

EARLIEST CHART SHOWING FISHERS ISLAND
MADE BY ADMIRAL BLOCK IN 1614



Fishers Island

N. Y.

1614-1925

By HENRY L. FERGUSON

NEW YORK

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TO THE MEMORY OF THE SUC-
CESSIVE OWNERS, FROM JOHN
WINTHROP, JR., TO THE AUTHOR'S
FATHER, WALTON FERGUSON, THIS
HISTORY OF FISHERS ISLAND IS
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

FOREWORD

It has been said that a good book needs no preface. This short history, however, must have one, for the author does not pretend to be either writer or historian and possibly mistakes have crept in, for which he wishes to apologize.

Like most historical records, this could necessarily be little more than a rearrangement of the words set down by those who have gone before. The search for these has carried the author far, but among the more important sources from which information has been derived are the works listed below. In the interests of simplicity and an easier page to read, footnotes and specific credit references have been omitted from the text. To the writers and publishers of the following, however, the author gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness, as well as to Mrs. Fay Fox Shiland, Mrs. Mary Smith (*née* Winthrop), Mr. Deane Winthrop Pratt, Mr. Frederick Winthrop, and The New London County Historical Society.

Old Paths of the New England Border—*K. M. Abbot*
History of Connecticut—*Trumbull*
Brodhead's History of State of New York
History of Long Island—*Thompson*
History of New London—*Caulkins*
Connecticut Colonial Records
Life and Letters of John Winthrop
Massachusetts Colonial Records
Fishers Island—*F. E. Hine*

New England Magazine: July, 1903—*H. R. Palmer*
History of Connecticut—*G. H. Hollister*
Connecticut Historical Collections—*J. W. Barber*
Life and Travels of George Fox, &c.
The Walworths of America
Hempstead Diary
The *Morning News*—old New London newspaper
Hinman's Antiquities
The Beginnings of New England—*J. Fiske*.
The Mumford Memoirs
John Winthrop the Younger—*T. F. Waters*
In Old Connecticut—*C. B. Todd*
Connecticut Historical Society Collections
Public Records of Connecticut
State of Rhode Island & Providence Plantations—*E. Field*
Smugglers and Smuggling—*A. Hyatt Verrill*

H. L. F.

FISHERS ISLAND, N. Y.,
May, 1925.

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Discovery and Early Records

MUNNAWTAWKIT, as Fishers Island was called by the Indians, lies distant from the mainland of Connecticut only two miles, at the narrowest point of Long Island Sound. Here for generations the Indians came in their canoes to hunt and fish and gather clams. Very possibly, too, they sought the cooler breezes that are found there, escaping the heat to which they were at times subjected on the mainland. Several shell heaps show the location of their camps, and implements of the chase as well as those of ordinary daily use have been found about these camp sites and in some of the fields that have been cultivated. In Colonial days the Island was heavily wooded and deer and game birds abounded, which made it an ideal home for the Indians during the summer months. It is probable that it was never used as a permanent camp by any large numbers, for if this had been the case more articles of their manufacture would have been found, as well as skeletons, of which only a few have been brought to light. The harbors were good and the camp sites well chosen, and the few that resided on the Island must have lived there in peace and plenty.

Across the waters of Fishers Island Sound lay the real home of the Indians. Not far from the Groton Monument in New London was situated the fort where the chief of the Pequots lived. "It commanded one of the finest prospects of the Sound and adjacent country, which

is to be found upon the coast. This was the Royal fortress, where the chief sachem had his residence. He had another fort near Mystic River, a few miles to the eastward of this, called Mystic Fort. This was also erected upon a beautiful hill or eminence, gradually descending towards the south or south-east." These were the conditions up to 1614, when history first mentions the Island.

It is quite probable that the Norsemen, in the course of their many adventurous voyages, sailed by Fishers Island, but of this we have no definite records. It is claimed, however, from their own accounts, that in A.D. 1000, Leif, the son of Eric the Red, sailed from Greenland and at last reached the head of Narragansett Bay, where he and his companions spent the winter. Several later expeditions were made by different Norsemen and, from their records, must have reached far to the south. As Narragansett Bay is only twenty-five miles from Fishers Island, it is more than likely that these brave explorers cruised about its waters. John Cabot in 1497, John Verrazano in 1524, and Bartholomew Gosnold in 1602 had each made voyages along the coast, but as far as is known no settlements were made by them in what is now the New London district nor did they give any account of this particular part. It was not until 1614 that we find mention of Fishers Island.

Adrian Block, full of spirit and courage, and a real explorer, had arrived the year before on Manhattan Island and was engaged in exploring the neighborhood. Losing his boat by fire, but not to be daunted, he built the *Onrust* or *Restless*. This boat was only forty feet

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long, but in it he braved the whirling waters of Hell Gate and then sailed up Long Island Sound, passing along until he reached the Connecticut River, up which he sailed. He was also the discoverer of Montauk Point on Long Island, to which he gave the name of Fisher's Hook. He also rediscovered the island which now bears his name (Block Island), though Verrazano had discovered it in 1524 and named it "Claudia" in honor of the mother of King Francis I. The following first description of the location of Fishers Island is taken from the writings of John de Laet, a Dutchman, and one of the early European geographers, who used in his writings the maps and log books of Block and his successor, Cornelis Hendrickson, and other explorers.

"Towards the main land within the bay lies a crooked point, behind which there is a small stream or inlet, which was called by our people East River, since it extends towards the East. There is another small river towards the west where the coast bends, which our countrymen called the river of Siccanemos after the name of the Sagimos or Sacmos; here is a good harbor or roadstead behind a sand-point about half a mile from the western shore in two and a half fathoms water. The river comes for the most part from the north-east, and is in some places very shallow, having but nine feet of water at the confluence of a small stream, and in other places only six feet. Then there are kills or creeks with full five fathoms water, but navigation for ships extends only fifteen or eighteen miles. Salmon are found there. The people who dwell on this river, according to the statements of our people, are called Pequotoos and are the enemies of the Wapanoos.

"A small island lies to the south west by south from this river, as the coast runs; near the west end of it a north west by west moon causes low water. We find next on the main a small stream to which our people gave the name of the Little Fresh River, where some trade is carried on with the natives, who are called Morhicans."

The description and map are interesting, and the reference to the low water at the west end probably refers to the ever changing waters of the Race. How the name of Fishers Island was given to it will probably always remain doubtful. Historians differ as to whether it was named after one of Block's companions or named from the occupation of the Indians who were then the inhabitants of the Island.

In 1635 John Winthrop, Jr., was commissioned to found a plantation at Saybrook. He returned from England, as his father says, "with commission from the Lord Say, Lord Brook, and divers other great persons to begin a plantation at Connecticut and to be Governor there." With him in this undertaking were Lion Gardiner, who later became the owner of Gardiner's Island, and many other fearless and brave men.

INDIAN OCCUPATION

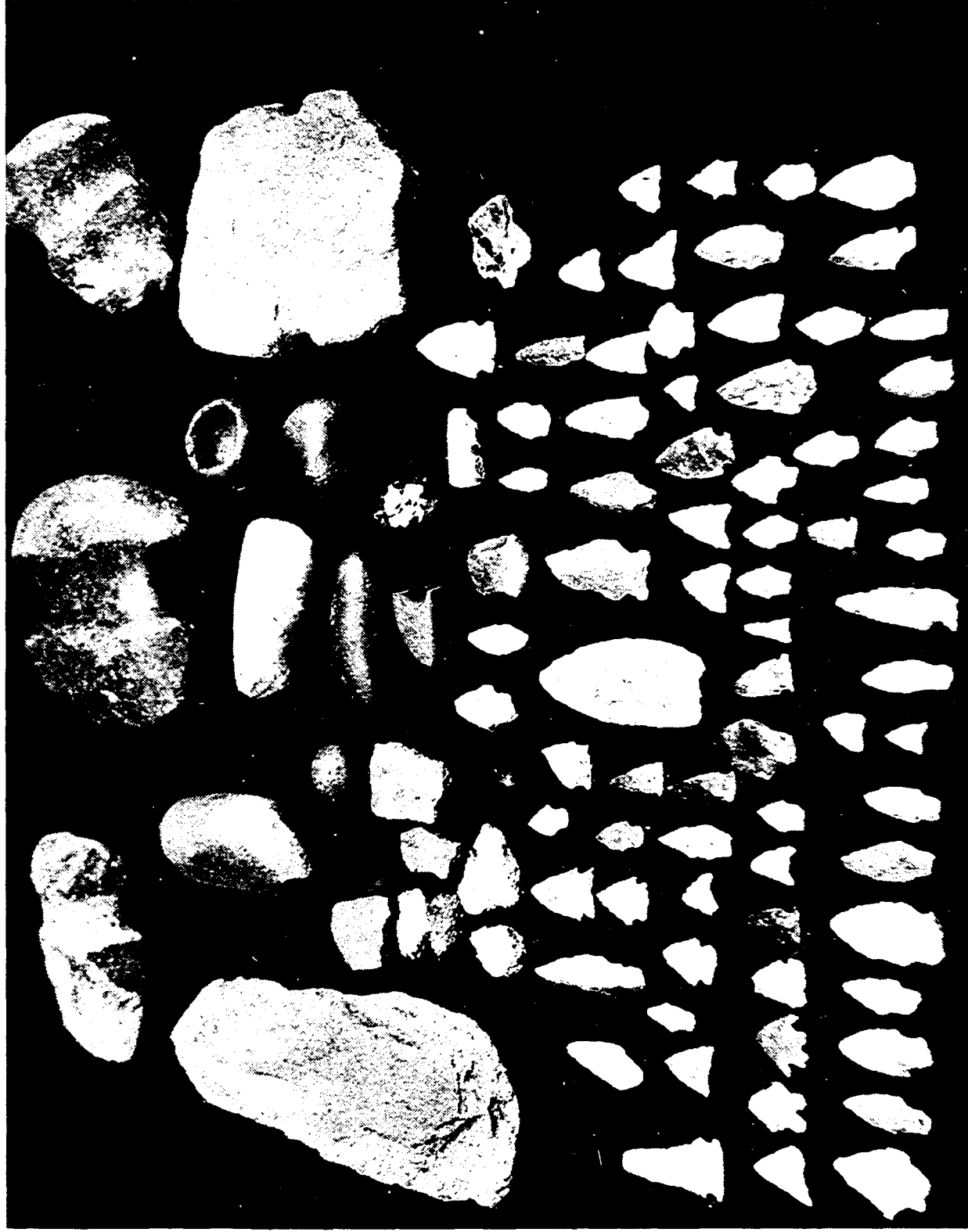
The Pequots, who had forced their way to the sea-coast, between the Mohegans and Narragansetts, had by now become the terror of the other tribes, and finally went so far as to attack the white settlers, killing Captain Stone and Captain Morton, who came in their boat to trade in the Pequot River—now the Thames. At

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Saybrook, where Gardiner and Winthrop were endeavoring to start a settlement, continual trouble with the Indians was experienced. Men working in the fields were fired upon, and boats coming back and forth on the river were attacked. The feeling grew intense. Either one of two things must happen: the colonists must give up their plans and abandon the new lands to the savages, or the Indians would have to be put down. Two years after the murder on the Pequot River, and a year after the beginning of the Saybrook colony, the murder of John Oldham took place. As reflecting the true attitude of the men of the colonies at that time, an old account of this brutality is quoted at some length:

“John Gallop with one man more, and two boys, coming from Conn and intending to put in at Long Island, as he came from thence, being at the mouth of the harbor was forced by a sudden change of the wind to bear up for Block or Fisher’s Island, where as they were sailing along, they met with a Pinace, which they found to be J. Oldham’s who had been sent to trade with the Pequods (to make trial of the reality of their pretended friendship after the murder of Captain Stone) they hailed the vessel, but had no answer, although they saw the deck full of Indians (14 in all) and a little before that had seen a canoe go from the vessel full of Indians likewise, and goods, whereupon they suspected they had killed John Oldham who had only two boys and two Narraganset Indians in his vessel besides himself, and the rather because they let slip, and set up sail (being two miles from shore, the wind and tide coming off the shore of the Island whereby they drove toward the mainland of Naragansett) they went ahead

of them, and having nothing but two pieces, and two pistols, they bore up near the Indians, who stood on the deck of the vessel ready armed with guns, swords and pikes: but John Gallop, a man of stout courage, let fly among them and so galled them, that they got all down under the hatches, and then they stood off again, and returning with a good gale, they stemmed her upon the quarter, and almost overset her, which so affrightened the Indians, as six of them leaped overboard, and were drowned, yet they durst not board her, but stood off again, and fitted their anchor, so as stemming her the second time, they bored her bow through with their anchor and sticking fast to her, they made divers shot through the sides of her, and so raked her fore and aft (being but inch board) as they must needs kill or hurt some of the Indians, but seeing none of them come forth, they got loose from her, and then stood off again: then four or five more of the Indians leaped into the sea, and were likewise drowned: whereupon there being but four left in her, they boarded her; when an Indian came up and yielded; him they bound and put into the hold, then another yielded; him they also bound, but Gallop being well acquainted with their skill to unlose one another, if they lay near together, and having no place to keep them asunder, flung him bound into the sea; then looking about they found John Oldham under an old sail, stark naked, having his head cleft to the brains; his hands and legs cut as if they had been cutting them off; yet warm; so they put him into the sea; but could not well tell how to come at the other two Indians (who were in a little room underneath with their swords) so they took the goods which were left, and the sails, and



INDIAN RELICS FOUND ON FISHERS ISLAND

towed the boat away, but night coming on, and the wind rising, they were forced to turn her off, and the wind carried her to the Narragansett shore, where they left her."

At this time Sassacus was the chief Sachem of the Pequots. Under him were twenty-six sachems, or war captains, the most prominent being Mononottah. Uncas, a petty sachem, was of the royal line of Pequots on both sides of his family, and his wife was the daughter of Tatobam, also one of the Pequot sachems. He rebelled against Sassacus and from that time on was friendly to the English.

As the conditions were critical in the extreme, and the fate of the colonists depended on vigorous measures being taken against the Pequots, a campaign was undertaken. Captain John Mason, with Captain Underhill and ninety men, left Saybrook on the 12th of May, 1637, with orders to proceed to the Pequot River and there attack the Indians. These plans were changed, however, as it was felt that it would be better to proceed to Narragansett Bay, get help from the sachem of the Narragansett Indians, and then to march to the Pequot fort and attack from that side. This they did, sailing along the Sound and past the Indian strongholds until they reached Narragansett Bay. Here they got in touch with the sachem, who furnished five hundred Indians to go with them to the attack on the Pequots. These Indians, however, became fearful as they approached their enemies' fort, and many deserted. Uncas, who had joined with the soldiers, warned them that the Narragansetts would all desert, and this was later the case. On they marched, and finally, when night fell, were near Mystic.

They slept at a place that is now called Porter's Rocks. Guards were appointed and they could hear the Indians singing in their fort and exulting that the soldiers were afraid to attack and had sailed past their forts. The following morning they marched about two miles and then Uncas and Wequash pointed out the fort on the top of a hill.

"Then Captain Underhill came up, who marched in the rear; and commending ourselves to God, we divided our men, there being two entrances into the fort, intending to enter both at once. Captain Mason leading up to that on the north east side, who approached within one rod, heard a dog bark, and an Indian crying Owanux! Owanux! which is—Englishmen! Englishmen! We called up our forces with all expedition, gave fire upon them through the pallizado, the Indians being in a dead, indeed their last sleep. Then we wheeling off, fell upon the main entrance, which was blocked up with bushes about breast high, over which the Captain passed, intending to make good the entrance, encouraging the rest to follow. Lieutenant Sealey endeavored to enter; but being somewhat cumbered, stepped back and pulled out the bushes and so entered, and with him about sixteen men. We had formerly concluded to destroy them by the sword and save the plunder.

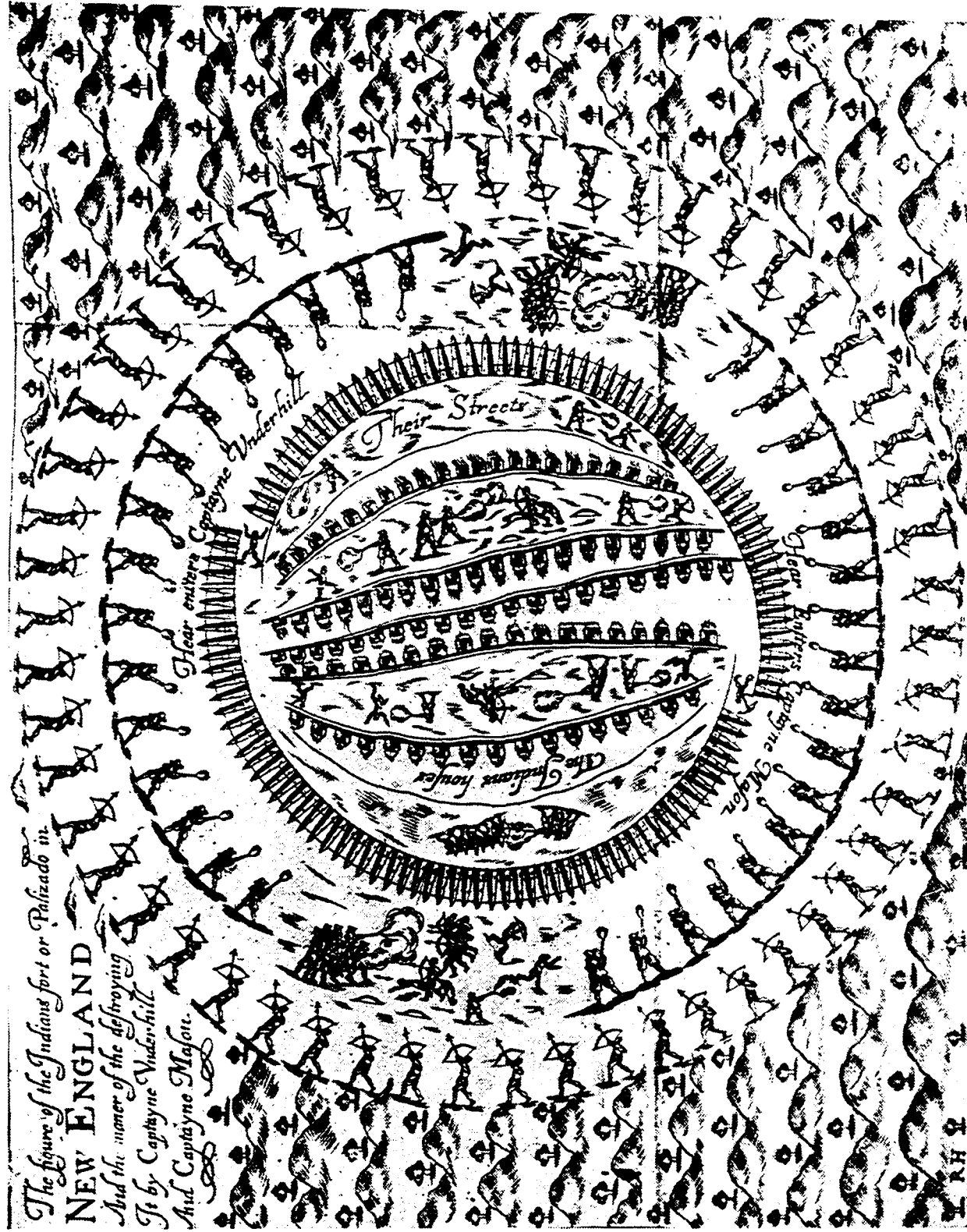
"Whereupon Captain Mason seeing no Indians, entered a Wigwam, where he was beset with many Indians, waiting all opportunities to lay hands on him, but could not prevail. At length William Heydon, espying the breach in the wigwam, supposing some English might be there, entered, but in his entrance fell over a dead Indian; but speedily recovering himself, the Indians some fled, others

crept under their beds. The Captain going out of his wigwam saw many Indians in the lane or street; he making towards them, they fled, were pursued to the end of the lane, where they were met by Edward Pattison, Thomas Barber, with some others; where seven of them were slain as they said. The Captain facing about, marched a slow pace up the lane; he came down perceiving himself very much out of breath, and coming to the other end, near where he first entered, saw two soldiers standing close to the palisado, with their swords pointed to the ground: the Captain told them that we should never kill them after this manner. The Captain also said, We must burn them; and immediately stepping into the wigwam where he had been before, brought out a fire brand, and putting it into the mats with which they were covered, set the wigwams on fire. Lieutenant Thomas Bull and Nicholas Omsted beholding, came up; and when it was thoroughly kindled, the Indians ran as men most dreadfully amazed.

“And indeed such a dreadful terror did the Almighty let fall upon their spirits, that they would fly from us and run into the very flames, where many of them perished. And when the fort was thoroughly fired, command was given that all should fall off and surround the fort; which was readily attended by all, only one, Arthur Smith, being so wounded that he could not move out of the place, who was happily espied by Lieutenant Bull, and by him rescued. The fire was kindled on the north east side to the windward; which did swiftly overrun the fort, to the extreme amazement of the enemy, and great rejoicing of ourselves. Some of them climbing to the top of the palizado, others of them running into

the very flames; many of them gathering to the windward, lay pelting at us with their arrows; and we repaid them with small shot; others of the stoutest issued forth, as we did guess, to the number of forty, who perished by the sword.

