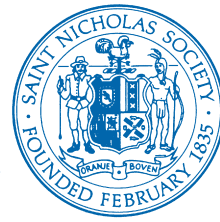


# The Weathercock



No. 68

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FALL 2007

## 2007 Paas Festival Debutante Ball

On Friday, March 30, 2007, at the St. Regis Roof of the St. Regis Hotel, 2 East 55th Street, the Saint Nicholas Paas Festival Ball was held, honoring Morrison Hecksher, Chairman of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The event took place with the participation of the Colonial Dames of America, the Holland Society, the National Society of Colonial Dames in the State of New York, and the Society of Daughters of Holland Dames. Debutantes presented were: Alexandra Russell Hancock, presented by her father, F. Woodson Hancock III; and Cristina Walton Liebolt, presented by her father, Frederick Lee Liebolt, Jr.



*Cristina Walton Liebolt with her father, Frederick Lee Liebolt, Jr.*

The evening began with a reception in the anterooms of the St. Regis Roof. In the receiving line were President John McC. Shannon and other officers of the Society, including Ball Chairmen Mr. & Mrs. Robert Armstead Naud, together with the debutantes and family members. As the hour for dinner approached, the guests took places at their tables, and Chief Steward Brian A. Blake, with a flourish of his staff of office, announced the entry procession of the officers and honored guests, who included: Miss Jean Cameron Grainger, President, the National Society of Colonial Dames; Mrs. Sten Gustaf Svensson, President,

*Continued on page 2*



*President John McC. Shannon with De Wittmann*

## COLLINS AND DOCTOROW TO BE ST. NICK MEDALISTS

The Saint Nicholas Society will honor two of the nation's prominent literary personalities, who are also distinguished New Yorkers, this fall when Billy Collins is presented with the Washington Irving Medal of Literary Merit at the 18 October Stated Meeting, and E. L. Doctorow receives the Society's Medal of Merit at the Feast of St. Nicholas on 6 December.

Mr. Collins is a distinguished professor of English at Lehman College in the Bronx, where he joined the faculty in 1968 and has taught for over 30 years. He is also one of America's most honored poets, having been appointed poet laureate of the United

*Continued on page 3*

## Society Moves to New Office

On Thursday, June 21, 2007, the Saint Nicholas Society moved into new quarters at 20 West 44th Street (5th Floor, Room 508), in the building of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen of the City of New York. The reason for the move was that the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, owner of the building at 122 East 58th Street, where the office had been since the 1930s, required tenants to vacate the premises, in connection with the sale of the building to the New York Synagogue. Other historical societies in the building have also moved out, or are about to move, and most of them have also found appropriate space at 20 West 44th. The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of New York, the Huguenot Society, the Holland Society, and the Mayflower Society will have offices in the same building, and so we will be able continue our long-standing tradition of neighborly cooperation. Sharing space in the Saint Nicholas office are The Pilgrims of the United States, the Daughters of the Cincinnati, and the American Friends of the Georgian Group. Also in the building is the Coffee House Club, on the 6th floor.

Our new headquarters is conveniently located near Grand Central Terminal (often mis-called Grand Central Station, which is the name of a post office), and across 44th Street from the Harvard Club and the New York Yacht Club. Just one block south are the Princeton Club, the Columbia University Club, and the Century Association, on West 43rd Street, between Fifth Avenue and Sixth Avenue—or Avenue of the Americas, a designation seldom heard on the streets of New York; the name dates from the days of Mayor LaGuardia (1945, to be exact, not long after the Sixth Avenue El came down, in 1938–39). Another block further to the south is the main branch of the New York Public Library, including the superb collections of its Local History and

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## 2007 Paas Festival Debutante Ball

