

Transcript of Lecture
Delivered by
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Governor Thomas Dongan and his Charter to East Hampton

I was asked to talk about Thomas Dongan and the charter he granted to East Hampton, hence the title of my talk. Actually, what he granted was a patent, not a charter, and please don't ask me to explain the difference. It is sufficient to know that what a town is granted is called a patent, and what a city receives is called a charter.

In 1686 there were serious differences between New York governor Thomas Dongan and the town of East Hampton, leading to the type of patent that East Hampton received in December of that year. The first question for us to deal with, is: who was Thomas Dongan? The second is: what was the area of conflict between him and East Hampton? I think the best way to handle this is to begin by describing the career of Thomas Dongan, including his administration of New York, to the end of 1686, and then review what had been going on in East Hampton, especially in relation to land title, up to the same point, so that we can see why East Hampton received the sort of patent that it did. And I will conclude with a view of Thomas Dongan's career after 1686. I'm sure that the further history of East Hampton has already been well covered by the other speakers in this series.

Thomas Dongan, like all of New York's colonial governors, came from a military background. Unlike his predecessors, Dongan was Irish, and, alone among New York's colonial governors, Roman Catholic. This is important to any understanding of the ups and downs of his career and of the times in which Dongan lived.

Thomas Dongan was born in 1634 at Castletown, County Kildare, the second surviving son of Baronet Sir John Dongan and Mary Talbot Dongan. Thomas's father was a member of the Irish Parliament. His mother's brother was the Earl of Tyrconnell. In short, Thomas Dongan was "castle Irish," not "lace curtain Irish"; more than an officer and gentleman, he was an officer and nobleman. And one of his uncles was the Archbishop of Dublin. This was a practicing Catholic family.

In the 1640s, the English had their Civil War, which ended with the deposing and beheading of King Charles I and the establishment of a commonwealth government, led by Puritans. This was not good news for Catholic Ireland, which, in fact, was invaded by English Protestant troops in 1649. However, the Dongans, including 15-year-old Thomas, had already joined the exodus of Stuart supporters from Ireland and England to France. In that same year, the dead king's teenaged sons, Charles the heir apparent and James, duke of York, had also escaped to the continent, first to Holland and later to France.

The teenaged Dongan enrolled in the Irish Regiment serving with the French army. It is

possible that at this time he first met the Duke of York, who served in the French army until 1656. The duke returned to England in 1660 with his brother, now King Charles II, but Dongan remained in the French army for another 18 years, and in 1674 attained the rank of colonel.

Then in 1678, when it appeared that England might go to war against France, King Charles ordered all British troops serving in the pay of France to return to England. Dongan resigned his commission and went to England, at great personal financial sacrifice, and despite attractive offers from the king of France to remain.

Charles II made some partial compensation to Dongan, granting him a life pension of 500 pounds a year and a commission as general of an army being raised for an invasion of Flanders. However, the king almost immediately changed Dongan's assignment, appointing him lieutenant-governor of the British colony of Tangier in North Africa. It was not a lucrative appointment Dongan complained that he lost money during his two years at the post but he apparently demonstrated qualities of leadership and administration that recommended him to the King and the Duke of York.

A year later the Popish Plot occurred in England. This was a supposed plot by Catholics to infiltrate the government and corrupt or kill the king. In fact, it was a total fiction, created by corrupt Protestant politicians as a way to destroy opponents. A number of innocent persons were convicted with perjured testimony and tortured to death. During this period, it was noticed that the three top officials at Tangier, including the governor and lieutenant-governor, were all Roman Catholic, and of course came under suspicion, with the result that Dongan was recalled in February 1680 and the governor soon after.

Dongan did nothing of note after his return to London it was a good time for a Catholic not to do anything that would draw attention to himself. Eventually the Popish Plot hysteria ran its course; the king finally put an end to it when charges were made against his brother. But Dongan was in the right place when King Charles and the Duke of York were seeking a governor for New York. On September 30, 1682, he was commissioned governor of New York and her dependencies, and a few days later was also commissioned vice-admiral of the Duke of York's territories in America. The duke handed Dongan his instructions in January 1683, including authority to establish a popularly elected general assembly.

Thomas Dongan sailed for his new post in America on the frigate Constant Warwick, arriving at Manhattan on August 25, 1683. He was to serve as governor of New York and its dependencies, which still included Pemaquid (in Maine), and Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard (off Massachusetts). Dongan also held a commission as admiral with jurisdiction in maritime cases for New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey.

