

Chapter IX

FREEMAN'S PURCHASE

LIMITS AND EARLY OWNERSHIPS OF LOTS NO. 1 TO NO. 16

Lot No. 1

This first Freeman's lot extended northerly on the westerly side of Main Street beyond the limits of the "West End", as I have described it, to the depth of a house lot beyond Cherry Street, and after the partition of June 1710 it belonged to Ralph Earle. Earle sold it in June of 1716 to Captain Constant Church, who was a son of Col. Benjamin Church. Col. Church had owned lot No. 2 since 1694 and had built a house upon it about 1700. He conveyed the southerly three-quarters of it to Captain Church two months prior to the purchase by the latter of the lot from Earle, so that in 1716 Constant Church had become the owner of all of the land west of Main Street from Franklin Street to Walnut Street, and from him it passed to various lot owners who built homes upon it. At a later date Abner Davol, and his sons Stephen Davol and William C. Davol, Sr., resided in the house just north of the First Baptist Church.

To the east of Main Street, the land of lot No. 1 fronting on Bedford Street came to be owned by Abraham Bowen and afterwards by James G. Bowen and Nathan Bowen. Thirty acres of it were sold in 1825 to John C. Borden whose land extended northerly to the Samuel Rodman farm and easterly to or beyond the present police station (on Bedford Street). In 1828 Borden acquired some near-by land, in partnership with Major Bradford Durfee, at the northeast corner of Bedford and Court Square. In 1855 Court Square was accepted as a public street (32 feet wide) and Granite Street was also accepted and made 35 feet wide. Previous to that time they had been private ways. The southerly end of Purchase street was then at Franklin street. It was extended from Franklin street to Bank

street, through the estate of Ellen M. Wrightington, on December 7, 1909 and carried through from Bank Street to Granite street on May 8, 1916. Rock Street had been laid out through John C. Borden's land in 1829 and was then called New Boston Road. It extended northerly from Bedford Street to Pine Street; then turned up Pine Street to the east and then northerly through the Winter Street section where it was called Highland Avenue until it joined New Boston Road. The name of Rock Street was given to part of it in 1835 but in the meantime it had been called "Exchange Street". John C. Borden erected an elaborate home on a site near the present Second District Court, faced it to the south and laid out a spacious lawn and garden which extended westerly to Purchase Street, and southerly to Bedford Street, where it overlooked the Quequechan River. This house was built in 1827, contained fifty-five rooms with floors, ceilings and doors of hard pine and with wainscoted walls and hand carved interior finish. The stable was the same which was later on Rock street, and used for many years by William Kirby as a livery stable. It was torn down in 1904. Borden died in 1833, but he had previously sold two-thirds of his real estate holdings to John and Jesse Eddy of Fall River, and Pardon G. Seabury of New Bedford. After Borden's death, in September 1835, his heirs joined the other owners in a deed of their real estate holdings to Horatio N. Gunn, Charles Trafton, Iram Smith and Joshua Remington. Trafford's share passed through several intermediate owners, as did the shares of Smith and Remington through other owners, until in March 1844 Gunn had purchased the whole property containing about 81 rods of land. The Borden heirs had converted his mansion into a hotel which was originally managed for them by James Valentine and later by John D. Thornton, and Gunn, and his associates continued that use and named it the "Exchange Hotel", a name which was afterwards transferred to the Richardson House on Main Street.

What was later known as the Kirby Stable became the headquarters for various stage lines and ultimately became the property of Rufus B. Kingsley who was interested in the various stage coach and express lines which operated from Newport to Boston. After Mr. Gunn had discontinued his hotel he used it as his residence until his death. It was still standing in an increasingly dilapidated condition until 1910, when it was torn down as the present Second District Court house was erected.

The land at the northwesterly corner of Rock and Bedford streets was sold in 1844 to the Central Congregational Society which erected a church there and older residents will remember the iron fence which surrounded

the front yard with an attractive shaded walk leading from Bedford Street to the steps of the church.

To the west of the church property was a narrow way which separated the Bowen and Borden estates.

The land lying northerly of Granite Street, southerly of Bank Street and easterly from Main Street, constituted the homestead of Oliver Chace. His substantial residence was in the rear of his homestead lot, and opposite Court Square. In 1835 pipes were laid from his well to supply water to the Exchange Hotel and its stables. After his death his sons James H. Chace and Jonathan Chace owned this estate, but it was gradually put to business uses. The Borland Block was built at the northeast corner of Main and Granite Streets; it was substantially enlarged and became the Wilbur Hotel. Then at the southeast corner of Main and Bank Streets the Fall River Bank, subsequently the Fall River National Bank, was built, and between these were wooden buildings rented to several merchants, one of whom was the leading market firm of Davis and Fish.

