

Home Sweet Home



*“Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam
Be it ever so humble, there’s no place like Home!
A charm from the sky seems to hallow us there
Which, seek through the world, is ne’er met with elsewhere!”*

So wrote actor, poet, and playwright John Howard Payne of his grandparents’ home in East Hampton, N.Y., where he spent his early childhood. In 1822, the words were set to music in the song “Home, Sweet Home,” which became an instant success. The house that inspired the tune is now a museum and owned by the village. We picture it here and on following pages.

Payne was born on June 9, 1791. His father, William, was a noted elocutionist at Clinton Academy in East Hampton (April, '90, p. 67). His mother, Sarah, was the daughter of Aaron and Mary Isaacs, whose house Payne honored.

Payne was the sixth of the couple’s nine children and showed several talents early on. At 13, he began writing poems. At 14, he published dramatic criticisms in his magazine, the *Thespian Mirror*. Newspapers of the day reported his accomplishments, and intellectuals in New York City and Boston showered him with invitations. At 15, he started writing plays and, at 16, took up acting against the wishes of his father, who deemed the pursuit “disgraceful.” He attended Union College, in Schenectady, N.Y., but his time there was cut short by financial problems at home.

Ironically, he took to the stage to pay his family’s debts, making his professional acting debut on February 24, 1809, as Young Norval in the play *Douglas*, at the Old Park Theatre, in New York City. The audience found him brilliant, citing his perfect diction, masterful delivery, and beguiling looks. He next played Young Norval at the Federal Street Theatre, in Boston, opposite leading lady Elizabeth Arnold Poe (mother of Edgar Allan Poe). Many engagements followed in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

In 1812, Payne began planning a one-year junket to Europe. Some say he was weary of acting and wanted a rest. Others say his colleague George Frederick Cooke, a noted English actor, suggested the trip perhaps as a means of pursuing glory abroad. Whatever the case, Payne sailed for Liverpool, England, in early 1813 with \$2,000 raised by friends.

On June 4, Payne made his British debut as Young Norval at the Drury Lane Theatre, in London. Heralded for his performance, he later played Romeo and then Hamlet, his greatest success. Soon he appeared throughout England, Ireland, and France and counted critic Charles Lamb and essayist Washington Irving among his many admirers.

During this period, Payne also wrote plays, produced plays, and translated the works of others. Generally, he received praise and money for his endeavors, but he was never financially secure. One particularly (Turn to page 81)



Home, Sweet Home!

With additional Verses.

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The Marches created a den (opposite above) from remaining space in the English basement. Against one wall is an American secretary, c. 1780, whose door panels feature raised decorations recalling Gothic arches. At left of the piece is an upholstered armchair from Kittinger; at right, a wing chair by Hickory Chair. In front of the sofa is a South Carolina pine table of the early 19th Century. On the second floor (opposite below), a reproduction pencil-post bed furnishes a guest bedroom. Dating to the early 18th Century are the walnut Chippendale chest, made in Virginia, and the mahogany tilt-top table near the fireplace. From the road, a view of the property (right) reveals two outbuildings. The Marches cure hams in the smokehouse at left, which is original to the site. Next to it stands a garden house that the couple built for equipment storage. From the rear entrance of the house, another view (below) shows the beds of an herb garden around a birdbath, with the outbuildings in the background.



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low point came in 1821, when he was thrown in prison with debts of \$7,000. Luckily, he reached a compromise with his creditors, gained his freedom, and sailed for Paris. There he rented a garret and wrote the libretto for an operatic version of the play *Clari, or The Maid of Milan*. His friend, the English composer and conductor Sir Henry Bishop, set his words to music. Among the opera's songs was "Home, Sweet Home."

Clari opened at the Theatre Royal at Covent Garden, in London, on May 8, 1823. It was a hit, and "Home, Sweet Home" was the favorite tune. The song sold 100,000 copies and netted its publisher 2,000 guineas in its first year. Payne received worldwide acclaim for the song but little money. After writing the opera, he had sold it along with a group of other plays for £250. His name never even appeared on the sheet music for the song. Later he wrote, "How often I have been in . . . Paris, Berlin, London, or some other city, and have heard persons singing . . . 'Sweet Home,' without having a shilling to buy myself a meal, or a place to lay my head."

Payne continued to live abroad and write plays, but they never had the success of *Clari*. Returning to America in 1832, he pioneered American copyright laws and supported the rights of the Cherokee. With the help of Daniel Webster, he was appointed American consul at Tunis, Africa, in 1842 and again, in 1851. He died at Tunis on April 9, 1852, and was buried there. In 1883, his remains were brought to America and interred at Oak Hill Cemetery, in Washington, D.C. A choir sang "Home, Sweet Home."

The song lived on. It was performed in concert halls, played on street corners, and adapted often. It was a favorite of Civil War soldiers and a treasured parlor song well into this century.

The house that inspired the song dates to the early 1700s and had several owners in addition to Payne's grandparents. By 1905, it had fallen into disrepair and faced demolition. In 1907, Mr. and Mrs. Gustav Buek of Brooklyn, N.Y., bought it, restored it, and filled it with antiques as a shrine to Payne. When Mr. Buek died, in 1927, the village of East Hampton acquired it. It opened as a museum in December, 1928.