Religious Issues

Accompanying Dongan on his voyage to America were two chaplains, the Anglican Dr. John Gordon and the Jesuit Thomas Harvey. They illustrate the duke of York's intention to have freedom of religion

in his colony, and served as a reminder to all that he was working for the same in England. The duke was openly Catholic, the king secretly so, and although the duke favored religious freedom in England for both Protestant dissenters and Catholics, the dissenters did not trust him and opposed his policies. However, the next six years would be a golden age for New York's large Roman Catholic minority, which for the first time would be served openly by three English Jesuits and two lay brothers, and would even have a parochial school on Manhattan. Their arrival would be viewed nervously by New York's Dutch Calvinists. Anthony Brockholls, carried over from the previous administration, continued to serve as deputy governor and commander-in-chief of Fort James in New York; with the arrival of Jarvis Baxter as commandant at Fort Albany, the colony's two forts and the governorship itself were all in the hands of Catholics. Some saw it as evidence of religious freedom, others as first steps on the road toward enforced Catholicism. It is important to keep the religious situation in mind, because there would be serious consequences a few years later.

People were even suspicious as to Dongan's motives when he began the liberal dispensing of trading licenses to fur traders. Some sixty French traders, frustrated by the regulations imposed by their own government in Canada, moved to New York to set up shop, most of them settling at Saratoga, on the Albany-Montreal trading route. Suddenly, New York had a community of foreign Catholics located at a point that was of strategic importance, both economically and militarily.

In October 1685 Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, and persecution of France's Protestants began. Dozens of them found their way to New York. With French Catholics settling at Saratoga and a considerable number of French Protestants arriving in New York City, fears of a French takeover began to trouble New Yorkers. Even the colony's English Catholics came under suspicion, as Protestants wondered if they were potential traitors who would hand New York over to Catholic France.

A General Assembly Not everything about Dongan's arrival was viewed negatively by colonists. More readily accepted by the general populace was the duke of York's decision to have Dongan establish a general assembly, for which the king granted an enabling act, the Charter of Liberties, to the inhabitants of New York and its dependencies. This was a move which the colonists, particularly those on Long Island with ties to New England, had long advocated.

Some have seen the establishment of an elected assembly and the assembly's adoption of the Charter of Liberties as important steps toward democracy. But in fact, the General Assembly would exist only at the pleasure of the king, and only as long as it did not strain his tolerance. All the acts passed by the Assembly were subject to review by the duke of York and ultimately by the king, whose vetoes could not be overridden.

What the colonists had sought, especially those on eastern Long Island, was to imitate the New England model. But even that was a cautious democracy. In New England the ballot was restricted to persons of means within the established (Puritan) church. Although New York's model had no religious restriction, it was otherwise little different. The general assembly was to be popularly elected by "every freeholder and freeman," which limited the franchise to males in possession of real estate with a value of at least forty pounds. This left a lot of people, including many owners of small holdings, disenfranchised. From the government's standpoint, voting should be restricted to holders of large properties who thereby had a major stake in the success of government why on earth would you give the vote to the rabble? Both the king and the town proprietors were agreed that democracy needed to be restricted; they differed as to

what those restrictions should be and whose rights needed to be restricted.

The elected representatives of the whole colony first gathered in General Assembly on October 17, 1683. They chose as speaker Matthias Nicolls, whose service in New York government began two decades earlier, and as clerk they chose John Spragg, the provincial secretary. The duke of York had once said he saw no need for an elected assembly, as he thought it would involve the same men that were already in government. In that, he appears to have been right.

The Assembly was granted the rights to levy taxes and make laws, and at its first meeting it passed fourteen laws, all approved by the governor and council and submitted to the duke for ratification. One of the acts was to form twelve counties. This, taken together with other acts of Dongan to charter the city of Albany and recharter New York City, and the establishing of circuit courts in which local justices participated, could be seen as advancing local government and popular participation in the political process. Or, one could interpret it as part of a pattern to increase the role of central government in local affairs, especially since the principal officers of the cities continued to be appointed, not elected. In fact, both views are correct: the people were given a platform to voice their concerns and vote on issues that affected them, but the king's appointed officials could end those freedoms anytime.

