

JOHN HOWARD PAYNE, HIS LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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John Howard Payne was a person of vast experience and of varied undertakings and achievements. He was an actor, playwright, minor poet, newspaper editor, publisher and critic as well as a United States Consular official. He championed for the rights of American Indians, fought for the establishment of copyright laws and he was a gifted director and producer in the world of the theater. Payne was probably the first native American actor to enact the role of Hamlet, the first American performer to appear on the European stage and the earliest American playwright to have his works produced abroad. John Howard Payne insisted on accurate period costumes for performers and included extensive scenery and costume designs for his plays. Payne wrote more than sixty different pieces for the theater including tragedies, comedies, farces and operas and his work was produced in both Europe and America for nearly half a century. Although his work was mainly adaptive and most of his plays and operas are no longer performed, Payne's works enjoyed success until the latter half of the 19th century and were performed by the leading actors of the day. He also wrote the lyrics to arguably one of the world's most famous songs, "Home Sweet Home."

Payne's major flaw was that throughout his life he was a poor financial manager. He was lavishly extravagant and never free from financial debt. He had many enemies and detractors and was at numerous occasions the victim of bad timing, misunderstandings and downright malice. In addition to the above, ill fortune and a penchant for wandering probably kept John Howard Payne from achieving greatness in the eyes of the world.

Any story of a historically relevant person should begin with his or her family. Aaron Isaacs, the maternal grandfather of John Howard Payne was said to have come from Hamburg, Germany. He spent time in New York City and was listed as a member of Temple Shearth Israel in 1748. Aaron Isaac's name first appears in the Records of the First Presbyterian Church in 1750 when his seven-year-old child died. He was a merchant who shipped goods on consignment between Long Island and Connecticut and was employed as a courier during the American Revolution. Mary Hedges Isaacs, the maternal grandmother of John Howard Payne traces her ancestors back to William Hedges and Thomas Talmage Jr., early settlers of East Hampton.

William Payne, the father of John Howard Payne was born in New England in 1746. His father had already died and his mother remarried and moved to Nova Scotia leaving her young son in the care of a Congregational minister whose son was a student at Harvard. William Payne began studying medicine with General Joseph Warren who was killed at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Payne then studied and became a specialist in languages and elocution and started a school in Boston, which closed as a result of the Revolution. He then removed to Barnstable to work as a tutor where he met his first wife

Lucy Taylor who died after one year of marriage. After a business trip to the West Indies William Payne returned to New London where he met Sarah Isaacs the daughter of Aaron Isaacs. They later married and moved to East Hampton where William Payne along with Jabez Peck became the first teachers at Clinton Academy. Aaron Isaacs was an early financial supporter of Clinton Academy.

Where the Paynes lived in East Hampton is anybody's guess as Aaron Isaacs, the father of Sarah Isaacs Payne owned several houses in town. One candidate of course would be the house now called Home Sweet Home; another would be the present law office of Robert Osborne close to Clinton Academy.

William and Sarah Payne had nine children, five who were born in East Hampton. Two girls, Eliza Maria and Elizabeth Mary both died before their third birthday. Lucy Taylor Payne, who is buried in the South End Burying Ground married a Dr. John Cheever Osborn and had two children who died in infancy. The last of the Payne's children, Thatcher Taylor Payne, became a lawyer in New York City. Sarah Isaacs Payne, named after her mother, attended Roxanna Beecher's school at the present site of the East Hampton Village Hall and died at the age of twenty-three. John Howard Payne's other two sisters, Eloise and Anna, operated schools in Rhode Island and New York City. Eloise Richards Payne, who died at the age of thirty-two may have been the most talented of all the Payne children. She was thought to be a woman of extraordinary genius and accomplishments. Eloise displayed an incredible proficiency in Latin at the age of fourteen, demonstrated a remarkable skill in penmanship and later in life distinguished herself as an amateur artist.

