

**ALONG NORTH RIVER: Stream of Indian Canoes, Pioneer Ships, and Modern Craft
Described**
by Margaret Crowell [later Margaret Crowell Dumas]

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[The early grants of land included not only what is now the town of Scituate but also what are now Rockland, Hanson, Hanover, Norwell and that section of Marshfield above Union Bridge running along the river for two miles. This last mentioned part was used for the growing of corn and a local name for that section is Two Mile or Corn Hill. At various times portions of old Scituate were set aside for the other towns until in 1849 the southerly part was separated and became the township of South Scituate, the name being changed in 1888 to Norwell.

When the men of Kent, as the first settlers were sometimes called, came to Scituate from England, they settled what is now Kent Street from the new Catholic church [St Mary of the Nativity] towards Third Cliff. For the most part they had come from Kent in England and while Scituate is certainly attractive, I often wonder at their courage in making new homes for themselves in what was then an unexplored wilderness. At that time the Indians had cleared land for corn where Kent Street and Greenfield Lane now intersect, hence the name, and also on Third Cliff which was more extensive than it is now. It was also possible to travel from Third Cliff to Fourth Cliff as the mouth of the North River was located further south near what is now the summer colony of Rexham Terrace [Marshfield]. The water of the river was fresh, and, while there was some current, except near the mouth, there was no decided rise and fall of tide as is the case today, while the meadows were valued for the hay. Trees and flowers grew close to the water's edge including the lovely hibiscus or rose mallow. The river was the first highway, and, it was quite natural that the first houses were built near its banks. Life was quite different in those days, since the colonists had to produce all their food supplies. They found that the waters off shore teemed with fish which they could use themselves and also barter for articles produced elsewhere. Naturally the materials, hardwoods abounded, while bog iron was obtainable in Hanover, where later there were a number of forges on the upper reaches of the river.

Shipbuilding played an important part in the life of the towns bordering the North River Valley. The men connected to the industry were craftsmen of no mean skill, and the products of their yards were sought by prominent ship owners of Nantucket, New Bedford, Salem and Boston. In unexpected places, you often find reference to North River craft, and invariably, they played some important part in the maritime history of our nation. Over one thousand ships were built on the North River from the early 1600s until 1871, and they were real vessels too, not dories.

Probably, the best known North River ship was the "Columbia" built by James Briggs at Hobart's Landing on the Scituate side of the river, a short distance upstream from what is now Little's Bridge (although at that time, 1773, it was known as Doggett's Ferry, there being no bridge). James Briggs seems to have been a resourceful person full

of Yankee gumption and “sprawl.” At the time of the Revolution, the soldiers had to furnish their own muskets. James Briggs had none, but, quite undaunted, he reported for duty with a stick over his shoulder. When his superior officer asked him what he intended to do, James Briggs cheerfully replied that he was going to knock down the first British soldier he met and take away his musket. Whether he actually carried this out, history does not record, but we do know that when James Briggs returned to Scituate, he carried a British musket!]

[In 1787, the Revolution being over, there was considerable interest manifested in establishing trade relations with the Northwest territory, which was claimed at that time by both Great Britain and Spain. Charles Bulfinch, the noted architect, and a group of friends, including one of the Derbys of Salem and Captain Crowell Hatch of Cambridge, subscribed fifty thousand dollars to finance a trading trip to this hitherto unknown territory.

