditional sense. Rather she has left us a series of facts, myths, eye-witness accounts, passages from old journals and diaries, ships manifests, family legends, rosters of forgotten life-saving stations, reminiscences of retired seamen and excerpts from old newspapers. . . . [T]hey reaffirm the mythical presence of Paumanok" (39). Becker credits Rattray with revealing the "living soil of Long Island" in a poetic way, as did Walt Whitman, with preserving the "actual voices of people who lived the events," and with "keeping essential human events alive" (40).

As a local historian she is unsurpassed. Her *East Hampton History, Including Genealogies of Early Families*, which she dedicated to Judge Henry P. Hedges, her inspiration, is an invaluable synthesis of earlier histories, town records, and a variety of memoirs. It brings the history of East Hampton up to date (1953) in a definitive way. It also contains some evocative and poetic writing: "The wild geese flying over in a V against the moon, and their lonesome honking over by Hook Pond in the early spring; the peepers' sleighbells ringing from the swamp 'down Egypt'; the first fragrant arbutus hidden away under the dead leaves at Northwest; the salty smell of the ocean and the roar of waves when the wind is east -- all these mean East Hampton and home" (Mayo 68). Her earlier *Three Centuries in East Hampton*, while briefer, has fine illustrations. Rattray's eye for interesting illustrations serves her well in *Fifty Years of the Maidstone Club, (1891-1941)*. (There is an eye-catching photograph of the dapper John Drew, after whom this theatre is named, at the 1914 Village Fair.) *Up and Down Main Street* is the product of formidable research. Again, beautifully illustrated, it tells the lore of every house and family, and it is replete with anecdotes and quotations -- "an informal history of East Hampton and its old houses," according to Rattray (5). She once wrote in a "Looking Them Over" column: "We must not let East Hampton change too rapidly. We who have known it always appreciate its permanence all the more" (Mayo 67-68). In *Up and Down Main Street*, Rattray gives the street a literary permanence. In a work titled *East Hampton Literary Group* Rattray writes about five distinguished writers, all newspapermen, who summered in East Hampton in the 1920s: Ring Lardner, Grantland Rice, Percy Hammond, Irvin S. Cobb and John N. Wheeler. She manages to bring them to vivid life through her humorous anecdotes. One story she tells concerns Ring Lardner. In one of his books he "took a crack at the Long Island Lighting Co." or its 1920 equivalent in Great Neck. Asked why he had chosen that particular town as his home, he explained that his wife "had lived all her life . . . at the corner of Broadway and 42nd Street and she was sick of the bright lights. . . . So I asked a prominent realtor to recommend a town where there would be no danger of being blinded by electricity." Lardner was told by the realtor, in effect, not to worry: "If the weather report reads Cloudy, or Light southwest winds, the current becomes so affected" that one does not have to worry about light (2).

Both of Rattray's sons became writers. Everett T. Rattray was editor of the *Star* from 1958 to 1980 and both editor and publisher from 1974 to 1980. His book *The South Fork* carries on the Rattray tradition of informal but thorough and informed history. After his death, at the age of 47, his novel, *The Adventures*

of Jeremiah Dimon: A Novel of Old East Hampton, was published, allowing the reader to see the town of 100 years ago through the eyes of one who had the gift to transport the reader back in time. David Rattray did not make East Hampton his permanent home, nor did he write about it. However, at his mother's death, he wrote a poem about that event in the spring of 1974 and describes a picture she kept at the head of her bed. It was of the Summer Palace near Peking, which she had visited fifty years before on the trip during which she had met her husband (Mayo 66). A daughter-in-law, Helen Seldon Rattray, today carries on the family tradition, delighting readers with her weekly column "Connections," about her life in East Hampton.

