

The Totoket Historical Society, Inc.

The Collected Articles

of

A. Laretta Plumley

Transcribed

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Introduction:

A. Laretta Plumley, born in Massachusetts in 1895, was a former teacher and had taught in several one-room schoolhouses in New Haven and Middlesex Counties. She was also an author and lecturer on Connecticut history and legends. She wrote a series of articles for the New Haven Register describing little known places of interest in the State of Connecticut. These articles date from 1933 and possibly earlier to at least 1940.

She was appointed Postmistress of The Clintonville, North Haven Post Office in July 1942 and served in that capacity until the office was discontinued in 1954. Ms Plumley was also the librarian at the Northford Library in 1943.

In the 1940 Federal Census she listed her occupation as “playwriter and authoress.” She had written a play produced for the 1935 Connecticut Tercentenary Celebration in Northford.

Not all of the articles written by Ms Plumley are available in the archives of the Totoket Historical Society.

Theodore Groom

Quaint Old Stories Woven in Woof Of Northford's History

Picturesque Village, Once Named "Paug" Has Furnished Many Distinguished Men to Community... Ancient Taverns and School Buildings Still Standing

By A. Loretta Plumley

Those who make their first visit to the village of Northford are impressed by the scenic beauty of the place. Enclosed on all sides by low mountain ranges, the setting is perfect for the well-kept homes of the residents. The Valley still retains much of the quaintness of the days of yore and the colonial atmosphere lost in so many of the rural districts of Connecticut.

This section was first known by the name of "Paug" this being the name called in the district by the Indians who lived in Farm River Valley. After the land was purchased from members of the Mattabeseck and Mohican tribes the first white settlers called the place Salem, meaning peace, a name that was most fitting to the location. When the present designation "Northford" was taken cannot be determined and the reason for the name is most vague, the only conclusion being that a river, once a fair sized stream, although now only a tiny brook, had to be forded, when the journey was made to and from North Branford and it is presumed that the name is a shortened word taken from the phrase "north of the ford." No record can be found when the appellations Salem was replaced by Northford but from public records under the date of December 9, 1751, is found the first occurrence of the name by which the parish has since been known.

Old School System

Soon after the district was organized arrangements were made for schools and although the residents were obliged to receive their secondary and college education out of town a deep interest was taken in the higher branches of learning and many sons and daughters of the parish traveled elsewhere to acquire an education in college and professional schools.

There has always been a large proportion of district and high school teachers who have taught at home and abroad. During the first years of the settlement the town comprised one school district but in the 19th century the village was divided into several districts. The teacher selected received a very meager salary, some as low as one dollar a week and "boarded around." Two terms of school were kept during the year, a Summer term and a Winter term. The Summer term was from April through August and was usually taught

by a young woman of the town and attended by the smaller boys and girls of the village. The winter term was in charge of a man when the older boys and girls of the community receive their education. The schoolhouses were one room structures, with seats and desks facing the outer walls. The woodstove was in the center of the room and close by was the master's desk somewhat elevated on a small platform, so that he could look down on his charges.

Brooks Academy

Many times the pastors of the village gave instructions in the higher branches of learning and help to prepare the boys and girls of the town for secondary school. There was one private school in Northford conducted by William Brooks. He was an excellent teacher and taught a few of the advanced subjects which were not available in the district schools. Pupils who could not go away to school often took a finishing course in Brooks's Academy.

Few parishes in Connecticut and perhaps none of equal population have given to the world so large a number of liberally educated men and woman, so goodly a number of emigrant sons who have served their generations in the various fields of labor.

Up to the year 1892, 39 sons of Northford represented the parish in the three leading professions namely law, medicine and the ministry. Those who followed the legal profession were Noah Linsley, Douglas Fowler, George Hoadley and Gustave Elliott. Diplomas from medical schools were held by doctors Malachi Foote, William Foote, Samuel Frisbie, Frederick Auger, Stephen Todd, Jehiel Hoadley, August Williams, Joseph Foote, Jared Linsley, Anson Foote, Elizur Beach, Benjamin F. Harrison, D. A. Tyler, Benjamin Fowler and John Linsley. Those who entered the ministry were Rev.'s Medad Rogers, Lemuel Tyler, Jonathan Maltby, L. Ives Hoadley, Isaac Maltby, Oliver D. Cooke, Eli Maltby, Benjamin S. J. Page, Harvey Linsley. L. S. Hough and Stephen C Loper. In addition to the above list Mrs. Epaphas Chapman and Mrs. Dwight Baldwin were missionaries, the first among the Indians and the other to the Sandwich Islands. Since that date many others have been trained in like in other professions. Miss Mary Foote, one of the first women to be admitted to the Connecticut Bar, was a daughter of Northford and received her preliminary education in the "Little Red School House" of Northford. Ranking high among those who specialize in teaching is Dr. Clara Smith, Dean of the Mathematics Department of Wellesley College. Others who have been successful in their chosen professions and have all honored Northford by Edward Maltby, engineer of note; Noah Lindsley, founder of the first free school in a slave state; Catherine Maltby Blaisedell, a recent teacher in Peking China; Rev. Morris Alling, late secretary of the Federation of Churches of Connecticut and instrumental in building the community church at Connecticut State College at Storrs, and Miss Grace Foote who for many years was the secretary to a member of the faculty in the University of Rochester. It has been said that, "the village exhibits a scholastic appearance."

Establish Own Church

The Village of Northford was made up of a group of God fearing people who for several years after the settlement journeyed each Sabbath Day to N. Branford Center for worship. During the winter months it was almost impossible to make this journey because of the heavy snows and poor roads. In 1734 the General Court of Connecticut granted the

people of the village the right to have a separate worship during the months of December, January, February, and March annually. Five years later the "Ecclesiastical Society" was formed and in 1745 the Northford Congregational Church was organized and a building was erected.

The first edifice was built without a steeple but this appendage was added in 1796. The meetinghouse was used for 100 years. At the end of that time the building became ill adapted to the use of the congregation and a second structure was built on the site. The first church was torn down and parts of the building were distributed among the church members. The doors of this first church of Northford are still in existence, being used as doors on a local barn. The second church building was made of stone and stood until destroyed by fire 28 years ago. The present church was erected in 1906.

The Episcopal Society of Northford was founded in 1763 and directed their first house of worship on Maple Avenue, near the present site of the Northford community house. This was replaced by the present church building which stands on a hill off the Middletown Turnpike, in 1845.

The first pastor of the Congregational Church was Rev. Warham Williams who served the parish for nearly 40 years. This pastor was ordained on June 13, 1750. According to the customs of the New England churches of that time a day of fasting and prayer was appointed for this occasion and pastors from nearby communities were invited to preach. Three local church members were appointed to "keep folks out of the building" on that day. Rev. Williams was a graduate of Yale College and shortly after his graduation was elected a tutor. He later served as a fellow, from the time of his early ministry to his death.

Rev. Williams was followed by Rev. Matthew Noyes who remained pastor of the church for 44 years. He too was a fellow of Yale College, a very brilliant man and known throughout Connecticut as "one of the wealthiest clergymen in the state" during his lifetime.

Beloved Pastor

Rev. Noyes was a great lover of nature and often would go out into the woods and fields to write his sermons while at work he would carve in stone. One of those stones was located when a new road bed was being constructed through Northford. The church people had it moved to the churchyard and erected to his memory the inscription on the stone cut by Rev. Noyes was MN – 1791.

