OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SKETCHES

No. 7

Being the proceedings of the September meeting of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, held in the Methodist Church, at Acushnet, September 24, 1904, and containing the following papers:

[NOTE.—The "Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches" will be published by the society from time to time and may be purchased for a nominal sum on application to the Secretary].

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

SEPTEMBER MEETING

OF THE

OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AT THE

METHODIST CHURCH, ACUSHNET

SEPTEMBER 24, 1904

The sixth regular meeting of the Old Dartmouth Historical society, held Saturday in the Methodist church at Acushnet, proved to be a very interesting session, dealing exclusively with the history of old Acushnet. When the members assembled shortly before 3 o'clock they found many interesting things to take up their attention before the opening of the session. Through the untiring efforts of the members of the committee, a collection of articles having a relation to the past of old Acushnet had been arranged, which proved of great interest to those present.

In general the collection consisted of old pewter, china and glass, ancient deeds and photographs of old Acushnet houses. Of especial interest among these was a deed of land given in 1722 and witnessed by the Rev. Samuel Hunt and his wife Hannah. It was for a sale of land by Joseph Russell to Jonathan Delano. Also there was exhibited the signature made in 1762 of Dr. Elisha Tobey, who built the old Tobey house; the original deed of the old Acushnet cemetery, a gift from John Jenney in 1713; the original petition for a fire engine in Acushnet and many other papers of an historical interest to the town.

The session was opened with an address by William W. Crapo, president of the society, who spoke as follows:

Acushnet is the inland town of Old Dartmouth. Unlike the other towns of this family group, it has no boundary line upon the sea and it cannot boast of seaport or docks inviting ocean traffic. And yet Acushnet has furnished many able seamen and scores of skilled navigators and accomplished shipmasters for the world's commerce. The whaling merchants of New Bedford and Fairhaven received from this inland community and sent out upon the ocean men of daring and hardihood and skill, who returned from distant seas bringing back full laden ships with rich cargoes.

From this village young men bearing

the familiar names of Nye and Swift and Hathaway went to foreign lands and became famous merchants in China and South America, men eminent in mercantile affairs, widely known and respected for honorable dealing and commercial integrity.

Acushnet village is fifty years older than Bedford village. Here, in early days, was the seat of government of Old Dartmouth. In 1686 it was ordered that "all our town meetings shall be held at or near the Mill in Dartmouth until the time the town sees cause to order it otherwise." Elisha C. Leonard, who is remembered as one of the most thorough and painstaking students of our local history, has said that this mill was at Smith Mills. Two years previous, in 1684, an agreement was made by the town for the building of a grist mill, with Ralph Allen, Samuel Hix, John Russell and Arthur Hathaway acting as agents for the proprietors. Whether this mill was located at Smith Mills and, if so, how long town meetings were held in that vicinity, I am unable to state. But there is nothing which indicates that a town house was ever built at Smith Mills.

In 1739 a new town house was ordered to be built and a committee was chosen to superintend its erection. This new town house was in Acushnet, and the vote of the town would indicate that the earlier town house which was to be superseded by the new one was located at Acushnet. The committee in charge of the construction were instructed "to make the best of the old town house, either in selling it or in pulling it down and use what may be profitable toward furnishing of the said new town house; and they which buy the said old house shall convey it off the lot where it now stands." The committee was further ordered "to have the building finished as soon as it may be done with conveniency and with convenient glass windows and shutters." I infer the old town house did not have glass windows.

There is no intimation in the votes that the cost of the new town house was to be met by the issue of town bonds, to be paid by succeeding generations. Our simple-minded forefathers had not learned the modern methods of placing the tax for public improvements upon their descendants. They limited expenditures to present needs and paid the bills.

Our ancestors held views in reference to the conduct of municipal affairs which are entitled to remembrance. As early as 1674, within ten years of the incorporation of Dartmouth by the Plymouth court, it was ordered by the inhabitants, at a meeting probably held in Acushnet, that "the town meeting do begin at 10 o'clock and continue until the moderator duly relieve the town, not exceeding four of the clock."

At the same meeting the town adopted an ordinance which imposed a "fine of one shilling and six pence apiece on all such persons as do neglect to appear at the town meeting, and for coming to the meeting too late three pence an hour. And the town clerk was ordered to collect said fines and have one-half of them for his pains, and in case any do refuse to pay to return their names to the town." Doubtless the proclamation in town meeting of the names of the delinquents was a more severe punishment than the money penalty.

With those men citizenship carried with it not merely a privilege to be exercised or omitted at pleasure, but it imposed an imperative duty which could not be ignored. It was their judgment that local self-government placed an obligation on every citizen to participate in public affairs and take his share of responsibility in acting for the common welfare.

There were differences of opinion in those early days as there is now and always will be. In 1747 a division arose in Acushnet growing out of church matters and a petition signed by a number of the inhabitants was presented to the general court in Boston praying that Acushnet village might be set off from Dartmouth and form a separate precinct in order that they might proceed under the law to call and settle an orthodox minister. But at a town meeting held in September of that year a committee was appointed to show to the general court that the petition should not be granted, and it was voted unanimously that the town was unwilling that Acushnet should be set off from Dartmouth.

It is fortunate for us today that Acushnet was not separated from the mother town.

Rev. Paul Coffin came to Acushnet in 1761 to visit his friend, Rev. Samuel West, who is known to us as an eminent preacher and ardent Revolutionary patriot. Coffin gives a doleful account in his diary of the local surroundings. He writes that rocks and oaks are over the whole town and adds that "whortle bushes and rocks are the sad comfort of the weary traveler." But time has wrought many changes. The whortle bushes and rocks no longer bring discomfort. The Acushnet of today is a place of rural beauty. Its verdant meadows and well cultivated fields and luxuriant gardens please the eye and give an added charm to its quiet restfulness. Acushnet in the present has many attractions and in the past it has furnished valuable contributions to the history of Old Dartmouth.

Past Industries of Upper Acushnet River

By Mrs. Daniel T. Devoll

History repeats itself. The hum of the factory and the activity of the river above the bridge are but the echoes on a larger scale of the industry and thrift that were part of it still farther up the stream in the days that my story has to deal with.

