

## SOCIETY HOSTS PAAS FESTIVAL

To celebrate the Easter season, The Saint Nicholas Society of the City of New York, in association with The Colonial Dames of America, The Holland Society, The National Society of Colonial Dames in the State of New York, and The Society of the Daughters of Holland Dames, held a traditional Paas Festival on Friday, March 31, when four young ladies were presented to the assembly. The formal affair was held at the St. Regis Hotel, on Fifth Avenue.

The event was dedicated to the memory of the Honorable and Mrs. Charles S. Whitman, Jr., who in the 1960s introduced the concept of presenting young ladies at the annual Paas Festival of The Saint Nicholas Society.

Making their debuts were: Kristen Alexandra Jelinek, presented by her grandfather, Walter Jackson Coleman (elected to membership April 28, 1969); Sherri Elizabeth Johnson, presented by her father, Scott Johnson; Jacqueline Elizabeth Strauch, presented by her father, Joel Edward Strauch; and Sarah Victoria Yoder, presented by her grandfather, Henry Darlington, Jr. (a former president of the Society, and a member since March 4, 1946).

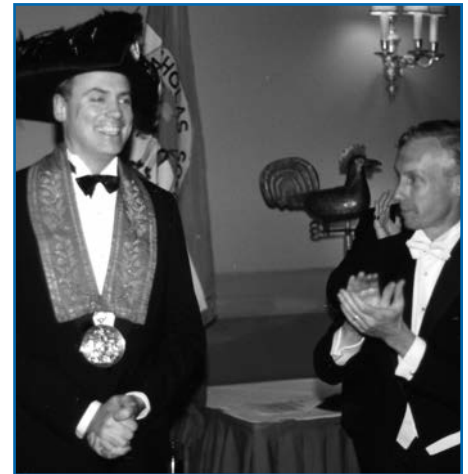
The mood was elevated throughout the  
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## OFFICERS ELECTED AT MAY STATED MEETING

### John McC. Shannon Is 92nd President

The Spring Stated Meeting on 18 May was held at the Racquet & Tennis Club, 370 Park Avenue. Spring meetings in election years are eagerly awaited by Society members because of the entertaining ceremonies surrounding the introduction of the new president. When the former president transfers the emblems of office to the president elect, the motions involving the transfer of the venerable three-cornered hat are coordinated in almost balletic movements, although it would perhaps be going too far to compare it to *El Sombrero de Tres Picos*. Likewise, the awesome medal of office (with names of past presidents engraved within it), with its embroidered orange band, is removed and placed upon his shoulders. The new president is also treated to a number of congratulatory speeches from other officers of the Society, mostly with warm praise of his sterling qualities, but sometimes, if truth be told, shading off into the character of a "roast." Fortunately, John Shannon's sense of humor carried him through this ordeal with his customary good grace, and the whole affair was most gratifying to the assembled guests.

Prior to the installation, three gentlemen were inducted into the Society: Robert Carter Arnold, Cody Constable and Robert



*John McC. Shannon after being invested by William R. Follett (right) as 92nd President of the Saint Nicholas Society*

Duryea.

The Racquet and Tennis Club is a beautiful setting for a Saint Nicholas meeting, with handsomely appointed rooms and an elegant *loggia* where, during the cocktail hour, one can look out over Park Avenue toward the plaza in front of the Seagram Building, and southward to the impressive Byzantine dome of St. Bartholomew's Church. After  
*Continued on next page*

## SPRING TULIPS



## AT ST. MARK'S

In the last issue of *The Weathercock* we reported the planting of tulip bulbs at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery on Wednesday, November 16, 2005. As the winter days rolled by we often thought about the tulip bulbs buried in the ground beside the ancient church, and wondered if they were as impatient as we were for sun and warm weather to arrive. As the spring season finally came into view in March, and at last began to blossom in April, we decided to revisit the scene of the tulip planting to see the results of our efforts. Readers will  
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## Jay Homestead Fall Outing on 23 Sept.

Members and their guests are cordially invited to enjoy a private tour of the John Jay Homestead in Katonah, New York, followed by lunch at the Bedford Golf & Tennis Club, on Saturday 23 September. Tour starts at 11 AM. Invitations have been mailed. Reservations required. For information about transportation, please call Jill Spiller at 212.753.7175 or email [info@saintnicholassociety.org](mailto:info@saintnicholassociety.org).

