

RIVERHEAD TOWN RECORDS

1792-1886



DR. ARTHUR CHANNING DOWNS, JR.
EDITOR

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE TOWN OF RIVERHEAD

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The publication of the **Riverhead Town Records 1792-1886** was ordered by the Town Board of the Town of Riverhead by a Resolution dated 1 November 1966. The members of the Town Board are as follows:

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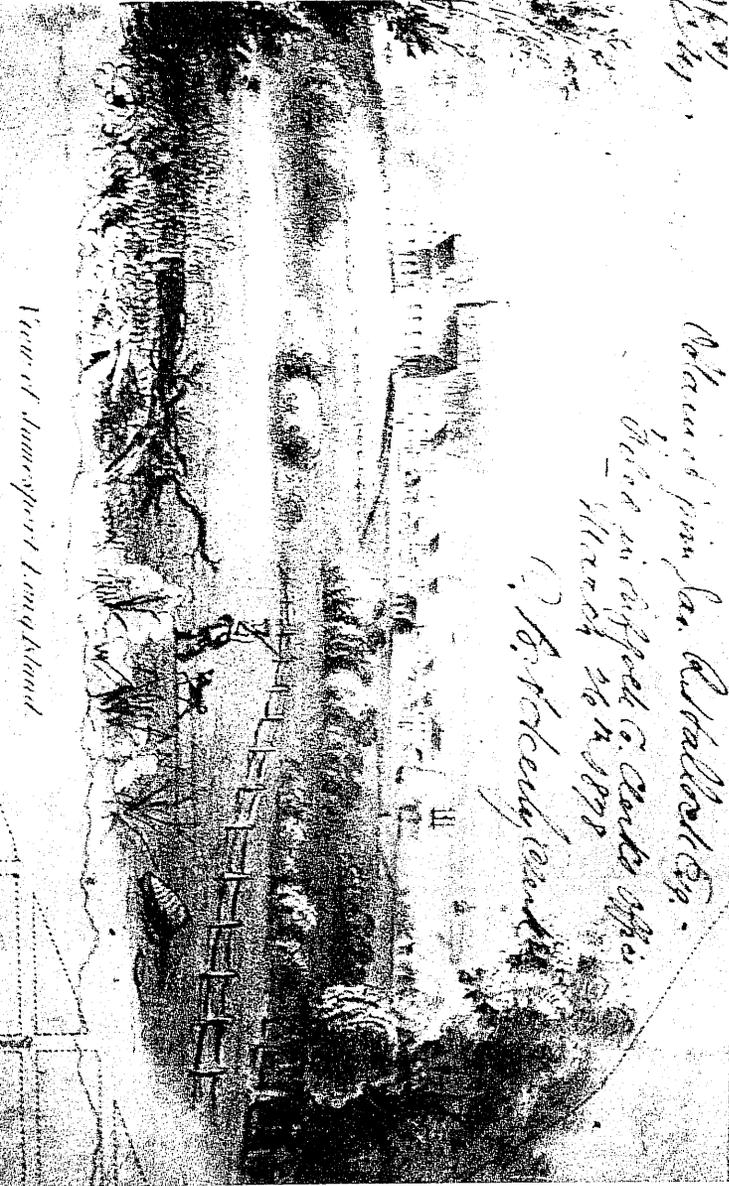
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 Mr. John L. Dayton
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 A NON-YELLOWING PAPER MADE TO LAST FOR CENTURIES.
 WATERMARKED.



“VIEW OF JAMESPORT, LONG ISLAND” Ca. 1840. Now called South Jamesport.

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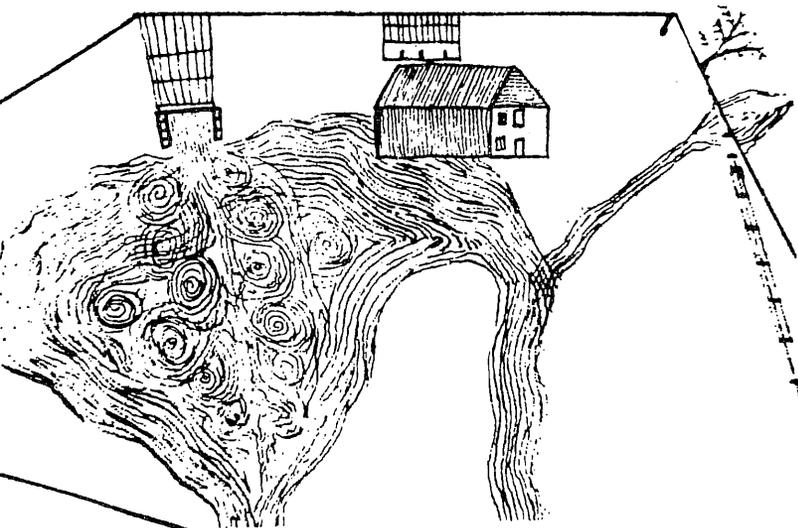
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Now Grangebél Park, Riverhead
(Detail of Frontis.)