Council and Courts Balancing the democratically inclined General Assembly was the government council. The council, whose members were appointed by the king, functioned as governor's cabinet, as upper house of the legislature, and, together with the governor, as court of appeals. In the governor's absence, one or more councilors collectively would administer the colony. At this point in time, the Council was comprised almost entirely of officeholders from England and New York City merchants.

They included two holdovers from the preceding administration, Dutchmen Frederick Phillipse and Stephanus van Cortlandt, who would serve throughout Dongan's administration, as did Anthony Brockholls, who served also as commander-in-chief of the military and deputy governor. Others who served off and on during the administration were primarily career government officials: among them, Jarvis Baxter, like Brockholls a military commander and a Catholic. Among the colonists on the council was Nicholas Bayard, a nephew of Peter Stuyvesant Bayard was being rehabilitated after having been jailed in 1674 for resistance to English government. Another long-term colonist was the even pricklier John Youngs from South Hampton, who had once been threatened with charges of treason for trying to place Long Island under Connecticut rule. However, Youngs was not a factor on the council: he seldom made the long trip to New York City to attend council meetings. The members of the council, for the most part, were Dongan's closest advisors. Dongan had to answer to the king and the duke, both of whom wanted to see some profit from the colony, and Dongan himself was not adverse to turning a personal profit on the job. It is not surprising that the three wealthy Dutch merchants on the council had more influence with successive governors than Englishmen on the council with no business connections.

Dongan made changes in the courts. The court of assizes, which met once a year at New York, was abolished. It had been virtually inaccessible for poor people at the farther reaches of the colony. It was replaced by circuit courts which met twice a year in each county. The circuit judges, who would sit with the county's justices of the peace as a judicial panel, were chosen by the governor. The judges throughout Dongan's administration were the venerable Matthias Nicolls, officeholder for twenty years, and Captain John Palmer, holder of numerous Staten Island offices. While the establishment of circuit courts on the one hand eased people's recourse to the courts, on the other hand it enabled the governor to

send in his own judges to oversee local hearings. Cities were granted charters and the aldermen were popularly elected, but mayor, clerk and other major officers were appointed by governor or king. The general assembly was popularly elected, but the laws it enacted could be rejected by the king. Governor Dongan on behalf of the duke of York offered unprecedented local authority in several ways, but always the governor was enabled to strongly influence local affairs, and the duke could always negate them.

Charters and Grants During his administration, Dongan cemented a number of political alliances within the colony by granting new patents to various communities, in addition to the charters to the two cities. He also erected a number of manors, about half of all those ever granted in New York. A number of large land patents were granted, usually to companies of investors who rewarded Dongan generously with gifts. The large number of manors erected and large patents granted by Dongan could be viewed as rewarding faithful servants of the government, or as means to tie important men more closely to the government, or as providing large fees (and bribes) to enrich Dongan personally. These various motives are not mutually exclusive. Rich men got land, Dongan got paid, and the government won friends among its important citizens.

Today, we consider it a serious offense for a public official to accept bribes, or large gifts from those doing business with the government. In the 17th century, the salaries of colonial governors and other public officials were never large enough to cover the expenses of office. That is one reason why wealthy men were given such positions they were expected to pay many of the expenses out of their own pockets. But the only people willing to accept positions in far-off, primitive colonies were those gentlemen and noblemen who were caught in a cash-flow problem and needed a position where they could replenish their personal coffers. As a result, gift-giving and bribery were normal and expected, and while they were illegal, the chances of conviction were remote, unless one had done something to really displease the king.

Besides issuing patents to new communities, Dongan in 1686 granted New York city a new charter, and Albany received its first English charter. In that same year, Dongan began enforcing an order of council for the existing towns to renew their patents, which gave the king and himself much needed revenue. Some towns resisted, and it is at that point that we must turn our attention to the history of East Hampton's relations with the government of New York.

East Hampton and Its Patent After the conquest of New Netherland in 1664, Governor Richard Nicolls sought to bring together the various regional interests of the colony under the proprietorship of the duke of York. In a gathering at Hempstead of representatives from throughout the colony, a new set of rules was worked out, called the duke's laws. Neither the Dutch at Albany nor the Puritans on eastern Long Island were happy about the new laws, nor about the Royalist government which would rule over them. It was the decision of Nicolls, and his successor, Francis Lovelace, to leave Albany pretty much to its own devices for the time being, but to bring all the English speaking parts of the colony under the duke's regulations immediately.

