

Notes From the Firehouse

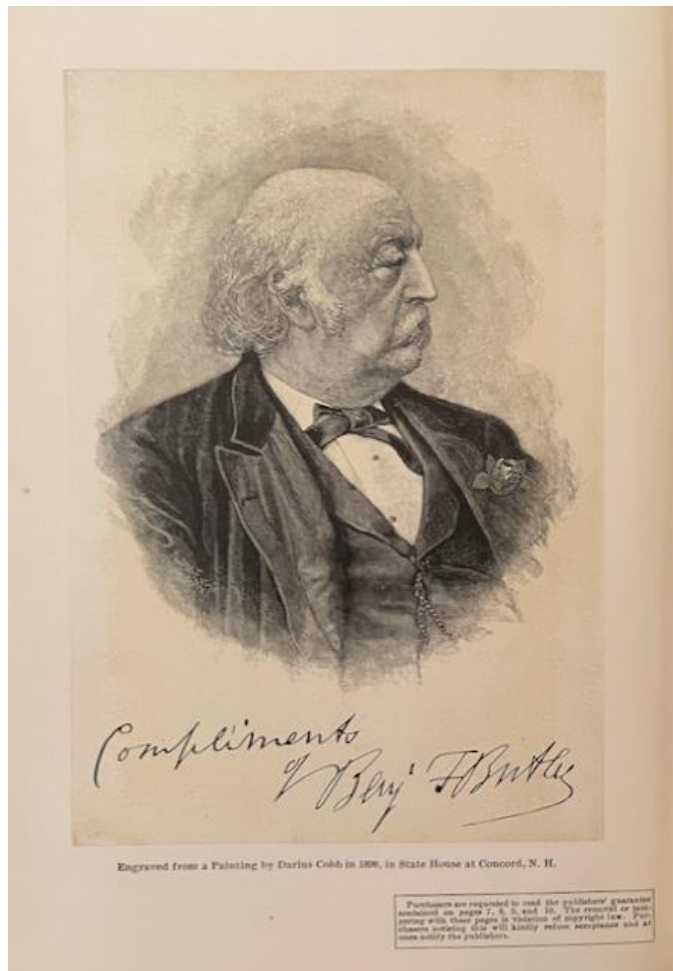
Home of the Annisquam Historical Society

March 2024



Bay View, Book, Boat & Benjamin Butler

Rita Littlewood Teele



Bay View is an ill-defined stretch of land that abuts Ipswich Bay from the northeastern edge of Annisquam Village to Lanesville. It is not a postal district, but you can't miss the Fire Station with **BAY VIEW** writ large on its frontage. On the same side of Washington street, towards Lanesville, is the large Bay View Cemetery--the first burial site in the Third Gloucester Parish.

