

William Floyd's House of evolution

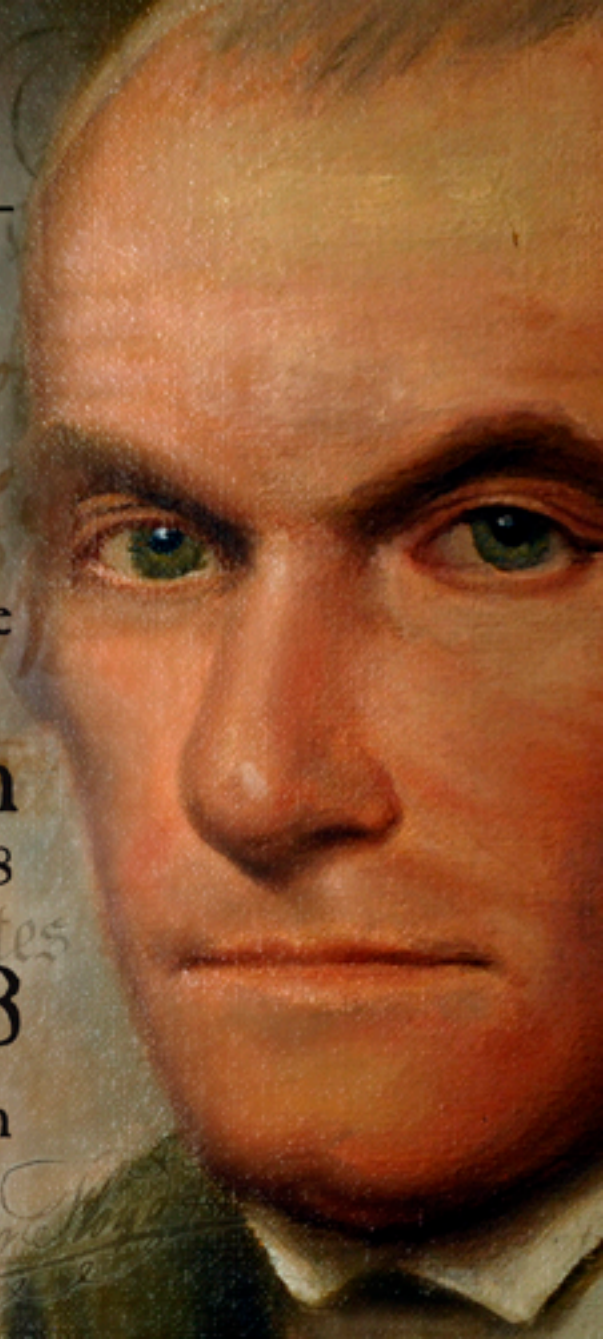
A photographic collection by Xiomáro
of the Old Mastic House at Fire Island National Seashore

On Exhibit at **Fraunces Tavern[®] Museum**

54 Pearl Street, New York, NY 10004 | (212) 425-1778

From July 4 to December 1, 2013

www.frauncestavernmuseum.org | www.xiomaro.com



William Floyd's House of Revolution

Exhibit Description from Fraunces Tavern® Museum

This photographic exhibit debuts the first artistic collection documenting the Old Mastic House, which is part of the Fire Island National Seashore on Long Island and was the home of William Floyd, an American revolutionary and signer of the Declaration of Independence. Together with fellow rebels such as George Washington, Floyd served in the first Continental Congress in 1774. His great grandson was Frederick Tallmadge, the second president of the Sons of the Revolution, which owns and operates Fraunces Tavern®, and the grandson of Washington's famous spymaster Benjamin Tallmadge.

For Floyd, it was so dangerous to be on Long Island – a time when it was militarily occupied by the British – that he and his family fled to Connecticut. The British took over Old Mastic House and used it as a barracks for their troops. The Floyds returned seven years later and restored the plundered homestead where he later entertained visits from fellow rebels (and presidents) such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

Remarkably, Old Mastic House was continuously occupied by Floyd's descendants up until 1976 when it was donated to the National Park Service. For over two centuries, the house itself marked America's rise from a colony to a nascent republic developing its place in world politics and culture. And it was more than just the Revolutionary War – the house is a silent witness to the impact of the Floyds in the Civil War and World War II. Indeed, the house grew with new rooms as the nation expanded with new states. And like America's motto –

e pluribus unum – the house stands as one unified historical structure having many evolving styles in architecture, furnishings, design and technology.

In 2013, the National Park Service commissioned New York artist Xiomáro (pronounced SEE-oh-MAH-ro) to create a photographic collection of the 25 room homestead. Xiomáro uses photography to interpret historical sites – particularly those within the National Park Service – where iconic American figures lived and worked to pursue their visions. He is a Visiting Artist at Weir Farm National Historic Site, and his work has been exhibited nationally. “My goal is that, after seeing these collections, viewers will feel compelled to visit the parks where they, too, can examine these leaders and explore the ideas that shaped our culture.”

The artist's collections can be seen and purchased at his website: www.xiomaro.com.

