



# OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SKETCHES

No. 15

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Being the proceedings of the September meeting of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, held in the Bank of Commerce Building, New Bedford, September 28, 1906, and containing the following paper:

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## THE STORY OF WATER STREET

Elmore P. Haskins

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

# PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

OF THE

## OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AT THE

BANK OF COMMERCE BUILDING, NEW BEDFORD

SEPTEMBER 28, 1906

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President Crapo presided at the meeting, which was largely attended. Before introducing the speaker of the evening, Mr. Crapo explained that the building was used for the meeting through the courtesy of the New England Cotton Yarn Co., and then gave a sketch of the historical associations of the site, saying in part:

The spot where we meet is one of historical interest. In 1803 the Bedford Bank was incorporated with a capital of \$60,000. It was the first banking institution in this part of the state. There was erected on this spot a banking house, and a vault was constructed which was an object of curiosity and wonder to the people of the village and neighboring towns. An interesting account of the banking room and vault is given by Mr. Ricketson in his history of New Bedford. The ponderous lock and key which protected the money and securities are among the possessions of the Historical Society. Thomas Hazard was its President and John

Pickens its Cashier. Mr. Pickens was a noted and influential citizen. He had served as an officer in the Revolutionary army. He was for many years Town Clerk and Town Treasurer. He was an expert and accomplished land surveyor and much of his work in this line has been preserved. A book of plans made by him from surveys of land in this vicinity is in my possession and is marked by clearness and accuracy and a neatness of penmanship that is a marked contrast to the imperfect penmanship so common at the present time.

In 1816 the Bedford Bank was succeeded by the Bedford Commercial Bank, an institution with larger capital. George Howland was its first President and Joseph Ricketson, the grandfather of our Walton Ricketson, was its first cashier and served in that capacity many years. He received an annual salary of \$500, a sum which the Cashiers of the present day regard as altogether inadequate. The business of the Bed-

ford Commercial Bank increased to an extent requiring larger accommodations and the banking house which had been constructed for the Bedford Bank was removed and a new building for the use of the Bedford Commercial Bank was erected. My recollection goes back sixty and even sixty-five years. I can recall the building and its occupants. The ground floor on its north side was used for the banking room. On the south side was the Bedford Commercial Insurance company of which James Howland, 2nd, the great grandfather of our Oliver Prescott, was President, and Captain Roland R. Crocker was Secretary. Captain Crocker was a typical retired ship master. He was well informed and companionable. He was genial and warm-hearted and much beloved by all who knew him. On one point he was testy and even irascible. He was born a Federalist and he hated Andrew Jackson. I have seen him seated in the outer room of the Insurance company, when some one incidentally or purposely mentioned the name of Jackson. He would violently pound his cane upon the floor and with an outburst of vehement indignation denounce the Ex-President, then wiping his forehead with his big red bandanna handkerchief he would be serene again. The clouds had passed away and there was sunshine. Among the acquaintances made in connection with the Insurance Company was that of Pete Almy, an aged colored man who made the fire in the stove in the outer office and swept the floor and dusted the chairs and table, but never with conspicuous neatness. Pete was fond of telling his experience in the United States Navy. When a lad in the War of 1812 he served as a powder monkey (such was his official designation) on board the United States warship Essex. This vessel, under command of Commodore Porter, had been ordered to the South Pacific for the protection of our commerce in that part of the globe. Pete would tell of the orders he received from a little midshipman, a mere boy, as he said, whose name was Farragut, the same who in the Civil War was our great Admiral. The Essex on her cruise recaptured from the British the whaleship Barclay, owned, if I remember rightly, in New Bedford and commanded by Gideon Randall, the grandfather of the late Charles S. Randall. Midshipman Farragut, then twelve years of age, was placed on board the Barclay as Prize Master and took her into the port of Valparaiso. Subsequently in a naval engagement the Essex capitulated to the British warships Phebe and Cherry and Commander Porter and Midshipman Farragut and Powder Monkey Almy, with others of the officers and crew, were taken prisoners of war. All of these oc-

currences Pete would recount with great minuteness of detail.

In the second story on the north side of the building were the law offices of Colby and Clifford. Across the entry on the south side the front room on Water street was occupied by the Merchants' Reading Room, usually called News Room. Here along the walls were slanting shelves which held files of newspapers, which were strapped down with iron rods and fastened with small brass padlocks. There were files of The Mercury and of several newspapers printed in Boston and New York and files of newspapers printed in Nantucket and Newport, which latter were read for recent shipping news. In the centre of the room on a stand was an open blank book which might be designated as a marine register. Whenever a ship came into port her arrival was entered in this book with the amount of her cargo of oil and bone. There were full reports of the vessels she had spoken on whaling grounds with an account of the catch of each and also vessels spoken on the passage home. When a vessel sailed from the port her departure was entered and also recent sales of oil and bone. Later the news room was transferred to the wooden building opposite the Custom House, on the corner of William and Second streets, where it remained until the decadence of the whaling industry rendered its facilities unnecessary. In the rear of the news room in the bank building was the editorial sanctum of The Mercury, which was presided over by Benjamin Lindsey, its editor and publisher. The third story was occupied by the printing department of The Mercury. Fifty-one years ago in the room which had been occupied as the Merchants' News Room I began the practice of law. The table at which I worked was placed between the windows on Water street. Seated there I could look down Centre street and see the ships discharging their cargoes or taking on board their outfits. I could see, and also hear, coopers driving the hoops tightening the large casks of oil preparatory to rolling them to the upper end of the wharf where they were placed in tiers, bung up, ready for the gauger to ascertain the exact quantity of oil in each cask and for the tester to determine the quality of each. The tester might appropriately have been called the taster, as the quality of the oil was ascertained by tasting. When a ship was hove down at the dock I could see the calkers driving the oakum into the seams and could see the ship carpenters replacing the worn sheathing with new and giving to the vessel a new suit of yellow metal. Looking beyond, Crow Island was in sight and further on was Fairhaven. Boats and vessels, large



and small, were passing up and down the river. Altogether it was a scene of life and animation.

