

# SLOOP CAPTAIN

from  
Willow  
Point

CAPTAIN JOHN KING, SON OF JOHN KING AND ANN PEENE, was born at Ashford, County Kent, England, on August 19, 1808. He came to New York in 1821 or 1822, at the age of 13 with his cousin, Joseph Peene, "to seek his fortune." He got a job working for Captain Daniel Willsea of Dobbs Ferry, New York, on a Hudson River sloop. By the time he was 16 he saved enough money to buy a sloop, the *Eliza Ann*. As Captain of his own ship, he plied the waters of the Hudson, carrying passengers and produce between Dobbs Ferry and Sneedeen's Landing to New York City. Joseph Peene also worked on the river and was soon running his own sloop, the *Ben Franklin*, three times a week from the bulkhead at Yonkers to the foot of Murray Street in New York.

Captain King was 18 years old when he married Eliza Ann Dobbs on January 20, 1827. She was the daughter of John Dobbs who lived on Daisy Avenue, Ardsley, just west of the Sprain, and his wife, Deborah Lawrence, whose picture hangs in the Dobbs Ferry library. The famous Johnny Dobbs was the great, great grandfather of John Dobbs mentioned above. He settled on a leasehold in Dobbs Ferry about 1700.

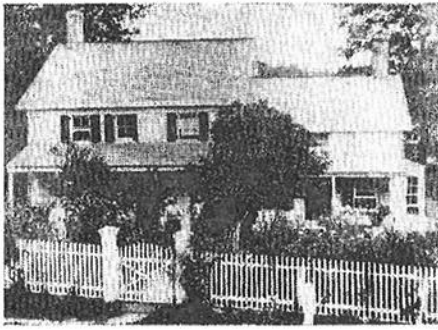
His son William, who first ran the ferry, gave the village its name.

Captain King and his bride settled in a little farmhouse on Willow Point, along the river at Dobbs Ferry. In addition to his transportation enterprise, the Captain raised garden produce and great quantities of cucumbers which he sold to several pickle factories in New York. It was a very profitable endeavor. Six children were born to them while

by  
Margaret  
King  
Travis  
Lane

they resided on Willow Point: Daniel Willsea on November 28, 1828; John Peene on December 11, 1831; Maria Elizabeth on April 12, 1834; Sarah Ann on May 27, 1836; James Thorne on September 8, 1838; and Harriet Jane on November 29, 1840.

When their first child was a month old one of his "golden locks" was sent across the ocean to his grandparents who had been worried that their son had married an Indian squaw! The grandparents King were living at the time in the town of Lydd, in County Kent "in sight of the famous Dungeness Light, and not far from the Goodwin Sands, scene of many shipwrecks on the English Channel." The parish church is located in the village of Lydd, and John King Sr. was its Senior Warden. Dating from the 15th century, the church is called All Saints Parish Church, though often referred to as the Cathedral of Romney Marsh.



Home of Captain King,  
Ashford Avenue and  
Eastern Drive, (1880)

Before their second child was born in 1831, the Captain sent passage money to his parents. They and their sons Thomas and Richard, came to Dobbs Ferry. Their voyage took 13 weeks. Richard married Maria Dutcher and resided at 57 Cedar Street. Their grandson, Warren C. King, was postmaster in Dobbs Ferry not too long ago.

By 1840 the Hudson River Railroad wanted Captain King's farm for its roadbed. He talked his old friend, John Brown Lefurgy, into selling him some land "out in the country" on the north side of Ashford Avenue, across from present Ardsley Heights. His house stood across the road, slightly east of John Joseph Lefurgy's old house which still stands at 572 Ashford Avenue. Captain King settled down to raising more cucumbers than ever, and both he and John Joe Lefurgy built pickle factories.<sup>(1)</sup> A circa 1862 map of Ashford's business district shows Captain King's pickle factory beside a small pond on the present King Street and the Lefurgy Pickle Works along the Sawmill River a short distance south of Bramble Brook.

Four more children were born after they "moved to the country". George Washington was born on July 4, 1842; Richard Lawrence (my grandfather) on November 11, 1843; Deborah Louisa on September 8, 1845; and Thomas Felix on January 30, 1847.

The pickle business flourished and the community along with it. Captain King named the settlement ASHFORD in memory of his birthplace in England. In 1854, he donated land for the first Ashford M. E. Church on Ashford Avenue at the corner of King Street.

On his farm, the Captain kept a cow or two to supply milk for his large family. In 1845 when a pair of twin heifers were born, the Captain decided to enter them in a competition at the American Institute in New York. His second son, John Peene King, aged 13, drove the twins to 23rd Street on foot, and returned with a silver medal for his father. This medal is now in the possession of Frank C. King II of Pleasant Valley, New York.

The Captain's eldest daughter Maria Elizabeth married Edmund A. Ackerman who was Dobbs Ferry's first United States Postmaster. Their grandson was Dr. Harold A. Storms who died in 1956. George Washington King, after serving as a captain in the Civil War, settled on the eastern edge of Dobbs Ferry. His house at 349 Ashford Avenue has recently been designated as an historical landmark.

