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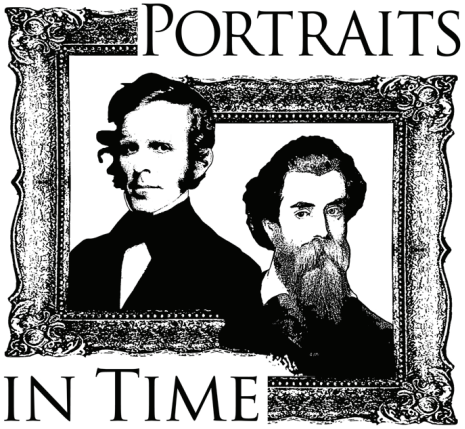

Three Centuries of Remarkable Residents
1600-1900

A Special Exhibition of

The Little Compton Historical Society

Curators

Sheila Hagan
Piper Hawes
Janet Lisle
Donald T. Gomez
Sheila Mackintosh
Dora Atwater Millikin
Lease Plimpton
Robert Porter
Chris Rawson
Richard Rogers

Donald Truchon

Project Advisor

Dr. Steven Lubar
Director, Public Humanities Program, Brown University

Pamphlet Editor

Jana Porter

Pamphlet Design

Piper Hawes

PORTRAITS IN TIME

Three Centuries of Remarkable Residents 1600-1900

Collections Manager
Fred Bridge

Exhibit Committee

Robert Wolter, Chair
Patty Almy
Claudia Bell
Fred Bridge
Randy Byers
Piper Hawes
Carolyn Montgomery
Marjory O'Toole
Chris Rawson

Exhibit Contributors

Nate Atwater
Diane Booth
The Brooklyn Museum
Donald & Donna Bodington
Carlton Brownell
Patricia Christiansen
Donald Gomez
Janet Goodman
Julianne Jennings
Reverend Robert Lawrence
Little Compton Tree Committee
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Dora Atwater Millikin
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Quahog.org
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Stephen & Lucy O'Connor
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Simmons College
The Society of Colonial Wars
Donald Truchon
URI Special Collections and Archives
Wharton County Historical Museum

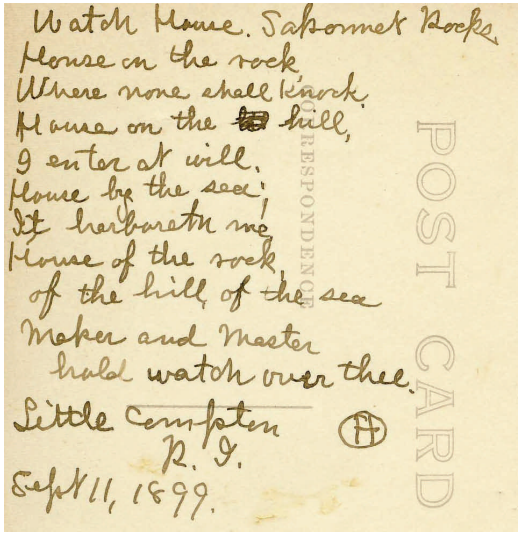
Exhibit Panel Design
Where Ideas Become Reality
David A. Costa

Exhibit Panel Printing
iolabs

Logo Design
Christopher O'Toole

Watch House
Who builds a house, does more; he blazons there
Himself, his aims, the genius of his mind.
So Watch House stands, broad open to the wind
And welcoming the sun. Around stretch, bare
Of trees, green fields that seem so high in air
They have the uplift of the moors. Confined
By red-rocked shores, the smiling sea is kind,
And healing brings, not harm. Unquiet care
Departs when, twilight fading down the West,
The ordered stars their nightly solace bring.
Long may it stand, sun-warmed to joy, wind-swept
Of care, to high endeavor heartening.
May those who breathe its finer air, attest
Its vision clear, its faith serenely kept.

The other poem, less elaborate but deeply felt, is "House on the Rock," which HDL wrote on a driftwood shingle, dated Sept. 11, 1899, signed with his characteristic circle-H and kept on a mantle at Watch House. "Where none shall knock," he wrote, because the house stood open: "House on the hill, I enter at will. House by the Sea, it harboreth me."



Poem by HDL with his characteristic circle-H signature on the back of a postcard
LCHS Collection

Lloyd Family Legacy

HDL has left more to Sakonnet than a tradition of progressive politics and his name on the beach on the west of Sakonnet Point. You don't know who's who in the older part of the Sakonnet summer colony unless you know their mother's and grandmothers' maiden names. Summer families are as intermarried and entangled as the Wilbors, Sissons, Wordells, Richmonds, Grinnells and other Town families — they just haven't had several centuries to perfect the entanglement. No family is more interconnected with the summer colony than the Richmonds, but the Lloyds have done pretty well, too, even without the Richmonds' head start.

HDL's sister, Madeleine, married Henry W. Goodrich of New Jersey, a lawyer whose real loves were history and the arts. He bought land on what became Goodrich Lane and then the 134-acre James I. Bailey farm (not to be confused with the James H. Bailey farm, the original nucleus of the Sakonnet Golf Club); this Goodrich-Bailey farm eventually yielded all of Bailey's Ledge, more than half of the expanded SGC and several family houses. The Goodrich-Lloyd marriage also yielded a son named Lloyd Goodrich, the famous art historian and head of the Whitney Museum, as well as connections to such other summer families as Havens, Huntoon and McPherson.

HDL's eldest son, William Bross Lloyd, married Lola Maverick from Texas, and their oldest child, Jessie, herself a socialist and journalist, who married another famous muckraking journalist, Harvey O'Connor. Lola's sister, Augusta Maverick, married Nicholas Kelley (son of the Lloyds' friend, Florence Kelley, a social reformer), bringing him into the Lloyd and Little Compton ambit – hence the Kelley houses on what used to be Lloyd land at Sakonnet Point. If you trace these Lloyd/Goodrich/Kelley family lines out through several generations, you find a higher incidence of both social progressives and artists than you'd expect in a well-to-do summer colony.

Watch House, still

Empty and impractical, Watch House was demolished in the late 20th century by the Haffenreffer family, who had bought the Lloyd land after it had served in World War II as part of the U.S. coastal defenses. But its memory lives on as a bracing conjunction of wealth and social conscience, and it has left us at least two poems. The first, from 1900, is by Henry W. Goodrich, who said, according to his grandson, David, "he would rather have written just one of Milton's sonnets than everything published in the 19th century."

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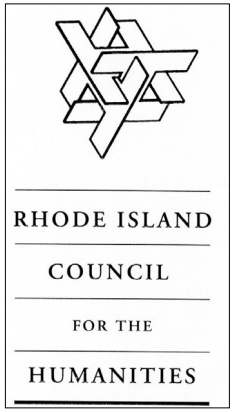

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FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

June 2008,

Dear Friends of the Little Compton Historical Society,

Every year your Historical Society works throughout the year to present to you a new facet Little Compton's rich history. This year we are using a "Broad Brush" approach by introducing thirteen local individuals in our exhibition, *PORTRAITS IN TIME, Three Centuries of Remarkable Residents 1600-1900*.

The "brush stroke" reveals many interesting stories such as Henry Tillinghast Sisson's real estate adventures in the 1800s; Charles Edwin Wilbour's convoluted path through Tammany Hall to become America's first Egyptologist; and the tense negotiations between Benjamin Church and Awashonks that ultimately changed the course of King Philip's War. We hope you enjoy these stories and the other remarkable lives we have the pleasure of presenting to you in our exhibit and this pamphlet.

Like all community service organizations, we are dependent on talented volunteers. We are very lucky to have so many people who have worked so hard to make this presentation possible. We are highly appreciative of all who have helped us in the past and continue to do so on a daily basis.

We would especially like to thank our 11 curators (who are listed on the facing page). Our curators spent a great amount of time in the research, writing and construction of their exhibits. They delved deeply into the backgrounds of their subjects. No stones were left unturned in the effort to uncover their unique contributions to history.

We are very grateful to Dr. Steven Lubar who shared his many years of professional museum experience with us as Project Advisor; Jana Porter who did a bang up job as pamphlet editor and Piper Hawes who used her special skills in designing the pamphlet.

We also thank the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities for their generous financial support. This project would not be possible without it.

Last, but not least, thank you Marjory O'Toole. Only you know how hard you have worked to bring PORTRAITS IN TIME together. We can only guess.

Sincerely,

Bob Wolter
Exhibit Committee Chair

Jessie O'Connor tells how the atmosphere of Watch House brought her parents together. In 1902, Lola Maverick was invited to Sakonnet by her college friend, Amey Aldrich, and introduced to Watch House, which "hummed with activity" from a "continuous stream of guests of diverse backgrounds, interests, and professions. These included family, their son's friends, people working for reform causes, and sometimes tired factory workers sent for a rest …. The inexhaustible sociability and endless plays, charades, games, and sailing at Watch House captivated her and she fell in love with one of Henry and Jessie's sons, William Bross Lloyd."

HDL also studied and wrote at Watch House, with the assistance of a secretary. "Working with Mr. Lloyd was one of the most delightful experiences of my life," wrote one. "He would usually dictate from 9 to 11 a.m.; then he would take a glass of hot milk and say, 'I'm going to blow my brains out,' which meant that he was going out on the porch for a brisk walk of a few minutes. … In September at Sakonnet, when it was really intensely cold … on several occasions I have sat … incased in a steamer rug, a golf cape with a hood about me, taking his dictation with … numb fingers."

Augusta Maverick Kelley (left), Lola Maverick Lloyd, Lucy Maverick and Rena Maverick Green Lloyd at Watch House in 1917
Photo Courtesy of Lola Maverick Lloyd papers, New York Public Library

"HDL in a prankish mood" is the caption in his sister Caro's loving biography
LCHS Collection

Paradise on the Point

"Sakonnet had no facilities, and seemed as hard to find as an enchanted country," wrote Caro.

Sea grey and vine-covered, [Watch House] stands on the hilltop, its front door nine feet wide, typifying its breadth of hospitality. . . . Mrs. Lloyd's social economy made of her domain a kind of co-operative commonwealth. After breakfast the younger guests usually formed themselves into groups for bed-making, dish-washing, flower-gathering. ... Mr. Lloyd usually enlisted a corps to pick peas or beans in the garden, during which process he dispensed philosophy as well as fun. The freedom and the happy horizon of Sakonnet seemed especially to suit him, and he never looked more fascinating than here, his negligee white suit with blue shirt harmonizing with his kind, blue eyes, and his mane of prematurely white hair. ... Across the beautiful waters of Narragansett Bay could be seen in the glory of the sunset the marble palaces of Newport, homes reared on the proceeds of tyranny. Then indeed did the spirit of Watch House stand most nobly revealed by contrast, a protest against love confined to kinship, its hospitality to all classes and races symbolizing the coming international unity ... a true democracy in miniature.

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1893 we stayed at home [in Chicago] and took in the Columbian Exposition." They came back in 1894, staying at what they called Pigs for Sale, a large farm house just north of Harry Richmond's on West Main Road, and thus close enough to use the beach on the land HDL had already bought at Sakonnet Point. But there was some trouble over a "giant cannon cracker" the boys set off.

By 1895 my father knew he wanted a house here, so he went to George Burgess, the old carpenter who preceded the fellow, Herbert Grinnell, who preceded Colson Simmons, and showed him the plans, and the old fellow said, "Mr. Lloyd, I don't know as I can build a house like that, but I'll try." So my Dad told him he guessed he could, and then he and my mother went all over Watch House Hill with a ladder and decided exactly at what level they wanted the main floor – and that's where they built it. … The house was three years building, but they got into it in 1897, before there were any locks on the windows.

A similar story is told in "How the Lloyds First Came to Little Compton," six undated pages by Augusta Maverick Kelley (William Bross Lloyd's sister in law), in consultation with more than a half-dozen Lloyd relatives. She says the initial Lloyd sight of Little Compton was in 1889. According to Carolyn Goodrich Huntton, HDL's niece:

Mr. Lloyd traveled up and down the coast, almost deciding on Bristol, R.I. Then when he came to Little Compton, you might say that he fell in love with it, for he bought 32 acres on Sakonnet Point. The property consisted of many green meadows, a large pond, and a beautiful sandy beach, with high sand dunes running down beside it, to the end of the point. …

While summering at Pigs for Sale, the Lloyds would go almost every day to their beach for a swim. Mrs. Lloyd and any visiting ladies would drive in a one-horse, two-seated surrey and carry with them the bathing suits and the lunch, Mrs. Lloyd driving. There were two deserted fishermen's huts at the foot of the high rock near the beach. The girls undressed in one and the boys in the other. …

When the Lloyds decided to build a house … they engaged an architect, a Mr. Wilson, who had built some houses in Newport and also the R.R. station in Providence. Mr. Lloyd wanted the house built just above the shore on the ocean, and Mrs. Lloyd wanted it on top of the rocky hill. They compromised by building it half way up the slope. … The house faced south, and when walking along the broad uncovered porch … one had a view of Newport to the west and Martha's Vineyard to the east. It had 10 or 11 bedrooms, but only one bathroom, with an extra toilet in a small room beside it. They named it Watch House.

combat and found rest for his soul."

Even discounting the idol worship, it sounds like an ethical-intellectual-progressivist Elysium. And "the same spirit prevailed in the summer home on Sakonnet Point, the last tip of land at the mouth of Narragansett Bay." But how did they get here?

Aerial view of an expanded Watch House, early 20th century
LCHS Collection

Finding Sakonnet

Here's the story according to HDL's second son, Dr. Henry D. Lloyd, in the two-page "Story of the Building of Watch House" (1951). In the summer of 1888, "when I was at the mature age of 10, and my brother Bill four years older, we – my mother and father, my grandfather and grandmother, their English maid … and a medical student who acted as a male nurse (for my grandfather had a slight cerebral hemorrhage)" spent the summer on Cape Cod. But, used to the relative wilds of Winnetka, which was "still almost a frontier village," the boys "roamed about pretty much as wild Indians." So the Lloyds searched for something more unspoiled than the Cape. HDL consulted Robert Swaine Gifford, a painter of marine and coastal scenes who had a sloop and had cruised the southern New England coast in search of scenes to paint, and he told them about Sakonnet.

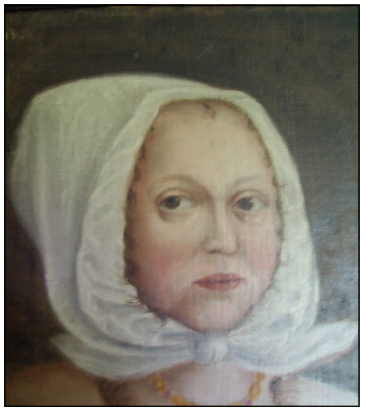
"The first two summers, 1890 and 1891," Hal continues, "we stayed at Asa Gray's house, but they could only take two summers of us. In

ELIZABETH ALDEN PABODIE

c. 1623-1717

Pilgrim Daughter of Little Compton

By Sheila Hagan



Portrait Courtesy of Carlton Brownell

There are no known portraits of Elizabeth Alden Pabodie. Seventeenth century American portraits are rare. There are only two known portraits of Mayflower Pilgrims. This 1655 English portrait of a middle-class woman gives us a glimpse into Elizabeth's world.

First daughter of the Pilgrim flock,
Despite her chronic years—we brood
The Baby Girl of Plymouth Rock,
Priscilla's crown of Motherhood.
In granite, carved above her grave,
This tributary verse we gave:

A bud from Plymouth's Mayflower sprung,
Transplanted here to live and bloom,
Her memory, ever sweet and young,
The centuries guard within this tomb.

Long as her home looks on the sea
Unfading shall that memory be.

By George Shepard Burleigh

This excerpt from a narrative poem, a testament to a journey that began on the Mayflower and ended in the rolling pastures of Little Compton, is found in Notes on Little Compton, collected by Benjamin Franklin Wilbour and edited by Carlton C. Brownell. It celebrates the Pilgrim Daughter of Little Compton, Elizabeth Alden Pabodie. The monument housing her tombstone towers over the Old Commons Burial Ground in the heart of town, where it was dedicated in June 1882, thanks to the efforts of Sarah Soule Wilbour and the Colonial Daughters of the 17th Century. The imposing obelisk serves as a distinctive memorial to one of the most notable Pilgrim daughters and, many believe, the first white woman born in New England.

Elizabeth Alden Monument
in the Old Commons Burial Ground
Photo Courtesy of Quahog.com

On September 6, 1620, young Priscilla Mullins boarded the Mayflower with her parents, William and Alice, her brother, Joseph, and a servant. Also on board was a young man named John Alden, about 22 years of age and hired as a cooper for the journey. The hand of fate would entwine the lives of John and Priscilla forever in the new world. The intrepid Mayflower set sail from South Hampton, England. Crowded with 102 passengers, it began a difficult voyage on the stormy ocean to an unknown destination. They spent 65 days at sea amid boisterous winds and gales. The sighting of land on November 9, 1620, was the beginning.

her brother, one of HDL's strengths was "his admirable and invariable poise. No one saw more plainly the imminent peril that threatened republican institutions in America … but he never allowed himself one extravagant nor unwarranted expression, speaking always with the calm assurance of authority. … from his conclusions the only road of escape lay through not reading them."

Watch House c. 1900, Ocean Front
LCHS Collection

Millionaire Socialist

Not that there weren't some ironies. HDL's granddaughter, Jessie Lloyd (later O'Connor), grew up in a big house in a wealthy suburb of Chicago, where the hired help included a cook, upstairs and downstairs maids, a chauffeur, a gardener and generally a governess. And yet her father, William Bross Lloyd, HDL's oldest son, ran for the U.S. Senate on the Socialist ticket. And many Lloyds eventually followed in HDL's tradition of writing and social activism.

Caro Lloyd's biography of her brother is a love-letter, richly detailed with no critical distance, but it gives a good sense of how HDL's politics played out for his family. In 1878, he moved them to a lakeside house, formerly an inn, in Winnetka, north of Chicago. Caro recalled "ideal Sundays when the goodly company of this social democracy lingered long around the dining-room table discussing the vital questions of the day." Frequenters of the Lloyd household included progressive reformers, educators, poets and politicians such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Booker T. Washington, but also workers: "the home might be described as in part a social settlement … [where] rich and poor, college bred and untutored, famous and humble, white and black, met on common ground. … Many a reformer in those days, when radicalism was much less common than now, came weary of the

always at noon. . . . The population about doubles in the summer, but because the summer colony prefers to be retiring, it is often not realized what an advantageous impact it has on the economy of the town. Summer people are the industry of Little Compton.

Henry Demarest Lloyd

An investigative journalist with the *Chicago Tribune*, HDL, as he was called, was a key figure in the late 19th century national reaction against the great era of freebooting capitalism that built huge and often monopolistic industrial empires. He sought to redress the distorted balance between private benefits and public good. A family friend and frequent Lloyd guest, Charlotte Dennett, herself an investigative journalist, wrote of him:

He was known as a fearless newspaper reporter and author. He and his wife Jessie entertained famous writers, social activists (including Jane Addams, the famous feminist and social reformer at Hull House) and philosophers from around the world at Watch House. ... Though Lloyd served as financial editor of the powerful Chicago Tribune *and married the daughter of one of its founders, he ... wrote passionately about the struggles of working men and women. He was an ardent defender of the Haymarket anarchists who had been condemned to die for the deaths of policemen killed by a bomb of unknown origin during a confrontation with a labor rally in Chicago in 1886. Today he is revered as one of the first and most influential muckrakers, helping to found that proud tradition in U.S. journalism. He is best known for his book* Wealth Against Commonwealth *(1894), a classic in American social history which critiqued, for the first time in a book, the emergence of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil as one of the most powerful corporations in the world.*

Lloyd's wealth came from his marriage to Jessie Bross, daughter of the Lt. Gov. of Illinois, one of the founders of the *Chicago Tribune*, which started as the organ of a small third party, the Republicans, and grew into a great journalistic power. His in-laws initially looked askance at their daughter's choice, but they softened when the four Lloyd boys arrived.

HDL saw himself, explained his granddaughter's husband, Harvey O'Connor, another famous (albeit working class) muckraker, as a "socialist-anarchist-communist-individualist-collectivist-cooperative-aristocratic democrat." HDL's exposures of the great industrial monopolies were an inspiration for the next generation, such as the novelist Upton Sinclair. But according to Charles Edward Russell, in his introduction to Caro Lloyd's loving two-volume 1912 biography of

Confined below deck for most of the voyage, and arriving on Plymouth's shore in unusually severe weather, the Pilgrims must have been daunted by the challenges ahead. Food supplies were running low, infections from diseases were rampant, and the future seemed very bleak. The winter of 1620 to 1621 was harsh. The first month, the women stayed on the Mayflower where they were prey to sickness and death. These threats persisted into February and March, and every second day graves had to be dug in the frozen ground. On February 21, 1621, William Mullins died, beginning a year of terrible sorrow for his daughter, who was probably in her late teens. Her entire family perished during this first year. An orphan, she apparently joined one of the other Pilgrim households. As the year of 1621 came to a close, half the Pilgrims had perished and the resolve of the survivors had been severely tested. Courage and fortitude prevailed, however, and a permanent colony was established.

John Alden and Priscilla Mullins were married in Plymouth about 1622 or 1623. The colonial cooper became a significant leader in the colony, serving the Plymouth Court and holding positions of authority in the colonial government. About 1623 or 1624, their first child, a daughter named Elizabeth, was born. She may have been the first white female born in New England, a belief that has been questioned, doubted and debated. Actual marriage and birth records for John and Priscilla Alden and their daughter Elizabeth are not in existence. Historical documents indicate it is highly believable that Elizabeth Alden was the first white female born in New England. The first documented evidence of her origin is found in The 1627 Plymouth Division of Cattle document, which names every person living in Plymouth at the time. The Aldens are listed in the fourth lot of John Howland and his group. Two children are listed with the Aldens, Elizabeth and her brother John, born in 1626. Elizabeth's age is given as about three years old, and it is suggested that she may have been older.

According to Elizabeth (Alden) Pabodie and Descendants by Mrs. Charles L. Alden, published in 1897, only a few of the original settlers were left in the spring of 1621. Just four women and very few heads of families survived by November of 1621, yielding very few marriages in the colony before 1623. According to Mrs. Alden, the marriage of John Alden and Priscilla Mullins was the second or third until August 1623, when Alice Southworth, who arrived on the ship "Anne," married Governor Bradford. Mrs. Alden is very firm in her belief that Elizabeth Alden was the "first white woman born in New England."

Caleb Johnson, noted historian and author, has been researching the history of the Mayflower, the Pilgrims and the early Plymouth Colony for 15 years. His website mayflowerhistory.com is a storehouse of valuable information. Although he acknowledges there is no way to know definitively who was the first white female born in New England, he feels that Elizabeth Alden is the most probable candidate and confirms that her birth was probably in 1623 or 1624.

Priscilla and her husband John Alden, who is considered one of the founding fathers, moved to Duxbury in about 1632. They had ten children. Priscilla Mullins Alden was frequently idealized as a perfect Pilgrim woman and one of the best known. She was celebrated with her husband by a descendant, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, in the narrative poem, "The Courtship of Myles Standish." According to the Alden family history, much was embellished and the facts are inaccurate in the poem, but nonetheless, it immortalized John and Priscilla.

Elizabeth Alden, born in Plymouth, first daughter of her celebrated Pilgrim parents and future resident of Little Compton, Rhode Island, married William Pabodie in Duxbury on December 26, 1644, when she was about 20 years old. William, who was about 25, was employed in public affairs and highly respected. According to descendant and author Mrs. Charles L. Alden, as town clerk of Duxbury, he carefully recorded his marriage, births of his children and their marriages. His various occupations were yeoman, boatman, surveyor, selectman, schoolteacher, and owner of numerous pieces of property throughout Massachusetts. He and Elizabeth had thirteen children. A daughter, Priscilla lived only four months.

In about 1684 or 1685. Elizabeth Alden Pabodie, in her sixties, moved from Duxbury to Little Compton, then part of Plymouth colony. She is described in Elizabeth (Alden) Pabodie and Descendants, as dignified, a woman of great character and fine presence, very tall and handsome. In height she resembled her father, John Alden, the tallest in the colony, and also her brother, Captain John Alden, known as the "tall man of Boston." It appears that when the Pabodies moved to Little Compton, most of their children were married. It seems that their daughter Lydia and their son William moved with the Pabodies and lived with them. Eventually, other members of the family settled in Little Compton. A visit to the Old Commons Burial Ground verifies this, as the gravestones of her children and grandchildren can be found on all sides of her monument.

