

Kingston, Massachusetts.

by Ethel Hobart.

(A copy of an article published in the New England Magazine of July 1905.)

"The next morning, being Tuesday, the 19th of December, 1620, wee went again to discover further. Some went in the shallop . . . and wee found a creek, and up three English myles a very pleasant river, at full sea a Barke of thirty tunn may goe up, but at low water scarce our shallop could passe." --- Mourt's Relation.

"What **is** the sweet, clean, little town I passed through driving from Duxbury to Plymouth?" asked the Tourist.

"That is Kingston. Originally, you see, the Pilgrims settled all along the shore, and the three present townships of Duxbury, Kingston and Plymouth were all included in the Plymouth colony."

"Yet," said the Tourist, "somehow one does not hear of Kingston as historically important, like Duxbury and Plymouth."

"Historically important it certainly is," replied the Guide. "If Myles Standish's grave and the monument on Captain's Hill distinguish Duxbury, and the town of Plymouth boasts a hundred memorial's of the Pilgrims, little Kingston has no fewer and no less vivid memories.

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The town was in its earlier days called the North Precinct; here a church was situated, as the distance to the Plymouth church was too great. As early as 1630, Governor Bradford built and settled here, although all his official business was transacted four miles away in Plymouth. Here also was the Isaac Allerton grant, and the house built on the land (generally known as the old Cobb house) dated back to 1705, and was standing until only a few years ago when it burned.

The town was formally separated from Plymouth in 1726, and as the Act of Corporation happened to be passed on the King's birthday, someone suggested that the town be called Kingston.

A few years later, however, the town proved itself by no means to belong to the King. It was a hotbed of revolutionary heroes. There was Major-General John Thomas, who was in charge of Dorchester Heights and whom Bancroft calls the most able general officer of the Revolution. Then there was Major Seth Drew, and Colonel John Gray, both Revolutionary soldiers of note. There was also Peleg Wadsworth, who started as a schoolmaster in Kingston, and who afterward became a Major-General, and who was granted the whole township of Hiram, Maine, in recognition of his services. Among Kingston's ablest, one thinks too of the Honorable William Sever, Esq., who was representative to the General Court of the Colony of the Province of Massachusetts at the age of twenty-three.

There still stands the house that was built by Captain Willett, though perhaps it was not quite as it stands now. It is called to-day

the old Faunce house, and it dates back to 1660. This Willett seems to have been a remarkably able man. He had lived in Leyden some years, he came to Plymouth about 1630, and succeeded Captain Standish as the head of the military affairs of the colony. He held various responsible positions, received a grant of one hundred acres in what is now Triphammer, Kingston, and then became the first Mayor of New York under the English. It was the Dutch themselves who requested this, as Willett had lived in Leyden and knew their manners and customs. He was re-elected; so, as it says on his gravestone, "twice did he sustain the place." There also stands to-day in Kingston the gray old house of Major John Bradford, grandson to the Governor, a house so rich in associations and memories that it quite deserves an article by itself.

The town is still small enough for the old Indian stories and traditions to be handed down faithfully from father to son. I remember a story of the old Cobb house, that was situated on the Massachusetts trail that led from Plymouth directly through Kingston to Boston town. It is said that the inmates of this house were awakened in the night by the talking and grumbling of the men who were returning from Boston with the head of King Philip after the Indian war. They had tried in Boston to get a higher price for the dead Indian than Plymouth would give, and they were returning in high dudgeon because no one would pay a penny over the usual price for an Indian's head, King Philip or no. So they grumbled and haggled and came back to Plymouth town over the old path that one may see to-day. Surely Kingston is not poor in historical association.

A fair, clean, typical New England town is Kingston to-day, giving one the feeling that it has just had its face washed. A quiet main street, shaded by sweeping venerable elms, houses old and comfortable in the sunshine, and a little green enclosure with the Soldiers' Monument (the land was given to the town by Major Bradford himself as early as 1721),-- these are the characteristic features of Kingston.

There is a pretty public library presented to the town by Mr. Fred-eric Adams, and some distance beyond, at the branching of two ways, is the site of the Old Point well, near which now stands a modern drinking fountain given by Mr. Glover. Near this old landmark there stood until a short time ago another,-- Cushman's old country store, once a time-honored old tavern, the stopping place between Sandwich and Boston in the days of the stage-coaches.

There are the plain, sedate wooden churches that one usually sees in New England towns; there is a substantial high-school building behind which the kindly Jones river makes a delightful spot for recess time, called Bartlett's Green.

