

Over the years MRHS has published and acquired quite a few very interesting books and pamphlets. It seems a shame to me that most of them are secure in the Downes Building but are all but forgotten and, for all intents and purposes, unavailable to our members and our audience. To rectify this unhappy situation we will be printing some of these publications in the *Portersville Press* and posting them on our website. This is in keeping with our philosophy of making our collections available in digital form to the world via the internet.

My first choice is a little pamphlet tied with a red ribbon with the cover “Haley Farm Souvenir”. There is no date or other information other than the title page The Haley Farm, Noank, Conn. Near New London, Caleb Haley, Proprietor.”
Lou Allyn October 2012

THREE years ago a friend of mine, doing business in Fulton Market, N. Y., extended to me an invitation to visit his Summer home near Noank, New London Co., Conn. Time dragged on, the visit still in prospective, until the present Fall; when a letter arrived announcing the fact of his being at Noank for a few weeks recuperation, and a suggestion that the time was ripe for the fulfillment of my visit. It *did* seem that now, if ever, the time *had* arrived; consequently one Friday afternoon about the last of October found me on board a West Shore train en route for my destination, reaching there about 7 A. M. By some means Mr. H—, who had driven his niece to the Depot to take train East for Boston, missed me, and I walked to the Farm about a mile distant, approaching which I met my friend driving to the village to see if he could find me.

Mrs. H—, having been indisposed the preceding clay, was sitting down to a late breakfast, which I was just in time, after due introductions, to join her in discussing.

If there is any one thing in which my friend delights more than another, it is the work of improvement which he is carrying forward at Haley Farm, Long Point; so breakfast dispatched we, of course, drove at once to the locality of the improvement now going forward.

It may be mentioned here, that the land in this vicinity and for miles in all direction is covered with boulders, boulders large and boulders small, sometimes ledges, but boulders in *all* shapes, boulders in *all* positions, boulders *on* boulders—everywhere. The first settlers simply removed or cleared the smaller rocks, such as a horse could easily drag out of the way, leaving hundreds of heavier ones half embedded in the soil in all directions. Thus thousands upon thousands of acres of splendid soil have been fit for naught but cattle runs of natural pasturage. To clear such land of everything to

obstruct the free running of a plow, is a herculean task and it is this wrestling with the stern face of nature, that I found to be the delight of my host. A forenoon spent in watching *and* assisting in the operations, found me deeply interested. A device called a "Stone-puller" was quite *fetching*, and was the invention of a near-by resident whom I was disappointed to learn had never realized much out of it, for without it, such operations as are here going forward, would be prohibited by the question of cost. Mr. H— has 428 acres of just such land as described; skirting the shores of L. I. Sound with deep coves running up on either side of his property; forming between them, Long Point, which is all included in the Haley Farm, with the exception of a tract on the extreme point, which is owned by parties who started to boom it for Summer cottage purposes, but came to a dead-lock with the town authorities regarding approaches, and who should bear their cost.

A description of the boulder-wall building may be interesting. A lot having been chosen for clearance, and direction of proposed walls staked out, all rocks within its area, are first drilled to admit the hooks of the hoisting apparatus.

This work is done in Winter by Messrs. Latham and Slater, two neighbors employed by Mr. H—, who also run the stone-puller. The cost of drilling last Winter was \$72. In the Spring, frost being out and ground settled, the stone-puller (drawn by an immense pair of oxen raised on the place) and looking like the semi-circular truss of a bridge over a country creek—on wheels, proceeds to lift every stone out of its bed by means of time hoisting tackle, which hangs from the centre of the truss just mentioned, behind, being a winch, to which the rope is led for hoisting. Every stone is dropped alongside the hole it came out of, awaiting its turn to be selected when the work of building the wall commences in earnest. Sometimes a rock proves to be larger underground than it appeared on the surface and proves too heavy for removal. In this case blasting is resorted to; powder being used in preference to dynamite, as not being liable to splinter, but merely to crack the stone under treatment. These preparatory arrangements being complete, the line of the proposed wall is trenched 3 feet deep and 4 feet wide, the soil so excavated being utilized to fill in the great gaping holes in the ground from which the boulders have been hoisted.