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Photo made from old blueprint in SCHS. (Another original blueprint copy is in Suffolk County Center map room.) Location of original unknown. Details on pp. vi, 3, 81, 271 Frontis

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INTRODUCTION

THE PRESERVATION OF TOWN RECORDS

This, the first publication of Riverhead Town Records, occurs during the Town's 175th Anniversary year.

It should be remembered that very early in the history of the Town, Riverhead officials realized the importance of preserving records pertaining to their Town. In 1804 it was voted that "the Town Clerk gett all the Records from Southold Town Book belonging to this Town and Record them" (Liber A, p. 80). These records were copied into the front of Liber B.*

Later in the nineteenth century Riverhead acted with Southold in publishing the **Southold Records** up to 1792. Rev. Ephraim Whitaker explained the reasons for the publication:

"The very great value of these Records for many purposes; the difficulty of using them, on account of the antique penmanship and spelling in which they are written, and also because of the existence of one copy only; the natural desire of many a man to have a printed copy of his own possession for his own purposes, to be consulted at his own convenience; and especially the danger of the injury, or even the destruction of the original by some accident or calamity, as well as other considerations, caused the Town Meeting, on the first day of April, 1879, to vote, as stated in the Town Records, 'that a Committee of three be appointed to confer with a like Committee from the Towns of Riverhead and of Shelter Island in reference to printing the Town Records of this Town; and if it be thought proper and expedient on conference with such Committees, then to publish such records as come down to the time of the separation of the Town of Riverhead from this Town.'"

The Town of Riverhead also acted on the proposed publication on the same date, 1 April 1879. (Liber B, pp. 394-395; also see pp. 399, 404, 410.) Just over three years later the first volume of records*** was offered for sale at a price of three dollars per copy, plus twenty cents postage.**** At that

*[At a later date copies were also made in the book now known as **Riverhead Highway Records** 1.]

[Southold Town Records**, I, pp. x-xi.]

***[**Southold Town Records** . . . Printed by Order of the Towns of Southold and Riverhead, vol. 1. 1882. This contains Libers A and B of the old records. Volume 2, published in 1884, contains Liber C. Yet unpublished are Libers D, E, F, and G which contain many early and important records.]

****[Newspaper clippings relative to the publication of the **Southold Town Records**—dated 7 February 1882 and 17 April 1882—may be found in the **Salmon Record Scrap Book** on (unnumbered) pages 65, 66-67, S.C.H.S. Also see **Southold Town Records**, I, p. xi; II, p. iii. The **Riverhead Committee** for the first volume was composed of Orville B. Ackerly, Clerk of Suffolk County; Horace H. Benjamin, Esq., Clerk of Riverhead Town; and Jeremiah M. Edwards, who soon died and was replaced by Thaddeus H. Corwin. On the **Riverhead Committee** for the second volume was Horace H. Benjamin, Esq.; George F. Stackpole, Esq.; and Mr. S. Terry Hudson.]

time the Southold-Riverhead Committee for Publication observed: "The edition is limited, and all who desire to secure copies should order forthwith there being no doubt that in a few years it will be impossible to purchase copies at the present price". That prediction has long since come true, and can undoubtedly be made for the Riverhead Town Records published in 1967. In a very real sense the present publication is a continuation of the earlier venture, rather than a completely new one.

RIVERHEAD TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE BURNED

The Town Records narrowly escaped destruction by fire in 1909. The Town Clerk's office was then in the Review Building on the south side of Main Street. It happened that one Friday evening the Town Clerk, Mr. John H. Hagen, had stayed up late to work on election records. At 1:00 A.M. it was customary for the electricity to be turned off, so Mr. Hagen was forced to light his kerosene lamp to continue his work.

To his horror the lamp exploded in his hands. It was only "owing to Mr. Hagen's coolness under exacting conditions in closing the safe" that all but "a few unimportant" town records were saved in the rapidly spreading fire (Quotations from a report of the fire entitled "Review Office Burned" in the *Riverhead News*, 10 April 1909, p 1, col. 4.) The fact that the electric lights were off in the streets also hindered the arrival of the fire department, which had to "prowl around in the darkness that is relieved only by an occasional lantern gleam." The citizens immediately petitioned the Town for all-night lighting. (*Ibid*, p. 2, col. 1.) Action on this was approved by the Town Board on 22 December 1909. The Town Clerk was authorized to advertise for bids for lighting the Riverhead Lighting District with ninety lights, to be lighted from "sunset to sundown" (sic).