“What I have formerly said, is according to my own knowledge, their being sufficient living testimony to every particular. But in reference to Capt. Underhill and his parties acting in this assault, I can only intimate as we are informed by some of themselves immediately after the fight, that they marched up to the entrance on the south west side; there they made some pause; a valiant resolute gentleman, one Mr. Hedge, stepping towards the gate, saying: ‘If we may not enter, wherefor come we here?’ and immediately endeavored to enter; but was opposed by a sturdy Indian, which did impede his entrance; but the Indian being slain by himself and Sergeant Davis, Mr. Hedge entered the fort with some others; but the fort being on fire, the smoke and flames were so violent that they were constrained to desert the fort. . . . Thus they were now at their wits’ end, who not many hours before exalted themselves in their great pride, threatening and resolving the utter ruin and destruction of all the English, exulting and rejoicing with songs and dances; but God was above them, who laughed his enemies and the enemies of his people to scorn; making them as a fiery oven. Thus were the stout hearted spoiled, having slept their last sleep, and none of their men could find their hands. Thus did the Lord judge among the heathen, filling the place with dead bodies. And here we may see the just judgement of God, in sending even the very night before the assault one hundred



THE PEQUOT INDIAN FORT NEAR MYSTIC

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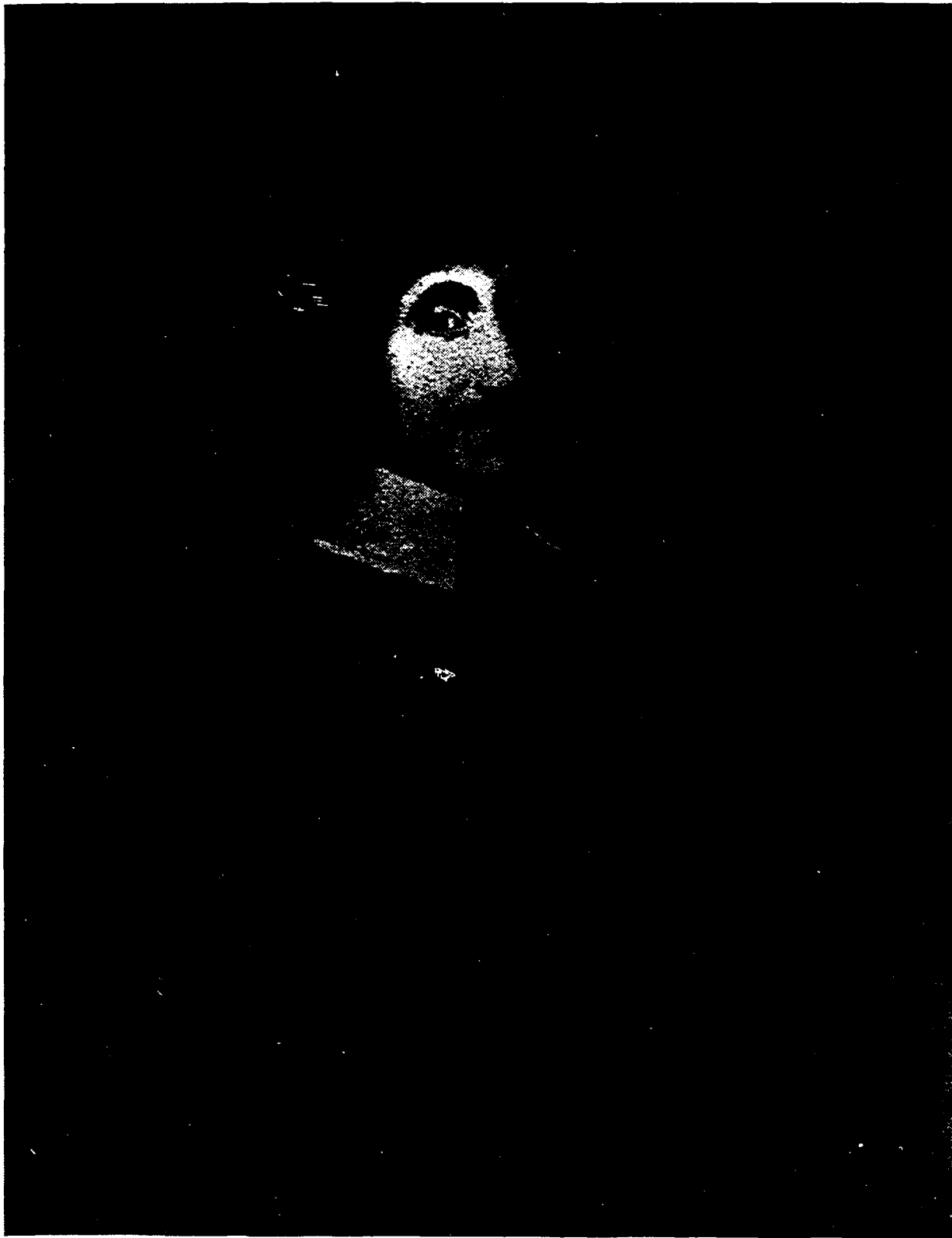
and fifty men from the other fort, to join with them of that place, who were designed as some of themselves reported to go forth against the English, at the very instant when this heavy stroke came upon them, where they perished with their fellows, so that the mischief they intended to us, came upon their own pate. They were taken in their own snare, and we through mercy escaped. And thus in a little more than one hour's space was their impregnable fort with themselves utterly destroyed, to the number of six or seven hundred as some of themselves confessed. There were only seven taken captive, and about seven escaped. Of the English there were two slain outright, and about twenty wounded. . . ."

The other fort, nearer New London, was not attacked, but Captain Mason and his soldiers, on their way to the Pequot River to meet their ships, kept up a continuous fight with the Indians, though not engaging in any hand-to-hand fighting. This massacre, for it could scarcely be called by any other name, put an end to the Pequot power. Sassacus, the chief sachem, with some of his followers fled and made their way to the Mohawk tribe, where they were murdered. A large number were slain at Fairfield, where they were overtaken while endeavoring to escape, and this war ended in what is known as the Great Swamp fight. So thoroughly were the Indians killed and driven out of the country that we hear of no more real trouble in the Pequot district from this time on. The almost complete destruction of the Indians made it a certainty that the colonists would succeed, and it paved the way for immediate action of John Winthrop, Jr., and his plans for settling Connecticut.

Early Settlers

JOHN WINTHROP, JR., or, as he was usually called, the Younger, was born in Groton, England, February 12th, 1605. He was educated at the University of Dublin and afterwards studied law in London, where he was admitted as a barrister of the Inner Temple. In 1627 he was appointed Secretary to Captain Best on one of the ships of war which were being sent out, under the command of the Duke of Buckingham, for the relief of the French Protestants of La Rochelle. He was married to his cousin, Martha Fones, on Feb. 8th, 1631, and set out the same year for the New England colonies. The next year we find him at Ipswich, which he had founded. His wife having died in 1634, he married a second time, choosing Elizabeth Reade, the step-daughter of the well-known Hugh Peters. The following year we find him at Saybrook. Winthrop was a man of sound judgment, skill in medicine and administrative ability, and, with the combination of these assets, did for Connecticut what his father had done for the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Soon after the Pequots had been defeated at Mystic, Winthrop, who had fancied Fishers Island for his own, applied to the General Court of Massachusetts for a grant, which was made to him Oct. 7th, 1640, but "reserving the right of Connecticut, if it should be decided to be theirs. . . ." To insure still further his owner-



JOHN WINTHROP, JR.

ship, Winthrop applied to Hartford for a grant and received the following under the date of Apr. 9th, 1641:

"Vppon Mr Winthrops motion to the Courte for Fyshers Island, It is the mynd of the Courte, that so farre as yt hinders not the publick good of the Country, either for fortifieing for defence, or setting vppe a trade of fisheing or salt & such like, he shall have liberty to prceed therein."

Soon after obtaining these grants he set sail for England to form a Company for the making of iron, which was sorely needed in the Colony. He was successful in this, but did not return to the Colonies until 1643. The following year he purchased from the Indians the title to Fishers Island, but this deed unfortunately has never been found, though twenty years later the Duke of York's patent mentions that this sale had been made.

The settling of the Island commenced in 1644, and the house constructed was the first one in the entire district between the Connecticut River and the Providence Plantations lying far to the eastward. It would be most interesting to know the precise spot where this house stood, but we have no records that tell of any definite location. One account says: "It was sheltered on the north and west by the banks and woods encircling a bay in which it nestled, and the air above it was softened by the warming influence of the surrounding ocean." Another says, "Here also was comparative safety. The island afforded less range to dangerous beasts of prey, and was less accessible to them. True, it abounded with deer and other wild game, which would make it attractive to Indians; . . ." These descriptions are very meagre, but

undoubtedly it was situated not far from the edge of West Harbor, and most likely near the present Mansion House.

Winthrop had seen the possibilities in starting a settlement on the Pequot River, and as he was the owner of the island home, which was free from many dangers that he might meet with on the mainland, moved in October, 1646, with his wife and two children, Fitz-John and Margaret, to Fishers Island. He was also accompanied by his brother, Deane Winthrop. These colonists were most courageous, and when one realizes that this little party was a long distance from friends or neighbors and was too few in numbers to care for itself in case of an Indian uprising, which might occur at any moment, it will help to show that Winthrop was not lacking in determination to make the settlement on the Pequot River a success. Without doubt the first house on the Island was built of logs, cut and hewed on the ground, and probably close to some spring. Perhaps one day some fortunate person will find the exact spot, and if so, a suitable monument should be erected to mark the location of the first home built in the Pequot Colony.

Only a few letters can be found, addressed to the Island at this period, and from these it is evident that Winthrop moved his family the next spring to the new settlement he was starting, called in those days Nameauge, which later was renamed New London. One letter is addressed in November, 1646, "To my very good son, Mr Jo. Winthrop at Fishers Island, n'r Pequot River." The last letter addressed to him at Fishers Island bears the date of May, 1647. Later letters were addressed, "Nameauge upon Pequot River."

"My Good Son:—

"I have written two letters to you by Wm Crawley and the other by New Haven. I received your letter from Rhode Island and do bless God for your safe arrival at Fishers Island. I think before long to hear certainly from you, for the tempest was most violent. Some hurt was here, especially by the tide the second day after, which was the greatest we ever had, much fish and salt lost at eastward, and terrible loss here about is feared. We are all in good health I praise God. Wait is with his sister Truesdale and Mary at Sister Childs.

"This gentleman, Mr Melbourne can inform you of all, or in my other letters you will meet with more. So with your mother's and brother's and sister's salutes to yourself and wife and children and Deane, I commend thee to the precious blessing of the Lord.

"JO. WINTHROP."

A letter was sent in May, 1647, addressed in rather a quaint way from Adam Winthrop:—"To his much honored Brother John Winthrop, Esq., Give these, I pray.

"I have sent a hog^s of salt by Captane Smith, which he will deliver at Fishers Island. I thought you might have some need off it."

The winter spent on the Island by the Winthrops was uneventful except for trouble caused at one time by some Indians. Nowequa, a brother of Uncas, visited the Island and destroyed a canoe. Winthrop, to punish them for this and their threatening behavior, forced Uncas to pay one hundred fathoms of wampum, or Indian money, which was a severe punishment.

"The Island was not as large as his ambitious spirit wished, or the work to which he had dedicated himself called for, so we find him building a house on the town plot, the present site of Winthrop school, New London, and removing his family there. The children, Elizabeth, Wait-Still, Mary and Lucy, who had been left in Boston with their grandparents during the winter, joined their parents in the new home in New London."

How much time Winthrop was able to devote to Fishers Island is not known. From the first he took an active part in the settling of the new town on the Pequot River and was also greatly interested in the affairs of the new colony. In 1648 he was authorized "to superintend the affairs of the plantation." For several years he was chosen as one of the twelve magistrates. In this capacity he was once asked to marry a couple who lived near Lyme, which was outside of his jurisdiction. He performed the ceremony by a brook which was the boundary between his colony and that of Saybrook while he stood on one side and the bride and groom on the other. To this day this little stream that winds its way through field and wood is called Bride's Brook, in commemoration of the event.

On the Island Winthrop raised horses and goats. The first horses ever seen in Connecticut were supposed to have been brought there by him in 1645. The business of raising horses was carried on by him for years and afterwards by his sons. The band of goats that he kept on the Island was of considerable size. One account says: "At a time when the Narragansett Indians were considered turbulent (Nov., 1654) a report was current, that they had killed two hundred of Mr. Winthrop's

goats." At one time, after Winthrop was chosen Governor, New Haven desired to have him reside in that city and offered to give him a house. As he did not care to be indebted to the people of New Haven, he offered in return to pay for the house in goats, but in the end remained at Hartford, which was more in the center of the Colony, where he was better able to keep in touch with all sections.

In 1657 John Winthrop, Jr., was elected Governor of Connecticut. He realized that the Connecticut title for the Colony was not as it should be, and he was appointed by the General Court in 1662 to obtain a charter from King Charles II. Taking with him a seal ring, given to his father by Charles I, as a means of identification, he sailed for England where he was well received and obtained a charter that was all that could be desired by the colonists. This charter was the same one that was later hidden in the celebrated hollow tree that history has called the "Charter Oak." This charter, besides laying out the boundaries of Connecticut, included the "islands adjacent," which meant to the colonists that Fishers Island, Gardiner's Island, Shelter Island and all the others belonged to Connecticut. So widespread was this belief that Long Island itself was thought for some time to be a part of Connecticut.

The King's grant of land to his brother, the Duke of York, in 1664, specified more clearly than did the Connecticut charter the islands that should be included in the grant. Connecticut still endeavored to control Fishers Island, and several of the towns on the eastern end of Long Island petitioned the King to be allowed to remain in the Connecticut Colony. Southold, of which

Fishers Island is now a part, together with South Hampton and East Hampton, were the petitioners.

As Fishers Island was specifically mentioned in the Duke of York's Patent to Richard Nicolls, Governor Winthrop procured a Patent of Confirmation as follows:

"Whereas there is a certaine Island wthin this Governm^t Scituate lying & being in ye Sound neare unto New London comonly called & knowne by ye name of ffishers Island Conteyning by Estimation one thousand acres be it more or lesse w^{ch} said Island was heretofore purchased from ye Indian Proprieto^{rs} by John Winthrop Esq^{re} governo^r of his Ma^{ties} Colony of Conecticott in whose tenure or possession it now is & ever since the purchase thereof hath so beene & Continued Now for & in Consideration of ye said Purchase & longe possession as also for ye good services performed by him the said John Winthrop at ye Reducing of this Place to his Ma^{ties} obedience (he being p^rsent thereat) togeth^r wth ye many good & Neighbourly offices done toward ye security & benefitt of this Colony and for divers other Causes & Considerations we thereunto especially moving Know yee, that by vertue of ye Commission & authority unto me given by his Royall Highness James Duke of Yorke &c upon whome by Lawfull graunt & Pattent from his Ma^{tie} ye Propriety & governm^t of Long Island and all ye Islands adjacent amongst oth^r things is Setled I have given Ratified Confirmed & graunted & by theise p^rsents doe Give Ratifye Confirme & Graunt unto ye said John Winthrop his Heires & Assignes ye said Island called Fishers Island aforesaid. Together with All ye Sands Soyles Woodz Meadows Pastures Marshes Lakes Waters Creeks Fishing Hawking Hunting & Fowling

and all other Profitts Commodityes Emolumits & Hereditamits to ye said Island belonging with their and every of their appurtenances & of every Parte and Parcell thereof . . . Ye said Island & premises now is and for ever here after shall be held deemed reputed taken & be an Intire Enfranchised Township Mannor & Place of itself & shall alwayes from tyme to tyme & at all tymes hereafter have hould and injoy like & Equall privileges & Immunityes with any Towne Infranchised Place or Mannour within the Govern^t only yielding Rendering & Paying yearly & every Yeare into his Royall Highnesse ye Duke of Yorke & his Heires or to such Governour or Governours as from tyme to tyme shall be by him Constituted & appointed as an acknowledgment One Lamb upon ye first day of May if ye same shall be demanded."

Evidently the "One Lamb" was paid each year, as in 1680 Governor Andross, writing to Winthrop's son, says, "to repeate & acknowledge the receipt by him of ye lambe you paid him (as authorized) for acknowledgment of ye tenure of Fishers Island and is in full to this time."

The question of state ownership of Fishers Island was not legally settled until 1878-9, when a joint committee of the two states, New York and Connecticut, met and decided that "New York has now the title, having had actual possession of it for more than a century." The Connecticut Commission gave this decision: "In regard to Fishers Island, it ought by reason of its nearness to our coast to belong to Connecticut. It belongs to us, we think, under a fair construction of the charter of 1662, which by express words gave us the islands adjacent to the main land; but upon familiar principles of law, New

York has now the title, having had actual possession of it for more than a century."

As was so often the case in those days with prominent men, Winthrop obtained possession of much land near New London and elsewhere in the Colonies. "These possessions, briefly enumerated, were Winthrop's Neck, 200 acres; Mill-Pond farm, 300; land north of the town on Alewife Brook and in its vicinity, 1500; land at Pequonuck, 6000; Little Cove farm, half a mile square on the east side of the river . . . —these were within the bounds of New London. On Mystic River, five or six hundred acres; at Lanthorn Hill and its vicinity, 3000; and on the coast, Fishers Island and its Hammocks, and Goat Island (Ram Is.). Governor Winthrop had also an undisputed title from court grants to large tracts in Voluntown, Plainfield, Canterbury, Woodstock and Saybrook, amounting to ten or twelve thousand acres. He also claimed the whole of what was called Black-lead Mine Hill in the province of Massachusetts Bay, computed to be ten miles in circumference."

From an old record bearing the date of 1647, it appears that Winthrop wished for other lands. "At this meeting Mr. John Winthrop, of Pequot, laid claim to the whole country of the western Nehanticks, including a considerable part of the town of Lyme. He represented that he obtained the title to this large tract partly by purchase, and partly by deed of gift, before the Pequot War." The Commissioners of Connecticut pleaded against the claim of Mr. Winthrop, that his purchase bore no date . . . and "declined any decision of the controversy; but it does not appear that Mr. Winthrop ever

after prosecuted his claim." "As it seems Mr. Winthrop, about this time, had a design of purchasing Long Island, the Commissioners took occasion to premonish him, that the Island was already under engagements for considerable sums of money, to a number of persons in Connecticut and New Haven." The Colonies were poor, little money coming into their treasuries to be used for running expenses, and so it was that the men who were running the Colonies were forced to take land in lieu of money on the chance that they might derive some benefit from part of it. They were land poor and continually were obliged to borrow to meet their daily expenses.

We read little of social activities in the old records, just a mention here and there showing that on occasions they met at one place or another, but undoubtedly they occasionally broke the monotony of their wilderness life. Lion Gardiner on his island, called in those days the Isle of Wight, and Lady Fenwick at Saybrook, "paid passing gay visits by boat to Mrs. Anna Walcott Griswold at Black Hall, or to the Governor of Connecticut, John Winthrop, Jr., at Fishers Island, of Pequot." The Sylvesters, living on Shelter Island, were of this little group, and a pathetic paragraph from Sylvester begs advice because the baby is sick and in danger of strangling, "and here we are quite out of ye way of help."

Aside from all his other activities, Winthrop was continually called upon for medical advice—a subject on which he possessed much knowledge—and many of his letters contain remedies. His favorite was called Rubelia, and appears to have been given for a number

of complaints. The formula for this has never been found and it is somewhat uncertain of what it was composed.

There was a spirit of helpfulness between the Colonies, and letters passed between them, some giving warnings of the Indians and others offering to help in different ways, such as the following:

“To the honored John Winthrop, Esq; Governour of
Connectacut Colonie, these present in Hartford.

“Honoured Sir;—

“. . . I shall onely, at present, add that since my wrighting to you, I have received letters & bookes, & written papers from my ancient & honored friends Mr. Hartlib, & Mr. Durie, wherein I find sundry rarities of inventions, & projects for common good, of sundry kindes, which I long for an opportunitie to communicate to your selfe, might your first leasure give us an occasion of personal discourse together. They are too many to be transmitted unto you by passengers, & yet such as, I believe, will affoord singular contentment to your public spirit, & probably you will finde some particularities, among them, which may be advantagious to your private proffit, in the improvement of your Fishers Island, & . . .

“Sir, Your much obliged freind & servant

“JOHN DAVENPORTE.

“Newhaven, the 19th day of the 6th month, 1659.”

At one time, Winthrop thought of selling the Island, as will be seen from the following letter, but the deal was never consummated and the Island remained in his possession.

"To ye Hon^{rble} Governor Winthrope, present in Hartford.

"Newhauen, ye 6th Decmbr 1669.

"Hon^{rble} Sr.—

"You were pleased some time since to informe mee that you have some inclination to dispose of Fishers Island. Now it is soe that a gentleman in Barbados (one Capt. Anthony Lane) hath lately written vnto me concerning it, desireing to knowe whether it bee to bee sould; if soe, then ye accomodations of all sortes as stock, buildings, & to be disposed wth it, together wth ye goodness of ye title, & ye lowest price, though it bee for money in England; & vpon information thereof will give his speedy answer whether he accepts or refuses.

". . . If you please to command mee any thing concerning ye premises, if it come time enough, shall advise by the sd vessell wch wth tenders of mine & my wifes obliged servise to your selfe & good lady, craving pardon for this boldness, is the needfull at present from,

"Sr, Your honrs humble and devoted servt.

"WILLIAM ROSEWELL."

"To Right Honble David Searl, Governr of Barbados,

". . . I provided last sumer two young bucks, and for the safety of them put them vpon an iland where my servants kept them very tame and fitted them for a sea voyage by learning to eat such things as may be sutable for them at sea. The one of them being brought over to New Lond: to be ready for the first oportunity of passage was accidentally lost; the other I hope is safe vpon the Iland, and have severall tymes sent down order to my servants, yt it should be ready for Mr. Hamblins

coming thither, but now he informs me yt he is not likely to touch in these parts, having taken in his full fraught heere in the river; I shall therefore give order it to be kept inland for the next oportunity. . . .

“Your most huble servant.

“J. W.

“Hartf: May 22, 1660.”

On the fifth day of April, 1676, John Winthrop, Jr., died at Boston, Mass. Thirty-one years previously he had spent his first winter at Fishers Island, and had then founded New London, and had later been chosen Governor of Connecticut, which position he had held for about eighteen years. He had gone to Boston to take part in the meeting of the Commissioners, at which he represented Connecticut. He was buried in the cemetery of Kings Chapel, in the tomb with his father, where Fitz-John and Wait-Still, his two sons, were afterwards buried.