On Bank Street extending through to Granite Street was built the substantial edifice of the St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal church. The Davis and Fish lot and the church lot, to an equal depth, were acquired by and added to the Fall River National Bank building, but the rear end of the church property was sold to the City of Fall River and used by the police department as quarters for the "Hurry-Up" or "Black Maria" and its equipment, with sleeping rooms upstairs. Previous to 1857 the street department hired most of its teaming, but it owned a few teams. They were usually kept at Sherman's Stable, which was then near the site of Stone's Stable on the Bank street extension. This stable was burned about 1856 and all of the horses and equipment were destroyed. In his inaugural address in the following year Mayor Davenport recommended the purchase of the large lot at the southwest corner of Court Square and Granite Streets and the building known for a long time thereafter as the Second District Court house was speedily built. Deed of this Second District Court House lot to the city was June 23rd, 1857 (see C. R. Book 49, Page 230). The first floor, at the street corner, was adapted for the use of two of the fire engines, with fire doors to the east, and immediately in the rear of that large room was the lockup and cell room, with a corridor leading out to Granite Street. The westerly part of the building was equipped as a city stable.

On the upper floor were the headquarters or offices and sleeping rooms of the police department. To the west of these was the court room with the clerk's, judges' and lawyers' rooms, and from the Court Room a public

entrance led down to Granite Street. The horse-drawn Metacomet and King Philip engines were housed there, and on top of the building was a tower from which the fire alarm bell was rung by means of a rope which extended to the street floor. Philander Curry and Clark Whipple drove two pair of horses in performance of the work done by the city on the streets, and whenever a fire bell rang these men would climb down from their high seats, unhook the whiffle trees and leaving the wagons wherever they stood would drive their horses, with the whiffle trees clanging along behind to the station house where they slipped them on to the engines and drove them to the fire. The office of the Superintendent of Streets was in a little wooden building across Granite street from the city stables.

On the east side of Court Square, midway between Bedford Street and Granite Street was the Fall River Opera House which was erected in 1876. On the west side of the square was a building owned by Rodney Barrett which had formerly been his liquor store, but which for a time was occupied by Samuel E. Fiske, from which several country newspapers, which had been printed on the upper floor, were distributed to the newsboys, of which the writer was one. There were ways on each side of the Barrett building, a driveway at the south and foot way at the north.

On September 4, 1914 Court Square was widened on the west side to form a more direct connection with Second street. The corner building (formerly owned by Charles A. Chace, but then owned by Mary A. Brady) was torn down. In it had been the real estate and insurance offices of Shepard and Buffinton on the lower floor, and over these the real estate and insurance offices of William S. Greene. Mr. Greene was our most prominent politician and his office was the headquarters for the political "runners". He had been mayor, congressman and postmaster for several terms and was an outstanding feature of our city life.

On the easterly side of the Watuppa Pond and within the limits of this lot No. 1, was located Adirondack Grove. A proprietors' way or Drift Road leads northerly along the shores of the pond from the old Bedford Road to this lot, at the dividing line between Westport and Fall River. Laneways formerly led easterly from this proprietors' way to the various farms which adjoined it, but when the westerly portion of these farms was condemned to preserve the purity of the water of the pond, all but one of these lanes, known as the "Blossom Way", were legally discontinued.

Adirondack Grove is situated on the north of two substantial hills which abut on the pond, and between these elevations there is a valuable

pit from which gravel was formerly taken, and sometimes towed (in barges), to the public landing place in the rear of the Centennial Block of John D. Flint on Hartwell Street. This landing place adjoined the upper Troy or Watuppa dam. A flat-bottom stern-wheel steam boat of the style of a Mississippi river boat, named the "Enterprise" plied between this landing place and various wharves on both ponds. Often surplus freight was brought down from the ponds in a barge, and some freight was unloaded on the easterly side of the stream, near the foot of Eddy Street. Centennial Block was moved to this site when "Borden Block" was built. It previously occupied the lot on the southerly side of Pleasant Street, between Main to Second Streets. Henry H. Wordell, who is still living, was captain of the boat and he operated it according to the demand for its services. Sand and cord wood were among its usual cargoes, but passengers were always accommodated.

On holidays during the appropriate season excursions were run to Adirondack Grove where picnic parties, which were well-advertised and popular, were the usual rule. The northerly view from the grove is still seemingly near to nature and very attractive. Before condemnation for preservation of the water supply, the pond itself furnished the best fishing for larger fish and the whole region was in close contact with game-abounding territory. There were very attractive camping spots in Blossom's Grove and at other nearby places.

Lot No. 2

The second Freeman's lot extended northerly from the first lot to the line of the stone wall which marked the rear line of the Maple street (Westall) school house lot. In the division of lots it was drawn by Humphrey Turner of Scituate. Upon Humphrey's death, his son Joseph Turner became the owner, and he sold it in 1671 to Israel Hubbard. Hubbard sold it to Jonathan Dodson, who sold it in 1674 to Col. Benjamin Church.