This leaves us with the most famous child of the Payne family, John Howard Payne, and the place of his birth. Like many other aspects of John Howard Payne's life the place of his birth is rife with speculation. His biographers give the place of Payne's birth to New York City on June 9, 1791. Family histories also assert that he was born in New York City including extant letters of Lucy Taylor Payne and Thatcher Taylor Payne. Numerous newspaper articles written about the life of John Howard Payne mention his birth as having taken place in the city of New York. Also there are no Paynes listed as living in East Hampton in the 1790 census. Another piece of evidence that supports a New York City birth is a letter written by Reverend Samuel Buell stating that as of September 30, 1790 William Payne was no longer teaching at Clinton Academy, and five days before John Howard Payne's birth William Payne is advertising in a New York Newspaper for students to attend his school of Academical Instruction in Great Dock Street at No. 4.

However, evidence to the contrary abounds. The late great Morton Pennypacker, an eminent historian whose collection of historical books, pamphlets, letters, maps and other historical artifacts comprised the beginning of the Long Island Collection of the East Hampton Free Library felt that John Howard Payne was born in East Hampton. Mr. Pennypacker related a story that while living in East Hampton William Payne often visited New York City, possibly to find a site for his new school. On his trips he sometimes stopped at the house of a man named John Howard in Smithtown. During one

of his visits in 1791 the traveler mentioned the birth of a son and asked his host to suggest a name for the child. John Howard supposedly proposed his own. Mr. Pennypacker also located a note on an address that was given by John Howard Payne while he was performing in Ireland explaining that the address was delivered by Mr. John Howard Payne, formerly of Easthampton, Long Island. Another East Hampton connection appears in a letter Payne wrote to his sister-in-law while traveling among the Indians in which he refers to himself as a "staid East Hamptoner."

The great, but not late former East Hampton Town Historian Carleton Kelsey asserts that being pregnant in 1791 would have caused John Howard Payne's mother Sarah to remain in East Hampton to have her child rather than risk the arduous journey to New York City. Members of the Mulford family who lived next to the house now called Home Sweet Home as well as a relative of John Howard Payne, Sophy Jones both remembered young John Howard as a child living in the home. Articles appearing in the Brooklyn Eagle around the turn of the 19th Century, attempting to promote East Hampton as a tourist attraction, stated not only that Payne was born in East Hampton but also that he wrote his famous song in Home Sweet Home!

We do know that John Howard Payne spent time as a child in East Hampton. He wrote of being terrified of the geese around Town Pond and of a teacher in the Town House terrifying her students. Also, in his early years Payne suffered from various ailments described as "fits of hypo" and "unremitting fevers." According to John Howard Payne he also suffered for three years from St. Vitus Dance, a nervous disorder. Later in life he suffered "fits of despondency and blue devils." Nevertheless, Payne could have been sent to East Hampton as a child in an attempt to restore his fragile health.

The place of John Howard Payne's birth, whether in East Hampton or New York, should not detract from Home Sweet Home as a memorial to his song and the accomplishments of his life.

William Payne's schools in New York City were located at various addresses and in 1799 he moved his school to Boston starting a boarding school called Berry Academy in which John Howard was a student. A component of the curriculum at the Berry Street Academy was the performances of plays called "exhibitions." Young John Howard Payne exhibited a talent for acting in these endeavors and several prominent theater personages offered to take him under their wings and train him for the theater. The theater was not highly thought of in the early 19th Century and while William Payne was forward-thinking enough to include it as part of his curriculum to further the teaching of elocution, he was not about to let his son enter the acting profession.

Meanwhile the Payne's oldest son, William Osborn Payne, died while working in a counting house in New York City where he had become a partner in the business. Young John Howard's father -- in an attempt to discourage his interest in the theater - sent him to New York to take his brother's place in the firm. The owner, a Mr. Forbes, was encouraged to keep young Payne so busy he would have no time for the theater.

Denied the opportunity to attend the theater on a regular basis and having no chance to perform, John Howard Payne, then fourteen years of age, initiated a venture that would involve him in the world of the theater. He commenced the publication of a newspaper, the Thespian Mirror, the first newspaper in the city of New York devoted exclusively to the theater. The paper first appeared on December 28, 1805 and featured news, critiques and sketches of stage personalities. It was published anonymously and ran for fourteen issues until Payne was discovered as its editor and publisher. The paper was an astounding accomplishment for a child of fourteen who was working a twelve-hour day in a counting house and had little or no writing or newspaper experience.