LIBERS A & B

Liber A contains the records of Town Meetings from the first meeting held in 1792 to 1804 inclusive. Liber A also contains various Town Accounts up to March 1865. The Town Meetings from 1805 to 1886 inclusive, as well as various Highway records are in **Liber B**. Libers A and B therefore overlap for the period 1805 to 1865. These two books have been rebound in tan cloth with red leather covers (at some date before 1935), and are in generally good condition, except that some of the writing has become faded. Interestingly, the fading of the ink is not proportionate to the age of the writing. Some of oldest writing is the darkest, whereas some of the faintest writing is from the 1850's and 1860's. (See below for more detailed information about the paper and ink.)

Liber B, as now bound, begins with a page numbered "6" in old ink.* Pages 6-7 contain a record entered in 1816. The earliest entries in the book are on pages 8-13, 14 (one entry of two), and 25-28. These are all dated 28 July 1804. Since these records are not on consecutive pages, and not even on the first surviving page, it is possible that the first five pages were blank and were discarded at the time the book was rebound.

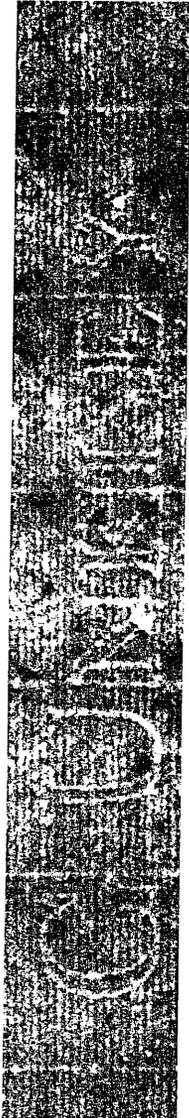
Most of the entries on the first pages (except pp. 6-7) are copies of eighteenth century Southold Records. The earliest record which is not a copy of older records is dated 4 September 1804, recorded 10 October 1804 (**Liber B**, p. 15.)

On **Liber B** pp. 31-32 is a list of the first thirteen Annual Town Meetings (and one Special Town Meeting), which are recorded in **Liber A**. The first Town Meeting recorded in **Liber B** is on page 33, dated 1805. (See pp. 278-280 of this volume.)

The paper used in **Liber A** is of particular interest because it was **manufactured in America** in the eighteenth century (before April 1792). When held to the light the paper shows the watermark "G. UNKLEY". (See illustration on next page.)

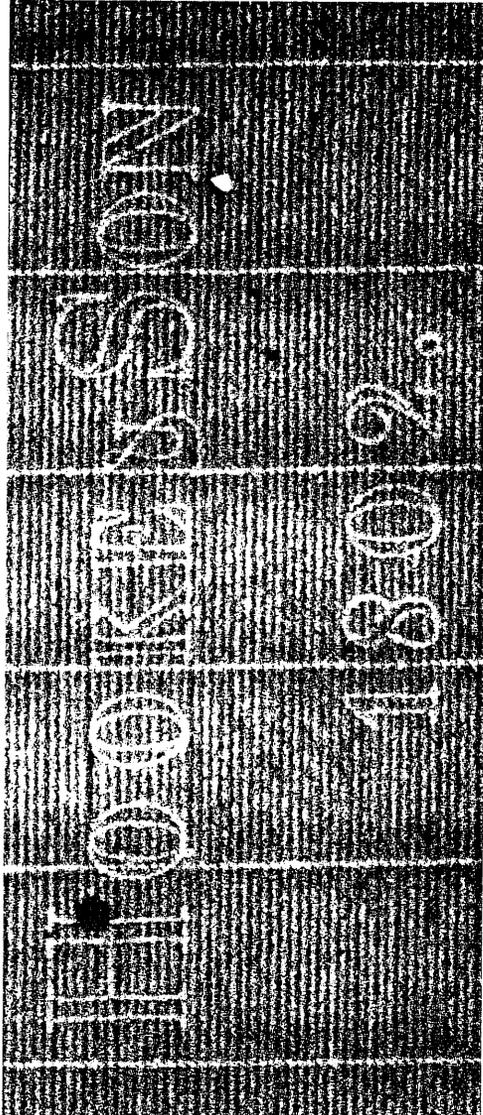
The following information about "G. UNKLEY" has been supplied by Mr. Harry F. Lewis, Curator of Museums, The Institute of Paper Chemistry, Appleton, Wisconsin (letter dated 9 December 1966): "His mill was apparently located on Saucon Creek in Lower Saucon Township of Northampton County, Pennsylvania. [Northampton County, Pennsylvania, borders on New Jersey and is roughly 140 miles west of Riverhead.] Apparently Unkley used three watermarks, the first one just Unkley, the second one **G. Unkley**, [as in **Riverhead Liber A**], and the third one is **GU**."