The time came when the Bank of Commerce, which was the continuation and designation of the Bedford Commercial Bank, as a national bank, required larger accommodations for its business. The building which I have described was torn down and a new and much more elaborate building, the one in which we meet tonight, constructed upon this same spot. After its completion I came back and took my place again at the windows looking down Centre street and here I remained until the exodus from Water street when the banks moved up the hill and found new locations on Purchase and Pleasant street. The lawyers, too, folded their tents and silently followed the banks. I was among the last to leave and regretted the change. It will not be wondered that I feel at home here this evening.

Water street, between Union and William streets, was for more than a hundred years the Wall street or State street of Bedford Village. On it were located the banks, the Bedford Commercial, the Merchants, and the Mechanics. In the rear of the Merchants Bank, with its entrance on Hamilton street, was the New Bedford Institution for Savings, founded in 1825. Over the Savings Bank was the Social Library, an educational factor of importance in the town. The holder of a certificate at a cost of \$5.00 enjoyed all the privileges of the library for himself and family. The library was opened on Saturday afternoons. I frequently visited it in my boyhood and never failed to find there a youth a few years older than myself, Robert C. Ingraham. He seemed to live in the room of the library. He acted as a helper or assistant and held a key which entitled him to entrance at any time. It was said of him that he had read every book in the library. This may have been an exaggeration, as there were four thousand volumes. His knowledge of the contents of the library and where to find anything and everything wanted was remarkable.

Within this space on Water street were all of the Insurance Companies, not only the Bedford Commercial, but also the Mutual Marine, the Whaling, the Union Mutual and the Pacific, all of which insured marine risks only.

On the street were the offices of all the lawyers in the town. At the southwest corner of Union and Water, over the auction room, was the law office of John Burrage and on the opposite corner the office of Ezra Bassett. At that time the lawyers went to their offices in the evening for the better accommodation of their clients. Adam Mackie, the father of our Treasurer, then principal of the Grove School, was a stu-

dent in Mr. Bassett's office and could be found there every evening. Further along on Water street was the office of Joseph F. Dearborn and beyond that the office of Clifford & Brigham, where later might be found Joshua C. Stone and George Marston, not naming any now living. On the opposite side of the street was the law office of J. H. W. Page, afterwards occupied by Charles T. Bonney. Across the stairway was the office of Timothy G. Coffin and further on the office of Eliot & Kasson, where afterwards for a time were Robert C. Pitman and Alanson Borden. Crossing Centre street was the law office of Judge Oliver Prescott.

In the earliest days of the whale fishery vessels of small tonnage, sloops and schooners, sailed out of the Acushnet and cruised along the coast. After capturing a whale or two the whales were towed into the harbor. On the shore of the river, in front of this building, before any wharf had been constructed at the foot of Centre street, there was placed a large try pot. The blubber was removed from the carcass of the whale and rendered into oil by means of this try pot. The scene has been made the subject of a painting by William A. Wall. It represents the beginning of an industry that has made New Bedford and Fairhaven famous.

In this rambling and random talk I have kept close to the spot which for many years was the financial and commercial centre of New Bedford.

Mr. Crapo then introduced Mr. Elmore P. Haskins, who read a most interesting paper on "The Story of Water Street for 137 Years."

At the close of Mr. Haskins' address, President Crapo called the attention of the members to the imperative necessity for new quarters, saying that in his opinion the continued efficiency and even permanency of the Society was dependent on more ample accommodations than it now possesses. In a few weeks it will be necessary to vacate the premises which the Society has occupied for the past three years. Mr. Crapo said he did not regret this, since we had outgrown the meagre and cramped quarters in the Masonic Building and more space must be found in which to move and breathe. The members of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, he was sure, had enough of local pride, of respect for ancestry and earnestness in the preservation of the traditions and in keeping alive the stories of the past to provide for it a commodious, convenient and attractive home.

"And in this connection," continued Mr. Crapo, "I am privileged to state that a friend of the Society, a son of old Dartmouth, has expressed a willingness to present to the Society, free of

cost, the premises where we have assembled this evening, if in the judgment of its members these premises are adapted to the uses of the Society. This proffer is not made with any intention or thought of forcing upon the Society something it does not want and which its members would dislike to accept. If other quarters can be found more advantageous and attainable within the means of the Society, the non-acceptance of the offer now made will cause no embarrassment."

President Crapo explained that wherever we found a new location the change would involve expenses in moving, and in the renovation and furnishing of rooms, and also increased expenditures in conducting the Society. The present income would be insufficient to meet absolute requirements. Contributions to a fund must be made and he urged generous subscriptions.

The report from the Committee on Location was then read, as follows:

Wm. W. Crapo, Esq.,  
President Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford Mass.

Dear Sir:

The committee to whom was referred the matter of looking up a location for the Old Dartmouth Historical Society

are prepared to make the following report:

After considering all the buildings which have been offered, we think that the Bank of Commerce Building is the most desirable and best fitted for the wants of the Society, and we, therefore, recommend to the Directors the Bank of Commerce Building. One member of our committee, Mrs. Jireh Swift, Jr., is absent in Europe, so we will be unable to get her opinion.

Respectfully submitted,

Abbott P. Smith,  
Annie Seabury Wood,  
Walton Ricketson,  
George H. Tripp,  
Ellis L. Howland,

Committee on Location.