The trench is then filled in with smaller rocks and broken pieces, and large ones, for that matter, so, however, that they do not come above the level of the ground; thus forming a good foundation and drain at the same time. Fine stone is laid over all, causing the site of the proposed wall to appear like a newly macadamized road, and easy for the oxen to walk over, which they have to do with every stone laid. The stone-puller is now again brought into use and the foreman of the work selects the first rock, which is hoisted just clear of the ground and hauled to the commencement of the wall, where it is deposited on the prepared foundation. This is called a "bottom," and

the “bottoms” are usually from 1 to 3 tons each. When a second bottom has been laid, the stone-puller fetches lighter stones, from 1/2 ton to 2 tons each, for the top of wall. The machine is laid at right-angles to the wall, the stone hoisted as high as the pulley admits, the oxen swerved in a couple of steps, and the stone swings into its position and is lowered to its bearings more handily, and with less fuss and talk, than I have ever seen anything of the same weight moved and placed before. I found that my host was quite at home in directing a gang of men and a past grand in the art of boulder-wall construction. The bottoms” are always a couple in advance of the top part and no more, all through otherwise the work of getting on the heavy top stones would be up-hill indeed. Hands follow the stone-puller to chock the wall before the great stones settle, that is, to fill tip all crevices, great or small, with suitable stones. Quite considerable judgment and forethought are requisite in the selection and placing of the rocks, both in building and chocking, to make a neat piece of work.

Some idea of the immense amount of work involved may be had from the fact that the present owner has been in possession for 30 years, and he has annually done more or less of this wall structure and lie certainly has enough in prospective to last an equal period. But lie has many fine loamy fertile fields, which lie has wrung from the grasp of forbidding nature in this manner.

On the farm he usually has about 45 cows, 25 head of other cattle, 18 horses, two working oxen, swine, etc.

After dinner the Surrey was brought round and Mrs. H— and myself were driven over to Mystic, to see the points of historical interest en route; our objective point being to pay a visit to Capt. Williams, a veteran sea-captain of 84 years, who made the fastest passage to California on record in the ship “Andrew Jackson” in his day. He came from England as a boy and, but for a slight cold lately contracted, is hale, hearty and entertaining. As the writer had seen quite a little sea service himself, it was naturally pleasant to meet him.

The town of Mystic is a characteristic New England place, situated on both sides of the Mystic river. In the palmy days of wooden shipping many vessels were built and hailed from here.

It has a silk factory up the river aways. On the way over, on Fort Hill, above Long Point, we came to the Bronze statue of Captain Mason, that celebrated Indian fighter, who on this spot utterly defeated the redskins and secured peace and safety to the Colonists for many years thereafter. It stands on high ground, commanding a fine view of the coast. Thus the writer found himself in the heart of an historic as well as a picturesque country.

The contrast,—standing face to face with Mason and his handful of settlers, in

memory as it were, and the present vast changes, not to mention possible prospective ones, which have come within measurable distance of possibility as well as probability, was fairly startling. The "Fish-town Cemetery" is another point of interest; being the resting-place of generations of Fish's, who were among the first families to settle the district. These family cemeteries are very frequent, in fact every family in earlier times had their own, and much of historic and colonial interest has been derived from them especially pertaining to the resting places of revolutionary heroes.

Sunday morning, rising early, a stroll took me through an orchard, situated on rising ground at the back, and to the north of the homestead, which ended in a steep pile of rocks of considerable elevation. Making for these I passed three sows, each with a family, who seemed half inclined to resent an early morning intrusion into their domain. but seeing that I was minding my own business, they apparently concluded to do the same. The topmost rock being gained, a fine view unfolded itself looking seaward. Three miles off in the Sound lay Fisher's Island, nine miles long and one-half to one mile wide. Extensive brickyards are here situated, and here during the war of 1812 the British fleet, under Commander Hardy of Nelson fame, used to rendezvous and anchor. Though so close to the Connecticut coast it is included with Long Island in New York State. North Dumpling Lightship is inside the Island to the Eastward, and across the Bay are visible the buildings of Watch Hill, about 8 miles distant by water, also Westerly, R. I., in same direction, while out at sea, beyond, still looking eastward, could be seen Block Island, too distant to appear more than a blue cloudy mass rising out of the water. Beyond Fisher's Island, southward could be traced, somewhat faintly, the outlines of Long Island, Gardiner's island, and Montauk Point. To the westward can be seen Gull Island, Race Rock, Bartlett's Reef Lightship; while bounding the view in this direction lies Eastern Point, forming one side of the entrance to the famed Thames River and New London Harbor.