# President/Officers

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a week of rain, on and off, the weather cooperated to bring a cool, bright evening.

Our menu consisted of excellent smoked salmon as an appetizer, followed by perfectly done steak served with spring vegetables and, for dessert, a colorful array of icing and berries, and coffee and tea. Fine red and white wines accompanied the dinner.

In addition to the election of new officers, guests were treated to insightful remarks by William P. Kelly, President, The Graduate Center, The City University of New York. Dr. Kelly is an academic specialist in English and American Literature, has edited *The Selected Works of Washington Irving* (published by Random House), and is the author of *Plotting America's Past: Fenimore Cooper and the Leatherstocking Tales*. He gave an illuminating discussion of Irving's use of folklore in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle."

Officers elected were: John McConville Shannon, President; John Mauk Hilliard, First Vice President; Stephen B. Billick, Second Vice President; Jonathan C. Jones, Third Vice President; George H. McNeely IV, Fourth Vice President; W. Seton Ijams, Treasurer; and Robert A. Naud, Secretary. Also elected for one year terms were: Thomas E. Bird (Historian); Michael S. de L. Neill (Genealogist); Francis J. Sypher, Jr. (Assistant Genealogist); The Reverend Thomas F. Pike, D.D., and The Reverend Barry C. Howard (Chaplains); Denton Sayre Cox, M.D., and Paul Cushman, M.D. (Physicians).

Elected to serve on the Board of Managers to May 2010 were: John P. T. Blake, Joseph vanB. Wittmann III and Daniel S. Curtis. They join W. Traylor McClellan, Hayden S. Baker and Joseph vanB. Wittman, Jr. (Class of 2009); Michael H. Charles, D. Campbell McCrary and John A. O'Malley (Class of 2008); and William P. Johns, Craig H. Weaver and Frederick M. Tibbitts, Jr. (Class of 2007).

Brian A. Blake was elected to serve as Chief Steward; and Charles R. Mackenzie, Charles W. Neuhauser, Winchester L. Stuart, Graham P. Sultan and Charles M. A. Winn as Stewards.



*Outgoing President William R. Follett with outgoing Chief Steward Joseph vanB. Wittman III (left) and incoming Chief Steward Brian A. Blake*



*New member Cody Constable, Charles R. Mackenzie and Graham P. Sultan*



*Speaker William P. Kelly with Past President John M. Baker*



*Newly inducted members Robert Carter Arnold, Cody Constable and Robert Duryea*



*John McC. Shannon*



*A brace of Bakers: (from left to right) Ian, Jamie, Edward, John and Hayden*



*The Rev. Gerardo Ramirez-Miller with The Rev. Thomas F. Pike, DD*



*George H. McNeely, Dinah Steward and Daniel P. Curtis*



*Robert and M. P. Naud with Thomas E. Bird*



*Curtis M. Estes and Layton P. Sanders*

## President John Shannon

John Shannon brings superb qualifications as president of The Saint Nicholas Society: he is charming, amusing, and well-spoken. He can tell a joke, and pronounce the French words correctly (nay, elegantly). The *hat* looks good on him. Furthermore, he is an experienced administrator of proven expertise, as shown by his success as executive director and almoner of the St. George's Society, and by his well-known work as president of the College of Arms Foundation, and as chairman of the Committee on Heraldry of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, to mention (for the moment) only a few of his many posts. Many of us in fact have witnessed him in action, as for example at the 2005 Paas Festival, which was a tremendously successful benefit for St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery.

John has been a member of the Society since February 5, 1990, in right of descent, in his maternal line, from Edward Howell, who in the 1640s came to America, contracted by the town of Southampton to build a mill (Water Mill, in present-day Southampton). John's parents—who presently live in Georgetown (Washington, D.C.)—met when his father, a journalist, was in London, where at the time his mother (not yet of course his mother) was working for USIA. They were married in San Francisco and later moved to Washington, where John was born, January 12, 1955. He has one sister.