In 1707 Col. Church conveyed the southerly three-fourths of this lot to his son Capt. Constant Church. In 1715 Capt. Constant Church sold ten acres on the shore to Thomas Turner of Tiverton. In 1731 Church sold the remainder of this southerly three-quarters to Benjamin Durfee and upon the death of the latter his son Thomas Durfee inherited it. At the location of the southwesterly corner of Main and Cherry streets Col. Benjamin Church once lived in a "wigwam". There was a spring in the rear of this lot (now connected with the sewer), formerly called Church's spring.

To the east of the North Watuppa pond, the northerly quarter of this lot, and the southerly half of the third lot, formed the Indian Reservation. Originally the Indian reservation extended to the easterly shores of the pond, but when the city condemned land to protect its water supply, a legislative act on June 12, 1907 transferred a large part of the reservation to the control of the city. Included in the portion so condemned were two Indian burial grounds known as the "Old" and the "New". The newer burial ground, on a bluff overlooking the waters of the pond, is enclosed in a rough post and single rail fence. The older burial ground was a part of the "Indian Common" located at the northeasterly corner of the Blossom and Indiantown roads and it has had no care. Within my early memory there were 25 to 30 grave markers upon it — today there are eleven; WPA workers and crushed stone necessities account for the difference.

The last Indian to be buried in the new cemetery was Dr. Bill Perry; this was about forty-five years ago. Dr. Bill Perry had three wives, and by his last wife he had four children, all of these are now (1941) unmarried. They live in the only house now standing on the Indian Reservation. It was moved from another part of the Watuppa Reservation, about 1905, when all the older houses were destroyed by fire.

A few descendants from Indian families are now living on or near to Blossom's Road. They are known to be industrious and reliable. An Indian named Osomakun who was born within the limits of the Indian Reservation is the Indian minister at Mashpee and Chilmark and has oversight over the Indian churches at both of these places. Dr. Perry's last wife came from Mashpee and when she died her body was sent there for burial. There are now fifty-four burial stones in the new Indian burial lot on the Watuppa Reservation.

Lot No. 3

The third lot of the Freeman's Purchase extended from a point south of Prospect Street to the middle of Pearce Street, — it was drawn in the allotment by Christopher Wadsworth who was a resident of Duxbury and was a man of considerable note. Although this purchase was not made until 1656, Wadsworth had been the first constable in Duxbury as early as 1633; a selectman there for six years and a representative in the General Court for four years more. On September 1, 1636 he was joined to the Governor and Colonial Council of Plymouth to prepare a regular system of laws for the colony. When the Quaker troubles arose and thereafter until 1661 when Charles II of England ordered that Quaker cases be sent

to England for trial, Wadsworth refused to act as a colonial officer. His will is dated January 13, 1687. He is an ancestor of the writer through his great-granddaughter Christina who was the mother of my great-grand-mother Mercy Phillips who married Blaney Phillips.

Lot No. 4

Freemen's Lot No. 4, extending from the middle of Pearce Street to the middle of Weetamoe Street, was drawn in the allotment by Edmond Chandler and descended from him to his son Joseph Chandler. Edmond Chandler had been a constable in Duxbury as early as 1637 and a representative to the Colonial Court in 1639.

In July of 1673 Joseph sold it to Henry Brightman of Portsmouth, R. I. and for many years this tract of land has been known as the Brightman Farm. Brightman sold to Matthew Boomer who became a settler upon this lot in 1675. Boomer is recorded as "redding in the Government without order, not attending public worship of God, living lonely and in a heathenish manner". He was a Quaker.

In 1678 Boomer sold one-fourth share in this lot to John Read of Newport, "the meadow at Sepecan only excepted", and Read settled there. His house stood on the present site of St. Joseph's Church. In his will executed March 5, 1714, Read (who died in 1721) left his house and lands in Freetown to his wife, describing it as the northernmost quarter of the fourth lot. At one time Read operated a tannery on the 9th lot.

John Read was a prominent and wealthy resident of Freetown, served as selectman, assessor and treasurer. He owned a negro slave and had considerable land in Swansea where he also maintained a home.

On the easterly portion of lot No. 4, was the "Highland Brook" which flowed easterly into the pond and upon which had once been a small saw mill. The mill was in use as late as 1795. The "north park", and the "city hospitals" of Fall River, are on this lot.

On the westerly end of this lot, at a point which is now the northwesterly corner of Davol and Brownell streets was a grove known as "Boomer Cedars". Here in July 1777 the town of Freetown voted to set up a "salt works". In 1780 the town "sold" the salt works for one year at public auction. The rent paid was ten bushels of salt which was to be paid "in the fall".

