

OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SKETCHES



Number Sixty Four
In the Series
1934

THE SOCIETY'S REAL ESTATE

By HENRY H. CRAPO

THE EPIC OF NEW BEDFORD

By WILLIAM M. EMERY

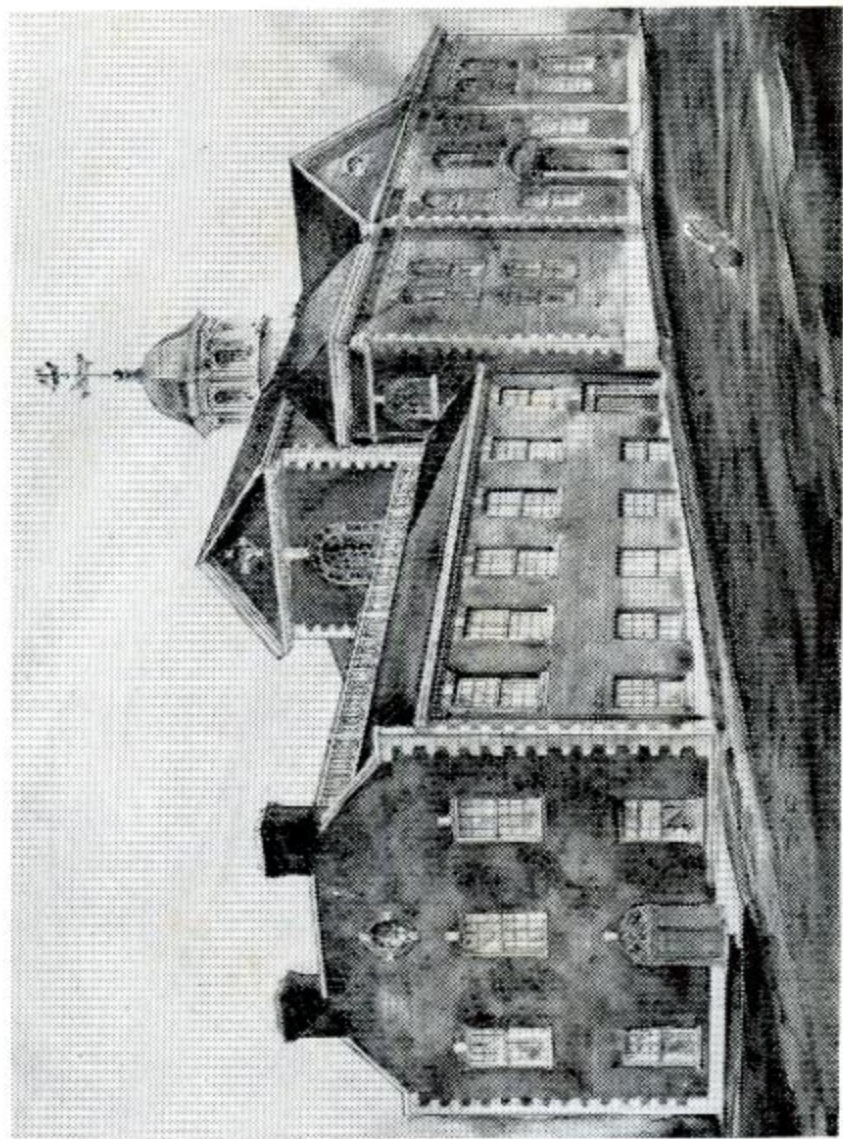


OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SKETCHES

JANUARY - FEBRUARY, 1934

No. 64

In the Series of Sketches
of New Bedford's Early History




ANNIE SEABURY WOOD MEMORIAL HALL
Architect's sketch of the new addition to the Whaling Museum, 1934

HENRY H. CRAPO'S ADDRESS

Read to the members of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society
at their meeting, February 12, 1934

THE SOCIETY'S REAL ESTATE

PROSPECT HILL

T is, perhaps, not altogether improbable that the first human being who set foot on Prospect Hill was a white man. Red men, of course, for centuries had the opportunity, but the red men in this part of New England were few compared with the vast territory over which they roamed. I know of no evidence that in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries there were Indian habitations in this part of Old Dartmouth. It is, of course, quite possible that some red men may have hunted or fished near this hill, yet it is equally possible that none did, until after the advent of the white men.

There was an ancient Indian trail leading from the eastward, crossing the ford at the head of the Acushnet River, and thence by way of Tarkiln Road to Rhode Island, a route which we now designate, in part, as the "King's Highway". A lesser, and probably a later, trail branched off southerly and led through low lands on the westerly side of the upper river to a point, Mr. Elmore P. Haskins tells us, near Weld Street, where it turned westward and southward, following the crest of the land to Clark's Cove, a route we now call, in part, County Street. It seems unlikely the Indians were wont to stray from this lesser trail, through the woods, a mile or more, to this ledge on which we meet today. It was not a place desirable for their method of fishing, and certainly not for the cultivation of corn.

There is, of course, abundant evidence of the presence of Indians in Old Dartmouth after the advent of the white men and in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed in 1675 they sacked and devastated the whole region. We know that later they had clam bakes at the "Smoking Rocks" near the Potomska Mills; Ricketson tells of an Indian group of huts near the foot of Willis Street; and, if they did not live on Prospect Hill, they at least were buried here.

Nearly one hundred years ago my grandfather, Henry H. Crapo, wrote of an Indian burying place at "the present site of the Merchants Bank and Hamilton Street. It was a burying ground before and after the Revolutionary War. It was a high hill composed of rock covered with a few feet of earth. When the hill was cut down the bones were put in a box and interred in the Friends burying ground by William Rotch, Jr." Miss Elizabeth Bailey (born 1824), writing in 1901, confirms this: "I have heard my mother tell about a hill on Water Street . . . that was dug away to level the Street . . . In digging there were some Indian graves found, and in a few days a very old Indian, I do not know whether man or woman, came and stayed around some days, and made a lament, according to their manner of mourning. No one knew where this Indian came from . . ." On Elisha C. Leonard's map of Joseph Russell's original sales the easterly part of Prospect Hill is called "Burial Point". Yet, admitting the Indians were hereabouts, on this hill, alive and dead, in the eighteenth century, it may still be a question whether they frequented the hill, before the advent of the white men.

We may, if we like, fancy that those "gentlemen adventurers" under the patronage of the Earl of Southampton, on exploration bent, left their winter quarters in 1602 on the islet in the pond of the hilly Island which their leader, Bartholomew Gosnold, named "Elizabeth", after his Queen, and sailing in the shallop up the Acushnet River "discovered" the hill now occupied by this Society. At all events it would have been rather decent of them since we have memorialized them by purchasing their islet (our first investment in real estate) and erecting a monument in their honor. I have studied the painting by William A. Wall which hangs at the head of our long staircase, attempting to localize the scene of Gosnold's landing which Mr. Wall's imagination depicted. His geography seems somewhat nebulous. The picture was exhibited by Mr. Wall at Liberty Hall ninety years ago, May 1843, and had a "write up" in the Morning Mercury. The writer says, "Mr. Wall has chosen the spot opposite the west shore of Palmer's Island as the place of Gosnold's landing." Did Mr. Wall have any justification for selecting the vicinity of the Smoking Rocks as the *mis-en-scene* of his visionary composition? Perhaps he had. The only definite contemporary record of Gosnold's landing hereabouts is that of Gabriel Archer, the company's historian, describing how they "crossed the stately sound" and landed near what would seem to be the Round Hills, meeting "a fair conditioned people" who gave them presents. Howsoever strange and outlandish the Indians may have ap-

peared to them, with what terrified amazement would they have watched the great mechanical birds which now hover over that locality. Mr. Wall's studied tableau, while it may lack geographical clearness and historical warrant, not to mention high artistic merit, seems to me one of the best of his legendary compositions. We are fortunate to possess it. Its present state of rejuvenation is due to the restorative treatment of one of our members, Mr. Crowell.

If, indeed, the gentlemen adventurers did sail up the Acushnet River, they saw, as they glanced to larboard, low wood-lands stretching between the river and Clark's Cove; thence, extending northwards, a long high hill covered with forest. On the eastern slope of this hill, projecting into the river, was a bare rocky spur, on both sides of which were shallow coves. They might, perhaps, have thought of this spur as a hill of prospect. Standing on the ledge a man could see both up and down the west shore of the river, and its islands, and the lowlands on the eastern shore.

In 1620 came the Pilgrims to Plymouth. The royal patent ran in the name of William Bradford, "as in trust", Bradford himself phrases it. Twenty years after the Mayflower anchored in the mud of Plymouth Harbor, the early settlers, those who were left, felt it highly desirable to partition the land of the colony among themselves, not forgetting some of the financial backers of the enterprise in the old country. Newcomers were constantly arriving who, manifestly, had no right to share in the lands under the original patent. Wherefore, Bradford, in 1640, by a formal document approved by the Court, allotted the lands to the "oldcomers". The "oldcomers" were those who came over before 1623. One of these allotments of land he describes as:—"A place called Acoughcouss which lyeth in ye bottome of ye bay adjoining to ye west side of Pointe Peril" (Gooseberry Neck)" and 2 myles to ye western side of ye said river; to an other place called Acushnete river, which entereth at ye western end of Nacata" (Sconticut Neck) "and 2 myles to ye eastward thereof, and to extend 8 myles up into the country." This, of course, is precisely the territory we now call Old Dartmouth.

This allotment made by Bradford, in 1640, to some fifty-eight persons, is set forth in his History of Plymouth Plantations and preserved in the State House in Boston. At the time of the return of the Bradford Manuscript by the English Government to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1897, renewed interest in the Plymouth History was created and the grant of Old Dartmouth in 1640 was briefly noted in the Morning Mercury. This most important item has

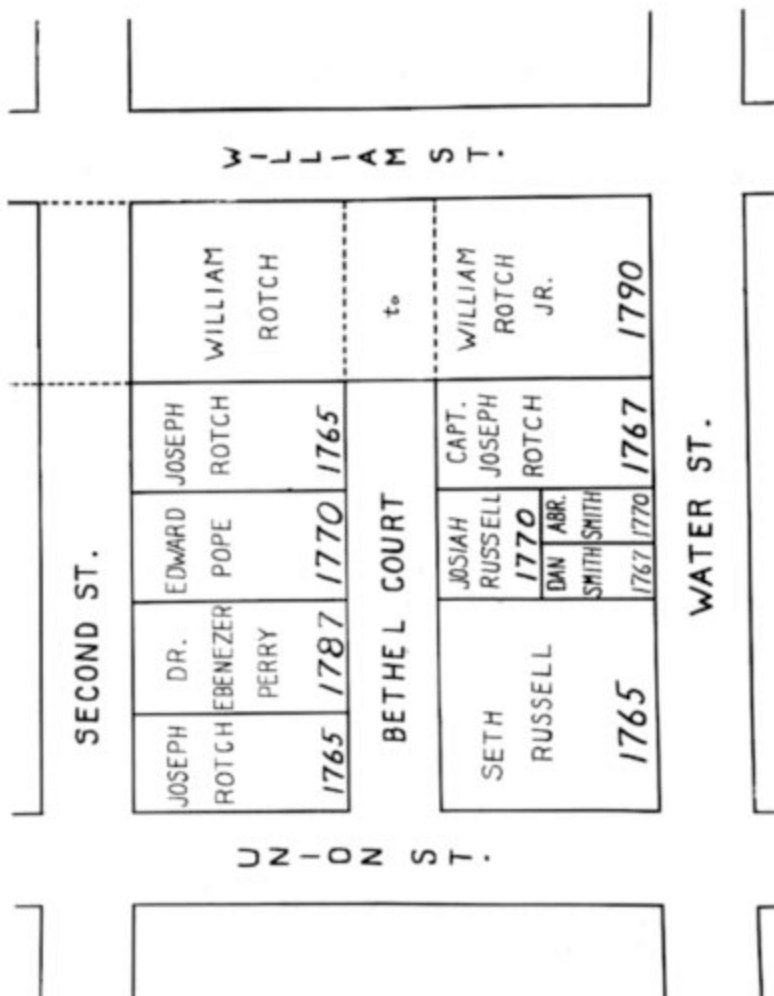
heretofore been ignored by our local historians. I have searched the published histories of Old Dartmouth and New Bedford, and the publications of this Society, and found no reference to it. Our traditional story has always had as its "original and end" the deed given in 1652, twelve years later, by the Sachem Massasoit and his son Wamsutta, to thirty-six individuals, no doubt representing Bradford's original fifty-eight. It would seem that these early real estate speculators felt their title would be "sweetened" by a pro forma grant from Massasoit on whose sufferance they lived and had their being. Yet, manifestly, it is not the supplementary, and, no doubt, to the Pilgrims, supererogatory Indian deed, but Bradford's allotment which is the fundament of all real estate titles in Old Dartmouth. In 1660 the Bradford allotment was further confirmed, and in 1664 the Sachem Philip defined the boundaries intended by the deed of 1652. It may now give us a greater sense of security to know that this Society's basic title to its land rests on royal grants from *both* King Charles and King Massasoit.