Rev. Andrew Law first introduced the study of church music in the village during his residence here and since the middle of the 19th century those he taught and their descendants have been employed at home and abroad teaching. Among the teachers most noted along those lines were Rev. Lemuel Tyler, Dr. Augustus Williams, Gen. Isaac Maltby, Levi Fowler, Salmon Fowler and Benjamin Johnson. In more recent years noted music teachers include Miss Mary Maltby who was supervisor of music in the schools of Brooklyn, New York, and Mrs. Grace Donovan, a singer and teacher of voice now in

New Haven. There has always been a little band of vocal and instrumental teachers in the village.

1812 Highway Built

In 1812 the Turnpike Company was organized by several individuals in and about New Haven and a highway was built from New Haven to Middletown through the village. Following the construction of this improved roadway a stagecoach route was run from Hartford to New Haven along the road with toll gates, where Sunrise Tavern now stands, another 4 miles from there in the home of Amos Harrison, and a third in Durham Center. Sums of money were collected from all passed along the highway and those taxes were used to keep the roadbed in good condition and to repay the company for their investments. John Todd was the keeper of the gate of the Sunrise Tavern and it is said he slept with one eye open for he never missed a fare. An amusing story is told of the two Chapman sisters who once passed his station. Mr. Todd swung back the gate and allowed them to pass through. Stopping, they asked the price of the toll "Well," said Mr. Todd "it is a shilling for a man and a horse."

"Go on Betsy," said Ms. Angie Chapman, "We're two girls in a mare." And hitting the beast with a slap with the whip they trotted on their way. However, we are told Mr. Todd collected full fare when they return home.

Where the Wallingford Road branches from Middletown Turnpike there are three old-fashioned houses which were inns during the day of the stagecoaches. This corner is known as Three Tavern Corner. Here were stables for 60 horses and stage drivers changed their steeds in each direction. One dark night when the coach was coming through from Hartford to New Haven, a lady got a board in Durham. The only passenger in the coach at the time was a traveling man noted for his "winning ways." By the time the stagecoach had reached Three Taverns Corner in Northford this gentleman and the lady passenger were very chummy. The driver stopped here to change his horses. The stable boy from the inn came out to assist and raising his lantern to look inside the coach, the light fell upon the face of the lady, which was resting most comfortably on the shoulder of the gentleman, and it was black. The man left the coach and traveled the rest of the way to New Haven on the seat with the driver. He never again passed through Northford.

Houses Painted Red

The first houses in Northford were painted red or were left a natural color and soon turned gray from exposure to the weather. During the middle part of the 19th century, three 2 1/2 story frame buildings were erected in the northeastern in part of Northford by Henry Eliot, Gustave Eliot and Charles Fowler, and these buildings were painted white this was the first white paint to be brought into the village and the section was called White Hollow, a name still used to designate this part of the town. For many years a lime kiln was operated by the Eliots in White Hollow and today they may still be seen in the ruins of the place although great trees have grown up through the kiln.

During the "gold rush" to California Charles Fowler and his family packed all their worldly goods in a covered wagon and left for the West Coast. They never returned to Northford.

Bands of Gypsies often strayed through the village. One dark, cold night in early fall of the year 1850, a local housewife answered a knock at her door. She found standing on her stoop a little girl about 12 years of age. A voice from out of the darkness said, "Kind lady, take this little one. Treat her as your own. I will promise to provide for her."

Upon questioning the child she told of being stolen by a band of Gypsies when she was very small and taken to their encampment where she was compelled to work hard for them. This night a man had entered the camp and seeing that she was ill treated had taken her away. She grew into a beautiful woman and was a blessing to her foster parents. Each year money was received to provide for her care but who her benefactor was, has never been known.

Old-Time Amusements

Children and youths today with their many amusements and means of entertainment find it hard to believe that the sports of former years could bring such fond memories to older people. Skating, coasting, candy pulls, husking bees in the fall, barn dances, spelling matches, an occasional surprise party and the singing school concerts made up the list of activities which brought pleasure and recreation to the villagers. Sunday was a "holy day" and following the long church services in the morning a very quiet afternoon was spent at home. There are still many in the village will recall these pleasures of their younger days. A great joy remembered by one is "riding the logs to the saw," when she was a tiny tot she would visit her grandfather's sawmill and with an uncle to watch her would sit on the great logs as they were slowly carried on the saw table toward the great perpendicular saw which would cut them into lumber. Just before the part of the log she was sitting on reach the sharp teeth she was rescued by her uncle. Today she tells the story and still thrills in the joys of the past.

Custom-made garments were unknown in the village of Northford during the 19th century. At this time the families employed shoemakers, dress makers and tailors to come into the house and cloth the family once a year. Dress shoes were made to match the ladies gowns from cloth materials with leather soles. Each man in the family had a pair of high leather boots made for him when he became 21 and these boots often lasted a lifetime. When the girls of the family reach the age of 16 the maternal grandmother always presented them a black silk dress "of the very latest fashion." Many of these gowns have been handed down to the present generation and are carefully kept as heirlooms.

Village Characters

When the village was first settled many of the families owned slaves. There was never any trading of slaves in the village and before the Revolutionary war "Dick Negro," one of the last black men to be enslaved, was freed by his master and given a plot of land on Totoket Mountain for a farm and a home. The "Dick Lot" is one of the scenic places of the village and although the house has tumbled in ruins the old cellar hole marks the dwelling place of the old colored man. A tombstone in the old Northford Cemetery marks his last resting place with these words engraved upon it: "Richard, a gentleman of color."

John Peter Johnson lived in a little house in the woods all by himself. He was a miserly sort of creature and vowed that he would never leave a bit of his goods to anyone on earth after he passed away. One day he was taken dreadfully ill and was sure he was about to die. Gathering his belongings into his dwelling he set fire to the buildings and perished in the flames.

It is interesting to know that when the white men bought land from the Indians in this section they were allowed all the property which they could cut a path around from dawn to sunset, for a small trinket. This path must be wide enough for a person to walk through. One farm bought in this way was the Roger Homestead land on Middletown Turnpike. On this place were born five generations and a member of the last family still lives on the property. This is the only place in Northford which has remained in the family of the descendants of those who first bought the property from the Indians.

Child Murdered

The one sad tale of the village is the gruesome murder of little Emily Cooper. This little girl lived with her grandma and her uncle Leander on Foote Hill. The last day of the summer school in August 1849, she started over the hill to school carrying her little lunch box and a bouquet of flowers as a parting gift for her teacher. The summer insects chirped gaily in the grasses by the road side and the tiny yellow canaries and broken sparrow sang joyfully in the treetops. She was very happy this morning and as she skipped along she sang a song in keeping with the birds. Her grandmother sat on the porch and watched the little one on her way. When Emily reached the top of the hill she turned and waved her hand to her grandmother and then ran out of sight.

She had gone but a short distance when she met her uncle. He was an ugly looking creature but had always been kind to his little niece so when he told her about a pretty rare flower and that he would show her where it grew, she followed him fearlessly into the woods. Here he murdered her. Later returning to his home he tried to murder his mother. Her cries for help attracted a group of men who were building a stone wall about the old Northford Cemetery. They gave aid to the woman but she died in a few hours from her injuries. When it was discovered that Emily had not arrived at school that morning a search was made for her and they found her in the woods still holding in one hand her lunch box and in the other her bouquet of flowers. Several hours later the man was found.

He tried to commit suicide and was suffering from loss of blood. However, he recovered and was kept for a year in New Haven jail, later being hung for the murder. During his days of confinement he repented of his sins. He was buried among the slaves in Potter's Field of the Old Northford Cemetery and a white marble slab with the following epitaph marks his resting place: "This is a faithful notice, worthy of all exception. Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Famous Blizzard

The noted Connecticut blizzard of 1888 was kind to the village of Northford and although the residents were snowed in for several days and all activities in the village were obliged to cease no great damage was done and no one died in the storm

Northford also escaped a visit from the deadly tornado of August 1878 although felt the effects of the great gale to some extent. However, during the storm it is reported by local authorities that fish were blown from the Community Lake into the waters of Paug Pond, a distance of 7 miles.