Mr. George H. Tripp moved the adoption of the following resolution, which after discussion, was adopted by a unanimous vote:

Voted, That the members of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society hereby express their approval of the proposed acquisition of the Bank Building on Water street, at the head of Centre street, the same being in their opinion admirably adapted to the purposes of the society.



BANK OF COMMERCE BUILDING



# The Story of Water Street

By Elmore P. Haskins

"The town of Portsmouth in 1657, reduced the quantity of land allotted to each of its citizens. It further discouraged the coming of new settlers, by voting that nearly all the undivided land 'be a perpetually common to the town for ever.' Six years before, 1652, thirty-six dwellers in the town of Plymouth purchased nearly one hundred and forty square miles of territory whose northern boundary was not far from this crowded district. A stream of home makers from the island of Rhode Island and elsewhere settled on this 'goodly land.' The Plymouth Colony, by its persecution of the Quakers, enriched this settlement with the names of Allen, Wing, Kirby, and Gifford. Six years later, in 1664, so numerous had they become, that they were granted the rights and privileges of a separate township by the Court of Plymouth.

"We pass over a period of nearly one hundred years, when on the west side of the Acushnet River, in 1760, a little village was begun. We do not know when the first little vessel sailed down the river, past Palmer's Island, out into the Atlantic in search of whales. Perhaps earlier than 1750. In 1760, the business on both sides of the river, of fitting the little whalers, trying out the oil from the cargoes of blubber, was of considerable magnitude. It became a problem, where to house the mechanics, mariners, and laborers, who in increasing numbers, sought employment on our shores, but the real estate men of that day were alive to the situation. Elnathan Eldridge bought a six acre tract, not including the oil works and ware house thereon, and named it Oxford. Noah Allen purchased twenty acres farther down the river and called it Fairhaven. These land developers knew the drawing power of a euphonious name. Near Noah Allen's purchase also, there were oil works and a store house. These large sections of land were divided into house lots and offered for sale.

"To further develop his growing business, and to meet the competition of his friendly rivals, Joseph Russell sold portions of his farm near the river. It was easy to purchase land in Fairhaven, and that side of the river, perhaps gave promise of greater prosperity. In December, the month that Joseph Russell sold his first piece of land, Noah Allen delivered the deeds of seven house lots to future home makers; two coopers, two mariners, two yeomen, one laborer, and a cordwainer or shoemaker.

"But these rapid sales sealed the fu-

ture of the eastern bank, for, when, in 1765, Joseph Rotch desired to transfer his whaling industry from Nantucket to the mainland, he was unable to buy sufficient land in Fairhaven for his purpose. He bought the famous ten acre tract in Bedford Village, and our future was secure.

"Let us consider a few dry facts relating to the acceptance of the different parts of Water street. Before Joseph Russell sold his first house lot 'at the foot of my homestead farm,' there was a path or way along the shore. It ran close to the river at Commercial street, wound over Prospect Hill, and to the Kempton Line. In 1764, William Macomber purchased land on Joseph Russell's northern boundary on the shore with 'the privilege of passing at any time, and at all times in a drift or bridle way by gates and bars to ye open way.' The open way is the present Union street. He bound his heirs and assigns 'to maintain a good cart gate at ye said open way.'

"About 1764, Joseph Russell prepared a plan showing both sides of Main Street with cross streets well defined. The plan is lost, but Water Street from School to Madison Streets is easily traced by deeds. Through the efforts of Joseph Rotch the connecting link from Lowden's line, a few rods south of Union Street to School Street, was made. This completed a continuous road for all the owners of the land in the new settlement. In 1769, the town of Dartmouth accepted this road or way, from the purchase of Joseph Rotch, north of Union Street to present Madison Street, and Water Street first became a public highway. We learn from an old map of Joseph Pickens, surveyor, that not until 1788, ten years after the town was destroyed by the British, Water Street was extended to Bridge or Middle Street. There were serious difficulties at the south; two rope walks barred the way. It was opened from near Griffin Street to the Cove in 1825, but five years elapsed before the obstructions were removed and the connecting link made. The line of the shore was far west of Water Street north of Middle Street. Not until 1840 was the extension made as far as North Street.

"The opening of Water Street from North to Hillman was the cause of the most exciting meeting in the history of the town. The record is easily found, but it may be of interest to recall the public spirit exhibited by the citizens of that day. Meetings were held twice daily for three days. At the close of

the sixth session there were three hundred and fifty-two men present. The street was accepted, and the town voted to release Samuel Rodman from his bond of two thousand dollars for damages paid to George Howland, his opponent and co-owner in the land. Fearing, however, that his fellow-townsmen might misconstrue his action in accepting this release, prompted by his high sense of honor, he paid the amount into the public treasury. The bounds of Water Street have since remained unchanged, except the widening of John Lowden's right of way from Union Street south to School Street. Water Street is one hundred and thirty-seven years old. For one hundred and thirty-seven years have the descendants of the Pilgrims, and a host of men from every land and clime used this street as a public highway. Let us glance at the surroundings where it began:—

'In 1765, five houses, a blockmaker's shop and the buildings of William Macomber, cordwainer, were all that marked 'The Little Way.' To the east, near the present Center Street, was a small structure covering a few try pots. There were probably a few shops and other buildings connected with the infant industry. This was Bedford Settlement in 1765.