Payne's newspaper attracted the attention of William Coleman the editor of The Post an influential New York City paper and Mr. Joseph Seaman a merchant of some note. They convinced William Payne that young John Howard's future was not in the counting house and made arrangements for young Payne to attend Union College with Mr. Seaman footing the bill.

While publishing the Thespian Mirror, John Howard Payne wrote his first original play, Julia, or the Wanderer. That he found time to write a five-act play while working in the counting house and writing and publishing his newspaper is astonishing. The play was said to be filled with wit and penetrating thought and was quite good considering the age of the playwright. However, the piece was criticized for indecorous incidents and objectionable language. The word "damne" appeared several times in the script. The play was given a single performance and was withdrawn by the author.

After a short trip to Boston to visit his family Payne departed for Union College early in June of 1806. He was supposed to depart the boat at Albany and travel to Schenectady, the site of Union College. But young John Howard instead departed on a stage with some fellow travelers bound for Montreal. He never arrived there and his return trip to Union College cost him the tidy sum of ninety dollars. Upon arriving at Union he was dismayed that Mr. Seaman was not happy at his tardy arrival. This kind of impetuous act was to plague Payne throughout his life.

At the college young John Howard came under the direct supervision of the college president, Dr. Eliphalet Nott, even boarding in the same room. Besides his studies he also found time to publish another newspaper, which was not a financial success and act in a student production, playing the part of a female character Lodoiska in a student-written play Pulaski.

Then events began to transpire that would change the course of John Howard Payne's life. On June 18, 1807, Payne's mother died at the age of forty-seven. A year later, Sarah Isaacs Payne died of consumption. These two events sent William Payne into a tailspin and he was finding it difficult to make his Berry Academy financially viable. It was then agreed that young John Howard Payne was to leave Union College and embark on an acting career to help defray some of his father's expenses.

John Howard Payne made his acting debut on February 24, 1809 at the Park Theater in the part of Young Norval in *The Tragedy of Douglas, or the Noble Shepherd*. Payne's debut was a success. His success was tempered by a disagreement he had with the Park's two co-managers, the actor Thomas Cooper and Stephan Price. At the end of his run at the Park Theater Payne insisted that the ornaments on his dresses (costumes) as well as the dresses were his property. Mr. Price informed him that the ornaments belonged to the actor Cooper and an argument ensued. Propelled by jealousy on Cooper's part and the indignation by Price of Payne's self-important attitude they both conspired to make further engagements in the theater difficult. Young John Howard Payne then went on tour and performed in the cities of Providence, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Richmond, Charleston, Petersburg, Norfolk, Boston and Washington. D.C. He earned more than \$13,000 for his efforts greatly easing his father's financial concerns.

Despite Payne's early successes he found it more and more difficult to attract engagements. There was not a large theater-going public in the early 1800's and the influence of Cooper and Price was far-reaching. Upon his father's death in 1812 a group of his Baltimore friends raised the funds for Payne to travel to Europe for a year and become acquainted with the English theater to further his theatrical education. If John Howard Payne had remained in America and overcame the obstacles of Cooper and Price he may have become our first great actor. As it was, he was the first American actor to enact the part of Hamlet.

Payne left for England on January 17, 1813 for his one year stay. He was gone for twenty years!

The trip to Liverpool took thirty-five days and, once again, Payne's timing was poor. Because of the hostilities between America and England as a result of the War of 1812, he was interred in Liverpool for fourteen days while his passport was examined. Upon his release John Howard Payne set out to secure an engagement at the Drury Lane Theater, one of the two leading theaters in London. Events leading up to the War of 1812 had affected Payne's debut in New York City in 1809 and his arrival in England in 1813 was at the height of the hostilities between the United States and England which affected the size of a theater audience in London. Also he had arrived just at the time the London theaters were closing for the summer season.