Without doubt, even before 1640, some of the enterprising old-comers, among whom surely was John Cooke, had prospected the region between the Sippican Purchase and Akoaset. Even so it is improbable that they walked over Prospect Hill. It was nearly twenty years after the Bradford allotment when a few settlers first appeared in the region west of the Acushnet River. About this time there may have been one or two settlers in the region now embraced in New Bedford. It was not until 1690 that this territory was formally set off to certain persons claiming under the Dartmouth allotment, some of whom were in occupation. At this time, certainly, it is quite likely that Benjamin Crane and his assistants, with their surveyor's chains, traveled Prospect Hill. To Joseph Russell, a son of the original John, of Apponagansett, they set off two extensive tracts south of what is now Spring Street. The lot next north, of four hundred and fifty acres, was set off to Manassah Kempton, a non-resident. Fifty-six years later, in 1746, Kempton sold the southerly portion of one hundred and fifty acres to Joseph Russell, third of the name, a great grandson of John, of Apponagansett. It is in this area, originally of Manassah Kempton, conveyed to Joseph Russell, 3rd, that Prospect Hill is included. At the foot of his drift way, near Prospect Hill, Russell inaugurated a little village. In 1765 Joseph Rotch moved his whaling enterprise hither from Nantucket and the hamlet, soon after called Bedford, began to grow apace.

In early records the rocky spur, about which the little village clustered, was called Prospect Hill. This designation, in formal documents, persisted for many years, although, at one period, the hill was often called "Rotch's Hill". When and why the colloquial nickname "Johnny Cake Hill" originated I have been unable to ascertain. It is, however, a name which has persisted for more than a hundred years. It has been suggested that it may be attributed to the fact that on top of the hill, on Bethel Court and thereabouts, there were, in the halycon whaling days, numerous hotels and boarding houses, at which, very possibly the piece-de-resistance of the menus was johnny cake. This explanation is to me not altogether satisfying, however much so the johnny cake would have been. Nor is another interpretation suggesting the hill may have been a place where travelling Indians tarried to cook their midday meal of "Journey Cake". It is unlikely that such a custom was a fact, whereas the explanation is manifestly a theory. Yet the name "Johnny Cake Hill", used perhaps first about 1820-1825 by sailor men has stuck. As the ledges were cut away and the topography of the hill altered, and buildings erected, the old name of Prospect Hill became less descriptive. In 1852 Moses Howes's son William wrote:—"The city authorities have commenced the sacrilegious act of levelling down Johnny Cake Hill . . . The time will not be so far distant when all the landmarks so familiar to the present generation will, by the unsparing hand of Improvement, be taken away from our view, and exist only in some ancient picture, or on the tablet of the brain, to be treasured up as memorials of former times. Sic imus."

It is not inappropriate that an Historical Society and Whaling Museum should now be located on this hill. The throbbing life of a people here engaged in the management of the business of hunting the hugest monster of the oceans, bringing fame and fortune to our city, has long since ceased. For more than a century this hill was at the heart of the intensive life of New Bedford. More than half a century ago the hill began to be abandoned by the men who controlled the destinies of our community, seeking a new inspiration and a new employment. It is now a place of memories. It is well for us, by our presence here, to preserve them.

First as to the Streets. The streets surrounding the block on which our Society's buildings stand have had, at different periods, various designations. Russell's Driftway became King Street and Main Street before it was called Union. Water Street has been called Front and First. William Street, laid out in 1795 as Market Street, was, in

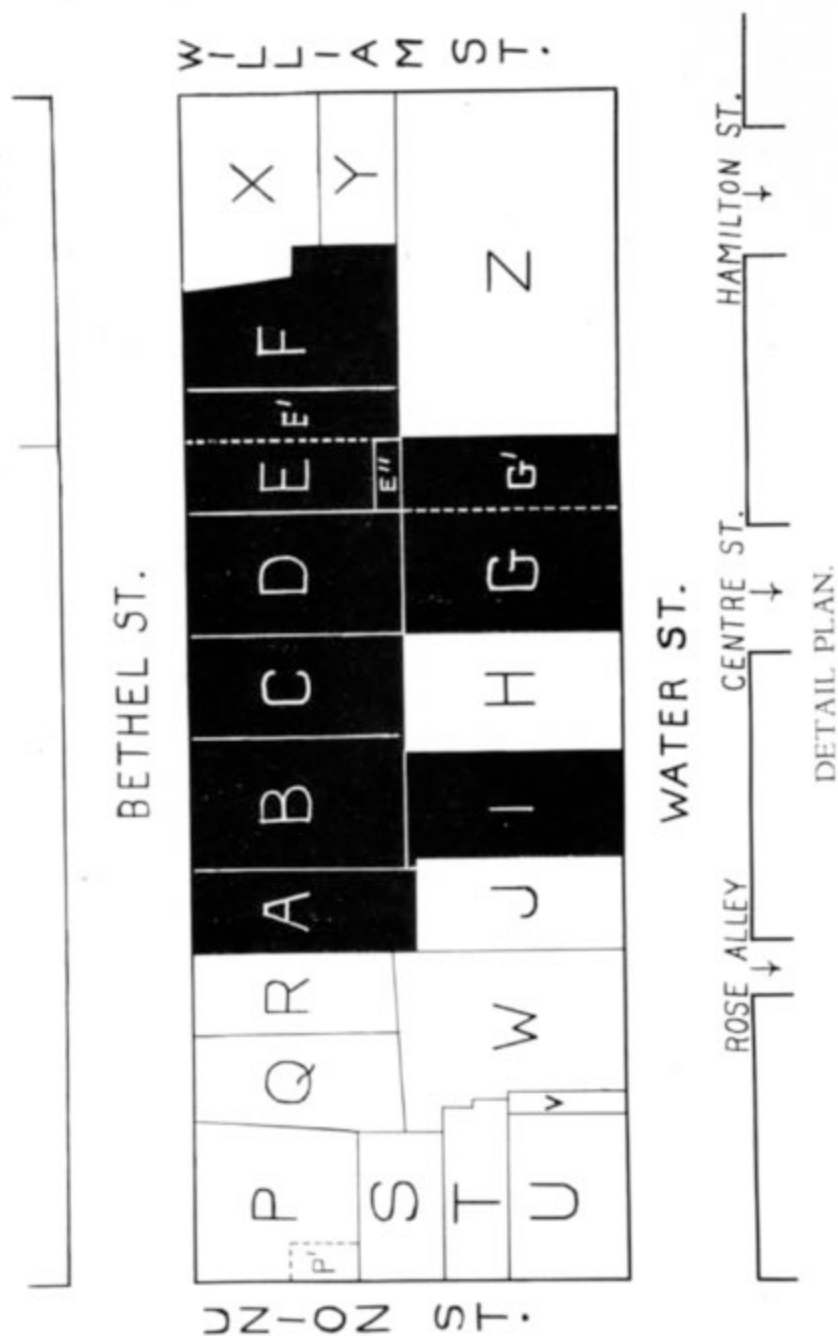


PLAN

JOSEPH RUSSELL'S ORIGINAL SALES ON PROSPECT HILL.

1830, renamed in honor of William Rotch, Jr. The street to our west for many years was a "Court" leading from Main Street northerly only so far as the house lot of William Rotch, Jr. In 1774 it was described as "ye upper or north street in Bedford". Later it was Second Street, being the second street from the river. Still later it was First Street. In 1831 when the Seamen's Bethel was built it began to be known as Bethel Court or Bethel Street. In 1851 it was laid out as First Street. Later its name was officially changed to Bethel Street. In 1921, during Mayor Remington's administration, at the request of this Society, and the Port Society, the name of the street was decreed as "Johnny Cake Hill". As a location it is quaint, of genuinely old time flavor, and it preserves the colloquial name of the hill over which it passes. And yet I wonder whether it was not the Duchess in Alice's Wonderland who suggested to this Society calling a street a hill. Alice, had she been present, would have remarked: "But a street is not a hill." To which the Duchess would doubtless have replied: "In this country all hills are streets. And the moral of that is—take care of the sound and the sense will take care of itself!" For the purpose of this address, dealing for the most part with ancient records, I shall call the hill, Prospect Hill, and the street, Bethel Street.

Joseph Rotch's first dwelling house, built from trees on the lot, cut down by his son, was at the northwest corner of the Driftway and the court where afterwards the Seamen's Bethel was built. A few years later Joseph built a more substantial house on the way, later called Water Street, near the southerly line of his "ten acre purchase" from Joseph Russell in 1765. The southerly line of the ten acre purchase, being one hundred six feet south of what is now William Street, is the north line of this Society's Water Street Main Building. Henry H. Crapo, I, in 1840, described Joseph's Water Street house as "a large house two and one-half to three stories high, standing on the same cellar as the house recently occupied by William Rotch, Jr." This dwelling, no doubt by far the most stately structure in Bedford village, commanded a view of Mr. Rotch's wharf, the river, the islands and the Fairhaven shore. It was destroyed in the British raid in 1778. Twelve years later (1790) Joseph's son William gave this house lot, between Water and Second Streets to his son, William Rotch, Jr., who had previously built thereon the three storied mansion which, in 1851, was moved up the hill to a Rotch lot on the west side of Bethel Street and is now the Mariners' Home. A portion of the William Rotch, Jr., house lot (E' F) is now owned by this Society as will hereafter appear.



G G' D E E''

This is the lot, next south of the Joseph Rotch ten acre lot, and running through from Water to Bethel Court, four rods wide and eight rods deep. It was conveyed by Joseph Russell in 1767, for £110 to Captain Joseph Rotch, 2nd, a nephew of Joseph Rotch. On the northerly portion of the lot, on Water Street (G') Captain Rotch built a gambrel-roof house in which presumably he lived with his wife Jane. This house also was destroyed by the British raiders in 1778. It would seem that Captain Rotch did not rebuild. In March 1803 he sold the entire Russell lot to his cousin, William Rotch, Jr. The consideration stated in the deed was \$200. William Rotch, Jr. purchased the lot presumably to furnish a site for the lately organized Bedford Bank, since, within a month, he sold the lot G with a frontage of thirty-seven feet and a depth of sixty-six feet to the Bank for \$600, retaining the title of the balance of the original lot for nearly seventy years. The high character of Mr. William Rotch, Jr., and his unquestioned reputation for fair dealing do not permit one to believe that the money considerations named in the deeds tell the whole story of the transaction between the two cousins.

