



LA ROCHELLE • AMSTERDAM • SUSSEX • SHELTER ISLAND • SMITHTOWN

The L'HommeDieu Line

& the Sylvesters of Shelter Island

An interactive family history for Dr. Russ L'HommeDieu: 144 direct ancestors across twenty generations, the places where they lived, and an honest look at which links are proven and which still need work.

A family history compiled from the L'HommeDieu family site • September 2026

Cover: The Manor House, photographed in 1930 while Cornelia Horsford lived there. Samuel H. Gottscho. Library of Congress.

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on a family tree reconstruction. Needs checking marks a link in the family tree that still has to be confirmed. Images are credited in their captions.	

L'HOMME DE DIEU: "THE MAN OF GOD"

Two refugee families, one island

The American L'Hommedieus begin with a marriage between two kinds of exile.

Benjamin L'Hommedieu

, a Huguenot born at La Rochelle about 1657, fled France around the time of the 1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

Patience Sylvester

, born on Shelter Island in 1664, was the daughter of Nathaniel Sylvester, an Amsterdam-raised English merchant, and Grizzell Brinley, daughter of a royal auditor who lost everything in the English Civil War. Their marriage tied the family to Sylvester Manor, and their son John L'Hommedieu (1707–1777) began the direct line that moved from Southold to Smithtown and on to the present day.



Protestants flee France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Jan Luyken, 1696. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (public domain).

The family route

C.1600-1685

La Rochelle

Huguenot port. Home of the L'Hommedieu, Peron and Mouchard families.

1613-1650s

Amsterdam

Giles Sylvester's merchant house. Nathaniel grows up among English Separatists.

1625-1661

Petworth & Datchet

Thomas Brinley marries Anne Wase; Grizzell's childhood amid civil war.

1644-1653

Virginia & Barbados

Nathaniel's tobacco voyage to Jamestown and the family sugar trade.

1651-1749

Shelter Island

Sylvester Manor; Benjamin and Patience marry and raise a family.

1728-1922

Southold to Smithtown

Five generations along the Nissequogue River.

A note on evidence

The tree data comes from the family's MyHeritage tree (exported September 2026). Links near the present and through the Sylvester and Brinley families are well documented. Some medieval links were copied between online trees and are marked here as unverified or contradicted where published sources disagree.

This book gathers the family history site into one document: the stories, the manor, the people and places, the medieval Sussex question, the timeline, a register of every direct ancestor in the tree, the open research questions, and the sources. Evidence labels are carried over from the site unchanged.

Stories

Arranged by era. Each story is marked Documented when it rests on records or published history, or Partly traditional when part of it depends on tradition or a historian's reconstruction. Needs checking means the family tree itself has a link that has to be confirmed.

OUR FAMILY

Russ and Karen: cousins through the Mills of Mills Pond?

1667 to today **Needs checking**

Dr. Russ L'HommeDieu and Karen (Matz) L'HommeDieu

The family tree connects Russ and his wife Karen through one shared ancestor: Timothy Mills (1667–1751), born in Jamaica, Queens, who settled at Mills Pond in Smithtown. Russ descends from Timothy's son Isaac Mills (born 1696/97), whose line ran through Orange County, New York, and back to Smithtown with Eliza Mills. Karen descends, according to the tree, from Timothy's daughter Mary Mills (born about 1720), who married David Hawkins of Setauket, and from there through the Hawkins and Blydenburgh families of Old Field, Bay Shore and Southampton.

If both lines hold, Timothy is Russ's 8×-great-grandfather and Karen's 10×-great-grandfather, which makes them ninth cousins, twice removed. They may be half-cousins: the tree gives Mary's mother as Sarah Longbotham but records no mother for Isaac, who was born before Sarah.

One link needs checking before this is told as fact. On Karen's side the tree lists Phebe Bayles, born in 1792, as the mother of Caleb Hawkins, born about 1718. That cannot be

right, and it is the only path from Karen back to the Mills family. Caleb's parents need to be confirmed (Brookhaven town records and Setauket church records are the place to start). If his real mother or father proves to be a Mills descendant, the connection stands. The tree also holds Timothy Mills as two separate records, which should be merged.

Russ's line

Timothy Mills (1667–1751) → Isaac Mills (b. 1696/97) → Isaac Mills (1726–1783) → Ebenezer Mills (1759–1835) → Isaac Mills (1788–1856) → Eliza Mills (1816–1890) → Charles Oran L'HommeDieu (1846–1922) → George Louis L'HommeDieu (1887–1956) → David L'HommeDieu (1908–1966) → Richard George L'HommeDieu (1929–2010) → Dr. Russ L'HommeDieu

Karen's line (as the tree has it)

Timothy Mills (1667–1751) → Mary Mills (b. about 1720) → Mary Hawkins (1754–1813) → Phebe Bayles (b. 1792): listed as Caleb's mother, impossible (link needs checking) → Caleb Hawkins (b. about 1718) → Isaac Hawkins (1757–1825) → Nancy Hawkins (1791–1836) → Charles Alfred Blydenburgh (1822–1892) → William Putnam Blydenburgh (1861–1898) → Cornelius Alfred Blydenburgh (1885–1942) → Walter Frederick Blydenburgh (1916–1998) → Donna Laurel Blydenburgh → Karen (Matz) L'HommeDieu

Sources: Family MyHeritage tree (GEDCOM export, Sept. 2026)

OLD WORLD

A father at the court of Charles I

1620s–1661 **Documented**

Thomas Brinley, Grizzell's father

Thomas Brinley came from Staffordshire gentry, trained as a clerk, and rose to become one of the royal auditors to King Charles I. In 1636 he shared a crown grant to drain some 12,000 acres of fenland in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. The family lived beside Berkeley House in Clerkenwell, where their twelve children were baptized at St James's church.

His position made the family comfortable and connected, and it also made them targets when the king's world collapsed.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 6–7; WeRelate

How the English Civil War scattered the family

1642–1661 **Documented**

The Brinleys and the Sylvesters

When war broke out between King and Parliament, Thomas Brinley stayed loyal to Charles I and lost his office and income. The family retreated to Datchet, near Windsor, where Anne Wase Brinley's relatives lived. Grizzell was thirteen when the king was executed in January 1649. Her mother went to court to protect the children's marriage portions.

The war pushed four of the twelve Brinley children across the Atlantic. Francis, William, Anne and Grizzell all ended up in New England. Nathaniel's brothers were on the other side: Constant Sylvester and his partner Thomas Middleton were Parliament men, and after Cromwell's fleet took Barbados in 1652 they sat on its council. So a Royalist's daughter married into a Parliamentarian merchant family, on an island that was a refuge from the whole conflict. Thomas Brinley got his post back at the Restoration in 1660 and died at Datchet the next year. His will mentions his daughter's family living on 'an island called Shelter Island'.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 4, 7; WeRelate (Brinley will, NEHGR 31)

Grizzell's sister marries the governor of Rhode Island

1650 **Documented**

Anne Brinley and William Coddington

In January 1650, at Datchet, Grizzell's older sister Anne Brinley became the third wife of William Coddington, founder and governor of Rhode Island. Grizzell sailed to New England with Anne and lived in the Coddingtons' Newport house for two years. Her father had named Coddington as her guardian.

It was in that Newport house, probably in the spring or summer of 1653, that Grizzell married Nathaniel Sylvester. The Coddingtons' home later became a Quaker meeting place, which shaped the religious life of the next generation.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 7–8

An English family in Amsterdam

1613–1650s **Documented**

Giles and Mary (Arnold) Sylvester

Nathaniel's parents were English Separatists who married in Amsterdam in 1613 and raised five sons and two daughters on the Singel canal. His father Giles ran a trading house whose ships reached Virginia, the Caribbean and West Africa. Dutch notarial records even preserve a 1634 scuffle in which Giles fought a customs officer over five barrels of Virginia tobacco.

Growing up bilingual among merchants explains much of what Nathaniel did later: his ease with Dutch officials, his trading instincts, and his habit of bending rules.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 3

ATLANTIC

Nathaniel at Jamestown

1644–1645 **Documented**

Nathaniel Sylvester

At about twenty-four, Nathaniel sailed from Amsterdam to Virginia on the family ship *Seerobbe* to buy tobacco, and stayed nearly a year around Jamestown. The rolls he bought were marked 'NS' for the Sylvester account.

He was in the colony during the Powhatan uprising of April 1644, and probably caught malaria in the Tidewater. From Virginia the ship went on to the West Indies, and on the voyage home its officers later testified that Nathaniel steered for La Rochelle to dodge Dutch West India Company duties. Historian Mac Griswold counts this year in Virginia among her new discoveries about his life.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, Preface and ch. 3

Slipping into La Rochelle

1645 **Partly traditional**

Nathaniel Sylvester; a possible thread to Pierre L'Hommedieu

On the way home from Virginia and the West Indies in 1645, the family ship Seerobbe did not sail straight for Amsterdam. Her officers later testified before a Dutch notary that Nathaniel, acting as the family's merchant aboard, had the ship steered toward La Rochelle and the nearby Île de Ré. Historian Mac Griswold reads this as a way to avoid paying the Dutch West India Company's duties on the cargo, and as an early sign of the rule-bending streak Nathaniel showed all his life.

La Rochelle was the great Protestant port of France's Atlantic coast, tied by trade and faith to Amsterdam's merchants. It was also the home of the L'Hommedieus. According to the family tree, Pierre L'Hommedieu was born there about 1631, so he would have been a boy of about fourteen when the Seerobbe made port; his son Benjamin, born about 1657, would later marry Nathaniel's daughter Patience.

No record yet shows that Nathaniel knew the L'Hommedieu family, and the documented voyage is a single one in 1645, not a regular habit. Still, it puts Nathaniel on the La Rochelle waterfront a generation before the two families joined, and it hints at the kind of Protestant merchant network that could have brought a young Huguenot refugee from La Rochelle to Newport and then to Shelter Island. Two sources could test the idea: the Amsterdam notarial depositions about the Seerobbe, and La Rochelle's Protestant church and merchant records from the 1640s.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 3 (depositions of the Seerobbe's officers, Amsterdam notarial archives); family MyHeritage tree for Pierre L'Hommedieu

Sugar, Barbados and the other island

1646–1680 **Partly traditional**

Constant and Nathaniel Sylvester

Nathaniel's older brother Constant owned sugar plantations in Barbados by 1646; one, Constant Plantation in St. George, still grows cane. By 1679 the Sylvesters held about 695 acres there, worked by some 260 enslaved Africans.

Shelter Island was bought in 1651 to feed that system. It shipped salted beef and pork, horses, and barrel staves south to the sugar islands. The price of the whole island was 1,600 pounds of sugar. Griswold also argues, from a ship officer's testimony, that Nathaniel sailed on a 1646 voyage to the Gold Coast of Africa to buy captives. It is the family's most painful Atlantic story, and it belongs in the record alongside the others.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 4–5 (the 1646 voyage is her reconstruction)

SHELTER ISLAND

Buying an island, twice

1651–1666 **Documented**

Nathaniel Sylvester and the Manhansett sachem Youghco

The partners bought Shelter Island, and Robins Island in Peconic Bay, from Stephen Goodyear of New Haven in 1651. The Manhansett people who lived there objected, and in 1653 their sachem Youghco confirmed the sale with a deed and a 'turf and twig' ceremony.

In 1666 Governor Richard Nicolls of New York made Shelter Island a manor with its own privileges, freeing Nathaniel from the authority of Southold and New Haven. The Sylvesters paid for it in beef and pork.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 2, 14; Wikipedia, Robins Island

A haven for Quakers, and a visit from George Fox

1657–1676 **Documented**

Nathaniel and Grizzell Sylvester

When Massachusetts and New Haven were jailing, whipping and hanging Quakers, Sylvester Manor took them in. Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick, banished from Salem, died at the manor. Mary Dyer stayed about six months in 1659 and 1660 before returning to Boston, where she was hanged. Nathaniel and his brother Giles petitioned the Crown, and New Haven tried to seize £100 of his estate for harboring Quakers.

In August 1672 George Fox, the founder of the Quaker movement, came to Shelter Island and held a meeting attended by about a hundred Manhansett people, with Nathaniel's brother Joshua reading scripture.

Was Nathaniel a Quaker himself? Grizzell became one, probably by 1657. Griswold argues that Nathaniel was a protector and sympathizer rather than a full convert, and notes that when the Quaker preacher William Edmundson urged him in 1676 to free the people he held in slavery, he did not.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 12–13

The paradox: a slaveholder who helped the first abolitionists survive

1657–1776 **Partly traditional**

Nathaniel Sylvester and the Society of Friends

In the 1650s the Quaker movement was barely a decade old and looked like it might not last. New England met it with branding, ear-cropping, whippings, banishment and the gallows; four Friends, Mary Dyer among them, were hanged on Boston Common between 1659 and 1661. A scattered, hunted people needed places they could gather, rest and stay out of the hangman's reach. Shelter Island was one of the very few. By taking in the banished Southwicks, sheltering Mary Dyer, hosting George Fox in 1672 and absorbing fines and legal threats for doing so, Nathaniel and Grizzell Sylvester helped keep the young sect alive on this side of the Atlantic through its most dangerous years.

That mattered far beyond one family, because Quakers went on to become the first organized abolitionists in America. In 1688 four Friends in Germantown, Pennsylvania signed the first formal protest against slavery by a religious body in the English colonies, arguing it broke the Golden Rule. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting was not ready to act, but the argument never died: John Woolman spent his life pressing Friends to give up slaveholding, and in 1776 the same Yearly Meeting finally required members to free the people they held or be disowned. Quakers then helped build the Underground Railroad and the antislavery societies of the next century.

Here is the paradox. The faith that produced the earliest abolitionists survived partly because a slaveholder gave it refuge. Nathaniel protected the Quakers even as he held two dozen people in bondage, and in 1676, when the Quaker preacher William Edmundson stood in his own house and urged him to free them, he refused. He never reconciled the two. The people he enslaved, and their descendants at the manor into the 1820s, paid for

that contradiction. It is fairer to say the movement he helped shelter grew a conscience he did not live to share than to credit him with an abolition he opposed.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 12–13; 1688 Germantown Quaker Petition; Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1776; John Woolman, *Journal*

Standing between Southold and the Dutch fleet

1673–1674 **Documented**

Nathaniel Sylvester

In 1673 a Dutch fleet retook New York. Nathaniel, who had grown up in Amsterdam, swore allegiance to the Dutch and signed a £500 bond payable in provisions. Southold refused to submit. When Dutch warships came to force the town, Nathaniel lent boats to both sides so they could row ashore and talk.

In February 1674 four Dutch warships returned and stripped his plantation to cover the bond. The next morning he sailed to Southold aboard the warship *Zeehond*, pleading for no bloodshed, and carried the Dutch demand to surrender ashore and Southold's refusal back. After a short exchange of fire that hurt no one, the Dutch sailed away. His mediation was one of several reasons the attack ended; Southold's armed defiance and the loot already taken were the others. A neighbor sneered that he was 'a Dutchman in his heart'.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 14; Fitz John Winthrop's report of 25 Feb. 1674

The people who were enslaved at the manor

1653–1827 **Documented**

Jacquero, Hannah, Hope, Isabell, Tammero, Oyou, Semonie and others

Nathaniel's 1680 will divided 24 enslaved people among his heirs, splitting families. His daughter Patience, the L'Hommedieu ancestor, received a girl named Hester, daughter of Tony and Nannie.

One enslaved man, Obium, son of Tammero and Oyou, was sold to the Lloyd family; he was the father of Jupiter Hammon, the first African American writer to be published in America. Slavery at the manor lasted until the 1820s, and today the Afro-Indigenous Burial Ground there is being studied with Shinnecock and Unkechaug partners.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 10 and appendix; Sylvester Manor

The Huguenot who married the planter's daughter

about 1686–1749 **Documented**

Benjamin L'Hommedieu and Patience Sylvester

Benjamin L'Hommedieu, born at La Rochelle about 1657, was one of thousands of French Protestants who fled after Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685. He landed at Newport about 1686 and settled at Southold, where Captain Sylvester's family encouraged him to build a dwelling, store and mill on Hallock Bay.

His marriage to Patience Sylvester joined a refugee to one of eastern Long Island's founding families. Their sons included John, the direct ancestor, and Sylvester L'Hommedieu, who helped organize Shelter Island as a town in 1730.

Sources: Family history document (2025); NYU Fales finding aid; *Behind the Hedges*

REVOLUTION

Two lighthouses: Montauk and Horton Point

1756–1797 **Partly traditional**

Ezra L'Hommedieu

Lighthouse historians report that in February 1756 a young George Washington crossed Long Island and met Ezra L'Hommedieu at Southold, and that the two discussed Horton Point and Montauk Point as lighthouse sites.

Decades later, as a Continental Congress veteran representing the New York Chamber of Commerce, Ezra chose the site for the Montauk Point Lighthouse. Built in 1796, it was New York's first lighthouse and is now a National Historic Landmark. Washington also authorized a light at Horton Point in 1790, but the money did not come until the 1850s; the Horton Point Lighthouse finally shone on 12 October 1857 and now houses the Southold Historical Museum's nautical museum.

Sources: Lighthousefriends (the 1756 meeting); Wikipedia, Montauk Point Light; Southold Historical Museum

A patriot in exile, then in power

1765–1811 Documented

Ezra L'Hommedieu

Ezra graduated from Yale in 1754, practiced law, and married Charity Floyd, sister of William Floyd, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. When the British occupied Long Island in 1776 he fled to Middletown, Connecticut, handled Congress's aid to Long Island refugees, and paid some of them from his own pocket when promised money failed to arrive.

He served in the New York Assembly, the Continental Congress (1779–1783, 1788), the state senate for most of 1784–1809, and as Suffolk County clerk. He corresponded with Thomas Jefferson about the Hessian fly, a crop pest, and promoted scientific farming. His gold watch remains at Sylvester Manor, and an early copy of Common Sense with his name on it is in the manor archive. His 1792 portrait by Ralph Earl belongs to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Earl's proof of the portrait hangs at the manor.

Sources: Wikipedia, Ezra L'Hommedieu; Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 17

Ezra and the Founders

1778–1811 Documented

Ezra L'Hommedieu with George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson

Ezra L'Hommedieu of Southold spent more than forty years in public life. Between 1775 and 1811 he sat in New York's Provincial Congress, its state assembly and senate, and the Continental and Confederation Congress; he served as clerk of Suffolk County and as a Regent of the University of the State of New York. Along the way his life crossed the paths of three of the most important figures of the founding era: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. The letters preserved in their papers show Ezra in three roles: a wartime advocate for Long Island's patriots, a colleague and trusted signer in New York's political and business world, and a fellow student of science and agriculture.

A voice for Long Island: Washington, 1778. When the British occupied Long Island in 1776, Ezra left Southold for Connecticut, where he worked to support fellow refugees,

often paying from his own pocket. In 1778, under orders from General Israel Putnam, Continental raiding parties crossed Long Island Sound to seize horses and cattle believed to be feeding the British army. Some of those animals belonged to patriot families who had stayed behind. On 15 October 1778 Ezra wrote to New York's governor, George Clinton, describing the harm done to these loyal Americans, and Clinton sent the letter on to General Washington two days later.

Washington answered Clinton on 18 October 1778 from his headquarters at Fredericksburgh, New York, promising that "the representation of Mr Hommedieu's letter shall be further inquired into and every thing done by me, which shall appear, necessary to relieve the oppressed individuals." The draft of that reply is in the hand of Washington's young aide-de-camp, Alexander Hamilton. In a single exchange, Ezra's concern for his Long Island neighbors reached both men.

Guiding ships home: the Montauk Lighthouse. After the war New York City grew into the busiest port in the nation, but ships approaching from the east had no light to guide them past Montauk Point. Ezra, representing the New York Chamber of Commerce, pressed the case for a lighthouse. On 12 April 1792 the Second Congress authorized one, and the Treasury Department sent Ezra to survey the site. He chose a plateau on Turtle Hill with sound ground for a foundation, and warned that the bluff was eroding, recommending that the tower be set well back from the edge.

The project moved step by step. In December 1792 New York ceded jurisdiction over the land to the United States; in February 1793 Governor Clinton informed Secretary of State Jefferson of the cession; in March 1793 Congress appropriated \$20,000; in August 1795 President Washington approved the \$22,300 bid of New York builder John McComb Jr.; the tower went up between June and November 1796; and in April 1797 the first keeper lit the lamps. It was the first lighthouse built in New York State and one of the earliest public works of the new federal government. It still stands on Turtle Hill and was named a National Historic Landmark in 2012.

Colleagues in Congress: Hamilton, 1782 to 1788. On 22 July 1782 the state legislature named Hamilton, James Duane, William Floyd, John Morin Scott and Ezra L'Hommedieu to represent New York in Congress for the coming year. Ezra arrived in Princeton, where Congress was then meeting, on 7 August 1783. On 1 September 1783 he

and Duane wrote jointly to Hamilton and Floyd about one of the most pressing questions facing New York: who should garrison the frontier forts the British were preparing to give up, Continental troops or the state? The letter, in Ezra's own handwriting, is preserved among Hamilton's papers at the Library of Congress, with Ezra's draft at the New-York Historical Society.

The partnership was renewed in 1788. On 22 January the legislature elected Hamilton, Abraham Yates Jr., Egbert Benson, Ezra L'Hommedieu and Leonard Gansevoort as New York's delegates. This was the Congress that received the newly ratified Constitution and prepared the way for the first federal government.

Hamilton, Burr and a promissory note, 1799. Aaron Burr had borrowed heavily from Louis Le Guen, a French merchant whose attorney was Alexander Hamilton. To secure an \$8,000 loan, Burr gave Le Guen a promissory note from David Gelston payable to Ezra, and Ezra endorsed it, lending his good name to the debt. Burr assured both men they would never be called on to pay. On 4 April 1799 Hamilton wrote to Ezra as holder of the note: Gelston had deposited \$4,000 toward it, and Hamilton offered to accept that sum with Ezra's consent. He took care that the letter reached him, sending copies by post to both Albany and Southold and having his clerk leave a third at the home of a New York merchant.