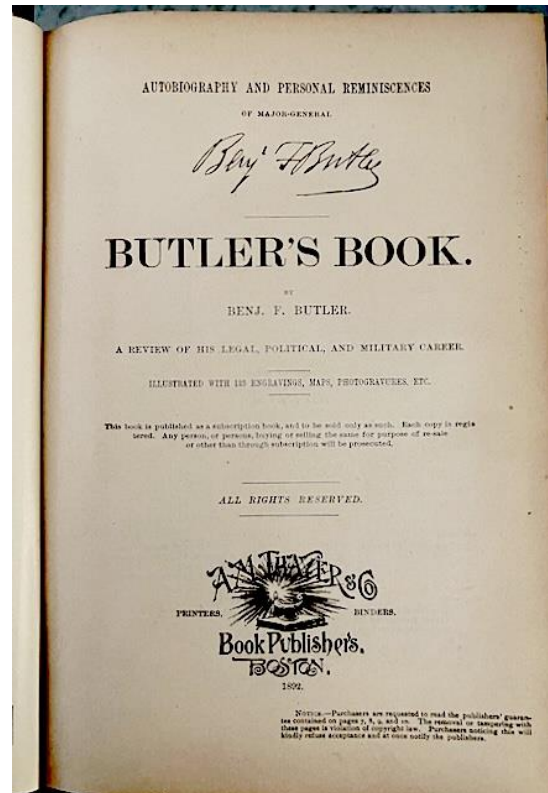
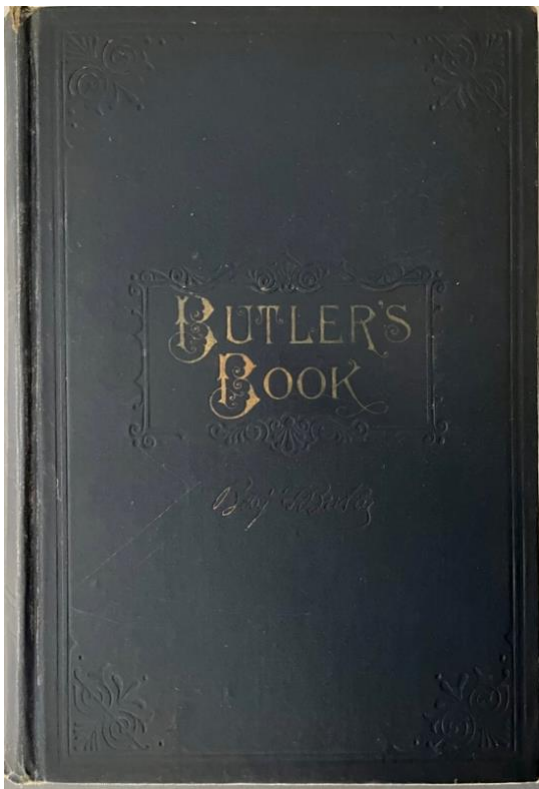


With houses and trees interposed between road and sea, "Bay Glimpse" might now be a more accurate name for the area.

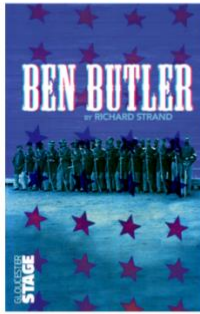
Turning the clock back 161 years to 1863, General Benjamin Butler, of Civil War notoriety, bought a large tract of land between the villages of Annisquam and Lanesville. General Butler is cited as having named the land "Bay View" by proclaiming that sunsets over Ipswich Bay were equal to any in the Bay of Naples. (ref: Cape Ann Museum). Butler returned to Cape Ann in 1865 and built a residence on his property known as "The Homestead".

Granite for the house came from an adjacent quarry, (later known as the Cape Ann Granite Company) that Butler had purchased with business partner Jonas French, a colonel in the Civil War.

There is a copy of **Butler's Book** in the Annisquam Historical Society. Befitting the subject, it is a weighty tome. Benjamin Butler was the sole author. The first page appears to have been autographed by the author himself--but several subsequent pages, include an identical image. The "autograph" was created during the printing process in 1892.



Because publication of Butler's Book was well after the Civil War had ended--and also after Butler's turbulent time in domestic politics--many historians have tried to piece together his history from other narratives. Newspaper articles, with lithographs, from the time of the Civil War have been crucial for cross-checking Butler's accounts. One episode, which was well documented, occurred during Butler's governance of Fort Monroe in 1861. Butler, who had been trained as a lawyer, declined to return fugitive slaves to their owners after they had sought shelter at the fort. He argued that Virginians, who considered slaves as chattels, were now living in a state that had seceded from the Union. "I am under no constitutional obligations to a foreign country," he wrote, "which Virginia now claims to be." Furthermore, slaves who were being used as laborers for building fortifications and other military activities were thenceforth considered contraband of war. Abraham Lincoln and his Cabinet decided to support Butler's argument. This resulted in the policy of the Union Army to *not* return fugitive slaves. That policy was later extended to the Union Navy.



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August 2 to August 25

BEN BUTLER

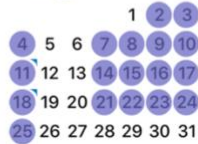
by Richard Strand

Directed by Joseph Discher*

Richard Strand's *Ben Butler*, a smart and funny discourse on race, protocol and our sense of humanity, garnered high critical acclaim during its Off Broadway run in 2016. The sharply comic play takes place in the middle of the Civil War, 1861 at Virginia's Union-held Fort Monroe under the command of General Benjamin Butler. When three escaped slaves show up seeking sanctuary, General Butler is faced with an impossible moral dilemma – follow the letter of the law and return the escapees back to the Confederacy, or make a game-changing move that could alter the course of US history? The bold and bright refugee, Shepard Mallory demands an audience with General Butler and what ensues is a battle of wits between two equally formidable men at the edge of a country ripped in half.

