



PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE PANNEBAKKER FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Frank Knox Morton Pennypacker (1872–1956)

ADVENTURES IN THE LOVE OF HISTORY II

MORTON REVOLUTIONIZES AMERICAN HISTORY



1932 meeting of the NYSHA [New York State Historical Society]
... in the July [issue of the journal] *New York History*

He was an excellent example of the "Amateur Historian" ... a really remarkable man ... Those of us who knew him were always impressed by his diligence and industry, especially in pursuing data on the "Two Spies," Nathan Hale and Culper Junior. He exemplified the finest tradition of the non-professional historian. -- one of Morton's contemporaries

BIOGRAPHY FROM THAT JULY 1932 JOURNAL

Morton Pennypacker, printer, publisher, author, historian and bibliophile, was born August 13, 1872 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was educated by private tutors. He learned the printing trade at an early age, and from 1897 to 1915, he and two younger brothers operated the Pennypacker Bros. printing plant in Asbury Park, New Jersey, where they printed weekly and monthly newspapers as well as job printing. From 1920 to 1952 he was a salesman for the Osborne Advertising Co. in New York City.

In the 1920s Mr. Pennypacker moved to Long Island, first to Mineola, then to Kew Gardens. It was during the twenties that he began collecting books, documents and other literary material relating to Long Island. From 1943 to 1954 he was historian of the town of East Hampton where he resided, and was also historian of Suffolk County, New York.

He was the author of many articles and several books. His first book, *Harry's Work* was published in 1899. *The Two Spies, Nathan Hale and Robert Townsend* was published in 1930 by Houghton Mifflin. The Long Island Historical Society published his book, *General Washington's Spies on Long Island and in New York* in 1939.

In the fall of 1930, Mr. Pennypacker presented to the East Hampton Free Library, by deed of gift, 7,314 items of Long Island material. Of this number, 2,600 were books, the remainder were documents, pamphlets, maps, and clippings. A fire proof room, named the Gardiner Memorial Room was built to house the Pennypacker Collection. By 1942, there were over 24,000 items in the collection. A second room, the Gertrude Mumford Memorial Room was added in 1936. Mr. Pennypacker described the objective of the collection as "a library of books and documents aspiring to contain every book written about Long Island or Long Island families, and every representative book having a native of Long Island for its author." On April 2, 1936, Morton Pennypacker married Ettie C. Hedges, Librarian of the East Hampton Free Library. Mr. Pennypacker continued to work with the Long Island Collection, assisting researches and adding new material, until his death in 1956.

Morton's most well known discovery is that "Samuel Culper, Junior," the head spy of the Culper Ring, was Robert Townsend, a member of the renowned New York Townsend family.

He did so by identifying an exact match in penmanship between the Culper letters attributed to Culper Junior and letters written by Robert Townsend.

His findings were confirmed by a forensic handwriting expert. He wrote about this in his book -- *George Washington's Spies*.

by Dorothy T. King of the East Hampton Free Library, and based on M. Bruce Maxian's *A History of the Morton Pennypacker Long Island Collection* (Brookville, N. Y.: Long Island University, 1966).

WASHINGTON'S SPIES ON LONG ISLAND

THE FIVE WHO SMUGGLED NEWS TO HIM FROM
NEW YORK HAVE NOW BEEN IDENTIFIED

Among the Culper Ring's espionage successes was its foiling of a British counterfeiting operation to weaken the young republic by devaluing Continental notes.

Ring members also alerted Washington about British plans in the summer of 1780 to ambush 6,000 French soldiers arriving in Rhode Island to aid the Americans.



SARAH TOWNSEND AND HER BROTHER ROBERT

In its crowning achievement, the Ring obtained a copy of the British naval codes in 1781, providing the French Navy with a profound advantage against the British fleet during the Battle of the Chesapeake that year.

The French sea victory was instrumental to Washington's siege of the British Army at Yorktown.

THE TASK WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY MORTON PENNYPACKER

This New York Times feature, published February 1, 1931, lays out the history finally known due to Morton.