Ezra replied on 9 April, consenting to the arrangement while acknowledging his standing as endorser. Le Guen's own accounts show the note was settled out of a new mortgage loan to Burr on his Richmond Hill estate. The episode shows how Ezra's reputation for integrity made him a man others relied on, and it places him in a small circle that also included Hamilton and Burr, five years before their famous duel.

Jefferson comes to Southold, 1791. In May and June 1791 Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and Congressman James Madison made a month-long tour of New York and New England. One of Jefferson's great interests on the trip was the Hessian fly, an insect that had been destroying wheat across the region. On 12 June the two Virginians crossed Long Island Sound from Connecticut and spent the night in Southold, where Jefferson met Ezra. They talked about the fly and about a variety called yellow bearded wheat that seemed to resist it, and Jefferson's notes from the tour record Ezra's account of how that wheat first came to Long Island.

The conversation became a correspondence. On 10 September 1791 Ezra wrote to Jefferson from Southold, enclosing observations on the insect by Colonel Sylvester Dering of Shelter Island along with stubble of yellow bearded wheat. He passed on news from Dr. Samuel Latham Mitchill, who had heard from Sir Joseph Banks, president of the Royal Society of London, that the insect was unknown in England, and, like a careful scientist, he refined what he had told Jefferson in person about how many times a year the fly reproduced. He also asked his Shelter Island neighbors Jonathan N. Havens and Sylvester Dering to write to Jefferson directly; their detailed report followed on 1 November 1791.

Jefferson replied to Ezra from Philadelphia on 22 December 1791, thanking him for "the valuable information procured thro' your means" and writing that he was "confident it will be found to throw more light on the subject of the Hessian fly, than any thing I have before seen." He enclosed a letter for Dering and Havens. Jefferson's original letter to Ezra was later preserved on Shelter Island.

A national society for agriculture, 1802. By 1802 Ezra was vice president of the New York Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts and Manufactures, of which he had been a charter member and to whose publications he contributed essays. With its president, Robert R. Livingston, serving as minister to France, Ezra led it as president pro tempore. In March 1802 the society proposed that the agricultural societies of every state send delegates to Washington to form a central national society. On 3 April Ezra sent the proposal from Albany to Jefferson, now President, in his capacity as president of the American Philosophical Society. Congressman Mitchill delivered it on 12 April, the next day Jefferson forwarded it to Dr. Caspar Wistar to be laid before the Philosophical Society, and it was printed in the *National Intelligencer* on 28 April 1802.

Mitchill later described Ezra to James Madison as a successful laborer in the field of agricultural improvement. Ezra was a Federalist, and Jefferson led the opposing party; their letters show that shared curiosity about crops, soil and science could bridge the sharpest political divide of the age.

A life among the Founders. In 1778 Ezra's plea for Long Island's patriots reached Washington's desk in Hamilton's handwriting. In the 1780s he sat beside Hamilton in Congress as the nation moved from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution. In

the 1790s he chose the site for the young nation's lighthouse at Montauk and hosted Jefferson in Southold, beginning a scientific friendship that lasted into Jefferson's presidency. Ezra L'Hommedieu died in Southold on 27 September 1811 and is buried in the Old Burying Ground of the First Presbyterian Church. The lighthouse he sited still shines over Montauk Point.

Sources: Founders Online (National Archives), from the Papers of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison: Washington to Clinton, 18 Oct. 1778; Duane and L'Hommedieu to Hamilton and Floyd, 1 Sept. 1783; Hamilton to Clinton, 14 May 1783 (editorial note on the 1782 delegation); Appointment as Delegate to the Continental Congress, 1788; L'Hommedieu to Jefferson, 10 Sept. 1791; Havens and Dering to Jefferson, 1 Nov. 1791; Jefferson to L'Hommedieu, 22 Dec. 1791; Jefferson's Notes on the Hessian Fly, 24 May–18 June 1791; Hamilton to L'Hommedieu, 4 Apr. 1799; L'Hommedieu to Hamilton, 9 Apr. 1799; L'Hommedieu to Jefferson, 3 Apr. 1802; Mitchill to Jefferson, 12 Apr. 1802; Jefferson to Wistar, 13 Apr. 1802; Mitchill to Madison, 10 Jan. 1803. Also: Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, "L'Hommedieu, Ezra"; histories of the Montauk Point Lighthouse

Signing the Suffolk Association

1775 **Documented**

Sylvester L'Hommedieu (1703–1788)

In May 1775, before independence was declared, Sylvester L'Hommedieu, brother of the direct ancestor John, signed the Association of Suffolk County pledging support for the patriot cause. The Sons of the American Revolution list him as a patriot on that basis. He had earlier helped found Shelter Island's town government in 1730 and served as its collector and constable.

Sources: Family history document (2025), citing SAR and Find a Grave

Robins Island and the Culper spies

1784–1811 **Documented**

Ezra L'Hommedieu

Robins Island in Peconic Bay came into the family story twice. Nathaniel Sylvester and his partners bought it in 1651 along with Shelter Island. After the Revolution, the island's Loyalist owner Parker Wickham lost it by act of attainder, and in 1784 it was sold to Caleb Brewster and Benjamin Tallmadge, two members of Washington's Culper Spy Ring.

In the 1790s Brewster and Tallmadge sold Robins Island to Ezra L'Hommedieu. After his death his executors sold it, and his widow's account papers at NYU record the sale. It is the family's documented link to the Culper Ring; no record found so far shows Ezra himself as a member of the ring.

Sources: Wikipedia, Robins Island and Culper Ring; Sylvester Manor Archive, NYU

Buying back the manor

1827 **Documented**

Mary Catherine L'Hommedieu and Samuel Smith Gardiner

After the Dering heirs fell into debt, Sylvester Manor was auctioned at Sag Harbor in 1827. The buyers were Ezra's young daughter Mary Catherine and her husband, lawyer Samuel Smith Gardiner. Mary Catherine was herself a descendant of Nathaniel and Grizzell through Patience Sylvester L'Hommedieu, so the manor stayed in the bloodline.

Every owner since, including the Horsfords and the Fiskes, descends from her. The same year, on July 4, New York ended slavery.

Sources: Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 18 and appendix

19TH CENTURY

Newspapers, railroads and a Minnesota lake

1806–1875 **Partly traditional**

Stephen Satterlee L'Hommedieu, a cousin

Stephen Satterlee L'Hommedieu, whose grandfather Samuel served in the New York militia in the Revolution, moved west to Cincinnati. He co-owned the Cincinnati Gazette until 1848, then spent twenty-two years as president of the Cincinnati, Hamilton and Dayton Railroad.

The Lake L'Homme Dieu Association's leading theory is that the lake near Alexandria, Minnesota, was named for him, though the story is not proven.

Sources: Wikipedia, Stephen S. L'Hommedieu; Lake L'Homme Dieu Association

How a farm boy became a food chemist

1818–1893 **Documented**

Eben Norton Horsford, husband of two of Ezra's granddaughters

Eben Norton Horsford was born in 1818 in Moscow, New York, and spent his boyhood sketching and hunting fossils on the family farm. The geologist James Hall noticed him and helped him win a scholarship to the Rensselaer School, where he took an engineering degree in 1838, then taught mathematics and natural history at the Albany Female Academy.

The turning point came in 1842, when he heard about the German chemist Justus von Liebig's new agricultural chemistry, the idea that crops, soils and food could be understood by measuring their chemical makeup. In October 1844 he sailed for Liebig's laboratory at the University of Giessen, where he measured the nitrogen in grains. That training in the chemistry of food set the course of his life. In January 1847 Harvard elected him Rumford Professor, and over sixteen years he researched phosphates, condensed milk and fermentation.

His big idea was practical. American cooks leavened bread with cream of tartar, an expensive import from France. Horsford worked out how to make calcium acid phosphate instead by grinding cattle bones and treating them with sulfuric acid. In 1854 he and George Wilson founded the Rumford Chemical Works in Rhode Island, and by 1869 they were selling a complete baking powder kept dry with cornstarch. In 1864 he published a plan to make the Union Army's ration lighter and less wasteful. The American Chemical Society named his baking powder a National Historic Chemical Landmark in 2006.

The family link: in 1848 Horsford married Mary L'Hommedieu Gardiner, Ezra L'Hommedieu's granddaughter, and after her death he married her sister Phoebe. Rumford money restored Sylvester Manor, and every later owner of the manor descends from Horsford and the Gardiner sisters.

Sources: Wikipedia, Eben Norton Horsford; American Chemical Society lesson plan on the development of baking powder; Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 19

The story of Rumford Baking Powder

1753–today **Documented**

Count Rumford, Eben Norton Horsford and the red can



A vintage Rumford tin. The silhouette on the label is Count Rumford himself.

The name belongs to a count who wasn't born one. Benjamin Thompson was born in 1753 in Woburn, Massachusetts, to a modest farming family. He married a wealthy older widow in Rumford, New Hampshire (today's Concord), which gave him money and standing. In the Revolution he sided with the British, and he is widely believed to have spied for them. When the war turned, he left his wife and infant daughter behind and fled to England. He never lived in America again.

In Europe he reinvented himself. Serving the Elector of Bavaria, he reorganized the army, put Munich's beggars to work in workhouses, and fed them on a cheap, nourishing "Rumford soup" of barley, peas and potatoes. He also laid out Munich's English Garden. In 1792 he was made a Count of the Holy Roman Empire and took his title from the New Hampshire town where his fortune began.

He was a serious scientist too. Watching cannon barrels being bored in Munich, he argued that heat was a form of motion, not an invisible fluid called "caloric," an

important step toward thermodynamics. He redesigned the fireplace (the "Rumford fireplace" is still built), invented efficient ranges, roasters and a drip coffee pot, and helped found the Royal Institution in London. He married Lavoisier's widow, unhappily, and died near Paris in 1814. His will endowed a Harvard professorship, established in 1816, to apply science to the "useful arts" of everyday life.

In 1847 Harvard gave that chair to Eben Norton Horsford, who had studied chemistry under Justus von Liebig at Giessen. Home bakers then raised quick breads with baking soda plus sour milk, which was unpredictable, or imported cream of tartar, which was expensive. Horsford made a better acid, calcium acid phosphate, from animal bones, and argued it put back phosphates that white flour had lost. He patented it in the 1850s.

With the businessman George F. Wilson he built a factory in East Providence, Rhode Island, and named it the Rumford Chemical Works after the Count whose chair he held. "Horsford's Bread Preparation" became Rumford Baking Powder. The company also sold Horsford's Acid Phosphate, a popular tonic, supplied compressed rations to Union troops, and later published the Rumford Complete Cook Book. It did well enough that Horsford left Harvard in 1863. The factory village became Rumford, Rhode Island, so the name went full circle: from a New Hampshire town to a Bavarian count, a Harvard chair, a factory and a new town.

In 1950 the brand was bought by Hulman & Company of Terre Haute, Indiana, makers of Clabber Girl and the family long tied to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Rumford is still sold in its red can, marketed as aluminum-free because it uses calcium phosphate. The irony is that Count Rumford never had anything to do with baking powder. Still, the name fits: a cheap, reliable leavening from the professor who held his chair is just the kind of "useful art" his bequest was meant to encourage.

Sources: Family research notes on Count Rumford, the Rumford Professorship and the Rumford Chemical Works (Sept. 2026)

Vikings on the Charles River

1887–1890 **Documented**

Eben Norton Horsford

Horsford spent part of his baking-powder fortune on a passion that historians have not been kind to. He was convinced that Leif Erikson had reached Boston around the year 1000 and that the legendary Norse settlement of Norumbega stood on the Charles River.

When Boston declined to put up a statue of Erikson for lack of evidence, Horsford paid for one himself; it was unveiled in 1887 and still stands on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall. In 1890 he built a stone tower in Weston, on the banks of the Charles, with a plaque claiming the Norse discovery. No archaeological evidence has ever supported the theory, but the statue and Norumbega Tower remain two of Boston's odder landmarks, and both were paid for by bread.

Sources: WBUR, Vikings, baking powder and poets (2018)

A First Lady in the Gardiner family

1844 **Documented**

Julia Gardiner Tyler, cousin by marriage

Samuel Smith Gardiner, who bought Sylvester Manor with Mary Catherine L'Hommedieu in 1827, came from the Gardiners of Gardiner's Island. His brother David Gardiner, a New York state senator, had a daughter named Julia, born on Gardiner's Island in 1820.

In February 1844 David Gardiner was among those killed when a huge naval gun called the Peacemaker exploded aboard the USS Princeton during an excursion with President John Tyler. Julia, who had been courted by the widowed president, grew close to him in her grief, and they married quietly in New York that June. As First Lady she made 'Hail to the Chief' a presidential custom.

Julia was a first cousin of Mary and Phoebe Gardiner, Ezra L'Hommedieu's granddaughters. She is kin by marriage to the L'HommeDieu line rather than a blood relative, but her family appears in the family tree alongside President Tyler.

Sources: Wikipedia, Julia Gardiner Tyler; family MyHeritage tree

A cousin killed in the Civil War

1863 **Documented**

Tillinghast L'Hommedieu (1831–1863)

Stephen Satterlee L'Hommedieu's son Tillinghast served as a Union Army officer and was killed in action at Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1863. His brother Stephen Jr. (1842–1883) later served in the Ohio legislature.

The direct line itself stayed in Smithtown through the war years: Charles Oran W. L'HommeDieu (1824–1876) and his son Charles Oran (1846–1922). A search of Civil War service records for the Smithtown L'HommeDieus is a good next research step.

Sources: Wikipedia, Stephen S. L'Hommedieu

Whaling money, baking powder and poets

1840–1900 **Documented**

Samuel L'Hommedieu; the Gardiners and Horsfords

In the whaling boom, Ezra's nephew Samuel L'Hommedieu built a red-brick Greek Revival house on Captain's Row in Sag Harbor in 1840. During the Civil War era its later residents are said to have armed it with harpoon guns to defend Black neighbors.

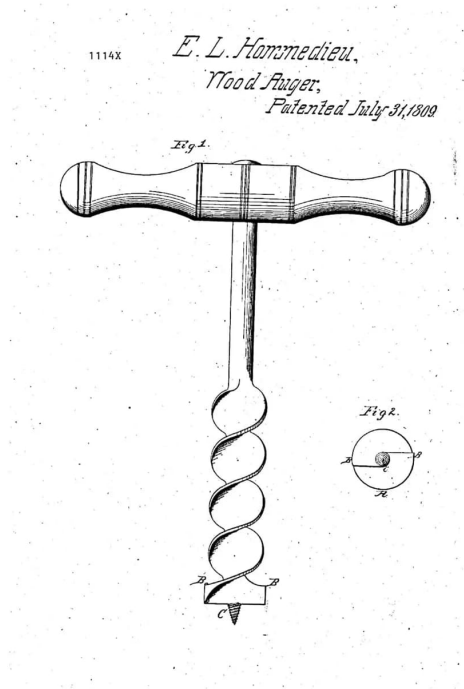
At Sylvester Manor, Mary Catherine's daughters married Eben Norton Horsford, the Harvard chemist whose Rumford Chemical Works made baking powder. He turned the manor into a summer retreat for Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell and other Cambridge writers.

Sources: Behind the Hedges; Griswold, *The Manor*, ch. 19

The L'Hommedieu patents

1809 to today **Documented**

Ezra L'Hommedieu of Chester, and the family inventors who followed him



E. L'Hommedieu, Wood Auger, patented July 31, 1809 (patent drawing, marked 1114X). Fig. 1 shows the double-twist auger with its center screw, C; Fig. 2 is the end view of the cutting head.

For more than two hundred years, members of the L'Hommedieu family have turned practical problems into patented ideas. Patent records in the United States and Europe show at least eighteen patents and patent documents carrying the name, running from hand-forged augers in the age of sailing ships to fabrics, garden supplies, and color television circuits, and to ice cream molds in the twenty-first century.

The first inventor was Ezra L'Hommedieu (1772 to 1860), a different man from his older kinsman Ezra the statesman of Southold. He was the son of Grover L'Hommedieu, a ropemaker whose family left British-occupied Long Island for Saybrook, Connecticut, during the Revolution. Ezra began as a ship carver, and the shipyards of the lower Connecticut River needed tools to bore clean, deep holes in heavy timber.

On 31 July 1809 he received a United States patent for a "double podded central screw auger," a tool that helped establish the double-twist auger in America. The witnesses to

his application later agreed to pay \$60,000 for the right to make and sell it in the Carolinas, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee for the fourteen-year life of the patent.

Around 1812 Ezra and his younger brother Joshua set up an auger works in Chester, Connecticut, and the Chester and Deep River area became a center of American auger making. Ezra kept improving his augers and the machines that made them for more than forty years, earning eight patents between 1809 and 1854. Some of the early records were reconstructed after the Patent Office fire of 1836, and one 1835 patent was lost in it entirely. The business became L'Hommedieu & Watrous of Chester, and in 1881 passed to Russell Jennings, whose name became one of the best known in American auger bits.

Others followed. In 1897 Denmark granted Joseph Spinney L'Hommedieu a patent for a bottle whose contents could not be counterfeited. In 1938 Arthur W. L'Hommedieu patented a buffing wheel for the family firm Chas. F. L'Hommedieu & Sons Co., makers of polishing supplies.

Two inventors named Paige L'Hommedieu worked for Johnson & Johnson in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Paige B. patented a budding and grafting tape in 1932. Paige Drake patented reinforced nonwoven fabrics in 1962 and 1964, and his 1964 patent is recognized as an early foundation of spunlaced, water-jet entangled fabric, the technology behind many of today's wipes, medical gowns, and dressings.

In the 1970s Jesse H. L'Hommedieu and his colleague Martin Fischman received five patents for GTE Sylvania color television circuits, dealing with deflection, which steers the electron beam across the picture tube, and convergence, which keeps the red, green, and blue beams aligned.

Most recently, Russ L'HommeDieu of Cutchogue filed an application in 2002 for a method of molding ice cream novelties and cakes in flexible silicone molds, published in 2004 as U.S. Patent Application 2004/0076727. It became the foundation of Cold Molds, later featured on Food Network, and seventeen later patents cite it as prior art. From Ezra's augers on the Connecticut River to Russ's molds on the North Fork, the family trait is the same: seeing an everyday problem and building a better tool to solve it.

Sources: DATAMP; Old Tool Heaven; Google Patents; Justia Patents and Trademarks

20TH CENTURY

The general who built Aberdeen Proving Ground

1869–1933 **Documented**

Brig. Gen. Colden L'Hommedieu Ruggles, a cousin

Colden L'Hommedieu Ruggles was the son of Brigadier General George D. Ruggles and Alma L'Hommedieu, a daughter of the Cincinnati railroad man Stephen S. L'Hommedieu. He graduated fifth in the West Point class of 1890 and became an expert in artillery design.

During the First World War he planned and oversaw the construction of the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, still one of the Army's main testing grounds. He was promoted to brigadier general in 1918, served as acting Chief of Ordnance in 1930, and retired that year after forty years of service.

Sources: Wikipedia, Colden Ruggles

Miss Alice's garden, and the dig she invited

20th century **Documented**

Andrew and Alice Fiske, tenth-generation keepers of the manor

For much of the twentieth century Sylvester Manor was held by Andrew and Alice Fiske, tenth-generation descendants of Nathaniel and Grizzell and, through Patience, cousins of the L'HommeDieu line. They kept the place standing: they upgraded and preserved the 1737 Manor House, the windmill and the grounds, and Alice made the manor's garden famous in its own right. On Shelter Island it is still called Miss Alice's garden.

Alice's lasting gift was a decision she made after Andrew died. She invited an archaeological team from the University of Massachusetts Boston to dig on the property. That work has never really stopped. It is how the manor has recovered the histories of everyone who lived there, not only the Sylvesters but the Manhansett people and the Africans enslaved on the plantation, whose lives rarely appear in family papers. Much of what this site can say about them rests on what those excavations found.

Sources: Sylvester Manor, Sylvester Family; Griswold, The Manor

From Shelter Island to Pixar

1955 to today **Documented**

Eben Fiske Ostby, a cousin and heir of Sylvester Manor

Eben Fiske Ostby, born in 1955, is a direct descendant of Nathaniel Sylvester through the same L'Hommedieu marriage that starts Russ's line: Benjamin and Patience, then Ezra L'Hommedieu, his daughter Mary Catherine, the Gardiner and Horsford sisters, and the Fiskes. Andrew Fiske, the manor's owner for much of the twentieth century, was his uncle. By our count from the family tree and The Manor, that makes Eben and Russ seventh cousins, once removed.

Eben was Vassar College's first computer science major and earned a master's degree at Brown. He became one of Pixar's first employees and one of the four founding members of its animation department alongside John Lasseter, working on the early shorts Luxo Jr., Red's Dream, Tin Toy and Knick Knack. In 1998 he shared an Academy Award for Scientific and Engineering Achievement for the Marionette 3-D animation system, and he was a technical director or supervisor on Toy Story, A Bug's Life, Monsters, Inc. and Cars, later rising to vice president for software.

He inherited Sylvester Manor in 2006. Rather than sell it, he gave the family archive to New York University and, with his nephew Bennett Konesni, helped turn the manor into the Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, where he is a founding trustee. After 363 years in one family, the property passed to the nonprofit in 2014. The same bloodline that ran the plantation, and that joined the L'Hommedieus in the 1680s or 1690s, ended its ownership by opening the manor's full history, including its history of slavery, to the public.