A few years after John's birth, the family moved to Paris, where his father was Paris correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*. There, John attended French schools, and acquired his excellent knowledge of the French language, which he occasionally waves like a bright verbal tricolor when speaking from the Saint Nicholas podium. In 1967 the family moved to Tokyo, where his father took up a new post as bureau chief, and John continued his education *à la française* at a French lycée there. Then in 1971, when his father became bureau chief for the United Nations, they moved to New York, where John completed his secondary studies at the Lycée Français de New York.

After one year as a freshman at Hunter College of the City University of New York, John transferred to Trinity College, in Hartford, Connecticut, where he graduated in 1977, with a B.A. in history. Thereupon he came to New York, and the rest, as the saying goes, is history.

As John describes his professional career: "Absolutely everything good that's happened to me has been through friends." One introduction led to another, and in 1978 he

began working in the international division of Manufacturers Hanover Trust Co. He soon entered European correspondent banking, and in 1984 he went to Chase Manhattan Bank as an account officer in international private banking.

In 1989 John moved into the field of corporate public relations, and was introduced ("through a friend") to Ogilvy Adams & Rinehart, Inc., where he began a public relations career that led him in new creative directions, and that will be a great asset to him (and to the membership) in his role as president of The Saint Nicholas Society. In the summer 1994 he began doing administrative work at the St. George's Society, where after a few months he became executive director and almoner, the post he now holds. For those who may be unfamiliar with the term, an almoner is a person who manages charitable operations—the St. George's Society provides various forms of assistance to British and Commonwealth subjects in New York.

John is a passionate anglophile (not excluding strong sympathies toward our Netherlandish roots as well), and is dedicated to ideals of public service. His extra-curricular activities provide good evidence of this, as in his membership in the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem. In much of this work there is a strong component of "being compassionate." John is also a prominent member of St. Thomas Church (he is a lifelong Episcopalian), at Fifth Avenue and 53rd Street, where he ushers, and takes photographs at events (something he does so well for us too, at Saint Nicholas functions).

Other organizations that are fortunate to have John as a member are: The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of New York, The New England Society, the Church Club, the Amateur Comedy Club, the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus, and the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, of which he is assistant secretary. He is also a member of the Royal Oak Foundation, and the Royal Society of St. George, in England. And he plays an active role in events for the British Memorial Garden in Hanover Square. John travels to Europe every year, and tours historic sites and renews acquaintance with friends and associates, especially in England.

In The Saint Nicholas Society, John has found that at whatever meeting he attends, wherever he happens to sit, he is sure to have a nice time because of the invariably interesting people he meets. He enjoys our

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fellow Members,

In February of 1990 I was elected a member of our beloved Society. I am proud to be a "St. Nicker" and have enjoyed many Stated Meetings, Feasts of St. Nicholas and Paas Festivals. Our Society is special, with a distinct identity and blessed with wonderful members and unique esprit de corps. As your President, I will do my best to preserve it and thank you for your confidence and support.

It was a privilege to serve Bill Follett, Sam Williams and John Baker, my three immediate predecessors, on the Board of Officers. They each taught me leadership and I am indebted to them all. They leave big shoes to fill.

My goals are simple: 1) increase attendance at events, 2) increase membership, and 3) increase the endowment. The goals are perennial; it is in their implementation that we can be creative and different.

By year end I expect that we will be installed in a new office at 20 West 44th Street, the home of the General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen. Ted Wickersham is representing the Society in negotiations with the prospective landlord. The relocation is an opportunity to analyze how we work and make improvements.

Michael Charles will head a new Program Committee, composed of Brian A. Blake, Dan Curtis, Jill Spiller, and myself, to create original events for the membership, their friends and prospective members. Email suggestions for venues to Michael at [program@saintnicholassociety.org](mailto:program@saintnicholassociety.org).

Bob Naud organized offered to run the Paas Festival again next year. I'd be crazy to turn him down. The date is Friday 30 March 2007. He is always on the lookout for débutantes. Email him at: [paas@saintnicholassociety.org](mailto:paas@saintnicholassociety.org).

Every society, ours included, requires new members. George McNeely heads the Admissions Committee. Please think of candidates who might be good for St. Nick – friends and particularly relatives. Contact George with questions about procedures at: [admissions@saintnicholassociety.org](mailto:admissions@saintnicholassociety.org).