During the past century there were along the Atlantic Seaboard many salt-works where common salt was prepared from sea water. Sea water averages 3-4 parts of salt per 100 parts of water. Until fifteen or twenty

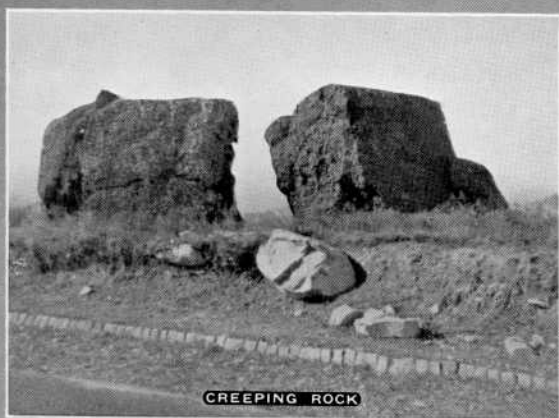
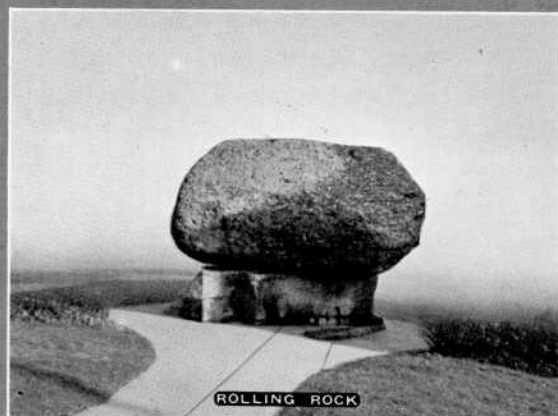
years ago there were the remains of such a salt-works in Dartmouth, Mass. near the western end of the bridge leading to Padanaram.

As salt is nearly as soluble in cold as in hot water, it was necessary to actually remove the water from the salt solution. To do so was too expensive unless solar heat was utilized. The usual procedure was to erect a large frame, 75-100 feet or more long and about 30 feet high. This frame was loosely stacked with fagots from top to bottom. The sea water was then pumped by windmills to the top of the frame and allowed to trickle slowly down over the fagots. Thus a greater surface for evaporation was obtained. The more concentrated salt solution was caught in shallow catch basins beneath the frame and then recirculated over the fagots until the salt began to crystallize out. It was then run off into wide, shallow settling basins where the rays of the sun removed the rest of the water. The crystallized salt was worked over with rakes to secure as complete drying as possible. Sometimes a purification process was attempted but it is doubtful if this was done very often. The settling basins were provided with wood covers for protection in case of rainy weather. Of course, the warmer the climate the shorter was the time required to produce a yield of salt.

Lot No. 5

The fifth lot of the Freeman's Purchase extended northerly from Weetamoe Street to the junction of North Main and East North Main (Crescent) Streets. It crossed the North Watuppa pond north of Interlachen and included an island in the pond. Allotted at first to Samuel House of Scituate, who died there in 1661, his sons (Samuel and Joseph) conveyed it in 1678 to Henry Brightman and Thomas Cornell, Brightman taking the northerly half and Cornell the southerly half. Cornell sold his half during the next year to George Lawton, Jr., and Lawton sold it to Samuel Gardner, who built and occupied a house on it as early as 1687 at which time he sold it back to Lawton for two hundred and fifty pounds, and Lawton again sold it in 1694, this time to Ezekiel Hunt for two hundred pounds. All these men were from Portsmouth, and the deeds describe the half lot as being fifty-eight rods wide and four miles deep, stating also that Henry Brightman still owned the northerly half of the lot and that John Read occupied the adjoining land to the south (lot 4).

The North Burial Ground is upon this lot. Brightman Street takes its name from the Brightman owners, and while the land has gradually been sold off, one of their descendants lived upon Crescent street until her death in 1939 (Eva St. Clair Brightman). A part of Leemingville is on the tract.



Natural Phenomena

1. Rolling Rock
2. Old Man of Joshua's Mountain
3. Bullock Marker (Freetown)
4. Creeping Rock

Lot No. 6

The sixth lot of the Freeman's Purchase was drawn by Henry Howland of Duxbury. It extended northerly from lot No. 5 to a point slightly to the north of Dexter street and through the cove north of the Border City Mills and south of the Shell Oil Company plant.

John Howland and Samuel Howland, sons of Henry Howland, settled upon this lot. The father Henry died in 1670, John in 1687 and Samuel in 1716.