One of Abraham Lincoln's top generals, Benjamin Butler, a lawyer, championed the causes of labor, abolition of slavery, and naturalized citizens. After retiring from the battlefield, Butler was a settler of Gloucester's Bayview neighborhood (present-day Ames Estate still inhabited by Butler's descendants), a presidential candidate, and the 33rd Governor of Massachusetts.

Aug



↳ [Talkback following show](#)

"Ames Adamson delivers a powerhouse performance"

"clever without being glib, meaningful without being pretentious"

"In short, it's a hoot."

The New York Times

A play about the episode at Fort Monroe and its ramifications, was initially staged in New York in 2016. It came to Gloucester Stage in the summer of 2019 and was very well received.

In May of 1862, Butler was sent as military governor to New Orleans after its capture by Admiral David Farragut. Barely two weeks after his arrival, he issued the following General Order No. 28:

New Orleans, May 15, 1862. As the officers and soldiers of the United States have been subject to repeated insults from the women (calling themselves ladies) of New Orleans in return for the most scrupulous non-interference and courtesy on our part, it is ordered that hereafter when any female shall by word, gesture, or movement insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her avocation.

With this order, Butler earned the nickname "Beast". He remains well known for his tenure in New Orleans where he also earned the name of "Spoons Butler" when he confiscated silverware. The final episode that resulted in his removal from the city was his order that all foreigners in the city take the oath of allegiance. Foreign consuls were furious and Lincoln recalled General Butler in December of 1862.

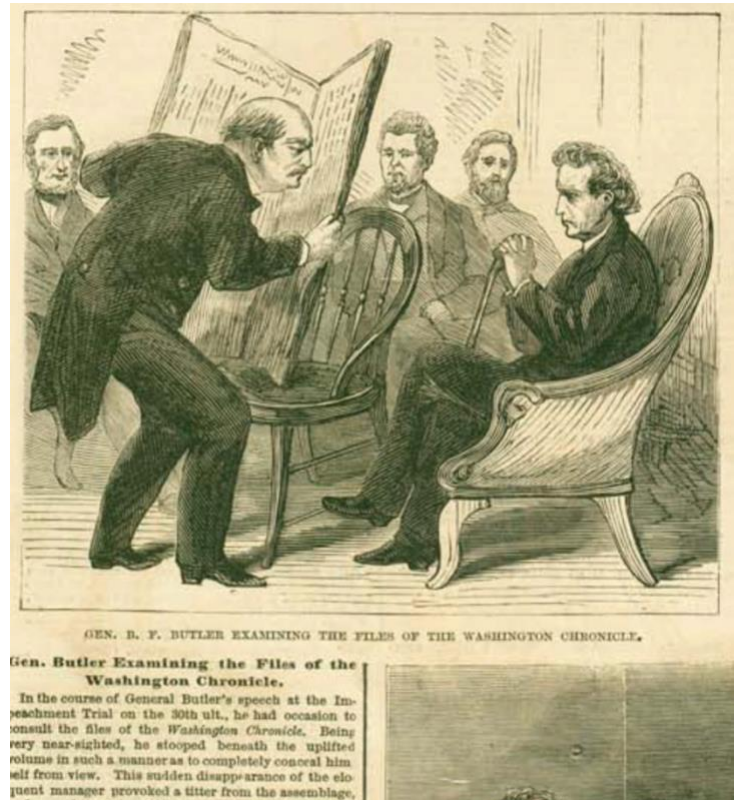
After the war, Butler was congressman from Massachusetts for five terms and in 1883 was governor. Kelby Ouchley from Louisiana writing for *64 Parishes* summed up Butler's career: He was considered a brilliant lawyer, a political firebrand, and an incompetent soldier.