Many changes have come to the village since the first whiteman build his home in this region and the Indians roamed the Valley. Modernity has captured the town and the district has adopted the improvements and changes of the times in a most gracious manner. However this setting of the village is unchanged and many of the first dwellings of the town still stand in their original home lots, erect and sturdy, silent witnesses of the generations who have steadily passed their doors and monuments of those who once lived here and made the valley an outstanding community in Connecticut.

Mysterious Caverns Abound On Totoket Mountain Range

Northford Folk Tell Of Experiences of Hiker Who Penetrated “Cave Of Death”

By A. Laretta Plumley

Motorists travelling along the Turnpike from New Haven to Middletown cannot help but admire the range of mountains lying to their right as they enter and pass through the village of Northford. In early Spring the beautiful light greens and pale yellow of the foliage on the mountain trees are a lovely sight. When Dame Nature bedecks those same trees in the reds, golds, Autumn browns and deep yellows following the first frost no prettier scene can be found in Connecticut. And when bleak winter has robbed the trees of their leaves and the snow capped hills stand forth in their rugged beauty still to be admired.

The range of mountains received its name from an Indian brave. After the white men settled the Farm River Valley, many of the Indians attempted to learn the English language. Tomket was very proud of his progress. One day while roaming the mountain he injured his toe. Limping to the home of one of the settlers he displayed his injury, then pointing toward the hilltop he said “to-to-ket.” From that time on the mountain range has been called Totoket. The many peaks of the range have been designated by the names Great Hill, Middle Hill, Red Hill, Mt. Pisgah and Bluff Head, rich in natural deposits, places of scenic beauty and full of romantic tales as weird and fantastic as the fairy fables of Ireland.

Old Salt Box Houses

During the years of the early settlements of this district wild animals made their homes in the caves and under the ledges of the hillsides. Many of the early dwellings were built after a design known as the “salt box” house. These structures had eaves with long flat roofs. Stories are told that on cold winter evenings wolves would come down from the mountain sides and run howling up and down on the eave roofs causing great terror to those who lived within these houses. Bears, panthers and wildcats also lived on the mountain as late as the middle of the nineteenth century and were hunted by the residents of the village who received a valuable bounty for each animal killed as well as the right to the skins. These were made into carriage and sleigh robes, a few of which are still in the possession of the descendants of the early settlers.

At the top of Great Hill is a large treacherous stretch of boggy land known as Drowning Swamp. When the Indians roamed the area of New Haven County this section of the mountain was used as a lookout post. During the Indian Wars, the enemy strangers in this part of the country gained a camping site on top of this peak. Braves from the Bare Plain Tribe were sent to capture them. These Redskins climbed the mountain south of the swampland. The enemy advanced to meet them and being unfamiliar with the

region plunged into the swamp and many were drowned in the deep waterholes or perished in the quick sands. Thus the swamp received its name.

Ancient Mine Shaft

Near this swamp so hidden that no one has been able to find it since the days of the Revolution, is a lead mine. The mine was the property of the Indians who had marked its location by placing a pair of Elk Horns on a tree close by. During the Revolutionary War lead was taken from the mine and made into bullets by the women of Northford...who helped in this way to provide ammunition for their men who were fighting with Colonel William Douglas in Washington's Army. The Indians became frightened when they discovered what the white settlers were doing and removed the Elk Horns. Many times since then a search has been made for the old lead mine but it has never been found.

About 1840 Willis Tucker had a blacksmith shop at the foot of Mt. Pisgah. One day two boys were exploring this mountain peak when they found some pieces of black shiny rock. This looked like coal and they brought some of it down to the blacksmith's shop. For several days Mr. Tucker burned the substance in his forge and at last being sure that it was coal he reported the discovery. Soon the Northford Coal Company was organized and the members offered shares for sale. However since they were anxious to have this company made up of only Northford residents the project failed and the mine was forgotten. Twenty years later two men reported that they had again found the mine. This was late one afternoon just as the sun was setting and when they returned early the next morning they were unable to locate the spot. Search as they would they could not find the mine and no one has discovered it since.

Bluff Head is a rugged peak of Totoket Mountain in the extreme northern section of Northford. The rock formation on the hillside shows clearly that many years ago a large river must have flowed over the mountain here cutting a deep gorge through the rocks where now at the bottom a tiny stream of crystal water slowly winds its way to the Farm River. In the shale on Bluff Head can be found fish and reptile fossils. Several years ago Samuel Loper collected many of these fossils for Yale College. Among them were some perfect fish of great size.

Popular with Scouts

Many lovely spots famous for their scenic beauty may be found on Totoket Mountain. One of the most beautiful is Stair Brook which finds its source in Drowning Swamp on top of Great Hill. Twenty three steps have been cut by nature in the mountain cliff over which this clear cool stream flows singing and splashing on its way to join the river waters.

Red Hill and Middle Hill have long been noted as overnight camping grounds for Boy Scouts and others who enjoy spending the night under the stars. Nature lovers find many interesting things to study here. Some have reported finding many rare species of wild flowers among them the *Linnaea Borealis* or Twin Flowers, a plant most rare in this section. Here too have been found Indian Relics of value. Those who believe in the glacial theory will find among the rocks and cliffs on the mountain side strata, amorphous and metaphoric rocks and crisscross glacial scratches in abundance. The mountains elate a strange peculiarity of these hills. It is said that the Indians told of a "power" that dwelled in the caves who would "hide away" things found in the mountain regions. This same queer power seems to exist today for stories are told how folks will wander through

the woods on the mountainside and will find places of interest, unusual rock formation and strange growth of vegetation. When they return to locate these places again they are unable to do so.

During the Revolutionary War an alarm was sent from New Haven to the villagers in Farm River Valley to flee to the hillsides for safety as the Red Coats were planning to invade the town of Northford. Women, children and old men gathered their personal belongings together and took refuge in the caves on Mt. Pisgah. Here they shared the dwellings of the Indians for several days. The Red Coats did not get to Northford and in due time order was restored and the white people returned to their homes.

Weird Secret Cave

A fascinating tale is told of a cave found in the side of the mountain one Winter's day in the year 1875 by a resident of a nearby village. This gentleman who had been enjoying an afternoon hike took a shortcut to his home over the mountain. A light snow was on the ground and as he walked along he noted with interest the tracks of the foxes, squirrels and other animals which were in the snow. He was well experienced in nature and when he discovered a spot on the hillside two feet square wholly bare of snow he paused to investigate and to determine the reason. Upon close examination he discovered that the ground beneath the spot had a hollow sound. Working for several minutes he removed the leaves and pine needles from the spot and uncovered a plank door. This he raised and descended down several steps into a cave, the entrance of which was blocked by a heavy door. After a short time the door opened and a man appeared carrying a very bright light. He offered the gentleman a paper and beckoned him to follow. Although greatly frightened he followed the guide into a room. Here he was left alone. He read the note that he had been handed, which was as follows: "Stranger, you have consulted your convenience alone in timing your visit to my abode and notwithstanding the fact that I am deeply sensitive to the honor you do me, still I beg that you will allow me to appoint a time when it will please me to receive you. This pleasure I must deny myself until seven o'clock P.M. on January 14, 1875. Until that time make yourself comfortable in my reception room."

The room was most comfortable and after adjusting himself to his surroundings he prepared to make the best of his enforced imprisonment. He found food in a locker, fresh drinking water in a wall crevice and good books to read. At the end of the third day his host appeared. He was a kind old gentleman who apologized for his lengthy absence and bade his guest welcome.