If Everett and Helen Rattray were famous locally, another writing couple living in East Hampton at the time had national reputations: A. J. Liebling and Jean Stafford. Their house in Springs, at 929 Fireplace Road, belonged to Liebling. He had purchased it in 1952 during an earlier marriage. There were thirty-one acres around the house, and Liebling loved both the house and the land: "One of his favorite self-indulgences was to lie on his back in the field behind the house savoring his property" (Roberts 336). When they met in 1956, Liebling was "five-foot-nine-and-a half and 243 pounds" (Roberts 319). This is significant because his obesity would lead to his premature death, in 1962, and it also highlighted the contrast between Stafford's and some of her friends' attitudes toward her new love. Her friends found him very unattractive. Eve Auchincloss describes Liebling as wearing "his pants below the belly" (Roberts 326). But Stafford was attracted by his lack of good looks. Another friend, Eileen Simpson, recalls Stafford's delighting in his being "positively ugly" (Roberts 327). It is true that Liebling loved food. Janet Malcolm once said: "He was not an epicure. He just ate. He'd go to a French restaurant and eat a great meal, then, on his way back to the office, have a Boston cream pie" (Roberts 337). He really did not believe in denying his body. Quite the reverse. His biographer Raymond Sokolov wrote: "To eat and overeat was . . . a badge of freedom. His belly was the outward and visible sign of an inward and manly grace" (Roberts 337). Significantly, his last book, "a memoir of a great eater's best times in Paris before the war," is entitled *Between Meals: An Appetite for Paris* (Sokolov x). In it, Liebling defines eating: "I use the verb 'to eat' here to denote a selective activity, as opposed to the passive acceptance and regular renewal of nourishment, learned in infancy. An automobile receiving fuel at a filling station or an infant at the breast cannot be said to eat, nor can a number of people at any time in their lives" (Liebling 632). Liebling was delightful company, courted Stafford lavishly, and she fell deeply in love with him. Each had a great admiration for the other's work, but each had problems of addiction. Stafford

was drinking at the time and found in this man of gargantuan appetite a mate who would not deter her from her own indulgences. They courted for three years and married on April 3, 1959 (Goodman 267). A few years later the long honeymoon was definitely over. He began to think that she was drinking too much; she thought he was eating too much. Both were correct. He developed a life-threatening obesity along with depression, and it was no surprise when he died in New York City, December 28, 1963, at the age of fifty-nine. Liebling and Stafford had been married only three years. Stafford buried Liebling's ashes in Green River Cemetery in Springs under a black slate headstone carved with a fleur-de-lis (Roberts 346).

Stafford made Fireplace Road her residence until her death fifteen years later. She worked on improving the livability of the very plain house and property. She once rented a renovated outbuilding to Wilfred Sheed. Domestic life appealed to her: "I'm a compulsive housekeeper. I even go into corners with Q-tips" (Hulbert 345). However, that was really an escape, for she was drinking, depressed and reclusive. One of her neighbors, Eleanor Hempstead, noticed that although Stafford played at living the country life, she stayed inside the house most of the time. She did not drive and had to use Schaefer's Taxi to go shopping. Her few friends included her New Yorker colleagues Howard Moss, Berton Roueche, and Saul Steinberg as well as Jeannette Rattray, but she especially cultivated a number of her neighbors, especially those she felt were real Bonackers. Reflective of her lack of productivity at this time, one of her wall decorations was a quote from Thomas DeQuincy: "If once a man indulges himself in murder, very soon he comes to think little of robbery, and from robbing he next comes to drinking and Sabbath-breaking, and from that to incivility and procrastination" (Roberts 351). This seems an especially apt apothegm for a writer who was not writing.

Some of you may recall the tragic balloon incident that took place in the fall of 1970 and began in a field near Stafford's house. As the three adventurers who planned to cross the Atlantic waited for acceptable weather, they were invited to join Stafford each evening for drinks. In fact, before the launch on September 20, they had been drinking brandy with Stafford all night. Little more than a day after finally leaving Springs, the balloon went down off Newfoundland, and the crew was never heard from again (Roberts 376-77).

In poor health for much of the time she lived in Springs, Stafford once described herself in a summer

letter to the East Hampton Star as "cross as a bear" and annoyed by the influx of summer people (Goodman 294). The life of the community though was supportive during the 70's. She lunched at Bobby Van's. She spoke at a commencement at Southampton College. She gave readings at the Guild Hall (Roberts 384). Despite her insistence on privacy, once she even opened her house for a Guild Hall-sponsored house tour (Goodman 300). During all these years, as Stafford was becoming more and more difficult and alienating her friends, her faithful, cheerful and uncritical cleaning lady, a pure Bonacker by the name of Josephine Monsell, was especially caring. When Stafford died, in 1979, she left her entire estate to Mrs. Monsell. Stafford's ashes are also buried in Green River Cemetery, next to Liebling's. She has a snowflake on her black slate slab (Roberts 413). If one makes the pilgrimage to their graves, one should bring: "bittersweet and holly in the autumn, roses and daisies in the summer," which the "Widow Liebling" used to bring to her husband's grave (Roberts 351).

