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A History of Connecticut's Coast

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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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A History of Connecticut's Coast

400 Years of Coastal Industry and Development

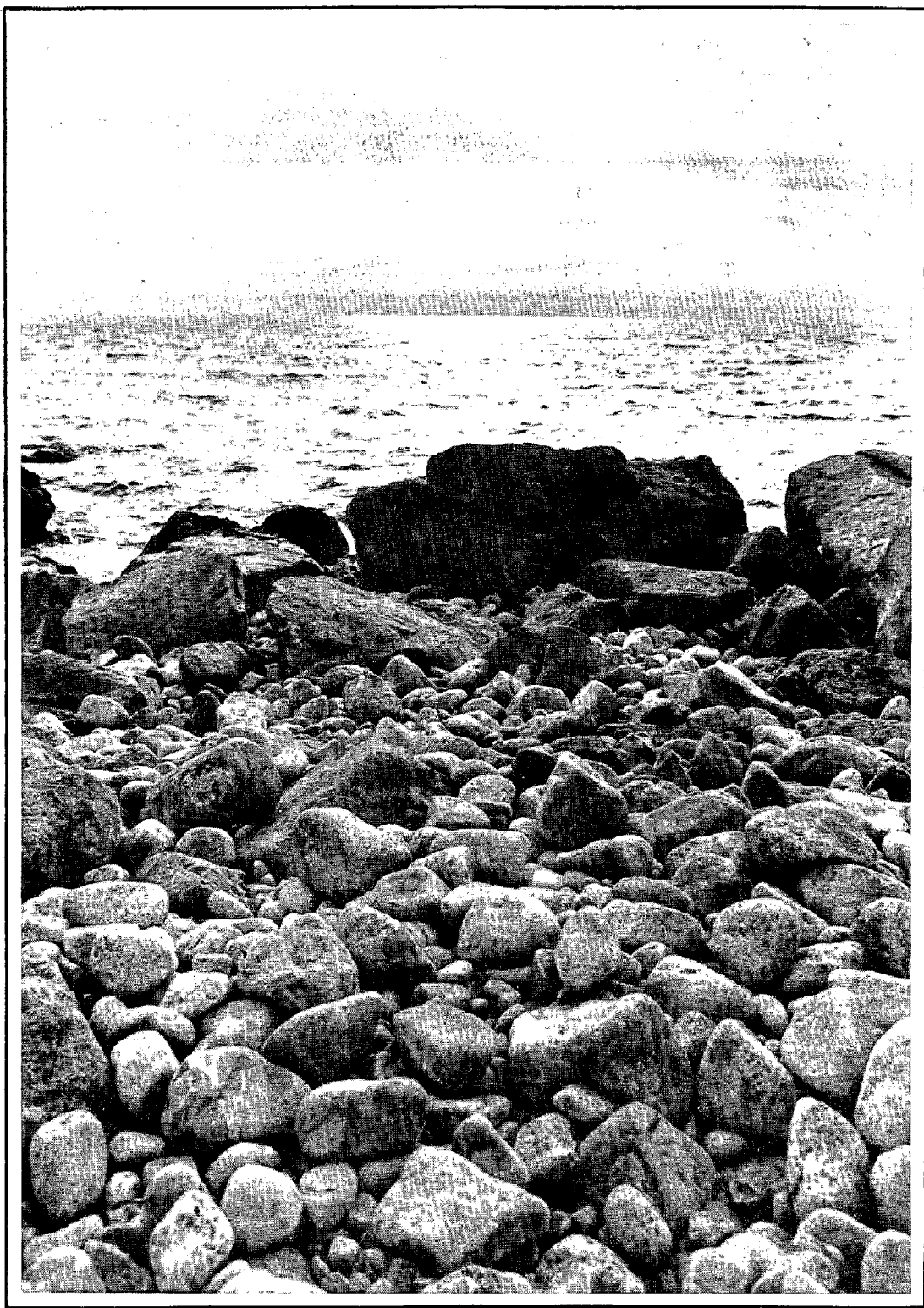
Edited and designed by David Tedone

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1. *Bluff Point, Grozon.*

Seascape

Mention the shoreline to almost anyone and immediately visions of sailing, sunbathing, fishing and other recreational experiences are conjured up. We all have a favorite beach, fishing spot, or picnic area—remnants of our maritime heritage—in close proximity to Long Island Sound. But the shoreline of Connecticut also represents a broader facet of our lives and encompasses our workaday world as well as our recreational world. Our coastline is, and has always been, primarily important to us economically, and few people not directly related to local industries are aware of that importance.

We rely on the Sound and the coast for shipping, energy development, transportation corridors, food products, and living space. Many small and large manufacturing concerns are located by the shore; our coastal population as a result is three times greater than it is inland, and four out of every ten residents live within the coastal zone. Four of our five largest cities are also located by the sea.

Why have so many interests converged on our shores, and how have they come to pass?

Partly as a result of history, partly by chance, and partly by mistake. Local cultures from primeval tribes to modern man have used, affected, and altered the natural resources of our coast, and each culture has left its unmistakable footprint—from the shell heaps left by primitive people to the concrete slabs of highways and mass housing developments of our own times.

The development of the coast is truly a “History of Connecticut” written on the land. Each and every age has been characterized by the way in which people used the land and water. Generations of Connecticuters have

adapted lifestyles, changed livelihoods, created innovations, cooperated with nature, or perished along the calm waters of Long Island Sound. In the past thirty years, such changes have meant the altering of the natural character of our environment; so dramatic and extensive have these changes been that 19th century citizens would hardly recognize the coast today. Many of our ports have literally become “urban seas” as transportation corridors, housing developments, factories, and other institutions have come to surround them, while many marshes and shorelands feeling the pressure of suburban sprawl have been filled out of existence.

In the last 350 years, Connecticut has made tremendous economic progress. Today, we are a technological state with many modern factories producing sophisticated goods, and it is somewhat difficult to realize, for instance, that our forefathers once put to sea hunting whales for a living.

It is our intention here to provide a few glimpses into the past. In an attempt to highlight some of the major patterns of development—which have helped transform the coast from the wilderness Adriaen Block found in the 17th century, to the bustling seaports and railroad meccas of P.T. Barnum’s time, to the dense industrial and residential centers of today—we have uncovered some fascinating photos, previously buried in archives and forgotten books around the state, and reproduced them here. Perhaps it is only through a historical perspective that we can understand our present environmental pressures and begin to comprehend the vast changes that our coastline and our culture have undergone.



2. Connecticut Indians found coastal waters teeming with fish.

Indians, Explorers, Settlers

The first inhabitants of the northeast were nomadic hunters who had crossed the continent from the west following herds of caribou. They were a hearty race, some 12,000 years ago, who developed a formidable array of tools and hunting weapons and who regularly made long journeys through the dense forests. Approximately 10,000 years ago, the continental forests underwent a subtle but major change. Conifer trees gave way to hardwoods, and as the deer, fowl, and other forest wildlife began to flourish, the North American natives became less nomadic. By the 1600s, when the first Europeans began exploring the New World, they found a string of sites along the coastal region with 50 to 150 inhabitants each. The Indians lived relatively comfortably — digging for shellfish, hunting the wild fowl and deer, and never roaming very far away.

In all, sixteen tribes lived in Connecticut, with at least eight tribes controlling the coastal zone: the dreaded Pequots (the name means *destroyer of men*) in the Groton-Stonington area; the Mohegans in Mystic; the Niantics in Lyme and Waterford; the Hammonassetts in Saybrook and Clinton; the Menunketucks in Guilford and Madison; the Quinnipiacs in the New Haven area; the Paugussetts in Bridgeport and Stratford; and the Siwanogs, a New York tribe whose territory extended into Greenwich and Stamford.

Although historians still do not agree on the population figures (they range from 6,000 to 20,000), it is generally acknowledged that Connecticut contained one of the densest concentrations of Indians in America. Still, there was plenty of room between settlements, particularly in the 1600s when the Indian population was

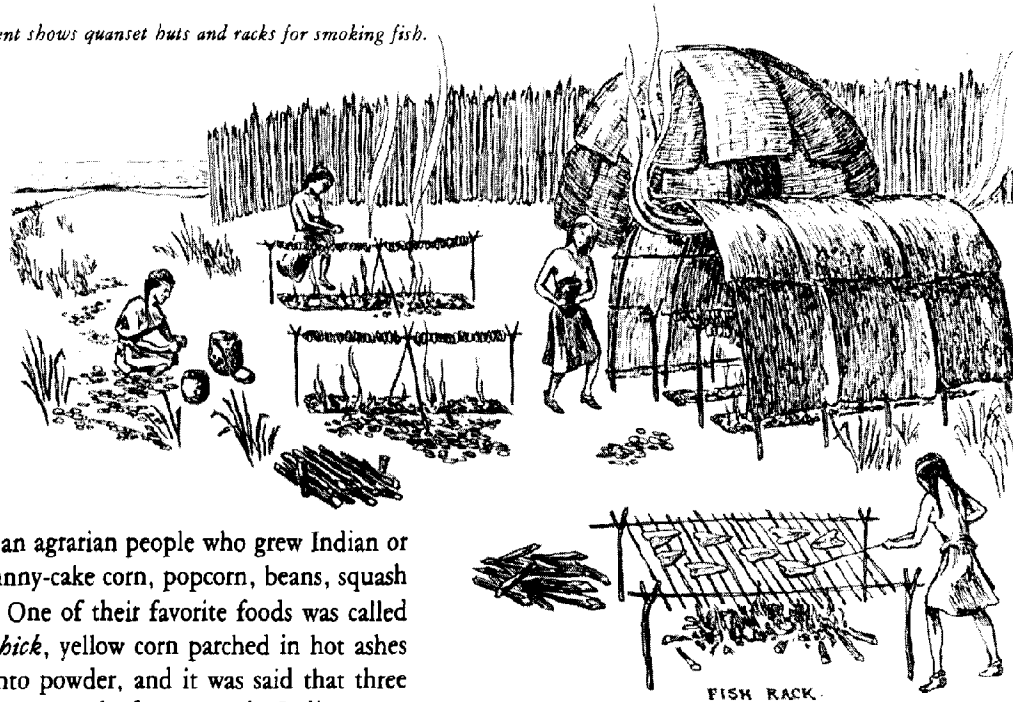
decimated by plague; these stretches of wilderness were hunting territories which were well known and well defined by natural landmarks. There was surprisingly little economic and cultural commerce between the tribes in the coastal regions; certainly the influence of the Pequots was felt along the coast, and many tribes paid tribute to this warlike tribe. But trade and cultural exchange, although not unknown, were not practiced very much.

The tribes did have one thing in common and that was Long Island Sound. From it they took oysters, scallops, lobsters, crabs, soft clams, quahogs, mackerel, halibut, cod, flounder (their chief fish food), skate, haddock, scup, striped bass, sturgeon (which they harpooned at night from torch-bearing canoes), salmon, shad, herring, eels, and lamprey. They even hunted whales which now and then appeared offshore. Fishing may have provided an easier and more certain subsistence than hunting, but the coastal tribes were not only fish-eaters.

They hunted deer, moose, bear, raccoon, rabbit, squirrel, pigeon, partridge, quail, turkey, ducks, geese and crane. They were also proficient trappers and caught wolves, foxes, wildcats and beavers for their furs. Wild berries and mushrooms could be had for the picking, as well as beech nuts, hickory nuts, chestnuts, acorns and sunflower seeds. In the spring, they tapped the maple trees and boiled down the sap for sugar. It was no wonder that the Connecticut Indians stayed at home; the Sound and the woodlands provided for all their needs.

The Indians, so adept at hunting, fishing and trap-

3. Seaside settlement shows quanset huts and racks for smoking fish.



ping, were also an agrarian people who grew Indian or mixed corn, Johnny-cake corn, popcorn, beans, squash and pumpkins. One of their favorite foods was called *yokeag* or *nobehick*, yellow corn parched in hot ashes and pounded into powder, and it was said that three teaspoonsful was enough for a meal. Indian corn yielded 1,200 to 2,000 grain seeds for each one sown, a ratio that astounded the European settler; and one Indian acre yielded 60 bushels of corn, a rate of harvest that Connecticut farms barely improved upon even as late as 1860. The secret to the Indians' success was simple. He, actually she, (because the fields, except the tobacco fields, were the province of Indian women) did not exhaust the land. Indians let their fields lie fallow for years because there were enough clearings near their settlements to begin new sites. The European farmer, although he had cleared larger tracts of land and replenished the soil with manure, was not so eager to let meadows go unproductive; he farmed the land as intensely and as exhaustively as he had in the Old World.

The Puritans believed that there were "treasures" in nature, but these had to be "fetched thence by the sweat of our brows." The Indians took advantage of natural abundances as eagerly and thoroughly as the Europeans did, but they did not share the Europeans' penchant for development. Local tribes did clear fields for sowing corn (*Pyquag*, their name for Wethersfield, means "cleared land" or "open field"), but never to the extent that the Europeans did. They were at home in the forests, while the Puritans, who imagined demons everywhere, systematically purged the landscape of woods. The Indians also exploited the Sound and the rivers as avidly as the first settlers did, but the

European population soon expanded and the store of seafood did not, after a while, seem so infinite.

The Connecticut Indians lived a simple, comfortable life. There were of course hardships, for even nature at its most generous can be destructive. Winters were less harsh on the coast than in the hinterlands, but they were by no means mild; and there were droughts, floods, storms and plagues to contend with. The Indian settlements, although relatively large, were not obtrusive; they were dwarfed by the vastness and grandeur of the wilderness that surrounded them.

Tribes lived in family-sized wigwams called *wetus*, dome-shaped constructions usually made from elm bark stretched over pole frames. The poles were actually saplings, green and flexible, which were bent into a semi-circle and the ends secured in the ground. A smoke-hole was left at the top and sometimes skins were added to the elm bark for extra protection against the wind and cold. The huts were cozy, and sometimes larger ones — which resembled quanset huts — were built to sleep eight or ten families.

The tools the Connecticut Indians made and used were not highly crafted, certainly not as impressive or as durable as those made by their hunter ancestors. Their hoe for example was just a clamshell tied to a stick; their clothing was also simple, as was their chief means of transportation, the canoe. Nature, it seems, repre-

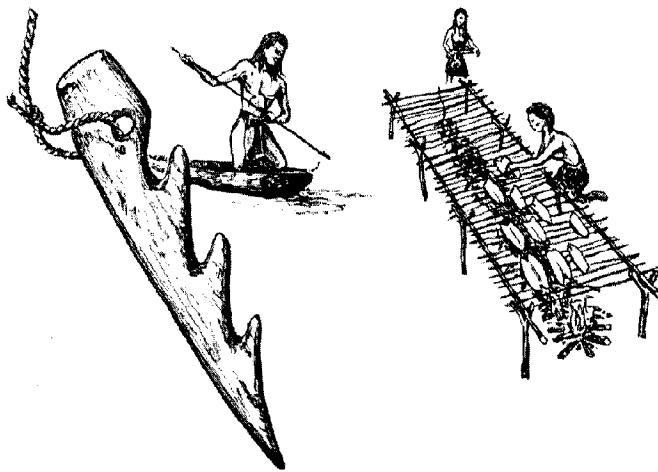
sented a kind of paradigm to the Connecticut Indians; it made no sense to them to do more than what was necessary to live in harmony with nature. It is easy to romanticize this kind of thinking, but the Indians who populated the Connecticut coast were not "noble savages"; they were simply a people who responded to their environment as best they could. Their way of life died out not because it was right or wrong, but because it was a victim of an accident of history: with the arrival of the Europeans the Indians' subtle mixture of casualness toward and respect for nature would be subsumed in the dauntless, inexhaustible, and often obsessive energy of the Puritans.

The Voyage of The Restless

If it weren't for an accident — a fire of mysterious origin — Adriaen Block would probably not have gone down in history as the man who first sailed Long Island Sound and discovered the Connecticut coastline. Block, an intrepid Dutch captain who had on a previous New World excursion explored the eastern coast from Maine to Delaware, was, in 1614, concluding yet another voyage, trading furs with the Indians of Manhattan Island. When he returned to his ship, he found it in flames. But the resourceful Block was not dismayed; he and his crew built another vessel, possibly the first ship ever built in America, and named it *Orrust*, or *Restless*.

There was one problem: the ship only weighed sixteen tons and Block wondered if it were seaworthy enough to get him and his crew back to the Netherlands. Deciding that the craft needed to be tested, he ventured up the East River, only to become trapped in a violent whirlpool which he christened Hell Gate — a name the passage still bears today. Beyond this torment of currents and rocks was a glimmering, deep blue body of water: Long Island Sound.

By a combination of chance and skill, Block made it through the whirlpool and sailed along the coast of Westchester County, probably more interested at this point in scouting for new trade than in testing the ship. He passed the coasts of Greenwich and Stamford, darted in and out of the Norwalk Islands, reached New Haven, which he called *Rodenberg* for the red palisades that dominated the landscape, explored the Branford River and finally came to the great placid estuary of the



4. Harpoons were carved from bone or antler. Fish was always a food staple.

Connecticut River, which he called "Fresh Water." He sailed up the river as far as the falls at Enfield before returning to the Sound. He then landed at Montauk Point in Long Island, sailed past an island which he named after himself (it is still called Block Island, although the first explorer to discover it was Verrazano in 1524), and eventually reached Cape Cod. From there he returned to the Netherlands, but not on the *Restless*, which stayed behind and was used for further exploration by Block's mate, Cornelius Hendricksen.

The Dutch, content to settle the Manhattan and Hudson River areas, did not share Block's curiosity and sense of adventure and made only tentative attempts at colonizing the new territory. In 1627, they sent Isaac de Rasiere to Plymouth to offer a joint commercial venture between the Puritans and themselves. The Puritans, after all, had always considered the Dutch as allies sympathetic to their religious beliefs; and, in fact, before the New World became a possibility, they had sought and always received asylum in Holland. The planters at Plymouth, however, would have no part of the proposal and the Dutch were left to settle the Connecticut wilderness on their own.

A Retreat for Puritan Gentry

In 1632 agents of the Dutch East India Company landed at Saybrook and purchased land at the mouth of the "Fresh Water" from the Pequots who lived there. The point had been called Pattaquasett by the Indians, but the Dutch renamed it Kievit's Hook, after a bird, now known as the pewit, that nested in the nearby swamps. In 1633, Jacob Van Curler purchased from the Indians (Pequots again) a tract of land upriver where

Hartford stands now; there they built a fort and named it House of Good Hope.

Two small forts, however, do not make a colony. The English, who were quick to follow the Dutch precedent in Connecticut, did not consider the wilderness to be part of the New Holland. They believed in the doctrine of *vacuum domicilium*, in which unoccupied and unused land was free to those who improved it. Elizabeth I had, thirty or so years earlier, dismissed Spanish pretensions in North America by saying that colonization was not quite the same thing as "their having touched only here and there upon a coast, and given names to a few rivers and capes." The Dutch had done more than that in Connecticut, but, as far as the English were concerned, not much more.

In 1631, a group of Connecticut Indians led by the sachem (or chief) Wahginnacut visited Plymouth and Boston to appeal to the English that Connecticut was a virtual paradise that needed to be settled; the real reason for their journey, however, was their hope that English settlers might be a buffer between them and the Pequots who had become more and more belligerent. Edward Winslow of Plymouth was one of the

Englishmen who liked what the sachem had to say and in 1632 sent an expedition up the Connecticut River to begin a new settlement near the Dutch House of Good Hope. The Dutch offered no resistance and the settlement, known as Windsor, survived the harsh winter and served as an example for other settlers, including those led by Thomas Hooker.

Meanwhile, a group of fifteen English lords and gentlemen were given a special patent to settle in North America. This group included Viscount Say and Seale, Lord Brooke and Colonel George Fenwick, and they dreamed of creating a retreat for "men of distinction and quality," an oasis of culture and civilization in the New World, complete with grand estates, liveried servants, and English gardens. They named John Winthrop, Jr. to oversee the establishment of their retreat in Connecticut, and in November 1633 an armed contingent of Englishmen arrived off Kievit's Hook.

There is a story about how the English crew spotted a parchment nailed to a tree — the Dutch claim to the land along the river — which they promptly tore off and replaced with a carving of a face with its tongue sticking out. If the insult was ever noticed, it went un-



5. Block's ship, the *Restless*, fascinated the Indians.



6. *A first meeting between Europeans and native Indians in Connecticut.*

heeded, because the Dutch, as they had upriver at Windsor, did not resist the English trespassers, and the Dutch Kievit's Hook suddenly became the English Saybrooke (derived from the names of two of the founding gentry, Viscount Say and Seale and Lord Brooke).

In March of that year, Lion Gardiner, a military engineer, arrived and began to supervise the construction of a new garrison. The fifteen gentlemen who planned Saybrooke did not intend their settlement to be a military post for very long, and with the arrival of Colonel Fenwick it looked as though the idyllic community might become a reality. Saybrooke, however, was not destined to become the retreat its founders had envisioned; instead, it became a place of broken dreams.

The Fragile Detente

Aside from the brief but bloody Pequot War, the relations between the English and the natives of Connecticut had always been considered cordial. Despite the peace that generally prevailed, there was an undercurrent of hostility between the two cultures that stemmed not only from the Puritans' unfailing belief in their own superiority, but from their more pressing economic needs. Both cultures were, by chance, agricultural *and* water-oriented, and they both clung to the coastline and major river valleys because there the soil was most fertile and the fish and game most abundant. There, too, were the salt banks along the Sound used by European and Indian alike for preserving food; and for the English settler there also existed the promise of future trade, coastwide and even trans-Atlantic.

Both cultures relied on the shore because it also provided them, for a time, with their sole source of currency — wampum. There were two kinds of wampum, white and the more valuable dark. The white was cut from the inside of the conch shell; the dark, ranging in color from blue to purple, came from the shells of quahog clams or mussels. The Indians used stone tools

to cut out these tubular beads, seldom more than half an inch long, and then they bored a tiny hole from end to end. The beads were strung on narrow strips of deer-skin and fashioned into bracelets, belts, and other ornaments which were used as gifts and currency and in mystical rites and rituals (wampum, the Indians believed, "spoke louder than words"). When the Europeans came, they introduced metal tools which enabled them to make wampum much easier. In fact, on Long Island, the English and Dutch actually employed local Indians to "make money," working them hard and paying them little. Across the Sound, the English taught the Indians how to counterfeit wampum, doubling the value of white beads by dyeing them black.

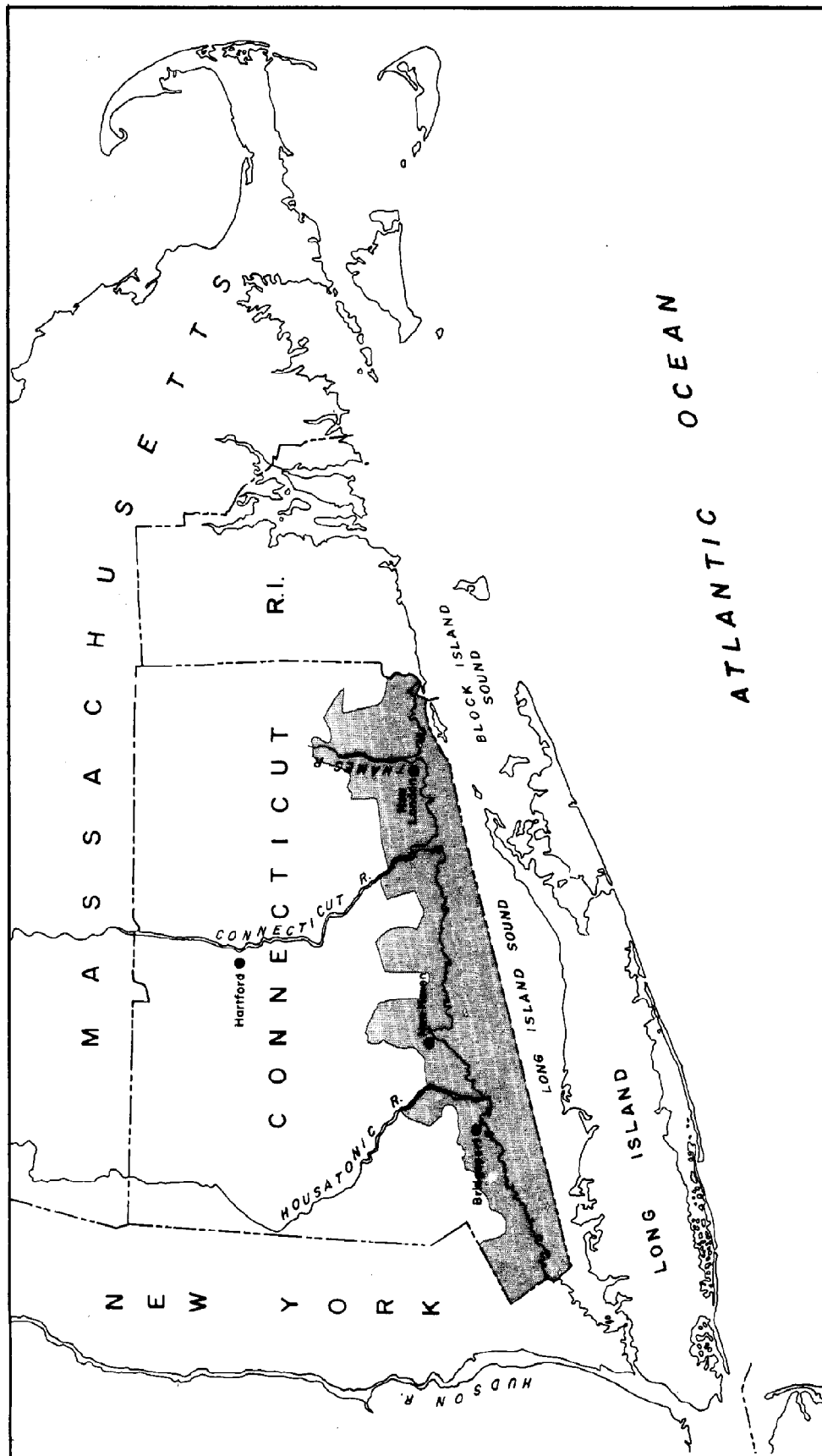
There was certainly enough land and water for both cultures to co-exist, but there were innumerable conflicts between them — mostly because they used their available resources so differently. The English coveted the cleared areas lying fallow and unproductive; they built grist and saw mills which meant the damming of streams and the curtailment of the Indians' stream fishing. The English wanted the salt marshes and bays for harborage; and they let their livestock roam free, indifferent to the fact that their cattle or swine often destroyed Indian crops; and, most of all, they hungered for wood — for timber, fences, barrel staves, and for fuel — which eventually left the Indians without hunting grounds.

Firewood was virtually unknown in Europe in the 17th century, a luxury only the most wealthy could afford, and so to the English settlers the miles upon miles of woods in the New World must have seemed like a dream come true. The Indians used wood for construction and for burning, but their consumption was negligible to that of the English pioneer who needed from twenty to forty cords every year to fill the great fireplace that heated his home. If clear-cut, an acre of land yielded a year's supply of fuel; multiply that by the rapidly growing numbers of European immigrants and it is no wonder that as early as 1800 virtually the entire state had been cut at least once.

The Bottom Line: English Purchase of Indian Lands

When the English arrived they were extremely meticulous about their land purchase; they made the Indians

Long Island Sound and its Environs.





7. Roger Ludlow cutting a deal with the sachem Nau-eu-wok for the purchase of Norwalk in 1640.

sign contracts, demanding that everything be kept strictly legal, despite the fact that the price they paid for acres of prime land was ludicrously small. In some cases, the Indians who signed these fateful documents did not understand that they were giving up their hunting, fishing and planting rights to the lands they sold; they had no concept of private property and believed they were merely sharing the land with the newcomers. In other cases, however, Indians gave land outright to the English as a means of protecting themselves from hostile tribes.

Everyone knows the story of Peter Minuit, who bought Manhattan for goods worth \$24; the Connecticut coastline was only a little more expensive:

Greenwich—Greenwich Point was called Monakewego by the Mianus tribe, and later Elizabeth Neck after Elizabeth Peaks from the New Haven Colony, said to have made the purchase for "twenty-five fine coats."

Stamford—Captain Nathaniel Turner of the New Haven Colony bought the land known as Rippowams for a number of hats, coats and blankets.

Norwalk—The area is named after Naw-eu-wok, the sachem who sold the land to Roger Ludlow for "ten scissors, three kettles, some coats, hatchets and hoes, and ten Jew's harps."

Stratford (Pequonnock) and *Fairfield* (Uncoway)—These lands were sold to Roger Ludlow for wampum, a few coats,

some hatchets, spades, looking glasses, Jew's harps, hoes and kettles. The Indians, seeking protection from the Mohawks, and witnessing the English defeat of the Pequots in Fairfield, paid the settlers an annual bounty of furs and corn.

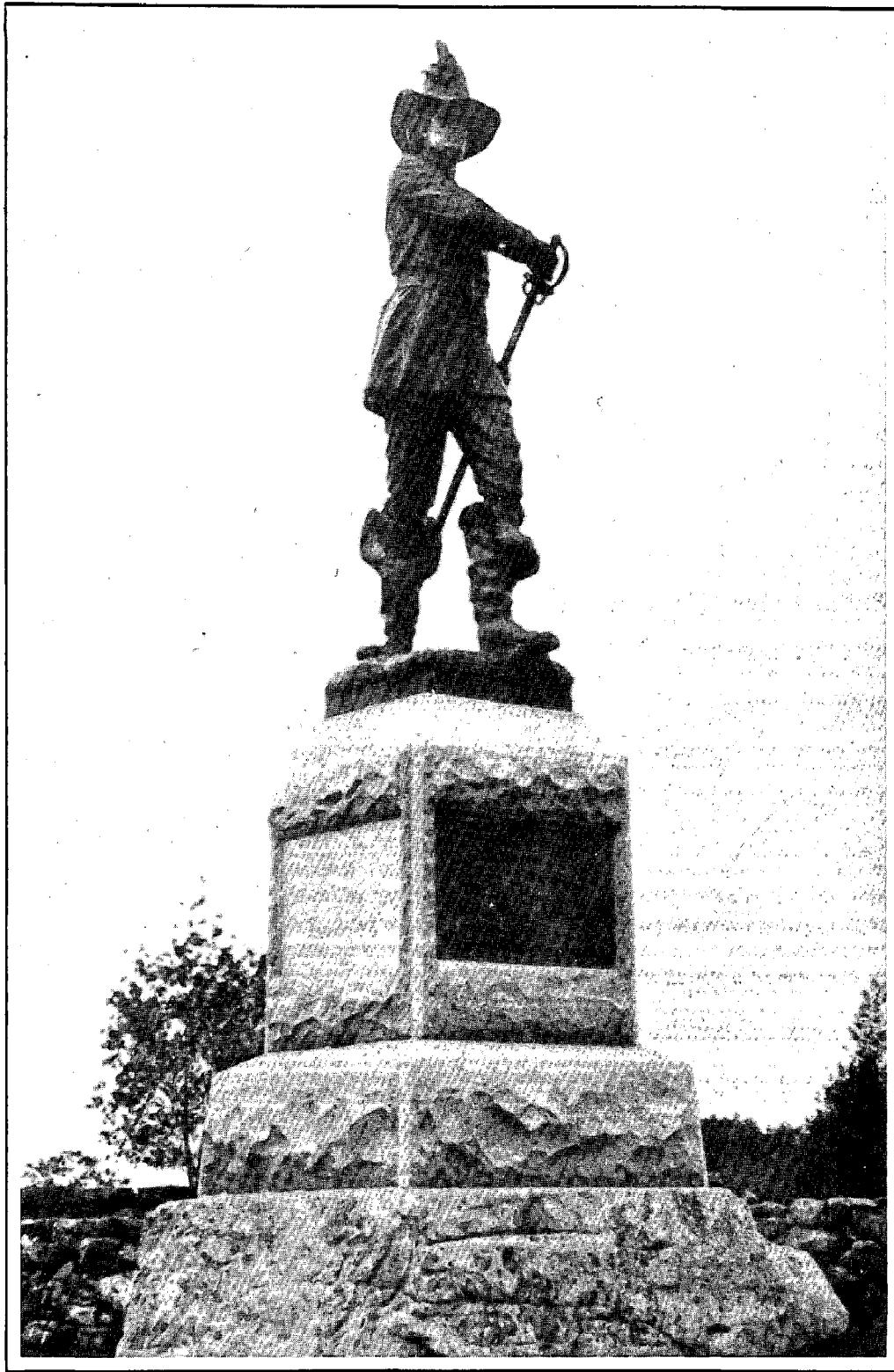
New Haven—On November 24, 1638, the local sachem, Momaugin, sold all the land in Quinnipiac, reserving hunting and fishing rights in return for "twelve coats of English trucking cloth, twelve alchemy spoons, twelve hatchets, twelve hoes, two dozen knives and scissors."

