

HALE-SITE

Presented to
Mr J. J. Scudder
with the compliments of
George Taylor
July 12 1897.

BCE 2088



THE purpose of this sketch is to set forth so much of the history of Nathan Hale as bears directly upon his capture on the shore of Huntington Bay, L. I., and to connect the same with the particular spot now called Halesite, and marked with a memorial stone.

The reader is referred to existing sources of information, and notably to the volume by Hon. I. W. Stuart, herein referred to, for fuller details of the life of Nathan Hale.

GEORGE TAYLOR,
HUNTINGTON, LONG ISLAND,
Decoration Day, 1897.

ceive at once a hearty welcome, Hale walked deliberately down to the water side—when, lo! to his utter surprise, as the barge struck the shore, she proved to be British! He attempted at once to retrace his steps. A loud summons commanded him to stop. He glanced over his shoulder and saw the whole crew now standing erect and levelling at him with their muskets. ‘Surrender or die!’ an imperious voice exclaimed. He was close within reach. Their shot would inevitably prove fatal. Escape was impossible. He turned, and complying with their command, passed on board the barge. The guardship to which she belonged—the Halifax, Capt. Quarme—and from which it is said, she had been sent ashore for water, lay off at a little distance, hid from sight by the intervening point of Lloyd’s Neck”*—*Life of Capt. Nathan Hale, by I. W. Stuart, Chapters 5 and 6, pp. 101-112.*

*She lay off the east side of the Neck to protect a body of men who were employed in cutting wood for the British garrison at New York. So says Thompson, the historian, of Long Island.—*I. W. Stuart.*



In Volume 2, Page 70, of the printed records of the Town of Huntington, appears a record of land laid out for Capt. Thomas Fleett, on East Neck, at Huntington Bay, viz.:

“A record of Captt. Fleett’s land in ye East Neck, Aprill ye 11, 1690. Laid out for Captt’n Thomas Fleett, according to ye within specifiende grant of hundred ninety-two acres on ye East Necke facing North to the great harbor in breadth eighty-four (84) Rod on ye West side is left a hyeway of three Rod next to the beach between Jonathan Rodgers bogie meadowe and ye Capttn’s land, in length one hundred seventie-two rod the front and rear of an equall bredth.” . . .

This grant to Capt. Thomas Fleet included the land where now stands the memorial to Nathan Hale, the Martyr Spy of the American Revolution

The highway reserved on the western side thereof, being the present highway which runs past the house occupied by Titus Conklin.



“Some one,” reasoned Washington, “must penetrate the British camp,” . . . and he communicated this opinion to his Board of Officers. The Board agreed fully with the views of the Commander-in-Chief, and Colonel Knowlton was instructed to select some competent person for the hazardous office. . . . Knowlton, therefore, appealed to officers—to those of his own regiment, and some of others, assembled for the purpose—and in the name of the Commander-in-Chief, invited the service. The solemn pause which followed his appeal, was long unbroken . . . and one after another of the officers present, as Knowlton repeated his appeal, individually, declined. His task seemed hopeless . . . From the group of reluctant, half-resentful officers—at the moment when all hope for the enterprise seemed at an end, and the heart of Knowlton, saddened with the thought of future misfortune, was fast yielding to the torture of disappointment, there came a voice with the painfully

thrilling, yet cheering words: “*I will undertake it!*” That was the voice of Captain Nathan Hale. He had come late into the assembly of officers. Scarcely yet recovered from a severe illness, his face still pale, without his accustomed strength of body, yet firm and ardent as ever of soul, he volunteered at once, reckless of its danger, and though doubtless appalled, not vanquished by its disgrace, to discharge the repudiated trust. His family, his fellow-officers, many of them remonstrated at his choice . . . and none with more assiduity than Gen. William Hull, then an officer of the same grade in the army with Hale, and who for three years was Hale’s companion in college, and his intimate afterwards in the camp, enforced his views with all the pride natural to the soldier, and with all the warmth of private friendship. Hear Hale’s reply:

“I think I owe to my country the accomplishment of an object so important, and so much desired by the Commander of her armies, and I know no other mode of obtaining the information than by assuming a disguise and passing into the enemy’s camp. I am fully sensible of the consequences of discovery and capture in such a situation. But for a year I have been attached to the army and have not rendered any material service, while receiving a compensation for which I make no return. Yet I am not influenced by the expectation of promotion or pecuniary reward. I wish to be useful, and every kind

of service necessary for the public good becomes honorable by being necessary. If the exigencies of my country demand a peculiar service, its claims to the performance of that service are imperious."

"He spoke," says Hull, "with warmth and decision." ("Life of Capt. Nathan Hale," by I. W. Stuart, Chapter IV, pp. 90-94.)



He stood at last—the few simple preparations being ended—elevated on one of the rounds of the gallows ladder—ready for the fatal fall. The coarse voice of Cunningham, whose eye watched every arrangement, was now heard scoffingly demanding from his victim his dying speech and confession. . . . With a voice full, distinct, slow—which came mournfully thrilling from the very depths of his being—in words which patriotism will forever enshrine and every monument to Hale's memory sink deepest into its stone, and every temple of liberty blazon highest on its entablature—at the very moment when the tightening knotted cord was to crush the life from his young body forever—he ejaculated—as the last immortal testament of his heroic soul to the world he was leaving: "*I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.*" ("Life of Captain Nathan Hale," by I. W. Stuart, Chapter VII, pp. 140-142).

"While at Yale, Hale took a most active and leading part as a member of the Linonian Society in this institution. He was the first of his own class to be chosen its Chancellor, or presiding officer. With Timothy Dwight, afterwards the distinguished President of Yale College, and James Hillhouse, afterwards the celebrated civilian and Senator in Congress from Connecticut, he co-operated in founding its library.* The Spectator, Addison's Evidences, Paradise Lost, Young's Night Thoughts, Prior's Poems, the Travels of Cyrus, and the Elements of Criticism—works which indicate the soundness of his own literary taste—were among the books bestowed by himself for this purpose." *Life of Capt. Nathan Hale, by I. W. Stuart, Chap. 1, p. 20.*

"How beautiful is death, when earned by virtue!
Who would not be that youth? What pity is it
That we can die but once to serve our country!"

† "Cato," a tragedy by Addison.

Act 4, Scene 4.

* It seems to have escaped the attention of the biographers of Hale that there is apparently a close connection between his acquaintance with and favor for the writings of Addison, two of whose works were among those donated by him to the library of the Linonian Society of Yale College, and the sublime sentiment expressed in his last words: "*I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.*"

† The compiler thinks the quotation, above given from Addison's "Cato," is the connecting link between Hale's knowledge of Addison's writings and his own unselfish and lofty utterance—G. T.



Erected 1846 at South Coventry, Conn.

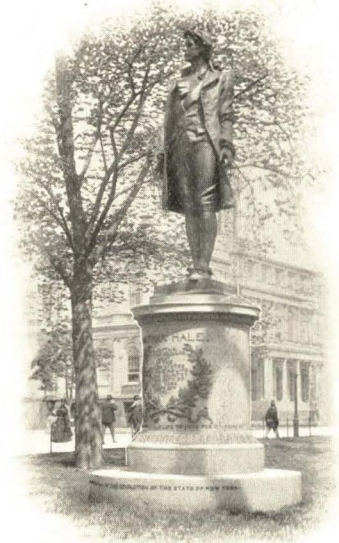
Inscriptions on Monument:

(East Side) CAPTAIN NATHAN HALE,

(North Side) Born at Coventry, June 6, 1755,

(South Side) Died at New York, Sept. 22, 1776.

(West Side) "I only regret that I have but
one life to lose for my country."