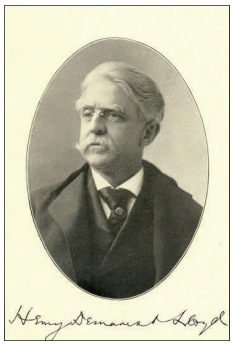
Elizabeth's husband, William Pabodie, an original settler of Little Compton, was given land grants in about 1673 according to a

HENRY DEMAREST LLOYD

1846-1903

Crusading Journalist

By Chris Rawson



LCHS Collection

The Coming of the Summer People

The story begins with a scalloped wedge of land jutting southwestward into the Atlantic, its islands flung ahead of its sandy chin into the prevailing breeze. Stiffening the coast is the characteristic pinkish granite, while a string of freshwater ponds, salt marshes and beaches softens the southern shore. Little Compton has been the town's name since English settlers incorporated it in 1675. But the leading edge, with three sides exposed to the sea, has its own name, Sakonnet. And at Sakonnet Point, in 1897, Henry Demarest Lloyd built a rambling mansion, Watch House.

Little Compton had suffered its first summer people at least by the 1860s, among them Sarah Helen Whitman, to whom Edgar Allen Poe once addressed love poems. "There is an inexpressible charm in the life we lead here," she wrote, "so free, so untrammeled, so social, so kindly, so restful!" What brought the summer visitors was the combination of healthy farm food, sparkling ocean and brisk country living. But while simplicity was the essential draw, before automobiles, inaccessibility made simplicity a luxury available only to the determined.

Carlton Brownell summed up in *Notes on Little Compton* (1970):

The Little Compton summer colony started about the time of the Civil War, although 20 years earlier the Seaconnet House at the junction of Warren's Point Road had some reputation as a fashionable country inn. . . . Even quite well-to-do farmers' wives took boarders, taking on extra hired girls and serving tremendous meals, dinner

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map called Proprietors of Little Compton at Duxbury, dated 1673-1694.

Originally these lands belonged to the Sogkonate Indians and stretched from Sakonnet Point to an indefinite boundary eastward. By the 1680s, William Pabodie acquired a block of land, formerly belonging to Awashonks, sachem of the Sogkonate Indians, called "three quarters mile square." This extensive piece of land is bordered by Taylor's Lane to the north, the Sakonnet River to the west, the great Main Road to the east, and the Benjamin Franklin Wilbour estate to the south.

Much controversy exists as to exactly where Elizabeth Alden Pabodie and William lived and the true location of "The Betty Alden House." Within the "three quarters mile square," they settled at 521 West Main Road and built a very simple little Cape Cod style house with four rooms on the first floor and two bedrooms in the attic. According to Historic and Architectural Resources of Little Compton, Rhode Island, 1990, this property became known as the Peabody-Wilbour Farm. It is documented that the Wilbour house included a section in the attic dating from the late 17th century. According to Notes of Little Compton, Governor Isaac Wilbour (1763-1837) told his daughter Sarah Soule Wilbour that William Pabodie used one of the bedrooms upstairs to teach school.

17th century attic in the Pabodie-Wilbour Farmhouse
521 West Main Road
Photo Courtesy of Providence Journal

William Pabodie was also the first town clerk in Little Compton, maintaining this prominent position until the age of 82. In addition, he served several terms on the General Court that met at Plymouth. Some consider his marriage to Elizabeth Alden, Pilgrim daughter, as his crowning achievement. On December 13, 1707, at about 88 years of age, William Pabodie died and was buried in Little Compton in the Old Commons Burial Ground. The will of William Pabodie, according to Notes of Little Compton, presents evidence that the Isaac Wilbour House at 521 West Main Road was the home of William and Elizabeth. The east end of the house was bequeathed to his wife, and this configuration of the house existed until Isaac Wilbour remodeled it.

Gravestone of William Pabodie, husband of Elizabeth Alden, in Old Commons Burial Ground
Photo Courtesy of Quahog.org

Following the death of her husband, Elizabeth, then about 83 years old, moved in with her son William at what is now 561 West Main Road, which gained the distinction of being called the "Betty Alden House." It is probable that William Pabodie Jr. (born 1664) built this house about the same time that his father built the house nearby at 521, as these properties were part of the "three quarters mile square." William's son Deacon John Pabodie married Rebecca Gray in 1723. In Little Compton Families, from the records of Benjamin Franklin Wilbour, this homestead farm, referred to as the "Betty Alden Place," was sold to Pardon Gray in 1762.

community. (Shanghai had once been asked if he belonged to that church, and he replied, "Hell no! That church belongs to me.")

A Fair Likeness
Photo by Don Truchon

Comments after his passing:

"His wealth did not change his nature; he remained to the end a crude, vulgar, loud-mouthed egotist." [1]

"If there is one of the old Texans I'd like to have known it would have been him." [12]

"He was as uncouth as the cattle he drove, but with all his blustering ways, there was no harm in him. He was, at heart, one of the best men in this or any other land" [7]

"…A man who, through hard work and ruthless determination, rose to become the undisputed king of the Texas Cattle Barons." [4]

In conclusion, it should be noted that neither the flamboyance of "Shanghai" nor the quiet industriousness of "King Jon" should detract from the legacy these two Little Compton Pierce brothers left to Texas or to the cattle business of the United States.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mrs. "Judy" Truchon, Mrs. Ruth Pierce, Mrs. Janet Barrett-Hobizal, Ms. Mary Belle Ingram, the staff of the Wharton County Historical Museum, the staff of the Matagorda County Museum.

He discovered that these leaders were "not at home" when he went calling. No one told him it was customary to make an appointment to see the Pope. After trying some closed doors at the Vatican, Shanghai was turned back by the halberds of the Swiss Guards. He later said, "When I saw those men come at me with their bayonets, I just threw up my hands western style and backed out."[2]

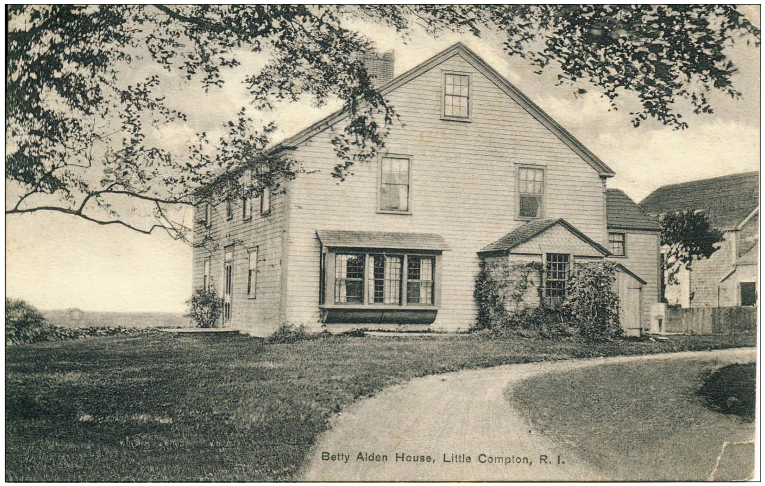
In Memoriam: Jonathan Pierce had contacted a sculptor, Frank Teich, to plan a family burial marker. While discussing some of the European statues he had seen while touring Europe, Shanghai discovered that Mr. Teich had assisted in creating them. Shanghai asked if Mr. Teich could sculpt a full size likeness of himself. Mr. Teich said that he could and would for $2,500. Shang insisted on a statue that would stand "higher than any Confederate general" and that would be a "fair likeness" to be determined "by a person of my choosing" and Teich agreed to these conditions. Shanghai then insisted that $2,500 was too much. Mr. Teich finally agreed to accept $2,250. While the statue was being created, Shanghai went about claiming that he had contracted for a bronze statue to be cast of him at a cost of $20,000.

Three sections of the statue were delivered to Deming's Bridge Cemetery. One was a ten-foot section of highly polished gray granite with the inscription "A.H. Pierce, born June 29, 1834 died -----, and another was a ten foot pilaster upon which the 6' 5" statue would be mounted. When the construction was completed, Green Duncan, a small black boy, walked slowly around the statue looking at Shanghai, then the statue, then again at Shanghai and finally exclaiming, "Mr. Shanghai, dat shore do look like you up there." Upon hearing this Shanghai said, "By Gad, that does it, I'll take it!" Shanghai wrote Frank Teich his acceptance of the "fair likeness."[3]

Shanghai's sister, Miranda, was asked to inspect a monument being delivered to Little Compton. The monument was created by the Providence Monument Works. Shanghai had ordered it to be placed at the Pierce family gravesite on West Main Road but forgot to tell anyone about it. Miranda wouldn't sign anything she didn't know about. She was very angry at Shanghai when she learned that he had indeed ordered the marker without her knowledge.

Abel Head "Shanghai" Pierce died at 3 a.m. on December 26, 1900. He had feasted on a turkey dinner and copious quantities of raw oysters at Christmas dinner against his doctor's advice. Many thought spoiled oysters killed him, but the real cause was a cerebral hemorrhage.

The funeral took place in the church Pierce had built for the



The Betty Alden House—561 West Main Road
LCHS Collection

Purchased from the Pabodies by Pardon Gray in 1762, the house eventually passed to his great-granddaughter Bessie Gray. She popularized this home as "The Betty Alden House" during the Colonial Revival Period.

Sitting room of "The Betty Alden House"
LCHS Collection

The Grays added the western wing onto the original house and repaired the fireplace hearth. Old forks and knives were found, along with a spoon of peculiar shape and material. The spoon is bronze and resembles the bronze spoons used in Holland about 1600, according to Mrs. Charles L. Alden. She postulates that this spoon was brought here on the Mayflower, remained in Duxbury until the deaths of the Aldens, and was inherited by Elizabeth. A memorial booklet of the 200th anniversary of the Congregational Church in Little Compton, dated 1901, gives some credence to the spoon legacy. Ladies of the Congregational Church created an exhibit. Mrs. George A. Gray brought some items to the exhibit, and the spoon is listed, "supposed to have been Betty Alden's."

Elizabeth appears to have lived ten years longer than William. Her obituary appeared in the "Boston-Newsletter," June 17, 1717.

Little Compton, May 31st
This morning died here Mrs. Elizabeth Paybody, late wife of Mr. William Paybody in the 93rd year of her age. She was the daughter of John Alden, Esq. and Priscilla his wife, daughter of Mr. William Mullins. This John Alden and Priscilla Mullins were married at Plymouth in New England, where their daughter Elizabeth was born. She was exemplary, virtuous and pious, and her memory is blessed; Has left a very numerous Posterity; Her granddaughter Bradford is a grandmother.

From this Pilgrim daughter, recognized by most as the first white female born in New England, a vast and lengthy lineage descended. At the time of her death she had 82 grandchildren and 556 great-grandchildren. The following couplet is associated in many sources with Elizabeth's prodigious number of descendants.

Rise, daughter, to thy daughter run!
Thy daughter's daughter hath a son!

the others stood guard over Shanghai. Upon his return, they split the money and released Shanghai, leaving no one the wiser.[13]

Shanghai had a ranch foreman with whom he had become very friendly. His foreman was shot and killed by a hired hand from a neighboring ranch. The killer fled. About four months after the incident, Shanghai was on a business trip to the southern part of Texas. He entered a café and encountered the killer, who called out for his friends to rescue him from a vengeful Shanghai. The killer's friends drew their guns and entered the café. Shanghai grabbed the killer, shielding himself with his captor, explaining that they were really friends. He then invited all present to join him at the bar for drinks. Later Shanghai explained that he had visions of his name in large black print on his large white gravestone during the encounter.[13]

The Texas Cattle Raisers Association held a banquet in Austin. A lawyer entered the hall by mistake and was roughly thrown into the street. He shouted that Ben Thompson, the fancy gun handler and city marshal, would hear about the abuse. Shanghai had arrived at the banquet late and was not able to take his usual seat at the head of the table. The "King of the Cattle Barons" couldn't even get anyone to pass the turkey. He removed his boots, got up on the table and gingerly picked his way toward the turkey, being careful not to step in the peas. About half way to his destination, Ben Thompson, weapons drawn, burst through the door shouting, "Who the hell says my friend can't come in here?" Shanghai leapt from the table and dove through the nearest window, glass, sash, screen, and all. He later explained that he was "too big a target to wait around for the fire works."[7]

Shanghai was not known as a "drinker," but one time in Wichita he got drunk. After a prolonged struggle with Wyatt Earp, he found himself in front of a judge paying $100 fines for himself and 21 of his hired cowboys.[6]

While on a roundup, Shanghai's cowboys had herded a farmer's milk cow. The farmer approached Shanghai and, in a meek voice, asked to have his cow returned. Shang brushed the farmer off by telling him that they were all too busy to be bothered with one cow and that he would take care of it later. The farmer went away but returned with a double barrel shotgun. Pointing it directly at Shanghai's head, he again requested that his cow be cut from the herd and returned. Shanghai ordered his men to get this fellow's cow immediately. He told his crew later that he saw the inscription on his gravestone and it said, "Shanghai Pierce, born June 29, 1834 died TODAY."

Shanghai went on a tour of Europe. He intended to check on the cattle and pay a visit to the head of state of each country he visited.

the same time, he was dealing with the recent deaths of his four month old son and his wife Fanny Lacy. Shanghai packed up and moved to Kansas. Some say that he moved to avoid giving testimony, some say because of grief, some say because he was being hunted by business rivals and gunfighters. Maybe they were all right! [14] He returned to Texas after about 18 months and acquired about a half million acres of land in Wharton and Matagorda Counties.

Shanghai noticed that cattle that had Brahman blood were adaptable to the hot damp conditions found in coastal Texas and were not bothered by ticks. He also noticed that this breed and their crossbreeds did not "catch" Texas fever. He concluded that it was ticks that caused the dreaded Texas fever. He was able to buy two of these sacred Indian cattle at a traveling circus.[7] Shanghai's nephew, Abel Pierce Borden, became the manager of Shanghai's estate. He went to India and bought 51 head of Brahman cattle. Before they were allowed into the United States, they were quarantined on an island off New Jersey. Some of the herd were infected with a disease carried by the tsetse fly. The Secretary of Agriculture ordered the whole herd destroyed. A.P. Borden appealed to President Theodore Roosevelt for intervention. With the President's help, the 33 head that were disease free were released and shipped to the Pierce ranch, where they became the foundation stock for the Brahman breed throughout the United States. [11]

F**ighting:** It was during the last half of the nineteenth century that gunfighters and lawmen were made famous through dime novels and movies. Before the completion of the transcontinental railroad, Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas were part of the American frontier. Most people carried guns and were not overly concerned about how they used them.

Shanghai believed in fighting with money and didn't "take much to scrappin'." He often said, "Just give me 30 minutes and I can talk any Man out of a fight." [2] On another occasion, he was overheard saying, "By heaven, young man, if I stopped to fight with everyone who cussed me I'd be fighting all the time and I wouldn't have time to take their money!"[7]

While on the range, Shanghai wandered into the territory of one of his bitterest enemies. Four cowboys captured Shanghai and told him to start saying his prayers because they were going to hang him and deliver his body to their boss. Shanghai told them that they "were the biggest fools he had ever met because you have caught me and don't understand my value." He offered them a check for $5,000, and they accepted. One of his captors took the check to town and cashed it while

SOME FAMOUS ELIZABETH ALDEN DESCENDANTS

This list is a snapshot of the unique, interesting, and famous ELIZABETH ALDEN descendants. It includes two of the remarkable Little Compton residents, *who were featured in the special exhibit "Portraits in Time."

NORMA JEAN BAKER …….Marilyn Monroe

FRANK NELSON DOUBLEDAY ……founder, publishing company

GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL …… ... founder, Audubon Society

ROBERT LANSING …… statesmen, international law

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW …….....American poet

ABEL HEAD "SHANGHAI" PIERCE*……Texas cattle baron

JOHN SIMMONS*……...founder, Simmons College

FREDERICA von STADE …….opera singer

ADLAI E. STEVENSON III ……..US Senator, Presidential candidate

JOHN TRUMBULL ……Revolutionary patriot

(GEORGE) ORSON WELLS…….. actor and director

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continue without water.

That night, after bedding the herd down, Shang held a "star council." He ordered some of his men to return to the water hole, round up all of the cattle they could find, and drive them "until their tongues dragged on the ground." The following day the armed group caught up with Shanghai's herd and demanded that they inspect the herd for their lost cattle. Shanghai said, "Go ahead, boys, and take your time, we are in no hurry!" The following day they asked to cut the herd again and found nothing. On a third occasion they returned, but this time Shanghai refused, claiming that no one has the right to cut another's herd three times for the same reason. The offenders left without incident. When Shanghai arrived in Kansas he was asked how the drive went. Shanghai replied, "Considering the natural increase in the cattle along the road, it was a fairly profitable trip."[5]

Besides buying cattle and driving them to the railheads in Kansas, Jonathan and Shanghai were acquiring large tracts of land. When the market price for cattle dropped, the brothers would pasture the cattle until the price increased. At times it became more profitable to slaughter the stock for hides and tallow, a material used to make candles. Shanghai once sold a large herd of cattle to a group of "shorthorn" men from up north. The buyers were not familiar with the wild nature of these “Shanghai Sea Lions.” The new owners started their drive north with this wild herd, but they continued to lose cattle every night. By the time they got to the Oklahoma border they had no cattle left to drive. Somehow most of the cattle returned to the ranch on their own, only to be sold again.[8]

Barbed wire was now defining pastures and replacing the "open range" of cattle country. The practice would allow a landowner to enclose a plot of land and then drive branded cattle of other owners off that land, thereby allowing only his cattle to graze on the pasture. The Pierce brothers used the new barbed wire to oust all of Bing Grimes’ cattle, leaving him with no recourse but to sell and get out of the cattle business completely. Shanghai's prophecy of "I'll put you on the Black Hills for this!" had come to fruition as far as the cattle business was concerned.

While inspecting some of his holdings, Shanghai came upon a band of cattle thieves. They had set up a tallow factory, killing several hundred heads of cattle for the tallow and hides. Four hundred of the cattle had Pierce brands. A mob formed and four of the thieves were lynched. A rumor spread that Shanghai had participated in the lynching and may have even given the order to do it. An investigation was started, and Shanghai was subpoenaed to testify at the proceedings. At

demand.

The railroads were expanding into Dodge City, Abilene, and Wichita. Shanghai gathered his cattle and bought cattle from other Texas ranchers to drive north to the Kansas railheads. He was among the first to use the new Chisholm Trail for the four-months-long cattle drive to Kansas. It was during these drives that Shanghai Pierce earned his reputation. The self proclaimed "Webster on Cattle" or "Mystic Knight of Bovine" became known from the Rio Grande to the Canadian boarder. Shanghai's cattle became "Shanghai's Mosseyhorns" or "Shanghai's Sea Lions." [1]

Shanghai's Mosseyhorns
Photo by Don Truchon

Shanghai would roam the countryside with his slave, Neptune. Money was scarce, cattle were plentiful, and owners were in dire need of income. He and Neptune would ride up to a camp and ask for the boss. Shanghai would say, "Young man …," (he called everyone young man, young or old) "… I've come to buy cattle." He would instruct Neptune to spread out a blanket and fetch the saddlebags containing gold and silver coins. Shanghai would then pick out the best two or three hundred head and pay for them with cash, much to the delight of the owners.

During one particularly dry season, Shanghai's cattle suffered "pinkeye" and "worms" from lack of water. When they reached a large waterhole, a force of armed men surrounded it claiming that only their cattle could use the water. Shanghai strongly protested, claiming that the water was a God given commodity to which everyone had rights. He even offered to pay, but to no avail. He then ordered the drive to

AWASHONKS
c. 1630-c. 1700
Sachem of the Sakonnets

By Dora Atwater Millikin

From a painting by Dora Atwater Millikin

Awashonks, the female sachem of the Sakonnet Indians, (Sakonnet is spelled many ways in the 17th century records), was first mentioned in a Plymouth treaty of 1671. Her name was Awa followed by the suffix "shonks," "shunks," or "suncks" as her designation of leadership. She had two sons and a daughter with her first husband, Tolony. Their names were Marmanuah or Mamaneway, or Momynewit, later to be called William; and Tatukanna, later to be called Peter. Their daughter was known only as Betty. Awashonks' second husband's name was Waweyewet.

As a first cousin to Metacomet or King Philip, the great sachem of Mount Hope and son of Massasoit, Awashonks was an important member of the Wampanoag family. She was an aristocrat who led an indigenous group of a few hundred people during a time that saw tremendous change and loss of native powers. Although we do not know when she was born, her birth would have likely taken place after the Mayflower Pilgrims landed in 1620. Unlike her parents, Awashonks lived her life having to negotiate the Pilgrim encroachment. By the time her children were of age the Indians had all but lost their political and social power.

What little we know of Awashonks as a person comes from Benjamin Church's Diary of King Philip's War 1675-1676. This account is that of one English colonist with a Eurocentric perspective and his own personal agenda. As we will see, he was not the least bit

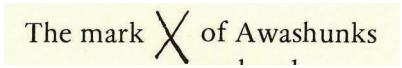
interested, for instance, in joining Major Bradford's army; instead he persuaded many of Awashonks men to fight with and for him against other Indians.

Awashonk's people occupied territory stretching east from the Sakonnet River to an unknown boundary. As they were one of about 30 sub-tribes of the Wamponoags (led by sachem Massasoit), and part of the larger Algonquin group, the boundaries of the Sakonnets' territory are hard to delineate. In addition, the Indians' concept of land ownership differed vastly from that of the Europeans.

We first hear of Awashonks when, in 1671, increased tension between the English settlers and the Indians prompted the courts at Plymouth to demand official declarations of allegiance from area natives. On June 24, 1671, the courts acknowledged that Awashonks had voluntarily signed a peace agreement between the English settlers and her people. She was to give up her arms as a show of her commitment. She signed her mark in the presence of Samuel Barker and John Almy. Barker then wrote a letter on her behalf to Governor Thomas Prince in response to the court's acknowledgement and eventually received word expressing dismay that Awashonks' sons, Marmanuah and Tatukanna, refused to grant Plymouth any peaceful authority over them. In fact, only 42 of the Sakonnet men actually agreed to the terms in the articles signed. One must wonder whether Barker and Almy properly represented Awashonks or if her words to the Governor were accurately transcribed.

We next hear of Awashonks when on October 20, 1672 records at Plymouth expressed that she was indebted to Mr. John Almy:
for the sum of 25 pds to be paid in porke at three pence per pound or peage (wampum) at 16 penny and 20 pole of stone wall at four pds, which stone wall or four pounds is to be understood to be part of the fine, Awashonks having to pay agreeably to her promise, agrees to set off land in the north side of the Indian field next punckateesett, on the eastline till it meets with running brook thence northerly to a fresh meadow, thence bounded to the river by a salt cove.

This is mortgaged unto the court at Plymouth for the payment of the said debt which debt is to be paid the 10th of February 1672.



The exact nature of Awashonks' and her people's debt is not clear, but the mentioning of the stonewall in the above passage suggests that the Indians were expected to build walls as a way to pay off their debt. It could be argued that an element of careful and methodical

Compton, while attending a funeral service, he asked his sister Miranda, in what he thought was a whisper, if they were going to serve mince pie at the collation. Much to her embarrassment, everyone in the congregation heard him. "Mirandie" would insist that Shanghai attend church services when he visited. It is said that everyone knew when Shanghai was in town because you could hear his "Amens." When asked why he left Rhode Island, Shanghai replied, "When I laid down, my head would be in someone's lap in Massachusetts and my feet would be bothering someone in Connecticut."

Brother Jonathan Pierce came to Texas and also went to work on the Grimes Ranch. Jon was not a horseman, but he excelled at bookkeeping, horticulture, land management and construction. Shanghai became Trail Boss and Jonathan became the business manager.

Shanghai drove a herd of Grimes cattle to New Orleans. When he was asked how he got the cattle across all of the swamps and streams in Louisiana he replied, "Those mosseyhorns just looked for some vines, tangled them around their horns and swung across like monkeys."

At the outbreak of the Civil War, both Pierce brothers joined the First Texas Cavalry. The commanding officer recognized Shanghai's uncanny ability to "find" cattle, no matter who they belonged to. For this special talent, Shanghai was assigned the rank of "Regimental Butcher." [1] When asked about his rank, Shanghai would say that "I was about the same as a major general, the last to leave camp on the attack, and the first to leave on retreat." [4]

The first thing Shanghai did when he was released at the end of the War was head for the Grimes Ranch to retrieve the five hundred dollars he had left with Bing. Bing pointed to a whole barrel full of worthless confederate money and told Shanghai to "help himself." Shanghai shouted in anger, "By God, Sir, I'll put you on the Black Hills for this!" [1]

The Cattle Business: Shanghai and Jonathan became partners rather than return to Grimes. Jonathan had made some wise investments in cattle, and Shanghai was able to borrow on his knowledge and experience. Jonathan stayed at the ranch taking care of the business end while Shanghai handled the outside portion of the partnership. Cattle had multiplied, increasing geometrically during the War years. Most of these cattle were not branded and were available for the taking. During Reconstruction, the demand for beef in the North was insatiable. The problem was finding some way to get the cattle north to satisfy the

On one occasion Bing's wife saw a slave take a very hard fall while breaking a horse. She told Bing that "it was stupid to have a slave that cost $1,000 doing that dangerous work when he had a two-bit Yankee splitting logs." Abel became the ranch horse breaker.