'Thirteen years later, when the Red-coats marched down King Street to take revenge on Bedford Village for the ravages of its privateers, they found Water Street a hive of industry, a store-house of treasure. It was lined with dwellings, stores, and shops. One of our historians, Daniel Ricketson, furnishes us with a list of sixteen houses then on Water Street, of which ten were standing in 1846. Many of the twenty shops, including the distillery, were there. These were the days of pot-augers, goose-quill pens, and hand-made nails; when painters ground their lead between two stones. We marvel today at the amount and quality of the work done in those early years. Men felled the trees in the forest, made the tools, and built the ships that weathered the gales for half a century. They built houses not only durable and strong, but some of whose details are reproduced today as models of beauty. On the water front they filled the land, made the streets, dug the wells, and built the wharves.

'The morning of September 5th, 1778, dawned on a Water Street rich with the results of enterprise and labors on land and sea for a decade. It closed with many of its homes, its stores, its warehouses, its ships, and even its wharves in ashes. The value of the property destroyed was estimated at half a million. Even Joseph Russell, so the record states, was stripped of nearly all his property, and Joseph

Rotch left the village. In a few years the war was over, the men of Bedford Village, though broken in fortune, took heart again, and Water Street stirred with new endeavor. From 1820 to 1857 were the years of our greatest financial gains; from 1785 to 1812 were the constructive years that made the latter success a certainty. In these years, the wharves we see today were located. Substantial buildings were built that were used for purposes connected with the whaling until its decline. A glance at the map of Elisha Leonard, shows the names of the purchasers and dates of the purchase of different parcels of land from 1760 to 1815. The greater portion of the farm of Joseph Russell, extending from a few rods north of Union Street nearly to Madison Street and from County Street to the water, had at this date been conveyed. That portion of the Kempton farm east of Foster Street had also been sold to house lot purchasers. The new owners were in many instances connected with some branch of business on Water Street. By this test, we are assured of the prosperity on our money-gathering thoroughfare. Water street has suffered in three wars; destroyed in 1778, prostrated in 1812, despoiled in 1860.

'The effects of the struggle of 1812 are described in Ellis's History of New Bedford. He writes: 'Bedford Village was in a sad condition when the second war with England was brought to a close. The wheels of industry had long since ceased to move, and the fleets of vessels that had brought wealth and prosperity had been driven from the ocean; her shops and shipyards were closed; her wharves lined with dismasted vessels. The port was closed against every enterprise by the close blockade of the enemy, and the citizens wandered about the streets in enforced idleness.' Peace was at length declared. Enthusiastic citizens covered the four corners with arches and bunting, illuminated their homes with candles and the light of good sperm oil, and even greeted the Corsicans with the glad hand of common rejoicing. Water street again fitted its ships, and the long silent anvils rang with the sound of productive toil.

'Water street was at first a place for dwellings. The view from Prospect Hill of the winding shore, the cedar covered islands, the broadening bay, and the beauty of the farther shore,—these made old Water street a residential thoroughfare that today has not an equal. Joseph Rotch chose for the site of his first home the spot where now stands the building of Wood, Brightman & Co. Its character is now unknown,—it was destroyed in 1778.

'In 1789 and 1801, William Rotch presented to William Rotch, Jr., and to Samuel Rodman each a strip of land



on the west corners of William and Water streets. Ecce they built their dwellings. Life must have been full of cheer in those two homes. The owners were the respected leaders in the social and business affairs of the town. The Friends meeting looked to them for support and not in vain. One building, the William Rotch house, with its old style front, can still be seen. It is the Mariners' Home on Bethel street. The other is within the large building on the old location. These we find in part, but we prefer in imagination to see the spacious rooms, with furniture now antique, the blazing hearth, and the kitchen with its swinging cranes. Brazilla Myrick, Benjamin Taber and Elnathan Sampson enjoyed their pleasant corners on King and Water streets. Here with neighbor Lowden and neighbor Shepherd, they gathered to talk of the catch of Russell's little fleet, the Hannah, the Nancy, the Greyhound and the Polly. The bolsterous crews of later days were then unknown. The foundations of the distillery were not then laid, but they came full soon, and the four corners changed from a quiet place for children and for homes, to a place of noise and traffic.

"South of Union was a long street, and the land on both sides had been divided into house lots. Here, with the unbroken shore before them, the early residences were built. Here lived Whippley, Sands Wing, and Leonard Jarvis, employed by the authorities of Boston to charter privateers and watch the British fleet. Here lived the Howlands, Grinnells, Allens, and many more whose names are household words. It was a charming neighborhood.

"Here William Russell, chairmaker, built his home on the southeast corner of Queen (School) and Water streets. An interesting anecdote is told of him. When the British threatened the village, William Russell took the works from his tall clock and hid them in a distant wall. He returned in time to save his house, which had been fired by soldiers. In later years, its dwellers moved farther west. The taverns patronized by crews returning from long successful voyages changed quiet, residential Water street. For similar reasons, the corners of Middle and Water streets lost their reputation. We need not rehearse the well known story of the Arks. Unlike the ancient time, the scoffers were within, the righteous stood without. The buildings were of little value, and the occupants are forgotten. The Arks were burned at different times, three years intervening between the riots. The same men who in their wrath destroyed the first Ark, joined a vigilance committee to prevent further outbreaks. The incident is valuable as showing the spirit of the citizens of 1826 and 1829; they corrected

their own abuses. They violated the law; observing the effect, they rigidly enforced it. The list of 110 citizens who formed this vigilance committee is interesting; they were the representative men of the time. The organization has had a continuous existence and is now known as the Protecting Society.

"We can hardly realize that ships stood high on their stocks and were launched from Water street. The 'Dartmouth' that left its freight of tea in front of Boston, was built near Hazard's dock. Then, Hazard's dock was almost Water street.