Mr. Bulfinch and his associates bought for this enterprise two vessels, the “Lady Washington” and the “Columbia.” It was thought that the former was built on the North River, but there is no definite proof (although we of this region would naturally like to claim it.) However, there is no doubt that the “Columbia” was the tiny ship of two hundred tons, eighty-three feet in length built by James Briggs at Hobart’s Landing in 1773. The “Columbia” was captained by John Kendrick of Wareham while Robert Gray had charge of the “Lady Washington,” the smaller of the two boats. Naturally, there was a great deal of interest felt in this enterprise, and some commemorative medals were cast, some of which are still in existence. It was the general plan to trade for furs with the Indians and then push on to China to exchange the fur for tea to bring back to Boston. Accordingly, the two vessels set sail with an assortment of hardware, beads and other articles calculated to please the dusky inhabitants of the Northwest. It took a long time, about a year to round Cape Horn and travel up the Pacific coast to what is now Oregon, and, they had the usual trouble with scurvy. When they reached their destination, some of the men were killed by the Indians. They spent considerable time collecting furs, coming in contact with the vessels of both the Spanish and British fleet bent on similar activity. Here reports differ. Some say the two captains exchanged commands in Oregon, while others say that both vessels went to Canton, China, where Captain Gray took the “Columbia” and Captain Kendrick the “Lady Washington.” Of these two versions, it is Dr. Briggs’ theory that the exchange took place on the Oregon coast. In any event, we know that the “Columbia” touched at Hawaii for there Attoo, a native prince, joined the expedition. At Canton, the furs were bartered for tea and Captain Gray continued with the “Columbia” on his way to Boston via the Cape of Good Hope, the first Yankee to carry the flag of the new nation around the globe! Three years after leaving Boston, the “Columbia” returned from her long journey, and, quite naturally, there was great excitement upon her arrival. Salutes were fired by the town artillery, and, Governor John Hancock gave a dinner to the owners and officers of the “Columbia.” The Hawaiian prince, Attoo, who had returned with Captain Gray, was the first of his nation to visit this country, and, he made quite a sensation, especially as he wore a gorgeous cloak and helmet of yellow and scarlet feathers, which, in Hawaii, only persons of prominence were allowed to possess. It is said that the cloak worn by Attoo is now (1938) on display at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. I have not seen it, but the next chance I have, I am going to

hunt for it. That is one of the delightful things of being a history lover, there is always something new to look for in the old, if you know what I mean.

Captain Gray made a second trip to the Oregon coast with the "Columbia," and, this time he discovered the river which bears the name of our North River ship, "Columbia." Captain Gray named this mighty stream in honor of the staunch craft, built by James Briggs, which had carried him so far. At the entrance of the river stood a Sitka spruce, which was used as a landmark in taking bearings by all mariners entering the river from the time of Captain Gray until 1934 when it was blown down by a severe storm. The Oregon D.A.R. chapter have [has] marked the spot with a tablet, and have also had a gavel made of wood, one of which was presented to the Norwell Historical Society by Mrs. Frank P. Nason of Scituate. Needless to say, it is highly valued for its connection with our North River valley. Unfortunately, for all concerned, neither of these trips to the Northwest were financially successful, but, on the other hand, they were pioneer trips which helped establish trade relations with that territory, and, from that standpoint, they were highly successful.]

[In contrast to the "Columbia," the privateer, "Grand Turk," was a money maker. This vessel was built by Thomas Barstow at the Two Oaks Yard in Hanover on land now owned by Edmund Q. Sylvester, a short distance down the river from the bridge. The owner, Elias Hasket Derby, of Salem, paid for her principally with rum and butter, both commodities being much in demand in 1781. In a little over a year, the "Grand Turk" had captured sixteen British vessels [privateering during Revolution], which not only paid for her cost but also earned a considerable fortune for her owner and the crew. She seems to have been built under a lucky star, for after hostilities ceased, she made a number of profitable trips to the West Indies, also sailing to St. Helena, which at that time was a port of considerable importance. There, she was the first vessel to display the stars and stripes.

Two years before the "Columbia" sailed on her first trip to the Northwest coast, the "Grand Turk" headed for Canton, China, being the first vessel from New England to enter that far-off port. In commemoration of this event, the Chinese merchant, Pinqua, who took charge of the cargo, gave the captain, Ebenezer West, a huge punch bowl to be presented to Mr. Derby, the owner of the "Grand Turk." It is a beautiful thing with a picture of this North River vessel on the side, and, also inside, as you may see for yourself, if you visit the Peabody Museum in Salem, where it is displayed in a special case.

A short distance down river from Two Oaks Yard, on the Pembroke side, near Dr. Low's house, is the site of the Brick Kiln yard, which Ichabod Thomas built about the time of the Revolution.