On lot G was built the picturesque bank building which Mr. Daniel Ricketson has so graphically described. The Bedford Bank and its successor the Bedford Commercial Bank occupied the old building until 1833 when it was torn down and a new building built. The new building was similar in appearance to the Allen brick buildings next south on Water Street still standing. It covered lots G and G', although the title of G' remained in William Rotch, Jr., for many years. The banking rooms were in the north part of the ground floor and the rooms of the Bedford Commercial Insurance Company on the south. In 1865 the Bedford Commercial Bank became the National Bank of Commerce. In 1871 the heirs of William Rotch, Jr. sold the lot D to the bank. There was a dwelling house on D at an early date. In a deed of the Avery Parker lot, (Union and Bethel Streets) in 1792 the street, later Bethel Street, is described as a "Street leading north up the hill where Thomas Roach now lives." Thomas Rotch, a brother of William Rotch, Jr., was never a recorded owner of land anywhere on Prospect Hill. It may be that he built, or occupied a house on his cousin, Captain Joseph's land, later his brother's. The Rotches and the Rodmans were habitually careless about deeds between members of the family. Either this house or a successor stood on the lot when it came into possession of this Society, one hundred and fourteen years

after 1792. It was a small cottage house of the so-called "Cape Cod type", painted yellow. It was torn down by the Society.

In 1872 the heirs of William Rotch, Jr., conveyed to the Bank of Commerce, G', where a hundred years before stood Captain Joseph Rotch, 2nd's house burned by the British. The bank building had stood on the lot nearly forty years, presumably paying ground rent therefor. In 1884 the bank purchased an eight foot strip, E'', in the rear of G', thus completing the bank property. The same year a new palatial bank building was built which is substantially intact today. In 1890 the property was conveyed to the New England Cotton Yarn Company, by whom it was conveyed to this Society in 1906, a gift from Henry H. Rogers. In various publications of this Society the story of the bank buildings and neighboring buildings and their many occupants has been fully set forth.

I will now take up the titles of the lots on Bethel Street (A B C D) on which the Bourne Whaling Museum stands, the gift of Emily Howland Bourne, and (E E' F) on which we hope an addition to our Museum will soon be erected, commemorating Annie Seabury Wood.

A

This is the northwest portion of the Seth Russell lot, sold by his sons Seth and Charles in 1821 to Hervey Sullings for \$240. It would seem there was no building on the lot. Hervey Sullings born in Dartmouth in 1784, was the son of John and Ruth (Spooner) Sullings. When about thirty years of age he was ordained a preacher of the Gospel among the "people usually denominated Christians". He was a founder of the Middle Street Christian Church and later of the Bonney Street Christian Church where he often supplied the pulpit. During all his life he was a generous supporter of the religious interests of the community, thereunto enabled by his successful business as a hardware dealer. His shop was on lot T, on Union Street, which he bought from Seth and Charles Russell the year before he bought his house lot (A). This shop was in his possession for forty-six years. A nephew, John W. Sullings, was associated with him and later became the founder of the firm of Sullings & Kingman. Hervey Sullings built a three storied house on Lot A and, it would seem, lived in it for some years, later moving to the southerly part of the village. William P. Sullings, his son, lived in the house during the thirties and forties. William Sullings was a grocer and confectioner having a shop in Purchase Street. In 1850 Hervey Sullings conveyed the property to William, and in 1857, through an intermediary, it was sold to John Cunningham. John and his wife, Susan, kept a boarding house on

Union Street and were also traders and pawnbrokers. Susan appears to have been a better half. In 1862 the property was conveyed by her husband to her. Four years later Susan filed a married woman's certificate to the effect that she herself would do retail trading and pawnbroking on her separate account. What happened to John I know not, but thirteen years later Susan revoked the certificate stating her husband John was able to attend to his own business. It does not appear that the Cunninghams ever lived in the house on lot A. They retained its ownership for forty-seven years. They probably let it as a private residence at first and later as a boarding house. After their decease it was sold in 1904 to Orion E. Covil, the son of Alonzo Covil who once ran the Parker House livery stables. The property was sold by the Covil heirs to this Society in 1915.

B. C.

This is the lot, four rods square, which Joseph Russell sold in 1770 for £60 to Josiah Russell, or Josias, as he was more usually called. Josias, a cooper, was a distant relative of Joseph and Seth, born in 1747 and died in his forty-fifth year. He married Patience Wing of Newport. The lot is described as "on ye upper or north street in Bedford with privileges of ye Driftway from Bedford to ye road that goes by Joseph Russell's house." At the time the deed was given there was a house on the lot, presumably built by Josias. Josias owned the property only four years and in 1774 sold it to Salisbury Blackmore for £72. Blackmore had married Phebe Reed two years before. Presumably he lived here. Eight years later he sold the whole lot to John Coggeshall who built a larger house on the north portion (C). The next year Coggeshall, by a somewhat enigmatical deed sold the south portion (B) to John Lawrence who lived there nine years and then in 1792 sold the property to William Rotch, Jr. who purchased it for the use of a Friend's School. The statement made by Mr. Worth, that Mr. Rotch built the structure used as a school-house, would seem to be incorrect. The structure was built prior to 1770. It may have been altered and enlarged by Mr. Rotch. Daniel Ricketson in his "New Bedford in the Past" wrote as of 1875 "the present location of the Bethel must have been a very prominent as well as pleasant spot a hundred years ago . . . At the top of the hill, generally known as Johnny Cake Hill, was an old gambrel-roofed house the residence of James Durfee, Senior, and nearby, a school house, the master at one time being William Sawyer Wall, a Friend." I am unable to completely understand Mr. Ricketson's description. James Durfee, Senior, at no time owned land on the east side of Bethel Court.

The "old gambrel-roofed house" which Durfee occupied might have been on C. John Coggeshall, in that case, later replaced it with a larger house. Opposite the Friends School, on the west side of what was later Bethel Court, on the Pope lot was another even earlier school house which burned down and was rebuilt further to the westward, on Second Street. This school was for non-quakers. It thus appears that the top of Prospect Hill, in the early days of the village, was the educational precinct. The population of the village was less than one thousand. For how many years the Friends School was maintained I have not ascertained. Possibly it was discontinued after the Friends Academy on County Street was established on land given by Mr. Rotch in 1810. Yet on a map of the town in 1815 it is designated as a school house. Mr. Rotch held title to the property until 1821 when he sold it to Hervey Sullings who had lately bought Lot A. The school house must have been torn down by Mr. Sullings or his son William and a new building, adjoining and possibly later connected with, the Sullings house on Lot A.

In the palmy days of the whaling industry the boarding house business was an extensive one. There was at times in New Bedford a transient population of perhaps four to five thousand sailor men. The resident population was not much over ten to fifteen thousand. This ever shifting body of sailor men might legitimately be called the floating population, at least in the sense they were about to float on the seven seas, or had just come from floating. All these tars had to be lodged and fed. The many taverns and boarding houses of the town were naturally located not far from the water front. They crept up Prospect Hill. The Rotch Mansion, when it was moved up the hill, was called the "Seamen's Boarding House". The Avery Parker house at the corner of Union and Bethel Streets was once a public house. Several of the houses on the east side of Bethel Street, once private residences, became boarding houses. No doubt Johnny Cake was a staple dish. So it may be the sailors, whether in derision or appreciation, dubbed the locality "Johnny Cake Hill." The following advertisement in the Mercury in February, 1832, seems to refer to the house on Lot B and possibly also Lot A.

"New Bedford Boarding House."

Head of Prospect Hill, opposite the Mariner's Church

By John Dodge.

The above establishment has lately undergone complete repairs, and is now rendered the pleasantest and most retired of any establishment of the kind in this town, at the same time that it possesses the ad-

vantages of a location in the immediate vicinity of the centre of business in the town. From 25 to 30 steady regular Boarders can be handsomely accommodated on reasonable terms."

John Dodge was by occupation a boarding house keeper as well as a grocer. In 1836 he was keeping a boarding house at 49 South Second Street.

Hervey Sullings and his son William held title to lot B for forty-five years and in 1866 sold it to George Barney, a son of Paul Barney, cousin of the Rotchs. He probably bought it for investment. There is no evidence he ever lived on Bethel Street. Hereafter the property was doubtless occupied by many tenants, and from time to time, used as one of the numerous boarding houses on the hill. It remained the property of George Barney for nearly fifty years and was sold by his heirs in 1915 to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society.

C.

Major John Coggeshall had retained the northerly, and larger, part of the lot B C which he bought in 1783. He built a house thereon and lived there for some years. He was a hatter by trade and his shop is still standing on Union Street east of the corner of Bethel (P'). He had purchased the shop lot of Elisha Parker in 1782 for £36. It was about twenty feet on Main Street and twelve feet deep, carved out of the Parker lot (P). Isaac Howland, Jr., in 1792 purchased the Parker lot and quite naturally wanted to regain this little hat shop parcel. It seems that Lydia, the wife of Elisha Parker, had neglected to sign the deed to Coggeshall ten years before and no doubt Isaac Howland found this out. This cost John Coggeshall £3 in 1792 for the release of dower of Lydia, then a widow, which probably annoyed him and caused him to be stubborn. The release of dower was not recorded until 1808. John Coggeshall remained obdurate. After his death his son Haydon, to whom the other heirs had sold, finally in 1833 conveyed the little parcel to Isaac Howland, Jr., for \$1,530., a pretty stiff price, which probably would have pleased John, especially as Isaac died six months later. Isaac was reputed to be a sharp business man and this experience with Major Coggeshall must have grieved him, as, no doubt it did his granddaughter Hetty who became an owner.

During the Revolution John Coggeshall served as Captain, and then Major, of militia. He had sons, John, Joseph, James, Haydon and Charles, and a daughter, Abigail. Several of the sons became prosperous citizens owning much real estate in New Bedford. Major Coggeshall himself was highly respected. This Society has his portrait and that of his wife, Abigail Haydon Coggeshall (1757-1834), as

well as the portraits of his son Haydon (1785-1861) and the latter's wife, Joanna (1787-1860). Excellent pictures.

It would seem that the parents of Rev. Alexander McKenzie, D. D., lived in this house and that here Doctor McKenzie was born in 1830. Miss Ida A. McAfee has kindly given me a note of reminiscence by Doctor McKenzie, written more than sixty years after his birth. He says:—"I took my boy some years since to see the house which I entered first. It was opposite the Bethel on Johnny Cake Hill. That was a rocky height. The stone cropped out before my house and down on Union Street made a good display. It was long a query with me whether the rock grew with the process of the years. I am afraid it has grown in the wrong direction under the hands of strangers. But it reached all the way from the Old Mansion House to Thornton's Drug Store. I remember once seeing a man lying on the bald summit in front of my door. I thought he was dead, but probably a less creditable reason made him seek this exposed resting place".

The McKenzies lived here several years, leaving perhaps about 1836, when they removed to Third Street, near Bush Street. Soon after Major Coggeshall's death his son Haydon, to whom the other heirs had conveyed their interests sold C (in 1831) to Henry Cannon. Cannon, in the early days of Bedford Village, kept the Washington Hotel on Union and Water Streets. I have no knowledge that he ever lived on Bethel Court. It seems probable he may have let it as a residence and later for boarding house purposes. He held title to the property for over thirty years and his heirs sold it in 1865 to Levi Widdowes. Thence through McCulloughs, Teixeiras, Rays and Cairns, in an every descending scale of respectability, it came to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society in December, 1914. The buildings were torn down to make room for the Bourne Museum. Most of you, at the present moment, are sitting on the site.

D.

This lot is included in the Bank of Commerce lots. It was used in part for the Museum. I am probably standing on the lot, a portion of Captain Joseph Rotch, 2nd's original purchase.