"The old 'Rebecca' of 1785, claimed to have been the first vessel 'around the Horn' in search of oil, was launched from Water street at North street. She was an enormous vessel, 175 tons burden, so the rumor ran. People came from far and near: from as far as Taunton and Bridgewater, to view the monster. George Claghorn was the builder, who also built 'Old Ironsides.' In his day the shore line was half way to Second street. After the land had been filled and the wharves extended, the large ships were built on the river bank, beyond the line of Water street. Here at Maxfield street, the 'Hillmans' built their splendid clipper ships, unsurpassed for beauty and for speed. At Belleville, the 'Stetsons' launched the whale ships that filled the coffers of the merchants of our street. To the mechanics of Water street, in large measure belongs the honor of the great success of our former industry; to the men who repaired the hull, calked the seams, who set the rigging, and bent the sails. When 'Soule and Edwards' or Samuel Dammon had finished their work the owners felt secure. When Benjamin Gage or James Drew or the 'Cannons' had calked the seams, letters from distant ports read: "Our pumps are seldom used." The rigging securely set by Curtis and Gammons or Amos Baker defied the howling blasts. They and many more—spar makers, joiners, blockmakers, ship-smiths, whose faultless anchor chains saved many a vessel from destruction. The Water street mechanics, masters and men, by their honest work, made the long successful voyages a possibility.

"Only one of the many oil refineries on this street now remains, that established by George W. Baker, before 1850. It is now operated by William A. Robinson & Co. One near Middle street helped to make the fortune of the founder of the 'Swain Free School.' These old stone buildings have been used for many purposes. David A. Snell established his mechanical bakery in the oil refinery of Samuel Rodman. Here was first introduced into New England the device of a revolving

wheel within the ovens. This bakery was a busy place during the Civil war. Here, tons of army bread were packed by the deft fingers of a small army of boys and girls. 'More boxes' was the constant cry. My brother was a sub-contractor in this department. The writer was a sub-sub-contractor and after school and Saturdays, filled knot holes and pieced the ends.

"On the north side of the bank building, opposite the bakery, was a unique watering place. Water from springs beneath the Custom house, led through logs, fed the cannon fountain. The wells along and near Water street were in constant use. The old well beside the house of Samuel Rodman was famous. Another in Rose Alley had a reputation. An old prescription of a popular medicine, on the books of a neighboring druggist reads in part: 'Aqua. Rosa. Pampa.' We look for the origin of the name of the alley. A rose garden in the rear of the house of Benjamin Taber bordered the path; its color and perfume pleased the dwellers of Water street, and they gave the name Rose to the little lane. There came a day when its odor changed and the change was great. It must have smelled to heaven, for our early historian says he always went through it on the run. A water boat supplied the vessels in the stream, filled from a pump near the corner of Water and Hillman streets. The old boatman would pump for hours with the regularity of a machine. On summer nights, the neighbors heard his even stroke well into the morning hours.

"Among the financiers of Water street was a peculiar character: Asa Dyer. He followed a primeval industry—digging clams. His garb was more peculiar than attractive, the patches were legion. In the winter time numerous layers of canvas covered his feet. As the spring advanced a shedding process began. His constant fear of thieves led him to put his savings in peculiar places. A loose board in the wall, or floor, an old chair cushion served his purpose. One of his old straw hats was accidentally destroyed; within the lining was a roll of bills. In his cellar was found old tin cans filled with war scrip. Even the Washington expert could not determine its value; the rust that doth corrupt had ruined his treasure.

"At the head of Water street, at Middle, lived General Lincoln. Next east was the home of Asa Smith, postmaster and farther west Jehaziel Jenney, the joker of his time. The two west corners were occupied by Samuel Rodman, Jr., on the north, and Captain Reuben Swift on the south. Just south of Swift's stood the old shop of Anthony Richmond, the first copper-smith in the town. His partner was

Timothy Dyer, a fervent Methodist. He put into the business the integrity born of the sunrise meetings in the old 'Elm Street' loft. In this shop, Frederic Douglass studied his book, while blowing the bellows for his daily bread. In the height of his fame, he came back to the old place and chatted with his fellow workman, Reuben Gardner.

"The corner of Elm and Water streets was always an attractive place for boys. Here in the old building, built in 1792 by Joseph Austin, were James and Giles Fales. Honorable names these in the little business world of Water street. Here they labored for fifty years, winning for themselves honorable names by careful labor and fair dealing. One window displayed guns and pistols; in the rounded window on the corner, watches hung in tempting rows. Our resources were somewhat limited. The sale of old copper nails from ships' stagings and certain profitable ventures in old iron were not enough to buy a watch. We could have had a cheap one but for the 'Fourth'. For that day there were fire-crackers, and powder to buy for a loud brass cannon, and at the apothecaries', bananas at ten cents each, an indulgence allowed on the nation's holiday. When we ventured in to inquire the prices, the kindly courtesy that met the timid customer won our lasting friendship. Opposite was a carpenter's shop, whose sign displayed a name found on the proprietor's records—Manasseh Kempton. Farther south, at the foot of Madison street, was Dudley Davenport's shop, the most prominent builder of his time. His shop, three stories high, had a tower and clock. Beside the benches, men made, one by one, the doors and sashes that machinery now produces by the thousand. Later, a few machines were introduced, driven by steam.

"To prevent a recurrence of great loss by fire, he used every precaution for the protection of his property. In a conspicuous place he posted this sign:

'No smoking in this Yard,

'Except by John Pincard,

'In his chimney you may see

'Smoke enough for you and me.'