*[One sheet (blank except for an old notation, "Suffolk Avenue p. 225") precedes this page. It is in much better condition than the following pages, and appears to have been taken from the back of the book at the time of rebinding.]

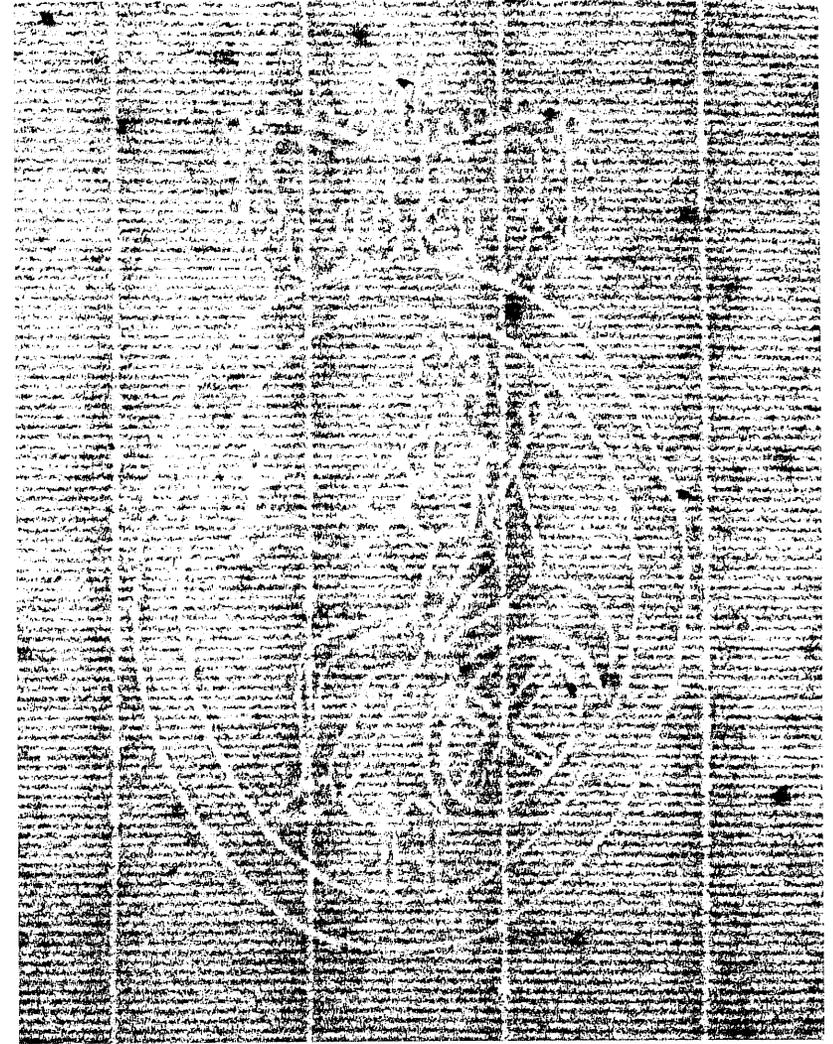


WATERMARK "CUNKLEY" From Liber A; full size.

(X-ray photographs of watermarks on pp. xii-xiii by courtesy of Mr. Harry F. Lewis, Curator of Museums, The Institute of Paper Chemistry, Appleton, Wisconsin.)



WATERMARK "HOOKE & SON 1829." From Liber B; full size.



WATERMARK SHOWING "BRITANNIA" AND LETTER "H".

From Liber B; full size.

In another letter (dated 23 March 1967) Mr. Lewis supplied this additional information:

"I have been going over some old correspondence in the Dard Hunter Watermark Collection and found a letter dated May 6, 1947 addressed to Mr. J. G. Magee, Jr., whose address was apparently Hamilton Court, 39th and Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The last paragraph of this letter reads as follows:

'Of George Unkley, I know that he acquired a property of sixty acres on Saucon Creek, near Hellertown, Pa. in 1802 and built himself a paper mill. In 1839 it was converted into a grist mill. He may have been a son of Henry Unkell who worked for Henry & Andrew Katz at Whitmarsh in 1774, at the Jacob Newhouse mill in Lower Merion in 1779, and for Daniel Sower in 1781.'

The original binding of Liber A was removed when the book was rebound. However, one sheet of the original eighteenth century marbled endpapers is preserved at the front of Liber A.

The paper in **Liber B** is of English manufacture; made in 1802 or shortly thereafter. The watermarks are "Hooke & Son 1802" and (on alternate pages) the image of a seated "Britannia" within an oval with the letter "H" at the bottom, all under a large crown. (See illustrations.) According to Mr. Lewis of the Institute of Paper Chemistry, Hooke's first name was Thomas. The paper in Liber A is 7½" w x 12¼" h; in Liber B it is 8" w x 12½" h.