There was much resistance on Long Island, where the towns sought to secede and join with either Massachusetts or Connecticut. To stop the grumbling, a law was passed in 1666 to stop talk against the deputies who passed the duke's laws. But when eastern Long Islanders decided to stop paying taxes to New York, Nicolls' patience reached its limits and he informed the leaders of the eastern towns that they would pay their taxes or be charged with treason. The punishment for treason was a particularly

unpleasant form of death, and no one doubted that Richard Nicolls was a man of his word, so the resistance collapsed. But no one was happy.

Since none of the existing land patents in the colony had been issued under the proprietorship of the duke of York, all patents had to be reissued with the proper wording. The recipients of the new patents did not get them for free; they had to pay fees to the governor, the colonial secretary, and the clerk who actually wrote the new patents, so the renewal of all the patents in the colony provided a goodly source of income to those officers for the next few years.

Richard Nicolls granted a new patent to East Hampton on the thirteenth of March 1666/7. It granted "all the privileges belonging to a town within this government. The patentees and associates, their heirs, successors and assigns shall pay such duties as now are or hereafter shall be established by the laws of this government." In other words, the same people are still in charge, and don't forget to pay your taxes.

As far as the East Hampton men were concerned, the promised rights were not forthcoming. In June 1682, East Hampton men on military training day drew up a petition to acting Gov. Brockholls, complaining that, although they paid their taxes, nowhere on Long Island did citizens have free representative government. Brockholls, who had neither the authority nor the inclination to help, offered no sympathy.

In 1683, Dongan proclaimed the establishing of the long awaited General Assembly. The eastern towns of Long Island were to send two representatives. East Hampton asked that the representatives stand up in the assembly for the maintenance "of our privileges and English liberties." They wanted all writs to run in the king's name and not the duke's: they were willing to be the king's subjects, but they did not want to recognize the duke's title to their territory. They also noted that they participated in the elections, not in answer to the writ of the sheriff, which was issued in the duke's name, but because they refused to miss any opportunity to assert their liberties.

The issue of who controlled land and land-title in the colony was about to be given a thorough hearing, as governor and East Hampton men engaged in a series of encounters. In March 1684/5, Dongan ordered the county sheriffs to investigate all titles in their jurisdictions. The reason he gave was that "Several inhabitants in the province request liberty and license to purchase land. It is uncertain what land are disposed of, since several persons possess land to which they have no legal title or at least have neglected to record the same." Therefore the sheriff was ordered "to inquire of Suffolk inhabitants by what title they enjoy their possessions and return the same to me... to find out if they be recorded." While they were at it, the sheriffs should also collect all quit rents and arrears of quit rents due the duke of York. The reaction in East Hampton was typical of most towns: they didn't like the new order, both because they were not inclined to pay taxes if they could help it, and because the implication of quit rents was that the land belonged to the duke, who allowed them to own it at his pleasure. Threatened with a hearing before the court of exchequer, where Dongan was almost certain to win, most towns gave up the struggle, but East Hampton continued to press its case.

In July of 1685, the Rev. Thomas James and Capt. Josiah Hobart were dispatched by East Hampton to treat with the Governor about the quit rent. Their instructions stated that they were to surrender no existing rights or privileges, but only to seek an agreement whereby East Hampton's quit rent would be no more than that of neighboring towns. While they were at it, they should seek confirmation of the

town's rights as granted by former governors. That effort went exactly no place, so in August, Lt. John Wheeler and Ens. Samuel Mulford were sent off to try and gain from the governor "better security and confirmation for our lands, and also to agree upon a quit rent upon as easy terms as they can." That also went no place. The town planned to submit its annual protest at the General Assembly, but Dongan dissolved the Assembly in August 1685. Before it could meet again, King Charles died, and the duke of York became King James II. The General Assembly had been James's creation, but as king he thought it a bad idea, and abolished it. He also revoked the charter of liberties and all the other laws the assembly had passed, except of course those for raising taxes.

At the beginning of October, therefore, East Hampton sent a petition to the governor, noting that the government of New York had been established under the king by Col. Richard Nicolls, "By word and writing we were promised and engaged the enjoyment of all privileges and liberties which other of his majesties subjects doe enjoy. Since that time we are deprived and prohibited of our birthright freedoms and privileges to which both wee and our ancestors were born. Laws and orders have been imposed upon us from time to time without our consent and therein we are totally deprived of a fundamental privilege of our English nation." All of this smacked of insubordination, and would not have been well received by Dongan.