"Dudley Davenport and Robert Chase were rival carpenters. Each built one-half of the bank building at the foot of William street. The shafts of the columns were to be made according to the rules of the order, so the specifications ran. The dimensions at the base and top were given. The diameter of the columns half way between the base and the capital was the uncertain quantity. How much should they swell? The builders could not agree. Looking at the corner columns in each group of four, the varying theories of the builders still appear.



Major Warren of Providence, the architect, decided that the columns at the north, built by Robert Chase were right. It was in their day (in 1840) that Water street went on a strike.

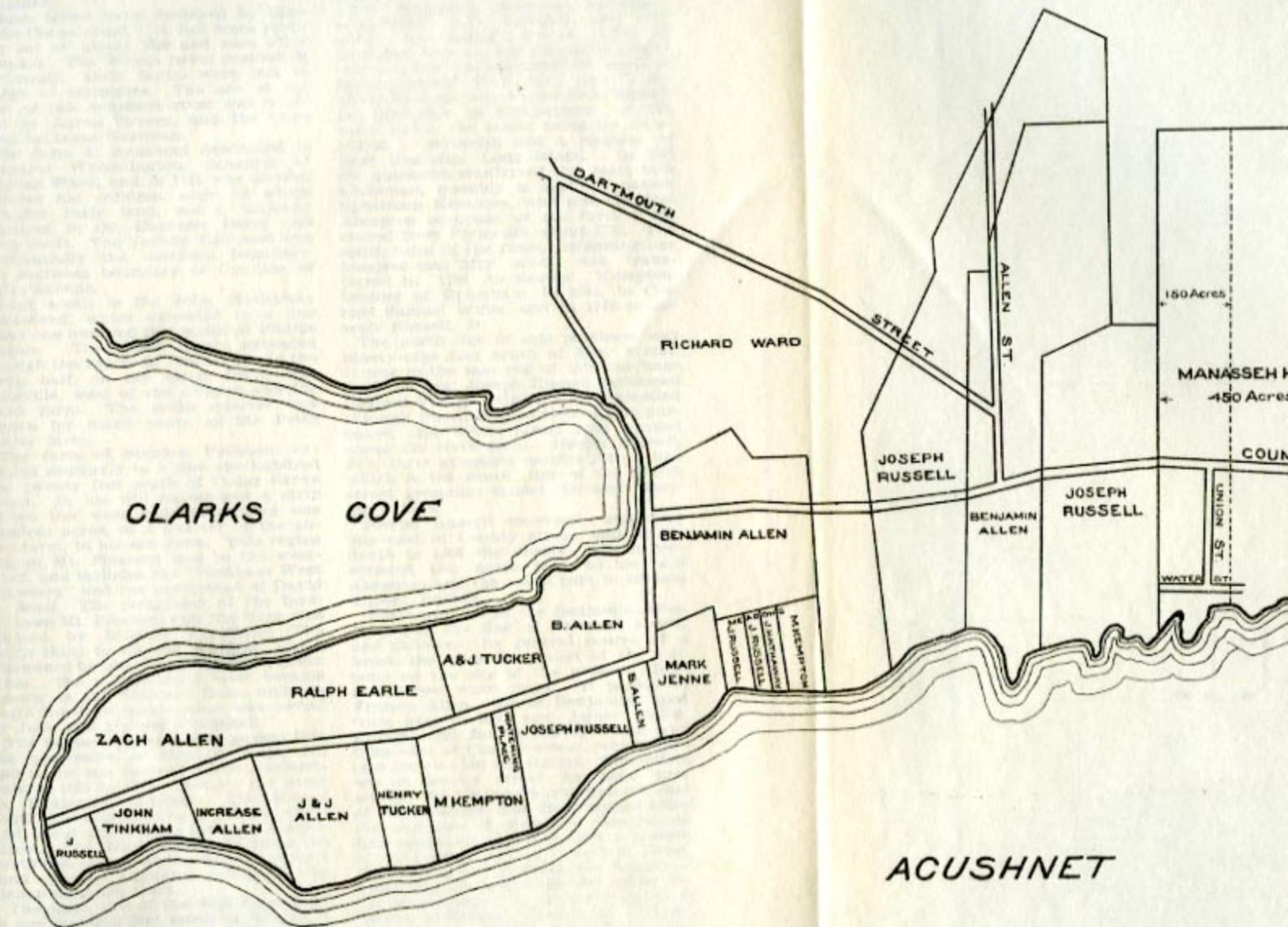
"The working day was from sun to sun. The wages were the same for the long day in June and for the shortest day in December. The mechanics desired that ten hours should constitute a day's work. The introduction of machinery and the increasing number of skilled workmen permitted a reduction of hours.

"For three weeks Water street was silent, for the opposition among employers was very great. An open air meeting was held, at which George Howland was the chief spokesman. Mounting a barrel he declared that he would be the last man to submit to demands so unreasonable. Another speaker said the men ought to be ashamed to be seen going home in the middle of the afternoon. The men thought differently. More liberal counsels prevailed and the strike was ended.

"There have been many changes in Water street north of Middle street. It was more than half a century after George Claghorn built the 'Rebecca' that the shore line was straightened and our street grew in length to Hillman street. In his day, the line of the shore was half way to Second street. A little inlet to the spar yard of William Beetle and his son, Rodolphus, was covered by a bridge on the highway. It was a street for cooper and blacksmith shops, spar yards, and rigging lofts. The only chandlery store was that of Rodney French and Charles D. Burt at Hillman street. The tide ebbed and flowed under the building, keeping ships' knees free from worms. At the head of Water street stood Rodman's cotton mill; later the building was used for a flour mill.

