

In Memoriam

Robert P. Rushmore, 1928 – 2019



Robert P. Rushmore of Garden City died on September 27, 2019 at the age of 91. A retired English professor, he was a trustee and officer of the Nassau County Historical Society for many years, as well as an editor of this *Journal* who wrote numerous articles on Long Island history.

Robert Rushmore could trace his Long Island roots back to Thomas Rushmore who came to Hempstead by 1657, after nearly a decade in Connecticut. On his maternal side, Hans Cristoffels (a name later Anglicized to Christopher) emigrated from Holland before 1664, first to Flatbush, Long Island, and then to Staten Island.

Robert graduated from Baldwin High School and then served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps from 1946-1947. He received his B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1950) and an M.A. from Columbia University (1953). He also earned a Master of Philosophy degree from Columbia in 1977. He taught English at the University of Georgia in Athens (1953-1962), Farleigh Dickinson University (1963), CUNY's Hunter College and Lehman College (1964-1968), and at Nassau Community College (1969-1985). Professor Rushmore published an article on "The Criticism of W. H. Auden," which appeared in *Shenandoah: The Washington & Lee University Review* 14, no. 3 (1963): 2-57, and donated his collection of more than a hundred items about the Anglo-American poet Auden to the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1988.

Robert Rushmore served as a Trustee of the Nassau County Historical Society and its Corresponding Secretary for twenty-five years. He was first elected to the Board in 1988 and retired in 2013. In addition, he became Assistant Editor of this *Journal* in 2002, and then Associate Editor in 2010. Unfortunately, his health this year did not permit him to edit the articles in this issue. He always insisted on good writing and correct grammar in his editing and dismissed some submissions as "not publishable." I strive to live up to his high standards for our *Journal*.

Over the years, he donated a number of manuscripts and vintage photographs to the Nassau County Historical Society's collections at Hofstra University. These included a 1657 Hempstead deed and the Prescription book from Thomas Rushmore's Pharmacies in Hempstead and Garden City (1897-1907), which was the subject of his article in our 2014 *Journal*.

Robert wrote eight historical articles that appeared in this *Journal* and seven additional articles in five other publications. Some of his articles on local

history related his own family's history, others drew on his background in literature, while still others focused on Hempstead. He always used a manual typewriter, though he attempted to embrace the new technology. He bought a computer and took lessons, but the computer sat unused on his desk.

At his request, poem XIX from Conrad Aiken's "Preludes for Mamnon" was read at the interment of his ashes in the family plot in Greenfield Cemetery in Hempstead. Its opening lines are:

Watch long enough, and you will see the leaf
Fall from the bough. Without a sound it falls:
And soundless meets the grass . . .

Unmarried, he is survived by two nieces, Susan Sahler of Florida and Donna Castellana of Walkill, New York, and four great-nephews. As Mrs. Sahler recently wrote, "He was a gentleman, who was kind and thoughtful and very precise." Indeed, Robert Rushmore was a gentleman and a scholar, and is greatly missed.

A Personal Remembrance by Stephanie Bird

Robert was a gentleman with a rich intellect and high principles for living life. He stayed true to his beliefs and his high standards. He appreciated good quality as expressed in the clothes he wore and the words he spoke and wrote. When our family spoke of him, we often referred to him as "Dapper Bob." He liked to stand in front of the fireplace sipping a good Scotch, dressed in "tie and tweed," while listening to and participating in the talk of the moment.

Robert enjoyed a stimulating conversation especially when he could expound on literature, history, the direction of society, poetry, and more. He was concerned about the world and its direction, and was able to find solace in the poetry of Conrad Aiken and W. H. Auden.

Robert appreciated nature, particularly the grounds in springtime of the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Garden City. He once told me, "Stephanie, if you want to enjoy a beautiful, peaceful springtime walk, walk around the grounds of the Cathedral. They are beautiful." At Easter gatherings Robert would always arrive at my door with a gorgeous, colorful daffodil or tulip plant with the suggestion that I could plant it in my garden.

There is sadness at the passing of such goodness and richness of intellect. The uniqueness of an individual seems to be more evident when they are gone.

Articles on Local History by Robert P. Rushmore

(in chronological order)

- “A Sketch of The Life and Works of Daniel M. Tredwell [1826-1921].” *Journal of Long Island History* 12 (Fall 1975): 4-22.
- “Gabriel Harrison [1818-1902]: Artist, Writer, and ‘Father of the Drama in Brooklyn.’” *Journal of Long Island History* 18 (Spring 1982): 30-44.
- “‘Auden in Amityville.’” *Long Island Forum* 48, no. 7 (July 1985): 131-35.
- “Letters from George Mayher to Ann Amelia Sammis, 1854.” *Long Island Forum* 52 (Fall 1989): 120-27.
- “‘The River Sampit’: A Forgotten Eighteenth-Century American Topographical Poem.” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 93, no. 3/4 (July-October 1992): 221-30.
- “Thomas Rushmore, A Long Island Pioneer.” In *Hempstead: The Roots and Heritage of Hempstead Town*, ed. Natalie A. Naylor, pp. 47-78. Interlaken, NY: Hearts of the Lakes Publishing/Hofstra University, 1994.
- “The Location of the First Hempstead Meetinghouse.” *Nassau County Historical Society Journal* (hereafter cited as *NCHS Journal*) 49 (1994): 7-14.
- “‘The Village of East-Hampton,’ A Sketch by John Howard Payne [1838], edited with an Introduction and Notes.” *Long Island Historical Journal* 10 (Fall 1997): 25-38.
- “Life on Old Long Island: An Essay Review” of *Journeys on Old Long Island: Travelers’ Accounts, Contemporary Descriptions, and Residents’ Reminiscences, 1744-1893*, ed. Natalie A. Naylor. *NCHS Journal* 57 (2002): 45-49.
- “A Brief History of the Rushmore Homestead Farm in Uniondale.” *NCHS Journal* 59 (2004): 31-34.
- “The See House in Garden City.” *NCHS Journal* 60 (2005): 10-15.
- “George Washington at the Sammis Inn: The History of a Myth.” *NCHS Journal* 64 (2009): 20-29.
- “Reconstructing the History of Hempstead’s Sammis Hotel.” *NCHS Journal* 65 (2010): 16-24.
- “John Evers, Painter of Hempstead, Long Island.” *NCHS Journal* 66 (2011): 1-7.
- “Receipts and Private Formulas of T.T.R.: A Prescription Book of Thomas Tredwell Rushmore, A Pharmacist in Hempstead and Garden City.” *NCHS Journal* 69 (2014): 9-17.

—Natalie A. Naylor and Stephanie Bird