Ink. Libers A, B, and C (to 1886) were written with ink which now appears brown or, less commonly, gray or black. The only exception to this is writing of March and April 1858 when a blue ink was used. The **Assessment** and **Jurors Lists** are also in brown or blackish ink except for the **Jurors List** of July 1854 which is in blue ink. The undated Riverhead "Ear Marks" are in the same blue ink used in the Town Records of 1854 and 1858. From other evidence, it appears that these undated records are in fact of the 1850's as suggested by the blue ink. (No blue ink is found in Libers C and D until after 1900.)*

*[In the records of the Supervisors of Suffolk County, blue ink was used for the entries of October 1838 and for the annual entries from October 1841 through 1851. The earliest reference to the sale of blue ink in Riverhead which has been noted is an advertisement by G. O. Wells, Riverhead, L. I., dated January, 1865: "Having fitted up a New Store, I would most respectfully beg leave to call attention to my Stock . . . [including] Black, Blue, Carmine [red] and Indelible Inks" (Hutchins' Improved Family Almanac - 1865.)]

LIBER C

The first several hundred of the 720 pages in Liber C contain various Town records from 1860 to 1887. The book was then unused for some years, but entries began to be made again in 1897 and continued until 1936.* Only the earlier records are printed here.

Liber C retains its original leather cover, though somewhat battered. The inside of the front cover contains this label: "WILBUR & HASTINGS, STATIONERS, Printers, Lithographers and Blank Book Manufacturers, 40 FULTON ST. NEW YORK." The unwatermarked paper is pre-paginated and lined, 7¾" w x 13" h.

ASSESSMENT AND JURORS LISTS

Apart from Libers A, B, and C of the Town Records, probably the most valuable early records in the Town Clerk's Office are the **Assessment Rolls** (1819, 1820, 1821, 1823, 1829, 1835, and 1836) and **Jurors Lists** (1842, 1845, 1848, 1851, 1854, 1857, 1860 and 1863.) The Assessment Rolls are virtually "censuses" of heads of households in Riverhead Town for the years named, and include non-resident as well as resident landowners. The lists of Jurors are of particular interest because they state the person's occupation.**

Some Assessment Rolls, and probably other Town records, were apparently never deposited in the Town Hall. Some of these have been given to the Suffolk County Historical Society by persons whose families had retained them. They include the Assessments for 1810, 1817, 1820, 1824, 1825, 1826, 1839, 1841, 1854, and a fire tax list of 1846.

The Assessment Rolls in the Town Clerk's office, as well as those of 1810 and 1817, have been prepared for publication. At almost the last moment (late June 1967) it was discovered that the length of the Index would prohibit their inclusion in the present volume. (Also omitted for lack of space are miscellaneous records and notes which the Editor had hoped to include.)

*[The major portion of the records from 1887 to the turn of the century—including Town Meetings—are in Liber D.]

**[These Juror and Assessment Lists "disappeared" from the Town Hall sometime after 1935. With the help of Supervisor Robert Vojvoda they were recovered by the Editor in October 1966 from the bottom of a cardboard box in the basement of the Water District Building. As far as can be determined, all nineteenth-century records which were in the Town Clerk's Office as late as 1935, when an inventory was made, have been recovered.]

BIRTHS, DEATHS, MARRIAGES

The Town Clerk's Office in Riverhead contains records of births, marriages and deaths beginning with February 1881. The records also contain a very few delayed birth registrations, the earliest noted being 1872. No earlier vital statistics are preserved in the Town Hall, except for a few notations of death which will be found in Libers A and B of the Town Records. It is not certain to what extent records were kept before 1881. An Act for the registry of births, marriages and deaths was passed by the State Legislature 28 April 1847 (*Laws of the State of New York* [Albany, 1847] vol. I, pp. 147-148.) What seem to be complete records of births, deaths and marriages for Riverhead for the years 1847, 1848 and 1849 have been discovered recently and will be found reprinted in the present work. Similar records for later years, if they ever existed, have apparently been lost or destroyed long ago.

The most extensive other source of marriage and death records for the North Fork is the *Salmon Records* (1696-1811) which was published by the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society in 1918, edited by William A. Robbins. The volume is not indexed, but an unpublished index prepared by Mrs. Emma M. Reeves, of Mesa, Arizona, is in the Suffolk County Historical Society. Also in the Historical Society is a unique copy of *The Salmon Record Scrap Book* (1921) which contains another version of the "Salmon Records" plus marriages and deaths continued until 1880 by N. Hubbard Cleveland. These records are in alphabetical order, except for some Riverhead records for 1880, which are on (unnumbered) pages 68-69 (some additional names of persons who died away from Riverhead, but were buried here, are at the end of the list on page 69.) There are some variations between the *Salmon Records* and the *The Salmon Record Scrap Book* so both copies should be checked. Although these records contain thousands of names, they are by no means complete. Many names appear in the Riverhead Town Records which are not found in the above mentioned lists, another reason why the Town Records should prove of value to historians and genealogists.

