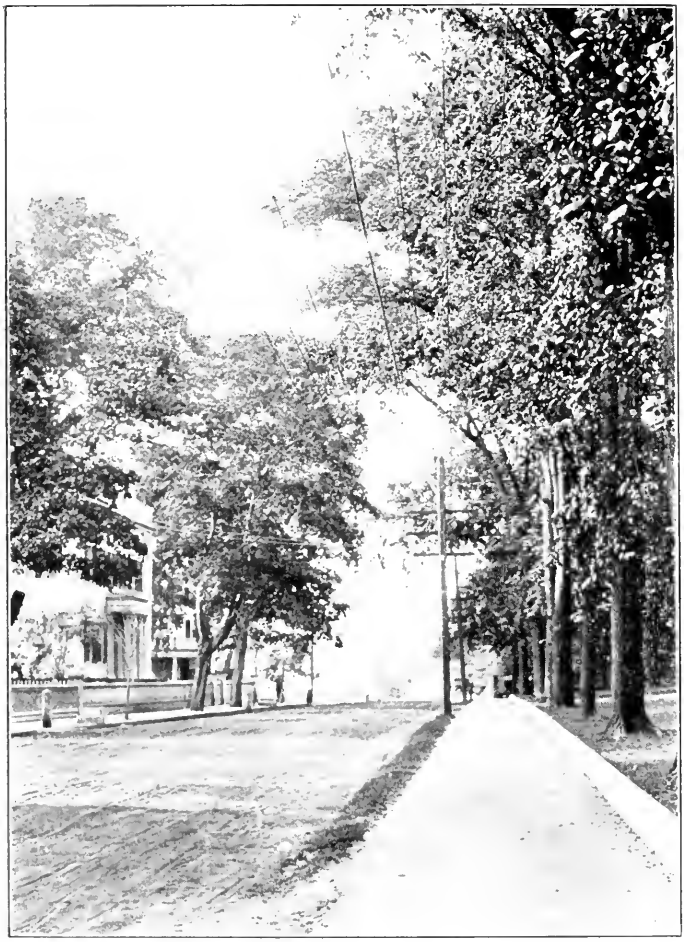
STONINGTON BY THE SEA

HENRY ROBINSON PALMER



WATER STREET IN SUMMER
Wadawanuck Park on the right

STONINGTON BY THE SEA

BY

HENRY ROBINSON PALMER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

STONINGTON, CONNECTICUT
PALMER PRESS
1913

PUBLISHED JANUARY, 1913

BY THE SAME AUTHOR
THE COUNTRY BY THE SEA
A BOOK OF VERSE
ONE DOLLAR POSTPAID
PALMER PRESS, STONINGTON, CONN.

PREFACE

This little volume has been compiled for the purpose of providing a convenient and inexpensive history of Stonington—particularly that part of the town that is within or adjacent to the boundaries of Stonington Borough.

No attempt has been made to rival the larger works that deal with the history of the town. Anyone who wishes to know more of the subject than could be compressed within the restricted pages of this book will find it extensively treated in the late Judge Richard A. Wheeler's excellent history and genealogy, and in the attractive volume, "Homes of Our Ancestors," by his daughter, Miss Grace D. Wheeler.

I make grateful acknowledgments to these two books, as well as to Judge Wheeler's earlier article on Stonington in the History of New London County, the late J. Hammond Trumbull's brochure on the Battle of Stonington (a rare book, a copy of which is in the possession of the Stonington Free Library), and various other sources too many to mention.

I wish also to record my obligations to the late Honorable Ephraim Williams of Stonington and William C. Stanton of Westerly, who furnished me with many interesting facts concerning the early history of the

community, and to the writers under whose names the four chapters in this volume on "Whaling and Sealing," "In the 'Fifties,'" "Society 'Before the War,'" and "Whistler in Stonington" are printed.

Much of the earlier part of the book is based upon an article I contributed to the New England Magazine in 1899, just two hundred and fifty years after the first settlement of the town at the head waters of Wequetequock Cove.

If any special merit may be claimed for the work it is that of conciseness and the bringing together, in handy form, of many facts about Stonington by the Sea that cannot be found elsewhere within a single volume.

H. R. P.

January, 1913

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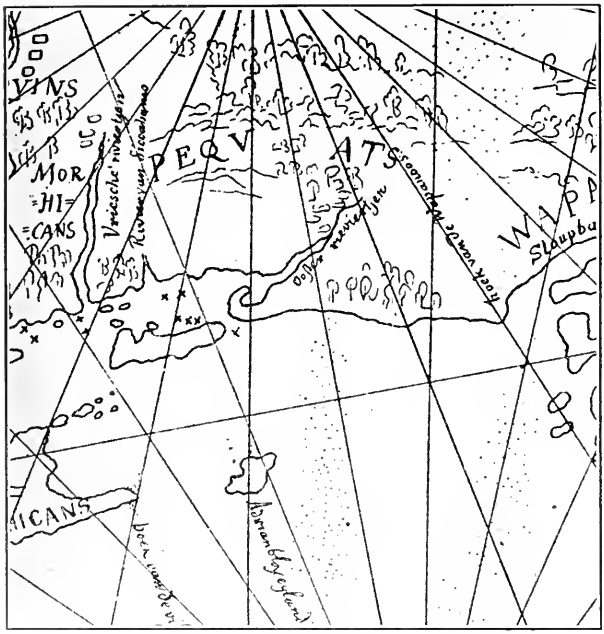
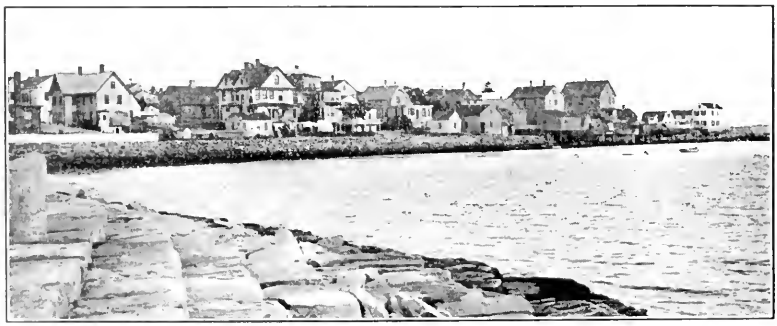


THE PEQUOT COUNTRY
(From an old Dutch map)



STONINGTON POINT FROM THE BREAKWATER

STONINGTON BY THE SEA

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE TOWN

Before the white man established himself in New England, the warlike tribe of Pequots dominated the region between the Thames and Pawcatuck rivers. They had come from the headwaters of the Hudson, sweeping across Connecticut despite the opposition of the local Indians, and cutting in two the mild Niantics, who occupied the shores of Fisher's Island sound. One division of the Niantics was pressed to the east, the other to the west, and comfortably between them down sat the Pequots to enjoy the well-stocked hunting and fishing grounds the dispossessed tribe had loved.

The Pequots could muster nearly four thousand warriors if need arose. They added Fisher's Island to their undisputed domain, and went on hostile enterprises as far as Block Island and Montauk. In 1632 —five years before their own tragic overthrow—they met the Narragansetts of Rhode Island in battle and drove them to the eastward, extending their landed claims ten miles beyond the Pawcatuck. It was partly in revenge for this that the Narragansetts in

1637 rallied to the call of the colonies and assisted Captain John Mason in the overthrow of the Pequots at their lofty fort on the west bank of the Mystic river. The slaughter was complete—scarcely any of the savage Pequots survived the indiscriminate musket fire and ruthless burning of their palisaded tents and huts. Against the ball and powder of the whites the redskins could make no effective stand, though thirty years later, when the Narragansetts were cornered in the Great Swamp Fight at Kingston, they were able, because of the muskets they had managed to acquire, to inflict a loss of thirty or forty slain upon the colonial troops.

The Pequots, in pushing their boundaries ten miles east of the Pawcatuck in 1632, laid the foundations for a border dispute that disturbed the relations of the settlers of Connecticut and Rhode Island for eighty years. The traces of this dispute and the prejudices to which it gave rise are perhaps observable to the present day.

The Dutch explored the southern coast of New England before the English came. Adrian Block set sail from New Amsterdam in the year 1614 in the Restless, a vessel forty-four feet in length which had been built on the shores of the Hudson, and voyaged leisurely along the Connecticut coast, taking time to examine the rivers and harbors, and giving them names that have long since disappeared and been forgotten. The English came a few years later and gave a new set of names to the region, and these names, like the English language and theory of government, have sur-

vived. Captain Block, however, left Dutch names on two islands that still bear them—his own he gave to Manisses or Block Island, which however has the English name of New Shoreham as its corporate designation, and upon the beautiful nearer island, now unfortunately part of the state of New York, which stretches its graceful hills and beaches within three miles of Stonington he bestowed the name of Visscher, or Fisher, one of his crew.

Captain Block sailed past Stonington, and possibly anchored in Stonington harbor. He cruised through Little Narragansett bay and up the Pawcatuck river, to which he gave the name of Oester riviertjen—East river. "Within the Great Bay" (Long Island sound), a Dutch historian of the time wrote, "there lies a point in the shape of a sickle, behind which there is a small stream or inlet, which was called by our people East river, since it extends toward the east."

Fate, however, had reserved this region for the English. Eight years after the destruction of the Pequot power, the younger John Winthrop came from Boston and began the settlement of Faire Harbour or New London, on the west bank of the Thames; and among those whom he invited to join him in the enterprise was William Chesebrough of Rehoboth in the colony of Plymouth. Chesebrough visited the site, did not care for it, and set out across country for home. At Wequetequock, in the present town of Stonington, he found a pleasant valley, with a picturesque salt-water cove, and here he determined to set-

tle. In the spring of 1649 he brought his family from Rehoboth, and thus the white settlement of the town was begun. Chesebrough had come to America with the elder Winthrop in 1630, from Boston in England, where he had been born in 1594. In the American Boston he was a responsible citizen. By trade a gunsmith, he had not been long at Wequetequock before he was summoned by the General Court of Connecticut on suspicion of breaking or intending to break the law that forbade the sale of firearms and ammunition to the Indians. At first Chesebrough declined to heed the summons, as he believed he was within the jurisdiction of Massachusetts, but in 1651, on the advice of Winthrop and others at New London, he presented himself at Hartford and declared his innocence of the charges made against him. He insisted that he was not engaged in any unlawful traffic with the natives, and that his theology was orthodox—he had been a member of the First Congregational Church of Boston. He agreed to give a bond not to furnish the Indians with munitions of war, and there appears to have been no further controversy between him and the authorities.

Thomas Stanton established himself within the present bounds of the town of Stonington in 1650, setting up a trading post at what is now Pawcatuck. He was a native of England or Wales, and emigrated to Virginia in 1636—the year of the founding of Harvard College and Providence Plantations; he was nineteen or twenty at the time. He made a study of the Indi-

an tongues, and won such a reputation that he was later appointed interpreter general of the New England Colonies. It was not until 1658 that he settled his family at Pawcatuck, and meanwhile, in 1652, Thomas Miner came to Wequetequock and built a house on the east shore of the cove, just across from the Chesebrough house, which was on the west bank. Miner had come to America in 1630, and lived by turns in Charlestown, Hingham and New London. Only a few months after his settlement at Wequetequock, he sold his house to Walter Palmer, a former neighbor of Chesebrough, and moved to Quiambaug, two miles west of the present borough of Stonington. There he built himself a house on land that remains in the possession of the Miners to this day.

Walter Palmer came to America from Nottinghamshire, England, in 1629, only nine years after the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, and in advance of the other founders of Stonington. Palmer came to Stonington from Rehoboth in 1653, and acquired a tract of three hundred acres on the east side of Wequetequock cove. It was in his house, purchased of Thomas Miner, that the first Christian service in all the territory between the Thames river and Narragansett bay was held.

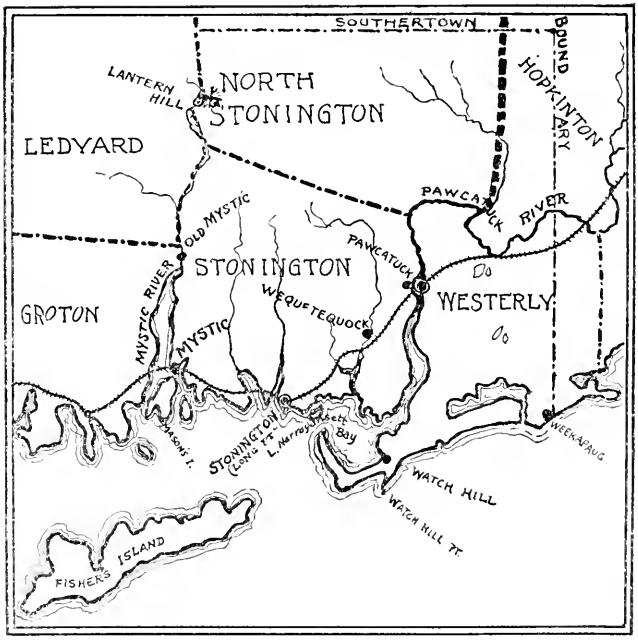
Two other of the earliest comers to Stonington were Captain George Denison, famous as an Indian fighter, who settled near what is now Mystic in 1654, and Captain John Gallup and Robert Park, who brought their families to that part of the town in the same year.

Massachusetts and Connecticut laid rival claim to the lands of the Pequots—each had had a share in the overthrow of the tribe. The settlers of Stonington, (Mystic and Pawcatuck the region was locally called), applied to the General Court at Hartford to be set off as a separate town, but the opposition of New London, which claimed the territory as far east as the Pawcatuck, led to the refusal of the application. In 1657 they made application to Massachusetts, which colony, the petitioners said, had, as they thought, a just claim to the area in dispute—but Massachusetts likewise refused the request of the little settlement on the edge of the wilderness. Thereupon a republic in miniature was set up under the name of "The Asotiation of Poquatuck Peple," whose articles of agreement said:

"Whereas thear is a difference betwene the 2 Cullonyes of the Matachusetts and Conecticoate about the government of this plac, whearby we are deprived of Expectation of protection from either, . . . we hose names are hereunto subscribed do hearby promis, testify & declare to maintain and deffend with our persons and estait the peac of the plac and to aid and assist one another acoarding to law & rules of righteousness acoarding to the true intent and meaning of our asociation till such other provition be maide ffor us as may atain our end. . . . And we do not this out of anny disrespec unto ether of the afoarsaid governments which we are bound ever to honnor, but in the vacancy of any other aforesaid."

From this declaration of independence in 1658 it will be seen how the Anglo-Saxon in the New World was being trained for that self-confidence and efficiency that flowered in the great Declaration of 1776.

In this same year, however—1658—the commiss-



SOUTHERTOWN

The faintly dotted line shows the extent of the old Massachusetts township of 1658. The first settlement in the town was at Wequetequock in 1649. The jurisdiction of Connectient was acknowledged in 1662, and the name of the town was changed to Stonington in 1666

ioners appointed to settle the dispute between Massachusetts and Connecticut gave in their decision, finding the claims of the two colonies to the Pequot lands, based on their triumph in the fight at Mystic, practically equal. Accordingly they divided the territory between the two, with the Mystic river as the boundary. Eastward to Weekapaug, well within the present town of Westerly, Rhode Island, Massachusetts was to control; westward, Connecticut. The local name of "Mystic and Pawcatuck" was changed to Southertown, the limits of which therefore included the later town of Stonington and much of Westerly. A committee of the town appointed to fix the lines reported in March, 1659:

"We did as followeth ffirst we began at Misticke Rivers mouth, and ffrom thence we run six miles to the north, northeast to the pond lying by Lanthorne Hill, where we marked a chestnut tree with six noches right against the middle of the pond, which pond we ffound to be seuen chains and one pole wide, and from thence we run two miles due north to an ash tree which we marked ffouer ways and set eight noches for the eight miles."

From Lantern Hill the commissioners carried the line eastward into what is now the town of Hopkinton until they reached a point north of the present summer resort known as Weekapaug, thus overlapping Rhode Island's territorial claims. The result of this confusion of colonial boundaries was a prolonged controversy between the Rhode Islanders and their neighbors west

of the Pawcatuck. Within the memory of men whose lives were lived entirely within the nineteenth century, indeed, the rivalry of the youth of Westerly and Stonington was keen and vigorous. Westerly gave the opprobrious name of "fishtails" to the boys of Stonington, and Stonington impolitely responded with "buckies." The surest way to start trouble in the public highway was to raise the cry that a lad from the other town had put in his appearance on hostile ground.

In 1662 the town was surrendered to Massachusetts by virtue of the charter granted to Connecticut. Three years later it was officially called Mystic, and in 1666 the name of Stonington was given to it, probably because of the character of the soil. So far as is known the town was never represented in the General Court of Massachusetts, and it was not until 1664 that William Chesebrough was elected as its first representative at Hartford.

Other early settlers were John Shaw, Josiah Witter, John Searles, Edmund Fanning and James York. In 1667 a committee was appointed by the town to lay out "home lots" of twelve acres each, near the present "Road" Church. The next year there were forty-three heads of families in town.

CHAPTER II

THE SETTLEMENT OF LONG POINT

Before the settlement of what is now Stonington Borough was undertaken, an elaborate scheme was broached for a townsite on the west side of the harbor, at Wamphasset. A plan was exhibited to the public showing thirty-two house lots, with streets apparently on a rectangular pattern; and for some years the project seems to have promised success. Houses were erected and at least one warehouse and one wharf were built. It is said that the settlement was given up because the depth of water was not sufficient on the west side of the harbor. At any rate, the growth of the community on the east side of the harbor, at Long Point, was so rapid from 1753 onward that the earlier settlement was soon overshadowed.