Introduction

Thank you for downloading my eBook. I'm investigating options with traditional publishers about authoring a hardcover coffee table style book, which many people have been asking for. Until then, I'm using the technology of our day to get something into the hands of all who love art, photography, history, architecture and interior design – or, perhaps more precisely, getting this content into their mobile phones, tablets and their home and office computers.

Even if I had a hardcover book out, I think I would still continue to publish these electronic versions. Though my eBooks will not have as much content as a regular book – and certainly will not have the sumptuous and tactile printing quality that is so important for photography – I can offer eBooks at a nominal cost, and they are a convenient way for many to explore new art without having to commit to a substantial expense. So if you enjoy this eBook, please encourage your friends, family and colleagues to download copies at my website while they are available: www.xiomaro.com

If you live or work in the greater New York metropolitan area or are planning a trip to New York City, I encourage you to visit the exhibit at [Fraunces Tavern® Museum](#). They are [located at 54 Pearl Street](#). The museum is a complex of five buildings with nine galleries and includes the very dining room where George Washington bade farewell to the officers of the Continental Army. The museum houses an extensive collection of Revolutionary War era artifacts. Free guided tours are available on the weekends. So it is the ideal place to view my photographs.

Now I know many people are familiar with my work digitally. They see the images on my website or in one of my eBooks. When they come to an exhibit, however, they are always amazed at how impactful it is to experience the photographs in person.

This is because the photographs are *printed*. My prints are larger than what can be viewed on a typical computer monitor, and the paper has a surface finish. Also, your monitor, by default, is not calibrated and is set by the manufacturer to be much brighter than necessary. What this means is that the original colors of the photographs will not appear accurately. If anything, your monitor will make all the images appear bluer than they should be.

Finally, there's the phenomenon of light and people. A fixed printed photograph that is *illuminated* by light falling on it is different than the electrons moving on your screen and projecting light out *at you*. And, despite our age of social media, there is nothing more social than enjoying art in a room full of other people – even strangers. It's like the difference between experiencing a play and watching television. Thankfully, visiting the Fraunces Tavern® Museum is far less expensive than purchasing Broadway tickets.

At the museum, each photograph has a floor plan next to it that shows the exact spot where the image was taken within the house. So once you've seen these images, why not consider following up with a visit to the source itself: [Old Mastic House at Fire Island National Seashore](#). It's located on [245 Park Drive, Mastic Beach, NY 11951](#). Parking and admission is [free as are the guided house tours](#). My photographs offer perspectives, close-ups and

certain artifacts you won't see. But the house tour offers a truly immersive experience led by very knowledgeable rangers.

In any case, I like the idea that, for those who do not have the proximity, budget or time to come to New York City or to Fire Island, this eBook serves as another exhibit vehicle with the advantage of being portable. The eBook can travel around the world to anyone interested and able to download the file.

The 18 images presented here are the same ones from the exhibit. At a special "sneak peek" opening we held for museum members, I had the opportunity of meeting and conversing with many of the docents who will be giving tours of the exhibit to visitors. A frequent request was for information that went beyond what appeared in the short summaries on the walls accompanying each photograph.

In a gallery setting, the size of the text has to be large enough so that it can be easily read. And, yet, the label containing the information has to be small enough so that it doesn't distract from the photograph. With the eBook, however, I have the space to elaborate further on the images. In fact, I have added two additional photographs that had to be cut because of installation logistics at the museum. So they are here as bonus material and complete the 20-photograph presentation I originally designed. Perhaps this extra textual and visual content will spark a two-way dialogue between us.

Back when I had a bit more free time, I enjoyed oil painting as well as charcoal and pastel drawing. With those arts, I decided what was going to be in the final picture. Nothing appeared in the image that my hand did not render. So there were no surprises.

With photography, it's different. I get to decide what's going to be in the frame and left out of it. I also determine other things such as the composition, the lighting, the coloring, whether or not I want to intentionally introduce some blur, etc. But as I am photographing what exists in the house, there will invariably be things that appear over which I have no control. I am sometimes surprised at details that reveal themselves to me later on. It might be something tucked away in the background or within a shadow. Or it might be something more nuanced – a mood, a sense of place, something immaterial that triggers a thought or a personal connection.

So feel free to [email me and let me know](#) what *you* think about the photographs. What are you seeing and how does it make you feel? Which ones are your favorites and why? What impact are these photographs making on your fresh pair of eyes? It is through the experiences and insights of others that I often learn the most about my work.

William Lloyd

Who Is William Floyd?

I can speak to my experiences and my processes for creating artistic works based on historical subjects. I can motivate others to explore history beyond what they might have begrudgingly learned in school. I can advocate for the funding, preservation and appreciation of historical sites and artifacts. I love history.

But I am an artist not a historian. So other than general information by way of background – hopefully presented accurately – I suggest consulting with the experienced docents at Fraunces Tavern® and the rangers at Fire Island's Old Mastic House. You can also read more about the history at this [resource page](#) on my website, which links to free downloadable materials. The *Historic Furnishings Report*, which you will see there, was of particular help in preparing this eBook.