The *Salmon Records* sometimes identify a death as occurring in the bounds of what is now Riverhead Town. The earliest such reference noted is dated 1725: John Youngs' wife Ann, age 39 at "oquabogs" (SR, p. 16.) This does not mean the hamlet of Aquebogue, but the area made up by the several Aquebogue Divisions which extended from west of Mattituck to Wading River. Aquebogue is also found spelled "Horkerbok", "Hocabogue", etc. Specific references to **Riverhead** occur three times in the *Salmon Records*. The earliest is dated 26 March 1745/46: "St (or "Sr") Jn. Howell Drown'd at ye Riverhead" (SR, p. 30.) The other entries are as follows: December 1779, Richard Howel (died at) Riverhead; 7 September 1780, Joseph Wickham's wife Mary (died) at Riverhead.

Wading River is first mentioned in an entry of 12 October 1754 "Benj Pain (died) Last week at Wading River" (SR, p. 39.)

James Terry died at "**Baiting hollers**" in 1787 (SR, p. 60) and "Hinniry" Wells died at **Fresh Pond** in 1792 (SR, p. 63), these being the first references noted for these localities. The *Salmon Records* are almost certainly not complete, but on the other hand some of the deaths listed no doubt occurred in Riverhead Town even though not so specified. For example James Fanning's son death on 18 March 1732/33 is recorded without location, but James Fanning lived on present Main Street, Riverhead, and the son was no doubt Richard who was buried on the farm there. (See Walter F. Brooks, *History of the Fanning Family* pp. 104, 781.)

THE TRANSCRIPTION AND PRINTING OF THE RECORDS

The copying of the handwritten Records for transmission to the printers was a difficult and exacting job. The publication of the present volume in a matter of months was to a great extent made possible by the diligence and dedication of the transcribers. Their names are:

Mrs. Norman Tye
Mrs. Edward Kukla
Mrs. Eugene Woodhull

After transcription all of the typed copy was proof-read against the original records by the Editor. After it was set in type the printed copy was proof-read twice, first by the printers, and then again by the Editor who re-checked it against the original records.

The Index was prepared by Mrs. Kukla and the Editor.

The technical excellence of the present volume is due to the careful attention of Mr. Harold Hassel and his staff at The Long Islander. Such refinements as the small raised letters (as in "Esq^r"), which must be inserted by hand, would have been prohibitively expensive but for Mr. Hassel's kindness. This volume was set in type by David Naliboff and proofread by Margaret O'Prey. Everyone who has printing done hopes to find dedicated craftsmen, and Riverhead Town has been especially fortunate in this regard.

Every attempt was made to follow exactly the spelling of the original records. The errors in spelling, as well as mathematics, which the reader will soon detect are—as far as humanly possible—not printing errors, but those of the early Town Clerks. Sometimes the unusual spelling of a word is indicative of the way the word was then pronounced, and therefore has a particular interest for us today. In some instances the writing in the original records is so cursive that it is impossible to determine what spelling was intended, although the word itself may be obvious. In such cases the word given its correct spelling. The endings of abbreviated words are often especially difficult. Initial letters, particularly middle initials in names, are sometimes very hard to read with certainty. The letters "T" and "F", as well as "L" and "S" may be indistinguishable as written. Every effort has been made to ascertain what initial was intended, but it is impossible to guarantee that 100% accuracy has been achieved. Not all of the Town Clerks were poor penmen, however. The earliest were fine writers indeed, but the high standards of the early years were unfortunately not always maintained.

Punctuation is so seldom used by the early Town Clerks, that one almost wonders if it were an invention unknown in the early nineteenth century. The lack of punctuation is more apparent in the printed version than in the original handwritten records, for the penman had the possibility of

many variations in spacing, letter size, and so on, which cannot be recreated with printer's type. **Bold-face type** for headings and individual words has been used arbitrarily by the Editor with the hope that it would improve legibility, and to some extent recreate the intent of the original writers.

Any additions by the Editor to the body of the records will be found in square brackets []. Parentheses found in the printed version also occur in the original, except those added around words which have been crossed out or erased, but such words are always footnoted.

The reader who might make a random comparison of the printed text with the original records should note that some page headings extend across two facing pages in the original records. For example, the words "Overseer of the Poor account with the Town of Riverhead" extend across pages 241 and 242; the words "Town of Riverhead" being on the latter page. In order not to cut the heading in two, it must be printed as though written entirely on page 241. The words "Town of Riverhead" therefore do not appear as part of the printed text of page 242.

