



OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SKETCHES

No. 27

Being the proceedings of the Twenty-sixth Meeting of the
Old Dartmouth Historical Society, held in their building,
Water Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts, on 29 December, 1909.

THE OLD MEN OF FAIRHAVEN

Job C. Tripp

[NOTE.—The “Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches” will be published by the
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Secretary and also at Hutchinson’s Book Store.]

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING
OF THE
OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
IN THEIR BUILDING
WATER STREET, NEW BEDFORD
MASSACHUSETTS
29 DECEMBER, 1909

The Old Dartmouth Historical society held its twenty-sixth quarterly meeting on Wednesday evening. Two interesting papers were read before a gathering of the members, one being by Job C. Tripp on "The Old Men of Fairhaven," and the other a Bourne prize essay by Miss Irene Belanger on "Some Events in the History of New Bedford as Revealed in the Collection of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society." Miss Belanger's paper had been awarded a prize in the competition.

President Edmund Wood, in opening the meeting, called attention to some recent valuable accessions to the society's collection. The following memorial tablets have been placed in position by the entrance door:

Peleg Slocum
1654-1733
"An Honest Publick Friend"
His Wife
Mary Holder
"A Daughter of Xopher Holder"
Henry Howland
Died 1671
"An Original Purchaser"
Stephen Willcox
Died 1736
His Wife
Susannah Briggs
1672-1719
Eliezer Slocum
1664-1727
His Wife
Elephel Fitz Gerald
Died 1748
Benjamin Crane
Surveyor
for
Dartmouth Proprietors
1710-1721



JOB CARVER TRIPP

The Old Men of Fairhaven

BY

JOB C. TRIPP

Twenty years after 1620 and within the life time of the Pilgrim Fathers the township of Dartmouth was marked out as a most desirable place for settlement, and a deed was obtained from the two sachems Massasoit and Wamsutta for all the land included now in the city of New Bedford, and the towns of Dartmouth, Westport, Fairhaven, and Acushnet. In consideration of which there was paid to the Indians thirty yards of cloth, eight moose skins, fifteen axes, fifteen hoes, fifteen pairs of breeches, eight blankets, two kettles, one cloak, eight pairs stockings, eight pair of shoes, one iron pot and two English pounds in wampum. It must have been over 250 years ago, when John Cooke, the last surviving Pilgrim on the Mayflower and the first white man to settle in our town, came to what is now the locality of Oxford, in Fairhaven. He was undoubtedly our first old man; a man of great ability, strictly honest and trustworthy, and a Christian of the Baptist persuasion, having left Plymouth on account of his then heretical notions, which found no fellowship among the Pilgrim fathers, although no deed given by the Pilgrim fathers within the township of Dartmouth was valid unless countersigned by John Cooke, their agent here. John Cooke was the ancestor of many families in our town. Fairhaven, when set off from the town of New Bedford, in 1812, included the town of Acushnet, the latter town having been set off from Fairhaven as an independent township many years later. In speaking of the old men of Fairhaven, I allude to those living in the present township, placing them in two classes: first, those I knew of and saw when a boy of 10 or 12; and secondly, those whom I knew when I was a young man in business; and with those lives I was more or less contemporary. The most of these men were good citizens, and faithful in their callings, the larger part being descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers. Many of them connected with the various trades or occupations enumerated were prominent in the civic, religious and business life of the town.

I commence with some of the oldest men whom I have seen when the business of the town was wholly mari-

time, giving names, occupations, and age at death.

Master mariners—Noah Stoddard, 94; Silas Alden, 78; John Bunker, 72; Lemuel C. Wood, 78; Alden D. Stoddard, 83; James Merrihew, 82; Thomas Bennett, 75; George Hitch, 80;? Sylvanus Allen, 81;? Atkins Adams, 67.

Most of the shipmasters were able men, and successful in their calling. Most of their life being spent on ship-board, a little of the commanding and autocratic spirit was shown on shore. It was said that Noah Stoddard's attitude at home or on the street was that of a stern man, not to be trifled with. Boys on the street stopped their noisy play and stood in awe as he passed by. Atkins Adams was always a finely dressed and imposing figure, with aristocratic bearing, on our streets. He with others did not approve in that day of the laboring man's efforts to reduce the hours of labor from the custom at that time of working from sunrise to sunset, to the 10-hour system which was afterwards adopted. He expressed the thought that the workmen were rather too independent and saucy, but he was a fine man and prominent as a leading citizen. Thomas Bennett, in his day, was a prominent shipmaster in the merchant service between this country and Russia.