Indeed, despite the many years I have lived on Long Island, “William Floyd” was nothing more than the name of a parkway and a high school out east in Suffolk County. But, as I soon learned and as the Exhibit Description announces, Floyd was an American Revolutionary and the first of the four New York delegates to sign the Declaration of Independence.

In comparison to other Founding Fathers such as John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton or Thomas Jefferson, not much is known about Floyd (December 17, 1734 to August 4, 1821). So his signature (previous image) is about as close as one can

get to this mystery man. Among the few authenticated possessions of Floyd that are in the house is a three-volume set of books written by Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, titled *Characteristicks*. Volume 1 has the curious subtitle, *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm. Sensus Communis; an essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*. [You can read a copy here](#) courtesy of the University of California – at least for as long as they choose not to change the link. Although *Characteristicks* is not part of the house tour at Fire Island National Seashore, the exhibit at Fraunces Tavern® museum includes a Victorian display case containing documents and other artifacts pertaining to Floyd and his great grandson Frederick Tallmadge.

This volume bore Floyd's prominent signature inside. It's fascinating to see a signature, say Goya's or Monet's, on a painting. But it's much more visceral to see Floyd's signature on this flyleaf without the distraction of colors or painted imagery. It is just there. It's even better than seeing it on the original Declaration of Independence where it is competing for attention with 55 other signatures – especially the oversized imprimatur of John Hancock.

A heavier and highly blotted version of William Floyd's signature – "William" is abbreviated as "Wm" – appears in the flyleaf of another volume of *Characteristicks* (next image). The signature of his grandson John Gelston Floyd appears underneath as if to symbolize the parallel lives they led.

William Floyd served as a New York State delegate to the First Continental Congress from 1774 to 1776. Afterwards, he became a member of the New York State Senate from 1777 to 1788. Then, in 1789, he was elected to the 1st United States Congress under the new Constitution and served until 1791. Finally, in 1808, Floyd returned to the New York State Senate.

John Gelston Floyd was born at Old Mastic House in 1806 and went on to lead a public life as well. He became the prosecuting attorney of Utica, Judge of Suffolk County and a two-term Democratic Congressman. He joined the Republican Party soon after its founding. John died in 1881 and is interred in the family cemetery at Old Mastic House.

Wm Lloyd Garrison

Wm. G. Storrs



Old Mastic House

Floyd's signatures are a direct introduction to the personality of the man. So it is fitting to present a photograph showing the exterior of Old Mastic House to introduce his dwelling and the place where the photographs were taken (previous image). The house was built by William Floyd's father in the 1720s as a small two-story six-room structure on a 4,400 acre plantation. It was farmed by both slave and free labor with its products shipped from the nearby bay. But by August 1776, it was so dangerous to be on Long Island – a time when it was militarily occupied by the British – that William Floyd and his family had to leave their home (and source of income) behind and escape to Middletown, Connecticut.

Even from Connecticut, the frequent trips to Congress were still quite perilous and a constant worry for Floyd's wife Hannah. In a letter to her husband, she expressed relief of his "safe arrival at Philadelphia which gave me great pleasure for many have been my fears about you since you first left...but thanks be to Heaven that kept you from falling into the hands of your Enemies....Disagreeable news from the East end of Long Island our friends are very much distress[ed] there house filled with Soldiers there Bread taken from them there Cattle killed ten a day to Support them and it is the opinion of many Should they Continue there all winter many of the inhabitants will perish for want of bread many of them have come off and Left there families at the mercy of the Enemy...."

During that time of exile, Hannah died and was buried at Middletown's Mortimer Cemetery. Meanwhile, the British took over the house and used it as a barracks for their troops. The

house was ransacked and damaged when Floyd returned seven years later. Eventually the house was restored and enlarged, as was the new nation that was coming into existence. To visit the house today during a tour is to walk in the steps of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and other notable guests who would later visit Floyd.

Taking this exterior photograph was quite the experience, as I was unprepared for how I would be greeted. I was the first human to arrive on the estate grounds early that morning. And the mosquitoes knew that too as they immediately descended on me like a buzzing curtain of hungry flying needles. Untying my hair provided a thick cover for my ears and neck. And, though I overdressed for what was to become a very hot day, my photography vest and long-sleeved flannel shirt minimized the amount of blood that was drained.

