

then governor, was about to be succeeded by the Earl of Bellomont. Feeling aggrieved over what he considered the injustice of his recall, he spitefully plotted to give away Nutten Island before the noble Bellomont arrived. Fletcher's council, however, refused to sympathize with his jealous motives and would not confirm the grant.

When Lord Bellomont took over the reins of local government in 1698, he promptly forestalled any further attempts at such private disposals of government property by publishing an edict forbidding any governor to grant away any part of the king's domain. Additionally, he specifically set aside Nutten Island as "being part of the Denizen of His Majesty's Governors for the time being." So was a tradition born, for as a result of this proclamation, the old name Nutten Island, fell into disuse and the more authoritative title of "The Governor's Island" took its place. Eventually the word "The" was dropped and then the passing years also rubbed out the apostrophe in "Governor's," the name became, without any official action, as we know it today — Governors Island.

Then came Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury, cousin of England's Queen Anne, to be New York's governor from 1702 to 1708. He was, to put it mildly, a quaint character, much addicted to donning women's attire and mincing along the ramparts of the fort. He also was fond of giving dinner parties that turned into drunken brawls, which would last well into the next morning, all to the prejudice of good order and public peace of mind. As a colonial administrator he was a distinct failure, but as an exploiter of the potentialities of Governor's Island for pleasure and profit, Lord Cornbury was an unqualified, though unethical, success.

Like Van Twiller, whom he resembled in his more dishonest characteristics, Governor Cornbury was quick to note the advantages the island provided for an official residence, to which he and succeeding executives could retire to "free themselves from business." The only catch was that there were no funds to defray construction costs. But, to a financial manipulator who had left England just one jump ahead of consignment to a debtors' prison, lack of money presented no real obstacle.

Popular opinion was at last awake to the desirability of fortifying Governors Island, and Cornbury seized upon the popularity of this movement to announce new taxes to raise money for the necessary defenses. The classes of assessments were many and varied, and few were exempt from one or more of their applications. There was a tax for every person who wore a pearl ring, every man who sported a periwig, all slave owners, and every bachelor over 25 years old. The net result was a

fund of 1,500 pounds, which certainly should have built a very respectable fort, but no fort and no accounting of the money collected ever appeared. Instead, there arose a splendid house on the same high ground so much favored by Van Twiller. This became the permanent home for the British governors, or, as Lord Cornbury picturesquely put it, "The smiling garden of the sovereigns of the province."

Official records on this edifice and its exact location are no longer in existence, but tradition places it where Quarters 2 now stands. As late as 1840, this building was commonly referred to as "the Governor's House," and with no real proof to the contrary, Quarters 2 may well be the actual house in question. Its architecture indicates early English origin, and it is known to have been built considerably prior to the War of 1812, during which it served successively as a guard house and as headquarters for the island garrison. Its basement then contained the famous "Black Hole," a cell for the solitary confinement of especially unruly prisoners. Traces of this cell are no longer discernible, nor are the sockets for the heavy bars that covered the windows of its other less exclusive apartments. An interesting legend has it that this house was connected by a tunnel to a private dock on the Buttermilk Channel shore, whereby, the governor could make his escape on his official barge, if the island were invaded by hostile forces. The tunnel and barge are reputed to have been large enough to accommodate the governor's coach and four horses, so that any forced departure of His Excellency could be made with as little impairment of the gubernatorial dignity as possible. No trace of this rumored exit can now be found.

It was not long after Lord Cornbury established himself with such pomp and ceremony upon Governors Island that reports of his unorthodox financial dealings reached Queen Anne. His royal kinswoman immediately removed the governor from office, his creditors just as immediately put him in jail, and the long-overdue military activation of Governors Island was again postponed.

In June 1710, a convoy of Palatine refugees to the number of seven to ten thousand arrived at New York with orders from Queen Anne that they be lodged and fed by the city. Since a "contagious distemper" had ravaged their ships on the voyage across the Atlantic, killing hundreds of the unfortunate Europeans, the colonial authorities were properly concerned about where and how these unwelcome guests might best be quarantined. They eventually decided that Governors Island was the proper place to put them. Huts were hastily erected on the island to house them, food was provided, and special