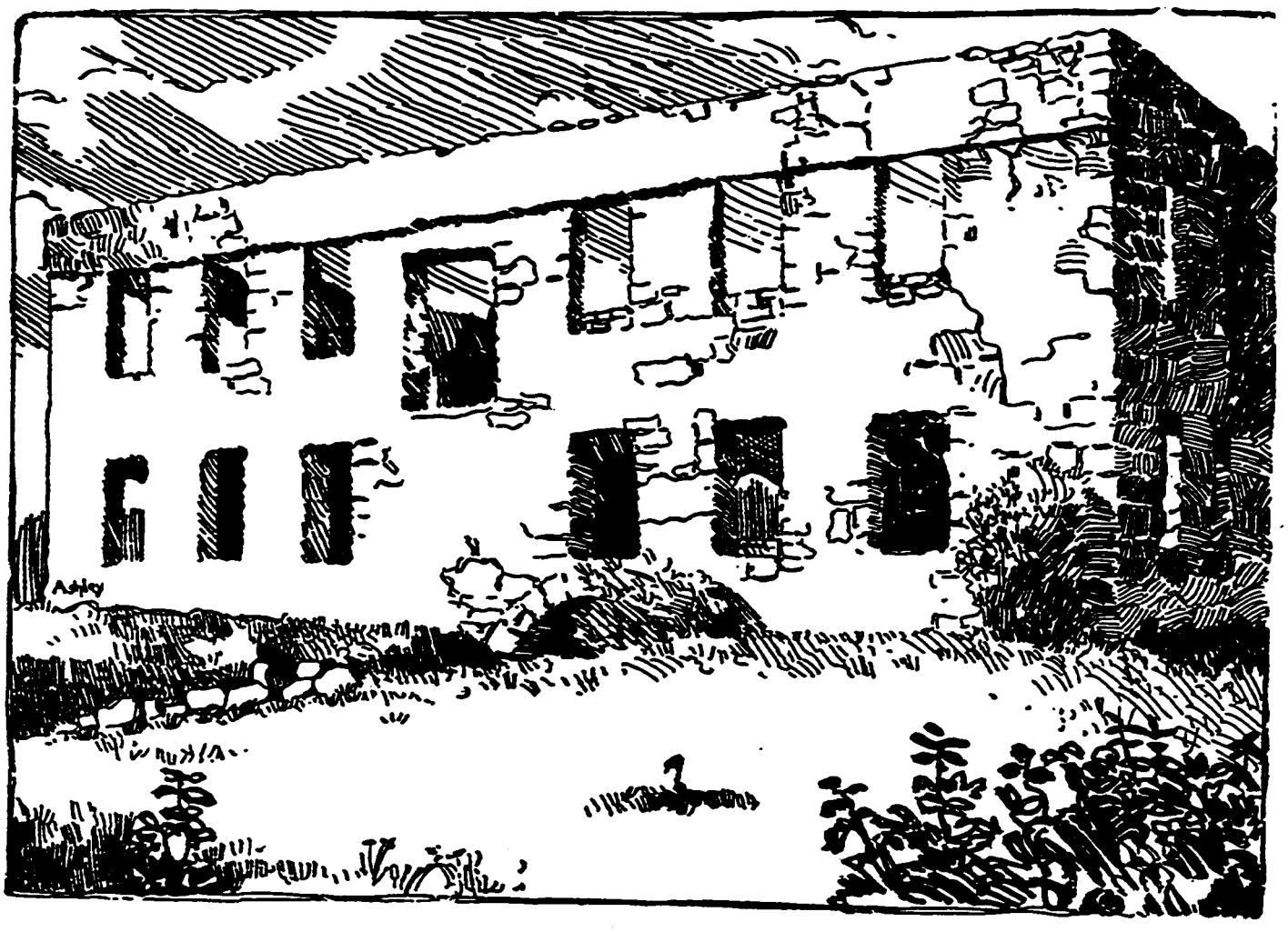
From its source to its joining with the bay it has always been productive, and while seemingly for some years back the trend of its industries was down towards its mouth, the course of events make it now turn backward, and old Belleville, once its favored port and projected town, now harbors its last mill, the Manomet.

The river was discovered by Gosnold in 1602, and as far back as 1797 this was its description taken from Morse's Gazetteer: "Acushnet was the Indian name of New Bedford, and a small river of that name discovered by Gosnold in 1602 runs north to south through the township and divides the villages of Oxford and Fairhaven from Bedford Village. A company was incorporated in 1796 for building a bridge across the river; from the the head to the mouth of the river is seven or eight miles."

In 1665 King Philip quitclaimed his right in land about Acushnet, including what is now New Bedford. A part or the whole of this was what had been bargained away by his father, Massasoit, and 10 pounds was now paid to King Philip to remunerate him for marking out and defining the boundaries.

Daniel Ricketson says of the old township of Dartmouth that it has its full share of pleasant and picturesque scenery, with an extent of sea coast, inclusive of the creeks and inlets, of not less than thirty or forty miles, with three fine rivers like the Acushnet, Pascamanset and the Acoaxet.

The Acushnet river rises in Little Aquitticaset pond, which is the most southerly of the chain of ponds known as the Middleboro ponds. In 1858, when Daniel Ricketson published his history



RUINS OF THE ONCE FAMOUS WHELDEN FACTORY.

of New Bedford, it took its rise in a richly wooded dell near Joe's rock and the Devil's foot; now the New Bedford pumping station is situated there, and the once towering pines have given place to the attractive grounds and buildings which supply New Bedford with water.

My early remembrance of the spot was delightful and full of romance. For three quarters of a mile from the pond to what is known as Squin's brook is low, marshy land, and this has been ditched through to the dumping station. Squin's brook was named from the fact that tradition tells us that Lydia Tispaquin had a hut or wigwam upon the east bank of the brook. Squin's brook, at its intersection with Keen's river, forms lower down what was called Ansel White's mill pond, now the old or first reservoir purchased to supply the city of New Bedford with water.

The first industry upon this river I can find trace of was a shingle mill at the foot of Braley's hill, upon the east side of the highway near the foot of the hill. This mill was run by water from Squin's brook. It had an outside wheel and the water was carried in a plank acqueduct over the wheel. The mill was upon the Abraham Sherman farm, owned by Mr. Rotch and run by John Sherman.

Upon this same stream and nearer Squin's brook and upon the farm of William Braley was a mill for sawing long lumber, run by Abner Braley, or as every one knew him, "Deacon Braley."

We follow Squin's brook down to its conjunction with Keen's river, a beautiful stream, famous in the old days as a trout stream, and now occasionally fished by an old timer, and we come to the Ansel White mill pond. Here for many years was activity.

Here was a grist mill and saw mill on the south side of the road; this road was in those days little better than a cart path, and here Ansel White, leaving his brothers at White's Factory, farther down the stream, built a stone mill for himself in 1830, on the north side of this same highway. Here he carded wool and people came a great ways to bring it, and it is said even as far as Mattapoisett. The story goes that one Mrs. Hillier, who came from the last named town, frequently got there so early in the morning that she brought scup to them for breakfast. Subsequently, in 1856, this mill was turned into a candle wick factory, run by Captain Allen and Benjamin White, until the advent of kerosene gave us better light.

On the south side of this road is now the lower old reservoir pond of the water works. Leaving it we again take up our course down stream, and we come to the boat building industry of Mr. Leonard. This industry was started by Ebenezer Leonard, senior, and has been continued by his sons since.

The original shop was on the north side of the road; it was burned and then rebuilt on the south side of the road. This was also burned and the business is now carried on off the stream in the old Joseph Taber house.

Following the river down we come to the stream where at present William G. Taber has his mill for sawing box boards. Jacob Taber originally had a saw and grist mill here; then Joseph and Pardon Taber; then Joshua Morse, Sr., owned and run it; then his sons in partnership for a while carried on the business, and finally George P. Morse, the youngest son, and the last of the boys, disposed of it to the present owner, William G. Taber.

Years ago here also was a forge run by one Stephen Taber and the slag and cinders are yet to be seen near the old furnace.

As we go down the stream from here we must be impressed with its rustic beauties. The pastoral scene with pasture and wood land flanking it and the beginning of a river flowing through them make a most enchanting picture.