The town records show a number of instances of sales of lots and buildings at Wamphasset, one of which may be cited verbatim as an illustration of the legal phraseology of the day:

"To all People to whom these Presents shall come, I John Whiting of Stonington in the County of New London and Colony of Connecticott in New England &c Yeoman, send Greeting, Know ye that I the John Whiting for and in consideration of the sum

of Eight Hundred and Seventy pounds current money of New England to me in hand before the Ensealing hereof, well and truly paid by Thomas Noyes of Westerly in Kings County and Colony of Rhode Island &c Yeoman, the Receipt wherefor I do hereby acknowledge, and my Self therewith fully Satisfied, contented and paid, and thereof, and of every part and Parcel thereof, Do Exonerate acquit, and Discharge the Said Thomas Noyes his heirs, Executors, & Administrators forever by these Presents: Haue given granted bargained, Sold, aliened, enfeoffed conveyed and confirmed, and by these Presents Do freely, fully, and absolutely give grant bargain Sell, alien enfeoffe, convey and confirm unto him the the Sd. Thomas Noyes his heirs and assigns forever one certain parsel; Tract or Lott of Land; Lying and being within the Township of Stonington aforesaid, containing one half acre be same more or Less, being bounded as followeth: VIZ: Beginning at a Rock Standing about Seven feet North or Northwest from the Northwest corner of the Dwelling house the said Whiting now dwellethin, and from Said Rock Running Southeast and by East to the Harbour or Salt water; which is the North side of Said Lott; and from said Rock Running Southwest and by South four Rods, and then Southwest and by East to the Salt water or harbour Parilell with the first mentioned line; & So bounded on the Southeast or East with the harbour: together with all the Housing & buildings and wharf, and warehouse Standing thereon; To haue and to Hold, the said Granted

and bargained Premises, with all the appurtenances Privileges and Commodities to the Same belonging or in my wife appertaining to him the Said Thomas Noyes his heirs and assigns forever."

On September 26, 1751, John and Abigail Hallam conveyed to Isaac Worden, mariner, of Stonington, for the sum of one hundred and ten pounds current money, lot number six on the Wamphasset plan, "which plan is a projection of more than Thirty lots of land . . . together with main & cross Streets, and Intended by Sd. Hallam as a Settlement for a Town."

The beginning of the settlement of Long Point (Stonington Borough) was made shortly after 1750. Miss Emma W. Palmer in her interesting chapter on the old houses of the borough, in Miss Grace D. Wheeler's volume on the "Homes of Our Ancestors" (1903), says that Edward and John Denison, son and grandson of the shipbuilder George Denison of Westerly, built the first house in 1752; but it was not till 1753 that Elihu Chesebrough, of the family to which the point had originally belonged, a hundred years before, sold to Edward Denison two tracts at the point. As early as October 26, 1750, however, Humphrey Avery, county surveyor, reports that he has completed with the assistance of chainmen the task intrusted to him by Captain Nathan Chesebrough, Captain Thomas Wheeler and several other inhabitants of the town of Stonington, "to Survey boundout and Describe a highway across their farmes from said

Stonington Harbour, to the North meeting House in Sd. Town." He says:

"I began at a meerstone marked with the Letter —: R: Standing South, Eight Rods and Sixteen Links from said Capt. Chesebrough's warehouse on the East Side of Sd. Harboure, & at highwater mark on Sd. Capt. Chesebrough's Land."

From this point he proceeded to the "Post Road 186: Rods to a meerstone at the North Side of Sd. Post Road, Standing west 22 North ten Rod: 20: Links from the N. W. corner of the Meeting House in the East Society in Sd. Town, at Mr. Elihu Chesebrow's Land;" and finally to the road in "the North Parrish in Sd. Town, which the Meeting House Stands on." The road thus described was two rods and a half wide, "which afforesd. Road, Now Layed & Discribed is in the Place where it is, and hath been used for many years as a way from Sd. Harbour to Said North Meeting House."

On November 24, 1750, the land for this "Publick Highway" was granted to John Williams, Joseph Denison and John Holmes and the rest of the inhabitants of Connecticut by Nathan Chesebrough, Elihu Chesebrough, Clement Minor, Samuel Minor, 2d, Samuel Frink, Joseph Hewit, Samuel Plumb, John Macdowell, Samuel Miner and Joseph Babcock, who reserved to themselves, however "the Previledge of feeding the land."

Under date of August 7, 1753, Elihu Chesebrough, with the assent of Esther his wife, who waived her

dower rights in the property, conveyed to Edward Denison of Stonington, in consideration of one thousand pounds "in bills of credit old tenor" a two-acre tract on Long Point. This land as described in the town records began "at the South East corner of a highway Laid out by a Jury on Said point". On the same day also Mr. Chesebrough conveyed to him a tract of one acre and ten rods, also on Long Point, for the sum of six hundred and thirty-four pounds; and to Samuel Stanton of Stonington one tract of half an acre adjoining the land sold to Denison and a second tract of half an acre for two hundred and forty-four pounds. To Edward Hancox, Jr., of Stonington, on the same day, he conveyed two half-acre lots, one for two hundred and the other for one hundred and seventy pounds. The first is described as being adjacent to "a Rode Lately Layed out from Sd. Stonington harbour on the East Side of Sd. Harbour."

Thus in a single day six parcels of land were conveyed to Messrs Denison, Stanton and Hancox at Long Point; each of these family names has since been intimately connected with the history of the place.

Edward Denison's house was a large structure of two and a half stories, with a great central chimney. It stood on what was first called Town square, but is now known as Cannon square, because it is the resting place of the two eighteen pound guns used in the defence of the town against the British in 1814.

The Denison house was built for the farmers

"who came to sell their stock and produce to those engaged in the West India trade, which was quite profitable at that time, before the Revolution." According to Miss Palmer Mr. Denison built the first wharf at the foot of the street in 1752 (or 1753?) "and continued the West India trade in which he had been engaged in Westerly. The house was afterwards occupied by Mr. Giles Hallam, and was burnt in the great fire of 1837, the family hardly escaping with their lives."

Under date of September 24, 1754, Samuel Griffing of Stonington conveyed to his brother Thomas Griffing for the sum of nine hundred pounds "in bills of credit old Tenor" about one-sixteenth of an acre on the east side of Stonington Harbor, on the "Main Street."

Samuel and Thomas Griffing at this time jointly owned a dwelling house on this street, the premises of which house ran from the street westerly to the harbor.

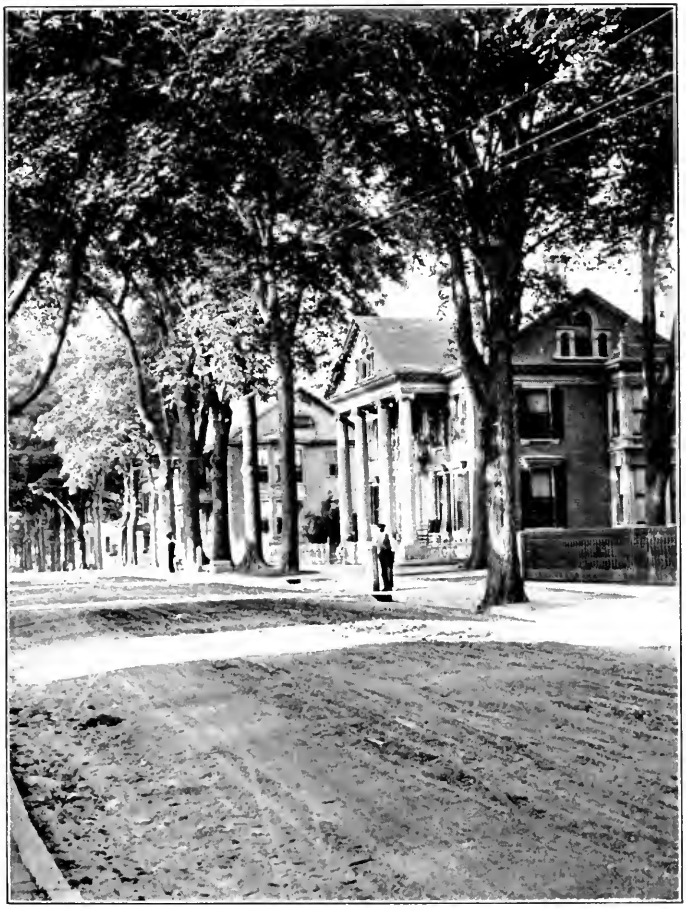
It may be added that Main Street was laid out from the harbor to the town of Preston in 1752, and that in the same year the first town landing was built north of the present main tracks of the New Haven railroad.

CHAPTER III

A MEETING HOUSE LOTTERY

Meeting houses built by lottery were no rarity in Colonial New England. In the early days of Long Point the "proffessors of the established religion" in the village felt the need of a church edifice but, being unable to raise the necessary money by voluntary contributions, applied to the General Assembly for permission to conduct a lottery for the purpose.

There were already two meeting houses within four miles of Long Point, one erected by the West, the other by the East, Society. These two Societies united in 1765 and were ministered to for several years by Rev. Nathaniel Eells, who preached six months in one meeting house and six months in the other. Afterwards Mr. Eells was secured for the afternoon service at the Point, eighty-three residents of which in 1774 set forth in a persuasive petition to Hartford their wants and wishes. They said that they were nearly four miles distant from any meeting house, that the inhabitants of the village were generally poor, making their living chiefly in the whale and cod fisheries, that the community had increased to upwards of eighty families, comprising nearly five hundred persons, "among which are twenty widows, seventeen of



Main Street in Summer

which have children as families," and that there was not one horse to ten families in the place—a lamentable situation indeed. For lack of a proper meeting place they were wont to assemble in a small schoolhouse or in private houses, the attendant inconveniences of which practice were so great that Sunday was misspent by many persons who would otherwise not profane it; in short, the cause of religion greatly suffered, and an increase of vice and irreligion was feared. The petition continued:

"That the town of which your memorialists are a part have lately paid and are liable to pay upwards of one thousand pounds for the deficiency of several collectors that have lately failed; that your memorialists from great necessity, by their being remote from any constant grist mill, have lately contributed about seventy pounds as an encouragement to an undertaker to build a windmill at said point, which with about the same sum lately subscribed by said inhabitants for a schoolhouse, with the great labor and expense they have been at to make roads and causeways to said point, all which with the poor success that attended the last year's fishery, and the lowness of markets and the various and different sentiments in the religious denominations of Christians among them, viz.: First day Baptists, Seven day Baptists and the Quakers or those called Friends, are such real grief and discouragements to your memorialists, who are of the established Religion of this Colony, that they can no longer think of obtaining a meeting house by subscription or any other way among themselves."

To many readers of the present generation it would be interesting to mark the names attached to this petition. Some of the families represented still survive in Stonington; others have not a single descendant within the borders of the borough. There are no longer any members of the Morgan, Rathbun, Tripp, Champlin, Lamb, Hillard, Tenny, Grafton, Buddington, Beebe, Littlefield, Niles, Cobb, Elliot, Borden, Crary, Seabury, Satterlee, Ashcroft, Irish, Chester, Gallaway, Sparhawk, Fellows, Coleman or Fanning families on "Long Point," and probably several other names have disappeared. What a change has been wrought in a century and a third in this small corner of the world, where it is customary to think of life going on placidly and without much ebb and flow of population. Of Stonington Borough it is recorded that Rufus Choate once said it was the only place he had ever seen that was entirely finished. Possibly the tale is apocryphal; possibly it is a standard story, applied impartially to scores of New England towns. But how inaccurate its characterization of even the most sluggish community must be is indicated in the radical changes that have occurred since 1774 in Stonington. Doubtless Mr. Choate, if he made the remark attributed to him, referred to the lack of material growth in the community; yet even so, his facile verdict fell short. When these memorialists for a lottery sent their petition to the General Assembly, Stonington was a scanty village of three or four score houses, many or most of them a

story and a half in height under their quaint gambrel roofs; with one broad highway—Main street —and a primitive series of lanes where the cross streets now are. No doubt the grass flourished jealously beside the narrow paths that served for sidewalks, and it is a well authenticated tradition that only a hundred years ago Water street was so crude a thoroughfare that an agile lad might leap from rock to rock throughout its entire length without once putting his feet on the ground. But to return to the meeting house. The General Assembly granted the petition of the Long Pointers, whose monetary and other distresses, however real, lost nothing in the formal recital; but it was not until 1777 that the lottery was drawn and the desired funds were secured. Fate willed, however, that there should be no meeting house at the Point for the time being. The Revolutionary War opened, much of the money was used for the defence of the village, and the rest of it, being invested in Continental bills, was lost by reason of their utter depreciation. Again in 1785, two years after the Peace with Great Britain, another petition for a lottery was granted by the Assembly, (the amount being limited as before to four hundred pounds), and the money was raised; but as the meeting house of the East Society at Putnam's Corners, near the present residence of Fernando Wheeler and the "Whitefield Elm," was in the market, this was taken down and re-erected at the Point in 1785-86. The lot on which it stood is occupied by the house of Mrs. Lucius N.

Palmer, on the east side of Wadawanuck square. It was set back from the street and survived until 1860, though in its later years it was unused and in a dilapidated condition. Immediately in front of it, between it and the street, was the house of Samuel Trumbull, the first publisher of Stonington, who printed the "Journal of the Times" and many books. The Trumbull house was torn down about the same time as the meeting house.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST BRITISH ATTACK

What other town in Connecticut was ever the scene of an American victory over the British! New London and Groton were ravaged by the redcoats under Arnold, who, returning to his native county after the treacherous episode of West Point, wreaked his vengeance for his self-inflicted misfortunes on the hapless communities at the mouth of the Thames; General Tryon, erstwhile colonial governor of New York, led a British expedition into the state in 1779 and burned Danbury. But Stonington twice repulsed the forces of His Britannic Majesty—once in 1775 and again in 1814. Is it not fitting that the General Assembly should in some way provide for the enduring recognition of this unique and dual triumph?

The first British attack upon Stonington occurred on the thirtieth of August, in the year of Lexington and Concord, more than ten months previous to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The British troops were at the time besieged in Boston, with the Yankee net so tight about them that provisions had to be sought by sea rather than by land. Admiral Graves despatched Captain Sir James Wallace, accordingly, to the coasts of southern New England to

forage for fat cattle. Captain Wallace was then forty-four years of age, a naval veteran of nearly thirty years service, who had been appointed in November, 1771, to the command of the Rose, a twenty-gun frigate. It would be interesting to have an exact description of this vessel; very likely she was a three-masted ship with a double bank of guns—one bank on the main or gun deck and a lighter battery on the upper or spar deck. The Dictionary of National (British) Biography says of Captain Wallace that "during 1775 and the first part of 1776 he was actively engaged in those desultory operations against the coast towns which were calculated to produce the greatest possible irritation with the least possible advantage." So far as Stonington was concerned, however, this maximum of irritation and minimum of advantage were both experienced by Wallace himself. He had burned a score of houses and barns on the island of Conanicut in Narragansett bay and made off with a cargo of live stock. At Bristol, on the east side of Narragansett, he ordered the magistrates to come on board and hear his demands, and when they declined this peremptory invitation he opened fire upon the place with disastrous results. Thereupon the town fathers yielded and promised him cattle and provisions. Naturally the isolated inhabitants of Block Island, ten miles south of the main shore of Rhode Island, waxed apprehensive as they heard of these raids so near their own doors. So they shipped their cattle to Stonington, twenty miles distant, where

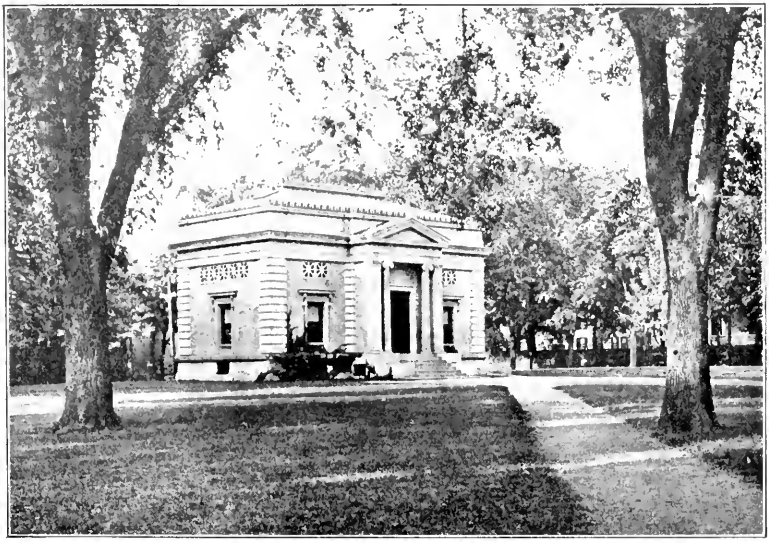
they hoped the beasts could be sustained in safety until the dread marauder had passed. The sequel showed that their hope was not in vain, though what actually happened could hardly have been foreseen by them.