"A fire that swept the section between North and Middle streets was one of the most destructive in our history. A ship, twenty buildings, and 8000 barrels of oil were burned. Men with big brush brooms, in scorching heat and blinding smoke, beat out the burning embers, and saved 14,000 bar-

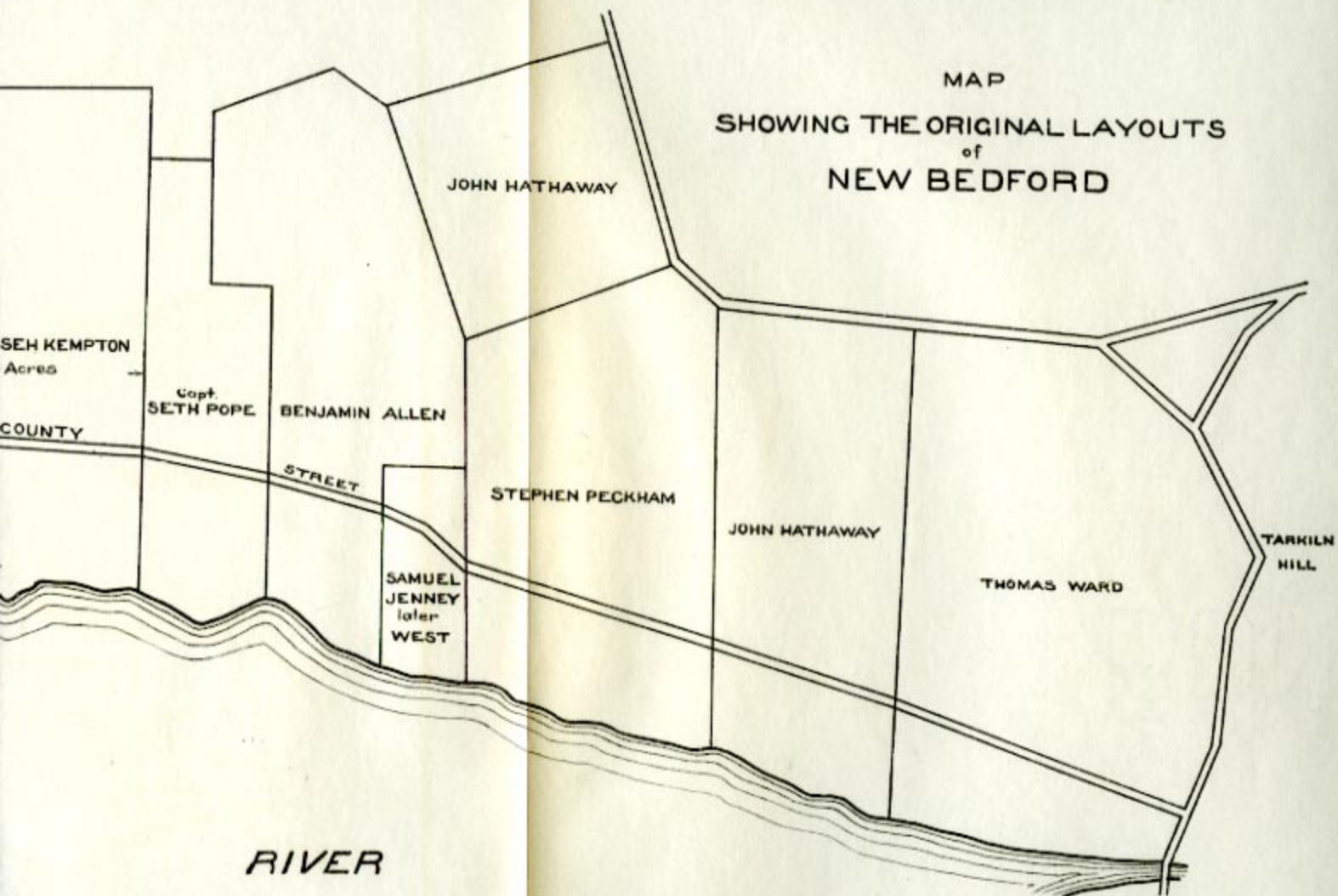
rels of oil. The need of insurance was never more clearly shown. Ellis's History states that the loss was over a quarter of a million, while the insurance was less than \$7000. Oil flowed in the streets and over the wharves into the docks. It needed but a slender outfit to catch oil that day; a depression in the street, a dipper, and an empty barrel. The lumber yard and planing mill of William Wilcox and his successors was a centre of the wood working industry. From about 1870 to 1885 was the period of its greatest activity. The old postmaster and General Lincoln would be amazed at the Water street of today. The site of their former homes is now 'Bridge square.' The best illustration of the change from the whaling industry to cotton is shown in the north part of Water street. The last whaler built on the water front was launched from Howland's wharf. Here for fifty years vessels were fitted and great cargoes of oil were landed. Today it is covered with coal for cotton mills. On the square where the oil was saved, and fortunes were made in whaling, stands a yarn mill. The story of the 'four corners' has often been told. Descriptions of the square between William and Union streets with its stores, its banks, and its famous lawyers are familiar reading. South Water street has been neglected. It had its ship yard in John Lowden's day. It has its foundries, its machine shops, its gas plant, and many more. Samuel Leonard, one of the greatest oil refiners of his time, would hardly find the old salt works at the Cove, nor in the great clubhouse discover his former home. Shunning the 'broomstick train' and walking through the street now lined with blocks and stores, he would marvel at the foreign sights and sounds. We have only outlined in this paper the story of Water street. The changes have been many. The buildings will pass away. But the legacy that is ours, is the knowledge of the noble deeds performed by an army of self-made men, who were loyal, earnest, and scornful of ease. Their story is the story of Water street."