On its opposite side from the Morse mill, we come to the ruins of what was once the famous Whelden factory. Here in 1814, Captain Joseph Wheldon built a stone mill for the manufacture of cotton cloth. Captain Wheldon was famous in his day and generation, and it is said of him that when he was paid off his lay in the voyage of the Rebecca he felt himself to be a very wealthy man.

He had previously owned in the White factory, but left and built this mill. In the same year he built he sold shares to Jireh Swift, Job Gray and Loum Snow, and they conducted the business as Wheldon, Swift & Co.

In 1820 the firm was changed again and later Thomas Wood used it to manufacture bedsteads and wheelbarrows. The mill was finally burned. East from here runs a tributary to the old Wheldon pond, called Meadow brook, and on it is the one left industry of Acushnet, the Cushman mill. Originally a grist mill, then successively Thomas Wood made furniture, then horn buttons for men's trousers, and finally a lumber and box mill, which it has been for many years.

Mr. Cushman made a great success of this business and from small beginnings raised his output so that he consumed millions of feet of box lumber.

Going back to the old stream we come to the Hamblin saw mill and here the river is both wide and deep. This locality has been the most noted of any upon the river, for here was the oldest

cotton mill. The road called the White Factory road was laid out by the Dartmouth proprietors about 1712 to James Samson. He sold in 1715 to Anthony Young of Newport, and Young sold to one Tisdale and Thomas Gage. Young built a dam at this place. In 1741 it came into possession of George Brownell. It was then called Young's dam. Brownell probably built a saw and grist mill, and after his death George Brownell, Jr., sold it to William White, who built a stone mill.

The Whites were wool carders who came from England; in 1811 one half of it was sold to Captain Joseph Wheldon. In his deed he mentions mill dam, wool carding machinery, grist mill, saw mill and cotton factory machinery. This mill was burned and then Captain Wheldon built further up the river.

Phineas and Benjamin White, sons of William White, ran a cotton mill at this place. They made print cloth which was sent to Fall River, and employed something like fifty men and women, who lived about the mill in the houses around there. In these days there was nothing but Yankees employed, and society was upon one common plane.

Mary Spooner, who lived on the County road and to the great age of one hundred years, worked for many years in this mill. They began work at six o'clock, worked until 7 30, then had one half hour for breakfast, back again and worked until 12, an hour for dinner, and then worked until 7 30, or as long as they could see; the women attended the looms. This mill was sold to Thomas and Dow, who enlarged it and put in steam works. It was partially burned down and then Samuel Hamblin rebuilt it, and it is now run as a saw mill and owned by James B. Hamblin. Upon this mill is the date 1831 cut upon the stone over the door. It is said at this time the sons of William White built this mill.

Now the river widens, and what is known as Acushnet village, or Head of the River, is reached. Here are numerous industries. The first we come to is what is now called the Acushnet Saw Mill Co. Many men of varied occupations have owned and refitted this mill to suit their taste for securing the filthy lucre. A grist mill, a saw mill, fulling, dressing and wool carding mill, and here is an advertisement from a Mercury under date of June 26, 1818:

June 26, 1818.

Wool Carding.

"The subscriber hereby gives public notice that he intends carrying on the wool carding business the ensuing season in the new building between the grist and paper mills at the Head of Accushnett river; and to commence next week; being furnished with good machinery, he flatters himself that from his experience in wool carding, merino and native wool and by the attention, care and punctuality he proposes to observe in the prosecution of his business he shall be enabled to give ample satisfaction to his employers."

Wm. Gordon, Jr.

Mr. J. P. Lund, with Mr. Charles W. Morgan, afterwards run a paper mill here, and connected with it at the same time was an up and down saw mill run by water power; then it was given to Mr Parkman Lund, who sold it to Messrs. Simeon and Jonathan Hawes and Noah H. Wilbur, who now own it.

In 1770 there was an industry called the West Iron Workers or Forge on the west side of the river, near the present Acushnet post office; pumps were made by Benjamin Taber for making salt here also; blocks were made for vessels by Edward Wing in company with William Rotch, then with Squire Nathaniel Spooner. Here, too, on the west side of the river, was the blacksmith and shipsmith's shop of Thomas Terry.

Then we come to the shipyard of Charles Stetson. The first vessels constructed were schooners and other small craft, bought by Cape people for codfishing. About 40 of these were built, but no ships were built until 1798. The first vessel built was the Hunter, for Seth Russell & Sons; she was commanded by Peter Butler. At her launching she ran several feet into the marsh on the Fairhaven side, but came off all right. He next built the brig Hepsabeth, named for the wife of Weston Howland, and built for Mr. Howland and Humphrey Hathaway, then the ship Charles. Ship Swift was built here for Humphrey Hathaway and Jireh Swift, and on the 10th of November, 1805, not quite one hundred years ago, the ship Swift lay at the wharf with flags flying; on this same day Jireh Swift and Elizabeth Hathaway were married. For more than fifty years the ship Swift sailed the seas until her close came in the Pacific. Mr. Humphrey Swift owns an oil painting by Bradford of the good ship and her cabin water pitcher with her picture painted thereon. The brig Horatio was the last vessel that I can find any record of as having been built here, for the trend was down, and Belleville and its vicinity became the place. The brig Hope had her keel laid in the new yard, and the last one I can find about was the brig Sun, for Isaac Vincent. In 1809 they built the bridge, and that changed the channel to the other side, and the industry and projected town moved on.

For a few moments at least you have

followed me with the river windings; let us stop here.

I must content myself with the river's upper industry, for if I attempt to go down stream farther I shall find myself dealing with many and varied ones, and come into the realms of the present.

It is said that word Acushnet is an Indian word meaning "a good place to bathe." and taken in conjunction with the industries that have flourished by its borders and made fruitful and possible the fair city on its western side, it might mean equally well "a good place to work by." Its ever moving waters have led by the homes of a thrifty people who have not let its example do other than teach them the lesson of its course to the sea, "work."