Nevertheless John Howard Payne became the first actor from the New World (America) to grace the stage of the Old World (England) when he appeared as Norval in *The Tragedy of Douglas* on June 4, 1813. Considering the disdain the English had for American culture -- or the lack of it -- Payne's reception was warm and complimentary. He later appeared as Romeo in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. While in London at this time he made the acquaintance of Benjamin West, Charles R. Leslie and Samuel F.B. Morse. Later friends were Walter Scott and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

After the theaters closed for the season in London John Howard Payne then embarked on a tour of the countryside appearing in Liverpool, his greatest success, Birmingham, Litchfield, Manchester and other smaller hamlets starring in many of the

roles he played in the United States. His performances did not afford him a great deal of profit as travel and management fees cut into his earnings.

During this time Payne was also involved in a "romantic friendship" with a wealthy woman named Mrs. Emelia Von Harten who fell desperately in love with him. Mrs. Von Harten exhibited a propensity to mental disturbances and John Howard was enlisted by her to supply aid and comfort. Payne, while somewhat attracted to Emelia, realized her married state and attempted to cool her ardor. Upon the return of her husband to England Emelia's passion for the young actor abated little and the resulting circumstances almost led to a duel between Payne and George Von Harten. Cooler heads prevailed and the death of Emelia Von Harten in 1816 ended the unhappy episode.

In the summer of 1814 John Howard Payne traveled to Ireland and his tour of the Emerald Isle was an artistic success. He developed friendships with some of Ireland's leading literary and public figures and he helped launch the career of Eliza O'Neill who later went on to become one of England's leading tragic actresses. He also fell in love with Miss O'Neill but did little to further his suit. His Irish tour while not a financial success did serve to widen his fame abroad.

Upon his return to England Payne joined the throngs sailing for Paris as the war with America had ended and Napoleon was exiled to the island of Elba. When he arrived in Paris Napoleon had escaped from Elba and the city was in an uproar. John Howard Payne made the acquaintance of Francois Joseph Talma, the great French tragedian who extended him the freedom of the house which enabled Payne to view every play in Paris free of charge.

During the first quarter of the 19th Century, London theaters had a great sentiment for adaptations of Paris hits preferring them to original works. This set John Howard Payne on a course that would encompass most of his dramatic writing careers, the adaptations of the works of others. Had Payne developed original works of his own, he may have achieved exceptional results and financial success, but his adaptations while remarkable, brought him little recognition or monetary reward, except to others. After adapting several French plays and sending them to England Payne returned there and resumed his acting career which ended apparently in May of 1818. In all he had appeared for one hundred and six nights in twenty-two different roles.

The night of December 3, 1818 marked the opening of what many felt was John Howard Payne's greatest work, Brutus, or the Fall of Tarquin. The play launched the career of one of England's greatest actors, Edmund Kean and was performed for half a century in both England and the United States. One of America's greatest actors, Edwin Booth, performed in it in the late 1860's. Payne's Brutus, like so many of his plays, contained explicit directions for scenery, costumes, stage directions and lighting. John Howard Payne was one of the first playwrights to insist on accurate period costumes for his productions. He received one hundred eighty-three pounds for his efforts, not a huge amount considering the success of the production, and received nothing from subsequent performances both in England and in the United States. International Copyright laws

were usually ignored at this time. Payne even had to defend his play from charges of plagiarism.

Washington Irving then suggested that Payne return to America but instead he took over the management of a small summer theater called Sadler's Wells, which even though he raised the stature of the theater with his productions, caused him to incur indebtedness to the tune of seven thousand dollars.

His debts caused Payne to be sent to London's Fleet Prison for the inability to pay his creditors. He was able to obtain his release by adapting a French play -- that with a stroke of good luck, he was able to obtain -- into a melodrama entitled *Therese* which afforded him enough funds to satisfy some of his creditors. There were still outstanding debts and his creditors were becoming insistent so Payne fled to Paris to look out for French novelties to be translated and adapted for the English stage.