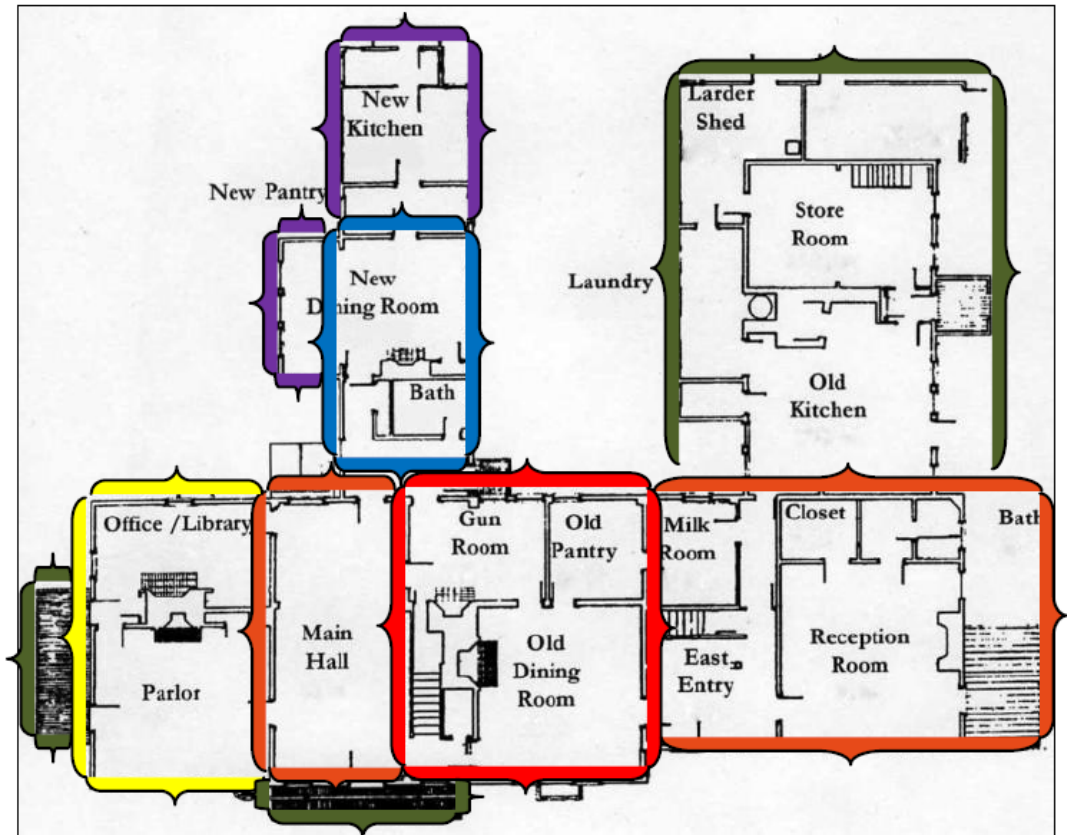
Then there was the tick I found on my foot later on. How that speck managed to get past my thick ankle-high boots and socks is something I'll never know. But what I did find out, from an amused ranger, is that my visit coincided with the recent hatching of all these little suckers. The humor of bad timing by hapless visitors was apparently not lost on the Floyds either. During World War II, the family would put on a play for their friends and neighbors called *The Drama of the Mastic Mosquito Fleet Base*. Yeah. Funny.

But don't let my one-time misadventure discourage you from visiting the park. You'll want to see the house and grounds for yourself as they are much larger than they appear in my exterior photograph. Though reduced from its original plantation size, there is still a

significant 613 acres of forest, fields, marsh and trails to explore. And, from the photograph, you cannot see that there are two wings expanding rearward, which give the house a unique shape – almost like the top part of a monkey wrench (next image).

Old Mastic House | First Floor Plans

Original (1720s)
Addition 1 (~1750)
Addition 2 (1792)
Addition 3 (1857)
Addition 4 (1898)
Addition 5 (1920s)





Up Close and Personal

To continue the theme of introducing William Floyd, the first half of the exhibit moves from the signatures and the exterior of the house to a study of some of his few personal items that survived the plundering by the British. Floyd's own account lays blames on British sympathizers from Connecticut who obtained a permit from William Tryon, New York's loyalist governor, to take possession of his estate. As Floyd puts it, "The above persons took on my Estate a Considerable Quantity of Stock of Different kinds the Greatest part of my Household furniture, and all my farming utensils with Some Beds, and Beding with other Cloathing."

Under those circumstances, it is incredible to see the New York Chippendale secretary that served as Floyd's desk (previous image). Photographing this piece was of particular interest to me as my father was a New York cabinet maker specializing in reproducing antique furniture, which included a lot of Chippendale. I grew up surrounded by this kind of furniture and worked in his shop doing the sanding, bandsawing, gluing and other tasks.

Upon seeing this desk, one can imagine the personal and business correspondence Floyd penned – perhaps to his political allies Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who would later visit Old Mastic House. The desk is located in a corner of the Parlor. In that same room hangs the original handwritten document appointing Floyd to represent the State of New York at the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in which he served from 1774 to 1776.

On top of the desk are two volumes of *Characteristicks* along with Floyd's snuff box and an English hand-blown wine bottle (also known as "black" glass) personalized with his initials. The staff was kind enough to pull these items from storage and to place them on the desk for me.

The snuff box (next image) was found by the last generation of occupants in a maid's room. Like his books, the box evokes a great sense of intimacy. It animates a personality that would otherwise remain a distant figure from history. The ornate container was handled by Floyd, perhaps brought close to his nose and carried on his person. The photograph reveals the subtle beauty of this piece which – even if it were on display – would not be possible to appreciate as readily during a house tour where time and proximity is too limited for one to engage in a studied look.





Floyd's father built the house so that it could easily be expanded as his family grew in wealth and size. This can be better appreciated from the color-coded floor plan I presented earlier showing the various additions that were made over the years. Around 1750, his father added what is now known as the Main Hall. The front door (previous image) strategically faces south toward the bay. This enabled the cooling of the house during the humid Long Island summers by opening the top half of the Dutch door and drawing in the draft when another Dutch door across the room was also opened.