By his death the colony lost its founder, who had been working continually for her welfare, and it was due largely to his strong character and perseverance that the Colony had not failed. He was probably not so great a character as his father, but he was an outstanding man of his time and his advice was sought for by his contemporaries in the management of Colonial affairs.

Colonial Days

AT the death of John Winthrop, Jr., his two sons, Fitz-John and Wait-Still, were left the owners of their father's large estates, and this property was never divided during their lives. Fitz-John had no sons, and so it was agreed to keep the majority of the lands in the Winthrop name and that John, the son of Wait-Still, should eventually own Fishers Island and the other properties. The two brothers had commissions in the Colonial army, but Fitz-John was the more active in military affairs and rose to be a Major General. Fitz-John, or John, as he was usually called, was born at Ipswich, Massachusetts, March 14th, 1638. He received his training in the English army and was made Governor of Stirling Castle, being one time a General in Monk's army. Eventually he felt drawn to the colonies, and gave up his duties in England, returning to help the young Colony in its effort to succeed.

He was a member of several quite important commissions and finally was appointed head of military affairs for the Colony. At this time he made his home in New London, though he had his house on Fishers Island, where he quite often went and visited while looking over the stock that was kept there. Before coming over to America, Fitz-John had received the following letter from his father.

"For my beloved Sonn, Capt. Fitz-John Winthrop in
Col. Read's Regiment in London.

"Hartf: Sept 5-1660.

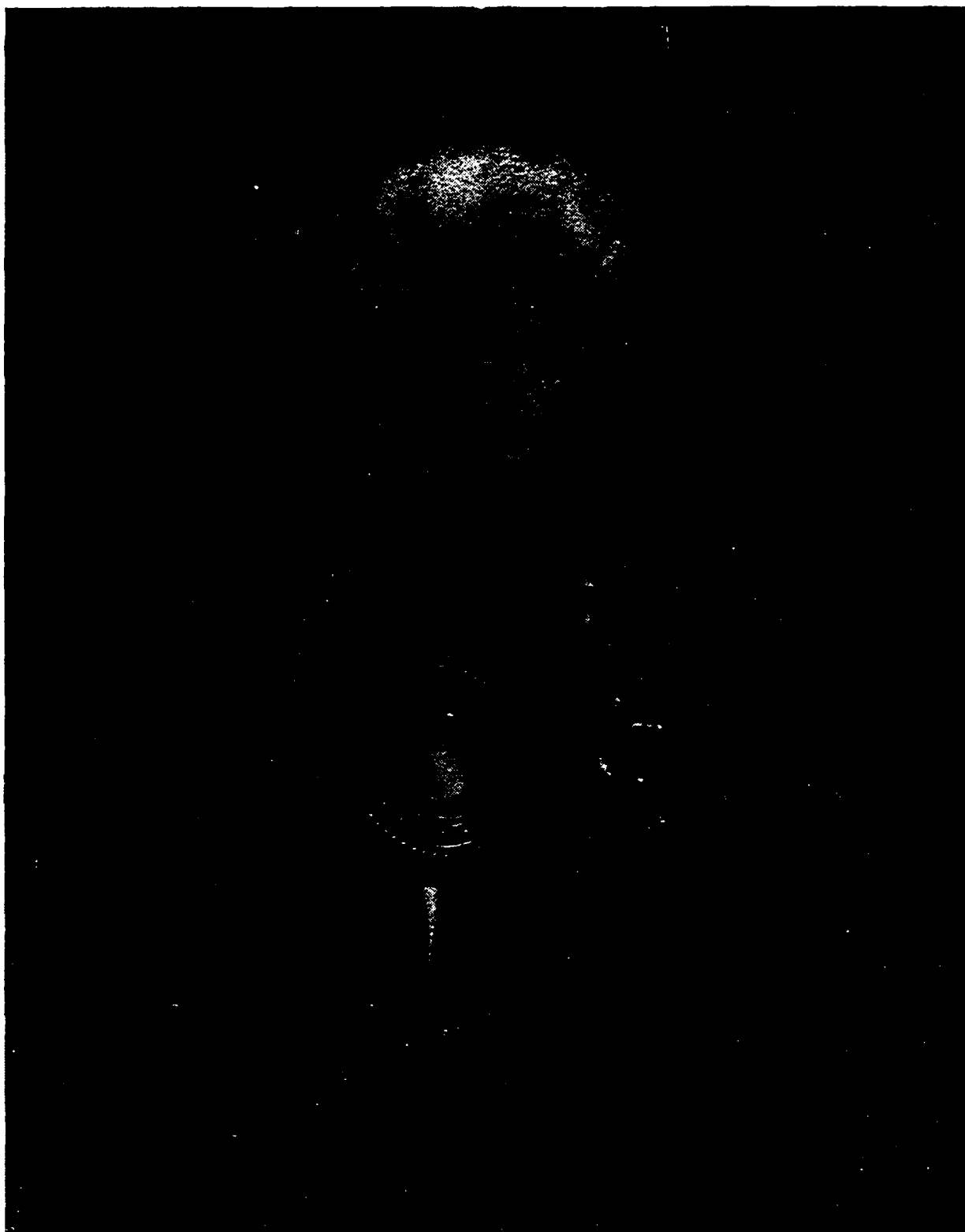
"Sonne, . . . I rejoyce and bless God to heare of your health and recovery out of that dangerous sicknesse the small pox."

This dread disease was not restricted only to England for the colonists were much troubled with it, and it added to their other burdens, that were met with in the wilds of New England."

An extract from an old journal of one of the early missionaries, George Fox, gives quite an interesting note concerning the Island and its neighborhood.

"1672. (about the last of May)

"I went from hence [Narraganset] towards Shelter Island, having with me Robert Widders, . . . We went off in a sloop; and passing by Point Juda and Block Island, we came to Fishers Island, where at night we went on shore, but were not able to stay for the musquetoës (a sort of gnats or little flies) which abound there, and are very troublesome. Where fore we went into our sloop again, put off from the shore, cast anchor, and lay in our sloop that night. Next day we wnt into the Sound, but finding our sloop was not able to live in that water, we returned again, and came to anchor before Fishers Island, where we lay in our sloop that night also. There fell abundance of rain, and our sloop being open, we were exceeding wet. Next day we passed over the waters called the Two Horse Races, and then



FITZ-JOHN WINTHROP

Garner's-island, after which we passed by Gull's island, and got at length to Shelter-island which tho it was but about twenty seven leagues from Rhode-island through the difficulty of passage, we were three days in getting thither.

"We staid not long in Shelter-island, but entering our sloop again, put to see for Long-island. We had a very rough passage; the tide run so strong for several hours, that I have not seen the like; and being against us, we could hardly get forward though we had a gale. We were upon the water all that day and the night following, but found ourselves next day driven back near Fisher's island. For there was a great fog, and towards day it was very dark, so that we could not see what way we made. Besides it rained much in the night, which in our open sloop made us very wet. Next day a great storm arose, so that we were fain to over the Sound, and did get over with much ado. We passed by Faulcon-island, and came over to the Main, where we cast anchor till the storm was over."

In this letter we find the first mention of the "Race," as the name for the rip between Fishers Island and Little Gull Island, though the name as given by Fox was somewhat more fanciful than that by which we know it at the present time.

The year after John Winthrop, Jr., died, the following letter was written in an endeavor to help out the heirs. It shows that Winthrop had been willing to do anything in his power to help the new Colony in its days of uncertainty and distress.

“Weathersfield.

“Apl. 7th, 1677.

“Governor Leet:—Honorable Sr,

“Haveing a word or two in commemoration of Or late honorable Govr Winthrop (wch intended sooner) am so bould to present the same to yor selfe who are his successor; and the rather because I would intreat of yor Honor and yor associates to take into yor worthy and serious consideration the affayers of the heires of the aforesd Govr Winthrop, referring to Fisher’s Island, wch was incumbered for the sake of this colony. And haveing last fall had some speech with Capt Waite Winthrop, who understands that Mr Harwood intends this way ere long from England, it will be much hoped as the Honnord Generall Court hath begun a good work for ye clearing ye sd Island, soe they would see it compleated; for had it not been for the late Governors going on that accot, his estate had never been intangled, & great pittie it will be his relicts should suffer for his good intentions for ye publick. I presume that both yor honored selfe & confederates have such a respect for ye memorie of ye sd governor, that you will voutsafe to beare in minde the premises, & intreating excuse for my couldness remaynes,

“Yor Honors to be commanded,

“S. C.” [STEPHEN CHESTER]

In 1673 the Dutch, having recaptured Manhattan, made an expedition down the Sound and stopped at the eastern end of Long Island. Connecticut decided to oppose them and ordered the troops to be raised at New

London and Stonington. Captain Fitz-John Winthrop was put in command and ordered to bring the Dutch to terms. Embarking his men, he proceeded across the Sound to Southold, where, after a bloodless encounter, the Colonial troops were left in possession and the Dutch retired to Manhattan.

A few years after this the question arose as to which colony Fishers Island belonged. Connecticut at last decided to take steps in the matter, which caused Winthrop to write the following letter to the Governor of Connecticut.

“N. L. March 10 1679-80.

“Honble Sr.

“It was a few days since that I read a warrant from yor honr & councill, wch came hither under covert from your secretary to seize and secure seuerall goods on Fishers Island; and all though I was much surprised at ye sudain exercise of authorety on yt place, wch hath hitherto been unregarded, & without your comon notice & pretensions yet I was greatly satisfyed to know by that possitive warrant that at last ye intrest of that place is desired by yor selves to be secured under ye influence of yor good government, to wch yor honr knows how much content I should take to trim my vine kindly secured under yor authority; but not to flatter myself too much with so great a hapines, I desire leave to mention my feeres, and that difficulty wch may cross my peaceable enjoyments under yor shadow . . .

“Yor honrs most faythfull humble servt

“J. W.”

From the following letters it is evident that Governor Andros of New York determined to claim for his colony the ownership of Fishers Island, and although Connecticut ordered the people residing on the Island not to obey the orders of New York, the Island really came under the latter colony from that time.

“Fishers Island, Apl. 5, 1680.

“Deare Brother [Wait],—I can but just wright yiu a short scrawle, & tell yt with ye bearer I am returned from New York after a weekes stay there, & can onely tell you yt I have spoke to Sr Edmond about ye patent given by Collonell Nicolls, who seems resolved to assert it accordingly; I intend to be wholly passive in ye matter till I see how our Gentm act therein; I beleive they will doe what they can now they are alarmed, & doe expect to heare from them shortly. Sr Edmd has given me a confirmation of ye Indian guift of land on Long Island, & tells me he is ready to doe any thing else within his power. I cannot tell you any other matters at prsent; You see my fingers are cold, so yt I can onely add my deare affections to yor self & my sister & sisters, & yt I am

“Yor affectionate brother

“J. W.”

This letter and another dated June 12, 1680, both from Fishers Island, show that Fitz-John went constantly there to look over the estate that he and his brother owned jointly, but it is doubtful if he ever made it his home, for in this letter he calls the Island “a wilderness place.”

"For the Honble Major John Winthrop, att his house
att Fisher's Island.

"N. York, ye 16th, of Aprill, 1680.

"Sr.

"This is by Capt Hall (commander of the sloop Mary, in the King's service.) My reiterated acknowledgements & thanks for your obliging & kind visit in this place. I have now sent about ye wrack or good drove ashore, out of ye barck Providence, & to demand & receive a lambe for ye tenure of yor island, & assure you that as I doe my duty to his Majty & Rl Highness, I shall have continued regard to yor particular concernes. Mr Arnold having lett me know he hath by his sloop signified to you his readiness to convey my letters, or what else, to me, (as order'd), I hope to heare from you upon all ocations, & shall not be wanting to serve you without delay accordingly. I have receav'd an answer from Governor Leet from Hartford, by which he seems to argue for a pretended right to Fisher's Island (by consequences) nott particularly parted with; but nothing materiall for their said pretence,—rather ye contrary in every respect, & if insisted on by them must tend to their further detriment. So thinck they will not persist therein; however, shall not be wanting in asserting itt & yor interest as I ought & remaine.

"Your most affectionate freind & humble servant,

"E. ANDROS. G."

The letter which Sir Edmond Andros wrote to Governor Leete of Connecticut was as follows:

"Honble Sr.

"Being advised of an Order or warrant from yourself and some of Assistants sent to Ffisher's Island, I am much surprised at yor intrenching upon his Maties Letters Patents to his Royall Highnesse, as well as the Graunt by Governor Nicolls to the Honble John Winthrop Esqr (late Governor of Conecticut), for said Island: Which Island and graunt, it is my Duty to Assert, as much as this or any other part of the Govermt; and there for desire, that you will without delay recall sd Warrant or order, and forbear any the like proceedings for the furture, to prevent greater Inconveniences: and remaine,

"Yor Efectionate Neighbour & humble Servant,

"E. ANDROSS.

"New Yorke, 29th March 1680."

This letter the Governor turned over to the General Court and its reply on May 13th, 1680, follows:

"Whereas this court is informed that Sir Edmund Andros hath asserted that a certain island called Fishers Island, belonging to heirs of John Winthrop, deceased, is part of his Royal Highness's territories, which by charter from his Majesty, Charles II, King of England, is indeed granted into this, his Majesty's colony of Connecticut, and under the Government (thereof). This Colony, for preserving the just limits of his Majesty's gracious grant to them, do hereby publicly assert that said island is a part and under the Government thereof, and that they have exercised and shall exercise Government there as occasion shall re-

quire, and do hereby declare and protest against the said Sir Edmund Andros and all other persons their claims or exercise of authority or Government on or over said island, that all such acts are unjust as have or may be exerted by an authority or Government on or may be exerted by any authority from the say'd Sr Edmund Andross or any other than what hath been or shall be derived from the power given by his Majesty unto this his Colony, are and shall be voyd as to bind any person or persons to any obedience there unto; and we doe hereby prohibit all and every person and persons that are or may be on the sayd Island from yielding obedience to any authority what soever save the authority of his Majesty vested in the Colony of Connecticut."

The following is a letter from Daniel Wetherell to the Governor and Council at Hartford, begging advice as to how to deal with the privateers that were then menacing the neighborhood.

"New London, July 25— 1682.

"Hon'd Sir;—

"Thse may informe yor Honr that lately arrived at East hampton on Longe Iland a Catch and two small Sloopes with about 30 or 40 privateers or rather pirates; one of the sloopes laye some time at Plumbe Iland where 5 of her men left her and came hither, the rest went for the Baye Colonie, . . . The next day after they were gone I received the enclosed, which gives account of the surprizall of the third small Sloope by the Governor of Rhoads Island; Since which here arrived Mr Jonas Clarke bound to Southold to put Mr Arnold ashoar

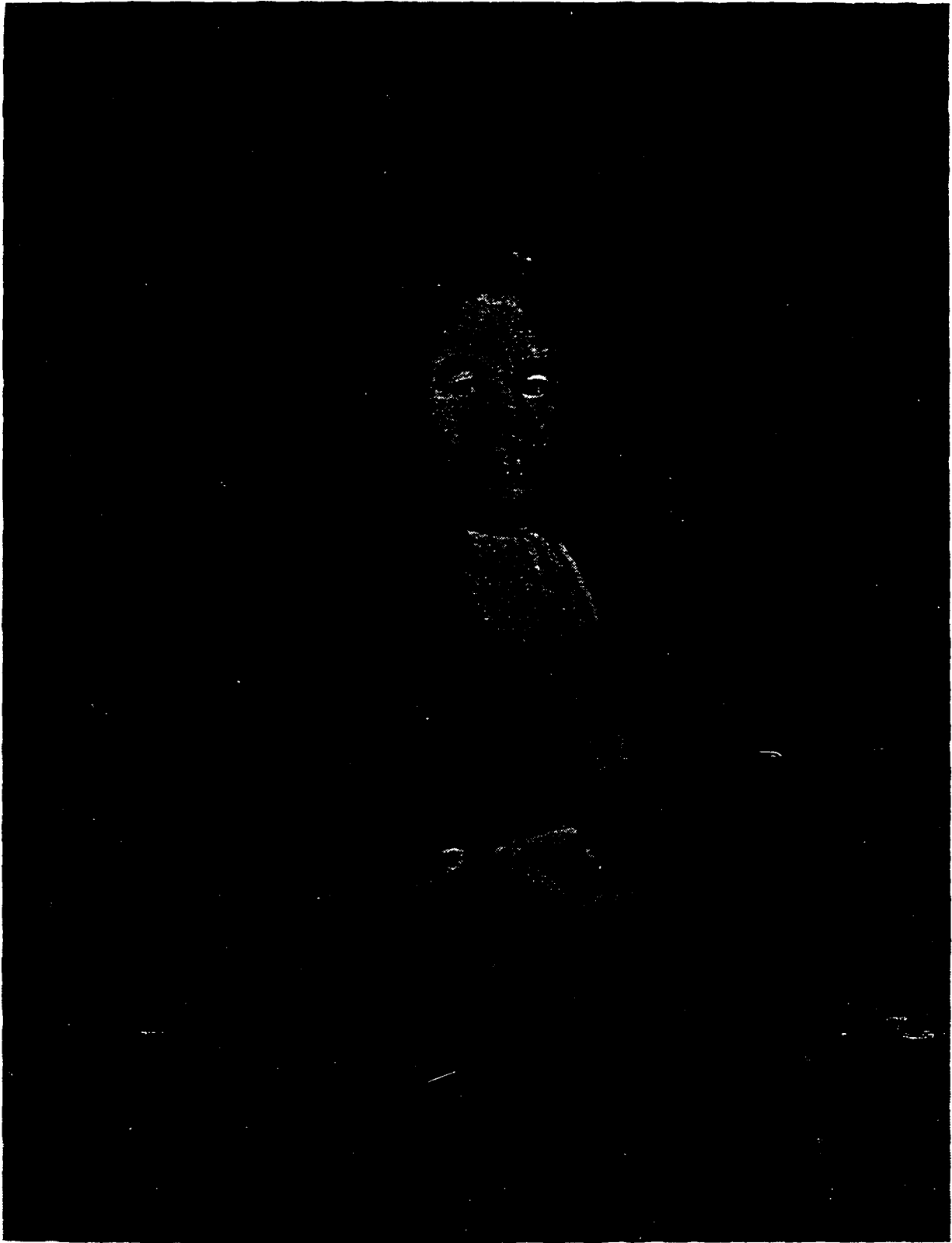
there, and from thence to Connetticutt, who was chassed by that privateer yt went out of this Harbour and lyes still about Fisher's Iland; and Garners Island; but they were too nimble for ye privateers, and came into this harbour, where they desired some men and armes to secure them, having as they sd a very considerable Cargoe on boarde. I durst not without yor Honrs authority impress any men, but we sent them armes and ammuni-tion; and the winde bloweing favorable, they set sayle yesterday morning, and I hope got safe over, although several persons informed me they saw the privateers pursue them, but their wings were too short; so they tacked, and I sawe them, as I conceive, goe in for Fisher's Iland.

"Sir, my humble desire is that yor Honr with yor honrs Councell would please to informe what to do in these exigencys, for they are yet wayting for to take all they can master, being well armed and fitted with Grandos for ye worke. I earnestly begg yor Honrs advice in this weighty concerne, wherein men's lives and estates are dayely in hazard, and shall wayte for an answer from yor Honr & Council, meanwhile shall rest yor Honrs humble servantt to be commended.

"DANIEL WETHERELL."

The Winthrops had a great deal of difficulty in getting the necessary work done on the Island and were forced to use Indians to do a good part of it. Wait writes to Fitz-John, from Boston, on Nov. 30, 1684, as follows:

"I forgot in my former letters (tho I have severall times thought of it) to desire you to let the Indians finde



WAIT-STILL WINTHROP

some way to thrash the best of the hay that is clover at the island to save the seede. . . . It would be easy for the squase, boyes, and girls, to procure a good quantity of it and cleans it well which would be best; for the clean seed is worth halfe a crown or thre shilling the pound, . . .”

Another letter written by him on Christmas day, 1688, says:

“I have spoke to Mr Simmons about laying the bricks at the island, but cannot prevaile with him, or rather he with his wife, to let him goe into the country, for feare of the Indians.”

This fear was still in the minds of the settlers, but on the Island Winthrop had some white men living, as we learn in May, 1688. Wait writes:

“I hope the Lancashire horn pipe sounds briskly from the island and the sheep at Rode Island will shortly dance after it.”

Fitz-John and Wait-Still Winthrop were both so active in the affairs of the Colonies that they could not spare time enough properly to superintend their Island affairs. They finally procured the services of William Walworth in 1689, who at that time was living in England, not far distant from London.

“He came at the special instance of Fitz-John Winthrop, then Major-General commanding the forces of the Colony, and afterwards its Governor. It was Winthrop’s desire to introduce upon Fisher’s Island the English system of cultivation, with which William was known to be well acquainted. He was the first lessee and settler upon that island. He not only grappled with

the virgin wilderness, reducing it, or a part of it, to smiling farm land, but made it the birth place of the greater part of his children.

“By a confirmation of Winthrop’s title, obtained from Governor Nichols of New York, the island was declared to be subject only to state authority, and independent of all local and subordinate jurisdiction. This made William, as being its sole citizen, not only a sort of Robinson Crusoe, but invested him, like the old Earls of Man, with a practical sovereignty upon his island. He could bid defiance to all sheriffs, constables and police officers. He made his own roads and mended them. No man, unless a Winthrop, had a right to hunt there. No dog but his own had a right to bark there.

“On this island Walworth resided with his family for about nine years, in comparative safety. Later on while William was in occupation of Fisher’s Island, a series of invasions and depredations back and forth between the French of Canada and the Colonists of New England, took place. But a danger awaited the family on Fishers Island more alarming in their apprehension than Indians on the warpath, or French privateers—a danger which caused Walworth to move with his family from the Island. His change of residence to Groton is connected with the memory of a character no less notable than Captain Kidd. Kidd’s career as a pirate seems not to have commenced so far as the disturbance of our American waters is concerned, before 1698. In that year he returned to New York from the East Indies loaded with booty. A part of this treasure, the only part that has ever been discovered, he buried on Gardiner’s Island.”