Branford—The deed of purchase in 1639 stipulates that should the Indians "become affrighted . . . they may repair to the English plantation for shelter, and that there in a just cause ye English will endeavor to defend ye from wrong."

Guilford—The sachem queen of the Menuncatucks sold all the land from Kuttawoo (East River) to Oiokommuck (Stony Creek) for "12 coats, 12 fathom of wampum, 12 glasses, 12 pairs of shoes, 12 hatchets, 12 pairs of stockings, 12 hoes, 4 kettles, 12 knives, 12 hats, 12 porringers, 12 spoons and 2 English coats."

Norwich—For nine square miles of land, John Mason and Thomas Tracy paid Uncas, Owanero and Attawanhood "the full and just sum of seventy pounds."

New London—At a general court held in Boston in 1646 John Winthrop, Jr. appointed a commission "to remove such as Indians as were will to the other (or east) side of the great river (Thames), or some other place for their convenient planting and subsistence, to the good liking and satisfaction of the said Indians."



8. *Captain John Mason, immortalized in bronze, fought against the Pequots during the period of colonial expansion in Connecticut.*

Colonial Expansion

New Haven, New Earth

Before the Pequot War the shoreline west of Saybrook was, for the English, *terra incognita*, an unknown land. The Dutch had long since investigated the area, but no settlements began there. When Captain Mason and his men were chasing Sassacus into Fairfield, they were impressed by the beauty of the area, particularly where the Quinnipiacs lived. "It hath a fine River," reported Captain John Underhill, "fit for the harboring of Ships and abounds with rich and goodly Meadows." This area would become, in a few years, the "Bible State" or "Newhaven" of Anglican dissenter John Davenport.

Unlike Saybrook, which was intended to be a kind of New World spa for elegant ladies and cultured gentlemen, New Haven was to be a theocracy, a community governed by religious principles and populated by an "elected" citizenry. Its founder, John Davenport, was a learned, serious man (the Indians, who apparently never saw him without a book, called him "big study man"), a minister and reformer who, when he was in England, wanted to "purify" the Anglican Church without actually becoming a Puritan. As a preacher in London — at St. Stephen's Church on Coleman Street — he had gained a reputation as an eloquent and convincing orator, but it was church politics rather than his ministerial talents that got him into trouble with the Anglican authorities, particularly William Laud, Bishop of London.

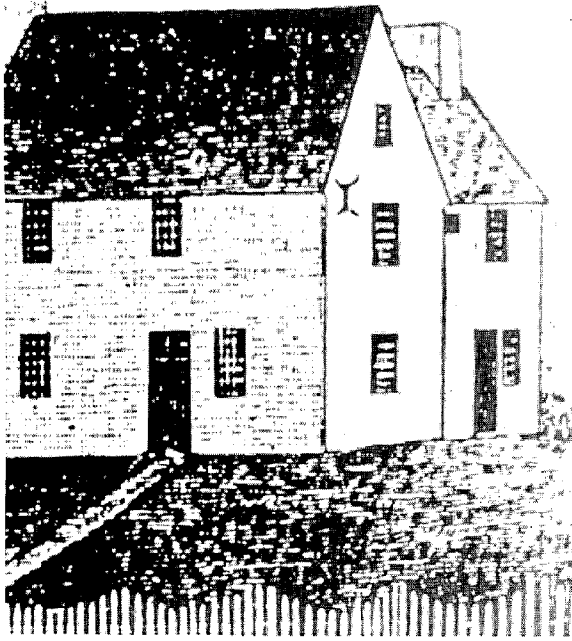
Davenport was accused of harboring Puritan sentiments, which he denied vehemently; nonetheless, the

young minister was more inclined to Puritanism than he realized. The English dissidents knew this and tried to get the well-respected preacher on their side. They finally succeeded but only after Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury and Davenport realized that the Church of England would no longer tolerate his brand of Anglicanism. He went over to the Puritan side, crossed the Channel to Holland disguised as a merchant, and later ventured to New England to establish his "Bible State."

While he was a much-admired theologian, Davenport did not have the practical mind needed to organize an expedition to America; for help he turned to his friend, Theophilus Eaton, a London merchant and a man of "fair estate and of great esteem for religion, and wisdom in outward affairs." It was the combination of zeal and business sense that made the Davenport-Eaton venture a success.

9. English settlers cleared the dense forests with an inexhaustible zeal.





10. Theophilus Eaton's home, New Haven.

In 1638, Davenport and his followers purchased land from the Quinnipiacs and spent their first year in New Haven putting up temporary shelters. Eaton became the first governor of the new colony and asked surveyor John Brockett to lay out a plan for the community; the result was the famous "nine squares" which included a meetinghouse green, which still stands today, although without the meetinghouse. While Eaton was busy with the practical details of the settlement, Davenport, as one of the "seven pillars" or leaders of the colony, was busy forming a state based on the "perfect rule" provided by the Scriptures. They created, in fact, a settlement in which one's civil rights and responsibilities were wholly dependent upon one's standing in the church. Only church members, the "pillars" decided, "shall be burgesses, and that they only shall choose magistrates and officers among themselves to have the power of transacting all the public civil affairs of this Plantation."

The New Haven elders strove to build a society based on civil order and adherence to Puritan principles. It was, however, a closed community and would not admit anyone "whether they came in by purchase or otherwise" unless they met the approval of the "seven pillars." Its justice was swift and relentless; an Indian named Napaupuck, for instance, was found guilty of murdering an English settler and the next day he was decapitated and his head displayed in public as a warning to all potential lawbreakers. The combination of business sense and religious fervor embodied by Davenport and Eaton continued to direct the growth of the settlement, which became known not only for its

regimen and dedication to order, but for its prosperity. Underlying New Haven's Puritan stringency and respectability was a solid foundation of capital, for New Haven became one of the wealthiest settlements in America in the 1600s.

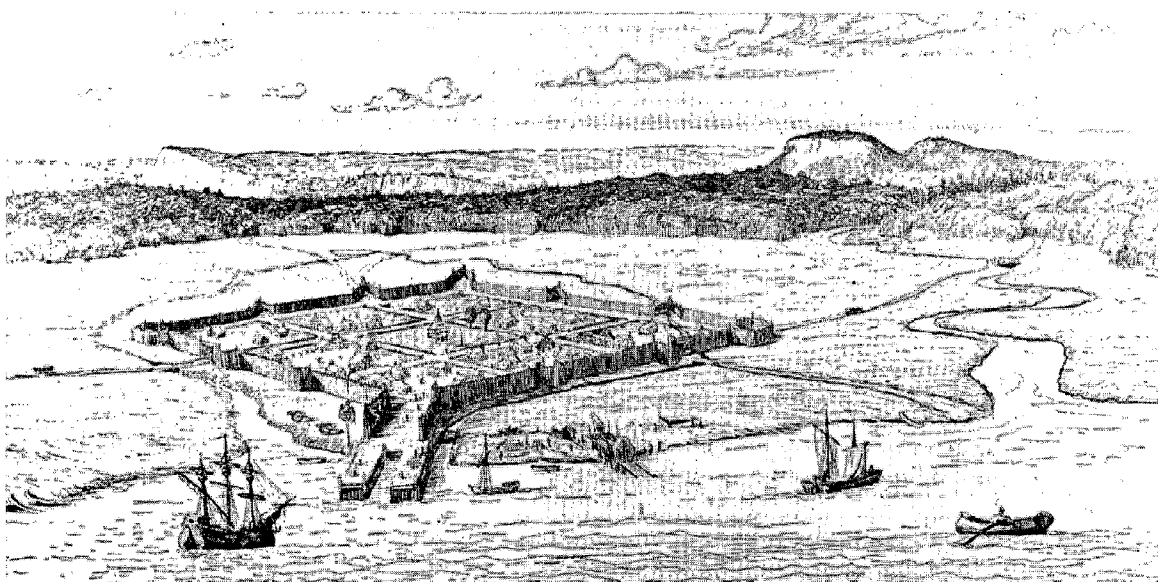
Saybrook's Struggle

As New Haven prospered, Saybrook, the first English settlement along the Connecticut coast, declined. In 1639, when Colonel George Fenwick arrived there with his wife, the former Lady Alice Apsley Boetler (the trip over had been their honeymoon), the future of Saybrook seemed assured. Other members of the Puritan elite were sure to follow. But Fenwick and Lady Alice were not so certain that the primitive life that Saybrook offered was really what the 15 English gentlemen really had envisioned when they accepted the Warwick Patent. The Fenwicks decided to stick it out, yet their ten-year stay at Saybrook was plagued by disaster.

The Pequots made life miserable for the colonists and



11. John Davenport.



12. New Haven Colony fortification in 1625. Original "nine squares" outlined in the center of a salt marsh still exist today. East and West rocks are easily distinguished.

forced them to live virtually like prisoners behind the walls of Gardiner's fort. After the Indians were defeated, life became a bit more bearable, but with the victory of Cromwell in England it became clear that none of the "men of quality" would ever come to Saybrook: the Puritans now controlled England and there was no longer any reason for the Saybrook founders to emigrate to the New World. They were needed at home to fill important posts in Cromwell's Interregnum Government.

In 1646, Lady Alice died after giving birth to a daughter, Dorothy, and was buried near the fort overlooking the Sound (her tomb at Saybrook Point was moved during the construction of the Valley Railroad in 1871). Fenwick was crushed by this last, most bitter disappointment, and with his children he returned to England (accepting a position in Cromwell's government), never to return to Saybrook again. Before leaving, he sold the Warwick Patent to the Connecticut Colony, and the settlement eventually began to prosper, not as a retreat for upper-class Puritans, but as a strategic gateway to the Connecticut River.

The New Haven Colony: New Settlements

New Haven and Saybrook spawned a "second generation" of pioneers who left these two established

communities to seek a life elsewhere along the Connecticut coast. New Haven, in particular, began to expand along the shoreline until it became a Puritan empire in miniature, the New Haven Colony, which comprised the new settlements of Guilford, Branford, Milford, Stamford and Southold, in Long Island, for a time vied with the Connecticut colony for civil authority in the state.

Under the leadership of Henry Whitfield, a gifted Anglican preacher who, like Davenport, finally embraced Puritanism, Guilford was founded almost as a carbon-copy of New Haven, complete with its own "seven pillars" and meetinghouse green. The settlers of Guilford, however, considered themselves only friendly neighbors and religious allies of the New Haven Colony, and were not politically part of the mother settlement until the threats of Dutch and Indian attack made unity a necessity.

Branford — the home of a Dutch settlement in the 1620s — was claimed for settlement by Samuel Eaton, brother of the governor of New Haven. But Eaton returned to England to find recruits for the new colony, found none, and never returned to Connecticut. Meanwhile, the handful of settlers who had moved from New Haven to Branford (called Totoket by the Indians), asked Abraham Pierson to lead them in building a community. Pierson agreed, and the settlement, named Branford in 1653 (after Brentford near London), prospered in the shadow of the fast-growing New Haven. In



13. *The wily Uncas, sachem of the Mobegans.*

1667, Pierson took the majority of his flock with him to found Newark, New Jersey, leaving Branford a virtual ghost town until 1680 when it regained its original population.

In the summer of 1638, Reverend Peter Prudden, a resident of New Haven, went to Wethersfield to preach; there he won an enthusiastic following, many of whom wanted to join him in the creation of a new settlement. The next year, after land was purchased around the mouth of the Wepawaug River ten miles west of New Haven, Prudden, his New Haven congregation, and a small number of his devoted Wethersfield followers marched from New Haven to form a new community which they called Milford. The town was organized in the New Haven manner, although their restrictive policies were not as rigid. Milford remained an independent colony for a while, but eventually petitioned New Haven to become a part of the burgeoning colony. They were refused because of their liberal attitude toward church membership, but soon a compromise was reached and Milford became part of the Colony in 1643.

Captain Nathaniel Turner, an agent for New Haven, bought in 1640 a tract of land known as Rippowams, later to be called Stamford. The next year the area was settled by a group of argumentative Wethersfield dissenters under Reverend Richard Denton, a "little man," according to Cotton Mather, "yet he had a great

soul." The new colonists had a reputation for being quarrelsome, and not only because of their feud in Wethersfield; in 1657, Quakers arrived in Stamford to settle in the area, but the residents drove them away, issuing an edict against "the cursed sects of heretics."

The Ludlow Settlements (Norwalk, Stratford, Fairfield and Greenwich)

Not all new settlements along the coast originated in New Haven. Roger Ludlow, the founder of the towns of Norwalk, Stratford and Fairfield, was, in fact, a thorn in New Haven's side. Ludlow, who fought under Mason in the Pequot swamp battle, was impressed by the Fairfield area and returned in 1639, only a year after New Haven was founded, and purchased land at Pequonnocke (western Stratford) and Uncoa (Fairfield). Ludlow's attempts at colonization infuriated the new settlers at Milford, who considered his ambition a form of poaching, but the veteran of the Pequot War was vindicated by the General Court, for which, incidentally, he served as a magistrate. His feud with New Haven lasted until 1654 (he insisted that the New Haven Colony would not support Fairfield against the threat of a Dutch attack), when he returned to England to act as a representative of Cromwell's government in Dublin.

The Captain Islands off Greenwich are named for Captain Daniel Patrick who, along with Robert Feaks, purchased Monakewego (now Greenwich Point) from the Mianus tribe in 1640. The Indians, however, suddenly became unfriendly and the new settlement aligned itself with the Dutch for protection. In 1643, Captain Patrick led an expedition against the Indians but came up empty-handed. While his force was disbanding at Stamford, a Dutch soldier, calling Patrick an incompetent leader, killed him in a heated argument. A combined Dutch-English force, led by John Underhill, Pequot War hero who had settled in Stamford, defeated the Indians at Maspeth.

Saybrook's Offshoots

Saybrook, like New Haven, was instrumental in the settlement of other shoreline communities after the

Pequot War. In fact, nine modern Connecticut towns have their origins in the community that Fenwick and Gardiner established.

The area that is now Clinton and Killingworth was called Homonoscitt by one John Clow, Jr. who petitioned the General Court to settle 30,000 acres of land west of Saybrook. The government of Saybrook contended that the land had been purchased from Uncas, the Mohegan sachem, by Colonel Fenwick, but the Court ruled in Clow's favor. Uncas, seeing that he could sell a parcel of land twice over, claimed remuneration from Clow, discovering the fact that he had already sold the land to Fenwick. The new settlers found it expedient to pay Uncas again and soon families arrived from Guilford, Hartford and Saybrook. In 1667 Homonoscitt was renamed Kenilworth, which eventually became Killingworth. In 1838, the southern part of Killingworth was incorporated as Clinton.

Although Lyme's first settler was Matthew Griswold in 1639, it was in 1663 that a number of Saybrook residents decided to begin a plantation on the eastern bank of the Connecticut River. The next year the two communities came to an agreement, known as the "Loving Parting," and Lyme was founded as an inde-

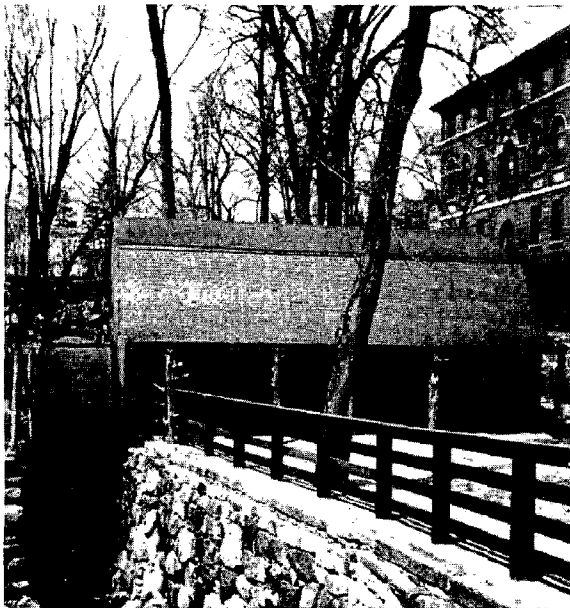
pendent settlement. In 1839, East Lyme came into being; in 1855 Old Lyme was incorporated as a town.

Saybrook itself was divided a number of times, and today, there is no political entity that goes by that name. The first area to separate was Chester in 1836, followed by Westbrook, the Old Potopaug quarter of Saybrook, in 1840. In 1852, Old Saybrook came into being and in 1854 Essex separated from Old Saybrook. In 1947 the town of Saybrook gave up its historic name and became Deep River.

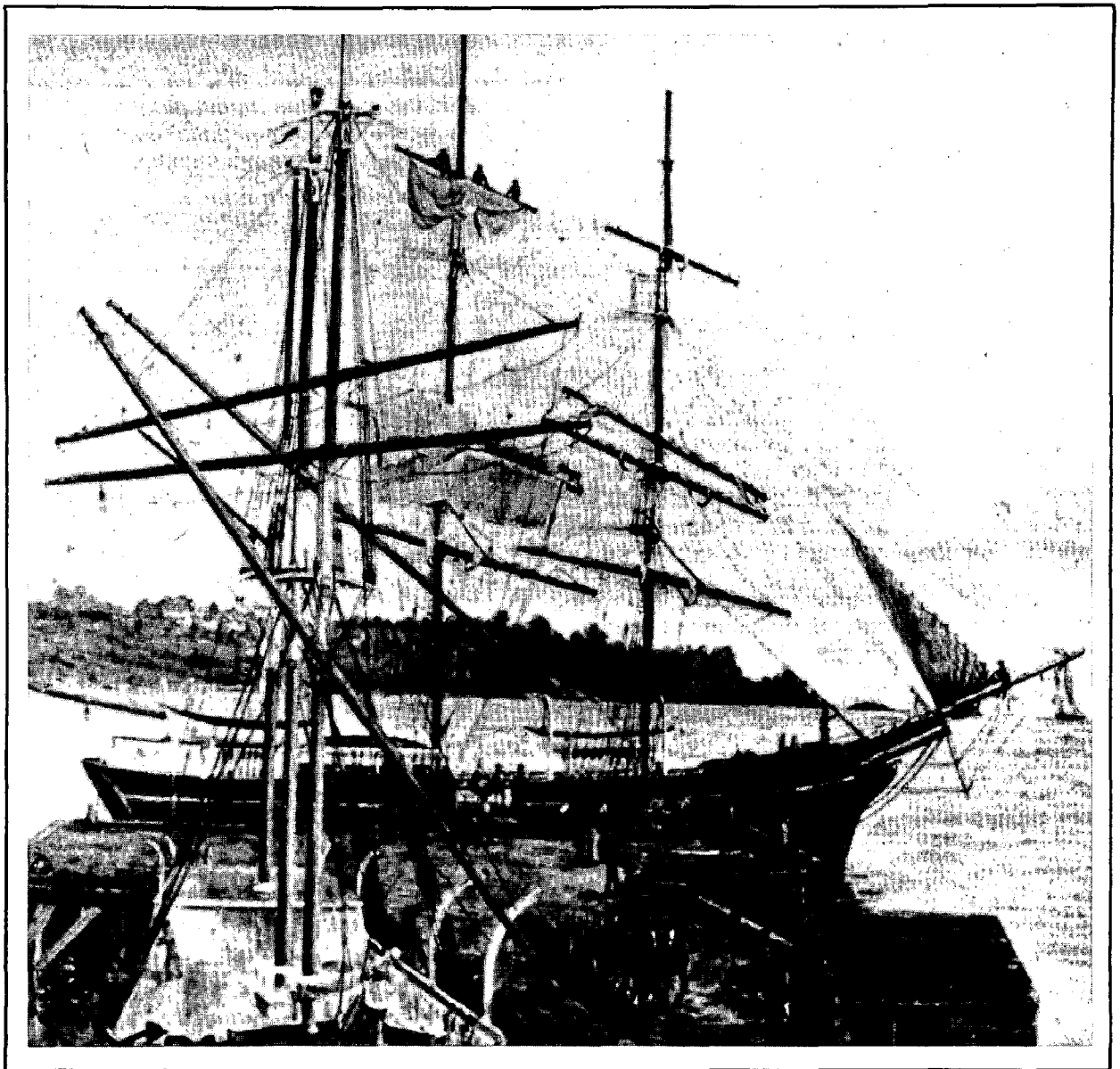
The Founding of New London

Even after the defeat of the Pequots the area surrounding the Thames River was thought of as Indian country. In 1644, John Winthrop, Jr., son of the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, and future governor of Connecticut, decided to establish a colony in the land of the Pequots. He is considered the founder of New London, but he never really lived there, being a kind of roving diplomat (when he finally settled down it was on Fisher's Island, off New London, which he had claimed in 1640). By 1650, however, the future of the new settlement seemed shaky, yet in that year fourteen families arrived from Gloucester under Richard Blinnman and gave the town new impetus. Soon New London was a major shipbuilding center and port, and in the 19th century it became one of the three great whaling centers in the world.

Like New Haven and Saybrook, New London spawned other communities: Groton in 1705, Ledyard in 1836, Montville in 1786 and Waterford in 1801. The tract of land which would become the community of Norwich was first purchased from Uncas in 1654 by Thomas Tract and none other than Captain John Mason. The first settler of Stonington, which would become famous as a steamship junction, was William Cheeseborough of Rehoboth, Massachusetts, who was charged with trading with the Indians and repairing their weapons. He was cleared of the charges and given a grant of land.



14. Winthrop's Mill, the nation's oldest grist mill, built in 1650 in New London.



15. Fine sailing ships of the period, used to trade with the West Indies.

Early Maritime Commerce

Of all the American colonies, Connecticut was, perhaps, the least dependent upon Britain, partially because its people prided themselves on their self-sufficiency, but mostly because England wasn't terribly interested in what Connecticut had to offer. Agriculture was the main occupation in colonial Connecticut, but it wasn't the kind of agriculture practiced in other colonies, like Virginia, where there was a single and lucrative tobacco crop. Connecticut's farmland was not the most fertile in the New World anyway; in fact, the best farming soil in the state was taken over by the first wave of Europeans who settled on the shore or along the river valleys.

One 17th-century wit once called Connecticut "a cask of good liquor tapped at both ends, at one of which Boston draws, and New York at the other, till little is left in it but lees and settlings." The observation was no exaggeration; between the premier port of Boston and the growing port of New York, Connecticut's coastline towns, even New Haven and New London, seemed doomed to limited, incidental trade. New London was actually authorized as an official British port, but the trade there was local, never trans-Atlantic. Connecticut maintained a lively coastal trade with Massachusetts and Rhode Island, but any ship involved in direct trade with England left from or came into Boston.

New Haven, as early as 1647, had different ideas and wanted to bypass Boston to establish a direct trade route with England. The town elders purchased a 150-ton

Rhode Island-built ship (called "the Great Shippe"), loaded it with local products and, despite gloomy auguries from the ship's captain who did not believe the craft seaworthy, set sail on a winter day through a channel chopped out of an icebound New Haven harbor. Months passed and there was no news, good or bad, until one day a "ghost ship" appeared beyond the harbor looking very much like the ship the townspeople had fretted over for so long. Before their very eyes, as the story goes, the ship sank, as if destroyed by some monumental storm, and with it sank the hopes and ambitions of New Haven to become a major port.

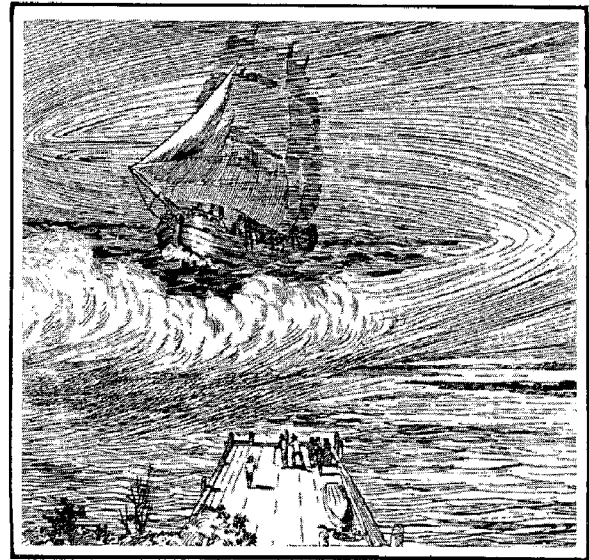
Certainly Connecticut's farmers, merchants, seamen and tradesmen did not appreciate being a colonial backwater, but they managed to survive. They survived King Phillip's War — instigated by a chief of the Wampanoag tribe in Massachusetts — although they paid dearly in lives and money; they also survived the threat of Major Edmund Andros, governor of New York, who in 1675 appeared before Saybrook with several armed sloops demanding the colony be annexed to New York. (The dispute was finally settled and Connecticut gained a symbol of its independence, the Charter Oak, where the Charter of 1662, which insured Connecticut's existence as a colony, was hid after being snatched from under Andros' nose.) Only when Connecticut's agriculture shifted from crops to livestock, when manufacturing became an economic force, and when the seaports grew and prospered in the Caribbean trade, would the colony emerge from the shadow of English neglect.

The West Indies Connection

Connecticut's attempts to trade with England may have failed miserably, but by the 18th century one trade route, and a very profitable one, emerged: the West Indies. British Jamaica and the Leeward and Windward Islands (especially Antigua, Barbados and Grenada), French Guadeloupe and Martinique, Spanish Hispaniola and Dutch St. Eustatius were the ports of call for ships from New London, New Haven and the smaller coastal communities such as Norwalk and Darien. (In fact, Darien got its name because one of its most influential citizens became rich trading on the Isthmus of Panama, then called Darien.)

Connecticut merchants traded directly with the Islands, rather than making it one stop in the triangular routes popular at the time. An odd marriage, it might seem, between the "Land of Steady Habits" and the tropical paradises of the Caribbean, but it was a marriage that lasted almost into the 1900s. On the islands one could find a trading post that looked more at home in the middle of the town green than amid palm trees and white beaches; and one could also notice the influence of the exotic Caribbean in the new-found worldliness of the Connecticut shore town. Merchants like Nathaniel Shaw of New London, whose ships touched at almost every Caribbean port, helped open the Connecticut coast, dormant and isolated for so long, to the rest of the world.

At the beginning of the 18th century, the Caribbean trade grew steadily; by 1750 it employed well over half of Connecticut's tonnage; and in the years immediately before the war, when the island markets expanded, the Connecticut coastline experienced a time of unprec-



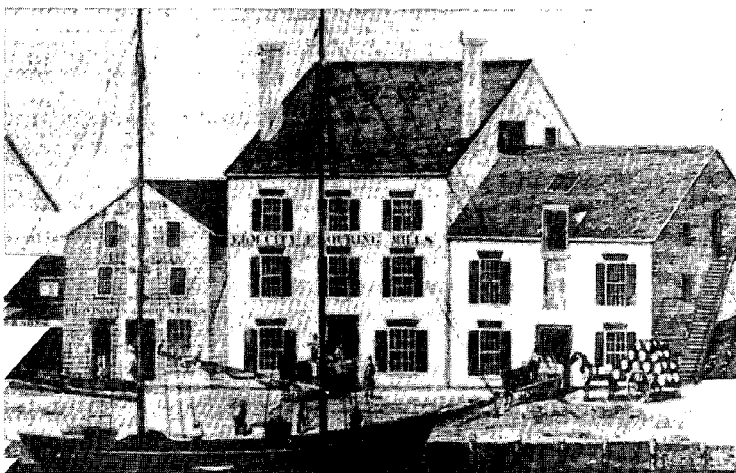
16. *The ghost ship, New Haven.*

edented prosperity. The success of the trade was based on the decision of the Connecticut farmer to shift his emphasis from crops to livestock. Connecticut's horses, mules, cattle, swine, sheep and poultry were in great demand by Island merchants and planters, who returned sugar, salt, molasses, fruit and bills of exchange. Molasses was the most lucrative commodity because the Connecticut-Caribbean connection was actually only part of a trading cycle: the molasses and other products from the Indies were used by Connecticut merchants to buy English manufactured goods from neighboring colonies. Connecticut re-exported, in the coastwide trade, between two-thirds and three-fourths of the molasses it imported from the West Indies. So while Connecticut was still not rewarded with a direct trade route to England, it obtained English goods without the bother of trans-Atlantic voyages.

Throughout the colonial period, the Island trade was a staple of Connecticut's economy. There were wars, the French and Indian War for one (1754-1763), which Connecticut merchants survived quite handily by supplying the British with provisions while simultaneously carrying on an illicit trade with the French; and there was a serious recession that lasted from 1763-67 due to British restrictions and the closing of all French ports except St. Lucia. But the coastline merchants never really suffered a depression.

After the Revolution, Connecticut ships found the Caribbean ports, especially the British ones, less friendly; America, after all, was now an independent country

17. *Coastal trade was an important colonial industry.*



and had to compete with Britain and other powers in the open market. Although they continued trade with the Spanish, French and Dutch possessions in the Indies, Connecticut traders were for the most part squeezed out of the British trade. The rise of New York as a national port and the emergence of ports in the American south didn't help matters either. The only exception, oddly enough, was the port of Norwich, which happily experienced a post-war boom in the Island trade.

In 1793 war broke out between France and England, one which would rage until Waterloo in 1814. The Caribbean became a battleground and consequently Connecticut's trade decreased dramatically. Jefferson's embargo in 1807, and the War of 1812, with an accompanying British blockade, further crippled Connecticut's Island ventures, and the golden age of trade between the coastal towns and the West Indies was over. There were attempts to revive the connection as late as the 20th century. One firm, the Gilbert Transportation Company out of Mystic, was begun in 1906 on the premise that the West Indies trade could be made profitable once again. The head of the organization, Captain M.L. Gilbert (who was only 29 years old, having begun his life at sea at the age of seven) collected a fleet of sloops, convinced that these sleek craft were more economical than the steamship in hauling cargo from the Caribbean. The venture seemed to be successful, and, anticipating the building of the Panama Canal, looked forward to a boom, but the company folded after ten years. The West Indies trade, so lucrative in the formative years of the Connecticut coast, could not be revived.

The Calm Before the Storm

Life along the coastline of colonial Connecticut was one of change, often radical change. By the 1720s the once sleepy ports that opened to the Sound became hubs of activity. New London, for instance, became something of a boomtown, almost a prototype of Dodge City of Old West fame, for cattle drives, begun inland by the new livestock breeders, ended in the streets of New London where the animals were put on-board ships bound for the West Indies. Shops, small manufacturing concerns, and inns sprung up catering



18. Pirates were common in Long Island Sound.

to the influx of new people who came to the town to do business. Shipwrights, fishermen, and merchants came to live and raise families in the town which would remain Connecticut's busiest port until the decline of whaling late in the 1800s.

In the years before the Revolution, Connecticut shore towns grew more affluent and more cosmopolitan. Food was plentiful, not only the meat and produce supplied by area farmers, but the fish, clams and oysters the Sound provided; many imported goods, especially those items from the Caribbean, were also available to coastal consumers. What remained of the Indian population (they numbered only 1,363 in 1774) lived on reservations in Stonington, New London, Groton, Lyme and Norwich; and except for black slaves (there were about 5,000 in 1774) and a scattering of Dutch and French, the population was exclusively of English descent.

Families were generally large, almost always Puritan, and invariably hard-working. Schools established in and around the seaports provided a curriculum that mixed the practical with the spiritual, and a boy growing up along the shore either looked to the farm or the sea as a means of livelihood. Girls, who learned the skills of housewifery, had no such option. Around this time, however, a third alternative was gradually emerging, that of manufacturing.