*Continued from front page*



*Michael H. Charles and Francis P. Powers*



*President John McC. Shannon with Don Grant*



*Brian A. Blake with Stephen Billick*



*Francis J. Sypher, Jr., and Susan Williams*

the Colonial Dames of America, and Mr. Svensson; Mr. William Wells Van Pelt, President, the Holland Society, and Mrs. Van Pelt; and Mrs. Ernest P. Brinkley, Directress General, Society of Daughters of Holland Dames, and Mr. Brinkley. Other members of the Ball Committee were: Mr. & Mrs. John Milnes Baker, Dr. & Mrs. Thomas E. Bird, Mr. & Mrs. Henry Darlington, Jr., Mr. & Mrs. Thomas A. DeLong, Mr. & Mrs. F. Woodson Hancock, Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Lee Liebolt, Jr., Mr. & Mrs. Hollis Warren Merrick III, and Mr. & Mrs. Joseph vanB. Wittmann, Jr.

Our Chaplain, the Reverend Thomas F. Pike, D.D., offered a blessing before the beginning of the opening ceremonies, including the traditional toasts offered to Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, with playing of the Dutch national anthem and to the President of the United States of America, with playing of the "Star-Spangled Banner."

An excellent first course opened the menu, with smoked salmon, garnished with pea shoots and radishes, and served with toasted brioche. The main course was filet mignon of exceptional quality, with young spinach grilled Trevisano, fingerling potato puree, and roasted shallot reduction. Excellent California wines accompanied the courses: a Belvedere Chardonnay, from Sonoma, and a Rock River Merlot. For dessert there was an extravagant confection denominated caramel dark chocolate dome with crêmeux vanilla, served with coffee, decaf, and tea.

As dessert and coffee appeared on the tables, President Shannon oversaw the egg-cracking contest, a tradition that dates back to our earliest Paas Festival celebrations. In the 19th century, and down to the 1950s, the event was a stag affair, with much heavy puffing on Dutch clay pipes, and a large dose of frivolity. In the 1950s it was the happy thought of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Whitman, Jr. to transform the celebration into a debutante ball, as it has been ever since. For the contest, each table is supplied with a bowl of hard-boiled eggs, dyed orange and blue (the Society colors, of course). The bowl is passed around the table, and each guest takes an egg, and then knocks the egg against that of his or her neighbor until one or the other egg cracks. The person with an intact egg then searches for another successful contestant and goes

through the ritual again, until at each table there remains one guest whose egg has come unscathed through the benign combat.

Then these survivors of the fray enter upon the dance floor and engage each other in similar duels until at last there remain only the two finalists, who battle it out for the victory. This year, De Wittmann was the winner, and Don Grant the runner up. President Shannon awarded them handsome boxes, whose well-known light blue color and white silk ribbon gave indications of something elegant inside.

Preliminary to the presentation of the debutantes, Chief Steward Brian A. Blake led the procession of the weathercock, while all joined in waving their napkins to provide the necessary breeze. Other members of the board of stewards were: Charles R. Mackenzie, Charles W. Neuhauser, Floyd S. Sanford III, Graham P. Sultan, and Charles M. A. Winn.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the debutantes, by Robert Armstead Naud, Ball Chairman. After preliminary comments, he introduced first Miss Alexandra Russell Hancock on the arm of her father, Francis Woodson Hancock III. Miss Hancock appeared in right of John Bowne, who settled in New Amsterdam in 1651, and is credited by historians with being the author of the Flushing Remonstrance, a written demand, signed by leading inhabitants of Flushing, and presented to Peter Stuyvesant to certify the petitioners' freedom to practice their religion. Next, on the arm of her father Frederick Lee Liebolt, Jr., was Miss Cristina Walton Liebolt, in right of Harman Albertse Velder of New Amsterdam. On her maternal side she is a direct descendant of William Livingston, a member of the Continental Congress, a signer of the Constitution, and first governor of New Jersey; she is also a direct descendant of Helen Griswold Green, 8th woman elected to the Colonial Dames of America, in 1892. The young ladies' dresses were no less magnificent than their lineage.