One feature of the original records which could not be reproduced economically is the large hand-drawn brackets which are sometimes found beside a group of names. In the printed version the brackets are replaced by a vertical row of colons. Sometimes not all names in a group are included in a bracket. In the example below, brackets (in the original) embrace all names on the left side, but only the first two names on the right side. In other words, only the first two names are indicated as "qualified" as "Commissioners of high Ways".

Commissioners	:	Nathaniel Griffing	:
of high Ways	:	Micah Owen	:
	:	Henry Hudson	:
			: Qualified

ABBREVIATIONS

Most of the abbreviations found in the Records will be well-known to the reader, e.g. "Jun.", or "Jur.", for "Junior". The final letters of abbreviated words are sometimes almost (or completely) illegible. In some instances the Town Clerk evolved his own abbreviations as he went along. "Amount" sometimes changed to "Amt", "Ant", and "At" as it was repeated on one page (e.g. Liber A, p. 201.) The following are abbreviations which will be found recurring frequently:

D, Dr = Debit

D, Do = Ditto

a/c = Account

In the footnotes, the following abbreviations may be found.

RHR = **Riverhead Highway Records**—I, Town Hall, Riverhead. Records of highways found in Libers A and B were re-copied into this book 1878-1881.

SCHS = **Suffolk County Historical Society**, Riverhead, N. Y.

SR = **The Salmon Records** ed. by William A. Robbins, New York Genealogical and Biographical Society (1918).

SRSB = **Salmon Record Scrap Book**, compiled by N. Hubbard Cleveland from newspaper clippings (1921). Unique copy in SCHS, photostatic copy in New York Public Library, Fifth Avenue, New York City.

Although not strictly an abbreviation, it might be noted that names such as "Daniel" and "Nathaniel" are perhaps often written "Danul" and "Nathanul" in the Town Records. When "i's" are not dotted it is often impossible to be sure which spelling was intended, so the proper spelling is used.

THE FISCAL YEAR

Riverhead Town's fiscal year now begins on the first of January. But in the Records contained in this volume, it will be observed that the "year" began and ended in late March or early April. This was a holdover from an ancient calendar system according to which the year began in March. This system was still in effect in the early colonial period (early seventeenth century), when the **year-date** did not change until the 25th of March. (Much confusion can result in reading the early Southold and Southampton Records when the date is in January, February or March. For example, "1 January 1641" was the next day after "31 December 1641", and was actually 1 January 1642 as now reckoned.)^a

Later in the seventeenth century "double dating" was used for dates falling in January, February and March, and a date such as "1 January 1675/76" might be found written.

By the time the earliest Riverhead Town Records were written double-dating had long since been discontinued, and the year-date changed on January the first. However, in keeping the accounts, the end of March (or early April) continued to be used as the beginning and end of the fiscal year.

At the beginning of the new fiscal year the annual elections were held. This was almost always on the first Tuesday in April (for the period of this volume, 1792-1886.) Only in three years was the day not a Tuesday. Assuming the day-date to have been written correctly, elections were held on a Monday in 1835, 1841, and 1859.

^a[The sawmill which John Tucker (or Tooker) and Joseph Horton were given permission to build "neere the head of the River" was to be built within three years from "the seaventh day of ffebruarie 1659" (Southold Town Records, I, 212.) This was therefore 7 February 1660, and the men had until 7 February 1663 to complete the sawmill.]

AMERICAN POST-COLONIAL MONETARY SYSTEMS

The Town Accounts were kept in pounds (£), shillings (s.), and pence (d.) until it was voted in 1815 that the accounts be kept in dollars and cents (Liber A, p. 121). Understandably, the older system was continued in everyday usage by some of those who had known it all their lives, just as today many of us would continue to use feet and inches even though the metric system might be adopted as the official standard for measurement. (Use of pounds and shillings in accounts after the Revolutionary War in no way indicates British sympathies, as one writer has suggested in describing the Riverhead Records.) Dollars and cents were also in circulation in Riverhead well before being officially adopted for the Town Records in 1815*

1 pound (£)	= 20 shillings	= \$2.50**
1 shilling (s.)	= 12 pence	= .12½
4 farthings	= 1 penny (d.)	= one cent (actually \$.0096)