Gradually his finances improved and Payne's time in Paris was one of the more prosperous times of his life. He visited with Charles and Mary Lamb and for a while shared an apartment with his good friend, Washington Irving.

Payne was attracted to a ballet then playing in Paris called *Clari*, or the Promise of Marriage. He created a play from the ballet entitled, *Angioletta*, which his good friend the great English composer, Henry Rawley Bishop, suggested he turns into an operetta and thus was born *Clari*, or the Maid of Milan, with lyrics by John Howard Payne and music by Henry Rawley Bishop. And of course this production was the introduction of the famous song, *Home Sweet Home* to the world.

The operetta opened at the Covent Garden Theater on May 8, 1823 with Anna Maria Tree playing the part of *Clari*. The production was well received and played throughout England and America. Payne sent *Clari* with two other pieces -- *Ali Pacha* and *The Two Galley Slaves* -- to England and the Covent Garden Theater for two hundred fifty pounds. That was Payne's entire remuneration for his work. The song, *Home Sweet Home*, took on a life of its own separate from the operetta as a London publisher sold thousands of copies of the song making a great deal of money for himself and others while Payne and Bishop did not share in the profits. The song became part of the program of many recital singers including Adalina Patti who sang the song for the Lincolns at the White House after the death of their child, Tad, and the great Jenny Lind sang the song in Washington, D.C. in 1850 with John Howard Payne in the audience. The song was a staple of the Civil War and was used at bond rallies preceding World War 1.

There has been much speculation about John Howard Payne's motives and circumstances at the time his famous song was written. Payne was living in an apartment at the Palais Royale when he wrote his famous lyrics, and the apartment overlooked a magnificent garden and park and gave a clear view of one of the finest marts in Paris. Thus the opening lines of his song, "Mid pleasures and places though we may roam." We can probably dismiss the stories of his wretched and poor and lonely condition at the time he wrote *Home Sweet Home*. However, his motive for writing the song can be open for

interpretation. Before his production of *Clari* opened in England, John Howard Payne had written home to lament that his yearnings for home were becoming stronger and that he missed his family. Was he thinking of the building we now call Home Sweet Home or his family in New York City when he wrote the song? Certainly a case can be made for the old saltbox house, the 19th Century windmill and the gardens surrounding the building we now call Home Sweet Home as evoking feelings of home and belonging.

Another less emotional theory is that John Howard Payne wrote Home Sweet Home to further the plot of his operetta. *Clari*, a poor maiden, is lured from her country home by the Duke Vilvaldi with a promise of marriage. Sequestered in the Duke's palace, surrounded by luxuries of every kind, the Duke reveals to *Clari* that he cannot marry her because of the differences in their stations. *Clari*, then alone among all the Duke's riches, sadly sings her song of home.

Whatever people feel about Payne's motivation for writing his immortal song, there is nothing amiss when we associate the words of Home Sweet Home with the 18th Century saltbox nestled between the historic Mulford Farm and the elegant St. Luke's Episcopal Church next to the Village Green in East Hampton. There is no better place, in this writer's opinion, to evoke the memory of John Howard Payne or the meaning attached to the words of his song.

John Howard Payne spent the remainder of his time in Europe collaborating with Washington Irving on several plays, bringing out a small weekly publication called *The Opera Glass*, adapting numerous other works for the London stage and falling in love with one of the most famous women of the early 19th Century.

In 1825 John Howard Payne met and fell in love with Mary Shelley, the author of *Frankenstein*. Payne secured free passes for Mrs. Shelley and her friends to attend operas and plays, accompanied her on many occasions. Letters between Mary Shelley and Payne indicate that while he hoped for a relationship, she was not only not interested in him, but Mary Shelley had developed a fondness for Payne's best friend, Washington Irving! Irving it appears had no interest in developing a relationship with Mary Shelley. She, according to a recent biography, may have feigned an interest in Irving to thwart Payne's unwelcome advances.