<https://64parishes.org/authors/kelby-ouchley>

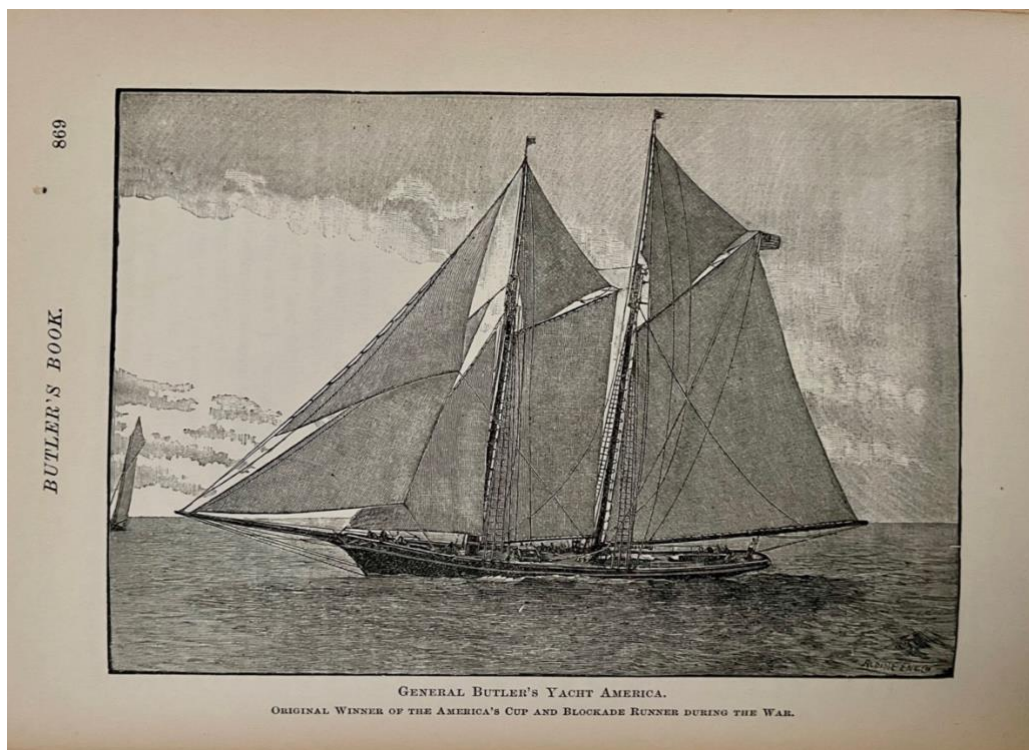


In the era during which Butler was active in military and political matters, the press delighted in depicting him in cartoon fashion via lithography. The above strip is from drawings during the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson.

The drawing, below left, from a photograph circa 1861, is unusual in that it clearly shows Butler's eye affliction, strabismus. The image, below right, from Andrew Johnson's impeachment trial, makes fun of his difficulty in reading.



(Newspaper images are freely available online)



Under ownership by a group of New York Yacht Club members, yacht "America" was famous for winning the Royal Yacht Squadron's regatta in August of 1851. The winner's prize has since been known as "America's Cup." After a series of sales to British owners, she was sold to the Confederate States of America for use as a blockade runner during the American Civil War. Scuttled in Florida in 1862, then raised and repaired by the Union, she blockaded off Charleston, South Carolina. After becoming a training ship at USNA, Annapolis, she was sold by the Navy to Benjamin Butler in 1873. Nephew Butler Ames was given the boat in 1897. The photograph, above, in **Butler's Book**, is unattributed as to date or locale. *America's* last home was at the U.S. Naval Academy.

Postscript:<https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1967/september/u-s-schooner-yacht-america>

After the war and numerous discussions in the Navy Department, the decision was made that the yacht *America* could not be restored properly with the funds at hand. A survey showed that the hull was in such poor condition due to dry rot that to restore her, she would have to be rebuilt, using all new materials. So it was decided to scrap her. The Navy Department awarded the Annapolis Yacht Yard the contract for dismantling her, which was done during the winter of 1945-1946.

On 18 September 1945, the Chief of Naval Operations authorized a model of the *America* to be built. This was completed and presented to the Naval Academy Museum by the Secretary of the Navy in 1948. The model is under sail, and built to a scale of 3/8 inch equals one foot. The spars and deck fittings of the model were made of wood taken from the original vessel.