E E'

E was the northwest portion of the Captain Joseph Rotch, 2nd, original lot which he sold to William Rotch, Jr., in 1803. There may have been a building on the lot during the eighty-one years it remained in the ownership of William Rotch, Jr., and his estate, but there was none when in 1884 his heirs conveyed it, together with a strip adjoin-

ing on the north (E'), the latter being within the William Rotch, Jr., homestead lot, to Temple S. Corson, who, it would seem, built a house thereon. Nine years later he sold to William E. Brownell and Frank R. Hadley, who, in turn, in 1896 sold to Mary J. Richardson. Mrs. Richardson lived here about twenty-five years. On her death it was conveyed by her heirs in 1922 to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society and the house torn down.

F X Y.

This is a part of the William Rotch, Jr., house lot acquired by him in 1790 and held by him and his estate for eighty-one years. After the mansion was removed in 1851, the land was probably occupied by various tenants who built buildings thereon. In 1871, Mr. Rotch's heirs sold F X Y to Theodore W. Cole, a civil war veteran, who for many years kept a marble shop here. A few months after Cole purchased he sold Y, on William Street, to Selmar Eggers who kept a gun and amunition shop here also for many years.

F.

On the southerly part of his lot Cole built a house. Forty-three years after he purchased the land, he conveyed F, with the house, to Mary E. Harlow in 1914, who sold to Margaret Finerty, who conveyed the property to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society in 1933. The house has lately been removed.

I.

A year ago the Society acquired one of the famous Allen brick stores on Water Street. This lot was originally conveyed by Joseph Russell to Daniel Smith, a tailor, in 1767 for £7 10s, thus establishing the flavor of tailoring which distinguished this immediate locality for nearly a century. Soon Daniel erected a dwelling house on the lot. Three years earlier he had married "Rebecca Cornal", — but not without hindrance. Nearly a year earlier (June 11, 1763), he had given formal notice of his intention to so do, but his father and mother, Humphrey and Rebecca, had forbidden the match. Daniel, in some way, perhaps with the aid of his betrothed, won over the dissenting parents, since the marriage was "in meeting". His tailor shop, I believe, was on Union Street. Twelve years after Daniel acquired his homestead lot he sold it (1779) to Jesse Dunham, a boat builder and mariner, who lived here with his wife Dinah. Captain Dunham was lost at sea (1782). Eighteen years after he purchased his house lot his heirs sold the property to Gilbert Russell who held title to the land twenty-six years and then, through an intermediary, sold the property to William H. Allen

for \$2000. Within the next few years Mr. Allen extended his brick building on H to cover I. This three storied brick block still stands intact. In its day it was a pretentious structure on the principal business street of the town, and during its history its offices have sheltered many of the worthies of the town, merchants, financiers and lawyers. Samuel Rodman, in his diary, 4 mo. 20, 1825, says "the town was alarmed at 4 o'clock by the discovery of fire in the garret of William H. Allen's new fire proof brick building next to the bank." On this occasion it seems to have been proved "fire proof."

William H. Allen, born in 1786, lived to be ninety-seven years old. He married a daughter of John Avery Parker. In his youth he worked for his father, James Allen, who was a tailor. Later, in company with his brother Gideon, he carried on a tailoring business on the premises south of the brick block (J), which they owned. In 1825 the Merchants Bank was organized under the leadership of John Avery Parker, and hired from Mr. Allen, for a banking room, "the lower south room in his new brick store." The first brick store (H) had been built in 1822-23. The new brick store (I) in 1824-25. If the description "new" applies to the store on I, it would seem that the picture of the first quarters of the Merchants Bank shown in its history by Mr. Pease, assigning them to the northerly store, may be inaccurate. The bank moved to its pillared building at the foot of William Street in 1831. In some of the stores on the street level Mr. Allen carried on his business of tailoring and dry goods. He offered "cloths, gentlemen's findings, as well as goods for ladies wear". It was, no doubt, the smartest shop in town. About fifteen years later business difficulties compelled Mr. Allen to sell the entire block (H. I.) to the Merchants Bank in 1838. The bank conveyed the south portion of I, about twenty feet front, with rights in the "stairways and scuttle", to Zephaniah Eddy and Gilbert Hathaway. Edmund Taber became associated as owner with Eddy and Hathaway and in 1844 became the sole owner. The clothing business was still conducted in the store. Eight years later, in 1852, Edmund Taber sold his south portion of I to Ezekiel Swain, who, in 1857, sold to William Tucker, Jr., who held the ownership for twenty-four years, the same clothing and outfitting business being continued. In 1881 it was purchased by Simeon Doane, engaged in selling seamen's clothing, who in 1886 sold it to Mark H. McIntyre, a tailor.

The title of the north portion of I with a frontage of thirteen feet remained in the Merchants Bank until 1852 when it was sold to George A. Bourne who carried on an auctioneer's and commission

business for many years in this locality. He sold it in 1889 to Mark H. McIntyre who had already acquired the south portion.

The entire property I was conveyed by McIntyre to Charles W. Clifford in 1905, who in 1918, sold the same to Giles P. Slocum and Alphonso H. Smith. Mr. Smith shortly after acquired the Slocum interest, and carried on a mill supply business for some years, when the property was conveyed in 1932 to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society.

H.

This lot is not the property of this Society, yet its history is so interwoven with I that I have, perforce, investigated the title. The lot was referred to in 1767 as belonging to Barnabas Mosher. There is no recorded conveyance to Mosher. He may, however, have occupied it and built a house thereon. It was conveyed by Joseph Russell to Abraham Smith, a blacksmith, whose interesting shop was on Centre Street. A full account of Abraham Smith and his nineteen children has been given by Rebecca Williams Hawes in No. 30 of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society Sketches. The dwelling house on this lot which Abraham Smith either acquired or built, was probably a small gambrel-roof house, the prevailing type of the early dwellings. Whether he lived here with his wife, Zerviah Ricketson, for twenty-six years until he sold it, in 1796, is not clear. If so, even assuming he had somewhat added to it, it would seem that by the time his seventeenth child was born, he may have felt the need of a somewhat more ample residence. He sold the lot to Captain Weston Howland, who, presumably, lived here some nine years. Captain Howland is one of the dramatic characters of our early history. He sold the property in 1805 to Job Eddy, cordwainer, an important personality in the community, who owned it for seventeen years. Whether Job Eddy lived here I do not know. During his ownership another house, or building, was built on the lot. The street was developing from a residential to a business street. In 1822 Eddy sold the lot to William H. Allen. Mr. Allen tore down the buildings and built the first of his pretentious brick stores. As stated in connection with lot I, owing to financial embarrassments, Mr. Allen was forced to sell both lots to the Merchants Bank. As in the case of lot I, the Bank sold the building on this lot in two separate portions, the north portion with a width of twenty-one feet, and the south with a width of sixteen feet seven and one-quarter inches. The north portion was sold to Joshua Richmond, a tailor. For forty-seven years Mr. Richmond, and his son, James Henry, carried on the fashionable tailoring shop of the town.

Mr. McIntyre was a cutter for the Richmonds and succeeded to their trade. In 1886, when the street was abandoned by the elite, the property was sold to Samuel Ivers and Moses Hatch, who bought for investment. In 1918 Eben P. Hirst, a plumber, bought the property and now occupies it. The south portion was conveyed (1839) by the Bank to John Wood, a partner of Joshua Richmond. After passing through several hands, it was the property of George A. Bourne for thirty-three years. Subsequently, the property came into the possession of Ivers and Hatch, who sold it to Mr. Hirst, the owner of the north portion, who now owns it.

J.

This is the northeast corner of the Seth Russell original purchase (1765). It would seem that it was here that Seth Russell built his first house. It came to be known as "the old Seth Russell house". It was a long house with the end to the street and its front to an alley. In 1775 Seth Russell sold J to Josiah (Josias) Russell for £98 10s. In the deed Seth Russell describes the south line of J as "within eight feet of my now dwelling house" (W.) Josiah Russell probably did not live here. It seems more likely that he lived on Bethel Court (B). At the time of the British Raid the house was occupied by John Sherman, a blacksmith. It appears to have been spared. Twenty-three years after Josiah Russell purchased the property, his widow, Patience, sold it (1798) to Joseph Howland, who, the next year, sold it to Jonathan Howland, 2nd. In 1803 it belonged to Jonathan Allen, and in 1809 to Silas Kempton. In 1815 Kempton sold to William H. Allen and Gideon Allen, who carried on the tailoring business until William built his brick block to the north. It was sold in 1823 to Bennett Wilcox. Forty-four years later the Executors of Philip Wilcox sold (1867) the property to Elisha C. Leonard. It is now owned by Marcus M. Allen.

W.

On this lot Seth Russell built his second house. He was living here in 1775. Before the war Seth removed to his farm on the road to the head of the river. At the time of the British Raid the house was occupied by the Widow Doubleday. "This house was set on fire three different times by the British soldiers, which was as often extinguished in their presence by the heroic Mrs. Doubleday." (See Old Dartmouth Historical Society Sketches, No. 23). The lot and house remained the property of Seth Russell until his death in 1820, when it came into the possession of his son Charles. In 1833, when Charles and his

brother Seth failed, the property was assigned to Trustees, who in 1835, sold it to Sylvia Ann Howland, possibly in settlement of claims against the Russells of I. Howland, Jr., and Company. The title remained in Sylvia Ann Howland for eighty-three years when it was sold (1922) to Morris and Harris Horvitz. The building harbored many people in its long history. Judge Oliver Prescott had his office here in 1840. In 1920 a small piece of the lot was sold to the owner of lot T.

U.

This is the southeast corner of Seth Russell's original purchase (1765). In 1771 he sold the lot (thirty feet on Water Street and thirty-three feet on Union Street) for £12, to Uriah Rea, John and Benjamin Slocum, David Shepard, William Claghorn, Daniel Smith and Seth Russell, Jr. These multitudinous owners doubtless built the wooden building shown in Mr. Wall's picture of the Four Corners, as of 1807. The owners, under the name of Uriah Rea and Company, carried on a business rather ambitiously named the "West India Goods Store". Rea was also licensed as an innholder in 1775-1785, but presumably he did not keep his inn here. In 1786 he was in Warwick, Rhode Island. The West India Goods business appears not to have been altogether successful. As of 1810, Mr. Wall says:—"Leonard Macomber occupied the corner store as a shoemaker's shop; Jahazel Jenney kept a general merchandise store next west; the barber shop on the Water Street side was kept by Nathaniel Rogers". The history of the property between 1810 and 1920 is unknown by me. There is no record of how and when Seth Russell regained title to it, yet at his death in 1820 it was a part of his estate and came to his son Charles, who, about 1822, built thereon the brick building now standing. In 1833, on the failure of Charles and his brother Seth, the property was conveyed by their Assignees to the Mechanics, Merchants and Marine Banks, who held title for twelve years and then (1845) sold to Benjamin Cummings in whose possession and that of his heirs, as part of the Cummings Trust, it has remained for over ninety years to the present time.

The brick block, with its granite trim, was an important building in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was known as the "Ricketson Block". Charles Ricketson and Son, tailors, occupying a part of the street floor. Bourne and Haskell, auctioneers, and Green and Tillinghast, dry goods dealers, were also tenants. In the second story were the law offices of Williams and Warren. In the third story was the Social Library, George W. Baker, Librarian. Afterwards the Social Library was removed to Hamilton Street. At one time the New

Bedford Standard, in its early days, is said to have used the upper stories. Lorenzo D. Stevens later had a restaurant and bar on the ground floor. Charles Taber & Co. at one time used part of the building.

The small passage-way to the north, title of which is involved, and the cause of much contention, was in 1908, conveyed by George A. Bourne to the Cummings Trust. Bourne certainly did not own either U or W, and how he acquired title to the passage-way is mysterious. Mr. Charles G. Akin, whose father's shop was on W, says that Mr. Bourne used the passage as a drive way, keeping his horse and buggy somewhere in back of the buildings.