Just turning to descend from my perch I unfortunately startled a little porker, which had strayed near to me. It went off squealing at a great rate, and instantly the three old lady pigs advanced to the foot of my rock on the double quick, giving utterances to deep guttural grunts, that did not at all resemble Tuscan as I have 'heard it spoken," but quite suggestive of Tusk, nevertheless. However, seeing me if anything still more engrossed in the contemplation of my own affairs, they probably concluded I was nothing but a harmless human crank, and paid no more attention to me. At the foot of the ledge of rocks, above mentioned, on descending I stumbled across the burying-ground of the Chester Family, the former owners of the present Haley Farm. This discovery had a consuming interest for me, and I greedily devoured the inscriptions on the headstones, which bore dates previous to Revolutionary days.

Thomas Starr Chester, Esq., his wife, Richard Starr Chester, Esq., and children who had died young, with simple and appropriate verses for each, setting forth the virtues of deceased. On mentioning my discovery at breakfast, I was somewhat disappointed to learn that the bodies had been long since removed, presumably to the Ledyard Cemetery at Groton.

While eating breakfast, rain which had threatened all the previous day, began to fall and continued till after dinner. I learned that the temperature here in Summer is peculiarly moderate; the temperature being mostly 10 to 15 degrees lower than in New York City, while seldom, indeed, are they without a pleasant breeze from Fisher's Island, Race Point to the southwest, or from the eastward in the direction of Block Island and the open sea.

In the afternoon, the rain having partially ceased, Mr. H— decided to make his customary Sunday visit to his mother at Centre Groton; a remarkable old lady of 89. The drive over was particularly interesting to the writer, the road running for two miles of it through woods thickly strewn with boulders and steel) ledges of rock, often covered with ferns and moss and lichen. In Summer such lovely shady drives must be desirable and delightful in the extreme, for it seemed to be thickly covered with trees for miles around, and I was informed it ran for miles back before cleared country could be found again, but hereabouts it seems, poetically speaking, to reach down to kiss the sea, and ever and anon we would pass a babbling brook taking its way among interminable boulders and loudly protesting, as it went, against so many and rude obstructions in its path, to the bosom of its mother—the Ocean.

Centre Groton consisted of a few houses on a cross-road and proved to be both historical and interesting. It is situated on the main post-road between New York and Boston, and in ante-railroad times was the scene of daily bustle and traffic; in fact the house to which our visit was directed had been a hotel in those days, while the house opposite, occupied by the Daboll family of historic note, had also served in that capacity. On the opposite diagonal corner I was shown the oldest frame house now standing in Connecticut—a typical New England homestead of the olden type, with great square chimney in the centre, interesting as being the house from which Whitfield, the great minister of the Gospel, preached to a large crowd, assembled in the garden fronting the house, somewhere about the year 1740, I believe. The Daboll homestead was equally interesting, as being the spot where for 120 years the New England Almanac and Farmer's Friend had been printed and published by the Daboll family, who for generations were noted for mathematical and astronomical ability. In 1895 another generation of this respected and able family passed away in the person of David A. Daboll, A. M., at 82 years, to whom for over 30 years the preparation of the

Almanac had been a labor of love. It was here in this interesting hamlet that a revelation began to unfold itself, and I began to understand, as never before, some of the underlying causes for the solidity, resolution and earnestness of the New England character. But I had not yet seen all this teeming neighborhood had to present for my enlightenment.

At dusk we returned home over Candlewood Hill (more of the wilderness country), so called from having been so often on fire, Mr. H— said, while Mrs. H— thought its name was referable to certain luminous phosphoric lights to be seen at times proceeding from the trunks of certain of the trees.—” You pays your money and you takes your choice.” When our nimble team of roadsters brought us to the heights over Long Point, the evening being clear, we paused to count the lights and identify them separately, there being 12 lighthouses and lightships visible from that position.

The following morning, being Monday, I took another stroll before breakfast down towards the point where the freshening breeze was urging the sea to turbulency, a role it seems ever too ready to play, and as I stood watching the billows dashing themselves into spray on the rocks and boulders so plentifully distributed along the shore, or rolling in endless phalanx upon the short stretches of silvery white sand beach, I fell to wondering what *good* luck—or *bad* luck—had kept such beautiful and diversified foreshores, in this age of improvement, so completely wedded to the past, in fact, much as it might have appeared in revolutionary days, except, indeed, as the Shore Line to Boston runs right through it, and as I wondered the breeze seemed to moan more and more sadly among rocks until I fell into abstraction and presently imagined that old Ventosus was answering my mental queries. No—o—o—o—o—o— (with rising inflexion) Auch— (climax)—ors (with falling inflexion) in that melancholy voice with which he sometimes calls to us down the chimney ;—on a stormy Winter’s night. “No anchors!” Abstracted as I was, this seemed to puzzle me the more, and the more I puzzled, the louder and sadder Ventosus seemed to repeat: No—o—o—o—o—o— Auch—o—o—o—o—rs.