Sir James was promptly made aware of this prudent action of the Block Islanders, and determined to have the cattle nevertheless. Perhaps the very fact of their withdrawal to the mainland spurred him on. They had been put prosperously to pasture on the plains of Quonaduc, just above the village of Stonington, when he arrived off the port and sent a boat ashore to demand their delivery under penalty of terrible reprisals. The Long Point patriots, however, were in no mood to acquiesce in his requirements. They abruptly declined to surrender the cattle and assembled a defensive force with all possible speed. Captain Oliver Smith gathered his expert Long Point musketeers and Captain William Stanton came down from the Road District double haste with his company of militia. The troops rendezvoused in the Robinson pasture, on the present property of Mrs. Courtlandt G. Babcock, just north of Wadawanuck square, and marched thence to Brown's wharf to repel a landing party sent in small boats from the Rose, which remained in the offing. To beat back the invaders they had no cannon, but their Queen Anne muskets were trusty weapons, reputed of high effect at long range. They proved so distasteful to the unwelcome visitors from the Rose that the discomfited tenders beat a retreat

to the frigate with heavy losses. Captain Wallace concluded not to venture ashore again with small boats but began a bombardment of the place, and for several hours kept it up, so that nearly every house suffered more or less. But no white flag was raised, no proposition of surrender was made. Some of the inhabitants of the town took to their cellars for safety, others retired temporarily northward; still others found a shelter behind the abundant rocks of the Point, one of which, a great boulder at the southwest corner of Wadawanuck square, was struck by one of the frigate's shots. The only man wounded among the gallant forces of defence was Jonathan Weaver, Jr., a musician in Captain Smith's company, who was compensated by the next General Assembly for his injuries to the extent of twelve pounds, four shillings and fourpence. Sir James, whose expedition thus proved a failure, except for the shingles and chimneys he displaced, sailed off no doubt in a huff, and the Block Island kine continued to feed, prosperous and unwitting, at Quonaduc. As for Captain Smith of the Long Point sharpshooters, the Assembly made him a major, as he deserved.

When the Long Pointers learned that Stephen Peckham, a Tory, had piloted the Rose to their harbor they were wroth against him. After a time fate overtook him and brought him, a captive, to Stonington. A large buttonwood tree then stood near the corner of Water and Wall streets; it was known as the Liberty tree, because the Sons of Liberty

STONINGTON LIGHTHOUSE, BUILT 1842



STONINGTON FREE LIBRARY, WADAWANUCK PARK

were wont to meet within its shade. The Tory pilot was taken to this tree and forced to mount a platform that had been set up there. Patriots of the neighborhood gathered in large numbers to witness the discomfiture and punishment of Peckham, who had previously given his assent to a written confession. Esquire Nathaniel Miner read the document to the crowd. It was in essence as follows: "I, Stephen Peckham, do hereby acknowledge that, being instigated by the devil, I did great injury to the inhabitants of this place, for which I profess my hearty sorrow, and do humbly ask their forgiveness." As the confession was written in the first person, 'Squire Miner would occasionally interrupt himself to remark, "Not I, but that fellow on the platform." Peckham was let off with this lenient penalty, but Stonington no doubt took as much satisfaction from it as if he had been hanged, drawn and quartered. The gentle art of punishing Tories was never better exemplified.

CHAPTER V

THE SECOND BRITISH ATTACK

Thirty-nine years after the successful repulse of Captain Wallace and the frigate Rose, the inhabitants of Stonington were called upon to meet once more a British assault. This time the attack was more serious but the result was much the same: the attacking party was beaten off with grave losses, while the defenders of the place suffered hardly at all.

At the opening of the Second War with Great Britain, in 1812, Stonington Point, as the village had come to be known, comprised about a hundred houses, most of them clustered on the southern portion of the little peninsula. Occupying as it did an exposed position, the community naturally apprehended a British visitation, though it thought that New London and Newport, much more important places, were more likely to suffer. But in August, 1814, the blow descended; Captain Thomas Masterman Hardy, in command of a British squadron, appeared off the place, and sent the authorities this truly emergent message: "Not wishing to destroy the unoffending inhabitants residing in the town of Stonington, one hour is given them from the receipt of this to remove out of the town." Sixty minutes to escape!

Captain Hardy was born in 1769, entered the British navy in 1781, and served with Nelson in the last years of the eighteenth century. On the tenth of February, 1797, at Gibraltar, he jumped into a jolly-boat to save a drowning man. The little craft was borne by the tide toward the leading Spanish vessel. "By God," cried Nelson, "I'll not lose Hardy! Back the mizzen topsail!" This quick manœuvre enabled the jolly-boat to return in safety to the British frigate. For Hardy his great friend cherished a lively affection to the end. In the battle of Trafalgar in 1805, he was in command of the Admiral's flagship Victory, and acting captain of the fleet. When Nelson received his fatal wound, Hardy was walking with him on the quarterdeck; and it was to him that the Admiral addressed his last request, "Kiss me, Hardy, before I die." When a committee of Stonington citizens visited Captain Hardy's ship under a flag of truce, to protest against what appeared to them an unprovoked and brutal attack, the commander of the squadron received them courteously, and said, pointing to a lounge or settee in the cabin of the ship, "It may interest you, gentlemen, to know that on that couch Lord Nelson lay in his death, after I had given him my parting embrace." Hardy was forty-five at the time of the attack on Stonington and a naval veteran of thirty-three years service. He had been appointed to the command of the Ramillies in August, 1812, and that vessel was among those that made this sudden assault on Stonington, though Hardy sent

his peremptory message from his temporary headquarters as commander of the squadron on board the Pactolus. In 1815 he was nominated as a K. C. B.; in 1837 he became a vice-admiral, and in 1839 he died at the age of seventy. His portrait given by Lady Hardy is in the Painted Hall at Greenwich, England; there is a monument to his memory in the hospital chapel, and a memorial pillar, visible from the sea, has been set up in his honor on the crest of the Black Down above Portisham.

It was thus a distinguished naval commander who brought his squadron of four hostile vessels to Stonington on the ninth of August, 1814, and sent so sharp and ruthless a communication to the borough officers. The squadron consisted of the Ramillies, carrying seventy-four guns; the Pactolus, with forty-four; the Despatch, a brig of twenty-two guns, and the bomb-ship Terror. At five o'clock in the afternoon they dropped anchor off shore, and at eight o'clock in the evening the Terror began casting its whistling shells in the direction of the town. Promptly in return one of two Revolutionary eighteen-pounders that had been sent to Stonington by the Government some time previously roared its defiance. Hardy prepared to follow his preliminary bombardment with sterner measures, and accordingly several small boats were sent in shore for the purpose of capturing the place. One account says there were four barges and three launches, another says there were five barges and one launch. The flotilla, at any rate six or seven strong,

took position off the point and poured a rain of Congreve rockets into the village, at first to the grievous apprehension of the inhabitants, who soon discovered, however, that no great damage was being done to their houses and nobody was being killed. As soon as they grasped these essential facts they utilized the flare of the rockets to direct their own fire. The bombardment continued till midnight, and at dawn of the tenth was renewed.

By this time a formidable force of militia was assembled in the town in response to the hurried call of the inhabitants for assistance. Several of the enemy's launches and barges had taken position near the east side of the point and had renewed their rain of rockets. The battery of the defenders consisted of three guns only, the two eighteen-pounders to which reference has been made and a four- (or six-) pounder. These occupied a four-foot earthwork near the present entrance to the old breakwater on Water street. The earthwork was the only fortification the village could boast, but above it floated the stars and stripes for a reminder and inspiration. Once the flag fell, levelled by a shot from the fleet, but a gallant patriot nailed it to the mast again, and there it floated, torn by ball and shell, till the battle ended.

The British demonstration on the east side of the point called for immediate attention, so the smaller cannon was dragged from the battery to the threatened locality, and a party of volunteers established themselves there, anticipating an attempt at

landing. But meanwhile one of the eighteen-pounders had been run to the extreme end of the point, whence it maintained so galling a fire that the landing party retreated, with one barge thoroughly shattered. Captain Amos Palmer, writing to the Secretary of War a little more than a year later, thus described the incident: "The next morning (August tenth) at seven o'clock the brig Despatch anchored within pistol shot of our battery, and they sent five barges to land under cover of their whole fire (being joined by the "Nimrod," twenty-gun brig.) When the boats approached within grape distance, we opened our fire on them with round- and grape-shot. They retreated and came round the east side of the town. We checked them with our six-pounder and muskets till we dragged over one of our eighteen-pounders. We put in it a round shot and about forty or fifty pounds of grape, and placed it in the centre of their boats as they were rowing up in a line and firing on us. We tore one of their barges all in pieces, so that two, one on each side, had to lash her up to keep her from sinking."

Captain Palmer continues his recital in vigorous but modest English; the account has the special merit of being that of a participant in the battle, written within a few months of its occurrence. He says: "They retreated out of grape distance, and we turned our fire upon the brig, and expended all our cartridges but five, which we reserved for the boats if they made another attempt to land. We then lay four hours,

being unable to annoy the enemy in the least, except from muskets on the brig, while the fire from the whole fleet was directed against our buildings. After the third express from New London, some fixed ammunition arrived. We then turned our cannon on the brig, and she soon cut her cable and drifted out. The whole fleet then weighed and anchored nearly out of reach of our shot, and continued this and the next day to bombard the town. They set the buildings on fire in more than twenty places, and we as often put them out. In the three days' bombardment they sent on shore sixty tons of metal, and, strange to say, wounded only one man, since dead. We have picked up fifteen tons, including some that was taken up out of the water and the two anchors that we got. We took up and buried four poor fellows that were hove overboard out of the sinking barge.

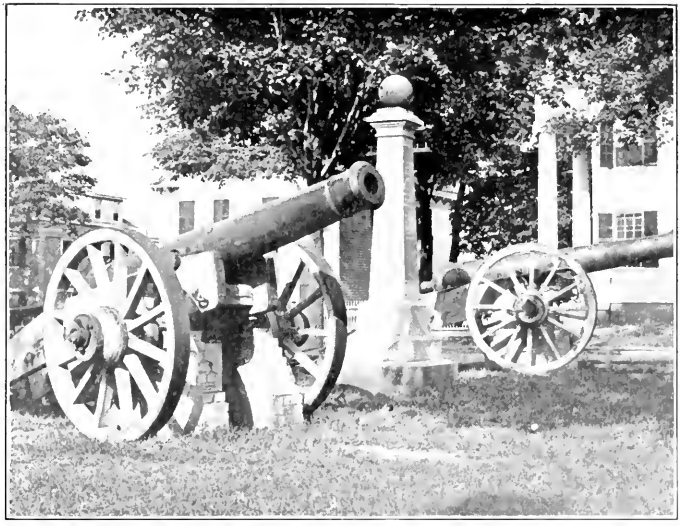
"Since peace, the officers of the 'Despatch' brig have been on shore here. They acknowledge they had twenty-one killed and fifty badly wounded, and further say, had we continued our fire any longer they should have struck, for they were in a sinking condition; for the wind then blew at southwest, directly into the harbor. Before the ammunition arrived it shifted to the north, and blew out of the harbor. All the shot suitable for the cannon we have reserved. We have now more eighteen-pound shot than was sent us by government. We have put the two cannons in the arsenal and housed all the munitions of war."

At one o'clock in the afternoon of August tenth,

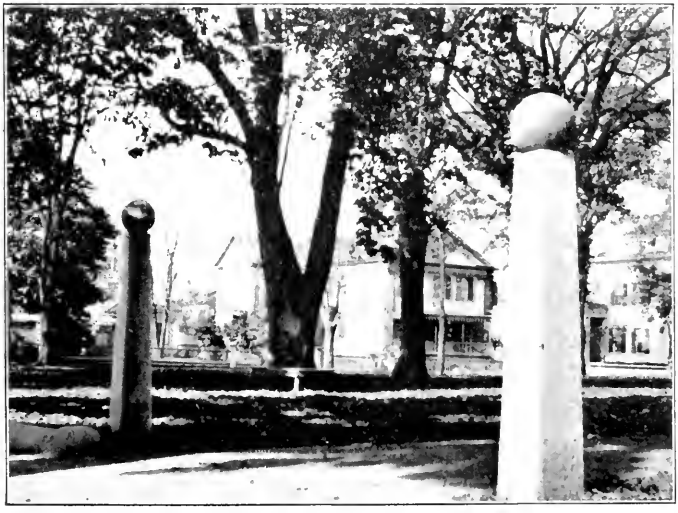
the Ramillies and Pactolus took up their station two and a half miles from the point and the defenders of the town saw that matters were getting very serious. They therefore sent a deputation under a flag of truce to Captain Hardy to ask the reason for his attack. So far as known the only reply he gave was that the people of Stonington had fitted out torpedoes for use against the British fleet and that the wife of Vice Consul Stewart, recently resident at New London, was detained on shore and must be sent on shipboard within an hour. Both charges were denied; of Mrs. Stewart the Stoningtonians knew nothing whatever.

Meanwhile the army of defence was steadily increasing, and it was no longer practicable for the British to consider forcing a landing. Having failed against the little body of militia and unorganized volunteers on the night of the ninth, they could not hope for success against the host that was now swarming in from the neighboring country. The bombardment continued, however, in a desultory way until the twelfth of August, when the squadron retired, with the Despatch so badly injured that she was in imminent danger of foundering.

The more the story of this Battle of Stonington is studied, the more remarkable does it become. Against five British ships, equipped with a hundred and sixty guns and commanded by a veteran of long experience on both sides of the world, the scant defenders of the town, with three cannons and little ammunition, won



The Eighteen-Pound Defenders of 1814



British Bombshells at Wadawanuck Park

decisive. The village suffered little from the attack, one explanation being that the spire of the White Meeting House, east of what is now Wadawanuck square, deceived the enemy into thinking that most of the town lay far back from the sea. This does not altogether account, however, for the comparative immunity of the hundred houses of the place from injury. Nor will it do to argue that the attack was not made in earnest. Everything goes to show that the British, for some reason, greatly desired to take the town. Probably they thought they would meet with little resistance, but the event undeceived them. Nowhere in all the War of 1812 was a more gallant defence of American territory made. Perhaps no more specific reason for the assault need be sought than the fact that the British, previous to this time, had extended their blockade very generally along the coast of the new republic, and were under orders to "destroy and lay waste all towns and districts of the United States found accessive to the attack of the British armaments." In accordance with these orders, town after town was bombarded and burned.

Philip Freneau, the famous balladist of the day, wrote a song about the battle that is worth setting down here entire:

THE BATTLE OF STONINGTON
ON THE SEABOARD OF CONNECTICUT

Four gallant ships from England came
Freighted deep with fire and flame,

And other things we need not name,
To have a dash at Stonington.

Now safely moor'd, their work begun:
They thought to make the Yankees run,
And have a mighty deal of fun
In stealing sheep at Stonington.

A deacon then popp'd up his head,
And Parson Jones's sermon read,
In which the reverend doctor said
That they must fight for Stonington.

A townsman bade them next attend
To sundry resolutions penn'd,
By which they promised to defend
With sword and gun old Stonington.

The ships advancing different ways,
The Britons soon began to blaze,
And put th' old women in amaze,
Who feared the loss of Stonington.

The Yankees to their fort repair'd,
And made as though they little cared
For all that came—though very hard
The cannon play'd on Stonington.

The Ramillies began the attack,
Despatch came forward—bold and black—
And none can tell what kept them back
From setting fire to Stonington.

The bombardiers with bomb and ball
Soon made a farmer's barrack fall,
And did a cow-house sadly maul
That stood a mile from Stonington.

They kill'd a goose, they kill'd a hen,
Three hogs they wounded in a pen—
They dashed away and pray what then?
This was not taking Stonington.

The shells were thrown, the rockets flew,
But not a shell of all they threw,
Though every house was in full view,
Could burn a house in Stonington.

To have their turn they thought but fair;—
The Yankees brought two guns to bear,
And, sir, it would have made you stare,
This smoke of smoke at Stonington.

They bored Pactolus through and through,
And kill'd and wounded of her crew
So many, that she bade adieu
T' the gallant sons of Stonington.

The brig Despatch was hull'd and torn—
So crippled, riddled, so forlorn,
No more she cast an eye of scorn
On the little fort at Stonington.

The Ramillies gave up the affray,
And with her comrades sneak'd away,
Such was the valor, on that day,
Of British tars near Stonington.

But some assert, on certain grounds,
(Besides the damage and the wounds),
It cost the king ten thousand pounds
To have a dash at Stonington.

It is said that one of the youths of the neighborhood, Langworthy by name, was present at the point when the British vessels slunk away amid the great rejoicing of the triumphant defenders. The American officer in command, according to a story handed down in Langworthy's family, was so exultant that he called for cheers and at the conclusion threw his cap in the air. The brisk wind carried it overboard, young Langworthy jumped in and brought it ashore, and the commandant gave him a shilling for reward. The tale is slight, but it helps to give us a vivid picture of the moment of victory—the vessels making off through Fisher's Island sound, the soldiers on shore relieved of their anxiety and justly happy in their success, and even the chief officer so exuberant that he had to cast his cap into the air to express his feelings.

CHAPTER VI

NOTES ON THE SECOND ATTACK

An account of the bombardment of Stonington in 1814 written by Rev. Frederic Denison and printed in the Mystic Pioneer, July 2, 1859, contains interesting particulars "gathered from the lips of prominent actors in the battle." The first men, so far as remembered, "that took stations in the battery" (on August ninth), it says, "were four, William Lord, Asa Lee, George Fellows and Amos Denison. Just before six o'clock, six volunteers from Mystic, Jeremiah Holmes, Ebenezer Denison, Isaac Denison and Nathaniel Clift, reached the place, on foot, and ran immediately to help operate the gun in the battery. . . . . The battery being small, but few men could work in it." Later, on the morning of the tenth, it was operated, "as nearly as remembered, by Jeremiah Holmes, Simeon Haley, Isaac Denison, Isaac Miner, George Fellows and Asa Lee." This list is not complete.

The one defender wounded during the bombardment was Frederick Denison, who was struck in the knee by a flying fragment of rock or by a direct shot from the brig. The wound was not considered dangerous, but he died on the first of the following November. A monument was erected to his memory in Elm Grove ceme-

tery at Mystic by the State of Connecticut. John Miner was badly burnt in the face by the premature discharge of one of the guns.

The damage done to buildings was estimated a few days after the battle at four thousand dollars.