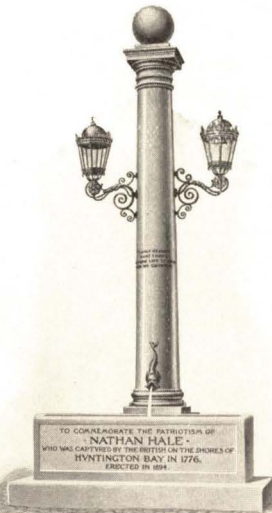
Erected 1893 in City Hall Park, New York.

Inscriptions on Monument :

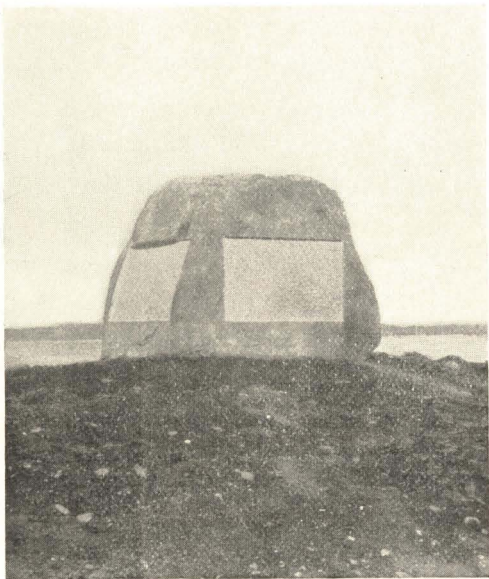
Nathan Hale, a Captain in the regular army
of the United States, who gave his life
for his country in the city of New
York, Sept. 22, 1776.

"I regret that I have but one life to lose for
my country."

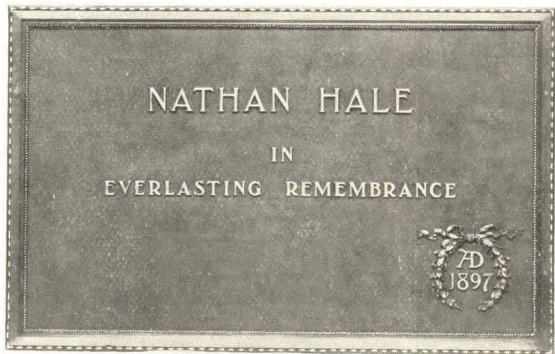
Erected by the Sons of the Revolution of the
State of New York.



Erected in Main Street, Town of Huntington,
Long Island, 1894.



This boulder, weighing 45 tons, on which are set three memorial bronze tablets to Nathan Hale, was removed to its present location, on the shore of Huntington Bay, in the Autumn of 1896, from the field on Hale-site, nearest that where formerly stood the home of William Johnson, who is mentioned in the sketch as giving shelter and information to Nathan Hale.



(South Side.)

HIS ANCESTORS WERE THE MALES OF KENT, ENGLAND.
HE WAS BORN AT COVENTRY, CONN. JUNE 6, 1755.
GRADUATED FROM YALE COLLEGE SEPTEMBER 8, 1773.
ENLISTED AS LIEUTENANT 7TH CONN. REGIMENT JUL. 6, 1775.
APPOINTED CAPTAIN IN CONTINENTAL ARMY SEP. 1, 1775.
VOLUNTEERED AS SPY SEPTEMBER 1776.
CAPTURED BY THE BRITISH ON THIS SHORE SEP. 1776.
EXECUTED AT NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 22, 1776.

(East Side.)