His principal customer seems to have been the Friend [Quaker], William Rotch, of Nantucket, who was engaged in the whaling industry. One vessel Ichabod Thomas built here for William Rotch was the "Beaver," which, in 1773, sailed from London with a cargo of tea. When the ship arrived in Boston harbor, naturally, the patriots were much disturbed, since, at that time, the tax on this commodity was quite a subject of annoyance. Shortly after the "Beaver," the "Dartmouth" and "Eleanor," also owned by William Rotch, arrived with more tea. There were mass meetings in the Old South meetinghouse in an attempt to have the ships sent back to London without landing the tea, but the Royal Governor [Thomas Hutchinson] refused clearance to the ships, and, after about three

weeks of fruitless negotiations, the patriots took matters into their own hands, and, in the early evening of December 16, 1773, took part in the most famous tea party of history. So, again, a North River built vessel played a part in an interesting episode of our nation's history. After that exciting interlude, all three ships resumed their customary activity of whale fishing, but it has been said that the London firm which owned the tea still carries that item on their books! That is true British conservation for you.

Another whaler built at the Brick Kiln yard for the Rotch family was the "Bedford," which was the first Yankee vessel to enter the port of London after the Revolution, and display the flag of the new nation. There was considerable excitement, when the "Bedford" appeared with a cargo of whale oil, which doubtless brought a huge price. One of the crew, a hunchback, and, while walking about the docks, some Britisher taunted him by asking what he had on his back. Quick as a flash, he replied, "Bunker Hill, be damned to you, will you mount?"

Ichabod Thomas built the "Maria" also for William Rotch, and, this ship was in actual service for ninety years, a remarkable tribute to the skill of the builder, and the quality of the oak planking. The "Maria" was quite speedy for her day, and once made the passage from Nantucket to Dover, England in twenty-one days. She, too, was used in the whaling industry, and is said to have earned \$250,000 for her owners. Later, she was sold, and continued her career under the flag of Chile. Captain Mooers, who was in command of the "Bedford" on her epoch making trip to England, was the master of the "Maria," and, a story is told that one time he was forcing the "Maria" with all sails set, perhaps the time she made the record trip. The owner, Mr. Rotch, with some friends, were passengers, and, they found it most uncomfortable in the cabin as the "Maria" forged her way through the sea.

At last, Mr. Rotch climbed the companionway and addressed the master thus, "Captain Mooers, it would be more conducive to our comfort if thee would shorten sail." The request did not have the desired effect, however, for Captain Mooers replied, "Mr. Rotch, thee has the cabin, I have the deck."]

[On Dr. Bailey's place (likely Wanton Shipyard Lane), at one time, lived the Friend [Quaker], Edward Wanton, who began building boats about 1660. He had been an officer in the King's Guard in Boston, but was so impressed by the sincerity of the Friends, as the Quakers prefer to be called, that he resigned from the service and became a convert to that faith. Since persons of that sect were more tolerated in Scituate than in other parts of the colony, he and his family settled here, where he busied himself with building ships and teaching. So many became converted to this faith that, at one time, the Friends had a meeting house where Stephen Webster's greenhouse stands on the Greenbush road. Later, there is said to have been another meeting house on Wanton land, which was later moved to Pembroke. That is something no one seems very certain about, and, there are many different versions.

One is that the Friends met in the Wanton dwelling house, and, that there was no special building for their use. Another is that there was actually a meeting house which was moved up river on gundalows; another that it was taken up river on the ice by oxen, and, others feel certain it never was moved in tact, but material from it may have been used in the construction of the present building standing in North Pembroke. That is something that may yet be settled, but at the present time, you may take your choice.

One thing is certain—the Wantons, father and sons, did build ships on the Bailey place, and, near their dwelling was a burying ground. Most of the markers for the graves were just field stones in accordance with the custom of their sect, but, later, other persons were buried there, whose graves had the conventional slate stones. One of these marked “Mary Webb, 1706” was in place about ten years ago.

Two of Edward Wanton’s sons, William and John (despite the teachings of their faith) indulged in privateering off Newport [during some colonial war?]. They were both striking-looking men judging from their portraits which hang in the Rhode Island Senate Chamber. While the Friends’ teaching does not approve of fighting, Edward Wanton is said to have told his sons that while he would regret to hear that they had taken part in any military engagements, he would regret more if they proved to be cowards. He probably felt like another member of his faith, who was captain of a vessel being overhauled by a privateer. He was not inclined to offer resistance, but his mate begged to be allowed to take a shot at his pursuer; suggesting that, since it was against the captain’s scruples to go below. Accordingly, the captain went below, but a few minutes later, his enthusiasm got the better of his religious beliefs, and, he cautiously poked his head above the companionway, and remarked, “ Mate, if thee means to do any execution with that swivel gun, I would advise thee to lower the muzzle a little.” In like manner, Edward Wanton probably took a keen interest in this activity of his sons, and he had a right to be proud of them. One exploit was the capture of a French privateer of considerable size. They rode out to it in the fog, as it lay at anchor, and firmly inserted wedges between the rudder head and the sternpost so that the vessel could not be steered. Later, they attacked with their own vessel, doubtless built on North River, and overpowered the Frenchmen.

