

# Museum scores rare book about songwriter

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For [East Hampton](#) town crier Hugh King, who regularly wears a cloak, rings a bell and brings the town's history to life, the chance to get a previously unknown book about [John Howard Payne](#), who wrote the song "Home Sweet Home" and once lived in the village, was a rare opportunity.

The manuscript was written half a century ago by Hido Kawanami, a math instructor who briefly taught college classes in upstate New York and who later wrote numerous letters from his home in Tokyo to [East](#)

[Hampton's](#) Home Sweet Home Museum asking about Payne. In his letters, Kawanami explained that his mother regularly sang "Home Sweet Home" to him at bedtime.

Kawanami's daughter recently brought one of the only three existing copies of the book to the museum, and historian King may be able to actually read it in a couple of months -- as soon as it's translated from Japanese.

The prewar correspondence is recorded in the museum's records, so King has long known that Kawanami had exchanged a series of letters before [World War II](#) broke out. But he only recently learned of the book's existence, when the author's daughter, Toshiko Nishida, called from Japan to tell him about it.

"It kind of completes the circle," King said. "Usually, it's 'what are these letters doing here.' Now, we know where they went."

There are several things King hopes to learn when the book is translated, including how written Japanese has changed since [World War II](#) and how [East Hampton's](#) past may have looked to someone living in prewar Japan.

"I'm really excited," he said. "No one has ever written about him [Payne] from the viewpoint of a Japanese professor."

The song "Home Sweet Home" is popular in Japan, and King said he got an idea why from

An advertisement for Hilton HHonors. The top left features the Hilton HHonors logo. The main text reads "WIN A TRIP TO HAWAII" in large blue letters, followed by "AND ONE MILLION HHONORS POINTS" in smaller black letters. Below this is a blue button with the text "Enter now &gt;". To the right is a movie poster for "Baywatch" featuring a silhouette of a person on a beach with a large, futuristic structure in the background. The text on the poster says "BAYWATCH IN THEATERS MAY 18, 2012". In the top right corner of the ad area, there is a small "AdChoices" icon.

talking to Nishida.

"The reason the song struck such a chord . . . it's the idea of your humble home. She lives in Tokyo and she couldn't believe how much space we have out here. Just the idea of having your own home . . . when you're stuck in a flat."

The book -- not bound, but written on thin sheets of paper -- is about 150 pages. [East Hampton](#) Village Mayor Paul Rickenbach Jr. asked the Village Preservation Society to pay for the translation work, and the group agreed to hire a teacher's aide in [Montauk](#) to do the job for \$3,000, about \$20 a page.

King said the translation will not be easy, since some of the characters are no longer used in written Japanese, and sections may already be archaic.

"There is no American equivalent for some of it," he said.

[John Howard](#) Payne wrote the lyrics to "Home Sweet Home" in England. The melody was composed by Sir Henry Bishop for Payne's 1823 opera "Clari, or the Maid of Milan." One of the verses:

*I gaze on the moon as I tread the drear wild,*

And feel that my mother now thinks of her child,

As she looks on that moon from our own cottage door

Thro' the woodbine, whose fragrance shall cheer me no more.

Home, home, sweet, sweet home!

There's no place like home, oh, there's no place like home!

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