At 14 James Lane, it welcomes visitors June through September, Monday through Saturday, from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M., and Sunday from 2 to 4 P.M. It is open by appointment at other times; tel.: (516) 324-0713.



Masterful craftsmen

Between 1760 and 1840, three generations of the Dominy family—Nathaniel IV (1737–1812); his son, Nathaniel V (1770–1852); and his grandson, Felix (1800–1868)—served as East Hampton's master craftsmen. They made a range of furniture, including beds, bureaus, chests, tables, and chairs of mahogany, maple, pine, and cherry. In addition to cabinetmakers, they were clockmakers, wheelwrights, metalworkers, watch-and-gun repairers, and mill-and-house carpenters. Attached to their 1715 family home in town were a woodworking shop, a clock shop, and a forge. In 1946, the house was demolished. The shops were moved to another site and converted to a clubhouse. In 1959, Winterthur Museum reconstructed the shops on its property in Winterthur, Del. On display are Dominy account books, furniture, and more than 1,000 tools acquired from family descendants and other sources. Two Dominy blanket chests (above left and right) grace a bedroom at Home Sweet Home. One chest (above left) features a molded-edge lid that opens to a deep storage well above two drawers. The other chest (above right) also has storage space beneath its lid. Its two top drawers are false. Nathaniel Dominy V made the chest in 1800. Samuel Schellinger, who probably trained with the Dominys, built Pantigo Mill (below) in 1804. It was the first smock mill in town and stood on the common. Gustav Buek, who owned Home Sweet Home from 1907 to 1927, bought the old mill and moved it behind the house in 1917.





John Rutledge B&B

Fittingly, this 1763 townhouse turned bed and breakfast stands in the heart of the historic district in Charleston, S.C. It was home to John Rutledge, a legendary statesman whose career spanned four decades. He served as delegate to the First and Second Continental Congress, president of the Republic of South Carolina, and chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. But he won his greatest fame as an author and signer of the Constitution.

Born in 1739, Rutledge grew up in one of the "first families" of Charleston. He studied law in England and, upon

his return, established a lucrative practice. At age 24, he married Elizabeth Grimké and built his home in the center of town.

In *Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina*, author Richard Barry writes that it was "maintained as a quasi-regal residence—the centre of formal and generous hospitality." It had a large dining room; a wine cellar brimming with French brandy, West Indian rum, and Irish whiskey; and spacious kitchens for a game cook, meat-and-vegetable cook, and their helpers. The grounds featured deep gar- (Continued overleaf)



Home Sweet Home showcases many collections. 1. A c. 1790 cupboard holds Doulton stoneware, Staffordshire molded ware, and Bennington ware. 2. Early-19th-Century silver-resist ware, from England, lines a mantel. Decorating the three jugs are polychromed robins. On the table is silver lusterware. 3. A 19th-Century dish closet displays silver and rare canary lusterware. 4. Blue-and-white Staffordshire bears the "Landing of Lafayette" pattern. 5. Platters dominate another Staffordshire exhibit. 6. First made about 1825, copper lusterware has a wash of gold.



A portrait of actor-playwright John Howard Payne (opposite above) shows him dressed as Hamlet. He played the role in England in 1813. Nine years later, he wrote the words for the song "Home, Sweet Home" (opposite below) and used it in his operatic version of the play Clari.

This saltbox in East Hampton, N.Y. (below left), inspired "Home, Sweet Home" and is named for the song. Robert Dayton probably built it about 1715. Payne's grandfather Aaron Isaacs bought it in the 1740s. Payne spent his boyhood days here and later wrote of its saltbox shape: "Low, with one end to the street. And the roof of that old-fashioned and unintellectual form which may be compared to a face without a forehead . . ." Its front door (below right) displays vertical boards and handmade nails. The house is now a museum. The highlight of the study (right) is the white-oak chest made by Thomas Mulliner in 1640. It is thought to be the oldest extant piece of joined furniture crafted in New England. By the window is a 1600s Armada chest of handwrought iron.



PHOTOS BY O. PHILIP ROEDEL, FIELD EDITOR, SHIRLEY ROEDEL



The fine woodwork in the parlor (left and below) combines fluted pilasters and arched panels. Installed in the mid-18th Century, it recalls woodwork common in the Connecticut River Valley at that time. Trute & Weidberg of Philadelphia, Pa., made the five-octave spinet with mahogany case and ivory keys in 1790. On it stands a Hearty Good Fellow toby jug of porcelain. Over the fireplace hangs a 1712 water clock by John Tully. A built-in cupboard (below) features butterfly shelves, a shell-topped niche, and arched-glass doors. Lining it are tea sets of pink lusterware. Early-19th-Century cottage lusterware graces the table. Hooked rugs date to 1840.

In the front bedroom (opposite above and below), matching rope beds wear positive-reverse quilts made by the Pember sisters of Westminster, Vt., about 1855. A picture of Payne adorns the fireplace wall. East Hampton, N.Y., furnituremaker Nathaniel Dominy V crafted the "Great" slat-back armchair with rockers between 1800 and 1825. On the washstand behind it rest a silver lusterware pitcher and bowl. Near a window in the room (opposite below) stands a high-chest-on-frame. Probably from Pennsylvania, it shows 18th-Century styling and a scalloped apron.