Old Acushnet

By Mrs. Clement N. Swift

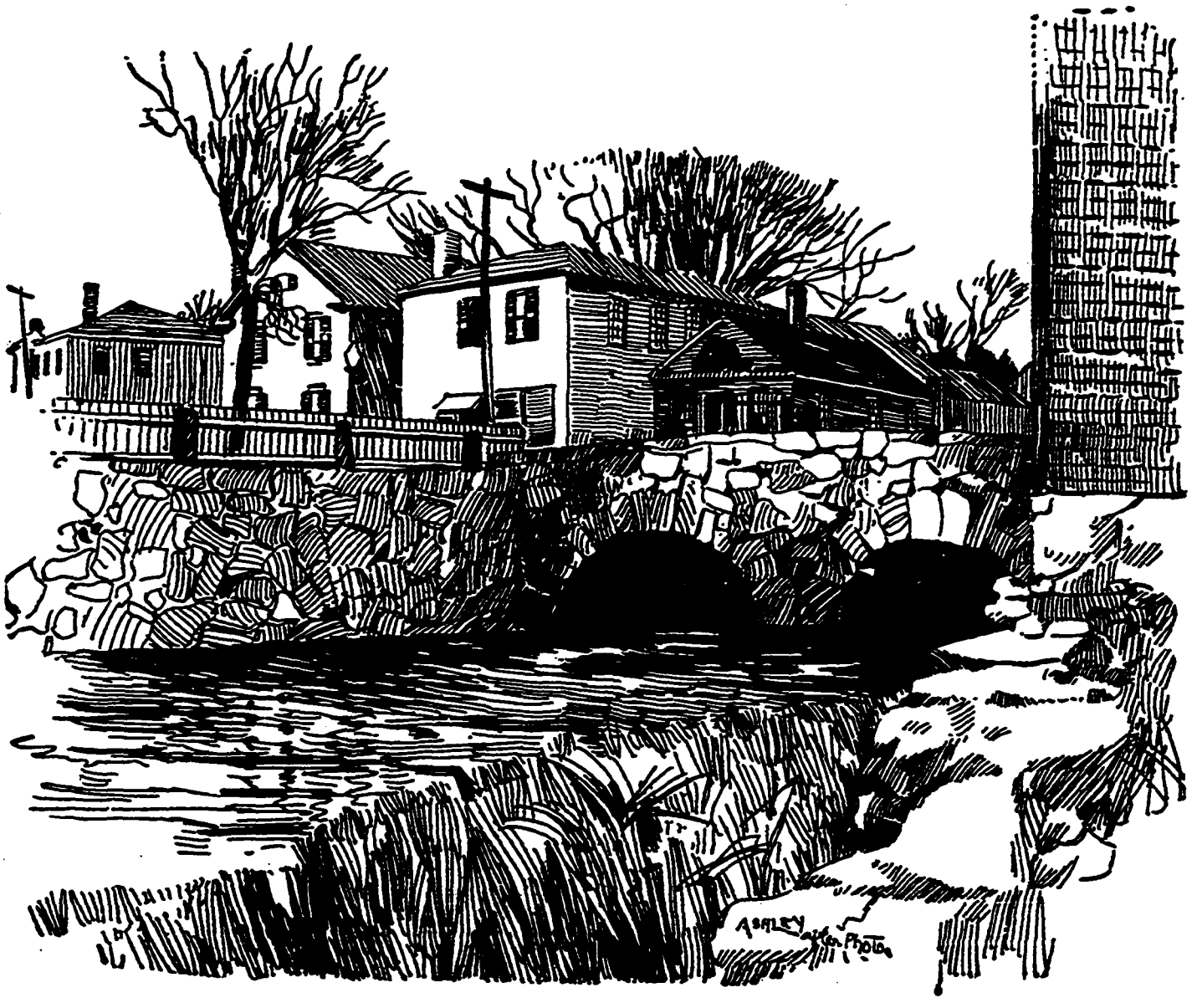
Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen—Before reading what is but a faltering and faulty attempt to bring Old Acushnet to your attention, I must acknowledge my great indebtedness to the writings of Ricketson and Ellis of New Bedford; to the carefully indexed files of the New Bedford Standard and Mercury to be found in the public library, and the kindness of my fellow townspeople.

Most, if not all, of you are well acquainted with "Mr. Starter's" "Now Then, North end; Lund's corner!" the very modern introduction to the nearest approach yet produced of the witch riding a broom-stick of our forefathers. Lund's corner, so called from Mr. Lund, who for many years kept a tin-shop in the store and buildings on the southeast corner of the county road, now owned by Mr. George Cobb, is the official name for what was the junction long ago of two Indian trails, one leading up from Clarks point, the other coming down over Tarkiln hill, the latter known as the "Rhode Island way," leading as it did from Newport to Plymouth, on the one side, and Boston on the other. In those days this hill must have been somewhat, though not very considerably, higher and bare of trees, a sandy ridge. A little further back from the river east, west and north, were thick forests; while to the northwest lay the great Acushnet cedar swamp. Even in the early days of my childhood the Old Colony railway ran through some of the densest part of this swamp, now devastated of its timber; and well do I remember how, as the slant beams of the afternoon sun shot here and there between the beautiful brown tree trunks and glittered on the mysterious pools of black water, I expected, with the delightful horror of childhood, to see a painted savage glide from each sombre shadow!

In a criticism on American school history, lately enunciated by Professor Wilson of Princeton, he laments that we seem doomed to be creatures only of our own day, and that "a dull day." "All hurry, all bustle and no refreshment; a day of cold steel and hard fact. We are in such a hurry that we have no longer time to sit down and dream dreams. No people make any intellectual advance unless they do dream dreams." Now this Acushnet of ours is essentially a place for dreaming dreams. "Old Acushnet" is fast becoming only a place of memories. From being the very heart and pulse of Old Dartmouth, the cradle of much of New Bedford's present greatness, as has been shown you in the preceding paper, she is fast sinking into a mere agricultural adjunct to her daughter. The very inhabitants are changing. The old bounds, the old landmarks, and all the old and revered traditions are fast disappearing before the oncoming waves of foreign immigration; and, desirable as all this may be from certain standpoints, the first steps in the great march of progress are not always either graceful or gracious. For today let us banish this from our minds and try to dream of "Old Acushnet," that is, more especially, Acushnet village. To treat of the township in the short and broken time which has gone by force of circumstances, to the writing of this paper, would be out of the question, even if you had the patience to listen to such a disquisition. Of the Acushnet Indians, a tribe of the Wampanoags, ruled by their own sachems, I have gleaned little. We know that they constantly frequented the banks of this river, calling it "a place for bathing," and that they held clambakes on its shores, as witnessed by the shell-mounds. There is one field more particularly known to

the writer, on rising ground near the east shore of the river, where, owing to the numerous chips and unfinished, as well as perfected, arrow-heads picked up, it seems likely that a much frequented camp existed. The site is commanding, giving as it does an extensive view down the river and harbor. A little to the northeast of this spot is another, long known to the family of the late Captain R. N. Swift, on whose land it is, as the "Indian Burying Ground;" a tiny bit of ground marked by a grove of white birch trees, set with rough stones gray with moss and lichen, and now seven in number. Nothing is definitely known about it; most probably it was the burying place of Indians working for the white settlers, but it is undoubtedly of much antiquity.

About here, also, lay some of those "fair fields and meadows hedged with stately groves," spoken of by Gosnold, where the Indians grew their corn. Judging from the bounds of the old survey, there must have been many stately trees in those early days, more especially oaks; and nearer our own time, buttonwood, grand, single trees, abounded. Probably the trees stood rather back from the river, and the warm sandy hillocks sloping up and down from its low banks were bare, but the face of the land must have changed almost unrecognizably since those days. Among these ancient people, the rightful owners of the land, came the first settlers; though possibly there were English land owners here before the purchase of Old Dartmouth from the Indians in 1652 for "thirty yards of cloth, eight moose skins, fifteen axes, fifteen hoes, fifteen pairs of breeches, eight blankets, two kettles, one cloth, £22 in wampum, eight pairs stockings, eight pairs of shoes, one iron pot, and ten shillings in another commoditie." We know that at first the Indians and the new comers dwelt at peace, but gradually, as was to be expected, dissensions arose, culminating in "King Philip's War." On the horrors of that contest we need not dwell; yet



THE BRIDGE AT ACUSHNET.