Sources: Wikipedia, Eben Fiske Ostby; Sylvester Manor, Eben Fiske Ostby page; Cottages & Gardens; Griswold, The Manor, appendix

Sylvester Manor today

2014 to today **Documented**

The nonprofit Sylvester Manor, Shelter Island

The land came long before the family. The manor's own history begins with the Manhansett people, whose home it was for thousands of years. Today the nonprofit cares for 236 acres, which it describes as the most intact remnant of a former slaveholding

plantation north of Virginia. In 2015 the site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District of national significance.

The manor does not soften how the family began. It says plainly that the Anglo-Dutch Sylvesters ran an Amsterdam-based shipping business that included carrying kidnapped Africans into slavery in Brazil, the West Indies and the English colonies, and that Nathaniel and Grizzell founded the plantation in 1653 to send food and livestock to Barbados sugar plantations. It publishes the list from Nathaniel's 1680 will of the enslaved families he divided among his wife and children.

It is also a working place, not a museum under glass. Visitors can see the 1737 Manor House, the restored nineteenth-century windmill and the Afro-Indigenous Burial Ground. There is a working farm that sells produce and gives food to local families, public walking trails, free field trips for Shelter Island schoolchildren, Manor House tours, an annual Juneteenth commemoration, and the outdoor exhibition Sculpture @ Sylvester Manor. The house where Patience Sylvester grew up now teaches the whole history of the place, including the parts her family would have left out.

Sources: Sylvester Manor, home page and Sylvester Family page

The Yankees connection

1915–1923 **Partly traditional**

Col. Tillinghast L'Hommedieu Huston

Tillinghast L'Hommedieu Huston (1867–1938), an engineer and army officer, bought the New York Yankees with Jacob Ruppert in 1915 and supervised much of the building of Yankee Stadium, which opened in April 1923. Ruppert bought out his half that May.

Huston was born in Buffalo to Richard Grier Huston and Mary Elizabeth Samuel, so he was not a L'Hommedieu by blood as far as the records show. His unusual first and middle names match exactly those of the Union officer Tillinghast L'Hommedieu, the family cousin killed in 1863, which suggests he was named in his honor. How the Hustons knew the L'Hommedieus is still an open question.

Sources: Thru Time Family (Huston biography); Wikipedia, Tillinghast (name list); Wikipedia, Stephen S. L'Hommedieu

SHELTER ISLAND, NEW YORK · 1651 TO TODAY

Sylvester Manor

People come and go in a family history. Sylvester Manor stays. For more than three and a half centuries it has been the fixed point the Sylvesters, L'Hommedieus, Derings, Gardiners, Horsfords and Fiskes kept returning to: the place where the family was founded, where its two main branches met, where its fortunes were lost and bought back, and where its hardest history is now told in the open. It is less a backdrop than a supporting character, and it has a scene in almost every era of this site.

1651

A plantation on Manhansett land

Role: the founding

Nathaniel Sylvester and his partners take up Shelter Island as a provisioning plantation for the family's Barbados sugar trade. Nathaniel settles here with Grizzell Brinley after their 1653 marriage. The wealth that built the manor came from the labor of enslaved Africans and Native people, and the manor today tells that part of its history first.

1657–1672

A refuge for Quakers

Role: the shelter

While Massachusetts was banishing, whipping and hanging Friends, the Sylvesters took in the banished Southwicks and in 1672 hosted George Fox. The manor helped the young Quaker movement survive, even as the household held people in bondage.

ABOUT 1694

Where the two branches meet

Role: the matchmaker

Patience Sylvester, raised on the manor, marries the Huguenot refugee Benjamin L'Hommedieu. Every American L'HommeDieu in Russ's line, and Ezra L'Hommedieu's line of cousins, starts with that marriage.

1737–1756

Brinley's Georgian house

Role: the family portrait

Brinley Sylvester builds the Manor House that still stands. His daughter Mary sits for Joseph Blackburn in 1754, the portrait now at the Met. Two years later she marries Thomas Dering, and the manor passes into the Dering line.



The Manor House, photographed in 1930 while Cornelia Horsford lived there. Samuel H. Gottscho. Library of Congress.

1776–1827

War, debt and an auction

Role: the lost inheritance

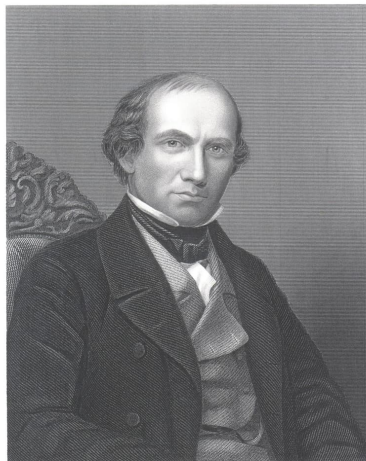
The Derings flee to Middletown, Connecticut, during the Revolution. Their heirs later fall into debt, and in 1827 the manor is auctioned at Sag Harbor. The buyers are Ezra L'Hommedieu's daughter Mary Catherine and her husband Samuel Smith Gardiner, a Sylvester descendant through Patience. The L'Hommedieu branch buys the family seat back.

1848–1893

A summer house for poets

Role: the salon

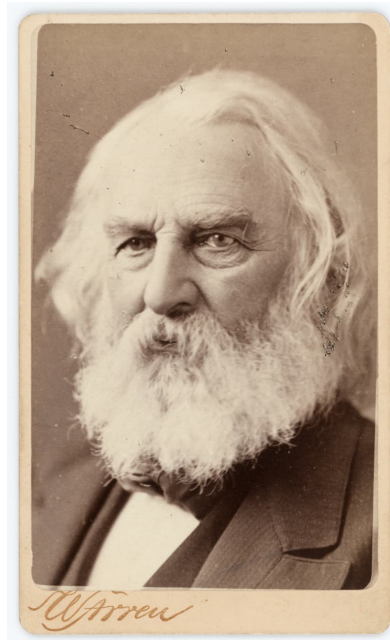
Mary Catherine's daughters marry the Harvard chemist Eben Norton Horsford, whose baking powder paid for Viking monuments in Boston. He makes the manor a summer retreat for Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell and other Cambridge writers.



PROFESSOR HORSFORD.
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, UNITED STATES.

E. N. Horsford

Eben Norton Horsford. Engraving, 1860. Smithsonian Libraries and Archives (no known copyright).



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a summer guest, about 1870. George Kendall Warren. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian (CCO).

20TH CENTURY

Miss Alice's garden

Role: the keepsake

Andrew and Alice Fiske, tenth-generation descendants of Nathaniel and Grizzell, keep the house, windmill and grounds standing. Alice's garden becomes famous on its own.

Ezra's gold watch, his copy of *Common Sense*

, and Ralph Earl's proof of Ezra's portrait stay at the manor.



Boxwood path at Sylvester Manor, about 1915. Frances Benjamin Johnston and Mattie Edwards Hewitt. Library of Congress.

2006–2015

Given to the public

Role: the witness

Eben Fiske Ostby inherits the manor, gives the family archive to New York University, and with his nephew Bennett Konesni helps found the Sylvester Manor Educational Farm. In 2014, after 363 years in one family, the property passes to the nonprofit. It becomes a National Register Historic District in 2015.

TODAY

A working farm that tells the whole story

Role: the teacher

236 acres with the 1737 Manor House, the restored windmill and the Afro-Indigenous Burial Ground. A working farm that sells produce and gives food to local families, public trails, Manor House tours, free field trips for Shelter Island schoolchildren, a Juneteenth commemoration, and Sculpture @ Sylvester Manor. Grounds are open March to October.

Sources: Mac Griswold, *The Manor*

(2013); Sylvester Manor, sylvestermanor.org; NYU Fales Library, Sylvester Manor Archive.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART · JOSEPH BLACKBURN, 1754

Mary Sylvester's lineage



Joseph Blackburn, *Mary Sylvester*, 1754. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 16.68.2.

Mary Sylvester (1725–1794) was the great-granddaughter of Nathaniel Sylvester and Grizzell Brinley, and Ezra L'Hommedieu's second cousin. Their fathers, Brinley Sylvester and Benjamin L'Hommedieu II, were first cousins, both born in 1694. By our count from the family tree, Mary is Russ's second cousin, seven times removed.

Her parents: Brinley Sylvester (1694–1752), born in East Hampton and raised in Rhode Island as a merchant. He inherited the manor from his uncle Giles after a legal dispute

and built the Georgian house that still stands. He married Mary Burrough; they had two daughters.

Her sister: Margaret (1719–1782), who married David Chesebrough in 1749 and died at Stonington, Connecticut. Blackburn painted her the same year as Mary, and her portrait is also at the Met.

Her marriage: In 1756, at Newport, she married Thomas Dering, a Boston merchant and son of Henry Dering and Elizabeth Packer. When his business failed in the 1760s the family moved to the manor, and during the Revolution they fled to Middletown, Connecticut.

Her children: Sylvester Dering, who managed the manor and later appears as a brigadier general; Henry Packer Dering (1763–1822), Sag Harbor's first customs master, who married Anna Fosdick in 1793; and Elizabeth (Betsey), who married Nathaniel Gardiner. An infant, Henry Sylvester Dering, lived from April 1757 to January 1758. A later Sylvester Dering gave the portrait to the Met in 1916, so it stayed in her direct line for more than 160 years.

Two branches from one couple

Both lines start with Nathaniel Sylvester and Grizzell Brinley, whose own parents were Thomas Brinley, an auditor to Charles I, and Anne Wase.

Sylvester branch

- Nathaniel Sylvester (1610–1680) + Grizzell Brinley
- Nathaniel Sylvester II + Margaret Hobart (wife needs checking)
- Brinley Sylvester (1694–1752) + Mary Burrough
- Mary Sylvester (1725–1794) + Thomas Dering
- Sylvester, Henry Packer and Elizabeth Dering

L'Hommedieu branch

- Nathaniel Sylvester (1610–1680) + Grizzell Brinley
- Patience Sylvester (1664–1719) + Benjamin L'Hommedieu
- Benjamin L'Hommedieu II (1694–1755)

- Ezra L'Hommedieu (1734–1811)
- Mary Catherine L'Hommedieu + Samuel Smith Gardiner

The branches came together again over the manor. The Derings held it until their heirs sold it at auction in 1827, and the buyers were Ezra's daughter Mary Catherine and Samuel Smith Gardiner. Russ's own line runs through Patience's son John L'Hommedieu (1707–1777), Ezra's uncle. Benjamin also had a brother, John, naturalized in New York in 1687, so not every American L'Hommedieu descends from Patience.

Where the sources disagree

- **Birth year:**

the Met gives 1725; the East Hampton Star gives 1724.

- **Marriage date:**

a University of Michigan finding aid says 1738, which is almost certainly wrong, since she would have been 13. The Met gives 1756.

- **Generation count:**

the NYU archive calls her Nathaniel's great-great-granddaughter. Nathaniel, then Nathaniel II, then Brinley, then Mary makes her a great-granddaughter.

- **Grizzell's father:**

some sources name Francis Brinley. Francis was her brother; Thomas was her father.

Only the Met page was opened directly for this section. The other details come from the NYU Sylvester Manor Archive finding aid, the East Hampton Star, WikiTree, Find a Grave, Wikipedia and Nutfield Genealogy as summarized in research notes, and have not yet been checked page by page. The Research notes chapter tracks them.

NOTABLE PEOPLE, THEN THE PLACES OF THE FAMILY JOURNEY

People and Places

People connected to the family, then the sites tied to it, in rough order of the family's journey from Sussex and La Rochelle to Long Island and Minnesota.

PEOPLE

Josuah Sylvester

Poet and translator, England 1563–1618

Nathaniel Sylvester's grandfather, according to the family tree

Poet best known for translating Du Bartas. The family tree makes him the father of Giles Sylvester, the Amsterdam merchant, and so the grandfather of Nathaniel Sylvester.

Nathaniel Sylvester

Amsterdam, Barbados and Shelter Island 1651 onward

Direct ancestor

Merchant and Barbados sugar partner who settled Shelter Island in 1651 and built Sylvester Manor. He married Grizzell Brinley in Newport in 1653.

Grizzell Brinley Sylvester

Clerkenwell, Newport and Shelter Island 1636–1687

Direct ancestor

Daughter of Thomas Brinley, a royal auditor to Charles I. The Civil War sent her to New England, where she married Nathaniel Sylvester. She died at Sylvester Manor, and her will survives in the Sylvester Manor Archive at NYU.

Benjamin L'Hommedieu

La Rochelle and Southold Born about 1657

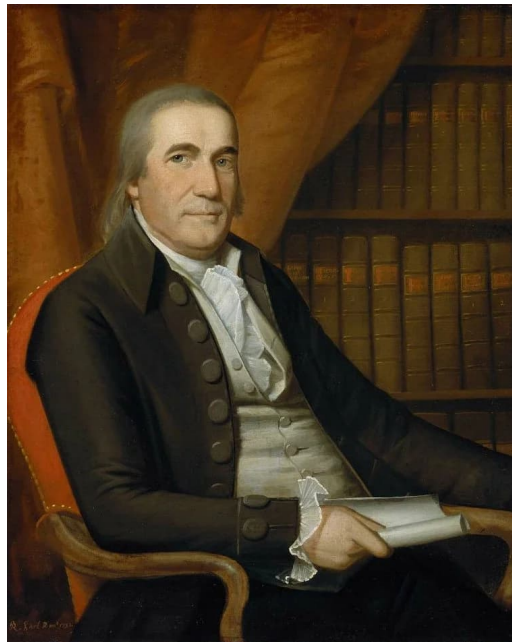
Direct ancestor

Huguenot born at La Rochelle who left after the persecutions that followed 1685 and landed in America about 1686. He married Patience Sylvester, Nathaniel and Grizzell's daughter, which joins the L'Hommedieu and Sylvester lines.

Ezra L'Hommedieu

Southold, NY 1734–1811

First cousin, 7 times removed



Ralph Earl, Ezra L'Hommedieu, 1792. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Yale 1754, lawyer and Continental Congress delegate. He chose the site for the Montauk Point Lighthouse. His 1792 portrait by Ralph Earl belongs to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Earl's proof of it hangs at Sylvester Manor.

Wikipedia: Ezra L'Hommedieu: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezra_L%27Hommedieu

Mary Catherine L'Hommedieu Gardiner

Shelter Island, NY **Bought the manor 1827**

Ezra's daughter

With her husband Samuel Smith Gardiner she bought Sylvester Manor in 1827, bringing it back into the Sylvester bloodline. Every later owner of the manor descends from her.

Mary L'Hommedieu Gardiner Horsford

Shelter Island and Cambridge, Massachusetts **Married 1848**

Ezra's granddaughter



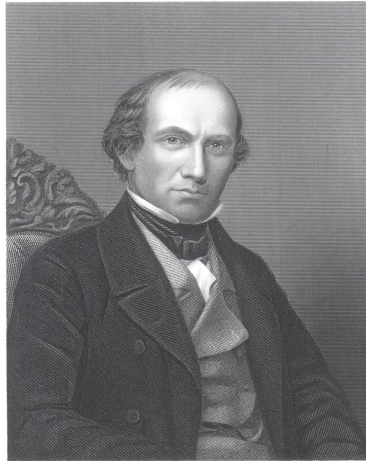
Mary L'Hommedieu Gardiner Horsford.

Daughter of Mary Catherine and Samuel Smith Gardiner. In 1848 she married the Harvard chemist Eben Norton Horsford. After her death he married her sister Phoebe, and every later owner of Sylvester Manor descends from Horsford and the Gardiner sisters.

Eben Norton Horsford

Cambridge, Massachusetts and Shelter Island 1818–1893

Husband of two of Ezra's granddaughters



PROFESSOR HORSFORD.
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, UNITED STATES.

E. N. Horsford

Eben Norton Horsford. Engraving, 1860. Smithsonian Libraries and Archives (no known copyright).

Harvard chemist whose Rumford Chemical Works made phosphate baking powder. He married Mary L'Hommedieu Gardiner in 1848 and later her sister Phoebe. Rumford money restored Sylvester Manor.

Wikipedia: Eben Norton Horsford: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eben_Norton_Horsford

Julia Gardiner Tyler

Gardiner's Island and the White House **Married 1844**

Cousin by marriage



Julia Gardiner Tyler, First Lady 1844 to 1845. Print, about 1850 to 1860. Library of Congress (no known restrictions).

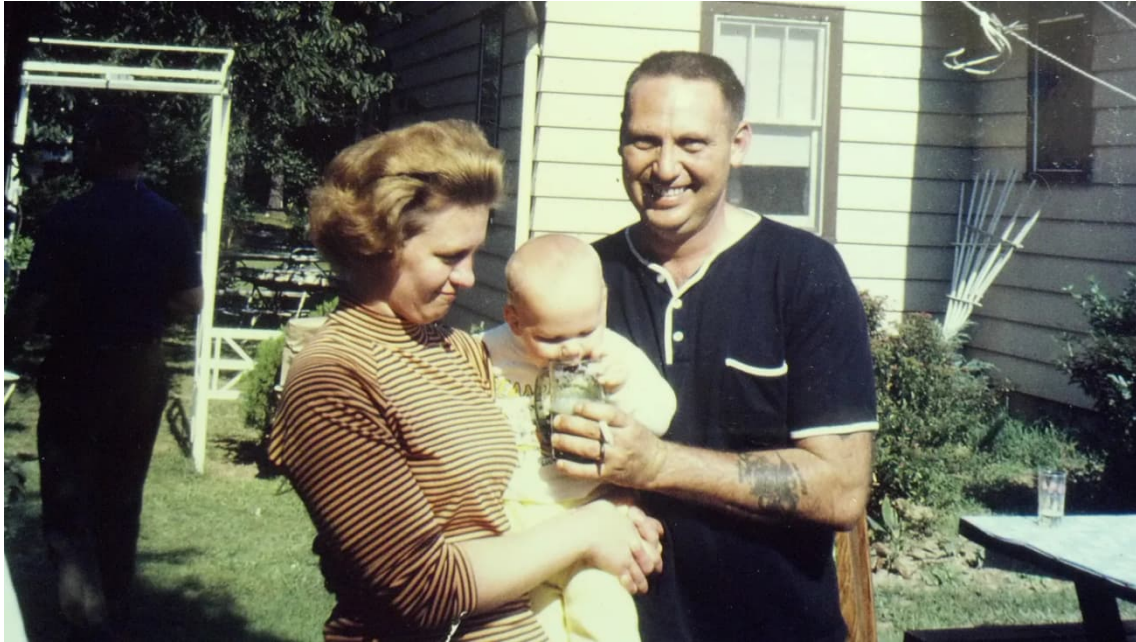
First cousin of Ezra's granddaughters Mary and Phoebe Gardiner. In 1844 she married President John Tyler and became First Lady. She is kin by marriage, not by blood.

Wikipedia: Julia Gardiner Tyler: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_Gardiner_Tyler

Richard George L'HommeDieu

Camp Lejeune, the USS Columbus and Gibraltar 1929–2010

Russ's father



Richard and Dolores with their baby in the backyard.

Born June 24, 1929, to David and Leola L'HommeDieu. A six-year Marine Corps veteran, he worked briefly at Grumman in Bethpage, then spent his career as an engineer for the Long Island Rail Road. He married Dolores Marie Michels in 1953 and raised three children in Smithtown. He died in 2010 and rests at Calverton National Cemetery, with Dolores beside him. His 51 letters home are on his page.

Dolores Marie L'HommeDieu

Smithtown and Calverton, New York; Apollo Beach, Florida 1935–2026

Russ's mother; wife of Richard George L'HommeDieu



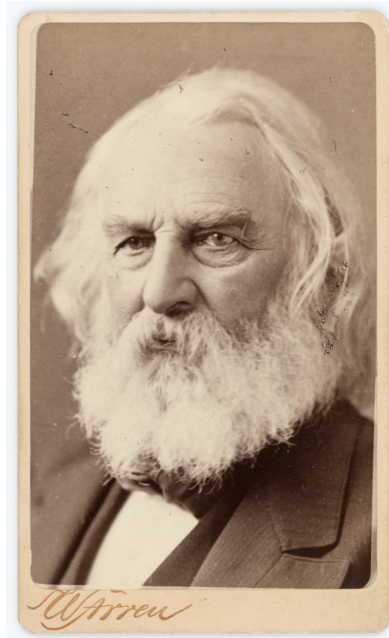
Dolores as a VA volunteer, January 2017.

Born Dolores Marie Michels in Bay Shore. For twenty-eight years she was president of the Society for Lending Comforts to the Sick, and in 1992 Smithtown named her Citizen of the Year. Her obituary, photographs and remembrance video are on her page.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Cambridge, Massachusetts **Summer guest**

Family friend, not kin



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a summer guest, about 1870. George Kendall Warren. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian (CC0).

The poet was one of the Cambridge writers, along with Whittier and Lowell, whom the Horsfords hosted at Sylvester Manor in the summer.

Wikipedia: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Wadsworth_Longfellow

Sylvester L'Hommedieu

Brother of John, the direct ancestor

Helped organize Shelter Island as a town in 1730 and signed the Suffolk County Association supporting the Revolution in 1775.

Stephen Satterlee L'Hommedieu

Cousin through Benjamin and Patience

Cincinnati newspaper publisher and railroad executive, and the leading candidate for the namesake of Lake L'Homme Dieu in Minnesota.

Bodiam Castle

Bodiam, near Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5UA **Built from 1385**

Claimed ancestor: Sir Edward Dalyngrigge (link contradicted)



Bodiam Castle and moat. Photo © Patrick Roper, Geograph, CC BY-SA 2.0.

A moated quadrangular castle with round corner towers, a twin-towered gatehouse, spiral stairs, battlements and an original portcullis. National Trust since 1925.

National Trust: history of Bodiam: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/sussex/bodiam-castle/history-of-bodiam-castle>

Petworth

West Sussex 1500s–1625

Wase and Dawtrey families; Anne Wase born c.1606



St Mary the Virgin, Petworth, where Anne Wase married Thomas Brinley in 1625. Photo © Len Williams, Geograph, CC BY-SA 2.0.