John Howard Payne had achieved abroad what no American had done before and had won a unique place in American and English theatrical history. With his future in doubt he now set sail for home on June 11, 1832 at the age of forty-one, to live another twenty-one years and die far from his home sweet home.

John Howard Payne's arrival in New York City on July 25, 1832 coincided with the great cholera epidemic which eventually took the lives of more than three thousand people, another piece of extremely bad timing. By August life began to return to normalcy and a benefit was proposed for Payne by the *New York Mirror* which had recently published the story of his life to date in two lengthy installments. The benefit realized upwards of three thousand dollars and others were planned in Boston and other

cities, but a charge of "accepting charity" was lodged toward him and Payne refused any and all proposals for future benefits and testimonials. Anyway his mind was taken by an idea for a new venture, a proposed periodical to attempt to further Anglo-American friendship to be called by the unusual name, Jam Jehan Nima.

John Howard Payne thought that if people in England and Europe knew more about America they would be more respectful of our people and culture. His new periodical would include accurate information about the United States, which would acquaint Europeans about the true nature of his mother country. Thinking he needed five thousand subscriptions before commencing publication Payne set out on a tour of the western and southern states to secure the necessary subscribers. He traveled to Boston, Baltimore, Charleston, Louisville, Natchez, New Orleans and Florida. While in New Orleans he received more than one thousand dollars from a benefit in his honor. The benefit was roiled in controversy, however, as Payne became embroiled in a dispute between two rival newspapers in the city.

Writing to his benefactors in New Orleans to thank them, he broached a subject which made him a pioneer in the field- copyright protection for dramatic authorship. Payne wrote that England had recently given its authors twenty-five years of protected compensation for their works while in America there was no copyright law at all. Later in 1836 he wrote to Senator Henry Clay in support of a copyright law then before Congress. If copyright laws had been in effect and enforced during his lifetime, John Howard Payne would have been free of debt and would have been remembered as a literary and dramatic figure of some note.

Leaving Florida Payne continued his journey into Alabama and Georgia in order to obtain more subscriptions and gather information for his articles. Here he experienced adventures with the Creek and Cherokee Native Americans that would bring him posthumous fame and recognition, but also threaten his life.

In a letter to his sister Lucy John Howard Payne gave a complete description of probably the last Green Corn Dance enacted by the Creeks east of the Mississippi River. He later compiled a fourteen-volume history of Cherokee political history, religious history, myths and legends. Both of these works have proved invaluable to subsequent ethnographers of Native American culture. Home Sweet Home Museum and the Village of East Hampton have obtained a microfilm copy of John Howard Paynes's fourteen volumes of Cherokee history from the Newberry Library in Chicago and donated it to the Long Island Room of the East Hampton Free Library.

However, Payne was also destined to suffer greatly due to his contact with the Cherokee Indians. Beginning in the decade of the 1830's the United States had begun a systematic removal of the Cherokees from their native lands. Many of the Cherokees, led by John Ross, resisted any treaty that would result in their removal. John Howard Payne, who had become acquainted with Ross, wrote passionately of the injustices that had been inflicted upon the Cherokees, translated various Cherokee documents and began compiling material in order to write a history of the Cherokee Nation. For his efforts he

was arrested by the Georgia Militia, jailed for fourteen days, and nearly lost his life in the process. The Cherokees were eventually moved off their native lands despite protests and memorials written largely by Payne for the Cherokee leader, John Ross.

John Howard Payne's Indian adventures probably ended the possibility of his periodical becoming a possibility and he turned to other pursuits. Through a visit to George Keats he discovered four unpublished poems of the poet, John Keats, established a relationship with a magazine called the Ladies Home Companion, and then became a contributor to a new monthly magazine entitled The United States Magazine and Democratic Review. Payne was to write a series of articles under the subject of Our Neglected Poets.