The farming-trading cycle which had been the heart of Connecticut's economy since the arrival of the first settlers could not sustain a growing population for very long. The number of people who lived in the colony — only 800 in 1636; 2,000 in 1640; and 30,000 in 1701 — had jumped to nearly 200,000 by the census of 1774, making Connecticut one of the most densely settled of the American colonies. Most of these people lived in the shore communities. Of the six most densely populated towns in 1774, five were in the coastal zone: New

Haven, 8,295; Norwich, 7,327; New London, 5,888; Stratford, 5,555; and Stonington, 5,412. The other was Farmington with 6,069. In the years between 1756 and 1774 New Haven's population increased 63 percent, Stratford's 52 percent and New London's an incredible 86 percent, almost doubling its citizenry in less than 20 years. With the increase in population came an increase in maritime activity, which in turn spurred the economic shift to small manufacturing.

The colonists had always avidly purchased English manufactured goods, especially clothing, and as early as 1640 the General Court passed a resolution urging the local manufacture of woolen cloth. Mills appeared in Stamford in 1700 and Guilford in 1707, and in 1760 Christopher Leffingwell began a stocking-weaving business in Norwich, but the English competition was too established to be undermined by local efforts.

Early Connecticut industry varied from nail-making to pewterware, but one of its first and most famous industries was clockmaking. The first clock built in America is said to be the handiwork of Thomas Nash of New Haven in 1638, and he created a precedent which other masters, often from Europe, followed with considerable success, among them Ebenezer Parmele, who installed a tower clock in Guilford's meeting house, and Thomas Harland whose Norwich complex busily produced clocks for over thirty years. Harland, something of a mechanical genius, also built Norwich's first fire

engine.

During the middle and late colonial period, people along the Connecticut coast believed they had in many ways fulfilled the dreams of the early settlers. Towns along the Sound grew, prospered, and began to develop a local identity: New Haven, a busy port, was also the home of Yale University (a distinction first held by Killingworth and then Saybrook before the school decided to move); Stonington was called the "nursery for Seamen" because the town, home of one of the first whaling franchises in 1647, provided so many seafaring masters; Saybrook gave its name in 1708 (not long after it lost Yale) to a famous and controversial plan of church government and discipline called the Saybrook Platform; Norwalk became famous for its stone pottery; and Norwich, known for its shipbuilding, was also the home of Daniel Lathrop's apothecary shop, patronized by country doctors from as far away as Waterbury.

The shoreline was changing rapidly, expanding, becoming more and more in touch with the world, becoming more and more economically diversified. But the greatest change of all was fast approaching as colonists along the shore and everywhere else in America were beginning to feel the ponderous weight of the British crown.

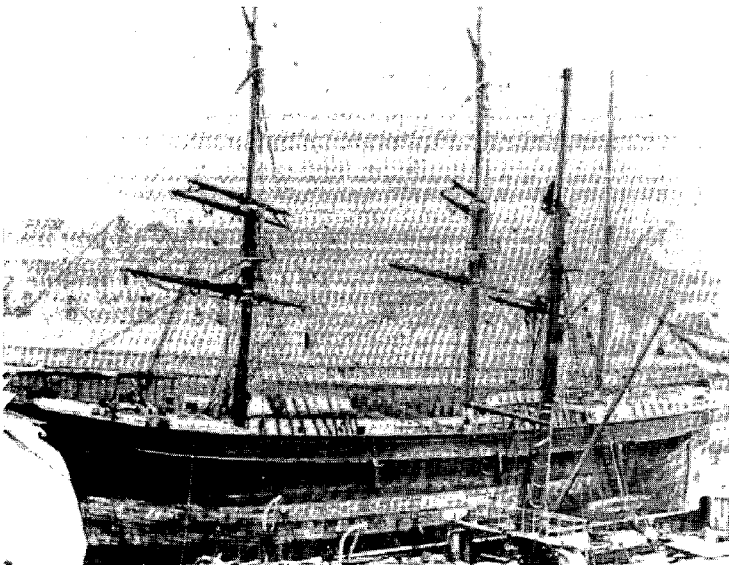
The Adventures of Captain Kidd

*Come all ye young and old, you're welcome to my gold,
For by it I've lost my soul, and must die.*

— Ballade of Captain Kidd

Connecticut's coastline, with so many hidden coves and secluded estuaries, was a favorite haunt for smugglers and pirates in the 17th and 18th centuries. The history of Long Island Sound is filled with tales of daring midnight entries into busy ports, boardings on the open sea and chases across the Race. The tradition even extends into the modern era; the port of Stonington, for instance, was a major rum-running location during Prohibition in the 1930s. The Sound can also claim dubious credit for the greatest pirate of them all: Captain William Kidd.

Toward the end of the 1600s, Long Island Sound was so beleaguered by pirates that the Earl of Bellomont, governor of New York, was ordered by the Crown to



19. Captain Clifford's barque, "The Wandering Sprite."

suppress the illegal activity and make the Sound safe for commercial traffic. Bellomont appointed a respectable young seaman who lived with his wife in Manhattan to do the job, and the choice turned out to be the worst he could have made. The young man's name was William Kidd. Seduced by the romance and profit of a pirate's life, Kidd soon became the scourge of Long Island Sound, preying upon commerce and raiding shore communities for provisions. His new profession took him around the world and his reputation for treachery grew, until he became a legend in his own time. At the turn of the century Kidd was offered a full pardon by Bellomont and eventually surrendered to him. But the promise was not kept and Kidd was arrested and sent to England to stand trial. Kidd maintained that he was not a pirate at all, but a privateer, who only attacked ships belonging to the enemies of England. The English court was not impressed and Kidd was hanged in 1701.

Before his fateful surrender, Kidd was supposed to have buried some treasure on Gardiner's Island off Long Island, and to have told Bellomont himself that he expected to find it when he returned after his pardon. Kidd, of course, did not return to Gardiner's Island, and neither Bellomont nor anyone else has ever claimed to have found Kidd's booty.

There are spots along the Connecticut coast which Kidd, burdened with treasure, was supposed to have visited. Sachem's Head in Guilford is one (the name goes back to the Pequot War when Uncas, a member of Mason's party pursuing the retreating Pequots, killed a local sachem and placed his head on a pole because the poor chief could not or would not give him information as to the whereabouts of the renegades); another is a rock formation called Captain Kidd's Punch Bowl in the Thimble Islands off Branford. There are local legends about people who have found treasure chests there, yet the stories, like those about Kidd himself, have never been substantiated.

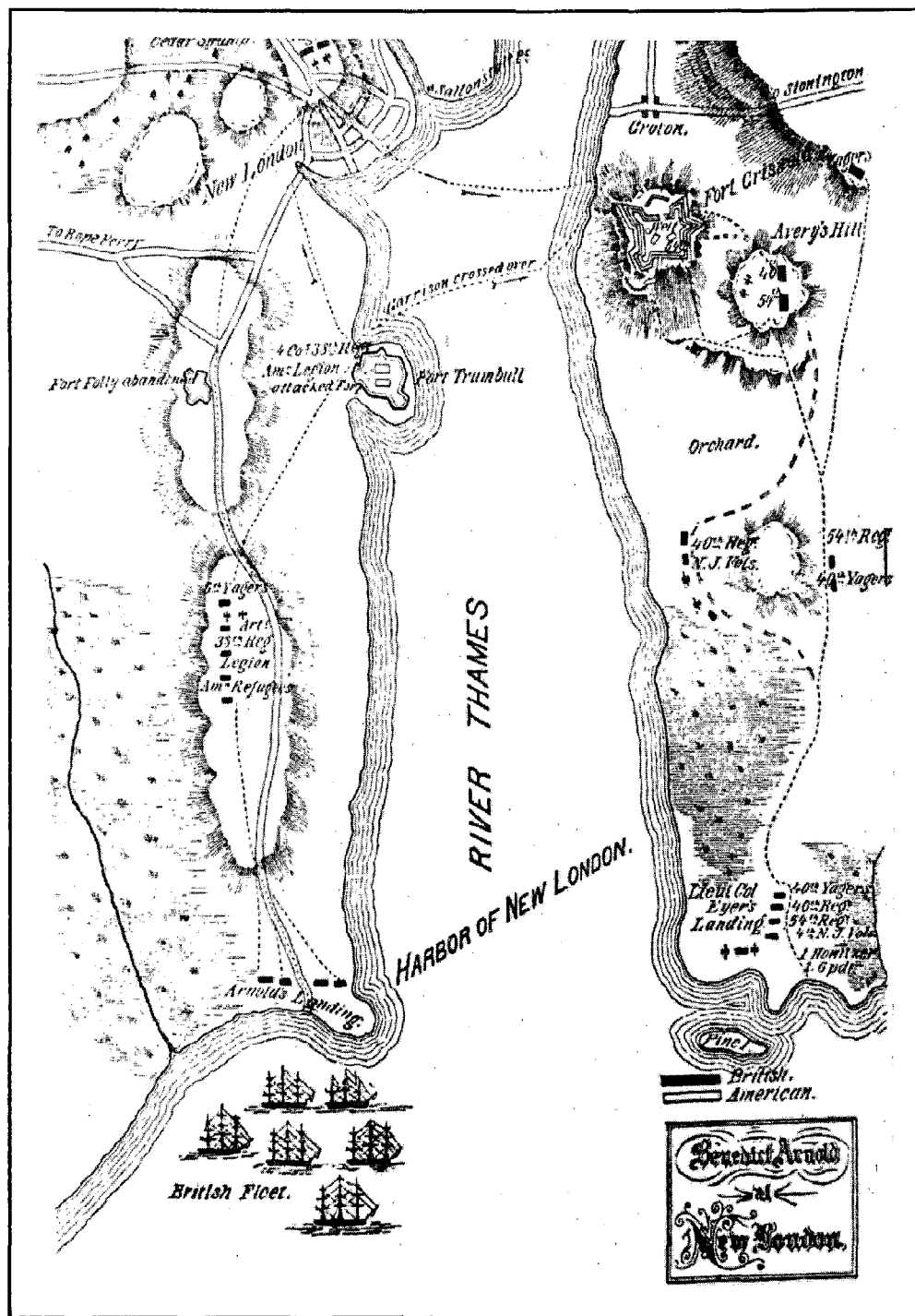
There were pirates on the Sound after Kidd's death, but the cold expediency of British justice tended to take the romance out of piracy. Still, there was always smuggling and this form of "moonlighting" by coastal seafaring men remained popular. Even during the Revolution, smuggling, called "illicit trade with the enemy," was lively, for some Connecticut seamen had no qualms about trading with the English. There were two major routes: land and sea. The first was the old rum-running route through Greenwich (the Byram



20. Captain William Kidd, the notorious pirate.

River there is derived from "Buy Rum"), the second involved seamen in all the coastal ports, especially New London's whale boat men who were commissioned to prevent smuggling and illicit trade, but who were, in fact, actively engaged in it.

Connecticut merchants and seamen found smuggling an easy way to fatten their incomes. In 1781 there was so much contraband being run into New London that the government had twelve sloops patrol the waters between Saybrook and the Race. New London merchants welcomed this early version of the coast guard, because they acted as a deterrent to pirates, but they had little if any effect upon smuggling operations. Piracy had declined somewhat in the 1700s, replaced by privateering (nothing more than a sanctioned form of piracy), but the smuggling trade prospered. In war or peace, boom or depression, smuggling was a constant in the life of coastal Connecticut.



21. Map depicting the Revolutionary War battle in New London.

Revolutionary War

With the coming of the Revolutionary War, the normal routine of the Connecticut shoreline was disrupted. There were shortages, salt especially, which was used to preserve meat, while paper money issued by the state depreciated rapidly. Some trade was carried on, but few ships risked the British blockade to reach the Caribbean isles. There was also some trade with America's new European allies, Holland, Spain and France; in 1777 four ships left New Haven harbor bound for Bordeaux and in Hartford there were newspaper advertisements for French goods, suggesting that the British blockade had a few cracks in it.

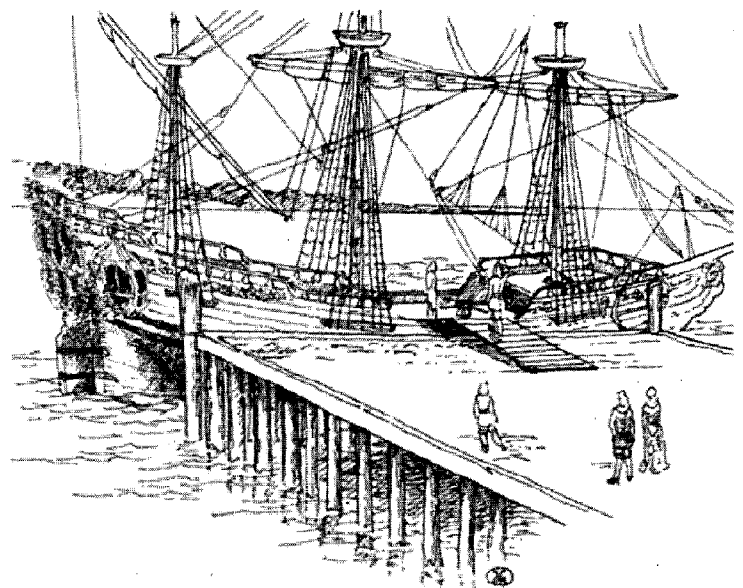
As the war progressed, trade became more and more difficult. "God knows," said one New London merchant, "whether we shall ever be in a situation to Carry it (trade) again, no business now but preparation for war, ravaging villages, burning of towns, etc." Some merchants tried to sell their ships, others went out of business, most went into privateering; and citizens, no longer caught up in the bustling mercantile life, could only complain about the price of food and worry about the possibility of a British invasion.

Early in the war, the General Assembly enacted laws against hoarding, which was upsetting an already faltering economy. Instead of selling produce at market prices, farmers would hold back, creating a greater demand for their goods, until people were willing to pay higher prices. The families of men who had gone to fight suffered the most; a soldier's pay did not have very much purchasing power in so inflated a market.

One observer, appalled by the fact that so many were making profits during the war, asked a very pertinent question; "Will your army continue to defend you on the field when their wives and their children are famishing and crying for bread at home?"

Despite hoarding farmers, illicit traders, and black-market profiteers, communities were generally united in the Patriot effort, meeting quotas for troop provisions and forming committees to assist the families of soldiers. Life was immensely difficult for the people who lived along the coast, but their struggles were offset by a sense of purpose which managed to carry them through five anxious, often desperate, years of war.

22. Coastal trade continued despite heavy losses throughout the War.



War on the Sound: Connecticut's Privateers

If the war seemed one-sided in Britain's favor, it was because of the size and reputation of the English Navy, the largest and most experienced in the world. The English ships, although instrumental in a number of coastal raids, were primarily used as a containment force, blockading harbors, patrolling rivers and coastal areas, and supplying the British troops. There was no such thing as an American Navy when the war began, although one was soon organized and during the war mounted an impressive record against the English.

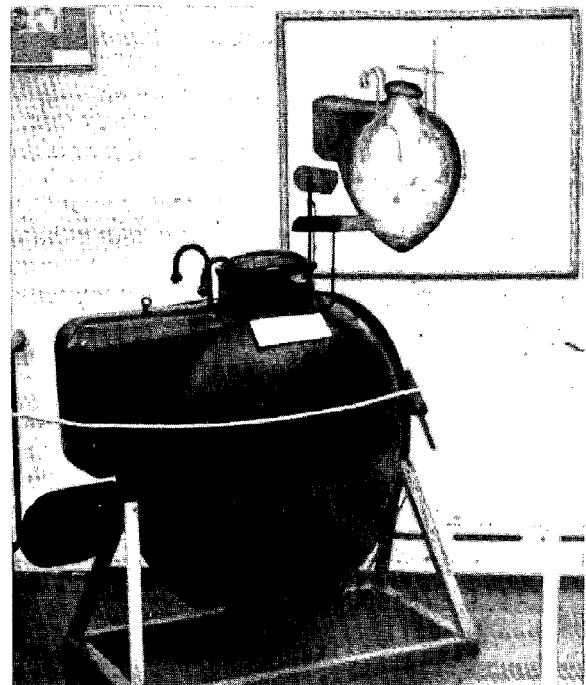
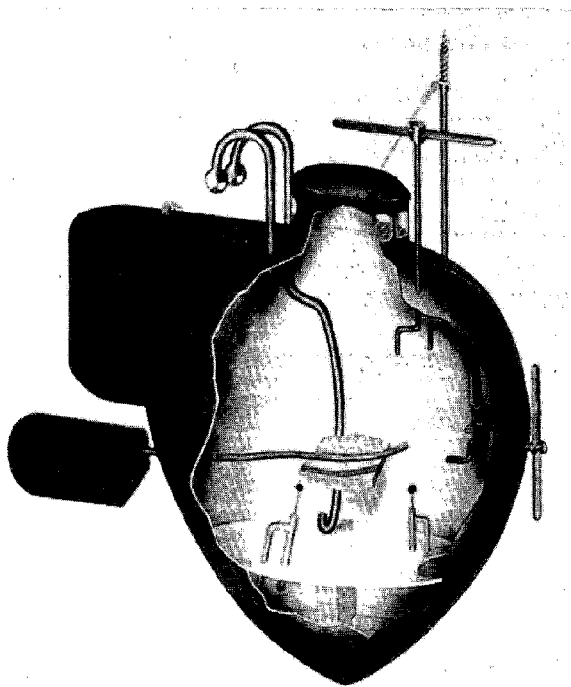
Individual colonies, too, formed their own militia-navies, and Connecticut, whose navy was created in 1775, commissioned a fleet of thirteen ships to do battle with the English. The most successful Connecticut naval vessel was the *Defence*, a brig commanded first by Seth Harding and then by the daring Samuel Smedley of Fairfield. Under Smedley the *Defence* cruised the Atlantic from Newfoundland to the Windward Islands, bringing prizes totaling over half a million dollars into Connecticut ports.

Both the Connecticut and national navies gave

employment to coastal shipbuilders and seamen, but the backbone of the Patriot maritime effort against the British was privateering. Privateers were independent seamen who were willing to risk their lives and ships in an occupation that was both patriotic and financially rewarding. Some privateering vessels had only one owner, but most ventures had several backers, in order to spread out the risk.

If a prize was taken, the bounty was split in two, with the Connecticut government getting half and the owners, captain and crew sharing the other half. On some ships there were awards for the first one to sight an English vessel and for the first to board one; and there was sometimes compensation for sailors who suffered disabling wounds. The profit was high, but so was the risk and danger, and once in a while success could contribute to a ship's demise, as in the case of the New London sloop *Eagle*, which took seven quick prizes and a large number of English prisoners, who eventually rebelled, took over the ship and killed the entire crew except for two boys.

Although privateering was active in New Haven, Saybrook and Darien, New London was a virtual hornet's nest. Over 100 privateering vessels hailed from



23. David Bushnell's "Turtle," a forerunner of today's submarines, was used to drill holes in British frigates during the Revolution. Bushnell, a recluse inventor, lived and worked in Connecticut.



24. Benedict Arnold.

that town at one time, bringing in a total of nearly 300 prizes. Many of these were very valuable, such as the *Lively Lass* of London, captured by the *Recovery* and *American Revenue* with a cargo worth \$200,000; and the *Hannah*, the greatest single prize ever captured, valued at \$400,000. New Londoners were a hearty and daring lot. The New London ship *Spy*, for instance, sailed up the English Channel through the very heart of the English fleet to avoid being captured; and Captain Ebenezer Dayton and Captain Jason Chester captured five British vessels off Fire Island and brought them back safely to New London. The exploits of these men were so adventurous they almost seem fictional, but despite their successes, the British were not willing victims, and no one's luck held out for very long. Even the dashing *American Revenue*, which took 13 prizes in two years, was not invincible and fell to the British frigate *Greyhound* in 1779.

The privateering ventures were organized, in part, to harass the British blockade of Connecticut ports. The British had no difficulty in maintaining the blockade, since Long Island Sound has only two outlets to the sea,

through New York and via the Race, and it remained tight in 1776 and 1777. Months passed before coastal privateers could claim a prize and many, in fact, were captured by the British. The blockade relaxed somewhat in 1778 as British attentions shifted to the south, and the next few years privateering was at its peak.

In the course of the war, Connecticut sent out between 200 and 300 privateering vessels, and while there is no doubt that the losses inflicted upon the British greatly aided the Patriot cause, no port, not even New London, grew rich from privateering.

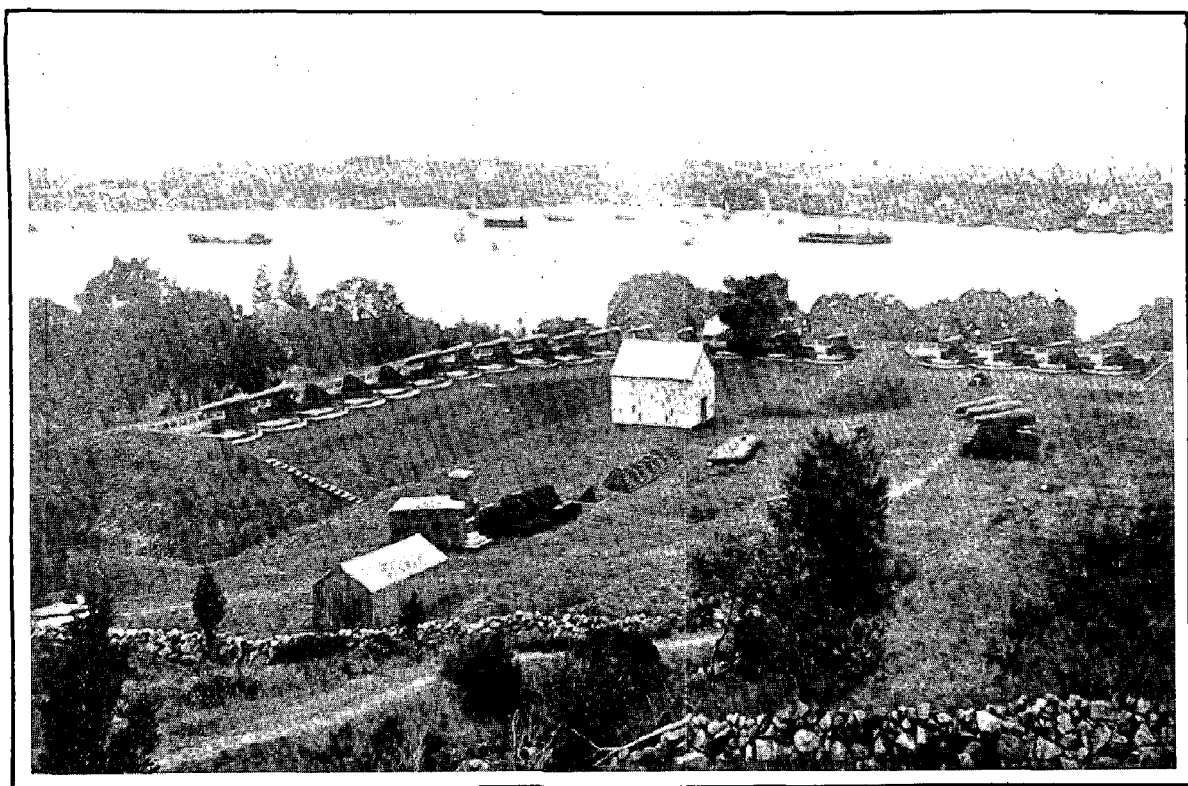
By the end of the war the escapades of the privateers became legendary, so much that privateering actually interfered with military recruitment; men would rather risk their lives at sea than as lowly privates in the military. While privateering made some wealthy, most of its investors lost money. It was a risky business, but it was the only business available. Because trade was at a standstill, merchants could either let their ships stand idle or use them for privateering. They usually chose privateering, though trade was far more lucrative, far less dangerous, and merchants and seamen alike longed for the day when trading would once again return to the coast.

Invasion of the Coast

Connecticut was not the scene of a great or strategic

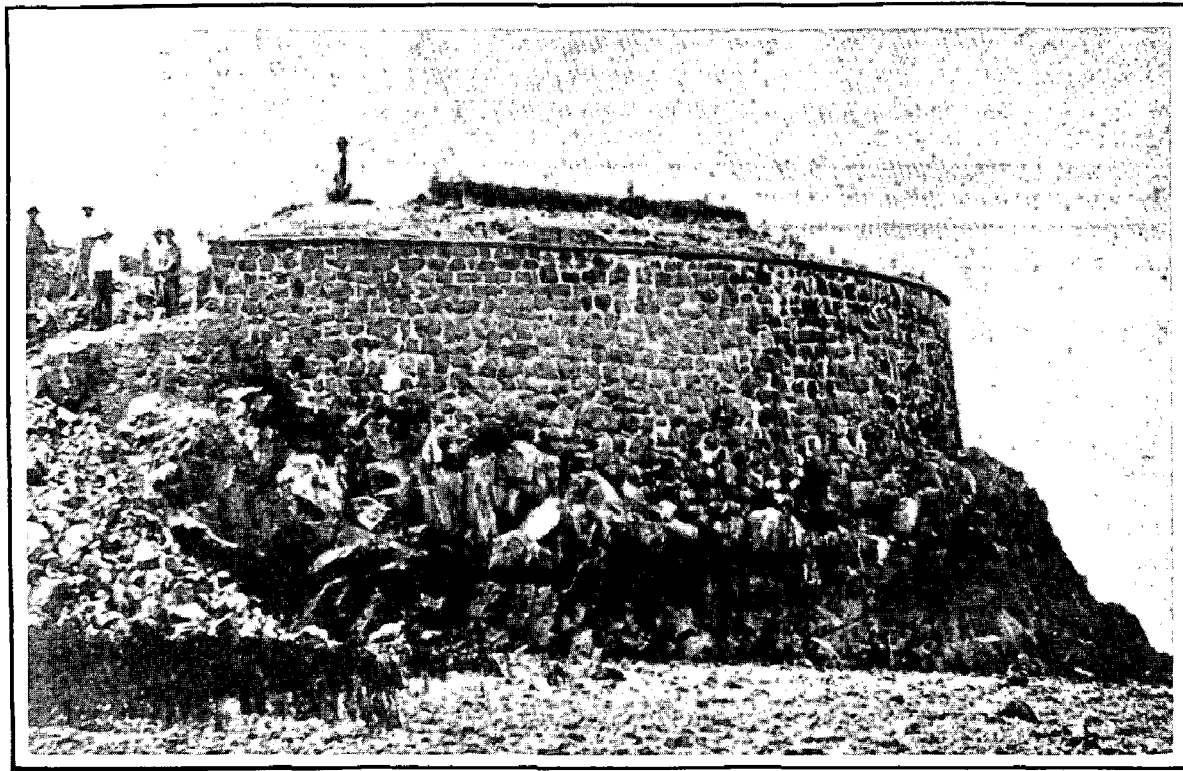


25. An early photo of Benedict Arnold's house in New Haven. The building was razed in the 1960s.



26. Fort Griswold, Groton, the scene of a major Revolutionary War battle.

27. Fort Hale, New Haven, a Revolutionary War fort.



battle during the Revolutionary War, but it did not escape the attention of the British army. Even before the War began, Connecticut Patriots feared an attack by sea, so much so that in 1775 the General Assembly placed seventy men at New London, thirty at New Haven, fifteen at Lyme and forty at Stonington to guard these vulnerable towns. Throughout the war, the shoreline was the victim of raids by Tory marauders, usually from Long Island, but after the British gained control of New York, Patriots believed a full-scale invasion was imminent.

Their fear came true, in April 1777, when Major General William Tryon, governor of New York, landed at Compo on the Saugatuck River, and marched inland to destroy Continental supplies at Danbury. The raid was successful in that many of the storehouses were burned, but Connecticut troops, led by Benedict Arnold, harassed Tryon's men until they were forced to return to New York. As it was, British casualties were close to 200, while the Americans lost only twenty.

The coast was relatively quiet for two years, until February 1779 when Tryon returned to the Sound, stopping at Greenwich to destroy the saltworks there and pillage the area. In July a British force commanded by Tryon and General Garth attacked the New Haven area as a decoy maneuver to lure General Washington's Army away from its stronghold on the Hudson. The British met resistance from local troops, including a number of Yale students and some militia under the leadership of a young Aaron Burr, but these were only skirmishes. The British seemed a bit confused as to their purpose in New Haven, and did little more than burn some storehouses, harass some citizens and drink rum.

The British force under Tryon had more success in East Haven, even though the presence of Connecticut militia and artillery forced them to retreat. Tryon and Garth then descended on Fairfield and nearly razed the defenseless town; after crossing to Long Island for supplies, they returned to the Connecticut coast to ravage Norwalk, destroying two churches, nearly forty stores

and shops, 130 homes, flour mills, saltworks, 90 barns and five ships. The raids proved costly to the colony, although very few people actually lost their lives. The tactical diversion failed, however, since General Washington did not move his army into Connecticut as the British had hoped.

The next invasion was the last and the most brutal: the British destruction of New London. It was a raid that was as ironic as it was bloody, for commanding the assaulting forces was none other than Benedict Arnold, who had helped repel the first British invasion — Tryon's raid in Danbury. The expedition, 32 ships strong, arrived in New London Harbor in September 1781, the same harbor which had just seen the arrival of the *Hannah*, the richest prize ever brought into port by New London privateers. About 900 troops, including regulars, American Tories and Hessians, landed on both sides of the Thames River. New London fell quickly to Arnold's divisions; the British burned 140 buildings and all the ships in the port except for the few schooners that fled upstream to safety. Even the houses of suspect Tories were burned, including that of James Tilley, a friend of Arnold's who was, in fact, entertaining the general at dinner at the time.

On the other side of the river, in Groton, a bloody battle was taking place. Colonel William Ledyard, commander of Fort Griswold, after refusing twice to surrender, finally succumbed to the superior British force. With the fort taken, a British officer cried out: "Who commands this garrison?" Ledyard answered, "I did, sir, but you do now," and handed his sword over to the officer who promptly stabbed him with it. The rest of the Americans at the fort were killed, including those already wounded, some of whom were placed in an ammunition wagon and blown up. The brutality of the invasion angered the Patriots and embarrassed the British. The attack itself was of questionable success; British losses were high, and privateering, which had prompted the attack in the first place, continued even as New London lay smoldering in ashes.



28. Steamship travel was sometimes dangerous, but passengers traveled in style. This is the posh interior of the "Bristol."

Steamships, Railroads, Trolleys

The first steamships to sail up and down the Connecticut coast — small, noisy, smokey contraptions — must have caused many of the old sailors who lived along the Sound to scratch their heads in disbelief. Here were vessels that needed no sails and didn't appear at all seaworthy; moreover, they were fire-breathing beasts that consumed cord after cord of wood. The first steamboat, Robert Fulton's *Clermont*, which sailed up the Hudson in 1807, was not an impressive-looking craft, but it did work, although not very efficiently considering all the fuel it used.

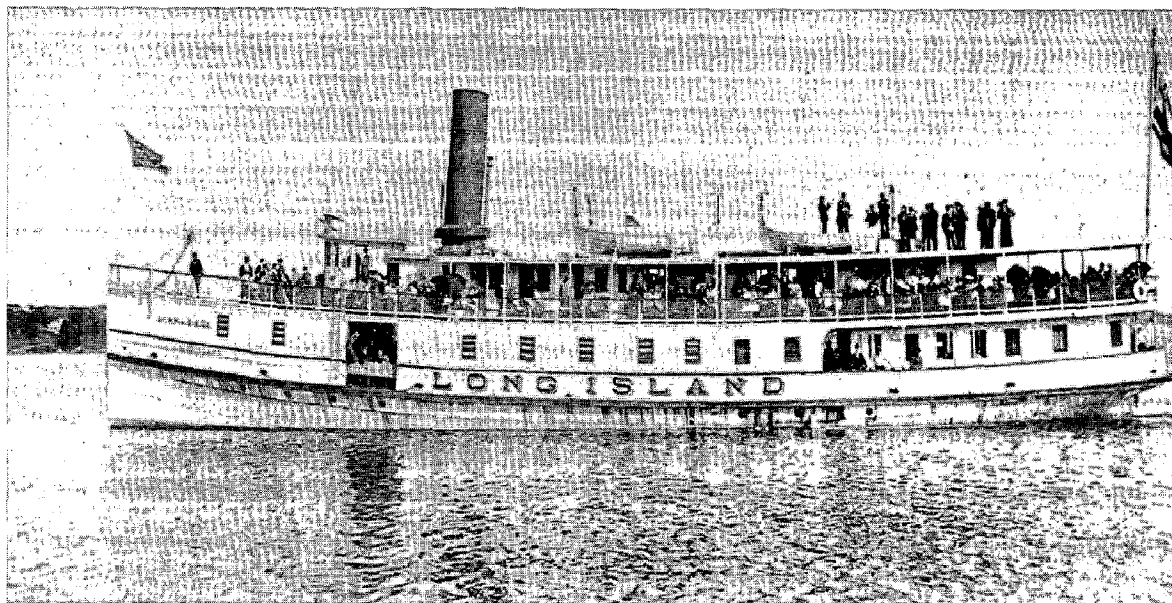
As it turned out, the ships that followed the *Clermont* were some of the most elegant vessels that ever put to sea. Before the steamships arrived on the Sound, one traveled along the coast by sloop or by coach on bumpy, pot-holed highways. The steamers, with their luxurious decors and promises of breath-taking speeds, changed all that; traffic between New York and Boston increased dramatically, mostly because of the ludicrously low fares (a steamship ticket could, at one time, be bought for a dollar), and towns along the coast — New Haven, New London, Norwich and Stonington in particular — thrived as stopping-off points.