Market town where Anne Wase married Thomas Brinley in 1625. The Dawtreys held Moor House (More House) at Petworth.

WeRelate: Brinley and Wase family: [https://www.werelate.org/wiki/Family:Thomas_Brinley_and_Anne_Wase_\(1\)](https://www.werelate.org/wiki/Family:Thomas_Brinley_and_Anne_Wase_(1))

Stopham

West Sussex **Medieval to present**

Claimed: Bartelot (Barttelot) ancestors



Stopham Bridge, built about 1423. Photo © Donald Simmons, Geograph, CC BY-SA 2.0.

Seat of the Barttelot family since the 1300s, with brasses in St Mary's church. The tree's Bartelot link is unverified.

Landed Families: Barttelot of Stopham: <https://landedfamilies.blogspot.com/2020/08/426-barttelot-of-stopham-house-baronets.html>

Clerkenwell

London 1636

Grizzell Brinley's birthplace



St James's, Clerkenwell, rebuilt about 1790 on the site of the church where the Brinley children were baptized. Photo © John Salmon, Geograph, CC BY-SA 2.0.

The Brinleys lived in St John's Lane; their twelve children were baptized at St James Clerkenwell.

Datchet

Near Windsor, Berkshire (historically Buckinghamshire) 1640s–1661

Thomas and Anne Brinley; Grizzell's girlhood



St Mary the Virgin, Datchet, rebuilt in the 1850s and 1860s. Photo © Derek Harper, Geograph, CC BY-SA 2.0.

The Royalist Brinleys retreated here during the Civil War. Thomas Brinley died at Datchet in 1661, and his daughter Anne married William Coddington here in 1650.

La Rochelle

Charente-Maritime, France c.1575–1685

L'Hommedieu, Peron and Mouchard ancestors; Nathaniel Sylvester in 1645



The siege of La Rochelle, 1627 to 1628. Workshop of Claes Jansz. Visscher, 1628. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (public domain).

The great Huguenot stronghold of the Atlantic coast. Nathaniel Sylvester steered the family ship here in 1645, apparently to dodge Dutch duties. Benjamin L'Hommedieu was born here about 1657 and left after the persecutions that followed 1685.

Amsterdam

Netherlands 1613–1650s

Giles, Nathaniel and Constant Sylvester



Amsterdam's harbour in 1625. Balthasar Florisz. van Berckenrode. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (public domain).

Giles Sylvester married Mary Arnold here in 1613 and ran his trading house on the Singel canal. Nathaniel grew up here among English Separatists.

Jamestown

Virginia 1644–45

Nathaniel Sylvester



The brick church tower at Jamestown, built in the 1690s on the site Nathaniel knew in 1644. Detroit Publishing Co., 1900 to 1910. Library of Congress.

Nathaniel spent nearly a year around Jamestown buying tobacco for the family firm and was in Virginia during the Powhatan uprising of April 1644.

Constant Plantation

St. George, Barbados 1646 onward

Constant Sylvester (Nathaniel's brother)



Constant Plantation, St. George, Barbados (painting)

Sugar plantation worked by enslaved Africans that Sylvester Manor was founded to supply. It still grows sugar cane.

Newport

Rhode Island 1651-1686

Grizzell Brinley; Benjamin L'Hommedieu



The Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House, among Newport's oldest houses, built before 1700. HABS, Library of Congress.

Grizzell lived with her sister Anne and brother-in-law Governor William Coddington, and married Nathaniel here in 1653. Benjamin L'Hommedieu landed here about 1686.

PLACES • LONG ISLAND

Sylvester Manor

Shelter Island, NY 1651–2014

Nathaniel, Grizzell, Patience; Ezra's gold watch is kept here



The 1810 windmill at Sylvester Manor, 1930. Samuel H. Gottscho. Library of Congress.

The family seat, on Manhansett land: 236 acres with a 1737 manor house, 1810 windmill, gardens and the Afro-Indigenous Burial Ground. Held by eleven generations of Sylvester descendants, now a nonprofit working farm with tours, trails and education programs, and a National Register Historic District since 2015. Grounds open March to October.

Visit Sylvester Manor: <https://www.sylvestermanor.org/>

Southold

Suffolk County, NY 1690s–1811

Benjamin and Patience; John L'Hommedieu (b.1728); Ezra L'Hommedieu

Where Benjamin and Patience settled and raised their children. Ezra L'Hommedieu is buried in the Old Southold Burying Ground.

Montauk Point Lighthouse

Montauk, NY 1796

Ezra L'Hommedieu (cousin)



Montauk Point Lighthouse at sunset, with the keeper's house.

New York's first lighthouse. Ezra chose the site; it is now a National Historic Landmark run by the Montauk Historical Society.

Wikipedia: Montauk Point Light: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montauk_Point_Light

Horton Point Lighthouse

3575 Lighthouse Road, Southold, NY **Authorized 1790, lit 1857**

Ezra L'Hommedieu (by tradition discussed the site with Washington in 1756)



Horton Point Lighthouse and keeper's house, Southold, home of the Southold Historical Museum's nautical museum.

Now home to the Southold Historical Museum's nautical museum, open summer weekends.

Southold Historical Museum: Horton Point: <https://www.southoldhistorical.org/horton-point-lighthouse>

Robins Island

Peconic Bay, NY (private) 1651; 1790s–1811

Nathaniel Sylvester and partners; later Ezra L'Hommedieu



Robins Island from the air, Peconic Bay.

Bought with Shelter Island in 1651. Ezra bought it in the 1790s from Culper spies Caleb Brewster and Benjamin Tallmadge. Privately owned today and not open to visitors.

Wikipedia: Robins Island: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robins_Island

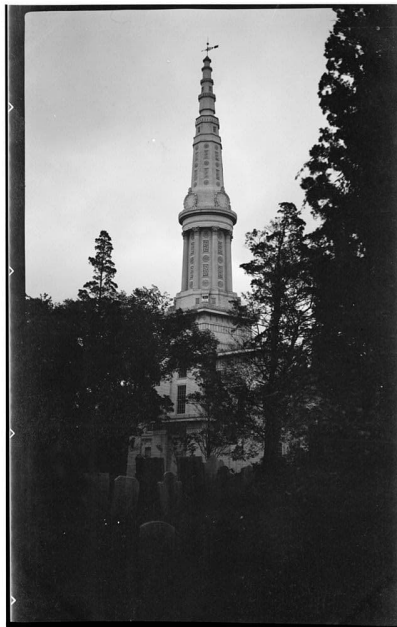
L'Hommedieu House

Captain's Row, Sag Harbor, NY 1840

Samuel L'Hommedieu (Ezra's nephew)



The L'Hommedieu House on Captain's Row, Sag Harbor.



Sag Harbor in the whaling era: the 1844 Whalers' Church before the 1938 hurricane took its steeple. HABS, Library of Congress.

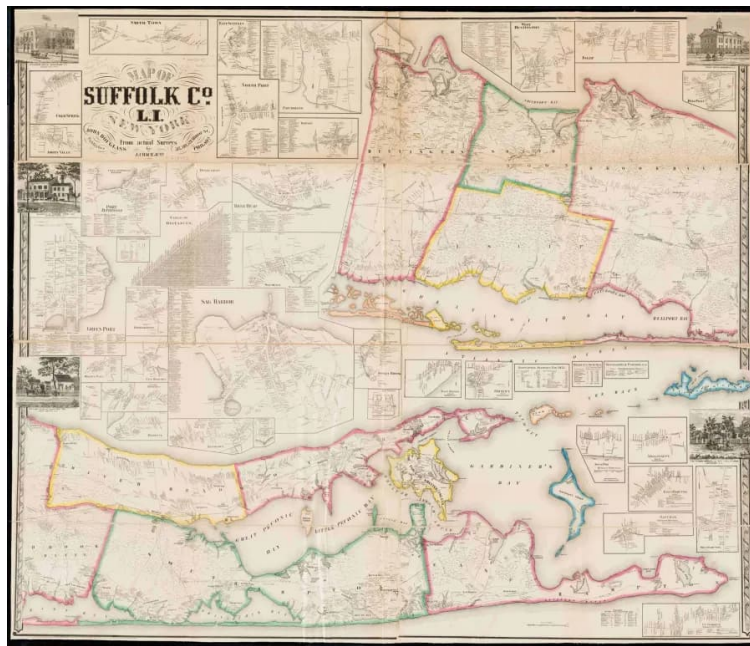
Red-brick Greek Revival townhouse built in the whaling era. A private home, visible from the street.

Behind the Hedges: Treasure of Captain's Row: <https://behindthehedges.com/treasure-captains-row/>

Suffolk County, 1858

Suffolk County, NY 1858

17 L'Hommedieu entries across Smithtown, Brookhaven, Islip, Sag Harbor and Riverhead



J. Chace Jr., Map of Suffolk Co., L.I., New York, 1858.

Every L'Hommedieu name on the 1858 county map, with close-ups of the village insets where they appear.

Digital Commonwealth: the full 1858 map: <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/4m90f1959>

Smithtown and the Nissequogue

Suffolk County, NY 1767–1922

David Scudder, Charles Oran W, Charles Oran and George Louis L'HommeDieu

Five generations of the direct line lived here. George Louis was born in 1887 on Nissequogue River Road at the Head of the River.

Mills Pond

Smithtown, NY 1690s–1800s

Mills ancestors through Eliza Mills (1816–1890)



Mills Pond House, built 1838 to 1840 by a later generation of the Mills family. HABS, Library of Congress.

Home of the Mills family, several generations of whom appear in the tree, before they moved to Orange County, NY.

Norumbega Tower and the Leif Erikson statue

Weston and Boston, Massachusetts 1887–1890

Eben Norton Horsford



Norumbega Tower on a 1905 Rotograph Co. postcard. The tower stands in Weston, on the Waltham line, so period postcards often labeled it Waltham.

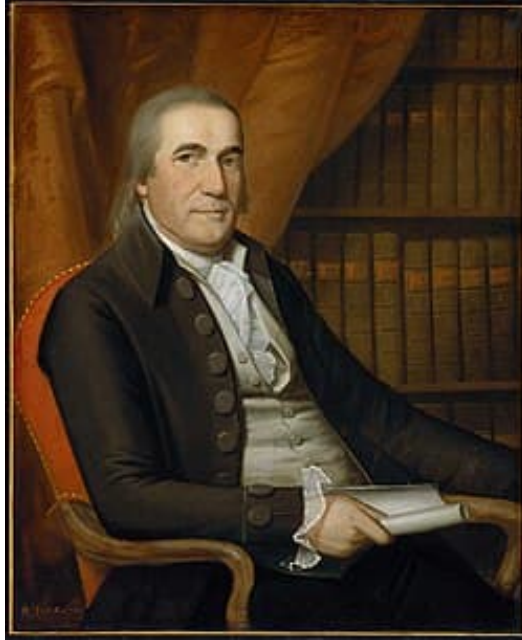
Horsford's Viking monuments, paid for with baking-powder money: a stone tower on the Charles River in Weston and a statue on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall in Boston.

WBUR: Vikings, baking powder and poets: <https://www.wbur.org/news/2018/12/27/vikings-boston-history-leif-erikson>

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts **Portrait painted 1792**

Ezra L'Hommedieu (cousin), painted by Ralph Earl



Ralph Earl, Ezra L'Hommedieu, 1792. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Ralph Earl painted Ezra in 1792, at about 58, seated in a red armchair in his study with papers in hand and shelves of books behind him: the portrait of a lawyer and legislator. Oil on canvas, 33 by 27 inches, museum number 1989.634. The Smithsonian's Catalog of American Portraits records the MFA as its owner. Ralph Earl's proof of the portrait hangs at Sylvester Manor on Shelter Island.

Smithsonian Catalog of American Portraits: Ezra L'Hommedieu: https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_1989.634_MFAB

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

1000 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY (The American Wing) **Portrait painted 1754**

Mary Sylvester (1725–1794), daughter of Brinley Sylvester



Joseph Blackburn, Mary Sylvester, 1754. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

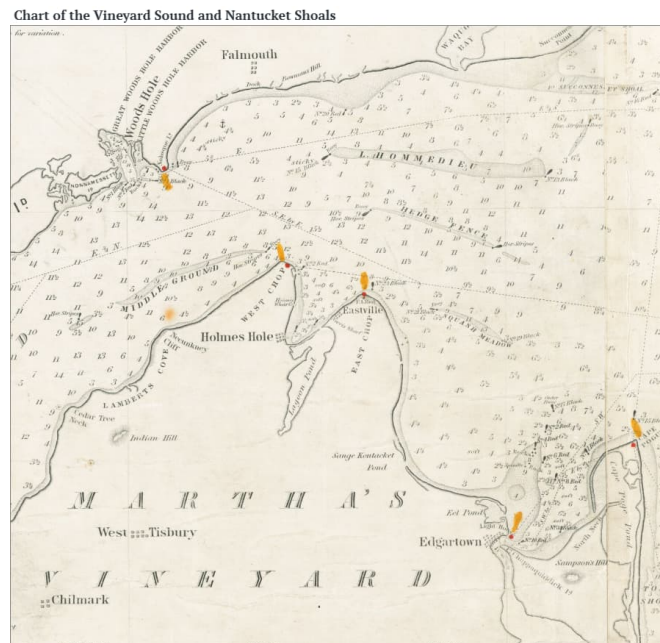
Mary was born at Southold, the daughter of Brinley and Mary Sylvester. Joseph Blackburn painted her unmarried, as a shepherdess, with a lamb at her side as a symbol of purity and innocence; he painted her sister Margaret (Mrs. David Chesebrough) the same year. The carved, painted and gilded frame is original. In 1756 she married Thomas Dering, a Boston merchant, at Newport. Sylvester Dering gave the portrait to the Met in 1916. Museum number 16.68.2; not on view at last check.

The Met: Mary Sylvester, 1754: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/10174>

L'Hommedieu Shoal

Nantucket Sound, between Falmouth and Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts **Named by 1866**

The family name on the water; who it honors is unknown



George Eldridge, Chart of the Vineyard Sound and Nantucket Shoals, 1874.

A long sandbar, 3 feet at its shallowest, that every chart of Nantucket Sound labels L'Hommedieu Shoal. The name was in use by 1866, when the schooner Arcturus was lost on it, but no record says who it was named for. The article weighs four explanations and where the answer may still be found.

Middletown

Connecticut 1776–1783

Ezra L'Hommedieu; the Dering cousins



Bird's-eye view of Middletown, Conn., 1877.

Where Long Island patriots, including Ezra and the Derings of Sylvester Manor, lived in exile during the British occupation.

Lake L'Homme Dieu

Alexandria, Douglas County, Minnesota On maps by the 1850s

Possibly Stephen Satterlee L'Hommedieu (1806–1875), a cousin

A lake of about 1,800 acres, up to about 85 feet deep, in the Alexandria chain of lakes. Official maps spell it Le Homme Dieu. The lake association's leading theory is that it honors Stephen Satterlee L'Hommedieu, a Cincinnati newspaper publisher and railroad man descended from Benjamin L'Hommedieu; another account says it was named for a friend of early settler Gleny King. Neither is proven.

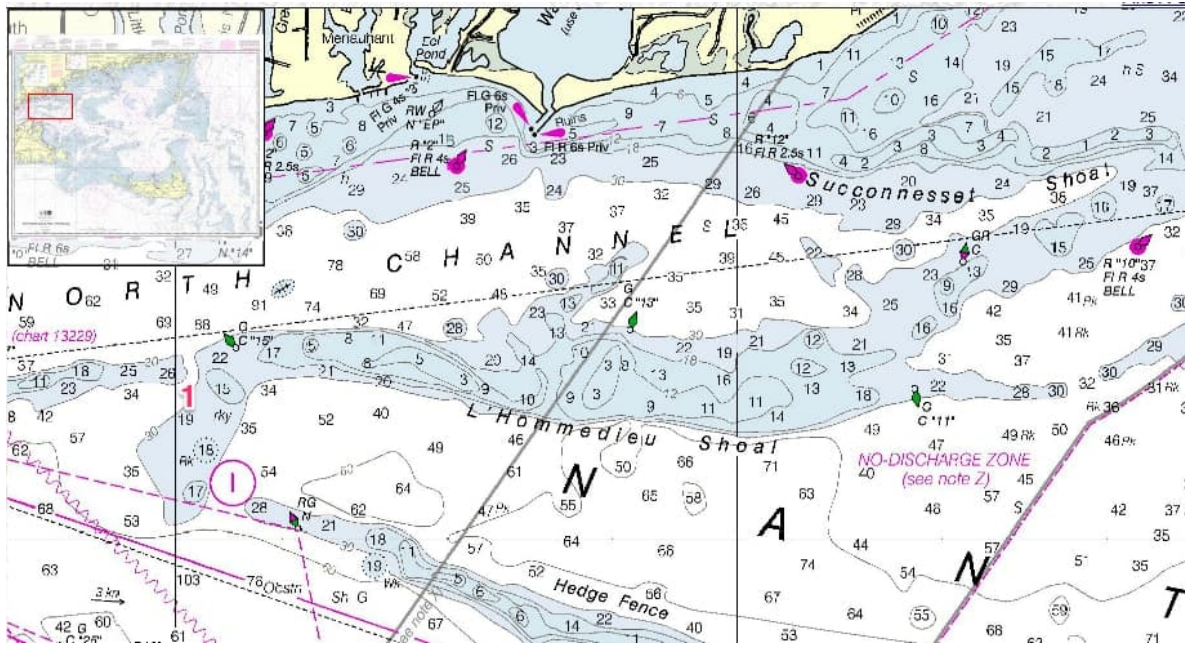
Lake L'Homme Dieu Association: history: <https://lakelhommedieu.org/history/>

NANTUCKET SOUND · DR. RUSS L'HOMMEDIEU, OCTOBER 2026

The Shoal That Bears Our Name

Halfway between Falmouth and Oak Bluffs, under three feet of water, lies a sandbar that carries our family name. Every chart of Nantucket Sound labels it L'Hommedieu Shoal. Yet no history, tradition or government record I have found says who it was named for, or why.

That silence is not unusual for these waters. In 1964 the *Vineyard Gazette* surveyed the names of local shoals and ledges and admitted that for many of them "neither history nor tradition offers a clue." Lucas Shoal, Tom's Shoal and Bow Bells all sit in that same fog. Ours does too. What follows is what the record does show, and the most plausible ways a Huguenot name from Long Island came to mark a hazard off Cape Cod.



L'Hommedieu Shoal on a modern nautical chart, with Hedge Fence below it and Succonnesset Shoal along the Falmouth shore.

The shoal itself

L'Hommedieu Shoal is a long ridge of sand running east to west where Vineyard Sound meets Nantucket Sound. It lies at approximately 41°31.5' N, 70°31' W (41.525° N, 70.5167° W in decimal degrees). The U.S. Coast Pilot

gives its least depth as 3 feet and notes that it is marked by buoys at its north, east and west ends. Its neighbor to the south, Hedge Fence, is covered by only 5 feet.

For two centuries this was one of the busiest coastal highways in America. Schooners carrying coal, lime, lumber and granite between New York and Boston funneled through these sounds rather than face the open sea around Nantucket. Every one of them had to thread the gap between L'Hommedieu and the shoals around it. Local fishermen still know a stretch of it as "Half Way" shoal, for its position on the crossing to the Vineyard.

What the record shows

The name was already in use by the 1860s, and the shoal has been catching ships under it ever since. None of the wrecks below explains the name, because all of them came after it.

Ruth E. Merrill, six-masted schooner of Portland, Maine

January 1924

Leaking badly with coal from Norfolk to Boston, she was steered onto the edge of the shoal on purpose and sank there. Captain and crew of twelve escaped in a power boat.

USFC Grampus, Fish Commission research schooner

5 September 1891

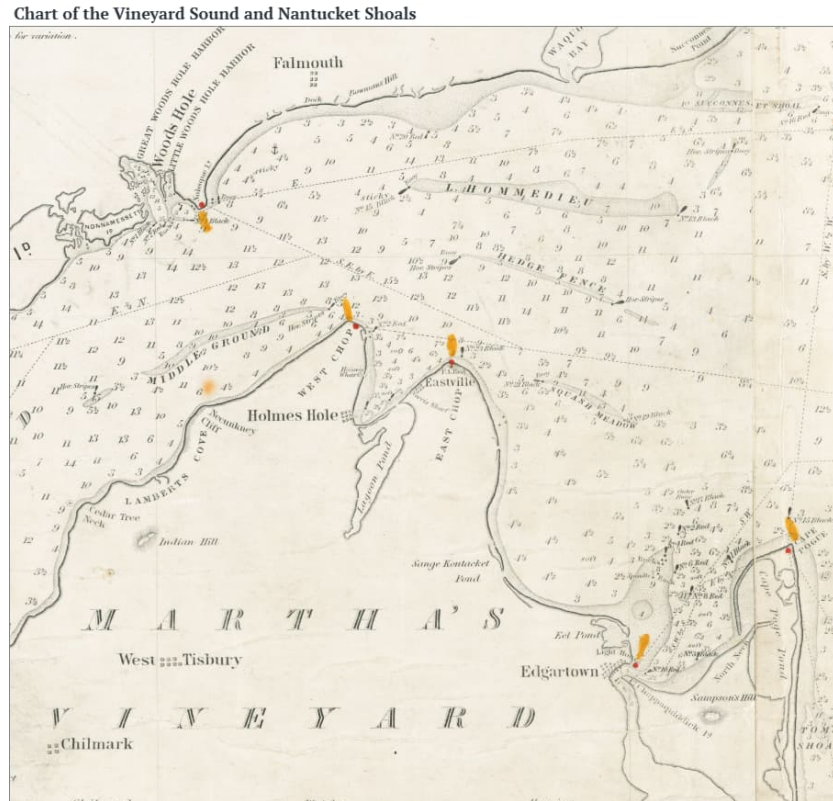
Ran aground in a southeasterly storm with U.S. Fish Commissioner Marshall McDonald and his family aboard. All reached Falmouth by dory; the ship was refloated.