At a point on Blossom's Road east of the Pond, which I estimate to be within this lot, is the "Boomer" burial ground fenced by a substantial cut granite wall, and diagonally northwesterly from the cemetery, across the road in the edge of young pine grove and near to the road, was formerly a depression between two hillocks, where in the underbrush, was a camping place, which upon reliable tradition was used by King Philip and his Indians. There, a few hundred yards southerly from Philip's Swamp Brook, Philip spent the night upon his hurried retreat to Mount Hope from Rochester where his wife and son had been captured, when he was making his last trek at the close of the Indian war. The camp fire was built on a rock of substantial size, which had a side or back at right angles with its base, and it was a much respected landmark until the federal PWA workers saw fit to level the depression, dump the rock into it, clear up the underbrush and "beautify" the spot within the grove.

Lot No. 7

George Watson, proprietor of the seventh lot, which extended northerly from the Border City cove to the center of Canedy Street, retained title to it as long as he lived and after him it was occupied by his children and grandchildren. A grandson, John Watson, sold it on July 20, 1706 to Henry Brightman, and it was added to his substantial holdings as has been explained under "lot five".

Lot No. 8

The eighth lot of the Freeman's Purchase was drawn by Ralph Partridge of Duxbury. He came to America in 1636 and died in 1658. This lot extended northerly from Canedy Street to a point midway between the St. Vincent's Home and Steep Brook. Partridge died before his deed was recorded and partition made among his heirs in 1660. The lot passed to his grandsons Ralph Thatcher and Peter Thatcher, and on October 29,

1694 they conveyed to John Read, reserving the meadow "at or near Sippican". They sent a written request to Samuel Howland and Matthew Boomer, asking them to give possession to John Read, and he took possession December 5, 1694. "Sippican" may likely have been an Indian word indicating a main camping place on the shore of an important river portage. It was also used with reference to a river in Rochester, which was contiguous to an important camping place where Col. Church attended Awashonks and her war dance.

By will of March 5, 1714 Read bequeathed to son Joseph Read one quarter part of this lot, and Joseph settled there. February 3, 1727 John Read (son of John above) conveyed to his son John "the northerly half of the lot", and the deed refers to his brother Joseph Read as occupant of the adjoining farm. John Read, Jr. died after 1750. He had been town clerk for thirty-five years and served for two years as representative, selectman, assessor and town clerk. On this lot (north of St. Vincent's Orphanage) lived Henry Elsbree, a stone-cutter. It is related of him that he walked to work in New Bedford every Monday morning and came back Saturday night. His pay was sixty cents a day. In the Elsbree house, then the home of Louisa Borden, the first Fall River town meeting was held in 1803.

Lot No. 9 (Steep Brook)

Prior to the American Revolution (from about 1740) there was a substantial rivalry between the villages of Assonet and Steep Brook as to which would be recognized as the chief center of trade. At first Assonet had the greater prominence because of its shipping interests and its foreign trade, but Steep Brook was nearer to the river traffic and more directly in the line of land travel, especially of the travel between Cape Cod, New Bedford and Providence. At one time there were six grocery stores in each village. When a town church was established in Freetown the only possible solution as to its location was to build it in the wilderness equi-distant from these two trade centers.

There was then no way of reaching the falls river settlement except through Steep Brook because the narrows between the ponds were not bridged. When in 1773 Blossom Road (connecting with the Yellow Hill Road and New Bedford) was laid out, a dispute arose which was so keen that when the road reached the corner of Wilson Road there was a fistic encounter to decide whether the road builders under the leadership of David Wilson would continue north to Assonet or west to Steep Brook. David Wilson was the grandfather of Job Wilson, and the Steep Brook

extension was named Wilson Road in his honor. His grandson James H. Wilson, (the younger who has borne that name) now upholds that same family business standing in the Steep Brook area. "Fighting Rock" (the site of the affray) was a prominent landmark at the road intersection until it, with many other cherished landmarks, was destroyed during the recent PWA administration when the rock was removed in order to give work to the unemployed.

Steep Brook village is located on the main road, about midway between the bound limits of lot nine, and Wilson road extends east and west from that village approximately through the middle of the same lot. The entire lot was at first owned by Timothy Hatherly, a prominent resident of Scituate, and a colonial official. He sold it to Capt. James Cudworth, and Cudworth sold it in 1681 to Simon Lynde of Boston, whose son deeded it in 1717 to his grandchildren Thomas Valentine and Elizabeth Valentine.

At the northeasterly corner at the Four Corners Isaac Winslow built the first "town house" in 1805. Its cost was \$415. When the town built a new town house on Brightman Street the old house was used as a school house, and afterwards as a store until it was burned.

Southwesterly of the Four Corners was the "Green Dragon Inn". It was at first operated by Orin Eddy, and was later owned and operated by Captain Hezekiah Wilson. Until a recent date the Wilson family retained for a relic the old pictured sign of the Inn. It bore the words "Beer, Oysters and Horsekeeping". There was a black-smith shop northwesterly of the Four Corners. As early as 1808 stage coaches began to run from Boston to Newport by way of Berkley, first on alternate days and then daily. A rest period was had at the Green Dragon Inn while the horses were changed and the equipment checked at the blacksmith shop. At a nearby wharf (also owned by Capt. Wilson) connection was made with many river boats. There was another Inn on Freeman's lot numbered ten (V. v.).