The Wantons went to London after this exploit, and were received at court by Queen Anne, who presented each with a silver punch bowl and salver, and also granted them an addition to their coat of arms.

William Wanton married Ruth Bryant, a daughter of John Bryant, who lived near the site of Albert Norris’ mill. There was considerable objection to the match as the Friends did not like him to marry out of the faith., nor the Congregationalists eager to have him marry into theirs. However, William was a resourceful sort of young man in love as well as privateering for, eventually, he solved the problem by addressing Ruth in the presence of her family, thus, “ Let us break away from this unreasonable bondage. I will give up my religion and thee will give up thine. We will join the Church of England and go to the devil together.” They followed the first part, if not the second of William’s suggestion. Ruth did not do so badly after all, for her husband was twice elected governor of Rhode Island, and one of their sons was governor of that state six years.]

[Sometime later, the Wanton yard was divided by a stone wall, the Fosters building on one side, and the Delanos on the other.

Benjamin Delano, a descendant of Philip de la Noye, the lad who came to this country on the “Fortune” in 1621, was the first of this family to live in Scituate.

The Delanos were of French Huguenot stock, in contrast to the majority of the Scituate settlers, who were of English derivation. They were a distinguished family in France, and one branch befriended the Pilgrims during the stay in Leyden, Holland. Young Philip was a passenger on the “Speedwell,” the companion ship to the “Mayflower” which was un-seaworthy and had to put back to England. The next year he

came on the "Fortune," settled in Plymouth and married. One branch of his family migrated to Fairhaven, numbering among their descendants, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Benjamin Delano built ships at the Wanton yard and lived in the Paul Skelding house. It is not just certain whether he built the house when he came in 1770 or if Richard Dwelley, of whom he bought the land, had built the house some time before. In any event, the house is a gem, with some unusually fine paneling.

William Delano, Benjamin's son, was also a shipbuilder using the Wanton yard, as his father had before him. He evidently was quite ambitious for he is sometimes referred to as "Lord North," and he built the two largest vessels ever to leave the North River. Also, his is the only three-storied house in the North River Valley. He married Sarah Hart, a daughter of Edmund Hart, the master builder of the frigate "Constitution," the anchors for which were forged up river at Luddam's Ford, now the site of the Clapp Rubber Works at Curtis Crossing.

In 1803 William Delano built the beautiful mansion now owned by Mrs. Gutterson, the dignified front portico with its delicate carving and fanlight being a fine example of North River craftsmanship.

The two vessels built by William Delano, which were the largest to leave the river, were the "Mt Vernon" and the "Lady Madison." The latter had quite an interesting career. She was built in 1810 for the whaling industry, and proved to be a very fast boat in those days. For seven years, she held the record for the westward passage, having made the trip in eighteen days. Her owners were Thomas Hazard and his son-in-law, Jacob Barker of New Bedford and New York. Jacob Barker was a member of the Society of Friends, and also a friend of James Madison with considerable influence in the affairs of government. The "Lady Madison" was 112 feet long, 450 tons.

The story is told that the "Lady Madison" was quite a bit overdue, and Jacob Barker was naturally rather disturbed, as she was not insured. At length, he went to an insurance agent, and, after explaining the situation, suggested the agent prepare a policy, but defer signing it, that is making the contract valid, for a few days. A short time later, Jacob Barker received a report that the "Lady Madison" was lost, so he called on the insurance agent, saying, "If thee has not signed the policy, thee need not do so as I have heard from my ship." The agent thought that he had heard the vessel was safe, and, being eager to collect the premium, which was a large one, he told Mr. Barker that he had already signed the policy. Mr. Barker paid the premium, pocketed the policy, and, as he turned to leave, he remarked, "Yes, I have heard from the 'Lady Madison,' she was lost on the Goodwin Sands." The agent eventually settled for one half the face value of the policy, I believe.