AN illuminating account of how General Washington conducted his secret service operations on Long Island during the Revolution has come to light. For a century and a half the activities have been veiled in mystery. That messages passed back and forth between the Commander-in-Chief of the American Army and his supporters in New York no one has doubted; indeed, suspicion fell on several men, believed to have been the secret agents. But not until a musty trunk was opened recently in an attic of the Townsend house, at Oyster Bay, was the truth made known and the identity of the men established.

Nor was it simply the opening of a creaking door and the forcing of a rusty lock that yielded the secret. The trunk held only a clue, indicating other paths to be followed. The proceeding was as thrilling as, and much more arduous than, a treasure hunt. It led to locked chests, unopened desks and other dust-mantled attics.

The task was accomplished by Morton Pennypacker, member of the New York State Historical Society, who has made a hobby of Long Island history. Many years ago he found traces of the secret agents, traces that pointed to Oyster Bay, Setauket and Patchogue. Follow them as he would, they invariably eluded him, disappearing behind the names of John Bolton, Samuel Culper Sr. and Culper Jr.

Letters from these three men were long known to exist in the island's archives. They dealt with affairs of the day and frequently mentioned troop movements. To the casual reader there was nothing suspicious about them; to the student of history they were full of interest. But who were John Bolton and the Culpers, senior and junior? No one knew. They apparently took their secret with them to the grave.

• • •

PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS

ALMOST equally mystifying was Austin Roe. His name was frequently spoken in Revolutionary days, and has not been unfamiliar to historians of recent times. Now, Austin Roe was a keen horseman, who rode from the heart of New York over Long Island's dusty roads, making frequent visits to the Townsend house at Oyster Bay, and often going beyond to Setauket, where he called at Abraham Woodhull's. The purpose of his long rides no one ventured to surmise.

At last the day came when the Townsend house was cleaned from attic to cellar; a pile of old and seared letters was given to a junk dealer, and among them was the long-sought clue. It was a letter written by young Robert Townsend, son of Samuel—staunch patriot, who found himself obliged to throw his house open as a headquarters for Colonel Simcoe of the British Army.

There was no denying the striking similarity between the writing of young Townsend and that of Culper Jr., a fact later established by experts. What is more, the letter made mention of Austin Roe, Abraham Woodhull and Benjamin Tallmadge. Here were indications pointing to the solution of the mystery. Other piles of frayed documents contributed further bits of information. Armed with such evidence, Mr. Pennypacker, into whose hands the letters found their way, followed the trails leading to the Woodhull and the Roe homes at Setauket and Patchogue, respectively. He persuaded the families to delve into the documents left by their Revolutionary ancestors. Bit by bit the story of the spy system of Long Island was pieced together.

In all, there were five links in the "chain," as General Washington—liked to call the men who so faithfully carried out his orders. The master minds of the system, it was found, were Robert Townsend and Abraham Woodhull, both of whom had youth, wealth and position. The former, though his home was in Oyster Bay, lived in New York, where he kept a general store—obviously a blind and a means of pry-

ing information out of the British. Young Woodhull stayed in his Setauket home, living quietly so as to arouse no suspicion.

Austin Roe was the wireless flashing between Townsend and Woodhull. Old documents (bills for fodder) reveal that he rode one of General Washington's horses, stabled in New York under the nose of the British high command. When Woodhull received a message from New York he hastened to the North Shore of Long Island to look for a black petticoat and some handkerchiefs hung from a clothes line. They were placed there by the fourth link in the "chain," Caleb Brewster, boatman, who plied his sturdy little craft from one side of the Sound to the other. Whenever Brewster landed on the Long Island shore he signaled his arrival by holsting the black petticoat and indicated the cove in which his boat lay by means of the handkerchiefs. He bore the messages given him by Woodhull to Major Benjamin Tallmadge, who awaited him in Connecticut. Tallmadge was the last and fifth link; it was he who conveyed the messages to General Washington.