"I WILL UNDERTAKE IT.... I THINK I OWE TO MY
COUNTRY THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF AN OBJECT
SO IMPORTANT, AND SO MUCH DESIRED BY THE
COMMANDER OF HER ARMIES.... YET I AM NOT
INFLUENCED BY THE EXPECTATION OF PROMOTION
OR PECUNIARY REWARD. I WISH TO BE USEFUL,
AND EVERY KIND OF SERVICE NECESSARY FOR THE
PUBLIC GOOD, BECOMES HONORABLE BY BEING
NECESSARY. IF THE EXIGENCIES OF MY COUNTRY
DEMAND A PECULIAR SERVICE, ITS CLAIMS TO THE
PERFORMANCE OF THAT SERVICE ARE IMPERIOUS."

"I ONLY REGRET THAT I HAVE BUT
ONE LIFE TO GIVE FOR MY COUNTRY."

(West Side.)



IN the preface to his life of Captain Nathan Hale, the Martyr Spy of the American Revolution, published in Hartford, Conn., in 1856, the Hon. I. W. Stuart, the author, quoted Stephen Hempstead, the friend and companion of Hale, as writing: "I do think it hard that Hale, who was equally brave, young, accomplished, learned and honorable, should be forgotten on the very threshold of his fame, even by his countrymen; that while our own historians have done honor to the memory of Andre, Hale should be unknown; that while the remains of the former have been honored even by our own countrymen, those of the latter should rest among the clods of the valley, undistinguished, unsought and unknown." And referring to the then "dearth of memoir with regard to Hale—feeling that his life signally deserved an effort for its exhibition"—Mr. Stuart wrote: "We began to look for materials for the purpose. We consulted documents of every kind within our

reach that might possibly contain them . . . We consulted also many aged persons, in different places—several who were personally acquainted with Hale . . . We procured, also, affidavits, or well authenticated statements from various persons upon Long Island, who were contemporaries of Hale, and conversant with his fate—as from Robert Townsend, a farmer of Oyster Bay, who heard the details of his capture from the British officer who seized him, Captain Quarme—from Solomon Wooden, a ship-builder, in 1776, near the place of Hale's capture, and familiar with its incidents—from the families of Jesse Fleet* and Samuel Johnson,† who lived at Huntington, East Neck, upon the very spot where he was made a prisoner." . . .

On Page 101 of this volume Mr. Stuart wrote of Nathan Hale as follows: "His passage across the Sound was prosperous, and about two hours before daybreak the little craft, which bore him gliding

*The house of Jesse Fleet stood where "Locust Lodge" Hotel now stands—G. T.

†William Johnson, father of Samuel Johnson, here referred to, is mentioned on Page 102 of Stuart's book, as giving shelter and information to Nathan Hale. The land of William Johnson is mentioned in a deed of Moses Scudder to Zebulon Fleet, dated May 1st, 1820, as adjoining the land now (1897) called Halesite. The descendants of William and Samuel Johnson now live on the east side of Huntington Harbor, about half a mile from the spot where stood the house of William Johnson.—G. T.

midway between Eaton and Lloyd's Necks, hove to near the shore of East or Great Neck—an elevated tract of land, remarkable for its extensive and picturesque, but then lonely scenery, on the east side of the harbor of Huntington. A boat was immediately lowered, Hale took his station in the stern, and four stout oarsmen propelled him quickly to the shore. The point where he landed was a neighborhood known as "*The Cedars*," and is still so called at the present day. One Jesse Fleet had there a farm—still, we understand, in the tenure of his family—and near his dwelling stood that also of Widow Rachel Chichester, familiarly called "Mother Chich"*—who, herself a Loyalist, made her home a rendezvous somewhat famous for all the Tories of her region. Hale passed this dangerous vicinity in safety, and following the course of a road, which led from the beach towards a settlement on the east side of Huntington harbor, after about a mile's walk reached, in the centre of a large field the residence of Mr. William Johnson. Attracted by a light streaming through a window, Hale, it is affirmed on good authority, approached the house with a quick and assured step. The door was opened by Mr. Johnson himself, who, after a confidential interview, gave Hale such information as his case re-

*The tavern of Widow Chichester (Mother Chich) stood about midway between the Nathan Hale Memorial and the residence of Mr. Titus Conklin.—G. T.