More rich, however, than most towns is Kingston in outlying districts of river and wood and even ocean beauty. There is Rocky Nook and Indian Pond and Smelt Pond and the Teal Hole and Blackwater, where the men go duck shooting in the fall. Beyond the Unitarian church and the Town Hall and the cemetery, that seems to symbolize the trim quiet of the town, is the part of Kingston called Triphammer.

Here stands the picturesque old anchor forge which gave its name to the district, and here the Jones river makes serene little ponds of itself, its inland sedges and water-lilies giving no hint of its acquaintance with the sea. Beyond Triphammer is the section called Wapping, where one may follow the loveliest of wooded roads,-- the Ring Road; and here in spring one may poke under dead oak leaves and find the mayflower, hardy, shy and sweet.

This is Kingston, but this is not all of it. We in Plymouth, perhaps, in our sea pride, may think of our neighbor a few miles away as an inland town. But if the greater part of Kingston is not on the ocean front, its tidal river (the Jones, named for the second mate of the Mayflower), redeems it from any such charge. Indeed, quiet and demure as is the village, one finds, as one grows to know it a little better, the lingering flavor of its seafaring days, some faint aroma of all the spices of the Indies. Old seafaring terms crop out in the course of every-day conversation. "That bureau drawer is too shoal," says a friend of mine when she means it is too shallow. One hears "stove in" for "broken", and many another sea term.

Just below what is to-day the railroad bridge was a shipyard once upon a time, though to-day one sees nothing larger than a knockabout or two drawn up on the bank for the winter. But time was when a three-masted schooner made here her maiden splash with the tide at full flood, borne proudly by the river through the sunny, windswept, salt marshes to the waiting sea beyond. Here were launched brigs and brigantines. Every family has a sea-captain for a grandfather; in many a house there are teak-wood tables or strange island shells from Ceylon, fans and lacquer-work from Japan, and china in the best cupboards, brought from far over seas. In many a house one finds fascinating little models of ships made by old retired sailors and given sometimes to very good children to play with.

The influence of the sea is like some poetic memory; those of us, hard-headed, unromantic Yankees as we are, whose lives have once come under the spirit of adventure and the touch with foreign ports and the sense of sorrow, yearning, and of pure majesty that this influence brings, can never be the same again.

Nor is Kingston without its little strip of genuine seacoast. Two miles to the south of the village proper, and perhaps half a mile east of the main road that leads to Plymouth, lies Rocky Nook.

You can wander by a certain grassy lane, through marshes and pastures warm with the sunshine and sweet with ineffable fragrance of mingled bayberry and wild rose. To your left the river winds in and out, doubling and re-doubling on itself through the marshes. Near its mouth is a rocky pasture hill where a few cedar trees are growing, and through the pastures grow high blueberry bushes that turn in October to a wonderful plum purple. You see a beautiful stretch of quiet rustic country, but one might be fifty miles from the sea. Then suddenly the lane ascends a little, you find yourself standing on a little rise, and lo! there is the harbor stretching before you, like some dream come wonderfully true.

To your right lies Plymouth, settled cosily along the shore with the noble headland of Manomet jutting out beyond; to your left is the curve of the shore hiding the river's mouth, and just across the bay rises the smooth contour of Captain's Hill, with the straight shaft of the Standish monument giving it a certain dignity and finish. Here from Rocky Nook, or the Fishing Rocks, as the Kingstonian is as apt to call it, used of old to sail ships to the Grand Banks and to the West Indies. Near the shore were spread upon the flakes great quantities of salted fish, drying in the sunshine. It must have been in our grandfathers' time a place busy enough; to-day it is a lovely, quiet, summer shore.

"It is a lovely old town," said the Tourist, at the end of the summer, "I think I do not know another New England place that so combines history and beauty. One may catch a glimpse of an old house across a sweep of

marsh and blue river, or one may forget one's history, and wander in the springtime through April woods, to gather the flowers that our ancestors named after the sweet, fair hedges of the dear old country."

Note:- The preceding article was illustrated by several views in Kingston as follows:

The Willett-Faunce house from the Anchor Forge Pond or Jones River.

The Peabody Bradford house at the junction of Stony Brook and Jones River, with its barns and outbuildings, as it was before the Dewings had it enlarged, and modernized, calling it "The Landing".

The old Holmes shipyard, showing the docks, the old boarding house and the sail-loft removed some time ago.

The Old Anchor Forge at Triphammer.

The Frederic C. Adams Public Library.

Summer Street looking north toward the railroad crossing.

Main Street in winter (snow scene).

(The description of the pictures is mostly mine, differing from the captions under the pictures in the magazine, because of my desire to add to the description, for future identification, in case the magazine article is lost.)

(Copied from the magazine, February 12, 1935, by E.F.D.)