“Ventosus you’re only fooling,” I almost ejaculated. “No anchors,” indeed! “Too many anchors, mooring the spot to the past would be more likely.” “No—o—o—o—o—o— Anch—o—o—o—o—rs” again, with a shriek and extra vehemence that took my hat off and set me running to save my head-gear and myself from an involuntary bath on that first November day. A lucky grab saved us from such unpleasant possibilities; and as I replaced it with a vigorous pull down over my ears the true meaning of Ventosus flashed on me—It was the fault of the Noankers *themselves* that their neighborhood was not in the front rank of Sea Shore Mecca’s. For myself I should be contented with the present state of affairs for all time, and feel that I am

heartily in accord with the dwellers of Noank, if they are really wedded to the present conditions, for I would choose to end my days amid just such surroundings. "Far from the maddening crowd," for real rest, relaxation, and sea-shore enjoyments, it is about my personal ideal.

Immediately after breakfast Mr. H— ordered out his buggy and invited me to drive with him to Noank for his mail, and to afford me an opportunity to inspect the shipyard at that point—about the one industry of the place, and important enough, at busy times of the year, to employ 450 hands. Many sailing craft used to be built here, but the work is now largely confined to building steamboats, tugs, railroad floats, and repairing of all kinds. I was introduced to Mr. Robert Palmer, the proprietor of the yard, a fine and able man of unassuming manner, who has done a world of good for his town and is beloved and respected by all.

On our return to the Farm we proceeded to the work of wall-building—that being always in order, and in which I found myself becoming more and more interested, and am thinking there must be something contagious about it. In this connection may be mentioned a sally Mrs. H— made on our visit to Centre Groton, on Sunday. Of course inquiries were made as to how the wall was progressing and I was descanting on the advantages of such a useful hobby, when Mrs. H— said, with an appropriate sigh, "That she was quite reconciled to Mr. H's pre-occupation with the wall-building. *As long as it didn't strike in.*" At this we all had a pleasant laugh, in which the elder Mrs. Haley joined as heartily as any of us.

Dinner being over and the weather fine and breezy, albeit a little chilly, Mr. H— arranged for Mrs. H—, a young lady visiting at the house for a few days, and myself to drive to Eastern Point, Groton, and to take in generally everything of historic or other interest.

We drove to the village of Pequonnoc, its name suggestive of Indian massacres and legends on and around Eastern Point (the Summer home portion of Groton) to the town proper, an interesting spot on the shores of the historic Thames River, nearly opposite New London. The driver having purchased some needed articles at the store we proceeded to Mother Baily's homestead. Here is the story of this woman of national celebrity.

Anna Warner, aged 23, was the adopted daughter of her uncle Edward Mills, who resided 3 miles east of Groton, near Candlewood Hill, before mentioned. On the morning of the massacre at Fort Griswold her uncle proceeded on signal, like so many other unfortunates to the defence of the fort.

The day after the battle, having had no news meantime, Anna went alone on foot to fort, found her uncle wounded and dying, moaning for his wife and children. She

hastened home, saddled the horse, put the wife and oldest child upon it, took the youngest child in her own arms and went with them to the dying father. She placed the baby in his arms, thus gratifying his last wish. After peace was declared she married Elijah Baily, subsequently postmaster of Groton for 40 years. It was here that the incident that made her famous took place. Decatur and his fleet were closely blockaded by Commodore Hardy, of Trafalgar fame, in full view of Fisher's Island. The Americans ran short of gun wadding and boats were ashore lacking for suitable material. All household goods, it appears, had been sent off to places of safety for fear of attack by the hostile fleet. Mrs. B—, coming out of her house, and being acquainted with the state of affairs, loosened the strings of her petticoat, let it drop, and picking it up handed it to the officer in quest of material. This became noised abroad and the name of Mother Baily became a household word. Two or three Presidents visited her here, and her house was the Mecca of numerous prominent men. Undoubtedly this Connecticut Wilderness, however, forbidding and unpromising in other respects, was the ideal soil, on which to raise resolute men and women—dangerous people to fool with, and George of England must have been three times a fool, as well as the third of his name, to attempt to curtail the liberty of, and to coerce a people, who for a hundred and twenty-five years had constantly been engaged in fights with Indians and French, and who had frequently to exchange the plough for a musket and always to have one at hand.