It wasn't until 1815 when Elihu S. Bunker, captain of the steamship *Connecticut*, attempted successfully to pass through Hell Gate *against the tide* that a "New York to New Haven" line was possible. In a few years, a Boston to New York route was established, with New London as the terminal (the trip from New London to Boston was made by coach). There was one major problem, however, and that was a legal one: Fulton petitioned and received a monopoly granting him exclusive rights to operate steamships in New York state.

In 1822, Connecticut responded by prohibiting New York-owned vessels from entering her ports, which prompted the Fulton company to by-pass Connecticut altogether and make Providence the main terminal. It seemed as though the Connecticut boycott had done little more than deprive the coastal towns of the Boston-New York traffic, but the Providence connection had one formidable drawback. To get from New York to Providence, a steamer had to pass Point Judith on the western edge of Narragansett Bay, which had traditionally been a navigator's nightmare. Here the Sound, the Bay and the Atlantic combined to create a turmoil of currents which made the most seasoned sailor respectful and the most ebullient passenger sober.

The dispute between Fulton and Connecticut was finally settled when the Supreme Court declared the monopoly unconstitutional and a fierce competition arose among rival companies with each attempting to attract fares with low prices, luxurious salons and record times. Yet the traveller knew that the steamship accounted for only half the journey; the other half, which had to be traveled by coach, was long and tedious. When the railroads began operations the journey from New York to Boston was shortened and made infinitely more comfortable.

In 1837, the Stonington Railroad connected the once sleepy whaling village with the Providence-Boston line and created the so-called "inside" line from Boston to New York. Now passengers from New York could travel by steamship to Stonington — avoiding the dreaded currents of Point Judith — and then continue by rail to Boston. The Providence line, also called the "outside" route, felt its reputation damaged as a result, in that it



29. The steamship "Long Island," loaded with passengers.

had enjoyed a privileged position as terminal since the Connecticut boycott of New York ships. The Stonington group accepted and bought the sleek *Lexington* from Cornelius Vanderbilt to run as their flagship; the Providence group countered with a brand new steamer, the *John W. Richmond*.

As it turned out, the more modern *Richmond* won by an hour's time, but the race really proved little. The "inside" and "outside" lines competed with each other until 1875 when the Providence and Stonington Steamship Company was formed, uniting the former rivals. The merger proved extremely successful and the P&S proved it was the biggest money-maker of them all, grossing over one million dollars a year.

Racing was a popular sport among the steamship captains, much to the dismay of their passengers. But because people wanted to get from one place to another in a hurry, steamship lines prided themselves on the speed of their fleets. If these races seemed irresponsible and dangerous, it's because they were just that. Racing taxed the boiler systems of steamers and consequently, explosions were not uncommon. The *New England*, for instance, engaged the *Providence* in an impromptu race up the Sound, and won, but in Essex harbor on the Connecticut River the ship's overheated boilers exploded and fifteen people were either killed or injured.

The steamers, despite their convenience, were considered unsafe by many travellers, and at the beginning of the Age of the Steamship, it was a frequent sight to see a steamer towing a sailing vessel filled with passengers who were too fearful of the new ships to board them.

After steamships became respectable, racing subsided. Nonetheless, there were still a number of tragic accidents which kept some passengers wary. On Thanksgiving Day in 1846, the *Atlantic*, considered the largest and finest vessel of its day, was wrecked on the rocks at Fishers Island after a fire broke out on board. In 1880 the *Narragansett* and the *Stonington* — two flagships of the Providence/Stonington line — collided in a fog near Cornfield Point; the *Stonington* returned to port unaided, but the *Narragansett* caught fire and sank, losing 80 people.

The most shocking accident occurred when the *Lexington* went down a few years after its famous race with the *Richmond*. It was on a freezing January night in 1840 when its new coal-fed engines became so hot that they set part of the cargo of cotton on fire. The blaze spread quickly and the ship, engulfed in flames, was abandoned. Passengers crowded into lifeboats which were almost immediately swallowed up by the cold angry waters of the Sound. The death toll reached 120 people and only a few survived, those who stayed alive

clung to the unburned bales of cotton.

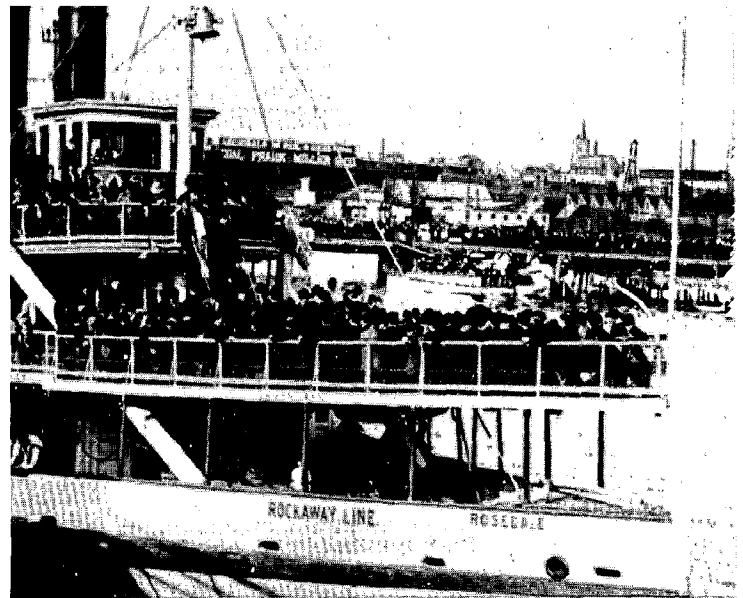
Steamships lasted well into the 20th century, but with the mercurial rise in popularity of the railroads and later the automobile, the steamers were relegated to ferrying and pleasure cruises. When steamships ruled the Sound, travelling was an adventure. Certainly there were, on the larger vessels, pickpockets, thieves and prostitutes, but the thrill of riding on the sparkling white and green-trimmed *Connecticut* or lounging in the plush salon of the *Lexington* must have been ample compensation.

The steamships took the Sound by storm in the early 1800s. By the 1900s, they had become so deeply entrenched in the life of coastal Connecticut that they were still used and appreciated long after they had outlived their usefulness — almost as though the people who lived along the shore, who grew up with the glamour and grandeur of the steamers, did not want the Age of Steamships ever to come to an end.

Railroads

The people who lived along the coast in the early 1800s were not, at first, agreeable to the idea of railroading. The Sound and the rivers, they thought, took traders and travellers where they wanted to go and that seemed sufficient. Yet the mercantilism which dominated the period was too overwhelming a force to disregard and Connecticut, although a leader in manufacturing, found itself far behind the times in the area of transportation. Connecticut had a relatively complete system of turnpikes, but they were not the most comfortable means of travel. There was one stagecoach route from Boston to New York, and it meant a tiresome journey of more than forty hours — which was considered a good run — over seemingly impossible terrain.

Merchants soon realized they could not survive without railroads; business was burgeoning, growing at an incredible rate, and the new markets — especially New York City — demanded safe and speedy transportation. Still, the people of Connecticut procrastinated, suspicious of the new-fangled engines. The charter for the New York and Stonington Railroad was finally granted by the General Assembly in 1832, only after a long debate on the merits of trains. Some critics saw them as iron monsters which would “produce more harm than

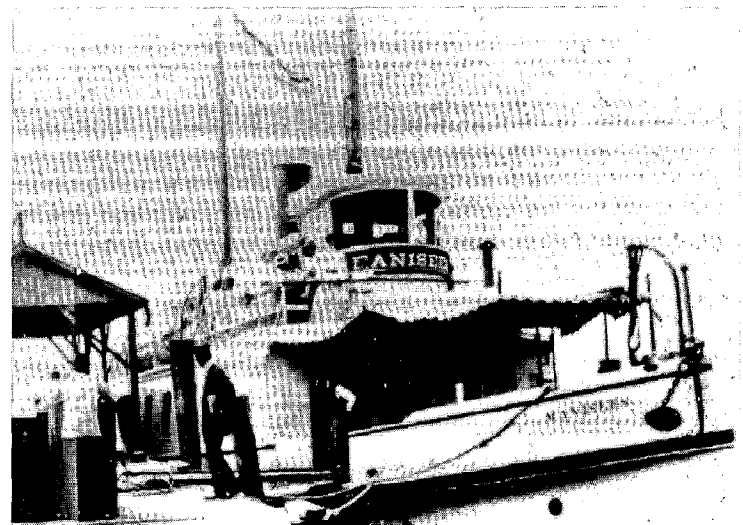


30. Bridgeport ferry.

good, and may result in great injury and injustice to private property.”

The first in-state line connected New Haven with Meriden in 1838, and Hartford a year later. The line, operated by the Hartford and New Haven Railroad, proved to be a typical railroad construction in Connecticut during the early 19th century. It was a north to south route, linking inland cities with coastal ports and encouraging the growth of small towns along the line (New Britain, which fought to have a depot in Berlin, became a major industrial city, while Newington, which refused to allow the railroad within its boundaries, did not). One important north to south line, the Housatonic Railroad, opened up western Massachusetts to the Sound, forming a connection between New York and Albany via Bridgeport. This railroad, which became one of the first to transport large quantities of milk to New York City, was instrumental in creating an industrial renaissance in Bridgeport. Led by railroad

31. Steamer “Manisees,” Noank.



promoter Alfred Bishop, Bridgeport also became the southern terminal for the Naugatuck Valley to Winsted, which proved to be a wise investment because of the local brass industries.

On the other side of the river, Norwich and New London became part of the New London, Willimantic, and Palmer Railroad, but the construction of the line was hampered by the rugged geography. A 300-foot tunnel, for instance, just north of Norwich had to be bored through a bed of solid granite. By the time the line was completed, in 1850, four other lines were competing for the area's textile business, and the line was eventually taken over by the Central Vermont Railroad. It was, however, northern New England's only direct rail connection with Long Island Sound. It operated trains drawn by steam engines until 1950.

Other north to south lines followed: the New Haven and Northampton Railroad was built along the old Farmington Canal connecting New Haven with Plainville and Northampton, Massachusetts; the Norwich and Worcester Railroad opened Putnam and northeastern Connecticut to coastal trade; the Danbury and Norwalk Railroad prompted the growth of South Norwalk, soon to be a point on the New York-New Haven line; the Connecticut Valley Railroad posed a particular threat to river steamship travel when in 1871 it connected Hartford with Saybrook; and the New Haven and New London became well known as the *Shore Line*.

By 1840, Connecticut had made up for its early distrust of railroads by connecting its towns and cities through a complex network of rails. The lines were mostly north to south routes and it was obvious to everyone that the most important line, one which

would directly connect the shore towns with New York City, had yet to be built. Everyone knew that the line was an economic necessity. The economy of the Connecticut shore could not survive without the business of New York City, and so capital was not difficult to obtain; the problem was geographical.

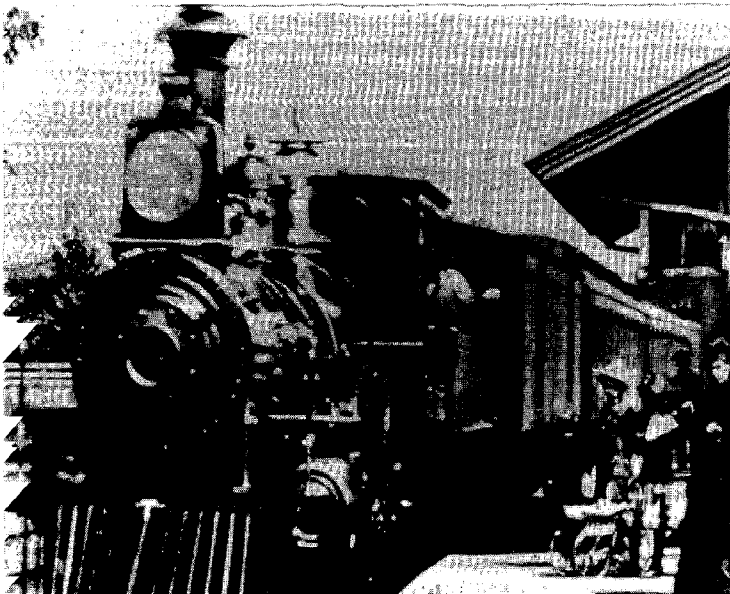
The coast was not made for railroads. There were dozens of rivers and streams to bridge, acres of wetlands to fill, and many hills and promontories to scale. Yet the coastal route, being flattest, was also the easiest in Connecticut — one which followed traditional overland routes such as the Boston Post Road. The project seemed an impossible one, leading a number of New York entrepreneurs to invest in the Long Island Railroad as the major line between New York and Boston.

The Long Island Railroad, on the other side of the Sound, stretched from New York to Greenport, along terrain so flat it was practically a railroad builder's dream. From Greenport there were steamship connections to Stonington and then the rail connection to Providence and Boston. It seemed, even then, like a roundabout way to get from one city to the other, but the investors believed that the coastline of western Connecticut was too difficult to span and that the threat of competition from an all-rail Boston to New York route seemed distant.

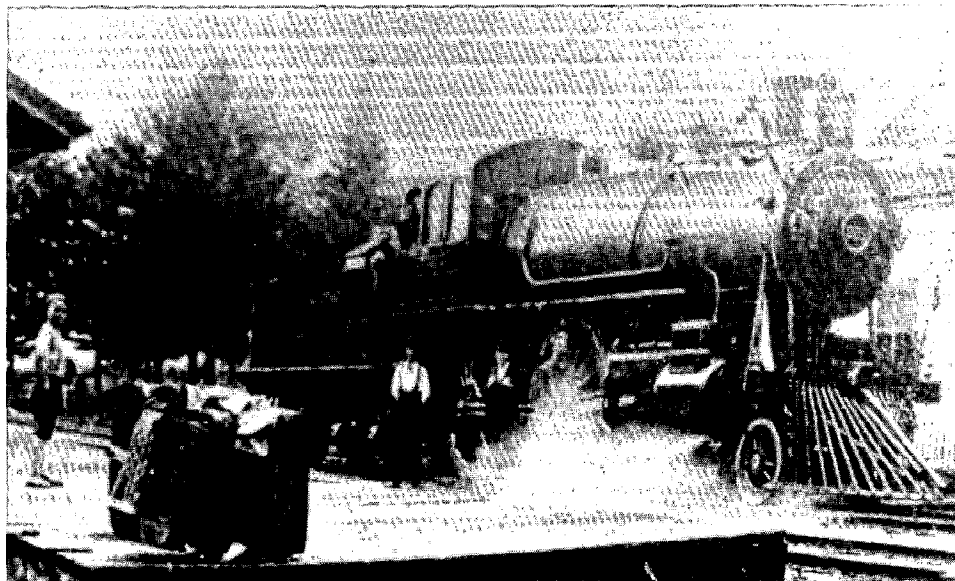
The Long Island Railroad was reputed to be speedy; but then the Sound crossing had to be made, and it was generally agreed that the stretch between Greenport and Stonington was one of the most hazardous parts of the Sound. When the plans for the New York and New Haven Railroad were announced in 1844, the Long Island Railroad stockholders waited for the next venture to fall on its face. Of course, it never did. The New Haven line began operations in 1848, and two years later the Long Island Railroad, unable to compete, went bankrupt.

The seventy-four mile route from Harlem to New Haven — the last link in a railway system that connected Maine with Georgia — was a formidable engineering feat. The line included almost two miles of bridges, including six drawbridges, and when there were no rivers to cross, there were ledges and hills to span. There were other less concrete setbacks as well; first of all, the venture turned out to be much more expensive than predicted, placing a considerable financial strain on its backers; and second, the railroad's entrance

32. Shoreline railroads created tremendous changes along the coast. Towns from New Haven to Stonington suddenly became cosmopolitan.



33. *A locomotive of the period, noisy but powerful.*



into New York City was opposed by the Westchester Turnpike Company and the Harlem River Railroad, both demanding subsidies. Even when it reached completion, the new line was plagued with troubles. In 1853, a train crowded with physicians returning from a medical convention plunged through an open drawbridge in Norwalk. And later, the railroad's president, Robert Schuyler, was implicated in a stock-watering scheme and fled to Europe with over one million dollars of the railroad's money.

The new railroad afforded towns like Greenwich, Stamford, and Norwalk the opportunity to flourish, not only as industrial centers but also as suburbs of New York City. Bridgeport and New Haven became hubs for a number of railways which accelerated their already lively economic growth. The New Haven Railroad, despite its questionable business practices, met with success because it provided the traveller with a comfortable, speedy, and scenic ride. A good portion of the track was specifically laid in full view of the Sound and quite often a railway passenger could sit back and watch as the train passed a stretch of wetland or a sloop cutting through coastal waters.

Through the 19th century, the New Haven Railroad's greatest competition came from steamships, which still appealed to travellers because of their opulence and comfort. The Railroad found that the most effective way to compete with steamship lines was to absorb them, and the company became famous for its pen-

chant for buying up everything in sight. It not only swallowed up a number of steamship companies but it also bought out trolleys and other railroads — the Housatonic and Naugatuck lines among them — and in 1872 it merged with the New Haven and Hartford Railroad, forming the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, popularly called the "Consolidated." Later, the "Consolidated" absorbed the Boston and New York Air Line, which was the most direct route between the two cities, cutting through Willimantic and Putnam.

The train was known to eastern Connecticut residents as the "Ghost Train" because its locomotives were painted white. By the turn of the century, the "Consolidated" had control of every connector line along the Boston-New York route and a collection of other lines as well. From 1872 to 1875, the stockholders of the railroad, mostly people from Connecticut, enjoyed unprecedented dividends. The line was so successful that at one time the railroad's annual revenue was three times that of the State's.

By 1903, the Connecticut ownership of the railroad gave way to New York interests, particularly those controlled by the magnate J.P. Morgan. The policy of expansion and monopoly, which had been responsible for the New Haven's success, was now conducted with a vengeance until the railroad became a giant conglomerate, burdened with a host of unnecessary and unprofitable enterprises. With the advent of the automobile, the railroad struggled, surviving the depression



34. A Branford trolley.

and war years with loan after loan, until finally the federal government took over the railways under the auspices of Amtrak.

Shore communities, however, remained dependent on the railroads, not only for commerce but also for passenger service. Today, despite the presence of super-highways, commuter trains run steadily from the coastal suburbs into New York, and the old shore line from New York to Boston via New Haven and Providence is one of the most frequently used lines in the east.

Trolleys

In the early 1900s, many of the shoreline towns were serviced by an interurban trolley system. In the New Haven area, cars ran every 43 minutes between New Haven and Branford. Once across the Quinnipiac River, the traveller would find himself in the open country of East Haven, which then had only 1,800 residents. It is now a community of over 25,000 people. The trolley

line ran across salt marshes and along shores causing less disruption to our marshes than the subsequent construction of paved roads which were begun in the twenties and thirties. Travel by trolley soon became outmoded; and the car and the bus took over the function that the trolleys once served.

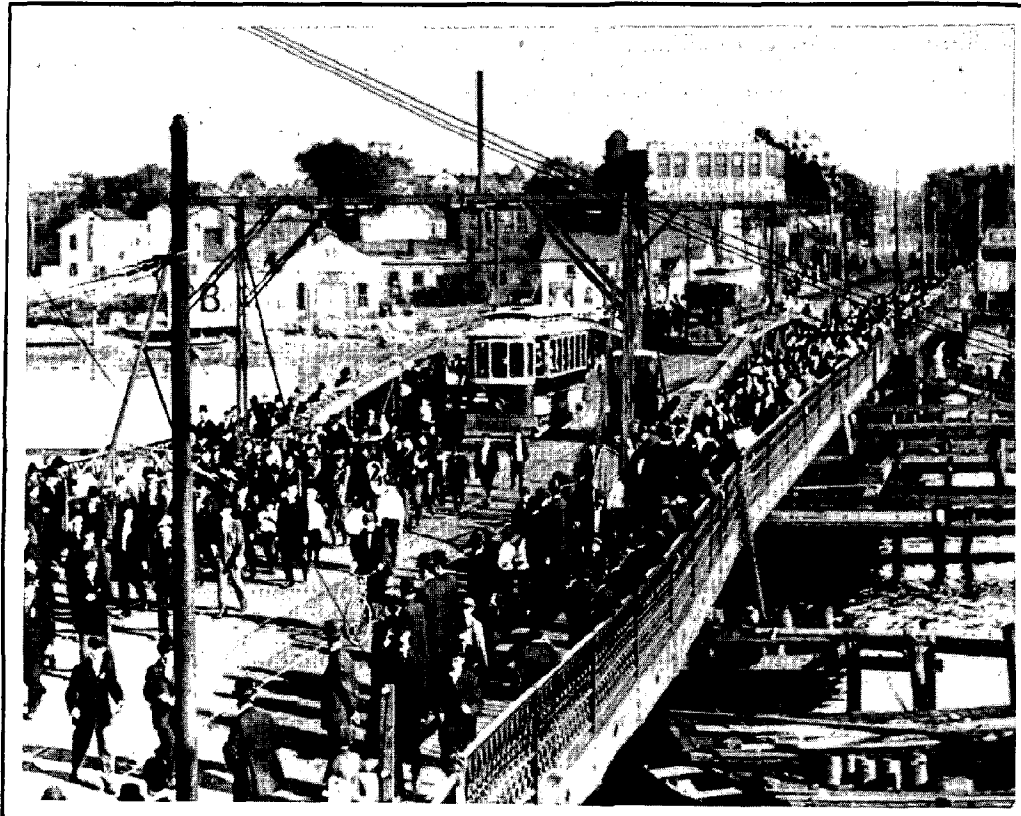
The Rises and Falls of Stonington

Surprising as it may seem, it was the small whaling village of Stonington that first introduced the Connecticut shore to the modern era. In the borough tucked away behind Fishers Island and seemingly far removed from the forces that were transforming towns like Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London into full-fledged cities, the first railroad line in Connecticut was completed, a modest few miles connecting Stonington with Providence. The day, November 10, 1837, was given over to celebration. It marked the inaugural trip of the newly formed Stonington Steamship Line, known as the "inside" line and later on, after its reputation was assured, as *Old Reliable*.

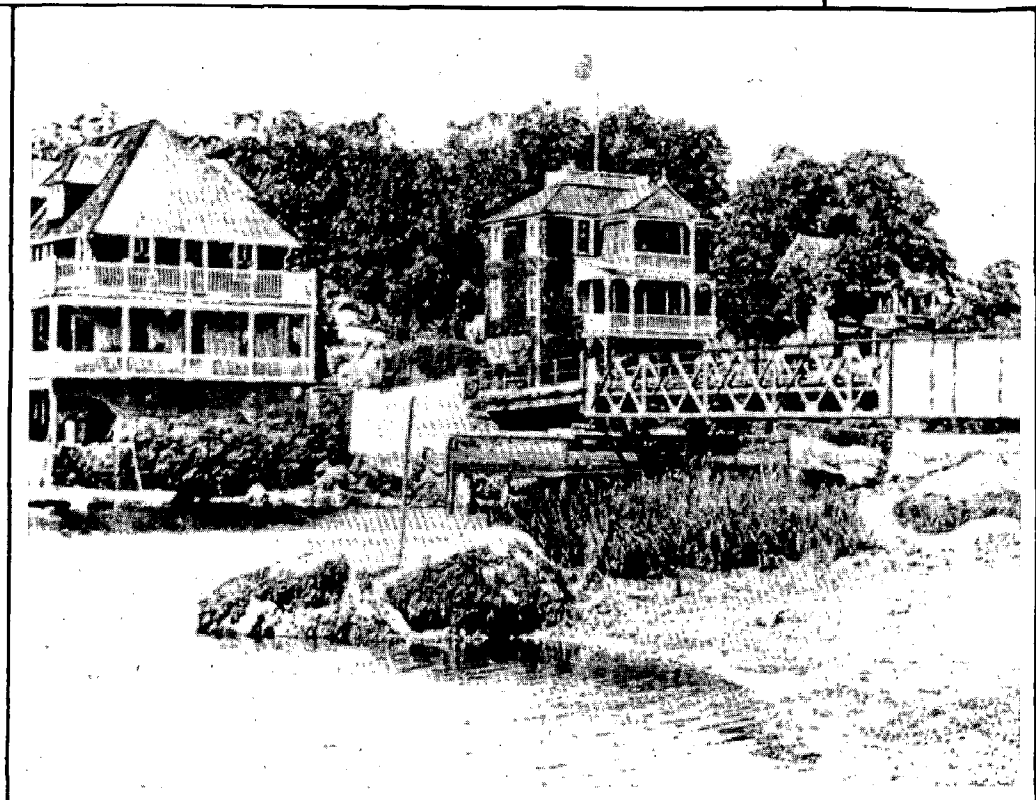
The *Narragansett*, flagship of the new company, was heartily cheered by the people of Stonington who envisioned a new era of prosperity ahead of them. Their borough, after all, had become the terminal for the Boston and New York traffic, a necessary link with the most travelled route in the northeast. A parade welcomed the first passengers and escorted them to the village's newest and grandest landmark, the Wadwanuck Hotel, a structure of incomparable luxury and

35. Trolley tracks running into East Haven, circa 1900.





36. Bridgeport trolleys during rush hour traffic.



37. Trolley bridge over the Hammonasset River.

elegance built to house the armies of travellers that would pass through the village (the hotel was torn down in the 1890s, and today the Stonington Free Library stands in its place).

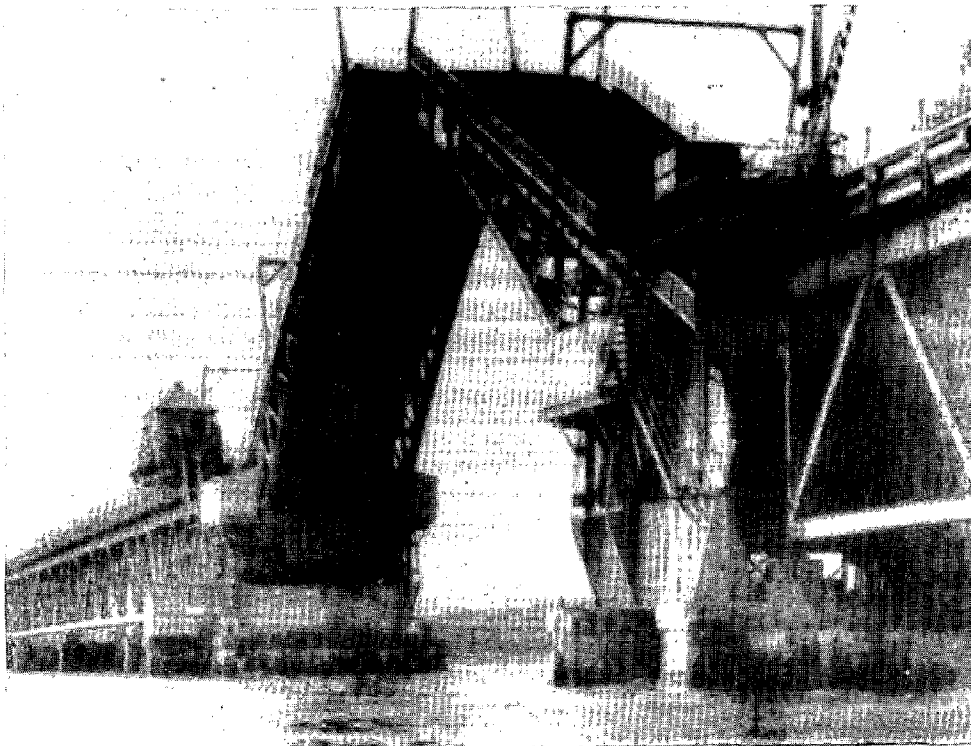
For all the cheering and hoopla that accompanied the arrival of the *Narragansett*, the people of Stonington were still wary of the ugly monster which railroad men called a locomotive. Railroading was still a daring idea in 1837 (there were only 2,000 miles of rails in the U.S.), and the villagers, fearing what the noisy machine would do to their peace of mind, would not allow the locomotive to enter the village under its own power. The first cars to carry the *Narragansett* passengers to Providence and Boston had the dubious distinction of being hauled to the steamboat wharf by horses. Nonetheless, the day was a historic one. Boston was now only 14 hours from New York, and Point Judith, the scourge of the "outside" or Providence line, had been successfully avoided. In eight years, the venture had become an established success and attracted no less an entrepreneur than Cornelius Vanderbilt, who saw the potential of the "inside" route and took over the line.

The ordinance prohibiting locomotives was eventually rescinded and a new roundhouse was built. And the prosperity that the new line promised did come true,

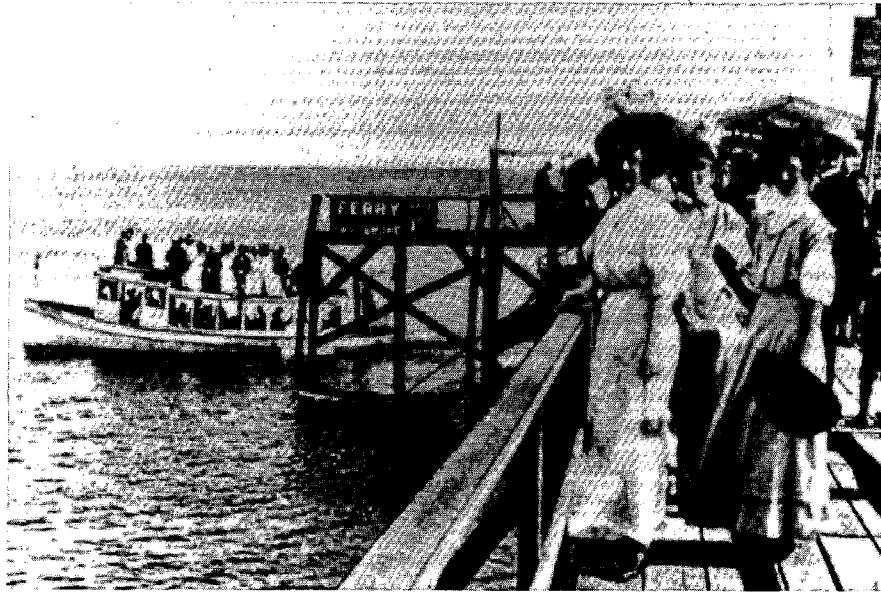
but at a price. When the passenger and freight service was expanded, some Stonington residents, appalled by the noise and chaos of the trains, wondered if they hadn't made a mistake in trading tranquility for industry. As Stonington grew, so did its doubts, and as trains continued to pour smoke and sparks from their enormous stacks, memories of the village's peaceful past seemed more remote.

The Stonington Company offered fast and safe service from New York to Boston, but after the Civil War, it merged with the Neptune Line and formed the Merchant's Steamship Line. The merger had a devastating effect on the people of Stonington, because Groton was selected as the terminal for the new firm. Stonington's economy degenerated and its citizens who had, despite their misgivings, come to depend on the steamships and trains for their livelihoods, complained bitterly without success. It was no longer financially practical, they were told, for the railroad to run through their village. Groton, more in the mainstream of the Sound traffic, was a better site.

