

Zephaniah Platt makes mark as war patriot

By David Ambro

In recognition of the bravery and contribution to the Revolutionary War effort by Zephaniah Platt, who allowed the Patriot fighters to hide their whaleboats in the barn of his homestead in Sunken Meadow, a marker was dedicated last week at Smithtown Cemetery where he is buried.

A brief ceremony was held Tuesday, May 24 to dedicate the marker, its placement visible near the roadside of Route 25A. It says: "Patriot Burials, Smithtown Cemetery, Revolutionary War Patriot Zephaniah Platt buried here. Imprisoned for hiding rebel whaleboats in his barn." The marker was donated to the cemetery by the William C. Pomeroy Foundation.

During last week's ceremony, Joann Galletta Hahn, of the Leo Ostebo Kings Park Heritage Museum, offered some background about Zephaniah Platt which led to the marker being placed in his name. She cited an article in the December 22, 1777 edition of the **New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury** newspaper, which says the British troops went to Mr. Platts homestead in which is now considered Fort Salonga and found the two rebel whaleboats in his barn. They set them on fire, took Mr. Platt into custody and drove off the cattle and livestock from his farm.

Ms. Hahn also cited an article from the History of Long Island, From the Discovery to the Present Time, published in 1918. "Zephaniah Platt was taken to a prison ship in New York Harbor, only to be restored to liberty through the personal application of his daughter Dorothea, out of the hands of Sir Henry Clinton. Having caught smallpox in the prison, he died January 27, 1778 at the age of 74."

"Thank you sir," Ms. Hahn said. "Your bravery to fight for freedom was not in vain. We are fighting for freedom today. We won't let you down."

During the dedication, Kurt Kahofer, chairman of Patriot Graves for the Long Island Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), shared his organization's mission statement and provided the background about the chapter's work to identify the graves of Long Island Revolutionary War patriots. He said SAR and the Pomeroy Foundation worked together to document the patriotic efforts of Zephaniah Platt to qualify to have the marker placed at Smithtown Cemetery.

"The Pomeroy Foundation's main mission is to celebrate local history and they do that by providing these signs around the country to commemorate historic people, events, places and patriots," he said, adding that the marker was provided to the cemetery by the Pomeroy Foundation free of charge, made in a foundry in the midwest. He said many of them can be found around Smithtown.

He said markers recognizing American patriots are not always for soldiers, but they can also be placed in recognition of the efforts of civilians toward the war effort, which includes Zephaniah Platt's work to hide the whaleboats of the rebels. "They put



MARKS THE SPOT: A marker recognizing patriot Zephaniah Platt's contribution to the Revolutionary War effort was dedicated at Smithtown Cemetery Tuesday, May 24. A guest at the dedication (above) takes a photograph of the new Patriot Burial marker, donated by the William Pomeroy Foundation.



themselves at risk of being imprisoned by the British by helping the local militias and local communities ward off the British and make progress in the success of the Revolution," Mr. Kahofer said, "That could include doing what Zephaniah Platt did. It could include providing food and clothing and shelter to people in the militias, which happened all across the 13 Colonies, or even delivering

messages to various militia groups so that they could coordinate their war efforts."

"It was very important work done by the Patriots and I'm very happy we are acknowledging not only statesmen, politicians and veterans but also patriots from the Revolution, who often go unnoticed. A lot of their deeds have gone unreported, but luckily we know what Zephaniah Platt did," he said.

Mr. Kahofer thanked Zephaniah Platt for his service to his country and said it is an honor to be there to recognize someone for their local service.

After hearing about Zephaniah Platt, the group at the event last week walked up the hill in the cemetery to the headstone of Zephaniah Platt, who was buried alongside other members of the Platt family, which have a long, rich history in early Smithtown.