

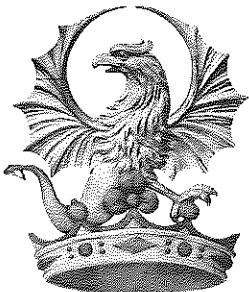


Sunfish Pond

*Where, in a twilit eddy of my dream,
Thine image, Isaak, pored upon a bream.*

AS ONE stands at the corner of Fourth Avenue and 31st Street today it may be difficult to imagine this pleasant scene as the place where the stage horses, having passed the second milestone from the city below, were stopped to nuzzle the cool waters of Sunfish Pond and to drink, while the passengers stretched their legs before continuing the journey to Harlem and on beyond to Boston.

This was a favorite spot for the young farm lads of the vicinity, and their dads, to do a little fishing or muskratting. This lovely little body of water provided in winter a natural ice rink on which to cut a fancy figure eight or, on new thin ice, to risk the exciting game of "tickelly bender" over its heaving bosom.



A carved wooden decoration from the old Murray Hill Hotel, owned by Mary Muller

The pond was fed both by springs and by a brook which also carried its overflow down to the East River at Kip's Bay. This brook, in olden times called "t'Oude Wrack," by tradition got its name from an early Dutch ship which was wrecked in the Bay.

British scouts and advance patrols came through here upon the landing of their main force in Kip's Bay, following the defeat of the American forces on the heights of Brooklyn. A considerable number of this amphibious army undoubtedly made good use of the pond's refreshing waters during the securing of their beachhead and while their commander, General Howe, with his staff, was being entertained at Inclenberg, the farm of wealthy Quaker merchant Robert Murray, on September 15, 1776.*



Sunfish Pond was a favorite spot for fishing and muskratting

The story of the charm and seductive hospitality of Mrs. Murray, the former lovely Mary Lindley of Philadelphia, has often been told. The Madeira wine with which she and her handsome daughters regaled the British gentlemen was the favorite vintage of George Washington who but a few days before had been a guest at the Murrays'. At the moment of the British toasting Washington was in a very precarious frame of mind, due to the wavering of his opposing patrols in the fields near Bryant Park.

The Murray farmhouse was on the high ground of what is now known as Murray Hill, beyond the Quarry Hill, which abutted the north side of Sunfish Pond. Murray built this house prior to 1764 and it remained one of the show-place farms until destroyed by fire in 1834. It was a most productive farm and Murray's favorite cornfields lay just north of his home beyond his orchards and included the entire area which now extends nearly to Grand Central Station.

Lindley, the eldest of the twelve Murray children, in 1793 agreed to sell "Bellevue," the old Keltatas mansion facing the East River at 26th Street, later used as a tavern and club, to Brockholst Livingston**, treasurer of the University of the State of New York. Livingston in turn conveyed the tract to the city in 1798. Bellevue Hospital, named for this estate, now stands on this land. Incidentally, Lindley Murray, the famous grammarian, was a cripple, reportedly because of a youthful attempt to jump across Peck Slip, a distance of some twenty-one feet, on a dare.

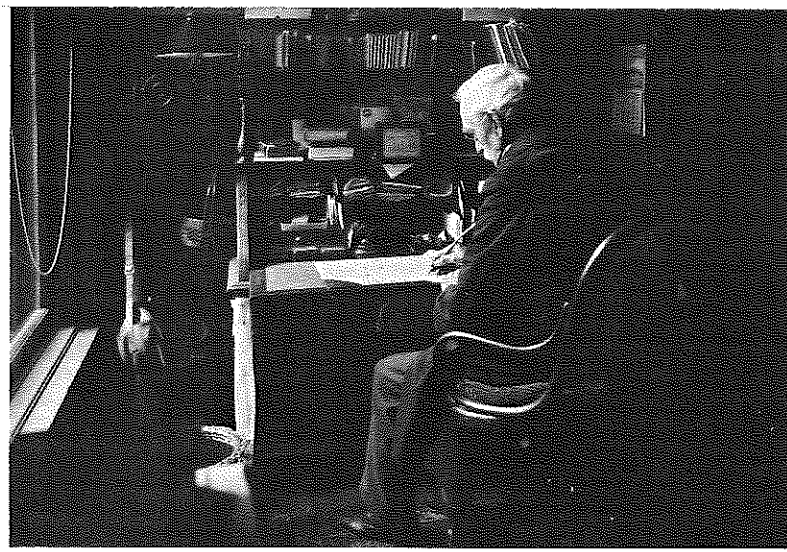
The Murray house faced the East River, overlooking Kip's Bay and the quaint little settlement of Kipsborough. The original Jacob Kip mansion built in 1655 was the oldest house in Manhattan at the time it was removed in 1851. It stood approximately at the present corner of 35th Street and Second Avenue. As the Kip family increased, the streets of the town, all of which have now disappeared, were named for the various members of the family.

When the House of Refuge on the old "Parade" (Madison Square) caught fire in 1838, Knickerbocker Engine Company No. 12 ran up from William and Duane Streets and took position with their suction dropped in Sunfish Pond, one of the nearest sources of water.

Several machines worked in line in order to carry a stream as far as the fire. "Old Nick's Boys" played into Black Joke Engine No. 33 and gave her a good washing on that occasion. The latter's boys loudly protested, to the amusement of the whole department, that mud from the pond choked their engine.

*Mr. Brower who saw the British force land in Kip's Bay, as he stood on the Long Island heights, says it was the most imposing sight his eyes ever beheld. The army crossed the East River, in open flat boats, filled with soldiers standing erect; their arms all glittering in the sunbeams. They approached the British fleet in Kip's Bay, in the form of a crescent, caused by the force of the tide breaking the intended line, of boat after boat. They all closed up in the rear of the fleet, when all the vessels opened a heavy cannonade. —Watson, 1828.

**Born Henry Livingston, brother of James R., he abandoned his given name for "Brockholst."



Charles Haswell shown working on his delightful reminiscences

Charles Haswell, that delightful octogenarian and diarist, recalled Sunfish Pond as a place of cherished memories, but that eventually the glue factory which Peter Cooper built nearby so contaminated the waters that the pond had to be drained and filled in 1839.

Part of the bed of Sunfish Pond later became the site of the old Harlem Railroad stables and in turn, the 33rd Street trolley car barns. It is now occupied by the handsome 100 Park Avenue Building.