This queer old man had suffered a great loss in his early life. On the eve of his wedding day his fiancé had died. Driven nearly insane by her death he had stolen her from the grave and by means of a special method of embalming had rescued from decay her beautiful body.

A Strange Task

Then at great cost he had built this subterranean home of five rooms in the heart of Totoket Mountain. Here he had generated electricity with which to light the place and had furnished it with rare pieces of furniture imported from abroad. He had hung beautiful pictures and valuable tapestries upon the walls.

For years he had studied and tried to bring life back to the body of his loved one. He had used other dead bodies to experiment upon and although he was able to make them do many things such as was proven by the use of the man who opened the door and delivered the note it was impossible to make them breathe. The old gentleman realized the futility of his labors and as he was growing old had given up the search to return life to those who have passed beyond.

At the end of the fourth day the visitor left this “cave of death” and made his way home. The place has never been found again but this weird tale is repeated occasionally when stories of the mountain are being recalled.

At present time two industries are being carried on from materials taken from the mountain. In the southern section of the town the New Haven Trap Rock Company conducts a large quarry where many tons of trap rock are taken from the cliffs of Totoket Mountain. In the extreme northern section of Northford great quantities of limestone is cut from the mountainside and taken to Coe’s Lime works where it is ‘refined’ into lime for use in cement and plaster.

Residents of Northford point with pride to Totoket Mountain as they gaily relate the legends of old and retell the traditions which make the history of this little village such an interesting story.

Interesting Stories Behind Monuments In The State's Old Burying Grounds Rapidly Becoming Lost To The Present Generation

By A. Loretta Plumley

The American public has always been interested in monuments. Throughout the length and breadth of the United States are to be seen memorial monuments and commemorative tablets which have been set up to bring to memory the accomplishment of some great historical achievement or to keep ever fresh in the minds of men the heroic performance of some great man. Pages of history are full of accounts which deal at great length with the reasons why such national personages should have thus honored.

With the coming of our ancestors a section of each newly settled town was laid aside for the burial of their dead, and, that all who came after might know who was "laid at rest in God's Acre", monuments were erected to mark their resting place. A visit to these ancient burial grounds will uncover that many an unsung hero or heroine of the community, village and neighborhood, lies nearly forgotten, their story fast becoming lost to the present generation, since it is remembered only in tradition by the older members of the town and has never reach the printed page. Much valuable historical data is thus passing out of existence to be forever lost.

In the northeast corner of the Branford Cemetery may be seen today a small marble marker, with a tiny hand pointing towards Heaven. The inscription on the marker reads: "To the land of the Hereafter, Asa, the faithful Indian." But no record of a printed page contains the story of "this faithful Indian" and but for the memory of one man who recalls having seen Asa when he was but a small boy and who knows his story, which was often told by his grandmother this fascinating bit of Indian history would be lost to all.

Asa was a Quinnipiac Indian, one of the last of his tribe to live in and about New Haven County. Each spring he and his squaw "Quinnie" would arrive in East Haven where they would labor hard all summer long on the farm, which was the property of a white woman. They helped to till the land, assisted with the gathering of the crops in the fall, and aided in preparing fuel for the long winter months. At the first fall of snow they would take their summer earnings, and few belongings and slip silently away, completely disappearing for the winter months. Questioned as to their winter quarters would bring only the reply, "we go to the Northland."

Returns to East Haven

One spring Asa returned to East Haven alone. He refused to tell what had happened to "Quinnie" or as to her whereabouts. When the winter season set in he requested the

privilege of remaining and so stayed on from season to season, never more returning to the Northland.

As he grew older he was unable to attend too many chores but would sit for long periods always in the chimney corner where he made Indian baskets. He listened to the story of the "great father" as told to him by his white friends and before his death professed the Christian faith. When he died he received the white man's burial ceremony and his marker is today a silent witness to the esteem in which he was held by all who knew him.

In the old Northford Cemetery one may see a small marble shaft which carries the inscription, "Richard, a gentleman of color." Too few know that this marks the resting place of old Negro Dick, a slave of Revolutionary War fame. Many are familiar with the story of Col. William Douglas, who lies in the same cemetery, with Negro Dick, that brave young man who in his late 20s recruited from New Haven County 500 soldiers to fight with Gen. Washington and who took with him all the able-bodied men from his own village.

When word came that the English had landed in Fort Hale, Northford was unprotected. Only the women, old men and boys remained in the village.

Negro Dick, had been a loyal slave, the property of the Linsley family. At the outbreak of the war, he was freed by his master and was given a home lot and cabin on the side of Totoket Mountain. At the rumored approach of the enemy, Negro Dick led the remaining residents of Northford to his place on the mountainside, where they would be free from harm. The British never reached the village, but the story of Negro Dick and his brave deed was for many years a legend of the community, now becoming a forgotten tale for it is known to few in the village and is seldom repeated.

In a remote corner of the old Northford Cemetery is another marble shaft which marks the grave of the village criminal, the epitaph on which, "This is a faithful notice, worthy of all exception. Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners of whom I am chief," causes many a visitor to stop and ponder as to the reason of the remark.

It recalls the gruesome murder of little Emily Cooper. The little girl lived with her grandmother and her uncle Leander on Foote Hill. The last day of the summer school in August 1849 she started over the hill to school carrying her little lunchbox and a bouquet of flowers as a parting gift for her teacher. She had gone but a short distance when she met her uncle. He was an ugly looking creature, usually the worst for too much liquor, but he had always been kind to his little niece so that when he told her about a pretty and rare flower and that he would show her where it grew, she followed him fearlessly into the woods. Here he murdered her. Later returning to his home he attempted to murder his mother but her cries for help attracted a group of workmen nearby who came to her rescue.

Murderer Recaptured

The man escaped and it was many hours later before they found him suffering from injuries which he had inflicted upon himself in an attempt at suicide. He was arrested and confined to New Haven Jail for over a year, later being hanged for murder. During his days of confinement he repented of his sins and urged that this epitaph be placed upon his tombstone and that passerby in years to come by questioning the meaning would in this way keep alive the tale of a great sin.

Far from the beaten line of traffic in the section of Guilford known as Clapboard Hill is a wooded grove on the banks of the East River in what is known locally as "Smallpox Cemetery." Here lies the buried Captain Ichabod Scranton and 42 soldiers of his company, who while fighting in the French and Indian wars contracted the "plague" or smallpox, that dreaded disease which killed off far more young men of that generation than did the weapons of their enemies. For many years the burial place of this young officer and his company was unnoticed for although he died in 1760 it was not until 1922 that sufficient interest in Capt. Ichabod was aroused among his descendents to properly mark his resting place. Today there has been placed upon a fieldstone in the enclosure of smallpox cemetery a bronze tablet bearing this inscription:

"As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

"This enclosure marks the spot where Capt. Ichabod Scranton and the remnants of his company were buried in December, 1760. Born in Madison, Connecticut, February 19, 1717, he received his commission from King George II and fought in the French and Indian wars. On the return march from Ticonderoga he and many of his company were stricken with smallpox, died and were buried on this spot.

"He was a man of patriotism and enterprise and his death deemed a public loss."

"Erected by descendent Juan in his memory 1922."

To those other brave souls, who, too, fought and died, neither relatives nor record has preserved their memory. Who they are will never be known! Each grave has an unmarked stone which designates the spot where a loyal soldier lies. History may tell us, who fought with Captain Scranton, but it cannot tell us who reached Guilford to die and be buried with him for many fell by the wayside and others may have fallen in battle. But from the historical data which we have about their captain, we may presume that they were the leading young men of the neighborhood, respected and honored by all.