It was at this point that the governor received a petition from nine men who had long lived in East Hampton, but were not proprietors of the town, seeking to be granted title to land. The town had been operating under the assumption that undivided land in the town belonged to the original proprietors. Dongan decided that it belonged to all freemen of the town, and he instructed the sheriff to have a surveyor lay out thirty acres for each of the nine petitioners, from any land not already claimed.

East Hampton saw Dongan's land grants to the nine men as an infringement of its privileges. Dongan ordered them to send "four men to appear at New York to answer" what charges might be made against the proprietors. The proprietors instructed the delegates to be well-prepared to present the town's case, and sent another two men to Connecticut for advice and help. The instructions show that East Hampton intended to revive an old argument, that because the east end of the island had not been protected by New York at the time of the Dutch invasion of 1673, the towns at that time had placed themselves under the care and supervision of Connecticut, and should therefore still be considered part of that colony. This was a dangerous argument: Dongan could charge the proprietors with treason.

Finally, on October 6, a meeting was called to protest the governor's actions, leading to the posting of the town's complaints without bothering to seek the necessary permission from a justice of the peace. That brought a charge from New York that seven men "did confederate together to bring his Majesty's authority into contempt and scorn," that they "did riotously, contemptuously and unlawfully assemble themselves together with diverse others unknown ...without any warrant or authority and did publish and affix on the wall of the meeting house a certain scandalous and libelous paper." Dongan had the seven protesters arrested on charges of sedition, as well as five men who had sided with them. A week later the Rev. Thomas James lent his support to the accused, and preached a sermon criticizing the colony's council for awarding land in East Hampton to the nine petitioners. He was arrested on charges of sedition.

Let us consider the situation at this point. The town of East Hampton opposed the authority of the duke of York and his agents, and after he had become king, which made New York a crown colony, the

townsmen continued their insubordination to the point of violating the laws against riot. The governor is furious, and claps a baker's dozen in jail, among them the town's clergyman. It hardly seems a propitious time to seek a new patent with added rights favorable to the interests of the town's proprietors.

At this point, nonetheless, the town on Nov. 18, 1686, instructed John Wheeler and Samuel Mulford once again to seek a town patent from the governor. Not only are they to see if a patent can be procured from the governor, but it should exclude the nine men who had been granted 30 acres each, the quit rent should be low, and payment should be made in East Hampton, not way off in New York. And the proprietors should be able to hold town meetings without a warrant from a justice.

Under these circumstances, we are not surprised that the patent Governor Dongan granted to East Hampton was on terms other than the town's own choosing. The ruling body of the town was no longer to be the proprietors, but a board of trustees representing all the freeholders and commonality: that would make the votes of the 30-acre men equal to that of the greatest proprietor. It was the trustees, now, who owned the undivided land, not the proprietors. Two constables, two assessors, and the twelve trustees were to be chosen yearly, but to hold an election, the trustees had to request a warrant from one of the justices of the peace, all of whom were appointed by the governor. The town had sought permission to buy Montauk from the local Indians, and the patent granted them the right to bargain with the Indians, but if they bought the land they were to pay a yearly quit rent, and at New York, not East Hampton. That would be in addition to the 40 shillings a year quit rent for their present bounds. And we should note that now that New York was a crown colony, refusal to pay taxes to New York or any attempt to join Connecticut would be treason against the king.

The patent was signed by Dongan on December 9, 1686, and approved by the Council the same day. It was the same council whose actions the town had so long opposed, and all of whose members the town probably detested: four Royalists, three of them Catholic, and two of New York City's Dutch merchants. The council was now particularly resented because, with the General Assembly abolished, the Council had adopted the function of the assembly, passing acts for the governor's signature. And worst of all, most of the council's acts were for the purpose of increasing taxes. Typical was the decision to grant pardons to the thirteen townsmen charged with riot. The men were free, but the town was charged with a special tax of 200 pounds to pay for the patent and legal fees.

Indian and French Relations While all this was of major importance to East Hampton, it was just another nuisance to the governor, who had inter-colonial issues to deal with. When Dongan arrived in the colony in 1683, he had a number of long-standing problems awaiting him. Territory in dispute included the land between the Connecticut and Hudson rivers, claimed also by Connecticut. Pennsylvania had designs on Iroquois lands on the upper Susquehanna, and Dongan's first order of business upon his arrival was a trip to Albany, to encourage that community's leaders to use their influence among the Iroquois to prevent any land sales to Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, Massachusetts had an interest in Pemaquid and the offshore islands. Massachusetts officials were issuing licenses to trade at Pemaquid, which Dongan declared invalid.