Dan Curtis will chair the Speakers and Medals Committee; and three new members have been appointed: Leighton Coleman, Sandy Sanford and Adam Van Doren. They join John Baker, Edward Baker, Tom Pike and John Hilliard. They

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*Sandy Sanford and Maria Dering*



*Nicole Bingham with Marguerite Platt*



*Elizabeth Lindh with Walker Bingham*



*Kazie Harvey, John Harvey and Carla Darlington*



*William Johns and Sara Fair*



*Samuel and Susan Williams*



*West Point Cadets Adam Reams and Daniel Baller with John Mauk Hilliard*



*Ian and Tomoko Kerr*

## Paas Festival

*Continued from front page*

evening, as guests went through the receiving line of attractive débutantes, their parents, and presenters. Adding to the formal atmosphere were a great number of gentlemen in white tie, as well as four young men in uniform: West Point Cadets Adam Reams and Daniel Baller; and Merchant Marine Midshipmen Lief Ulstrom and Craig Tamalo. Also in attendance were a number of distinguished former presidents of the Society, including: John M. Baker, Henry Darlington, Jr., Kent L. Straat, and Samuel D. Williams. In addition, guests included a number of past débutantes: Christine Caren Coleman, of Jacksonville, Florida; Alice Bontecou Darlington Cutler, of Morristown, New Jersey; Elizabeth Darlington, of Hilton Head, South Carolina; Meredith Darlington, of Cary, North Carolina; Cynthia Coleman Jelinek (mother of débutante Kristen Alexandra Jelinek), of Jacksonville, Florida; Louise Mae Stuart, of Sea Cliff, New York; Jane Whitman, of New York City; Rachel DeWitt Wittmann Maher, of New York City; and Victoria Darlington Yoder (mother of débutante Sarah Victoria Yoder), of Jacksonville, Florida.

President William R. Follett, in white tie, tails, and traditional tricorne headgear, greeted the guests at the St. Regis Roof. The menu featured a fine selection of smoked salmon, filet mignon, chocolate mousse dessert, and coffee with petits fours. Music was provided by the orchestra of Alex Donner, who made a personal appearance during the evening.

The Paas Festival is noted for some venerable—or venerated—customs, includ-

## President Shannon

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Dutch customs, good cheer, and the neighborly, non-political, non-controversial atmosphere. He is very appreciative of the excellent leadership that the Society has enjoyed in the past, and he plans to continue the fine example set by his predecessors.

One of John's first concerns for our Society is to bring a truly professional approach to the planning of income and expenditure, so as to ensure the long-term prospects of the organization. He wants to see (as who among us does not?) more members, more attendance at events, and growth in our endowment. These are, John says, "simple goals"; but "it's how to do it, that's the challenge." He is already setting in motion or-

ganizational plans that will help us continue to find good speakers, and interesting, attractive venues for meetings. He is very much "looking forward to wearing the hat" and intends to mobilize the good spirit of our membership into a period of genuine renewal of the Society.

As themes for the future, John sees an uninterrupted continuation of the things he admires ("friendship" most of all), and an active role in preserving the Dutch heritage of New York, and in public service (as for example in his leadership in fund-raising for St. Mark's last year). Looking forward, John says: "Here I am 51 years old and head of this distinguished Society, which I'm very proud of, and I want to make it better and see it flourish." With such an example, he is inspiring us already.

## President's Message

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will identify and secure worthy medalists and eminent speakers for our meetings. Email Dan with suggestions at: [speakers@saintnicholassociety.org](mailto:speakers@saintnicholassociety.org).

The Weathercock is the main channel of communication between the office and the members. With excellent articles and beautifully designed, it is produced by our own Frank Sypher. Stories and Salmagundi items should be emailed to: [weathercock@saintnicholasociety.org](mailto:weathercock@saintnicholasociety.org).

Email is faster and cheaper than snail mail. It is no longer the future, it is the present. For the Society to utilize email effectively we need your email address. Please provide it to Jill Spiller:

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## Four Young Ladies Are Presented in Elegant Setting

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ing the procession of the cherished weathercock, during which an ancient weather vane (see details elsewhere in this issue) is borne about the room by a cadre of stewards, while guests wave their napkins to create a “wind” to carry it along. A special Paas custom is the Egg Cracking Ceremony, which this year was led by First Vice President John McC. Shannon; this is a modern-day re-enactment of an old Dutch Easter game, whereby guests attempt to crack their neighbor’s dyed hard-boiled egg without breaking their own.