At the fourth corner was a shop owned by one Ashley. This shop bore the sign "Variety Store". It is still standing, nearby, at the corner of Ashley Lane.

A considerable tract of land at the shore was deeded to David Wilson and his son Captain Hezekiah Wilson constructed the Wilson Wharf there. From this wharf a boat, of which he was the owner, carried wooden barrel hoops to Newport and fire wood to other places. This wharf was subsequently acquired by Barnabas Clark, who enlarged it. At one time there was a small wharf a little south of the Wilson wharf.

On an old road and a little northerly from Wilson Road, at the top of the hill, Aaron Elsbree built a house and a blacksmith shop. On this same road stood a farm house owned by one Durfee, the foundation of which can still be seen. There was once a search for buried treasure upon this lot. At his blacksmith shop Aaron Elsbree built a small vessel which he drew to the shore about half a mile distant.

A little south of the Four Corners on the east side there is now an old blacksmith shop. On this spot was the postoffice which was moved there in 1813 by postmaster Charles Pitman from the present center of Fall River. He lived in a house just north of the postoffice. In three years this postoffice was moved back to Fall River, which had then become Troy.

At the top of the hill, south of Wilson Road and west of Highland Avenue, was a mill privilege. A saw mill, a grist mill and a fulling mill were built there and they were operated there by Barnabas Clark. Clark, a blacksmith by trade, came to Steep Brook from Lakeville. He first worked in the blacksmith shop at the Four Corners and when he lost that employment he bought all the land on the south side of Wilson Road as far east as Highland Avenue. On this land there was a pit where he uncovered a fifteen foot depth of the best quality of fire clay. He sold this clay to the Presbrey Stove Lining Company in Taunton and to other similar concerns, and made large profits from which he purchased and enlarged the Wilson Wharf, bought the Green Dragon Inn and other buildings, and made his mill investments.

There were other early business ventures in the Steep Brook section. There was a mixing plant for sidewalk and roofing material near the Four Corners and a stove foundry owned by Seth Eddy. Some distance northerly from the village beyond Gage's Hill and on the easterly side of the Main road, was Read's tan yard with the usual tan vats. It was operated for a considerable period. Scattered along the road were carpenter shops and boat building enterprises, and there was a gun factory at Assonet. There was a substantial Tory sentiment among the villagers.

The colonists had a minimum of amusement. I find record of only one dancing class, which was held in Assonet, and taught by a relative of the writer, who attended once a week, walking twenty-five miles each way to give his instructions. (His photograph is shown on page 227 of Pierce's History of Freetown).

There was a muster ground where all the military companies had annual drills (sometimes oftener), — infrequent baseball games were played. The inhabitants of each District met frequently in the District School Houses,



SCENES IN
WATUPPA RESERVATION



Photographs by Phillips Whidden

Scenes in Watuppa Reservation

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|-------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Hog Rock | 2. Bell Rock | 3. Dr. Durfee Acetate Mill | 4. View east from Bell Rock |
|-------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|

where there were debates, forensic displays and a few lectures. The church sermons were rather dull, but the church yard gossip was an incentive to church attendance. Fast Days and Thanksgiving Days were also "field days" when companies of youths visited historical spots, most frequently to "Joshua's Mountain". Even the girls at the Peet school planned "berrying parties", of which the boys of the village seemed to have acquired advance notice.

Creeping Rock

Near to the westerly line of Highland Avenue, somewhat south of Wilson Road is a massive conglomerate rock of considerable height which I have photographed.

Supposed to have originally been a single rock, it became divided into two parts a great many years ago, but even lately these parts were so near together that one could step over the fissure. These parts are now eight or nine feet apart. Lately the northerly rock has again divided. The division seems to have been due to the weight of the rock on a varying density of the subsoil and by pressure on the crevice due to freezing, and the name Creeping Rock applies on account of the tendency of the divided parts to separate from each other.

Lot No. 10

The tenth lot of the Freeman's Purchase, which included at the shore part of the present grounds of the Fall River Golf Club, was assigned to Love Brewster, son of Elder William Brewster. The lot was inherited by Love's son, Wrestling Brewster, who sold the north half to John Rogers (who was a carpenter). Edward Thurston Sr. of Portsmouth, R. I. purchased from Rogers on October 3, 1702 and there settled his son Thomas Thurston who held various Freetown offices, including that of selectman. He died in 1730. Brewster sold the south half to Thomas Durfee in 1676, and it was settled by his son, Robert Durfee, whose wharf in the cove was the earliest landing place for vessels in the Steep Brook section.