Capt. Scranton served in the King's Army and was given the commission of lieutenant in 1757 three years later in March 1760 he was made captain of the Fifth Company and led the forces for Madison in the French and Indian wars. That he was a man worthy of his standing in the community is shown by the itemized inventory of his estate which is recorded in the Scranton genealogy and was published by his wife, Chloe, who was the executrix of his estate. The prices and names of articles were given as follows: Crimson Wescoat, 30 shillings; Lappel Regimental (red) coat, 40 shillings; blue broadcloth coat, 70 shillings; hat, five shillings; silver shoe buckles, 20 shillings; Gun, 30 shillings; pocket compass, six shillings; six silver spoons, 54 shillings; wheat, four shillings six pence per bushel; Indian corn, two shillings, six pence per bushel; three pair of oxen, one pair, 17 pounds; another pair, 14 pounds five shillings; third pair, 12 pounds; six cows, 5 pounds

each; bull, 4 pounds; two sheep, eight shillings each; dwelling house, 70 pounds; old house and barn, 25 pounds; home lot, 40 acres, 7 pounds per acre; 9 acres Evarts lot, 40 shillings per acre; High Hill lot, 54 acres, 3 pounds 10 shillings per acre; 2 acres in planting field, 24 pounds; Hammonasset long meadow 12 1/2 acres, 6 pounds 10 shillings per acre; flax, six pence per pound; cider, eight shillings per barrel, etc., many of the articles being omitted according to the recorded statement. The total amount of the estate was 1,096 pounds and 13 shillings, a large estate for that day and especially for a man so young. He was survived by four children and his son won fame in the Revolutionary war.

Traveling along Highway Route number 80 a sharp eyed wayfarer might spy a tiny little tombstone, standing erect upon a high gravel mound. A visit to the spot will reveal but one word on the stone, that all of "Brother" in bold relief. Records of this burial spot are lost, but tradition records that it was the private lot of the Johnson family who owned the property for "nye on 200 years," and "there put to rest their dead being most to good to sleep with other folks." If so be, woe is the fate of those who now sleep there for gruesome is the tale of this private plot now marked by the tiny stone.

Stones Removed

Some 25 years ago the property passed out of the hands of the Johnson family and it was sold to a New York man. The real estate agent fearing that he might be unable to secure a purchaser if they knew of the family burying plot had all the stones removed.

When Route 80 was being built, this particular part of the Johnson farm was sold to the state for a gravel bank and during the process of excavation the graves were uncovered, as was the remaining little stone. The bodies were collected and now lie at rest in one large mound, topped by the tiny marker. Colonial history tells us that if our forefathers last sleep be disturbed, their spirits will haunt the valley wherein they lie. However, we have yet to hear of the ghost which roam on this spot on Route 80.

In many of the old cemeteries of Connecticut we find the graves of the town's leading citizens often marked with "table stones." Noted examples of these are to be seen in the Old Cove Burying Ground of East Haddam.

Discovering Connecticut Off The Beaten Track.

Indian Oven - Heart of the Pistapaug Life.

This is the second in a series of six articles about little-known places in the state

by A. Laretta Plumley

Nowhere in New England is there to be found more alluring and little-known places of scenic beauty or historical interest than in Connecticut and New Haven County comes in for an abundant share of such localities the Middletown Turnpike is one of the most historical roadways in Connecticut. Travelers journeying from New Haven to the cities north are much impressed with the beauty of the scenery, especially with the low mountain range, just 10 miles from the city, known as the Totoket Mountain. Plentiful all the tales and legends which can be told in connection with this mountain, but our story today is one of a little-known historical location in the vicinity of the mountain, rather than of the mountain itself.

Turning off Middletown Turnpike in the center of Northford, on to the Post Road, a journey of a quarter of a mile, will bring one to a group of rocky cliffs and ledges just to the right of the highway, rising upwards from the low marshes which surround them.

Once a wood covered hill and plain, this was the home of the Pistapaug Indians, a tribe of Matabesecks, who lived here as late as 1790. This spot may claim interest as an Indian location and as a reminder of the times when the great ice flow covered the region. One the outstanding interesting features is the Indian oven. It, without question, is a natural opening in the side of the cliff made, no doubt, by the dislodgment of a huge boulder during the glacial period, but nevertheless utilized by the Indians to cook and bake. The smoke blackened sides and walls prove indisputably that here the Indian woman prepared the food for the tribe.

Another interesting feature of this location is the 14 corn basins in the side of the rock cliff. Of various sizes, these are the silent witnesses of those people, who long ago worked for hours preparing the cornmeal for the winters food and it takes but little imagination to see the squaws gathered on the hillside busily at work grinding the dried kernels of corn.

On an adjacent ledge, nearby, is the "skin stone" and although many years have passed since the last deer hide was dressed here, the smoothness of the rock and the worn impressions the size of a skin can be clearly seen and tells a story of the long hours spent in the labor of rubbing the natural fats from the hides before they could be made into garments.

Other marks clearly identified on the cliffs are the spots where the arrow maker worked. Here and there on this particular boulder one can see the pits in the stone where he held the arrow points of flint "as he was putting the final touch on this weapon."

Many interesting and curious markings on the ledgers have been discredited by several Indian authorities of today as being made by the Indians. However, it has come down through tradition here that these markings were either the record of the Indian braves who left to fight in the French and Indian wars or a record of the number of children born into the tribe.

The Pistapaug Indians were friendly to their white neighbors and legendary stories passed down the ages, tell us that they all became converted to the Christian faith and attended services regularly in the Congregational church.

Jenny Squaw, the last of the Pistapaug, lived the last years of her life near a large boulder in a lot not far from the Northford Durham line. The people of the village were kind to the Indian woman and she felt free to visit anyone whenever she wished. She supported herself by selling baskets which she made, her price being "as much cornmeal as the basket would hold." She was a regular attendant at the "services" but it might be suspected that her presence was not always welcome for we find in the records of the Congregational church this item: Voted "that Jenny Squaw shall sit in the Negro pew and shall sit nowhere else when attending services here."

An amusing story is told of Tomkit and old Pistapaug. It was the law of the village that no one could give a strong drink to any Indian. One cold winter's day, Tomkit called at a settler's home carrying several of his baskets. He asked for cider. Not wishing to anger the old man, and not wishing to break the law, he said, "Tomkit, I will give you as much cider as your basket would hold."

Tom Kit turned, and running to a nearby stream dipped his basket into the stream. Soon a thick coating of ice covered the basket and he returned for his cider.

The Indians and the villages often shared the holiday together, and there are some still living in Northford who remember hearing tales of their ancestors had been guests at a feast which the squaws had prepared in the stone oven on Pistapaug Hill. Game was plentiful in the nearby forest and these Indians always had an abundance of food. Numerous relics found in the fields in the vicinity of Pistapaug Hill prove that the tribe did not have to travel too far away for food supplies. The stream nearby is only a remnant of the once large brook that flowed here from which they caught trout and other freshwater fish. The Pistapaug journeyed regularly to the shores for shellfish but they must have opened the oysters and clams and brought back only the meat, for no shell heaps have been discovered in this locality.

Many years have passed since the redmen dwelt on Pistapaug Hill, but evidence of their everyday life remains and their story can be read by all who visit the place and become acquainted with its surroundings.

Discovering Connecticut

Off The Beaten Track

Bog Mine Swamp – Our First Industrial Center

This is the third in a series of six articles about little-known places in this state

by **A. Loretta Plumley**

Connecticut was a pioneer in the building up of New England manufacturing and we find that many of the early industries had their beginning here in New Haven County, which today ranks among the foremost as an industrial center.

The first settlers eked out a living from the soil, but were quick to see that the possibilities of making their livelihood through development of the natural resources which they found here, were greater than the opportunities offered by agricultural outgrowth.