Richard Lawrence King married Margaret Louisa Lefurgy, John Joe's daughter. They lived on the south side of Ardsley Square where Richard operated a grocery store (1862-1872). This same store was operated

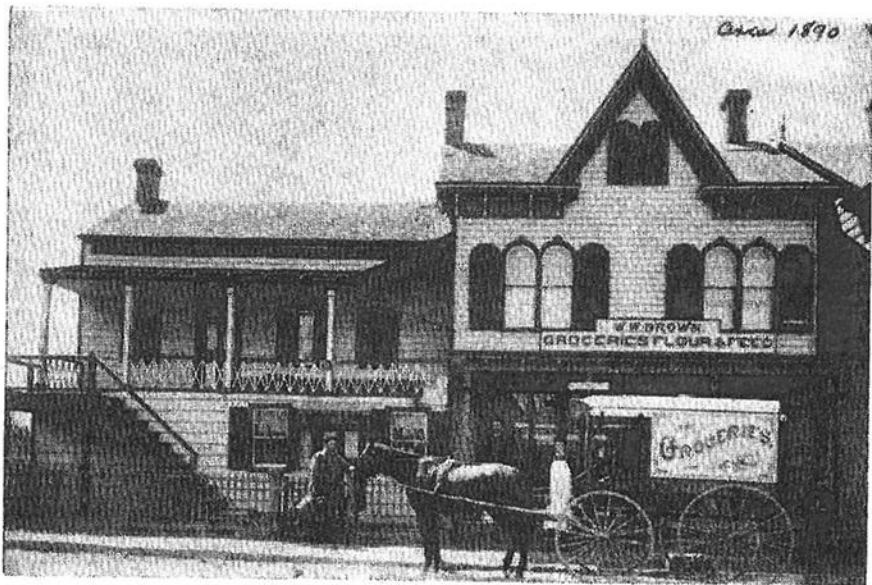
by Wesley W. Brown, the Captain's grandnephew, in the 1880's. Later, it was remodeled to include a drug store, the Post Office and Butch Lawrence's Meat Market. The building was completely destroyed by the Great Fire of December 5, 1914, which burned all of Ardsley Square. In 1872, Richard L. King and his family moved to Waterford Township, Oakland County, Michigan.

In 1881, the Putnam Railroad came through town, and the ASHFORD depot became a busy place. The villagers began to feel the need for their own post office, but their petitions were constantly ignored. Finally, a committee of determined residents, led by Captain King, approached Cyrus W. Field, asking him to use his influence. Mr. Field, who

owned a large estate on the northern edge of the village, was currently a prominent railroad developer. He had been cited by Congress and awarded a gold medal in 1866 after he laid the first successful Atlantic Cable to make communication with Europe a matter of minutes. This meeting turned out to be quite a HORSE-TRADE! Captain King nobly made a concession for the good of his neighbors by agreeing to let Mr. Field change the name of Ashford to ARDSLEY, after Field's ancestral home in England, and in 1883, the little village Post Office became a reality.

John Peene King was a carpenter in Ashford. He also served several terms as Judge of the local court. Both he and his father were original

Ardsley Grocery. Man on left identified as "baker from Dobbs Ferry", probably Carl Kindervatter. (See WEST. HIST. 45-2)



members of the board of trustees of the Ashford M. E. Church. The Captain served for 22 years as superintendant of its Sabbath School, until his death on April 29, 1885. John Peene King then became its superintendent, serving in this capacity until his death in 1917. On June 10, 1873, the Sabbath School of the M. E. Church of Ashford presented the Captain with a large photograph book, now mine.

Harriet Jane married Perry Montgomery Yates of Batchellerville, New York, near the present Sacandaga Reservoir. They were the parents of Abigail Eliza Yates, wife of William I. Odell, who died in Ardsley in 1952. Their daughter, Ruth King Odell Emerick, resides on Lincoln Avenue in the family home.

James Thorne King lived on Neperhan Street which has now been replaced by the New York State Thruway. He married Lodieca Yates, "Gum's" sister, having walked all the way to Batchellerville, New York, to do so. His grandson Raymond Clark King, and his wife, Ethel Brown, lived in Ardsley most of their lives. Ray died in 1961, one year after the death of his wife, leaving their son, William Wesley King, the Captain's Bible.

Sarah Ann married Eli Cole, his sister Gertrude married William H. Brown Sr., nephew of Captain King, Ardsley's longest surviving Civil War veteran. Eli was a carpenter in the village for many years. After the turn of the century, his children moved to Dutchess County, and Eli and Sarah accompanied them.

Thomas Felix King was the last member of the family to operate the Pickle Works. His family moved to Rochester, New York, early in 1900.

Deborah Louisa was the only who did not marry. She died at Captain's family home in 1894, her mother died two years later. Both are buried with the Captain at the Greenville Reformed Dutch Church Cemetery, Hartsdale.

Captain King's sloop, his first house on Willow Point in Dutchess Ferry, his old home on Ashford Avenue in Ardsley, his Pickle Works, Ashford's first church, even his son's grocery store on Broadway Square, have all disappeared. So the village of Ashford. Of 35 grandchildren, Colonel George L. King, Washington, D.C. and Ralph King of Rochester, New York, live to remember the days of the Captain. He had more than 275 descendants; the youngest, to my knowledge, is my granddaughter Jennifer Louisa Kane, born on July 3, 1967 in Troy, New York.

Although the King Family unions ceased with World War I, we descendants shall never let the memory of our adventurous 13-year-old immigrant ancestor and Dobbs family wife fade away. Captain was quite a guy!

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(1) There never was, nor ever will be a better pickle than one made according to the Captain's recipe:

Pickles 3 or 4 inches long  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup salt  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup dry mustard  
 1 quart vinegar  
 2 quarts water  
 a smitch of alum

Scrub pickles in cold water, pack lightly in large crock. Mix ingredients, pour over pickles, completely covering them. Put an old plate on top of pickles to keep them submerged. Put top on the crock and store in cool place.

EVERY DAY:—swish pickles around and stir up liquid.

Ready to eat in two weeks, but if you are a KING, you'll start sampling before end of first week!