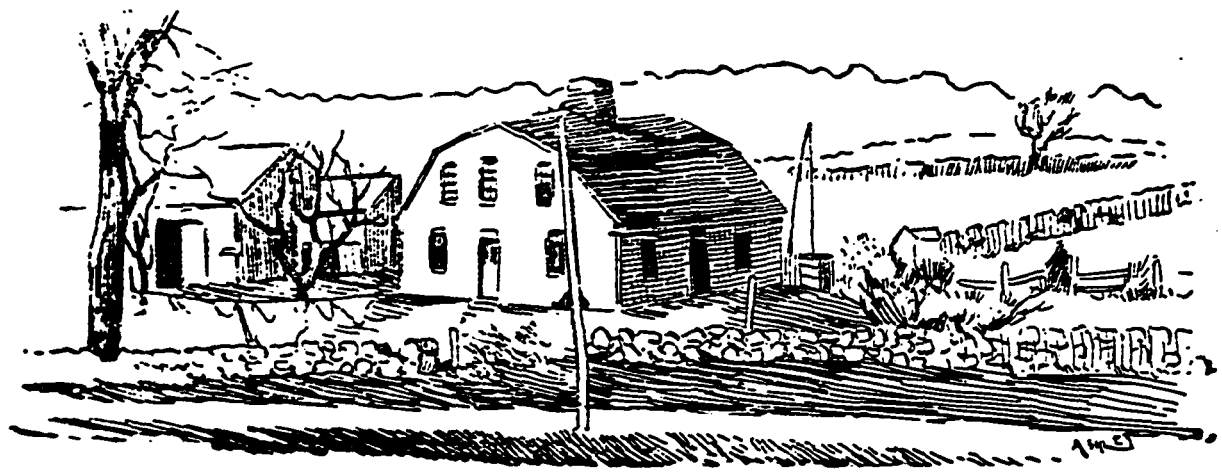
no historian of Acushnet should pass over one of its closing scenes, when a band of Indians, having voluntarily surrendered on a promise of amnesty, were betrayed into captivity by the "somebody else who had more power in the land" than Captain Church and the officers of Russell's garrison, who had given the promise. Down the narrow "wood-road" (now our village street) they passed; in and out through shade and sunshine, the beautiful shimmer of light upon the leaves of the forest trees, the lithe bodies moving so easily and with a noiselessness peculiar to the savage, from Russell's garrison at Apponegansett, to Plymouth and Boston, and among them walked King Philip's wife and son! The mere scene we may be able to imagine, but the feelings of those captives, who shall tell? An Indian prisoner naturally expected death: the Christian captors of these delivered them to worse than death, in West Indian captivity! After these troublous times, in which Dartmouth suffered so severely that she was exempted for three years from taxation or military service (except in maintaining the garrisons at Apponegansett, Palmer island and Oxford village), came the edict from Plymouth in 1678 that the settlers should draw their houses more closely together, for mutual protection, and thus originated Acushnet village.

In 1652 the whole of Old Dartmouth was held by 36 new purchasers and a few "old comers." In 1694 there were 56 proprietors, and by Benjamin Crane's surveys, about 1711, the land was again divided into 800 acre lots. These acres not necessarily lying contiguous, but 800 acres to each owner, and Hathaways and Jennes seem to have owned the larger share of the land upon which our village was built.

As to its beginnings and growth, one's bearings are hard to find. At the time of the Revolution the population of the whole of Dartmouth is said to have numbered only 7,000, yet we know that this was one of the earliest aggregations of houses in Dartmouth, and nearly half a century older than New Bedford, and that it was always distinguished as "Acushnet," though not so set off as a separate township until as late as 1860; being known after the setting off of Fairhaven and New Bedford as "North Fairhaven." Confining my remarks principally to the main village street, that old trail already referred to, and passing down it to the east, the first house on the north side, that of Mr. Humphrey H. Swift, built in 1806, is an offshoot of the old homestead purchased at the beginning of the last century. This is represented by the house opposite on the southeast corner—that now owned and occupied by Mr. George Cobb. Somewhere here, on the opposite side of the road, near the site of the present store of James Paige, stood the house of the bold villager who, standing at his doorway, as the British marched by on their revengeful raid of Sept. 5th, 1778, fired into their ranks, declaring that he would sell his house for a grenadier. One of the enemy fell, and the villager, flying for refuge to a field of standing corn behind his house, escaped; nor, apparently, was his dwelling burned. This story is not, to the writer's knowledge, recorded in any narrative of these times. It is given on the authority of the late General Thomas Church Haskell Smith himself an Acushnet man, born in the house next east of that of H. H. Swift, and now known as the "John Little house." Probably the British officers were hurrying their men on toward Fairhaven and the boats, for night was coming on apace, the troops not having landed at Clarks cove, according to their own official reports, until 6 p. m. The gathering darkness would also account for their having mistaken for minute-men the refugee householders grouped on the top of Tarkiln hill to watch their progress. Lively opposition had evidently been expected, 4,000 men having been landed. Just east of the present Swift homestead, from the ridge behind the present post office, then probably more thickly wooded, the British were fired upon by a small body of the Massachusetts train artillery. These troops had been stationed in New Bedford since the beginning of March, but, shortly before the British landed, had been called away to take part in the battle of Rhode Island. On hearing of the threatened landing, this small detachment was hurried back with one gun. By the return volley Lieutenant Metcalf, the commander, was fatally wounded. The present post office was the first store of the village, owned and kept by the late Jireh Swift, who afterward took into partnership his cousins, the late Obed and Gideon Nye. On either side of the Mill road several houses seem of ancient date, but of their traditional interest I have been able to gather no details until we come to the "Tobey house," which stands beyond the sawmill, facing south and distinguished by a gambrel roof. This house was built in 1755 by Dr. Elisha Tobey on land which belonged to the Rev. Samuel West, and was sold by his son Ephraim. Here was one of the recorded visits of the British. The treasures of the family had been hastily gathered into a small room, the door of which was so concealed from view when that to the cellar stood open, that the marauders prowled around the kitchen and down to the cellar without

discovering this very simple hiding place!

Before returning to the main street, I will note a curious matter in boundary running, which is: that so long as you are in the street you are in New Bedford, but so soon as you step inside a house to the east you are in Acushnet; a very astute arrangement which gives the care of street and sidewalk to New Bedford, "a burden lightly borne," you would say, if you often tried to ford this crossing in the winter or during rains; while Acushnet receives the taxes and votes. The present bridge bears date 1828-29 and is probably somewhat north of the old ford which would naturally be at the narrowest and shallowest part of the river just north of the present blacksmith's shop; between it and the rock in the river known as the "Little Diver" the bridge would be built where it was easiest to accommodate it to the rising land on both sides, and place it safely above high water mark. There is also a tradition that the old trail deviated considerably from the present road on the east of the bridge, passing behind the residence of the late Captain Swift and coming out again higher up. When we remember that a chain of small ponds ran north and south a short distance east of the river extending from the sand hills on the north to the "Great Acushnet pond" (identified as a small bit of water still existing on the farm of Mr. Slocum) on the south, and that quite a high sand hill occupied the site of the late Captain Swift's house, this seems plausible enough, though I have found no confirmation of the tradition. Neither have I been able to ascertain the date of the first bridge, more than that one existed here prior to 1711. It was certainly built of wood and probably only for foot passengers or riders, vehicles still using the ford, while even when widened for wheel-travel (and probably made a toll-bridge), it was still low enough for a boy, sitting on the edge, to dabble his feet in the water at high tide, as I have been told by the son of one who did so in his youth. In an old family letter we have an interesting account of an accident to a French officer, whose horse slipped and fell in crossing the wooden bridge, but I have been unable to put my hand on it. In 1815 the bridge then used was carried away by the high tide of the great gale, the water reaching up to Lund's corner, flowing into the mill pond and submerging all the low-lying lands for some distance on both sides of the river. It may be well to note here that this Acushnet river of ours has two sources: one coming from the west, sometimes called "Keene's branch," and one from the east, by "White's factory" from the eastern part of Freetown and sometimes called "Spooner's branch."