Arcturus, schooner

May 1866

Listed in a maritime disaster index as lost on the "W part L'Hommedieu Shoal." The earliest dated use of the name I have found.

The spelling wanders. Records show L'Hommedieu, L'Homme Dieu, Lhommedieu and, in 1891, L'Hommidieu. Our branch writes it L'HommeDieu; the charts have settled on L'Hommedieu.



George Eldridge, Chart of the Vineyard Sound and Nantucket Shoals (registered 1865, this edition 1874), with L'HOMMEDIEU lettered across the shoal between Falmouth and the Vineyard. Leventhal Map Center, Boston Public Library.

How it might have happened

No document yet confirms any of these. Each is grounded in how other shoals in these waters got their names, and in what our family was doing at the time.

1. A L'HommeDieu vessel struck it

This is the likeliest story. Hazards in the sounds were often named for the first ship known to hit them. Monohansett Rock off the Vineyard, the Gazette reported, went unmarked until the steamer Monohansett struck it in fog and the rock took her name.

The L'HommeDieus of Southold, Shelter Island and Sag Harbor lived by the water from the 1690s on. Coasting traffic between Long Island Sound ports and Boston ran straight through Vineyard and Nantucket Sounds. A sloop or schooner under a L'HommeDieu master, grounding on an uncharted bar, would have given pilots exactly the kind of story that attaches a name: "that's where L'HommeDieu fetched up."

2. A ship bearing the name

Vessels were often named for prominent men, and the family had one. Ezra L'Hommedieu (1734 to 1811) of Southold served in the Continental Congress and the New York Senate for decades. He chose the site for the Montauk Point Lighthouse in 1796, the first public works project of the new United States. A coaster christened for him or his family could have run aground here, leaving the ship's name rather than the captain's on the chart.

3. A pilot or surveyor's name

Some shoal names came from the pilots who knew them. *The Gazette* noted that Lucas Shoal "was given to the shoal by an oldtime pilot." A L'HommeDieu who piloted these waters, or who first sounded and reported the bar, could have left his name the same way.

4. A tribute to Ezra himself

It is tempting to link a navigation hazard to the man behind Montauk Light. But Massachusetts mariners rarely honored New York politicians, and I found no evidence of a connection. This is the least likely of the four.

A family thread worth pulling

Family lore traces our line to Charles L'HommeDieu, a steamboat engineer, and his father before him sailed a sloop named the *Martha Washington*

. Sloops were the workhorses of the coasting trade, carrying cargo and passengers between Long Island Sound and the ports of New England. If the *Martha Washington* ever traded east toward Boston, New Bedford or the islands, her course would have run directly past this shoal.

That would not prove the shoal was named for her or her master. But it puts a L'HommeDieu at the helm of exactly the kind of vessel these waters caught, and it gives us a name to search for. Ship enrollment and license records, customs house registers and old wreck reports could tell us her home port, her routes, and whether she ever came to grief in the sounds.

Why the answer was lost, and where it may still be

Names like this were born in conversation, not in documents. A pilot told a captain, a captain told his mate, and by the time a hydrographer wrote the name on a chart, the story behind it had stayed on the wharf. The federal Board on Geographic Names did not exist until 1890, long after this name was in common use.

The answer may still survive in a few places:

- **Old charts.**

The earliest chart that prints the name dates it. Candidates include George Eldridge's *Chart of the Vineyard Sound and Nantucket Shoals* (registered 1865, this edition 1874), Capt. Thomas Jones Jr.'s 1786 pilot's chart of the Nantucket Shoals drawn by a Falmouth pilot, and the 1776 *Atlantic Neptune* sheets.

- **Early sailing directions.**

Edmund Blunt's *American Coast Pilot*, first published in 1796 and reissued for decades, named the shoals it described. An edition that mentions L'Hommedieu would narrow the date.

- **Newspapers and customs records.**

Wreck reports in the *Vineyard Gazette*,
,
Nantucket Inquirer
and Sag Harbor papers, and the Sag Harbor Custom House registers, could tie a L'HommeDieu master or vessel to a grounding.

- **Island archives.**

The Martha's Vineyard Museum and Falmouth Historical Society hold pilots' papers and local lore that never reached print.

A name on the water

Family names usually survive on gravestones, deeds and church registers. Ours also survives on every nautical chart of Nantucket Sound, marked by three buoys and read by every captain who crosses between the Cape and the Vineyard. Sometime before 1866, perhaps much earlier, a L'HommeDieu, or a ship that carried the name, met that sandbar and became part of its story. We may never learn exactly how. Until we do, the shoal keeps its secret, and our name keeps its place on the water.

Sources

- Vineyard Gazette
, May 1, 1964: on the origins of Vineyard shoal names
- U.S. Coast Pilot 2
, Chapter 4 (NOAA)
- Vineyard Gazette
, January 17, 1924: the
Ruth E. Merrill
- List of shipwrecks in 1891 (Wikipedia): USFC
Grampus
- International Maritime Library, disasters index
- Ezra L'Hommedieu (Wikipedia)
- Salty Cape: L'Hommedieu Shoal
- Eldridge,
Chart of the Vineyard Sound and Nantucket Shoals
, 1874 (Leventhal Map Center)

Suffolk County on the 1858 map

17 L'Hommedieu entries on the 1858 Chace map of Suffolk County. The engraver spelled the name three ways: "Lhommedieu," "Lhomedieu" and once "L. Hommedieu."

Download the 1858 map entries

PDF · 10 pages · 2.9 MB The whole 1858 Chace map. The village insets around the edges are enlarged below where a L'Hommedieu appears. [Smithtown](#)

S. Lhommedieu

: Smithtown village inset, near the North Country Road and the cemetery.

Dr. Lhommedieu

: Smithtown village inset, next to the store, smith shop and D.W. Hudson.

C.H. Lhommedieu

: Smithtown Branch area, near Mrs. Hemming and W. Jayne.

A. Lhommedieu

: St. James / Head of the Harbor area, near W. Smith and C.A. Mills.

J. Lhommedieu

: inland, east of Smithtown village, next to the Town Poor house. [Smith Town inset.](#)

The Head of the River is at the left and the Branch at the right. The main-map entries for Smithtown (C.H., A. and J. Lhommedieu) are shown up close on the [Smithtown on the old maps page](#).

Brookhaven

- **W.W. Lhommedieu**

and

- **I.A. Lhommedieu**

: New Village (now Centereach area). The second initial looks like "I," but it could be "J."

- **J.P. Lhommedieu**

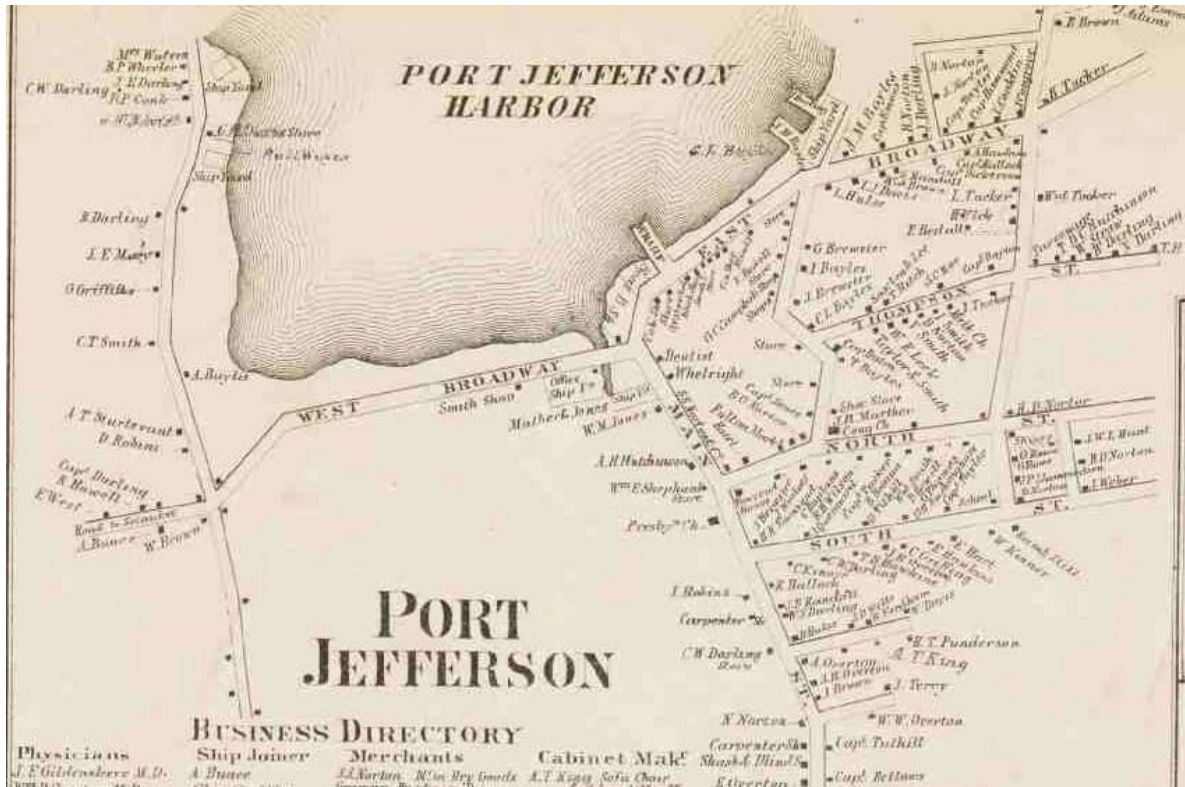
: Port Jefferson village inset, near B.D. Norton.

- **D. Lhomedieu**

and

R. Lhommedieu

: north of Yaphank, near E. Overton and L. Nichols.



Port Jefferson inset.

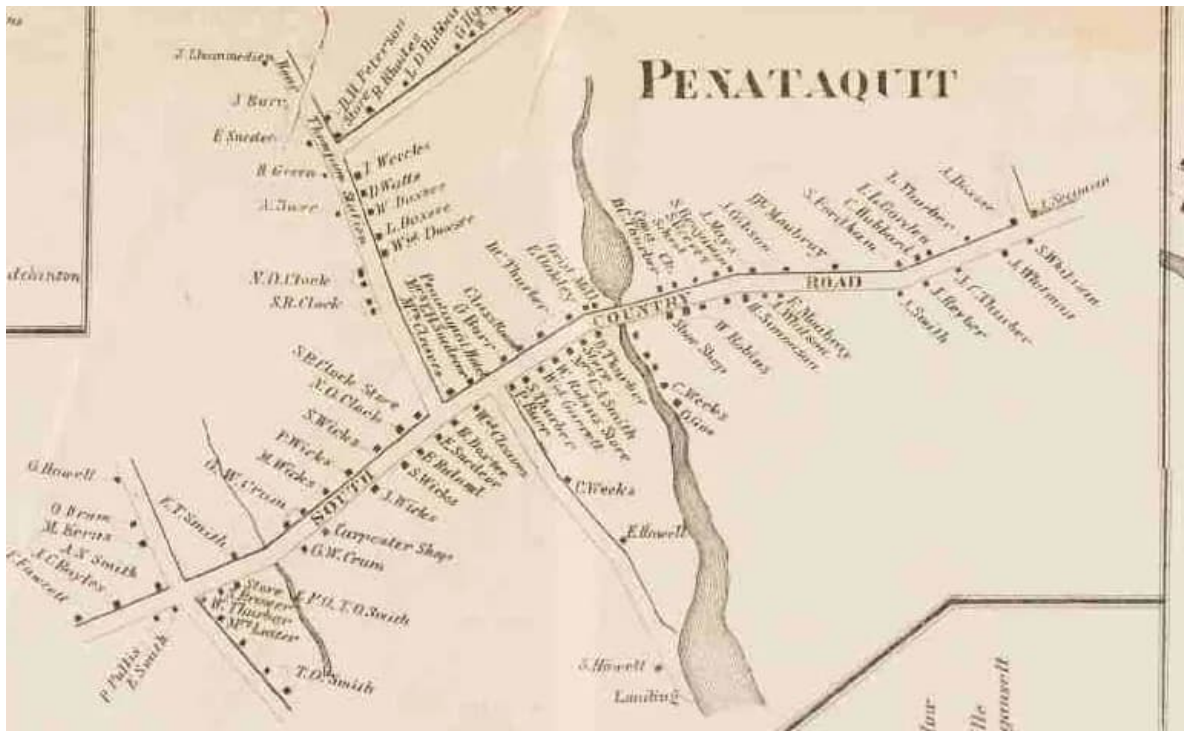
Islip

• J. Lhommedieu

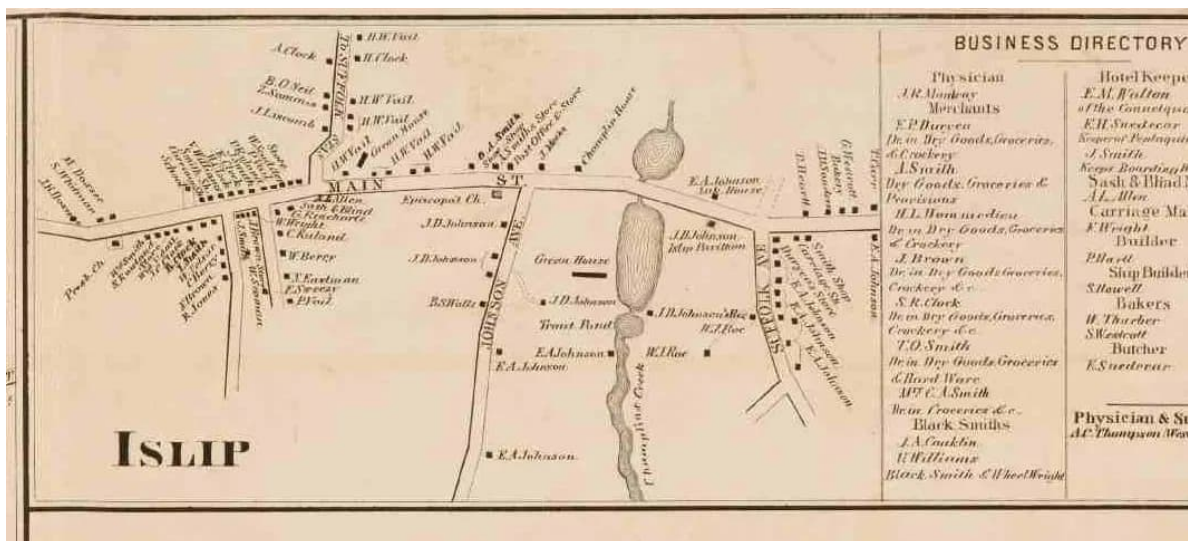
: Penataquit (Bay Shore) inset, near Thompson Station Road.

• H.L. Hommedieu

: Islip Business Directory, listed as a dealer in dry goods, groceries and crockery.



Penataquit (Bay Shore) inset. "J. Lhommedieu" is at the upper left, on the road to Thompson Station.



Islip inset. "H.L. Lhommedieu" is in the business directory at the right, under Merchants.

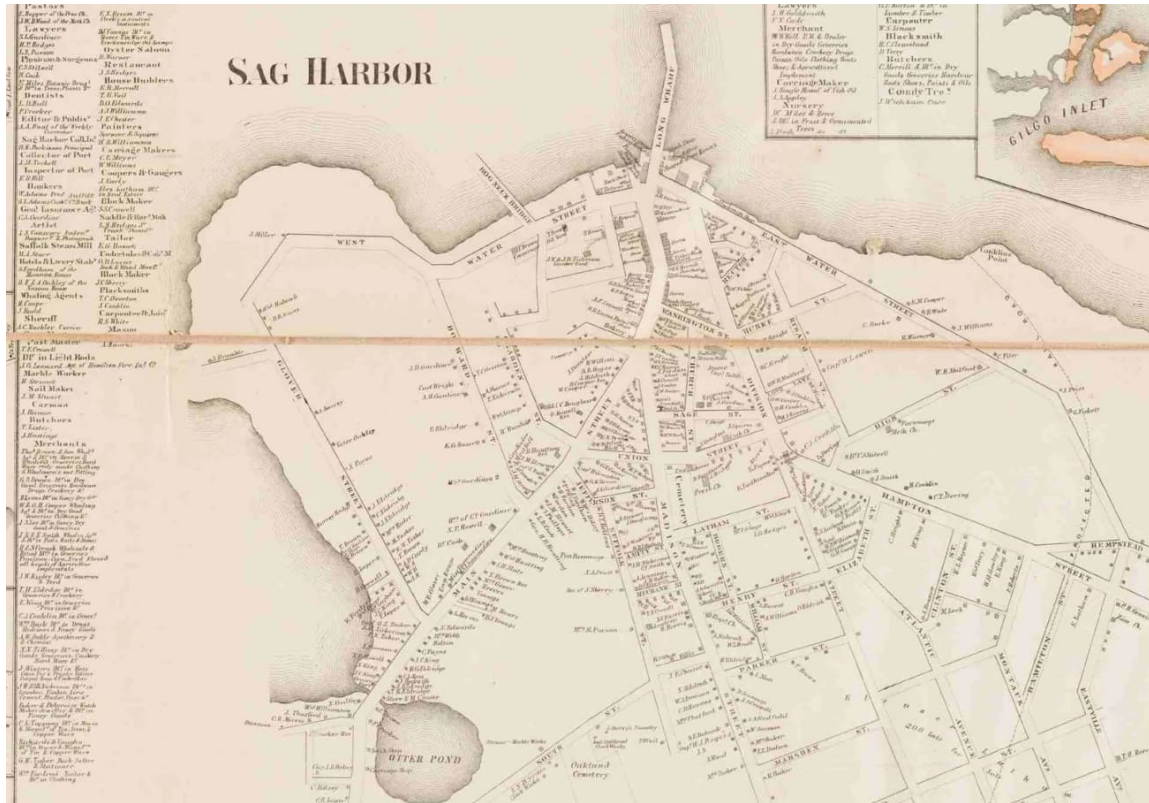
Southampton (Sag Harbor)

• Miss Lhommedieu

and

S. Lhommedieu

: side by side on Main Street, near Dr. Cook and N.P. Howell.



Sag Harbor inset. More on these two entries on the Sag Harbor on the old map page.

Riverhead (Baiting Hollow)

• J.L. Lhomedieu

and

D. Lhomedieu

: J.L. is on the North Road near J.L. Brown and D. Terry; D. is just south, near N. Corwin.

Source

• J. Chace Jr.,

Map of Suffolk Co., L.I., New York: from actual surveys

(Philadelphia: John Douglass, [1858]). Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

See the full 1858 map at Digital Commonwealth

SMITHTOWN, SUFFOLK COUNTY, 1858 AND 1873

Smithtown on the old maps

Two county maps drawn fifteen years apart put names on the houses of Smithtown. The 1858 Chace map names three L'Hommedieu households here. By 1873 the Beers atlas shows four in and around Smithtown and Smithtown Branch. This is the direct line's town. The Sag Harbor L'Hommedieus on the same 1858 map belong to a different branch.

Each label marks the occupant or owner of a house, usually by initials only, so a name on a map is a lead, not proof. The engravers wrote "Lhommedieu" without the apostrophe. The most likely person for each label is given below with a confidence rating; census and deed records will settle the rest.

Smithtown, 1858

Three L'HommeDieu households appear in Smithtown in 1858. The "C. H." household at the Head of the River sits where the family tree places the direct line.



Charles Oran W. L'HommeDieu (1824 to 1876), husband of Eliza Mills; or Charles Smith L'Hommedieu (1804 to 1884)**C. H. Lhommedieu**

Medium Direct line Head of the River, north of the mill pond, near W. Mills, W. E. Call, E. H. Smith and Mrs. Hemming. The family tree places Charles Oran W. and Eliza Mills here, where their grandson George Louis was born in 1887 on Nissequogue River Road, and the label sits beside the Mills households. Charles Smith L'Hommedieu belongs to a cousin branch. The engraved "H" fits neither Charles exactly, so the 1860 census must decide.

John L'Hommedieu (1800 to 1877), son of Samuel L'Hommedieu and Deborah Smith**J. Lhommedieu**

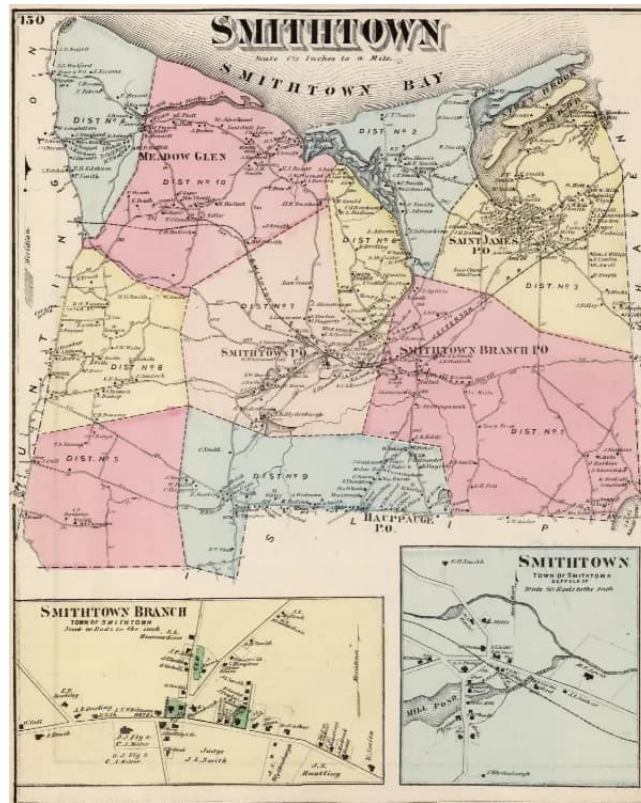
Medium East of Smithtown village, between J. C. Mills and the Town Poor farm. Married Mary Liscomb about 1827; eight children, including John Jr. (1836 to 1886). Died at Bay Shore and buried in Hauppauge Rural Cemetery.