"We have made some estimate of the number of shells and fire carcasses thrown into the village, and we find there have been about three hundred," says an account written for publication by the borough authorities, August 29. "Some respectable citizens from motives of curiosity weighed several shells, and found their weight to be as follows: One of the largest carcasses, partly full of the combustible, 216 lbs. One of the smallest sort ditto, 103 lbs. One of the largest kind empty, 189 lbs. One of the largest bomb shells, 189 lbs. One of the smallest bomb shells, 90 lbs. One, marked on it 'fire 16 lbs.', 16 lbs. One of the largest carcasses partly full was set on fire, which burnt half an hour, emitting a horrid stench; in a calm the flame would rise ten feet."

The National Intelligencer shortly after the battle said: "The defence of Stonington by a handful of brave citizens was more like an effusion of feeling, warm from the heart, than a concerted military movement."

Niles's Weekly Register of September 10, 1814, said: "Mr. Chalmers, late master of the Terror, bomb vessel, employed in the attack on Stonington, has been captured in a British barge and sent to Providence. He says 170 bombs were discharged from that ship in the attack on Stonington, which were found to weigh

eighty pounds each; the charge of powder for the mortar was nine pounds; adding to this the wadding, that vessel must have disgorged eight tons weight." But the bombshells weighed at Stonington tipped the beam at 189 pounds, just one hundred pounds more than their weight as Mr. Chalmers is quoted as reporting it. This would make the total weight discharged from the Terror more than thirteen tons, exclusive of the wadding.

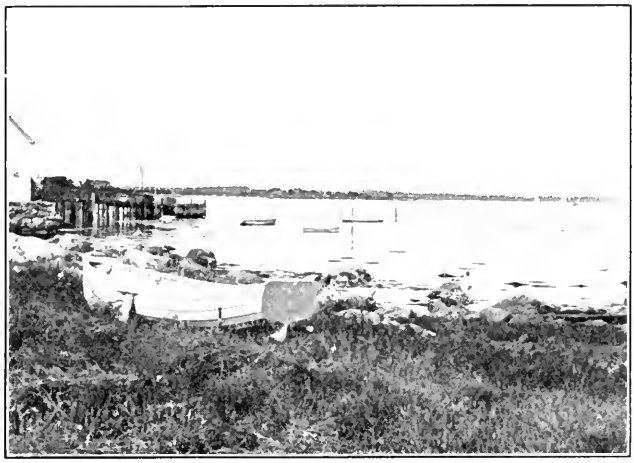
Niles's Weekly Register stated on June 3, 1815, that "the iron mine is not yet exhausted, for certain persons in the diving machine have raised no less than 11,209 lbs. of shot, which was thrown overboard from the Pactolus, when she was in such a hurry to get away from the guns of Stonington."

The long accepted story is that George Howe Fellows "nailed the colors to the mast" when a British shot had laid them low, but in a paper before the Stonington Historical and Genealogical Society in 1909, Miss Emma W. Palmer said: "When Captain Jeremiah Holmes's ammunition gave out, Stonington was at the mercy of the invaders, and a timid citizen who was at the battery proposed a formal surrender by lowering the colors that were floating over their heads. 'No,' shouted Captain Holmes indignantly, 'that flag shall never come down while I am alive.' And it did not in submission to the foe. When the wind died away and it hung drooping by the side of the staff, the captain held out the flag on the point of a bayonet, that the British might see it, and while in that posi-

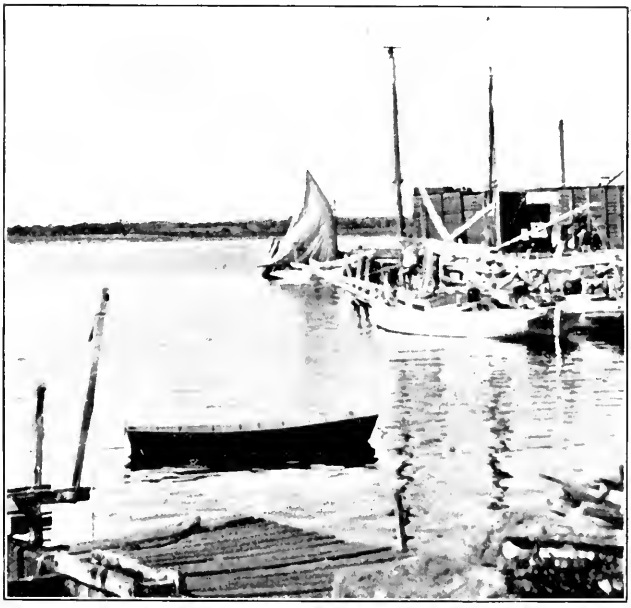
tion several shots passed through it. To prevent its being struck by some coward, Captain Holmes held a companion (J. Dean Gallup or George H. Fellows, a mooted question,) upon his shoulders while the latter nailed it to the staff.

"In 1860 Mr. Benson J. Lossing came to Stonington to look up material for his book, 'The Field Book of the War of 1812,' and was the guest of my father, Dr. George E. Palmer, who took him to see the venerable hero, Captain Jeremiah Holmes, at Mystic. He was in good health of mind and body, and told the story of his part of the fight as above, emphasizing the fact of its being J. Dean Gallup who stood on his shoulders, instead of George Howe Fellows. Miss Palmer added, "My father always said that George H. Fellows was not even here at the time of the attack."

A list of the volunteers who participated in the defence of the town was printed as follows in the Connecticut Gazette of August 17, 1814: Of Stonington—Captain George Fellows, Captain William Potter, Dr. William Lord, Lieutenant H. G. Lewis, Ensign D. Frink, Gurdon Trumbull, Alex. G. Smith, Amos Denison Jr., Stanton Gallup, Ebenezer Morgan, John Miner. Of Mystic—Jesse Dean, Dean Gallup, Fred Haley, Jeremiah Holmes, N. Clift, Jedediah Reed. Of Groton—Alfred White, Ebenezer Morgan, Frank Daniels, Giles Morgan. Of New London—Major Simeon Smith, Captain Noah Lester, Major N. Frink, Lambert Williams. From Massachusetts—Captain Leonard and Mr. Dunham. The same paper on August 31 added



LITTLE NARRAGANSETT BAY



STONINGTON HARBOR

the following names which had been omitted from the first list "by an error of the compositor:" Simeon Haley, Jeremiah Haley, Frederick Denison, John Miner, Asa Lee, Thomas Wilcox, Luke Palmer, George Palmer, William G. Bush. "There were probably others," said the Gazette, "whom we have not learnt." There were also forty-two drafted militiamen from the northern part of the state, under Lieutenant Samuel Hough, whose service on guard at Stonington extended from June 29 to August 29, 1814. The Eighth Company of the Thirtieth Regiment under Captain William Potter assembled on the evening of August ninth. Attracted by the signal fires that had been lighted to arouse the countryside, a large part of the Thirtieth Regiment hastened to the borough, so that by daybreak the defenders numbered 290, not including Colonel Randall's staff. Brigadier General Isham arrived with his staff from New London about noon on August tenth, and took command.

CHAPTER VII

STONINGTON IN 1819

In a quaint old volume bearing the title, "A Gazetteer of the States of Connecticut and Rhode-Island. Written with Care and Impartiality, from Original and Authentic Materials," by John M. Niles, and published at Hartford by William S. Marsh in 1819, the following description of the town and borough of Stonington five years after the repulse of Hardy's squadron is taken:

The town is uneven, being hilly and rocky, but the soil, which is a gravelly loam, is rich and fertile, and admirably adapted to grazing; the dairy business, or making of cheese and butter, being the leading agricultural interest. Barley, corn and oats are cultivated.

There are no rivers within the town deserving notice; the Paucatuck, which runs upon its eastern border, and separates it from Rhode-Island, and the Mystic, that forms its western boundary, and separates it from Groton, are short but considerable streams.

There is an arm of the sea extending from Stonington harbour northeasterly, over which is Quanaduck stone bridge. A turnpike runs from New-London through Groton and Stonington and intersects the turn-

pike road from Providence to Westerly, in the state of Rhode-Island.

There are 1100 tons of shipping owned in this town, which are employed either in the business of fishing, or in the coasting and West India trade, and which furnish employment to a portion of the inhabitants. The maritime situation and interests of the town have given a direction to the pursuits and habits of its citizens; and Stonington has become conspicuous as a nursery of seamen, distinguished for their enterprise, perseverance and courage.

But although principally engaged in the pursuits of agriculture, fishing and navigation, other important interests have not been neglected. There are few towns in the state that have done more in certain branches of manufactures; there being two Woolen Factories and one Cotton Factory upon an extensive scale in the town.

The civil divisions of Stonington are 1 Ecclesiastical Society, 8 School Districts, and an incorporated borough.

Stonington Borough, incorporated by the Legislature in 1801, is situated on a narrow point of land of about half a mile in length, at the eastern extremity of Long Island sound. On its east side lies Paucatuck bay, and on its west the harbour, terminating in Lambert's Cove. It has four streets running north and south, intersected at right angles by nine cross streets, and contains about 120 Dwelling houses and Stores. It also has 2 Houses for public worship, an Academy, where the languages are taught, and 2 common schools,

2 Rope walks, commodious wharves and ware-houses for storage.

The fisheries have for a long time been prosecuted with industry and success by the inhabitants, who employ from 10 to 15 vessels in this business; which annually bring in about 7000 quintals of codfish, & 1000 bbls. of mackerel, besides most other species of fish which are taken by smaller vessels and boats. There is also a brig engaged in the sealing business, in the Pacific ocean; three packets which ply regularly between this port and New-York; a pilot boat to cruise for vessels on the coast bound in; and a number of vessels employed in the coasting trade, which carry to the southern market their fish, with the cheese, barley &c. of the adjacent country. Many fine ships and brigs are built here for the New-York market.

In the census of 1810, the town contained 3043 inhabitants; and there are now 335 qualified Electors. There are 20 Mercantile Stores, 4 Grain Mills, 3 Carding Machines, 1 Pottery & 1 Tannery. There is a Public Arsenal belonging to the United States, which is a substantial brick building; 2 Churches, one for Congregationalists and one for Baptists; 1 Academy or Grammar School; 8 district or common Schools; 3 Attornies, and 3 practising Physicians.

The general list of the town, in 1817, was $45,991.

CHAPTER VIII

WHALING AND SEALING (BY JAMES H. WEEKS)

Any history of Stonington would be incomplete which failed to contain a chapter on whaling and sealing, for in the early years of the nineteenth century, and even for many years before, this place had her fleet on the high seas and in the cold climate of the far southern islands in search of whales, seals and sea elephants. The builders of Stonington took from the depths of old ocean that which was readily turned into the hard shekels which went to sustain life. From all oceans came her ships which hunted the several species of whales for their baleen and oil—staple articles that found a ready market in all ports of the world. The oil was the illuminating fluid of the long winter evenings when our grandmothers did so much of the work of which we know nothing to-day. The whale bone was put to various commercial uses and served its purposes so well that nothing has yet been found adequately to take its place.

Mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts all longed for the return of the men from the voyage which perhaps covered a period of two, three or even four years. It was before the days of the fast mail, and word from both home and ship was anxiously awaited.

On the high seas in the old bluntnose whale ship men learned that hardy life and discipline which served them so well when they went to war against England in 1812, and later in our civil war. They learned to fight life as it came to them, to live on the most common of food and to enjoy every day; and the sea always retained its lure for them. The ships fitted for their long voyages at the breakwater, after it was built (about 1827), and at the several wharves of the town; and those were busy times along the water front. In fact the industry became so great that the United States Government established our custom house and made Stonington a port of entry in 1842. The ships were repaired here by being hauled down first on one side, then on the other, and the sound of the hammer as the caulking was put in the seams and the heavy copper put on the ships' bottoms made the borough a busy place. The warp, sails, bread and other needed articles were made here and some of our older residents remember when our wharves and breakwater were covered with the huge casks and shooks filled with oil ready for the market. Only scattered facts come to us of the industry before our second war with England. Stonington being on the coast, it is more than likely that our early settlers hunted the whales that must have spouted and gambolled in Long Island and Fisher's Island sounds. Yet almost every shred of evidence which would connect us with such facts is lost forever. There is the rumor here and there, but the earliest fact which the writer can find comes from some notes

made by the late David S. Hart in a book, and copied from a paper of the early days: "Samuel Trumbull, the first printer of a newspaper in the borough (Stonington), commenced the Journal of the Times Oct. 2nd, 1798.

"The 52d number was changed to the Impartial Journal. This says in 1799: 'A large school of whales of various sizes and to the number, it is supposed, of 200 appeared in Long Island sound 8 miles from this place. A number of citizens went out to take one, but being without suitable warp, met with no success, although one whale was harpooned. Returning however with the proper gear they succeeded in killing one, which was towed in the same day, to the admiration of a great number of people. It measured 40 feet in length and 30 in circumference.' Sealing was carried on extensively at this early date and the paper had an advertisement as follows—'For Sale. Seal skins from the Little Sarah, by Capt. George Howe;' and this note: 'Capt. Edmund Fanning returned from a successful sealing voyage by way of Canton,' as well as this—'Extract from a letter from Mr. Joseph Copp of this port, dated Crow's Nest Harbor, South Georgia, on board ship Aspasia, Jan. 31, 1801: Capt. George Howe scoured the whole coast of Patagonia last season, thence he sailed to the Falkland Islands and wintered, thence took his departure in November last, supposedly for Staten Land; when he left the former he had 5,000 skins.'"

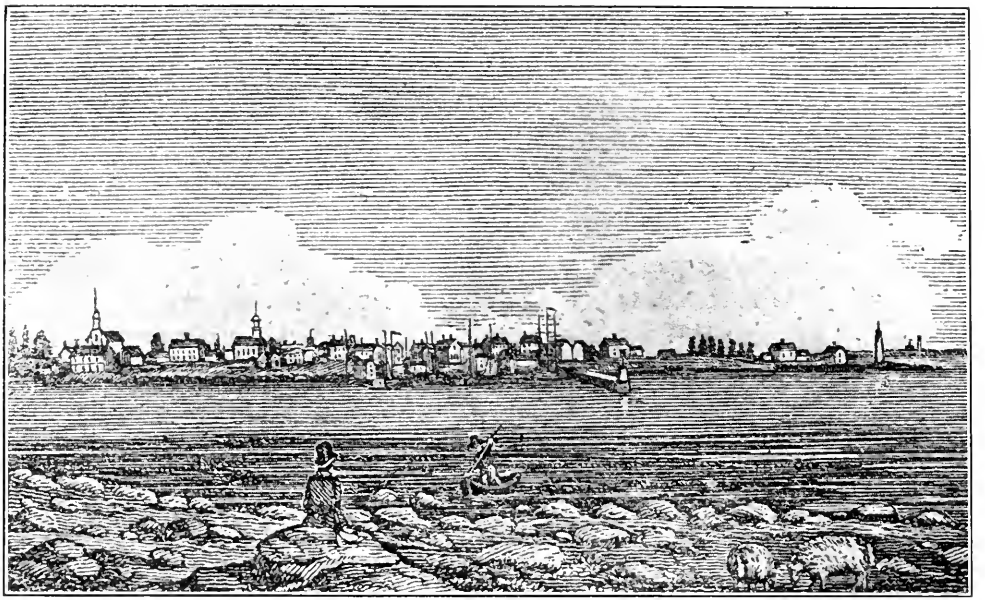
These extracts show how the two industries went

hand in hand, in ships from Stonington. The papers, logs and all data from then up to the driving of the ships from the sea by the English have been lost. Most have been consumed by the flames.

When peace was resumed there were 20,000 barrels of oil on hand in the United States, and in 1815 it was quoted at $1.40 per gallon. In 1823 it fell to 48 cents and in 1825 it rose again to 81 cents. In the latter year 89,218 barrels were brought into the United States. Stonington commenced again to feel the effects of the re-established industry and in 1820 three ships came in, the brig Mary, James Davis master, 194 tons, with 78 barrels of sperm and 744 of whale oil; the brig Mary Ann, Isaac English master, 183 tons, 59 barrels of whale oil; ship Carrier, A. Douglass master, 928 barrels of whale oil and 2040 pounds of bone. Each year there was an increase, and local men commenced to command the ships.

The Thomas Williams was built at Westerly, the Charles Phelps at the same place, while the Betsy Williams was built at the "kiln dock," so called, at the foot of Wall street in Stonington Borough. Owners commenced to buy ships from other ports, and between the years 1841 and 1845 twenty crafts went in search of whales from the port of Stonington. (See the end of this chapter for names and dates.)

Stonington men were among the first to petition Congress to establish a postal line on ships which sailed from New England on whaling voyages and the far islands in the Pacific Ocean. Some of our ships became



STONINGTON BOROUGH IN 1837
View from Wamphasset Point looking East
(From Barber's Historical Collections)

famous. There was the old "Herald," which left Stonington in charge of Capt. Samuel Barker, and which was owned by Charles P. Williams of Stonington. Starbuck in his pamphlet announced: "Sold at Rio Janeiro (?) 1848, by Captain. Also 600 sperm." This means that the craft was stolen by her master, sold and converted into a slaver to carry negroes from Africa to South America. What became of her captain was never known. The craft was seized at the Brazilian port in 1850 and Mr. Edward Kent, representing the United States, tried to sell her for the insurance company which held the risk. She was in poor condition and her ultimate fate is not known. She was sold into the slave trade about May 10, 1848.