The 2006 Paas Festival was one of the most successful in memory, with 138 attendees. For this the Society is greatly indebted to the chairmen of the event, Dr. and Mrs. Robert A. Naud, for their leadership and vision. We are grateful also to: Jill Spiller, Executive Director of the Society, the entire Whitman family, the Board of Stewards, and all who joined in to make the evening a success. After the presentations of the débutantes, Dr. Naud, as Master of Ceremonies of the Festival, said: “As to the young women presented tonight, I am reminded to broadly paraphrase a comment in the Broadway production of *42nd Street*: ‘You arrived this evening as young girls (which is temporary) and are leaving as débutantes (which is for a lifetime)’—Congratulations!”



*Curtis Estes and Victoria Kirsten*



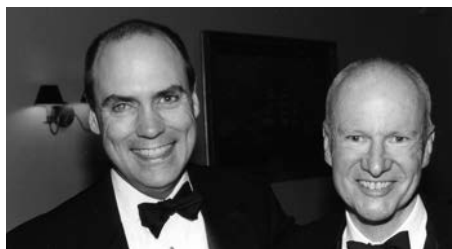
*Henry Lindh and Alex Donner*



*President William Follett, Barbara Follett  
and Brandon Fradd*



*Charles Mackenzie, Brian Blake and Seton Ijams*



*John McC. Shannon and Francis J. Sypher, Jr.*



*Kitt Garrett, The Rev. Thomas Pike,  
and Victoria Kirsten*



*Henry Darlington, Jr.*



*Daniel Curtis*



*John and Lydia Baker*

[info@saintnicholasociety.org](mailto:info@saintnicholasociety.org).

Remember to visit the website, created by webmaster and chaplain, Barry Howard at [www.saintnicholassociety.org](http://www.saintnicholassociety.org).

Ultimately, I serve the members and address their needs. Please contact me with ideas, suggestions, praise or criticisms. My email is: [president@saintnicholassociety.org](mailto:president@saintnicholassociety.org).

I look forward to seeing many of you in the coming year.

Oranje Boven!

John McC. Shannon

## SPRING TULIPS *Continued from front page*

recall that the bulbs were donated by Mr. Hans van Waardenburg, owner of B&K Flowerbulbs of Holland, who had donated countless bulbs for planting all around New York.

We first stopped at the former rectory where we were welcomed and ushered through the inner doors to the beautiful garden, which seemed like a different world from the busy scene on 11th Street, between Second and Third Avenues. All around us we found green trees and bushes, and soon discovered blazes of yellow tulips dancing in the brilliant sunshine, not only in the little patch near the bust of Peter Stuyvesant, where we had had our ceremonial planting, but also in other parts of the churchyard, and in the triangular park in front of the church, next to Stuyvesant Street. Spring had truly arrived.



*Tulips at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery*

## SALMAGUNDI

**Andrew Whitlaw Brink**, and **Helen Brink** are promised donors of the Brink Collection of Dutch, Flemish, French, and English prints to the University of Guelph (Ontario, Canada). From January 19 to May 21, 2006, a portion of the collection was on exhibit as *Landscape: Flemish, Dutch and French Prints of the 'Golden Age'—The Brink Collection*, at the Macdonald Stewart Art Center, in Guelph. The exhibition was accompanied by a handsomely printed, illustrated catalogue, the main text of which was written by Mr. Brink, giving an excellent overview of the subject and the collection. The catalogue is a companion piece to one published for an earlier exhibition, in 2004, *English Picturesque and Dutch Landscape Prints of the Seventeenth Century*, with text also by Mr. Brink.

**Tricia** and **Bromme H. Cole** announce with great joy the birth of their son (and brother to ecstatic big sister Mackenzie), **Bromme Hampton Cole II**, born April 26, 2006.

**John Shannon** spent a wonderful day in Windsor, England, where he and several New Yorkers, including fellow St. Nickers **Stanley D. Heisler** and **Frederick W. Pattison**, attended the annual service of the Order of the Garter at St. George's Chapel on 19 June. Afterwards the trio enjoyed champagne at the College of Arms' traditional garden party the Ranger's Lodge in Windsor Great Park.