At the shore line of this lot was a landing place called Thurston's wharf, where there were two houses by the river, also a cooper's shop in which barrels were made and sent in Thurston's vessels to the West Indies. Chace's Ferry was also at this place. There was a tavern maintained on the southerly portion of the lot until 1776, when it was destroyed by fire. The first Robert Miller was the proprietor of this tavern and a part of its foundation can still be seen. A subsequent structure, on the earlier foun-

dation, was burned in 1865, at which time many valuable family records and relics were lost. Miller was a shipwright by trade. He bought this lot in 1738 and added to his purchase in 1752. Chace's ferry was used by people from Dighton, Somerset and other places west of the river to connect on this side of the river with the stage coach for passage to Newport or Boston. In the winter ice made the passage hazardous and sometimes upset the ferry.

Next to Thurston's Wharf was Miller's Wharf (on the cove which bears that name). Robert Miller, shipwright, bought his land in 1738, and built a shipyard adjacent to his wharf. His son Robert was also a shipwright. Captain Benjamin Miller, son of Robert, Jr., bought additional land and enlarged the shipyard. Among the vessels built there in 1825 were the Sloop "Eliza" and the "Rising State". The "George Washington", built in 1838, made trips to Charleston, Savannah and Cuba trading in rice and cotton. In 1849 Capt. Miller sent her around Cape Horn to the California gold-fields. That ended her career. Upon his return home she was beached and abandoned by the crew, who were men from Steep Brook. Capt. Luther Winslow also built boats in this shipyard, in some of which he had an ownership. These included the "Lucy", "Rowena", "Mediator", and "Defiance".

Lot No. 11

The eleventh lot, next north, was allotted to Richard Moore of Duxbury, who had owned "Eagle's Nest" in that town, but the first settler was Thomas Gage, a clothier or cloth dresser. The high bluffs near the river on his property received the name of Gage's Hill. Robert Durfee's house was on lot ten at the foot of this hill.

A mile or more easterly from Blossom's Road and in the direction of the Copicut Fire tower, is a large rock called "Hog Rock" because of its really remarkable appearance. Formerly it was reached with great difficulty through the underbrush but now a "fire lane" passes near by. This rock is shown in a group photograph.

Lot No. 12

Lot No. 12 was owned by Walter Hatch of Scituate, who was a son of William Hatch, ruling Elder of the Second Church of Scituate. It passed to his son Joseph Hatch, who sold to Jonathan Dodson June 8, 1705 and Dodson settled there about 1708. He died in 1741. He was an important man in Freetown, serving as selectman, moderator, town clerk,

assessor and constable. In 1723 he declined election as representative to the General Court. At a town meeting held June 2, 1713 it was voted "Jonathan Dodson to be minister of the gospel for this town until there is a supply from England". Richard Collins, Dodson's son-in-law, also lived on the 12th lot.

Near to and westerly from the Bell Rock road, within the confines of Freeman's lot twelve (12) were situated Dr. Nathan Durfee's mills, known for a century as the "Doctor's Mill". The mill pond, containing approximately forty (40) acres extended southerly well into lot numbered eleven (11) and was fed by two brooks, the "bubbling spring" brook and the mill brook which latter was also the pond outlet. Both brooks were north of the watershed of the North Watuppa Ponds and the surplus water was carried through the quarry ledges and emptied into the Assonet Bleachery Pond. At the dam the mill pond was approximately ten (10) feet deep, and in addition to the spillway at the westerly end of the dam there were two flumes, one quite narrow, which supplied the water wheels of the wooden grist and saw mills. These mills have long since decayed. Nearly a century ago an "Acid Mill" was erected a little northwesterly of the other buildings. It was of stone construction and its remains can now be seen. A photograph is exhibited which shows the location of one of the retorts which were used. An aged nearby resident recalls a family tradition that approximately ninety years ago his father hauled maple wood to the acid mill, selecting it carefully, from the hard-wood cuttings taken from his farm, most of which he carted (one load a day) to the "slide", whence wood was taken from the wharf at the outlet of the Fall River stream for delivery by the harbor boats to the settlements along the bay.

Acetic (pyroligenous) acid results from a destructive distillation of wood as it is burned with a limited supply of air. At the same time wood (methyl) alcohol is produced. Acetic acid is thus produced much more cheaply than sulphuric acid (also known as "brown oil of vitriol"), which serves the same purpose in the composition of dyes. It was also used to form an "acetate of aluminum" in mordanting cotton.

Dr. Durfee was a large owner in local manufacturing plants, which used all of these acids, and he was the leading druggist and chemist of the town.