Every good horseman needs spurs. Abel went to the blacksmith shop and had a pair of spurs made. While trying them out, he strutted around jangling the loose rowels and decided that he did indeed look like a Shanghai rooster. From that day on the moniker Shanghai ceased to be a term of derision, and the young broncobuster became known as Shanghai Pierce.

In a year's time, Shanghai had learned a lot about the cattle business and decided to take his back pay in stock. Bing owed him about $200, and a strong cow with a healthy calf sold for about $14. Bing paid Shanghai with very old cows and the weakest calves he had. None of the "wages" survived the first winter. When asked about the transaction later, Bing stated that he "was just teaching a Yankee the cattle business."

This was not the only time Shanghai became upset with his boss. Shanghai was infatuated with Bing's sister. He envisioned marrying into the Grimes family and becoming a rich cattle rancher. Once when the family had gathered for a festive dinner, Shanghai arrived hoping to be included. Bing met Shanghai on the front porch and said, "You don't eat in this house, you eat with the slaves and the Yankee white trash out back in the cook house." Shanghai turned and rode off with as much dignity as he could muster.

Shanghai stayed with Bing Grimes and became a valued employee. His pay increased to $22.50 per month, with extra pay for each calf or maverick he branded. The Grimes Ranch had three registered brands and Shanghai had one. Bing's sister had one, Bing had another, and Bing's father had a third. Shang would brand the best cattle with the sister's brand (he still thought he might become part of the family), the father's brand would go to the ordinary cows, and Bing's brand would be placed on the weakest and skinniest cattle. Sometimes, "by accident," Shanghai's brand would get put on a calf, which he explained as "interest on my first years pay."

Shanghai Pierce's voice was legendary. It was described as "the bellow of a bull" or "the roar of a hurricane." "He could sit in one end of a railroad coach and in his normal voice carry on a conversation with someone at the other end. Of course the other fellow would have to yell."[2] When one of his partners was asked if Shanghai was in town, he would go to the door, cup his hand behind his ear, turn to his guest and say, "Nope, if he was anywhere in town you would hear him." In Little

manipulation on the settlers' part is paving the way for their eventual ownership of the Sakonnets' land.

To quote Benjamin Franklin Wilbour in Notes on Little Compton:

Although Little Compton people have prided themselves on the fact that their forebearers purchased land from the Indians rather than conquering it, there is evidence in all the records of a high handed and scornful attitude toward Indian ownership. There is also a barely concealed desire to put the Indian tribes in debt or in other situations whereby they must give up their land..

Bayles' History of Newport County says:

Many apparent contradictions and discrepancies exist in the records of the first land titles…but in no instance more conspicuously than in the title records to the lands at Seconnet. ...A tract of land bought at one time by the white man would become the subject of a subsequent deed from Indians who were strangers to the record in the first place.

In another Plymouth court record, Awashonks, her daughter Betty, and her son Peter were brought before the court on suspicion of killing Betty's child. Awashonks and Betty testified that the child was stillborn and the court dropped the charges against them. However, Betty was to be whipped by the Indians at Sakonnet for her assumed licentious behavior. (C.C. Brownell's comment about this episode as editor of Notes on Little Compton is, "How quickly and righteously did the English enforce their moral code on a primitive people!"

Most information regarding Awashonks comes from passages in Diary of King Philip's War, 1675-1676 by Colonel Benjamin Church. Church was born in 1639 and was building the first Little Compton homestead by the start of King Philip's War. He lived among the Indians, thereby choosing a different life from his Pilgrim forebears who believed in separating themselves from those thought to be less godly and more savage. He developed a good relationship with Awashonks. He was keenly aware that good relations with the natives were essential to his success in settling at Sakonnet and made sure to befriend them the first year he arrived. Church was industrious and ambitious; from the perspective of many, he was the ideal settler.

In June 1675 Awashonks sent Church an important message delivered by two English-speaking Indians, Sassamon and George, asking to join her and her subjects in a great dance. Philip was planning to go to war with the English settlers and wanted her people to align with him. Awashonks did not want to make any decisions without first speaking with Church.

If the Indians' beliefs about land ownership differed from those of the settlers, so too did their beliefs about authority and political rank. What may have seemed to the settler to be a random distribution of power or a lack of absolute control by any one person was actually an essential democratic system that worked well within the Indian culture. When confronted by problems that affected more than just one or a few, the entire tribe would gather around a large fire and, through discussion, prayer, dancing and singing, would arrive at a solution.

Church arrived for the meeting at what could have been the Indians' winter village on an upland mound in Tompe Swamp, on the north side of what is today called Wilbour Woods. Here he encountered hundreds of Indians gathered for this event.

Awashonks herself in a foaming sweat was leading the dance. But she was no sooner sensible of Mr. Church's arrival but she broke off, sat down, calls her nobles round her, orders Mr. Church to be invited into her presence. (Diary of King Philip's War)

Church was to discover that six of Philip's warriors had come to Sakonnet and had threatened to pit the Plymouth authorities against Awashonks by attacking English settlements and livestock on her side of the Sakonnet River, thereby creating a need for her to join Philip so as to avoid bloodshed. Church proclaimed the Pokanokets (Philip's men) "Bloody wretches [who] thirsted after the blood of their English neighbors, who had never injured them." Awashonks asked Church for the truth in answering whether the English were planning an attack. He answered that they were not and advised neutrality, encouraging her to take her people to safety on Aquidneck Island. Church then went back to Plymouth to seek council from Governor Winslow.

The Pocassets, led by female sachem Weetamoo, Philip's sister-in-law, lived to the North of the Sakonnets in what is today Tiverton, Rhode Island. Weetamoo had not joined forces with Phillip but felt that war was inevitable. She told Church, who was on the way to see the governor, that her own men "were all gone, against her will, to the dances" at Mount Hope (Philip's post). Church, as he had also advised Awashonks, told her to go to Aquidneck Island and again promised to be back in a few days with word from Governor Winslow.

After attending a General Court meeting at Plymouth on June 6, 1675, Church learned that the Council of War had decided to send a force of about 300 soldiers under the command of Major Bradford, one third of them Indian warriors, to fight Philip. This was an idea that Church himself had proposed and been denied three months earlier. However, Church had no intention of serving under Bradford and decided to find a way to form his own army. Before he could return to

Little Compton can be proud of the Pierce family. Over time, the brothers accumulated over 1,000,000 acres, (more than the 693,760 acres that comprise the entire state of Rhode Island), [6,] hundreds of thousands of cattle, and millions of dollars.

Exodus: Abel Head Pierce was named after his uncle, Abel Head, a successful Virginia merchant. Family members would often talk about "rich" Uncle Abel. This and other stories of successful people made young Abel establish the goal of becoming rich at all costs. Schoolmates nicknamed Abel, who was a tall, skinny boy, "Shanghai" after a local farm rooster with spindly legs. This nickname was not used in his presence because, as he later expressed, "Shanghai" meant "fight."

Like many boys, Abel could not envision any way to become successful under the overbearing influence of his father. Many heated arguments led to the decision to send Abel to Virginia to work for his uncle. His experience with his uncle was just as disappointing as his Little Compton experience. A routine of getting up before dawn, sweeping floors, and stocking merchandise, was not his idea of a road to riches. Even Uncle Abel became frustrated with young Abel's lack of enthusiasm. According to Uncle Abel, what the boy needed was more time in church.

Abel did enjoy one part of his apprenticeship. He would listen intently to stories of Texas, a new land where cattle and land could be had just for the asking. By his late teens he had had enough of the mercantile business, and "too many cases of sanctimony." He went to the docks of New York City where he stowed away on a boat bound for Matagorda Bay, Texas. He was either discovered or surrendered himself after departure and was put to work to pay for his passage.

Texas: Upon his arrival in Texas with 75 cents his pocket, Abel found employment on a ranch owned by W.B. "Bing" Grimes. Bing put the now strong 6'3", 19 year-old to work splitting rails for "4 bits" (50 cents) a day and board. Many mornings Abel had to leave for his work site before breakfast. While on route he passed a Widow Ward's house where he became a breakfast guest for huge mounds of flapjacks.

Years later, after Pierce became very wealthy, Widow Ward's son applied for a $90,000 loan for a land deal. Abel was a stockholder in the bank. The bank offered young Ward $70,000. Mr. Ward asked permission to contact Pierce for support for the original $90,000. Abel wrote a letter instructing the bank to loan the young man the full $90,000 "because his mother made good flapjacks."[7]

ABEL HEAD "SHANGHAI" PIERCE
1834-1900
King of Cattle Barons

By D.E. Truchon

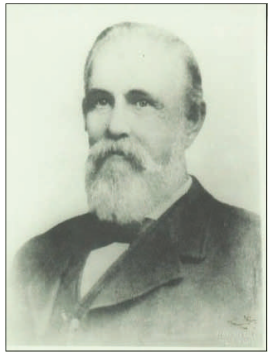


Photo Courtesy of the Wharton County Historical Museum

Introduction: Abel Head "Shanghai" Pierce was born in Little Compton June 29, 1834. His parents ran a small farm and his father had a blacksmith shop. It was from these modest beginnings that he rose to become a multimillionaire.

Although the tales that follow are about "Shanghai," many of his business successes could not have come about without the partnership of his brother Jonathan. The brothers worked for Bing Grimes prior to the Civil War, joined the Confederate Army together, became partners following the war and remained in that partnership for 25 years. They continued to succeed in business, even after splitting their holdings.

Other local family members were also involved. Sister Susan Pierce, moved from Little Compton to Texas and married Wiley Kuykendall, who was the Pierce brothers' chief ranch manager. Nephew Abel Pierce Borden, born in Tiverton in 1866, ultimately managed "Shanghai's" holdings. By implementing his uncle's ideas he brought international fame to the Texas cattle business.

Two towns in Texas were planned, developed and named by the Pierce brothers. Shanghai plotted streets, built a hotel, church and railroad station, and convinced the railroad to extend their rails to his town of Pierce. Jonathan did the same with a town about 35 miles southeast. He wanted them to call the town "Thank God" because it took them such a long time to complete the line. The railroad company would not agree, so Jonathan settled for the name Blessing. [10]

Awashonks and Weetamoo the fighting had begun. The "great Indian war" (now known as King Philip's War) began with an attack by Philip at Swansea, Massachusetts, a town north of Sakonnet, in June 1675. Under these circumstances Church was not able to return to Awashonks and Weetamoo with news from the Governor.

Church was convinced that Awashonks would align herself with the English, but instead she had taken her people across the Sakonnet River to join the then neutral Narragansetts. The Sakonnets were forced north to Wachussett Mountain after the Great Swamp Fight that took place on the western side of Narragansett Bay. When they returned, Church encountered some Sakonnet Indians fishing from the beach while he was canoeing around Sakonnet Point. Again he was hopeful that he could persuade Awashonks to abandon Philip and side with the English.

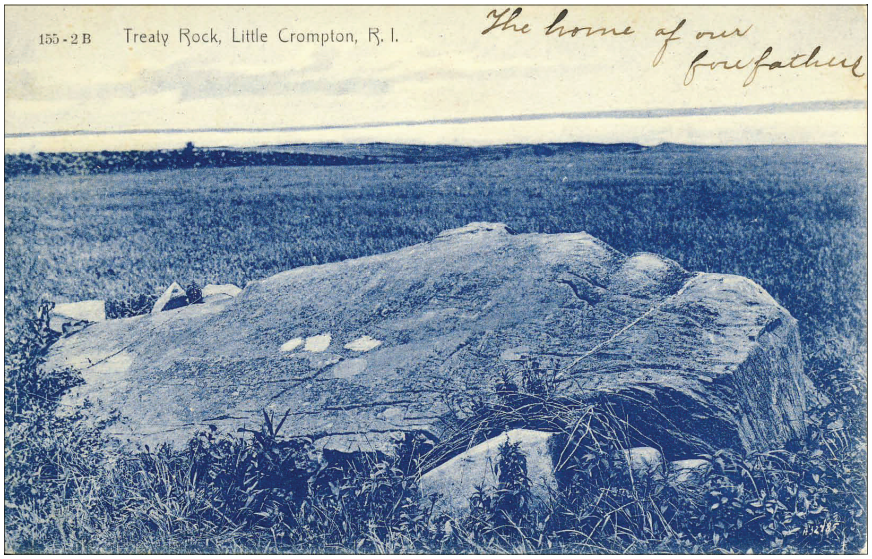
As recorded in Diary of King Philip's War 1675-1676:

The enemy hallooed and made signs for the canoe to come to them. But when they approached them, they skulked and hid in the clefts of the rocks. Then Mr. Church ordered the canoe to be paddled off again, lest if he came too near they should fire upon him. Then, the Indians appearing again, beckoned and called in the Indian language and bid them come ashore; they wanted to speak with them. The Indians in the canoe answered them again; but they on the rocks told them that the surf made such a noise against the rocks, they could not hear anything they said. Then Mr. Church, by signs with his hands, gave to understand that he would have two of them go down upon the point of the beach (a place where a man might see who was near him). Accordingly, two of them ran along the beach and met him there, without their arms, excepting that one of them had a lance in his hand.

Church went to meet these two Indians at the sandy spit of Sakonnet Point. One of the Indians, Honest George, had previously been befriended by Church. George spoke English well and explained that Awashonks had left Philip's alliance and would no longer be loyal to him. Mr. Church asked George to deliver a message to Awashonks to meet him with only two of her subjects in two days at what was to become known as Treaty Rock on the western shore at Sakonnet. (Captain Edward Richmond was to be the first English owner of Treaty Rock and the land surrounding it.)

Before meeting Awashonks at Treaty Rock, Church purchased a bottle of rum and a small roll of tobacco to share with the Indians during the anticipated negotiations. With his own man and two Indians from the Cape, Church canoed out to meet Awashonks. They were met on the shore by Honest George who would give no direct answer as to

whether there were only two Indians accompanying Awashonks. On shore he encountered Awashonks, her son Peter, and her principal warrior, Nompash, who led him to a large rock (Treaty Rock) at the edge of a meadow.



Treaty Rock
LCHS Collection

As they sat to negotiate: *at once arose up a great body of Indians who had lain hid in the grass (that was as high as a man's waist) and gathered around them till they had closed them in, being all armed with guns, spears, hatchets etc., with their hair trimmed and faces painted in their warlike appearance. It was doubtless somewhat surprising to our gentleman at first, but, without any visible discovery of it, after a small silent pause on each side, he spoke to Awashonks and told her that George had informed him that she had a desire to see him and discourse about making peace with the English.* (Diary)

Her answer was, yes.

Church's reply to her was, "it is customary when people meet to treat of peace, to lay aside their arms, and not to appear in such hostile form as your people do." After the warriors put down their weapons Church proceeded to share his rum. He asked Awashonks if she had stayed so long at Wachussett Mountain as to forget to drink occapechees or "little strong drinks." He drank to Awashonks' health

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Charles Edwin Wilbour and Daughters at Warren's Point
LCHS Collection

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Finally, to Charles Edwin Wilbour: As I learned about you, I began to learn from you. Thank you indeed!

and then passed the calabash gourd to Awashonks who suspected the libation to be poisoned and declined the offer. Sensing her discomfort, he poured more into his hand and supped it up, then drank another belt out of the calabash. Awashonks finally accepted the vessel and, after taking a drink, began to negotiate with Church.

Awashonks first wanted to know why Church had not returned some time ago with information and advice from the governor on how to treat the threats of Philip starting a war. Because he did not return with the information, she and her people had been forced to join Philip. Church explained to her that the abrupt outbreak of the war made it impossible to contact her and that when he did try to reach her, he and a small party of men were almost fatally delayed in the famous Pease Field encounter at Tiverton. Mention of this stirred a commotion with the warriors in the surrounding grass and Honest George had to explain that one of the men had lost his brother in the Pease Field Fight. This man wanted to retaliate and was subdued by Nompash who told Awashonk's men to "talk no more about old things." Church was certain that she and her people would be spared their lives and could remain at Sakonnet when the Plymouth authorities heard that they had disavowed Philip. Church looked forward to renewing their former friendship.

Nompash stood up and, expressing respect for Church, told him, "Sir, if you'll please to accept of me and my men and will head us, we'll fight for you and will help you to Philip's head before Indian corn be ripe." Awashonk's warriors were to become Church's warriors; he now had his own army.

We next hear mention of Awashonks when, on June 29, 1676, Mr. Church and a few men went to call Awashonks and her people at Sakonnet to come up to the English camp at Punkatees. She agreed to come and met him with "most of her number." "Mr. Church tendered himself to the Major Bradford to serve under his commission, provided the Indians might be accepted with him, to fight the enemy." Awashonks and her subjects were encouraged to go to Sandwich, and Jack Havens, an Indian, led their way with a flag of truce. Church would meet up with them in a few days.

Soon after, Church and his pilot Sabin were given permission to meet up with Awashonks. They came to Buzzards Bay: *and creeped among the bushes, until they came near the bank, and saw a vast company of Indians, of all ages and sexes; some on horseback running races; some at foot ball; some catching eels and flat fish in the water; some clamming etc; but, which way, with safety, to find out what Indians they were, they were at a loss."* (Diary)

Eventually Church hollered out to catch their attention. Two armed and well-mounted Indians responded. One able to speak English stated that the Indians were Awashonks and her company. Church requested they tell Awashonks that he wished to sup with her and lodge at her camp that evening.

Church's description of this episode is tantalizingly vivid.

It being now near dusk the Indians came running from all quarters laden with the tops of dry pines, and the like combustible matter, making a huge pile thereof near Mr. Church's shelter on the open side thereof. Supper was brought in, in three dishes; viz a curious young bass in one dish; eels and flat fish in a second; and shell fish in a third. But neither bread or salt to be seen at table.

By the time supper was over, the mighty pile of pine knots and tops was fired and all the Indians, great and small gathered in a ring round it. Awashonks, with the oldest of her people, men and women mixed, kneeling down, made the first ring next the fire; and all the lusty stout men, standing up, made the next, and then all the rabble in a confused crew on the outside.

Then the chief Captain stepped in between the rings and the fire, with a spear in one hand, and a hatchet in the other; danced round the fire, and began to fight with it; making mention of all the several nations and companies of Indians in the country, that were enemies to the English. And, at naming of every particular tribe of Indians, he would draw out and light a new firebrand; and at finishing his fight with each particular firebrand, would bow to him, and thank him; and when he had named all the several Indians and tribes, and fought them all he stuck down his spear and hatchet, and another stepped in, and acted over the same dance, with more fury, if possible than the first; and when about half a dozen of their chiefs had thus acted their parts, the Captain of the guard stepped up to Mr. Church and told him that they were making soldiers for him.

Awashonks and her chiefs came to Mr. Church and told him that now they were all engaged to fight for the English, and that he might call forth all, at any time as he saw occasion, to fight the enemy. And then presented him with a very fine firelock. (Diary)

Mr. Church accepted their offerings and set out the next day with Awashonk's warriors for Plymouth where they joined forces with the governor's army. Their mission, of course, was to pursue and conquer Philip their enemy.

From this point on, the 'great war' played itself out with the discovery of Philip and his army in a swamp at Mount Hope on August 12, 1676. Philip was shot and killed by a Pocasset named Alderman.

someone to help me in copying the Egyptian texts. And very efficient help it was, for Wilbour was not only a good Egyptologist, but the most accurate of copyists.

Maspero writes of Wilbour in La Science Françaisé l'Egyptologie (Paris, Larousse, 1915): *Edwin Wilbour, American journalist, who knew much, passed his last twenty years, alternately, in Egypt and in France. He died in Paris in 1896, without having published anything.*

Brugsch wrote a book in 1891 about the famous Famine Stele discovered by Wilbour in 1889 on Sehel Island, near Aswan. He noted in the preface: *Wilbour is more than merely conversant with the results and researches in the field of Egyptology. He is a scholar in the truest meaning of the word; a clear thinker; a conscientious critic and what puts the crown to all the rest he is the most enthusiastic of our young Egyptological recruits in discovering and studying unknown monuments, especially inscriptions…shows his comprehensive knowledge of the Egyptian language and Egyptian writing. With one stroke he drives the nail home.*

Son-in-law Edwin Howland Blashfield leaves us a most vivid set of impressions, including the same story of the boy Charles Edwin driving the hay wagon into a ditch, and says that he traveled everywhere with crates of books, no attention paid to major discomforts. Blashfield says that was why Mrs. Wilbour opined that "Keeping house in three continents was strenuous." Says Blashfield,

The constantly pursued object of Mr. Wilbour's life seems to have been studying today that he might study further tomorrow and having learned something thoroughly might enjoy it thoroughly during the days after. Having obtained it, he seemed willing to let others share and even exploit his knowledge freely.

His comments continue: *The possession of it was his real joy, that and his consciousness of its potentiality…(for) any other learned man to share and publish if he chose, and without ever seeming to grudge so valuable a gift. Surely that is an unusual and admirable form of magnanimity.*

Capart concludes in the foreword: *When Charles Edwin Wilbour died, an obituary was printed in a Parisian newspaper, brief but significant, and such as even the proudest man – and he was modest – would have been glad to receive in recognition:*

'Mr. Charles Edwin Wilbour, the celebrated Egyptologist of Rhode Island, the brilliant courteous, kindly gentleman, whose candid friendliness and open-minded benevolence were so well known.'

with Egyptians, working with his cohorts Maspero and Brugsch, whom the Egyptians called "Brugsch Bey," and descriptions of his purchases, most of which would only interest Egyptian experts, and some of which are items of rarest exquisite beauty.

The final two letters from Cairo, dated May 4 and May 9, 1891, are addressed to his mother Sarah Soule Wilbour (May 9 was her 87th birthday). They describe Charles Edwin's travails as a traveling father delayed several weeks while Dora and Linnie recover from chicken pox. The final words he wrote to his mother, "Good luck in holding the Fort!" are the final words in Travels in Egypt. Here the correspondence ends. Sarah Soule Wilbour passed away in Little Compton on May 27, 1891.

Pyramid Muscles and Seven Hathors

My favorite Wilbour letters, dated New Years' Day and January 2, 1881, both unusually long, describe a New Year's Day excursion including a climb up the Great Pyramid. Each of the six climbers needed three or four "Bedaween" helpers. The summit became the site for a simple picnic. Charles Edwin had discovered his "pyramid muscles," a sore right front thigh and another ache below his right knee, the result of the strenuous ascent and descent over the mighty granite blocks. Forced to rest, he recounts more of the New Year Day's adventure, a descent into a tomb, where, when challenged by his guides, he read what was visible of the sarcophagus lid's inscription aloud to his Egyptian friends, and told them they would find that the rest of it would speak of goats when they brushed the remaining sand away. To their awe, he was correct.

The party then decided to go to Heliopolis and stopped along the way at a garden spot, Matariyah, to see the tree under which the Virgin Mary is said to have rested. Charles Edwin associated Mary with "…a milky Hathor, one of the seven who met over every Egyptian cradle to weave a fortune and a fate…" Were this legend true, then the seven lovely goddesses surely would have been present in Little Compton on March 17, 1833, to attend and guard the birth of Charles Edwin Wilbour, one of Rhode Island's and America's first great Egyptologists.

Testimonials and Obituary

Capart's foreword in Travels in Egypt allows Wilbour's colleagues and associates to speak to us of the Charles Edwin they knew. His friend the famous Assyrian Orientalist A.H. Sayce, in his *Reminiscences* (London 1923, p. 289), states: *At Abu Simbel…I had*

His death marked the end of Indian freedom and power in New England. Bear in mind, only 55 years had passed since the Wampanoag Indian Confederacy had aided the struggling Plymouth colonists and joined them in the first Thanksgiving feast. The feast celebrated the survival of the Pilgrims in the Indians' country.

After discharging various obligations of service imposed on them for war damages, they returned to a life that was greatly reduced in living space, mobility, and corporate self-respect. Awashonks's winter quarters had been sold before the war, and the new reservation she was given at that time south of Taylor's Lane was lost, in ways unknown, by 1681. She and her daughter Betty disappeared from history in 1683. Marmanuah survived to sell almost all the tribal lands from his base in Coxet, near the west branch of what was called the Coxet (later Westport) River. His older brother Peter was last heard of on the Richmond farm. (Alan Simpson, Indians of Little Compton)

The person, Awashonks, female sachem of the Sakonnet Indians, is never mentioned or registered by first-hand knowledge again. Her memory all but dissolves into oblivion. The very fact that we really do not know when she died or where she is buried indicates that she had lost all importance in the settlers' eye. She may have been buried in what was thought to be her principal dwelling place of Tompe Swamp.