As evidence of the system of espionage was piled up by Mr. Penny-packer it became apparent that Robert Townsend worked under the name of Culper Jr., Abraham Woodhull was Culper Sr. and Colonel Tallmadge was referred to as Mr. John Bolton. * * *

GENERAL WASHINGTON gave strict orders that there should be no delay in the forwarding of messages. Only once did Tallmadge disobey. His default is connected with the case of Major André, British spy.

One night, in August, 1780, Colonel Simcoe entertained a guest named André in the Townsend home at Oyster Bay. Sarah Townsend, daughter of the house, supervised the serving of the dinner. She saw a stranger enter, put a letter on the pantry shelf and depart. The letter was addressed to "John Anderson." Later she saw André open and read the letter and place it in his pocket. Still later she heard André and Colonel Simcoe discussing the American stronghold at West Point, a British objective. Her suspicions were aroused.

The next morning she persuaded Daniel Young, British Captain, to send a messenger to New York for supplies needed for Colonel Simcoe's entertainments. This messenger carried with him a note from Sarah to her brother, Robert Townsend, informing him of the suspected plot to capture West Point. It was not long before the machinery of the secret agency went in motion. Austin Roe galloped over the scrublands of Long Island, Woodhull watched for the petticoat, Brewster hoisted his sail, and so the message reached Major Tallmadge.

Just prior to receipt of the message Tallmadge had a letter from Benedict Arnold, in which the latter mentioned that a friend, John

Anderson, might pass Tallmadge's way. He requested that since Anderson was unfamiliar with the countryside, an escort be granted to him. André was on his way to Arnold when Tallmadge, against orders, opened Townsend's letter and read of the spy's conversation with Colonel Simcoe.

The two messages—the one from Townsend, the other from Arnold, both referring to John Anderson—aroused Major Tallmadge's suspicions and he set off in search of

John Anderson. André, however, succeeded in reaching West Point, where Arnold gave him documents relating to the fortifications and the number of men required to take the stronghold. While attempting to make his way back to the English lines, André was captured by John Paulding and two companions, militiamen, and taken by them to John Jameson, commanding the Second Regiment of Light Dragoons. What words André used to persuade the American officer to send him back to Arnold will probably never be known. When at a later hour that day, Major Tallmadge came to Jameson's camp he learned that the man he sought was on his way back to West Point. Without disclosing all he knew, he insisted that Jameson order his return, thus preventing his escape with Arnold.

* * *

PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS

THE Secret Service agents wrote their messages in various ways; some were penned in invisible ink, others were in partial code. The finds in Long Island's attics have supplied the key that decodes the messages. The "chain" used a system of substitute letters for the alphabet. Numerals stood for names.

*see the key on p 6

With the exception of General Washington, all those men concerned with this secret service work lived fifty years or more after the outbreak of the Revolution. It is known that after he was President Washington went to Long Island to see the members of the "chain" that never weakened.