quired, and the comforts also of a hearty breakfast, and a bed to rest upon for a few hours. "When the morning had somewhat advanced," says the account from which we derive these facts, "the stranger departed"

We have no means of tracing his progress hence to New York and back to the point of his capture. We know that, when taken, exact drawings of the works of the enemy, with accompanying descriptions and notes, were found between the soles of his pumps. We know that several days elapsed between his departure from the American camp and his capture.*

"From the midst of all these dangers, Hale started—undetected and unharmed—on his return to the American camp, until he reached that point on the shore near Huntington, where he first landed, and where it had been arranged that a boat of his own countrymen should meet him and set him over to the Connecticut main. There he is now at 'The Cedars'—alone. It was morning—early—the time of his arrival at this point. It was also still—a solitude compared with the country he had left behind

*"Capt. Hale went away—was gone about a fortnight before I knew what was become of him. When he left us he told me he had got to be absent awhile, and wanted I should take care of his things, and if the army moved before he returned, have them moved, too. When he went away he did not tell me where he was going."—*Testimony of Asher Wright* (Hale's attendant in camp).

him. His ear could not perceive the echo of one hostile tread, nor did he dream, at such a time and place, remote as he thought himself from any British station, that he could be intercepted. He started forth to reconnoitre, expecting behind some sheltering headland, in some snug inlet or within some little channel thickly canopied with trees and bushes, to find the wished-for boat. It did not, however, immediately appear, and feeling secure in his treble disguise of dress, manner and conversation, Hale betook himself for awhile, according to one account of the transaction, to that Tory rendezvous of which we have already spoken—the tavern of 'Mother Chich'*—and from this point was soon betrayed.

* Doctor Ray, of Huntington, Long Island, who has given much attention to Hale's fate, says that in a few days after Hale left Mr. Johnson, having, during the intermediate time, passed through Long Island to New York City and returned by the same route, making memoranda of the information he had gathered, he again appeared at "The Cedars," and, feeling secure in the simplicity of his dress, as well as in his disguised manner and address, entered the tavern of Widow Chichester, familiarly called "Mother Chich." "A number of persons," proceeds Dr. Ray, "were seated in the room, and, as he had to wait several hours for the appearance of a boat to convey him away, he trusted to his ready powers of conversation to make himself agreeable, and to avert suspicion. A moment after a man, with a familiar face, left the room.

"Long before the time had elapsed for the arrival of the vessel, expected by the stranger, Widow Chiches-

According to another account, he continued his lookout along the shore for the expected boat up to the very moment of his capture. Be these circumstances as they may have been, all the accounts we have received agree, in the main, as to the manner in which he was finally seized—and it was as we shall now narrate: A barge, to all appearances such an one as Hale was expecting, quietly impelled, was seen approaching the shore. Confident of the friendly character of the crew, and expecting to re-

ter suddenly announced to her guests that a strange boat was seen approaching the shore. This news produced consternation and scampering among the Loyalists, while the breast of the stranger thrilled with joy as he left the bar-room for the beach, where the boat had already struck. Soon he found himself within range of several muskets pointed at him, while a voice cried out: 'Surrender or die!' In a moment he was seized by what proved to be a party from a British armed vessel, lying around the point of Lloyd's Neck, out of view from 'The Cedars.' To his mortification and astonishment, he discovered among the boat's crew the very person who had so suddenly left the tavern as he entered the door.

"Longer concealment was useless, and the stranger avowed himself to be Nathan Hale. He left the American camp, at Harlem Heights, at the request of Gen. Washington, to ascertain the condition of the British forces on Long Island. He was taken to New York by water, examined by Gen. Howe, and condemned to be hung as a spy, which sentence was carried into effect the next day, with circumstances of aggravated cruelty, by Capt. Cunningham, the Provost Marshal."—*J. W. Stuart.*