The ship Cynosure was also stolen from her owner, John F. Trumbull, and sold into the slave trade. The Betsey Williams was built at Stonington on what is now the property of C. N. Wayland at the foot of Wall street. She was built for Charles P. Williams and was a well-fitted craft. She sailed on her first trip Nov. 11, 1846, in command of Captain Palmer Hall of Avondale, R. I., and returned in April, 1849. She made several voyages and was sold. The ship Charles Phelps was built at Westerly in 1841-1842 by Silas Greenman, and had a career as interesting as that of a human being. She was built on honor, of native oak taken from the woods of our region; into her frame went the finest of metals to hold her together. Her spars and rigging were tried and true, for they came from the old barque Beaver of Hudson, once owned by

John Jacob Astor and used by him in trips to the far north. She made five voyages from Stonington, was sold to New London parties and was used till the Civil War. She found a place in the "old stone fleet" to be sunk in Charleston, S. C., but was in such good condition that she was reserved for a supply ship and the Government used her all through the war as such. She was then sold to New Bedford parties, refitted, and renamed the Progress and went on several trips to the Arctic in search of whales. Her last service was in connection with the great World's Fair at Chicago, in 1893, where she was used as an exhibit and thousands saw in her, for the first time, how the whale was caught and treated for commercial use. She was left to rot in a creek at the last named city. Her figurehead may be seen at the Library at Westerly, R. I.

The last ship to be seen at Stonington was the Cincinnati and she remained idle here for a long time. The war of 1861-1865 put an end to the whaling industry as far as our port was concerned. Our vessels went to other ports and among the number in the "old stone fleet" to be sunk to blockade southern harbors were several which had brought thousands of dollars to their owners. An idea of the value of a cargo may be had by the following manifest as entered at the Stonington custom house by the owner of the Phelps on her return from her third voyage in 1850: "275 barrels of sperm oil at $36 a barrel, $9,900; 2,600 barrels of whale oil at $15 a barrel, $39,000; 35,000 pounds

of whalebone at 35 cents a pound, $12,250; total $61,150. This cargo sold in the market for nearly $120,000 and it will be seen what a profit the owner obtained. During this voyage the catch was—sperm whales, 9, right whales, 24, steeple-tops, 6, blackfish, 39, total 78. The crew had a living while on the voyage and on the return got little cash and so were ready to sign for another trip on the high seas. Some of the men in fact found themselves in debt to the ship and after a few days on shore started out in life anew. The captain had as his "lay" 1-15 or 1-16 of the voyage, while some of the hands would get 1-175 and very likely the green youth in the capacity of cabin boy received 1-200 as his munificent share. The men who were taken from here were only enough to man the ship till the Western or Azore islands were reached. They were in many instances young, hardy fellows and anxious to try life on the main. Many Indians from the north came and shipped. At the Azores men were shipped for the remainder of the trip. Then down around Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope the old ship would pound her way; stops would be made at various islands for wood, potatoes and other articles. On for many days and the Sandwich islands would be reached. Here the men would have shore leave and other hands would be taken on if wanted. The ship would refit and proceed to the northwest coast to battle with wind, waves, ice and whales.

Sometimes two seasons would be required to fill the ship and then the long run for home would begin.

In all this there was much excitement, and the men loved the sea. But there was work to be done, the many thousand pounds of whalebone had to be cleaned and carefully packed, leaking casks had to be recoopered and sails, rigging and spars repaired and cleaned and the whole ship painted. It was a happy day when the crown of Lantern Hill came in sight as the first land to be made. "Watch Point" was left behind and the "old whaler" came to anchor in the "Deep Hole" and the master came ashore to report his success or failure.

As previously shown, the sealing industry was carried on extensively in the early years of the nineteenth century. Small sloops were fitted out at Stonington to go to the Patagonia coast and islands south of there. Large and valuable catches were made. About 1820 fleets commenced to go to engage in this fishery, and it was on such a trip that Nathaniel B. Palmer took his sloop Hero to the edge of the vast Antarctic continent and discovered that section known as Palmer Land. Edmund Fanning, Benjamin Pendleton and Nathaniel B. and Alexander S. Palmer took crafts to these faraway rookeries to get the fur seal for clothing and the hair seal which was used in harness and the trunk making trade.

The schooner Betsey Elucid came in May 7, 1834. She had 1390 prime and 500 pup fur seal skins, 38 salted bullock skins and 36 dried bullock skins. The schooner Henrietta came in May 11, 1834, with this cargo: 203 prime fur seal skins, 2317 hair seal skins,

122 sea otter (prime) skins, 80 tortoise shells, 629 hair pup skins, 220 fur pup skins and 102 goat skins. In 1835 several crafts arrived; one the Penguin, B. F. Ash captain, 82 33-45 tons, had 1215 fur skins for C. P. Williams, 800 fur skins for F. Pendleton, 350 hair skins for C. P. Williams, and 890 fur skins and 350 hair skins consigned to S. Lawrence from the Betsey Tahua and Ann Howard. In later days the schooners Express, Thomas Hunt and Charles Shearer and the brig Henry Trowbridge went on sealing voyages from Stonington.

WHALESHIP SAILINGS FROM STONINGTON, 1841-45

Vessel	Tonnage	Captain	Owner	Date of Sailing
America	464	Hubbard	C. P. Williams	Aug. 2, 1842
Bolton	220	Nash	C. P. Williams	July 30, 1843
Byron	178	Wilcox	J. F. Trumbull	July 20, 1843
Cabinet	305	Noyes	J. F. Trumbull	April 28, 1843
Charles Phelps	362	Wall	C. P. Williams	Aug. 29, 1842
Caledonia	446	Forsyth	C. P. Williams	Aug. 10, 1843
Corvo	349	Pendleton	C. P. Williams	June 20, 1842
Calumet		Hancox	C. P. Williams	In Port
Enterprise	95	Sealer. Ash	Stanton & Smith	Aug., 1842
Eugene	297	Pendleton	C. P. Williams	Nov. 3, 1841
Fellowes	268	Brewster	C. P. Williams	Jan. 18, 1842
George	251	Williams	C. P. Williams	June 7, 1843
Herald	241	Morgan	C. P. Williams	June 24, 1843
Mercury	305	Gray	Pendleton-Trumbull	July 11, 1842
Newark	323	Pendleton	J. F. Trumbull	Oct. 18, 1841
Philetus	278	Brewster	J. F. Trumbull	July 12, 1843

Richard Henry	137	Beck	J. F. Trumbull	July 20, 1843
Thos. Williams	340	Manwaring	C. P. Williams	June 20, 1842
Tybee	299	Swan	J. F. Trumbull	July 15, 1841
United States	244	Barnum	J. F. Trumbull	June 19, 1843

That an idea of the amount of material brought home may be gathered we give the names of some of the crafts which came home and a list of the cargoes, for the year 1847.

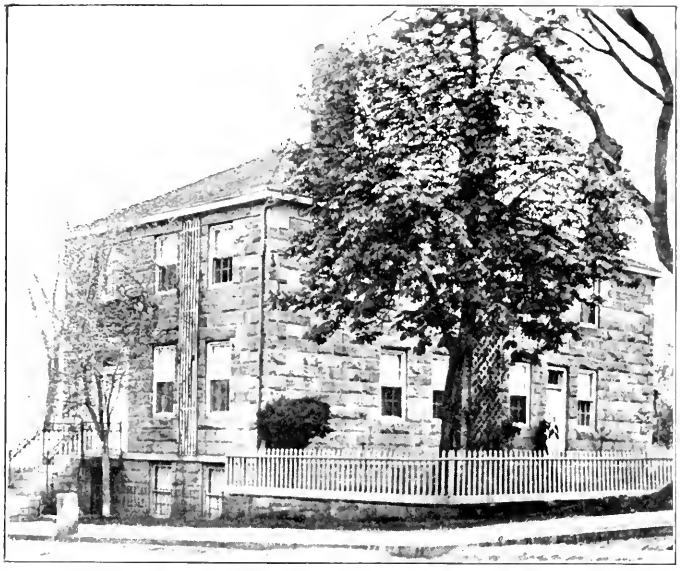
Date	Vessel	Commander	Bbls. Sperm	Bbls. Whale	Lbs. Bone	Time Gone
Mar. 6	Newburyport	Gray	100	2900	—	2 yrs. 5 mos. 15 days
Apr. 16	Corvo	B. Burch	Poor trip	owing to	leaks	1 yr. 9 mos. 8 days
Apr. 15	Charles Phelps	Pendleton	50	1750	16,000	2yrs. 9 mos. 20 days
May 12	Warsaw	Barnum		900	8,000	2yrs. 5 mos. 12 days
May 20	Eugene	G. Pendleton		1800	16,000	2yrs. 10 mos. 5 days
May 22	Mary and Susan	Hubbard	80	1700		2yrs. 9 mos. 21 days
May 19	Neptune	Oat		1300	15,000	
May 19	Izaack Walton	Fitch	30	3100	51,000	
May 25	John and Eliz'b	Walker	140	1910	20,000	

CHAPTER IX

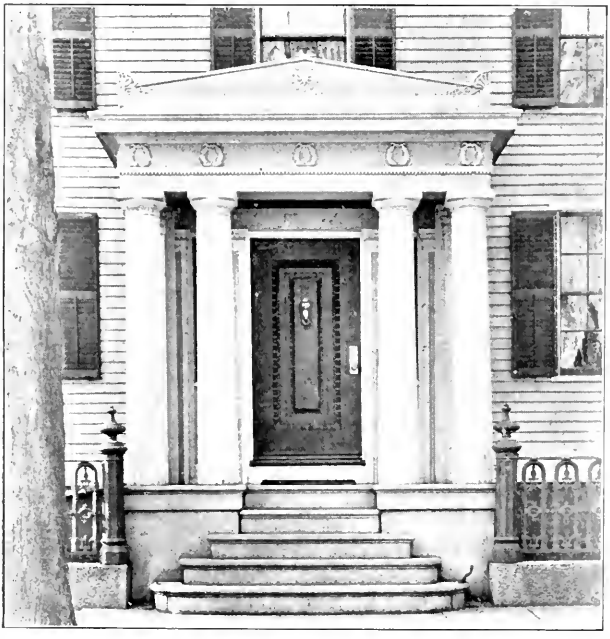
IN THE "FIFTIES" (BY GEORGE D. STANTON)

To give a historical sketch of the borough of Stonington and its inhabitants in the "Fifties" as it may have appeared to a looker-on from Venice is a difficult task. To begin this sketch, perhaps it will be best to consider first the business pursuits conducted by the wide-awake and enterprising men of that period.

The principal interest then centred in whale fisheries. There were at that time seventeen ships and barks sent from this port, with a total tonnage of five thousand, three hundred and twenty tons—an average of about three hundred tons for each vessel. Of these Charles P. Williams and John F. Trumbull owned each, or represented, eight vessels, and F. Pendleton & Co. owned one. This list comprises only those vessels hailing and sailing from this port. There were, however, thirty-one whaling ships, brigs and schooners sailing from Mystic, which was in the Stonington marine district. The officers and men who manned the ships belonging to this port were not all natives or residents of the borough. Many of these were obtained from other ports, and quite a large proportion of the crews were shipped at the Western islands, many of whom on their return from sea made their perma-



"Squire" Pomeroy House
Built three-quarters of a century ago. Now the home of
Frank Trumbull and sisters



Doorway of John F. Trumbull Homestead
Main Street

nent abode here. Quite a number of Indians were secured from the Indian reservations in North Stonington and Ledyard who shipped as seamen. In fact it may be truthfully stated in this connection that the tribes in those reservations were decimated and became nearly extinguished through having been so generally employed in whaling. They were reported to have made excellent seamen; but their contact with the white sailors and their proneness to indulgence in the white man's fire water and vices have nearly obliterated their race. In alluding to the men employed as sailors in the whale fisheries, it may not be out of place to refer to the lamentable fact of the alleged practice of some shipping agents in those days of securing men for the whaling voyages by inveigling young men into liquor saloons and plying them with liquor until they were stupefied under the influence of drink, and persuading them to sign shipping articles, after which they were immediately carried on board a ship, and when they aroused from their stupor they would find themselves many miles at sea. Many stories, too true, are told of how poor Jack was thus kidnapped and hustled on board ship, and how on his return he was cheated out of a large portion of his hard earned share of the proceeds of the voyage. This is the way a settlement with Jack is reputed to have been made in many cases. The cost was exorbitantly charged against him by the shipping agents for his outfit—"slop chest," containing clothing, needles, thread etc. This was about the way accounts would be finally settled

with him, as related by one who knew: "Ought is an ought and two is a two—six cents coming to me and nought coming to you."

In the way of manufacturing establishments there was the stone factory building erected by Hon. John F. Trumbull in 1851. It was first used for the manufacture of horseshoe nails, which was continued but for a short time as it was claimed that there were too many imperfect nails, and that the best of them were inferior to those made by hand.

There was a rope walk on Main street for the manufacture of cordage and fish lines. As to merchants, the borough was well supplied with enterprising business men who carried a large stock of dry goods and groceries to meet the demands not only of the local community but of the surrounding country as well.

In those days the merchant's only way of obtaining and replenishing his stock of goods from New York or Providence was by sailing packet. Among the leading merchants here in that period there were Samuel Chesebrough, Peleg Hancox, F. Pendleton & Co., J. E. Smith & Co., Enoch Chesebrough, Simon Carew, John C. Hayes and Hewitt & Hull. Elisha Faxon, Jr., kept stationery and newspapers at his store on Main street. Simon Carew had quite a considerable trade with the Block Islanders, and a story is told of a resident of the island who had purchased a bill of goods of Simon, and gave his note for the amount and was heard to remark as he left the store "Well, thank

God, that bill is paid." History has not recorded whether or no the note was ever converted into cash. This includes about all of the mercantile establishments that occur to me, with the exception that I may mention that Russell A. Denison had a cabinet shop and kept a limited stock of furniture.

Of the practising physicians here there were Drs. George E. Palmer and his son Amos, and the Drs. William Hyde, Senior and Junior. Benjamin Pomeroy and Franklin A. Palmer, Esq., represented the legal fraternity, William Woodbridge kept a high school, and Dr. David S. Hart taught a limited number of pupils in the higher branches, preparing young men for entrance to college. The old Wadawanuck Hotel was for a short time converted into a seminary for young ladies under the management of Rev. Harvey D. Sackett, assisted by a corps of accomplished young lady teachers. Miss Lucy Ann Sheffield also kept a select school for younger misses and boys. Miss Ellen Kirby kept a school for small children, on Main street.

Freeman Wallace kept clocks, watches and jewelry on Gold street, which gave that street its name. Frederick Moser kept watches and jewelry in a store in the south end of the old "Arcade," so called, and the north end of the building was utilized for a post office for several years by Gen. Franklin Williams. William Higgins also had a bake shop in the rear part of the same building, and he delivered his cakes, bread and pies around the borough from a large basket carried on his arm. There were two hotels, one called

the Steamboat Hotel, kept by C. B. Capron, and the other called the American House, kept by R. R. Barker, both hotels being on Gold street, facing the railroad square, the steamboat landing and the Stonington and Providence railroad depot.

CHAPTER X

SOCIETY "BEFORE THE WAR"

(In a paper read by request a few years ago before the Stonington Historical and Genealogical Society, Miss Emma W. Palmer gave a pleasant account of the social life of Stonington in the years just preceding the Civil War. It is unfortunate that there is not space in this volume for the entire paper, but as much of it as possible is comprised in the following chapter.)

The generation now growing up can hardly realize as they look around them what the dear old place was in those days of fair women and brave men, who either lived here or were attracted hither by a good hotel, such as the old Wadawanuck then was. Even before my day I remember the glorious times the young people had, led by Henry Clay Trumbull, Ephraim Williams, Amos and William Palmer, Edward Denison and others. There were hops, clambakes, tableaux and sleighing parties. And then riding parties, with Bessie Williams at the head. Few could excel her, or keep up with her, in this her favorite amusement. These were the days of fine saddle horses, and those who did not own them could always be supplied from the hotel stable then kept by Horace Lewis on the ground now occupied by the house of Mr. and Mrs. Henry R. Palmer.

Many were the runaway couples that were helped on their way rejoicing by the fast horses from this stable, the terminus generally being Norwich, as otherwise they had to cross the Thames. Sometimes would come the avenging Nemesis in the shape of the angry father, close at their heels, and then all, even to the servants, conspired to detain him as long as they could, to give the pursued a chance. At one time there were so many runaway marriages, owing to the stringent laws in Rhode Island, that Stonington was called Gretna Green.

These were the days of the Pattons, the Reverend Doctor and his two handsome daughters; the Misses Dwight of Norwich, the Warings, the Van Rensselaers and others. The MacNeills and Whistlers also lived here and always had more or less company. Mary Trumbull, afterwards Mrs. William C. Prime, was a great favorite, and Bessie Williams was the head-centre of all the fun. Once she arranged with Henry Trumbull that he should go for her early to take her to ride in a wheelbarrow. He was there promptly, and I think she went.

The Wadawanuck Hotel, so well kept, was filled with the creme de la creme of many cities; all seeking then, as now, the pure air and cool breezes of the seashore. Time would fail me to tell of the Vintons, Slaters, Wilmerdings, Palmers, Dixons, Burnhams and others who year after year came to this little place and not only enjoyed it themselves but included the many gay young people of the village in their enjoyments;

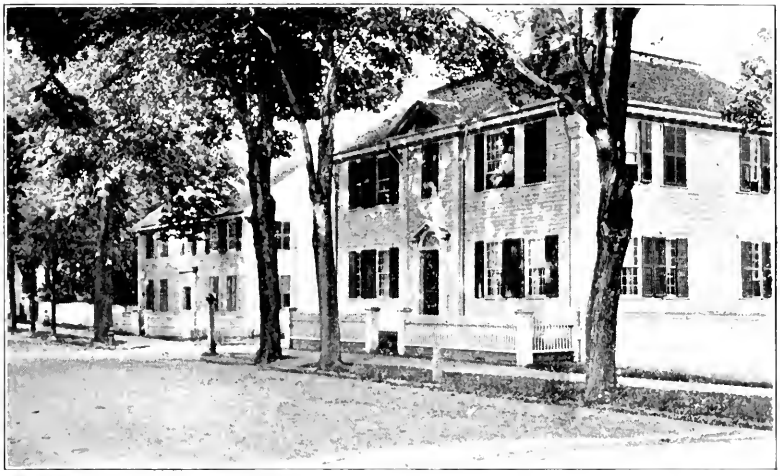
and I am proud to say that none of all the bright assemblage could eclipse the handsome girls of Stonington, noted for their beauty and also for their wit. There were Bessie Williams, Emmeline Williams, Eliza Trumbull, Abby and Helen and Sallie Day, Carrie Champlin and many others. In those days Walnut Grove, the lovely home of the Days, was always full of gay young people, and so were the Williams and Champlin houses, and our own home, all filled with a gay and happy crowd eager to enter into any fun or pleasure that came our way.