After the debutantes danced with their fathers, they were joined on the floor by their escorts, including two West Point cadets, Jonathan Green, and Patrick Tuffy, and two Merchant Marine midshipmen, Gregory Toliban, and James Cole Neumann. Dancing continued through the evening, to music by Alex Donner and his band.



*Morrison Hecksher, Laurence A. Fleischmann  
Chairman of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's  
American Wing, and Mrs. Hecksher*



*Alexandra Hancock and her escort*



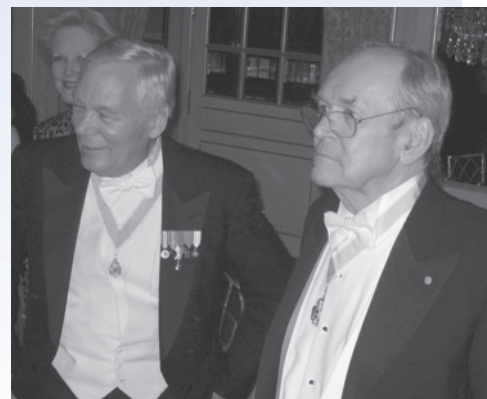
*Liddy and John Baker*



*M.P. Naud, Sten Gustaf Svensson and his wife, Audrey, President of  
Colonial Dames of America, and Katherine Price*



*Henry and Elizabeth Lindh*



*Paas Chairman Robert A. Naud and Frank Price*

## Collins, Doctorow Are Medalists

*Continued from front page*

States for two years. During his term as poet laureate (2001-2003), he read his poem, "The Names," at a special joint session of Congress on 6 September 2002, held to remember the victims of the 9/11 attacks.

Mr. Collins's poetry has often been called accessible. However, Collins does not much like *accessible*, a term he says that suggests ramps for "poetically handicapped people." He prefers the word *hospitable* for his poetry.

In 1997, he recorded *The Best Cigarette*, a collection of 33 of his poems that would become a bestseller. In 2005, the CD was re-released under a license allowing free, non-commercial distribution of the recording. He also recorded two of his poems for the audio versions of Garrison Keillor's collection *Good Poems* (2002).

During the 1990s, *Poetry* magazine awarded him several prizes and selected him as "Poet

of the Year" in 1994. In 2005 Collins was the first annual recipient of the Mark Twain Prize for Humor in Poetry, bestowed by the Poetry Foundation. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation and the New York Foundation for the Arts.

Edgar Lawrence Doctorow is considered to be among the most talented American novelists of the second half of the twentieth century. He is the author of *Ragtime*, *The Book of Daniel* and *City of God*.

*Ragtime*, a dazzling reimagining of the United States at the dawn of the twentieth century by means of a plot that, like *City of God*, brings together real-life figures— Henry Ford, J. P. Morgan, Harry Houdini, and Emma Goldman—with a host of invented characters. The novel was named one of the 100 best English-language novels of the twentieth century by the editorial board of

the Modern Library and was adapted into a successful Broadway musical in 1998.

Mr. Doctorow has received the National Book Award, two National Book Critics Circle Awards, the PEN/Faulkner Award, the Edith Wharton Citation for Fiction, the William Dean Howells Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the presidentially conferred National Humanities Medal.

Mr. Doctorow was senior editor for New American Library from 1959 to 1964 and then served as editor in chief at Dial Press until 1969. Since then, he has devoted his time to writing and teaching. He holds the Glucksman Chair in American Letters at New York University and has taught at Yale University Drama School, Princeton University, Sarah Lawrence College, and the University of California, Irvine.