Awashonks at Treaty Rock
Painting by Dora Atwater Millikin, 2008

Today we are left with a romanticized image of who she may have been. Her mystique forges on through the naming of our homes, boats, businesses and pets. It is ironic that someone who at the end of her life was apparently thought of so rarely is now looked upon with great respect.

A 19th century idealized portrayal of Awashonks
about 1674
Courtesy of RI Historical Society

In 1904 Roswell B. Burchard had this to say of the Sakonnets:

"Of the aboriginal race not a vestige remains,
save some relic, picked up like a strange
seashell on Time's shore".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr. Nathaniel B. Atwater

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The Egyptian laborers who sold *anteekehs* (antiquities) to Wilbour and assisted him on site and tomb excursions apparently loved, trusted and respected him deeply. They called him *Abu Dign,* or "Father of a Beard," a profound title in Egyptian Arabic. A patriarchal beard like his meant to them that he had had great wisdom, power, substance and spiritual strength. The Egyptians turned to him, as an American, to complain bitterly of their personal and national abusive treatment by the British, and Wilbour wrote that he listened sympathetically.

These friendly laborers liked to test Wilbour's ability to read hieroglyphs and were amazed by his ease and accuracy. They usually kept their best finds to show and offer first to Charles Edwin Wilbour, who often bought his choices at a small fraction of the low-to-begin-with asking prices.

Letters to Paris and Little Compton

The Brooklyn Museum in New York published a special book in 1936, a first edition of 1,000 copies titled Travels in Egypt. It contains over a decade's worth of Charles Edwin's letters to his mother in Little Compton and to his family members in Paris. The letters were found four years earlier in three bulky folios of Wilbour's papers, researched and culled by Egyptologist Jean Capart. Wilbour never intended these brief personal letters for publication, says Capart in the foreword, but this book's appearance, generously funded by Wilbour family members 30 years after he died, serves as another memorial to this great pioneer Rhode Island Egyptologist.

The first letter, to Charlotte in Paris, dated *Marseille, December 16, 1880, Grand Hotel* states: *The boat starts in an hour and I hope to with it …. Look among Eisenlohr's letters I emptied with papers in the cylinder box for a tracing of map, and send it to me at Luxor. All right and comfortable.*

Professor August Eisenlohr, German Egyptologist (1832 – 1902), had Wilbour as a student at Heidelberg University.

The next letter, from Naples, begins: *I send you the notes I have made thus far. Will you send them or a copy of them to Compton; I am sure Zoe will be glad to copy them if Dora does not want to. If you send the original, keep a copy which please make in a book; I may want to refer to them. The trip thus far is wonderfully comfortable.*

Thus begins a unique travelogue adventure of letters describing dinners at Shepheard's Hotel, Nile sunsets, descents into ancient tombs, copying hieroglyphic inscriptions, visits with European and American friends as people crossed paths on their travels, "slipper days" aboard the *dahabiyeh* devoted to writing and rest, Nile navigation, dealings

of Egyptology, the only such university department in the country, in her father's memory. Theodora, the eldest, outlived her siblings by many years.

A bit of an enigma herself, Theodora revered the memory of her family, especially of Papa, Charles Edwin. She had no tolerance for errors or wrong answers, removing Charlotte's antique silver collection and her own antique coin collection from the Brooklyn Museum after a dispute with a curator over a cucumber-spoon. Both collections reside today in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Rather than donate *Awashauncks* and its property to the Little Compton Historical Society, Theodora had the house torn down. She also had the family exhumed from the Wilbour Seaconnet Burial Ground to be reinterred in New York City.

Abu Dign and His Travels in Egypt

Charles Edwin and his family lived in Paris from 1871 through 1880. Immersed in his study of Egyptology, he learned from the greatest French and German masters and attended universities all over Europe. When he felt he had mastered the complex knowledge he would need, he journeyed to Egypt in the winter of 1880 to assist Maspero, the internationally recognized author of The History of Egypt. So began the annual round of travel that would mark the rest of Charles Edwin Wilbour's life: winter in Egypt, spring in Paris, summer in Little Compton, and back to Paris in autumn.

In 1883, he felt the need to purchase his own *dahabiyeh,* a large, family-sized wooden Nile River yacht that would serve elegantly as home, office and low-cost transportation for all his future Egyptian winters. He purchased the *dahabiyeh* Seven Hathors for £675, a two-mast boat with a huge lateen foresail and a smaller mizzen, a commodious aft cabin with staterooms and dining area for the owner and forward quarters for captain and crew. Charles Edwin's first act as new owner of the Seven Hathors was to run the Stars and Stripes aloft at her mizzen top.

The Seven Hathors
Photo from Travels in Egypt

COLONEL BENJAMIN CHURCH
1639-1717
First English Settler in Little Compton

By Robert Porter

Paul Revere engraving
of Benjamin Church
LCHS Collection

Although known as the first settler of Little Compton, Benjamin Church was first and foremost an Indian fighter, a military hero of King Philip's War 1675-1676. He went to war again at the close of the 17th century, this time defending the New England colonies from attacks by northern Indians allied with the French. When Benjamin Church first settled in a place on the western edge of the Pilgrim Colony known at that time as Sakonnet, he set about building a home within an Indian settlement. Little did he know he could not have picked a worse time to build a house for his family. The greatest Indian insurrection in American History was about to begin.

Benjamin Church, son of Richard Church, was born in Plymouth in 1639, 19 years after the founding of the Plymouth colony. At age 28 he married Alice Southworth in the town of Duxbury, where they resided for a number of years and produced their first son, Thomas, born in 1673. Two years earlier, a group of proprietors had purchased land from the Sakonnet female sachem Awashonks (also spelled Awashunckes, Awashunkes or Awasoncks) and applied to the General Court at Plymouth for permission to settle in a portion of what would become Little Compton.[1] A year later, at age 33, Church left his family in Duxbury and moved to Sakonnet to build a house on a lot on the south side of Windmill Hill, (not far from present day Walker's

Farmstand) which he soon was forced to abandon due to the outbreak of King Philip's War. He would not return to Little Compton for thirty years.

Portion of 1677 Indian settlement map

At the time of King Philip's War, the Plymouth Colony, which included Little Compton, was overshadowed by a more populous and prosperous Colony to the north. Massachusetts, founded by the Puritans in 1629, underwent a population explosion during the Great Migration several years later, when thousands of Puritans followed John Winthrop to the Massachusetts Bay Colony and quickly overspread New England. The Port of Boston soon dominated the region both economically and militarily, and in 1691 Plymouth was swallowed into the Massachusetts colony.

The exact causes of King Philip's War remain murky. Pilgrim relations with the Wampanoags were always tenuous, but certainly the sheer magnitude of land sales to the English settlers and the growth of the colony contributed to the tensions. In terms of the origins, conduct and history of this war, one is reminded of Churchill's statement, "History is written by the victors," because little is known about this conflict from the Native American point of view. Indians left no written record to give their side of the causes of the war. Although initially the conflict centered on Indian attacks around the immediate area of Plymouth, it quickly spread throughout New England from

an author and a pioneer Suffragist, helped the family to live comfortably and travel without scrimping.

Ancestors, Real Estate, Family

Charles Edwin Wilbour descends from a long line of Wilbours who were among the first 17th century settlers in Little Compton. Charles Edwin's grandfather Isaac (1763 – 1837) became a politician who served Rhode Island in many offices, including Acting Governor, U.S. Representative and Rhode Island Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Isaac fathered Sarah Soule Wilbour (1804 – 1891), who married her distant cousin Charles Wilbour (1805 – 1882). They had two children, Elizabeth (1829 – 1832) and Charles Edwin.

A comprehensive look at Charles Edwin's full American ancestry shows that he descended paternally from Mayflower Pilgrim John Alden, yielding kinship with many Little Compton families of his own time and a large number of Little Compton residents alive today.

Charles Edwin grew up in *Awashauncks,* a house located near the northeast corner of West Main Road and Swamp Road that stood for over a century. His daughter Theodora eventually ordered the necessary demolition of the dilapidated, vandalized structure circa 1939. Young Carlton Brownell, now our current Little Compton Historical Society Executive Director, heeded Theodora's request to go through the house before demolition to rescue any items of interest he might find within. Thanks to his diligence, we can view some precious ancient Egyptian artifacts in our LCHS Charles Edwin Wilbour exhibit, including a wooden funerary mask (circa 1100 BC).

Wilbour married Charlotte Beebe, called "Lottie" (1833 - 1914), a Springfield, Massachusetts minister's daughter. Charlotte founded the Sorosis Club of New York, the first professional women's club in America, and served five times as its president. Like her mother-in-law Sarah Soule, Charlotte Wilbour fought hard for women's right to vote when the Suffragist movement first emerged.

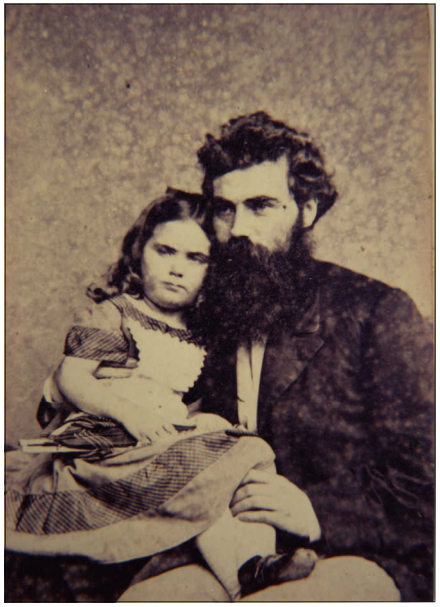
Charlotte and Charles Edwin Wilbour had four children: Theodora (Dora), Evangeline (Linnie), Victor and Zoe. Zoe died in her early twenties. Victor became known in Little Compton as an amateur athlete and gymnast, while Evangeline married the famous American muralist Edwin Howland Blashfield. Theodora endowed the Wilbour Collection of Egyptian antiquities at the Brooklyn Museum, enabling the museum to create *Travels in Egypt* from Charles Edwin's family correspondences over an 11-year period. She established a number of endowments for Brown University, including setting up its Department

Europe were unusually crowded and arrangements were difficult. At the age of 38, Charles Edwin Wilbour sailed for France with his family. Although Charles Edwin testified during the investigation of the New York Printing Company, he was never charged or indicted for any wrongdoing. He simply left his pre-1871 life behind forever. His life for his remaining 25 years would be completely new.

A *Providence Journal* column, "In Perspective," by former feature writer David Patten, quoted in the same Brown Alumni Magazine reprinted article, provides an impression of Wilbour at this time.

Charles Edwin was only one jump from the soil. He was the product of a thousand years of yeomanry, but it took only a few decades to polish him into something little resembling his father. He was tall, broad- shouldered, with a fine head, and his blue eyes snapped under busy white brows. His fingers were strangely slim for a son of the soil, and they frequently stroked the white mustachios and the full white beard that fell in a stroke almost to the middle of his body. None dressed for any occasion better than he, and his whole presence was that of a man at home in any waters.

A circa-1870 photo portrait of Wilbour shows a dark-haired man with a dark massive full beard somewhat shorter than as described by Patten. The eyes don't snap but seem to smolder and brood, as if Charles Edwin sees into a world invisible to most of us.



Charles Edwin & Theodora, c. 1870
LCHS Collection

Barbara Lesko, formerly of Brown University's Egyptology and Ancient Western Asian Studies Department, believes that Charles Edwin did not officially belong to the Tweed Gang. He did not flee, like so many, to avoid prosecution. More likely, he left New York because the new administration would not support him. The cost of living in France saved him money, and the cost of living in Egypt even more money. Nor did he gain great wealth from his Tweed years. The income of his wife Charlotte,

Connecticut to New Hampshire. The outlying towns in Rhode Island and Massachusetts suffered the worst losses; Philip and his allies killed approximately a third of the English inhabitants. Before the War was concluded, thousands of Indian men, women and children were killed, hung or sold into slavery.

During the first 40 years of the Plymouth Colony, Governor Bradford and the Pokanokets' sachem, Massasoit, together managed to smooth over the problems that arose and to maintain a fragile peace. It is noteworthy that the Indian troubles took a turn for the worse after these two leaders were out of the picture. The economic decline of the fur trade caused the Wampanoags to resort to selling large tracts of land to the English to pay for their trade goods, which resulted in the growth of hatred for the English.[2] Although Church must have been aware of the growing tensions with the Indians, he probably did not foresee the sheer magnitude of the coming conflict.

After Bradford's death in 1657, a more militant Governor, Josiah Winslow, succeeded him, and about this same time Massasoit's son, Wamsutta, became sachem of the Pokanokets in Mount Hope.[3] In 1660, having heard rumors of a possible Indian uprising, Governor Winslow had Wamsutta arrested and questioned. While in his custody, Wamsutta unfortunately became ill and soon died, beginning a downward spiral in relations with the Pokanokets as well as with their new sachem, Wamsutta's brother, Metacom, known by his Christian name, Philip.[4]

The Wampanoags were divided into many subgroups, and to understand the world in which Church lived, it is helpful to understand some of the subgroups in the immediate area around what is today Little Compton. The Pokanokets, among whom King Philip lived, were centered at Mount Hope, near what are today the towns of Warren and Bristol. Across the bay from Mount Hope in Tiverton were the Pocasset Indians led by Weetamoo, the widow of Wamsutta. Little Compton was home to the Sakonnets led by Awashonks, their sachem.

Church's move to Little Compton in 1675 coincided with the spark that ignited King Philip's War, namely the discovery of a body of a Praying Indian known as Sassamon.[5] Sassamon was a Christianized Wampanoag, educated at Harvard, who had been acting as Philip's translator, scribe, and advisor, and possibly as a spy for the English. Shortly before Church moved to Little Compton, Sassamon had warned Governor Winslow that "Philip was undoubtedly endeavoring to raise new troubles"[6] and was planning to go to war. Soon thereafter, Sassamon's body was found frozen beneath some ice on a pond, and within five months three of King Philip's men were arrested, tried and executed for the murder. Whether or not the three Indians were guilty is

open to historical question, but within days of the executions on June 24, 1675, Philip initiated the Indian attacks, beginning the war that bears his name.

The whereabouts of Benjamin Church during this war can be pieced together largely because of a book written in 1716 by his son, Thomas. Entitled Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip's War, it chronicles his father's participation. This history is sometimes viewed as unreliable, and the Bancroft Prize winning historian of King Philip's War, Jill Lepore[7], calls the book the "single most unreliable account of one of the most well-documented wars of the Colonial period." Thomas Church wrote the book 40 years after the War, as a tribute and memorial to his father, and it reads today like a series of tales, not unlike a swashbuckling Errol Flynn adventure movie script. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Church was a major factor in the colonists' successful execution of the war, and his son's book traces his involvement in this struggle.

While building his house among the Indians, Benjamin Church made friends with the Sakonnets. According to his son's narrative, in the summer of 1675 before the War broke out, Church, aware of possible imminent conflict, initially attempted to dissuade the female sachem, Awashonks, from joining Philip. He told her he would go consult with Plymouth to see if they would protect her. He abandoned his home to follow the 50 miles of Indian trails that led to Plymouth. He would not return to live in Little Compton again for thirty years.

Later that June, Church's attempt to return to Awashonks was prevented by the fighting that broke out, and as a result Awashonks led her people, numbering a few hundred, over to Aquidneck Island to escape the War and live with the then peaceful Narragansett Indians. In an attempt to return to Little Compton in July, Church crossed the Sakonnet River and led twenty men into an ambush in a pea field[8] belonging to a Captain Almy in Punkatees Neck, an area that today is located just north of Fogland near Neck Road in Tiverton. Surrounded by some 300 Indians, Church retreated behind stonewalls to the water's edge and was saved at the last moment by observers on a ship who sent a canoe to ferry his men out of harm's way.

At the outset of the war, Church had accepted a commission from Governor Winslow in Plymouth to fight the Indians, but he was soon frustrated by the European tactics of the Plymouth forces. He believed that to be at all successful it was necessary to wage war more like the Indians, with stealthy tracking and surprise attacks rather than large, formal military operations. Soon Captain Church was leading an irregular force of rangers, Englishmen and Praying Indians (those who

The Fly in the Ointment:

The "fly," a fiery little German-born political cartoonist at *Harper's Weekly* named Thomas Nast, brought Boss Tweed down with a series of savagely witty, slashing cartoons aimed at Tweed, Tammany Hall, Greeley and the Democratic Party. Tweed, who was often drawn wearing convict's stripes, stole, bullied, made dirty deals and feasted his cronies lavishly at taxpayers' expense through cartoon after cartoon. Tweed complained that if the public kept seeing him in stripes, they would put him behind bars.

One Nast cartoon relates directly to Wilbour's New York Printing Company. This cartoon describes a great 1871 scandal. Tweed set up the New York Printing Company and ordered "his" Board of Education to ban Harper's Publishing Company from supplying texts to the New York Public Schools. Texts would now be supplied by the New York Printing Company. All current Harper's texts were to be destroyed, which alone cost the New York taxpayers at least $50,000.

The Tammany Ring bilked $45 million from the New York taxpayers during a 30-month period from 1869 to 1871. During this peak time of unabashed rapacity, New York also saw its public debt increased by $50 million. The much greater (roughly 20-to-one) value of an 1870 gold-backed U.S. dollar, compared to the dollar's current 2008 value, sheds a powerful light on this plunder and loss.

A reprint article from the Brown Alumni Magazine, January 1972 (no author named), titled *Charles Edwin Wilbour '54 (1854),* refers to this time. Wilbour's friendship with New York's Boss Tweed brought him lavish Paris apartments and houseboats on the Nile, and Brown its Department of Egyptology. The article cites a book by Denis Tilden Lynch, Boss Tweed, which says:

The Boss was also a newspaper publisher. His paper was the Transcript*, a struggling morning newspaper when he took it over. The Boss engaged one of his Republican editorial friends, Charles Edwin Wilbour, to manage it. Editor Wilbour held at least three city jobs simultaneously. He was a stenographer in the Bureau of Elections at $3,000 a year, Stenographer in the Superior Court at $2,500 annually, and the Examiner of Accounts at $3,500. The* Transcript *became the official newspaper of the City of New York, and no journal fared so well in the matter of municipal advertising.*

Anti-Tweed outrage swelled, and 1871 election returns proved Tammany power had shriveled. Tweed, sentenced in late 1871 to 12 years in a New Jersey prison, escaped and fled to Spain, where somebody identified him thanks to a Nast cartoon showing him in stripes. So many people feared indictments that year that steamships to

During his early New York City years, Charles Edwin served as a courtroom reporter and invented a rapid, improved courtroom stenography system. He also may have briefly practiced law. He worked at literary translations and created the first English translation of Victor Hugo's 1,200 page Les Miserables. Wilbour's translation, published in 1862, was a bestseller and served as the foundation of the great friendship between Hugo and Wilbour, who named his own son Victor.

Ambition, Ruthlessness and Corruption

Horace Greeley provided Charles Edwin with keys to success, wealth and social distinction. Greeley mentored the young ambitious journalist and introduced him into New York literary society. Charles Edwin's pedigree, as the descendant of Mayflower Pilgrims John Alden and Priscilla Mullins and grandson of Rhode Island State Governor Isaac Wilbour, might not have been enough to break through the exclusivity barriers surrounding the parlors and drawing rooms of this "upper crust" world. However, Greeley's introductions forestalled any hindrances, and Charles Edwin quickly began making valuable friendships in many walks of life.

Charles Edwin also bought a small block of *Herald Tribune* stock, which he would expand significantly later in life. Meanwhile, things were already going well for Charles Edwin Wilbour. Greeley introduced Charles Edwin to another powerful and influential acquaintance, the founder and "Boss" of New York's Tammany Hall political ring, William Marcy Tweed. Tweed's very name would later become synonymous with greed, corruption, and the depletion of New York City's Treasury. Tweed's power grew swiftly during the Civil War. At war's end, he needed to consolidate that power, in part by muzzling and controlling the newspapers. Bribery worked well. Having his own newspaper with his own man to run it worked even better.

The *New York Transcript*, a failing morning-edition daily newspaper, cost Tweed little to purchase. He asked Wilbour to leave the *Tribune* to become manager of the *Transcript.* Charles Edwin agreed. At about the same time, in a related deal, Tweed took over the New York Printing Company and installed Wilbour as the new president of the also-failing publishing house. Charles Edwin Wilbour, with Tweed's patronage to back him, turned both businesses into successes. The newspaper, a legal daily, posed no great challenges for him, and Tweed's Tammany Ring provided all the financial backing, labor, skill and talent that Wilbour required to manage and direct both companies.

had been converted to Christianity), acting independently of the main body of Plymouth colonial militia, successfully raiding and capturing hundreds of Wampanoags.

A year later, in June 1676, Church briefly returned to Little Compton. By canoe he crossed the Sakonnet River to the tip of Sakonnet Point, and there he recognized an Indian he once knew, Honest George. He arranged with him to set up a meeting in two days' time with Awashonks at a well-known rock near the shoreline, not far from his abandoned home. Against his wife's entreaties, Church paddled across the Sakonnet River from the Almy house located in Portsmouth to what is now called Treaty Rock, armed only with some rum and tobacco as gifts. Awashonks brought her son, Peter, and her main warrior, Nompash, to meet at the rock. There the Sakonnet Indians promised not just to remain neutral, but also to fight with the colonists against King Philip.

The war concluded two months later when Philip was reduced to hiding in a swamp not far from Mount Hope. Church captured Philip's wife and child and, soon after, one of Church's Indian rangers killed Philip. Philip's body was drawn and quartered, his hands cut off and his head delivered to the fort at Plymouth where it was placed on a pike that stood for over 20 years. His wife and child were sold into slavery in Bermuda.

Revere Engraving of King Philip
LCHS Collection

After the War, Church moved to Bristol, where he was a signer of the "Grand Articles" for the founding of that town in 1680 and a representative at Plymouth. Church lived in Bristol until 1696 when he moved to Freetown, (Fall River), where he erected a saw and gristmill with his brother Caleb.

Beginning at the outset of what is known as King William's War in 1689, Church accepted a command of a force of 250 men representing the New England colonies to march into Maine and Canada against the French and their Indian allies, the Abenaki, to respond to repeated attacks against settlements in New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Under his command were some of the men with whom he fought in King Philip's War as well as a number of "Seconet and Cape Indians," who were commanded by Nompash the warrior with whom Church had met previously at Treaty Rock. Church's orders provided that his soldiers and Indian allies should have "the benefit of the captives, and all lawful plunder, and the reward of eight pounds per head, for every fighting Indian man slain by them, over and above their wages..."[9] He was to lead four more reprisal expeditions in 1690, 1692, 1696 and 1704. The last expedition during what came to be known as Queen Anne's War was an organized response to Indian attacks on New England settlements, including Deerfield. Church led a force against the Abenaki, attacking the French settlements of Minas and Beaubassin in Arcadia

It was not until 1705 that Church finally moved back to Little Compton. He built a new home on two farm lots totaling 120 acres near what is now 601 West Main Road, and in his final years he was instrumental in establishing the first Congregational Church in Little Compton. He also represented the town at the General Court of Massachusetts. In 1718 at age 79, Church fell off his horse in front of the John Irish estate on West Main Road, and the injuries he sustained from the fall ended his life. The inventory of his possessions listed in his will was rather extensive, indicating that he had acquired considerable wealth in his lifetime. In addition to his farm, he left numerous other properties including two slaves and a house servant. He was buried with his wife in the Old Burying Ground.

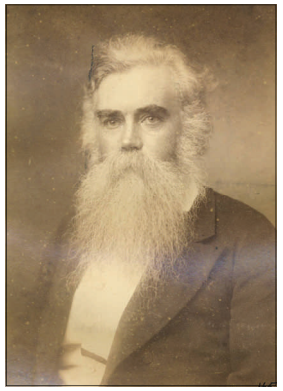
It is difficult to assess the personality of Benjamin Church. In Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip's War, Church's son portrays his father as heroic, but also virtuous, peaceful and moral. One must remember that Church became famous because of what he was really good at, namely killing Indians. He earned such a reputation as an Indian fighter that years after King Philip's War, even though he was

CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR

1833-1896

America's First Egyptologist

By Richard Rogers



LCHS Collection

Beginnings

Charles Edwin Wilbour was born in Little Compton on March 17, 1833. The reminiscences of friends and colleagues who knew him well paint a portrait of a quiet, scholarly, shy, chivalric, generous, spiritual family man and gentleman. He was also brilliant, a world traveler, an expert epigrapher, and something of an enigma. He died in Paris, on his way home to Little Compton from Egypt, in 1896.