In the same year, the pier at Groton burned down and with it went the *Commonwealth*, one of the flagships of the Merchant's Line. The company subsequently returned to Stonington. Later on, two other ships,



38. Bridging the rivers of Connecticut was a major feat. This is a drawbridge in Niantic.



39. *Waiting for the ferry, Bridgeport circa 1880.*

the *Commodore* and *Plymouth Rock*, met fates similar to the *Commonwealth*, and the Merchant's Steamship Company dissolved, leaving Stonington's wharves empty once again.

The New York, Providence, and Boston Railroad were dismayed by the bankruptcy and formed the Stonington Steamship Company. The village, which seemed to have as many lives as a cat, again became a hub of activity. In fact, this new life proved most lucrative, for in 1875, the "outside" Providence Line merged with the Stonington firm creating the P&S, the Providence and Stonington Steamship Company, which brought unprecedented wealth to the community. As before, the village had to pay the price of prosperity, and when the railroad tripled the size of its facilities along the Stonington pier, there seemed to be as many railroad cars in Stonington as people.

The two ships of the P&S, the *Narragansett* and the *Stonington*, were the pride of the shore, but on June 11, 1880, they collided in a fog near Cornfield Point, resulting in one of the worst steamship accidents in the Sound's history. In 1892, the P&S built two new steamers, the *Maine* and the *New Hampshire*. They ran until 1904 when "Old Reliable" — now under the control of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad — combined with the New London Steamship Line and moved the terminal to New London. Once again, Stonington's wharves were abandoned, and once

again there was a fire and a reprieve. When the New London docks burned, the line returned to Stonington, but only for a few months. Stonington had lived the last of its lives and on August 20, 1909, the steamship pier was closed forever. The roundhouse, repair shops, and water tanks fell into disrepair, and the trains and switches were soon overgrown with weeds.

The people of Stonington had always been ambivalent about industry and development, and after the steamships and trains were gone, they returned to their former peaceful existence. Without the financial base the steamship company provided, the village suffered throughout the 20th century. The Hurricane of 1938 destroyed the fishing fleet and weeks later, the American Velvet Company, the town's biggest employer, closed its doors. Unemployment was rampant and residents suffered through the Depression without much hope for the future. During World War II, when fishing was given special priority by the government, prosperity once again returned to the village, and the Stonington cat it seemed had a few more lives left.

After the War, Stonington became a residential community, no longer isolated, thanks to the automobile, and no longer a depressed area. Today, it is one of the wealthiest areas in the state and one of the most attractive. In fact, one would be hard pressed to believe that the quaint village was once one of the busiest little towns in the east.



40. Boating in New Haven Harbor.



41. Griswold Hotel, Groton.



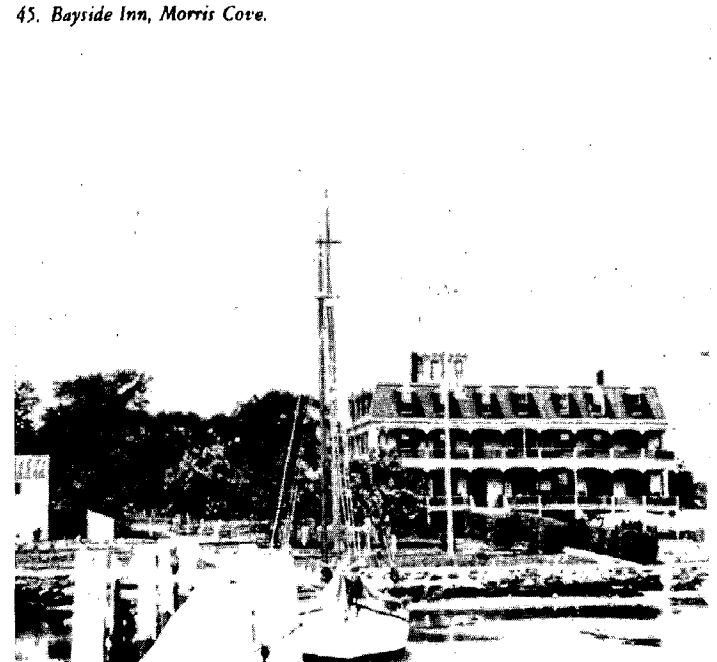
42. Morris Cove Hotel.



43. Outing by the sea, Old Greenwich.



44. Hammonasset House, Madison.



45. Bayside Inn, Morris Cove.

Summer Places

When the railroads and trolleys first appeared along the coast, they fostered industry as well as tourism, and inaccessible towns like Branford, Stony Creek, and Fenwick soon became popular resorts. The Branford shoreline in particular, with the Thimble Islands offshore, enjoyed immense popularity from the late 1800s until the outbreak of World War I. Many spacious homes were built on the islands and the area was sometimes referred to as the "Newport" of Connecticut. Fashionable hotels like the Hammonasset House in Old Saybrook, the Bayside Inn at Morris Cove, and the Griswold Inn in Groton were built to accommodate the influx of tourists. The shoreline and Long Island Sound were after all a natural recreational area, and as leisure time for local residents became a reality, locals took full advantage of the nearby resources.

Recreational boating began to develop in the late 1800s, and small work boats were converted to pleasure craft. One could take a short cruise in a catboat or a day-long excursion on a luxury steamer. Passenger steamers regularly took vacationers across the Sound to Long Island and up and down the major rivers, like the Connecticut, Housatonic, and Thames. Hot summer days sent hundreds swimming in the cool waters of Long Island Sound. Some of the more popular beaches were Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven, Cosey Beach in Branford, and Pleasure Beach in Waterford.

Fishing was also a very popular recreational activity; fishermen could take all types of fish from salmon, to shad, to bluefish, to blackfish, to porgy. Even recreational shellfishing enjoyed a popular boom. During the wintertime, the frozen waters of the major estuaries or tidal marshes provided skating territory, and an annual

horse racing event was even held on the frozen Thames River in Norwich. Of course, simply enjoying the grandeur of the seascape was (and still is) a popular way to spend the day in any season.

The "Newport" of Connecticut

One didn't have to be a Vanderbilt or an Astor to vacation in Connecticut. There were a number of elegant hotels up and down the shore, including the Beach Park Casino in Clinton, Fenwick Hall in Fenwick, Ye Olde Greenwich Inn at South Beach, the Rhondonolia Park House in Norwalk, the Montowese in Branford (called the "Queen of the Sound" by its apparently satisfied patrons) and perhaps the grandest hotel of them all, the Griswold Inn in Groton, which could accommodate 600 guests.

The rates at these places—most of which were on the Sound and very close to a New Haven Railroad junction—were very reasonable, although for the contemporary vacationer, who no longer flinches at paying \$40 a night for a rather ordinary room in a rather ordinary hotel, the rates seem unreal. A room at the Montowese, for instance, cost \$3 a night and up and one at the Griswold Inn went as low as \$5.

The Sound was truly an *American Mediterranean*, as Noah Webster had called it, and the Connecticut coast, for all its industrial growth, was an American Riviera. New London was no longer touted as the whaling capital of the world, but as the "yachting playground of America." There was a gambling casino at Grand Captain Island off Greenwich, and Pine Orchard, where in 1894 the Young family built a mansion with



46. Double Beach in 1909.



47. Coy bathing-beauties, Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven 1905.



48. Lighthouse Point Park, 1925.

twenty-one rooms, ten baths and ten fireplaces, was known as Connecticut's *Newport* (Pine Orchard, incidentally, was originally called *World's End*, but the name was changed for obvious reasons).

The turn of the century brought to the Connecticut shoreline a new kind of inhabitant—the summer resident. Whether up for the season from New York or down from Middletown or Hartford for two weeks, they came in droves, buying or renting shoreline property, creating little unofficial beach districts in townships such as Clinton, Madison, Old Saybrook, and Old Lyme. In Madison, the coast was, before 1870, a deserted stretch of beach, grown thick with wild beach plums and other plant life. The first beach house was built in 1867, but when vacationing at the shore became a way of life, Madison changed overnight. Hammonasset House and Flower House, once boarding houses for men who worked at the shipyards, were made into summer hotels—the sign of an economic turnabout which occurred in almost every coastal town and village outside the big cities.

There were chinks then in the industrial coastline, resorts and summer homes instead of factories and machine shops; but the difference was only superficial. The shoreline was developing rapidly, and whether it meant a new factory in Bridgeport or new cottages in Saybrook, it was still development: the wild beach plum became scarcer either way.

The coming of the automobile changed the face of the coastline even more, making it possible for the shore to become the summer vacation spot for more and more people. In the 1897 edition of the "Good-Roads" handbook for Connecticut, the focus was on bicycling. Advertisements for bicycle repairs and supplies fill the book, suggesting how popular bicycling was as a means of shoreline travel. In the 1928 edition, however, the focus shifted to automobiles, and advertisements for garages and auto parts were in the majority. Hotels, such as the Crocker House in New London or the Wauregan in Norwich, advertised their rates (\$1 to \$4 a day), their cafes, and entertainments, but they also made it quite clear that their facilities contained "our own garage in the rear of the hotel."

Savin Rock

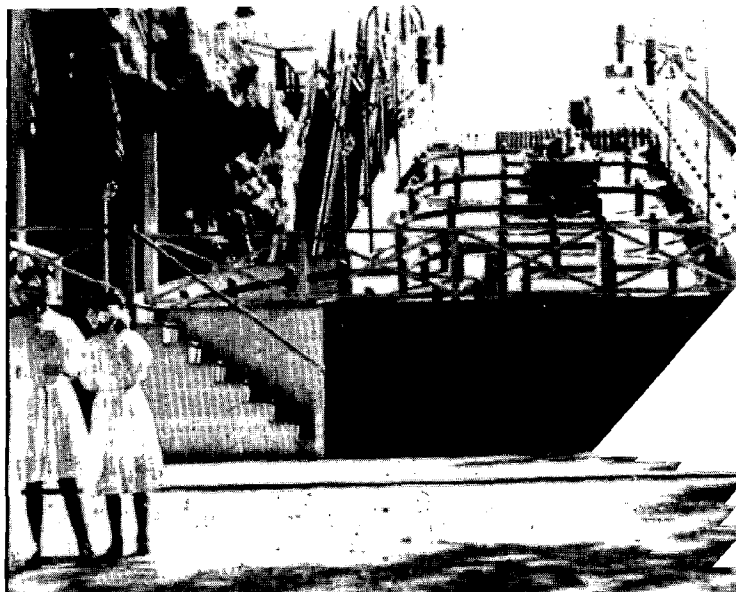
One of the shoreline's greatest turn-of-the-century resorts, Savin Rock, boasted elegant hotels and fine

restaurants, and claimed that "many of Connecticut's best families make Savin Rock their summer home, and that on Beach Street can be found some of the finest houses in the East." But Savin Rock also appealed to the working family. "If you want to be merry and gay," its advertisements read, "pay it a visit for a little holiday, and a little money, you can have a grand time." Savin Rock offered the usual resort fare—swimming, fishing, boating, and outings—but it was also the home of a prototype of Disneyland: White City, a spot "where troubles are forgotten and pleasure reigns supreme."

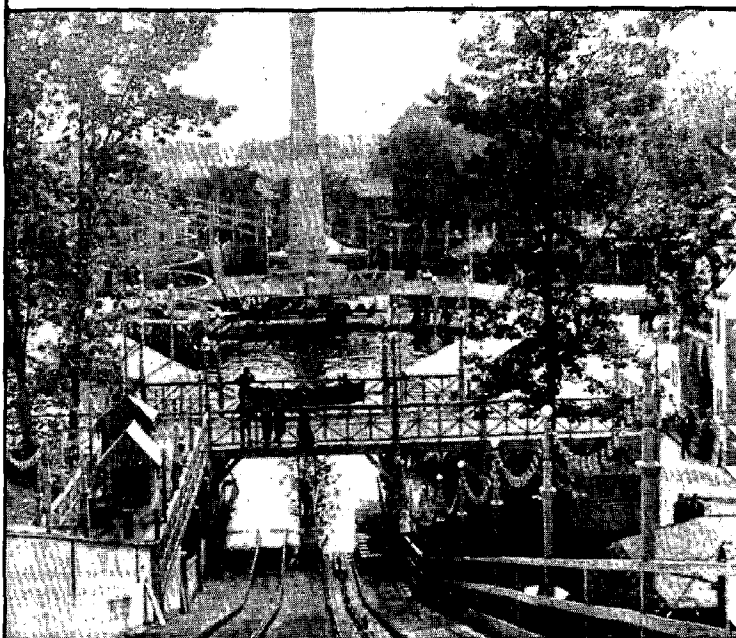
To get to White City, one had to pass under a white archway, beyond which there were walks, benches, booths, and a view, which, the owners insisted, was "one of taste and refinement." In the amusement area there were bandstands, a promenade, a maze, a baseball diamond where the Connecticut League played, and a game called "Baseball Man." If you could knock the baseball man from his perch with a baseball as well as his two wooden friends, Tommy and Jimmy, you would get a cigar. White City also contained the Hoosac Tunnel, a zoological garden with monkeys and parrots and other exotic creatures, a theater, a cafe, a dance hall, a "Myth Castle," a "Laughing Gallery," an "Electric Tower," a "Scenic Railway," and "The Chutes," with "its sailors working overtime to satisfy the demands of thousands who want to go down in either a Yale or Harvard Boat."

If all this proved too much for one day there was always "The Grove" where one could sit on a bench, eat some saltwater taffy or peanuts, or contemplate buying a souvenir (the most popular one was a clam shell with "Savin Rock" engraved on it). One could play pool at McDuff's Casino, spend fifty cents for a meal at Putnam's, take a walk down lovers' lane, visit Sperry Lighthouse, or just feel the breeze coming in from the Sound.

Savin Rock was a popular resort in the sense that it was a retreat for people of ordinary means rather than a spa for the very wealthy. The advertisements and brochures at the turn of the century make it sound like a magical place, and no doubt it was. One would actually spend a day—or longer—in a place devoted exclusively to pleasure. It was a place far removed from the routine of daily life, and yet, as the brochures emphasized, it was only "twenty minutes by trolley from New Haven."



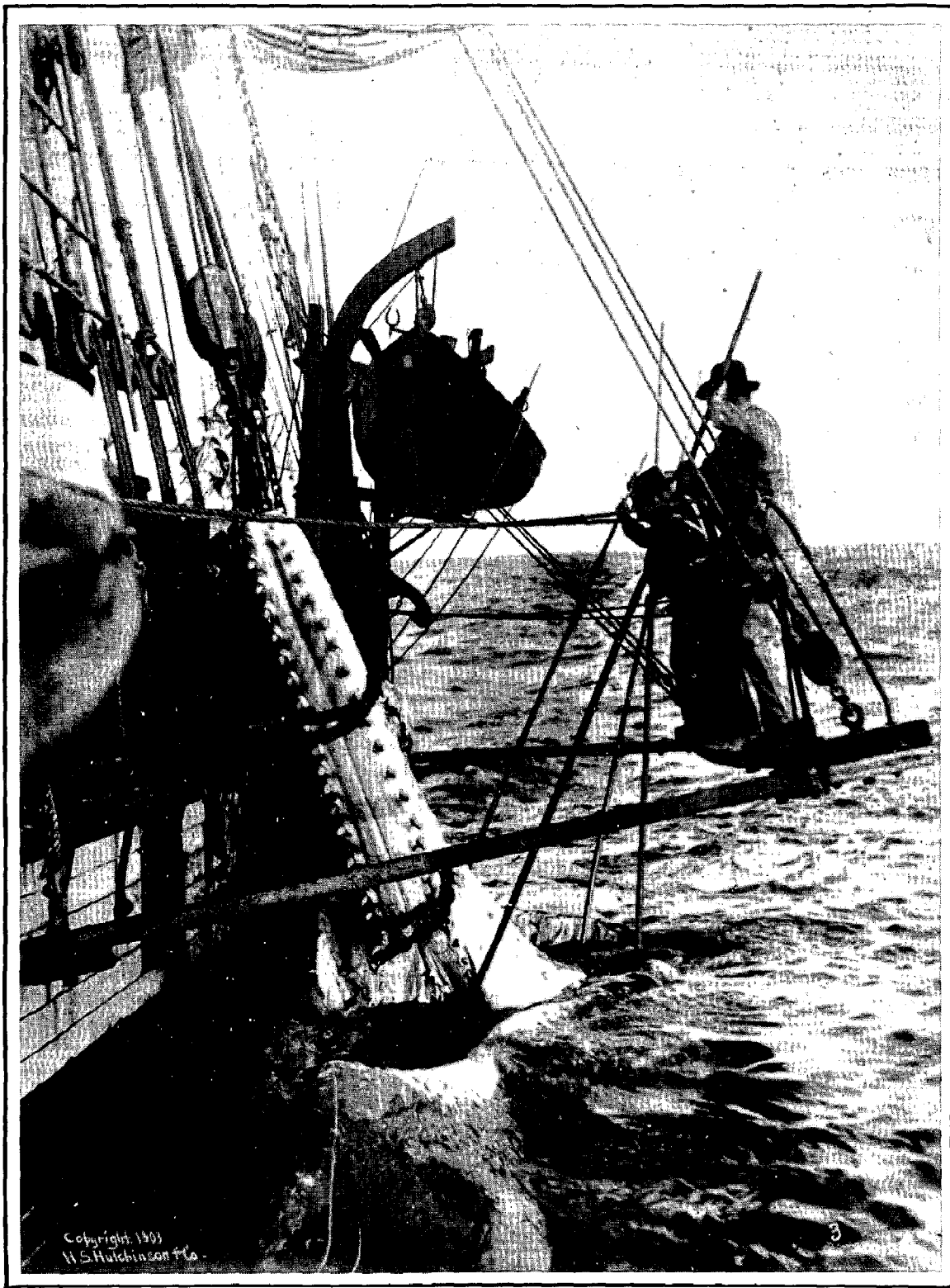
49. The "rickler" at Savin Rock.



50. View of the amusement park from the "Chutes."



51. Savin Rock restaurant along the boardwalk.



52. Whaling flourished in Connecticut. The men in this photo, taken in 1903, are severing the jawbone of a sperm whale.

Traditional Maritime Industry

Shipbuilding

When first settled, many of Connecticut's coastal towns were small ports living by coastal trade and shipbuilding activities. Shipbuilding was a moderately successful business as early as 1670, but the industry had little direct effect on the size and stature of the Connecticut trading fleet because most of the ships built in New Haven, New London, Mystic, Fairfield, Stonington, and elsewhere, were immediately sold outside the colony.

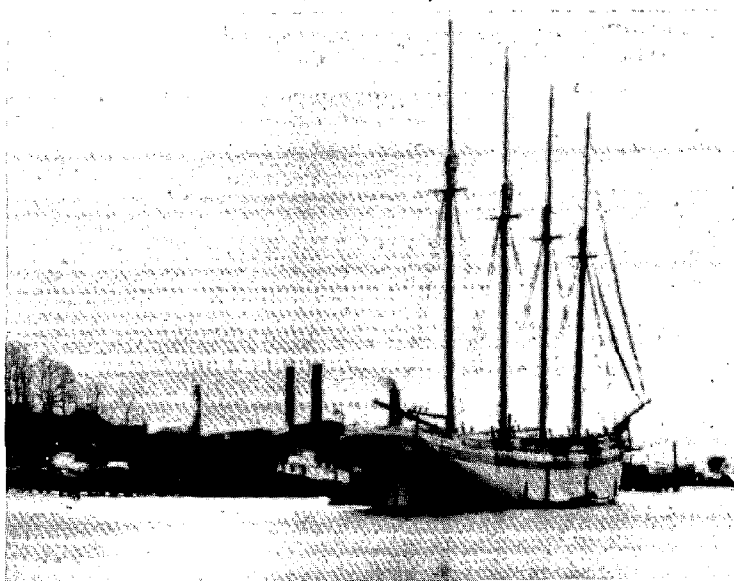
Connecticut builders specialized in sloop construction; the designers of these sleek ships were usually master carpenters who didn't work from detailed blueprints but from their own instincts and experience. No two vessels were exactly alike, and some by virtue of the painstaking craftsmanship invested in them could be viewed as works of art. By 1720, more and more English money was drawn to the Connecticut coast because of the low construction costs (unlike Boston, for instance, where timber had to be brought from great distances) and because of the increasing number of shipwrights who had taken up residence in the coastal towns.

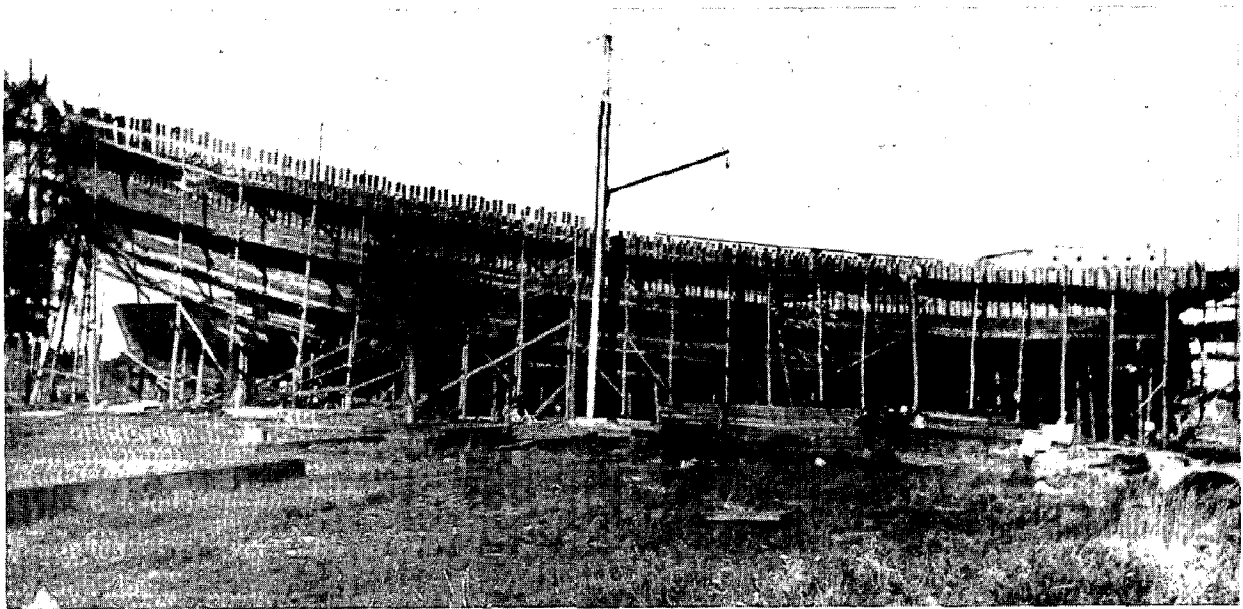
The influx of capital inspired the shipbuilder to construct larger and larger vessels until Connecticut builders, especially those in New London, earned a reputation for large ship construction, most of which were purchased by merchants from Bristol, England. The largest merchant ship of colonial America, a 720-ton vessel, was built and launched in New London in the 1750s; and another giant, the 570-ton *Don Carlos*, was launched there in 1775. Both ships were

sailed to Portugal and sold to English merchants in Lisbon. Both Mystic and Noank prospered as important shipbuilding communities during the whaling era, in the later part of the 19th century. Ships such as the *Charles W. Morgan*, a whaler which has been refurbished and can still be seen at Mystic Seaport, and the *Wandering Sprite*, a barque used to transport goods under the command of Captain Clifford, were typical wooden ships of the day. Yet vessels of nearly every description came from the Mystic and Noank yards; from fishing smacks to schooners and other large vessels.

Stonington, Mystic, and New London became important whaling centers which relied on the local construction of seaworthy ships. The whaling ships had to be expertly crafted vessels to withstand long voyages under adverse environmental conditions, and to accommodate the complex of work that routinely went on in search of

53. Four-masted schooner—a sleek, handsome craft.





54. Schooner "Jenny DuBois" under construction in Mystic.

the great whales. Ships even regularly sailed the Antarctic waters. During the Civil War, however, many Connecticut Whalers were victims of confederate raids; the destruction of so many fine sailing ships coupled with the discovery of oil in Pennsylvania brought the decline of the whaling era and with it the gradual disappearance of many shipyards.

Shipbuilding continued to flourish at Noank, nevertheless, where ready access to fishing grounds created a demand for vessels. Fishing schooners, a particularly elegant breed of work boats, were typically built in the late 19th century at Noank's Palmer Shipyard. In its day, the Palmer Shipyard represented one of the largest wooden ship builders on the Atlantic coast. Steamers such as the *Anne Wilcox*, which was designed and built by Deacon Palmer in 1881, were also produced by the yard. Capable of transporting passengers and freight simultaneously, such ships made regular runs from the Connecticut shore to New York.

Of course, building ships continues to be of economic importance to Connecticut—a typical maritime industry centered at the coast. The range in facilities is considerable: a small shipyard occupies the site of the Old Palmer Shipyard, and the building of nuclear-powered submarines at the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics in Groton employs roughly 20,000 people.

The Heyday of Whaling

After Jefferson's Embargo of 1807 and the War of 1812 had practically wiped out maritime trade along the coast, towns found it difficult to reestablish themselves as ports, and because the economic shift to manufacturing was only beginning, they seemed to languish for a time in a kind of economic limbo. Yet from 1820 to after the Civil War, circumstances changed dramatically with the incredible growth of a new enterprise—whaling. Towns like Stonington, New Haven, Mystic, and Darien began to outfit vessels to hunt whales in distant waters and soon a whaling hysteria took over the coast. By far the most active port in Connecticut was New London, which gained an international reputation as one of the three great whaling ports—along with New Bedford and Nantucket—in the world.

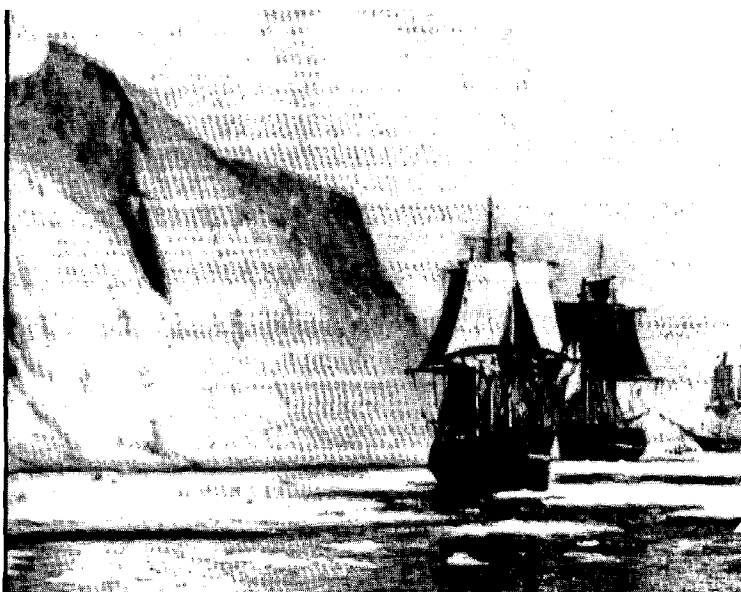
Actually whaling was not new to New Londoners who had hunted the great beasts in Long Island Sound as early as the 17th century. The first New London vessel to engage in whaling outside the Sound was the sloop *Society* which sailed off the coast of the Carolinas; other enterprises soon followed, including a company devoted almost exclusively to whaling established in 1804. It was founded by Dr. Samuel Lee, who had incidentally been a local hero during a yellow fever epidemic in 1798. Whaling was, at this time, only a

small part of the town's maritime activity. In 1819, however, whaling suddenly became big business and by 1832, New London was established as one of the major ports when no less than 20 whalers set out from port bound for Arctic and South Atlantic hunting grounds.

Whaling soon became *the* way of life for New Londoners, and nearly every family living in the town was in some way connected with the business. The docks were alive with activity; agents were busy outfitting vessels, signing up crews, arranging insurance and backing, while stevedores unloaded thousands of barrels of whale and sperm oil and stocked large piles of whale bones. Whaling-connected industries flourished along the wharf, from shipbuilding to sailmaking, from the manufacture of casks to the baking of biscuits. Young men served as apprentices to a number of whaling-oriented occupations, and people from different cultures—Indians, Portuguese, Blacks, South Sea Islanders, and Western Europeans—collected in New London to sign on whaling ships.

New London became a lively cosmopolitan, and very wealthy, port and during its whaling days sent out 1000 vessels in search of the valuable whale oil and bone. It was a wide open town—particularly the Water Street area with its hotels and saloons that catered to sailors. On the heights overlooking the harbor there was a row of elegant houses, the homes of captains and agents who had made their fortune in the whaling trade.

Although New London itself flourished, life aboard a whaling vessel was as unprofitable as it was difficult. It would be better, wrote one disenchanted whaler, "to be sold to a southern Planter . . . than to be doomed up the forecastle of a whale ship." Before the business reached its peak in the 1830s, whaling was a hard but rewarding business. A sailor didn't become rich, but at least he was not victimized by greedy owners. Captains ran tight ships, many forbidding liquor on board, and on some vessels there were extensive libraries so hands might spend their off-duty hours reading. Crews included men of all nationalities and races, and sometimes there were women on board (considered good luck by New London seamen), because captains liked to take their wives and children with them on long journeys. Often families stuck with difficult sons would send them on a whaling voyage to cure them of bad habits, but by 1830 crews were not so easy to find. The major reason for this was simple: whalers were poorly paid, and sometimes not paid at all.

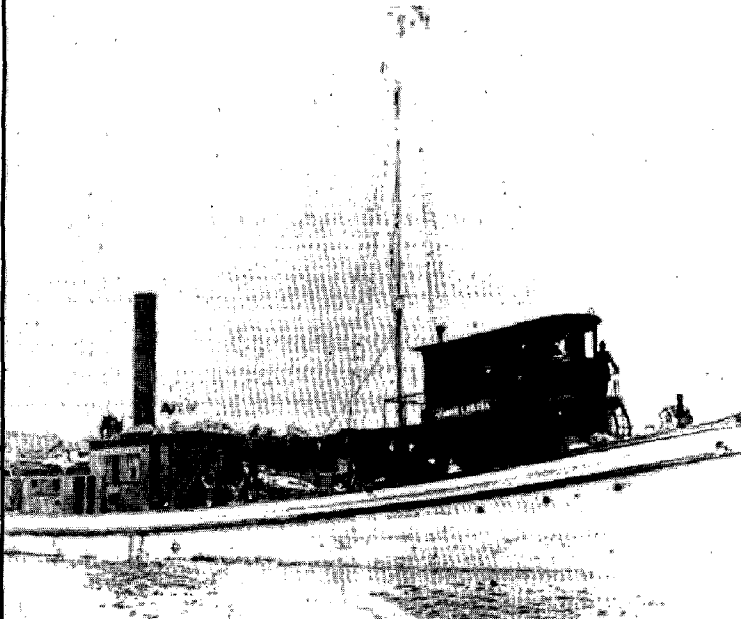


55. New London whalers even sailed to Antarctic waters.



56. Crew of the whaling ship "Margaret."

57. The "Anne Wilcox" was built at Noank's Palmer Shipyard.



Crews did not receive wages, instead they signed on for a "lay" or percentage of the profits. The captain and first mate would get 1/8 apiece, the second mate 1/28, the cook 1/100, the common seaman 1/150. The "lay" was not determined by profits the ship took in, but by what remained of the profits after the owners took their share, and they usually took 2/3. Any money owed to the owners—advances, purchases of clothing, tobacco, or other expenses—was taken from a whaler's share. So it was not, for the sailor at least, a very lucrative way to make a living.

One Anthony Jerome sailed on a whaling ship from 1844 to 1847 and his share of nearly 7,000 barrels of oil taken was a suit of clothes worth eight dollars. Another sailor was known to have earned \$2.50 after 22 months aboard the *Pearl*, and on the next voyage earned nothing at all. It was even possible for a whaler to owe money after a whaling trip which obliged him to sign on for another.

The whaling boom along the Connecticut coast happened to coincide with a migration epidemic that was leading some of Connecticut's ablest men and women west, where land was cheap and the future held great promise. The effect of the migration was sorely felt on those who stayed behind, particularly those in whaling towns like New London. Without seamen a vessel could not put out to sea, and often anyone, experienced or not, was hired to man a ship—including drifters, adventurers, and often criminals. One of the favorite ways of escaping the law was to sign on a whaler for three or four years. Even so, one wonders whether the law might have been more compassionate than the sea, for a whaler's life was also a dangerous one. Many ships were lost at sea, attacked by other vessels, or most commonly "taken down by a whale."