## SPRING STATED MEETING AT THE RACQUET & TENNIS CLUB



*President Shannon inducted William Rabbe as a new member of the Society*



*After his fascinating talk, Dry Manhattan author Michael Lerner, was presented with a certificate of appreciation by President Shannon*



*Frank Price formally inducted the same evening*



*Michael Margolin, Bromme Cole and Michael Charles in white dinner jackets.*

At the Spring Stated Meeting, held on Thursday, May 31, at the Racquet & Tennis Club, 370 Park Avenue, at 53rd Street, the slate of officers for the coming year was unanimously elected, and the members present enjoyed a commentary by Michael A. Lerner, Associate Dean of Studies at Bard High School Early College, on his book *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Harvard University Press). Mr. Lerner gave a most entertaining discussion of Prohibition in New York, with detailed descriptions of some of the speakeasies and clubs that grew up to satisfy the demand for alcohol, which of course persisted vigorously in spite of the law.

President Shannon awarded President's Medal to two members for exemplary service to the Society: to Robert A. Naud for his past chairmanship of the Paas Ball; and to Ted Wickersham for expert legal advice on many matters.

Two new members were inducted: George William Rabbe, Jr., elected April 25, 2007, by right of descent from George Dennis; and by right of descent from Isaac Platt, William Francis Price, Jr.

The following slate of officers was elected: John McC. Shannon, President; John Mauk Hilliard, 1st Vice President; Stephen B. Billick, 2nd Vice President; Jonathan C. Jones, 3rd Vice President; George H. McNeely IV, 4th Vice President; W. Seton Ijams, Treasurer; Secretary, Daniel S. Curtis; Thomas E. Bird, Historian; Michael S. de L. Neill, Genealogist; Francis J. Sypher, Jr., Assistant Genealogist; The Rev. Thomas F. Pike, D.D., Chaplain; The Rev. Barry C. Howard, Chaplain; The Rev. Martin L. Chase, Chaplain; Paul Cushman, M.D., Physician; Francis Perse Powers, M.D., Physician.

Board of Managers: Class of 2008: Michael

H. Charles, D. Campbell McCrary, John A. O'Malley. Class of 2009: Hayden S. Baker, W. Traylor McClellan, Joseph vanB. Wittmann, Jr. Class of 2010: John P. T. Blake, Robert A. Naud, Joseph vanB. Wittmann III. Class of 2011: Bromme H. Cole, William Francis Price, Jr., and Craig Hamilton Weaver.

Board of Stewards: Brian A. Blake, Chief Steward; Cody D. Constable; Robert A. Duryea; Charles R. Mackenzie; Charles W. Neuhauser; Floyd S. Sanford III; Graham P. Sultan; Charles M. A. Winn.



*Chief Steward Brian A. Blake, Past President Samuel D. Williams and William M. Manger*



*Lewis Stetson Allen, George Hill and Craig Weaver*



*At the Stated Meeting, Chief Blake inducted two new Stewards - Robert Duryea and Cody Constable*

### New Headquarters

*Continued from front page*

Genealogy division, and behind it is the gloriously refurbished Bryant Park.

The building itself is a large, imposing, limestone structure dating from 1891, when it was erected for the Berkeley Preparatory School, which, however, only occupied it for about eight years; it was acquired in 1899 by the General Society, upon their moving uptown from 18 East 16th Street. In the early 1900s the General Society received from Andrew Carnegie a grant to remodel and expand the building by adding the 5th and 6th floors. However, over the

years, some of the interior classroom space had become redundant and thus has been made available for offices to outside organizations such as the historical societies who are presently settling in.

**Thanks** to the following handful of members who helped pack:

Craig Weaver, John Shannon, Tom Lipscomb, Tim Leaycraft, Matt Leaycraft, Brian A. Blake, and especially my son, Thomas Hirschy, who packed, unpacked, moved, built and organized.

*Jill Spiller*

## Leighton Coleman III Is Chairman of Speakers and Medals Committee

The Speakers and Medals Committee got a makeover this Spring with the appointment of three new members and a new chairman. Joining the Committee's old guard (Edward Baker, John M. Baker, Daniel S. Curtis and Thomas F. Pike) are Brent H. Feigenbaum, John Mauk Hilliard and Floyd ("Sandy") Sanford, with Leighton H. Coleman III as Chairman, succeeding Dan Curtis.