In young Charles Edwin Wilbour's time, Little Compton had a system of one-room schoolhouses. His school, now part of the Little Compton Historical Society, sheltered the precocious, bookish farm lad under its pyramid shaped roof as he began a classical education that included the study of ancient and foreign languages. A story told by German Egyptologist Heinrich Karl Brugsch has young Charles Edwin, with his nose in a Latin grammar book, driving a fully loaded hay wagon into a Little Compton roadside ditch.

At Brown University, where he was a member of the Class of 1854, Wilbour acquired some fame for his gifted knowledge of modern and ancient languages. Brown awarded him a prize for his ability and proficiency in Greek. Charles Edwin did not graduate from Brown due to frail health. He dropped out in 1852 and taught himself short-hand. At last fully recovered from illness, he went to New York City in 1854, where he joined Charles A. Dana's and Horace Greeley's *New York Herald Tribune* as a reporter.

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9. Op Cit Ref 2 "Stone House Inn", OMB No. 10245-0018

10. Acts and Resolves, General Assembly, State of R.I. at the May Session, 1885, Providence: E.L. Freeman and Co., State Printers, 1885.

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12. *Notes on Little Compton, From records of B. F. Wilbour*, edited by C. C. Brownell, Published by the Little Compton Historical Society, 1970 – page 76

13. Op Cit Ref 12, Civil War Hero, David Patten page 74

14. Op Cit Ref 2 "Stone House Inn", OMB No. 10245-0018

15. The above extracted from Appletons' *Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events*, 1876, D. Appleton and Company, p. 683-686.

16. Adventures in a Remembered World, David Patten, No Date, page 83

considered old and out of shape, the United Colonies of New England sought him out to retaliate against the atrocities committed by French Canadian Indians. Indians were not usually spared. Throughout the Church book, they were simply "knocked in the head," a euphemism used to gloss over bloody violence. If by chance Church talked Indians into surrendering, they were most likely hung or sold into slavery by the Plymouth authorities. King Philip's War is remarkable for the degree of savagery and butchery on both sides of the conflict. What distinguished Church was his innovation of enlisting Indians to fight Indians. This tactic enabled him to bring an end to 14 months of terror.

The graves of Benjamin and Alice Church
LCHS Collection

END NOTES

1. Spelling variations include Sogkonate, Seconit, and Seaconnet in 1675. It was not until 1682 that the town was incorporated by the Plymouth Colony and renamed Little Compton.

2. Indian Deeds: Land in Plymouth Colony, 1620–1691 by Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, New England Ancestors, 2002

3. Massasoit moved westward to become leader of the Quabaugs right before his death.

4. Both of Massasoit sons Wamsutta and Metacom petitioned to adopt Christian names, Alexander and Philip, but at no time did they ever actually become Christian.

5. Indians were considered savages, but nevertheless worthy of being Christianized. A Reverend Eliot led a movement within New England to Christianize the Indians. Converted Indians were known as Praying Indians. Christian Indian towns were established throughout eastern and central Massachusetts.

6. The Name of War, King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity, Jill Lepore: Knoph 1998

7. *Plymouth Rocked: Of Pilgrims, Puritans and Professors*, Jill Lepore; *The New Yorker*, April 24, 2006.

8. The spelling of the "pea field" changed with the many editions of Church's exploits. More modern editions call it "Pease Field".

9. History of the State of Maine, William Williamson; Glazier Masters Smith, 1837; p.615

grand success…There was a hush as one of the old soldiers stepped up under the monument and raised his bugle to sound taps. But before he could do so, Smacko! It was like a rifle shot; practically everyone jumped right out of his skin. The weight of Mr. Maloney had proved too much for the gravestone and Mr. Maloney lay prone on the ground.

The bugle fell from the old soldier's hand. The morale of the occasion was completely shattered. Men rushed to pick up Mr. Maloney. The Ladies Aid sector was in panic. Hardly anyone noticed Mr. Coolidge. There he stood, holding his hat just off his head, his mouth grimly locked, his eyes set straight ahead, not a muscle flinching as the rout swept by on either side.

And then, no doubt influenced by the prevailing excitement, I made a most interesting observation. The statue of the colonel seemed to be shivering, contracting, cracking and from the fragments I saw old Henry Sisson emerge as I had known him. He was blinking at the carnage all around and I heard him say, 'Hold stidy, Cal. Hold stidy.' He looked to Mr. Maloney and muttered thickly, 'What a day! Worse than relieving Washington. Reckon I'd like a snifter or two myself.' Then taps sounded and the bronze solidified again, leaving the colonel fixed at last and forever frozen …a hero.

Photo by Donald Gomez

Afterword

I have enjoyed my research into Little Compton's own "Swashbuckler," Henry T. Sisson. Though primarily known for his Civil War exploits, and business failures, there is a depth to this subject that begs to be recorded. I found Henry Sisson to be intelligent, innovative, adventurous, heroic, and forward thinking. He was molded by his family, friends and to a large extent the environments and times he found himself in. Though suffering a good deal of tragedy, especially towards the end of his life, he remained faithful to his family and associates and is still visible to his community through the monument at the Union Cemetery.

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Governor. Neither Lippitt nor Sisson received the popular vote in any county of the state, not even Sisson's own Newport County, yet they won the governorship and retained it for three terms!

The Later Years

Misfortune dogged Sisson over the coming years. The Depression of 1873 lasted until 1878 and was felt for many years afterwards. In my opinion, Henry, as a business man, was guilty of bad timing. His financial troubles become obvious around 1884, the beginning of a three-year period of mortgage default. In 1900, his son Henry died at age 24, followed in 1902 by the death of his wife of 32 years. Unable to maintain his Sakonnet Point mansion, he sold the Stone House at public auction in 1902 for $3,000. After the auction, Sisson resided with his son David in East Providence. He died there on October 19, 1910.[16]

Seven years after Colonel Sisson's death, Massachusetts and Rhode Island honored him at a dedicatory ceremony at Union Cemetery on the Commons in Little Compton. A statue of Sisson was unveiled, and remarks were delivered by Rhode Island Lieutenant Governor San Souci as well as Massachusetts Acting Governor and future president Calvin Coolidge.

David Patten remembers Col. Sisson from the days when he, as a young boy, picked up eggs at local farms to send to market. Patten was present at the dedication of the monument. Perhaps his perspective on the ceremony is the most fitting. The following is excerpted from his recollection titled "Hold Stidy, Cal:"

This bronze figure unveiled at S'cunnet was not the man I had known as a boy,.. the old man I had known when we stopped at his place Wednesdays with the egg wagon – In the years when I knew him he was an old man, all ganted up, with squinting and rheumy eyes and a quavery voice, grizzled and old and deaf; his ragged beard stained by tobacco, his red eyes watering, a tinge of hard liquor on his breath, sort of shaking all over … (but) There he was, his shoulders thrown back, his sword thrust forward, with the come-one-come-all look he must have had on the day he became a hero.

In the Methodist church Senator Le Baron Colt presided ---- Over in the Grange Hall the ladies served their fish chowder, which had become quite famous. Then everyone went across to the cemetery. In the crowd was an oldish man named Maloney… He leaned heavily against a gravestone and as the closing speeches proceeded his eyes closed, his breath came in wheezes and he sagged dangerously.

Everything was almost over, and the day was verging on a

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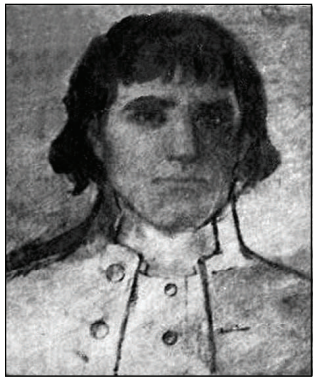
GOVERNOR ISAAC WILBOUR
1763-1837
Early American Statesman
By Janet Lisle



Isaac Wilbour as a Young Man
From "The Governor's Grandsons"
by Edwin Blashfield

Time has a way of dimming even the brightest lights of history. This is certainly the case with our own Governor Isaac Wilbour, who was born in Little Compton almost 250 years ago and lived here for all of his 74 years.

In his day, he was the town's most famous citizen, a self-made man who rose to occupy the highest elective offices in the state. He went on to Washington to serve in President Thomas Jefferson's Congress, where he engaged in debate on the most serious issues of the times. He finished up by serving eight years as Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court. The details of his life are largely unresearched, however, and barely register in the town's archives, except for a few old stories handed down through generations. A proper, in-depth study of his life remains to be done. The account presented here is just a beginning, but one that will perhaps spark interest in a man who deserves to shine once again in our history's spotlight.

Isaac Wilbour (1763-1837) was born on the farm of his father, Charles Wilbour, located on what was later Seabury land at the end of South of Commons Road. He was the fourth of 13 children. His mother, Hannah Borden Wilbour, died at the age of 44 in 1779, clearly exhausted. She had given birth every other year for 20 years. (She

Durfee Manchester, in Little Compton in June 1871, taking up permanent residence at Stone House in 1878. Between 1873 and 1885 the Sissons had four children: Nettie Walworth Sisson (1873-1918), David Sisson (1875- about 1945), Henry Tillinghast Sisson (1876-1900), and Frank Harris Sisson (1885-1948).

During the 1880s, Henry renovated the stone house that his father had built. At this time the house proper served as the living quarters for the Sisson family and included several bedrooms for family and service staff. Henry had designs in gold and bronze emblazoned on the ceilings and probably added the cupola as one of his improvements. In the room just below the cupola he mounted a stuffed eagle, and he had another eagle painted on the ceiling. He kept this room well stocked with liquor and when visitors were invited to "hear the eagle scream," they knew what that meant. The Sisson family held the property until economic circumstances forced a sale at public auction in 1902.

Stone House
LCHS Collection

Sisson as Politician

Henry Sisson's proximity to the political and economic power of the Sprague introduced him to politics. He eventually served three one-year terms as Lieutenant Governor of the State of Rhode Island (1875-1878) under Governor Henry Lippitt. They were to take on the controversial issues of the day: the Prohibitionist movement, the question of women's suffrage, and a new State House. Perhaps the greatest controversy was the contentious election of 1874.

The Republican State Convention gathered on March 25, 1874. The session lasted all night. There were numerous contesting delegations in response to the desire of Lippitt's supporters to repeal the prohibitory and constabulary acts. The Lippitt faction triumphed, with a slate of Lippitt for Governor and Sisson for Lieutenant Governor, but it left many Republicans disgruntled. The Democrats and The Prohibitionists also had candidates in this three way race.

The election took place on April 7 with no clear majority. The matter was then decided by the General Assembly. The Republicans held a majority in both the House and Senate, and the vote was along party lines, declaring Mr. Lippitt Governor and Mr. Sisson Lieutenant-

shall be directors of said corporation.

The Corporation proceeded to have engineering plans assembled, a set of which exists at the Little Compton Historical Society. Not much is known about the attempts to construct this railroad but it, like so many of Henry's concepts, failed.

Another of Henry's ventures involved a graphite mine. Period documents cite approximately 25 mines in Rhode Island at the point Henry decided to enter the business. Henry's mine was probably located on the Almy farm in Little Compton, where graphite was mined for paint companies. The pre-1900 operation has been described as, "An open pit graphite mine was worked about 300 yards south of the outlet of Nonquit Pond on the east bank of the Sakonnet River."

Henry also had a long time affinity for horses, reflected in his construction of a barn (c. 1866) and a circular racetrack at the Stone House. His associates, William and Amassa Sprague, were known throughout the United States for the "Trotters" their farm produced. One in particular, "Rhode Island," came to be in Henry's hands. A large brown horse, full sixteen hands high, weighing over 1,300 pounds, he was possessed of immense speed and great endurance. "Rhode Island" produced many noted progeny, accumulating substantial stud fees. Around 1875, Henry acquired "Rhode Island," but this venture failed when the animal died shortly after its arrival in Little Compton. The *Chicago Daily News* of December, 23, 1875, reported that:

The famous trotting stallion Rhode Island, formally of the Sprague farm, but purchased by Lt. Gov. Sisson of R.I. for $6000 and taken to the coast, died on Sunday. One hundred years later, the Colonel's granddaughter, Eleanor Sisson Hardt, wrote: *I had to laugh at the irony of it. This one paragraph was the summation of my grandfather's business ventures.*

Renovating Stone House

The spot where the house stands was first owned by Col. Benjamin Church, the famous Indian Fighter. Lemuel Sisson, Henry's grandfather, became a tenant on the "Seaconnet Farm" in 1816, eventually purchasing the property. Lemuel transferred ownership to his thirteen children in about 1849, the year of his death. His son David, Henry's father, a highly successful business man, subsequently purchased the farm from his siblings in 1853. David initiated construction of the building known as Stone House.

Henry acquired title to the property in 1857 and resided in the house after the death of his father in 1874. He married his second wife Emily Josephine Brownell, daughter of Joseph Brownell and Christiana

would be pleased to know that most of her children lived to grow up, marry and have families of their own, contributing to the astonishing numbers of Wilbours, Wilbers and Wilbors descending to the present day.)

As a youngster, Isaac moved with his ever-expanding family up West Main Road to the house that later became famous as "Prospect Hill Farm," the residence of his grandson, chicken farm magnate Isaac C. Wilbour.

Wilbour Family Home on West Main Road
LCHS Collection

It was a smaller, simpler place in the beginning, a family farm supporting livestock and vegetable produce. As a boy, Isaac Wilbour worked on the land with his father. He attended the tiny district town school, graduating from its eighth grade. He was to go no further in his education. Books were scarce. His father was unwell, and he was needed on the farm to help support his large family. Also, America's revolt from Great Britain was heatedly underway. Off Little Compton shores, British frigates patrolled ocean access to Providence and Newport. In 1772, when John Brown's raiding party initiated the first violence of the war by setting Her Majesty's eight-gun schooner Gaspee on fire, Wilbour would have been nine, old enough to hear and appreciate the news.

The Gaspee was burned in the West Passage of Narragansett Bay. The Sakonnet River soon became a war zone in its own right when the British took Newport and occupied Aquidneck Island in 1777. Farms like the Wilbour's were at the mercy of invading British troops foraging for cattle and provender. Their neighbors were shot and arrested. Their own lives were at risk. It was a time that must have registered deeply in the young Isaac's mind, and it may have motivated his eventual entry into politics, first locally, then regionally, and later in Washington D.C. when he was called to serve his new nation.

Another thread of moral authority was woven early into Isaac's character. His parents, Charles and Hannah, were conservative Quakers who carefully directed their son's upbringing according to principles set out by the Society of Friends. The family was pacifist during the Revolution, a position that was at first respected, especially in religiously tolerant Rhode Island. As the war dragged on, however, community impatience with Quakers developed. Eligible men who refused to join the needy American militias were ordered to supply, and pay for, substitutes. Isaac Wilbour, who turned eighteen in 1781, never enlisted to fight. Perhaps, by this time, the issue had become moot. The main battlegrounds had moved south to the Carolinas and Virginia, where General George Washington defeated the British at Yorktown in October 1781.

It is unclear whether Isaac supported his parents' pacifist views or chafed against them as a young patriot. One clue may lie in his determination, five years later, to marry 19-year-old Hannah Taber, a bright, well-educated young woman from Dartmouth, Massachusetts who was not of the Quaker faith. His action caused him to be "disowned...for transgressing the rules of the Society by marrying 'out of the meeting,'" wrote Sarah Soule Wilbour, their daughter and youngest child, years later. Despite this, she continues, "He always wore the broad brim hat and strait coat which are the distinguishing badges of that Society, and attended their meetings regularly with his family."

Though he was sometimes called the "Quaker Governor" in later years, Isaac did not ally himself with Quaker issues or groups during his time in office, and his children were not brought up strictly in the faith. As Sarah Soule Wilbour writes, "His familiar intercourse with men of every sect during his public life so broadened his views that he was far removed from the exclusiveness which characterized most Friends in those days." Only in old age, after his career was over and his parents had died, did his Friends' heritage begin to assert itself again, as will be seen.

service to what had been a remote rural area, Sisson formed the Seaconnet Point Land Company sometime before 1895 to subdivide his former farmland into 646 separate parcels in a summer settlement to be called Seaconnet Park. The focal point of the development was Round Pond, renamed Lake Josephine in honor of his second wife. The project failed. Evidence suggests that Henry conceived this development as early as the late 1870s. Many of the lots and roads plotted at this time remain today as Henry's legacy to Little Compton. An original drawing of the proposed subdivision of Sisson's estate is located at the Little Compton Historical Society.

Real Estate Ads from 1907 show high interest in the Little Compton summer rental business. As was often the case with Henry; right idea - wrong time!

Henry also surmised that a railroad originating in Tiverton and running to Seaconnet Point, with access to the local villages in between, would enhance his Seaconnet land development business. He assembled a group of noteworthy businessmen and, with his political connections, was able in 1885, to obtain authorization to establish a rail line from the Stone Bridge area of Tiverton to Seaconnet Point. The following is part of the enabling legislation. It outlines the magnitude of this ambitious project.

AN ACT TO INCORPORATE
THE SEACONNET RAILROAD COMPANY

Henry T. Sisson, Edward W. Howland, Isaac B. Cowen, Frederic R. Brownell, William T. Simmons, Alexander S. Price, Christopher White, Asa T. Davol, Joseph Church, George N. Durfee and their associates, successors and assigns, are hereby created a body corporate and politic, by the name of the Seaconnet Railroad Company, …and the said corporation are hereby authorized and empowered to locate, lay out, construct and finally complete a railroad, commencing at a point on the Old Colony Railroad at or near the Tiverton Railroad Station in the town of Tiverton, thence running southerly to or near the village of Bridgeport in said town of Tiverton, thence running southerly to or near the village of Tiverton Four Corners in said town of Tiverton, thence running southeasterly to or near the village of Little Compton Commons in the town of Little Compton thence running southeasterly to or near Seaconnet Point in said town of Little Compton. And for this purpose, said corporation …, may take as much or more land as may be necessary for the proper security and construction and use of said road;…and until the first annual meeting under this act, …and until the first annual meeting under this act. Henry T. Sisson, Edward W. Howland, Isaac B. Cowen, Joseph Church and Alexander S. Pierce,

With the exception of the usual rumors of a rebel attacks (and movements) … the quiet of our garrison life remained unbroken until well toward the middle of March. Then our camp-fire talk was not so much about martial as marital affairs. Our colonel, and his usual straightforward and energetic way of doing things, was the subject of it. This was the reason and also the record of the affair: On the 14th of December, 1863, he was introduced to Miss Nettie Walworth, of Elmira, New York. On the 14th of February, 1864, he was engaged to her. On the 14th of March he married her. The ceremony took place at the residence of the bride's uncle, Mr. Mallory, in the presence of the field and staff of our regiment and some officers from other organizations. …The next evening they had a house warming, attended by the officers of our regiment and many others. Mrs. Sisson was soon well known in our regimental hospital, where her pleasant face and kind manner soon endeared her to all, and many were the delicacies that found their way through her instrumentality from the colonel's bountiful table to the bedside of the patients there.

Nettie died in 1868, at 22 years of age, and is buried beside Henry in the Union Cemetery. Colonel Sisson continued to lead his men until he was "Honorably discharged the service on account of physical disability Oct. 5, 1864." He was 33 years old. With the exception of General Burnside, Colonel Sisson was the only soldier that the General Assembly thanked for his services in the war.

A special census of surviving Union Veterans was conducted in 1890. Little Compton records show 14 town resident veterans surviving; of the survivors, eight incurred disabilities as a result of the war. Of these, two had suffered gunshot wounds, one had frozen feet, three suffered impaired vision, and five suffered from deafness. Henry would suffer deafness for the rest of his life, likely a consequence of heavy artillery fire.

Entrepreneurship - Right Idea, Wrong Time

The historical record is unclear as to Henry T. Sisson's employment in the immediate post-war period. Some sources describe his management of the A. & W. Sprague textile mills in Quidnick and Arctic in the period from about 1866 to 1873. Other sources say that he returned to Fall River Iron Works for a few years to work with his father, simultaneously resumed manufacture of his patent binder, and joined the Sprague interests as a mill manager from 1870 to the collapse of the Sprague textile empire in the Panic of 1873.

Taking advantage of the rising popularity of Sakonnet Point as a summer destination and the establishment of regular steamship

Isaac was 23 in 1786 when he married Hannah, the daughter of Captain Philip Taber and Eliphal Soule. The young couple's first son, Taber, was born a year later and died after only six months. This was the first of several tragedies that seemed to undermine Hannah's psychological health. Though they went on to have five more children together, she was to become "a confirmed invalid," watched over by her husband "with a lover's assiduity to the day of her death." (Sarah Soule Wilbour). This day did not come soon, however. Like many invalids, Hannah lived on for years, confined to her room but exerting a powerful influence over her family. When she finally died in 1836, she and Isaac had just celebrated the 50th year of their marriage.

Wilbour's first recorded entry into politics is in 1795 when he was elected town treasurer of Little Compton. That he was active even earlier, during the 1780s, seems likely. Several sources report that he held public office before "entering manhood." He had an inquiring mind, loved poetry and literature, and made a special effort to educate himself through books, which he bought in large numbers for himself and his children. This intellectual energy was noted and rewarded. In 1801, he was chosen "Moderator" of Little Compton's annual town meeting, a stressful position requiring quick wit and endurance even back in those times. In 1802 he was elected to the State General Assembly.

In 1805, he served another term in the state Congress and the next year rose to be Speaker of the House. He presented himself as a strong proponent of Thomas Jefferson's "Democratic-Republican" party, a supporter of state's rights and decentralized government. His politics were in tune with his constituents: he was a farmer, representing other farmers in rural Rhode Island. He and his colleagues stood firmly against the elitist Federalists, who believed among other things that the "common man" was not to be trusted with governing.

Our first clear view of the man in action comes through an anecdote related by his grandson, Isaac C. Wilbour. The scene, familiar to us today, is an overheated Little Compton town meeting in May, 1802. Isaac Wilbour is presiding as Moderator. In the hall, the angry opponents, nearly equal in number, are Federalists and rival Republicans. Isaac C. writes:

The business of the meeting was the choice of town officers and two representatives to the General Assembly. Benjamin Tompkins held the office of Town Clerk, and Samuel Grinnell was the opposing candidate. [After the votes were counted] the moderator, Isaac Wilbour, declared Grinnell elected, and ordered Tompkins to vacate the seat, which he refused to do. The Town Sargeant was then ordered to

put him out. A scene of confusion ensued that does little credit to the moderation of our ancestors.

Little Compton Town Hall
The Commons, circa 1800
LCHS Collection

Isaac C. goes on to describe a near riot in which Tompkins loses his coat, grabs the Town records and leaps out a Town Hall window. His supporters follow, "coming out through open windows like angry bees from a hive." The dissenters take refuge in the Congregational Church. They are in the midst of electing a slate of their own officers when one of Wilbour's party bursts in shouting a memorable passage of scripture: "My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves!"

Back in Town Hall, Wilbour coolly continued the election of candidates and was himself chosen as one of two State Representatives. The rump defectors in the church refused to give in, however. At the next session of the General Assembly, both slates of officers arrived at the statehouse in Providence to claim their seats. After considerable agitation, the pro-Republican assembly voted in favor of Wilbour's town hall slate, a move that could only have further infuriated the Federalist opposition.

Wilbour's term as Speaker of the House four years later was apparently a success. In 1806, he ran for and was elected Lieutenant Governor of Rhode Island. This same election produced a three-way tie for the governorship. (The concept of running mates in state and federal elections hadn't yet surfaced; parties ran candidates singly, on separate tickets.) When no clear winner could be agreed upon, Wilbour was promoted by consensus to serve as Acting Governor. In the following year, 1807, lightning struck again. He was elected to the U.S. Congress as representative from Rhode Island, an office he would occupy for two years, through 1809. It was a heady political rise in an unusually short period of time.

Letters the new congressman wrote home during his first term show that he was uncomfortable with his position from the beginning. He describes Washington as "a wretched place...of much pride, misery and slavery in which my lot is cast at present." Worse, he was required to be away from Little Compton for months at a time. He missed his

occasionally demanding its surrender, which Union General John Foster rejected every time. Expeditions were immediately sent to his relief but returned unsuccessful. Colonel Sisson and his men joined in the Union efforts to raise the siege, but first Henry had to argue with his superior, who discouraged his action. On April 10, Colonel Sisson received orders to proceed with his command to Little Washington by water. At great risk, he led his men, all volunteers, through enemy territory to break the siege on April 15, 1863. Colonel Sisson received a series of resolutions thanking him and his regiment for his act of valor and was acknowledged with a set of regiment colors. Later, while on a visit to Boston, Colonel Sisson received from the lady friends of the Massachusetts Forty-Fourth, an elegant sword, sash and belt, together with two massive pieces of silver, in token of their appreciation. The General Assembly of Rhode Island also passed a resolution of thanks to Colonel Sisson and the regiment for their heroism.