### New Membership Book in Preparation

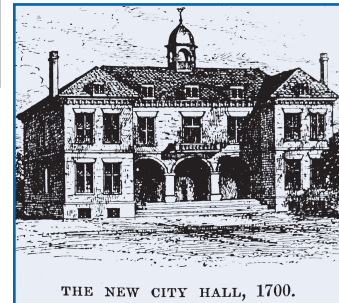
A new membership is in preparation. The publication will include a complete list of current members with their addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, name of

## Fall Stated Meeting at National Academy of Design to Feature James Suydam

The National Academy Museum, at 89th St. and Fifth Ave., will host the first exhibition in a quarter century to focus on luminism in America. The exhibition's title, *Luminist Horizons: The Art and Collection of James A. Suydam* reflects its focus on this prominent luminist painter, collector, and National Academician. Suydam (1819-1865) assembled a rich collection of works by his American colleagues, including major paintings by Frederic Edwin Church, Asher B. Durand, Sanford Gifford, and John F. Kensett, and his European contemporaries, such as Andreas Achenbach, that attests to both his discerning eye and his many artistic affinities in America and abroad. The Fall Stated Meeting will be held at the Academy and members will be able to view the works privately. The exhibition of approximately fifty-five works will highlight the finest examples of Suydam's art and collection, which the artist left in its entirety to the National Academy of Design upon his death, three years after he was elected a member of the Saint Nicholas Society. The Suydam bequest remains today one of the very few intact nineteenth-century artists' collections.



## Speculations on our Antique Weathercock



One of the most prominent symbols of The Saint Nicholas Society is the antique bronze weathercock that is regularly paraded by stewards at meetings, and placed at the podium so as to stand guard over our proceedings. Its appearance is familiar to all who have attended our events, as is the custom of waving napkins to create a breeze as it passes in procession. However, a certain degree of mystery surrounds the provenance of this famous *objet*, and it has been rumored (without much foundation, I regret to say) that it once stood upon the ancient government house of New Amsterdam, at the northeast corner of Pearl Street and Coenties Slip. In the present article, an attempt is made to present the little that is known, and more that has been conjectured about the origin of our weathercock.

Of the weathercock, the major (and perhaps only) authentic early record is the entry in a manuscript volume titled "Minutes of the Board of Officers of the St Nicholas Society of the City of New York, 1835." On p. 64, among the minutes of the meeting of Tuesday, December 5, 1848 (the eve of the feast of St. Nicholas) appears the following: "A note was presented from Pierre M. Irving in behalf of Washington Irving addressed to him by Miss Elisabeth Mackie dated May 13, 1836 relative to the Weathercock lately given to the Society and which had formerly graced the top of the old Dutch Government House. Read and ordered on file." (Unfortunately the text of Miss Mackie's note was not transcribed into the minutes, and the original document has not been located in the files; as we shall see, the notion that the weathercock was once on the "old Dutch Government House" seems highly unlikely.)

In 1993 David William Voorhees, Ph.D. (editor of *De Halve Maen*, the journal of the Holland Society) generously communicated to the Society the results of his careful, scholarly investigation of the history of the weathercock, in an unpublished article titled "The Weathercock." With his kind permission, portions of his discussion are here offered to readers. He notes at the outset that our weathercock was prominently featured on the cover of a paperback reprint of a book by Dixon Ryan Fox, *The Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York 1801-1840* (Harper and Row, 1965; originally

ancestor and date of election. Also included are the Society's officers, committee chairmen, and Constitution and By-Laws. The books will be distributed in the fall.

### New Members Elected

Name	Date of Election	Ancestor
Nicholas Cowenhoven Taylor	October 13, 2005	Wolfert Gerritse Van Kouwenhoven
Charles M. A. Winn	October 13, 2005	Stephen Knowlton
Andrew Lanark Bogardus	December 6, 2005	Everardus Bogardus
Peter Livingston Bogardus	December 6, 2005	Everardus Bogardus
Sidney Tuttle Bogardus	December 6, 2005	Everardus Bogardus
Bromme Hampton Cole	December 6, 2005	Barent Jacobsen Cool
Stanley Dean Heisler	December 6, 2005	Lambert Jochemse van Valkenburg
Charles Baker Finch III	December 6, 2005	John Ridley
Robert Carter Arnold	April 20, 2006	Wilhelmus Beekman
Cody Dickinson Constable	April 20, 2006	William Lawrence
H. Ashton Crosby, Jr.	April 20, 2006	Simon Crosby
Robert Atwell Duryea	April 20, 2006	David Demarest
George James Hill	April 20, 2006	Edward Howell
Cornwell Crystal Martin	April 20, 2006	Richard Cornell
Robert Bradley St. Clair Morse	April 20, 2006	Richard Denton
William Francis Price, Jr.	April 20, 2006	Isaac Platt
Myron Crenshaw Smith	April 20, 2006	Isaac Allerton