The Wadawanuck bath-house, situated just a little way west of the hotel and reached by a long wooden wharf, was popular in those days. It had a large open space in the middle for bathers, with dressing-rooms around and opening on it; and at high tide every day down would troop the gay crowd, each paying a small fee for the bathing privilege. I remember my cousin Eliza MacNeill was considered the best swimmer at that time, although at an earlier date Miss Sarah Fanning carried off the palm. The bath-house gradually got out of repair, and out of vogue as well, as Watch Hill bathing became the rage; and at last it ended its days in smoke. Having drifted from its moorings it was beached at Nat's Point and set on fire.

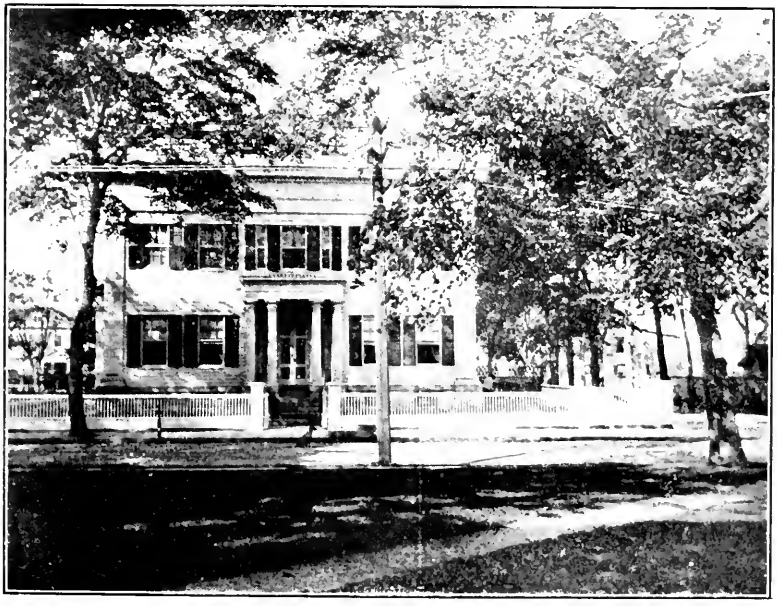
It was not only in summer that we had good times. There were the famous sewing societies of the Congregational and Episcopal Churches, when the ladies met in the afternoon and sewed, and stayed to tea, and the young people came after, and had such a good time!

The very recollection of those teas even now makes my mouth water. Such piles of delicious rusk, cut very thin and buttered, baked in a pan peculiar to itself, something like the present brownbread tin; why I can see them now as if it were yesterday! And the cake—well, I can only say you don't see such cake now: almond and citron and cocoanut and rich composition and raised cake, every kind you could think of. Even the sponge cake was better somehow than it is now, and each housekeeper had her own specialty that she was proud to make when it was her turn to entertain the society. There were so many hospitable homes in those days that seldom was more than one meeting held in a winter at any one house.

At last they got to be regular parties, much to the distress of the older members. Some of the younger ones often went off in a room by themselves and indulged in ghost and robber stories in the twilight, or blind-man's holiday, until they really were frightened and were glad to come back to the lights and the elder ones. Old Mrs. Dawes was a favorite character, and we used to love to crowd around her and hear her talk of her experiences, of her success as a matchmaker—dear, dear, what good old times those were when there was no fuss and feathers, but good old-fashioned hospitality! If strangers were visiting you you were invited to bring them, for there was always plenty and the tables fairly groaned with the good things. The coffee was so good, real old-fashioned boiled coffee, with plenty of



TWO OLD HOUSES ON MAIN STREET
At the left, the Eells House, about 1785; at the right, the Col. Joseph Smith House, 1800



EPHRAIM WILLIAMS HOMESTEAD, 1840
Now the Home of Dr. Charles M. Williams

cream in it, as clear as amber and as strong as it was possible to make it without having it bitter.

There used to be grand occasions when we could wear our best bib and tucker, and how well and becomingly all were dressed, even the old ladies, so different from the present style. Mrs. McEwen was Mary Day then, and I often laugh over one of her experiences. It was the style to wear the hair plastered down over the ears as smooth as it could be made, and, to keep it in place, we sometimes used the black pomade that comes in sticks. I had plastered mine down well with it and so had she, each of course unknown to the other, and in the course of the evening, it being warm, in each case the hair had been pushed aside and there was a strongly defined line of black on each of our faces that occasioned much merriment.

Another laughable thing I remember, that struck me so forcibly that even after the lapse of so many years it comes back to me just as funny as ever. A very nice but prim old lady quietly put a doughnut in her capacious pocket with her ball of yarn, and in the course of the evening, just when all was quiet and she was placidly knitting, out flew the doughnut, rolling over to the other side of the room, where, thinking it was her ball, one of the young gallants rushed to pick it up, much to his own and the poor old lady's discomfiture. Her face I can see now as he presented the doughnut to her. . .

Miss Palmer describes the church fairs, held sometimes in the old sail loft, which stands west of Mr.

Jerome S. Anderson's house. At these fairs as much as eight hundred or a thousand dollars was sometimes netted. She tells also of entertainments for the benefit of the Book Club, at one of which a charming feature was a series of tableaux, with attractive young women of the village impersonating famous characters or works of art. She says "there were Hannah Stanton, and Dina and Kate Stanton, Mary and Lucy Babcock, Jennie Burnham, Julia Palmer and many others whose names I cannot now recall. Each and all of the tableaux were so beautiful and so well done that the audience scarcely breathed until the curtain dropped. . Hops at the hotel and balls and parties at the different houses were frequent and most enjoyable, with plenty of beaux, if not at hand, then imported; and many a man of wealth, fame and rank has figured in these scenes and has looked back upon these days as the happiest in his life. James van Alen the elder, Colonel Vose, James and Will Whistler, Daniel Ulhman, Colonel Slocomb and Count de Choiseul all have figured more or less in these gay scenes or added their share to the general fund of enjoyment."

Miss Palmer closes her paper with the description of an oldtime party given at her home in 1859, one of the pleasantest gatherings ever held in the historic old house. She says, "I have tried several times to get up another like it during the long winter evenings, but have met with very little encouragement. "It's too much trouble; we would rather play cards," is the general verdict.

CHAPTER XI

WHISTLER IN STONINGTON (BY RIETA B. PALMER)

Although the artist James Adams MacNeill Whistler spent but a few years of his childhood and boyhood in Stonington, there are people living here to-day who well remember the slight figure, brown curly hair and alert face of the eccentric and lovable young man.

Whistler's mother was Anna MacNeill, a sister of Mrs. Dr. George E. Palmer, (mother of Mrs. Dr. George D. Stanton), and a southerner by birth. She married Major George Washington Whistler, a graduate of West Point and a civil engineer, who was a widower with three children, George, Joseph, (who died in childhood), and Deborah, who became Lady Seymour Haden. Major Whistler was employed on the Baltimore and Ohio and other railroads, and was engineer of locks and canals at Lowell, Mass., in 1834, when his son James was born. Two years later the second son, William Gibbs, was born and the family moved to Stonington in 1837 and established their home in a pleasant house on Main street.

Major Whistler had previously built the railroad from Stonington to Providence, (in 1835-37), and old residents of Stonington not many years ago recalled the carriage, fitted with car wheels and drawn by a

horse, which took the family by rail to the Episcopal church in Westerly on Sundays, there being no church of that communion in Stonington at the time.

The Whistlers lived here until 1840, when they moved to Springfield, Mass., where Major Whistler was engaged in building the Boston, Springfield and Albany Railroad.

In 1842, Czar Nicholas I. of Russia sent commissioners through Europe and America to find the best method and best man for the construction of a railroad from St. Petersburg to Moscow. They chose Major Whistler for the work.

This was a great honor, and the salary excellent. He started for Russia at once, leaving his family in Stonington with Dr. Palmer, whose wife, as stated, was Mrs. Whistler's sister. The next year the family followed him to Russia, where they remained until Major Whistler's death in 1849. The widow and her two sons, James and William, returned to Stonington, and Major Whistler was buried from the little Episcopal church he had so generously helped to build.

Miss Emma W. Palmer says in a paper written for the Historical Society that "James at this time was tall and slight (he was fifteen years old) with a pensive, delicate face, shaded by soft brown curls, one lock of which even then fell over his forehead. In later years he was very proud of this lock, which turned grey while yet young, and this gave him a striking appearance."

In the years of increasing fame and eccentricity

he was inordinately proud of his curly hair, and the one white lock, which he said should be the first thing seen upon his entrance in a drawing room.

Mrs. Whistler soon took her boys to Pomfret to place them in the excellent school at that place managed by a West Point man. And there they remained until James, or "Jamie," "Jim" or "Jimmy," as he was variously called, was old enough to enter West Point, following the example of his father. At both schools he was very popular. No one could resist his mirth, though he was frequently thoughtless and always "getting into scrapes" and being helped out of them by his devoted friends.

His fondness for drawing evinced itself at four years of age, and he was always making sketches in his school books, mostly caricatures. He was asked to do some pictures for a fair in Stonington, and though he made them very absurd they sold well. He was habitually obliging, his answer to all requests being, "Oh! anything for a quiet life." It seems a pity that this genial kindness did not continue into his later years.

He was thoroughly unsuited to the life at West Point. He could never be induced to exert himself, to hurry or to conform to what seemed to him foolish discipline, so he quitted the academy, leaving many stories of his pranks and witty sayings behind him. He was always exceedingly proud of having been a West Point man and spoke often of his experience at the school.

From West Point he went to Baltimore, where he

stayed only a short time in the locomotive works owned by a relative; then he had a position in the United States Coast Survey, where he made Government maps with infinite care. This was a little more to his liking, and the preparing and etching of plates was good training for his later work. From here he went to Paris, where his real life as an artist begins.

We will not attempt to follow his subsequent career, well known to all and having no further connection with Stonington. His fame did not come at once. He struggled hard, making a name for himself slowly and painfully. Though there are varying opinions about the value of his art, he is generally acknowledged a great painter and etcher. Some of his early paintings and etchings have been owned by people in Stonington, where it is pleasant to picture him as a gay, happy boy, showing promise of genius, and with nothing of that attitude of the poseur which afterward qualified his charm, and giving no evidence of that bitter tongue which so easily made him enemies in later life. William M. Chase says that it was impossible for any man to live long in harmony with him, and that he had two distinct personalities. In public he was "the fop, the cynic, the brilliant, vain and careless idler;" but the Whistler of the studio was "the earnest, tireless, sombre worker, a very slave to his art, a bitter foe to all pretence and sham, an embodiment of simplicity almost to the point of diffidence, an incarnation of earnestness and sincerity of purpose."

We have heard so much of his affectations that it is

a relief to think of his less complex years of youth, watched over and loved by a saint-like mother, whose portrait, so beautifully painted by an always devoted son, now hangs in the Luxembourg galleries at Paris.

CHAPTER XII

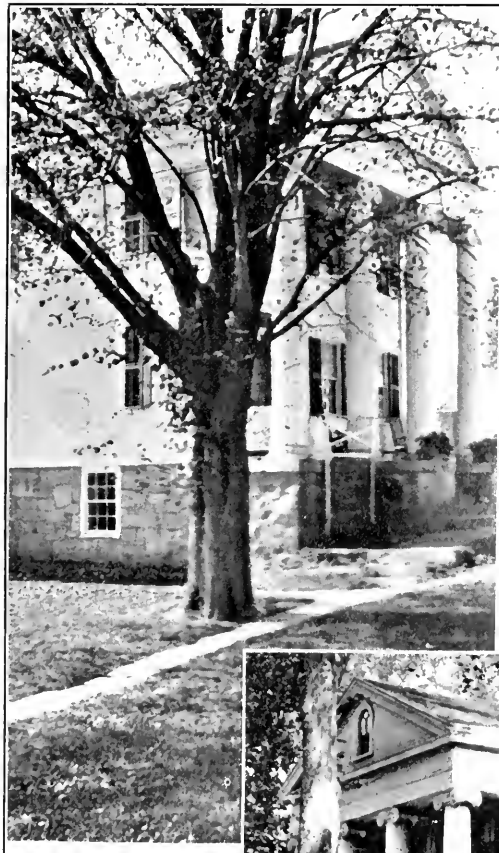
THREE DISASTROUS FIRES

Within a period of seven years —1836-1843—three disastrous fires occurred in Stonington Borough, all of them in the same general locality.

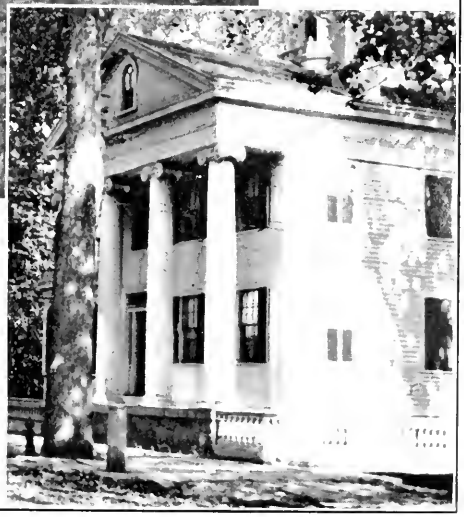
The first broke out in December, 1836, (according to information given the writer by Henry Clay Trumbull in August, 1902), starting in a cooper shop on the wharf southwest of what is now Cannon square. It swept the hotel on Water street, where Captain Samuel B. Pendleton's house now stands, and also the tavern (the "Swan Hotel") which occupied the site of the house now owned by Mrs. Benjamin C. Brown, on the south side of the square. The hotel on the west side of Water street was kept by Ezra Chesebro, who in November of the next year became the first landlord of the new Wadawanuck Hotel.

The second fire, the largest in the history of the borough, occurred on April 2, 1837. The Providence Journal of April 6, 1837, said: "A fire occurred at Stonington on Sunday morning last, (supposed to be the work of an incendiary), which destroyed nineteen buildings, most of them stores, and injured two others."

This disastrous blaze started in a cooper shop on the "Union Store" wharf, and spread with irresistible speed



CONGREGATIONAL PARSONAGE



HOUSE OF MISS CAROLINE A. SMITH

and fury eastward to Peleg Hancox's store, which occupied the site of the present store of James H. Stivers, Captain Charles P. Williams's house just opposite, and a row of stores to the south, on the site of the present Arcade. None of the buildings named could be saved. The flames for a time isolated upon the wharf five residents of the borough, one of whom was Dr. David S. Hart.

When the fire broke out there was no fire engine with which to combat it; the men of the place formed a long line with their leather buckets and wooden pails, and hurried water from the harbor to the burning buildings. The old Colonial house on the southeast corner of Water and Wall streets with its high steps and iron railing was saved, after a desperate and gallant effort, by the spreading of wet blankets on the roof and the constant dampening of these. Steam fire engines were unheard of at the time; hydrants also were unknown. It was after this fire that the old Wadawanuck engine was purchased by the borough.

There is now in the possession of the Stonington Historical and Genealogical Society a letter (the gift of Mr. Stivers) written on the day succeeding the fire by Zebulon Hancox, Jr., in which the writer, then a clerk in the store of Peleg Hancox, described to his employer, who was temporarily in New York, the devastation wrought and the measures he had taken on his own responsibility to provide for the future conduct of the business. It shows the young clerk as a bright, efficient business man, quite in accord with the tradi-

tions that have come down to us of his earlier and happier days, before he became a picturesque recluse in his cottage by the shore.

The letter reads as follows:

Stonington, April 3, 1837

Mr. Peleg Hancox,

Sir: A fire broke out on Saturday night about 4 o'clock in Charles P. Williams's cooper shop, which consumed your store and all the stores between the old Doctor Lording store, your house, Mrs. Carew's on the north and Frank Pendleton's store and Captain Amy's on the south. I have saved most all of the goods in the front store and they are safe in my house. I don't believe there will be more than a hundred dollars worth of goods missing from the front store. The fire was so rapid we had not time to save more. Your house was cleared of furniture, but we saved that and the old store on the wharf and your family is all returned and comfortable. Your books and notes are all safe.

I have engaged Mr. Nathan Wheeler not to let Ben Wright's store until you return. Mr. Charles P. Williams's house and barn are burnt, but he has saved most of his furniture. The bank (the present custom house) is saved and the rope walk. (This stood on the east side of Main street.)

We have found most of the articles taken from your house and they are returned. Your family are in good spirits, but want you here,

Yours in haste,

Zebulon Hancox, Jr.

At that time Mr. Peleg Hancox lived in the homestead just north of his store, and so fierce was the heat in the neighborhood during the fire that most of his household goods, as stated in the above letter, were removed from the house. When the fire was extinguished the infant son of the family was nowhere to be found. His mother had entrusted the eleven-month child to somebody at the height of the excitement, but to whom she could not remember. Some time afterward he was discovered wrapped up safe and sound, in the little yard in front of the Hyde house just south of Dr. C. O. Maine's present residence at the corner of Water and Harmony streets. The helpless infant was Nathaniel Hancox, justly beloved in Stonington for his keen wit and jovial companionship to the day of his death a few years ago.