The Main Hall was meant to impress guests, especially visiting presidents, and was where important events like funerals and family weddings took place. In 1784, Floyd's daughter married George Washington's spymaster, Benjamin Tallmadge, in this very room. Frederick Tallmadge, Floyd's great grandson, would become the second president of the Sons of the Revolution which owns and operates Fraunces Tavern®.

Next to the front door is a coat rack having an interesting design suggesting a patriarchal cross. It echoes an Armenian rug, not viewable in the photograph as it lies further inside the room, that features small crosses within its pattern. Two of the canes have ivory caps and are believed to have belonged to Floyd as they resemble the cane he is holding [in his portrait](#) on the other side of the room. Floyd's demeanor in the painting accurately reflects a contemporary's description of him as having "a natural dignity" and that "in his manners he was less familiar, and in his disposition less affable, than most men. He was an eminently practical man." Floyd's personality was also said to be one steeped in "reasoning, logic,

practicality, and his personal experiences,” which may account for why he was one of the few members of the landed gentry to oppose reconciliation with Britain – especially in New York where loyalism was particularly strong and which the British ended up holding throughout most of the war.

Adjacent to the Main Hall is the Old Dining Room, which dates back to the original building of Old Mastic House in the 1720s by Floyd's father. Against the back wall is a liquor box euphemistically known in the family as the traveling “medicine” cabinet (next image). It belonged to Floyd who would take it with him whenever he went to Philadelphia to do business at the Continental Congress. The inside of the lid is lined with decorative wall paper. Together with the ivory capped walking canes and snuff box, the traveling medicine cabinet completes the picture of Floyd as the country gentleman who assumed independence at the early age of 20 when both parents died in 1755.

In general, I prefer using natural light whenever possible. But the Main Hall is rather dark and the rainy April weather cast a gloom in the Old Dining Room. After fighting to wring out as much brightness as possible from underexposed images, I decided to embrace and enhance the shadows. I set up a lighting fixture I brought to infuse the images with an Old World warmth and glow. I was pleased with the look as it reminded me of the chiaroscuro employed by artists I admire like Rembrandt and Goya. Sometimes a problem forces a solution that yields a more creative result.





The chair in the earlier photograph of Floyd's desk is not original to him. But the Windsor chair pictured on the previous page is. This one is located in the Old Dining Room – on a rare bright April day – and there are several others in Old Mastic House that are known to have belonged to Floyd. There is one with a green patina in the Office/Library that belonged to Floyd and was made in Connecticut. In the Main Hall, there are more chairs lined against the staircase wall. As you can see, the Windsor chair is distinctive for its bowed spindle back.

Another personal item that brings us within one degree of separation from Floyd is the flintlock musket depicted in the next image as a close-up. The musket stands at attention in its rack on the Gun Room wall. The American Revolutionary War began in Massachusetts with the battles of Lexington and Concord in 1775 and came to a close with the signing of the Peace of Paris in 1783, which is when Floyd returned from exile. During the early stages of the war, Floyd was a member of Long Island's Suffolk County Militia and went on to become an officer. The house does not possess any military weaponry used by Floyd. So the musket, used for hunting, is the one extant firearm that would have been cradled in his arms.

During a tour it is difficult, if not impossible, to see William Floyd's initials inscribed on the plate behind the flintlock. The plate is on the bottom and faces leftward, in shadow, toward an open door (see photograph on page 38). So, of course, I just had to get a photograph of the inscription, which was quite the challenge. Because I was literally working in a museum,

I had to take great care to move myself and my camera equipment very slowly and deliberately to avoid accidentally knocking into something and causing damage. And I was not allowed to touch or move any of the objects. In fact, I removed my shoes and worked either in my socks or slippers to minimize additional wear and tear on the carpets, rugs and floors.

So the musket had to stay where it was, and I could not close the door. That meant trying to squeeze myself in between the musket and the door along with my camera, tripod and lights (it was another one of those gloomy days). It proved to be too constraining to accommodate everything. In such cases, less is more. I took the photograph, sans tripod, with the camera in one hand and gripping it as steady as I could to minimize blurring the image. With the other hand I pointed a small flashlight toward the initials.

It was worth the trouble. The musket, as will be described later, also presages a significant change in the use of Old Mastic House.



MEN OF BROOKHAVEN

TO ARMS! TO ARMS!

Protect your GOVERNMENT!

Obtain a liberal BOUNTY!

Escape the disgrace of a DRAFT!

Sustain the Honor of Old Suffolk!

and enlist in the

STANTON LEGION?

The best Regiment forming in New York city. Was H. Allen, Col. P. H. Balling, Lieut. Col. R. S. Vanuxem
... men, but not seen service.



E Pluribus Unum

“Out of Many, One”

As explained in the museum’s exhibit description, Old Mastic House was continuously occupied by Floyd’s descendants up until 1976 when it was donated to the National Park Service. The fully furnished house and seaside property, which could have easily fetched a princely sum on the open market, was given to the government to coincide with the Bicentennial. The house bears witness that the family’s service to the new country did not begin and end with the Revolutionary War. With the Civil War, America was again thrust into an existential conflict.

