



"This little island in the bay of New York is a very special place. It has given birth to and attracted to its shores many famous people from all walks of life."

—Borough Historian Thomas Matteo

Our Island's story, from people to places, featured in new book

'Discovering Staten Island' is one of the major endeavors of the year-long si350 anniversary

By **STEPHANIE SLEPIAN**
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

It was an August day in 1661 when Peter Stuyvesant authorized land grants to Dutch, French and Belgian settlers to make their home on a plot of land called Oude Dorp — today known as South Beach.

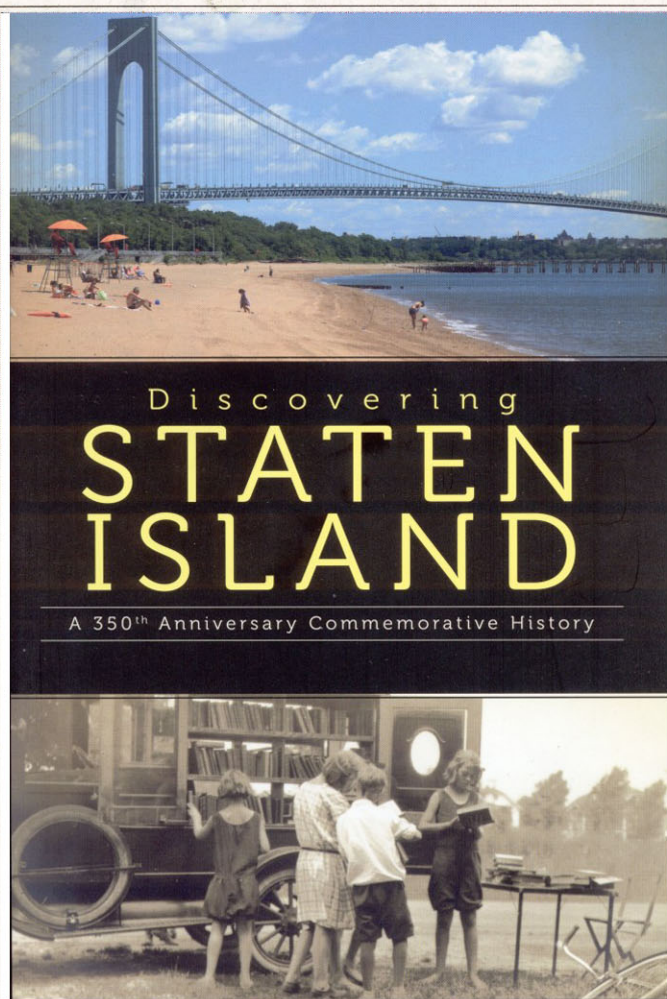
In the 350 years since, Staten Island has been home to literary giants, historical figures, medical pioneers, entrepreneurs, inventors and sports legends.

Early settlers arrived here by boat at the Watering Place and South Beach, more than two centuries before Erastus Wiman built a ferry terminal in St. George.

MANY HIGHLIGHTS

The borough was a link on the Underground Railroad, a stop on the stagecoach route to Philadelphia and the site of arguably the world's first airplane factory, in Sunnyside.

Henry David Thoreau tutored the nephew of Ralph Waldo Emerson on Emerson Hill, and Anna Leonowens, the real-life tutor of the King of Siam's children and the basis for the "King and I," ran a school in West Brighton.



The cover of "Discovering Staten Island: A 350th Anniversary Commemorative History." The book is one of the major endeavors of si350, a year-long celebration of the Island's anniversary.

The story of the Island — its people and its places — is told in "Discovering Staten Island: A 350th Anniversary Commemorative History," a 224-page book filled with facts and photos.

Published by The History Press, the book can be purchased for \$19.99 at

www.historypress.net.

It is one of the major endeavors of si350 — www.si350.org — a year-long celebration of the Island's anniversary, and was funded by a grant from the Richmond County Savings Foundation.

A launch party will be held

April 12 at Little Shop Studios in Port Richmond from 7 to 9 p.m.

"This little island in the bay of New York is a very special place," wrote Borough Historian and Advance Memories columnist Thomas Matteo in the preface.

"It has given birth to and attracted to its shores many famous people from all walks of life."

The book — which features welcome letters by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Borough President James P. Molinaro — is divided into 12 chapters, each representing one of si350's monthly themes:

Transportation, Education and Health, Business and the Economy, Ethnicity and Immigration, Food and Drink, The Arts, Sports, Environment, Civic and Political Life, Architecture, Military History and Religion.

NOT FORGOTTEN

There are descriptive histories of places that no longer exist, like Wittemann Airplane Manufacturing, the Kreischer Brick Factory and the Quarantine Station, which was burned to the ground in 1858 by an angry mob in Tompkinsville.

And there are stories about the Advance, the Staten Island Zoo, the Staten Island Mall, Curtis High School, Ralph's Italian Ices — and dozens of cultural institutions, parks, businesses and restaurants that have thrived here for decades.

"This guidebook encourages readers, whether tourists or residents of New York City, whether born here or off-Island, to rethink and rediscover the many fascinating places on Staten Island, and in so doing, to understand better its place in the history of New York City, the region and the world," wrote Lori R. Weintrob and Kenneth M. Gold, the book's editors.

"We emphasize the unique past of each neighborhood, organization and business listed, but also the astonishing ways in which they connect to major themes in American and global history and join us to each other."

Stephanie Slepian is a news reporter for the Advance. She may be reached at slepian@siadvance.com.