SOMERTON HOUSE BUILT ABOUT 1712.

Though more correctly "Squinns brook," from "Tispaquinn" the black sachem. This source rises in a small swamp full of deep springs and at one time formed the outlet of Little Quittacus pond, the present one being artificial. When this part of the stream was open, herring passed by it from the sea to Little Quittacus pond. In 1869 the present bridge was threatened with destruction by another gale and high tide, the water rising to the tops of the arches; and the piers being called upon to withstand the impact of logs adrift from the mill pond, and of all kinds of flotsam brought down by the rushing stream. Crossing the bridge we come to the site of the old mill pulled down this year, the oldest in Acushnet, erected in 1707, and used, as you have heard, for many purposes. It does not seem to be generally known that the wheelwright who constructed its last water-wheel, Captain Pierce, was killed while testing the revolutions

of the wheel which he had just erected; an iron bar, which he was using for the purpose, catching in one of the paddles and precipitating him into the water under his wheel.

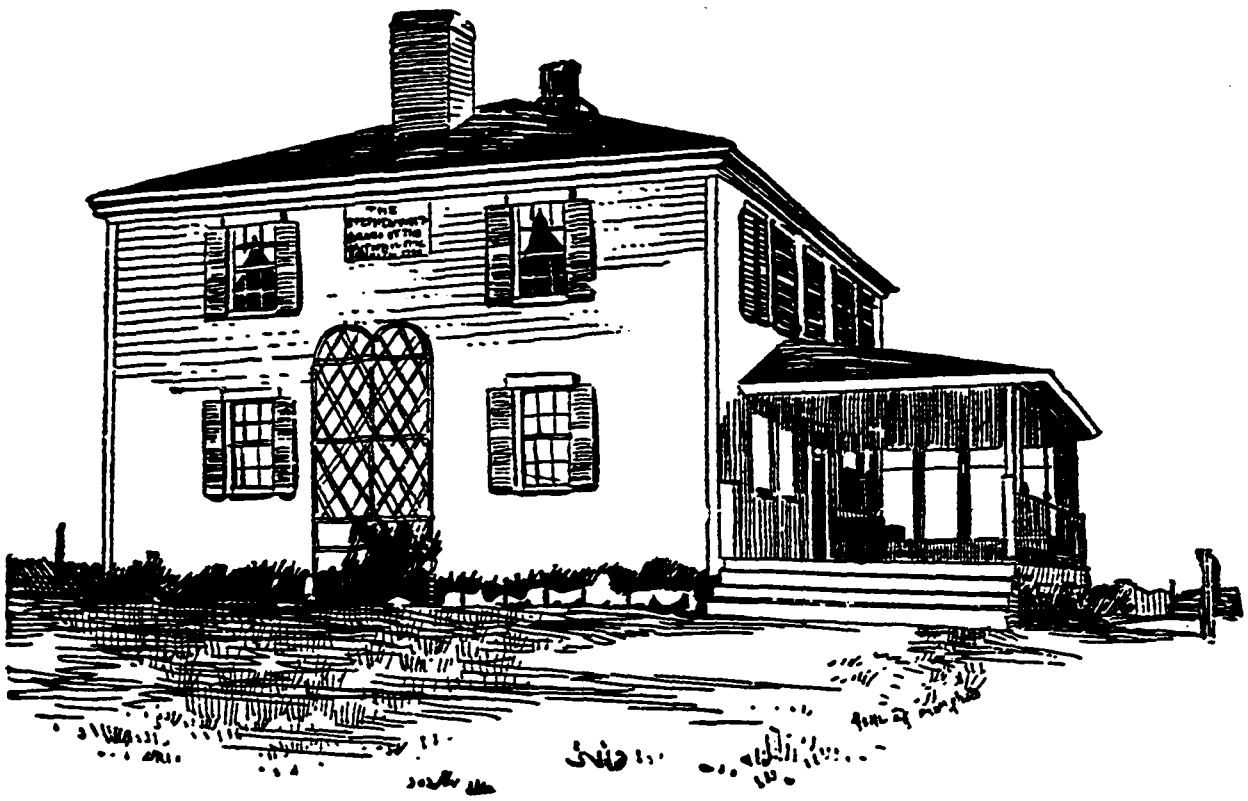
Somewhat behind this mill stood, and stands, the house of the late Judge Nathaniel Spooner, the first judge of the police court of New Bedford (which was established in 1834), and a well known character in his day. In the next enclosure—known to us as "Miss Martha Spooner's garden"—(and where some fine hawthorns rejoice one's eyes in springtime) stood the small shop of Stephen Taber, clock-maker, who dwelt in a house on the opposite side of the road, destroyed in the great fire, when six other houses were burned. This shop, removed some years since from its old location, now stands on the bank of the river north of the house. Somewhat peculiar, reticent and laborious, Mr. Taber here largely amassed, by his trade of watch and clock making, the fortune which has enabled his widow to endow the Tabor Academy at Marion. The second house east was the first home of the Acushnet post office under "Squire Clark," afterwards moved across the street. Next to this is the house now owned by Charles L. Kenyon, but occupied by the late Gideon Nye and his family at the time of the gale and high tide in 1815, already noticed. During the gale, as is related, the bowsprit of a stranded vessel, washed up by the tide and caught in a back current over the low and swampy lands behind the house, shattered a window, the fragments of glass falling on the cradle in which the eldest daughter, the late Mrs. R. N. Swift, was sleeping. The house is probably much altered since that time. Just beyond Mr. Kenyon's is the first home of the Acushnet fire engine, the original petition for which, in 1815, has lately come to light among other interesting and valuable old papers belonging to the Terry family. The petition reads as follows: "We the Undersigned Imprompted with the Utility of having a fire engine at the head of Acushnet River in the towns of New Bedford and fairhaven do agree to pay the sums Respectively set against our names for the purchase and Benefit of the same and it is understood and agreed that Each person who is desirous of becoming a member of said Company shall subscribe and pay at least the sum of Eight Dollars and when a sufficient sum of money shall be subscribed a Committee shall be Chosen to collect the money and carry the aforegoing Articles into effect—"

Just before reaching the church, standing well back from the road, is the house of the late Gideon Nye, (now owned by Mrs. Loring Ashley). The original house stood close to the road on the west side of the drive. A quiet and retiring man by nature, Mr. Nye was deeply interested in the welfare and progress of the village, and was for several years state representative to the legislature in Boston. His eldest son, the late Gideon Nye, Jr., who lived so entirely abroad as to be a stranger in his home, was for many years American vice consul in Canton, and his writings on Chinese trade and other eastern questions, although never given to the general public, are considered of no mean interest. The valuable collection of pictures which he had made abroad has, since leaving his hands, gone to make the nucleus of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the foundation of which was one of the many schemes for the advancement of literature and art in his native land, dear to his heart.