Of course, one cannot survey the subject of the literary Hamptons without describing Bobby Van's of the 1960's, the watering hole for many famous writers of our own time. In the July 1998 issue of *Hamptons Country*, Elaine Benson reports on a gathering that was held at the second incarnation of Bobby Van's, right across the street from the legendary Bobby Van's, which had hosted the group of writers that formed the "Hamptons' version of the Algonquin in the early 70's" (61). It was the day of annual John Steinbeck Book Fair, the 21st held for the benefit of Southampton College. Incidentally, the Nobel Prize winner John Steinbeck is intimately associated with Sag Harbor. *The Winter of Our Discontent*, which is about the Hawley family of New England, is a veiled rendition of Sag Harbor life. The protagonist of *Travels with Charlie* leaves Sag Harbor and finally comes home to it. In a memoir that Benson wrote a few years ago for *Whelks Walk Review* about how her gallery in Bridgehampton came about, she notes that the Book Fair, which she created and has been hosting for over two decades, "has been called "the start of the summer season" by the New York Times, and adds modestly: "I think that is an exaggeration, but who am I to correct the New York Times?" (58). The spring 1998 lunch at Bobby Van's included James Salter, who was to be given the annual award that day for *Burning the Days*, Peter Matthiessen, Joseph Heller, Shana Alexander, and Wilfred Sheed. Leaving the party to their privacy and laughter (Matthiessen had broken them up with a saying of his father's: "Halitosis is better than no breath at all.") before they later joined the other writers at the gallery, "90 area writers, all of whom had published within the past year," Benson begins to reflect on when it all began -- "this concentration of creative people drawn, as if magnetized, to an ocean-bordered strip of land 100 miles

from New York City?" (61). She notes that the "heyday" began after World War II. The names she mentions, of course, are a roster of familiar celebrities, among them George Plimpton, Patsy Southgate, Peter Matthiessen, Irwin Shaw, James Jones, all newly arrived from Paris. She speculates that the "'writers' club' may have found its inception through the gregarious Willie Morris," who had moved to Bridgehampton around the same time that Bobby Van opened his restaurant (62). It was the 70's and many writers found a home in the inviting saloon: Truman Capote; Wilfred Sheed; Miriam Ungerer, Sheed's wife and a food writer for the New York Times; and Gloria and James Jones, to name just a few. Fortunately, we have *New York Days*, a memoir by Morris, which gives us a glimpse of those heady days. *New York Days* reveals that a significant part of Morris' life was spent on the East End. He first knew it when it was "on the precipice of becoming riotous" (292). The riotous times took place in the 70's, the Bobby Van era that Elaine Benson refers to, when Morris would "come to know and spend time with some of the nation's finest writers who would choose out of love for this land to live here" (292). Morris lists these writers and they are a stellar group indeed: Peter Matthiessen, Joseph Heller, Jean Stafford, Shana Alexander, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Wilfred Sheed, Betty Friedan, Budd Schulberg, John Knowles, Craig Claiborne," as well as Truman Capote, and James Jones (292). This luminous group more than outnumbered the celebrities he had known earlier, among them Scottie Fitzgerald, whom he had driven around the East End as she searched for Sayre family connections, her mother having been born Zelda Sayre. Together they had found Sayre's Path in East Hampton, which they believed was named for her mother's forebears, early settlers in the vicinity (292). Morris tells some wonderful stories about George Plimpton but they are, for the most part, set, not on the East End, but in Paris or Manhattan or in Plimpton's east Seventy-second Street apartment on the East River. However, Morris spent a great deal of time on the East End with his closest friend, James Jones, in their favorite meeting place, Bobby Van's. The Jones family actually lived in Paris on the Ile St.-Louis, but they came to the East End each summer and rented a "ranch-style extravaganza" near Three Mile Harbor (295). Before Jones' death, however, they bought a place in Sagaponack, which he christened Spud Farm.

Morris tells us that Jones had been searching all his life for a "nice quiet dimly lit old infantry-man's dream of a bar somewhere" (299). He found it in Bobby Van's. Morris describes that extinct saloon and it should be on the record: Bobby Van's was "an angular structure on Main Street in Bridgehampton with dark paneling, Tiffany lamps, and old fans suspended from an undistinguished ceiling, a long mahogany bar, and from the back the flickering of candles on small booths and tables covered with red

tablecloths" (299). Jones, who had only a few years left, loved the bar and he would sit at it "stirring vinegar and a dab of mustard for his hamburger and taking books and writers and passing the time of day with his admirers" (299).