Two or three generations of this kind of training had made self-reliance a common, nay, universal trait among them. Had the British beaten their armies entirely out of the field, it is a question whether this people would ever have been subdued.

And now we were mounting the hill to the Fort—Fort Griswold! a steep ascent, indeed. We are on the top of the hill now and alongside a tall granite column, commemorative of the heroes who fell or were engaged in the battle.

A picturesque cottage of stone stands close to the column, built by the daughters of the revolution, where relics are kept, but it is not these that absorb my attention; but the old fort itself, grass grown and not at all formidable looking as Fortresses go now, and I get out of the carriage; the ladies waiting for me, and proceed into the interior alone—the only appropriate way I reflected, to make a visit of this nature, as I stepped into the narrow deathtrap, where 82 resolute men, with tender and affectionate sides to their natures, were butchered in cold blood and the honor of England received an enduring stab, which like Macbeth's blood, marks "Will not out."

I fain must hope, as of English birth myself, that the massacre was the outcome—more of one of those misunderstandings which sometimes in the heat and broil of battle, occur rather than a bloodcurdling and blood-thirsty desire for a

revengeful carnival of death. Better for the sake of our common lineage that we should all endeavor to think so. Here, on this spot, Col. Ledyard fell—mechanically I'm reading the inscription, for my thoughts are turned back to the fatal day—can I of all people be getting superstitious, impossible, yet I've a distinct feeling of an invisible presence at my elbow, or all around me, if you will. I stand there picturing to myself the three Chester brothers, hastening from Long Point; the Dabolls and others from Croton Centre, the Averys from Pequonnoc, and a hundred and more from every farm and homestead, the Mills, the Griswolds, the Fish's, they are all hasten by paths, through ravines, short cuts, all ways in fact, to the Fort on the hill—hastening in the delivery of a new nation from the womb of—for the time being at least—an unnatural parent. They arrive by ones, by twos, by threes. They are all within the Fort—the news of their respective homes and neighborhoods is being exchanged—the approach of the enemy is announced—the attack commences—the first assault takes place—the next—then the final, with the British leaping into the enclosure. Col. Ledyard is now surrendering to Col. Beckwith, and I - well, I stand just ready to seize the latter as he proceeds to run Col. Ledyard thro' with the sword he had that moment surrendered, sternly exclaiming as I proceed to do so. "Is this the work of an English Officer?" when the young man, who drives the carriage, jumps down into the enclosure, and announces that "The ladies are getting chilly." Strange aberration, if you will, but the conviction has since forced itself upon me, that I had been in spiritual companionship *with*, and had been converted to clearer understanding of—The spirit of '76.

This was not the only conversion; for I was converted to the method of my host Mr. H for the extraction of health and happiness from the rocks and boulders of Long Point - stone-puller and all, and I am more than ever sure that his method is *better* than any nostrum ever invented; as an antidote to the exactions and strain of a trying city business.

The kindly interest of the ladies, the unpretending way in which I was made perfectly at home, the thoroughness with which they determined I should see everything the neighborhood afforded of historic or other interest—particularly the hospitality of Mrs. H—, who sacrificed her time and comfort for me—to whom she had been quite a stranger, converted me, hopelessly, to the cause of the ladies of Connecticut in general, and Long Point in particular.

The audacity of Mr. H—'s niece, from Akron, Ohio, who when I innocently enough informed her that the botanical name of the "Boston," or "Fountain" fern was *Nephrolepis Exaltata*, playfully put her head over and said, "Let me look at your tongue,"—I have not yet forgotten.

On my return home I informed my wife, who is a Catholic, that I had been converted three times during a visit of as many days! She gave an incredulous toss of the head and exclaimed, "What nonsense ! how could that be? You must know that any

kind of conversion that don't include the true faith with it, is not popular—it is something like shaking a red rag at a bull. But she was quite mollified on learning the nature of my conversions—except perhaps *that* one in regard to the ladies—when I observed *perhaps* a *slight* toss of the head.

October, 1898.

WALTER HIL