I am informed that Captain Charles Stoddard was a noted shipmaster of a passenger ship running between this country and Europe, before the adoption of steam passenger service. In a great gale off the south side of Long Island, on his return from Europe with a large number of passengers, he met with shipwreck. Finding that his ship was leaking, and sure to sink, his quick sense of danger led him to summon his officers and crew to the quarterdeck, where, with speaking-trumpet in his hand, he ordered the boats manned and filled with passengers, all of whom were saved. When urged by passengers, officers and crew to save his life, he made answer through his speaking trumpet, 'I am captain of this ship, and you must obey my orders; as for me, I shall stand by the ship.' The next morning after the storm, when the divers came down from New York they found the sunken ship with Cap-

tain Stoddard standing at his post with speaking trumpet clutched so tightly by his fingers that it was with difficulty removed.

I speak of these incidents simply to show you what kind of stuff some of these men were made of.

Grocers and Traders—Bartholomew Taber, 81; Marlboro Bradford, 76; Enoch S. Jenney, 89.

Merchants—Levi Jenney, 70; Samuel Borden, 88; Joseph Tripp, 92; Warren Delano, 86.

Joseph Tripp was one of our first citizens and noted as merchant, state senator and gentleman.

Samuel Borden was for many years one of our wealthiest men and an important director in the Merchants bank of this city.

Warren Delano, a descendant of Phillipe Delanoye, of France, was for many years one of our most prominent merchants.

Farmers—George Willcox, 98; Seth Alden, 71; Nathaniel Delano, 72; Joseph Smith, 78; Amaziah Delano, 88.

George Willcox was always a hard working man. Every year he planted his garden and took care of it. On the last day of his life, when he died at 98, he hoed his garden and ate his dinner at 12 o'clock; then, retiring to the lounge, as usual, he soon fell asleep, and never woke again.

Shipwrights—Abener Pease, 85; Isaac Wood, 80; Jesse Paine, 70.?

Coopers—Jeremiah Pease, 80; Kelley S. Eldredge, 89; Salathiel Eldredge, 83; Gilbert Tripp, 80.

Shoemakers—Dennis McCarthy, 73; Ebenizer Tripp, 64.

Dennis McCarthy, Irishman and Catholic, who came over from Ireland, was a man of more than ordinary intelligence. He joined the Methodist church, where as a boy I also attended and often heard his gentle voice touched with poetic thought as he spoke in the prayer meeting. Many years afterwards he became a convert to the Swedenborgian faith, and many times have I seen the coach and span of Mary Rodman of this city drive up to his little cobbler shop, on Water street in our town, where no doubt she found congenial company in their discussion on spiritual themes.

Ebenizer Tripp was of most excellent character, but was both deaf and dumb. He was constant in his attendance at the Congregational church, and when questioned as to his reason for going when he was unable to hear what was said, he replied that he liked to watch the expression on the minister's face during his delivery of the sermon, and somehow he felt that the inspiration and spirit of the speaker was imparted to him. He felt in his heart what

he failed to hear in his ears. In the same spirit he fellowshipped with the other members of the church

Caulker—Jabez Sherman, 80.

H. H. Rogers informed me last year that one day when a boy he was walking over the mill bridge on his way to the high school, now and then throwing a stone into the mill pond, when he met Mr. Sherman, who said: 'Young man, whose boy art thou?' when young Rogers replied, 'I am Roland Rogers's boy.' Mr. Sherman then said: 'Roland Rogers's boy ought to know better than to throw stones into the mill pond, for thee will fill it.' A most remarkable prophecy from a man unconscious of the future, as any one will observe as he looks upon Cushman park.

Rope Maker—Albert G. Liscomb, 70.

Baker—Jonathan Buttrick, 77.

Rigger—James Hammond, 74.

Sail maker—Hardy E. Hitch, 83.

Town clerk—Ebenezer Akin, Sr., 85.?

I now refer to the second class of old men who were active when I was a young man in business.

Master mariners—Lemuel Tripp, 81; Caleb Church, 85; Phinneas E. Terry, 71; John S. Taber, 80; Ebenizer Pierce, 84; Alexander Winsor, 80; Thomas Stoddard, 80; Jabez Delano, 74; James S. Robinson, 87; James V. Cox, 71; Charles S. Taber, 82; Joseph Taber; Charles Bryant; James Tripp, 2d, 80; Peleg Gifford, 84; Ellery T. John Charry, 79; Gorham B. Howes, 71; Benjamin Ellis, 78; Thomas W. Taber, 85; John Church, 78; William H. Whitfield, 81; Isaiah West, 87; Ira Lakey; George H. Taber, 93.