T.

Part of the original Seth Russell lot where Barnabas Russell "for his son" built the market (on T and S) as shown in Mr. Wall's painting. Barnabas Russell did not own the land. The shop was demolished about 1817. In 1820 Charles and Seth Russell, Jr., sold the property to Hervey Sullings for his hardware store. (See A). Hervey Sullings probably built the three storied building now standing. The title remained in Sullings and his estate forty-six years and was then conveyed (1869) to Edmund Maxfield, in whose possession and that of his son, Edmund F. Maxfield, it remained twenty-six years, when it was sold to Susan G. K. Snow, who held it for twenty-five years. It has since been owned by Earl W. Taylor, Jacob Genensky, Thomas H. West and Cornelius D. Murphy.

S.

There was a small building on the lot in 1810 used by James Bosworth, as a shoemaker. In 1819, Seth Russell, Senior, sold the lot to Leonard Macomber and Nathaniel Rogers. Here Leonard Macomber & Son (George) carried on a grocery business, and Rogers, a barber's shop. In 1840 it was sold to Jonathan Smith and William Tucker. In 1844 it became the sole property of Tucker, who held it nearly thirty years, and sold (1873) to Sewell A. Dodge, who in turn, sold to Antone L. Sylvia, who, in 1890, sold to William Wallace.

P P'

This is the southwest portion of Seth Russell's original lot. In 1766 he sold it to Benjamin Baker, a carpenter, for £4. In 1768 Baker sold the lot to Jesse Crosman, a mariner, for £31 16s. A fair profit. In 1770 Crosman sold it to Daniel Spencer of Newport, a "shop joyner", for £180. This conspicuous increase in value indicates that a building had been erected on the lot. In a mortgage given by

Spencer (1770) to John Slocum, of Newport, the statement is made that "a messuage or dwelling house" is thereon. This dwelling, built before 1770, is said by Mr. Worth to be the oldest house now standing in New Bedford. In a mortgage given by Daniel Spencer (1771) he describes the property as "my house lot and house where I live". Also included in the mortgage was:—"One clock with a mahogany case; one mahogany desk; one large mahogany table, one small do; three feather beds and beadsteads." There is no record of the discharge of these mortgages but Daniel Spencer, describing himself as a "cabinet maker" conveyed by warranty deed the property to Goddard Spencer, tailor, for £180. There is no recorded conveyance by Goddard Spencer. In 1779, John Wanton, a merchant, conveyed the property to Avery Parker, innholder. There is no recorded conveyance to John Wanton. Possibly he acquired title by inheritance. He subsequently lived in Newport.

Avery Parker was a house-wright by trade. He kept a public house in the building on this lot during the Revolution. He was the son of Rev. Jonathan and Ruth (Avery) Parker and was born in Plympton, Mass., in 1743. He died in 1794. He was an uncle of John Avery Parker. In 1781 Avery Parker conveyed the property to Elisha Parker, presumably his son. In 1792, Lydia Parker, widow of Elisha, conveyed the property to Isaac Howland, Jr., for £210, describing it as the "land and buildings where Avery Parker now lives". Isaac Howland, Jr., added to the structure, building the south front as it now exists. Howland lived here for a number of years. Subsequently, he lived in the large three storied mansion at the southwest corner of Water and School Streets, which he bought from Gideon Howland in 1804. He died in 1834 and his property was devised to the granddaughters, Sylvia Ann Howland and Abby Robinson. On Mrs. Robinson's death, her daughter, Hetty H. R. Green, inherited a half interest in the property. In 1918 the property was conveyed to Gilman E. Hook and Frances F. Hook for \$5,500.

Q R.

This is the northwest portion of the Seth Russell Lot, conveyed by his son, Charles, on July 7, 1831, to Benjamin Mumford, who, on the same day conveyed Q to William H. Taylor. The excellent double house now standing on the two lots was evidently built at this time. Mr. Emery suggests it may have been the work of the well known architect, Richard Upjohn. It would seem that Benjamin Mumford was disastrously involved in the financial panic of 1833. His property (R) came into the possession of the Traders Bank of Newport. In

1840 the Bank conveyed it to William Freeman, of Boston. In 1845, Freeman conveyed to George C. Gibbs. In 1871 it became the property of Jennie W. Gibbs.

William H. Taylor, a prominent citizen in his day, probably lived in Q for some years. In 1870 he sold the property to Clarrissa C. Reynolds.

Z.

This was a part of the ten acre purchase of Joseph Rotch in 1765 which came to William Rotch, Jr. One hundred and fifty years after Joseph Rotch acquired the property it was conveyed by the heirs of William Rotch, Jr., (1915) to Thomas F. Wood and Thomas W. Macy, doing business as Wood, Brightman & Co., and is now held by their successors in business. Many buildings have been built and rebuilt on this lot. At the corner of William and Water Streets, John Kehew had a nautical instrument shop. After he went to Boston in 1865, perhaps earlier, Charles R. Sherman succeeded him in the same business, which he carried on for many years. In the upper story Edward L. Baker dealt in stocks and investment securities. He also had an office in Boston. The New Bedford office was started in 1848. Samuel P. Burt was his clerk.

The building next south was occupied by Wood, Brightman & Co., tinsmiths, many years before they purchased Z.

The next building south was at one time (about 1850 to 1860) occupied by Thomas Cook, father of Samuel H. Cook, and Loum Snow, who were wholesale dry goods merchants, otherwise called "outfitters". Mr. Snow became a whaling merchant on his own account, and Mr. Cook associated himself with his son, Samuel, in the insurance business. The building was torn down about 1865 and Samuel P. Burt built the somewhat fantastic pilastered one-story building which Sanford and Kelley later occupied. The next building south was a low building with pillars used by Samuel H. Cook, Secretary of the Ocean Mutual Insurance Co. It was standing about 1870.

(See Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches, No. 19, for pictures of the above buildings).

WILLIAM M. EMERY'S ADDRESS

Read to the members of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society
at their meeting, January 19, 1934

THE EPIC OF NEW BEDFORD

By WILLIAM M. EMERY

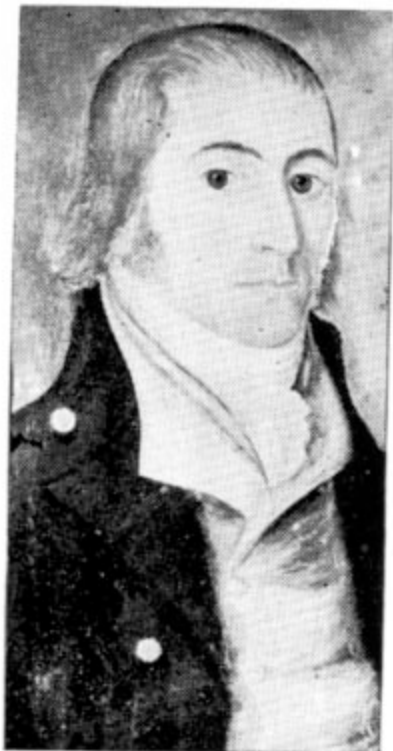


URING my frequent incursions into the realms of local history I have been deeply impressed with the possibilities of the Epic of New Bedford. This great recital, the complete, comprehensive story of the forefathers and their success in transforming the hillside wilderness into a place of habitation that has grown to be a famed city, — this recital, I would say without disrespect, and with all admiration for early and late historians, has never been adequately presented, and perhaps never will be. It would require study and research for a long period of years. In this paper I desire to tell a small part of the story of the beginnings in my own way, differently, perhaps, from what has been the case before, yet in no sense approaching the ideal I have in mind.

The first settlements in the ancient township of Dartmouth were not in the New Bedford portion. They were, regardless of chronology, at the head of Acushnet river, at Bellville, in Oxford village, Fairhaven, in the Apponegansett region, at Russells Mills, in Acoaxet or Westport, and on Sconticut Neck. The section destined to become the greatest was the last to be settled. Naturally and for the most part the pioneers established their farms conveniently near the water, and for some reason, possibly because it was at the foot of a hillside, did not make the New Bedford shore their early objective.

The settlement of New Bedford dates from 1761, a century after the first brave spirits planted themselves scatteringly about this terrain. Let us imagine New Bedford in the middle of the eighteenth century, more than 170 years ago, almost uninhabited by the white man, a thickly wooded slope, with meadows and pasture land here and there, and ponds sparkling in the morning light, and brooks trickling down to the river, — a region ascending from the waters, and stretching illimitably toward the setting sun.

There were Indians living on the tract, but they seem to have been inoffensive, in contrast to the savages of the bloody days of King Philip. Ricketson, in his "History of New Bedford," quotes from the reminiscences written by Miss Pamela Willis, granddaughter of Colonel Samuel Willis, who lived here long before the Revolution. Miss Willis said: "I remember being told by my grandfather that a number of Indians had huts down where Purchase Street runs, or nearer the



John Lowden, Jr.



Puella Covell, his wife

water where clams were plenty, and that a mortal sickness came among them, and swept them all off, but none of the white people had it. My grandfather told me about the Indians lashing their children to boards, to make them straight; and at one time two squaws, who had been drinking rum, placed their children, as usual, against a tree for the night; one of them placed hers head downward, and during the night it perished."

Miss Willis, who was born in 1769 and died in 1853, in her 84th year, herself remembered the Indians, of whom she said there were many in her childhood, some living a short distance northwest of what is now the County Street end of the Common. Miss Willis stated that she was a timid child, but her parents told her not to fear the red men, as they would do the whites no harm, and such proved to be the case.

Reference has been made to brooks that coursed down the hill. One of these was entertainingly described by Thomas M. Stetson in an article written in 1885, which I will read. This brook, said Mr. Stetson, "originated west of the court house on County Street, where the land was once, as James Arnold stated, a cedar swamp. It crept and wound eastward, keeping the sidewalk south of the court house quite wet a few years ago. It next showed its moisture on the sidewalk north of Mrs. Ellis' house on Eighth Street. It next appeared in the three spring-holes of City Hall Square. Passing Cheapside it had acquired the character of 'a little spring brook', and is so described in the Joseph Rotch purchase of 1765. The southwest corner of Mr. Rotch's purchase just hit this spring brook. It next gave name to the Fountain Lot (China Hall) and justified the establishment of a tanyard in Sears Court. Then turning southeasterly it crossed Union Street at the store of J. & W. R. Wing. Here was a street bridge. It next justified another tanyard about where the police station now stands, and finally debouched into the propellor dock, eastward of Spring Street, or Shepherd's Lane."

On Purchase Street, on the site of the building next north of the Five Cents Saving Bank, the locus of China Hall, now owned by the president of this Society, the brook formed what was known as the aqueduct fountain, so named because a water supply was conveyed therefrom to the wharves through pipes made of hollowed logs. In modern times these old log pipes have been unearthed in the course of excavations. One afternoon in 1817 some small children were playing there, and two of them, in attempting to cross a beam placed above the water, fell in. One was rescued, but the other, George Barstow, son of Captain Thomas Barstow, was drowned. The tragedy shocked the little community. The Baptist meeting house was crowded for the funeral services. Clergymen of three denominations took part, the Baptist pastor, Rev. Silas Hall, delivering an address. The body of this seven-year old boy was followed to the grave by a long cortege.

The largest and most famous stream was Tripp's brook, originating west of Oak Grove Cemetery. It flowed through the western part of the city, and then coursing easterly and southeasterly discharged into

the waters of Clark's Cove at the foot of Crapo Street. Another brook rising in the northwest section crossed the junction of Summer and Parker Streets, proceeded down past the site of Pleasant Street M. E. Church, and thence ran easterly to the harbor. Other streams were a brook starting near Acushnet Avenue north of William Street, and emptying at the foot of Elm Street; Rodman's brook, in the present Wamsutta Mills yard; and Vera brook, fed by springs at the southwest corner of County and Washington Streets, and finding its outlet near the foot of Howland Street.