In 1691, a few years after Walworth assumed control of the Island, Wait, again writing to Fitz-John, speaks of sending some coats:

“The sleues and buttons are just as all men here ware them; there was just enough to make two coates and two for the boyes, it being of the Fishers Island wool.”

William Walworth died in 1703, but up to his death continued to manage the Island. The life he led there must have been full of excitement, and the change he and his wife experienced after living in England must have been rather trying at times.

Pre-Revolutionary Days

IN 1689, four large French privateers and some smaller ones sailed to Block Island; the crews landed and plundered the inhabitants. The invaders were a rough and desperate crew, among them one Englishman named Trimming, who acted as both interpreter and decoy. So elated were they at having entirely stripped the Block Islanders of all their most valuable belongings, that they determined to sail to New London and capture it in the same manner. On entering the Thames River, however, they were met with an outburst of shot, and, realizing that the inhabitants were prepared for them, retreated.

“As the fleet was passing out to sea, some of the Company landed on Fisher’s Island, upon which there was then but a single house. Trimming, . . . who was one of the party, having mentioned his intentions to stop there, the people of Stonington got wind of it, when a party of seventeen men determined to intercept him. They accordingly set off, and by landing upon another part of the Island, approached the house spoken of before they were discovered by the pirates, who had already arrived. Trimming now came out in an apparently friendly manner, with his gun concealed behind his back, to receive them; whereupon the Stonington party demanded whence they came. Trimming replied that they had been shipwrecked. One of the Englishmen

from Stonington then said, 'If you are friends, lay down your guns, and come behind us.' Upon this Stephen Richardson fearing an attack of the pirates, levelled his gun and shot Trimming on the spot, an act for which he was much blamed. Thus he that delighted in falsehood in his life died with a lie in his mouth; and received, it seems, the just reward of his perfidious, villainous, and multiplied treacheries."

Gurdon Saltonstall, a great friend of the Winthrops, who lived in New London, wrote several letters to the general who was then leading the Colonial troops in a campaign against Canada, giving the news of Fishers Island and the neighborhood.

"For the Hon^{ble} Maj^r Generall John Winthrop, att Albany: to be left at Coll Allens at Hartford & sent by the first Post.

"N. London. July 17, 1690.

"Hon^{ble} S^r,—

"After my best service to your Honour, I am bold to enform you y^t all yours are well. This morning about eight of y^e clock wee discovered at y^e West end of Fishers Island, standing in between that & Long Island 4 vessels a ship, a catch & 2 sloops. They made the best of y^e way in, with English colours. They were attended upon by a company of about 150 men, all along y^e shore as y^y came into y^e harbour, who hailed them on Mamacock whence they were & were answered 'from Jamaica.' They sailed up & anchored ag^t Cap^t Dene's, made several waves wth y^r antient for a boat to come on board, but had no answer from us. There y^y lay a considerable while with y^r English colours flying; at last y^y

put out y^r French colours, fired a great shot, & at once every vessell took to y^r oares (y^e wind being ag^t them) and stood out. There were severall great shots fired after them, (and many by y^m) in all to y^e number of 50, some whereof struck y^r ships. With y^e aid y^t came in for our help we had in arms, on both sides of y^e River, neer 400 men, besides Indians. Our men followed them down as low as y^e harbours mouth, with shouts and shot, and there y^v now ly at anchor. Wee have a rumor that S^r W^m Phips with 4 ships, is at Road Island, and there upon wee have dispatched a post for that place, another along y^e shore, another for Hartford. I expect an attack to morrow. There are neer 350 men on y^e guard this night: Maj^r Palmes is with us and boyh as much command as any body, and yet I think y^r is nothing w^c we want more. This night y^r came over from Fishers Island a small number of Indians, who gave an acct of a skirmish y^t y^v had with a small number of the French. They have brought over a scalp with them and say y^v have left one dead there whose scalp they had not time to take. It is presumed (upon y^r report) y^t your house is rifled at y^e Island; w^t credit may be given to it I know not. The reports wee have are very uncertaine. Doct^r Williams is just now come from Martins Vineyard, who contradicts y^e report we heard formerly & tells us y^t both Martins Vineyard & Nantucket are safe. I have not had time in this hurry to speak with the Islanders; but shall take the first opportunity. M^{rs} B: & M^{rs} Mary is well, who presents her duty to you, and service is given from all hands, espec: from my wife, who thanks your Hon^r kindly for mee. Wee long'd heartily for your Hon^r here today. My wife seems to bee enclined to

goe up to Hartford with M^{rs} Mary. If she doth, I shall be y^e readier for your Hon^{rs} service at Albany, where if you doe not intend a speedy return, I shall waite you & approve my self

“Your unfeigned S^t

“G. SALTONSTALL.”

Gurdon Saltonstall to Fitz-John Winthrop:

“N. Lond. July 24, 1690

“Honble Sr,—

“I doubt not but your Honr both recd a lettr of mine bearing date the 17th instant, that being the day wherein ye enemy made an attack upon this place. I sent your Honr therein as good an acct of all the remarkable passages worthy of notice in it, as ye haste of the post, then mounted for Hartford, would permit mee. I had thought to have given you a new and more compleat acct, but when I consider in what a hurry & distracting way almost every thing here is acted, I can have but little hopes to mend the former relation, if I should attempt it. As for the erratas yt have escaped my pen, whether in point of orthography or of stylr, you will soon perceive from ye apparent causes of both (viz: an affrighted mind & a trembling hand) that at least a great measure of the blame may, without any injustice, be transfered from mee to those whose entrance into our port was as formidable & swaggering as their exit was sneaking & shamefull. As far as I remember Sr the last acct I gave you of them was yt wn yy rowd out of our River, which was ye 17th instant, they came to an anchor at the mouth of it, & lay all night within call of our soldiers yt were

posted on each side of ye River, neer or upon ye chops of ye harbour. The next morning, at ye break of ye day, they weighed anchor and stood over for your Island; 3 of them came to anchor there between ye hammocks & ye harbour; the other, which was ye biggest sloop, (as we guest her, about 50 tunn) stood up ye Sound, took a small sloop to ye westward of Fishers Island, then returned to & anchored with the rest. Here they lay the remainder of this day, and left not the place wholly (tho some say 2 of them cruised up ye Sound on Saturday) untill Munday in ye morning, at which time, ye wind at North West, they weighd and weathered ye west end of your Island, & so stood along between that & Long Island. Since which time I have had no intelligence of them yt may with any safety be depended upon. Rumors say yt some vessels yt came from Boston on purpose to find them, joyning with others of Road Island, did engage them that day in ye evening yt yy left your Island (off Block Island) and wee are impatient till wee are satisfied of ye truth & event of it, wc wee waite for & expect every minute. Mr Brinley from Road Island gives an acct that 2 ships, a katch & a sloop, sailed out of Boston after them on ye Wednesday before yy left Fishers Island, and yt ye winds have been so favourable yt wee conclude yy cannot easily miss of them. The day before yesterday a Jamaica sloop, wth 4 guns & between 30 & 40 men came in hither from York, in pursuit of ye enemy, & sailed ye next morning early. It is sd yt be bad on acct by 4 men yt went on board him in our harbour ye same morning he sailed, yt as soon as ever ye enemy discovered the Boston & Road Island Vessells, yy sent ye katch, wc was a prize yy had made,



THE MANSION HOUSE IN 1889

(& retaken from some of Capt Massons men, who were pressed from Port Royall bound to N York and ordered to ye Lt Governour there was another Catch taken in company with her, very richly loaden likewise and ordered ye same way, sunk by them, on Block-Island shore) with ye sloop yy took in ye Sound, to ye Westward; so yt be expected to meet with one or both of them off of Fishers Island. As for a particular acct of your affairs upon ye Island, I spare it in this place, bec; here comes enclosed one from Mr Smethurst of my penning, wc speaks as much of ye loss you have sustained there as we know. When I got home I found all your Islanders but Jonathan in a very great fright hurrying to Boston ye very next morning, & so could by no means come to speech with them. You will perceive by his letter wt his inclinations are; I have used all the arguments I can think of with him, but cannot alter them. Your Honrs presence here would doe much, or (if that is not likely to be attained) your directions unto him. When I was last down wth Mrs Betty (who is very well, wth Mrs Mary, & does yr respects & duty in order unto your Honr) we were discoursing about severall things yt we wanted to know your Hons mind concerning. Ile name them, and shall be ready myself to be as serviceable as I can in attending any directions you send; Whether you would have any of ye creatures removed from ye Island? If they must stay there, how yy should be provided for in ye winter? I have urged Jonathan to mow & make wt hay will be needfull for their keeping, and he tels mee he will doe whatever he is able; his Negroe is still with him & he expects Peter up again dayly. Yesterday I spoke with Mr Ashby concerning business at yr farme;

I find ye barley was then mowing; but the grass had not been touched wth a sithe; he bids mee tell you yt ye enemy hath hitherto given your labourers a little diversion, but yt now yy will fall too in good earnest; and ye truth is he seems to be resolved to doe wt he can to make them stand stoutly to yr work. —but yet I think we may rationally expect to be frequently alarmed here this summer, and therefore cannot, without being guilty of greatest impudence, neglect to put ourselves into a better posture of defense yn wee are likely speedily to be in. Something for that end is resolved upon; As yt yr be a battery raised by Capt Deviss, wc is already begun and some platforms for great guns made; that three of ye guns at Say-brook be brought hither; that yr be watches & wards kept along upon ye shore; but how far these things will be attended and prosecuted I know not.

“There hath been a proposall made (as I take it, by Majr Palmes) concerning a beacon to be placed on Mount Prospect on your Island, and yt a watch & ward be kept there, which I would desire your judgement of if you think meet. . . .

“Your Honrs most humble Servt

“G. SALTONSTALL.”

“To the Honble Majr Genll John Winthrop, at Albany.

“N. London, Aug 1st, 1690.

“Hond Sr,—

“Last night I was at Majr Palmes, when he desired mee to take care of the letter enclosed; some formalities about a receipt for the delivery of it were attended without wc you would hardly had ye sight of it at Albany. Since my last I know nothing very considerable that hath

hapned here. This week we have been alarm'd by vessels on ye coast, wc proved Yorkers, sent in pursuit of the enemy. They landed with a Periangier on Fishers Island, which hath scared Jonathan & Peter off; Jonathan, as Mrs Betty tels mee, offers his share of graine to any body that will secure ye rest, but will not venture himself upon ye Island without a guard. I have not as yet spoke with him, but shall take ye first opportunity to rectifie him in that matter. Last night arrived here the gentleman with his family who is to live at your farme. The carpenter's negligence I fear will be some disapointment to him, they having not as yet made the house ready to receive him. Your Honr will from hence conclude how welcome your presence would be here, but if that cannot be obtained, you shall find that wherein I am able & your Honr please to command, I am

“your most faithfull St

“G. SALTONSTALL.

“Your Honrs family are well.”

“For the Honble John Winthrop Esq. Commander in Cheife of the Forcese bound for Canada, at Albany or els where, these.

“Boston August 11. 1690 Monday afternoon.

“Deare Brother,

“. . . We have had a pirate on the coste, who has plundered the people at Block Island; from thence went to New London and concluded to have plundered the town, but they haveing notice were provided for him and he went away to Fishers Island, where he sent a perianger ashore before, and had one man kild and an other wounded by some Stonington men and Indians who went

over to look after our people and get them off; The pirates lay in the harbour at ye island two or 3 days and burnt the house; and what mischeife else I know not certaynly yet, but tis said a great deale. The men and wemen, when they saw the house afire from Stonington, came down hither all but Jonathan. But I have got the men to goe back againe and promised that shall have a house before winter if it may be; in the mean time have sent to the Indians at the farme to help them about a wigwam while they secure the corn and hay. Our men of warr could not cum up with the pirate; but two Rode Island sloops had a bout with them and kild them many men. They were about 100 men in all at first, and are now gone off the coast.

“. . . I have not els but to comend you to the protection of the Lord of Hosts, who I trust will preserve and return you with success in his cause, and am

“Your owne

“WAIT WINTHROP.”

“In the year 1690, New York and the New England Colonies united in sending an expedition against Canada, from which province the French and Indians had issued and destroyed Schenectady, Feb. 8th, 1690. The command of the land forces was given to Fitz-John Winthrop, who had the rank of Major-General and Commander-in-Chief. Sir William Phipps commanded the fleet. Winthrop marched with his forces to Lake Champlain, but could go no further. The Indian auxiliaries failed; provisions were scarce, and he was obliged to retreat to Albany for subsistence. The fleet was no less unfortunate; it sailed too late, and on arriving at

Quebec, found the place too strong for them. After an abortive attempt upon the town, in which they received more injury than they inflicted, the fleet returned home and the whole enterprise utterly failed.

"The Government of New York was greatly exasperated at General Winthrop's retreat, attributing the failure of the expedition entirely to him. If he had pressed onward, they said, to Montreal and kept the French troops occupied in that quarter, Quebec, left defenseless, would have surrendered at the first summons. So great was their dissatisfaction, that on Winthrop's arrival at Albany they procured his arrest, and he was only saved from a disgraceful trial before prejudiced judges, by the bold and adventurous friendship of the Mohawks under his command. They crossed the river, freed their General from restraint, and gallantly conducted him back to the camp.

"The reputation of Winthrop in his native Colony was not diminished by the disastrous issue of the enterprise. After the strictest scrutiny the Legislature approved of his conduct, and in view of the difficulties that he encountered, deemed that he had acted the part of a wise and discreet commander. But in New York he was regarded with bitter animosity; and the officers belonging to his council, who had concurred in his measures, were obliged to retire with him to Connecticut, there to wait till the fury of the storm was spent. Among these exiles was Captain (afterward Colonel) John Livingston, who accompanied Winthrop to Hartford and subsequently to New London, where he became a landholder and an inhabitant. He married Mary, the only child of General Winthrop, and continued to make New Lon-

don his home until Nov, 1718, when he went to England on some business, and there died."

Wait-Still Winthrop, who was a good deal of a hunter, wrote the following to his brother, Fitz-John. Whether or not these animals ever reached Fishers Island is not known, but it is interesting to think of moose being in the Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies.

"Boston July 25th, 1698.

"Here was a man from North Hampton sayes his brother got two young moose, a buck and a doe, but kild the buck before he heard I desired to get som, but keeps the doe and does not question to get a buck this season. I have encouraged him with the hopes of a reasonable price for them if he procured a couple. If they should not do at Fishers Island as well as cattle, they may at Tarpolin."

After his return from the attack on Canada Fitz-John Winthrop was commissioned by the Colony to go to England as agent and endeavor to straighten out the dispute as to who was in command of the militia of all the Colonies. The instructions, dated Hartford, Sept. 1st, 1693, were as follows:

"Major Gen'll Ffitz John Winthrop Esq commissioned by the Governour (Robt Treat) and the General Assembly to petition our Sovraign Lord and Lady, King William, and Queen Mary, with reference to the charter and more especially to the militia of this Colony."

He went to the British Court in 1694 and accomplished his mission in such a way that it was decided that the Connecticut Colony was to have full charge of her

own militia, though subject to a general call in time of need. This so pleased the Colony that Fitz-John was elected Governor, and this position he held throughout his life, being each year re-elected.

Fitz-John Winthrop "died in the tenth year of his office and was interred in the same tomb with his father and grandfather, in the church yard of Kings Chapel, Boston. His public duties since the year 1690 had kept him much of the time away from New London, yet this always continued to be his home. His death on Nov. 27th, 1707, was an important event to the town. As a member of the Commonwealth it had lost its head, and as a community it was bereaved of a tried friend and influential citizen. . . . He appeared to have been a gentleman of popularity, and to have sustained a character without blemish."

"It led the way also to another removal—that of their minister. On the death of the Governor, a special assembly was convened to elect a temporary successor, and a majority of the votes were cast for the Rev. Gurdon Saltonstall, of New London. He accepted the appointment and on the first of January, 1708, took the oath of office. At the annual election in May he was chosen Governor by the votes of the freemen and was annually re-elected to the office from that time until his death."

On the death of Fitz-John Winthrop the complete ownership of the Island fell to Wait-Still. He continued to reside in Boston, where he became a Major General of the militia. Besides being what Judge Sewall called him, "the great stay and ornament of the Council, a very pious, prudent, courageous New England man," he was

Chief Justice of the Superior Court, once judge of the Court of Admiralty, a Colonial commissioner, and on the executive council of Massachusetts. Like his father, he had a good knowledge of medicine, of which he freely gave to those needing help.

At a meeting of the Governor and Council, June 2, 1712:

“Upon the consideration of the hazard of the coast and coasters by reason of the French privateers, and for preventing as much as may be coasting vessels from falling into their hands, and other mischiefs by surprise;

“Ordered, that a beacon be erected on Fishers Island in the usual place on the western point, and an out guard of seven men maintained there; that a suitable boat be provided to pass between the island and this place, as often as may be with conveniency; that the men employed in this service be allowed two shillings per day and their subsistence.”

“Sept. the 4th 1712.

“Resolved that the out guard appointed and maintained from June the second, on Fishers Island, be from this time discharged.

“That ten shillings extraordinary be allowed to Nathaniell Beebee, director of the said guard, for his care therein.

“That 20 s. per month be allowed for the boat improved by the said guard.

“That 4s. 6d. per week be allowed to each of the said guard, for their diet.”



WINTHROP HOUSE AT EAST END,
ABOUT 1870

In 1712 the attempt was made to send a pair of moose from Fishers Island to Queen Anne in England, but, owing to the death of one and an accident to the other, the queen received only the horns.

In a letter from Gurdon Saltonstall to Joseph Dudley, he tells about the annoyances received by Wait Winthrop from certain tenants on Fishers Island, who had made the absence of John Livingston (one of the Executors) a pretext to delay delivery of lands and stock, formerly the joint property of Fitz-John and Wait Winthrop. One part of the letter reads:

"There is also some controversy about the remaining rent, & damage by moose, which I persuade them to issue by the judgment of indifferent men; or if they cant do so, to let ye law decide it."

John writes to his father, Wait-Still, as follows on Oct. 24, 1717:

"I have some red cedar berryes wch I gathered at Fishers Island: they say Mr Brenton sowed some at Rhode Island, and has a young grove of cedars now on his farme. Many people hereabouts carry them in their pockets and eat them, as being very wholsom & strengthening, they say, to the vitalls, and good for all sorts of ails, the Indians say."

On Oct. 28th, 1717, Wait-Still wrote his last letter to his son John in reply to the above. Shortly afterwards he was taken ill and died Nov. 7th, 1717.

The early part of the year 1717 was noted for many heavy snow storms, and we learn how the Island fared from the following letter from John Winthrop to Dr. Mather in Boston:

“Sir:—

“Being from home the last past day, when your letter arrived here, I am now to thank you for it, and to make answer to what you demand of me. The observations I made of the prodigious storms of snow, in the doleful winter past, are many. But I shall mention but two at this time, and they are these: That the snow spangles which fell on the earth; appeared in large sexangular forms. . . . The other is, that, among the small flock of sheep, that I daily fold in this distant part of the wilderness, (for I am a poor shepherd) to secure them from the wild rapacious quadrupeds of the forest; after the unusual and unheard of snows, the aforesaid animals from the upland parts of the country, where, in great numbers forced down to the sea side among us, for substance, where they nestled kenneled and burroughed in the thick swamps of these ample pastures, nightly visiting the pens and yards for their necessity. . . . The storm continued so long and severe, that multitudes of all sorts of creatures perished in the snow drifts. We lost at the island and farms, above eleven hundred sheep, besides some cattle and horses interred in the snow. And it was very strange that twenty eight days after the storm, the tenants of Fishers Island, pulling out the ruins of one hundred sheep out of one snow bank in a valley, (where the snow had drifted over them sixteen feet) found two of them alive in the drift, which had lain on them all that time, and kept themselves alive by eating the wool off the others, that lay dead by them. As soon as they were taken out of the drift they shed their own fleeces and are now alive and fat; and I saw them at the island the last week, and they are at your service.

“. . . I am an obscure person, less than the poorest of your servants, and not fit to stand before princes, but am contented to lie hid among the retired philosophers.

“I am, &c.

“JOHN WINTHROP.

“To the Rev. Doctor Cotton Mather.”

John Winthrop, the son of Wait Winthrop, was born in New London, Aug. 26, 1681, and was at Harvard College in 1700. By mutual agreement he was the heir of both his uncle, Fitz-John, and his father. Fitz-John had no son, only a daughter, Mrs. Livingston, upon whom he had settled some of his possessions other than real estate. Soon after coming into the estate, after his father's death, John's only sister, who was married to a man named Lechmere, claimed half of the estate. Fitz-John had made a deed in 1700, leaving his share to his nephew, John, but as this had never been recorded, it was not allowed as proof. A lawsuit ensued and went from court to court in Connecticut, being at last decided in favor of Lechmere. Winthrop then appealed to the King in council, and in 1726 went to England to fight his case. He was so successful that two years later a decree set aside the findings of the Colonial Court and declared Winthrop sole heir of all the lands that had belonged to his uncle and father. This decision was based on the English law of primogeniture. This decree, if it had been followed out, would have been very hard on the colonists. A later decision gave Winthrop what he had been striving for, but let the Colonial Law of inheritance remain as it had been before this case came up.

Because of this case Winthrop became very unpopular

in Connecticut, and he remained in England for twenty-one years, dying when about sixty-six years of age. He was of a scientific turn of mind and became a Fellow of the Royal Society. We find him usually referred to as John Winthrop, F.R.S.

While Winthrop was in England his wife, Madam Winthrop, and their family resided in New London. They appointed Joshua Hempstead, a friend and confidential agent, to look out for their affairs, both on the mainland and on the Island. There are many records in his diary of trips to the Island, which he usually made to look about and count the live stock. We find one entry on November 16th, 1727.