When Morris resigned the editorship of Harper's Magazine, which had been a difficult and traumatic decision, he moved to the East End. He was thirty-seven years old, facing the question of what to do with the rest of his life. In great pain, he sought the place he "had grown to love, and settled in a wing of a sprawling old house on an inlet of the ocean" (365). It was winter. There was snow on the ground. Nights were long and silent. Morris writes: "I gazed interminably out the window upon the hushed landscapes, the frozen inlet, the Canada geese in V formation, trying to put things into some larger piece" (365-66). He describes his mood as "bereft" (366). In his loneliness he "took long walks in that sequestered terrain, past a derelict concrete pillbox or two built against the Nazis in the previous war, to the sand dunes in the snow and the desolate winter beach, the gulls and scurrying little terns, and as far as the eye could see the gray wintry Atlantic breakers" (366). The landscape seems to mirror his spiritual state. Finally, he finds hope and begins to heal.

It is always interesting to see a writer from the perspective of another writer. In *New York Days*, Willie Morris, who got to know him well, writes about running into Truman Capote on the East End: "One day I am strolling up the sidewalk on the main street of Bridgehampton on a Saturday afternoon. An enormous Buick with a small man, so small that his nose barely rises above the dashboard, as in the 'Kilroy Was Here' drawings of World War II, stops before me. 'Hop in and let's ride around and gossip'" (292-93). Morris jumps in. "We are around the block and toward the ocean. Finally we are traveling in long widening circles about the dunes and potato fields" (293). All this time gesturing, "dramatically" and paying "little attention to the road," Capote is talking about lunching in La Cote Basque, the Four Seasons, and the Plaza and who was there and what famous person is having an extramarital affair. It is a harrowing experience. The reader can almost feel Morris' relief when Capote "negotiates the turn at Church Lane" (293). Capote was not always this exhilarated. There was his other side. Sadly, Morris says that Capote "often seemed lost and afraid" and adds that he "drove him home from Bobby Van's saloon in Bridgehampton a number of times," as much out of a feeling of protectiveness as of friendship (295). Morris notes a feature of Capote's residence that one hopes gave this increasingly frail writer a measure of distraction: "One heard the roar of the ocean from his house"

(295).

There were happy times, however. Capote wrote a delightful "Foreword" to *The Potato Book*, by Myrna Davis, a book of potato lore and recipes. This foreword captures Capote's delight in his home in Sagaponack, but, interestingly, is prophetic of the future:

I live in Sagaponack by the sea [which he did, for twenty years]. The house, which I love, sits smack in the middle of potato fields. In Fall, when harvesting is done and the tractors are gone from the fields, I amble out through the empty rows collecting small, sweet, leftover potatoes for my larder. Imagine a cold October morning. I fill my basket with found potatoes in the field and race to the kitchen to create my one and only most delicious ever potato lunch. The Russian Vodka--it must be 80 proof--goes into the icebox to chill. The potatoes into the oven to bake. My breathless friend arrives to share the feast. Out comes the icy vodka. Out comes a bowl of sour cream. Likewise the potatoes, piping hot. We sit down to sip our drinks. We split open steaming potatoes and put on some sour cream. Now I whisk out the big tin of caviar, which I have forgotten to tell you is the only way I can bear to eat a potato. Then caviar -- the freshest, the grayest, the biggest Beluga --is heaped in mounds on the potato. My friend and I set to. This simple tribute to the fruit of Eastern Long Island farming makes an exhilarating country lunch, fuels the heart and soul and empties the pocketbook. Some of the potato fields, so beautiful, flat and still, may not be here next year. And fewer the year after that. New houses are steadily popping up to mar the long line where the land ends and the sky begins (7). Like so many other East End writers, Capote injects an elegiac note into his celebration of this special world.