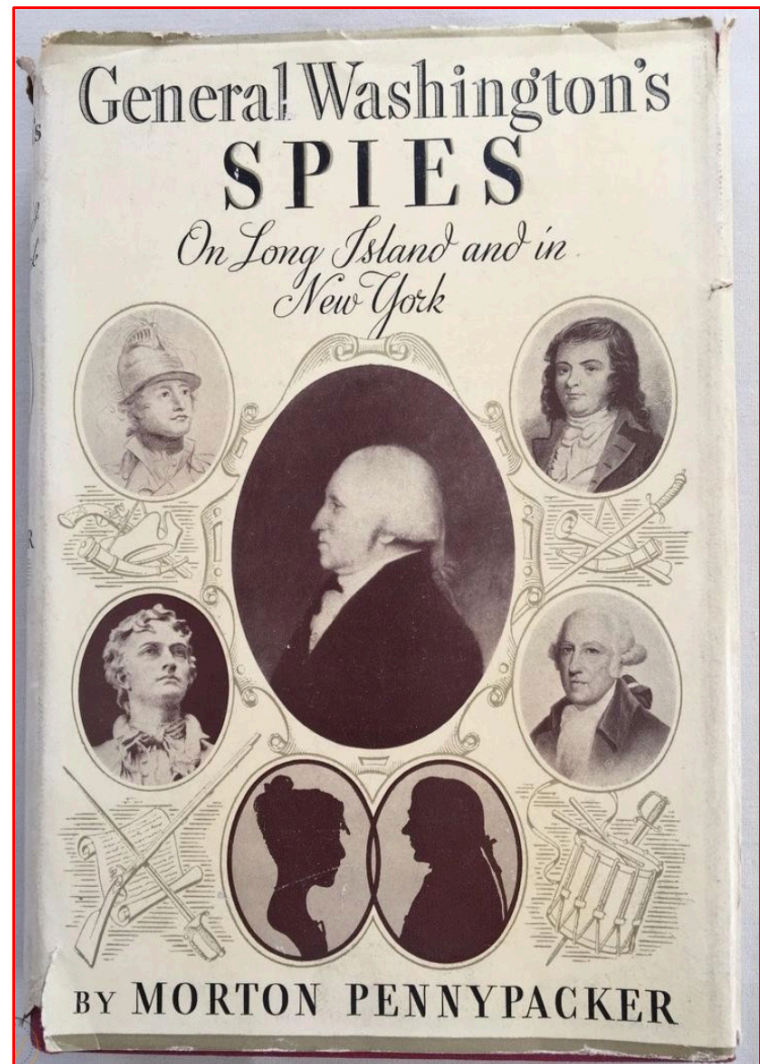
The New York Times
Published: February 1, 1931
Copyright © The New York Times



AMC'S *TURN*:
Washington's Spies
TV series is based on
Morton's work.

GENERAL WASHINGTON'S secret service in New York guarded some of its most important secrets for 150 years. It is less than a decade since Morton Pennypacker revealed, in his book "The Two Spies" (Houghton Mifflin Company) the identity of the two principal workers in Washington's Bureau of Military Intelligence. In this present volume he presents further material, hitherto unpublished, about the espionage activities which centered in New York during the Revolution.

"General Washington's Spies" is a source book which prints the majority of the spies' letters still in existence and joins them with a running narrative. But although the book is written for students of history the facts with which it deals have absorbing general interest.



The New York Times
Published: May 7, 1939
Copyright © The New York Times

*NOTE: The original New York Times
on line archive is crooked!*



THE TWO SPIES

NATHAN HALE *and*
ROBERT TOWNSEND

BY MORTON PENNYPACKER



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1930

The identities of the Culper Ring were such a closely guarded secret that even Washington didn't know who they really were.

Several members of the ring (Townsend in particular) had been insistent that Washington never learn their names. Even after the war was over, the members of the ring kept their identities a secret

Some of whom were uncovered only through their correspondence with Washington, who kept the letters instead of burning them

One member of the ring Washington personally wanted to thank was Townsend, who had risked his life almost every day for his country. But **Townsend never stepped out of the shadows to reveal himself to his commander-in-chief.** It was a great honor to be sure, but not one that Townsend sought. He did not want praise or celebration; the greatest reward Washington could give him was simply a return to a quiet and unassuming life as a man subject to no king but God.

From Morton's preface:

Many startling revelations will be discovered by the careful reader of these pages. Some of them will be observed only after referring to the secret code printed among the Notes.

(11) This is the Secret Code used by General Washington, Benjamin Tallmadge, Robert Townsend, and Abraham Woodhull, during the Revolutionary War.

Use of	Means	Use of	Means	Use of	Means
a	g	711	General Washington	15	advice
b	h			28	appointment
c	i	712	Clinton	60	better
d	j			121	day
e	a	721	Major Tallmadge	156	deliver
f	b		alias John Bolton	151	disorder
g	c	722	Abraham Woodhull	178	enemy
h	d		alias Samuel Culper	230	guineas
i	e	723	Robert Townsend	286	ink
j	f		alias Samuel Culper, Jr.	309	infantry
k		724	Austin Roe	317	importance
l	r			322	inquiry
m	l	725	Caleb Brewster	345	knowledge
n	m			347	land
o	k	726		349	low
p	n			355	lady ***
q	o	727	New York	356	letter
r				371	man
s		728	Long Island	476	parts
t				585	refugees
u	s	729	Setauket	592	ships
v	t			660	vigilant
w	u	745	England	680	war
x	v			691	written
y	w	e	1		
215	February	f	2		
374	March	g	3		
22	April	i	4		
373	May	l	5		
		m	6		
337	July	n	7		
29	August	o	8		
616	September	q	9		
462	October	u	0		
427	November				