Among the ponds was one a short distance northwest of the corner of County and Elm Streets, and another near the intersection of Ash and Bedford Streets, the latter readily recalled by persons still living.

Today I shall speak of two vast farms trending up the hillside, on which New Bedford had its beginnings. They extended from the river front far westward, to the present Rockdale Avenue; the northern boundary comprised the extensions of a line running east and west between Sycamore and Smith Streets, and the southern the extension of the south line of the Fifth Street schoolhouse lot. These two farms were owned by two men. Within these limits the first dwellings and stores, shipyards, ropewalks, and other places of manufacture were erected, and the first wharves were built, and within them the greater part of the town's life and activities flourished for a long period of years. When I think of these two gigantic farms I think of the two great families of real estate promoters, who made possible the municipality of which we have long been proud. We look back upon these worthies not merely as real estate operators, but as the fathers of the town, and indeed they were; and had not their enterprise led them, while developing the whale fisheries, to push the sale of lots, the building of this community would not have been possible, or certainly would have been long delayed.

Through the two large parcels of land just mentioned, and through others lying to the north and the south, ran the County Road, laid out from Clarks' Cove to the Head of the River, and beyond. It must have been a narrow country thoroughfare, winding among the fields and woods, very narrow indeed if we may rely on the tradition anent the British raid of 1778 that the well on the Kempton place at County and North Streets, into which the redcoats threw broken glass and chinaware, was located in what is now the west gutter of County Street. Along this highway stood several farm houses, those of the families, starting at the south, of Allen, Russell, Kempton, Willis, Peckham, Hathaway and Wrightington. West of the road were a few

cleared fields. To the east were arable lands as well, according to a contemporary statement in connection with the British invasion, which refers to a patch of pole beans on the east side of the road just south of the present William Street.

At the head of William Street lived Joseph Russell, with his neighbor Kempton to the north. Their dividing line was just south of Elm Street. Russell and the Kemptons were pushing sellers of real estate, and in 1765 received an accession in the person of Joseph Rotch, who had come from Nantucket to engage in whaling here.

Russell was to the manor born. Three generations had preceded him on Dartmouth soil. By inheritance and purchase he acquired the large farm on which he made his home, and he owned also a tract further south, but not adjoining, including the homestead of his grandfather, Joseph Russell the first, in the vicinity of County and South Streets. Born in the home of his father, Joseph Russell, the second, on County Street at the head of Walnut, we find him comfortably established in his own dwelling on the site of the High School of today as early as 1755, when it is said he began to engage in the whale fishery. The present Union Street formed his cart path to the shore, and at the head of this rough stony way, on the County Road, where pedestrians now dodge motor traffic moving in four directions, stood his grist mill. In addition to his whaling and milling Mr. Russell had various manufacturing and commercial activities. From London and from the West Indies his ships brought in wares that met ready sale. He and his eldest son, Barnabas Russell, who was associated with him, met severe losses as a result of the British raid and also the depreciation of the Continental currency, but their extensive real estate holdings were their salvation.

Meanwhile the Kemptons were quietly living their lives on their wide-spread acreage to the north of Russell, the shrewd Quaker, the homestead being on a knoll at the northwest corner of County and North Streets. The present frame dwelling there, sold a few years ago to the Catholic diocese, was the third to be built on the site. To me the story of the Kempton lands is one of the most fascinating in the annals of our town. Manasseh Kempton was a leader among the colonists at Plymouth. He and Governor Bradford married sisters. Kempton was one of the original proprietors of Dartmouth under the agreement of 1640. He had no children, and outlived both his only brother and only nephew, each named Ephraim, of Scituate. Hence at his death in 1663 he bequeathed his vast Dartmouth holdings to his favorite grand-nephew and namesake, Manasseh Kempton, the second. The latter never married, and subsequently removed to Southampton,

Long Island, where he died. In 1733, when he was eighty-two, he deeded, for "good will and natural affection" to his nephew, still another Ephraim Kempton (it seemed as if the woods were full of them) "one half of the whole share in Dartmouth which was originally my uncle Manasseh Kempton's." Four years later the Southampton man, at his death, bequeathed all his remaining lands in Dartmouth to William Kempton, son of the nephew Ephraim.

When Ephraim Kempton received the gift of a portion of the Dartmouth purchase in 1733 he was living in Plymouth. He was fifty-nine years old and father of three grown children. Nevertheless he felt an urge to settle on his newly acquired holdings. It was considerable of an undertaking for a man of three score to break away from the old associations of Plymouth and establish himself on a farm in the wilderness. But he and his good wife were of sturdy fibre, tenacious of purpose, resourceful and resolute. Theirs was the unconquerable spirit of the pioneer. It was in 1736, probably, when they built their home at County and North Streets. Mr. Kempton died twenty-two years later, aged eighty-four, and his widow Patience died in 1779, at the astounding age of 105 years, six months, six days. Their graves are in the old cemetery at Acushnet.

By the time Joseph Russell began to sell off houselots, the Kempton homestead was occupied by a son of the venerable couple, Thomas Kempton. In a few years he died, and his son, another Ephraim Kempton, took the house. The great farm then had been quite well split up among heirs. It originally ran from the river to Rockdale Avenue, and was bounded north, as I have previously stated, by a line just north of Sycamore Street. The southern line was 100 feet south of Elm Street. Thomas M. Stetson called it a "magnificent rectangle". An old entry describes it as about a mile long and three-quarters of a mile wide. It was probably the biggest farm, in a single tract, in the early history of New Bedford.

The Kemptons were farmers and not merchants or manufacturers. It was some years after Russell began to sell land that they ventured into the real estate business, in which they continued for a long period. At the death of the venerable John Burgess, son of a Kempton mother, two or three years ago, his homestead at Foster and Mill Streets, and some land on Emerson Street, were the only parts of the original Kempton farm remaining as continuous family holdings. Some of this went to his legatees, but a share in the Emerson Street lots still belongs to the heirs of David B. Kempton; thus it has never passed out of posses-

sion of the Kempton blood — an unrivalled ownership of close to three centuries.

It was a Kempton descendant, Mrs. Warren B. Potter, who bequeathed the Kempton Fund, \$250,000, to the New Bedford Free Public Library.

North of the Kemptons were the Willis family, with plenty of land. Eventually they entered the lists as real estate men, but their story is not a part of this narration.

As Joseph Russell looked about his large landed possessions he realized that he owned far more real estate than he needed, and would do well to be selling it off. Not in farms, but in house lots, and the inspiration to establish a town came to him. Such a procedure not only would supply him with additional cash resources, but would bring in a population that would provide a market for the products of his various enterprises. He sensed that the splendid harbor would be a factor in subsequent growth. He laid out the plan of a village, establishing various streets, starting with the present Union and Water Streets. It is unfortunate that the plan which Mr. Russell drew, or had drawn, has not been preserved; it is known to have existed, but its disappearance is a mystery. He had his houselots laid out and carefully surveyed. Some forty years ago Elisha C. Leonard, genealogist and antiquarian, made at the Registry of Deeds an intensive study of the first lots sold from the Russell and Kempton properties, and by expenditure of a vast amount of time and labor prepared a map showing these locations. Blue prints of this valuable plan may be consulted in the Registry of Deeds, and the offices of the City Engineer and Board of Assessors. Owing to the sometimes vague and inadequate descriptions of the boundaries of the originals it must have been necessary in many cases for Mr. Leonard to examine numerous subsequent conveyances before he could satisfy himself of the accuracy of his measurements and deductions.

How familiar we are with the famous painting by William A. Wall of New Bedford in 1807 — the Four Corners, with the venerable William Rotch, Sr., in his chaise—"the leathern conveniency," as it was called — dickering with Caleb Sherman for the load of hay; and the portly William Rotch, Jr., in earnest conversation with Abraham Russell in the middle of Water Street; and Captain Roland R. Crocker and Samuel Rodman, Sr., cordially shaking hands in front of the barber shop; and Jehaziel Jenney, the town's practical joker, talking to Peter Barney; and William Sawyer Wall, a village pedagogue, reasoning with an acquaintance leaning against a corner building; and Barnabas Taber, sedate Quaker, walking north in the foreground; and Patty

Hussey, stately Quakeress, proceeding south to her store at the Southwest corner of Union and Water Streets. The general scene, with the rows of wooden buildings — how far away and primitive it all seems. Yet New Bedford was then nearly fifty years old. And the surroundings when Joseph Russell sold his first houselot half a century before were even far more primitive. Not a building larger probably than a shed was in sight; not even a stone wall. The Four Corners marked only a spot in the bare countryside. In the winter the location must have been bleak and desolate indeed.

From contemporary accounts the site of our city could not have been especially attractive, barring the fine view across the waters. In July, 1761, Rev. Paul Coffin came to Dartmouth to visit Rev. Dr. Samuel West at Acushnet. He wrote in his diary: "Rocks and oaks are over the whole town. Whortlebushes and rocks in this and two former towns are the sad comfort of the weary traveller." Others allude to oaks as a marked characteristic of the olden times. Mayor George Howland, Jr., speaking at the Dartmouth bi-centennial exercises in 1864, stated that he had heard his grandmother say that when the house on the northwest corner of Union and Bethel Streets was raised, she sat at the window of her house on Water Street, between School and Walnut Streets, and looking through the oak forest witnessed what went on. This was before the Revolution. There was a hill not far from the shore long known as Prospect Hill, and later, colloquially, as Johnnycake Hill.

I have dwelt upon this phase in order that we may picture to ourselves the Russell farm previous to 1760 and later. Of course all things must have their beginnings, and while we know New Bedford had them, probably we seldom stop to visualize actual conditions prior to the time when buildings and streets began to appear.

We have often been told that Joseph Russell had a try works and candle works on the shore in the vicinity of the present Front and Center Streets, the water coming to Front Street at the time. Yet his cart path was down Union Street, a roundabout route. I wondered why, until I learned from an old deed that he had a shipyard at the foot of Union Street. It was located at a sufficient distance from the try pots to avoid danger from fire. I have never seen any reference in print to this plant for building vessels. But Russell's deed of 1760 to his first customer is unmistakable. It refers to "ye shipyard on ye west side of Acushnet River, so called," which could have belonged to nobody else but Russell. Possibly little whalers were built there.

We are no doubt, correct in assuming that in 1759 or 1760 there came from Pembroke, in Plymouth County, a certain ship carpenter to work in the Russell shipyard. His name was John Lowden. He must have boarded in the Russell home, for that was the nearest shelter, and Friend Russell was accustomed to have his hired men live with him. In due course of time Lowden began to pay attention to a young lady living out Long Plain way. An old saying runs: "The geographical area of a man's lovemaking has always been limited by the distance which he could travel after early supper." But the young man in question had a good nag. The fair damsel was Mary Whitridge, a member of the celebrated family of that name. On evenings when Lowden remained at home how do you suppose the Russell household passed the time in that candle-lit farmhouse, that lonely farmhouse up there in the woods? The enterprising Quaker was willing Lowden should have a saddle-horse to go a-courting, because courtship meant marriage, and marriage meant the sale of a house lot; and so, in their evening chats Russell no doubt urged young Lowden to buy land, perchance topping off with the question, "Can't I sell thee a corner lot, John"? And finally, John bought, though not a corner lot, and while marriage was a year in the future, as it turned out, he took a deed on Dec. 4, 1760, for an acre of land near the water-front in what ultimately became Bedford Village. Please note that the deed passed in December, and therefore it was unlikely that Lowden had just made a wintry journey hither from Pembroke and first viewed the bleak scene when snow was on the ground. The theory I have outlined is the more tenable. It is the easiest answer to the question: "What drew Lowden down here?"