In 1986, Robert Long published *Long Island Poets*, an anthology of poets of the South Fork. Each poet was asked to submit some poems and "to contribute a statement on the relationship of his or her work to the immediate environment" (6). The comments as well as the poetry of some of these distinguished poets reveal the vitality of the East End as a source of inspiration. For example, James Schuyler, who lived there in the sixties, wrote a great deal of his work "in the Fairfield Porters' house on South Main Street in Southampton" (157). The poems he selected for *Long Island Poets* focus on the view he had from different windows of the house. "In January" offers a winter scene, an unusual subject for the poets of the East End:

The yard has sopped into its green-grizzled self its new year whiteness. A dog stirs the noon-blue dark with a running shadow and dirt smells cold and doggy As though the one thing never seen were its frozen coupling with the air that brings the flowers of grasses. And a leafless beech stands wrinkled, gray and sexless--all bone and loosened sinew -- in silver glory And the sun falls on all one side of it in a running glance, a licking gaze, an eye-kiss And ancient silver struck by gold emerges mossy, pinkly lichened where the sun fondles it And starlings of the anthracite march into the east with rapid jerky steps pecking at their shadows. (161-62)

When Harvey Shapiro was looking through his work to choose a few poems for Long Island Poets, he was surprised to find how much the eastern shore of Long Island had inspired him. He "started coming out to the east end [in 1960], and . . . spent more vacations either on the north or south forks than anywhere else in my adult life (177). However, for fifteen years he vacationed in the dunes of Amagansett and many of his poems suggest that source. "At the Shore" creates a familiar experience: "The bugs batting against the lamp, the midges,/ in an old house, in summer" (178). In "July," he describes the "eastern sky . . . streaked with red" where "[I]nkages of bird song make a floating chain/ In a corner of the world, walled in by ocean and sky" (179). Poetically he finds humor in the to-and-fro situation of the second-home owner in his poem "Montauk Highway": "Murderous middle age is my engine" (181). In "Riding Westward" he confronts traffic and death:

It's holiday night And crazy Jews are on the road, Finished with fasting and high on prayer. On either side of the Long Island Expressway The lights go spinning Like the twin ends of my tallis. I hope I can make it to Utopia Parkway Where my father lies at the end of his road. (180) And dual elegiac notes creep into "Battlements" a poem on the death of a friend and set at Louse Point. He writes: "Summer eternal, though after we go,/ it may all be paved over" (179). In an earlier poem, published elsewhere, Shapiro celebrates a beach in Montauk in "Ditch Plains Poem": To be there when day breaks on the sea's reaches, The full moon still hung there. At Ditch Plains, For example, before the surfers appear, Water over rock and gravel. Shingle sound. Beautiful enough in this end of July Drought of fish to make me stand there, Hungry for a text--in the water, on the sand. Something to bring back to my desk like Beach glass or polished stone. I want My happiness to be visible. I want to bless this day with meaning. Let the rest of my life take care of itself So long as it can hover there. (Street Magazine 49) George Bradley contributed a poem entitled "Walking Sag Beach." to Long Island Poets. It is a thoughtful and

lengthy poem on the metamorphosis of the poet in communion with the ocean. Stanza 5 is the final one: Walk to the step-off on Sag Beach and you Have reached a place where you cannot proceed, Where you are offered endless evasions On each hand, but of progress make no more Than you could make walking the ocean floor Or waving your arms to fly off to Spain. There comes the point where you go no further, Where you reach the end of your world, alone As the last man must someday be, with space Soaring off to the distant horizon And all that color floating in your brain-- Azure, cerulean, gun-metal blue -- As if the sea and sky sluiced right through you, Poured into your eyes with a pounding sound Like breakers crashing in over the bar, As if you could feel an ocean sweeping Your mind as the sea does this crumbling shore, Shifting your configuration, bearing You away and adding chance accretions, Changing you once and forever and yet Leaving you recognizably the same, The way the beach seems the same one morning When you come to see what the night has done, Come to stand awhile in the undertow And gaze again off into nothingness, Left with hardly a thought to call your own, With the breeze and cries of the birds, filled As if with waves by ideas of the sea. (25-26)

Grace Schulman of Manhattan and Springs sees "things of the natural world as metaphors for human deeds and principles" (150). Her remarks in Long Island Poets reveal an imagination that abstracts and invests meaning as it encounters and contemplates the local landscape: "From my studio window . . . I see trees whose names speak of life (arbor vitae) and death (hemlock). Their gestures recall human actions: branches of the Norwegian spruce are extended majestically, in command; those of the blue spruce hold votive candles, as in prayer. As strangers exchange greetings, hickories touch branches across the road" (150). Her poem "The Marsh" "deals with the disintegration of a marriage, portrayed in vines that are hooked into elms for survival" (150-51).