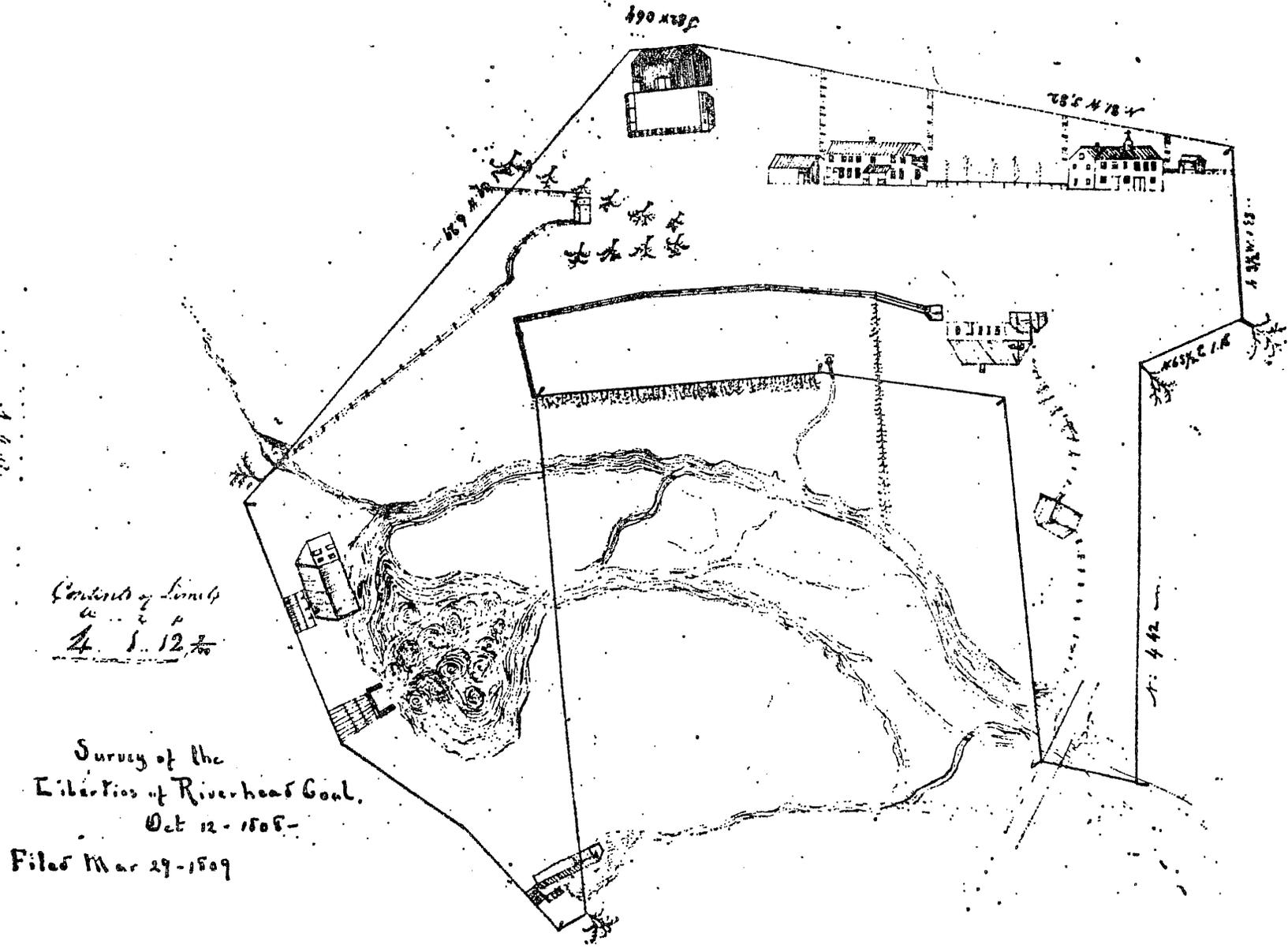
*[In the records of the Supervisors of Suffolk County most of the sums mentioned are in dollars from October 1798 on. Dollars are sometimes mentioned in the Riverhead Town Records before 1815, e.g. see p. 40 (Liber A, p. 64.)]

**[The dollar equivalents have been determined from entries such as one of 1809 (Liber A, p. 95) where \$400. is given as equal to £161/12s./0d.]

SURVEYING MEASUREMENTS

The Highway Commission records sometimes contain terms of measurement not commonly known. The following table may prove helpful when reading these records.

1 link	7.92 inches
1 rod	25 links
1 rod	16½ feet
1 rod	1 pole
1 chain	4 rods
1 acre	10 sq. chains or 160 sq. rods
1 sq. mile	640 acres



Contents of Liberty
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Survey of the
 Liberties of Riverhead Coal.
 Oct 12 - 1808 -

Filed Mar 29 - 1809

SURVEY OF THE LIBERTIES OF RIVERHEAD GOAL, OCT. 12, 1808 — Photo made from old blueprint in SCHS. (Another original blueprint copy is in Suffolk County Center map room.) Location of original unknown. Details on pp. vi, 3, 81, 271.