The Fifth also had its share of setbacks during the occupation. The second noteworthy event during Sisson's command of the Fifth occurred over several months in the early part of 1864. Company A was stationed at Croatian, N. C., 12 miles south of New Berne, to prevent guerrillas from tearing up the railroad track and cutting the telegraph wires. On the morning of May 5, 1864, the enemy appeared at Croatian. Colonel Sisson wrote in his May 8 report to Brigadier General Mauran, Adj. Genl. Of Rhode Island:

GENERAL: I have the honor to report the capture by the enemy of a portion of my regiment. About 7 o'clock on morning of the 5th instant the enemy, in considerable force, appeared at Croatian, ... Arriving at the station they immediately surrounded our men in preparation for an attack and to prevent the possibility of any escaping. In the mean time Captain Aegean collected his men and threw his entire command into the fort, ...and opened a vigorous fire on the enemy. A desperate fight ensued…Captain Aegean subsequently… agreed to a conditional surrender. The men were allowed, as part of the terms of the surrender to take two suits of clothing each, which will be of great service to them while they are held prisoners of war.

The prisoners were taken to Andersonville Prison. Approximately 151 Rhode Islanders were held there during the Civil War. Of these, 86 would never see Rhode Island again, a 54% mortality rate. However, Sisson's Fifth Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, Company A, had an astounding 69% mortality rate.

Even during times of war, life goes on. The marriage of Col. Sisson to Nettie Walworth is described in the *History of the Fifth Regiment:*

the Civil War just weeks after the Confederate firing on Fort Sumter. Commissioned on May 2, 1861, as 1st Lieutenant and Paymaster in Colonel Ambrose Burnside's 1st Rhode Island Detached Militia regiment, by July 1861 he was given command of the "Skirmishers" at the Battle of Bull Run (July 16 – 22), the first major battle of the Civil War, fought in Manassas, Virginia. Sisson helped lead the "Skirmish at Fairfax Court-House" July 17, 1861, which is recognized as one of the major events of the battle.

After the Battle of Bull Run, Henry wrote in a report: *I will briefly give you my own version of the affair commencing with my taking command of the line of skirmishes of the 2nd RI Volunteers: On arriving at the front I was placed in the advance in charge of the skirmishers with directions to keep my men well in hand, and when I came upon the enemy to draw their fire and report any information I might obtain regarding their position and strength, but not to fall back unless I was obliged to,…When we arrived at Fair Fax Court House I advanced the line of skirmishers and took possession of a recently deserted Camp of the enemy, and received orders from Genl Hunter to, remain until the troops came up. … As I passed the line of the 1st and 2nd RI Regts I occasionally halted and took part with several of the companies in firing upon the enemy.…Col. Slocum (was) a short distance to the right of me. I reported to him and he directed me to go back to the Carbineers and he would presently have me move them forward as I proposed, upon my return I found their Captain had left them and most of them were distributed elsewhere. I took the few that remained with me and taking a position in rear of a rail fence to the left endeavored to pick off the enemy in the valley below us, remained here until our R.I. troops were withdrawn and joined them in the retreat.*

The day after Bull Run, Governor Sprague called for the organization of a "Third Regiment of Infantry", later changed to 3rd Rhode Island Heavy Artillery. Sisson became the recruiting officer and was soon promoted to Major. Henry's most significant action while in the 3rd was the Battle of Secessionville on James Island, South Carolina, June 1862.

In November 1862, he advanced to Colonel and became commander of The Fifth Rhode Island Volunteer Heavy Artillery. Colonel Sisson led his men in the occupation of New Berne, North Carolina. Two major events stand out in the History of the Fifth while it was under Sisson's command

The first event occurred at the end of March 1863. The town of Washington, North Carolina was surrounded by Confederates. For two weeks the rebels laid siege to the town, shelling it with artillery and

farm, his children and especially his wife, who was his closest confidant all his life and shared his love of literature and books. He wrote her almost daily, trying to sound cheerful.

Yet when I am constrained to acknowledge that I have been blessed with natural shapes, understandings, companion, offsprings, prosperity, connections, preferment and accommodations, all better than I deserve, I ought to have gratitude sufficient to make me a Happy Man, although I am for a season separated from that Earthly Bosom Friend who so often causes 'one longing, lingering look behind,'" he wrote morosely, quoting from Thomas Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" (Letter to Hannah Wilbour, Feb. 1808).

Wilbour's Congressional term was dominated by discussion in the House of issues connected to British encroachments on American trade that would culminate in the War of 1812.

"He did not talk much," David Patten quotes his Great Aunt Sarah Soule Wilbour as remembering, ('which may be doubted,' Patten confides, 'since he was always a ready talker') "but the records show that he was always at his post and did good service by his vote in favor of the Embargo [Act], and against importation of slaves from foreign ports and other important acts."

*"*Of lesser consequence, he presented to Congress a petition for a lighthouse at Point Judith," Patten notes.

Wilbour considered Washington a devious place and kept a farmer's skeptical eye on legislative proceedings. In one instance, a bill up before Congress to build a bridge across the Potomac roused his suspicions. Its passage would negate the franchise rights of other builders who had secured them during construction of a previous Washington bridge.

Sarah Soule Wilbour wrote:

This, my father considered a flagrant violation of Justice. On leaving the House one day while the bill was under consideration, a friend of the bill slipped his arm under [Father's] as he walked down the avenue, and asked his reasons for opposing the measure. Father stated them plainly, and when he was through the gentleman exclaimed, 'Wilbour these are first principles. Where the devil did you get them?"

"*Following the plow*," *was the independent answer.*

Wilbour's tendency to make decisions according to an innate sense of right and wrong unlinked to legal precedent or personal ambition comes through in another, more famous, anecdote. It may have occurred during his year as Rhode Island Governor. There are various renditions of the story but the main facts seem to boil down to the following:

Riding home from Providence one day, the Governor passed through Tiverton Four Corners where a turbulent scene was underway. A woman tied to an upright, stone whipping post, her dress torn down and her back bared, was about to receive a court-ordered flogging for some offense. Around her, crowds made up mostly of outraged women were protesting the order. (Some accounts inject groups of leering men into the picture.) Seeing Governor Wilbour approach regally on his steed, the women cried out, pleading the victim's case. The Governor stopped, perused the order of sentence and shook his head. The law was the law; it must be obeyed.

Cartoon of the Whipping Post Incident
The Providence Journal, 1937

"The condemned prisoner shall be tied to an upright post and flogged according to the sentence of the Court," he read out in an ominous voice. A wail of protest went up from the women. The Governor's gaze swept over them. "But ladies," he continued, "if it happened that there should be no 'upright post,' then how could the law be carried out?"

At this, the crowd converged on the poor woman, untied her, and, with a hundred hands, uprooted and threw the stone post to the ground. Afterward, the story goes, no Rhode Island woman would ever again be shamed by a public whipping.

A less complimentary anecdote has Isaac Wilbour following his party's narrow views on suffrage by inserting the qualifying word "white" into a statute to discriminate against black property owners of the day. The move came after Primus Collins, a notable, free black landowner in the community, voted in an election. The context of Wilbour's action is at present unclear.

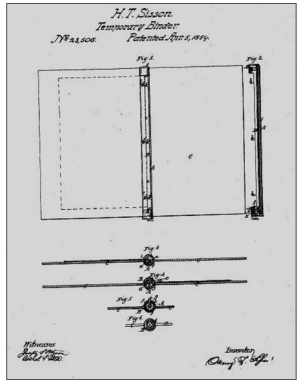
Wilbour's term in Congress ended in the spring of 1809. He returned home with relief. His wife's poor health required his attention, as did his farm and children. He would not be lured back to Washington again, not even when Governor James Fenner, a powerful friend and admirer, appointed him to fill out the term of a deceased U.S. Senator, assuring him of election to the six-year term afterward. Wilbour turned

business interests. Henry attended the East Greenwich Academy and is listed among its most notable graduates. It was at the Methodist-based Academy that Sisson first met life-long friend William Sprague. Sisson was much influenced by Sprague, later a textile magnate, Civil War General, and Rhode Island Governor. They were alike in many ways.

Henry Sisson Inventor

Nearly 150 years ago, Henry, at age 27, was awarded the earliest known patent for the "Loose Leaf" binder. Henry described his invention as "a novel apparatus which may be applied in the back of a portfolio or attached to a suitable handle for the purpose of holding and securing music sheets, pamphlets or papers of any kind." Henry continued to develop his binder technology and applied for additional patents over the years in both the U.S. and England. Henry's Binder business provided him with a good cash flow over the years. In 1871 he ran the following advertisement:

Sisson's Patent Magic Binder: The Manufacture is Now Prepared to furnish this article of any required size or style of binding, at short notice and upon favorable terms. Claiming that it will instantaneously bind papers as securely as they can be done at any book bindery, and in such a manner that deductions or additions may be made without lessening the security of the others. It is the only style of binder in the world which can claim as much. Their adoption by the U.S. government and their unqualified approval by the leading insurance office of the country, railroad companies, etc., are a sufficient guarantee of their usefulness and worth.



US Patent & Trademark Office, Patent # 23505, April 5, 1859

The R.I. Census of 1870 indicates that Henry's binder business was the largest business in Little Compton, with 10 employees and a value of $14,000. During the ensuing years, nearly 500 patents were awarded relating to loose-leaf binders. It seems a testament to both longevity and inescapable utility that Henry's original invention survived and evolved into today's form, the market for which exceeds $1.7 billion annually.

A Military Man at War - Progressing Through the Ranks

Henry showed an early interest in the military, serving as quartermaster for a Marine Artillery unit as early as 1849. He entered

COLONEL HENRY TILLINGHAST SISSON
1831-1910
A Little Compton Swashbuckler

By Donald T. Gomez

LCHS Collection

Introduction

Henry T. Sisson was born August 20, 1831, in Fall River, Massachusetts. He died October 19, 1910, in Providence and was buried in the Union Cemetery in Little Compton along with many members of his family. Henry was a Little Compton Original: inventor, businessman, land developer, graphite miner, breeder of race horses, developer of railroad lines, manufacturer, CEO, military man, civil war hero, three term Lieutenant Governor of Rhode Island, friend to the very powerful, and a family man. He owned and lived at the "Stone House" in Seaconnet, held great clambakes and liked his whiskey.

Henry's story starts with his Grandfather Lemuel Sisson, who brought his wife and eleven children from Newport to Seaconnet in a small sailing vessel in the early 1800s. Lemuel was the first Shouting Methodist in S'cunnet, and all later Sissons in town were descended from him. Most of his clan moved eastward into S'cunnet's Psalming Country. Henry inherited the farm at the Point and lived most of his life in the big house his father had built. He wasn't devout like the Sissons in the Psalming Country; "he was a rough old sojer who liked to varnish his insides with liquor." Governor and General William Sprague would later write to his father in-law, Salmon P. Chase, Lincoln's Secretary of the Treasury, that "(Sisson's) only fault was intemperance, but he had promised to reform."

Henry spent his first six years at Seaconnet until his father, David, relocated the family to Cranston in order to better manage

down the appointment, though he agreed to serve again as the state's Lieutenant Governor in 1810-11. After this, the Federalist Party swept to power, and seven years passed during which Wilbour devoted himself to raising the productivity of his farm.

By 1817, the political tide had begun to turn again. In 1818, Wilbour was appointed Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court. A year later, he rose to Chief Justice, a position he held until 1826. This late career turn toward the judiciary seems astonishing by today's standards since Wilbour had not been to college and had never studied law. Though judges at the time were not required to have legal training, it's likely that Wilbour's reputation for independent thinking and fair-mindedness won him the job. It didn't hurt, either, that his close political ally, James Fenner, had moved on from the governorship to become Chief Justice himself and was able to shepherd him on board. Upon Fenner's retirement in 1819, Wilbour's colleagues elected him to head up the court.

Perhaps he was a bit of a windbag in these later years. In his History of Rhode Island, Edward Field describes him as "the last of the old order of Chief Justices." He continues:

He was a man of imposing presence and dignified address. In his varied career he had picked up some disjointed knowledge of the law, which, according to tradition, he liked to display a little too magniloquently, but, however this may be, he held office for eight years under annual elections.

Other assessments point to his rock-solid moral compass. When, after Wilbour's retirement, a lawyer was chosen to fill his place on the court, U.S. Rep. Dutee J. Pierce remarked, "Though the public may get more law, they would not get more justice."

"Wilbour...was not a lawyer; yet he added to an understanding of a limited number of legal principles a great abundance of wisdom, and he was a righteous judge," according to Charles Carroll, author of Rhode Island, Three Centuries of Democracy (1932).

Finally, Sarah Soule Wilbour, writing with a directness she may well have inherited from her father, comments, "I think it [the Supreme Court] has been occupied ever since by regular-built lawyers, but I doubt if sturdy, common-sense justice has been as faithfully administered as it was before so much legal acumen was brought into our courts."

Wilbour's retirement from the court in 1826 has been ascribed to "ill health," but his life was far from over. He returned to his beloved farm to live another 11 years. "They must have been quiet and productive years for a man so given to reading," Patten observes. His

library was by now immense. He had time to indulge his love of poetry, literature and his craving for world knowledge. He also became more introspective. Sarah Soule Wilbour wrote, "After his retirement from public life, the fundamental principles of his mother Church seemed to reassert themselves in his mind, and the subjects of Peace, Temperance and Freedom for the enslaved were much in his thoughts and he labored for the advancement of these causes to the best of his ability."

He re-allied himself with the Little Compton Friends' Society and was known in these last years of the 1830's for his penetrating oratory at the Quaker Meeting House. The issue of slavery would have been much on his mind, as it was on the country's. The Underground Railroad was in operation in Rhode Island, and anti-slavery societies were active in Little Compton as the dark clouds of the Civil War began to gather.

The death of his dear Hannah in August 1836 seemed to dampen Wilbour's interest in life. Afterward, "his predominant thought and desire was for a reunion with her who had been the light of his home for more than fifty years," his daughter wrote. He died 14 months later, on October 4, 1837, at his farm.

That the old judge was among the last of a generation of self-educated, self-made American leaders was recognized almost at once. Writing a decade after his death, another Rhode Island Supreme Court Justice, Judge Job Durfee, lamented the passing of his kind:

If we could bring back the ancient judges and see them once more as they existed, in the flesh, what a rich variety of characters we should behold! They were representative Rhode Islanders, and to know them would be to know the State in its most characteristic qualities. For illustration, the stout farmer, who through many years has wrung from the rough earth a homely but comfortable living, and has slowly risen by his energy, thrift and practical cleverness to a position of honor and influence among his neighbors. He brings to the bench the open and deliberate habit of mind which he has cultivated on his solitary farm... He knows but little of the law, but he ponders and waits for his mind to settle to its conclusion, which is pretty sure to be right.

Isaac Wilbour was buried next to Hannah in the family's original graveyard on the farm. He and other early members of the Wilbour family are memorialized by name inside the carillon tower of Seaconnet Cemetery, located across from the old Mill House on West Main Road.

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a project was put in motion at URI, Kingston to preserve the breed before it became wholly extinct. Dr. Wayne Durfee, a retired professor of poultry science, appealed for support for a living flock of Reds to be cared for and quartered at South County Museum in Narragansett. Recently, an endowment has been set up by the Rhode Island Foundation to further this program, with the hope that future human generations can come to know in person their own "little red hen."

Reds do still make an occasional appearance in barnyards kept by Rhode Island gentry farmers. The only other sign of its former celebrity around here, aside from the town's annual chicken barbecue, is a monument erected in its memory by the Rhode Island Red Club in 1925. The plaque's location, at the corner of the community baseball field in Adamsville, has caused perennial consternation because it's nowhere near either William Tripp's farm or Isaac C. Wilbour's vast pastures. (Its placement was the result of a donation of free land by an owner of Manchester's Store, later a restaurant, across the road. The building was destroyed in a recent fire.)

LCHS Collection

Irritated by Adamsville's claim on the Red Hen, members of William Tripp's family and the Little Compton community eventually took action. Close scrutiny of the stonewall bordering the intersection of William Sisson Road and Long Highway reveals a small plaque identifying the location of the former Tripp farm, where the great Red breed originated.

With or without plaques, anyone who knows anything about Little Compton history knows the true provenance of our beautiful, red-plumed native, whose introduction to the world by two of our own is a bright mahogany-colored feather in our caps.

"The Governor's Grandsons" by Blashfield
Courtesy of The Brooklyn Museum

A shadowy portrait of the Governor watches over his three grandsons:
Left: Isaac Wilbour Brownell
Center: Charles Edwin Wilbour, an early American archaeologist
Right: Isaac C. Wilbour, owner of the largest 19th century poultry farm

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large, docile, free-range birds that had attained a deep red color due to Isaac's relentless crossbreeding.

"Mr. Wilbour, you have a new breed here and the time has come to give it a name. Have you a name to suggest?" one of the professors asked.

Wilbour reportedly answered, "Why wouldn't Rhode Island Reds do?"

It did, and became official. Wilbour was soon advertising his stock in journals under the catchy name. The Reds received a further stamp of approval in 1898 when the first Rhode Island Red Club was established in Fall River, MA to promote the breed and establish standards for it.

A year later, in 1899, Isaac C. Wilbour died at his farm at the age of 68. Management of the enormous enterprise was left in Philip Wilbour's hands, where it continued for several years until it was slowly dismantled as Philip turned to public service interests. Incredibly, however, the Rhode Island Red was still only at the beginning of its famous career. The breed was soon being marketed in the form of baby chicks all over the country, with ever more ecstatic reports of its versatility.

No other chicken could compete with its winter egg-laying capabilities. No chicken was hardier, or more consistently birthed such large and healthy broods. No chicken produced such delectable roasters and broilers. By the 1920s, the Red, now cross-bred by other breeders to the beautiful mahogany color it's known for today, had largely crowded out other varieties. It was the number one chicken requested on American farms and at the dinner table. Wild turkey may have disappeared from the land, but the fat-breasted Rhode Island Red was there to take over at Thanksgiving. When Herbert Hoover promised "a chicken in every pot" during his presidential run in 1928, he may well have been thinking of the Red.

By the 1930s, the breed was being introduced across the world, where it reportedly continues to thrive and support subsistence farms in underdeveloped countries. After World War II, its dominance in America began to decline, due largely to mass production practices. The Red was, and always would be, a free-range chicken. Confined to indoor coops, it lost heart and fattened less quickly. Breeds developed for assembly-line production took over the market.

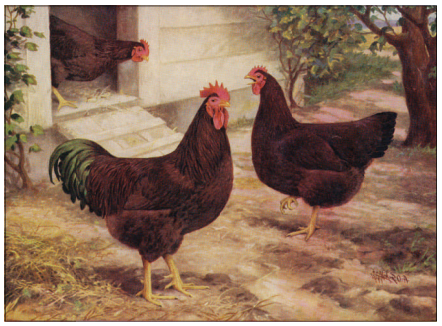
In 1954, wishing to bestow special blessing on the Red, the Rhode Island legislature voted to make it our official state bird. (It beat out the osprey and the ruby-throated hummingbird.) Nevertheless, by 2002, purebred Reds were so rare in the US, even in Rhode Island, that

Compton farm in its heyday. Here is "Prospect Hill Farm," just waking up one summer morning alongside the Sakonnet River.

A dim orange band cleaved the world. A rooster crowed far away. Others answered and soon the air was rent with their peals. Slowly the sun broke up the cloud-rack over the black woods to east'ard. There they were out the window: the farmyard almost enclosed by the house, barns and greenhouses and the biggest poultry farm in the country stretching away to the shore at the mouth of the river. Down the pastures the henhouses stood in rows, long and straight, all freshly whitewashed. The beams of the sun lay across the flat black land and the water, and shot back red from the windows of Cornelius Vanderbilt's "Breakers" and the other big houses eight miles away in Newport.

Even after assembling his massive flocks, Wilbour continued to act as a "market man" for farmers in surrounding areas who cultivated smaller chicken flocks. The daily rounds of the "egg wagon" are mentioned by Patten who, visiting his grandparents during boyhood vacations, sometimes went along for the ride. As the wagon rambled through what Patten calls "the hill country," it was hailed by backcountry farmers struggling to make a living. Isaac's merchandising helped support the local farm economy, whose slow erosion was leaving many families destitute. Not only here, but across New England, the introduction of poultry farming would bring a ray of light to stricken farms. Hand and glove with the new approach to farming came the Rhode Island Red Hen, which entered the scene in an explosion of publicity as the new century dawned.

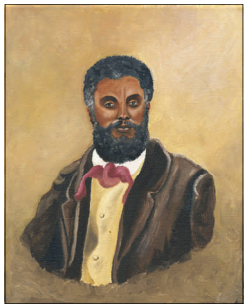
Amazingly enough, the bird was still being called the "Bill Tripp fowl," or alternatively, "Wilbour's fowl," by locals in 1890. And it was still largely unknown outside of Rhode Island. This changed in 1896 when two professors visited Isaac C. from the then new Rhode Island Agricultural Experiment Station in Kingston. The station was an arm of what was called Rhode Island College, soon to be the University of Rhode Island. Dr. A.A. Brigham and Samuel Cushman had been receiving reports of a star chicken being fostered on Isaac C.'s farm. The two came up from southern Rhode Island in person, by wagon, for a look. The chickens they saw were



The Mighty Red
LCHS Collection

PRIMUS COLLINS
1777-1858
Negro Governor of Rhode Island

By Lease Plimpton



Primus Collins
as imagined by Patricia Christiansen
LCHS Collection

In 1777, less than two years after the beginning of the Revolutionary war, a baby boy was born in Newport to Sorphox and Phillis. His name was Primus and he was a slave.

When Primus was about four his owner, Governor John Collins, gave him to Colonel William Richmond of Little Compton. Primus left his family and came to Little Compton to stay with Colonel Richmond and his wife, Hannah. Here he lived with the Richmond family and the other house slaves. As was the practice, Primus took the last name of his original master, Collins.

According to *Notes on Little Compton*, Primus Collins came to the Richmonds owing 25 years of service, but was freed by Colonel Richmond sometime prior to 1801 when Collins would have been 24, approximately five years before his period of enslavement was due to end.

On September 29, 1799, Primus Collins married Elizabeth, the daughter of slaves who belonged to Samuel Gray of Little Compton. Gray's daughter Hannah was Col. Richmond's wife. Primus and Elizabeth were married by the Reverend Mase Sheperd at the Congregational Church. The Collinses had two daughters, Lucy and Amey. Lucy lived her whole life in Little Compton and is mentioned in the diaries of Sarah Soule Wilbour. Amey married Charles Simmons and they lived in New Bedford.

Lucy Collins
LCHS Collection

The first recorded land Mr. Collins acquired was a gift from Col. Richmond in 1801. Over his lifetime Collins bought more parcels of land including a woodlot on Coldbrook Road. All these small holdings were left to his two daughters when he died in 1858, Elizabeth having died the year before.

Over the years, in addition to farming, Collins grew to be a person widely respected, even being elected to the position of Negro Governor, a title he held until his death. This leadership role was one brought from Africa by the slaves, creating a leader more similar to a tribal chief than a white elected official. The Negro Governor was involved with many matters pertaining to the lives of other slaves and free people of color, and was a useful liaison between the white and black communities of the time.

The election for Negro Governor took place each spring. The owners of the men vying for the governorship supported the events with money for food, finery to wear and even their carriages for transport. The master's generosity reflected credit not just on his property but also on himself. Colonel William Richmond was already a widely respected soldier and politician. In Newport, Primus Collins was elected because of the combined respect accorded him by both slaves and free people. Over time Collins generated a noteworthy legacy; descriptions of him are of a trustworthy man of high principles and steadfast integrity.

workers stirred up large pots of a hot mash composed of corn, potatoes and other vegetables and distributed it on wagons to the flocks.

As the numbers of chickens grew, Wilbour recycled pastures once used for grazing into chicken yards. Across his fields, he built small, peaked-top chicken houses where his free-range flocks could roost, lay eggs, and be fed on a regular basis. Collection of the eggs was easier and the fowl took contentedly to their new "colony" homes. No more barnyard scratching after grain for them. The results were impressive: Wilbour's flocks grew by leaps and bounds, producing huge numbers of eggs.

"Isaac carried 4,000 dozen eggs to Providence this week," his Aunt Sarah Soule Wilbour boasted in her diary of April 3, 1886. And this was just the beginning.