The many incidents relating to these men are too numerous to mention in this paper. Lemuel Tripp, one of our leading citizens, was director in the Fairhaven bank, deacon of the Congregational church, and well to do. He told me that he never gave his note or hired a dollar in all his life. Phinneas E. Terry, the favorite captain of Cornelius Vanderbilt on his New York and Galveston steamship line, expected his passengers as well as his crew to obey orders. Stopping at one of the southern ports to take on passengers, he noticed the next day that some of these southern men were gambling on the quarter deck. He ordered them to desist as no gambling was allowed on the ship. They obeyed, but the next day, in another part of the ship, the same gang were found at the same business. When Captain Terry approached, the men, all of whom were armed, quietly took their cards and threw them into the sea, to the great amazement and wrath of the gamblers; but there was

no more gambling. Then William Washburn, a favorite captain of Gibbs and Jenney, who sailed during the Civil war on a right whale voyage to Hudson bay. The ship was frozen-in by Sept. 15; Eskimos came and built their icehouses around the ship. Captain Washburn found them to be good men, and thoroughly honest. Finally the sun ceased to rise; the weather. 60 to 70 degrees below zero, was very trying, when the Eskimos chief proposed a hunting trip to the interior of northern Canada; the captain furnishing a boat crew and food, the Eskimo the sledges, with 40 dogs to a sled. They were gone about a week, and returned with nine moose oxen and 200 salmon trout. The coming season the ship, filled with oil and bone, returned; the oil selling at one dollar per gallon and the bone at one dollar and fifty cents per pound.

Captain Alexander Winsor, in the merchant service, was the favorite captain of Grinnell, Minturn & Co., and had the finest ship in the American service; which was afterward sold in a foreign port, "Flying Cloud".

William H. Whitfield, the captain who rescued Nakahama Mungero and his five companions from a lone rock in a China sea. This young Japanese was one of my schoolmates in Fairhaven, graduating in five years ahead of all the American boys. He finally returned to Japan, where he was quite as important a factor in opening the ports of Japan to the world as Commodore Perry and his warship. No fairy tale or Arabian Nights story could ever equal his experiences.

And then Ira Lakey, the jeweler in Fairhaven, who with many log books studied up the habits and the homes of the whales, and afterwards went as captain of a ship and proceeded to fill her with oil.

Captain Isaiah West, who on his voyage for sperm whaling in the Indian ocean puts into Zanzibar for recruits, and became acquainted with some of the black Mahomedan merchants, whom he found strictly honest, trustworthy and very religious. It was here that he lost his anchor in a typhoon, compelling him to obtain another one to replace the lost one. The merchant who sold the anchor refused to take pay, saying he could find the captain's anchor in the harbor, and besides it was the command of the Koran that the Mahomedan must treat the stranger in distress as he himself would like to be treated were he in distress in the stranger's country.

It was largely through Captain Charles Bryant in his interviews with Senator Charles Sumner that the senate of the United States was prevailed upon to purchase Alaska from the

Russian government. His whaling experiences in Bering sea, his acquaintance with the Alaska Indians, his experience as custodian of the fur seal fishery and his account of the fisheries and wonderful scenery in Alaska, are of the greatest interest.

Merchants—Nathan Church, 74; William P. Jenney, 79; Charles W. White, 79; Francis Stoddard, 66; Phinneas Terry, 87; Isaiah F. Terry, 91; Warren Delano, Jr., 88; Nathaniel S. Higgins, 86; Weston Howland, 85; Johnathan Cowen, 72; William L. B. Gibbs, 81; Charles S. Taber, 82; Roland Fish, 89; Furman R. Whitwell, 68; Philemon E. Fuller, 81; Ezekiel R. Sawin, 79; Wilson Pope, 84; Lewis S. Judd, 70; Nathaniel Church, 66.

Nathan Church, our wealthiest citizen, had three good characteristics: He always paid his labor every Saturday; he never spoke ill of any one; he was always polite to the townspeople in every walk in life.

Warren Delano, Jr., for a great many years was the trusted manager of the commercial house of Russell & Co., Shanghai, China.

Weston Howland, a citizen for so many years of both this city and Fairhaven, was noted as the discoverer in the successful manufacture of petroleum oil.

Grocers and Traders—Rufus Allen, 81; Samuel H. Eldred, 87; Noah Stoddard, 77; Seth S. Swift, 77; Tucker Damon, Jr., 84; Hervey Tripp, 80.

Carpenters—Amos T. Pierce, 72; Loring Dexter, 78; Frederick T. Pierce, 94; Bethuel Gifford, 87; Arnold G. Tripp, 87.