William Delano died in 1815, leaving his widow with seven children, three boys and four girls. For a time, Mrs. Delano was in rather straitened circumstances, so, she continued to keep store in the south wing of the house. But, later, she inherited a comfortable fortune from the Harts, who had been engaged in the China trade.

The three sons followed the shipbuilding trade, like their father, and they were all quite successful. William Hart Delano built in East Boston.]

[Benjamin Franklin Delano was educated under the tutorage of Reverend Samuel Deane. He showed considerable talent and ability as a draughtsman and designer. In 1833, he and his brother built seven vessels on Grand Island in the Niagara River. This was quite an undertaking for the young men, and, they took with them about twenty ship

carpenters from the North River valley. Just think, at that time, they probably traveled by stage coach, taking a number of days to make the trip and with no chance to telephone home to tell the family of their safe arrival or news of their work.

Benjamin Delano was later a Naval Constructor at the yards in Portsmouth, N. H. and Brooklyn, N. Y. On the stairway of James Library, you may see a testimonial to him in [a] massive frame with elaborate carvings. He married Jane Foster, the daughter of Captain Seth, who lived in the Bullard house on River street and used that place as their summer home.

Edward Hart Delano, like his brother, Benjamin, served at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and later at Pensacola, Fla; Norfolk, Va. and Charlestown, Mass. He built Admiral Farragut's flag ship, the "Hartford."

The four daughters, Sarah, Mary, Lucy and Prudence did not marry. One lived in Boston a good deal with some of her relatives, but the other three stayed in the great house on the hill with its beautiful view down the North River valley. About 1894, the last daughter, Miss Prudence, died, and then the entire furnishings of the house were sold at auction. This was quite an event as the house contained beautiful furniture as well as bolts of silks, carved combs and many other fascinating articles from the Orient. Some of the choicest furniture went to Harvard University, but the rest was scattered to the four winds.

The next family to build at the Wanton yard were the Fosters. Elisha and his sons, Seth, Samuel and Elisha, Jr., as well as Walter, although he is more identified with the Chittenden yard. One whaler which the Fosters built was the "Globe" for C. Mitchell & Company of Nantucket, but this ship had a sinister history. Some of her crew mutinied while in the South Seas and killed her Captain and some of the officers with fiendish cruelty. Their success was of short duration, and after a few weeks, the principal ring leaders were killed and the vessel sailed to Valparaiso, Chile, where she was put in the custody of the American consul. Later, she was furnished with another crew and sailed back to Nantucket.

In 1825, the Fosters built the "Smyrna," the first ship to carry the flag of the United States into the Black Sea. The "Smyrna" was owned by Ezra Weston of Duxbury, and, as he himself was a ship builder of note, it speaks well of the Fosters as builders that he had them construct a vessel for him. The Captain was Seth Sprague of Marshfield, whose grandson, the present tax collector, bears the same name.

The voyage of the "Smyrna" to Odessa on the Black Sea took place in 1830, covering a period of seven months. The passage through the Bosphorus Straits was quite difficult due to the easterly wind and adverse current running at the rate of six miles an hour. The "Smyrna" went through, and three weeks later, on her way back, met some vessels, which had started at the same time and had made little or no progress. The return trip, the "Smyrna" made, with a cargo of fruit from the port of Smyrna to Boston, in forty-two days, which was considered record time.]

[Seth and Samuel Foster built, the next year, the whaler, "Lagoda," which they had intended to name Ladoga after the lake of that name in Russia. But, in some way, the consonants were misplaced, and, as the name was an attractive one, no correction was made. At first, the "Lagoda" was used in the merchant trade, but in 1841, Jonathan Bourne brought her to be used as a whaler, sailing from the port of New Bedford.

It is not surprising that the “Lagoda” was Jonathan Bourne’s favorite ship because she earned for him over six hundred thousand dollars. One voyage alone netted two hundred thousand. He sold her in 1886, and, four years later, she was condemned in Yokohama as un-seaworthy after sixty-four years of service.

The memory of this ship is perpetuated in the Bourne wing of the Dartmouth Historical Society at New Bedford, which houses a model of the “Lagoda” exactly half-size and fully equipped for whaling except for actual food supplies. This was a gift to the Society from Miss Emily Bourne as a memorial to her father, Jonathan Bourne, and his favorite ship, the “Lagoda,” built on our North River.