To be sure, not all of Wilbour's chickens were Rhode Island Reds. The breed was one among several varieties on the farm, all benefiting from Wilbour's aggressive approach to poultry farming. There's no doubt, however, that the hardy Reds were an important component of his success, and that his continued interbreeding, with an eye to market sales, improved his results.

By the 1890s, the farm had become a powerhouse of production. Over the years, Wilbour had bought more land. His original farm, which had doubled in size to more than 260 acres, was housing and feeding an immense population of some 5,000 hens. No one had ever seen anything like this before. Yearly export of eggs surged to over 150,000 dozen, transported by rail and ship to all parts of the US, and Canada and Europe. The farm's innovative methods began to attract attention. Poultry farms began to spring up in other parts of New England, along with excited interest in crossbreeding fowl. Wilbour's success was featured in agricultural journals. Suddenly, he was being credited as a pioneer and progressive leader in a "new" agriculture which would soon be taught as serious science in schools and colleges.

Prospect Hill Farm, Isaac C. Wilbour's Home

In his colorful memoir Three Sides to the Sea, David Patten gives a glorious description of his grandfather's Little

had more cheaply and in larger quantity from the Great Plains states opening up in the West. Better roads meant the rapidly growing populations in cities had access to markets closer at hand. Isaac C. was not the only Rhode Island farmer to begin making changes in farming practices. He was among the first, though, to realize that poultry had a bright future, and he went further than anyone to create a system of operation that could both foster and deliver it in large quantities.

Before the 1850s, poultry farms were unheard of. Farmers kept a motley collection of barnyard fowl for personal use or, like William Tripp, bought chickens and eggs from neighboring farms to sell in towns. Isaac C.'s chicken farm in Little Compton began in just this way. His own flock was small at the outset. He supplemented it by buying eggs and fowl from surrounding farms. His markets were Providence and Fall River, cities whose populations began to swell after the Civil War, thanks to jobs offered by new industry, especially textile mills. The arriving employees brought their country tastes to town. Demand for farm fresh eggs and chicken increased. By the 1880s, the problem for Wilbour was no longer where to find good markets but how to keep up with the flood of households demanding weekly deliveries of his eggs and chickens.

Colony Houses, late 1800s
LCHS Collection

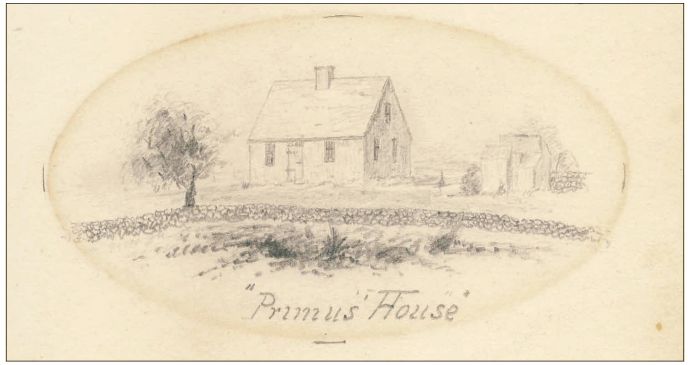
Sometime after the Civil War, Isaac C. bought a few of Tripp's locally famous red-colored chickens and added them to his flock. He was on the lookout for ways to improve production and had heard what tremendous layers the new breed was. Following William Tripp's lead, he began to experiment with crossbreeding himself. He selected chicks that showed redder coloration and hardier constitutions. He bred for heavier, meatier birds and even better egg-layers. He devised special methods and facilities for feeding and housing his hens. Daily, farm

The most memorable story of Collins and Richmond is recorded in *The Richmond Family* genealogy and took place, around 1800. Richmond went to vote in Little Compton, a town of only 220 families where everyone knew everyone. The man in charge of the polling booth told Richmond he could not cast his ballot because he had not registered. To which Richmond replied "If you touch my vote, I shall come down with this cane on your head." Collins, fearing for his master, jumped over a railing and so startled people they scattered. Richmond's ballot was cast.

In 1801 Col. Richmond's gift of land, made Collins eligible to vote at a time when most of Rhode Island's white residents could not. Richmond took Collins to the polls and told him to put in his vote. The Moderator forbade it. Once again Col. Richmond raised his cane and this time declared "This man shall vote!" Primus voted and continued to vote until his death. *The Richmond Family* genealogy goes on to say that Governor Isaac Wilbour of Little Compton was responsible for later inserting the word "white" into the voting statute.

Respect for Collins by some was so strong that he was nominated in the General Assembly, as "one of the Justices to keep his majesty's (sic) peace, within and for the county of Newport." He was not appointed. The esteem of some did not equate to the esteem of all. When a vote was taken, the members announced that Little Compton already had a sufficient number of Justices.

Collins' original house and land were given to him from part of what is still the Richmond's Treaty Rock Farm on West Main Road. Because of the triangular shape of the property it was often called Primus' Heater or Primus' Flat Iron.



Primus Collins' Flat Iron by John Church,1854
LCHS Collection

After his death the land was bought back by the Richmond family and is now the site of the Medeiros family home. Collin's daughter, Amey, and her husband sold off the plots of land in Little Compton that Collins had left her. Lucy kept some of her land and lived the rest of her life in a house on Meeting House Lane. Primus, Elizabeth and Lucy Collins are all buried in the cemetery by the Congregational Church in the middle of Little Compton.

Lucy Collins' House
on Meeting House Lane
LCHS Collection

It was said of the Richmonds that "they value their slaves more than other people." There are no records or details of what caused Col. Richmond to change from a slave owner, buying a wife for his slave farm foreman and giving one of their children to Reverend Mase Shepard, into the man who freed Primus Collins and gave him land to farm.

An estimated 12,000,000 people were sold into slavery in both North and South America. This exhibit is about one out of all those millions.

There have been slaves down through history. The history of slavery in North and South America goes back to the first explorers. Spaniards brought slaves with them, then added Native Americans to that number. Spaniards came here for gold and land, the French for land, the Dutch for land and furs. Even the Pilgrims came not just for religious freedom but to establish profitable commercial ventures in the New World.

The importation of African slaves and the selling of Native

an elegant home, including cupola, generous porches, furnishings from Boston and landscaped gardens. His children, though schooled locally, were encouraged to read and take an interest in national issues of the day, including slavery and states' rights. Though farming remained a main source of family income, the Wilbours became known for moral uprightness and a genteel style of life.

The farm Isaac C. inherited from his father, Philip, at about mid-century, was extensive, comprising some 125 acres. Isaac was only 15, still going to the Little Compton district school, when his father abruptly died. For a year after this, the farm was leased to a local farmer, Alexander Simmons, so Isaac could finish his schooling, an idea that must have been born out of desperation to keep the farm afloat. According to the journalist David Patten, Isaac's grandson, the Simmons family actually moved into the main house while Isaac, his mother and sister agreed to occupy only three rooms there. The odd contract, which Patten found among his grandfather's papers, gives some indication of the scope of the farm. Patten wrote:

Simmons was to have the cattle, sheep, and swine, and forty-seven milkpan. He agreed to fertilize the farm with three hundred barrels of fish, to keep up the walls and to 'carefully and diligently attend to the seaweed privilege.' The rent was to be three hundred and forty dollars payable at the end of the year.

By 1850, Isaac had taken charge of the farm and the family was back in the house, never again to have to make such a sacrifice. In 1854, he married Deborah Josephine Wilbour, a cousin, and started his own family. Perhaps it was the early scare that drove his aspirations for the farm. He now devoted himself single-mindedly to improving its productivity, though he regretted leaving school. He envied his cousin Charles Edwin Wilbour, whose family circumstances allowed him to continue preparatory study in Providence and then attend Brown University. For the rest of his life, Isaac strove to make up the difference. He bought books and read voluminously, compiling a huge library in his house. Later, determined that his only son, Philip, would not be deprived, he sent him to the Friend's Academy in Providence, where Edwin had gone. Philip showed little interest in school subjects however. Despite a spate of letters from his father urging him to study and try for college, he took a clerk's job in Boston after school and eventually returned to help run the Little Compton farm.

Since the early 1800s, the Wilbour farm had been largely supported by livestock raised on its rich pasturelands. This market was soon to become more competitive. Even before the Civil War, railways were coming into use for transporting goods. Beef and sheep could be

On a neighboring farm, John Macomber of Central Village, a friend and fellow "market man," took an interest. According to Captain Benjamin Tripp, William's son, the two farmers "exchanged, I think, twelve hens and a cockerel, and it was a rivalry between the two who would get the best results," Benjamin Tripp recalled in a letter dated 1899 to Rhode Island poultry enthusiast Dr. N.B. Aldrich of Fall River:

My father obtained the best results. And in doing it he crossed fowls through two generations by putting his Chittagong cock with the pullets he raised from what was called the Cochin China, these being the original fowl they both started with. The result proved so satisfactory to both Mr. Macomber and my father that they kept the strain for their own use.

After Macomber's death, William Tripp continued his experiments in breeding, gradually developing a hardy stock of excellent layers that could withstand cold winters and did not need the high, dry land most flocks required for good egg production. The new breed, bright yellow in the leg with light red feathers, was soon in demand by neighboring farmers. It didn't escape their notice that the large brown eggs from "Tripp fowls," as they were called, sold at market for as much as three or four cents more a dozen. The hens lay all winter besides, and were less feathery on the leg, an advantage when it came to marketing them as meat. Locally, the new chickens were an unqualified success, providing a living to many farmers in the area whose backcountry farms were plagued by poor, stony soil. Outside of Little Compton and Westport, the new breed remained largely unrecognized. When Bill Tripp died in 1891, leaving "The Maples" to his son Benjamin, he had little notion that the breed he'd spent a lifetime building was on the verge of national stardom. Bringing that about would require the marketing ingenuity of another Little Compton farmer.

Isaac Champlin Wilbour was born in 1831 into a prominent Little Compton family that had owned and farmed land in the Sakonnet area since the 17th century. His grandfather was the famous Governor Isaac Wilbour (1763-1837) who had grown up here during the Revolution and been among the first Rhode Island politicians to gain democratically elected office after the war. The family farm was a large tract of land running from Taylor's Lane southward along the Sakonnet River. It was rich-soiled, well drained in its upland reaches, and provided excellent grazing for livestock. Marketing sheep and cattle, as well as milk and other farm products, the Wilbour family had grown moderately wealthy over several generations. Under Governor Wilbour, a simple family house on West Main Road was renovated into

Americas as slaves in the Caribbean helped pave the way for businessmen in the colonies even though it conflicted with some Pilgrims' fervent religious beliefs. Starting in the 1660's there were protests, especially by Quakers, that enslavement of Negroes and Indians was morally wrong.

As dissention grew among the Pilgrims and folks started to spread across the land, religious differences helped move people into new places. Among the seekers of freedom were the early settlers of Rhode Island. Over time, Rhode Island's accepting attitude led to trade in many things, among them rum and human beings. Rhode Island rum was key in the Triangle Trade, sent out on ships to be traded for slaves in Africa, who were then sent to the Caribbean to work the huge sugar plantations and to the South for tobacco and cotton plantations. Soon, the center of the colonies' growing slave trade was Newport, Rhode Island, where slaves helped support an economy based on trade rather than crops.

From the late 1600's slaves were brought in from West Africa, especially the area now known as Ghana. Native Americans taken as prisoners of war were often sold as slaves in the West Indies because they were considered too dangerous to keep. The peaceful beginnings with Massasoit, John Alden, William Brewster and the other Pilgrims had become a memory as the English settlers expanded further into Indian territory and Philip, son of Massasoit rose as leader of the Indians. Those early conflicts are mentioned in other stories here, particularly those of Awashonks, a woman sachem or chief, and Benjamin Church, the first white settler of Little Compton who persuaded Awashonks to stay loyal to Britain. Something in this landscape breeds originality of thought and action.

From the beginning the Pilgrims had insisted that their views on relationships between the sexes were the proper ones, so marriage was expected for slaves in the colonies. Because many slaves were house servants living so close to their masters they also joined them in the same churches to worship.

This day-by-day closeness meant that many slaves in New England were educated, if not by direct schooling then by proximity. They learned manners, deportment and language based on what was said and done around them. This was as unlike life for a slave on a plantation, as in the South and the Caribbean, as can be imagined. With very few big farms or crops, most slaves were brought here to support the economy of trade. Newport was the center of the slave trade for the country, and Rhode Island had twice the population of blacks of any other state in New England. Primus Collins was one of them.

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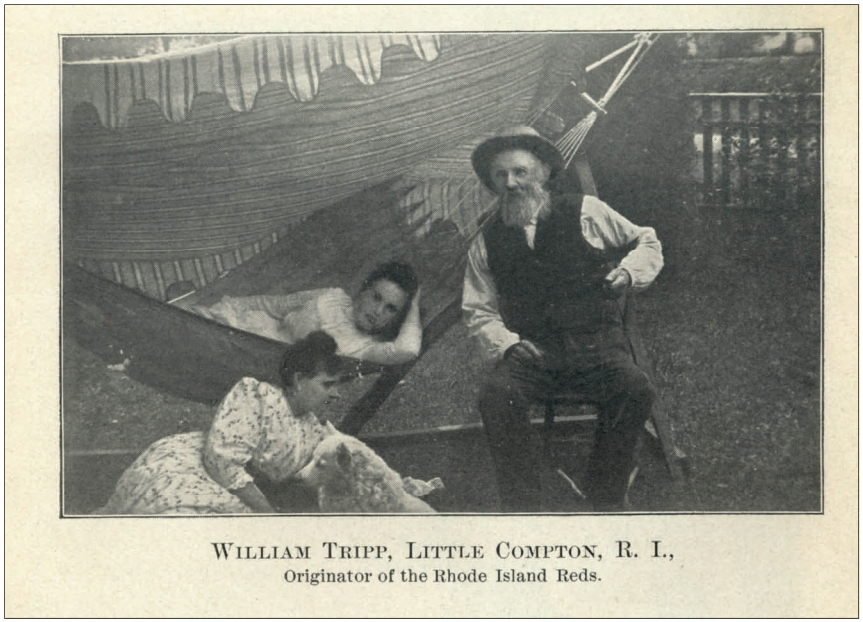
Caged on deck, the birds provided fresh eggs and fresh meat on the long ocean voyages. The cages were replenished with a variety of foreign cocks and hens when crews docked for supplies at Asian ports. While most of these birds were consumed on the trip home, a few roosters, especially those with fiery colors, were kept for cockfighting, a popular entertainment among sailors living on board together for months at a time.

William Tripp, a former New Bedford sea captain, was familiar with the docks. It's likely that he had market contacts there. On one of his weekly wagon visits, he reportedly picked up an exotic red-feathered "Chittagong" cock off a trading ship. He carried the bird back to his farm and, as a casual experiment, allowed it to run with his hens. Chittagongs, also known as "Shanghais," were already causing a stir in Britain, where they were also making an appearance off ships. Word of their large size, stupendous laying abilities and docile natures was beginning to make its way across the Atlantic. Whether Tripp had heard these rumors is unknown. However, there was no missing the wonderful improvement in the first generations of hens sired by his red Chittagong. The idea dawned on him that serious selective breeding might further improve the quality his stock.

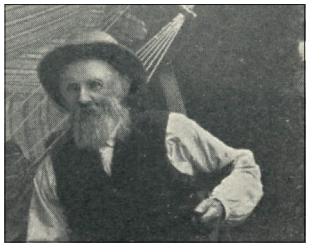


William Tripp relaxing with his daughters
URI Special Collections & Archives

Farmers Who Bred the World Famous Red Hen

By Janet Lisle

ISAAC C. WILBOUR
1831-1899



WILLIAM TRIPP
1812-1891

The town of Little Compton has long been associated with rural views, colonial history and quiet artistic pursuit. It seems incongruous at best that it was also once the cradle of an American industry, poultry farming, whose influence and innovation spread coast to coast and beyond to Canada and Europe. The story of the rise of the Rhode Island Red from Little Compton's humble barnyards to full-feathered glory as foremost Chicken of the Land, rivals any Horatio Alger tale. The narrative comes in two parts, each with its own Little Compton hero.

The town was a region of small farms and well-grazed pastures when William Tripp, born in Westport, MA in 1812, began farming here on acreage at the corner of Long Highway and William Sisson Road. "The Maples," he called the farm, and it prospered by all accounts with help from his wife and three children. By the 1850s, Tripp had become one of the local market men who bought from neighboring farms, carrying the goods in his wagon to sell in New Bedford. Whaling was in full force there, making the town a center of trade. By the mid 18th century, it had become the wealthiest city per capita in the United States. The giant whalers and trading ships setting out needed provisions. Root vegetables and non-perishable items like salted meat in barrels were in demand, but the ships also often took along live chickens.

The Maples
William Tripp's Home
URI Special Collections & Archives

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JOHN SIMMONS
1796-1870
Founder of Simmons College

By Piper Hawes

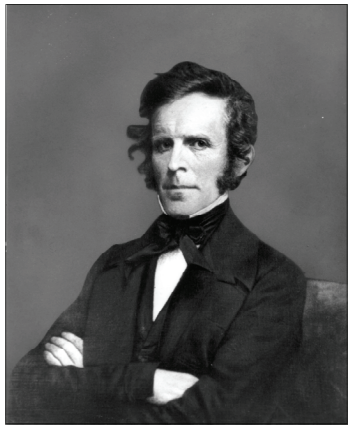

Photo Courtesy of Simmons College

John Simmons, whose final bequest led to the founding of an innovative women's college in Boston bearing his name, was born in Little Compton. He was raised in a modest cottage with his parents and seven siblings on what is now Sakonnet Point Road. After his early schooling in Little Compton, Simmons moved to Boston. Although he became wealthy pursuing two very different careers, he ended up a "grim and lonely" man. In spite of all the changes that he experienced over his personal and professional life, Simmons remained close to Little Compton, making visits home every year and eventually dying there.

Simmons' ancestors were among the first colonists to arrive in New England. His forbear, Moyses Symonson, landed in Plymouth on November 9, 1621, with the second party of Pilgrims on the ship *Fortune*. Although the colonists were happy to have 35 new workers, the ill-named ship arrived without the expected supplies to feed them. In addition, the ship had to return to England immediately laden with goods from the New World in order to pay back investors.

Symonson fared better. He settled in Duxbury, married Sarah Chandler in 1632, and became active in local civic affairs. In 1638, he received a grant of 40 acres. As some point he changed his name to Moses Simmons, probably to reflect his English origins. At the time of Moses' death in 1689, his estate was valued at 53 pounds, 11 shillings.

END NOTES

1. Wilbour, Benjamin Franklin, Little Compton Families, Little Compton Historical Society, 1967 Little Compton, RI, p 735.

2. Wilbour, Benjamin Franklin, Notes on Little Compton. Edited by C.C. Brownell, 1970. Publ. Little Compton Historical Society, Little Compton, R.I., p. 139.

3. Fall River Herald News, Fall River, MA., Awashonks, Part of Third Purchase in 1675, Offered to Little Compton Historical Society, September 15, 1937

4. Wilbour, Benjamin Franklin, Notes on Little Compton. Edited by C.C. Brownell, 1970. Publ. Little Compton Historical Society, Little Compton, R.I., pp. 102, 228-230.

5. U.S. Census for Little Compton, R.I. in 1880 was 1,200 people.

Sarah Soule Wilbour
LCHS Collection

Sunday, Jan. 8, 1882: I have regretted very much that I did not avail myself of many opportunities I had when I was young to ask the people who were old then, many questions of what took place in their early days. If I can leave anything that will benefit or interest the coming generation I want to do so.

The Simmons family had started its slow rise to prominence.

Five generations later, Newport shipbuilder Benoni Simmons, John's father, enlisted at age 20 in the Continental Army upon hearing the news of the Battles of Lexington and Concord. He fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill and, after reenlisting, served as a master gunner on the galley Trumbull. In 1776, during the Battle of Lake Champlain, a cannon ball blew off one of his arms.

At the end of the war, he returned home to Rhode Island and resumed work as a shipbuilder. In 1784, Benoni married Nancy Bailey of Little Compton and settled there. She was 17 and he was 29.

In her *"Notice of some Compton men who have made their mark in other places*," Sarah Soule Wilbour writes that Nancy Bailey "was a bright cheerful energetic woman, who when her friends objected to her marrying a poor man with but one arm, replied 'I had rather be hugged by that one arm than all the rest of the arms in the World.' " In fact, Benoni is said to have helped build 30 ships and could hew more timber than a carpenter with two hands.

He and Nancy had five sons and three daughters. One son died at age three months and another was lost at sea. Their fifth child, John, who rose to prominence in Boston, was born on October 30, 1796.

Portrait of young John Simmons in 1800
LCHS Collection

Although far from rich, the Simmons family lived comfortably in their four-room, shingled cottage. The family's forbearers were described as "Hospitable to strangers, but careful to avoid everything like extravagance in living and refinement in manners." Nothing had changed.

John attended the one-room Peaked Top School in Little Compton and also enjoyed roaming the woods with his brothers, visiting the fishermen at the docks, and eating a weekly Sunday treat of johnnycakes. He attended high school at the Town Meeting Hall but did not finish.

NEW HORIZONS IN BOSTON

His oldest brother, Cornelius, who was eleven years John's senior, left for Boston in 1810 to learn the tailoring trade. By 1814, Cornelius had his own store on Ann Street (now North Street). John went to Boston that year "dressed in a green baize jacket, with a small bundle in his hands and $5 in his pocket," in the words of Sarah Soule Wilbour.

If Simmons had stayed in Little Compton, he would probably have been a craftsman like his father or a farmer like his forbearers. But by following his older brother to Boston, Simmons took the first step toward his eventual fame and fortune.

He arrived there during a time of great change. There was rapid growth of new industries, especially in the manufacture of cotton and wool cloth. Francis C. Lowell opened his first cotton mill in 1814 in Waltham. In addition, there were ironworks in South Boston and Paul Revere's Copperworks in Canton. These brought new wealth to Boston, and even small businesses prospered, though not the laborers they employed. During this period, Cornelius' business increased and by 1818 John was able to open his own "slop shop" (a clothing store) across the street from Cornelius.

Ann Small Simmons
Photo Courtesy of Simmons College

Awasauncks, where Mrs. Wilbour had first moved with her new husband to "set up housekeeping," was demolished around 1938. The house, while rented for a time, was left full of furniture, artwork, and family papers. The house had become known as "the haunted house," according to Carlton Brownell, and although boarded up, was played in by local youth. By 1938, all but one of this Wilbour's family had died. Mrs. Wilbour's granddaughter Theodora no longer came to Little Compton, feeling that the Town's people did not respect her family and, in particular, her father. Carlton Brownell wrote to Miss Wilbour asking if he could have the coach that had belonged to Charles Edwin Wilbour, and she gave him permission to take it as well as all the other vehicles. Around 1990, the coach was refurbished by the Little Compton Historical Society, by John Nelson and his son, Michael, relatives of the Wilbour family.

Dr. Franklin C. Southworth, first president of the LCHS, had attempted to obtain Awasauncks before its demolition. The Fall River Herald News on September 15, 1937, printed an article based on a paper by Benjamin Franklin Wilbour, entitled "Awashonks, Part of Third Purchase in 1675, Offered to Little Compton Historical Society." It stated that Theodora Wilbour had offered Awasauncks to the Society, but a year later the building was destroyed. Apparently not aware of the newly formed Little Compton Historical Society, Miss Wilbour had contacted the Newport Historical Society earlier and asked them to collect what they wanted from the house before it was demolished. We are fortunate that The Newport Historical Society was able to respond, for they salvaged many family letters, a diary, documents, a large sofa and samplers. The Little Compton Historical Society also owns three-color posters of Egyptian murals retrieved from Awasauncks, as well as a photo album, glass photo plates, portraits, and other small items.

We will never know the fate of the young woman and her baby taken to the Poor House by Mr. Howland and Mrs. Wilbour in 1878. The entry does tell us, however, about the character and sensibilities of the writer who portrayed the strengths and weaknesses of her small community as she saw them. We do not know how many diaries Sarah Soule Wilbour actually kept over the years and can assume that there were more we have not been able to read. The diaries have been a valuable resource over the years, extensively quoted in Notes on Little Compton and other Little Compton Historical Society publications. A more complete picture of her life and the community is obtained by reading the daily entries detailing farm life, visits by friends and family, the lives of her neighbors, and yes, the weather.

Mrs. Wilbour traveled regularly to New Bedford and Fall River to do her banking and to visit family and friends. She was proud that she could travel to New Bedford and back in a single day at her age.