ACUSHNET



MAP  
SHOWING THE ORIGINAL LAYOUTS  
of  
NEW BEDFORD



## Description of Map

In the presentation of the foregoing paper reference was made to the original layouts of New Bedford, which are delineated on the plan inserted in this pamphlet.

These farms were surveyed by Benjamin Crane about 1711, but were probably set off about 1690 and soon after occupied. The Wards never resided in Dartmouth; their farms were left in charge of managers. The one at the head of the Acushnet river was occupied by Aaron Savery, and the Cove farm by Isaac Sherman.

The farm at Acushnet descended to Margaret Wrightington, daughter of Thomas Ward, and in 1741 was divided between her children, some of whom occupied their land, but a majority conveyed to Dr. Ebenezer Perry and Jereh Swift. The Tarklin Hill road was substantially the northern boundary, the southern boundary is the line of Bates avenue.

Next south is the John Hathaway homestead, which extended to a line about one hundred feet north of Phillips avenue. The Nash road extended through the centre of this farm. In the north half, on the water front, was Belleville, west of the avenue was the Nash farm. The south quarter was known for many years as the Peter Butler farm.

The farm of Stephen Peckham extended southerly to a line one hundred and twenty feet south of Cedar Grove street. In his will he devised a strip across the west end, comprising one hundred acres, or a quarter of the entire farm, to his son John. This region lies on Mt. Pleasant and to the westward, and includes the "Peckham West Cemetery" and the homestead of David A. Snell. The remainder of the farm between Mt. Pleasant and the river was devised by Stephen Peckham: The north third to his son Stephen, which afterward became the Timothy G. Coffin farm. The middle third later became known as the Tallman farm, and the south third for many years was owned by John and Hayden Coggeshall.

The Samuel Jenney tract passed into the possession of Stephen West, Jr., and to his son Samuel, whose descendants in 1825 to 1829 conveyed the same to Benjamin Rodman. The Jenney south line was the line of Durfee street and about thirty rods north of Linden street. The Wamsutta mills owns the southeast corner of the Samuel Jenney land and the adjoining section of the Benjamin Allen tract.

The south line of the Seth Pope tract is one hundred feet north of Sycamore street, and is the south line of the Buckminster property on Purchase street. The entire Seth Pope tract and

much of the Allen farm that lay south of the Jenney homestead was purchased in 1712 to 1720 by Colonel Samuel Willis. It extended west to Rockdale avenue.

The Manasseh Kempton rectangle, comprising four hundred and fifty acres, was bounded on the west by Rockdale avenue, and extended southerly to a line one hundred feet south of Spring street. This tract was transferred in some way by the first Manasseh Kempton to his nephew of the same name, the latter being by occupation a gunsmith and a resident of East Hampton, Long Island. In 1732 the gunsmith transferred this tract to a kinsman, possibly a nephew, named Ephriam Kempton, who was the first Kempton occupant of the farm. He moved from Plymouth about 1737. The south third of the farm, containing one hundred and fifty acres, was transferred in 1736 to Samuel Kempton, brother of Ephriam, in 1744, to Colonel Samuel Willis, and in 1746 to Joseph Russell, Jr.

The north line of this purchase was ninety-nine feet south of Elm street. It was in the east end of this purchase that the next Joseph Russell developed Bedford Village. Union street extended through the middle portion of this purchase, and Water street was opened along the river front. Joseph Russell, Jr.'s, farm extended southerly to a line which is the south line of the Fifth street grammar school lot and Morgan's lane.

Joseph Russell conveyed numerous lots east of County street, and at his death in 1806 the unsold portion descended, the north part to his son Abraham and the south part to his son Gilbert Russell.

The south line of the Benjamin Allen farm was the line of Sherman street, and followed the general course of a brook that was the outlet of the mill pond on the site of the present Sherman street ward room. It passed to Francis Allen, son of Benjamin, and from him to his son, James Allen. Francis and James conveyed the portions east of County street, which contain the two old cemeteries. The public one on Second street has been preserved; the Friends' burial ground, east of Water street, was discontinued after the purchase of their new location on Dartmouth street. It is now a portion of the lumber yard of Greene & Wood. The remainder, through the centre of which ran the farm road now called Allen street, passed to the descendants of James, including Allens and Tripps. The farm of Joseph Russell, Sr., extended to a line one hundred and twenty feet north of Thompson street on



County street, and passed to his son, Joseph Russell, Jr., thence to Caleb Russell, Sr., and finally the part north of South street to Seth Russell, the south portion to Caleb Russell, Jr. The south line of the Ward farm at County street was half way between Katherine and Independent streets. The east part, extending from the river to Dartmouth street, was transferred before 1800 to John, James and Cornelius Howland. The south portion was purchased by the Howland mill. The farm descended from Thomas Ward to his son, Governor Richard Ward, of Rhode Island. It was divided among his descendants in 1785, one of whom was named Bliss, from whom Bliss Corner takes its name.

The west line of the Benjamin Allen farm is the line of Crapo street. This Benjamin Allen was also the owner of the farm on each side of Allen street, and the tract between Seth Pope and Samuel Jenney.

The Clarks Point divisions, excepting the two set off to Abraham, John and Henry Tucker, Manasseh Kempton and Joseph Russell, came into the possession of Benjamin Allen and his son Benjamin.

Woodlawn park is in the portion set off to A. and J. Tucker.

The north part of the Joseph Russell forty acre tract became the Ashley farm. The watering place in the north-west corner of the Kempton lot was a public reservation to give access to the only stream of fresh water on the point. It being public property the city of New Bedford has used the location for a powder house, and later for the Brock avenue schoolhouse.

The J. and J. Allen tract and the land extending west to the Cove is the location of the present poor farm.

The plan and these notes were furnished by Mr. Henry B. Worth.