Leighton Coleman was born at the New York Hospital in 1964, reared in Paris and London, and attended boarding school in Villars, Switzerland. He graduated from the Stony Brook School in 1983, SUNY at Stony Brook (BA in Art History, 1987) and Parsons School of Design (BFA, 1991).

In the 1990s, Leighton worked as a men's wear design assistant and an interior design assistant. In 1994 he published the award-winning children's book, *Polar The Titanic Bear*, which sold over a million copies worldwide in English, Dutch, German, Spanish and Japanese.

In the later 90s, he worked in publishing as a freelance writer for the *Social Register Observer* and at *VARBusiness* magazine. In 2001 he formed Leighton & Associates, a niche interior design concern for private clients and other designers. The firm has projects in New York, California, Bermuda and Florida. He lives in St. James, New York.



Leighton H. Coleman III

In addition to St. Nick, Leighton is a member of St. George's Society of New York, the Titanic Historical Society, Corning Connections/Corning Family Society, and the Costume Designers Guild/Local 892 (yes – part of the Teamsters). He is also a trustee of The Governor William Owsley House Foundation in Lancaster, Kentucky.

The Speakers and Medals Committee is an important factor in designing social activities at St. Nick. Historically the Society has split the task of organizing meetings: the Executive Director is responsible for the venues and the menu; the Stewards are responsible for the ceremonial; and the Speakers and Medals Committee identifies and secures speakers and recipients for the Society's two awards, the Saint Nicholas Society Medal of Merit and the Washington Irving Medal for Literary Excellence. The President is also very much involved.

St. Nick dinners are noted for their high spirits and good speakers, who attract greater interest, but are also in greater demand and often hard to access. Nevertheless, the Society has built up a distinguished roster of distinguished and well-known public figures who have accepted our invitations to speak and accept an award. As noted elsewhere in this issue, we shall honor the American writers, Billy Collins, at the Fall Stated Meeting, and E. L. Doctorow, at the 2007 Feast of St. Nicholas.

## Book Review

***The Original Knickerbocker: The Life of Washington Irving.* Andrew Burstein. New York: Basic Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2007. Pp. x + 420. Price: \$27.50 U.S.**

The appearance of a new biography of our founding spirit, Washington Irving, is a welcome event for Saint Nicholas members. The author, Andrew Burstein, a professor of history at the University of Tulsa, is a native New Yorker, and a graduate of Hackley School, in Irving's home territory, Tarrytown. He presents Irving not simply as a brilliant humorist and author of immortal tales, such as "Rip Van Winkle," and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," but also as a major influence in shaping the cultural and historical milieu of early-19th-century America.

On the cover of this biography, 19th-century-style subtitles characterize Irving as: "Ambassador, biographer, New York politico, and acclaimed American storyteller: How the legendary author of *Sleepy Hollow* shaped a nation." One notes the pun in calling Irving a "legendary" author, as though the creator of the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow," can be seen as a "legend" in his own right. Burstein shows Irving to have been a leading figure in bringing the United States into respected membership in the international literary community. At the same time, Irving—with his "Manhattan attitude, built on parody" (as in *Knickerbocker's History*, 1809), "which crystallized as *Knickerbocker New York*" (p. 332)—spurred the growth of a distinctively American literary tradition.

Burstein, as a historian, reminds us of the



importance of Irving's lengthy, carefully researched historical works, such as: *History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828); *A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (1829); *Astoria*, 2 vols. (1836); *Mahomet and His Successors*, 2 vols. (1849–50); and *Life of Washington*, 5 vols. (1855–59). Although these volumes are little read now, in their day they helped the young United States become aware of its sense of mission, and they were immensely popular—especially *Columbus*, which had an impressive record of sales, seeing "175 editions" between 1828 and 1900 (p. 196).