"Fair. I went to fishers Island in their boat. Madm Winthrop Mr Wan [ton] Molly & Cate Peg Jus E Bagill Friday 17 fair. We Rid about ye Island to ye East end & found things in good order.

"Saturday 18 a little Rain & yn fair. Wee came all home by day light. Mr Wanton killed a young Buck in the forenoon wch wee brot over.

"April 1731. Saturday 10 fair and cold. I went to fishers Island with Mr Mumford & I Recd al the Stock & gave a Rectt. I viewed the house at ye East End & finished. Cary Latham carryed us over."

On November 13th, 1738, Hempstead writes:

"In the morn, About 7 Oe Clock I set of Designed for Sag harbour in Jno Roger's Boat with Joshua & Daughter Starr John Bolles & Jno Waterhose passengers & had the wind about W.N.W. & the Latter end of the flood. as the Sun Rise the wind Rise & blew exceeding high. wee were got near or quite half over & the Sea very big & angry we found the wind too hard for us.



JOHN WINTHROP, F. R. S.

wee had 21 bls of Cydar on bord & were forced to fling overboard 3 bls. Vizt 1 Terse of 2bls & 1 bl & a $\frac{1}{2}$ bl of Water to Lighten her & Jno Boles proposed it promised to be his part of ye Charge & Jno Waterhouse Said nothing to it. wee got Safe into Fishers Island Hay harbour about 9 clock & after about 2 hours Stay went up to the House where we Stayed al night & Mr Mumford Entertained us very Courteously & would take nothing of me or mine, and Sent his son to help us get of the Boat which was a ground on the flats. wee got no harm in our persons nor Boat though wee were very wet & very cold. The Tops of my fingers are numb near froze."

This is the first mention of the sand bar at the mouth of Hay Harbor. Where Hempstead and his fellow voyagers went aground many other boats since that time have found the channel all too narrow to sail through easily and anchor in the sheltered and nearly land-locked harbor.

In October, 1739, Madam Winthrop invited friends for a house party at Fishers Island. With her were Mr. and Mrs. Saltonstall and two of their children, Colonel Brown and his wife and child, John Winthrop and his sister Ann. They sailed across the Sound with George Mumford, who then had a lease of Fishers Island, and all stayed with him in his house, which stood probably on the site of the present Mansion House. They reached there about dark, as the wind was against their making a quick trip. The next day "wee all Rid Down to the East End & back & lodged at Mr Mumfords again." Friday was very stormy and they were kept in the house all day long. It is too bad that we find

nothing to tell us of how the long day was spent, but we can be sure that while it was stormy outside, it was cheerful inside, and with logs crackling on the open hearths and so many in the party to keep things moving, the hours passed quickly.

The next day, Saturday, was fair and windy. The party mounted horses and rode to the west end through the meadows and woods. In the afternoon a deer hunt was held and Mr. Saltonstall "kiled" one doe, but Mr. Mumford was either more fortunate or a better shot, for he downed two bucks. Another night was spent on the Island, and the following day they returned to New London, after a very tedious day, having left at nine o'clock in the morning and not reaching home before eight at night.

"One of the seasons noted in the Annals of New England for intense cold was the winter of 1740-41. The extreme severity of the weather at New London commenced with a violent snow storm at Christmas. By the seventh of January the river was frozen over between Groton and Winthrop's Neck, and the intense cold continued without interruption from that time to the middle of March. The ice extended into the Sound toward Long Island as far as could be seen from the town; Fishers Island was united to the mainland by a solid bed."

One morning, in 1744, Hempstead went to Madam Winthrop's house and found the Sheriff of Suffolk County there. He had come for the taxes on Fishers Island, which had not been paid for twenty-two years.

Madam Winthrop's husband, who had resided for so many years in England, died August 1st, 1747, but it was over a year before his son, John Still, returned to

assume the management of the Island and the other properties to which he had fallen heir.

"Nov 25-1748. fryd 25 cloudy. I was att home all day. I mended one of Madm Winthrops wheels & in the Evening went up to Madm Winthrops & met Mr John Still Winthrop at Colln Saltonstalls who this night arived with Ms Hide from London by the way of Nantucket first & Rhoad Island Next, & fishers Island Last. A great joy to his mother & friends. he hath been Gone Seven year Next feb."

"August 1752.

"Aftern I went to Mr Winthrops to Dinner &c.

"Thursday 27 fair. I went with Mr Winthrop to fishers Island & Jer Miller in Powers boat. I stayed there three nights. wee measured the length of the Island almost. Wee began att the west point & Measured Six mile towards the East End & made heaps of Stones att the End of Each Mile & also measured the Distance from ye house to ye West point & also to ye East End. Sunday fair. We came home in Mr Mumfords boat timely to go to meeting in ye aftern. Mr adams pr all Day."

The old survey undoubtedly made Fishers Island much larger than it actually is. One account of the Island says it has five thousand acres. As a matter of fact, the acreage is somewhat under three thousand, but owing to the irregular coast line, with the bays and points running out into the water, the Island has the appearance of being larger.

Revolutionary Days

MR. WINTHROP, who was named John Still, was the owner of Fishers Island during the next twenty-nine years, and during this period got more worry than pleasure out of the Island, if we can believe history. The war on the French in Canada opened up the chance for privateers on the sea, and these caused much trouble and uncertainty for the people residing on the Island. The Revolutionary War soon followed and the British fleets blockaded the Sound and waged war on every ship they could come up with.

“On the 5th and 6th of August, 1775, a fleet of nine ships and several smaller vessels, gathered around New London Harbor and appeared as if about to enter. Expresses were sent forth to alarm the country but it was ascertained that the object of the fleet was to secure the stock that was owned upon the fertile islands of the Sound. From Fishers Island alone they took 1100 sheep, besides cattle and other provisions; for which they made a reasonable compensation to Mr. Brown, the lessee of the Island; but from Gardiner’s and Plum Islands, they took what they wanted without payment.”

John Still Winthrop was graduated from Yale in the class of 1737. He made his home in New London and remained there all his days, dying on June 6th, 1776. His eldest son, John Winthrop, was born July 20th,



JOHN STILL WINTHROP

1751, and on the death of his father came into possession of Fishers Island.

The Island was again stocked with cattle and sheep, and rather than have them fall into the hands of the British, the Governor and Council of Connecticut met on July 3rd, 1776, and—

“Resolved and ordered, That the committees of inspection for New London and Groton do forthwith remove the horned cattle, sheep and swine from Fishers Island to the main, leaving necessary working oxen, cows, sheep and swine, for the use of the families there at their discretion; that they cause them to be appraised by indifferent judicious men, under oath, at their present just value in money; that the amount of such apprizement be paid out of the Colony treasury to the owner or owners of said stock at a reasonable price in behalf of the Colony, rendering their account of such sales and how they shall execute this order, to his Honor the Governor, as soon as may be; and also advising Colo. Champion, deputy commissary when they remove such stock, that he may purchase such part of the same as may be fit and proper for the use of the army.

“Feb. 28. 1777. Benja Brown moved for payment for stock taken from Fishers Island, July 1776. It was allowed. Appraised £570 3s.”

From Miss Caulkins' History of New London we find that:

“The 14th of March, 1777, brought another breeze of alarm along the coast. A fleet of eleven sail—the *Amazon*, *Greyhound*, *Lark* and seven transports—anchored near the Groton shore. An immediate descent was expected, and tumult and terror reigned for a time

in the town. The object of the squadron, however, was to obtain, as they had the year before, the stock of Fishers Island, and this business they executed so thoroughly as almost to sweep the island clean of produce. They took not only sheep, cattle, swine, poultry, corn, potatoes, wood and hay, but blankets, woolen cloth, sheeting and other necessities, for all which they made a reasonable compensation to Mr. Brown in British gold."

On Nov. 18th, 1778, again the governor and council of Connecticut "Voted, that Colo Samuel Mc Clallan and Majr William Ledyard be and they are hereby directed to call on the owners of the hay on Fishers Island to move it off said island immediately, and if not done by them to have it moved off themselves at the owner's expense."

A British fleet appeared again off New London, on July 5th, 1779. "No attempt was, however, made by the enemy to land, except upon Plum and Fisher's Islands, which the crews of the British ships plundered of everything valuable to them, and then wantonly set fire to the hay and buildings which they could not remove.

"During the eighteenth century, smuggling was extensively carried on along the Connecticut coasts, especially at the eastern and western extremities of Long Island Sound. At Fishers Island there were erected small warehouses or shacks wherein smugglers stored their goods, and ruins of which still stand. Incoming vessels from foreign ports would lie-to or anchor off the spot, send their contraband ashore, and with a cargoe fully entered on their manifests, sail to New London or other ports. Later the contraband would be smuggled in by small craft as opportunity offered." So serious did this menace be-

come that, on November 7th, 1781, we find the Connecticut Governor and Council ordering: "That Col. McClellan be authorized and directed to send out any boats under his command to watch and guard the coasts near and go on Fishers Island, seize, take and secure any boats carrying on illicit trade and goods found on sd island for illicit purposes."

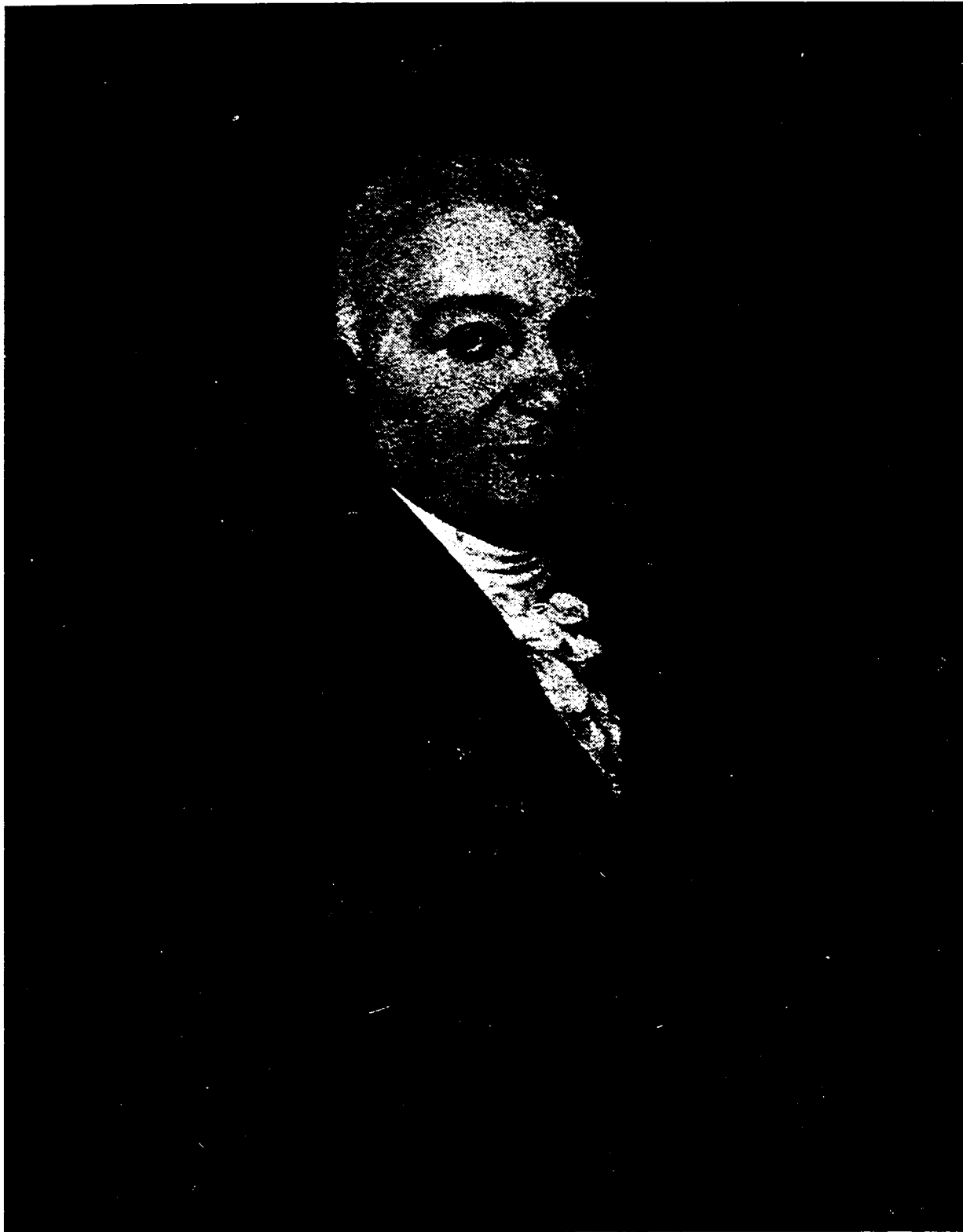
John Winthrop had been in poor health for some time, and we find that he had applied for and received permission on account of his health to go to the southern states, stopping on his way at New York for medical attention. Before leaving for his trip in 1780 he had requested the Colonial Government for permission to have some necessary work done at the Island, and in reply received the following:

"On application of Mr Jno. Winthrop of N. London, representing that he is proprietor of Fishers Island; that the buildings thereon are all burned and destroyed by the enemy etc,—the island desolate, and the wood plundered &c, praying that he may be permitted for the preservation of his property to build a small brick house and put a family there for the protection of the estate and some small stock &c; Resolved, that he be permitted to erect such small buildings and by and with the consent of the authority and selectmen of the town of N. London he may be permitted to put onto said island for the purpose aforesaid, such person as they shall approve, being a friend to the United States and one who has taken the oath of fidelity, and with his family, and also, two pair of oxen and three cows and such necessaries only, to be by them allowed, as may enable such tenant to live comfortably for the present."

Upon reaching New York, Winthrop was taken worse and soon died, when only twenty-nine years of age. He was unmarried, and left Fishers Island to his brother, Francis Bayard Winthrop. The new owner was in business in New York and it is very doubtful if he spent much time on the Island.

"In April, 1793, Thomas Allen Jr hired Fishers Island, New York, of Francis Bay[ard] Winthrop, paying for it an annual rent of twenty-six hundred dollars. The island was nine miles in length, and contained five thousand acres. He had twelve families, who were his tenants; he also had five or six girls, to spin and weave, two dairy women, a cook, and colored boy to help her. They made two sixty-pound cheeses per day. They also made butter. Mr Allen kept one hundred cows and two thousand sheep; he bred horses and mules, and raised rye, wheat and oats. He hired a man named William Westcote, to be both teacher and chaplain for his own and his tenants' large families. He was much beloved by all under him; one man worked for him twenty-eight years, and others nearly as long.

"Mr Allen attended St James Church, New London, Conn, with as many of his family as could conveniently accompany him. They went in his sloop *Betsey* on Sundays and Christmas Day. During the holidays he always invited all his tenants and their families to visit him, provided an excellent dinner and supper for them, and afterwards sent to the aged, sick, and those unable to be present. All looked forward to the Christmas gatherings, for they had a nice time;—a dance, and games for the young people occupied the evenings, when Jack (the colored boy) played on a violin. Mr Allen lived



FRANCIS BAYARD WINTHROP

nineteen years on the island. When he moved away all his tenants also left, as they said they did not wish to live there without him.

"Five of Thomas and Amelia Allen's children were born on the island, as has been stated; three, Samuel Tabor, Pardon, and the youngest, (Lizzie) died and are buried there. Thomas Allen was called either Squire or Captain. Before coming to the Island he had been at sea, trading with the Island of Madeira. His son Lewis Allen also lived on the Island and after marrying lived at the West End and managed the farm there. He owned half of the cows and made one of the famous sixty-pound cheeses."

From the *Connecticut Gazette*, which was published in New London Wednesday, Jan. 1st, 1812, we find mention of a severe storm that did considerable damage:

"The late gale will ever be memorable; it extended with more or less violence from Boston to the Delaware, but appears to have raged with its greatest power along the coast of this state.

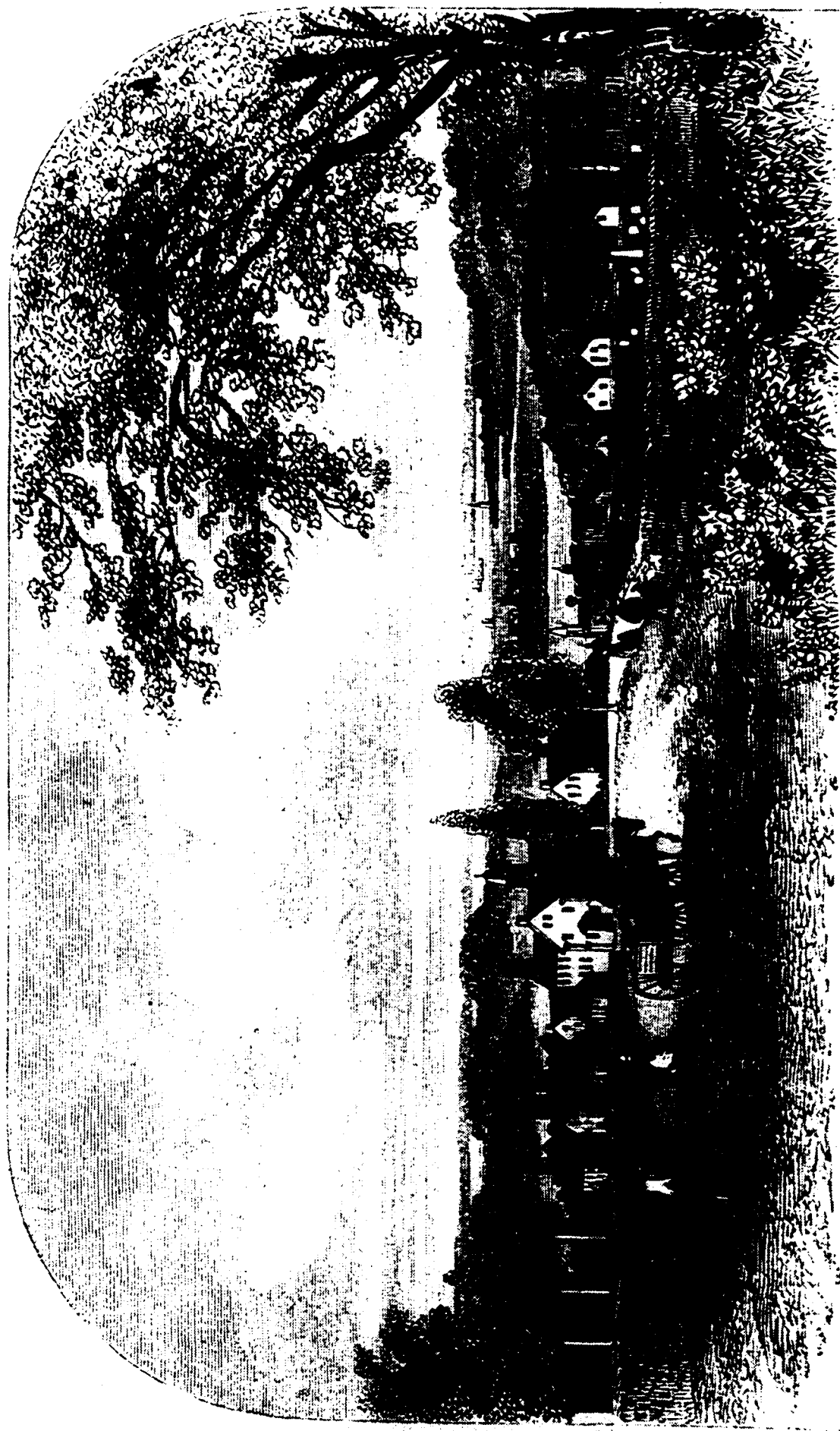
"The sloop *Maria Willard* from Warren for New York lay at Great Harbor, Fishers Island; her mast was cut away and she sprung a leak, the cable was cut, when striking on a reef, 9 hogsheads of Rum were stove in, which lightened her so much that she went on shore without further injury. A smack from Mystic went on shore at Fishers Island, and bilged; the people waded on shore."

The War of 1812

DURING the War of 1812 we find no mention of Fishers Island's suffering from raids as it had during the Revolution. The British fleet made Block Island their headquarters and held a strict blockade of the Sound and New London. Ships of war were constantly cruising about looking for chances to destroy the boats or ships of the United States. So strict was this blockade that Commodore Decatur, who in the *United States* had brought in as a prize the *Macedonia* on December 4th, 1812, was bottled up in the Thames River and did not have a chance to leave until peace was signed, when he sailed to New York.

The following, taken from an original Log Book, is the very meagre history of Fishers Island in this war:

A log
of the
Proceedings
of
H.M.S. *La Hogue*
Honble Thomas B. Capel (Cap)
Kept by
Frederick Paxton (Midn)
May 13-1813
Oct 15-1814



NEW LONDON IN 1813, SHOWING FISHERS ISLAND IN THE DISTANCE

"Friday 27th May.

"A.M. Calm, and thick foggy. Guard Boats ahead till day light. 11 Fog cleared away. Observed enemy's Gun Boats pulling along Shore. San Tejo, and Sloop at anchor of Fishers Island. PM."

The life on these blockading ships must have been very tedious, though some excitement was had at times in capturing and boarding the enemy ships, and one attempt to blow up a British ship added a real danger.

Occasionally, in the Log, a day is met with when punishment was meted out to those of the crew that had been unruly, and it was very severe.

"H.M.S. *La Hogue*, at anchor off N. London.

"A.M. Calm and Fine. 3 shortened Sail, and came to, with the Small Bower in 30 fathoms.—Punished Jas Barrett (sea) with 3 doz, Jno Collins (mar) 2 doz. and Chas Clark (sea) 2 doz, lashes for Drunkenness and Frances Harrison (m) 2 doz and Wm Pittman (m) with 2 dozen lashes for leaving their posts."

On August 9th, 1814, the British fleet, consisting of the *Ramillies*, 74, the *Poictolus*, 44, the *Terror*, bomb ship, and a gun brig, the *Despatch*, sailed into Fishers Island Sound and proceeded to Stonington which they bombarded after considerably notifying the inhabitants to vacate.