Not yet identified**A. Lhommedieu**

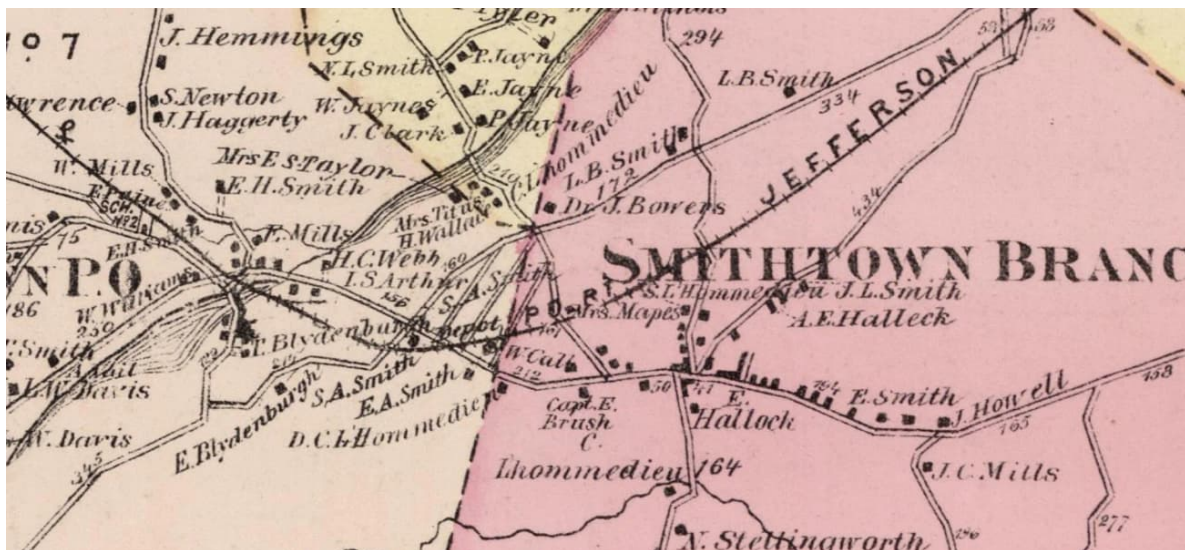
Unidentified Head of the Harbor, just east of the head of Stony Brook Harbor, among the Smith households (W. Smith, M. D. Smith, O. Smith) and west of the Mills holdings at the Pond. No "A." L'Hommedieu has been matched to Smithtown yet; the 1860 census should name the household.

Smithtown, 1873

By 1873 there are four L'Hommedieu labels around Smithtown and Smithtown Branch, and the new railroad to Port Jefferson runs through the Branch. The "S. L'Hommedieu" house in Smithtown Branch stands on the spot where Russ L'HommeDieu grew up about a century later.



The Town of Smithtown in the 1873 Beers atlas, with insets of Smithtown Branch and the Smithtown mill pond.



Smithtown P.O. to Smithtown Branch in 1873, with four L'Hommedieu labels and the new railroad to Port Jefferson.

Samuel Smith L'Hommedieu (1836 to 1899), or an older Samuel, son of Samuel and Deborah Smith

S. L'Hommedieu

Medium Smithtown Branch, on the main road beside Judge J. L. Smith and A. E. Halleck, south of the railroad. Russ grew up on this site about a century later. Samuel Smith L'Hommedieu was the youngest son of Samuel L'Hommedieu (1767 to 1848) by his third wife, Phebe Osborn. Eliza (Mills) L'HommeDieu of the direct line died at Smithtown Branch in 1890. A deed search will show how the lot reached Russ's family.

Charles Oran W. L'HommeDieu (1824 to 1876) or his son Charles Oran (1846 to 1922)

C. L'Hommedieu (north)

Medium Direct line West of the Branch near Mrs. Titus, H. Wallace, Dr. J. Bowers and L. B. Smith: the same neighborhood and neighbors as the 1858 "C. H." household.

Not yet identified

C. L'Hommedieu (south)

Unidentified South of the Branch below Capt. E. Brush, beside a stream near E. Halleck and J. C. Mills, on the 1858 John L'Hommedieu farm. Possibly a second Charles holding, or a child of John.

David Calvin L'Hommedieu (1818 to 1876), son of David Scudder L'HommeDieu

D. C. L'Hommedieu

Medium Southwest of Smithtown P.O., near E. A. and S. A. Smith and E. Blydenburgh. New on the 1873 map. The family tree lists David Calvin (2 April 1818 to 25 November 1876) as a brother of Charles Oran W., which fits both initials.

Sources

- J. Chace Jr.,
Map of Suffolk Co., L.I., New York, from actual surveys
(Philadelphia: John Douglass, 1858). Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.
- F. W. Beers,
Atlas of Long Island, New York
(New York: Beers, Comstock & Cline, 1873), p. 150, "Smithtown." David Rumsey Map Collection.
- Find a Grave memorials for Charles Smith L'Hommedieu, John L'Hommedieu and Samuel L'Hommedieu (1767 to 1848)

See the full 1858 Chace map at the Boston Public Library

See the 1873 Beers Smithtown page at the David Rumsey Map Collection

SAG HARBOR, SUFFOLK COUNTY, 1858

Sag Harbor on the old map

The 1858 Chace map of Suffolk County names two L'Hommedieu households in Sag Harbor, side by side on Main Street. They belong to the branch that descends from Benjamin and Patience (Sylvester) L'Hommedieu through their son Sylvester, not to the Smithtown direct line.

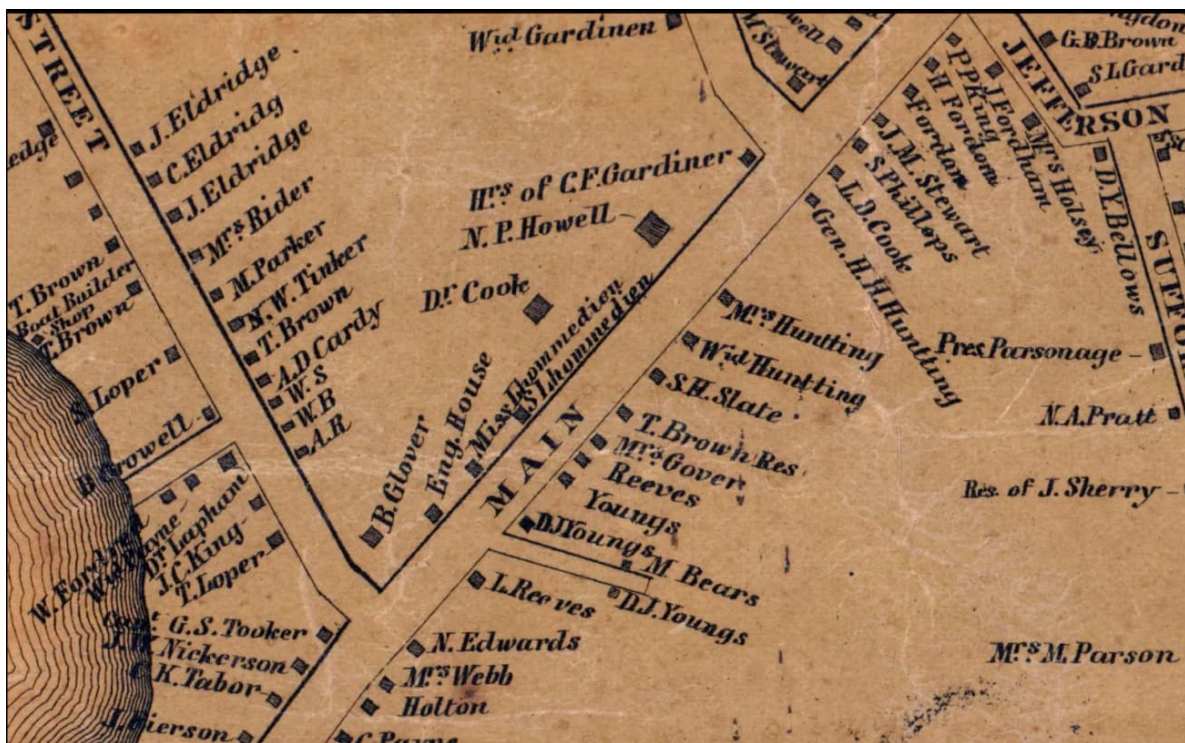
Each label marks the occupant or owner of a house, usually by initials only, so a name on a map is a lead, not proof. The engraver wrote "Lhommedieu" without the apostrophe.

Main Street, 1858

Two L'Hommedieu households stood side by side on Main Street: Samuel L'Hommedieu, who built the brick L'Hommedieu House in 1840, and an unmarried "Miss L'Hommedieu" of his family.



The Sag Harbor inset of the 1858 Chace map, from Long Wharf south along Main Street.



Main Street: "Miss Lhommedieu" and "S. Lhommedieu" between the Engine House and Dr. Cook.

Samuel L'Hommedieu (1785 to 1862), builder of the L'Hommedieu House, 258 Main Street

S. Lhommedieu

High Main Street (Captains Row), beside the Engine House and Dr. Cook. He built the three-bay red-brick Greek Revival townhouse in 1840, invested in whaling (owner of the whaleship *Henry*, 1845), and the family ran a ropewalk off Glover Street. Buried in Oakland Cemetery with his wives Mary and Maria. He descends from Benjamin and Patience (Sylvester) L'Hommedieu through their son Sylvester.

An unmarried woman of Samuel's family, not yet identified

Miss Lhommedieu

Unidentified Main Street, beside S. Lhommedieu. The 1850 and 1860 censuses for Sag Harbor should name her.

Sources

- J. Chace Jr.,
Map of Suffolk Co., L.I., New York, from actual surveys
(Philadelphia: John Douglass, 1858). Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.
- Behind the Hedges, "Treasure on Captain's Row" (the L'Hommedieu House, Sag Harbor)
- Rev. Jacob Mallmann,
Historical Papers on Shelter Island and Its Presbyterian Church
(1899)

See the full 1858 Chace map at the Boston Public Library

BODIAM, NEAR ROBERTSBRIDGE, EAST SUSSEX

Is Bodiam Castle in the family?

Bodiam Castle was built from 1385 by **Sir Edward Dalyngrigge**

(c.1346–1393), a veteran of the Hundred Years' War, after Richard II licensed him to fortify his manor. He held Bodiam through his wife

Elizabeth Wardedieu

, heiress of the family that had owned the manor since before 1330. The moated castle, with its round corner towers, twin-towered gatehouse and surviving portcullis, has belonged to the National Trust since Lord Curzon left it to the Trust in 1925.



Bodiam Castle and moat. Photo © Patrick Roper, Geograph, CC BY-SA 2.0.

The family's MyHeritage tree places Sir Edward and Elizabeth twenty generations back, as 18×-great-grandparents of Russ, through a Sussex chain that ends with Anne Wase, Grizzell Brinley's mother. Each link below is rated against published sources.

The chain, link by link

Sir Edward Dalyngrigge & Elizabeth Wardedieu

c.1346–1393 **Documented**

Built Bodiam Castle under a royal licence of 1385. Well recorded (National Trust; History of Parliament).

Joan Dalyngrigge m. John Dawtrey

c.1365 **Contradicted**

Histories name only a son, Sir John (died childless 1408); Bodiam passed to a cousin and then the Lewknors. The published Dawtrey pedigree gives John Dawtrey's wife as Joan Scardeville.

Andrew Dawtrey m. Alice Mill

c.1399–1434 **In published pedigree**

Appears as son of John Dawtrey in the Stirnet Dawtrey pedigree.

Edmund Dawtrey of Petworth m. Isabel Wood

c.1435–1498 **In published pedigree**

Moor House, Petworth. Appears in the same pedigree.

Margaret (Anne) Dawtrey m. John Ernley

c.1467–1528 **Name differs**

The pedigree has Anne Dawtrey marrying Sir John Ernley (Chief Justice, d.1520). Other trees call her Anne Margaret. Probably the same woman.

Clemence Ernley m. Edward Bartelot of Stopham

c.1489 **Unverified**

Not found in the published Barttelot of Stopham account checked for this site.

Elizabeth Bartelot m. William Wase

c.1525 **Unverified**

Needs a Visitation of Sussex entry or a will.

William Wase m. Christine Budd, then William Wase m. Ann Cole

1554–1642 **Partly supported**

Anne Wase's parents, William Wase and Ann Cole, are given in WeRelate. The earlier Wase generation is unconfirmed.

Anne Wase m. Thomas Brinley

1625, Petworth **Supported**

Marriage at Petworth recorded in WeRelate. Thomas Brinley's 1661 will names his daughter Grizzell on Shelter Island.

Grizzell Brinley m. Nathaniel Sylvester

1653, Newport **Documented**

Griswold, The Manor; Sylvester Manor Archive, NYU.

Patience Sylvester m. Benjamin L'Hommedieu

1684 or 1694 **Documented**

Marriage date varies by source (see Research notes); the marriage itself is certain.

Verdict: a Sussex connection, but not yet a castle

The lower half of the chain is solid: Anne Wase of Petworth really is Grizzell Brinley's mother, and so a direct ancestor. The Dawtrey generations also appear in published pedigrees. The weak point is the very first step. Standard histories give Sir Edward one heir, his son Sir John, who died childless in 1408, after which Bodiam passed through a cousin to the Lewknor family. The published Dawtrey pedigree names John Dawtrey's wife as **Joan Scardeville**

, not Joan Dalyngrigge. Until a record shows otherwise, treat Bodiam as a place from your ancestors' Sussex world rather than proven ancestry.

Where to look next: the Heralds' Visitations of Sussex (published by the Harleian Society), the History of Parliament biographies of the Dawtrey and Ernley men, and Dawtrey and Barttelot family papers at the West Sussex Record Office.

RICHARD GEORGE L'HOMMEDIEU TO HIS MOTHER, 1946 TO 1949

Letters home



Richard George L'HommeDieu as a young Marine. Date and place not recorded.

Between 1946 and 1949 Richard George L'HommeDieu (1929 to 2010), Russ's father, wrote home to his mother, Leola Ethel McComb L'HommeDieu (1908 to 2001). One of them, letter 51, is to his brother Gilbert. He was a teenager when the first letters were written. They come on United States Marine Corps stationery from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and on the letterhead of the heavy cruiser USS *Columbus* (CA-74), with one dated from Gibraltar on January 14, 1949.

Most open simply "Dear Mom." He thanks her for packages and gum, apologizes for not writing sooner, and asks after home. From Camp Lejeune he wrote: "I am in the dumps, I sure wish I could get home for my birthday. But it's just one of those things that can't be

helped."

All 51 letters (127 pages) are kept here as full-resolution scans, exactly as they were scanned in June 2026. Open any letter to read it, or download it to keep. Most are undated; the order below is the order they were scanned, not necessarily the order they were written.

Letters are being transcribed. As dates and places are read from each one, they will be added to its card.



Richard George L'HommeDieu in Marine Corps dress blues. Date and place not recorded.



Richard George L'HommeDieu in work uniform beside a DUKW six-wheel-drive amphibious military vehicle. Date and place not recorded.

About the DUKW, on YouTube (Anything History): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEw7r3aO338>

His life

Richard George L'HommeDieu passed away in 2010 at the age of 80. He was a United States Marine Corps veteran who served for six years. Following his military service, he worked briefly for Grumman Aircraft in Bethpage before dedicating his career as an engineer for the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR).

Life and family

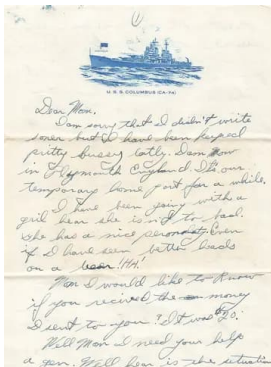
Early life. Born on June 24, 1929, in New York to parents David and Leola L'HommeDieu.

Marriage. On February 7, 1953, he married Dolores Marie Michels at the Smithtown Presbyterian Church. They initially settled on Terry Road in Smithtown, New York, and later built the home where they raised their family on family land on River Road in Smithtown.

Children. He raised three children: Richard George L'HommeDieu Jr., Joyce Noel Barry, and Russell Alan L'HommeDieu.

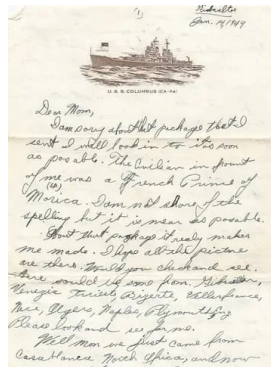
Resting place. He was laid to rest at the Calverton National Cemetery in New York. His wife, Dolores, passed away much later on June 5, 2026, and was laid to rest beside him.

The scans themselves are on the website, one PDF per letter. Below are the first pages, in scan order.



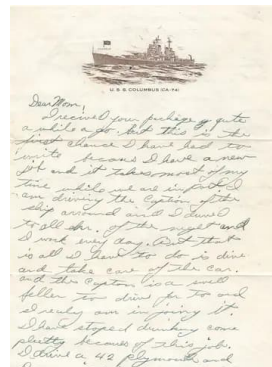
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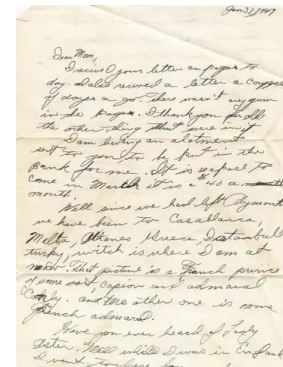
Letter 2

January 14, 1949 · Gibraltar



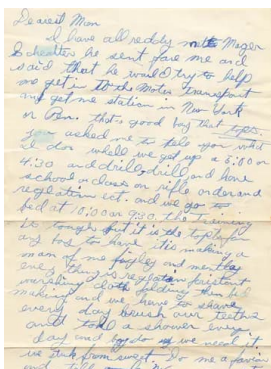
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USS Columbus · 2 pp.



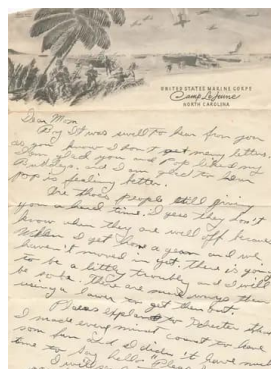
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January 31, 1949



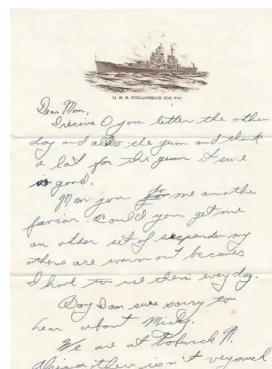
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Plain paper · 2 pp.



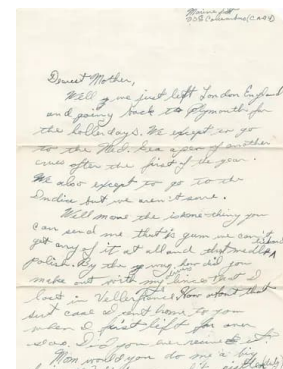
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Marine Corps · 2 pp.



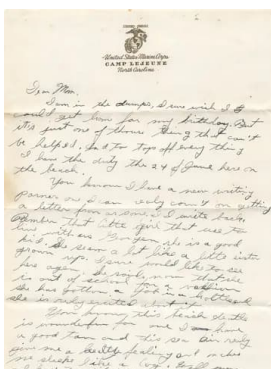
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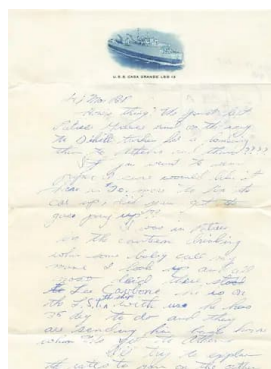
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Plain paper · 2 pp.



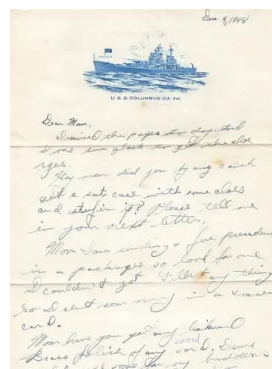
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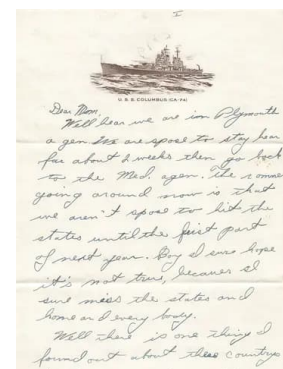
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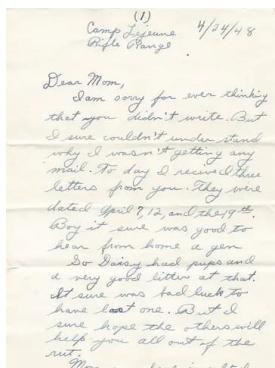
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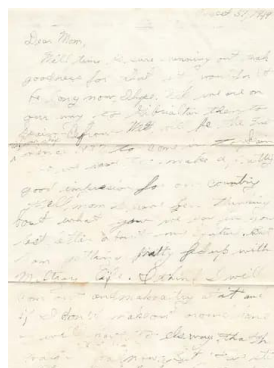
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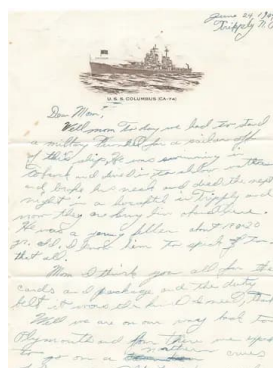
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Plain paper • 3 pp.



Letter 14

Plain paper • 2 pp.