Whaling declined in the latter half of the 19th century mostly because petroleum, newly discovered in Pennsylvania, proved to be more efficient and cheaper fuel than whale oil. There were also, by this time, fewer whales, which meant longer, more expensive voyages to hunt them. The Civil War closed down all the whaling centers along the coast except for New London, and later the gold rush to California diverted men, ships, and money from Connecticut.

When whaling came to flourish in Hawaii and San Francisco, steam navigation between New London and the Pacific became important. Steamers took supplies

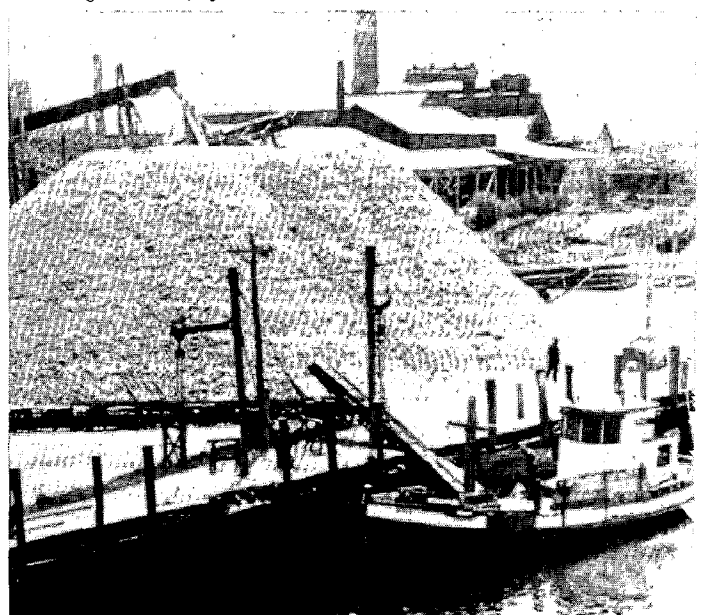
and carried crews from New London and returned with whale oil products. The New London-Pacific link lasted until 1922 when the North Atlantic and Western Steamship Company discontinued service from New London to Pacific ports. While whaling continues today as a business enterprise, no whaling vessel comes out of New London or any other Connecticut port. The last of the great American Whalers, the *Charles W. Morgan*, does reside in Mystic, where it is permanently berthed, and here the heritage of our whaling past is kept alive.

Oystering

The only fishing enterprise in Connecticut which could rival whaling was oystering. Connecticut having been blessed with square miles of natural oyster beds found itself in the 1800s emerging as the major producer of oysters in New England, and one of the major producers for the country. Some of the earliest reports we have from the settlers tell of the great natural oyster bounty. In some cases, enormous natural beds were found miles square. The oysters at times grew to enormous proportions with meats alone tipping the scales at five pounds each. Ship captains reported that in some instances beds had grown so thick that they formed reefs and blocked navigable waters.

It was a logical enterprise for European settlers, mostly of British descent, to develop the oyster industry; there was among the population an existing demand for oysters. At first, colonists simply followed many of the Indian customs for gathering oysters, but soon, as the population increased, they were consistently harvesting them for sale. Beds were eventually leased and others awarded as grants from the King of England.

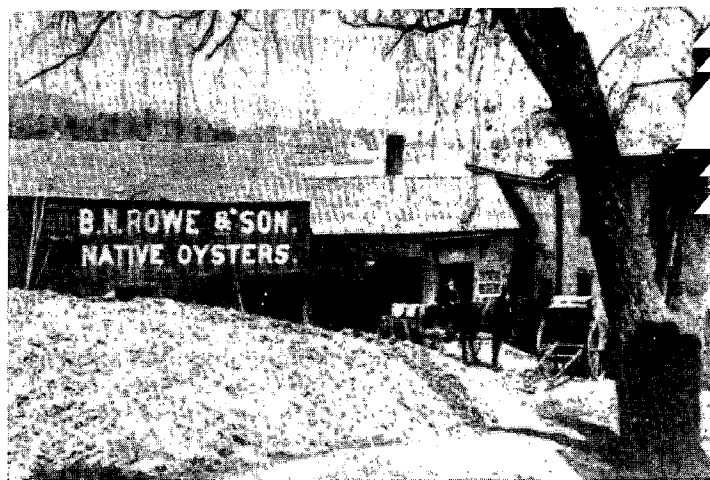
58. A huge harvest of oysters, New Haven.



The first laws regulating the taking of oysters in Connecticut appeared in the early 1700s. One law restricted lease rights to two acres per person to guard against monopolies. However, it was an easy matter for a local oysterman to have his wife, sons, aunts, and uncles sign up for two adjacent acres, and the monopolies continued. Another law which restricted the taking of oysters during months without an "R" resulted in the belief that oysters were inedible during May, June, July, and August. The "R" law was really no more than a conservation measure, because oysters normally spawn during the warm weather months, and officials wanted to ensure propagation of the species.

In time, oystering became an enormously popular sport—one which was not only fun but also financially rewarding. Ernest Ingersoll, writing in the 1800s described opening day of oyster season along the Quinnipiac River "as a time of great excitement." Hordes of tongers amassed on the riverbanks waiting for midnight, which signalled the legal start. "As midnight approached men gathered all along the shore," he writes. "And then a great bell struck a deep toned peal. It was like an electric shock. Waves of boats leaped out and advanced toward one another, as though bent on mutual annihilation. They were all compelled to move along as one, for none could resist the pressure of the multitude. The more thickly covered beds were quickly cleaned of bivalves. The boats were full, the wagons were full, and many had secured what they called their 'winter's stock' before the day was done, and thousands of bushels of oysters were packed away under blankets of seaweed, in scores of cellars."

Oyster companies grew and flourished along the Connecticut coast, specifically around the major estuaries of Norwalk, Byram, Mystic, Connecticut, Quinnipiac, and elsewhere. There were as many as twenty growers and shippers in the Fairhaven section of New Haven alone, and perhaps an equal number in Norwalk. What New London was to the whaling business, New Haven was to the oyster industry. Companies like F.M. Flower and Sons, F.F. Brown Co., Thomas Oyster Company, F. Mansfield and Sons, Sea Coast Oyster Company, Northern Oyster Company, and H.C. Rowe Co., flourished through the 19th and into the 20th centuries.



59. A typical New Haven oyster company.



60. Oyster cullers.

In Connecticut oyster production peaked between 1890 and 1915. In 1911, 15 million pounds of oyster meats alone were harvested from the Connecticut portion of Long Island Sound. The industry directly employed thousands: boat captains, tongers, mates, dredge operators, cullers, equipment maintainers, and others.

Once ashore, the oyster fostered and supported other industries and occupations—from the loaders at the receiving wharves, to the shuckers and packers of the oyster plant, to the shipbuilders, coopers, and other equipment manufacturers, to the roadmen, teamsters, shippers, and railroaders. In many respects, the importance of the oyster industry to the economy of Connecticut could not be exaggerated. It helped lay the groundwork for the local industrial revolution which required the organization and management of labor forces, the establishment of markets, and the creation of reliable transportation lines.

Ice Sluices

The many bays, inlets, and tributaries which characterize the coast of Long Island Sound provided a natural resource for another healthy though shortlived industry: ice sluices. Around the turn of the 19th century, refrigeration was virtually unheard of except for the conventional ice-box, which of course had to be periodically supplied with ice. Without the technology to produce ice artificially, residents of the day harvested natural ice in the winter and typically stored it in well insulated ice houses until summer, when the demand was great. The ice was then shipped by schooner to the hungry ice market of New York, and to selected areas like Hartford which could be reached by boat or barge.



61. Harvesting ice on a tidal river.

62. Ice house, Fairfield 1920.



Ice harvesting was a labor-intensive industry and employed hundreds of men between the years 1880 through 1930. Typically, the shallow tributaries meandering to the Sound often froze during cold winters. Tidal marshes provided many opportunities for ice harvesting and small sluices were located in them. To harvest ice, first the snow must be scraped from the river or pond. Then using a special sled with teeth, grooves were cut orderly into the ice. Next came the saw men who cut the thick ice—sometimes as thick as two feet—with handsaws resembling a lumberjack's. The ice blocks were corralled with pokers, hooked, and pulled to the ice house by a team of horses or several men.

As one might expect, the ice business was seasonal work while the industry lasted, but it often provided local farmers with a winter income, and turned ordinary water into a cash crop.

Salt Marsh Hay

In days gone by, the thick grasses covering salt marshes were often harvested with sickles and scythes. The cordgrass was used for hay and fed to livestock. It was also used for house insulation and in some cases for thatched roofs. One salt marsh in Pawcatuck was used extensively for hay during the Revolutionary War, and it was subsequently known as the Continental Marsh. The early settlers as well as the later colonists were suspicious of salt marshes. They often viewed them as wastelands and believed that they were the source of diseases. Perhaps the reputation was caused by the mosquitoes which often bred in the salt ponds found in marshes.

In later years, when the breeding ponds were discovered, ditches were often dug by hand to drain the ponds and diminish the mosquito habitat. This practice is still carried on today, however, the methods for cutting drainage ditches have been greatly automated and improved. It wasn't until the fifties that the important functions of salt marshes were realized.

Menhaden, Salmon, Shad

Although finfishing in Connecticut waters has not been the large commercial industry that shellfishing, particularly oystering, has been, there are several types of saltwater fish that have been economically important, contributing to the state's economy and providing

food and income for many coastal residents.

Two species of “anadromous” fish—those that are born and spawn in fresh water and spend their adult lives in saltwater—are the American Shad and the Atlantic Salmon. Both species are and were highly valued for food, the shad in particular for its roe. Both species were frequently netted in Connecticut and were familiar fare at the 18th and 19th century dinnertables of Connecticut residents. Early English settlers on the banks of the Connecticut River, where the shad and salmon made their annual trek up from the Sound, at first disdained the shad as a food fish. It wasn’t until the mid-1700s that shad even became a desired and valuable fish, fetching the princely sum of one pence each in 1733, and two pence each for a “good fat shad.” Thousands of barrels of shad were processed in Connecticut during the Revolutionary War from 1778–81, to feed the troops.

Salmon fishing flourished briefly during the 1700s in

Connecticut and dwindled by the turn of the 19th century. The first dam on the Connecticut River in South Hadley, Massachusetts in 1795 tended to obstruct the salmon run from the Sound up the Connecticut River. More dams were built in the 1790s, causing a sharp decline in the number of salmon available. Shad also were affected by the damming of rivers. By 1860, however, enough interest was shown in replenishing the salmon and shad populations in Connecticut waters that New England States fish commissioners began cooperative efforts to hatch salmon eggs and place the fingerlings in the historically active salmon rivers. The Connecticut River received most of them after a fishway was installed over the Holyoke dam in 1873. Over one million salmon fingerlings were stocked in the Connecticut River and its tributaries. Although the number increased, the salmon still couldn’t get above the Holyoke Dam because the fishway was misplaced: it emptied too far downstream and never seemed to receive enough



63. Transporting saltmarsh bay across Mystic River, 1904.



64. Fishermen in Guilford tarring their nets, 1890.

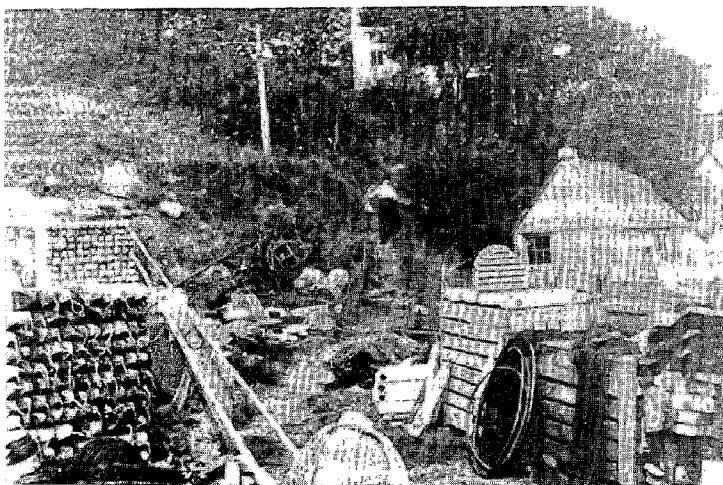
water.

As early as 1874, commercial pollution of Connecticut waters was regarded by State fish commissioners as "the most serious obstacle in the propagation" of the shad population, a further problem which confounded the shad industry.

Food was not the only reason for harvesting fish from coastal waters. For many years shad and menhaden were netted, particularly in the eastern part of the Sound, and used for fertilizer. Fish used for this purpose became known as "mossbunkers." Catching mossbunkers was a community-wide endeavor brought about by the heavy demand from farmers. Summertime brought the huge seine nets out to the Sound, scores of boats, and hundreds of fishermen. They usually returned to the docks with their nets filled with menhaden, shad, and usually several other types of edible fish, though in less quantity. The plentitude of fish for food and industry was evidence of the bounty of the Sound.

Besides fertilizer, menhaden were used for their oil which had a commercial value in the tanning industry. Menhaden were boiled in large iron pots until the oil rose to the surface. By the mid-1800s, processing plants had sprung up on the Norwalk Islands and on Shelter Island in Groton. And the quality of the menhaden fertilizer produced was comparable to the famous Peruvian guano. The industry had its drawbacks, however. For one, the newly-plowed fields enriched with men-

65. Fishermen's gear, Noank 1910.



haden fertilizer smelled to high heaven, causing many people to complain. And the area surrounding the island processing plants also stank of dead fish; one more reason why residents preferred to have the plants located on islands. In the end, the rise of technology and the new leisure class helped terminate the menhaden fertilizer business. Synthetic fertilizers and mineral oils replaced the commercial uses of menhaden, and mainland dwellers co-opted the processing island for recreational use.

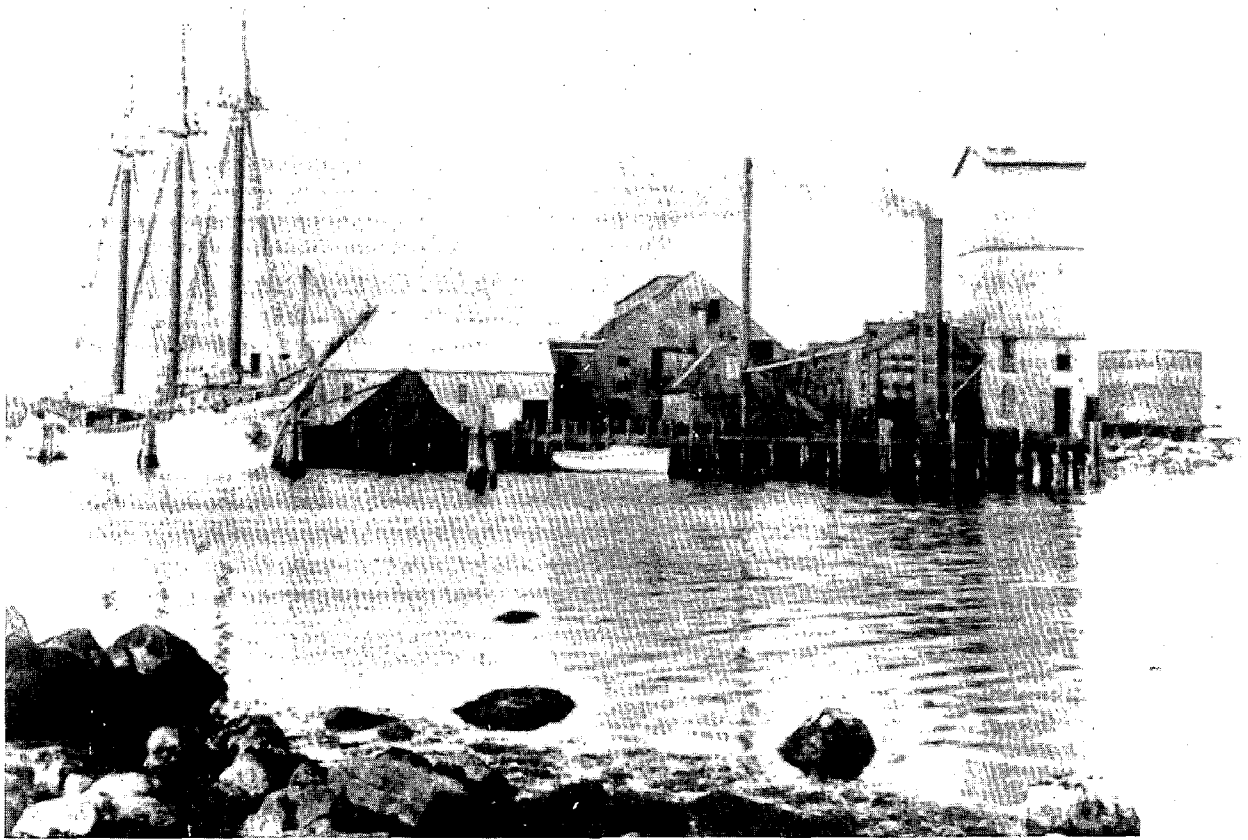
Like whaling, the full-scale finfishing business rapidly declined by 1900—a victim of the times.

Today, finfishing is still carried out but on a much smaller scale. Connecticut's only fishing fleet, made up of about 15 boats, sails from Stonington. But recreational fishing surely thrives on the remaining bounty of fish—from bluefish to striped bass—along Long Island Sound.

Coastal Quarries

Few residents think of Connecticut as a mining state, yet throughout its history, Connecticut, and specifically the coastal area, has supported several profitable quarrying and mining operations. In the past, major mines and quarries were located in New London, Waterford, Branford, New Haven, and Stamford. Early settlers dug iron-rich sledge from the peat bogs in North Haven and smelted the minerals in a blast furnace in East Haven. The iron was used to supply our forefathers with materials such as nails, gun barrels, and tools. The East Haven furnace ran for about twenty years until 1678, when the open bogs ran out of pig iron ore.

Sandstone, especially the reddish "brownstone" that graces Manhattan's elite townhouses, was the major rock quarried in Fairhaven for many years. There the industry peaked in the mid-1800s, but had its roots much earlier. The same residents of New Haven Colony who smelted pig iron also cut local sandstone for grave markers. Since wood was so plentiful, and forests needed to be cleared, little use was made of stone as building material. By the Revolutionary War, some Fairhaven residents were beginning to use sandstone for home construction, but the shortage of black powder for blasting rock, which was also needed for guns, put the brake on the quarrying enterprise for a while. When Irene du Pont, a French immigrant, perfected a high-grade blasting powder in his Delaware workshop in



66. Menhaden processing plant at Latimer's Point, Mystic, turned fish into fertilizer for farmers. Even though the plant provided many jobs, residents no doubt balked at the stench.

1804, the quarrying industry in Connecticut boomed.

As the century progressed, sandstone became more and more in demand for construction, especially for churches, and the homes of prominent New Haven area citizens. Between 1880 and 1890, several Yale University buildings were constructed from Fairhaven sandstone. The stone was also shipped by barge across the Sound and used in New York City's fast-growing construction industry. Sandstone was also used for wharf foundations, pier and railroad abutments, and even the lighthouse which stands at the tip of Fairhaven's inner harbor. Built in 1840, it was made of brownstone and painted white. When the Shoreline Railroad was re-routed, the sandstone abutments of the Quinnipiac River Bridge were transported to become the foundation of the Yale boathouse.

The use of local rock in shoreline towns helped bring about a major innovation in the quarrying industry.

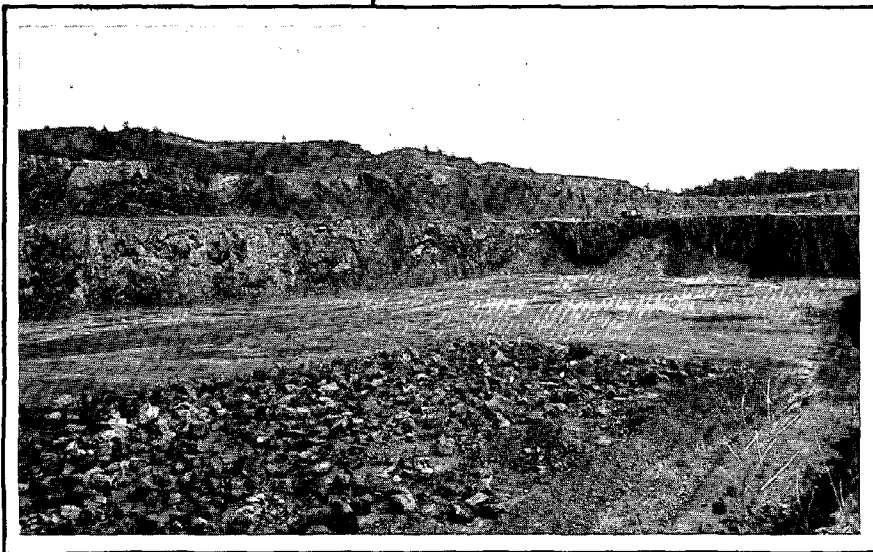
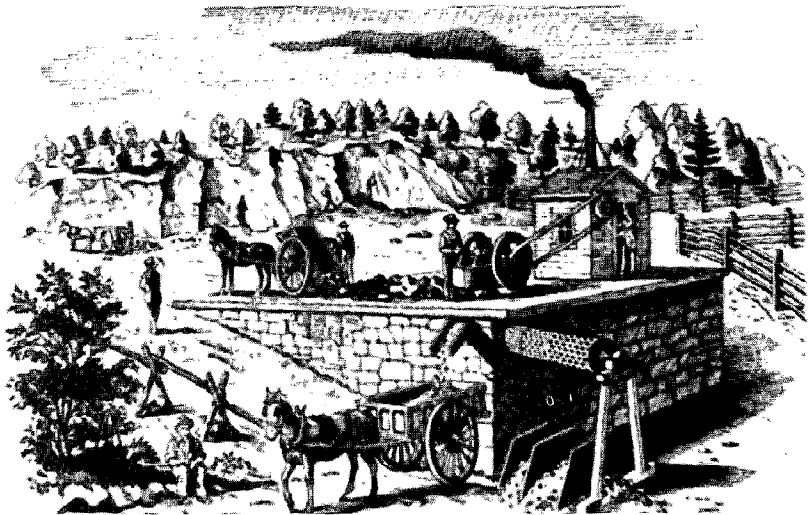
Crushed stone was occasionally used to lay roads. Called "macadam" roads, the chunks of rock were crushed by hand, usually by prison labor. The job of overseeing the construction of two miles of macadam roadway in New Haven in 1854 was awarded to Eli Whitney Blake, a Yale graduate and nephew of the inventor of the cotton gin. Realizing that the hand method was hopelessly inadequate, he spent four years developing the mechanical jaw crusher, a machine which is still used today.

One of the first suppliers of stone to the crusher was a Fairhaven quarryman, Charles Wells Blakeslee. Blakeslee started his business in 1844, at the age of 19, carting stone with a wheelbarrow. His first capital purchase, a horse, enabled him to haul traprock (basalt) to the local crusher. Later on, his sons joined him in business and expanded to include quarrying, cutting, and crushing stone. The company was incorporated under the name

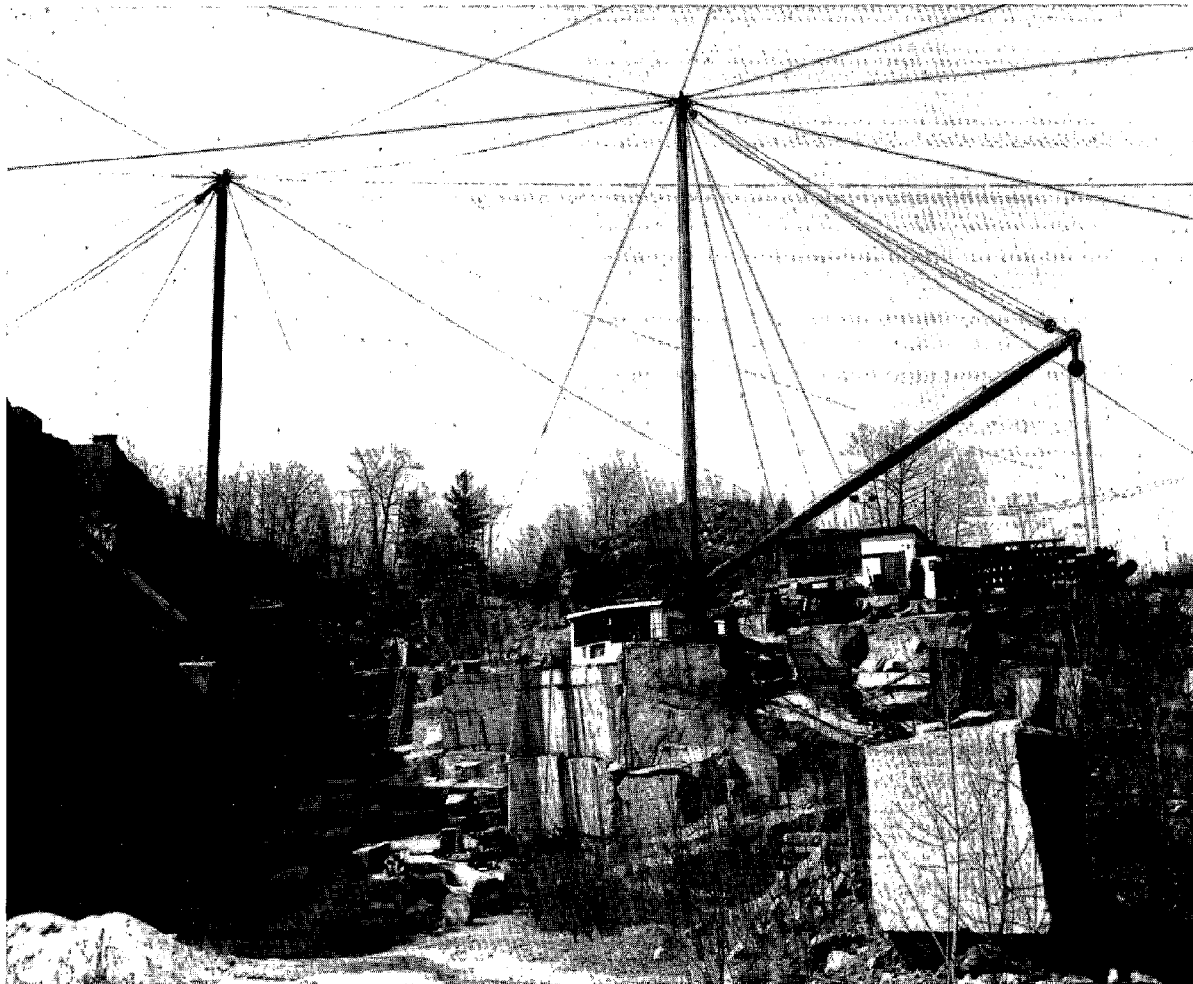


67. Quarrymen from Millstone, Waterford.

68. Eli Whitney Blake's revolutionary stone-crusher, New Haven.



69. Quarry in Branford.

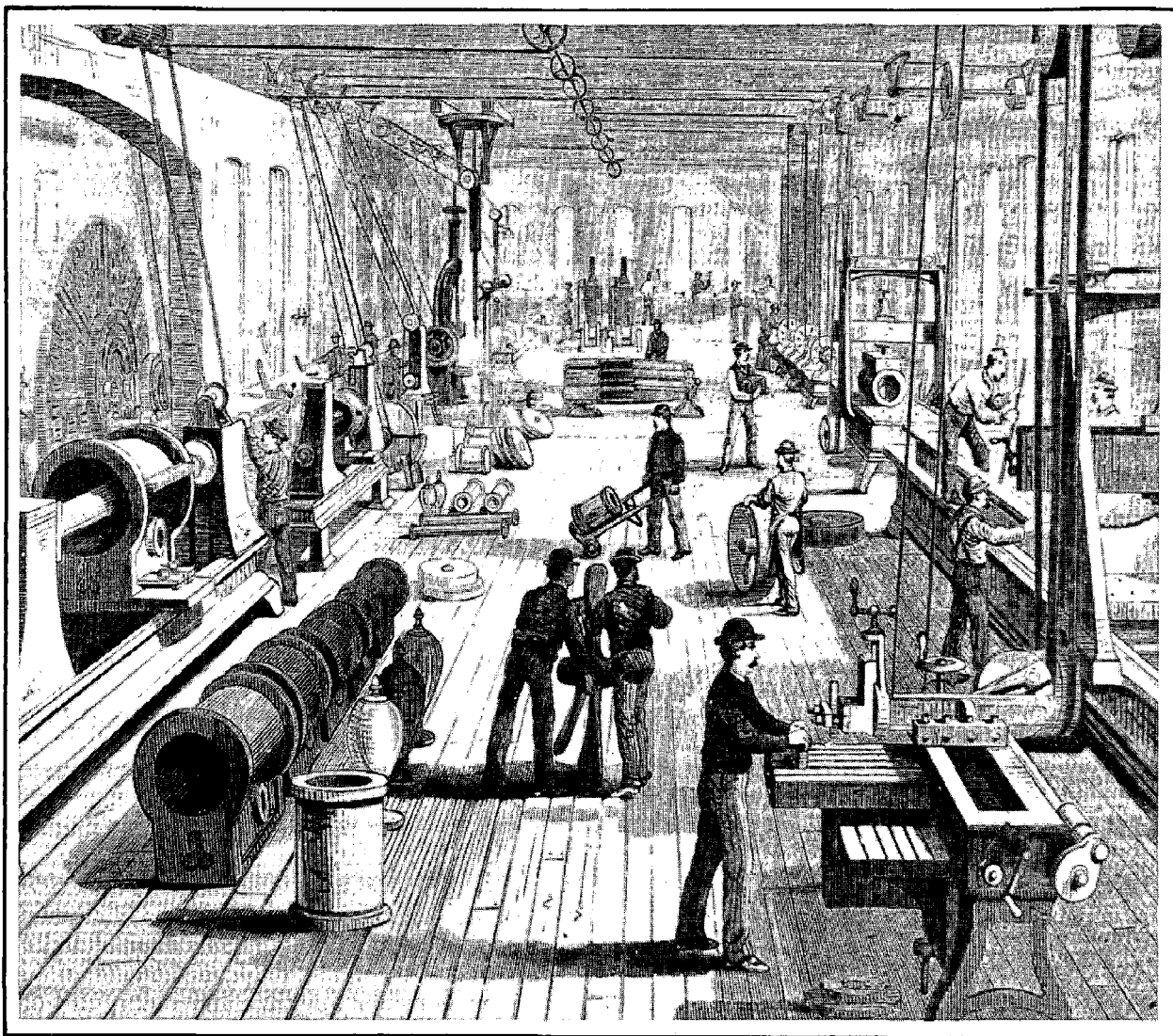


70. A recent photo of the Norcross Granite quarry, Stony Creek.

“Connect Quarries” and survived within the family until 1976.

The sandstone quarries vanished because the supply dwindled, and other mines competed with the coastal ones. Reinforced concrete became preferred for many uses, and it just became too expensive to dig sandstone out of the ground. Perhaps most significantly, the land near the quarries was filling up with homes, and property deeds in Fairhaven and elsewhere began carrying clauses that prohibited the use of the land for quarrying. However, rocks weren’t the only thing dug from Connecticut’s soil. During the sandstone boom, the state was also an exporter of minerals. Mica, feldspar, clay, and lime were mined for industry and export. At one time, New Haven even boasted silver mines, which are now unfortunately covered by the Maltby Lakes.

One West Haven farmer, August Prehn, found a quartz boulder on his property one day in 1886, which was claimed to contain traces of gold, silver, and copper. Understandably excited, he found a number of investors to back him and soon opened three shafts in the vicinity of the discovered quartz. The operation, however, proved to be a bust; the investors lost their money and the mine shafts were boarded up. Still, stories persist that precious metals can be found in the ground of West Haven. After the Civil War, Connecticut increasingly became an importer of minerals for industry. The dense population and expense of exploring have essentially finished off the mining and quarrying operations on the coast. Nonetheless, the brownstone buildings still serve as a reminder of the heyday of the quarries.