The first real industrial venture in Branford and the first of its kind in the state was the “bloomery” iron smelting furnace at Furnace Pond in the year 1658. Today careful researching on the shores of Lake Saltonstall will reveal the exact location of this foundry. The following excerpt was taken from the town records and shows the concessions granted which promoted this enterprise.

“This April 29, 1658 these perteculers was granted by the towne to the undertakers of the iron works. 1. That they shall have such land as shall be drowned with ponds either for furasse or forge freely. 2ly lerbetie to get mine in any place within the bounds of the towne. 3ly liberty for cart wayes but soe as the town benot charged by them for there carding coal or mine or Iron. 4ly if a Forge shall be set up in our bounds they shall have the convenient word for coals and 18 or 20 acres of planting land as convenient as can be formed that is not given out allreadie but for meadows wee have it not except they can make some. 5ly that they shall have lebertie to get prinsipall pieces of timber for there works in any place where they can find them. 6ly they doe grant them convenient ox pasture near the furnasse but so as newhaven give land likewise according to their proportions.”

But of even more interest is the material which they used in this furnace and the location from which it came. The ore used was a species of bog iron and was obtained from the Bog Mine Swamp in North Haven. Although two centuries have more than past, those who visit the swamped today can still see the indentation from which the order was taken.

The ore was carried all the way to the “bloomery” by water. This was carried by ox cart to the Quinnipiac River in North Haven where it was loaded on boats which sailed down the river through Long Island Sound and into the Farm River to Furnace Pond.

The brick makers of North Haven found in the Bog Mine Swamp a yellow substance which they used to color the early bricks which were made here so many years ago.

It was discovered that the waters in the Bog Mine Swamp had medicinal value and after the mine ceased to be worked, a number of mineral baths were built. These were constructed of bricks made in the local brick yards and of bricks made of wood. They measured about 4 feet in circumference and were from two to four feet deep. Three of these baths can still be seen in Bog Mine Swamp in a splendid state of preservation. Records show that many invalids from surrounding communities made regular visits to the swamp to receive aid for numerous illnesses.

In addition to bathing in the water, the invalids were given the water which flows from a spring in the swamp to drink as a tonic. Water from the spring was also sold in large quantities to drugstores and was prescribed by physicians as a cure for many ills. A taste of the water today will cure one of their momentary ills, we can assure you.

A visit to the Bog Mine Swamp is well worthwhile. To reach the place from New Haven, follow Middletown Turnpike to Quinnipiac Avenue, Montoese. Travel along Quinnipiac Avenue until it merges into Maple Avenue, beneath the Air Line Railroad bridge. Watch for signs off Maple Avenue marked Poole Road. Driving along Poole Road one will notice a sign, “Poole Park. Enter, but do not Litter or Destroy.” This is Bog Mine Swamp where a pleasant stay awaits you’re coming.

Discovering Connecticut

Off The Beaten Track

White Robed Figures of Tamarack Swamp

This is the fourth in a series of six articles about little-known places in this state

by **A. Loretta Plumley**

Along the back roads and the byways of Connecticut are to be found weird locations which played a most important part in the community history of the state and when visited today seem instilled with the uncanny atmosphere which existed there many years ago.

It will startle many to learn that but a few miles from Wallingford Center is the ghostly impenetrable Tamarack Swamp, a wilderness of trees, dense briar thickets, giant ferns and dangerous quicksands, with great lofty cliffs rising to the east, which casts their eerie shadows over the lowlands, making its appearance grim and foreboding to all who visit this locality.

In early summer common wild flowers of the vicinity grow in greater abundance than in other places and their size and fragrance surpass other specimens of the same species in nearby localities. Here too, may be found unusual insects. The butterflies are more colorful and of greater size than those in the nearby communities and it is here that the wings of the "darning needle" are of deep browns and orange rather than the more common blues and greens of those in other sections of the neighborhood.

The cliffs at the swamp edge are claimed to be the abode of raccoons, rattle snakes and foxes, all dwellers being safe from invasion, for it is only on rare occasions that anyone from the outside world makes a visit to this bewitching place.

Innumerable legends have come down through the ages and add to the natural charm and weirdness of the swamp. This was once the torture chamber provided by nature for the Metabeseck Indians who lived in this part of Connecticut. They were friendly and kind to the white men when they settled in the valley. However, true to Indian nature, they were cruel to their prisoners. Traditions tell us that they used Tamarack Swamp as a place of torture and punishment. At sunset the prisoner was taken to the edge of the swamp. Three Braves with bows and arrows set to shoot, would stand at the Swamp entrance and send their enemy into the treacherous land, almost always to certain death. If the prisoner could survive the numerous dangers and find his way out of this terrible place he was given his freedom.

Haunted swamp

The swamp is claimed to be haunted and at certain times of the year can be heard the uncanny cries of those who lost their lives in this region. A story which has come down through the ages is told of a beautiful maiden who lived in this section during the early part of 1800. Her parents were stern God-fearing people who brought their daughter up in a strict Puritanical way.

This young woman fell in love with a stranger who came to the village to live. This did not meet with the approval of her parents, so a secret love affair was carried on between the two for several months. At the end of this time the youth left the village. When the girl's parents discovered her disobedience they turned her from their home. She wandered to a nearby Indian camp. Here her baby girl was born and leaving the infant to the care of the friendly savages she went to Tamarack Swamp and died, choosing as her grave a bed of quicksand.

The little one grew up and was a real joy to her foster parents. She loved the great out-of-doors and roamed the countryside after flowers, berries and nuts. As she grew older she seemed to be fascinated by Tamarack Swamp. The Indians told her about the terrors of the place and warned her to stay away. As she grew still older the desire to visit the swamp became greater and although she had never been told the story of her mother, she often said that she could hear a voice calling her into the thicket.

One bright moonlit night the girl wandered into the swamp. It is said that an angel-like figure appeared and beckoned the maiden to come. The girl answered the call and led by this mystical person disappeared from view. The Indians who were watching were so overcome by the sight of what they saw, that they could not move, but for years after repeated the story until it became a legendary tale of the swamp.

And if one will visit the swamp on a May night, when the moon is full, two white robed figures may be seen at the swamps entrance, beckoning. Tamarack Swamp is well off the beaten track. One approach is to take Middletown Turnpike to Northford Store and from here follow signs to the Clearview Camp. Upon reaching the camp, continue to the four corners where the improved road is met by two unimproved roads. From here go north along the unimproved road for a mile. Take the first left on this road and continued for a quarter of a mile to the next fork in the road. Here park your car and continue on foot along the road to the left until you come to a cart path on the right. Follow the cart path for some few hundred feet and you will reach the swamp edge.

Late summer or early fall is the best season to visit the swamp, for it is at this time that the water has receded sufficiently so that one may walk along the east and north borders of the place.

The weird and spooky appearance of the swamp makes it of general interest but it is of particular interest to geologists as the cliff formation is of an unusual type of trap rock for this section of Connecticut and to biologists who will find unusual types of plant and animal life here.

Discovering Connecticut

Off The Beaten Track

Footprints of Local Prehistoric Life

This is the fifth in a series of six articles about little-known places in this state
New Haven Register, July 28, 1940

by **A. Loretta Plumley**

The laymen traveling about Connecticut is greatly impressed with the beauty and grandeur of her landscape, caring not at all that he is unable to read in the size of her hills, the fissures of her cliffs or the color of her soil the shifting periods through which she has passed to attain this age of charm and comeliness which all still enjoy today.

Among the unmarked historical locations in our state are chapters in the history of the making of Connecticut which are so clearly written that the laymen may not only understand the story, but may at the same time enjoy the tale.