All these were problems with other Englishmen, and, like the problems within the colony, would eventually be worked out at some level of government. Problems with other neighbors were more complicated, and even dangerous. England and France had been edging toward war for several years, there were constant rumors throughout Dongan's years of administration that war was finally about to

break out, but it did not actually begin until 1689. New York's interest was not in far-off wars but in the threat that French Canada posed to its northern frontier if war between England and France did break out. Complicating the problem for the two colonies was their jealousy over trade with the Iroquois.

New York had long claimed sovereignty over the Five Nations of the Iroquois, which the Iroquois acknowledged when it was to their advantage, and ignored when it was not. This ambiguity led New York into constant diplomatic difficulties with other colonies. Iroquois raids on Virginia and Maryland were an embarrassment, and Dongan arranged conferences in two successive years at Albany. The Iroquois leaders apologized for their young hotheads and blamed the French in Canada for arming them. Agreements were reached, gifts were exchanged, but raiding parties continued southward. The Iroquois promised not to make any treaties without checking first with Dongan, then went ahead and made a formal treaty with the French anyway, and almost immediately broke it. Their understanding of power politics and the nature of treaties was virtually European.

The French had their own problems with the Iroquois five nations, who were raiding French trading parties returning from Sioux territory, and had assaulted a French fort on the Illinois River. The French planned to retaliate and sought assurance of neutrality from New York. Dongan, of course, restated New York's claim to sovereignty over all the five nations and their territory, and forbade any French incursions south of the Great Lakes. In June 1687, Dongan warned the Seneca of French intentions against them, and Albany sent them powder and lead. The men of the nation went on war alert, and sent the women and children to Cayuga villages and to Albany for safety.

The French invited the Iroquois nations to send representatives to a conference. However, when the Iroquois ambassadors arrived at Montreal they were seized and sent to France, where they were put to work as galley-slaves. French troops then attacked Indian villages along Irondequoit Bay, and went through Seneca country burning fields and villages. The Seneca called for a meeting with Dongan at Albany, where they filled him in on what had been happening. He urged caution and recommended releasing French prisoners.

Dongan took the military situation seriously enough that he spent the winter of 1687-88 in Albany overseeing the palisading of that town and Schenectady, leaving Brockholls and the council in charge at New York. He had Albany send scouts to Lake Champlain, and sentries were posted at Albany and Schenectady. The Long Island militia was called upon to send up one man in ten to help with the frontier defenses, and Dongan called on the Iroquois for reinforcements.

The Mohawks and Mahicans now began to attack small forts and villages near Montreal and the area of present-day Kingston, Ontario. A party of Jesuits sent by the French governor came to Albany in February 1688 to discuss peace with Dongan, the French being convinced that the Iroquois were not acting on their own. While good intentions were expressed by both sides, the conference really did not accomplish anything. The Iroquois harassed the Canadians all that winter. Most of the French at Niagara were either killed or died of disease. Fort Frontenac was invested. By spring the Iroquois controlled Canada from the Richelieu River to Montreal. Finally the French asked them to come parlay, but remembering what had happened to their ambassadors the last time, the Iroquois took the sensible and intimidating step of sending 1,200 warriors as representatives to Montreal. The French governor agreed to peace and solicited from France the return of the Indians serving in French galleys. However, no one expected that the troubles were over, and in May Dongan went to Albany again for further defensive

preparations and discussions with local officials. This time he left the three Dutch counselors Phillipse, van Cortlandt, and Bayard in charge at New York, since Brockholls was in charge of a military force along the border.

New York in the Dominion of New England

Meanwhile, King James was advancing a plan begun two years earlier to cancel the charters and abolish the elected assemblies of his northern colonies, which he could then unite into one dominion under one governor and one council. The Dominion of New England was formed in 1686 from Massachusetts Bay, New Hampshire, and Plymouth colonies, and Pemaquid was annexed to Massachusetts. Dongan in fact had long campaigned for just such a move, pointing out that Pemaquid was more properly a dependency of its neighbor, Massachusetts, than of distant New York.