## The Weathercock



FAR LEFT: *The Weathercock as a Symbol of New York Aristocracy*

LEFT: *New York City Hall, circa 1700*

ABOVE RIGHT: *View of Broad Street, 1798 Showing City Hall Remodeled*

published in 1919). However, the origins of our vane remain cloaked with controversy and mystery. Voorhees points out that although “New Netherland’s oldest surviving weathercock had been placed upon the Albany Dutch Reformed church in 1656, seventeenth-century views of New Amsterdam are notable for their lack in depicting weathercocks.”

“Some have speculated that the initials ‘S.N.’ riveted on our rooster’s right side must stand for St. Nicholas, and hence have concluded that our Weathercock originally stood atop New Amsterdam’s first Reformed church. Nevertheless, no seventeenth-century views of this structure, which was demolished in 1693, depict either a weathercock or weather vane. Moreover, the use of saints’ names was antithetical to the Reformed religion, which held such practices to be ‘Papist’ and used every effort to stamp them out. (It is worth noting that nearly every perpetuator of the claim that the good Calvinist burghers of New Amsterdam named their church for the jolly saint has been an adherent of the Church of England.) In addition, initials on seventeenth-century weather vanes are extremely rare. If the vane had stood atop the church, it would most likely bear either the initials of the West India Company or of the Classis of Amsterdam, under whose jurisdiction the New Amsterdam church fell. Hence, if the ‘S.N.’ is indeed contemporary with the creation of our weathercock, it may indicate the name of its maker.

“The 1848 minutes of the Saint Nicholas Society specifically identify the ancient cock with the ‘old Dutch Government House.’ James Truslow Adams’s *Album of American History* (1944) contains an illustration of our weathercock and also a picture of New Amsterdam’s first town hall or *Stadthuys* (originally erected in 1642 as the city tavern), and claims ‘this weather vane was once on the Stadthuys’ (vol. 1, p. 141). Yet, neither the view of the structure that Adams uses nor any other contemporary view shows a weathercock. A 1679 sketch by Jaspas Danckaerts of this edifice, for example, shows a pennant flying from its tower.

“A more likely placement of our weathercock, one generally accepted by scholars,

was atop New York City’s second town hall, originally constructed in 1699 and greatly altered in 1763. Depictions of this structure, later affectionately known as the “old Government House” and which stood on the site of present-day Federal Wall on Wall Street, reveal that a weathercock did indeed sit atop its cupola until 1763. Elizabeth Mackie, who presented the weathercock to Washington Irving, was the daughter of ironmonger Peter Mackie. It is possible that Mr. Mackie acquired the weathercock as scrap when the original cupola was removed in 1763 and a third story added in its place. This building later gained fame after Congress in 1788 designated New York to be the capital of the United States. Under the supervision of Major Charles Pierre L’Enfant, the second City Hall was almost completely reconstructed as the new nation’s Capitol, and from its balcony in 1789 George Washington was inaugurated as the first President of the United States.

“An additional controversy surrounding the early history of our weathercock is whether or not it once graced Washington Irving’s country home, ‘Sunnyside’ at Tarrytown. In a study of the history and architecture of Sunnyside, architectural historian Clay Lancaster asserted in the October 1947 *American Collector, Sunnyside Edition*, that ‘the weather cock was an ubiquitous 17th century finial, Irving having acquired and placed on Sunnyside three weathercocks of this form, one of which has once adorned the old Stadthuys, or Government House, in New Amsterdam.’ A footnote to this paragraph reads: ‘Given by Irving to The Saint Nicholas Society of New York in 1848.’ Nonetheless, in an 1847 response to a letter from Gouverneur Kemble about the meaning of the pagoda at Sunnyside that Kemble had noticed in passing up the river by boat, Irving wrote: ‘The only part of it that is not adopted to some valuable purpose is the cupola, which has no bell in it, and is about as serviceable as the feather in one’s cap, though, by the way, it has its purpose, for it supports a weathercock brought from Holland by Gill Davis (the King of Coney Island), who says he got it from a windmill which they were demolishing at the gate of

Rotterdam, which windmill has been mentioned in Knickerbocker. I hope, therefore, I may be permitted to wear my feather unmolested.’