The Lowden purchase, which cost £20 6s., was a parallelogram, four rods in width, extending from the present First Street to the river. Its north line was four rods south of Union Street. The water-front along there was then farther west than it is today, and at the present head of Commercial Street the waves lapped South Water Street. The deed cited that Lowden's land began at "a white oak tree on ye edge of the beach between ye ship yard on ye west side of Acushnet River, so called, and ye brook from thence east to ye river." The westerly corner boundaries were heaps of stones. The deed also gave privilege of a drift way (i. e., Union Street) "out to ye Country road", and provided that the said Lowden was to help maintain it. Thus we see that Joseph Russell was the original advocate of betterment assessments on abutters, and we shall find he pursued this idea further.

Conveyance was to Lowden, his heirs and assigns, forever, "excepting ye privilege of building vessels in said shipyard so as not to be prejudicial to ye said Lowden." I have copied this as I found it, but it seems to me there was an error in recording, and the intention was to say "not to be prejudicial to said Russell" — in other words, Russell meant Lowden should not become a competitor in ship building. Although he was not married to Miss Whitridge until December, 1761, Lowden built a home, just west of South Water Street, early in that year. It was the first house in Bedford Village. He also constructed a wharf in the line of the present Commercial Street. Subsequently he bought fairly extensive tracts in other parts of Dartmouth, probably woodlots.

Bedford Village had begun. The second lot sold from the Russell farm was conveyed early in 1761 to John Allen, house carpenter. It was at the southeast corner of Union and Water Streets, north of the east part of Lowden's purchase, was four rods wide, and extended to the water. Allen built a house there and subsequently sold to Barzillai Myrick, a ship carpenter.

In 1762, Russell sold to Gideon Mosher, a mechanic, lot Number Three at the northeast corner of Union and Water Streets. This was also four rods wide and abutted on the shore. Mosher's deed is not of record.

December 11, 1762, Elnathan Sampson, a blacksmith who had come from Wareham, paid £6 13s. for the fourth homelot. At the southwest corner of Water and Union Street, it comprised 32 rods, with a frontage of four rods, and was eight rods deep. It was north of land of John Lowden, "where he dwelleth," with boundaries, at the north and east, of land left for ways or streets. Sampson was given the privilege of these thoroughfares, but he was "to help mend ye said ways and keep them in repair from time to time." Another instance of betterments.

In 1764, David Shepherd, a cooper, made the most extensive purchase to that time. It comprised all the land south of John Lowden as far as the present School Street, and extended from First Street to the river. That year also William Macomber, cordwainer, bought water-front property 100 feet south of Elm Street and extending a short distance west of Water Street. Macomber's purchase gave him the privilege of passing over a driftway or bridle way running south to "ye open way." This open way is the present Union Street. He bound his heirs and assigns "to maintain a good cart gate at ye said open way". The driftway was the beginning of North Water Street.

In 1765, David Shepherd again dabbled in real estate. He bought a large tract in the city center where the municipal building and public library now stand. Tradition says this was known as the Great Meadow, and that part of it was marshy. Five years later he added to his holdings on School Street. For a number of years he carried on the most extensive cooperage business in Bedford Village.

In 1765, Benjamin Taber bought the Gideon Mosher property at Water and Union Streets, northeast corner. It is stated that four years previously Mr. Taber had a shop for boat-building and block making, at which he had served apprenticeship at Nantucket, and this shop was just north of William Street, on Water, where it had been moved from the shore. Mr. Taber apparently hired this building. On his Union Street property he had his dwelling and a boat-building shop. At the foot of his land he erected Taber's wharf, jutting out from Front Street, as the water came to that point. Mr. Taber built the first whale-boat, it is said, ever turned out here, and also gains distinction from the fact that his son Daniel was the first male child born in Bedford Village.

Through his property Taber laid out a lane, still existent, known in derision as Rose Alley, because, according to Daniel Ricketson, of its peculiar odor. Mr. Ricketson wrote: "Whenever I had occasion to pass through it, it was generally on a run." The origin of the name also has been poetically ascribed to the fact that the lane ran by Mr. Taber's rose garden. Mrs. Charles R. Price, a descendant, is of the opinion that the rose garden was established much later, by her grandfather, who lived there, William C. Taber, Sr., a grandson of Benjamin Taber. The portion of the land at the northeast corner of Union and North Water Streets was not sold by the Tabers until 1907, when it had been in possession of the family for 142 years.

In 1765 came the most important purchase thus far from the Russell farm, marking the advent of another real estate operator and the establishment of a leading family here. In that year Joseph Rotch, a Quaker whaling merchant from Nantucket, came to Dartmouth. He acquired the famous ten-acre lot (with eleven rods over) on the northern boundary of the Russell estate, extending from the water nearly to Pleasant Street, except for the little jog near the shore that had been sold to William Macomber. The north boundary was 100 feet south of Elm Street and the southern, in Sears Court. For this property Friend Rotch paid £201 7s 6d, or something over twenty pounds an acre. At the same time he purchased of Russell two other large plots, one south of the lower part of the tract aforesaid, bounded by Bethel

and Union Streets and Acushnet Avenue, and the second bounded by School, First and Madison Streets, and extending to the water front.

Other early sales by Russell were: in 1765, to Seth Russell, and to William Russell; 1766, to John Howland; 1767, to Daniel Smith, and to Captain Joseph Rotch, 2nd., nephew of the original Joseph Rotch; 1769, to William Tallman. Save in one instance I will not stop to particularize. The land transferred in 1765 to Seth Russell, cooper, a nephew of Joseph Russell, for the moderate price of twelve pounds, was eight rods square, at the northwest corner of Water and Union Streets; its westerly boundary was Bethel Street. At the Union Street corner Russell erected a good sized shop or store, of wood, and his house was next north, on Water Street. The deed fixed the eastern boundary as forty feet west of Benjamin Taber's west line, and the southern boundary as forty-six feet north of Elnathan Sampson's north line, and referred to the fact that the open spaces between were left for streets. The width of both thoroughfares is the same today, Water Street, forty feet, and Union Street, west of Water, forty-six feet, the boundaries remaining identical with those established by Joseph Russell on Oct. 11, 1765, something more than 168 years ago. Much of the Seth Russell tract remained for many years in the family, and the present brick building at the northwest corner of Union and Water Streets was erected by the Russells in 1822.

The transactions I have been describing were the only original sales from the Russell tract between 1760 and 1770. But it must not be supposed that no other buyers of houselots appeared in those ten years. Nearly all the first purchasers were turning portions of their holdings into cash from time to time, and the village began to grow. Take the case of John Lowden, for example. In September, 1766, he sold a part of the water side of his lot to John Gerrish, blacksmith. It was north of the foot of Spring Street. In April following he sold to Captain William Claghorn, who had come from Marthas Vineyard, the northern portion of his property on the west side of Water Street. It was described as land and dwelling, with frontage of forty-three feet on "ye first street, and west to ye second street." This shows that while Water Street had been laid out, it had not yet been named as we now know it; and furthermore forecasts a curious system of street nomenclature that existed until about 1830. For years the present First Street was called Second Street, i. e., the second street from the water; Second Street was Third Street; Acushnet Avenue, for many years Third Street, was Fourth Street, and so on. This is shown in the city map of 1815, where, for instance, the Friends Meeting House

appears to be situated between Seventh and Eighth Streets. These old street designations have sometimes caused confusion in tracing transfers of real estate, a confusion worse confounded by the occasional practice of giving a street the name which it bore after 1830.

South Water Street had its beginnings in October, 1766, when Lowden sold to Joseph Rotch, "in behalf of himself and other owners of ye lots in that new settlement where I now live", the privilege of an open way thirty feet wide, "east of my dwelling". David Shepherd, next south, also sold a similar right of way. This gave a highway from Union to School Street. Doubtless Rotch at that time extended the street through his own land from School to Madison Street, originally Bush Street, and Walnut Street was laid out later.

The Captain William Claghorn mentioned was a cousin of Colonel George Claghorn, builder of the frigate *Constitution*. Having been engaged in privateering, his house, near the head of Commercial Street, was burned by the British in 1778. He was somewhat of an aristocrat, and was notable for his fine attire. He possessed five ruffled shirts, fourteen plain shirts, six linen waistcoats, six pairs of silk hose, a broadcloth coat, two fancy waistcoats, a pair of olive velvet breeches, pair of satin breeches, satin waistcoat, and a great variety of other clothing. Our forefathers certainly dressed well when they had the means.

But John Lowden kept selling off land. In 1772, describing himself as shipwright, he sold to Caleb Russell a dwelling house and store east of Water Street and half of his wharf property, reserving to himself the other half of his wharf. In June, 1774, describing himself in the deed as an innholder, he sold to Joseph Russell, son of Caleb Russell, the remainder of his wharf, and land with a bake-house. He no longer, in his new business, needed the wharf. In September, 1778, Lowden's dwelling house, or inn, was burned by the British devastators, and he returned in discouragement to Pembroke to spend the remainder of his days. In 1787, he sold to Isaac Howland "the whole of what I now own of land bought of Joseph Russell in 1760," and by the deed it appears there was a barn or stable thereon.

Let us recapitulate the situation about the Four Corners in 1770: Benjamin Taber, northeast corner; John Allen, southeast corner; El-nathan Sampson, southwest corner; Seth Russell, northwest corner. Next south of Sampson was Captain William Claghorn, and south of him was John Lowden. David Shepherd lived at the northwest corner of Water and School Streets.

On the Sampson property today stand two wooden buildings with a Water Street frontage, according to the Assessors Department, of sixty-six feet, which precisely answers the call of the deed to Sampson in 1762, namely, four rods, for be it known that a foot has been a foot and a rod a rod ever since the days of Henry VIII, and even earlier. Next south is a brick structure, and south of that a narrow wooden building, with joint frontage of forty-three feet, the exact width of Captain Claghorn's front dooryard. Thus it is interesting to know that some of the old boundary lines of the early settlement are still unchanged after the long lapse of years. Lowden had left himself a frontage of only twenty-three feet next south of Claghorn; it was well toward Spring Street. This has now been absorbed in an open lot much longer, the site of a huge billboard. Behind the northern end of this boarding, therefore, about seventy-five feet north of Spring Street, stood the first house erected in Bedford Village proper by John Lowden in 1761. It would seem fitting if the Old Dartmouth Historical Society could arrange to mark this spot with a suitable tablet.

The Kemptons did not catch the real estate fever as early as did Joseph Russell. Their first recorded sale was to our old friend David Shepherd in 1771, eleven years after the Lowden purchase. During the next ten years they disposed of considerable property north of Elm Street, and subsequently, of course, made many more conveyances. A sale that interests us especially was made in 1774 to Captain George Claghorn at the southeast corner of Second and North Streets. At that corner, in a little house, the builder of the frigate *Constitution* lived for many years, and in the rear of his dwelling was his shipyard, the harbor line then being west of North Water Street.

Over a long period subsequently the Kemptons, the Rotches, the Willises and Russell sold off scores and scores of lots, and must have made good profits. Joseph Russell died in 1804, forty-four years after the beginnings of Bedford Village, which he lived to see well populated.

I want to refer for a moment to that portion of North Front Street immediately north of Union. In 1765, when Benjamin Taber purchased his lot, he had a frontage on the water, which came up to the western part of the present Front Street. Gradually he filled in, and in 1796 deeded an open way over the fill, thirty feet wide, running 132 feet north from Union Street, which "shall and always forever hereafter continue and remain open for a free passageway." East of this open way, first called Orange Street, later Front Street, was Taber's Wharf. You have all heard the old joke about selling Brooklyn bridge to a rustic. It had a parallel in New Bedford, when in 1878, a share in the

Taber's Wharf property was sold, the deed fixing the westerly boundary at the west side of the west sidewalk of North Front Street. Thereby the seller disposed of a portion of an accepted public street, in which the city, by adverse possession, at least, had an easement. No complications resulted, however. In 1896 the city purchased the entire wharf property, extending easterly from the east side of the thoroughfare, and in addition each of the owners deeded all "right, title, and interest whatever the same may be, in the fee of the land conveyed by Joseph Russell to Benjamin Taber by deed bearing date Oct. 21, 1765, which lies east of the center line of Front Street." We may wonder why the sellers were not asked to convey title to the west half of the street.

