

The purpose of the Archives is to collect, preserve, and provide access to the permanent records generated by the various departments of the Town of Huntington, as well as ensure that these records will be available for future generations. The archival activities we implement enrich education, improve access to historical records and serve as a source of information for residents, teachers, students, community groups and a range of researchers. In addition, our activities help in highlighting the Town's historical organizations and sites.

The Archives is open for research on weekdays, except holidays, by appointment only.

Hours: 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

For additional information contact:
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Archival handouts are developed by Antonia S. Mattheou, Town Archivist. They are printed on recycled paper and are free of charge.

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HUNTINGTON TOWN CLERK'S ARCHIVES
AT
TOWN HALL

Jo-Ann Raia, RMC, Town Clerk/RMO



American Hero
Nathan Hale

Nathan Hale was born on June 6, 1755, in Coventry, Connecticut. He was the sixth child of Deacon Richard Hale and Elizabeth Strong Hale. At the age of fourteen, he and his brother Enoch were sent to Yale College. While at Yale, Nathan had the opportunity to study the play "Cato" by Joseph Addison. In fact, it is believed by some that the verse, "What pitty is it that we can die but once to serve our country," to have been the inspiration for Nathan's famous last words before his hanging. Nathan graduated from Yale in 1773. He attained a teaching job first in East Haddam, and later in New London. In 1775 he joined a Connecticut militia and was elected first lieutenant. By July 6, 1775, he had joined the 7th Continental Regiment under Colonel Charles Webb of Stamford. In March 1776, he was promoted to captain and commanded a small unit of Lt. Col. Thomas Knowlton's Rangers who were defending New York City. On September 8, 1776, Nathan volunteered to go behind enemy lines and report on the movements of the British troops on Long Island. Around September 12, Hale and his companion, Sergeant Stephen Hempstead, left their camp on Harlem Heights and made their way to Norwalk, CT. From there, they were ferried across the Long Island Sound in a sloop belonging to Captain Pond of Milford. The two men landed near Huntington Harbor, Long Island, where Sergeant Hempstead remained while Nathan pressed on alone. Disguised as an unemployed Dutch schoolmaster and carrying with him his Yale diploma, Nathan spent several days behind enemy lines. His boyhood friend from Coventry, Asher Wright, said later: "He was too good-looking to go so. He could not deceive. Some scrubby fellow ought to have gone."

On the night of September 21, Hale was on his way back to the shore where he had first landed, when he saw a boat rowing toward the shore. Believing it to be friendly he walked down to the water side making his way toward it. When he realized his mistake, it was too late.

The British arrested Hale and took him to New York City on the frigate Halifax, belonging to Captain Quarme. Nathan was brought for questioning before the British commander, General William Howe. When the British discovered sketches of their military fortifications under the inner soles of his shoes Hale admitted his identity and the

purpose of his mission. General Howe ordered his execution without trial.

Thus, on the morning of September 22, 1776, Captain Nathan Hale was marched along Post Road to the Park of Artillery next to a public house, called the Dove Tavern (66th Street and Third Avenue today), and hanged at 11:00 AM. He was 21 years old and the first American to be executed for spying on behalf of his country. He is best remembered for his words before being hanged, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." Hale has long been considered an American hero and, in 1985, he was officially designated the state hero of Connecticut.

Sources in our collections pertaining to Nathan Hale include:

- The Huntington Town Clerk's Archives houses a 28" bronze statue of Nathan Hale made by artist Frederick MacMonnies, Ca. 1890. The statue was donated to the Town of Huntington in 1919, by the artist's wife Alice. It was consigned to the Town Clerk's office in 1976 and in 1998, it became part of the Archives holdings.
- Records regarding the Nathan Hale Memorial, 1933-1934 and 1954
- A 1938 pamphlet on Nathan Hale
- Research done by Town Historian Roy Lott, in 1935, regarding the place of Captain Nathan Hale's capture.
- Material pertaining to the Nathan Hale Post Association, 1930-1933

This pamphlet was developed using documents housed in the Huntington Town Clerk's Archives.

Activity: *Plan a class trip or ask your students to visit the Huntington Town Clerk's Archives to view our Nathan Hale collection and other manuscripts relating to the American Revolution.*

Ask for copies of other handouts from our Archives