For years nothing grew in acid soil near my house
that stood on scant legs.
Then, year by year, I saw
sassafras and glasswort;
creepers curled around bayberry trees,
tall stalks hunted soil to live. Nearby, shadblow trees
with striated, gunmetal bark
lifted wiry branches.

Then fires of wind and water
burned the marsh;
only bare vines,
hooked into elms,
survived,
as we had, joined
together, in the house
on bulldozed sandy ground,
draggled, storm-blown,
still holding fast
to memories of dense grasses
and green vines
as if we knew life's law
was cleave or die. (152-53)

Paris Review published Schulman's most recent poem about the East End. "American Solitude" is set in Springs and focuses on the three derelict gas tanks in front of the Springs General Store:

Hopper never painted this, but here
on a snaky path his vision lingers:
Three white tombs, robots with glassed-in faces
and meters for eyes, grim mouths, flat noses,
lean forward on a platform like strangers
with identical frowns scanning a blur,
far off, that might be their train.
Gas tanks broken for decades fact Parson's
smithy, planked shut now. Both relics must stay.
The pumps have roots in gas pools, and the smithy
stores memories of hammers forging scythes
to cut spartina grass for dry salt-hay.
The tanks have the remove of local clammers
who sink buckets and stand, never in pairs,

but one and one and one, blank-eyed, alone,
more serene than lonely. Today a woman
rakes in the shallows, then bends to receive
last rays in shimmering water, her long shadow
knifing the bay. She slides into her truck
to watch the sky flame over sand flats, a hawk's
wind arabesque, an island risen brown
Atlantis, at low tide; she probes the shoreline
and beyond grassy dunes for where the land
might slope off into night. Hers is no common
emptiness, but a vaster silence filled with terns' cries, an abundant solitude. Nearby, the three dry gas
pumps, worn
survivors of clam-digging generations, are luminous, and have an exile's grandeur
that says: in perfect solitude, there's fire.

One day I approached the vessels and wanted to drive on, the road ablaze
with dogwood in full bloom, but the contraptions
outdazzled the road's white, even outshone
a bleached shirt flapping alone
on a laundry line, arms pointed down.

High noon. Three urns, ironic in their outcast
dignity -- as though, like some pine chests,
they might be prized in disuse -- cast rays,
spun leaf-covered numbers, clanked, then wheezed
and stopped again. Shadows cut the road
before I drove off into the dark woods. (283-84)

Read her poem at that place, and you will never see those gas tanks in the same way again.

In his introduction to the selection of poems he provided to Long Island Poets, Howard Moss catalogues the images of the East End: "cows, barns, horses, a silo, and small mountains in the distance (the Shinnecock Hills) . . . fishing boats . . . strung out in a line . . . trees and the illusion . . . of deep woods" (98-99). He laments the loss of acres of oaks and the encroachment of the boutique and the shopping

mall on the Main Streets of East Hampton and Sag Harbor, "each a testimonial to a distinct way of life and an aesthetic notion -- the studied elegance of a New England village green, the bustling life of a port" (99). Sadly, he sees that "[t]he sedate and the maritime are both struggling to hang on to the authentic, to ward off the increasing threat of the suburban" (99). What Moss says he owes to "the stars, the birds, to random drives through the countryside, to the bays and the beaches" is eminently clear in his poetry (99). One stanza of his "Bay Days" charts the disappointment of a would-be florist:

I tried today to make of the wild roses
An untimely bouquet. Opening, falling,
They never last long--in short, they're dying.
Now I am thinking of taking to drinking
Earlier than usual. Gin. And something.
A potion of petals. They're thorns by evening.
Wild roses in the trash can in the morning. (101)

Another poem, "In Traffic," describes so well the impatience of the returnee to the East End, stalled in traffic on a "narrow trap of a road adorned with / a diner, a garage, and a nursery" (101). Forced to stop, the riders have time for a brief reflection:

We're stymied, as usual, by the unknown --
A broken-down truck up ahead, an accident,

A Harvester dragging gigantic claws
too wide for one lane, or an animal
refusing to budge -- and we begin to wonder
who we all are: the anonymous
taking on interest, the way a tree
stands out suddenly, exempt from its species.