“Because Irving did not write in 1847 that he had a weathercock in use at Sunnyside, which, because of its association with New Amsterdam, he planned to give to the society he founded for old New York families, does not signify that this was not the case. But it is highly unlikely that he gave to the Society his newly acquired weathercock from Holland, as some have claimed. It was reasonably argued in the 1935 centennial volume of The Saint Nicholas Society that since Irving wrote Kemble that he had obtained a new weathercock from Holland and had placed it atop his cupola, the one given to the Society was probably not one of three in use at Sunnyside.”

To these informative comments by David Voorhees, one might add that the old New York City Hall, after becoming Federal Hall in 1788, shortly afterward reverted to being the City Hall (when the federal capital was transferred to Philadelphia in 1790). In 1812, upon completion of the present City Hall, city offices were moved into the then-new building, and the former City Hall was taken over by the federal government for use as the Custom House. Finally, in 1834 the old structure was demolished, to be replaced by the federal Sub-Treasury building, which presently stands at the site, now named Federal Hall National Memorial (on Wall Street, looking southwards down Broad Street).

It may be more than mere coincidence that the earliest extant reference to our weathercock is dated 1836, just after the demolition of the former City Hall building, which had gone through so many remodelings and reconstructions in its approximately 134-year-long history; however, there are, as we have seen, no precise indications of the date when the weathercock was made, or of the manner in which it reached Miss Mackie.

In the final analysis, the only things that seem fairly certain are: that the weathercock was in the possession of the Society in 1848; that it dates at least to 1836; that it may have been associated with the former City Hall building on Wall Street; and that most probably it was never on the ancient Dutch Stadthuys, or on the first Dutch church in Manhattan.

A final point, which was alluded to in *The Weathercock*, No. 64 (Fall 2005), is that the tradition that the weathercock turns to the northeast to warn New Yorkers of incursions from New England, is derived from passages in Irving’s *The Alhambra* (1832), about an ancient Moorish ruin called *la casa del Gallo de Viento*, where a magical bronze horseman stood guard over the city, to turn his lance in the direction of any approaching foe (see chapters titled “The House of the Weathercock,” and “The Legend of the Arabian Astronomer”).

# NECROLOGY

The Society has received notice of the death of the following members:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Election</i>	<i>Date of Death</i>
William A. Stimson	January 27, 1987	March 15, 2006
James Bonbright Ketcham	March 4, 1946	March 16, 2006
Francis Leonard Kellogg	April 30, 1973	April 6, 2006
Charles Kellogg Field III	December 6, 1999	April 10, 2006
William Tredwell Ketcham	March 4, 1946	July 18, 2006

## Calendar of Events 2006-2007

Saturday 23 September 2006	Fall Outing to John Jay Homestead
Thursday 26 October 2006	Fall Stated Meeting at National Academy of Design
Wednesday 6 December 2006	Annual Feast of St. Nicholas
Thursday 8 February 2007	Winter Stated Meeting
Friday 30 March 2007	Paas Festival Débutante Ball
Thursday 24 May 2007	Spring Stated Meeting

### THE SAINT NICHOLAS SOCIETY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

122 EAST 58TH STREET,  
NEW YORK, NY 10022-1909

TELEPHONE: 212-753-7175

FAX: 212-980-0769

EMAIL: info@stnicholassociety.org

#### OFFICERS

JOHN McC. SHANNON

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JOHN MAUK HILLIARD

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#### THE WEATHERCOCK

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BY

FRANCIS J. SYPHER, JR.

JOHN McC. SHANNON

The Saint Nicholas Society  
of the City of New York  
122 East 58th Street  
New York, NY 10022-1909