*** We still do not know who she is

The entire book can be read at the link below.
As so often happens in history writing, the Notes are particularly interesting.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015002211301&view=2up&seq=10>

20-Year Search Ends in Tomb Of Noted U.S. Spy in Brooklyn

Plaque in Crypt Is Missing Piece in Chain
of Evidence in History of Revolutionary
War Man-and-Wife Espionage Team

By EDWIN GORDON

Morton Pennypacker, 70-year-old historian of Southampton, L. I., ended a search of two decades yesterday in a dim-lit tomb in downtown Brooklyn's Fort Greene Park, and then unfolded a Revolutionary War tale of espionage, suffering and mystery.

In the shadows of the stately granite Prison Ship Martyrs Monument, a Brooklyn landmark for forty years, is a simple brick cube-like crypt that contains the remains of 12,000 American citizens. They lost their lives on the British prison ships anchored in Wallabout Bay, off the present-day New York Naval Shipyard, Brooklyn, when this country was in the midst of its battle for freedom.

In the crypt Mr. Pennypacker uncovered a sandstone plaque—the missing piece in a chain of evidence he has been accumulating for twenty years.

While waiting in the sweltering sun for the park custodian to appear with the keys to the vault, the soft-spoken Revolutionary War scholar, who is the official historian of Suffolk County, said that the evidence reveals that one of Gen. George Washington's most successful spies was a woman who died incognito on the prison ship Jersey. She was, he said, the wife of Robert Townsend, Washington's most trusted and efficient agent behind the British lines, and the two Americans were the parents of a son who was rescued from the ship.

Until now the alliance of Mr. Townsend, who ranks with Nathan Hale in American espionage, with the woman spy has been unknown to historians, Mr. Pennypacker said.

The custodian, carrying a ladder, arrived and forced open the heavy bronze door, revealing a short flight of stone steps. Inside the vault it was musty and cool. The cries of the children at play on the nearby greensward were muffled and ghostly. Beyond the steps was the small room, 25 by 11 feet, with twenty lead coffins containing the bones of the martyrs.

This article is as compelling in what it tells us about Morton,
as it is in completing the Culper story.

The New York Times

Published: July 7, 1948

Copyright © The New York Times

Mr. Pennypacker looked around among the shadows. Then he spotted the plaque above the inner open doorway. He supervised the raising of the ladder, and, agile for his 70 years, eagerly climbed up to see the inscription.

"It's worn off in spots," he reported from his perch. The soft sandstone had eroded with time, but Mr. Pennypacker was able to decipher part of the inscription, and the name of Robert Townsend Jr., cut in the 140-year-old stone.

"This is what I've been looking for," he announced, and he proceeded to make a tracing of the 2½ by 4 foot plaque. When he finished he sighed and made his way down. The tomb was relocked.

Then, seeking the shade of a leafy Norway maple near the monument, Mr. Pennypacker closed his eyes and thought back to the days when the red-coated English troops held New York, parts of Westchester and Long Island. His story was closely linked with the plaque he had just seen.

"Townsend," Mr. Pennypacker began, "was in his twenties, a handsome fellow. He was a merchant by trade and an extensive importer of flax. He insisted that no one should know his true identity, and while working for the American cause he called himself Culper Junior. Culper Junior was perhaps the best spy Washington ever had.

"I learned a lot about Culper Junior, how he owned a restaurant near Wall Street, catered to the British officers, and silently collected his information. Then, in the Nineteen Twenties, I met a near-relation of his, Howard Townsend, a New York banker. This man hinted that perhaps Culper Junior had been married. 'I'm sure he was a bachelor,' I answered. 'Well, you work with that thought in mind,' I was told."