Nothing is really dancing except
an insect or two, whose lives will be smashed
against a windshield once we begin

to move, which we're beginning to do;
a truck full of trees is carting its garden
away toward somebody's landscaped Eden,
and we're picking up speed, single file,
driving past ponds displaying their steadfast
green, through towns too pretty to be. (101-02)

Moss is able to take the most mundane of situations and make it meaningful. Kenneth Koch has written a poem entitled "The Boiling Water" which he tells us he "began writing . . . in 1975, in early summer, when I was living in a house I rented on Millstone Road . . . down from . . . Scuttlehole Road . . . next door to the house I later bought and spend summers in now" (80). It is about the drama of the boil, after the water has been watched and waited for. The poem was finally finished on Millstone Road a long time later. The Long Island details, Koch tells us, include: "the tree waving in the wind, the hurricane (of 1976), the fly, and the bee; and the tree, full of pink and whitish blossoms, which was an apple tree in the yard between my house and the fields" (81).

Although David Ignatow confesses an ambivalence about East Hampton, for he must often resist "the calm and quiet" and "the wonder of the trees, bays, and ocean" to keep in mind "the tension, turmoil, and slaughter of people in the cities and in the Third World," he admits to the pleasure in the relief he finds here "in small doses" (68-69).

In "Little Friend," the narrator watches first one bird and then another.

The first he sees:

. . . standing as though idly
in the grass, your head turning
slowly in one direction, then in another
without alarm when, suddenly, you crouch,
flutter your wings and leap into the air
as though to escape an attack or as if in memory of one to which
you still respond, so deep has been your fear.
And now you're safe upon a branch
above my head from which I sit secluded, not to trouble you again.

The bird sails off and disappears from view. A second bird:

. . . lands close
to where you stood and looks
in both directions first, before it bends
its head to feed. Off it flies
with something in its beak. I step out
from hiding, reminded of my hunger.

The narrator then synthesizes the demands of the world and the calming distraction of nature:

Later, I turn to read the news of state
and individuals and wonder what
the bird is doing at this moment,
now that it has eaten. (74)

The peace that David Ignatow often found in East Hampton is mirrored fully in "The Bay," which appeared in the 1997 issue of Hampton Shorts:

So much of something lying calm,
self-possessed, taking the sun,
the ships, the wind and the gulls,
not letting itself be troubled
or turn upon itself. It is the bay
in its place on the map
and in the world, and it has its work, to uphold ships and to let the eye
roam across a wide expanse
for a moment of release and calm. (103)

Having looked back over almost 250 years, what conclusions can we come to about the writers of the East End? It is astonishing how many of the best American writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries lived and wrote here: poets, novelists, essayists, biographers, journalists, historians, and

dramatists. They all uniformly recognized the East End as a special place, and all allowed this place to work on their sensibilities in a profound way. All were happy here, but sounded an elegiac note about the future, fearing change in this unique place. Upon reflection or after long lives, all felt nostalgia for an almost idyllic past.

An overview also reveals the tremendous intellectual vitality of the East End. It has been, and still is, a stimulating environment for both mind and body and is enormously encouraging to writers. The presence of the Bay Street Theatre means that resident playwrights have a forum -- now playing: *House*, by Terence McNally and Jon Robin Baitz, set in Noyac in the present. Roger Rosenblatt is creating an exciting program at Southampton College. Organized by Sherrill Foster, members of the American Association of University Women are transcribing original and primary materials in the Long Island Collection of the East Hampton Library, under the direction of Dorothy T. King and Diana Dayton, Librarians. At present they are transcribing the diaries of Fanny Huntting, her brother James Madison Huntting, Cornelia Huntington, and Morgan Dix. Pushcart Press and Canio are searching out and publishing new talent. Barbara Stone's Hampton Shorts is a showcase for local writers. The East Hampton Star and all the free papers -- in English and Spanish -- invite anyone with a BiC pen to try his or her hand at writing. Wilford Sheed has noted: "It might be taken as a general principle that if you see someone in particularly shabby work clothes -- and I don't mean designer work clothes, either -- it just might be a writer and not necessarily a famous one" (ix). I regret having had to leave out great writers who have not yet written about the East End. If only Doctorow had written *Summertime* instead of *Ragtime*. Or Edward Albee had written, not *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* but *Who's Afraid of Martha Stewart?* Or Kurt Vonnegut a collection of commencement addresses for Southampton College. And then there's Joseph Heller. His latest memoir *Now and Then: From Coney Island to Here* is not about here!

To conclude, the East End has either birthed, bred, nourished, housed, published, comforted, or buried an impressive number of the best American writers for many, many years. It has been, therefore, a special place for them. However, because of them, the East End now holds a very special place in the history of American letters.