But enough of this dry narration of land and street matters. Let me turn to the pioneers who went about their daily tasks unhonored and unsung. "I see them muster in a gleaming row," to echo the words of Lowell, and they seem to me to sweep in majestic pageant across the pages of our local history. Today, my friends, we can pause to offer those hardy spirits homage and salute, because the fruit of their zeal has become our proud heritage. Would we knew something more of these men who first established their homes and their business enterprises here in those old days of the wilderness. They were stout-hearted, enterprising men; they were thrifty and forehanded, keen at the bargain; no doubt most of them were of good moral fibre. "The character and life of any man, however obscure," wrote Henry Cabot Lodge, "is of profound interest could we but know it aright, and display it to the world." It is a pity we cannot blazon forth to the world the full story of the fathers of the hamlet. I have been able to learn something about two of them.

First I will refer to Elnathan Sampson. In 1769, one Jeremiah Child of Dartmouth was indebted to Daniel Russell, and on a writ of execution Child's negro slave, named Venter, or Venture, was sold by public auction, the purchaser being Mr. Sampson. Yes, they had negro slaves in New Bedford in those days; even Joseph Russell owned them. "Said Elnathan Sampson did afterwards reconvey one half of said negro to John Chaffee of said Dartmouth, spermaciti manufacturer," says the ancient account. Ownership of one half of a slave might be attended by complications, in case the owners could not agree what each should do with his half. John Chaffee, the purchaser, was an expert, possessed of valuable manufacturing secrets, whom Joseph Russell employed at the then fabulous salary of \$500 a year to carry on his candleworks at the foot of Center Street.

Within a year after the auction sale the slave, surprising to relate, was ready to purchase his freedom. Somehow and somewhere he was able to lay hold of £21 6s 5d of lawful money, and on payment thereof to Sampson and Chaffee on July 9, 1770, he was by them set at full liberty. As the release signed by them and recorded on the town books, was witnessed by William Rotch and Dr. Elisha Tobey, it is not unlikely that these two men had interested themselves sufficiently to contribute the required indemnity. It is not improbable, furthermore, that Messrs. Sampson and Chaffee netted a good profit by the transaction. Venter assumed the name of his original master, and is found later on the records as Venter Child. Accumulating a little property he was taxed on real estate valued at twenty pounds in 1778. In 1785 he was baptized and admitted into full communion in the Congregational Church at Acushnet, the place of worship of the non-Quakers of Bedford Village for more than thirty years. John Chaffee, by the way, was a deacon in that church.

Let me digress here for a moment. More than fourscore years after the sale of Venter a more celebrated slave was sold by a member of the Chaffee family — perhaps of the same Rehoboth stock as the Bedford man, though not a descendant. He was Dr. Calvin Clifford Chaffee of Springfield in this state, at one time a member of Congress. Around the transaction hangs the odor of one of the most momentous decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States — a decision which hastened the downfall of the slave power in America. It was the Dred Scott case. Dr. Chaffee married the widow of the owner of Dred Scott, who had inherited the slave from her husband, and they subsequently sold him. The coincidence in names is striking.

Elnathan Sampson's end was tragic. One night in the winter of 1773, with some friends, he crossed the river on the ice, to spend the evening in Fairhaven. On their return he fell through an eel hole, and as he was a very heavy man, his companions could not extricate him. They told him they would go for help, as they were not far from the New Bedford shore. When they reached the landing they listened, but hearing no sound concluded Mr. Sampson must have lost his hold in the bitter cold weather and gone down under the ice. Accordingly they abandoned their attempt at rescue. In the morning Mr. Sampson was found dead, with his arms resting on the ice as he was left the previous night. He was only thirty-two years of age.

His property at the southwest corner of Union and Water Streets passed to his widow, and then to his daughter Martha (or Patty) who married Captain Isaiah Hussey. She was the famous Patty Hussey who

kept a store at the Four Corners, where she sold notions, articles of women's wear, and probably snuff and the like. She died in 1845, leaving two daughters, to one of whom, Miss Abby Hussey, she bequeathed her estate, and in time it passed to Miss Hussey's niece and sole heir, Mrs. Charlotte Beardsley of Brooklyn, N. Y. For more than half a century the store at the corner was occupied by Thomas Donaghy, shoe dealer, but it was not until 1890 that he could induce the owners to part with the property. When it passed out of Mrs. Beardsley's hands in that year it had been owned by the Sampson family and heirs for about 127 years. In 1912, when the store was sold by Mr. Donaghy's estate, Mrs. Beardsley was deceased, and her son and daughter were the only living descendents of Elnathan Sampson.

John Lowden was about thirty-five when he married Mary Whitridge in December, 1761, and she was twenty-four. The new house into which they moved was described by John Gilbert, an early resident, in talks with Governor Henry H. Crapo about a hundred years ago. The building did not face squarely on Water Street, but at an angle, and, after the fashion of many dwellings of the period, was two stories high in front and one at the rear. John and Mary Lowden had only one child, John Lowden, Jr. After the start we do not hear much concerning the shipyard, but Lowden was still a shipwright until 1772 or 1773. About that time he began to keep tavern in his little house. Mrs. Lowden died Oct. 3, 1775. Through weakness of body and mind, we are told, Mr. Lowden was then unable to care for himself or his affairs, and two weeks later the selectmen of Dartmouth presented the following petition to the Judge of the Probate Court, now spread on the records in Taunton:

We would inform your honor that John Lowden of Dartmouth is non-compos mentis, and we think proper that a guardian be elected to take care of his estate. We think William Whitridge to be a suitable person for that purpose.

William Tallman,

William Davis,

Jabez Barker, Jr.,

Selectmen of Dartmouth.

The Court accordingly appointed Dr. William Whitridge, a relative of the late Mrs. Lowden, as guardian. Dr. Whitridge acted promptly and efficiently, providing for the care of Mr. Lowden and the boy John with friends; rented the house or tavern; and sold part of the furniture and other personal belongings for maintenance. The kindly doctor was

meticulous in filing inventory and accounts. In the latter papers he referred to his ward as "non-compos, or distracted." Among the inn-keeper's possessions were listed six gallons of cherry rum, twenty-five gallons of molasses, thirteen gallons of Teneriffe wine, and part of a cask of gin.

A year later, in September, 1776, the selectmen decided Mr. Lowden had recovered his mental poise and was fit to be released from guardianship. They set forth, in a document to the Court, that while Mr. Lowden previously "could not take care of himself or estate through weakness of body and mind," it "now appears he has so far recovered his health and understanding that we think him capable, etc., and may be discharged from guardianship."

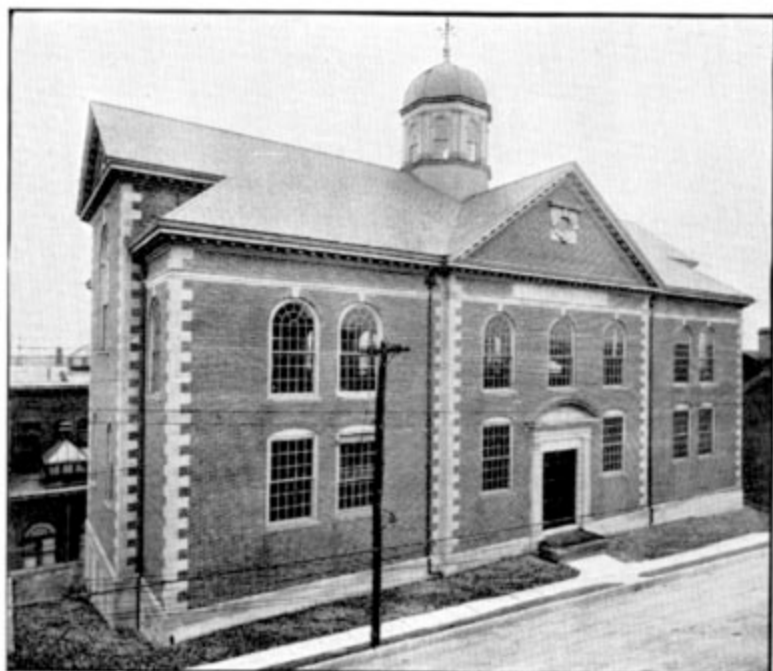
The petition, or recommendation, was granted, and in November Dr. Whitridge returned Mr. Lowden's property, taking a receipt in full. The rejuvenated patient evidently resumed business at the old stand. After he returned to Pembroke following the burning of his tavern by the British he entered into two matrimonial ventures. In 1779, at the age of fifty-three, he married Hannah Gould, who was thirty-five. She died four years later. In 1786, when sixty, he took as his third and final partner Ruth Josselyn, a spinster of forty-three, who survived him. Something more than eighteen years afterward, in September, 1804, at the age of seventy-eight, he died. I have found his will in the registry at Plymouth. He bequeathed his estate to his wife, Ruth Lowden, and to his "only son and child," John Lowden. The latter continued to reside in New Bedford.

The last surviving descendant of the pioneer Lowden died in this city in September, 1931. She was Miss Helen E. Netcher of Pleasant Street. Her parents were George F. Netcher and wife Amanda M. Russell. Her grandparents were George E. Netcher and wife Ann W. Lowden. The latter was the daughter of John Lowden, Junior, and wife Puella Covell, who were her great-grandparents. John Lowden and Mary Whitridge were her great-great-grandparents. Her paternal ancestry also ran back more than a century here, as she was descended from Starr Netcher and Rebecca Chandler, who were married in New Bedford in 1805.

Miss Netcher left an estate of upwards of \$60,000, mostly in savings bank deposits. She had no near kindred. After several bequests to friends her will provided for the payment of one-third of her residuary estate to the Animal Rescue League of New Bedford, and one-sixth each to the Y. M. C. A., Y. W. C. A., Children's Aid Society, and Family Welfare Society. I am informed the Rescue League received

\$17,400, and the other organizations \$8,700 each. To the Old Dartmouth Historical Society Miss Netcher bequeathed a banjo clock, and portraits of her great-grandparents, John Lowden, Junior, and his wife, Puella, which now hang upon the museum walls. It seems most appropriate that this last descendant of the first settler in Bedford Village should have graciously bestowed the bulk of her fortune for public uses in the community of which she and her ancestors were so long a part.

In the empurpled twilight of the past, a commanding personage stands before us. Despite the slender figure, and a stature not above the ordinary, there is something about this man that awakens our respect and challenges our admiration. Beneath unusually heavy brows his keen eyes survey the scene with penetrating glances. The stern countenance has a blended touch of benignity, and the thick dark hair adds strikingly to his appearance. His expression, his carriage, denote the determination, the courage and the resourcefulness that are within him. He is attired in the costume of the Society of Friends. This is Joseph Russell, the father of New Bedford, living on the hilltop amidst his broad acres, and skillfully conducting his various enterprises, while in the soul of the dreamer, perhaps, arise visions of the city that is yet to be. As he plans his little town, is it given him, may we ask, to foresee that day when every available nook and corner of his domain will be devoted to the streets and structures of the heart of our New Bedford, and yet constituting merely the center of a municipality that stretches away to far-flung boundaries?



Bourne Whaling Museum



Sketched before the Bourne Whaling Museum was built.



No. Water St. Entrance



Colonial Room