It is well worth a visit for it is possible to go on board and make a careful inspection, going below to the cabin.

The captain’s berth is of mahogany and so mounted that no matter how the “Lagoda” rolled, the berth itself would be level, while a compass overhead showed whether the man at the wheel was keeping on course. In the after-cabin, which according to custom was the captain’s drawing room, is a built-in mahogany sofa upholstered with haircloth, which is typical of all the old whaling ships. The original “Lagoda” was 371 tons and 107 feet in length, while the model is fifty-four feet in length. The “Lagoda” is mentioned in “Two Years Before the Mast” by Richard Henry Dana.

Among the men who probably worked on the “Lagoda” was Anson Robbins, the great-grandfather of Mr. Herbert E. Robbins, who used to do the cabinetwork. The original sofa and swinging berth were doubtless his share in the construction.

There is living today in Bermuda, an old man, who two cousins sailed on the “Lagoda” when she made her record catch of oil.

The next yard down river is at Chittenden, where the Second Herring Brook joins the river near the home of William E. Mills. Job Randall is thought to be the first to build at this yard, although it takes its name from a family which used it later. Job Randall lived in the Liddell house or else one that stood on that location. If only the early settlers had been more definite in recording erection dates of their houses, how grateful we would be to them.

Later, the Torreys, who lived in the Liddell house, also built at the Chittenden yard. One branch of this family lived in a fine old house at the Partridge Nest, which is on the right hand side of Circuit Street, just before you drive into Clarke Atwater’s camp. Unfortunately, the house burned some years ago. One boy born in this house was George Otis Torrey, who at the age of twelve, sailed to the East Indies. He followed the sea for six years, making many long voyages, and then worked in the yard as a ship carpenter. Later, he served in the Union Army as a Corporal. During the last of his life, he lived in the house now occupied by the Neftels as the Grenadier Tea Room [a rooming house and establishment in Norwell on River St.]

A peach tree used to grow between the house and the road, which George O., as everyone called him, guarded zealously, but despite his care, he had no peaches for himself. The school children, in particular, used to hop off the horse-drawn school barge and help themselves to the fruit. George O. used to shout at them, which added to the fun, for the children knew he was too lame to catch them. One day, a little colored boy was the offender, whereup[on], Mr. Torrey hobbled to the door and yelled, “You, I fought and bled for you.” The little boy gravely removed his cap, bowed low and said, “Thank you, Mr. Torrey.” Then, seizing a peach, he nimbly ran after the school barge.

One of the men who worked at the Chittenden yard was a negro known as Uncle Peter Litchfield. He used to drive a single ox cart, and, when training a young one, would hitch him ahead of the older, tandem fashion. People used to enjoy asking Uncle Peter how his new ox worked to hear him reply, "Pretty well for a flying jib."

At the Chittenden yard, the last vessel built on the North River was launched in 1871, the Helen M. Foster. She was built by Joseph Merritt, the father of Joseph F. Merritt, the president of the [Norwell historical] society, and, he named her for his wife. The launching was a great event, and, fortunately, there are pictures of it taken by James Williams, who used to live in the Ringe house on River Street, next to the Grenadier.

Joseph Merritt also used to do the ironwork on ships, and, the latter part of his life, he had a blacksmith shop in the building, which John Sparrell now uses for a garage. Probably a number of you, like myself, have found that doorway quite narrow for a car. It was intended for horses and oxen rather than the modern conveyances, and, I am glad it remains unchanged, even to the wrought iron latch.]

[River Street was really a street of shipbuilders, for Elnathan Cushing, who lived in the Blackhall house, worked at the Foster yard. The Torreys, in the Liddell house, Walter Foster in the Deane's house, and Warren Sylvester, opposite all, were ship carpenters. Warren Sylvester's sons, Charles and Harvey also worked in the yards. Charles Foster, a brother of Walter, lived in our house, and is thought to have worked occasionally in the yards. Next door lived Elijah Cudworth, who built at the Chittenden yard. At the Grenadier was George Otis Torrey, and opposite, in Miss Locke's house, was Laban Souther, both of whom were ship carpenters. At the foot of the hill, where the Cox house now stands, was an old house, the home of Elisha Foster. While his son, Elisha, built the Keefe place. Samuel Foster, another son, lived in the Skelding place since he married Sarah Delano, the sister of William Delano, who built the Gutterson house. Seth Foster, still another son of Elisha, lived in the Bullard house, and his daughter, Jane, married Benjamin F. Delano, one of William's sons. In fact, nearly every house can claim one or more shipbuilder.