On the 19th of December, 1686, former New York governor Sir Edmund Andros arrived at Boston as the new governor-general of the "Territory and Dominion of New England in America." Almost at once a tug-of-war broke out between Andros and Dongan for Connecticut, with Dongan sending off agents to woo the unresponsive Yankees, who did not want to be part of anything else, certainly not any colony led by either the long distrusted Andros or the Catholic Dongan with his Dutch confederates.

East Hampton was more receptive to the idea of the dominion. In July 1688, the trustees voted to send delegates to meet with Andros, and instructed them to take John Youngs along as advisor. East Hampton still wanted to be out of New York: if they couldn't join Connecticut, they were glad to settle for Massachusetts. However, the king had his own ideas; on All Hallows' Eve, Andros forced Connecticut into the dominion, and the next day Rhode Island. The dominion was looking even more attractive.

But the king wasn't finished. New York and New Jersey were added to the dominion on March 23, 1688. Governor Dongan found himself laid off from his job, or in modern terms, down-sized. To make his being superseded more palatable, Dongan received an offer from the king of a regiment and a commission as major general of artillery. He opted instead to retire and by July 28 he was ready to give up his government.

That winter, Anthony Brockholls would oversee a garrison at Pemaquid, while Patrick MacGregorie and other regular officers from New York were assigned to other forts on the Maine frontier. Thomas Dongan, the most experienced soldier of them all, retired to his farm at Hempstead, and to his 25,000-acre Staten Island estate, Cassiltowne, named for his birthplace.

Ex-Governor Dongan

The year 1688 ended with the colonists caught up in their own concerns, unaware of events in Europe. The Netherlands had been at war with France for several years. Now a Dutch army led by King James's Dutch nephew, William of Orange, had landed in England. James II had found himself virtually without friends among his own subjects and fled to France. William and Mary had begun their reign in England. Now that France's enemy, William of Orange, was not only commander-in-chief of the Dutch armies but king of England as well, France declared war on England. But the Americans would only learn of all this the next spring.

When word arrived, the governments established by James collapsed. The unpopular Dominion of New England vanished like a puff of smoke and Governor-General Andros was thrown in jail by Boston's citizens. In New York, the news that there was a new king brought down the government. A period of anarchy ensued until New York militia captain Jacob Leisler assumed the role of acting governor.

With an unstable and makeshift government, Leisler, and many ordinary citizens of the colony, feared not only the French military threat to the north, but the possibility that some groups in New York might be less than enthusiastic in their support of King William. Leisler even imagined that disaffected groups in the colony, which he supposed would include those who had grown rich under James's rule, and Frenchmen, and Roman Catholics, might conspire with the French colonial government to the north. In particular, Leisler saw Thomas Dongan as a menace to Protestants, and accused him of organizing a Catholic army on Staten Island to overthrow the government.

With Leisler in control of provincial headquarters at Fort James, Dongan left the colony in August 1689 for Connecticut, and then moved on to Rhode Island. By November he had quietly returned to his farm at Hempstead, but when Leisler issued an arrest warrant in February 1690, accusing Dongan of advancing the interests of James II in violation of his oaths to King William, Dongan renewed his wandering, first to New Jersey and then to Massachusetts. In 1691 he made his way across the ocean to London, and there he stayed, for there was no longer anything for him in Ireland. His brother William, Earl of Limerick, had gone into exile in France, along with James II, and the family estates were confiscated by the crown.

James made one attempt to regain his throne, leading an army into the friendly confines of Catholic Ireland, from where he proposed launching an assault on England herself. But King William, William of Orange, took an army to Ireland and met James at the battle of the Boyne. James's army sustained heavy losses, James panicked and fled the battlefield and continued on, eventually all the way back to France. On that day, Ireland's Protestants became Orange men.

In 1698 Thomas Dongan's brother the earl of Limerick died, leaving no male descendants (his only son having been killed at the battle of the Boyne). Thomas then became the fifth earl of Limerick. He had been petitioning since 1692 for recompense for his services in America, and for the arrears on his pension granted by Charles II, to which he now added a request for the return of his ancestral estates. In none of this was he successful. He eventually sold some of his American properties, which enabled him to spend his last years in genteel poverty. He died on December 14, 1715, at the age of eighty-one, in London where he had lived for 25 years, and was buried there in St. Pancras churchyard. A life-long bachelor, he left his estate on Staten Island to three nephews who emigrated to America.

