

2017-K444

Assembly Resolution No. 444

BY: M. of A. Englebright

HONORING the members of the Setauket Spy Ring for their bravery during the American Revolutionary War to be celebrated with the dedication of Route 25A as Washington's Spy Trail on May 18, 2017

WHEREAS, It is the intent of this Legislative Body to commemorate those unsung patriots of historical significance who add strength, vigor and inspiration to the cultural diversity and quality of life in the communities of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor the members of the Setauket Spy Ring for their bravery during the American Revolutionary War to be celebrated with the dedication of Route 25A in Setauket, New York, as Washington's Spy Trail on Thursday, May 18, 2017, at the Brewster House; and

WHEREAS, Built in 1665 and considered the oldest house in the Town of Brookhaven, the Brewster House was home to six generations of Brewsters; and

WHEREAS, In the summer of 1778, the Setauket Spy Ring was organized by American Major (later Colonel) Benjamin Tallmadge under orders from General George Washington during British occupation of New York City at

the height of the American Revolutionary War; and

WHEREAS, Benjamin Tallmadge was tasked with recruiting people who could be trusted to conduct vital undercover operations in occupied New York City, so he sought out his Setauket boyhood friend, Abraham Woodhull; the two men chose other trusted friends and neighbors from Setauket including Caleb Brewster, Austin Roe, Jonas Hawkins, and Anna Smith Strong; and

WHEREAS, In June of 1779, Abraham Woodhull engaged Robert Townsend to gather intelligence in New York City, using the alias "Samuel Culper, Jr."; the intelligence gathered in New York City was carried to Setauket, then ferried by Caleb Brewster in his whaleboat across the Long Island Sound to Connecticut; from there, it was delivered to General George Washington at his West Point Headquarters; and

WHEREAS, In 1780, intelligence transmitted by the Culper Spy Ring enabled General George Washington to prevent the British from capturing Newport, Rhode Island, and destroying the newly arrived French army and naval fleet; and

WHEREAS, Secrecy was so strict during the Revolutionary War that even General George Washington did not know the identity of all the operatives; however, after the war, President George Washington visited Setauket and stayed at the Roe Tavern owned by Setauket spy, Austin Roe; following that monumental visit, the Spy Ring story and members all but disappeared into unwritten history; and

WHEREAS, The general public was unaware of the Culper Spy Ring's existence until the 1930s when Robert Townsend's identity as "Culper, Jr." was discovered in 1929, by historian, Morton Pennypacker; Morton reviewed Robert's letters and noticed that the handwriting was similar

to handwriting in letters written by "Samuel Culper, Jr." in George Washington's collection; other evidence later corroborated Robert Townsend's identity; and

WHEREAS, The secrecy surrounding the Setauket Culper Spy Ring and its members precluded recognition of its vital contributions to the favorable outcome of the Revolutionary War and creation of the nation; these meritorious men and women risked their lives and families to serve their young country at its most precarious moments to ensure that liberty and freedom would shine in the years ahead; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commend the efforts of those institutions which seek to bring recognition to historical events within the State of New York, and in doing so, help to ensure that the complete history of our State and Nation is preserved and shared with present generations of citizens; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is pleased to have this opportunity to express its highest admiration for the Setauket Spy Ring, and for all of the individuals who have worked to bring proper attention to a place and time which merits recognition in the grand panorama of the history of our State and Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor the members of the Setauket Spy Ring for their bravery during the American Revolutionary War to be celebrated with the dedication of Route 25A as Washington's Spy Trail on Thursday, May 18, 2017, at the Brewster House.