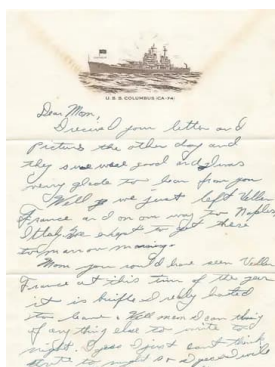


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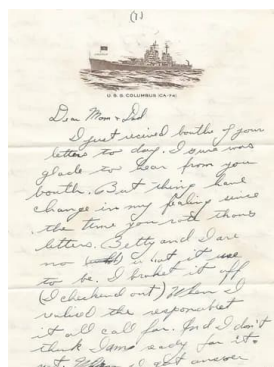
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Plain paper • 2 pp.



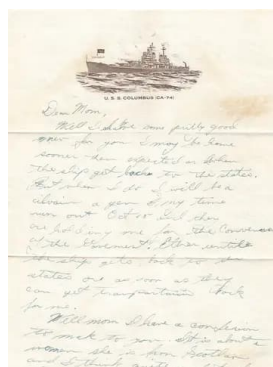
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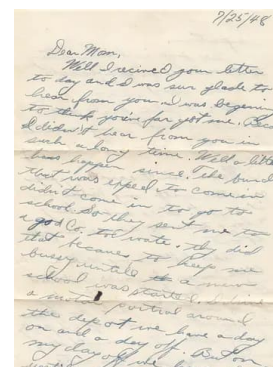
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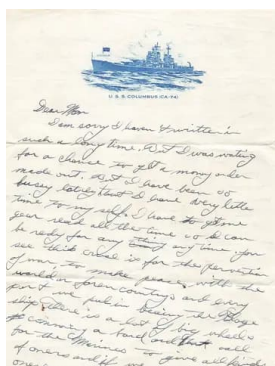
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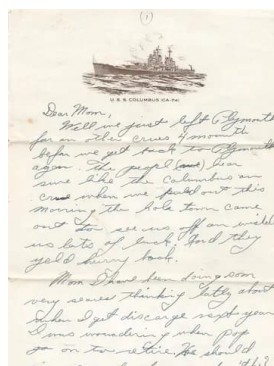
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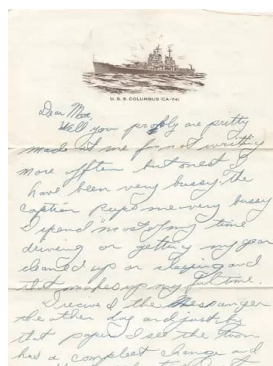
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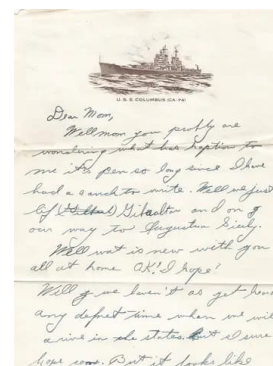
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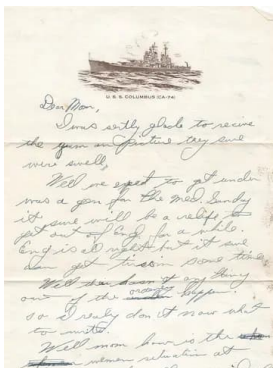
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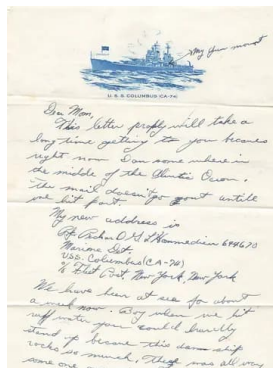
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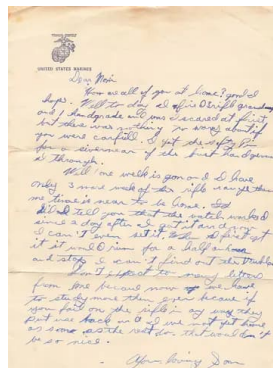
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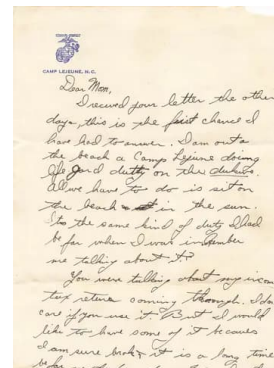
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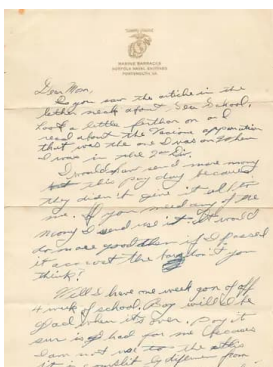
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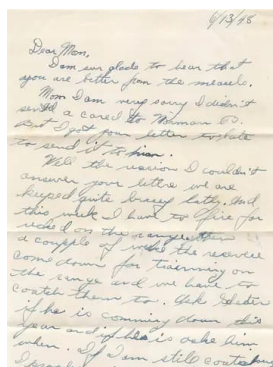
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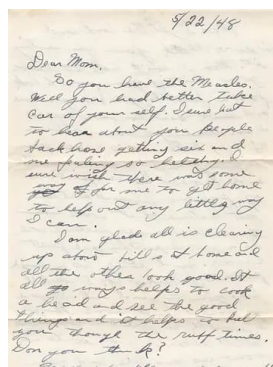
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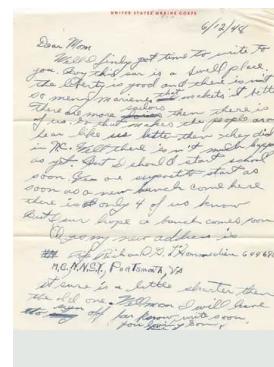
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Plain paper · 1 pp.



Letter 31

Plain paper · 2 pp.



Letter 32

Plain paper · 2 pp.



Letter 33

Plain paper · 3 pp.



Letter 34

Plain paper · 4 pp.



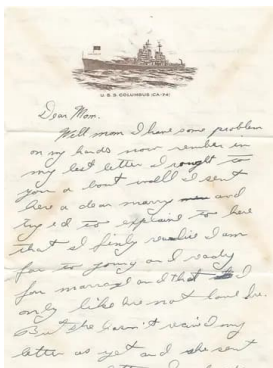
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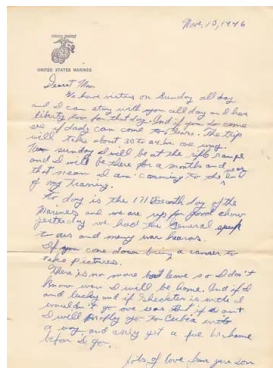
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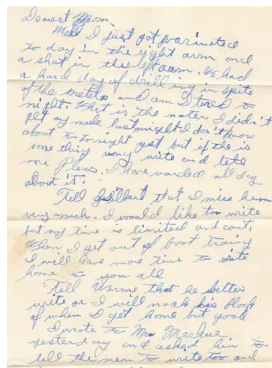
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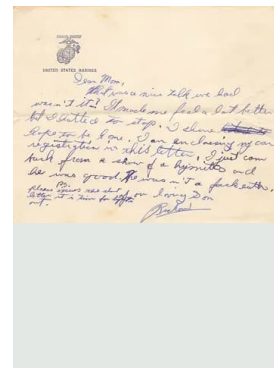
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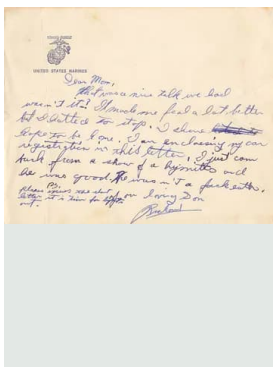
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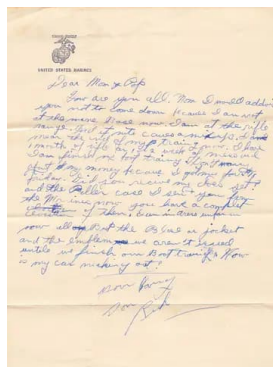
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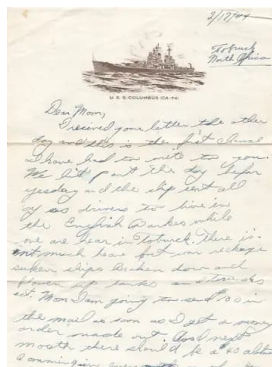
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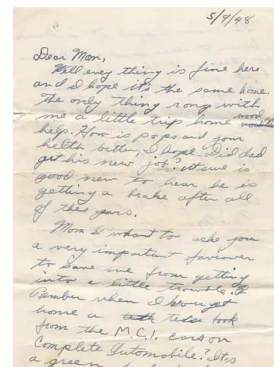
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Letter 43

USS Columbus - 2 pp.



Letter 44

Plain paper - 2 pp.



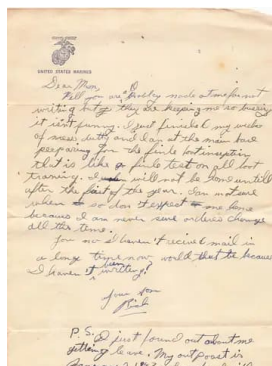
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Letter 46

Marine Corps - 4 pp.



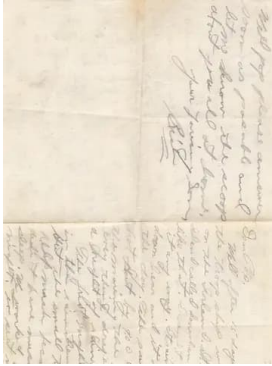
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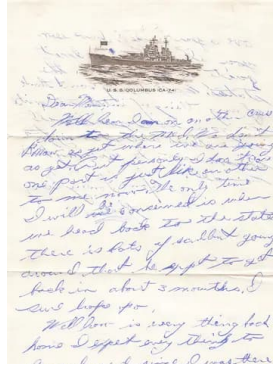
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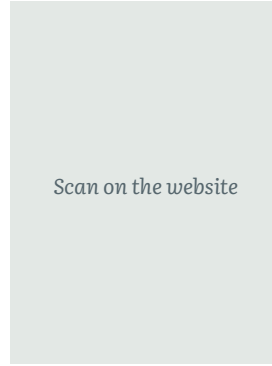
Letter 49

Plain paper · 4 pp.



Letter 50

USS Columbus · 2 pp.



Letter 51

To his brother Gilbert

1935 TO 2026 · SMITHTOWN, CALVERTON AND APOLLO BEACH

Dolores Marie L'HommeDieu



Dolores Marie (Michels) L'HommeDieu, Russ's mother. Born November 3, 1935, died June 5, 2026.

Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.

Albert Einstein

Dolores Marie L'HommeDieu, of Apollo Beach, Florida, formerly of Smithtown and Calverton, New York, died on June 5, 2026, at St. Joseph's Hospital-South in Riverview. She was ninety.

On February 7, 1953, at seventeen, she married Richard George L'HommeDieu in a Saturday afternoon ceremony at the Smithtown Presbyterian Church, with the Rev. Raymond Case officiating and a reception afterward at the Sons of Norway Hall in St.

James.

Richard, born June 24, 1929, had served six years in the United States Marine Corps and was then with Grumman Aircraft at Bethpage for a short time before becoming an engineer for the Long Island Rail Road.

They began married life on Terry Road before building a home on River Road where they raised three children. They were together fifty-seven years, until his death in 2010.

She was working at Dow's Music Mart the year she married. She dealt antiques for a good stretch of her life, which is its own kind of education in what a used thing is worth and who might need it.

Later she became Director of Volunteers for Christian Nursing Hospice — a job that came down to finding compassionate people to sit with the dying, making sure they were not alone and their needs were met.

For twenty-eight years she was president of the Society for Lending Comforts to the Sick, the Smithtown organization founded in 1906 by a group of local women who wanted to ease their neighbors' suffering by lending out hospital and recuperative equipment. It buys wheelchairs, walkers, canes, and hospital beds with money raised at community fundraisers and lends them, free, to anyone in the township who needs one — no waiting, no paperwork.

Dolores ran it for nearly three decades, and remembered the annual fair as a day the whole town turned out, the Bank of Smithtown and the Town Board bidding each other up over a cake. Beyond the lending closet, the Society puts what it raises back into Smithtown in scholarships and direct help to families in trouble.

In 1992 the Smithtown Chamber of Commerce named her Citizen of the Year, only the second person to receive the honor and chosen by unanimous vote of its board; the proclamation read that her skill, devotion and love had made Smithtown a better place.

In May of 2000 she was honored at the Junior League of Long Island's Volunteer Merit Awards Luncheon, where the New York State Assembly, Nassau County, and the Town of Hempstead each sent certificates.

She and Richard later moved east to Calverton. After Richard passed, she gave years to Calverton National Cemetery, where the Department of Veterans Affairs recognized her dedication and commitment. It was not easy work. It meant standing with the families of veterans on the hardest morning of their lives, over and over, for people she had never met and would not see again — and she did it for veterans and their families.

She was never comfortable being singled out for any of it. Writing to a newspaper editor after an article about her, she accepted the compliment only to hand it on: "I realize that we cannot recognize everyone that strives to make the lives of others a little brighter," she wrote. "Receiving an honor such as this turns my thoughts to anyone that has ever put aside their own needs to reach out to someone else." She asked to be thanked on behalf of the many others who, in her own phrase, also managed to traverse that extra mile in easing the existence of others.

Next, she moved to Apollo Beach, Florida, to be near her son Russell. It did not slow her down. She took a weekly shift at Calvary's Angel Attic, the all-volunteer thrift store in Ruskin whose proceeds support the Community Cupboard food pantry — the same arrangement that had funded her lending closet in Smithtown for twenty-eight years. She kept that shift until the last month of her life.

She is survived by her three children, Richard George L'HommeDieu, Jr., and his wife Toni, of Georgia; Joyce Noel Barry and her husband Robert, of New York; and Russell Alan L'HommeDieu and his wife Karen, of Florida; by nine grandchildren; and by seven great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her husband, Richard, in 2010, and by her parents.

She was laid to rest beside Richard at Calverton National Cemetery — the same ground where she had spent years helping other families lay their own veterans down.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that gifts be made to Calvary's Angel Attic or the Community Cupboard at Calvary Lutheran Church, 1250 East College Avenue, Ruskin, Florida 33570, or to the Society for Lending Comforts to the Sick, 71 Blydenburgh Avenue, Smithtown, New York 11787.

In remembrance

A remembrance video is on the website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSRxXQ1tpXQ>

Photographs



Wedding day, February 7, 1953



River Road years



Dolores and Richard



Together fifty-seven years



Calverton National Cemetery



At her post at Calverton



Graduation day





Lobster night



Among the volunteers



Calvary's Angel Attic, Ruskin



It did not slow her down





In lieu of flowers

Calvary's Angel Attic & the Community Cupboard

Calvary Lutheran Church

The all-volunteer thrift store where she kept a weekly shift until the last month of her life. Its proceeds stock the Community Cupboard food pantry.

1250 East College Avenue, Ruskin, Florida 33570

Society for Lending Comforts to the Sick

Smithtown, New York — founded 1906

Lends wheelchairs, walkers, canes, and hospital beds, free, to anyone in the township who needs one. Dolores was its president for twenty-eight years.

71 Blydenburgh Avenue, Smithtown, New York 11787

FROM BODIAM TO THE PRESENT

Timeline

- 1385 Richard II licenses Sir Edward Dalyngrigge to fortify his manor at Bodiam; the castle rises.
- 1613 Giles Sylvester marries Mary Arnold in Amsterdam.
- 1625 Thomas Brinley marries Anne Wase at Petworth, Sussex.
- 1636 Grizzell Brinley born in Clerkenwell, London.
- 1644 Nathaniel Sylvester sails to Virginia and spends nearly a year around Jamestown.
- 1645 Returning from the Caribbean, Nathaniel steers the Seerobbe into La Rochelle, apparently to avoid Dutch duties.
- 1651 Nathaniel, Constant Sylvester and partners buy Shelter Island.
- 1653 Nathaniel marries Grizzell Brinley at Newport and settles on Shelter Island.
- 1657 Benjamin L'Hommedieu born at La Rochelle, France (about this year).
- 1664 Patience Sylvester born on Shelter Island.
- 1666 Governor Nicolls's patent makes Shelter Island a manor.
- 1673 Dutch retake New York; Nathaniel acts as go-between at Southold (1673–74).
- 1680 Nathaniel Sylvester dies; his will divides 24 enslaved people among his heirs.
- 1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes drives Huguenots from France.
- 1686 Benjamin L'Hommedieu reaches Newport, Rhode Island (about this year).
- 1687 Grizzell Sylvester dies at the manor.
- 1694 Benjamin marries Patience Sylvester (some sources say 1684).

- 1707 John L'Hommedieu born on Shelter Island, first of the direct American line.
- 1734 Ezra L'Hommedieu born at Southold.
- 1737 Brinley Sylvester builds the present manor house.
- 1749 Benjamin L'Hommedieu dies.
- 1767 David Scudder L'HommeDieu born in Smithtown.
- 1776 British occupy Long Island; Ezra and the Derings flee to Connecticut.
- 1796 Montauk Point Lighthouse built on the site Ezra chose.
- 1827 New York ends slavery on July 4. Ezra's daughter Mary Catherine and Samuel Smith Gardiner buy Sylvester Manor.
- 1840 Samuel L'Hommedieu builds the brick house on Captain's Row, Sag Harbor.
- 1854 Eben Norton Horsford and George Wilson found the Rumford Chemical Works in Rhode Island.
- 1844 Julia Gardiner, cousin of Ezra's granddaughters, marries President John Tyler.
- 1887 George Louis L'HommeDieu born at the Head of the River, Smithtown.
- 1918 Colden L'Hommedieu Ruggles, a cousin, completes the Aberdeen Proving Ground.
- 1925 Lord Curzon leaves Bodiam Castle to the National Trust.
- 1998 Eben Fiske Ostby shares an Academy Award for Pixar's Marionette animation system.
- 2014 Sylvester Manor passes from the family to a nonprofit.

FROM THE FAMILY MYHERITAGE TREE

Register of direct ancestors

All 144 direct ancestors in the tree, by generation back from Russ. Living people appear without dates. Places and dates are as the tree records them; see the Bodiam and Research notes chapters for the links that still need checking.

GENERATION 1 · ROOT OF THE TREE

Russ L'HommeDieu [L'HommeDieu](#)

Physical therapist, educator and compiler of this family history. The root of every line on this site.

GENERATION 2 · PARENTS

Dolores Michels [Michels & Nelson](#)

b. 1935, New York, USA · d. 2026

Richard George L'HommeDieu [L'HommeDieu](#)

b. 24 JUN 1929, Richmond Hill, New York, United States · d. 19 MAR 2010, Family home, Calverton, Long Island, New York, United States

Born in Richmond Hill, Queens, in 1929; died at the family home in Calverton, Long Island, in 2010.

GENERATION 3 · GRANDPARENTS

David L'HommeDieu [L'HommeDieu](#)

b. 2 JAN 1908, New York, USA · d. 17 MAY 1966

Elsie Nelson [Michels & Nelson](#)

b. 1911, New York, United States · d. 1997

Leola Ethel McComb [McComb & Sanders](#)

b. 21 FEB 1908, Brooklyn, Kings, New York · d. 15 NOV 2001

Wilbur Michels [Michels & Nelson](#)

b. ABT 1910, New York, USA

GENERATION 4 · GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Axel A. Nelson Michels & Nelson

b. 1881, Udevalla, Sweden

Fanny Mabel Sanders McComb & Sanders

b. 17 MAY 1887, Burton on Trent, Staffordshire · d. 8 JUL 1928, Patchoque, Suffolk, New York · Scholar

Fanny Potts Staffordshire

b. 2 DEC 1881, Yoxall, Staffordshire, England · d. 28 APR 1969, Home, Arcadia, Lee County, FL

Born in Yoxall, Staffordshire, England, in 1881. She died in Arcadia, Florida, in 1969.

George Louis L'HommeDieu L'HommeDieu

b. 10 OCT 1887, Nissiquoge River Rd., Khead Of River, Smithtown, NY · d. 6 NOV 1956, Port Jefferson, NY

Born in 1887 on Nissequogue River Road at the Head of the River, Smithtown, where the family had farmed for generations. Married Fanny Potts, who was born in Yoxall, Staffordshire, England.

George Michels Michels & Nelson

b. ABT 1884, New York, United States

Martha Harriet Elchner Michels & Nelson

b. OCT 1881, New York, United States · d. 1983

Miss Lorensen Marie Thoronsen Michels & Nelson

b. ABT 1880, Kragire, Norway

Walter George McComb McComb & Sanders

b. 2 OCT 1878, Brooklyn, Kings, New York · d. 4 AUG 1944

GENERATION 5 · 2× GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Anne Fullwood Staffordshire

b. MAR 1843, Tutbury, Stafford, England · d. 1927

Annie Michels & Nelson

Catharine Rugie McComb & Sanders

Charles Oran L'HommeDieu L'HommeDieu

b. 1846, Smithtown, NY · d. 1922, Smithtown, NY

Emil Tronsen Michels & Nelson

Fanny Potts McComb & Sanders

b. ABT 1866, Burton on Trent, Staffordshire

George Potts Staffordshire

b. MAR 1849, Yoxall, Staffordshire, England · d. 11 NOV 1936, Elmont, L.I., NY · Agricultural Labourer

James McComb McComb & Sanders

Louis Michels Michels & Nelson

Louise Cook Long Island

b. 12 SEP 1837, Landing, Smithtown, Suffolk, NY · d. 22 DEC 1923, Smithtown Br., Suffolk, NY

Louise Segfried Michels & Nelson

b. MAY 1864, Berlin, Germany

Massen Elise Carsen Michels & Nelson

Paul Elschner Michels & Nelson

b. APR 1859, Hamburg, Germany · d. 13 FEB 1913, Queens, New York, United States

William H Sanders McComb & Sanders

b. ABT 1865, Burton on Trent, Staffordshire · Elementary Teacher

GENERATION 6 · 3 × GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Annie Fullwood Staffordshire

Charles Oran W L'HommeDieu L'HommeDieu

b. 1824, Smithtown, NY · d. 1876, Smithtown, NY

Ebenezer C. Cook Long Island

b. ABT 1795, Brooklyn, NY · d. ABT 1845, Smithtown, Li, NY

Edward Fullwood Staffordshire

b. 1833, Yoxall, Staffordshire, England

Eliza Mills Mills of Mills Pond

b. 1816, NY · d. 17 FEB 1890, Smithtown Br., Long Island, New York

Descendant of the Mills family of Mills Pond, Smithtown. Her line runs back through Isaac and Timothy Mills to Jamaica, Queens.