Coopers—William W. Allen, 89; John C. Pease, 80; Pardon Tripp, 87; Nathan Lawton, 81; Charles H. Tripp, 84; Charles Eldredge, 88; John M. Howland, 91; Welcome J. Lawton, 79; Kelley S. Eldredge, 80; Hiram Tripp, 84; Francis J. Delano, 86.

Blacksmiths—Luther Cole, 79; Tucker Damon, 82; John Howard, 76; Phinneas Merrihew, 80; Isaac W. Babbitt, 93.

Shipwrights—Reuben Fish, 85; Elbridge G. Morton, 74; Albert Gifford, 79; Daniel J. Lewis, 72; Ebenezer Bryden, 76; Oliver Brightman.

Farmers—Lemuel S. Akin, 76; William F. Terry, 88; John P. Ellis, 73; William P. Sullings, 81; Manuel Rose, 80; Sylvanus E. Studley, 87; Henry Akin, 76; Charles F. Morton, 81; Samuel Dunn, 81; George R. Dean, 79; Seth Alden, 84; Johnathan E. Cowen.

Physicians—George Attwood, 72; Charles N. Thayer, 79.

Treasurers and Cashiers—Charles Drew, 84; Reuben Nye, 89.

Riggers—William Waterson, 88; William T. Hoeg, 73.

Machinists—Henry J. Mantius, 86; Russell Hathaway, 81.

Painters—Bartholomew Taber, 80; William Washburn, 84; Alexander Tripp, 79.

Teachers—Martin L. Eldredge, 78; Frederick Jenney, 82.

Manufacturers—Edward A. Dana, 78; Cyrus D. Hunt, 79.

Ministers—Rev. Henry J. Fox, 70; Rev. Frederick Upham, 91.

Martin L. Eldredge will be remembered as the successful commander and teacher of the state schoolship Massachusetts, which for several years was anchored in our harbor. Reuben Fish will be remembered as a most successful ship builder, some of the finest ships owned in New Bedford and Fairhaven were the products of his skill.

Seth A. Mitchell, road builder, 88; George A. Briggs, civil engineer, 84; Nathaniel S. Taber, sail maker, 87; Ira Gerrish, cabinet maker, 86; Walter D. Swan, pump maker, 84; Joshua Delano, boat builder, 80; James Lawrence, teamster, 75; Robert Bennett, clerk, 75; Francis W. Tappan, lawyer, 87; John H. Howland, selectman, 76; Alfred Nye, justice, 78; William Bradford, artist, 70; Thomas S. Putman, deputy sheriff, 82; Eben Akin, Jr., town clerk, 87; James Bennett, railroad conductor, 75; James C. Mara, dentist, 80; Samuel Jenkins, gardener, 93; Harvey Caswell, block maker, 84; Frederick Williams, cooper, 82; John Chase, blacksmith, 93; Cyrus G. Lawrence, cooper, 94.

Some of these men were great sticklers for their rights. The selectmen gave James Wing permission to dam up the old mill pond in order that he might obtain his supply of ice from this place. I well recollect a great northeast storm with a down-pour of rain that completely flooded the land around the pond. Two of the abutters, Oliver Brightman and James Lawrence, already alluded to, were up bright and early in the morning and proceeded with a gang of

men to destroy the dam. Word got quickly around the town. I was one of the first to arrive on the scene, when soon came the selectmen, who in peremptory tone ordered them to desist in their attempt to defy the action of the constituted authorities of the town. The two men replied that they had squatters rights and they were going to maintain them. They kept at work until the whole dam gave way, the great body of water rapidly flowing into the Acushnet river. It was a great sight and great fun for the boys. Suit at law was immediately brought by the selectmen against both Lawrence and Brightman, the two latter being defended by Thomas D. Elliot, Esq., who told me afterwards that he gained the case for these men and also a decree from higher authorities that this waterway must remain open and undisturbed to the sea. The town was mulcted in the sum of \$3300.

Of course there were many other old men besides those I have enumerated, mostly farmers who were beyond my reach. I note the fact that among all the occupations given the healthiest were those of house carpenters and coopers.

Of course nothing has been said about the old women, of whom there are always more in number than the old men. There are more widows than widowers in our town. A life insurance risk on a woman is better than one on a man.

Fairhaven 70 years ago, with its lack of good streets and sidewalks, its sale of liquors at the grocery stores and public bar, its lack of shade trees and its inadequate school system, was a vastly different town than the town of today. But later on some of the men whom I have named did much afterwards in tree-planting, grading, flagging and curbing some of our streets and improving our school system, until our former townsman, H. H. Rogers, completed the work as it stands today.