An original recruitment poster from 1862 hangs in the Office/Library (previous image). It’s in such good condition that I actually thought it was a reproduction. Together with the neighboring bird of prey, it was a composition I could not pass up. It reminds us that, in 1862, John Gelston Floyd, Jr. (1841-1903) enlisted in the Union army along with other men from Brookhaven that he recruited. John served as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 145th New York Volunteer Regiment, Company G, which was organized in Staten Island, New York.

Three weeks after enlisting, John wrote home to his mother from Frederick, Maryland, and described how the men in his regiment “were received by the president in person, a rare honor. President Lincoln has a ... look, rather care worn.” John spent the next 16 months in the battle and saw his second cousin and commanding officer, Captain Franklin B. Crosby,

get killed in action. Reconstruction and beyond was spent with many nightmares reliving his experiences at Gettysburg and Chancellorsville.

You can read more correspondence on the [Civil War page of the Fire Island website](#), which includes digital versions of the original documents and additional information about the 145th Regiment. But if you're in the house, you can see a more modern form of communication on display in the New Dining Room. Receiving a Western Union telegram during World War II could be a nerve-wracking affair as it was the military's method for informing families of the fate of their sons. Unlike other households, John T. Nichols was spared from receiving news that his son William Floyd Nichols was either killed or missing in action. Nevertheless, one can only imagine this father's distress upon learning that William, a Staff Sergeant, "was slightly wounded in action in France" (next image). The information age of the internet, social media and 24 hour cable news coverage did not yet exist to fill in the details of the telegram's terse announcement.

William Floyd Nichols was the great, great, great, great grandson of William Floyd. His father, John T. Nichols, was a noted ichthyologist, ornithologist and curator at the American Museum of Natural History. John used the wildlife on the estate in his studies. His books, specimens, documents of bird counts and other materials remain in the American Museum's collections.

Again, the lack of natural light forced an unorthodox technique. My flashlight provided the extra illumination I needed and created the effect of a wartime searchlight.

TELEGRAM

CLASS OF SERVICE

This is a Address Telegram or Cablegram unless its character is indicated by a suitable symbol shown on preceding the address.

WESTERN UNION

A. N. WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT

The time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.

SYMBOLS

DL=Day Letter
NL=Night Letter
SC=Day and Night
NLT=Night Letter
Ship Radiogram

NOV 4 30 GOVT=WUX WASHINGTON DC 21 54 AA
JOHN T NICHOLS=
116TH 9 ST GARDEN CITY NY=

PM SEP 21 AM 6 17

DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON STAFF SERGEANT
WILLIAM F NICHOLS WAS SLIGHTLY WOUNDED IN ACTION IN FRANCE
SEVEN SEPTEMBER PERIOD PROGRESS REPORTS WILL BE FORWARDED
AS RECEIVED=
J A ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL.

THE COMPANY WILL APPROPRIATE



BFW-48

3

~~M.B.N. 16~~

~~JSN - June 1917~~

~~A.C.M.G. - July 1918~~

2

~~A.B.M. 17~~

~~C.P.W. July 21~~

~~W.G.N. 152
July 152~~

1

~~D.G. 152~~

~~Robin Tray
Aug 76~~

3

For over two centuries, Old Mastic House was a microcosm of the nation. Not only did it go through periods of war and peace, but the house also expanded, changed and improved in tandem with the new country. Like America's motto – *e pluribus unum* – the house stands as one unified historical structure despite the confluence of many evolving styles in architecture, furnishings, design and technology. For that reason, the family growth chart is a striking symbol (previous image).

It's easy to miss the chart because it's not conspicuously enshrined, though it is now protected with a shield of clear acrylic glass. Like many families, the Floyd's kept their chart out of the way – in this case, in the hallway. The chart, of course, marks the passing of childhood to adulthood. But represented within the crudely scratched years is a span of history when great changes were also occurring within the country as the family and Old Mastic House entered the 20th century.

The rise of industrialization over agriculture and the social changes it brought about meant that the year-round plantation had to evolve. By 1885 the family worked outside the home and ceased using the property as a full-time working farm. Instead, the forest was allowed to grow back and the estate became a summertime retreat for hunting quail, pheasant, water fowl, fox and deer.

So the growth chart's location is very appropriate as the hallway was part of a new wing that was needed to help accommodate the many guests visiting the family to escape the summer

heat of New York City. The wing was added in 1898 by John Gelston Floyd, Jr., who was by then an old veteran of the Civil War, and included an indoor bathroom and a sitting room.

The bedroom, which was originally the kitchen, was converted into the Gun Room by about 1792 (next image). By the time Old Mastic House transformed into a recreational seaside estate, the “useless flintlocks” – hunting rifles from 1700s to the early 1800s – were used by the children to play “cops and robbers.” The gun on the left is the one belonging to William Floyd. Next to that is the door that made it that much more difficult for me to photograph his initials.