Many locations which depict clearly the transitional episodes of our history may be visited in an afternoon, each in itself being a full story of the era when the long, long story from a "time than no man knows" to the present, was in formation.

There is no record to tell us how long the land we call Connecticut has existed, but a strange and wonderful story is ready for us all will but stop and read.

Let us first visit at Bluff Head, the northern extremity of Totoket Mountain, which rears its peak boldly, just beyond the border of Northford Durham town line on Middletown Turnpike. Taking the first right-hand road, beyond the lime kiln, one follows the unimproved road for some 300 feet.

Here a large cleft in the mountain-side portrays clearly that a rushing mountain stream once broke the silence of the surrounding countryside, even as long ago as the Paleozoic eon. Here in the bed of that once great stream lie heaps of shale and hardened within are fossil fish, a very fine specimen of which is on display in the Peabody Museum in New Haven. Other specimens found in the river bottom, show the clear green and blue coloring of the scales which made the original an object of beauty. Time and patience will repay the seeker of fossils for his labors, for many specimens still remain here today. Leaving Bluff Head and continuing north along Middletown Turnpike may be seen the evidence of another great period in the physical formation of our state. Since we are most interested in historical landmarks and not in the chronological growth of Connecticut, let

us inspect this great boulder standing alone in the field on a hilltop. This is a monument to the great Ice Age which advanced slowly from the north and covered the hills and valleys of all New England and the mid-Atlantic states. When the great ice sheet melted away, many such boulders were left on a firm rock. Then the fields gradually became green again and the hills rounded and smoothed by the ice were covered with forests once more. Soon there appeared from the west a race of savage men and the Human Period dawned in Connecticut. It was near this rock that Jenny Squaw the last of the Northford Indians, a far descendent from those savages made her home, having lived here about 170 years ago.

To pursue further the age long story in our state's history, leave Middletown Avenue at Durham and follow the Middlefield Road on route number 157, across the Airline Railroad tracks in Middlefield, pass the gun site factory, to route 147, pass the Happy Acres Club grounds to the entrance of Lyman's apple orchard. In a lot to the right of the road may be seen the most interesting chapter of our whole story, that age known as the Triassic Period of the Mesozoic eon, when so many and interesting changes took place, yet their indications and certainty may be clearly read.

It was during this period that the great Central Valley of Connecticut slowly settled in a vast crack appeared extending for miles north and south through the Center Valley. From these crevices rose screams of melted rock which spread far and wide, killing all life before it, then slowly hardening into rock.

Then the streams washed down sand and mud and clay from the uplands and covered the lava rock piles, and as the centuries rolled on great animals which resembled large lizards came and wandered over the hills and roved in the valleys, leaving their tracks in the mud flats. Later came large reptiles called dinosaurs, some with two large and strong hind feet and small front feet, others all four feet large and strong, ran and walked to and fro in the soft earth.

Here on the Middlefield hillside may be seeing the footprints of these great animals who lived in the region. The size of the footprints and the various layers of the mud might indicate that this was not only the chapter of one story in this period, but several chapters in a continuous tale, for what we might well imagine that this act in the drama of the ages was unusually long.

The story here seems also to relate the gathering place of families of dinosaurs. Not only are the inprints of the large feet of the adults clearly seen, but close by are the tiny three toed footprints of the smaller species of the type. The water-lined surface of mud rock portrays the fact, that without doubt this was the feeding grounds of those long-ago creatures which roamed over the hillsides and wandered in the valleys before the coming of man to the rich and fertile plains of Connecticut.

Discovering Connecticut

Off The Beaten Track

Indian Rocks of North Guilford

This is the seventh of a series of articles on little-known places about the state.

By A. Loretta Plumley

Those who are interested in Indian history and the former locations of the homes of the redmen who once lived in Connecticut have a real treat in store if they visit the Indian caves in North Guilford, a series of ledges which begin the formation of the Totoket Range and is locally called "Toket Hill."

Although the overhangs are not as large as many others in Connecticut, the location is so typical of the rock shelter dwellings of these first people populated our state, even one unfamiliar with Connecticut Indian lore, could not help but feel the spirit of the tribesmen who tilled the fields, planting here their winter supply of corn and beans and in some of the clearings raising their needed tobacco. The ledges are a western exposure, with a stream of fresh water nearby.

The tribe of Indians who occupied this locality was known as the Menuncutucks and were under the rule of the squaw queen Shampishuh, who sold her property to Henry Whitfield and his company when they came from England to find freedom of worship and security of peace in this new land.

Many of the Menuncatucks left Guilford and establish their homes in that section of our state known as Madison. However, it is known that several remained here in the caves of North Guilford, the last two Jim Sawbuck and his wife, Sue, leaving about 1852 joined their countrymen in Norwich. Interesting tales are still remembered by many of the townspeople and we relate some of them here.

In 1820 Joel Rossiter brought his wife one Miss Todd of Madison to the old homestead in North Guilford. When the local Indians heard of his marriage they came to make a call and to wish the newly married couple well. Mr. Rossiter had gone to New Haven for the day, and his wife was alone. She was not accustomed to having Indians about and was greatly frightened. However, the redmen paid little attention to her, but entered the cellar where a barrel of hard cider was set aside for the year's supply of vinegar. Rolling the barrel out into the yard, they began to drink to the health of the bride and groom and when Mr. Rossiter arrived home, they were in a state of intoxication and his bride was in a state of terror. He soon dispersed the Indians and calmed the fears of his wife, who as years went on became more familiar to the Indians of this community.

Jim Sawbuck and his wife Sue, lived in the vicinity of North Guilford caves for many years. As they grew older they found that their ideas on many subjects were not the same

and they began to have differences and they discuss the parting of the ways. One morning Sue announced, "Jim, I have been to the law and...."

Jim never let her finish her sentence for he interrupted her to say, "Sue, I have been to the law, too, law say, 'damn squaw shan't have anything.'" It is reported that they made up their differences and soon after left to make their home in Norwich.

After leaving the Indian caves in North Guilford one soon comes to the churches in North Guilford which faced upon the burial ground. Many of the North Guilford Indians became converted to the Christian faith under the leadership of Rev. Samuel Russell, Jr., the first pastor of the region, son of the Rev. Samuel Russell of Branford who worked among the Indians in that region.

A section of this ancient graveyard has been set aside for the burial of these Christian Redman and searching through the tall grasses will reveal many of the markers which were used to locate their graves. No inscriptions are on the stones to tell who are here interred, but it is enough to know that they were respected by their white neighbors to the extent that they were willing to share "God's Acres" with them.

The Indian caves of North Guilford all located on the old highway called County Road. This may be reached from New Haven by taking Route 80 through North Branford Center, to the second left turn above Sea Hill Road. Continue on this road until you reach the four corners. Park your car by the right of the road, just before you cross the four corners, and enter the pasture at the left of the highway. Follow a well-defined cow path to the swamp. Turning right at the swamp one will soon come to the first of the caves, and overhang of some 8 feet, a perfect shelter from storm. Continuing along the edge may be seen other caves of various sizes, which all show evidence of having housed those first peoples who roamed the wilderness when our forefathers first came to Connecticut to make their homes.

Discovering Connecticut

Off The Beaten Path

Stair Brook In Totoket Hills

This is the ninth in a series of ten articles about little-known places in the state of Connecticut

By A. Loretta Plumley

Tourist traveling along the Middletown Turnpike from New Haven to Middletown cannot help but admire the range of mountains lying to their right as they enter and pass through the village of Northford. In the early spring the beautiful greens and pale yellows of the leaves on the mountain trees are a lovely sight. When Dame Nature bedecks these trees in the reds, golds, autumns and deep yellows following the cold frosts of the fall, no prettier scene can be found in Connecticut. And when winter has robbed the trees of their foliage the snowcapped hills stand forth in their rugged beauty, still to be admired.