Cummings Litchfield lived on the south side of Scrabble Lane, now known as Green Street. The house is vacant at the present time, but is in good condition with its excellent interior woodwork and fireplaces. Cummings Litchfield was one of the North River carpenters who went with Benjamin F. Delano on the ship building expedition on the Niagara River. Later, he built the schooner, "Only Son" in his own yard at the head of Scrabble Lane. It was named for his only son, and, when completed, eighteen yoke of oxen were used to drag it to Union Bridge for the launching, a distance of about three miles. The "Only Son" was used as packet between Scituate and Boston. She also made several trips to Grand Manan [island of New Brunswick, Canada], where she was eventually sold for cod fishing.

If River Street was the way of shipbuilders, Main Street seems to have been the abode of doctors and ministers. Dr. Isaac Otis built Miss Pray's house, and afterward, his son, Dr. James Otis, lived there. Isaac Otis was the first regular doctor to settle in Scituate, and the town voted him a settlement of one hundred pounds to encourage his remaining.

The Barnard's house was occupied by Dr. Cushing Otis, a son of Dr. James, who was third generation of his family to care for the sick of this locality. In the First Parish Cemetery is a monument to the Otis family, which, quite appropriately, has a carving of

two saddle bags, a reminder of the past, when doctors and their medicines traveled on horseback.

In later years, Dr. Brownell lived in the Baird house on the corner of Winter Street, and, still later, Dr. Little occupied the Davis house on the corner of Central Street. Dr. Fuller, who lived in Scituate in 1830, lived on Main Street, a little above Lincoln Street, in an old Cushing house. The cellar hole is still visible, and the spot is marked with a tablet in memory of Judge Cushing.

The ministers, too, were distributed up and down the street. Ralph Gordon's house was built by the Parish as a parsonage in 1728 to replace an older one. Reverend Nathaniel Eells lived there, but later bought a house just beyond the Homestead Farm near the corner of Lincoln Street. Until a few years ago, an old pear tree stood in the field, the last of the Eells orchard.

Another minister, Dr. David Barnes, built the Fogg's house, while his successor, Reverend Samuel Deane, lived in the Hart house, now owned by Mr. & Mrs. George E. Judd. The next minister, Reverend Samuel J. May, owned the Arthur L. Power place, and beautified it greatly by planting the elm trees.

The McMurray's house was also used as a home for two ministers until the present parsonage, the Pickels Cushing property, came into the possession of the Parish.

Dr. Barnes was apparently a lovable man, much respected by his parish, which he served for fifty-seven years. One of his hobbies was the keeping of bees in which he was quite successful.

Reverend Samuel Deane, who succeeded Dr. Barnes, wrote a history of Scituate, which represented a great deal of research. He was interested, financially, in some of the North River vessels, owning shares, as was the custom. Like the present minister, he was fond of horses and rode constantly. He was considered a good judge of horseflesh, and, his opinion was often quoted. The story is told that a man tried to sell a horse to someone, and offered as an inducement, the information that Mr. Deane said the horse was seven years old. The purchaser rather doubted the statement, so, he went to Mr. Deane and asked him if he had made such a statement. "Yes," remarked Mr. Deane, "but that was seven years ago."

One interesting man who followed the sea was Captain Henry Vinal, who lived in Scituate harbor. He first went to sea as a mere boy of twelve, as the cook on a fishing schooner. One wonders what sort of meals he prepared. He followed the sea all his life, making many trips to the West Indies and the Dutch island of Curacoa off the coast of Venezuela. He, evidently, was a persuasive talker with remarkable powers of description. He apparently told the Dutch merchants a great deal about the excellence of Scituate rabbits, which interested the Dutchmen so much that they asked him to bring some to them. Accordingly, when he returned to Scituate, he set all the boys catching rabbits in box traps. In due course, he sailed for Curacoa with a goodly supply of bunnies, which he sold for six dollars apiece.

This sketch only tells a few incidents of the North River valley. It is a region abundantly blessed with historical incidents, and to anyone who loves this region, it is a constant joy searching for something new in the old.]