

2019-J238

Senate Resolution No. 238

BY: Senator BRESLIN

CELEBRATING the Bicentennial of the birth of Herman Melville, American novelist, short story writer, and poet of the American Renaissance period who was a long-time resident of New York State, including Lansingburgh, Albany and New York City to be celebrated on August 3, 2019

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize those artistic individuals whose creative talents and commitment to writing contribute to the enrichment of their community and the world, and to pay homage to a man whose life of writing stands out as an inspiration to others; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to celebrate the Bicentennial of the birth of Herman Melville, American novelist, short story writer, and poet of the American Renaissance period; this momentous occasion will be celebrated with a Birthday Party hosted by the Lansingburgh Historical Society on Saturday, August 3, 2019, where they will feature a one man play, *Sailing Toward My Father*, featuring Stephen Collins chronicling Herman Melville's life from youth to old age at the Gardner Earl Chapel in Oakwood Cemetery in Troy, New York; and

WHEREAS, Herman Melville was born to Allan and Maria (Gansevoort) Melville on August 1, 1819, in Manhattan, New York; in 1830, the family

moved to Albany, New York, where they lived first at Market Street (now Broadway) and Steuben Street and later at 3 Clinton Square; after the death of Allan in 1832, Maria and her children struggled financially; when his mother could afford the tuition, Herman attended the Albany Academy; and

WHEREAS, In the Spring of 1838, Herman Melville and his family moved to a house on the corner of River Street (now First Avenue) and North Street (now 114th Street) in Lansingburgh, New York; one year later, he graduated from the Lansingburgh Academy with a degree in surveying and engineering; and

WHEREAS, For a short period, Herman Melville taught school in both Brunswick and East Greenbush, New York, and visited the Young Men's Association Library in Troy; in 1839, he traveled to England on his first sea voyage and the local newspaper, the Democratic Press, published his first short stories entitled "Fragments from a Writing Desk" Nos. 1 and 2 and "The Death Craft"; and

WHEREAS, From 1841-1844, Herman Melville sailed on the whaler Acushnet, out of New Bedford, Massachusetts; during his incredible adventure, he worked hard, but was also able to explore several islands in the South Pacific; and

WHEREAS, Back in Lansingburgh, in 1846, his first novel, Typee, recalled his Polynesian escapades and his subsequent work, Omoo, issued in 1847, which covered additional adventures as a sea rover; Herman Melville continued to write from his studio along the Hudson River where he began composing the allegorical novel, Mardi; and

WHEREAS, Herman Melville married Elizabeth Shaw, daughter of

prominent Massachusetts jurist, Lemuel Shaw, in 1847, and the entire extended family settled in a brownstone house at 103 Fourth Street (now Fourth Avenue) in Manhattan; in 1849, he released the largely autobiographical novel, *Redburn*, based on his initial voyage 10 years earlier; and

WHEREAS, In 1850, Herman Melville and his wife relocated to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, acquiring an old farm on Holmes Road known as Arrowhead; it was here, that he completed *Moby Dick* (or *The Whale*) which was published in 1851; he also wrote *Pierre*, *White Jacket*, *Israel Potter*, and *The Confidence Man*, and some remarkable short stories, most notably "*Bartleby, The Scrivener*" and "*Benito Cereno*" both of which appeared in his book, *The Piazza Tales*; and

WHEREAS, In 1863, Herman Melville returned to Manhattan, purchasing his brother's house at 60 (later 104) East 26th Street; this house served as his residence until his death on September 28, 1891, and was subsequently sold by his wife soon thereafter; even though the house was demolished in 1912, the block is commemorated by a sign reading "*Herman Melville Square*"; and

WHEREAS, During his final years in Manhattan, Herman Melville published four books of poetry, *Battle Pieces* (1866), *Clarel* (1876), *John Marr and Other Sailors* (1888), and *Timoleon* (1891); he also composed *Billy Budd*, which was not published until 1924; and

WHEREAS, Three additional upstate New York communities, while not Herman Melville's official residences, played significant roles in his life; while a Lansingburgh resident, he visited his Van Schaick cousins across the river in Cohoes, New York, and spent time on Peebles Island in Waterford, New York; he also made many trips to the home of his mother and sisters in the Town of Northumberland in Saratoga County; and

WHEREAS, It is important to recall and honor individuals such as Herman Melville, longtime New York State resident, whose legendary talent has entertained readers for almost 200 years, recognizing their valued contributions and publicly acknowledging their endeavors which have enhanced the basic humanity among us all; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the Bicentennial of the birth of Herman Melville, American novelist, short story writer, and poet of the American Renaissance period; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Lansingburgh Historical Society.