Emma Pott Staffordshire

b. ABT 1831, Lichfield, Staffordshire · d. 1908, Yoxall, Staffordshire, Englad

Joseph Elschner Michels & Nelson

b. Germany

Nancy Cook Long Island

b. ABT 1800, Brookhaven, Li, NY · d. ABT 1875, Smithtown, Li, NY

Pauline Elschner Michels & Nelson

b. Germany

William Potts Staffordshire

b. ABT 1829, Yoxall, Staffordshire · d. 1908, Yoxall, Staffordshire, England · Bricklayer

GENERATION 7 · 4 × GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

David Scudder L'HommeDieu [L'HommeDieu](#)

b. 11 AUG 1767, Smithtown, LI, NY · d. 31 DEC 1847, Smithtown, Suffolk, NY

Born in Smithtown in 1767, the first of the direct line born there. His middle name, Scudder, points to one of Smithtown's founding families.

Elizabeth Thompson [Long Island](#)

b. 25 JUL 1775, Suffolk, Ny · d. 2 FEB 1864

Isaac Mills [Mills of Mills Pond](#)

b. 5 MAR 1788, Middletown, Orange, NY · d. 18 JAN 1856, Mt. Hope, New York

Jonathan Rowland [Long Island](#)

b. ABT 1777, United States

Mary Simons [Long Island](#)

b. ABT 1779, United States

Sarah Mills [Mills of Mills Pond](#)

b. 1801, Suffolk Co., NY

GENERATION 8 · 5 × GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Abigail Vail [Mills of Mills Pond](#)

b. 27 AUG 1768 · d. 25 OCT 1832, Walkill, Orange Co., NY

Ebenezer Mills [Mills of Mills Pond](#)

b. 3 AUG 1759, Mills Pond, Long Island, New York · d. 21 FEB 1835, Middletown, New York

John L'HommeDieu [L'HommeDieu](#)

b. 1728, Southold, Suffolk, New York, United States · d. 17 SEP 1794, Smithtown, NY

Born in Southold in 1728, grandson of Benjamin and Patience. Died in Smithtown in 1794, having moved the direct line west along the North Shore.

Prudence Goodale [Long Island](#)

b. BET 1710 AND 1737 · d. BET 1769 AND 1826

GENERATION 9 · 6 × GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Abigail Meeker [Mills of Mills Pond](#)

b. 28 OCT 1734, Wallkill, Orange, New York · d. 10 MAR 1814

Isaac Mills [Mills of Mills Pond](#)

b. 19 FEB 1726/27, Mills Pond, Long Island, New York, United States · d. 24 APR 1783

Isaiah Vail [Mills of Mills Pond](#)

b. 28 SEP 1734, Southold, Long Island, New York · d. 1 JAN 1810, Wallkill, Orange, New York

John L'Hommedieu, Sr L'HommeDieu

b. 11 JAN 1707, Shelter Island, Suffolk County, New York, United States · d. 25 JAN 1777, Southold, Suffolk County, New York, United States · Cooper

Son of Benjamin L'Hommedieu and Patience Sylvester, born on Shelter Island in 1707. A cooper (barrel maker), a trade tied to the island's provisioning economy. Married Mary Hudson, daughter of Jonathan Hudson of Shelter Island; the book *The Manor* notes a second Hudson and L'Hommedieu marriage in the same generation.

Jonathan Goodale Long Island

b. South Hampton, Suffolk, New York

Mary Hudson Long Island

b. 1707, Shelter Island, New York · d. AFT 23 JAN 1777, Southold, New York

Daughter of Jonathan Hudson, whose 1729 grave is the earliest surviving burial in the Sylvester family graveyard on Shelter Island.

Sarah Phillips Mills of Mills Pond

b. 26 FEB 1729/30, Mills Pond, Long Island, New York, United States · d. 29 APR 1790, Mills Pond, Long Island, New York, United States

GENERATION 10 · 7× GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Benjamin Constant L'Hommedieu L'HommeDieu

b. 1657, La Rochelle, Charente-Maritime, Poitou-Charentes, France · d. 4 JAN 1749, Shelter Island, New York
Huguenot refugee from La Rochelle. After the persecution of French Protestants he reached Newport, Rhode Island (about 1686), then settled at Southold. With Patience Sylvester he raised at least six children: Benjamin II, Hosea, Sylvester, Patience, John and Joseph. He died in 1749.

Elizabeth Long Island

b. ABT 1664

Hannah Miller Mills of Mills Pond

b. 6 AUG 1698, Mills Pond, Suffolk County, New York, United States · d. 16 SEP 1777, Mills Pond, Suffolk County, New York, United States

Isaac Mills Mills of Mills Pond

b. 13 MAR 1696/97, Mills Pond, Long Island, New York, USA · d. 8 JUL 1767, Mills Pond, Suffolk County, New York, United States

Jonathan Hudson Long Island

b. 5 MAY 1658, England · d. 5 APR 1729, Shelter Island, Suffolk County, New York, Colonial America · appraiser of the estate of George Havens of Shelter Island

Joseph Goodale Long Island

b. ABT 1660

Josiah Vail Mills of Mills Pond

b. 1693, Southold, Suffolk, New York, USA · d. 4 OCT 1746, Wallkill, Orange County, Province of New York

Patience Corwin Mills of Mills Pond

b. 1695, Suffolk, Livingston, New York, USA · d. 1717, Wallkill, Orange, New York, USA

Patience Sylvester Sylvester

b. 1 NOV 1664 · d. 2 NOV 1719, Shelter Island, Suffolk, New York, United States

Born on Shelter Island in 1664, one of eleven surviving children of Nathaniel and Grizzell Sylvester. Her father's 1680 will left her an enslaved girl named Hester, a reminder that the manor was a slaveholding plantation.

Sarah Long Island

b. 1660, Lyme, CT · d. 1729

GENERATION 11 · 8 × GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Grace Burgess Braddick Mills of Mills Pond

b. 1666, Southold, Suffolk, New York, United States · d. 18 MAY 1751, Southold, Suffolk County, Province of New York

Grissel Brinley Brinley & Sussex

b. 16 JAN 1635, London, England, United Kingdom · d. 13 JUN 1687, Sylvester Manor, Shelter Island, New York

Born in London in 1636 to Thomas Brinley and Anne Wase and raised partly at Datchet, near Windsor, during the Civil War. She sailed to New England with her sister Anne Coddington, married Nathaniel Sylvester in Newport in 1653, and died at Sylvester Manor in 1687. Her will survives in the Sylvester Manor Archive at NYU.

John Corwin Mills of Mills Pond

b. 1663, Southold, Suffolk, New York, United States · d. 13 DEC 1729, Southold, Suffolk, New York, United States

John Vail Mills of Mills Pond

b. 1663, Long Island City, Queens, New York, United States · d. 18 AUG 1737, Long Island City, Queens, New York, United States

Martha Peron Huguenot

b. 1633, France · d. 29 SEP 1685, Kingston, Ulster, New York, USA

Nathaniel Sylvester Sylvester

b. 1610, Amsterdam, Netherlands · d. 13 JUN 1680, Sylvester Manor, Shelter Island, Suffolk County, New York, Colonial America · Sugar Merchant

Raised in Amsterdam in an English merchant family. In 1644 he spent nearly a year around Jamestown, Virginia, buying tobacco on the family ship. In 1651 he and his partners bought Shelter Island as a provisioning base for Barbados sugar plantations. He sheltered persecuted Quakers, and in 1673 and 1674 acted as a go-between when Dutch warships threatened Southold. The historian Mac Griswold dates his birth to about 1620, later than the tree's 1610.

Pierre L'Hommedieu [L'HommeDieu](#)

b. 1631, La Rochelle, Charente-Maritime, Poitou-Charentes, France · d. 29 SEP 1685, France (tree also says Kingston, NY; unresolved)

Benjamin's father, according to the family tree, born at La Rochelle about 1631 and married to Martha (Marthe) Peron. UNVERIFIED: no baptism, marriage or church record has been attached, and the tree gives the couple conflicting deaths on the same day in 1685, one in France and one in Kingston, NY. The La Rochelle Protestant registers are the place to prove him.

Sarah Hubbard [Mills of Mills Pond](#)

b. 1660, Morris, New Jersey, United States · d. 28 DEC 1763, Matituck, Suffolk, New York, United States

Timothy Mills [Mills of Mills Pond](#)

b. 1667, Jamaica, Queens, New York, USA · d. 30 MAR 1751, Smithtown, Long Island, New York

GENERATION 12 · 9× GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Ann Wase [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. 1606, Petworth, Sussex, England · d. 13 JUN 1687, Datchet, Buckinghamshire, England

Born at Petworth, Sussex, and married Thomas Brinley there in 1625. Through her, the family reaches back into the Sussex gentry, and the tree's claimed link to Bodiam Castle runs through her ancestors.

Francois L' Hommedieu [L'HommeDieu](#)

b. Bet. 1600–1610, France · d. 1660

UNVERIFIED and possibly misattached. The tree's note describes a noble François L'Homme Dieu, lord of Tranchant and Lignerolles, a King's Guard officer wounded at the siege of Arras and confirmed in his nobility in 1646. That noble family, the L'Homme Dieu du Tranchant de Lignerolles, came from Normandy and the Perche and served a Catholic king, which fits poorly with a Huguenot family of La Rochelle. The tree gives his first marriage as Madelaine de Champaignon on 23 November 1631.

Giles Sylvester [Sylvester](#)

b. 1584, London City, Middlesex, England · d. 1652, London, Middlesex, England

Merchant in Amsterdam, father of Nathaniel and Constant Sylvester. His trading network reached Virginia, Barbados and West Africa.

Luc Peron [Huguenot](#)

b. 20 JUN 1608, La Rochelle, Charente Maritime, Aunis, France · d. 15 APR 1659, La Rochelle, Manche, Basse-Normandie, France · Marchand teinturier

Madelaine De Champaignon [Huguenot](#)

b. ABT 1612, France

Marie Mouchard [Huguenot](#)

b. 18 NOV 1613, La Rochelle, Aunis, Charente Maritime, Poitou, France · d. 4 JAN 1669, Villeneuve-la-Comtesse, France

Mary Arnold [Sylvester](#)

b. 1594, Lowestoft, Suffolk, England · d. 26 JAN 1657, Suffolk, London, England

Thomas Brindley (Brinley) [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. 1591, Exeter, Devon, England · d. 15 OCT 1661, Datchett, Buckinghamshire, Bucks, England, UK · Auditor for Charles I; Chartered ships to trade in tobacco

Royal auditor to Charles I. A Royalist, he lost his post during the Civil War and retreated to Datchett, Buckinghamshire, where he died in 1661. His will mentions his daughter Grizzell's family living on 'an island called Shelter Island'.

GENERATION 13 · 10 × GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Abraham Mouchard [Huguenot](#)

b. ABT 1580, La Rochelle, Aunis, Charente-Maritime, France · d. 1652, France

Alice Wylde [Sylvester](#)

d. 1631

Ann Cole [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. 1582, Sussex, England · d. 1638, Petworth, Sussex, England

Jean Isaie Perron [Huguenot](#)

b. 1583, Larochele, Aunis, La charente-Maritime, France · d. 1636, France

Joanne Reeves [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. 1567, Exeter, England · d. Exeter, Staffordshire, England

Joshua Sylvester [Sylvester](#)

b. 1563, Medway, Kent, England · d. 28 SEP 1618, Middleburg, Zeeland, Netherlands

The tree identifies him as Joshua Sylvester (1563–1618), the poet and translator who died at Middelburg in Zeeland. Worth confirming with Hoff's 1994 Sylvester genealogy.

Marie Auffray [Huguenot](#)

b. 1575

Marie Dousset [Huguenot](#)

b. ABT 1584, France · d. ABT 1668, France

Marie Eleonore Peneau [Huguenot](#)

b. 1583, France · d. 2 APR 1635, Villeneuve (Charente-Maritime) , Villeneuve-la-Comtesse, Poitou-Charentes, France

Mary Sylvester [Sylvester](#)

b. 1565, England

Nathaniel Arnold [Sylvester](#)

b. Lowestoft, England, United Kingdom · d. Amsterdam, Noord-Holland, The Netherlands

Pierre L' Hommedieu L'HommeDieu

b. 1575 · d. France

The earliest L'Hommedieu in the tree, born about 1575, married to Marie Auffray. UNVERIFIED: no record is attached. A promising lead: the 1951 L'Hommedieu Genealogy cites La Rochelle Protestant church records naming a Francoys L'hommedieu as an elder in 1581 to 1587, which would place the family in the Reformed church there in this generation.

Richard Brinley Brinley & Sussex

b. 1565, Willenhall, Staffordshire, England · d. Exeter, Staffordshire, England

William Wase Brinley & Sussex

b. MAY 1580, Petworth, West Sussex, England · d. 29 SEP 1642, Buckinghamshire, England

GENERATION 14 · 11× GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Alice Arnold Sylvester**Ann Colclough** Brinley & Sussex

b. 1535, Staffordshire, England

Anne Moreau Huguenot

b. ABT 1552, France · d. ABT 1625, France

Christine Budd Brinley & Sussex

b. 1556, Sussex, England · d. AFT 1585, England

Collineau Roulet Huguenot

b. 1576, France · d. 1625, Rochefort, Allier, Auvergne, France

Jehan Perron Huguenot

b. 1557, La Rochelle, Manche, Basse-Normandie, France · d. 17 JAN 1580, Larochele, France

Jonathan Godfrey Brinley & Sussex

b. ABT 1701, Willenhall, Staffordshire, England · d. AFT 7 JUL 1760

Marie Pineau Huguenot

b. 1550, La Rochelle, Manche, Basse-Normandie, France · d. 1622, La Rochelle, Aunis, France

Mary Harman Sylvester**Mercy Nickerson** Brinley & Sussex**Nicolas Mouchard** Huguenot

b. ABT 1550, France · d. France

Plumbe Sylvester**Robert Sylvester** Sylvester

b. ABT 1530, Medway, Kent, England · d. 1596, London, Middlesex Co., England · 1563 Clothier - Meopham, Kent, England

Thomas Cole Brinley & Sussex

b. 1530 · d. 1611

William Arnold Sylvester

William Wase Brinley & Sussex

b. 1554, Sussex, England · d. 1583, England

William Wylde Sylvester

GENERATION 15 · 12× GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Deborah Cook Brinley & Sussex

Elizabeth Bartelot Brinley & Sussex

b. 1525, Stopham, Sussex, England · d. England

Evelyn Mobray Sylvester

b. ABT 1500, England · d. England

FNU Budd Brinley & Sussex

b. ABT 1530, England · d. England

Moses Godfrey Brinley & Sussex

Norman Sylvester Sylvester

b. ABT 1500, England · d. England

UNKNOWN Budd Brinley & Sussex

b. ABT 1532, England · d. England

William Wase Brinley & Sussex

b. 1520, Silington, Sussex, England

GENERATION 16 · 13× GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Clemence Ernley Brinley & Sussex

b. 1489, Earnley, Sussex, England · d. England

Edward Bartelot Brinley & Sussex

b. 1484, Earnley, Sussex, England · d. 1558, Earnley, Sussex, England

George David Godfrey Brinley & Sussex

Hannah Brinley & Sussex

James Wase Brinley & Sussex

b. ABT 1497, England · d. England

GENERATION 17 · 14× GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Edward Bartelot [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. ABT 1460, Sussex, England · d. England

Elizabeth Hall [Brinley & Sussex](#)

Francis Godfrey [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. ABT 1590, Bath, Somerset, England · d. BEF 29 OCT 1666, Bridgewater, Plymouth, Massachusetts

Joan Stanney [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. ABT 1464, Sussex, England · d. England

John Ernley [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. ABT 1463, Earnley or Petworth, Sussex, England · d. Sussex, England

Margaret Dawtrey [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. 1467, Petworth, Sussex, England · d. 1528, Sussex, England

GENERATION 18 · 15× GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Edmund Dawtrey [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. 1435, Moor House, Petworth, Sussex, England · d. 1498, Farnham, Surrey, England

Isabel Wood [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. 1438, Petworth, Sussex, England · d. 1489, Sussex, England

GENERATION 19 · 16× GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Alice Mills [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. 1402, Hampshire, England · d. 1450, Sussex, England

Andrew Dawtrey [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. 1399, Moor House, Petworth, Sussex, England · d. 1434, Hardham, Sussex, England

Lady FNU Rivers [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. ABT 1417, England · d. England

Sir Thomas Wood [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. ABT 1410, England · d. England

GENERATION 20 · 17× GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Joan Dalyngrigge [Brinley & Sussex](#)

b. 1365, Bodiam Castle, Sussex, England · d. 1426, England

The tree's link between the Dalyngrigges and the Dawtreys. Published pedigrees give John Dawtrey's wife as Joan Scardeville instead.

John Dawtrey Brinley & Sussex

b. ABT 1364, Hardham, Sussex, England · d. 1403, Sussex, England

John Mills Brinley & Sussex

b. 1379, Southampton, England · d. 1429, Hampshire, England

GENERATION 21 · 18 × GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Elizabeth Wardeux Wardieu Dalyngrigge Brinley & Sussex

b. 1346, Bodiam Manor, Sussex, England

Heiress of the Wardedieu family, through whom Sir Edward acquired the manor of Bodiam.

Sir Edward Dalyngruge Brinley & Sussex

b. 1346, Beddington, Surrey, England · d. 1393, Bodiam Castle, Sussex, England

Builder of Bodiam Castle (licensed 1385). His place in this tree is contradicted by published pedigrees; open the Bodiam Castle card under People and Places.

Research notes

Places where the sources disagree, and what would settle each one.

Mary Sylvester's birth year and marriage

Birth: 1725 (the Met) or 1724 (East Hampton Star). Marriage to Thomas Dering: 1756 (the Met) or 1738 (a University of Michigan finding aid, which would make her 13).

Next step: Treat 1738 as an error; check the Newport marriage record for 1756.

Mary Sylvester's generation

NYU's archive calls her Nathaniel's great-great-granddaughter; Nathaniel, Nathaniel II, Brinley, Mary makes her a great-granddaughter.

Next step: Confirm Nathaniel II as Brinley's father in the Sylvester Manor Archive.

Wife of Nathaniel Sylvester II

Familypedia names Margaret Hobart, a lightly sourced claim.

Next step: Hoff, NYGBR 125 (1994), or East Hampton town records.

Grizzell Brinley's father

Some trees name Francis Brinley. Francis was her brother; Thomas Brinley was her father.

Next step: Check that the MyHeritage tree has Thomas, not Francis.

When did Benjamin and Patience marry?

Family chart in The Manor and several online trees: 1694. An endnote in the same book: 1684.

Next step: Southold town and church records; Hoff's 1994 NYGBR article.

When was Nathaniel Sylvester born?

Tree: 1610. Griswold and Hoff: about 1620.

Next step: Amsterdam records; Hoff's article.

Where did Grizzell die?

Tree: Barrington, Massachusetts. Griswold and WeRelate: Sylvester Manor, Shelter Island.

Next step: Correct the tree to Shelter Island.

Bodiam descent

Tree: Joan Dalyngrigge married John Dawtrey. Published pedigree: John Dawtrey married Joan Scardeville.

Next step: Heralds' Visitations of Sussex; History of Parliament; West Sussex Record Office.

When did Ezra marry Charity Floyd?

Wikipedia: 1756. Griswold: 1765.

Next step: Floyd family records; Yale biographical sketches.

Mary Catherine L'Hommedieu's marriage and death

Marriage to Samuel Smith Gardiner: 1823 (Boston University article) or 1827 (Griswold).

Death: 1835 (Griswold) or 1838 (tree and Wikipedia).

Next step: Gardiner family Bible or Shelter Island cemetery records.

Two Hudson marriages

The tree has John L'Hommedieu marrying Mary Hudson; Griswold notes Samuel Hudson marrying Grizzell L'Hommedieu.

Next step: Confirm both couples in Shelter Island town records.

Benjamin's French ancestors

The tree names Pierre (b.1631) and Martha Peron as his parents, then François and Madelaine de Champaignon, then Pierre (b.1575) and Marie Auffray. No records are attached. The 1951 L'Hommedieu Genealogy left out French ancestry for lack of research.

Next step: Protestant registers of La Rochelle (Archives départementales de la Charente-Maritime); Baird, History of the Huguenot Emigration to America (in your Drive).

Is François the noble L'Homme Dieu du Tranchant?

The tree's note on François describes a Catholic royal guard officer from the Norman noble family. The 1951 family genealogy calls the link to French nobility unproven.

Next step: Treat as a separate family unless a record ties him to La Rochelle.

The crusader-knight legend

The 1951 family genealogy traces the knight story to a novel and calls it fiction.

Next step: Keep it as family lore only.

Who was Lake L'Homme Dieu named for?

Association: possibly Stephen Satterlee L'Hommedieu. Wikipedia: a friend of settler Gleny King.

Next step: Douglas County Historical Society; early Minnesota survey notes.

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