

Nicoll Family

Hello. . . . Welcome. You look like you've seen a ghost! Don't fret, I'm real. But. . . The date is March 1900. I've just come over from Emmanuel Church in Great River after the burial of Mr. William Nicoll. I cared for him in his final days. Bright's disease, you know. First the kidneys and then the heart. . . . Terrible, terrible, terrible. . . . Back in the '80's, the 1880's, Mr. Nicoll (newly departed) hired me to care for his mother, Mrs. Sarah Greenly Nicoll. I've come over here to pay my respects to the rest of his immediate family.

Now, his mother here, Mrs. Sarah Greenly Nicoll, was born upstate NY in Hamilton, S.E. of Syracuse, or SW of Utica. Her family originally came from Glastonbury CT. Her brother was born there. Her mother was Mary Hunt. Her father was DR. Thomas Gosley when he left CT and seems to have transformed himself to a Greenly in NY. (Don't ask me. I'm just telling you what I heard.) Sarah's mother died when she was only two years old. Her father became a respected politician. . . state legislature, senator for four years.

Did I mention he married three more times and had four more children? Anyway, young Sarah marries upstate and comes down here as the bride of the best catch in Islip. . . . Mr. William Nicoll.

Everyone knows the Nicoll family owned almost all of the land around here. They started in 1683 with a patent of 20,000 acres, they bought more from the natives, and married 'well'. Eventually they owned about 50,000 acres from Bayport to East Islip. Mr. William inherited the so-called ISLIP GRANGE through his father from the will of his great grandfather. As great grandson, the entailment ended with him.

Oh, there was lots of LAND and there were lots of LAWSUITS. It seems that with the land came a lot of people and towns wanting "clarification" of its boundaries. . . . It wasn't so easy. Was it Huntington Gut or was it Nicoll Gut? One old geezer says one thing and another says the opposite. Does a patent from the English monarch trump a bill of sale from the local Indians? Lawyers must have LOVED him. The last case I heard of was in Suffolk Circuit Court 1881, referring to the 1700's will of Mr. William Nicoll's ancestor. This Mr. Nicoll died in 1823. (I'm getting way ahead of myself.) All of his life and then some, was so encumbered. To the grave and beyond!

Mrs. Sarah Greenly Nicoll and her new husband settled into the family home in Youngsport (as Great River was called then). She bears two children, in 1820, William (the newly departed), and in 1822, his sister Frances Louisa (who died six months before her mother, she's over there in the Ludlow plot). It's a lovely, rather large farm house. It IS a working farm. There are small dwellings around for the help and by all accounts they are treated well. Mr. William becomes the Town of Islip Supervisor and the Inspector of Common schools in 1822. He adds Overseer of Highways to his titles the following year. . . . THEN. . . . tragedy strikes. Shortly after his 25th

birthday, on November 20th 1823, Mr. William Nicoll, the sixth in line of Islip Grange Nicolls dies of TYPHUS.

This is William Nicoll's grave right here. How carefully it was chosen. . . right behind the altar of the church his ancestors had built in 1765. Nearer my God to Thee.

Did I mention that Mrs. Sarah Nicoll is 7 months pregnant with her third child?

Little Sarah Greenly Nicoll is born on January 2, 1824. Her mother gave to this, her last child, that which was only hers. . . her name. This Sarah had Nicoll blood. Alas, little Sarah's story is a short one. She died after only 6 years, five months and four days of life. Cause? We will probably never know.

Her grave is marked by this very unusual "cradle grave". It may be the only one of its kind. Someone planted it with perennials, so every spring it will bloom. Little Sarah is buried right near the father she had never known. . . whose own father died, at age 23, the year he was born.

And over here is another wee grave. William Nicoll 1844-1844. He was the first child of William (newly departed) Nicoll. He only lived four weeks. The following year William Greenly Nicoll was born to his parents; William (newly departed) and his wife Sarah Augusta Nicoll.

Mrs. Sarah Greenly Nicoll: 32 years old, widow, mother of 2 young children and the grieving mother of her "baby". She has no family, we know of nearby. There was the farm, and rentals from other properties and the law suits. Bits of the land were sold or, generously given to build churches etc. . . Emmanuel church was one such receiver of Nicoll favor. This was not an easy time for her. . . yet she so valued education, that, her son, William (newly departed), graduated from Kings College. (AKA Columbia University. . . which can also thank Nicoll deep pockets and generosity for help in its establishment.)

Did I mention that all seven generations of Nicolls held deep respect for the land? They were all truly conservationists. They were quite aware that their wealth and possessions came from the soil, water and the environment. They did not waste anything. Their needs were simple. The land was their responsibility, and they would not damage it.

It all really began with this man over there . . . Liff Snedecor. In the 1820's he started with buying some land from the Nicolls. I guess he was just trying to make a business. Anyway this SOUTH SIDE SPORTSMEN'S CLUB was a successful business, for HIM. It introduced a lot of RICH New York Millionaires to a lot of other RICH New York Millionaires and to the beauties of Long Island's South Shore. Pretty soon, one by one, these RICH New York Millionaires started buying up big chunks of land. I mean hundreds of acres, big chunks of land. Then they started to build these monster homes. Only they weren't HOMES, they were show places. OSTENTATIOUS DISPLAYS OF WEALTH! Most of them only came out here for 'visits'. Oh they employed locals to

run the farms on the estates, do the building and maintenance, stuff like that. But tell me, WHO NEEDS 110 ROOMS?

Mrs. Sarah Greenly Nicoll was born in 1798, the year before George Washington died. She died in her 90th year. She witnessed many, many changes in her lifetime. I'm glad she didn't see much of the near future. . . .Look across the road. . . .Can you see it? Bourne Mansion. . . .1899.

How long do you think that will last? I'll wager. . . not even 30 years. . . .certainly not the 200 plus years Nicoll's Islip Grange lasted. Bah! I don't know what could become of such a monstrous 'home'. Perhaps a school? Maybe a military school where South American dictators can hide their bratty sons. . . .and they will shoot off canons at graduation! Bah. Oh for the good old days.