On the ninth of June, 1814, there is this entry:

"Recd Information from *Supurb* by Sig, of there being Peace between G. Britain & France. Bounaparte having abdicated the Crown, and returned to the Isle of Elba."

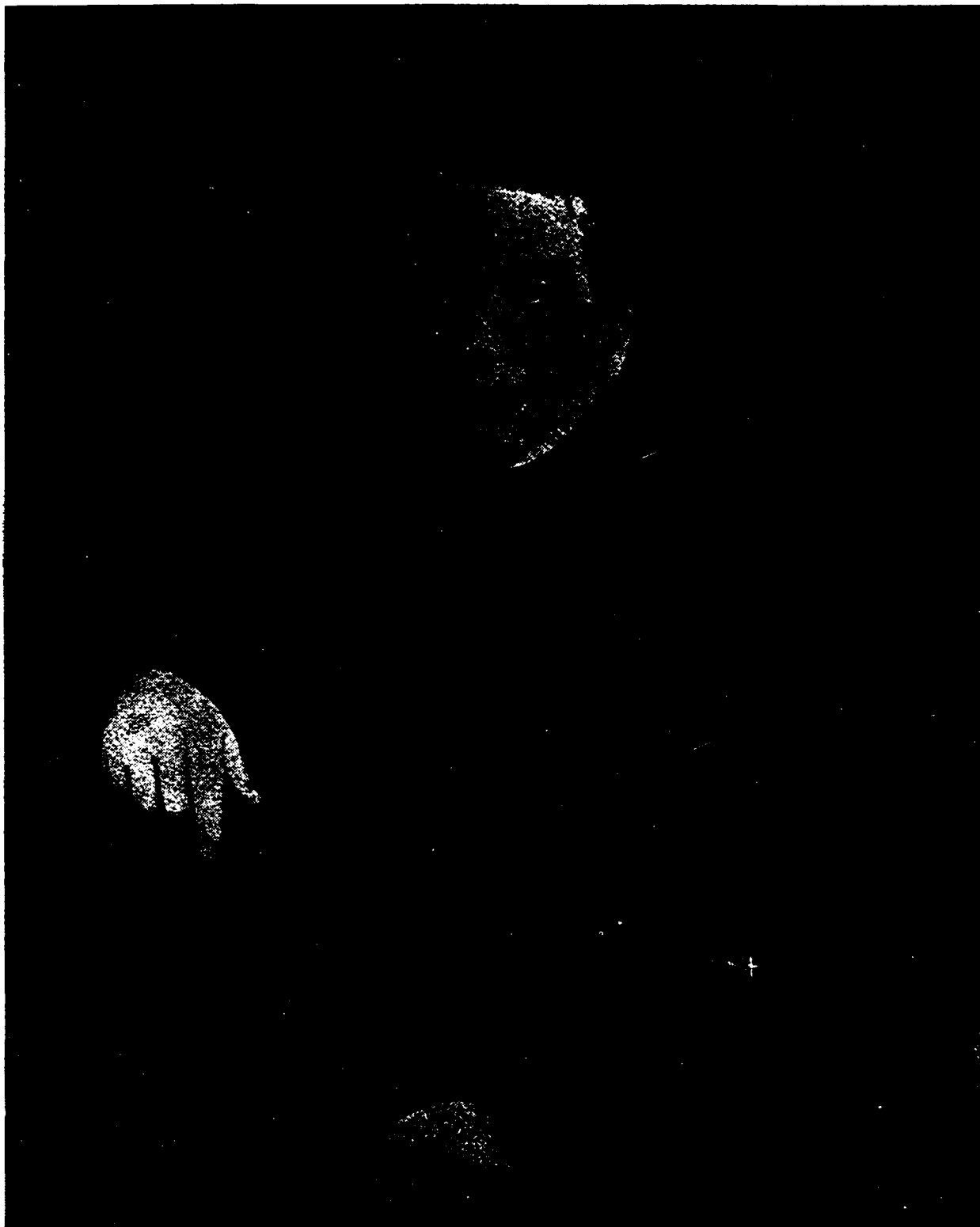
Taxes were small in these days and in 1814 the total amount was only \$68.67 for the entire Island.

On his death, May 16th, 1817, it was found that Fishers Island had been left by Francis Bayard Winthrop to his four sons. In 1818 William H. Winthrop, who had been graduated from Yale College in the Class of 1809, became the sole owner, having purchased his three brothers' interests. He spent much time on the Island, but did not raise a great deal of stock. When Ruel R. Strickland was acting as manager for him in 1838 there were listed only one hundred cows, five yoke of oxen, one driving horse, twenty-five horses and colts and twelve hundred sheep.

His son, William H. Winthrop, Jr., lived in the Winthrop house at the East End in 1843 and afterwards moved down and made his home in the Mansion House. The East End house being left vacant, Thomas Winthrop moved in and made that his home. A daughter of Mr. William H. Winthrop, Jr., relates that when a doctor was needed it was the custom to raise a white flag on one of the hills north of the Mansion House. The signal being seen, a doctor would sail over from Noank. On this hill was a large rock where a telescope was laid to watch for the doctor or any person expected.

One deep snow storm covered the Island so completely that in riding to the East End one day it was impossible to follow the road, and the riders rode over the stone walls as if they were not there.

On Wednesday of each week Winthrop sent his sloop, the *Arabella*, to New London or Noank for mail and provisions, and this was the only regular communication with the mainland.



WILLIAM H. WINTHROP

There were only five houses on the Island during this period: the East End House, the old brown house at the Flat plains (now Middle Farm), the White House, which is said to be haunted, at the Brick Yard, the Mansion House, and a house for workmen not far distant from the Mansion House. There was a rumor that the East End House formerly was panelled and that this was removed when the Winthrops left the Island. This story, however, is without foundation, as the Winthrops took with them when they departed only their personal belongings. It was during this Winthrop's time of ownership that the wreck of the *Atlantic* occurred, and wagons were sent out to collect the bodies and bring them to the Mansion House barn where they were laid out for identification.

For over two hundred years the Winthrops had owned and managed every foot of the Island and had not allowed any one to get possession of any part of it. At last, in 1847, the United States purchased the North Dumpling and erected a lighthouse there.

William H. Winthrop died in 1860, followed three years later by his wife. It then became necessary for the heirs, William H., Jr., Thomas P., and Francis B., and the two daughters, Jane P. Chester and Mary T. Pratt, to dispose of it. A purchaser was found in the person of Mr. Robert R. Fox, a retired manufacturer, of New York. The heirs deeded to George F. Chester the entire Island and its Hummocks, he in turn transferring it to Mr. Fox; and the Island that had been in the Winthrop family for two hundred and eighteen years passed to a stranger.

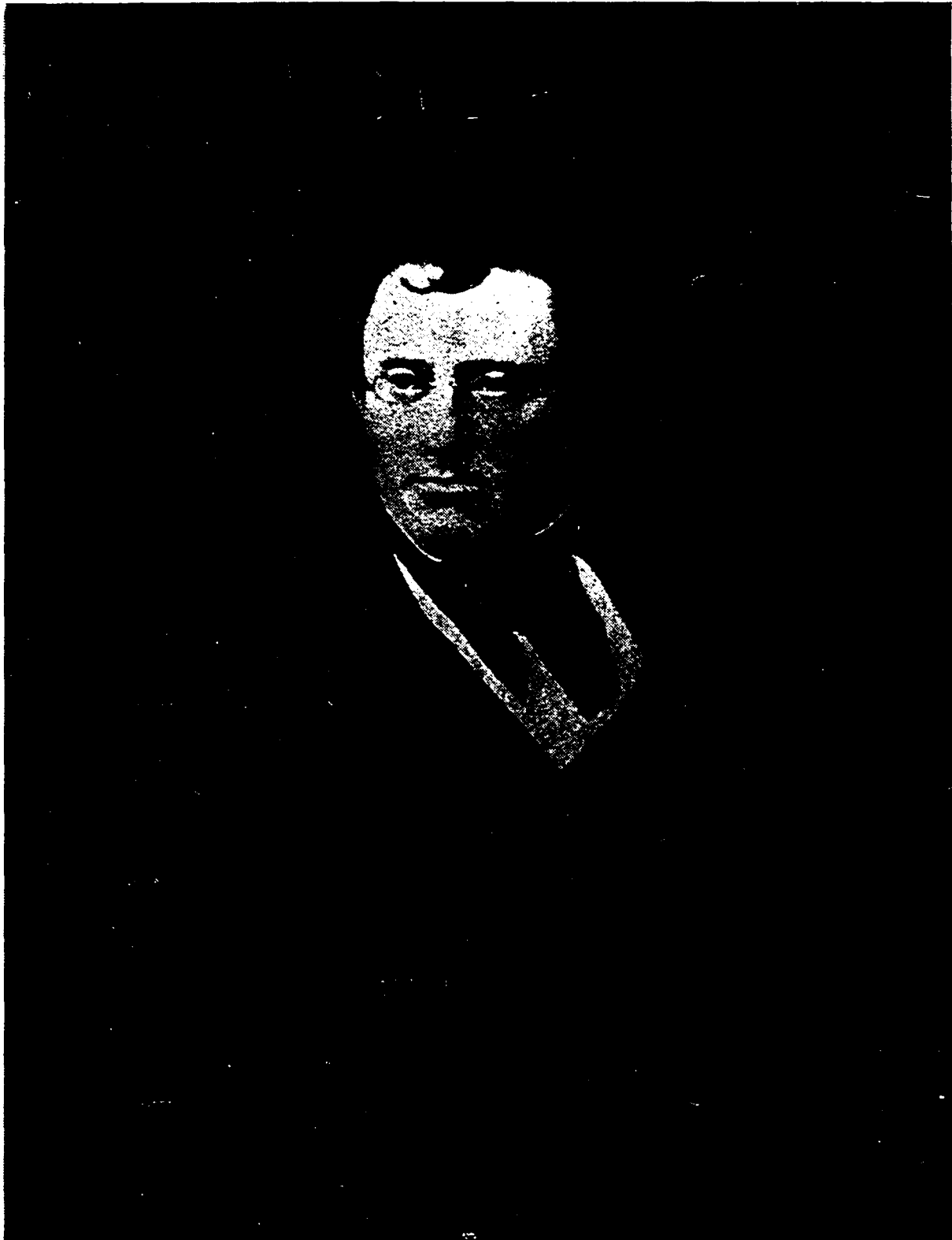
Later Days

WHEN Mr. Fox purchased the Island in 1863, he planned to cultivate it more than ever had been done and hoped to develop it along the lines of a fine stock farm. He erected a mill for grinding his grain. Some old mill stones still lie behind the Mansion House, though the mill has long since disappeared, but it is thought that these stones belonged to a mill in the time of the Winthrops. Large barns were erected where the live stock were cared for in the wintertime. The Press barn, standing near the present entrance of the Fort, and the Mansion barn were the largest; a smaller one was in the Durfee meadow, and part of its foundation forms a bunker on the golf course which now covers the meadow.

Unfortunately Mr. Fox died in the summer of 1871, before he had time to perfect his plans. He was buried near the Union Chapel on the knoll near the pines, but his body was afterwards removed to Brooklyn and interred there.

A letter from his daughter, the former Miss Fay Fox, says:

"My father carried on stock farming on a somewhat large scale. On the several farms at one time were twenty-four hundred sheep, five hundred head of horned cattle, and several hundred horses. A large sloop, the *Richard Smith*, and the yacht *Fay Fox* were moored at



ROBERT R. FOX

the wharf in front of the Mansion. The former on two occasions yearly made a trip to New York, returning with a large cargo—foodstuffs, farming implements and the various essentials for a small store. The yacht, on Tuesday and Friday, set sail for New London and this was our only communication with the mainland for many years. During the very severe winters that were to be experienced it was not an unusual thing for us to be ice-bound for three weeks. A tug would finally be chartered to bring over mail and a few passengers, and, breaking through the ice off North Hill, the landing was made in whatever was the most practical way, sometimes in a small boat or even coming ashore over the ice.

“When we had as a guest a clergyman, a Service was held on Sunday in the Music Room, so called. A man was sent out on horseback and notified everyone on the Island and every one came. There were some forty men employed on the Mansion Farm, and the sloop *Richard Smith* took over to New London any of them who cared to attend Service there, but this plan was finally abandoned, as a head wind or tide meant too much of an element of uncertainty to the trip in either direction. We had several wrecks during each winter usually and that meant an excitement for us, and the shipwrecked crew were always cared for at the Farm House.

“Have I mentioned this episode of my early days, a prize fight? There were two but the first one was the important one. A farm hand came rushing around to the front piazza to tell my father that two or three hundred men were being landed from two big schooners near North Hill. Father ordered his horse and, followed by every man on the premises, set out to investi-

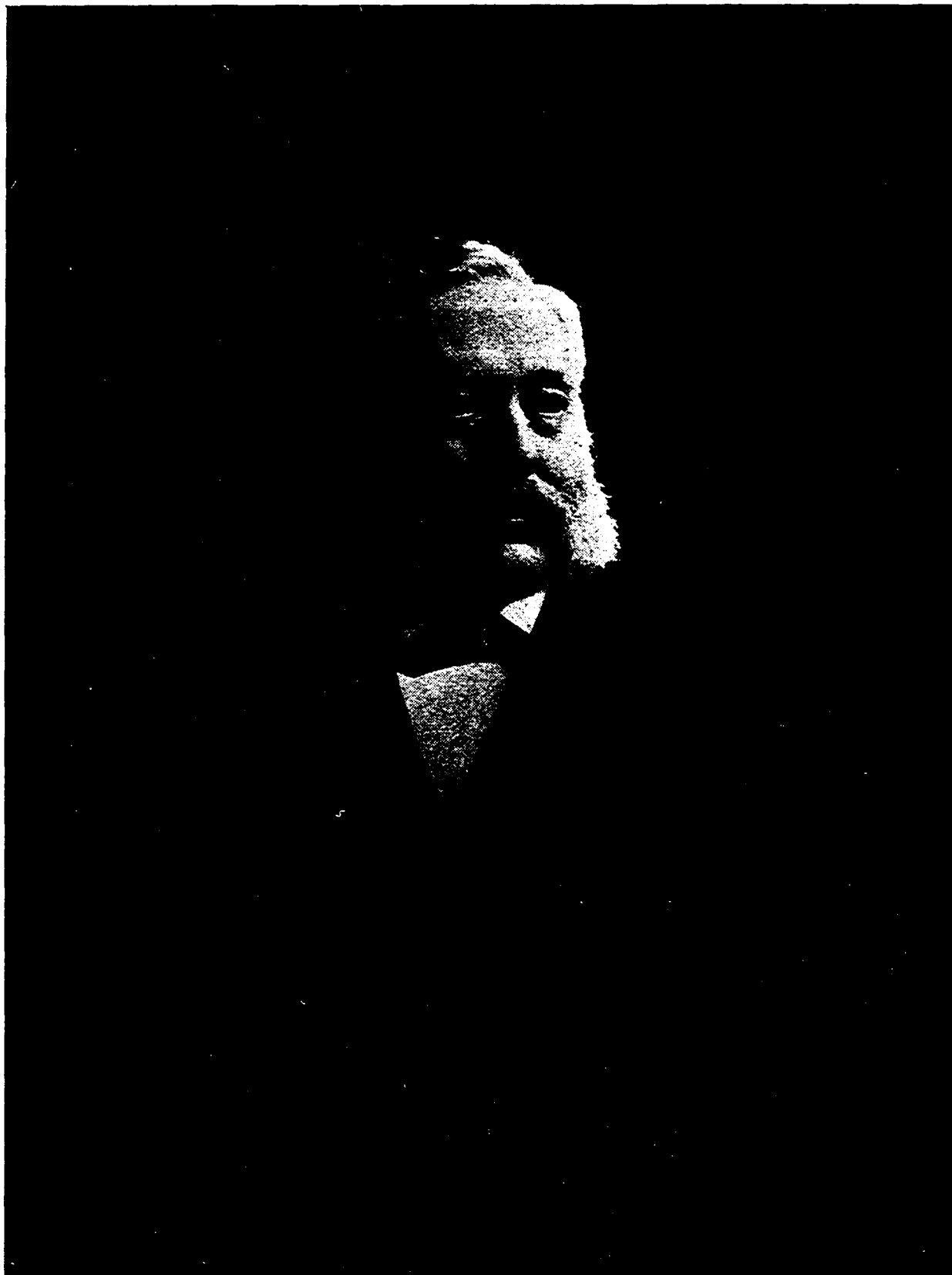
gate matters. The big field just below the Twin Hills was the scene of action. All the women and children, too frightened to be left behind, followed on and from the Twin Hills we looked down upon the scene, one which I have never forgotten. Sentinels were on watch for an approaching steamer with officers of the law, and the affair was not one of pure enjoyment for fear of liability to arrest."

The field where the prize fight was held is still known as the Battle Field and lies several hundred yards north of the Mansion House.

For eighteen years after Mr. Fox's death the Island remained in the Fox family. The farming was kept up, but on a smaller scale and efforts were made to utilize the natural beauties and develop it into a summer colony. Quite a number of lots were sold and cottages built, and one hotel, the Lyles Beach, was erected. The brick yard was opened and the bricks, which were of a fine quality, have been used in making homes and public buildings in many places up and down the coast.

Finally, in 1889, Mr. Lyles, who was the trustee for the heirs, sold the Island with its Hummocks and small islands to the Messrs. Edmund M. and Walton Ferguson.

Mr. Edmund Morewood Ferguson was born in New York City August 15th, 1838. After his graduation from Trinity College, Hartford, Conn., he engaged for some years in the iron business. He lived at Pittsburgh, Pa., and, after purchasing a half interest in Fishers Island, spent the summers there in his own house on the Highland Range overlooking what is now Fort Wright.



EDMUND M. FERGUSON

Mr. Walton Ferguson was born at Stamford, Conn., on July 6th, 1842. He also attended Trinity College. For several years he was in business with his father, John Ferguson, in New York, but lived at Stamford. Afterwards he moved to Pittsburgh, Pa., where he became associated in the coke business with his brother and Mr. H. C. Frick. In 1884 he returned to Stamford and made his home there until his death on April 7th, 1922. At Fishers Island he had his own home in the neighborhood of North Hill, commanding a beautiful view over the waters of the Sound and the Connecticut shore. On the death of his brother, E. M. Ferguson, at Pittsburgh, Pa., on June 18th, 1904, he took over the other half of the Island, and ran it under the firm name of E. M. & W. Ferguson until July, 1918, when it was incorporated under the name of the Fishers Island Farms, Inc.

The original idea of the Fergusons was to keep the Island as it always had been, simple and like a private estate. Unfortunately one thing led to another and the Island started to expand. To utilize the large barns and the hay it was decided to raise horses. This was tried, but soon proved a dismal failure. The Mansion House that had been open for many years became cramped and, the prospects becoming brighter, an addition was joined to it and a number of cottages built. The supply of accommodations, however, was soon outgrown and first one addition and then another was added, and more cottages built, until the Mansion House itself could hardly be seen, surrounded as it was by so many other buildings.

One of the first things done was to purchase the old

Lyles Beach Hotel that was used as an objective for steamers with excursion parties. This hotel was rebuilt from top to bottom and renamed the Munnatawket. It stands upon one of the most attractive sites on the Island.

A band of several hundred sheep was grazed for a good many years, but it was too few in number to need a herder and was a constant bother, as the sheep were continually getting through the fences and damaging the crops. They were disposed of in 1914.

As no good milk could be purchased and brought to the Island to supply the needs of the summer population, a dairy was started. The Wilderness Barn was built which, with the Middle Farm, gave stable room for a large herd. Different breeds were tried, but the Holstein proved the best all-around breed for the Island, and gradually the others were eliminated. The care of the cows and milk was put in the hands of the New York County Medical Commission, and from that time on the milk delivered was clean and good. To feed all these cows, about two hundred in number, it was necessary to grow hay and ensilage corn, so farming was carried on in quite an extensive way. In 1924 it was learned that good milk and cream could be brought by motor trucks from inland points in Connecticut, and delivered to the boat in as good condition as the Farms could produce it. As a result, in one day one hundred and forty cows were shipped from the Island. Only about thirty cows and some young stock were retained to care for the winter population and to produce certified milk during the summer months. It was essential to have good milk, though the dairy had been run at a

large loss; now, due to motor transportation, it has become possible to do away entirely with the herd.

Until 1899 the residents of the Island were forced to depend on candles, lamps or private lighting plants. Street lights were unknown. At this date an electric light station was built and electricity was pretty generally installed. Street lights were erected where most needed and the night appearance of the roads was greatly improved. In 1922 the plant, having become quite antiquated, was closed down, and a cable run from near the Munnatawket dock, between the Hummocks over to Groton Long Point, where it connected with one of the power companies. This cable is capable of carrying a heavy voltage, and besides furnishing the houses and hotels, also supplies Fort Wright with electricity.

There have been three different schoolhouses built on the Island, school having also been held in the Mansion House. The first schoolhouse was built at the Brick Yard, as the majority of the children lived in that neighborhood. In 1888 the second school was built near the Episcopal Church, but with the increased numbers of winter residents, augmented with the children from Fort Wright, the accommodations were outgrown and it was necessary to get larger quarters. In 1914 a new school, up-to-date in every way, was built on the land adjoining the Union Chapel. The old schoolhouse was deeded to the Public Library, which now has over seven thousand volumes, and, thanks to the interest of many of the summer people, has a very good assortment of books.