Four or five merchants, among them "Uncle Peleg," afterward opened shop in the sail-loft building on the Union Store wharf. Mr. Hancox's stock included some fine velvets and laces, strange goods for such a rough environment.

The third fire to which reference has been made occurred in the winter of 1842-43 and destroyed the stores of A. S. Prentice, (irreverently nicknamed "Apple Sass" by reason of his initials), Elisha Faxon and Captain Francis Pendleton. These stores stood, in the order given, from north to south, on the space now occupied by Mr. Bindloss's coal office and Oscar F. Pendleton's "Brick Store."

It may be added here that the Eagle Hotel, which

stood at the northwest corner of Water and Church streets, was burnt in 1862. On April 20th of that year, the freemen of the borough voted to compensate Horace Lewis "for damage to his onion patch by the fire engines and people at the recent Eagle Hotel fire."

From January 1, 1883, to October 6, 1894, during the term of Erastus S. Chesebro as chief engineer of the Stonington Fire Department, twenty-five fires were reported in Stonington. The assessed valuation of the buildings involved was $64,850; the fire loss was only $4310.

From October 22, 1894, to July 1, 1902, during the term of George A. Slade as chief engineer, fifty-two fires occurred. The valuation of the threatened buildings and contents was $323,300; the fire loss was only $20,338 or six per cent.

From November 19, 1903, to December 25, 1912, during the term of Edward P. Teed as chief engineer, thirty-two fires for which alarms were sounded threatened buildings valued, with their contents, at $138,450. The fire loss was only $11,950, or less than nine per cent.

These figures speak volumes for the efficiency of the Stonington Fire Department.

CHAPTER XIII

STONINGTON NEWSPAPERS

The first Stonington newspaper was published in the eighteenth century by Samuel Trumbull, son of John Trumbull, a newspaper publisher and printer of Norwich. Mr. Trumbull came to this place in 1798 and on October 2d of that year issued the first number of the Journal of the Times, a diminutive sheet with the motto:

> "Pliant as reeds where streams of freedom glide,
> Firm as the hills to stem oppression's tide."

Mr. Trumbull was an elder brother of John F. Trumbull and lived on the site of the house now owned and occupied by Mrs. Lucius N. Palmer on the east side of Wadawanuck square. In 1800 the title of the paper was changed to the Impartial Journal. The Journal supported Thomas Jefferson and was continued until 1805, when Mr. Trumbull abandoned journalism for other business.

The next newspaper was "America's Friend," published by John Munson, who came to Stonington from New Haven. It is thought that it was not continued for more than a year or two.

In March, 1824, Samuel A. Seabury came to the borough from Long Island and issued one number of the Stonington Chronicle. This first issue was the last,

for the editor died almost immediately afterward.

Within a few months, however, on July 28, 1824, William Storer, Jr., who had been a newspaper publisher at Caldwell, New York, put out Vol. I. No. 1 of the Yankee, which had for its motto this unimpeachable legend: 'Where liberty dwells there is my country.' Three years later the Yankee became the Stonington Telegraph, under which name it continued till July 22, 1829. Nearly complete files of these two papers are in the possession of the writer, having descended to him from Dr. David S. Hart, who had carefully preserved them through many years.

The Stonington Phenix and the Stonington Chronicle had brief successive existences in 1832-34. Their publishers were Charles W. Denison and William H. Burleigh. Immediately following them, the Stonington Spectator, issued by Thomas H. Peabody, continued for six months. Franklin A. Palmer published the Stonington Advertiser for a time in the fifties, and Henry Clay Trumbull and others were associated, about the same period, in the ephemeral publication of "Lux Mundi."

On November 27, 1869, Jerome S. Anderson issued the first number of the Stonington Mirror, with which was later consolidated the Mystic Journal (established in 1859). These papers, identical except for their headings, have had a continuous existence to the present day and are now issued by the Stonington Publishing Company with Jerome S. Anderson, Jr., as the editor.

This list of Stonington newspapers is not absolutely complete, but it comprises all the sheets that have had more than a brief or inconsequent career.

CHAPTER XIV

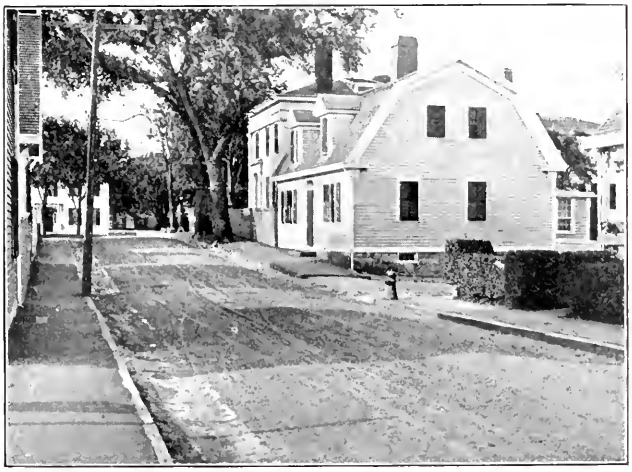
THE DISCOVERY OF ANTARCTICA

To Captain Nathaniel B. Palmer of Stonington belongs the honor of discovering the Antarctic Continent. He was a mere boy at the time, only twenty-one or twenty-two years of age, but nevertheless the command of the sloop Hero had been entrusted to him. The Hero was one of a little squadron of Stonington vessels sent out to the sealing grounds in the South Shetlands in 1820. The fleet consisted of the brig Frederick, Capt. Benjamin Pendleton, the senior commander; brig Hersilia, Capt. James P. Sheffield; schooner Express, Capt. E. Williams; schooner Free Gift, Capt. F. Dunbar, and sloop Hero, Captain Palmer.

The vessels reached Yankee harbor, Deception Island, during the season of 1820-1821, and from that place a lookout on a day of unusually clear atmosphere discovered from his post aloft a volcano in operation. The fiery mountain was many miles distant to the southward, but Captain Palmer, despite his youth, was dispatched in the Hero, a mere shallop, to examine the region.

This adventurous voyage into the southern seas is worth the attention of the poets, and indeed one poet, the late Rev. Frederic Denison, has sung the episode in

"The Hill," the Denison Homestead
Built by Rev. Hezekiah Woodruff, about 1795, and Remodelled by Edward P. York, 1912



The Lower End of Main Street

rhythmic verse. Here was a boy hardly out of his teens, in command of a 45-ton sloop, starting on a voyage of discovery across an uncharted ocean, with only a smoking volcano to guide him forward. In one way the voyage was not productive of great results, for Captain Palmer found little except rocks and ice in the volcanic country. There was hardly any animal life and no vegetation. But as a matter of geographical interest the voyage was of first importance, because it brought a new continent to light.

Only within a few years has it been absolutely determined that there is a mass of land of truly continental proportions around the South Pole, but the credit for the discovery of Antarctica belongs to 'Cap'n Nat.' Columbus discovered America, even though he thought he had landed in India, and although he never set foot on the North American Continent.

There is some uncertainty as to whether the land visited by the Stonington sailor was part of the central continental mass or separated from it by what is now called Belgica Strait, but the question is of little real importance. The Belgian expedition of a few years ago determined to perpetuate the name of Captain Palmer in the region by attaching it to the archipelago west of the strait, whereas for many years "Palmer Land" was the accepted designation of a part at least of what is now called "Graham Land" on British charts.

Captain Palmer found the region sterile and mountainous, and difficult to land upon. It was almost cov-

ered with snow and ice, although it was midsummer when he visited it.

On his way back to the little squadron at Deception Island the Hero was becalmed not far from the Antarctic shore, and when the fog that had enshrouded the sloop cleared away, Captain Palmer was surprised to find that he had run between a Russian frigate and sloop-of-war. Thereupon he hoisted the Stars and Stripes and awaited developments.

The Russians set their own colors and sent a boat to the Hero, inviting Captain Palmer to come aboard. He accepted the invitation and was told that the commander, Captain Bellingshausen, had been sent by the Emperor of Russia on a voyage of discovery around the world. Captain Palmer reported to him his own prior discovery of Antarctica, and the Russian commander was so impressed with the sight of a youth in command of a slight vessel far from home and on such a mission that he named the new-found country Palmer Land.

Captain Palmer's own account, as recited by Hon. Frederic Bush, United States consul at Hong Kong, includes the following interesting note:

"I gave him (the Russian commander) an account of my voyage, tonnage of sloop, number of men, and general details, when he said: 'How far south have you been?' I gave him the latitude and longitude of my lowest point, and told him what I had discovered. He, rose, much agitated, begging I would produce my log book and chart, with which request I complied,

and a boat was sent for it. . . When the log book and chart were laid upon the table he examined them carefully without comment, then rose from his seat, asking: 'What do I see and what do I hear from a boy in his teens— that he is commander of a tiny boat of the size of a launch of my frigate, has pushed his way to the pole through the storm and ice and sought the point I, in command of one of the best appointed fleets at the disposal of my august master, have for three long, weary, anxious years searched day and night for?' With his hand on my head, he added: 'What shall I say to my master? What will he think of me? Be that as it may, my grief is your joy. Wear your laurels, with my sincere prayers for your welfare.' ''

CHAPTER XV

FANNING'S VOYAGES

Although the discovery of the Antarctic Continent by Nathaniel B. Palmer was the most spectacular geographical achievement of any Stonington sailor, Edmund Fanning sailed several long voyages that brought him a great reputation as a navigator, made many interesting discoveries and shed a brilliant lustre on his native place. He was born at Stonington on the 16th of July, 1769.

Fanning came of a prominent Stonington family, though unfortunately the name long since disappeared from the town. At the age of fourteen he first went to sea, as a cabin boy; at eighteen, in June, 1797, he was put in command of a merchant vessel, the brig Betsey, and set forth on a journey around the world. Although the brig started from New York, Stonington was visited for the purpose of obtaining a New England crew. In his famous book, "Voyages Round the World, (1833), Captain Fanning says:

"When off Watch Hill point, she was brought to, in order to discharge the pilot, and the occasion was embraced as the best suited to ascertain the minds and inclinations of the seamen. All hands were therefore mustered on deck, aft, and liberty was given all

such as were disinclined to proceed on the voyage, to all those who were unwilling to encounter the dangers, privations and sufferings usually attendant on similar expeditions, now to return with the pilot. Notwithstanding this, no one seemed so inclined, but all to a man answered, their desire was to proceed on the voyage, confirming the same by three hearty cheers. And here it may be remarked, that a more orderly and cheerful crew never sailed round the world in any vessel. The pilot accordingly returned by himself."

This is a significant picture of the sturdy class of seafaring men that Stonington produced more than a hundred years ago.

It would be impossible in the brief space that can be given in this volume to the achievements of Fanning to follow him in his several voyages through the seven seas. In the mid-Pacific he discovered many islands, however, of which some mention must be made.

The New International Encyclopedia says of the "Fanning Islands" that they were named for the Stonington sailor, who discovered them in 1798; and it describes them as being "a group of small islands in the Pacific, scattered about a segment of the equator, lying between longitudes 157 degrees and 163 degrees W." The area of the group it places at about 260 square miles, the chief islands being Christmas, Fanning, Jarvis, Washington and Palmyra. "Since 1888," says the cyclopedia, "they have belonged to Great Britain. The population is estimated at 200."

Concerning the last-named, Palmyra Island, much

international interest has recently been aroused, owing to its annexation by the United States, in which fact we may take a sentimental pleasure, for surely at least one of the many islands discovered by Fanning ought to be under the Stars and Stripes.

A glance at the map of the Pacific Ocean will show that Palmyra Island lies almost directly west of the Panama Canal. Its strategic importance is therefore obvious, and the action of the United States in proclaiming sovereignty over it at this time is easily comprehensible.

In connection with his discovery of Palmyra, Captain Fanning says he turned in, at nine o'clock in the evening of June 14, 1798, but in less than an hour found himself, "without being sensible of any movement or exertion in getting there, on the upper steps of the companion-way." Suddenly he awoke, exchanged a few words with the officer of the deck and returned to his berth, meditating on the strangeness of the incident, as he never walked in his sleep. A second and a third time he found himself mysteriously on deck, but the last time he had unconsciously put on his outer garments and hat. "It was then," he says, "I conceived some danger was nigh at hand, and determined upon laying the ship to for the night; she was at this time going at the rate of five or six miles per hour." The officer of the deck was clearly surprised at his commander's perturbation, but Captain Fanning assured him that he was well and possessed of his senses; only "something, what it was I could not tell, required

that these precautionary measures should be studiously observed." When day dawned the breakers of Palmyra Island were discerned due ahead, only half an hour from the spot where the ship was laid to for the night. The commander saw in the incident "an evidence of the Divine superintendence."

Captain Fanning describes Palmyra as a coral reef, or shoal shaped like a crescent, eighteen miles in length from north to south. He did not find a foot of ground, rock or sand, above water where a boat might be hauled up. A later visitor put its length at nine miles and credited it with two lagoons, in one of which there was water twenty fathoms deep, while on the northwest side of the island he found "anchorage three-quarters of a mile from the reef, in eighteen fathoms."

Hawaii proclaimed its ownership of Palmyra in 1882, but six years later Great Britain annexed it, together with various other islands that Fanning discovered. Palmyra now reverts to us by virtue of our annexation of Hawaii.

It is a pity we ever abandoned our claim to these mid-Pacific islands. They were ours in the beginning by right of discovery. They bear the name of our Stonington world-voyager and are his best monument, but except for Palmyra they are under the British flag. If we possessed them now, we would not lightly let them go; but they are England's and their value to our transatlantic cousins is indicated in the news that the Admiralty intends to fortify them.

CHAPTER XVI

TALES AND TRADITIONS

Now that the concluding pages of this book are at hand, it seems as if many important or enlivening matters had been neglected, although of course it would be impossible in so small a volume to set down every salient incident in the history of the place or relate any considerable number of the tales and traditions that are interwoven with its more serious record. A few of the latter, however, should be preserved for the sake of their mild and pleasant oldtime flavor.

One of these tales comes to mind at the moment. It was told by the late William C. Stanton of Westerly:

A certain citizen of Stonington laid a wager that a man could not walk backward to Westerly in a given time. The amount wagered was, perhaps, ten dollars. The party of the second part—the man who took the bet—selected Andrew Stanton (father of William C.) to make the journey, because for years he had worked in a rope walk and had become toughened to reverse pedestrianism. The course was from the liberty pole at the head of the breakwater to the middle of the bridge over the Pawcatuck river, and Horace Niles accompanied the walker on horseback with a watch. It is perhaps superfluous to say that the well-trained rope-

BROAD STREET IN OCTOBER

Looking West on the Leaf Strewn Highway to the Harbor

maker finished the five miles and a half within the time allotted him.

Thomas Ash died in Stonington of cholera about 1849-50, at which time there was a cholera scare throughout this part of the country. Mr. Samuel H. Chesebro, whose father opened a grocery store on Water street in 1837, says the people of the town were so fearful of the disease they would buy no vegetables, while the demand for soda crackers was greater than the supply.

As a boy Mr. Stanton saw the first train start from Stonington for Providence in 1837. He climbed the fence at the south side of the Congregational church to see it go by. It was drawn by horses, the borough authorities being fearful lest the new fire-machines—locomotives, that is to say, should set the town ablaze with their spark-belching chimneys. To this day the foundations laid for the railroad's first roundhouse may be seen near Orchard street, outside of what was then the settled portion of the place.

At a meeting of the borough freemen at the Congregational conference room, August 9, 1837, there was read and accepted a report of a committee appointed some months previous (before the great fire of April) to ascertain the intentions of the railroad company "as to the location of their road within the limits of this borough." It was voted that the warden and burgesses be requested "to frame a Bye Law to prevent the passing within the limits of the Borough of Loco-

motive Engines propell'd by Steam and to affix penalties."

The warden and burgesses on August 21st gave notice to the railroad company through Mr. Whistler not to lay its rails in or across any of the streets or highways of the borough.

On November 18th a meeting of the freemen of the borough passed a by-law forbidding any vehicle to be drawn in or across any highway at a rate of more than five miles an hour; and a penalty of two dollars for each offence was fixed.

Thus early the citizens of Stonington realized the annoyance and danger of the branch track that bisects our principal streets at grade. Yet in 1837 trains were infrequent of movement and insignificant in size.

As an illustration of the possible survival of colonial prejudices spoken of in a previous chapter, the story may be told of the Stonington man who painted his house red. "Regular Rhode Island taste," was the contemptuous comment of a relative.

A few years ago the oldest Congregational clergyman in Connecticut, Rev. Amos S. Chesebrough, a native of the borough, wrote a series of reminiscences which were published in the Stonington Mirror. In the course of these he recalls many amusing tales of his boyhood days, for instance one concerning the excellent daughter of a pious deacon of the place: "His daughter was as good as her father and a story is told of one of the neighboring deacons who, having lost his wife, after a long and distressing illness, came to see Miss Fellows the very evening after her funeral and proposed mar-

riage. She was of course shocked and said to him, 'Why, Deacon, is not this too sudden?' 'Oh, no,' he replied, 'I picked you out some time ago;' and she made him a good wife and nurse in his declining years."

The Rev. Mr. Chesebrough also tells in his reminiscences of an old-time training day, when the local military organization, the First Company, Eighth Connecticut Militia, paraded through the borough. Francis Amy was captain, Charles H. Smith lieutenant, Peleg Hancox ensign, Giles C. Smith sergeant, and Azariah Stanton second sergeant.

Marching down Main street, the trig militiamen passed the house of Captain William Potter, whose daughter was engaged to the drummer of the company. "As they came marching past," says Mr. Chesebrough, 'he espied his fiancee at the window, and, wishing to do his best and make all the music at his command, as a salute, he beat the drum with so much spirit that he pounded the drumhead in and spoiled the music for the day, which was not very well pleasing to the captain."