The mountain range is called Totoket. It retained the name of the territory which once included the entire Township of Branford. It is an Indian name and means the "rise of the tidal river" because the river carried freshwaters down from the mountain and with the rise of the tide "took water from the sound."

Many peaks of the range have been noted by the names, Great Hill, Middle Hill, Mount Pisgah and Bluff Head, containing natural deposits, places of scenic interest and full of romantic tales as weird and fantastic as the fairy fables of Ireland.

Many of these places of scenic beauty far exceed those well-known and highly advertised about the state, but are unknown even to the townspeople, for with the passing of years and the increased opportunities to travel and see places afar distant, beauty near at home has been neglected.

Among the most beautiful of the scenic places on Totoket Mountain is Stair Brook on Middle Hill, a place where the clear mountain stream has cut an unusual gorge through the mountainside and slips from sight at once only to appear again some feet below in the valley.

Stair Brook has its starting point in a little stream which rushes from a spring on the mountaintop. One can imagine that in the beginning of this beauty spot, a tiny brook gradually sought lower levels as it eroded away the topsoil from the rock foundations. Little by little the water increased its volume and the force of the tumbling water began to cut its way its further down the mountain, until following the Ice Age, a great boulder found a path down this mountainside and completed the hewing out of the terraced slope which is there today.

We may too, imagine, that this stream as it traversed its way down the mountain, may have been a mathematician, much concerned with the mensuration of surfaces, for as we approach the lower stair we are at once impressed with the great triangular prisms which border the trickling brook on either side, and we note through the stream the sharp cut surfaces of the square prisms over which it is tumbling. Then our attention is at once drawn to the many stones in the path over which we have just come, and we cannot help but be impressed with the various shapes of the rocks, some being true formed rectangles, others perfect squares, many in the shapes of trapezoids and although real polygons, their services so true that we wonder if the fabled gnomes, those diminutive goblins believed to have dwelt in the earth and to have been the guardian spirit of the miners, did not many years ago, quarry them from the hillside in preparation of some tiny castle which was never completed. These rocks are so browned with age that they appear to be rusty.

As we enter the stairway and climb to the top, we find these perfect cut formations increase in beauty and that pentagonal prisms are intricately surrounded by prisms which are square and triangular in shape. In several places, perfect pyramids have been cut into the sides of the rock wall, some inverted, others set firmly upon their base. Each step is so cut that although the climb to the mountain peak is slow, it can be made with comparative ease.

Any season of the year will reward one for making the trip to Stair Brook. In the early spring the fresh flow of water turns the stairway into a miniature Niagara Falls, and the splashing spray catches the late sunshine and covers the hillside with tiny rainbows.

If one wishes to climb the stairs, summer is an ideal time to make the visit. It is then that the stream is reduced to just a tiny thread which flows gently down the cavern, and makes no pretense of being the brook of the former season, only supplying the pools in the many stair crevices with freshwater. In the winter the melting snows often cause the flow over Stair Brooke to increase and when it freezes in this condition it is most beautiful.

Wildflower growth in the vicinity of Stair Brooke is very profuse and it is here that the *Linnaea borealis*, or Twin Flower, a rare species of plant life for this location, is reputed to be found.

Stair Brooke is located on Totoket Mountain in the back of the farm now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Wolf, in Forest Road, Northford. To reach this location from the West follow Middletown Turnpike, until it merges with route 139 in Northford Center. Follow route 139 to a large yellow house on the left. From here you may receive further directions. If you are coming from the East follow Route 80 until it merges with route 139 near the New Haven trap rock company. From here follow 139 to the yellow house on your right.

Discovering Connecticut Off The Beaten Track.

The Johnson Oak in Northford

This is the 10th and last of a series of articles on little-known known articles about the state.

by A. Loretta Plumley

With the increased interest being taken in the conservation of Connecticut's wildlife it is fitting, in this series of little-known historical locations, that attention be brought to the Johnson Oak of Northford, that great old tree which has withstood the ravages of time for centuries and is alleged to be some 1200 years of age. Only recently has it begun to show the scars of the storms and the wear and tear of the ages.

About the time that Alfred The Great of the England was fighting against the invasion of the Danes a tiny acorn took root in the fertile soil of Northford, then a lonely wilderness. Dame nature favored the little sapling which came forth from the heart of the acorn and year by year she nurtured it until it developed into an enormous tree.

Traditional history tells us that this great tree was used as a gathering place for the Sachem Sowhoeg and his chieftains who ruled over the southern section of Connecticut. We find, too, that this was the tree beneath which the general court of Connecticut met when hearing the complaints of the settlers of Branford and Guilford, that the Indians were setting traps in the "paths of their cows" and so killing or wounding their livestock.

The first measurement of the tree recorded were taken about 1800. From the records we find that at its base the trunk measured 30 feet in circumference and that the spread of its branches was found to be 111 feet east and west and 107 feet north and south. The oak had two branches which extended horizontally 55 feet from the trunk and several branches which extended 40 feet or more.

Estimating the increase of circumference as 1 inch in 10 years, the size of the tree proves its age to be 1200 years old; but the fact of no growth in a double decade puts aside this basis of calculation and indicates a much greater age.

The first people to settle beneath the Johnson Oak were Tom Mulliner and his wife Martha. In 1714 the property was sold to Nathaniel Johnson, a young officer in the colonial army and remained in the Johnson family until 1916.

In 1882 the house which stood beneath the tree was destroyed by fire and at this time the tree was badly damaged by the flames.

The following excerpt is taken from an article written at the time in behalf of the oak by ex-Lieut. Gov. Benjamin Douglas: "my ancestral home was within one fourth of a mile of this old tree, and many a day with the neighboring children, I have played in its venerable shadows. So much have I held it in almost sacred regard, that when meeting old acquaintances from that locality, more or less through the last half-century of my life, and inquiring after all friends and things of my youth, I have many times inquired if this old oak was still standing, and within a year or two when visiting my old home, I drove out of my way with my family and passed round this old tree in my carriage, with my head uncovered in veneration of the monarch, which has looked down upon savage tribes and wild beasts for many centuries before the feet of our fathers penetrated those wilds. 50 years ago, there was a currant bush up in a fork of the tree, some 12 or 13 feet from the ground, which bore fruit regularly. I hope the old oak may be spared for centuries to come and should any friends of these venerable marks of our history and our grand old forest care to interest themselves in saving this, the oldest of New England trees, I should be willing to contribute to its purchase, that it might stand till nature shall bid it laid down its noble life, the children and generations yet unborn may with admiration gaze upon its beautiful form."

State forestry experts doctored the injuries of the great tree at that time and it was saved.

In 1931 when the new highway was laid from North Haven to Northford, the life of the oak was again threatened for the engineers plans called for the cutting of the great tree to straighten out a curve in the old road, which followed an ancient Indian path. The residents of the village arose at once in protest and town officials conferred with the members of the State Departments of Highways and the calamity was averted. A new course was mapped out at a considerably larger expense to both the state and the town, but the "Johnson Oak" was saved.

The mighty winds of the hurricanes lashed its great branches and caused several of them to break but even then, the trees survived without too much damage.

To visit the Johnson Oak, from New Haven, one may take highway route number 15 until it merges with Route 168 in North Haven Center. Following this road for 2 miles, the tree may be seen on the left-hand side of the road just before one reaches the four corners of Route 168 and Village street. If traveling from the west to reach the site of the tree, one may take Route 15 until it merges with Route 168 in Northford Center. A visit to this giant of old will fill one with courage and inspire one to continue to face the circumstances in this troubled world.