Lot No. 13

Lot No. 13 was drawn by Thomas Southworth of Plymouth. He was a brother of Constant Southworth who owned lot No. 19. By the middle

of the eighteenth century Samuel Valentine, son of Thomas and Elizabeth Valentine, had become the owner of this lot and lived there. In 1756 Samuel conveyed a part of this farm to his son Joseph, but family disputes arising, Joseph reconveyed to his father three years later. By 1768 William, another son of Samuel, had built a new dwelling house on a part of the lot and Samuel then conveyed to son William two acres of the land and the new dwelling. It is interesting to note that William Valentine had ordered a clock from England for his new house and that the bill of lading bears date 1767.

The William Valentine house, standing on the east side of North Main Street, (1941), and now numbered 5105 on said street, is occupied by Roy C. Athearn, one of his descendants. It is a typical colonial mansion of the better class and well worth visiting. It is in good condition with corner posts and plank construction, and its wooden inside-shutters slide instead of swing across the windows. The large chimney has several fire places. The old (hand-made) latches and hinges are still in use.

This same William Valentine owned 400 acres of the 14th lot which adjoined his farm. On the west side of the street the home of David Valentine, son of Samuel, still stands. It is a little north of the William Valentine place. David sold it in 1787.

East of the Athearn house is the "wigwam lot" so-called, a wooded tract upon which, until a late date, an Indian chief dwelled. Mr. Athearn made some excavations upon this lot, found old clam shells and Indian relics which are indicative of an early settlement and the circular stones such as were generally used to hold down wigwam supports. A notable collection of Indian relics has been collected by Mr. Athearn, in fact this collection is the most notable I have ever seen. It contains several hundred items which have been carefully classified with notation as to where each was found.

In a group picture entitled "Scenes in Watuppa Reservation" I am showing a view of a large, conical-shaped out-crop which is called Bell Rock. It is located in the easterly section of lot No. 13, approximately 1500 feet south of the line between Fall River and Freetown, and in the under-brush several hundred feet easterly of Blossom's Road, which is also called Bell Rock Road. It is reached from the road through a narrow path. In this same group picture is shown a view of the Reservation lands, taken, looking southeasterly from the top of the rock.

Bell Rock is the most noted of the land-marks in this district and there are several traditions as to the origin of this name. Some relate to bell-like

sounds heard by the Indians from the interior of the rock, or in the surrounding area which were regarded auspiciously, — others relate to the conical shape of the boulder, though access to it is abrupt on the easterly side. There are many so-called "bell-rocks" in other areas.

Lot No. 14

William Pabodie of Little Compton was the first owner of the fourteenth lot which comprised land on each side of the Fall River and Freetown line at Mother's Brook. Pabodie had been town clerk of Duxbury from 1666 to 1684. He was a representative to the General Court for twenty-three years. He died in 1707. He never settled upon the lot. By an order of the Plymouth Court it passed to Captain Benjamin Church, who in turn sold it to Samuel Lynde in 1681. Lynde's great-grandson Samuel Valentine lived on the lot. He is the Samuel who married Abigail Durfee, daughter of William Durfee of Stone Bridge in Tiverton. Samuel Lynde deeded to the town two and one-half acres of the lot for the first town meeting house lot, burial ground and training field.

In 1756 Valentine sold a portion of the northern part of his homestead to his son Samuel, describing in his deed that the land conveyed was bounded on the north by the Ambrose Barnaby land.

Lots 15 and 16

Lots 15 and 16 of the Freeman's Purchase extend from a point slightly north of "Mother's brook" up over the hill to a point slightly beyond the ruins of the old Thurston house. They are entirely without the limits of the city of Fall River, but they must be referred to because at one time they were owned by Nicholas Morey. A woods-road extends southeasterly from the main highway through these and other lots for a distance upwards of two miles to the Bell Rock Road, and a branch trail circles along the westerly shores of the pond "Swamp" to Wilson Road, near to the terminus of New Boston Road. Within the limits of this road, which can still be traversed, was an old Indian trail now referred to as "the Morey trail" (sometimes called the "Mowry Path"). It led between the Watuppa Pond water shed and Barnaby's Cove. It is the trail over which, at the inception of the Indian war, King Philip's warriors, accompanied by those of Weetamoe, escaped from the great Pocasset swamp and crossed over the Indian ferry on their way to join the Narragansetts and to attack the colonists. The trail follows in part a ridge and in part a modest elevation which separates the water shed of the North Watuppa Pond from the water shed

of the Ledge Brook, which runs from the pond of Dr. Nathan Durfee's Mill to the pond of the Crystal Springs Bleachery. Between that trail and the Ledge Brook, as well as between the trail and the Watuppa Pond area, there were substantial swamps. Ledge Brook runs through a large quarry from which, in the olden time, much stone was cut for construction work in Fall River. It was owned and operated by Lloyd S. Earle and its special value was due to the comparative ease with which the ledge was worked. Geologically this stone was called "arkose granite" and the territory surrounding the quarry was much traversed by the youth of earlier Fall River, but it was deemed hazardous and claimed several lives.