Eventually, a more appropriate rack was installed for the variety of sports that were now being enjoyed on the wide-ranging grounds and bay of Old Mastic House (previous image). Fishing paraphernalia, croquet balls, badminton rackets and paddles, baseball and boxing gear now stand in for their rifle counterparts juxtaposed directly across the room. Curiously, an Iroquois war club (a precursor to the tomahawk) appears to the left of the baseball bat. I imagine that it might have come in handy if the children ever tired of cops and robbers and needed to change their roles to cowboys and Indians.

The still life of the bull's-eye target under the sports rack is one of the photographs that I had to eliminate from the exhibit (next image). It's a convenient symbol of the trappings of the modern leisure class as it moved away from its agrarian roots. Just as the Floyd hunting flintlocks became repurposed into playthings, so did archery. After the Civil War, archery became a popular lawn game, fell out of favor and then enjoyed a resurgence of interest in the 1920s.





The room names given by the family can be a source of confusion because the use and décor of the rooms evolved over time. As previously discussed, the Gun Room is one notable example. The Blue Room on the second floor is another example as it has long abandoned its original color scheme. Some names are the product of the children's fanciful imaginations such as the Fo'c'sle Room (pronounced like "fossil") on the second floor inspired by a ship's forecastle (i.e., the sailors' living quarters).

Originally, the Office was used to conduct the plantation's business affairs. Eventually, it morphed into more of a reading room to provide books for moments of leisure. During inclement weather, afternoon tea was served in the Library instead of on the front porch. The fireplace certainly made it a cozy room to relax in. On the mantel are a Churchwarden smoking pipe and a shorebird decoy (circa 1860) (previous image). A second decoy on the mantel has "Gelston Floyd" (grandson of William Floyd) inscribed underneath.

The hallway door (next image) is the other photograph that was eliminated from the exhibit. It leads to what the family in the 20th century called the Old Kitchen, which was built as part of an 1857 addition. In fact, it was the third kitchen created over the history of the house and would come to signify its continuing evolution.





Cornelia Floyd Nichols (1882-1977) spent her childhood summers at Old Mastic House with her siblings. She grew up to become an attractive Gibson Girl while her brother, William Floyd, worked in real estate and became a Socialist. As William himself put it, "It is difficult for capitalists to understand how a descendent of a signer of the Declaration of Independence and of William Bradford of the Mayflower can be a Red. To the Reds I am a bourgeois, the Socialists being the middle ground people hated by all." Cornelia blamed William's "un-thinking Socialism" on his wife.

Sometime in the 1960s, Cornelia began romanticizing the colonial past and staged the Old Kitchen with items found in the attic to create a museum environment for the children. As a result, we see a decorative arrangement with a scale and basin by the window (previous image). Likewise, the fireplace, seen as an open hearth, does not represent the original cooking technology of the time (next image). In 1857, there would have been a gargantuan cast iron cook stove with six kettle holes and two ovens. The brick oven on the left was used for baking biscuits, bread, pies and puddings.

The Old Kitchen is quite spacious, which was a necessity when the estate was a working farm with large numbers of family members, domestics and laborers to feed and large quantities of produce and meat to prepare. Though later replaced by a modern kitchen space, the Old Kitchen was still used for labor-intensive activities such as canning, making preserves and storing sides of ham and beef.





Built in 1928, the addition of the New Kitchen reflects the continuing expansion and evolution of both Old Mastic House and the U.S. (previous image). The limited use of the house as a seasonal dwelling, the decline in the number of full-time live-in domestics, advances in technology and the availability of pre-packaged foods resulted in a smaller kitchen. As seen here, the kitchen is outfitted with a 1954 Hardwick stove, a cabinet with a steel-topped counter and linoleum flooring.

In the 1950s, the New Kitchen was used for a lot more than just cooking and eating. As discussed earlier, John T. Nichols was a curator at the American Museum of Natural History. His affinity for using specimens from around the estate apparently influenced his son, David. And, so, the tradition got passed on from father to son and the kitchen table became a makeshift taxidermy staging area. David taught his son John – Cornelia's grandson – how to prepare the field mice, moles and shrews caught on the estate so that they could be sent to the American Museum's small mammals collection. John recalls how "Dad taught me how to skin the mice, curing the pelts in fine cornmeal, stuffing the little creatures, and pinning them out as museum specimens on mounting boards."

I must confess that I took some creative license with this photo. As previously described, I worked in my socks or slippers to protect the floors. But asking every visitor to remove their shoes is not practical unless the house tours are run by the TSA instead of the rangers. So there is a circumscribed path of carpet runners, which was difficult to keep out of the photographs as I was able to do on other commissions. When I photographed Theodore

Roosevelt's mansion, for example, extensive work was being done in the house. So the rooms were nearly vacant and most of the runners were removed. At the Connecticut farmhouse of Impressionist painter Julian Alden Weir, the rooms were under renovation and I was permitted to temporarily roll the black rubber runners out of the way. Both of these houses were closed to the public.