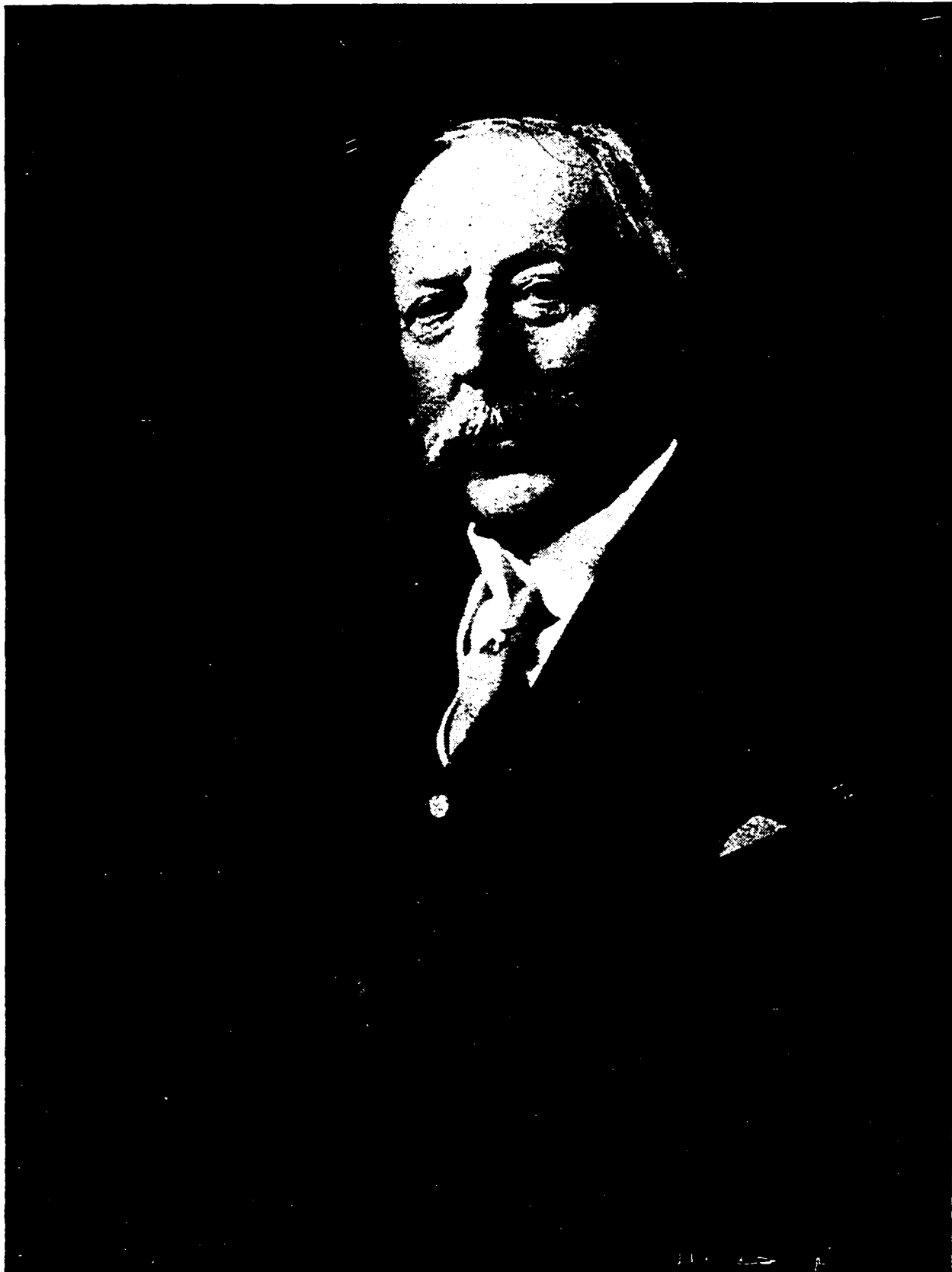
The first Church on the Island was St. John's Episcopal Church. This was erected in 1881, largely by the efforts of Henry Bowers, George H. Bartlett and Rich-

ard H. Chipman. It stands on a beautiful site overlooking the West End, and connecting with its grounds is the cemetery for the Island. As this church was hardly suited to all creeds, the Union Chapel was erected in 1898, due largely to the efforts of Mr. F. E. Hine. In 1905 a Roman Catholic Church was constructed a short distance south of the Episcopal Church. These two churches remain open throughout the year, thus affording places of worship to the winter residents of the Island.

One of Mr. Fox's daughters conducted the first Post Office. The mail was brought over from Noank only twice a week, so her duties were light in the little office connected with the Mansion House.

After the regular mail contracts were put into effect, the Post Office was moved to the Murdock Cottage, and when the Office Building was erected in 1898, it was again moved to its present quarters. The Office Building, besides housing the Post Office, is the office of the Fishers Island Farm, Inc., which is the company running the different departments that the Fergusons have from time to time been forced to add to care for the ever-growing numbers of summer people. The telephone and telegraph office are also in this building. A large room on the second floor is used as a meeting place for different organizations, and most of the social activities are held there during the winter.

"Some of the old residents still have cause to remember the old steamer *Fishers Island*, the first steamer to make regular trips to New London. Many others have pleasant memories of the *Skip-Jack*, a relic of the Island,



WALTON FERGUSON

and of Capt. Nash, who never failed to entertain his passengers with stories of his fertile brain."

The *Munnatawket* was built in 1890, and is still running. From time to time work has been done on her, but so well was she built of picked timbers and planks that to-day she is as seaworthy as when she first took the water. Two years ago her engine, that had been in use for thirty-three years, was removed and a Diesel engine installed, permitting more deck space for automobiles as well as making her more economical to operate.

In 1904 a larger boat was needed, and the *Restless* was built. She received her name from the *Onrust*, in which Adrian Block had sailed on his voyage of discovery nearly three hundred years before. This boat is used only in the summertime, and the *Munnatawket* makes her way back and forth during the winter months.

Here and There

IT is difficult to tell how old are any of the Winthrop houses on the Island. We know that Winthrop, in 1780, stated that the houses were all burned, which would make it seem that nothing remains older than that date. On the contrary, however, tradition has it that they are over two hundred years old.

The Winthrop House at the East End was added to by Mr. Fox, who put on the two-storied porch and the addition in the rear. The Mansion House consisted originally of only the front part, now used as the hotel office. An old Dutch doorway, covered by a small porch with seats on either side, opened into a narrow hall, on the right of which was the music room. On the left was the kitchen with a huge fireplace. A different roof, the present mansard, was put on by Mr. Fox.

The Brick Yard House, or, as it was formerly called, the White House, was one of the three Winthrop houses. It has always been haunted, according to tradition, but for many years the inhabitants have not been visited, and what the story is no one knows. It is probably of the same period as the East End house, which is a brick house covered with shingles. No mention has ever been made of this house, and its real history is unknown, save that it was used as an office for the brick company for several years.

The old lock and key of the Mansion House are still

in existence, and until a short time ago were in the possession of one of Mr. Fox's heirs. She writes that it was "a huge affair and in perfect working order, and at least two hundred and fifty years old," and that "in the early days one of the Winthrops had always had the key put under his pillow every night."

Until 1815 the Island maintained its original appearance, save for several scattered clearings which had been made on which to raise crops, necessary for the use of those residing on the Island, and for the live stock that was being raised there.

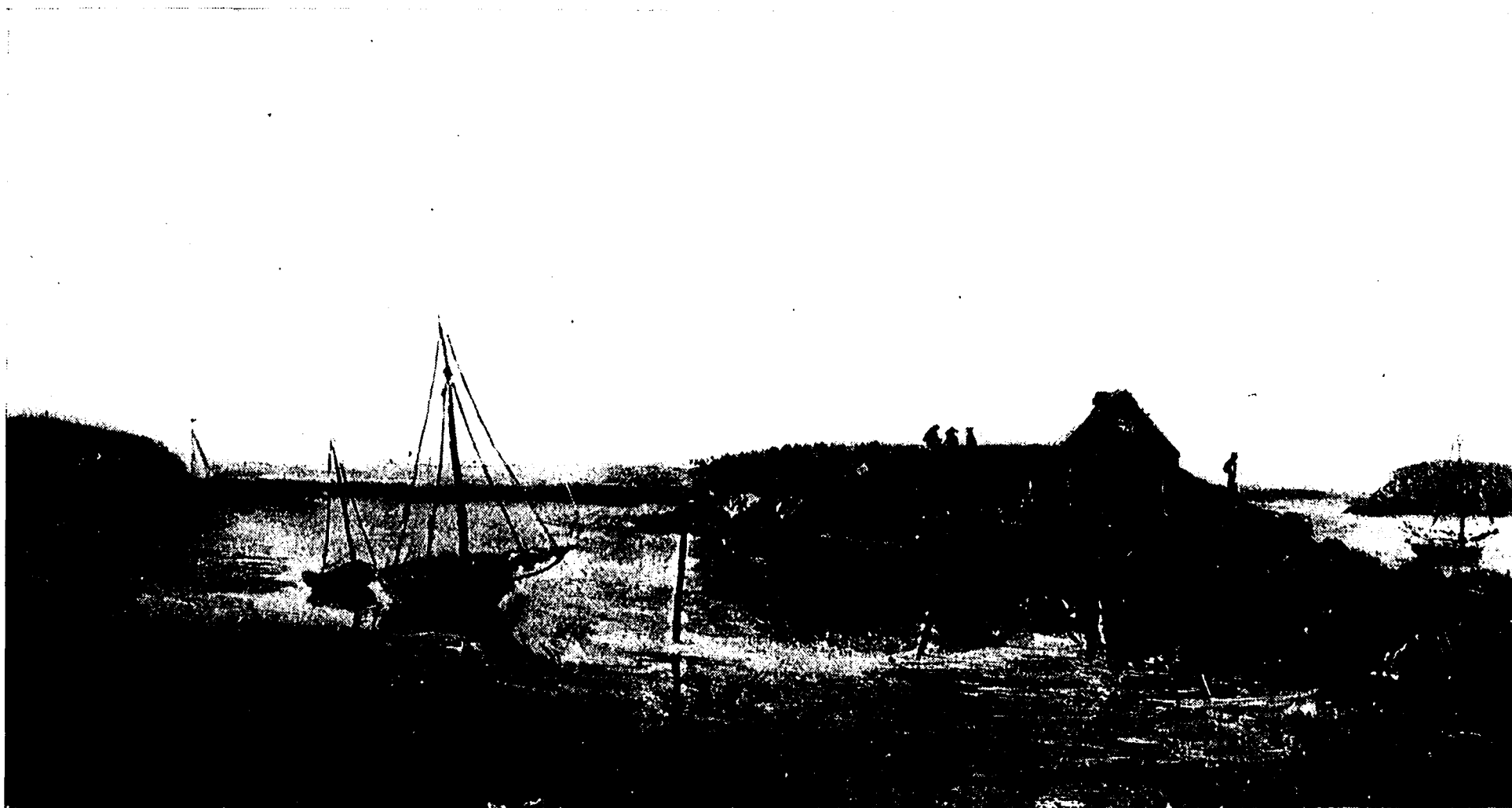
On Friday, Sept. 22nd, 1815, a gale of great force came along the coast and practically laid bare the Island. The oaks, maples and other trees that covered the greater part of the Island were overturned or broken, and what had once been a wooded retreat for deer and other animals became an open stretch of rolling hills. Even to this day, the decayed remains of large trees can be seen lying where they were hurled during the great wind.

So strong was the wind that the harbor water at New London was held in, and caused to rise three or four feet higher than ever before recorded, covering the docks and flooding the land lying along the water front. Vessels were driven ashore, stores fell and trees were blown down, and the general damage was great. At Stonington every vessel in the harbor went ashore. At Providence, forty were driven upon the river banks. So strong was the wind that the salt spray was driven far inland, to such an extent that the streams and wells in the neighborhood, according to the New London newspaper of the day, became brackish.

On the Island, only those trees that lay in the sheltered parts were spared. The old-fashioned rail fences, whose zigzag lines can still be traced, were given up for lack of wood, and from that time it was necessary to purchase elsewhere the lumber needed on the Island. What few trees were left commenced a new growth, and several fair-sized patches of woods lie scattered about, consisting mainly of oak and maple, while here and there hickory, beech and pepperidge trees are found, adding to the beauty of the landscape and also providing homes for many of the tree-loving birds.

Near the place where Hempstead, writing in his diary of 1738, tells of getting his boat "a ground on the flats," is situated the Hay Harbor Club. The Club is the center of the Island's social life and here the tennis, dancing and boating enthusiasts gather. The Club is only an old house, added to in every direction until it has lost every semblance that it ever bore to the original. Its location, wide porches and service, however, make it attractive, and for years it has been most popular. The little children find the sand bar a wonderful place on which to wade and sail their boats in the shallow water. A pool was dredged out, and a dock constructed leading from it to the bath houses, which gives an opportunity to the older people who like to dive and swim in still water. The beaches further up the Island afford fine bathing for those preferring the rougher waters of the ocean.

Little Hay Harbor is the home of the smaller boats. Motor boats, skidooies sailed by the youngsters, and the one-design class are kept in its sheltered waters. The boats of the one-design class race once or twice a week



FISH HUT POINT, HAY HARBOR
FROM A PAINTING MADE IN 1860

outside the harbor, and have many exciting contests for the cups that are awarded.

For twenty-three years the Fergusons had as their superintendent Mr. F. E. Hine. During all these years he never spared himself in work for the interests of the Island. He held the only public office, that of Justice of the Peace, and was a prime mover in all public affairs, giving largely of his spare time to the Library and Union Chapel. When people were in trouble he went to their aid either with advice or help as the case might require. He died in November, 1923, and the Fishers Island Farms and the people on the Island lost a real friend.

Several other employees have worked for the present owners for thirty or more years, and the majority of department heads have been at least ten years on the Island. Having men like these, who can be depended upon, makes lighter the troubles that arise at times.

OLD GRAVES

Aside from one or two Indian graves which have been dug up, the oldest grave that we have any record of is that of Samuel Pierpont. He was drowned while crossing the Connecticut River, and his body was washed ashore on the Island April 28th, 1723, a few hundred yards east of the Coast Guard beach. The old flat tombstone of red sandstone is still in place and, having been recut in 1924, the inscription tells the story. An old account says the following of Pierpont:

"Essaying to pass over Connecticut River, towards Lime, a league above Seabrook Ferry, in a canoo, with an experienced Indian Water-man; a suddain and unusual

Storm of Wind came down upon them, overwhelmed and drowned them.—He had an extraordinary gift in Prayer; was a Boanerges in Preaching; of a very acceptable Conservatism, and highly valued by the people of Lime.”

North of Chocomount were found, several years ago, on one of the ridges, the graves of two children and two adults. Only rough fieldstones had been erected to serve as markers, and who these people were will probably never be known. As there are some old foundations not far distant it is likely that they were some tenants that were employed by the Winthrops many years ago.

On the point running out from the East End towards the Coast Guard Station is another grave with the initials “W. W. S.” and “Westerly R. I.” cut on a rough stone. This stone is in a hollow and is rather difficult to find. In all probability it marks the resting place of someone who was drowned and buried where his body came ashore.

In 1924 a letter was received from one of the previous owners of the Island in which she said:

“As a child I used to be much interested in trying to decipher the almost obliterated inscriptions on three or four very old tombstones which were on the gentle rise of ground just above the swamp and between the Mansion House and the Lyles Cottage. I recall one stone marked the grave of a Lizzie Allen, aged seventeen, drowned. When the meadow was seeded down these stones were laid face downward, I have often wondered why, and finally grassed over.”

Late in September of the same year a man was set to digging a trench on the summit of this slope. In

a few minutes discolored earth was encountered and on digging further a body was found. Filling in this grave, the trench was continued and, in all, five graves were located. Only one had a real headstone and on that was engraved:

“Joseph Son of
Mr Joseph & Abigail Congdon
died Feb 13— 1792
aged
4 days.”

The other stones that were met with were crude field-stones, with no names, and the one of which the letter told was not found. As these graves were uncovered after very little digging, it is believed that others lie there and that this spot was the old burying ground of the Island.

TREASURE HUNTERS

There have been many rumors about buried treasure on Fishers Island, but only two have any records to substantiate them. Near the Winthrop House at the East End a treasure was supposed to have been found, and this very likely was what led to the name given the pond east of the house—Money Pond.

While Captain Kidd sailed about the waters near the Island and buried at least one treasure on Gardiner's Island, there is nothing but rumor to say that he made Fishers Island the scene of any of his activities. One account, of somewhat recent date, says:

“An old seaman now in command of a fishing yacht, whose station is at the wharf of Shinnecossett Neck, assured me that he had seen men digging for this treasure on Fishers Island, at Little Hay Harbor, so late as 1850.”

There is a story that a farmer who lived at one time at the East End house, while plowing one day, dug up an old Spanish cannon. Soon after this he gave up his position and moved over to the mainland, where in a few years he died. On his death it was found that he had left a good-sized fortune and it was supposed that beneath the cannon he had unearthed some long buried treasure.

“Boston, Mass. July 25, 1892.

“E. M. & W. Ferguson,

“Fishers Island, N. Y.

“Gentlemen:—

“About eighty years since a member of our Great Grandfather’s family died at St. Johns, N. B. He had been a sailor and had accumulated considerable money. Before he died, he said he had buried for certain reasons an iron chest at Fisher’s Island, N. Y. This chest he claimed had in it considerable gold and silver. He made a written statement of the exact spot where it could be found. This paper has been in the family ever since, and although enough has been thought of it to preserve it, no one has ever made any particular investigation. Some things that have come to light of late lead us to believe that he did have at one time considerable money in hard cash and that it was secreted somewhere. With two other interested parties, I visited the Island last



LOOKING NORTH OVER WEST HARBOR

week and found the spot where he claimed the chest was buried. Certainly his description of the spot where he claimed it was located was clear enough to enable us to find it, if it is there. It is in the vicinity of the little pond at the mouth of Hay Harbor. We write for permission to dig for it. We should not want to open more than six or eight feet square, and two men can do all the digging required in less than one half day. We will guarantee to replace the earth and leave it in as good condition as we find it excepting the breaking of the sod. While we do not really expect we can find anything there, we should like the privilege of digging, under the circumstances. Will you kindly permit us to do this? We should expect to pay for all damages.

“Yours respectfully,

“_____”

“Receipt for treasures on Fishers Island, Hay Harbor; West of the harbor 50 feet from the mouth of the harbor, there lies a large rock with a mark on the rock one yard long pointing South West—twenty yards from the rock the same point there lies three large chests of treasures of silver and gold, besides two more on the north side of the pond east of the rock,—one on the bank a little north of the rock.”

In answer to the above letter, permission was given to look for this treasure. No one took the interest to be on hand when the treasure seekers arrived. They came, dug one hole and departed, without anyone being the wiser, and it seems that probably they were successful in their search.

A few years later another man came to the Island.

He hired a horse and buggy and spent days driving about, finally disclosing that he was looking for treasure. It seems that in going over some old letters that had been in his wife's family for generations he had come across the following:

"The Grate order to take up money.

"November 6th day A.D. 1770.

"Elisha Livermore.

Jordan Poast.

Gillond.

Jonathan Lester.

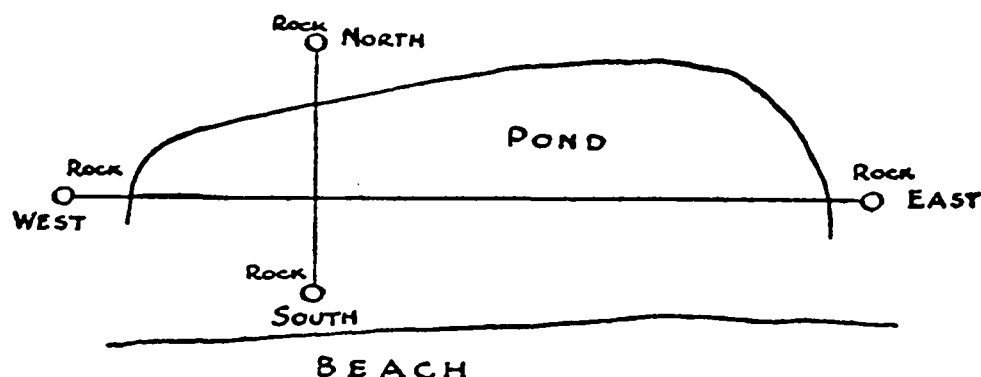
Cholstar.

Moses Fuller.

Capt. Merry Hartford.

"These may certify that as I am the true soul owner of Chist of money full of gold; and thirteen boxes full of gold and silver that is hiden upon fishers island, I do upon good consideration give over all my right and power to take up sd money to Mr Pratt of Lee (Mass) upon his giving one tenth parte of the whole to the heirs of William Mathews the giver to me if to be found but if not to be found to be devided amongst the other partners. And to give the half of all to me and my partners and to take and devide the one half with the said Prat and his partners as he and they agree; and if I am dead to my childrine as I shall order it to be divided; and every partner in both sides to promise to devoate a tenthpart of theyer part to the benefit of the gossell or school where-soever they pleas and if I am dead to give my partners their part as they are named wids Anna Bingham; one 10th of the whol; Simion Root and Elisha Root his son

one 10th betwixt them zaryag fare one 10th as witness my hand



Where the line crosses there is the chist. 4 feet north in an East and West line there is the boxes."

Attached to this treasure paper is the following strange epistle, which if it ever had any power over evil spirits, will have ceased to exist if the treasure is found in the future and anyone may now safely come near the treasure without coming under the spell:

"In the name of God the Ruler of all Spirits for as much as money. Sums of money in gold and silver hath been unjustly taken by wicked and lawless men and hid in divers parts and places of the Earth and held by wicked and strong spirits and inchantments and held from men for whose use it was ordained to be good as: Genesis second and twelfth therefore no evil spirit hath no just right to detain it and if silver it was ordained as all things for the use of man and was the price of the Lord of Glory, therefore no evil spirit hath no just right to hold it from the use of man whome God hath maid and given all these things for their use and them for his glory Mathew twenty sixt and fifteen agree for thirty pieces of silver, therefore for as much as no Evil spirit

hath no just right to hold aney such coin nor they that hid had no just right to it, I do by the name of God the all wise King of all Kings three persons and one God adjure all such spirits so holding or inchanting such sums of gold or silver unjustly by the power and name of the almighty God to withdraw from any place or places where this adjurement shall be seet up and not to appear visibly nor by power invisible to move aney such coin one inch and by the name of the almighty God adjure you and aney of you to depart and not to come within the space of ninety and nine rods from aney place where this adjurement shall be set up for the terme of ninety and nine years; in the name of all the all mighty God amain.