Beyond the little orchard of beautiful, old apple trees, next east of the church, stands what, I am told, is one of the oldest houses in Old Dartmouth—dating from about 1712—that occupied by the family of the late Enoch Bennett and known as the "Somerton house." It is said to have been built for the Rev. Samuel Hunt, "first ordained minister over the church of Christ in Dartmouth," by his father-in-law, Seth Pope, passing afterwards to the Rev. Richard Pierce, who had married Mr. Hunt's sister, then to the Rev. Israel Cheever, and finally to the Somerton family. You will please observe that it has a gambrel roof (so called from the resemblance to the hind leg of a horse), and also the desirable central chimney. For myself, it may be profane! These gambrel roofs always remind me of my dear old Noah's ark, where one lifted the upper shelf of the roof to empty out long-coated Mr. Noah, the more or less maimed animals and all the wonderful birds which kept on their feet by standing on their tail-feathers!

Next east comes the old cemetery; but before saying anything about it I wish to take you west down the other side of the street, and so finish our ramble through the village. Perhaps I should first say that for very many years the public schoolhouse of the town has stood at, or near, the Parting Ways, as does now the lately and well renovated and enlarged building. Somewhere here, too, stood the first town meeting house after the setting apart of New Bedford; and it is related that, like our present town house, it was so much too small for the voters that, at any important meeting, they moved out and took their divisions by crossing the street, the "ayes" one side,

the "noes" on the other! Appropriately enough, the first two houses coming down the hill belonged to Wests, the owner of that opposite the cemetery being only a connection of the famous Dr. West, who built and occupied a house somewhat lower down on the rise of the hill where stands that lately built by Jean Baptiste Jean. It is rather curious that the two former houses, built on the same foundation, should both have been burned: the first [the West] house by the British, the second accidentally during its occupancy by a French family. A tablet having been put on the second house recording the time and manner of its destruction, it was suggested that when a third house was built it should bear



STEPHEN WEST HOUSE.

the inscription: "West Farms, burnt by the British in 1778; burnt by the French in 1902." To write of Dr. West, his learning and his eccentricities, would worthily take a paper to itself. Coming to Acushnet in 1761 as pastor of Congregationalists, he served here for 39 years, with little substantial help from his people, who had agreed to recompense him in money and in kind, and, worn out with years and labors, he resigned in 1800, dying three years later at the home of his son in Tiverton, R. I. He had married Experience, daughter of the Rev. Samuel Hunt, and she being tall, he was wont to say that he "had learned from long experience that it was well to be married!" A man of much learning, he was also distinguished by the absentmindedness which so frequently accompanies literary gifts, and countless stories are on record of these slips of memory. But he had also a ready wit, one instance of which is shown in his management of a refractory choir. Hearing that they were about to strike, he gave out, on the following Sunday, a certain hymn, requesting that the singing should begin at the second verse:

Let those refuse to sing
Who do not love the Lord!"

The wrath of the British at the time of the raid "round the river" was especially directed against him, because he had lately rendered great assistance to the Revolutionary cause by elucidating the cypher of a treasonable letter. Indeed, keen theologian as Dr. West undoubtedly was, he also seems to have played an active and important part in shaping political destinies of his state and country.

Passing some way further down the road to the west we find the small house, standing with its gable to the street, built by the late Judge Spooner for an office and where he was wont to dispense justice. The present town house and library was for many years used as a school. Further on we find the foundations, now grassed over and partly built upon, of another house burnt by the British. It was owned and occupied at that time by a Captain

Crandon, and, in his zeal for the patriotic cause, he would not allow the ruins to be built over. His new house, nearly in the same place, faced east with its gable to the street, and those now living remember the gaping walls of the cellar, full of charred timbers, left as they fell. This house was the post office during the latter part of Squire Clark's postmastership. And thus we reach the old inn, one of the stopping places of the Boston stage, which was established at the end of the last century by Abraham Russell, to ply between New Bedford and Boston. Ellis relates that Mr. Russell's wife, a lady from Philadelphia, was at that time the only person in New Bedford who knew how a team of four horses should be harnessed! The old inn is a place of chequered memories and of an antiquity which I have not been able to master. There were several taverns in Acushnet in old times when rum, brought from the West Indies, was plenty. One Crandon kept a saloon southeast of the bridge, which he is said to have bought from Paul Mendal, but I am not sure that this is that one. It was more lately owned by a Russell, and after him by Mr. Thomas, who first ran the omnibus between Acushnet and New Bedford. It last figured as a public resort when it became the general store of John R. Davis, watchmaker, a most delightful place, in my recollection, to explore for old treasures. It formerly covered much more ground. the bowling alley having been destroyed in the great fire of June, 1847, which originated here. It is a quaint old place—one of Acushnet's landmarks. On the western door is still dimly visible the word Bar-Room, and in the broad stone door step are the sockets for the railings. Most probably there were seats here, and it formed the lounge of Acushnet before the bridge parapet, the post office or the wall at Lund's corner became fashionable. How many old-world scenes over which we may not linger, its faded walls and time-worn timbers bring to one's mind, emphasized by the busy twitterings of the English sparrows who find many resting places in the crannies. The next two buildings date somewhere about 1815 or a little earlier. In the first there was at one time a carpenter shop down stairs and one of the many small schools. already mentioned, up stairs, kept by Miss Mary Hatheway. In the other. evidently built for a storehouse. the Methodists of the neighborhood held their meetings in early times.

Beyond the bridge that is to the west and by the river bank where are now the remains of a flight of stone steps, stood Terry's blacksmith shop, built by Isaac Terry, minute man and skilled artisan, in the early days of the village. Passing through successive generations, it was still in operation and in possession of a Terry in the days of my childhood. This most interesting old place was burnt in 1856. It stood on public land, and between the Humphrey Hatheway house on the southwest corner of the street, which was opened in 1803 as Belville road, stood the public stocks and whipping post erected at the end of the 17th century or beginning of the 18th century. Very much interesting family history attaches to the Humphrey Hatheway (or Haskell) house, but nothing of public importance, though it may be interesting to note in passing that President Roosevelt's first wife was great granddaughter of this Humphrey Hatheway, and that Mr. Roosevelt has more than once visited his wife's relations in Acushnet. It was on the steps of this house that a disappointed and jealous swain is currently reported in our family to have deposited the following uncomplimentary criticism on a more favored rival:

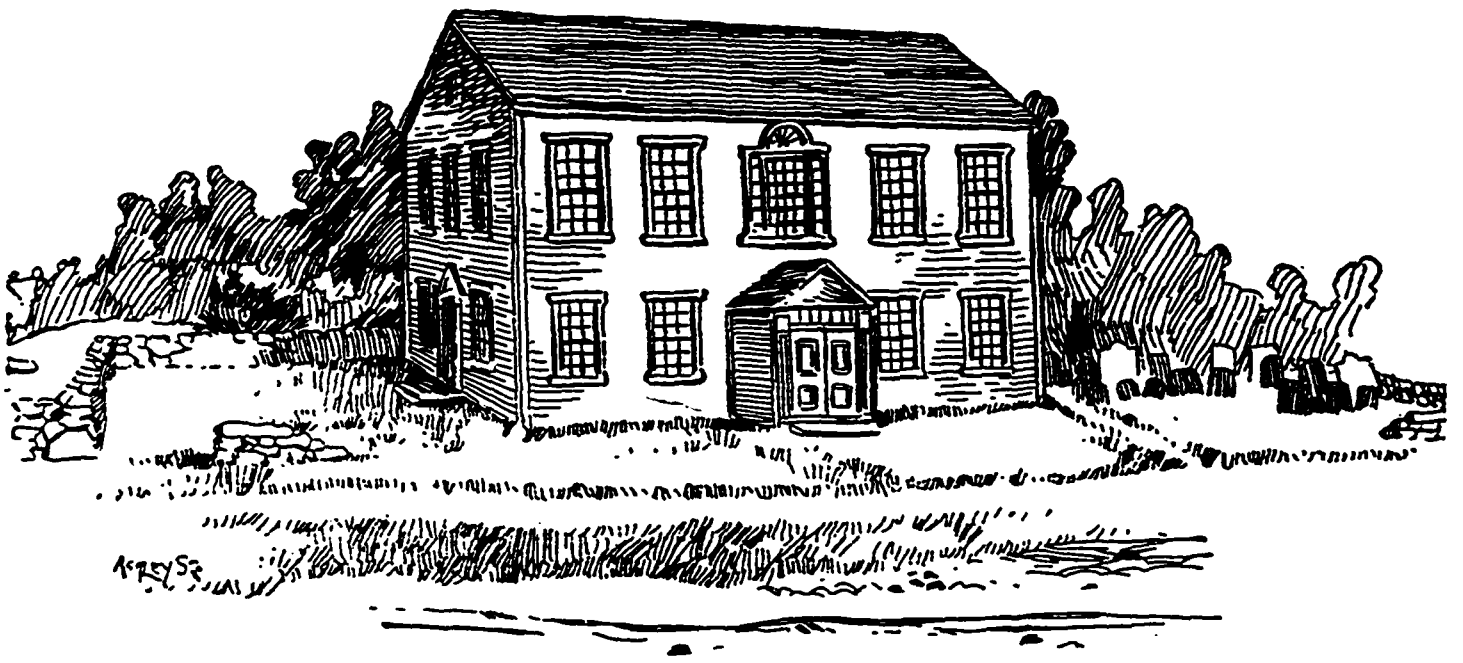
"Thomas Nye's hair
Curls in a manner,
He went to see Jethro
And stayed along o' Hannah."

Now let us retrace our steps to the top of the hill—to the old cemetery and the site of the first "church of God in Dartmouth." So far back as 1686 a Presbyterian place of worship was ordered built by vote of the town. It was to be "24 feet long, 16 feet wide, 9 feet stud, and to be covered with long shingles and be enclosed with planks and clabboards, and to have an under-floor laid and to be benched around, and have a table to it suitable to the length of said house; also for two light windows." Seth Pope and Thomas Taber were to attend to the matter. It probably stood on the hill about or on the same place as that afterward occupied by what is known as the "Old Church." In June, 1789, the general court voted that "£15 be paid Seth Pope out of the public treasury toward the finishing of the meeting house lately erected in the town of Dartmouth." In 1713 John Jenne conveyed by deed to the people of God in Dartmouth, called Presbyterians, one acre of land for a burying place, providing also that a church might be erected there. This new meeting house was dedicated in January, 1744, and was for many years the only place specially set apart for public worship, other denominations—Methodists, Baptists and Quakers—meeting from house to house. Its congregation gathered from long distances; and not far from the church, to the south, stands a high ledge of rock, called by the older people the "Shoeing Rock" (by others the Mayflower Rock), because here, those coming to this church were in the habit

of sitting down to put on their shoes, which they had carried up to that point. They certainly chose a most beautiful spot, commanding as it does an extended view over the neighboring woods and fields and down the river. Alas! alas! the beautiful walnut and chestnut trees which grew around it have been burnt off, though I believe that the huge beech on whose trunk and among whose branches were cut the initials of so many country lovers. is still allowed to stand, and this spring blasting operations were begun in this historic old spot. The old church boasted no architectural beauties, as you will see by a sketch made by the late Elisha Leonard and which the kindness of Mr. Philip Bradford allows me to show you here this afternoon.

I have heard several people remark on the lack of a chimney, which certainly seems peculiar at a date when those of the dwelling houses were so important a part of the structure. I know no reason for the omission, but have been told that the women carried their foot-warmers to church and a huge fire was always kept ready at the pastor's house [the Somerton house], where they could fill them with live coals. Here worshipped successive generations, and around the site lie buried the forefathers of many of my hearers, the exact location of the church, just north of the steps, being marked by the absence of any early headstones at that spot. The two oldest inscriptions in the cemetery are those of Deborah Pope, first wife of Seth Pope, who died Feb. 19, 1711, (new style), age 36; and Mary, wife of Jabez Delano, died April 29th, 1716, age 33. Very probably there were burials here prior to these dates for which our guide posts, the headstones, no longer remain and the traditions are lost, but we know certainly that most of the pioneers of the Old Dartmouth colony and of all her undertakings and industries are gathered here, and I find the subject far too extensive and too interesting for fit consideration, except in a paper devoted to it alone.

Before Dr. West retired from active work in June, 1803, another Presbyterian church had been built by private subscription in 1795 at Bedford village, to which he also gave his ministrations on alternate Sundays. Gradually and for various causes the old church where the town meetings of New Bedford have been held since 1787, and those of Fairhaven since 1812, fell into disuse and disrepair. The last religious services held there were by Lorenzo Dow, about 1820, on which occasion the old building was so crowded that the gallery threatened to give way and the terrified congregation rushed out into the cemetery, where the preacher finished his discourse in the open air. The late Mrs. R. N. Swift, then a young child, was one of those in the gallery, and during the panic was safely dropped to the ground outside from one of the windows. The church was finally demolished in 1835 and the materials used for other building purposes; but the subject cannot be left without some slight notice of the long struggle for liberty of conscience carried on in the Old Dartmouth colony from 1670 until 1723, the colonists absolutely refusing, in spite of repeated



OLD CHURCH WHERE REV. SAMUEL WEST PREACHED.

fines and the imprisonment of their selectmen on three different occasions, to pay the sum assessed by the court of Plymouth for the support among them of a minister of a given denomination.

Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, they dwelt together in perfect peace and amity, the latter body finding here more tolerant usage than in any other part of New England, and they rebelled manfully against the setting up of a state-paid minister. Warnings, threats and ill usage had no effect; finally in 1723 an appeal was made by the recalcitrant tax payers direct to the king, and by an act of the privy council in London in the following year they were entirely upheld in their refusal, exempt from any such exactions in future, and the then imprisoned selectmen released, they being John Aiken, Philip Tabor of Dartmouth and Joseph Anthony and John Sisson of Tiverton.

Resolutions

The following resolutions were passed in regard to the death of Charles S. Randall:

Resolved. That this society has learned with deep sorrow of the death, since our last meeting, of our distinguished associate, the Hon. Charles S. Randall, whose public services had won our respect, whose energy and good-fellowship had secured our admiration and affection and to whose faithful work the foundation of this society was largely due.

Resolved, That Walton Ricketson, William H. Mathews and Charles W. Clifford be requested to prepare a memoir of him for the files of the society.