His first article was to be about William Martin Johnson an unpublished poet who lived in East Hampton for some time. In the middle of his essay on Johnson Payne included a sketch of Hampton because that's where he thought Johnson was the happiest. The East Hampton piece appears to have been based on a visit John Howard Payne made there sometime between 1832 and 1834. His essay is important because it may be one of the earliest descriptions of an American community for other than informational purposes, rather an impressionistic travelogue of an isolated community, which focused on local manners and customs. The tone of the piece was tongue-in-cheek, and when read appears to be venerating and tender, somewhat similar to what his good friend, Washington Irving, wrote about the Hudson Valley Region. 1

However when excerpts of the piece appeared in the Sag Harbor Corrector in 1838, the people in East Hampton were not happy. They thought Payne had mocked their way of life and depicted them as unsophisticated relics of the past. Thus, the piece was lost to oblivion. 2

After a short journey to the west to again visit with the Cherokees, John Howard Payne found himself in Washington, D.C. making plans for his final leg of his rambling journey through life. At the death of William Henry Harrison John Tyler had become President of the United States. Payne both knew the President's father and was acquainted with his son, John Tyler Jr., and through the Tyler's influence he obtained an appointment as United States consul to Tunis, as Tunisia was known then.

On arriving in Tunis Payne found the consulate house in disrepair and the duties of office had been sadly neglected. He spent a good deal of time repairing the consulate mansion, with a good deal of his own money, and began drafting plans for the extension of trade between the United States and the North African countries as well as preparing to write a history of Tunis. Payne's health began to fade and his time and energy were spent on the repair of the consulate house when he received a disturbing piece of news. Because of a change in the administration at Washington, John Howard Payne had been recalled from his position as consul to Tunis and been replaced by his predecessor! He then spent two years returning to America traveling by way of Malta and Italy.

Payne then began making plans for his future. He made an effort to publish the first volume of his Cherokee history, applied for the position of librarian of the New York Historical Society and even contemplated joining the California Gold Rush. Nothing came of these endeavors and in March of 1849 he found himself in Washington, D.C. Millard Fillmore had succeeded to the presidency upon the death of Zachary Taylor and Daniel Webster had become Secretary of State. Through their efforts and with the help of Secretary of War William Marcy, John Howard Payne was reappointed consul to Tunis.

Before leaving on his mission Payne was treated to a rendition of Home, Sweet Home by the Swedish Nightingale, the great Jenny Lind, on December 17, 1850 at the National Hall, the newly constructed concert hall in Washington, D.C. During Payne's last years in Tunis his health began to fade. His upper teeth had already been removed and he began to suffer from oppression in the chest and a weakening of his nervous system. He died on April 9, 1852 and was buried at St. George's Cemetery on a hill overlooking the harbor of Tunis. Payne had died at sixty-two years of age.

This however does not end the story of the star-crossed life of John Howard Payne. Due largely to the efforts of William Corcoran, founder of the Washington Gallery which bears his name, his remains were returned to the United States and he was re-interred in the Oak Hill Cemetery in Washington, D.C. on June 9, 1883. In attendance were Chester Alan Arthur, President of the United States and a graduate of Union College, his cabinet, members of the Supreme Court and Congress, members of the diplomatic corps and more than two thousand attendees, including Payne's niece Mrs. Eloise Payne Luquer. John Howard Payne was accorded a grand funeral service and the ceremony was characterized by much pomp and circumstance and John Phillip Sousa's band of course played Home, Sweet Home.

Even in death Payne suffered one last indignity. The orator of the day, a Mr. Leigh Robinson, knew little of his life and characterized him as a failure with the one-blessed event in his life the writing of Home, Sweet Home. Robinson's oratory was based on hearsay, innuendo, distortion and his own prejudiced opinion with enough sweet words to disguise the true effect. Unfortunately William Corcoran's insistence on extensive press coverage ensured the rapid spread of Leigh Robinson's eulogy. Much of what future generations would know about the life of John Howard Payne was based on this one biased and mostly truthless oration.

I hope this paper will serve as a proper memoriam for one of America's most important literary and dramatic figures.

1. Rushmore, Robert P. "The Village of East Hampton, a Sketch by John Howard Payne," Long Island Historical Journal, Fall 1997, Vol. 10, Department of History, State University of New York at Stony Brook: 25-38.
2. Ibid.

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