At Old Mastic House, however, tours were underway so removing the carpets was not an option. Hard as I tried, these modern-looking intruders frequently poked into my line of sight like a pesky fly – or, perhaps more appropriately, a mosquito. In the New Kitchen, they were unavoidable. A triangle of beige carpeting trespassed in front of the stove and adjacent to a corner of the flowered floor mat by the sink. With some patience and careful blending in post-processing, however, I extended the linoleum to remove the runner entirely!

The Collection

The 20 photographs from the *exhibit* are to be distinguished from the rest of the photographs in the *collection*. The 20 were selected from a great many that are part of the collection, which includes alternate views and images from other parts of the house. I created the collection so that there is variety, which gives the National Park Service options on how it chooses to use the images over the years. As of this writing, I am still working on the project. So check my website periodically as I will eventually have a gallery page with all of the photographs available for viewing.

An exhibit, however, has to be more focused. It is an intensive editing process. Like photography, it's a matter of deciding what to leave in and, perhaps more importantly, what to leave out. What story do I want to tell? What images are the most effective in telling that story, but are also representative of William Floyd, his house and the rest of the photographic collection? How do I sequence the photos in a way that best presents that story? How do I avoid revealing too much about Floyd and Old Mastic House so that a desire is sparked to learn more?

These are all hard questions. And I never answer them perfectly with the exhibits I create. But if I provoked in you a curiosity about or appreciation for the history our National Park Service is entrusted to protect, then that is success enough for me.



About The Artist

New York artist Xiomáro (pronounced SEE-oh-MAH-ro) uses photography to interpret historical sites within the National Park Service where iconic American figures lived and worked to pursue their visions. Xio began as an Artist-in-Residence at [Weir Farm National Historic Site](#), in Wilton/Ridgefield, Connecticut, and continues his relationship as a Visiting Artist.

His other collections include *Weir Farm – “The Great Good Place”*; *Weir Was Here – Secret Rooms, Doors and Windows*; *Mahonri Young’s Secret Rooms, Doors and Windows*; and *Theodore Roosevelt – “How I Love Sagamore Hill,”* all of which can be seen on the [Gallery page of his website](#) and at his [upcoming exhibits](#).

His work has been exhibited around the U.S. at the National Park Service (Connecticut, New York, Philadelphia), educational institutions (Brigham Young University, Harvard University), governmental offices (Senator Joe Lieberman, Congressman Jim Himes, Mayor Michael Pavia), galleries (Quetzalcoatl Fine Art Gallery, Oyster Bay Historical Society, PhotoPlace Gallery, K. DiResta Collective) as well as overseas (Siena Art Institute, Italy). Many of the photographs have been acquired by art connoisseurs and institutions to become part of their permanent collections.

His exhibits have been covered and announced by [The New York Times](#), *Fine Art Connoisseur*, *Long Island Woman*, *Fox 13 News* and many other newspapers, magazines, radio programs and internet sources.

“My goal is that viewers of my photographs will feel compelled to visit the parks where they, too, can examine these leaders and explore the ideas that shaped our culture. Experiencing our heritage and open spaces also ensures their preservation and conservation.”

Support More Exhibits

I understand that not everyone can help. But, if you can, here are some ways to support my mission to promote the National Parks:

1. **Share Your Contacts:** If you know anyone at a museum, educational or governmental institution, gallery or any non-traditional location that would be open to exhibiting *William Floyd's House of Revolution* or any of my other collections, please [email me and let me know](#). I'm also available for speaking engagements. It could be anywhere in the country or around the world.
2. **Buy A Print:** Each purchase helps finance expenses. The costs for framing, promotion and travelling quickly add up. Print prices are targeted to a range of collecting preferences and are affordable to just about everyone – from as low as \$10 to over \$1,300. They make great gifts for birthdays, anniversaries and other occasions or to decorate a home or office. I also like to use my art to give back. So ten percent of higher-priced works is donated to Doctors Without Borders. [Click here for purchase information](#).
3. **Recommend me to the Media:** If you know anyone at a newspaper, magazine or newsletter; TV or radio program; blog, podcast or other internet source, please [email me and let me know](#). It could be anywhere in the country or around the world.

4. **Boost my Exposure:** If you haven't done so already, friend me on [Facebook](#), follow me on [Twitter](#) and connect with me on [LinkedIn](#). Encourage your friends to do the same and to download a copy of this eBook.

Web Links

Here's a list of all the links appearing in the eBook so that you don't have to go back and hunt around for them:

Email me: [click here](#)

My website: www.xiomaro.com

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William Floyd resource page: [click here](#)

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Fraunces Tavern® Museum: www.frauncestavernmuseum.org

Map and directions to the museum: [54 Pearl Street, New York, NY 10004](#)

Old Mastic House website: [click here](#)

Map and directions to Old Mastic House: [245 Park Drive, Mastic Beach, NY 11951](#)

Old Mastic House facilities, hours, free tours: [click here](#)

Fire Island's Civil War page: [click here](#)

William Floyd's portrait: [click here](#)

Characteristics: [click here](#)

Weir Farm National Historic Site: www.nps.gov/wefa

The New York Times: [An Unorthodox Look at a President's Home](#)

Credits

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Ebook: *William Floyd's House of Revolution*

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