In the course of his discussion, Burstein comments on the popularity of the famous actor Joseph Jefferson, who became intimately identified with his stage portrayal of Rip Van Winkle. In the 19th century, literary works often reached a wide audience through dramatic performances, just as today works may be better known through film versions than through the original books. Doubtless many people who have never read anything by Irving are familiar with the animated film of the legend of Sleepy Hollow.

We are happy to record that the Saint Nicholas Society is twice mentioned (pp. 142, 284; however, as a result of an editing or typographical slip, the founding year is given as 1836, when it should of course be 1835). The Society is duly credited with contributing "to make Christmas a more significant time" in New York, and with helping to preserve the "Dutch-American legacy" of our city.

Francis J. Sypher

## SALMAGUNDI

Lauren Beth Oelkers and HAYDEN BAKER were married May 6, 2007 at St. Ann Roman Catholic Church, Naples, Florida. An attractive photo and detailed article appeared in *The New York Times*, Sunday, May 7, 2007.

THOMAS A. DeLONG is the author of *Two Lives Linked by a Love of China: Madame Chiang Kai-shek and Miss Emma Mills* (McFarland & Co., 2007; www.mcfarlandpub.com), based principally on letters and journals by Emma DeLong Mills, Madame Chiang's closest American friend, and Wellesley classmate of 1917. The resulting portrait gives new information on the development of Chinese-American relations from 1922 through the Franklin D. Roosevelt era. Softcover, 252 pp., \$39.95. The Colonial Dames of America Book Award Program has selected the volume as a Book of Merit nominee for 2007.

FRANK SYPHER has published volume 17 in his series relating to the prolific British poet, novelist, and critic Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802–1838): *Poems from the New Monthly Magazine* (Ann Arbor: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 2007). Her family stemmed from co. Hereford, whence came also several progenitors of American lines of the Landon family, among whom are Elizabeth Landon (b. 1683), who married Col. Robert Carter (1663–1732) of Virginia, and is an ancestor of U.S. Presidents William Henry Harrison and his grandson Benjamin Harrison; she was a sister of Letitia Landon's great-great-grandfather William Landon (1667–1729). Several Saint Nicholas members have lineage connections with the Landon family.

## New Members Elected

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Election</i>	<i>Ancestor</i>
George William Rabbe, Jr.	April 25, 2007	George Dennis
Lewis Stetson Allen	September 20, 2007	Metje Wessels
Gregory Michael Outwater	September 20, 2007	Frans Jacobsen van Oudewater

## 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>
Alexander P. Cannon	April 30, 1951	January 13, 2007
Coman Leavenworth	April 27, 1957	January 31, 2007
Denton Sayre Cox	May 6, 1991	March 3, 2007

## Genealogical Record Book in Preparation

At the May 2007 meeting, President John Shannon announced as one of his priority projects for the Society, the publication of a new genealogical record book containing lineages of members elected to the Society since 1980. The first such volume appeared in 1905, and subsequent volumes were published at intervals through 1980. The new volume, the tenth in the series, will present concise lineages for members elected to the Society from 1980 through May 2007, and will be fully indexed. It is planned to have bound books available in December.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS FALL 2007—SPRING 2008

**Thursday, September 20, 2007**  
Board of Managers – 20 West 44th Street

**Thursday, October 18, 2007**  
Fall Stated Meeting – The Racquet & Tennis Club, 370 Park Avenue

**Thursday, December 6, 2007**  
173rd Feast of St. Nicholas –  
Harvard Club of New York City,  
35 West 44th Street.

**Thursday, January 24, 2008**  
Board of Managers – 20 West 44th Street

**Thursday, February 28, 2008**  
Winter Stated Meeting

**Friday, March 28, 2008**  
Paas Festival

**Thursday, May 15, 2008**  
Spring Stated Meeting

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#### THE WEATHERCOCK

AN OCCASIONAL PUBLICATION  
OF THE SOCIETY, WRITTEN, EDITED,  
AND PRODUCED BY

FRANCIS J. SYPHER, JR.  
JOHN McC. SHANNON

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