These were momentous times, and I fear that it is all a bit much to put into a speech and expect anyone to comprehend it all. But perhaps we can summarize and give some general impressions of what this all means.

Thomas Dongan was sent as governor to New York because he had what were considered the requisite qualities for public administration in those days: he was a nobleman, and had served thirty years in the military. A year or so as lieutenant-governor of Tangier was sufficient practical experience. But, in fact, he did a good job as New York's governor during a very difficult period.

Within the colony, there was still plenty of resentment against English government by the overwhelmingly Dutch population. This was not just ethnic bias: the Dutch did not have the contacts in England necessary for success as merchants, and the Dutch were first and foremost merchants. Of the English in the colony, the vast majority on Long Island and at Westchester were Puritans Congregationalists and Presbyterians and they had come over here to escape from Anglicans and Royalists.

That Dongan was a Royalist we know; from the standpoint of Dutch and English Calvinists, his being Catholic was even worse than being Anglican. That he had served thirty years in the French army hardly endeared him to people in a colony whose northern neighbor was still called New France. The New England colonies were suspicious of a neighbor colony that was a Royal possession. New Jersey chafed under New York's influence and was unhappy that as long as the governor of New York held the title of admiral, New York still controlled their shipping. The reliability of the Iroquois as allies extended only as far as they saw the alliance as in their self-interest, but Dongan did a good job of holding their loyalty. Relations were certainly prickly at times, but overall, the Iroquois were New York's firmest allies.

Against this background, Thomas Dongan tried to administer one of the most internally combustible of colonies. There was animosity between Dutch and English, between Royalists and Puritans, between Protestants and Catholics. These were not simple dislikes: people were forced into exile for belonging to the wrong party. People were killed for belonging to the wrong party. Dongan was placed in a particularly difficult situation in that the duke of York, later King James, expected him to bring about freedom of public worship for most of the religions in the colony. Lutherans and Quakers and Catholics liked that idea they had been repressed under the Dutch but many Protestants were more than a little upset with a Catholic chapel and chaplain in the fort at Manhattan, a Jesuit parochial school in the midst of New York City, and Jesuit missionaries roaming through the colony cementing the far-flung Catholic community. In the end, Dongan's strongest supporters in the colony were those who most benefitted from his position. Other than his religious allies, they would be the owners of large, landed estates and wealthy merchants who did business with the government. During the Leisler regime, they would all be tarred with the same brush: even Dutch Calvinists like Stephanus van Cortlandt and Nicholas Bayard were accused of being soft on Catholicism and disloyal to King William. It was not a time when tolerance was viewed as a positive quality.

It is difficult to evaluate the measures adopted during Thomas Dongan's governorship. Dongan's reorganization of the legislature, the courts, and local government extended a measure of popular participation in government, but also expanded the influence of central government throughout the colony. City aldermen and town officials were popularly elected, but county officials and the principal city officers were appointed, not elected. It was more democracy than King James was comfortable with, less than the colonists desired.

One of Dongan's most difficult problems was the long-standing feud between the towns of eastern Long Island and the government of New York. He sought to make peace with them, tried to accommodate them as much as he could, and overlooked many of their affronts. But in the end they had to understand that Long Island was part of New York and they would have to submit to its government.

What was the purpose of granting a patent to East Hampton? It was hardly intended as a favor to the residents here. For one thing, issuing the patent put some money in Dongan's pocket, although that is not

why we are interested in it. More importantly, it made all land title here dependent upon the royal colony of New York. The annual quit rent was a reminder that refusal to pay tribute could result in loss of property title. The proprietors lost their title to any unassigned land, and government in the town henceforth would represent all the landholding freemen and other residents: a proprietor's vote carried no more weight than anyone else's. Other places had manor lords; the east end of Long Island had equality, or at least something approaching it the vote was, after all, limited to the more successful residents. If there was democracy here, it was very local and very limited, but it was a start. It would be another three centuries before every adult in this country would have the right to vote, only in the 1960s that we eliminated the last of the poll tax laws that disenfranchised the poor. But the movement toward universal voting, together with clear land title without quitrents began here in that most difficult and uncompromising of towns, East Hampton.

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Occupation: Curator, historical manuscripts and archives, New York State Library, 1970-88. Editor, New York Historical Manuscripts, 1974-present. Publications: 11 volumes in the New York Historical Manuscripts series, and 3 other books. More than 40 journal articles and contributions to books.

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