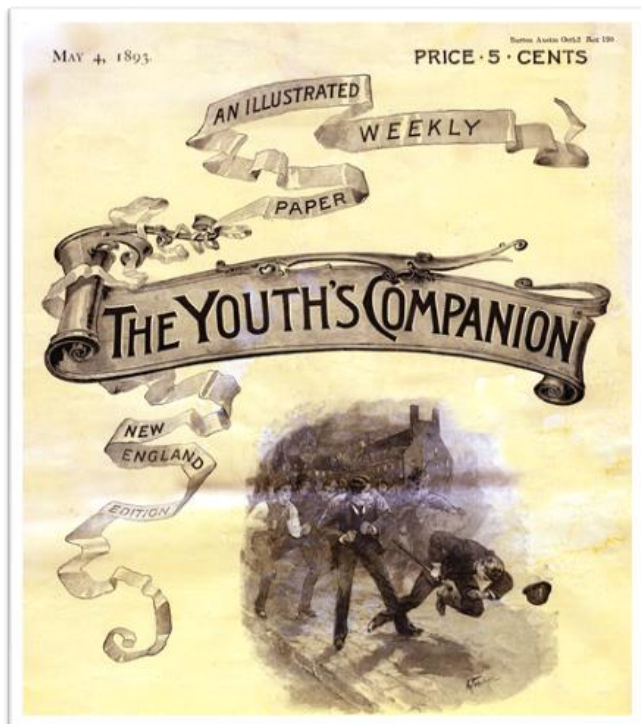


The Pledge at Navesink

Written by: Nicholas Wood

"I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

On a rainy morning in 1893 at Twin Lights, an enthusiastic crowd gathered to recite the Pledge of Allegiance under the direction of the author of the pledge, Francis Bellamy. The original pledge was a simple affair and did not include passages 'the United States of America' or 'Under God' as we know it today – those changes were still a generation to come when the crowd gathered here at Twin Lights.



To understand how the Highlands of Navesink were selected for this moment in American History, we need to take a step back five years in time to 1888. Bellamy's soon-to-be employer, *The Youth's Companion*, boasted one of the largest circulations in America and was famed for its writing and values. James Upham's premiums and advertising department had just embarked on a multi-year campaign to encourage American public schools to prominently display the American flag – a marked departure from its previous use in government and military buildings. If the school could not find a flag to purchase locally, the Youth's Companion's advertisers stood ready to assist them!



It was to this cause that the former preacher, Francis Bellamy was set on a sweltering Summer afternoon in 1892. His 22-word pledge would first appear in print on September 8th in preparation upcoming Columbus Day programs. The pledge was an immediate success, with school children across America reciting it daily and presidents Harrison and Cleveland endorsing its use. Flag sales were said to exceed \$20,000, making the venture both a commercial and ideological success!

What was needed next was a suitably historic place for an official Pledge of Allegiance ceremony to take place. To this cause joined New Jersey native and founder of the Sons of the American Revolution, William McDowell. He felt that a large, prominently displayed, flag would inspire a sense of patriotism in immigrants and visitors coming to the Chicago World's Fair. The Highlands of Navesink was selected due to its location on the approach to the newly constructed Ellis Island. McDowell was able to raise \$571.50 in public subscriptions to fund the new Liberty Pole. At 135 feet tall, the new flagpole stood almost twice the height of the Twin Lights behind it.

Returning to that damp morning of April 25, 1893 – the assembled crowd gathered to hear Upton, Bellamy, and a host of local dignitaries speak about patriotism and the flag. A tattered flag, believed at the time to belong to the American Naval hero John Paul Jones' ship, was hoisted up by Adlai E. Stevenson, president of the Daughters of the American Revolution and assisted by Captain Caulkins. The flag was raised upon new Liberty Pole to the cheering of the crowd. The event was part of the larger Columbian Expositions taking place in Chicago the week after to mark the 400th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the new world. The recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance here at Twin Lights was also timed to the arrival of an international flotilla of ships heading for the pre-fair celebrations in New York. High winds and costly upkeep eventually made the Liberty Pole unsustainable, but you can visit the site today – just look for this concrete footing by our famed mystery cannon!