“Dated November 6th A.D. 1770

“Mr Moses Fuller Sr. Recd this above written in the fear of God and with a true hart and I hop God all mighty will helpe you Mr Jonathan Lester or aney other man you shall think best from going to serve at Comnd.

“ROBERT WATSON.”

The owner of this paper was given permission to search for the treasure. At last he decided that the pond now called the Treasure Pond was the spot. Engaging a diver, he explored the bottom of the pond, but with no success. The water was deep, the mud deeper and the diver could make little headway, so that finally the attempt was given up. The old man that was searching figured that the treasure was worth close to a million dollars, but whether he chose the wrong pond or whether the evil spirits were still guarding it, the fact remains that the treasure was not recovered.

SHIPWRECKS

The first wreck that we find any mention of occurring on the Island was the *John and Lucy*, a British merchant vessel that was lost on Race Point in 1671. She was a total loss, and her crew are thought to have perished. She was an armed ship, for there is a note saying her guns were recovered by seamen from New London.

During the night of November 28th, 1679, another vessel, the barque *Providence*, standing in from sea, drove on the point and was totally wrecked. Captain Dymond and his companions only just escaped with their lives. In a queer old protest which he presented to the authorities in New London, he says "he acted to attayne to the porte of New London for his discharg, and coming neare the same and standing of and in the night, as judgment directed and wind and weather would permit, under extreame darkness, it pleased God soe to order, that by the extreimity of the wind and weather, the Barque fell among a parcell of rocks neare Fishers Island Poynt, where the said Barke and all her goods in her perished and was lost."

Fitz-John Winthrop, the following March, writes to his brother Wait, that "seuerall coyles of rigging haueing been taken vp, a part of ye wreck that was lost on ye island, I have detayned them——."

A Spanish ship of some size was wrecked on the Island, but the only mention of her that can be found is from the journal of Simeon Lyman of Sharon, a soldier.

"Aug 23. 1775. The next day there was about 20 of us went aboard a sloop and went to Fishers Island about 12 m.

"24. We walked about and we went aboard of the old Spanish ship that was cast away. It was 8 rod long and four decks, and there was rooms as fine as any in the housen all papered off."

The best known of all the wrecks that have occurred on the Island was the new side-wheeler, *Atlantic*, that left her port of New London on Thanksgiving Eve, November 26th, 1846, bound for New York. The night was black and the wind blew with terrific force from the northwest, when the *Atlantic* steamed out from New London with her load of freight and passengers. Suddenly, without warning, the steam chest burst and the *Atlantic* was forced to anchor. At this time she was not far from Bartlett's Reef. The wind grew in strength and additional anchors were dropped, but to no avail. The wind and seas caused her to drag, and she rolled and pitched at the mercy of the elements. At noon on Thanksgiving Day she had dragged her anchors until she lay not more than a quarter of a mile from the shore. The steamer *Mohegan* tried to get beside her to take off passengers, but could not accomplish this, owing to the great seas. The next morning at half-past four, while in the deepest dark, the *Atlantic* crashed on the rocks of North Hill. Wave after wave went over her, washing overboard everything that was not fastened. Soon a gigantic wave swept the ladies' saloon and its occupants into the boiling, rocky surf. "In fifteen minutes the majestic boat was a mass of ruins with nothing to tell what she once was but the floating timbers and part of her larboard side high on the rocks."

Those who wished to stay on the wreck were torn loose and cast into the sea, and of those who chose the



WRECK OF THE STEAMER ATLANTIC, NOVEMBER, 1846

sea and tried to reach land, many were dashed to death on the rocks. The scene was fearful; the night dark and the wind blowing a gale. Those who were saved were only just alive after their horrible experiences and would never forget the awful times through which they had passed.

The survivors were taken to or made their way to the Mansion House, where Mr. Wm. H. Winthrop, the owner, took every care of them and had his men all out searching the shores for any saved or dead persons. The next day the survivors were taken to New London and the dead carried there for burial, though a few are said to be buried on the Island—but where, no one knows. The ship's bell, owing to the vibration of the vessel's timbers, kept ringing during the wreck and for some time afterwards. It was this mournful tolling that led to the familiar poem, "*The Atlantic*."

"Toll, toll, toll,
Thou bell by billows swung,
And night and day thy warning words
Repeat with mournful tongue.
Toll for the queenly boat,
Wrecked on yon rocky shore,
Seaweed is in her palace hall,
She rides the surges no more.
Toll for the master bold, the high souled and the brave,
Who ruled her like a thing of life, amid the crested
wave."

The bell was later taken off the wreck, and is said by some to have been erected on the hill west of the

Mansion, and used to call the workmen to their meals. The hill is still called Bell Hill, but the bell has disappeared and its whereabouts is unknown. It is said, even at this late date, by fishermen, that they can "feel" the boilers of the *Atlantic* with their anchors, but nothing remains of her that can be seen. Her flag is in the New London Historical Society, and the old newspapers on file there give very graphic descriptions of this calamity.

During July, 1775,—“a ship sent in as a prize by Capt. Biddle, in the *Andrew Daria*, ran on the rocks near Fishers Island, being chased by a British ship-of-war, and immediately a number of armed men from Stonington went on board, and as they say, prevented the man-of-war from destroying her.”

On July 2nd, 1788, occurred one of the disasters that is met with about the sea. A Captain Chapman was bringing to New London a party of immigrants in his vessel, when sickness broke out on board and he was forced to put them into quarantine on Fishers Island. While landing them, one boat filled and capsized; the occupants in seizing hold of the second boat overturned this also, and the Captain and nine other persons perished.

Many other ships have struck upon the shores of the Island, the *Alinda*, a Portuguese tramp, in about 1895 went on in the fog near Goose Island, on the south shore, and eventually broke up. The schooner *Isabella Blake*, after which the beach is named, went ashore in about 1870. Near this beach another three-masted schooner grounded in 1914. Two Government boats, a tug and a submarine, have gone ashore in recent years. Some of



LIFE SAVING STATION AT RACE POINT, ABOUT 1895
SHOWING OLD LIFE CAR AT SIDE

these vessels have been salvaged and others have been left to be gradually battered to pieces by the waves and disappear.

One stormy day in January, 1875, Mrs. Fox left the Mansion for a walk towards Race Point. As she drew near she saw through the snow two schooners on the rocks. She hastened back and collected some of her employees and returned to the wrecks. Near by was the Live Saving Station which the Government had erected and equipped in 1870, and, running out the life boat, they saved the crews of both vessels and gave them shelter and care at the Mansion. The old station stood in the '90s and was an object of curiosity, with the old rusted and useless life boat, life car and other equipment lying about. The small mortar used for shooting a life line over a wreck was afterwards removed, and it is said was presented to some historical society as a relic of one of the early wars.

The 28th of April, 1923, was a stormy day. Huge waves coming from the south dashed themselves to foam along the south shore of the Island. Farther out, beyond Montauk, the waves were still larger. One of these carried away the rudder of the former yacht *Onward*, which had been rechristened the *Thelma-Phæbe*, and she was out of control. First one anchor was lost and then another, until the *Thelma-Phæbe* drifted helpless, tossed about by the heavy seas. The next morning at seven o'clock she struck on the western end of Chocomount Beach, on a line between the clump of rocks and the key post of the Coast Guard patrol.

The drift through the awful night had been one of horror to all on board, as they were continually wet and

expecting to be drowned each minute. When she struck, the colored cook, seizing a mattress, jumped overboard and was killed on the rocks or drowned and was afterwards picked up on the beach. The rest of the crew, seven in number, came ashore on the life raft.

The cargo of the *Thelma-Phæbe* was reported to consist of between two and three thousand cases of Scotch and rye whiskies. Many cases were washed from the deck and scattered along the shore, some being salvaged by the Coast Guards and doubtless some by the civilians. What remained in her hull was removed by a wrecking crew, which also took out her engine, and then, placing dynamite in her hold, blew her up so that overcurious people would not be continually searching her for stray bottles.

There were many tales told about the wreck. One of the boys from the farm found a case and hid it among some bushes. On his return the next day, when he came to take it away, he found it all gone, empty bottles lying about, and near by a soldier peacefully sleeping. Hearing the boy approach, the soldier raised his head and remarked, "Little Boy Blue, you've lost your sheep," after which he again dropped off to sleep. One finder of a case, not being able to wait until he got it safe home, opened it, and after drinking a good deal, did not know where to put the remaining bottles. A ray of intelligence penetrating his dazed brain, he buried them in the sand of the beach. Then, fearing that he would be unable to find them later, he dug them up and proceeded with great care to rebury them, leaving their necks in view. It is needless to say that upon his return some one had forestalled him.



THE THELMA-PHOEBE, WRECKED ON CHOCOMOUNT BEACH, APRIL, 1923

One fisherman picked up twenty-seven cases floating east of Watch Hill, and received for his day's catch \$1100. One of the small boys on the Island had twice found a bottle, but both times had been relieved of it by one of the sharp-eyed Revenue Agents. He at last picked up an empty bottle and, slipping it under his arm, started away. After a chase he allowed the agent to catch him, much to his own glee and the agent's chagrin.

And stories are also told of how, in the dead of night, people carried their precious findings inland and buried them in out-of-the-way places, as the pirates of old did with their ill-gotten gains.

The fifty-foot cabin cruiser *Columbia* on the last day of December, 1923, was running along shore on her way in from the rum fleet. The night was dark and the seas were pounding the shore, when without warning she crashed on the rocks at Barley Field Cove. Each wave moved her farther upon the reef, until she was jammed at last among rocks that held her firmly. Then the waves were able to do their damage and the *Columbia* began to break up. Her crew, consisting of three men, made their way ashore, and after stumbling about in the darkness finally saw the light at the Coast Guard Station and hastened to it for shelter, as they were wet and nearly frozen. They said they were duck hunters, but about that time one of the patrols came in and reported cases of whisky coming ashore. The cases, about eighty in number, were saved, but later opened and their contents destroyed, and the crew taken away for trial. While the engine was saved, the boat was completely destroyed and little of her remains to show where the wreck occurred.

Until a few years ago it is doubtful if more than a few people living in Southold knew that Fishers Island was a part of their town. Certainly the Island derived little benefit from its connection with a town so distant. Taxes were collected, and that was almost the only interest taken in it. A change then occurred; closer contact was established, and the interest in the Island grew. Now each year members of the Town Board come to the Island and do what they can to help. The County Supervisors also come to visit the Island every few years, and now the Island feels that it really belongs to Southold and is helped by her fellow townsmen from Long Island.

WATER SUPPLY

For many years the only water supply on the Island was obtained from wells, which were an unending source of trouble, as the wind blew either too strongly or too gently at times to operate properly the windmills. Finally, in 1904, a large reservoir was constructed on the top of Bell Hill, in the rear of the Mansion House, and water pumped to it from the Barlow and Island Lakes, which are connected, thus giving a good supply of water to the West End. Shortly after the electric cable was laid, the old-fashioned steam pumps were removed and electric pumps installed, which have been much more satisfactory and have kept the water in the reservoir at a more nearly constant level than the old pumps were able to do.

The lakes add greatly to the beauty of a drive along the Island, combining, as they do, a touch of inland

scenery with the grander sea views, and these ever-changing, lovely vistas are not easily forgotten.

Race Point and Race Rock have, since Colonial days, been a great menace to navigation. We find mention of beacons on the Point in early days. In 1849 a spindle had been erected on Race Rock itself, but it was not until 1878 that the lighthouse was erected on the rock in the midst of the swirling eddies of the Race. This work was a most difficult thing to accomplish, as the tides and currents were continually undoing what the builders constructed. Captain T. A. Scott was at last successful, and to-day the Race Rock Light stands in its rushing waters, warning off from danger any ships venturing too near. The account of the trials and tribulations that were met with in constructing this lighthouse will be found in the book, "Caleb West—Master Diver," by F. Hopkinson Smith.

To safeguard any vessels that might go ashore along the Island, the United States Government was deeded enough land on East Harbor to have a suitable Coast Guard Station erected, and this station is now one of the best equipped along the coast. Day in and day out the patrols cover their beats, and their watchful eyes are ever on the lookout to rescue boats in trouble at sea or along the shore.

SPORT AND WILD LIFE

Fishers Island has always been a favorite place for shooting and hunting of different kinds. First the Indians used it, and among the refuse of their shell heaps we find many deer bones. Winthrop, when he got pos-

session of the Island, took care to have included in the grant from the Duke of York the hunting, fowling and hawking rights, so that he could enjoy them himself.

In a letter from Roger Williams to John Winthrop, Jr., in March, 1649, he says, in speaking of an Indian named Nunekunat, that:

"He prays you not to loose your right, but send for a skin of a moose which was killed vpon one of your hummocks by Fishers Iland lately, & caried to Wequash-cuck, as the lord."

When Fitz-John Winthrop and his brother Wait were joint owners of the Island, we find more mention of the hunting there. In a letter from Wait in 1688 he says:

"He also desires I would write som thing that may be an order to him to keepe every body from bringing guns on the Island to gun or hunt, and desire you to put your hand to it, which I heer enclose; it may be of good use if that custom can be broke."

From this it is evident that poachers were found in those days, showing that the game must have been plentiful.

In 1691, October 31st, Wait, who evidently was a good deal of a sportsman and was trying to improve the shooting on the Island, wrote again to his brother:

". . . and it may be best to have an improvement at that end of the island; there must be reservation for the deer and turkeys coming frely there without disturbance. . . . Whether an improvement with rabbits on the very east neck, beyond the pond and stony beach, might not be profitable; and to have part of a grate number of geese, ducks, &c, which might be kept at the opening at

the marshes, it being never frozen, and a brave place for their feeding."

"Only a few years before his father's death the son describes with pride his father's activity of limb and accuracy of aim during a day's shooting on Fishers Island."

A white man and an Indian were fined for shooting a deer at Fishers Island on Nov. 28th, 1734. At this period we read of several hunting parties on the Island, given by Madam Winthrop and her friends. There are two mentions of moose on the Island, which have been given elsewhere. With deer, moose, turkeys, geese, ducks and, while not mentioned, the once common Passenger Pigeon, the shooting there in the early days must have been extraordinary.

Probably after the great gale in 1815, when the trees were laid low and the Island bare, the deer were easily killed or driven off, and we hear of no more shooting until 1885, when some field trials were held on the Island, the dogs being put down on the Bob Whites with which the Island abounded. A few years later, in 1888, the Fishers Island Sportsmen's Club was started, and as the native quail were not there in sufficient numbers for a club, more were purchased and set out each year. When it became hard to purchase quail, the introduction of English Pheasants was begun. For many years these birds were raised with good success and very good shooting resulted. Mallard ducks were also raised and were shot in the English manner of driven birds. These birds have been flown from a hill beside the Chocomount swamp, over the trees to a pond that was constructed in the marsh adjoining Barley Field Cove. Near the

trees were constructed stands for the guns fixed in such a manner that only incoming birds could be fired at. Rabbits have always been plentiful, so that shooters coming to the Island were afforded a chance to obtain a mixed bag, which always adds to the pleasures of a few days in the open. Hungarian Partridges have been turned out several times, but they do not thrive very well and just about hold their own against the vermin that prey on them.

Owing to the formation of the land, with its hills and hollows, woods and swamps, the shooting has always been most attractive. Before the sunrise-sunset law was enforced, the numerous ponds afforded fine Black Duck shooting; since then, however, the ducks lie out on the Sound or Ocean and do not come to the fresh water except after dusk, save in stormy weather, when they seek the ponds for shelter. Except for Mergansers and Scoters, the duck shooting on the salt water is nil. The Broadbills that afford so much sport in the Sound and on Great South Bay on Long Island, do not stop about Fishers Island at all, as they cannot procure their proper food.

In the Autumn the great migration of birds commences. The line of flight follows down the New England coast until Watch Hill is reached. Here the flight divides, some following the Connecticut shore and the rest passing over the Island and then across to Long Island, winding their way to the Southland to escape the winters and enjoy the plentiful food that is found there. During these migrations many varieties of birds are seen. Owing to the narrowness of the Island, it is easy to get about from one place to another, and in a



BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON AND NEST

short time see multitudes of birds. One of the most interesting sights to observe is the hawk flight that comes each year. In 1918 a flight of great size passed over the Island and many interesting records were made for the bird-lovers. Literally thousands of hawks came by, some high up—mere specks—some lower down, others skimming along the ground. Occasionally one would be seen to swoop down and make a kill and then, having appeased its appetite, join the procession.

In addition to the ordinary birds that pass over the Island, some very rare stragglers have been collected, notably a Black Gyrfalcon, a European Curlew Sandpiper, a Raven, a Golden Eagle and Snowy Owls. As a breeding place, the Island affords a home to many birds, as it provides many different kinds of places they like. The sand banks provide homes for the Bank Swallows, the woods for the Black-crowned Night Herons, the small islands nesting places for the Common Terns, and in the bushes, on the ground and in the trees, Brown Thrashers, Towhees, Chats and numerous other birds build their nests and rear their young, safer than in most places, for war is continually carried on by the gamekeepers against the rats and other vermin that interfere so much with the birds at their nesting time.

In the fall and wintertime, after the summer birds have left for warmer lands, many birds come south and spend the winter on or near the Island; for as the South is to our summer birds, so is Fishers Island to these hardier birds that prefer a cold climate both in summer and winter. On the open fields we see great flocks of Horned Larks and many Snow Buntings. On the open sea and Sound are found Dovekies, Murres, Red-throated

Loons and in abundance the Herring and Black-backed Gulls.

The Sportsmen's Club also had the privilege of fishing, and erected stands along the south shore, from which to cast for Striped Bass, and while fishing for these usually landed many large Black Fish. One of the ponds, years ago, was stocked with Small-mouthed Black Bass and some large fish have been taken. Owing to the plans for the new development, it was felt impossible to continue the Sportsmen's Club any longer, so it was disbanded on January 1st, 1925, after being in existence for nearly forty years.

WHALING

Probably few people would think of whales as ever being in the neighborhood of Fishers Island, but it is a fact. In the seventeenth century small boats were kept ready for use, and when a whale appeared the boat was manned and the chase began. In the event of its being killed it was taken ashore and there cut up. The earliest record of this industry in Connecticut is dated Hartford, May 25th, 1647:

"If Mr. Whiting with any others shall make trial and prosecute a design for the taking of whale, within the liberties, and if upon trial within the term of two years, they shall like to go on, no others shall be suffered to interrupt them for the term of seven years."

In Hempstead's diary for January 13th, 1717-18, we find this note:

"Comfort Davis hath hired my whale boat to go a whaling to Fishers Island, till the 20th of next month,



LOOKING EAST OVER ISLAND LAKE TOWARDS CHOCOMOUNT

to pay twenty shillings for her hire, and if he stays longer, thirty shillings. If she is lost, and they get nothing, he is to pay me £3, but if they get a fish, £3 10s."

Parts of a whale's skeleton lie heaped up on the Island. They are worn and broken and in a few years will probably disappear, but they lie there now as a mute reminder of one of the bygone industries of the neighborhood.

WAR DEFENSES

During the Spanish-American War the fears of the people on the mainland grew so strong that a chain of mines were strung across the Thames River about half-way from its mouth to the bridge above the town. In addition to this defense the Government sent the Civil War monitor *Jason* to guard the entrance to the Sound. This ship, one of the regular "Cheese Boxes," had such weak engines that at times she could not get through the Race against a head tide, and when it was learned how useless she really was, she was anchored most of the time off the Munnatawket wharf, remaining there until the war was over.

The Government then awoke to the fact that there was no adequate protection at the eastern end of the Sound, and acquired two hundred and sixteen acres at Race Point for a Coast defense fort. This fort was named in honor of General Horatio G. Wright, one of the Civil War generals. One of the first things the engineers did was to cut through the beach and make a harbor out of Silver Eel Pond, where the Government boats now dock.

Suitable buildings were constructed and now the Post is capable of supporting six companies of regulars, besides having a large camp where visiting militia are trained. During the World War large numbers of temporary barracks were erected and many men were trained there for overseas. In 1903 it was considered imperative for the United States to own Mt. Prospect, and a short time later it was purchased by the Government and is used for a searchlight and fire-control station.

On the Roll of Honor of Fishers Island men who served their country in the army or navy during the war were fifty-five names. Not all of these men were residents of the Island, but only those who were closely associated with the Island were placed on it. Six men gave their lives and their names follow:

LATHROP BARTOW
DOUGLAS TILFORD CAMERON
HARRY W. ELDRIDGE
LAWRENCE D. GODDELL
DANFORTH MONTAGUE
WILLIAM H. PRIME

A Red Cross branch was established from which a great quantity of work was turned out and shipped away to be distributed by the proper authorities.

In the passing of time the Island has naturally changed. Probably the Indians had hoped it would always remain a wonderful hunting and fishing ground, but they were doomed to disappointment. The Winthrops changed all that, putting on men to farm it and handle stock. After their day the Fox family went still



U. S. S. JASON

further and, besides farming it, sold off many lots to different people. The Fergusons have always tried to keep the Island unspoiled, and in their development have planned to keep it the unpretentious place it always has been.

Plans are now under way to construct an eighteen-hole golf course and a club house on the undeveloped section east of the poultry yard. Members will be able to build their homes or obtain accommodations at the club, and they will have there the privacy that so many people desire and at the same time be able to enjoy the freedom of the hundreds of acres that are being turned over to the organization. The West End will, with its cottages, hotels and harbors, continue to be the center of the Island's activities.

Many changes have occurred since Block discovered the Island in 1614. Indians, great men of the Colonial days, gales and shipwrecks, pirates and wars have contributed to its history. Through all the years it has been cared for by its successive owners, so that the fascination of the lakes, the cool breezes, the bright ocean waters and the sunshine, has not been lost, and those who know the Island to-day are charmed by its natural beauty and are drawn to it, as was Winthrop two hundred and eighty-five years ago.