Mr. Chesebrough says of the Rev. Ira Hart, (who died in 1829), "I remember his looks distinctly; rather stocky in build, with large, round full face and double chin and a dignified gait, always carrying a gold-headed cane. He had the reputation of being a good preacher and an excellent pastor of his flock, but we boys were afraid of him and did not like to meet him face to face. For one thing he was noted— his high Calvinistic theology. I remember once, as the congregation was coming out of the audience room of the church in the

borough, hearing Samuel Denison say something like this: 'I don't believe that doctrine.' Election, perhaps it was. It seems strange that although the people of that day were strict in their views of the right training of children, they did not believe in child piety; children were to be brought up to be converted after they arrived at maturity."

The old fort from which the British attack was repelled in 1814 "became a favorite place for the boys to gather for play. It went by the name of the Grasshopper Fort, and it was a matter of general regret to see it levelled down so that the space occupied by it might be used for a shipyard. Eliakim Cannon, who lived in the old Oliver York place, built a number of vessels in that yard."

Mr. Chesebrough says that in his boyhood a great gate "faced the head of Water street (at about the present southwest corner of Wadawanuck Park), but there was then no road connecting it with the road running north to the bridge and cove, but just south of the salt works (near the present site of the railroad station) was a crossroad so that teams moving out of the village by way of Front (Main) street could cross over to the road which leads north by the Grandison barn and to the Mystics. I well remember the interest of all when Water street was extended through the Robinson pasture to the Mystic road. This gate then opened into a large lot of unoccupied land called the Robinson pasture, where later stood the Wadawanuck Hotel and where now stand the (colored) Third Baptist

Church and many other buildings." The pasture was rocky, as most Stonington pastures are, and much of the material for the breakwater was taken from it by Captain Charles E. Smith, the contractor who built the famous old stone pier.

The Robinson family, for whom the pasture was named, have no survivors in Stonington who bear the family name. But the Robinson burying-ground on Broad street still bears its solemn witness to their half-forgotten connection with the borough.

One more story, of later date, may serve to close this rambling chapter. Not many years ago on election day the writer met a well-known veteran of the Civil War coming from the polls. It was in the time of the former ballot law, when each voter had to place the small white ballot of his own particular party in an envelope and seal it while sacredly isolate within the voting booth. "Good afternoon, Major," I said. "How goes the world with you?" "Begorra, I'm in bad luck to-day," was his melancholy response, "I live in the city now, you know, and every year when I come home to vote the Doctor gives me a little prescription for m' stomach's sake. And faith! I've made a mistake and voted m' prescription."

CHAPTER XVII

STONINGTON TO-DAY

The township to-day stretches from the Pawcatuck River on the east to the Mystic River on the west—as varied and charming a reach of country as may be found in many a day's journey.

Other towns of Connecticut are as beautiful in their alternations of hill and valley, but no other town in the state borders upon the Atlantic Ocean. The neighboring shore towns of Rhode Island front upon the ocean but lack the thick forests that canopy the country roads within a mile of Stonington by the Sea.

The census of 1910 gave the town a population of 9154; it has somewhat in excess of that to-day. The borough, with its immediate environs, contains 2500 inhabitants, while Pawcatuck has 4000 and Mystic and Old Mystic have, within the town, 2000 or more.

For many years after the settlement of the town in 1649 the people were Congregationalists; Church and State were almost synonymous; but two centuries and a half have wrought, chiefly through immigration, a great religious change. The writer is indebted to Mr. William B. Snow of Willimantic for the results of a religious census of the town taken by Mr. E. N. Seelye and himself for the Connecticut Bible Society in

1907. There was found within the town a population of 9419, (mark the excess over the Federal census of three years later), divided into 2290 families. The leading branches of the Church were represented by the following number of persons: Roman Catholic 3747, Baptist 1939, Congregational 1178, Episcopal 1126, Methodist 586, Christian 264, Seventh Day Baptist 186, Lutheran 146, Hebrew 23, Presbyterian 16, Unitarian 11. Even the Latter Day Saints had 7 adherents and the Greek Catholic Church 6.

By nationality the division was in part: Americans, 5568, Irish 1147, English 619, Germans 613, Portuguese 425, Italians 320, Scotch 216, French Canadians 128, Canadians 127, Austrians 42, Poles 41, Russians 23, and scattering representations of several other peoples. It need hardly be said that this diversity of races is common throughout southern New England in these opening years of the twentieth century.

Not many years ago Stonington was said to be, in proportion to population, the richest town in Connecticut. A law was passed, however, by the provisions of which stocks, bonds and mortgages, formerly assessable in each town, might be taxed at a low rate at Hartford. This caused an immediate shrinkage in the "grand list" of Stonington. In recent years, nevertheless, the town's valuation has made a substantial advance, the figures for 1912 being $5,929,321, a gain of $130,384 over 1911.

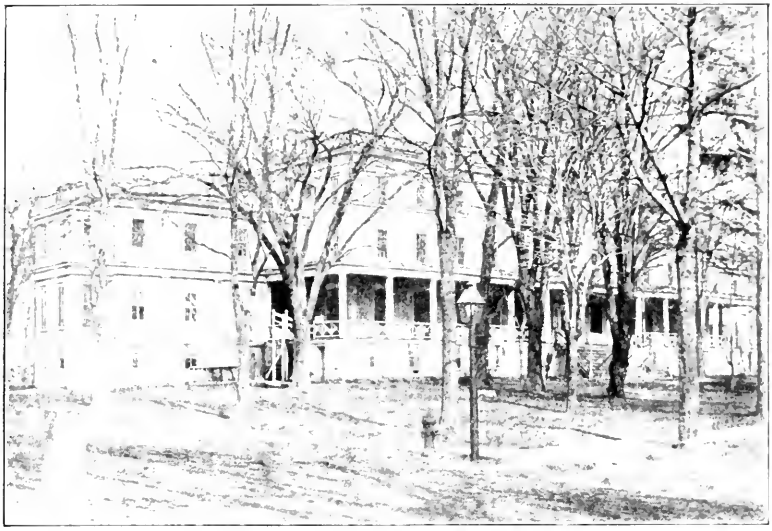
So much for bare statistics. How little they tell of the real development of the town, its picturesque his-

tory, the individual character and charm of Stonington by the Sea!

The special flavor and dignity that Stonington unquestionably possesses—we are speaking now of the borough—may be said to be the composite effect of many and diverse causes.

First among these is its natural situation. The ocean has had much to do with making Stonington what it is. The going down of generations of men and youth to the sea in ships; the alternate spectacle of blue waves and silver fog; the smell of the salt; the sound of the harbor bell on misty nights; the boom of the surf, subdued by distance to a pleasant melody, beyond Napatree; the sunset glow that wraps the sea and land in Roman scarves of fascinating tints; the ultramarine of the wintry harbor against Wamphasset's shining snows; the sentiment of breadth, the feeling of freedom, that come from contact and friendship with the Atlantic—these are some of the elements of beauty and strength with which nature has wrought upon the place an inescapable spell.

Another reason for the differentiation of Stonington from its neighbors may be found in the early establishment of its borough form of government. This has given it separate shape and direction, emphasized its individuality, contributed to its proper pride and community of purpose. It is the oldest borough in the State, and therefore in New England. Since 1801 it has been a small imperium in imperio, a semi-independent government within the larger government of



THE WADAWANUCK HOUSE
Built 1837; a fashionable hotel for several decades; torn down in the '90s. This rare photograph shows it in its later years

HOUSE OF CHANDLER N. WAYLAND
Originally the home of Charles P. Williams

the town. It has been administered not in the lax fashion of the unincorporated village but by a board of warden and burgesses analogous to the characteristic mayor and council of a city. It has provided itself with many public improvements—notably street lights, hydrants, and side and cross walks. Is there another Connecticut community of the same size, or of double the size, in which one may go dry-shod everywhere in wet weather? A recent visitor said, "Stonington is not so much a village as it is a little town." The distinction is just.

The old whaling days brought large wealth to Stonington by the Sea. Great houses were built, pretentious mansions erected by lavish owners in the midst of pleasant lawns and trees. A charming society grew up recruited from the cities and fostered by the presence of the fashionable Wadawanuck Hotel. The "Day place" and other hospitable homes flung wide their doors to house parties of clever women and accomplished men. Some of the finest boats of the New York Yacht Club rendezvoused in the harbor.

It is needless to say that openhearted hospitality, the interchange of gentle courtesies, the assemblage of trained minds and keen wits, the liberal outpouring of the good things of the world—a society, in short, based on experience, culture and intelligence—exert an influence that lasts and is easily recognizable when the era that produced them has become little more than a tradition.

Among the other influences that have contributed to impress on Stonington a quality of its own should be mentioned its long career as a railroad and steamboat terminal. In 1837 it became the western end of the New York, Providence and Boston Railroad, which extended eastward to Providence and connected here with the Stonington Line of steamers for New York. On the evening of the day of the opening of the road, November tenth, 1837, the official party of inspection having traversed the distance to Providence and returned in safety (despite the breakdown of the train at East Greenwich), an elaborate celebration took place at the Wadawanuck Hotel, which had just been built for the express purpose of providing a convenient stopping place for travellers between New York and Boston.

From that time forward with the exception of some three years, the Stonington Line maintained its nightly service to New York, until 1904, when it was merged in the Norwich (now the New London) Line.

Stonington is no longer a transportation terminal, except for the summer ferry to Watch Hill. Its highways are no longer blocked by the switching trains that for so many years puffed and clanged up and down the grade from the steamboat dock to Main street. It finds it hard to realize that it is no more a railroad and steamboat town, but the deserted switching yard and the silent wharves nearby bear unmistakable testimony to the fact.

One more factor in the individualization of Stoning-

ton by the Sea may be said to be its proximity to Rhode Island. It is not quite a Connecticut community in the accepted sense of the term. Sandy Point, the extreme tip of Rhode Island territory, approaches within a mile of it, while with Westerly its relations have long been industrially and commercially intimate.

The first President Dwight of Yale College in his famous book of travels bemoans the condition of religion in Stonington, which he blames upon the heretic sects of its neighboring State. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt that its contact with liberty-loving Rhode Island—a strongly individualized commonwealth to this day—has reacted upon it and given it a certain variety—one may say a certain piquancy and tinge—it would not otherwise possess.

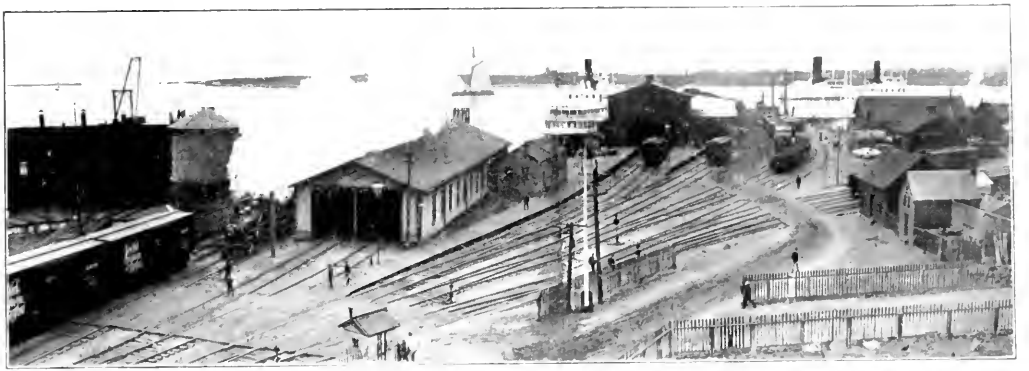
At the present time, 1913, Stonington by the Sea, including the thickly-settled district just beyond the borough boundaries, contains by estimate between seven and eight hundred buildings—dwelling houses, shops and stores. It is built on a severe rectangular pattern, with two chief streets running north and south for practically the entire length of the "Long Point" of other days. Main street, as its name indicates, was once the principal business thoroughfare; now it is essentially a residential street and a majority of the stores are on Water street, nearer the harbor. The harbor is commodious and safe, having been dredged to a great depth and hedged in by three stone breakwaters. The custom house on Main street is a profitable Government institution, exceeding the New London custom

house in amount of collections and requiring a far less expenditure in proportion to these. Established in 1842, it has survived the rise and fall of the whaling and sealing business, the transfer of the New York boats to another terminus and the vicissitudes of a once large shipbuilding industry.

There is, to-day, an important lumber trade between Stonington and the Canadian provinces, and the Stonington custom district comprises within its borders portions of three States, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York. In other words, it includes Westerly, Mystic, Noank and Fisher's Island.

Stonington Borough has two large manufacturing corporations, the elder of which, the Atwood Machine Company, is the largest maker of silk machinery in the world; while the other, the American Velvet Company, ranks among the leaders in its line. There is also an important coastwise fishing business which centres at this port.

As a place of residence Stonington has many attractions. It is unusually cool in summer and mild in winter. It is but three hours and a half from New York, two hours and twenty minutes from Boston and an hour and a quarter from Providence. It is the seat of the new Stonington union high school, the fine resultant of a merging of the four scattered high schools of the town; an institution numbering 176 students in the current year, of whom 88, exactly half, are in the freshman class. The Stonington Free Library, established in 1888, occupies a fine building of its own, the



STONINGTON TERMINAL, 1904

This picture shows the wharf property of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Company in 1904, just before its abandonment in favor of the terminal at New London. The west breakwater is seen at the left, with Fisher's Island beyond. Wamphasset Point is the land in the middle background.

gift of the late Samuel D. Babcock and Erskine M. Phelps, on Wadawanuck Park, is endowed with a fund of twenty thousand dollars bequeathed it by Mr. Phelps, and has between six and seven thousand volumes on its shelves.

A Travel Club, with an average attendance of fifty at its weekly sessions, is now in its sixth year and studying France. A Men's Club meets twice a month in the winter to listen to speakers, usually from out of town, on interesting and important subjects, and has one hundred and forty members on its roll. An annual lecture course is maintained at a high level of excellence, the speakers for the present year including Dean Charles R. Brown and Professor William Lyon Phelps of Yale.

Under the important new conditions wrought by the twentieth century in American life, the village and small town, like everything else, have changed. The oldtime isolation of Stonington, as of many other communities, has been substantially done away with.

We are now in close contact with the city, share in its advantages and measurably mould our thought in accordance with it. Our favorite New York morning paper lies beside our plate at the breakfast table; the telephone puts us with marvellous promptness in touch with many a distant friend; the parcel post has enlarged our shopping district a hundredfold; the trolley has bound us with its shining steel and incomprehensible current to all our neighboring towns—has produced in southeastern Connecticut and southwestern Rhode

Island what is practically a consolidated community, so that we are, in the phrase of the Apostle, the inhabitants of no mean city. Old divisions, old prejudices, are minimized by reason of our new facilities for transportation and communication. We think across larger radii—the innumerable little circles of community interests everywhere in America are expanding and overlapping. The process is one of the most fascinating and significant of modern social phenomena in the United States.

For reasons like these life in the country and the smaller towns has assumed new attractiveness to many city people.

The drift to the centres of population has met a reverse tide that is setting back to the open fields, the village squares, the old New England streets with their white Colonial houses bowered in maples, elms and lilacs. If we lack the dramatic and musical attractions of the great town, its restless social quest and adventure, we have pure air and unimpeded sunshine, the brisk friendliness of the ocean winds and the faithful companionship of the hills. We know the year in all its moods and whimsies; the Procession of the Months becomes to us a colorful and charming pageant, and in the rival show of the successive seasons Winter reveals herself the subtlest artist of them all.

To those, however, who may be interested in Stonington for what it has to offer in the summer months the assurance can be given of an invigorating atmosphere throughout the heated term, of days tempered

by the wind from the sea and nights of refreshing coolness and silence. A generation ago Stonington was a famous summer resort; the Wadawanuck drew many guests from distant States long before Watch Hill had loomed upon the social horizon. In recent years there has been a marked tendency toward the permanent acquisition of summer homes in the borough and its vicinity by people from the cities. In some instances elaborate new houses have been built; in others old houses have been remodelled and modernized. Thus, to name some of them at random, we have Stoneridge, Brookdale, Farmholme, Shawandasee, The Poplars, The Hill, The Homestead, Rocky Ledge, Bythesea, Shore Meadows, Covelawn and Grey Knoll. We have also the "Day place," with its ninety acres of surrounding meadows and wooded hills, converted into the Stonington Manor Inn, a thoroughly inviting hotel, mainly for motorists but open to us all. As in the "sixties" the Wadawanuck sometimes registered a hundred new guests in a day, so the Inn in its initial summer of 1912 became the objective point for scores of automobile parties on many a pleasant afternoon.

As I write these closing words of this little volume, it is eleven o'clock of a January night and the wind is blowing a hurricane outside. There has not been such a storm in years along the New England coast—and only yesterday we were basking in the bright sunshine of an exceptionally genial winter. The barometer has fallen below 29 and the southwest tempest is howling like a hungry wolf at the corner of the house. Yet

this grim weather has a charm of its own in Stonington by the Sea. It is full of mystery and the suggestion of power, and one feels close to elemental nature as the gale sweeps by, singing like a cataract in the tops of the trees. It is an invisible spirit playing upon a visible world, the symbol of the Unseen and the Eternal. And here by my shaded lamp I listen to its melody and fury, and see in my mind's eye the flooded marshes beyond the town, the rocky beaches where the great waves roll in, and the turbulent open ocean from Wicopeset to Napatree unsheltered by any land this side of Spain.

A wild night it is, but with something in it kindred to the restlessness of the human heart and will. And, listening to the wind as it surges and breaks, roars and whispers and roars again, who could fail to be touched anew with the beauty and dignity of the varied year in Stonington by the Sea!