Mr. Pennypacker leaned back and smiled. "It was one of the few times I've been wrong," he admitted. "Since, I have collected evidence, three trunks full, some written, some hearsay. And I pieced the story together.

"I learned that Culper Junior did marry. His wife, whose name we have not been able to discover, was pretty and as vivacious as I suppose female spies should be.

She attended society parties, where high-ranking enemy officers were sure to appear, and kept her ears open for idle bits of gossip that might prove valuable. She learned much, according to papers of Culper Junior's that I've found, that was of great use to Washington.

"Then, after October, 1780, when the English Maj. John André was executed, the British, in revenge, began to apprehend all who were suspect of holding American sentiment. Thousands were flogged, underfed and tortured on the prison ships anchored right down there." Mr. Pennypacker pointed in the direction of Wallabout Bay, but the waters were hidden by new apartment buildings and factories.

"Culper Junior's wife was one of those taken," he continued. "Culper Junior, too, was arrested, and, since they did not know he was a spy, he was forced to wear the red and white enemy uniform and act as a doorman in front of No. 1 Broadway, the British headquarters. Culper Junior was mortified, then heartbroken. He had learned of the death of his wife."

Through wills, letters and bills Mr. Pennypacker traced the history of Culper Junior's son, Robert Townsend Jr. He was taken from the ship, brought up in Brooklyn by two prominent women of that era, and became a member of the State Legislature. Culper Junior undoubtedly had told the young man of his heritage, but the story of the marriage was kept a secret by the Townsend family until Mr. Pennypacker received the first hint.

Young Townsend soon began his crusade. As a member of the old Tammany Society, before it obtained its political teeth, he worked for the erection of a monument to those who died on the prison ships. His plan was carried out and the cornerstone of the original tomb was laid on land near the Navy Yard in April, 1808. Sixty-five years later the remains of the martyrs were removed to Fort Greene Park, and on Nov. 14, 1908, the present 145-foot column was erected. The monument is now being repaired and its surroundings beautified by the Department of Parks at a cost of \$55,000.

"I recently discovered a copy of the inscription of the stone of the original monument," Mr. Pennypacker said, "but I felt that until I saw the real stone, which had apparently disappeared, my proof would not be complete. I just took the chance that it might be somewhere near the tomb."

Officers

President: Ron Pennypacker
520 Loch Alsh Ave.
Ambler, PA 19002
(484) 302-6842
r.pennypacker@yahoo.com

Vice President: Linda Millerick
751 Monterey Salinas Hwy. Salinas,
CA 93908-8953 (831) 484-2834
lmcnealmillerick@yahoo.com

Secretary: Marcea P. Kligman
4170 Summit Way
Marietta, GA 30066-2346
(770) 928-9055
mpklig@bellsouth.net

Treasurer: Ed Pennypacker
271 Hafner Rd.
Royersford, PA 19468
ed@jepcosales.com
Tel 610 948-7867

Membership/**Newsletter/WebMaster/****Genealogy:**

Bruce Pennypacker
201 Shady Brook Drive Langhorne,
PA 19047 (215) 380-1748
throwcoach@gmail.com

Newsletter

Mary Bullock
105 Cassidy Place 2R
Staten Island, NY 10301
marybullock@gmail.com

Board of Directors

Tom Armstrong, Branchburg, NJ
Mary Bullock, Staten Island, NY
Susan Costantini, Royersford, PA
Bruce Pennypacker, Langhorne, PA
Ed Pennypacker, Royersford, PA
Ron Pennypacker, Ambler, PA
Sandy Pennypacker, Langhorne, PA

Pannebakker Family Association



The Pannebakker Family Association is an outgrowth of the family reunion held at Pennypacker Mills, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania on July 2-4, 1999. The reunion celebrated the 300th year wedding anniversary of Hendrick Pannebecker and Eve Umstat, in Germantown, Pennsylvania in the year 1699. In the words of the Steering Committee of the reunion, "We hope that the 1999 Pfannebecker-Umstat Reunion will lead to the growth of a family association, which will provide a forum for conversation, collection and preservation of information, and a sense of lasting community among the heirs of this rich cultural heritage."