October 16, 1890: Charles Howland took me to New Bedford. Got my dividends. Called on Lizzie Wood. Were detained at the Head of Westport on our way home so that it was very dark (it having clouded over) coming thro Cole Brook woods. Sometimes we could not see the horse. We were in great danger of colliding if we met a team or going off into the ditch. Twice we stopped. Charles got out and felt the way back to the path. Once I put up my hand and I could not see it. But we got home safe and kept our perils to our selves. Shall take care not to be caught again.

Summer visitors to Little Compton were referred to as "strangers" by Mrs. Wilbour and were a topic of discussion then as they are now. In 1890 she commented:

It has been very warm for several days. Visitors and boarders from the Citys are over running us. I don't like this influx of strangers. They bring extravagant habits and break up the quiet of good old Compton. And later*: I don't want strangers buying our pleasant places and getting control of our affairs. They shall not have an acre of mine while I Live.*

Awashauncks
LCHS Collection

That same year, Simmons married Ann Small. They moved into a house just down Ann Street from the slop shop.

As Simmons' business prospered, he moved to ever-larger stores. In 1826, the year his brother Valentine came up from Little Compton to help him, Simmons moved his business to North Market Street, across from the new Quincy Market.

The 1825 Boston Directory listed 25 stores that sold men's clothing. Most were small. Simmons was able to grow his business in part by adopting the "New Store Look," which emphasized window displays instead of clothing racks on the street. He also advertised the business, which produced greater volume in sales.

Erected in 1850, this imposing granite structure was the final home of John Simmons & Co
Photo Courtesy of Simmons College.

Sometime between 1830 and 1835, Simmons began making ready-made suits in standardized sizes. Although the originality of this idea is open to debate, the speed with which Simmons capitalized on this innovation is not. He provided men with fashionable and well-made clothing, easily obtained at a reasonable cost. As an added advantage, orders could be made from a distance, a time-saver for customers.

Instead of using the older system of 16 individualized tailoring markings, standardized procedures reduced the number of markings to three. This system, based on the principle that human bodies had set proportions, transformed Simmons' clothing business. Journeyman tailors could do the new measuring and the cutting, which required some training and for which they were paid $2 a day, according to the *1832 Documents Relative to the Manufacture of the United States*.

The cheaper labor was mainly women who worked on contract in their homes assembling the suits. For this they were paid 50 cents a day, according to the same source.

Simmons went from tenement to tenement delivering cloth that had been sized and cut at his store. Many of the seamstresses were farm girls living in the city on their own, widows (from the War of 1812) with young children, or older women struggling to survive.

The poor seamstresses that might have inspired
John Simmons' final bequest
Image Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution

Two more advancements further revolutionized the clothing industry. The first was in 1846, when Elias Howe, Jr. of Cambridge was granted a patent for his sewing machine. By this point, Simmons already had the largest wholesale ready-made suit business in New England. However, by embracing the new invention before his competitors, he was able to further increase his production and his profits.

The second advancement was the expansion of railroad routes, which allowed Simmons to use traveling salesmen to open new markets in the south and the west.

As Simmons' business grew, so did his family. He and Ann had four sons and two daughters. Just as he moved the business several times as it grew, he moved the family as it grew, too, until finally, in 1841, he built what he referred to as his "mansion" on Tremont Street opposite Boston Common. In a rare display of wealth, the house was said to have the finest interior finish of any house in Boston with rosewood doors and Italian marble door casings, a far cry from his Little Compton boyhood cottage.

Apparently foreseeing that the newly developing Back Bay would become a more fashionable area, Simmons bought choice corner

shines and every thing in Nature moves on as usual – May we hope no moral or financial earthquake will follow as a consequence of this days doings. It is humiliating to see a man of Grover Clevelands character and small abilities elevated to the Presidential chair, but saddest of all the existence of a debased standard of morals that would make such a thing Possible. Have renewed my insurance policy.

When Benjamin Harrison was elected president four years later, Mrs. Wilbour's entry is more optimistic.

March 4, 1889: Today a Republican party assumes the reins of Government, multitudes, assemble at Washington to see the pageant of inauguration. It being our party we look for improvement in the administration of the National affairs. Mr. French is raising the big flag.

Mrs. Wilbour had strong opinions about Indians, King Philip in particular, as we read in this summation of a discussion with a visitor.

January 6, 1890: Mr. Leonard came in the evening. We had a spirited talk about the Indians. He denounced Philip as treacherous ugly nasty beast, which the English did right to destroy. I said he fought for his country and his race his hunting grounds and the graves of his ancestors and who among us who believed in taking up arms would not do the same.

Although Mrs. Wilbour mentions several times the books she is reading about King Philip's War, there is no other mention of this issue in the diaries we have today.

In 1890, Mrs. Wilbour was 86 years old. The walk referenced below is one she made often between Awasauncks and her winter home at Isaac C. Wilbour's, a distance of three quarters of a mile.

October 11, 1890: Rested yesterday. Today repeated my walk with the exception of a ride from George Gray's gate on an ox cart, the news of which preceded me to my home where, on my arrival, I was given to understand that it was not considered Lady like for Mrs. Sarah S. Wilbour to ride on the tail of an "Ox Cart." I don't feel that I have compromised the dignity of the family.

Sunday, "The day past quietly as do all our Sabbaths. They would be days of rest if old people ever felt rested." Mrs. Wilbour did pay a ministerial tax and give barrels of flour to the ministers for Christmas. She made pointed remarks about church being where friends meet "and have a social 'how do you do' and talk about the weather and the price of eggs." Another entry reads, "I rode to the Common with Isaac, left a $5 bill with the Treasurer of the Church for the minister. Thought he might preach better tomorrow if he had a crisp note in his pocket."

In January 1886 she wrote, "We have not had a pleasant day this week, snow & rain drizzle & fog. The chicken trade goes ahead of all. Incubators, brooders and chicken houses are being multiplied. Already the peep of young chickens is heard all over the neighborhood." During these months, Mrs. Wilbour described the thriving poultry market, how the weather impacted the birds and the crops, where eggs were marketed, and the various ways they were transported. In May of 1889, Mrs. Wilbour stated, "this might well be called Poultry Town such numbers of Goslins, and there is a market for them, when they are small, $1 and $1.50 for little things just beginning to feather." In addition to poultry and eggs, Isaac C. Wilbour and his son Philip marketed beans, peppers, squash, beef, pork and lamb, according to the diaries.

Being in Isaac C. Wilbour's house was important to Mrs. Wilbour for reasons other than companionship, comfort, and safety during the last years of her life. In the fall of 1886, she wrote about the layers of meaning the house had for her.

Forty seven years ago to day my Father died in this room where I am now writing. Here also my brother passed away in 1848. In this room the present owner, my brother's only son, was born – and more than all to me in this room Charles and I spent those hours, when Love's young dream wakes in the soul a happiness unknown before. These walls witnessed the pledge of fidelity to each other which remained unshaken till Death dissolved the earthly tie, and left only the Hope of reunion hereafter.

It was in this house that Mrs. Wilbour died five years later.

As a staunch Republican, Mrs. Wilbour tells us in no uncertain terms how upset she is by Grover Cleveland's election as President.

March 4, 1885: Today a Democrat walks into the White House at Washington inaugurated President of the United States. The sun

property on Arlington Street in 1860 and started to build three houses meant for Ann and himself and for their two daughters. However, all three women refused to move because they did not want to live so far out of town. (The houses still stand at 1, 2 and 3 Arlington Street.)

PERSONAL TRAGEDY STRIKES

However, Simmons' prosperity did not equate with his personal happiness. By 1860 he had lost all four of his sons: an infant, Theodore Augustus in 1829 at 10 months; Lorenzo in 1841 at age 18; John, Jr. in 1846 at age 25; and Theodore Augustus II in 1858 at age 28. In addition, his only grandson, John Jr.'s son, John Simmons III, died in 1854 at age nine. And in 1861, Ann died.

After the death of his last son, Theodore Augustus II in 1858, and with no male heirs left to run the business, John retired as a wholesale clothing dealer.

Although over 60, he "had too active a brain to remain quiet," according to his eventual obituary in the *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*. Instead, he devoted his considerable energies to real estate investment. As an apparent early believer in the adage of "location, location, location," he was shrewd in his choice of sites and bought prime property in the central business district. He then built high quality buildings which he managed carefully and from which he derived large incomes.

As his holdings increased in value, John made new purchases and, by 1867, he was one of Boston's wealthiest men. Despite his wealth and being able to trace his roots in America to 1621, he was not part of Boston society, in large part because he was from Rhode Island and did not attend Harvard College. His friends were other businessmen who were becoming wealthy. Simmons would call on them on Sunday afternoons, walking with a cane and looking like the successful clothing merchant he had been, wearing a high beaver hat, long black coat, high collar and black cravat.

His daughters' choices of spouses apparently did not sit well with Simmons. Mary Ann married George Ditson and sailed to Cuba with him. Simmons, who had disapproved of the marriage, went to Cuba and brought Mary Ann home with him. Mary Ann later divorced Ditson. In his will, Simmons made clear that none of his estate should fall into Ditson's hands. Mary Ann later married William Arnold Buffum, but only after her father's death.

Daughter Alvina married Edward A. White, a tailor on Washington Street, but again, Simmons did not approve. They may

have run away to marry, as the marriage is not recorded in Massachusetts. But eventually Simmons came around and named White a trustee in his will. White also went on to become a Boston alderman.

What did make Simmons happy was to go home every summer to Little Compton. He returned to fish and hunt and to visit his many relatives including four siblings, Valentine, Mary Almy, Comfort Sisson and Lydia Austin.

As described by David Patten in the *Providence Journal*, Simmons would have his two-horse coach brought to his house in Boston to take him to the train station and would then go by first class with the horses and coach in a box car. They would disembark at Tiverton, and his coachman would drive Simmons "sitting there stiff, somber, unbowing, aware of his greatness," according to Patten, to Little Compton.

Although Valentine had built a large house across the street from the original small family home, Simmons returned to the family home, which he never altered, for his visits. "Always frugal in his habits," John "never ceased to enjoy the pleasures of rural life at his county home in Little Compton," according to his obituary.

Simmons suffered from Bright's disease, a chronic kidney ailment. In the summer of 1870 his health deteriorated. He traveled to Little Compton as usual, however, to be among the Simmons clan. His conditioned worsened and in late August he died, in the town of his birth, in the home of his sister Comfort Sisson.

His funeral was held at his "mansion" in Boston and he was buried in the Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, next to his wife, sons and grandson.

Some insight into how Simmons was viewed by his Boston contemporaries can be gleaned from two obituaries. According to the August 29, 1870 *Boston Post*: *Our city can ill afford to spare citizens of so much worth, but the grief of his departure is assuaged by the fact that he lived to a good age and leaves a long and most honorable record. He was eminently a self-made man and his example can be studied with profit and interest by the rising generation.*

In the August 30, 1870 *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, the obituary read: *He came to the city early in life, learned the tailor's trade, was industrious and sagacious, and succeeded; so when the railway system opened new markets for manufactured goods, Mr. Simmons had the experience, capital and foresight to extend his business to meet a new order of things.*

chosen. The first time in the history of our Town that a woman has been elected to that office. Mrs. Anna Brownell was elected Trustee for District No. 5. The work of womans enfranchisement goes slowly but surely Onward..

Mrs. Wilbour wrote that she attended the April 12, 1886, Little Compton Town Council meeting to seek permission to "lower" Simmons Hill. Wood harvested from the Colebrook Road woods was hauled by teams to houses on the west side of town. Mrs. Wilbour was concerned about the animals that had to pull those heavy loads over the "sharp" hill and proposed paying to have the hill lowered in lieu of paying her highway tax. She received permission to do as much as she pleased, according to her diary, and promptly hired seven men to do the work. She checked their progress regularly. By the middle of May the work had been completed and the workmen paid. She paid each man $5 a day for a cart, team, tools and labor. "Nov. 14, 1886: Rode to the village. Paid my Town Tax [of] $32.30. I paid under Protest. In season and out of season I will raise my voice against taxation without representation."

After Mr. Wilbour's death in 1882, Mrs. Wilbour moved to the home of her nephew, Isaac Champlin Wilbour, for the winter months each year until she died. Mrs. Wilbour seldom mentioned attending church on Sunday, but she did have opinions about the services and ministers.

Sun. Nov. 16, 1890: I rode to Mrs. Borden's with Isaac. It was a fine morning and many people were out. Mr. Jenkins of Providence was to preach at the white Church. But Lo! There was no kindling and the sexton failed to make fire. Minister and majority of the people went to the M.E. Church where they had fire. They don't have the old-fashioned Fire and Brimstone preaching of the former days which kept their ancestors warm in a barn like house where there was no fire for 90 years except what the old Ladies carried in their foot stoves.

As a child, Mrs. Wilbour attended services at the Friends Meeting House with her father. In an essay entitled "The First Friends Meeting House," she reminisced about the silent Meetings, those who were in attendance, and watching for the handshakes that indicated the end of the service. In later years, she attended a Friends Quarterly Meeting in New Bedford in 1883 and the yearly Meeting in Westerly in 1889. On a Sunday in 1882 she wrote, "This day but a repetition of most of our Sabbaths. We sit in our loneliness and read." On another

monument. The north side states, "Elizabeth Pabodie, daughter of Plymouth Pilgrims, John Alden & Priscilla Mullin, the first white woman born in New England." On the east side is a verse composed by George S. Burleigh.

April 18, 1889: I fully believe that women are entitled to equal rights as express[ed] in the Declaration of Independence. I preach the doctrine of equality before the Law, where ever I go, in highways & byways, at home & abroad - SSW

Mrs. Wilbour was a staunch believer and active supporter of women's suffrage. In 1888, she wrote in her diary that Louisa Tyler was visiting every town in Rhode Island for the Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Association. Mrs. Tyler came to town in hopes of starting a "league" in Little Compton and had tea with Mrs. Wilbour. The next day a meeting was arranged and held in Mrs. Wilbour's home. Ten members were enlisted to the cause, and Mrs. Wilbour was elected President. In October of the same year, Mrs. Wilbour received a letter from Elizabeth B. Chace asking her to attend a suffrage meeting in Providence, and Mrs. Wilbour made the trip. Her diary notes that she had not met Mrs. Chace since 1836 when "we united to do what we could to strengthen the heart and hands of William Lloyd Garrison in his battle with hated Slavery." Until Mrs. Wilbour's death in 1891, her diaries make note of the monthly Little Compton suffrage meetings, state meetings in Providence, and fund raising for the national organization.

One effort of Mrs. Wilbour's in 1889 was to collect signatures for a petition "for equal rights for women in settling intestate estates." In February of 1890, Mrs. Wilbour traveled to Washington D. C. to attend Susan B. Anthony's 70th birthday party. (She had also attended Mrs. Anthony's 50th birthday party in New York City in 1870.) While in Washington, Mrs. Wilbour attended suffrage meetings where "19 states and territories" voted to unite and form one society called the National Woman Suffrage Association, merging the National Woman Suffrage Association with the American Woman Suffrage Association. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was elected president and Susan B. Anthony vice president.

Mrs. Wilbour proudly wrote on April 3, 1884:

Had our spring town meeting and elected a member on the board of superintendents of schools. Mrs. Susan H. Brownell was

A LIVING LEGACY

Simmons' will was probated on September 30, 1870, and reveals much about the man. It runs for 24 pages and includes 33 different articles. His estate was appraised at $1,436,033 in real estate and $315,783 in personal property.

He left his three surviving siblings, Valentine, Comfort and Mary, $1,000 each. His two daughters received life interest in their homes and his two granddaughters $5,000 yearly. He had made his own way and clearly intended his relatives to do the same.

The bulk of his fortune as stated in Article 16 was to be used: *to found and endow an institution to be called 'Simmons Female College,' for the purpose of teaching medicine, music, drawing, designing, telegraphy and other branches of art, science, and industry best calculated to enable the scholars to acquire an independent livelihood.*

His real estate holdings were immediately put in trust for the college, although the terms of the will baffled the trustees. Who should constitute the college's student body? Should the schools be autonomous or attached to a men's school? How could one college teach such diverse subjects?

Simmons, however, had carefully chosen his trustees. Benjamin Brooks invited opinions of authors and educators who were interested in women's education. Henry Lefavour, dean of Williams College, was asked to look at trends in Europe. In his report, Lefavour said the new college should "lead the way with standards of the future rather than of the past."

However, tragedy seemed to follow Simmons even in death. On November 9th, "The Great Fire of 1872" destroyed 770 mostly commercial buildings in downtown Boston between Washington Street and the waterfront, including most of the assets set aside for the college. The fire, which raged for 15 hours, was so spectacular it could be seen 60 miles away in New Hampshire.

In fact, with losses valued at $50 million, insurance companies could not cover the total damage of the fire and 32 companies went bankrupt, including the one covering Simmons' properties.

Here is where the trustees were really put to the test. Not willing to forget Simmons' last wish, the trustees asked the Probate Court permission to mortgage the land so that new buildings could be erected. It took another 22 years of careful management to accumulate the $500,000 needed to begin work on the college.

In 1899, the trustees transferred all of the real estate holdings to the newly-formed Simmons College corporation. When the college finally opened on October 9, 1902, Simmons had been dead for 32 years.

Many have wondered why Simmons left most of his hard-earned fortune to found a women's college. There is more than one theory but Simmons never publicly stated his reasons.

Some believe he was influenced by the poor seamstresses he employed and whose living conditions he saw firsthand. Simmons knew few jobs were available to women and those that were, were poorly paid: domestic service; sewing; and factory work. It was still commonly thought that women "belonged in the home." But Simmons understood that many women were unmarried, widowed or with invalid husbands.

Of course, he had no male heirs, so he may have been anxious to have the Simmons name live on in another way. As he had earned his money by dint of his own hard work, it is fitting that he chose to invest his fortune in the future prosperity of so many women -- the spiritual descendants of the poorly-paid seamstresses he had employed.

Simmons might have also been influenced to focus on women in this particular way by what others were doing during the same period. A contemporary, Matthew Vassar, who had made his fortune in beer, founded the women's college bearing his name, in 1861. Simmons wrote his will six years later.

But Simmons' vision was substantially different from Vassar and the few other existing women's colleges. Simmons was not interested in a traditional liberal education. In a speech at the college's opening, Simmons College's first president, Henry Lefavour, said "This college is unique, in that it is the first to stand in New England for a utilitarian education for girls, while aiming not to neglect any influence that may broaden the students' outlooks and deepen their lives."

So why Simmons didn't leave everything to his two daughters may never be known. But it can be said that he has helped thousands of "daughters" -- the many women who have graduated from Simmons College since 1902.

lived & died in Portsmouth RI. But gave his lands in Little Compton to his four sons William, Joseph, John and Samuel, who all settled here and have many descendants here at this time 27 families.

Mrs. Wilbour's recording of daily life in Little Compton creates a fascinating portrait of her, her family, and the community. Her 1878 diary is full of daily chores, visits with neighbors, illnesses, medicines, deaths and politics. After Mr. Wilbour died of kidney disease in June 1882, the diaries detail even more of her daily life and are filled with comments about town government, national elections, the suffrage movement, farming and religion. All the while, she waited patiently for letters from her son Edwin and his family in Paris or Egypt. The Edwin Wilbour family had been out of the country for eight years and returned shortly after Mr. Wilbour's death in 1882. Throughout the diaries, Mrs. Wilbour looked forward to Edwin's letters and journals from Egypt where he lived in a houseboat on the Nile, collecting artifacts and studying hieroglyphics.

A project Mrs. Wilbour was quite proud of was the Elizabeth Pabodie Monument. For 35 years, Mrs. Wilbour had wished to preserve the memory and the gravestone of Elizabeth Pabodie, who was born around 1624 to John Alden and Priscilla Mullins. Elizabeth was believed by Mrs. Wilbour to be the first white female child born in Plymouth. Mrs. Wilbour's husband Charles was a direct descendant. Elizabeth Pabodie had been buried in the Old Burying Ground adjacent to the United Congregational Church, her gravestone sunken into the ground. Mrs. Wilbour feared it would be forever lost. In 1847, she started a subscription to preserve the marker, and in June 1882 the monument that we are familiar with today was placed in the graveyard. The original tombstone marker was fitted into the west side of the

Son Charles Edwin Wilbour at the Elizabeth Alden Monument
LCHS Collection

In an 1885 essay entitled “Recollection of My Early School Days,” Mrs. Wilbour wrote about her education. She had attended the Peaked Top School at the age of 5 and very sporadically “when I could be spared from household duties.” She graduated in 1825 at the age of 21.

In 1827, Sarah Soule married her third cousin, Charles Wilbour, a farmer and a lawyer, and two years later moved to a farm on the north side of Swamp Road near the corner of West Main Road. Mrs. Wilbour notes that the house was built by Thomas Church, son of Benjamin Church, in 1724. The house was named ”Awasauncks,” and in 1853, Charles Wilbour purchased the ten-acre farm, house, barn and outbuilding for $1,610.

Charles Wilbour
Courtesy of Newport Historical Society

The Wilbours had two children. A daughter, Elizabeth, was born in 1829 but died before the age of three. Charles Edwin Wilbour was born in 1833 and adored by his mother. Many passages of Mrs. Wilbour’s diaries are devoted to Edwin, his family, and their travels throughout Europe and Egypt. Charles Edwin Wilbour became America’s first trained Egyptologist.

Mrs. Wilbour was very interested in family history and Little Compton history. A diary entry reads, “I am invited to B. F. Wilbour’s to meet a stranger who claims to have Wilbour ancestry. What will the folks do when I am gone for somebody to tell them who they are?” Mrs. Wilbour wrote essays on many local topics including the War of 1812, the First Friends Meeting House, John Simmons, founder of Simmons College; the Congregational Church; early clubs; graveyards; and the name for Little Compton as “Single Pole Town.” Mrs. Wilbour also received requests from non-residents interested in local history for information on topics such as the post office and local physicians. In addition, she did extensive genealogical research.

Sunday, November 24, 1878: Dull weather I have copied the Will of William Wilbur, the first of the name that bought land in this town, he

These graduates have been educated to be independent professionals who have the potential to be eminently self-made women. Today, the college is one of the few remaining undergraduate all-women schools. The graduate programs in social work, nursing and library science admit men but Simmons College has the only MBA program in the world designed exclusively for women, geared toward women’s experiences in the workplace. Altogether Simmons' legacy has educated over 64,000 "daughters" and "sons." John Simmons would no doubt approve.

In the end, Simmons’ is the quintessential American story, the small-town Yankee boy from Rhode Island who transformed himself into a Boston millionaire. His success was due in large part to his ability to straddle two very different worlds.

His Puritan background and strong work ethic were essential as he left his sheltered upbringing in Little Compton to start his own small business in Boston. He was a pioneer in the clothing industry with the vision and the daring to embrace new business methods and technologies. In his real estate career, begun late in life, Simmons foresaw the future of Boston as a commercial hub. Even in death, Simmons was a pioneer, founding a women’s college that flourishes today. Instead of enriching his own family, this self-made man created a college so others could, can and will become self-sufficient, an ongoing legacy bearing the Simmons name.

First graduating class of Simmons Female College, Class of 1906
Photo Courtesy of Simmons College

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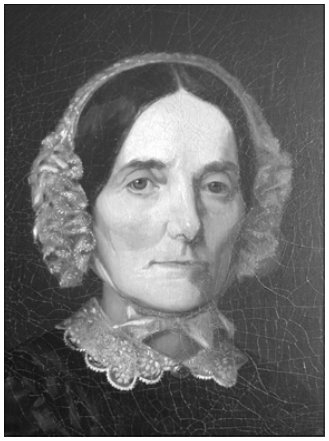
SARAH SOULE WILBOUR

1804-1891

Activist Author

By Sheila Mackintosh



LCHS Collection

Pleasant. I went with C.W. Howland to bring a young woman with her baby to the Poorhouse. When will the laws and public opinion treat men and women alike in such cases? It is enough to make me believe in Total Depravity. To see the man received the same as before in society & the woman an outcast. - Sarah Soule Wilbour, September 9, 1878

Sarah Soule Wilbour wrote this passage in her diary in the fall of 1878 when she was 74 years old. Mrs. Wilbour was a conscientious chronicler of Little Compton social, political and religious events as well as familial comings and goings. She also made note of national events. The Little Compton Historical Society owns dairies Mrs. Wilbour kept between 1882 up until her death in 1891 at the age of 87. A diary written in the year 1878 is now on loan from the Newport Historical Society. All of the diaries have been transcribed.

Mrs. Wilbour was born in 1804, the last of six children born to Governor Isaac Wilbour and his wife Hannah Tabor Wilbour. Isaac Wilbour was a member of Congress, acting Governor, Lt. Governor, a member of the Rhode Island Assembly and Speaker of the House. The Isaac Wilbour family lived on West Main Road on the farm that would become part of "the biggest poultry town in the world" in the 1880s and 1890s.