71. Norwalk Iron Works. The developing towns of Greenwich, Stamford, and Norwalk were leaders in the metal industry.

The Industrial Revolution

When the Revolutionary War ended, Connecticut earned a reputation not only for military efficiency and dedication, but for its ability to supply the Continental Army with rations, arms, gunpowder, and rum. Because of the efforts of Governor Trumbull and the three men who served as Commissary General—Joseph Trumbull, Elijah Hubbard and Jeremiah Wadsworth—the Patriot armies were fed and armed; Connecticut, in fact, became known as “The Provisions State.” The distinction was more than just flattery, a thank-you note from a grateful nation, because the war effort forced Connecticut to shift its interests toward commerce and industry, a shift which, with the coming of peace and independence, would shape its future economy.

In the years following the Revolution, Connecticut had barely enough tillable land to support its population. The maritime trade remained the most important commercial activity (although small compared to New York or Boston) and the first major industry in the state was shipbuilding (its second was the distillation of rum). Shipbuilding, supported by government contracts during the war, flourished until the 1820s in New Haven, New London, Norwich and Stonington; the largest port was New Haven’s Long Wharf at 3,500 feet, and New London was the leading shipbuilder. But while the coast maintained its trade with the Caribbean, it did not develop a domestic market and could not sustain the impact of Jefferson’s boycott of English ships in 1807 or the War of 1812. The Caribbean trade was a staple; it kept the coastal town active and their people employed, but it was not enough to promote economic growth.

Perhaps the greatest threat that faced postwar Connecticut was the emigration of its citizens. Because of the decline of agriculture, shipping, and shipbuilding, Connecticut natives began to look elsewhere for their livelihoods. They moved to northern New England, Pennsylvania, New York, and the Western Reserve of Ohio (an area given to Connecticut in 1787 by the federal government). No one knows exactly how many people left Connecticut, but today probably more descendants of Connecticut colonists live in the Middle West and West than in the state of their ancestors. From 1789 to 1889, 34 men born in Connecticut served in the Senate as representatives of 14 other states, and 187 in the House from 22 other states.

In every decade between 1800 and 1840 the American population increased by about 33 percent, while Connecticut grew only four or five percent. Those who remained in Connecticut were widely dispersed among the 117 towns, only six of which had more than 5,000 inhabitants: Hartford, Middletown, New Haven, New London, Stonington and Norwalk. New London and Stonington, however, shrank considerably because of the maritime depression in the early 19th century. Not until manufacturing became a genuine economic force did the migration of Connecticut natives stop and the population begin to grow, aided by the influx of new settlers from Europe.

Despite the population drain, life along the shore was changing, in preparation one might say, for the industrial age to come. The first turnpike company, from New London to Norwich, was incorporated; banks were opened in New Haven and New London; a fire insurance company appeared in Norwich; and a fund

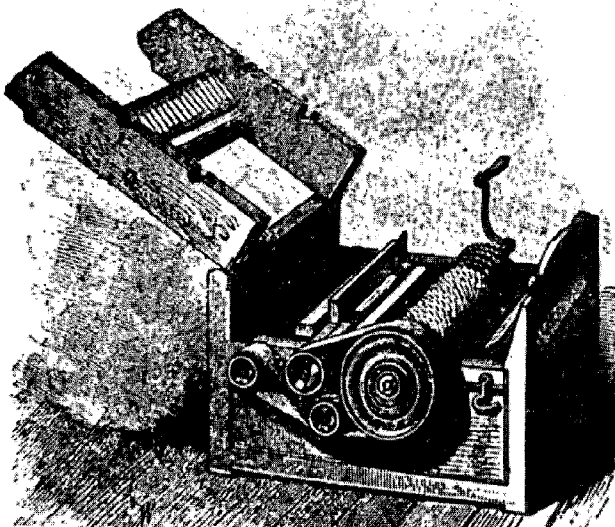
was established from the sale of Western Reserve land to set up a public school system. When the Industrial Revolution arrived in full force, the Connecticut coast was prepared not only to accept it, but to embrace it. There were no other alternatives. The fact that so many people left the state showed that a future of severe economic stagnation seemed inevitable. The easiest solution was simply to leave, yet for those who stayed, there was only one hope — manufacturing.

Whitney and the Factory Village

"One of my primary tasks," wrote Eli Whitney about his new gunmaking scheme, "is to form the tools so that the tools themselves shall fashion the work and give to every part its just proportion — which when once accomplished will give expedition, uniformity and exactness to the whole." The system — in which the parts of the gun were made to be interchangeable — looked so promising that the American government offered Whitney a contract to produce 10,000 muskets even though Whitney hadn't had any actual gunmaking experience. Instead of a single gunsmith making a single weapon "according to his own Fancy," regulating "the size and proportion by his own Eye," there would be workers who labored on individual parts, which would later be assembled into working firearms.

Whitney, at this time was already a famous man; he was the inventor of the cotton gin, which had not only made cotton king in the South, but which had stimulated the expansion of cotton manufacturing in the North. In his search for the site of his new venture, Whitney looked for one thing — water. "I am per-

72. Whitney's cotton gin.



73. Eli Whitney

sued," he said, "that machinery moved by water would greatly diminish the labor and facilitate the manufacture of this Article."

He chose one hundred acres along the Mill River, just north of New Haven, a spot where New Haven's earliest settlers had put their first gristmill, and in 1799 Whitney began building his factory. He recruited about fifty workers, mostly from Massachusetts, and placed those with families in five stone houses he had built on the site; those who were unmarried lived in a nearby boarding house. Whitney, a bachelor himself, lived in a farmhouse across from the mill with three nephews and a group of apprentices and servants. The main building, where the gun parts were made and assembled, was two stories high and 72 feet long, and surrounding it were sheds and storehouses, a forging shop, and a community store.

Whitneyville, like the other factory villages, was a self-contained, self-sufficient, social unit, a community based on work and loyalty to the business.

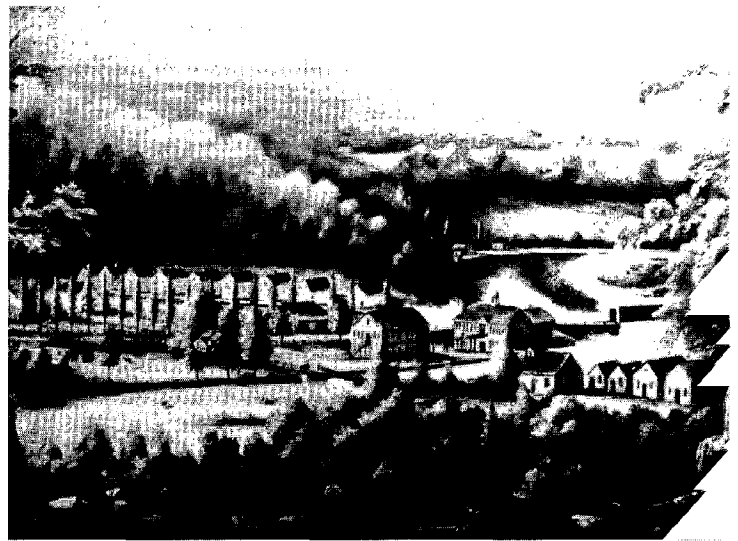
Whitney's experiment, as far as the government contract was concerned, was not an immediate success. Beset by delays and disappointments, he could only deliver 500 guns; but after 1801, when the process was refined and the community settled, Whitney won uni-

versal praise for his idea. Guns could now be produced in mass and uniformly; with a tolerance of 1/32 on an inch, not much by modern standards but quite extraordinary in 1801. By 1815, Whitney's system of standardization was copied in every burgeoning industrial center in America.

Around 1820, the typical manufacturing concerns of the shore towns involved the processing of agricultural products and the production of articles for local consumption. The towns had small grain mills, woolen and cotton factories and tanneries; only in Bridgeport and New Haven did manufacturing get underway on a larger scale. In Bridgeport there were saddle, carriage, book bindery, printing, and metal firms, and New Haven's manufacturing was along those lines, but larger. In 1818, at least 130 firms or shops were in business in New Haven, the most important, of course, being Whitney's firearms community just across the border in Hamden.

The Connecticut coast had not yet become an industrial region, but it was certainly moving in that direction. In 1817, the Connecticut Society for the Encouragement of American Manufacturing (later called the Manufacturers Association of Connecticut) was formed. Its founders believed that Connecticut "must either manufacture or dwindle into insignificance." The state, they wrote in the preamble to their constitution, "enjoys preeminent advantages for manufacturing establishments. It has a comparatively numerous population — ingenious artisans — industrious habits — sufficient capital — excellent millseats. . . . They are the last, best hope of Connecticut."

Although we think of cities like New Haven and Bridgeport when we think of industrialization, the shift from an agrarian to manufacturing economy was, at



75. Whitneyville, 1826.

first, a rural phenomenon. Factory villages like Whitneyville, the first real manifestations of the industrial age in Connecticut, sprung up like mushrooms in the least likely places.

If you glanced at a map of the state you would find a number of communities that have the "ville" suffix; Dayville, Uncasville, Yalesville, Dobsonville are only a few. There were, at one time, 203 "villes" in Connecticut, and each was a factory village with company-built boarding houses, schools, churches, libraries and stores. Only two have become actual townships, Montville in 1786 and Plainville in 1831, and some are no longer in existence, but all have in one way or another left their mark on Connecticut.

The factory village was a manufacturer's utopia, or at least it was intended to be. As it turned out, these little communities were in marked contrast to the greens, neat houses and shaded avenues of the old Connecticut towns. The factory villages were drab, usually gerrybuilt and unsanitary, and while they prompted economic growth in their respective areas, they did so at the expense of the people who worked in the factories and lived in the cramped, dingy dormitories or housing projects.

There were two major systems used in the establishment of a factory village — the Rhode Island system and the Waltham system. The first, employed by Samuel Slater, recruited whole families, especially children who were considered more agile and durable workers than adults. Slater was relatively humane (although certainly not by modern standards), but the system was abused by later manufacturers and was never popular in Connecticut. The Waltham system was introduced by Francis Cabot Lowell, it centered around the "moral" well-being of its workers, mostly young





76. Advertisement for health-food manufacturer, New Haven.

women (the "nuns of Lowell" they were called because of their white gowns). Everything was done to make manufacturing appear respectable; at the heart of factory life was the church and school, but even Lowell came under heavy criticism. His moralistic and paternalistic experiments were no less exploitative than the others.

As insensitive to human life as these villages usually were, they were never as horrible as the slums which would soon emerge when manufacturing began to find its permanent home in the cities.

Barnum's East Bridgeport: A Vision of an Industrial Utopia

Phineas T. Barnum was, of course, the world's greatest showman, the master of hokum, and the impresario who made Tom Thumb and Jenny Lind a part of American cultural history. But Barnum was also a popular and public-minded businessman who served his city, Bridgeport, as its state representative and its mayor. He was also one of its major landlords, and, according to one Bridgeporter, one of its best: "P.T. Barnum seems to be having a mighty big pull on the real estate of Bridgeport, but he's all right. I, for one, wouldn't kick if he bought up the whole town, for if you take notice, the minute he gets his hand on a piece of property he begins to improve it, every time. He doesn't buy up old hulks and let them stand for years an eyesore to everyone."

It is impossible to think of Bridgeport without thinking of Barnum. He loved the city and the people in it, and thought both had great potential. Barnum believed in hard work, but he also believed that a city must provide for a citizen's recreation as well as his livelihood. It is no wonder that Barnum gave Bridgeport a tract of land fronting Long Island Sound to be used for recreation; the gift became Seaside Park, and, if in a sorrier state these days because of years of water pollution and the proximity of a dump site, it is still crowded on summer weekends with people trying to escape the city heat.

After his fortune was made, Barnum settled in Bridgeport and became an amateur city planner, a man who had a vision of what a modern city should be like. In 1851, he purchased over 200 acres of land, "a beautiful plateau of ground lying within less than half a mile of the center of Bridgeport city," with the idea that this would be the nucleus of his new city of East Bridgeport. Barnum insisted that his project was not simply a money-making scheme; he had "East Bridgeport on the brain," as he said, a desire to create a city from nothing, a city as aesthetically pleasing as it was industrially stable and productive.

According to Barnum, his partner, William H. Noble, "laid out the entire property in regular streets, and lined them with trees, reserving a beautiful grove of six or eight acres, which we enclosed, and converted

into a public park. . . . Our sales were always made on the condition that a suitable dwelling-house, store, or manufactory should be erected upon the land, within one year from the date of purchase; that every building should be placed at a certain distance from the street, in a style of architecture approved by us; that the grounds should be enclosed with acceptable fences, and kept clean and neat, with other conditions which would render the locality a desirable one for respectable residents, and operate for the mutual benefit of all persons who should become settlers in the city."



77. Phineas T. Barnum.

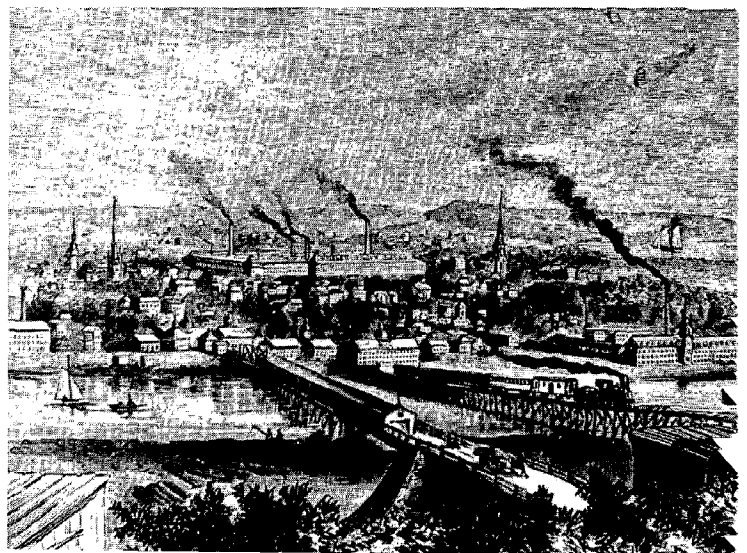
The "rules" by which East Bridgeport settlers had to abide also included no-drinking and no-smoking clauses; and so it was clear that Barnum was not simply developing a section of unused land, but was intent upon building an ideal community. The way he attracted people to East Bridgeport was innovative to say the least, and the plan, brilliant for its time, is still being used by developers today. Barnum offered the first lots to working men and their families "at a merely nominal price," advancing part and frequently all the money necessary for building expenses and allowing the settlers to repay the loan in small installments.

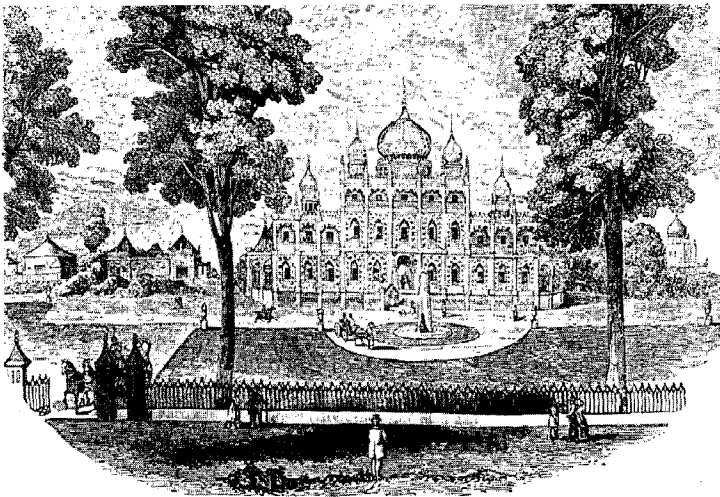
"The arrangement," Barnum believed, "enabled many persons to secure and ultimately pay for homes which they could not otherwise have done." Barnum thought that if the first settlers could build an attractive community, others would want to live in it, and that his profits could be realized in the rise in value of the lots which he held in reserve. The scheme, which he called "profitable philanthropy," was enormously successful. East Bridgeport was a growing concern; a foot bridge and later a toll-bridge connected Barnum's new complex with Bridgeport, and in 1852 a coach-building firm erected a factory there.

Later on, Barnum became a stockholder in a small clock factory in Litchfield known as the Jerome Clock Company. "Thinking of plans to forward my pet East Bridgeport enterprise," Barnum wrote, "it seemed to me that if the Litchfield clock concern could be transferred to my prospective new city, it would necessarily bring many families, thus increasing the growth of the place and the value of the property." The decision to move Jerome Clock to East Bridgeport turned out to be a disastrous one. Believing the company was sound, Barnum invested heavily to back it, only to watch helplessly as the bottom fell out. Barnum went bankrupt, an ordeal which he survived, but the dream of East Bridgeport was never realized.

The area grew quickly, becoming the site of a number of large manufacturing enterprises, but it was an erratic growth, another example of urban sprawl; tenements sprang up, buildings were not maintained and the delicate balance of beauty and industrial productivity that marked Barnum's dream city could be found nowhere. Barnum Avenue may have run through the heart of East Bridgeport, but it was a city that no longer had Barnum's visionary stamp on it.

78. Barnum's dream city, East Bridgeport, 1864.





79. Iranistan, the legendary home of P.T. Barnum in Bridgeport.

The Megalopolis

In 1902, a former Hartford newspaperman living in Washington, D.C. became homesick for Connecticut, and in his now-famous attempt to keep his home state alive in his memory, we can get some idea of Connecticut's manufacturing range, and how it emerged as one of the great industrial areas of the world:

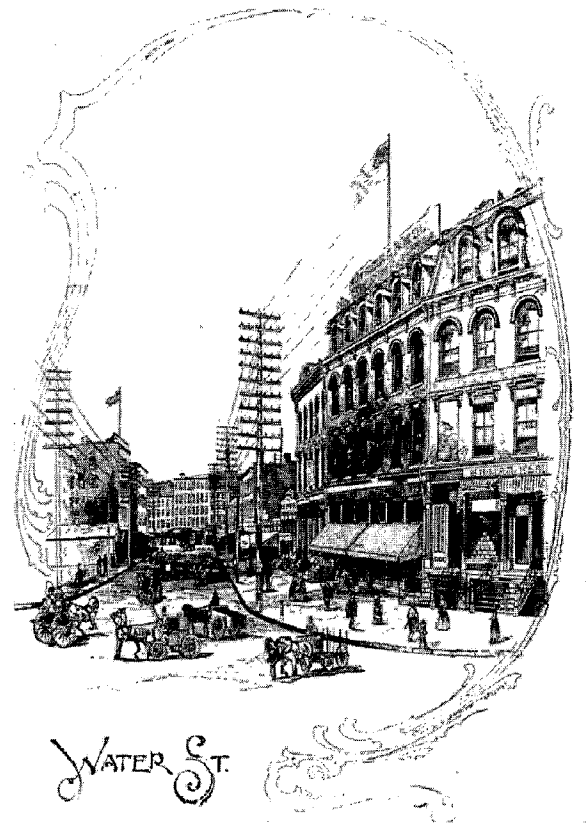
At my boarding-house I find the plated ware to be of Connecticut manufacture. The clock that tells me the time from the mantlepiece; the watch my friend carries; the hat he wears; his pocket knife, are all from Connecticut. At the office I write with a Connecticut pen and when I need an official envelope I find the original package from which I take it bears a Connecticut mark. If I make an error and wish to erase it, I do so with a steel eraser made in Connecticut, and my letter finished I deposit in a corner letter box, stamped "New Britain, Connecticut." This letter I am sure, when it reaches its destination, is delivered from a post-office box locked with a Yale key. My desk has a Connecticut lock and key although perhaps made in Michigan.

In looking about the city I am attracted to a shop window glittering with swords, and read an ugly-looking machette this inscription: "Hartford, Conn., U.S.A." A Winchester or Marlin rifle, or a Colt's revolver, all made in Connecticut. I find another window, and still another, a supply of fixed ammunition from New Haven and Bridgeport, Axes, hammers, augurs, all kinds of builder's hardware, and in a shop close by — all made in Connecticut. Foulards, cottons, woollens, worsteds, rubber goods of all kinds, are near by — they are standard makes from Connecticut. The gas and electric fixtures that show them off are of our manufacture no doubt. Do I want a button? Made in Connecticut. Hand me a pin. The box tells me it is from "Waterbury, Conn., U.S.A." That automobile rushing by

came from Connecticut. That bicycle, those tires, these novels, call and door bells — all from Connecticut typewriters on every side from our little state.

And if I lounge through residential streets summer evenings, I hear from many open doors and windows the sound of music. This may not be from a Connecticut piano, although in most cases the ivory keys would be found to have been made in our state, but in many instances emanates from a Connecticut-made gramophone or phonograph. And what of the sewing machine? Everybody knows that the earliest ones were made in Connecticut, and the latest improved ones are made there now in great numbers. And last let me say that where my trousers are put away at night they go into a hangar of the best kind — made in Connecticut.

In the 19th century, Connecticut's population shifted from rural to urban at a startling rate, much higher than in most states. By 1840, one-third of Connecticut's labor force was employed outside agriculture, a figure twice the national rate; and by 1880, almost three-fourths of the state's workers were involved in



80. Water Street in Bridgeport, circa 1890.



81. *Electrotype advertisement, E.B. Sheldon Co., New Haven.*

non-agricultural labor. Likewise, state residents preferred living in towns and cities; by 1840, half of Connecticut's population lived in towns with a population of 2,500 or better (the national ratio was 11 percent), and in 1880 this jumped to three-fourths (as opposed to the national ratio of 25 percent). The urbanization of Connecticut was most striking along the shoreline, especially from Greenwich to New Haven, mostly because of the influence of New York.

New York in the 19th century superseded Boston as the major port of the northeast; it had always been a regional metropolis, the mercantile heart of an area that included northern New Jersey, upstate New York to southwest Connecticut, but in the 19th century it became a *national* port, the gateway to the country and a hub of transportation, commodity exchange, finance and communication. And when New York grew in prominence, so did Connecticut's coastline. The market was no longer limited, no longer regional; it extended to the newly settled communities of the far west, to southern markets and agricultural centers of the midwest. The Connecticut shore, which had for so long lived in the shadow of New York, now took advantage of its proximity to the city. Like eastern Massachusetts, northern New Jersey, northeast Ohio and southern Michigan, the coastline of Connecticut became a complex of highly industrialized cities, it fed New York, which in turn, fed the country.

By 1850, five industrial cities had emerged along the

coast: New Haven, Bridgeport, Greenwich, Stamford and Norwalk. New Haven was the largest, with over 3,500 workers engaged in manufacturing (carriages, carriage components, rubber boots and shoes, suspenders, shirts, clocks, ironworks, machine shops, hardware), followed by Bridgeport with almost 2,000 workers. Stamford workers were employed in rolling mills and ironworks, while Norwalk's manufacturing specialized in hats, felt, and carriages.

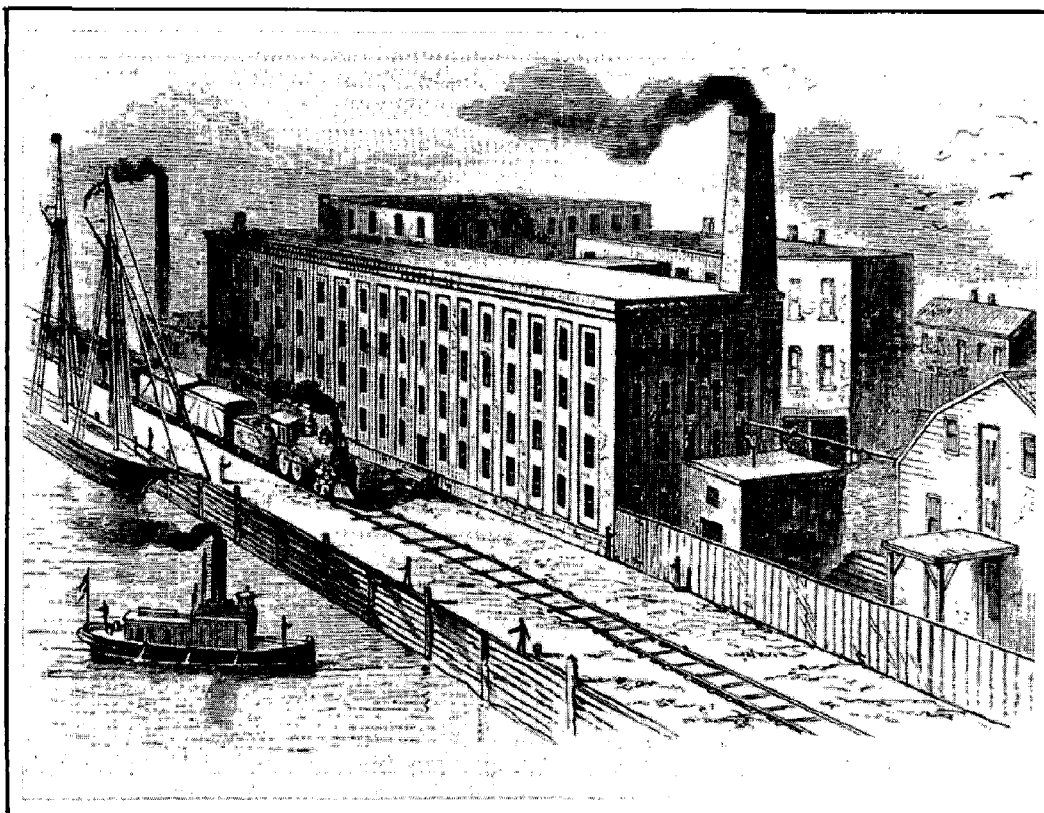
Greenwich, today a relatively quiet bedroom suburb, was in 1850 a booming industrial town, the home of Greenwich Iron Works and a number of hardware and clothing concerns. By the end of the century, the industrial cities had declined to four, with Greenwich as the conspicuous dropout. Bridgeport was the headquarters of such firms as Bridgeport Brass, Union Metallic Cartridge (later to become Remington Arms) and Wheeler and Wilson Manufacturing (which later merged into the Singer Sewing Machine Company).

In New Haven, there was the New Haven Clock Company and the Winchester Repeating Arms Company. Stamford produced locks and hardware (the Yale and Towne Company), pianos (Schleicher), typewriters and chemicals (Milk of Magnesia), and Norwalk was famous as a corset producer. Many of the companies that employed coastal workers are still in existence today and the architectural legacy of the industrial boom — factories, tenements, warehouses — is still a part of the coastal landscape.

The growth of industry created a demand for workers, one which coincided with the first waves of European immigrants who had come to this country in search of jobs. The immigrants soon changed the demographic composition of the state; the Irish, the largest

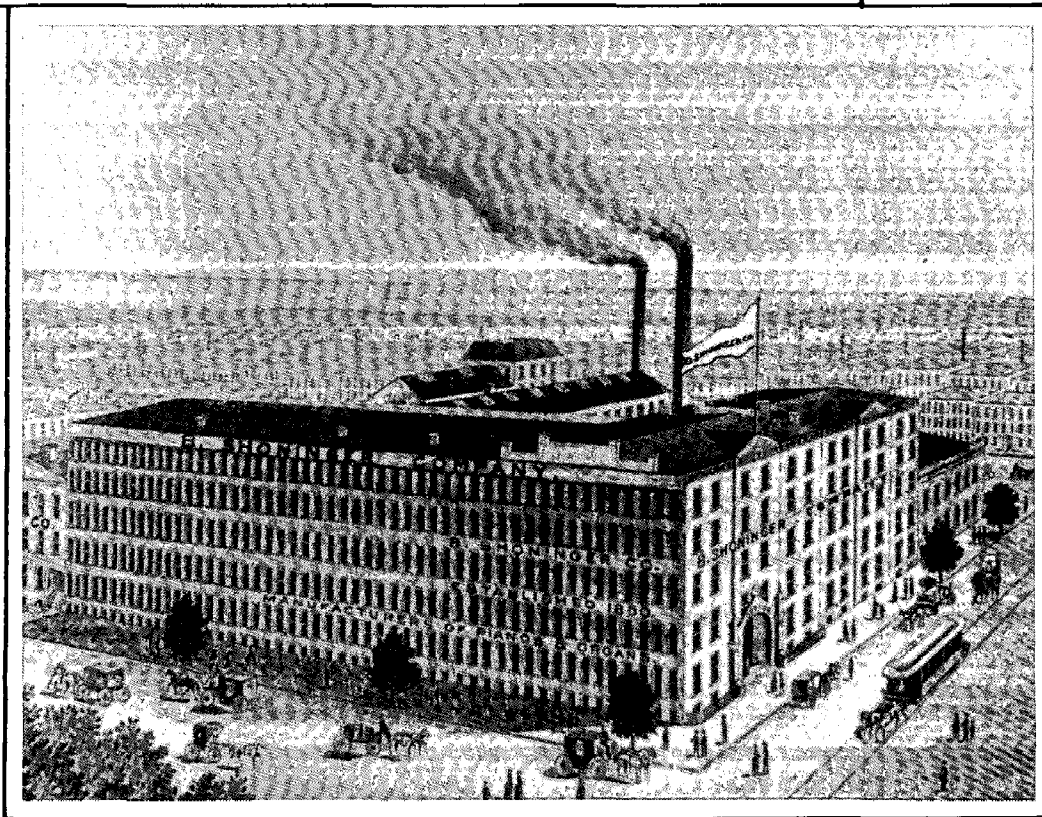
82. *Carriage-manufacture was one of New Haven's leading industries.*





83. Roger's manu-
facturing plant
in Norwich.
Steamships and
railroads
transported
goods.

84. B. Shoninger Co.
of New Haven,
makers of
pianos and
church organs.



nationality of the first immigrant wave, accounted for one-fifth of the population of New Haven in 1870, while other cities and towns were experiencing similar changes. From 1850 to 1870, Connecticut's population increased by 45 percent, primarily because of the immigrants, who flocked to the cities along the coast — Stamford, Bridgeport, New Haven — scratching out a living, working ten to twelve hours a day in factories and shops. The later groups of immigrants, who, unlike their predecessors, did not speak English, lived in slum neighborhoods which reflected their nationality, and by the end of the century every city along the coast had its ethnic subdivisions, its Little Italy or Frenchtown.

Economically speaking, the industrialization of the Connecticut shoreline represented a boom period, but in human terms, the Industrial Age was tantamount to the Dark Ages. The manufactured goods which made Connecticut famous were mostly the products of exploitation: child labor, poor working and living conditions, ethnic prejudice, and managerial indifference underlined the profits which companies boasted of in their annual stockholder reports. A history of the last one hundred or so years of the Connecticut coast is certainly the history of industry, but it is also the history of those who battled against industry's inhuman treatment of its workers. As companies grew more and more powerful, its workers grew more and more dissatisfied with conditions until they began to organize into guilds and unions.

The earliest form of labor unions were mechanics' associations, which were like the European guilds, concerned primarily with the education and welfare of their members. The General Society of Mechanics was formed in New Haven in 1807 and similar organizations sprung up in Norwich and Hartford. These groups were quite different from the reformist groups that were forming in New York and Philadelphia in the 1830s. New London, just as it had been the home of

radicals during the Revolution, was the home for dissidents who were called "Workies" and who supported the ten-hour day, improved factory conditions, universal suffrage (for men), free schools and the end of corporate monopolies. A number of trade unions were organized, interested in raising wages and improving working conditions, and in New London, a physician, Dr. Charles Douglas, helped form the first national organization of wage earners, the National Trades Union. In the 1850s, child labor laws were enacted, and the ten-hour day became state policy, although the law was weak and there were numerous violations.

In the later part of the century, unions became a much more powerful political force; groups like the Knights of Labor and later the American Federation of Labor, lobbied diligently in state and national governments, keeping legislators busy with labor laws for several decades. There were a number of strikes against shoreline companies, but none compared in bloodshed or destruction to those in other parts of the country.

The industries which prospered along the shore were also indifferent to the effects of their factories upon the environment. The pollution of the Sound was inevitable because so many companies along the coast engaged in heavy industry. At the turn of the century economic growth was the exclusive standard by which progress was judged; there was little if any concern for the environment. There might have been, at that time, a satisfactory balance between industrial development and the natural landscape, but the balance was soon upset when development continued unstopped and unregulated.

It was only until the middle of the 20th century, when the imbalance between nature and industry (not to mention the added influences of the automobile and the construction boom) became so great that people realized that the coastal lands were being filled out of existence and that the Sound was becoming a dead sea.



85. *Eli Whitney's famous musket, built on an assembly line, 1801.*



86. *Bridgeport Harbor, 1970.*

The Urban Sea

Ports and Harbors

The Industrial Revolution, more than any single event in recent history, changed the character of the Connecticut coast from agrarian to urban. Coastal towns in particular absorbed many of the new industrial developments because manufacturing had historically been located near the water, which provided ready commerce for raw materials and manufactured goods. The natural embayments of Long Island Sound fostered the growth of many ports and harbors which in turn spurred the development of major urban centers. Commerce, transportation, and industry have naturally been centered around ports and harbors. Today, the state's three largest harbors are New London, New Haven, and Bridgeport. They occupy strategic points along the shoreline and incorporate a few of the densest concentrations of developed shorefront.

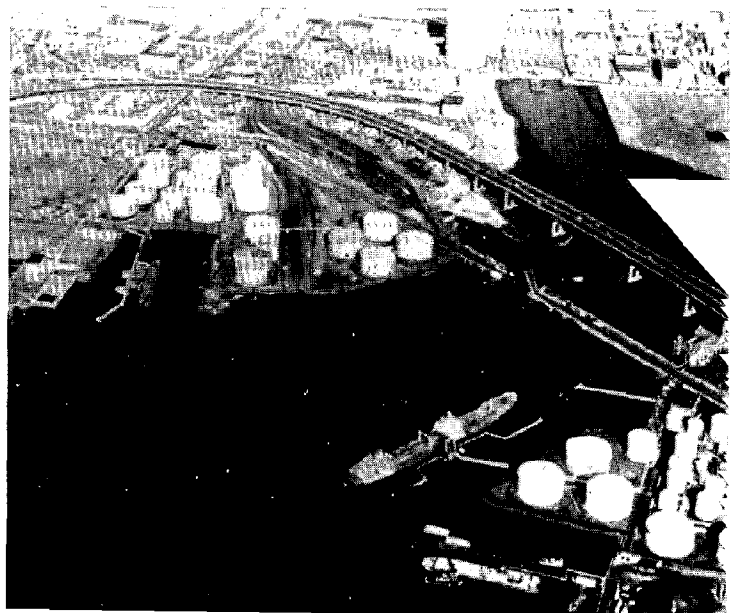
New London Harbor comprises the lower twelve miles of the Thames River. New Haven Harbor, the third largest in New England, occupies nearly five miles of shorefront. It has a thirty-five foot entrance channel and forms a basin for the Quinnipiac, the Mill, and the West Rivers. Bridgeport Harbor is actually a port area consisting of two harbors: the main Bridgeport Harbor and Black Rock Harbor, which are about two miles apart.

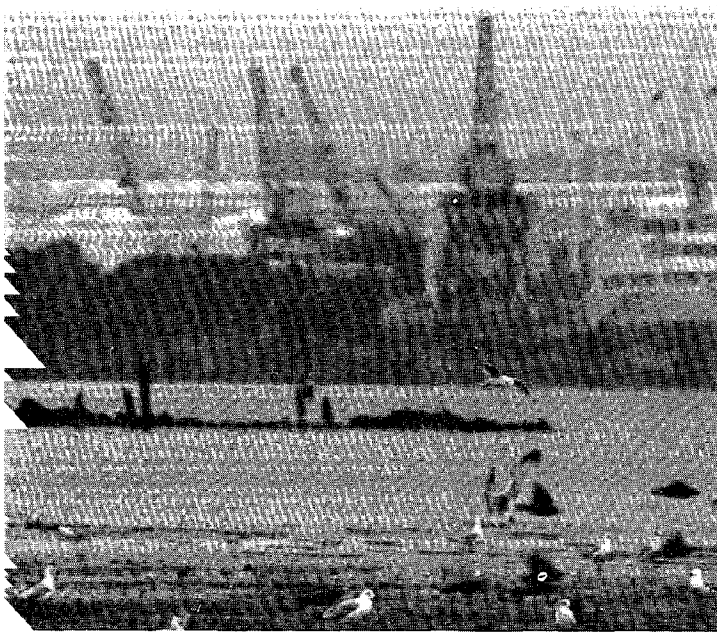
Together, these harbors are responsible for the lion's share of waterborne commerce entering and exiting the state. All types of ships and barges, with the exception

of the largest supertankers, call on Connecticut ports. They transport an array of cargoes such as lumber, sand and stone, chemicals, scrap iron, gypsum, lime, wood pulp, rubber, auto parts, manufactured items, tar and asphalt, and some food products. By and large, however, major commodities are bulk fuels such as oil and coal. Nearly all our petroleum comes through New Haven, Bridgeport, and New London, which supply thirty-four oil handling facilities.

One would be hard pressed to find a port without a large oil storage tank — such tanks are perhaps the most dominant feature of ports today. In Connecticut, over one thousand storage tanks are located with a combined capacity of more than 14 million barrels of oil. Smaller

87. New Haven Harbor.





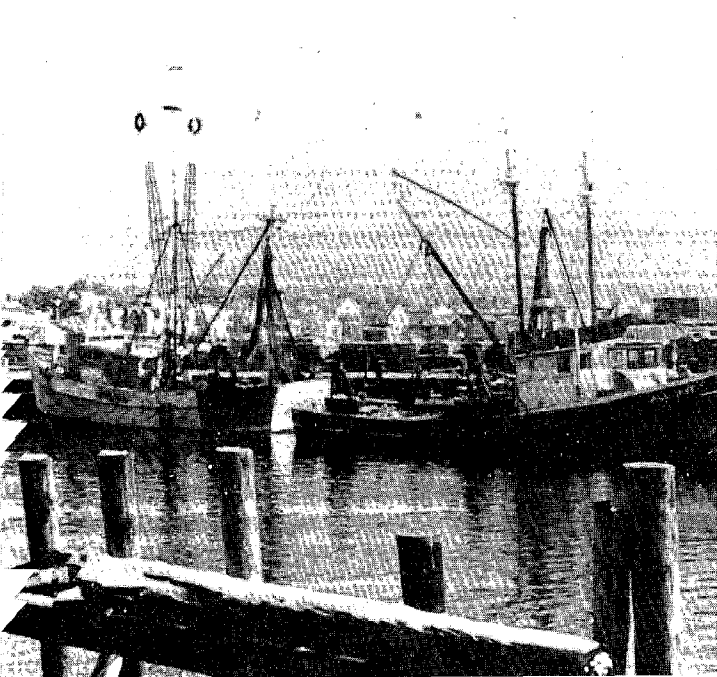
88. Scrap metal, oil tanks, and seagulls. New Haven.

ports located on the north shore of Long Island Sound include Stamford and Norwalk harbors, and ports along the Housatonic and Connecticut Rivers.

Fishing, Marinas, Tourism, and Submarines

Although Connecticut's dependence on maritime industries vanished with the 19th century, a few industries wedded to the sea still exist and help generate the economy. Such water-dependent industries are a positive and viable economic force which helps maintain the integrity and heritage of our coastal resources. Commercial fishing, shellfishing, sportfishing, marinas, shipbuilding, and recreational facilities are typical commercial uses found along the coast.

89. Stonington's fishing fleet.



Commercial fishing, like the menhaden fishery of days gone by, was once of great economic importance; however, it no longer represents a major commercial use of our coastal resources. For instance, in the ten years between 1950 and 1960, total finfish landings have declined substantially, from twenty million to five million pounds annually. Only one finfishing fleet remains in the state, located in Stonington. It is comprised of about 14 draggers and a dozen lobster boats.

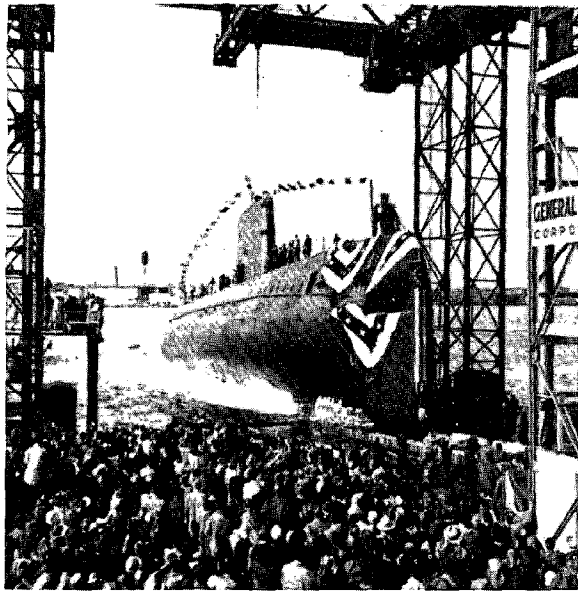
The shellfish industry — which mainly produces oysters — underwent a similar decline, primarily because of pollution and the economic vulnerability of such a labor-intensive business, yet it has enjoyed a slow and gradual resurgence since 1970. Around 1900, 300 growers, hundreds of ships, and thousands of employers were associated with the oyster industry. Today, only seven natural growers, 29 large vessels, and two hundred employees constitute the oyster industry in Connecticut.

Sportfishing, commercial recreation, and tourism are growing in economic importance and helping to further change the character of the shoreline. Charter boats for striped bass and bluefish operate out of many small harbors, specifically in the eastern half of the state. Thousands of summer cottages are rented to vacationers in towns like Madison and Old Lyme, and tourist attractions like Mystic Seaport and Mystic Aquarium draw thousands each year. Over 100 thousand power boats and sailboats are presently registered in Connecticut, making pleasure craft big business. These boats are serviced by 164 commercial marinas which supply a host of facilities such as boat repairs, restaurants, and filling stations.

Although shipbuilding is not the important industry it was once, this water-dependent enterprise is still represented by the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics in Groton. The company builds sophisticated nuclear submarines and employs over 20 thousand workers.

Industry and the Coast

The first industrial complexes in Connecticut were no more than mills, which were used to grind corn or wheat. They were always located near waterways because they relied on the force of running water for

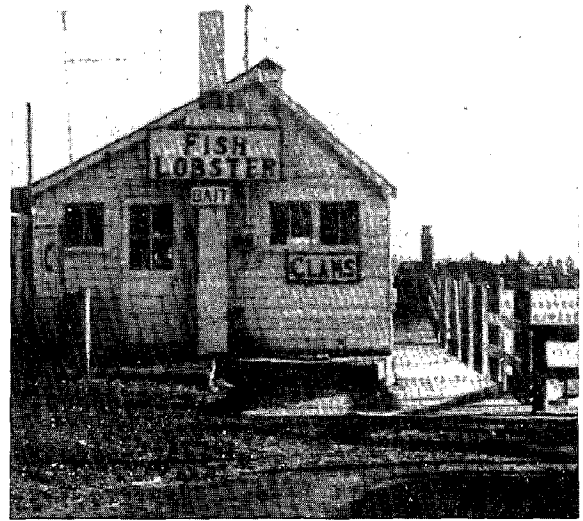


90. USS Nautilus being launched in Groton, 1954.

power. Such small industries were completely dependent on the availability of water. Today, our industrial complexes are much grander and, powered by electricity, no longer depend on water for power. Nevertheless, because of the historical relationship between industry and waterways, many industrial concerns are still found bordering the Sound and major rivers, even though they could be located inland.

In fact, the greatest changes in coastal land use have occurred in recent years because of the proliferation of manufacturing industries. They include the production of machinery, primary and fabricated metals, transportation equipment, chemicals, and food products. Commercial and industrial proliferation have greatly contributed to the economic growth of coastal municipalities. Shopping centers, office buildings, and other facilities have rapidly accumulated in the last two decades, crowding the coast. Between 1960 and 1970, coastal communities experienced a whopping 133 percent increase in commercial land use. The communities each gained an average of 740 acres of commercial development each year.

Many nationally known industries are located in coastal towns. Greenwich alone houses American Can, AVCO, Arnold Bakers, and U.S. Tobacco. At the other end of the state, in Groton, we find at least two large manufacturers: Charles Pfizer Chemicals and the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics. The most



91. Local fish store.

industrialized region of the coast — southcentral Connecticut — is the site of Armstrong Rubber Company, Bic Pen Corporation, Cheesbrough-Pond's, Federal Paper Board Company, Pratt & Whitney Aircraft, Upjohn Company, and many other small and large manufacturing firms.

Today, manufacturing is extremely important to Connecticut, with thirty-nine percent of the coastal population employed by manufacturers. And the trend continues. Most new industrial developments have located near highways — along Interstate 95 in Greenwich, Stamford, Milford, and Branford, along Route 8 in Shelton, near Route 52 in Norwich, and along Interstate 91 in North Haven.

92. New Haven Harbor.

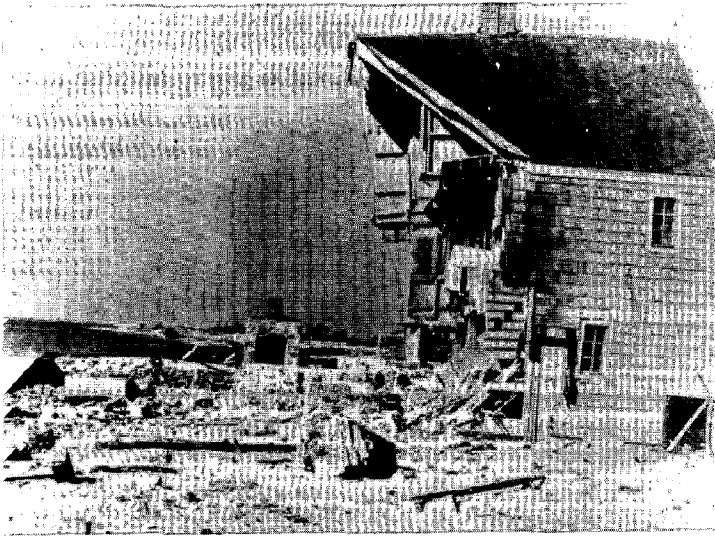


Hurricanes

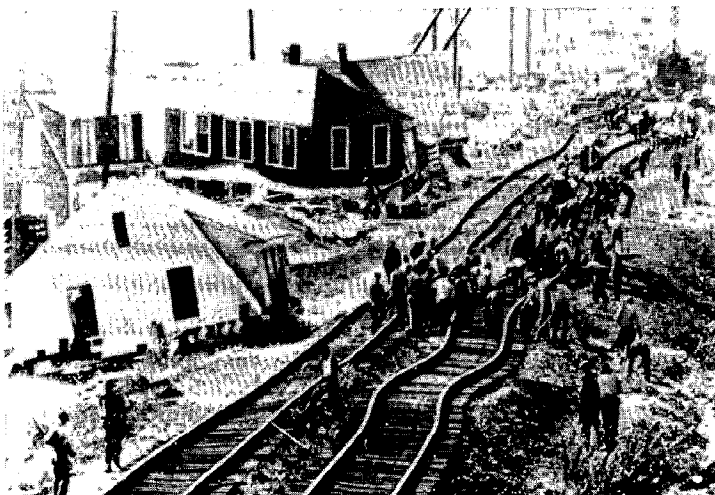
One aspect of shoreline life that causes alarm is the sudden and dramatic fury of the sea brought about by severe storms and hurricanes. Inevitably, when such a coastal storm occurs, widespread destruction and occasional death often follow. In the past fifty years, the Connecticut shore has experienced no fewer than seven hurricanes, and scores of severe storms. (Hurricanes are severe storms with winds exceeding 64 knots.) There is no way to predict when and where the next hurricane will slam into our shores. They form erratically, but always in the warmer months: September 21, 1938; September 14, 1944; August 31, 1954 (Carol); September 11, 1954 (Edna); August 12 and 19, 1955 (Connie and Diane); August 27, 1971 (Doria); and August 10, 1976 (Belle).

Perhaps the most destructive hurricane ever to hit Connecticut was the Hurricane of 1938, when, as one source put it, "the Sound broke loose over the land,

93. *An Old Saybrook House after the Hurricane of 1938.*



94. *New London Railroad tracks after the 1938 Hurricane.*



reducing civilization to a pile of splintered wood and wrecked buildings." As early as September 16, 1938, U.S. weather experts announced that a full-fledged hurricane had developed in the Caribbean. No one was particularly alarmed, because most tropical storms get blown out to open ocean. However, by the 20th, the storm began to curve northward. A North Atlantic high pressure center, located close to the shoreline, prevented the hurricane from moving northeasterly, out over the Atlantic and away from the American mainland. Meanwhile, another high pressure center was moving eastward across the U.S., leaving a narrow section of warm moist air pointing straight at New England. By the following day, the hurricane was rushing at 70 miles per hour, with gusts over 100, up this atmospheric corridor toward the Connecticut shore.

There were no accurate weather reports about the storm; radar had yet to be invented and ships in the Atlantic had moved out of its path. New Englanders were worrying about the unusually heavy rains of the past few days, which threatened to push the overburdened rivers to flooding. No one had the slightest inkling of the hurricane or its force until it was too late.

September 21 was a hot, extremely humid day. As the air pressure fell people remarked to one another that their ears felt funny. By one o'clock in the afternoon, the winds along the Connecticut shore had picked up to gale force. Within an hour, torrential rains began to fall. Soon after a fast moving wall of water smashed against the shores of Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The winds and water tore through houses and other buildings, pushed boats and small cottages many yards inland, twisted train tracks and demolished nearly all the boats along the shore. Chunks of shoreline property were actually tipped away and washed out to sea by the hurricane's fury, altering the configuration of many parts of the coastline. The storm raised the Sound tides ten to seventeen feet above normal.

Since few, if any, residents knew of the approaching storm, most people went about their usual business, oblivious to the destruction that lay ahead. In the early afternoon, a New Haven passenger train, the "Bostonian," stopped as it was passing through Stonington. On the tracks ahead lay a house and a cabin cruiser, flung there from the Sound by the hurricane. The train's engineer uncoupled the engine from the rest of the cars and slowly pushed both the house and boat off the

tracks, then hooked up to a single passenger car and dining car. Since the tracks ahead were too weak to support the train, the passengers moved into the two cars and spent the night eating, drinking and entertaining each other, cut off from the rest of the world. The track gradually twisted and buckled, causing the last two coaches to flip over on their sides close to the flood waters. Miraculously, no one was killed.

Other parts of the state did not fare as well as those train passengers. In all, 85 persons died as a direct result of the storm, and state property loss totalled \$100 million. The entire coastline was affected — Fairfield County reported damages of \$1 million and more. The eastern part of the coast, lacking the buffer of Long Island, suffered greater losses. In the six-town area comprising Westbrook, Madison, Guilford, Branford, Old Saybrook, and Lyme damages totalled more than \$7 million. New London was hit full force: in addition to boats and buildings being destroyed, a fire caused by the storm destroyed about \$4 million worth of property.

The hurricane didn't stop at the coastline but moved up into the interior of Connecticut, through Middletown and Hartford and up through northern New England before petering out around Montreal.

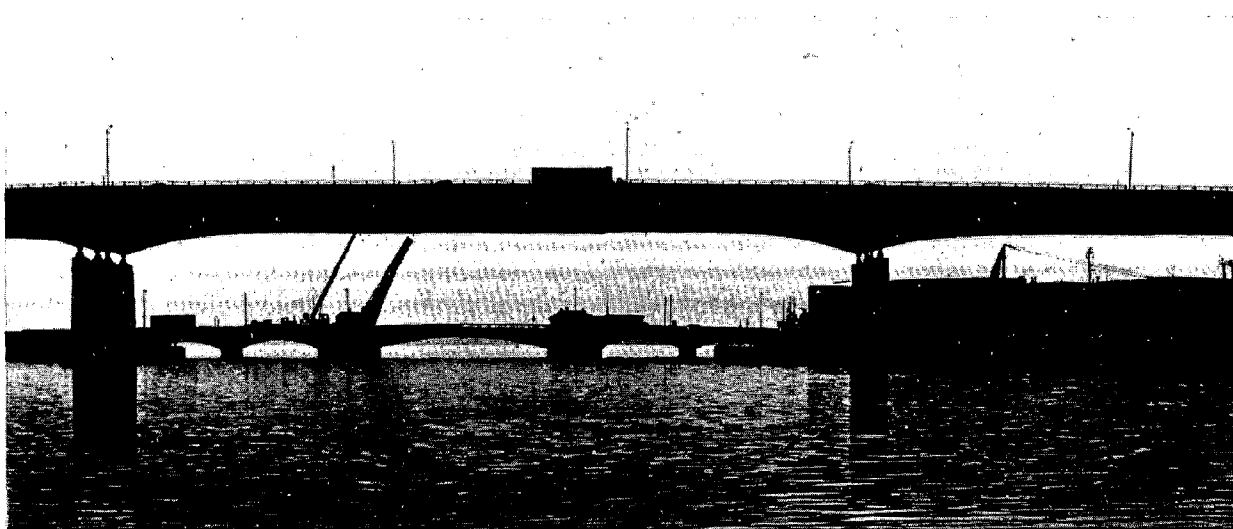
High and Low Roads

At the 1939 World's Fair on Long Island, the most popular attraction was the General Motors highway ex-

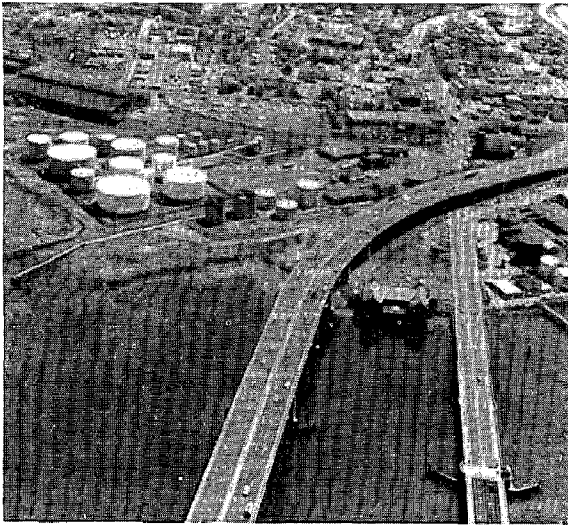
hibit, Futurama. The exhibit showed people what life would be like in the future (actually 1960) with a complete and well planned highway system. Gone would be the traffic jams, crowded intersections, and other annoyances of daily driving. It was a vision which the country eventually accepted, and in 1956 the federal government embarked on a large-scale network of highways, 41,000 miles in all, which would join forty-two state capitals and ninety percent of all cities in the U.S. with a population of fifty thousand or more. It was called the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, and Connecticut, like other states, linked up to the network.

The Connecticut shoreline, however, had its own transportation problems. Around 1920, the traffic along Route 1, or the Boston Post Road, was so congested that a new highway had to be proposed. The new road was designed to avoid towns and cities and became the Merritt Parkway — one of the most attractive and advanced highways in the country. Yet even after 1938, when the Parkway was completed, traffic along Route 1 continued to be high.

Route 1, according to a seasoned traveler in the late thirties, "was one of the first long-distance roads to be completed in America, and at once became one of the most popular. But unfortunately, for the dreams of its early protagonists, once built, the road established itself as one long slum. Today, with its miles of hot-dog stands and filling stations, its omnipresent billboards, and its thousands of trucks and buses crawling from traffic light to traffic light, it is the worst introduction



95. Bridge over coastal waters.



96. New Haven Harbor.

to southern Connecticut that the motorist could possibly find."

Most of the congestion was caused by trucks, which had replaced the railroads as commercial carriers, and so another shore route was planned. A road that would closely approximate the line of the New Haven Railroad would be a commercial boon to the cities along the coast, connecting with the New York Highway system and serving the coastline for at least twenty years. In the late fifties, Connecticut began a four year program which suddenly brought the coastal towns and cities closer to each other and the rest of the country. With the completion of the Connecticut Turnpike (Interstate 95), the shore became part of a national network of highways. Highway construction in the 1960s seemed a way of life to people along the shore, many of whom were not exactly happy with the inconvenience that came with it. The new thruway brought more commerce into the cities, but it also brought more trucks, more noise, and more pollution.

Power Plants

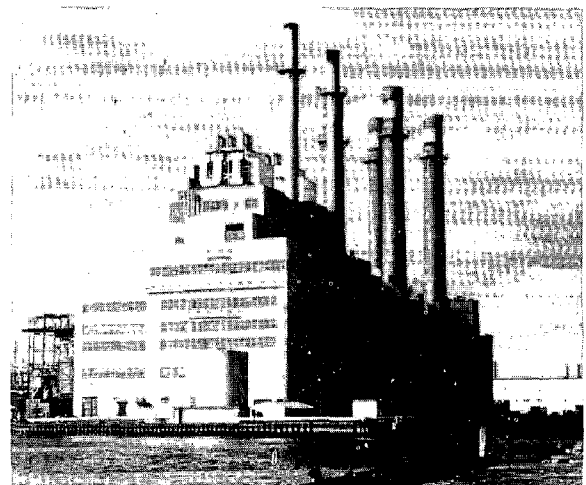
Water as a power source was a major factor in the historically intensive use of the coast. Today, electric generating plants located on the coast utilize Long Island Sound and major rivers as a water source for cooling. Currently twenty electric generating stations operate within the coastal municipalities. Three are nuclear-powered with a fourth under construction. These

facilities are evenly distributed among the western, central, and eastern coastal regions, with a noticeable lack in the Connecticut River Estuary area. The availability of electricity to many rural areas via transmission lines has facilitated residential growth along the coast as well as inland.

The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit

The economic growth spurred by commercial and industrial development was accompanied by increasing residential use of the shorefront and inland areas. Today, residential dwellings occupy one-quarter of the state's available shorefront property. Rising land values and a lack of undeveloped shorefront land have stimulated more residential growth inland. Within the coastal communities, residential land use between the years 1970-75 accounted for nearly half of the total newly developed land acreage — a statistic which has had dramatic consequences for the coast and for the people who live there.

One of the things Connecticut is famous for is a stereotype: the independent, inventive, irascible character called the Connecticut Yankee. Connecticut also provided the country with a more modern stereotype: the suburban commuter. More stories have probably been written about Fairfield County than anywhere else, and more about the suburban man than anyone else. The suburbanite has been characterized, even satirized, as a person whose life is defined by social obligations, train



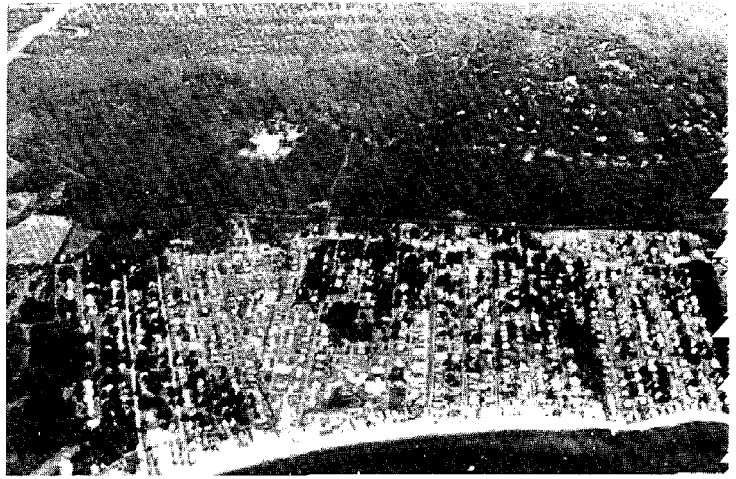
97. United Illuminating Electric Generating Plant, New Haven.

schedules, status-seeking, and keeping up with the neighbors; and he has been defended as someone who managed to create, no matter how tenuous, a semi-balance of order in a chaos of violence, corruption, and indifference. No matter how we view the stereotype of the suburbanite, he is to us what the Connecticut Yankee was to the last century, a typically modern character, representative of our fears and wants.

The most western part of the Connecticut shore has been considered a suburb of New York City for over a century, but it has been in the last fifty years that the idea of "suburbia" has become part of our consciousness. Between 1920 and 1930, the population growth along the coastline registered a major change. Cities like New Haven and Bridgeport grew at expected rates — less than ten percent — because of the consistent industrial growth there. But much more surprising was the increase in population in Stamford, New Canaan, and Norwalk, which grew at a rate of more than twenty-five percent, and Greenwich, Darien, and Fairfield which grew at an incredible rate of forty-five percent. The suburbs were taking shape.

As New York grew more and more hungry for educated, white-collar workers, its traditional satellite communities found on Long Island and in Westchester County were not sufficient, and the greater metropolitan area of New York spread into Connecticut and New Jersey. By 1950, the commuter was a familiar personage, someone who worked in the city and lived in the "country" ostensibly reaping the benefits of both worlds. Some suburban towns even grew into cities; Stamford, for one, forged its own identity, and by the fifties began competing against New York — a David against Goliath — as headquarters for national corporations. Yet the people of Westport and Darien, for instance, worked hard at keeping their communities essentially residential, avoiding the lure of commercial and industrial development.

Suburbia is also not limited to the New York-oriented towns — the so-called Gold Coast of Fairfield County. In the ten years between 1920 and 1930, towns like Hamden, West Haven, Stratford, Orange, East Haven, and North Haven mushroomed, becoming the "suburbs" of the industrial centers of New Haven and Bridgeport. While the railroad prompted the growth of Fairfield County as New York's suburb, it was the highway system which gave rise to the residential developments that dot the landscape around the larger



98. Dramatic shot of coastal housing density, Old Lyme.

shoreline cities.

The suburban boom also coincided with the post-World War II "baby boom" which created problems that most of these towns could not readily handle. High-density home building meant, among other things, an increase in services, from garbage collection to the construction of new schools and roads. Along the Sound recreation became a big business, and the cities, being depleted by the suburban exodus, began revitalization programs which involved more development.

The stretch of land from Greenwich to New Haven was the scene of an almost unbelievable frenzy of building. Housing developments, apartment complexes, condominiums, commercial centers, and shopping plazas dramatically changed the face of the coastline. Even the summer resort communities, which had remained peaceful townships — at least after the summer ended — felt the pressures of suburbanization. Milford, one of the earliest resort areas, has over the last twenty years become highly urbanized, mostly along Route 1 and the Connecticut Thruway, while Madison remains a favorite summer retreat for thousands. North Madison has grown into a residential community in its own right. Even the river community of Chester, which

99. Many condominium and apartment complexes have been built along the coast.





100. Branford beach scene.

had been spared the onslaught of suburbanization has been discovered and is experiencing a population boom of its own. Many other towns such as Old Saybrook and Old Lyme have undergone housing changes brought on by the winterization of summer homes.

Fun and Games: Coastal Recreation

The rapid and intense growth of the population living in coastal Connecticut — and in the state in general — created a strong demand for recreational use of coastal resources. Although many recreational areas have existed along the shorefront for many years, they too have changed in character in the last thirty years. Today, boating facilities are perhaps the most promi-

nent recreational feature on the coast. In addition to the 164 commercial marinas, there are 63 private yacht clubs and eight public marinas together supplying over 25 thousand berths and slips. Some 23 state boat ramps accommodate more than 100 thousand registered boaters in the state.

The largest stretches of sandy beach found in Connecticut have generally been kept in public ownership. Yearly, some three million residents sunbathe, swim, and carouse at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, Hammonasset State Park in Madison, and Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme. Bluff Point State Park and Harkness Memorial State Park in Groton, and Silver Sands State Park in Milford, are also publicly owned; though undeveloped, they offer recreational beach opportunities to many residents.

Connecticut, in comparison to Massachusetts, Rhode Island, or New York, does not have an abundance of



101. Mystic boat show.

sandy beaches. The state totals only 78 miles of sandy beach, and most of that beach is broken up into small pocket beaches. Municipalities own about 23 miles of sandy beach. Those beaches range in size from short, 100-foot stretches of sand with very little available parking to highly developed beach areas offering a full range of recreational facilities. A good example of such a large, developed municipal beach is Seaside Park in Bridgeport, which incidentally was left to the people of the city by P.T. Barnum.

The coastal area offers other recreational opportunities which are not as well recognized as the traditional boating, bathing, and fishing and yet are just as impor-

tant. Tidal wetlands, for instance, provide natural areas for fishing, shellfishing, bird-watching, and biological research as well as open space. Nonetheless, the competition for coastal lands among residential, industrial, transportation, and recreational interests has had adverse impacts on many wetlands, and Connecticut has lost over 15 thousand acres, or fifty percent, of its wetlands since World War II. Wisely and fortunately, some areas have been preserved — such as the Wheeler Wildlife Sanctuary in Milford and Barn Island Fish and Wildlife Sanctuary in Stonington — for recreational, biological, and aesthetic uses.

102. Fishing in Bridgeport Harbor.



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