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STONINGTON BOROUGH: A CONNECTICUT
SEAPORT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

RICHARD M. JONES

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in History in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy, The City University of
New York

1976

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

18 March 1976
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Ari Hoogenboom
Chairman of Examining Committee

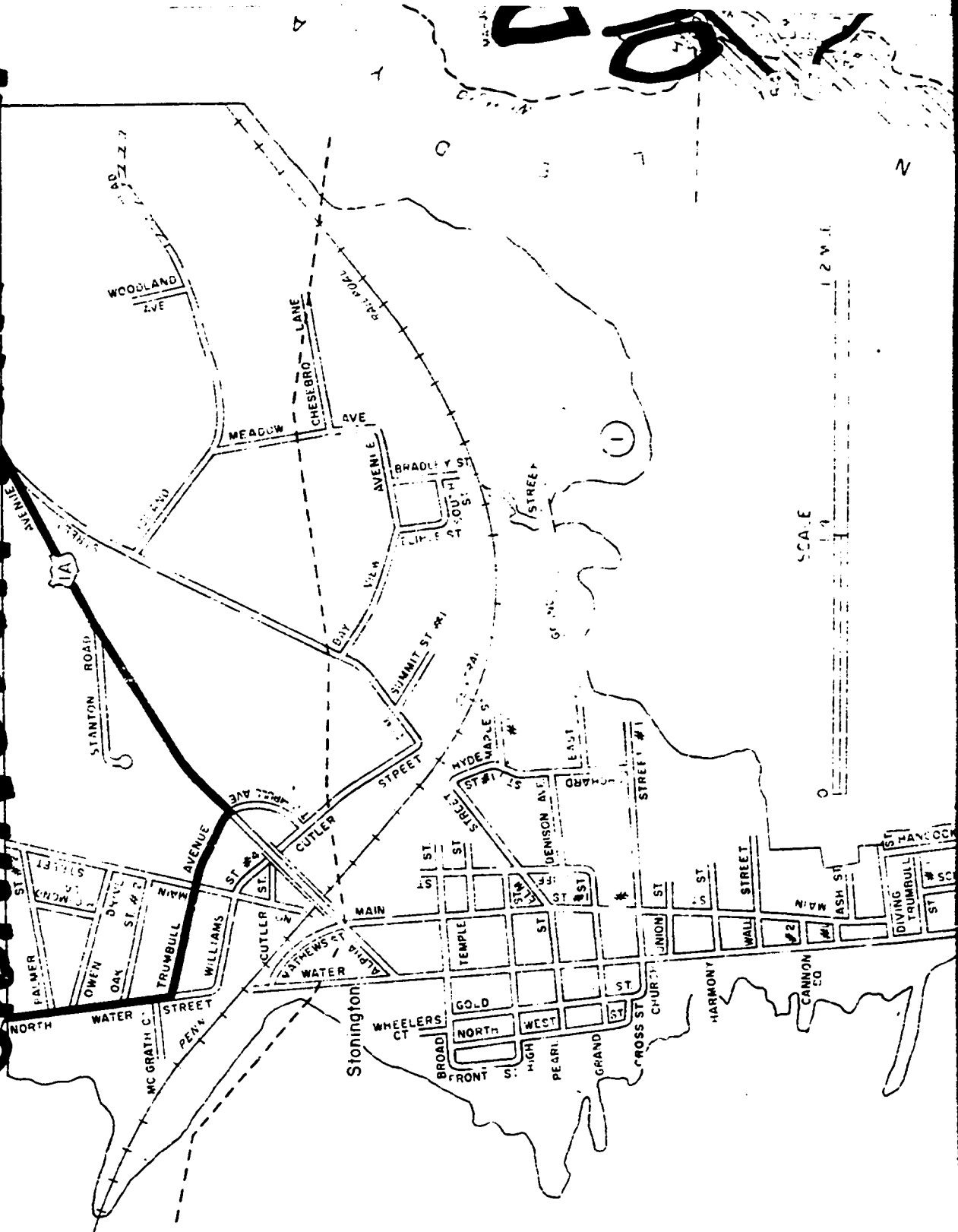
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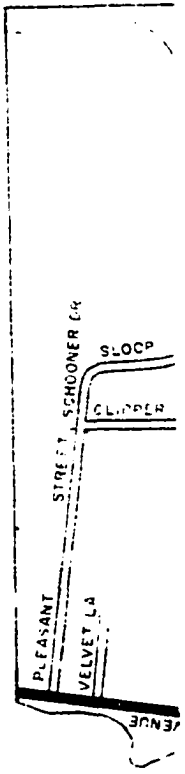
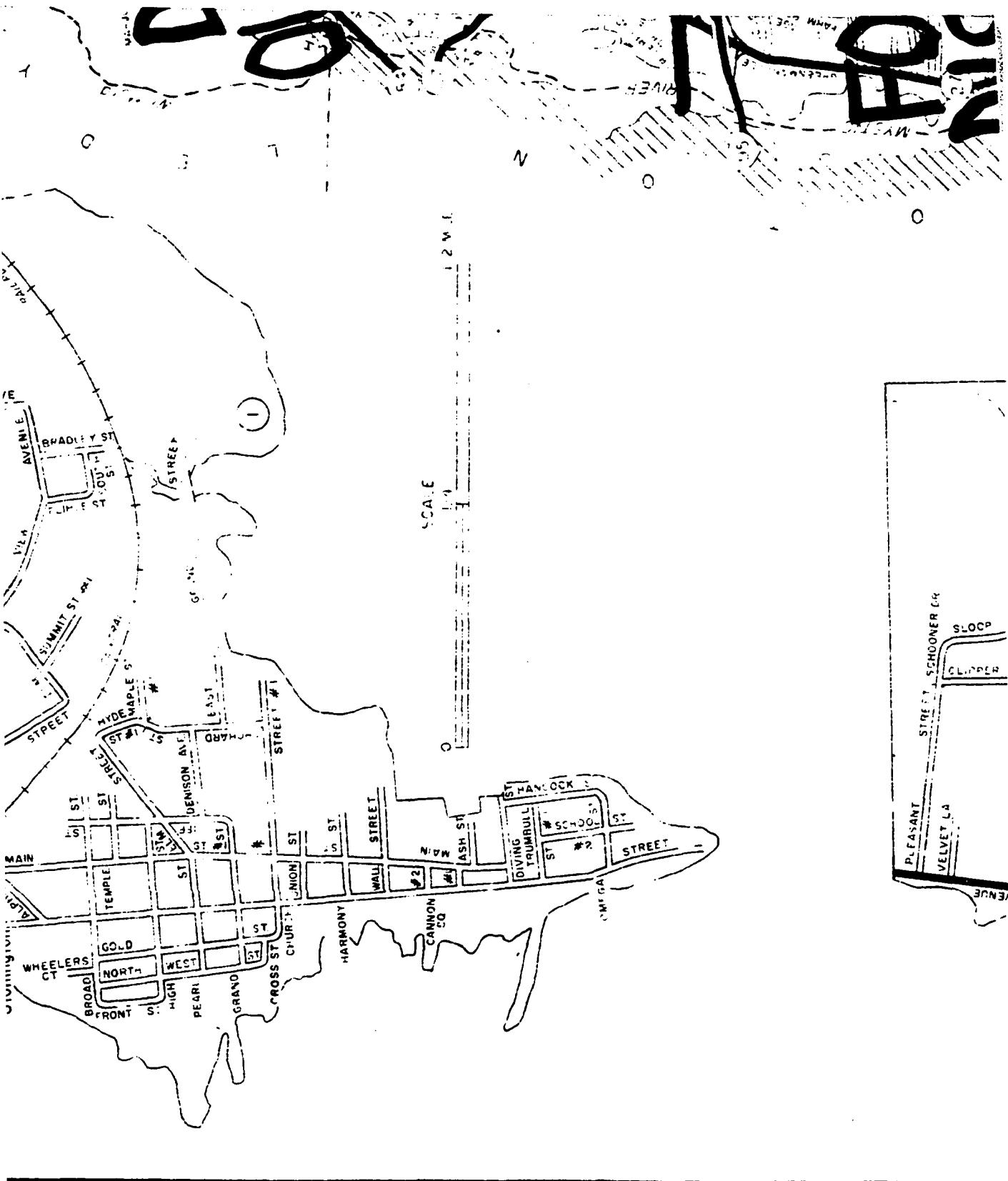
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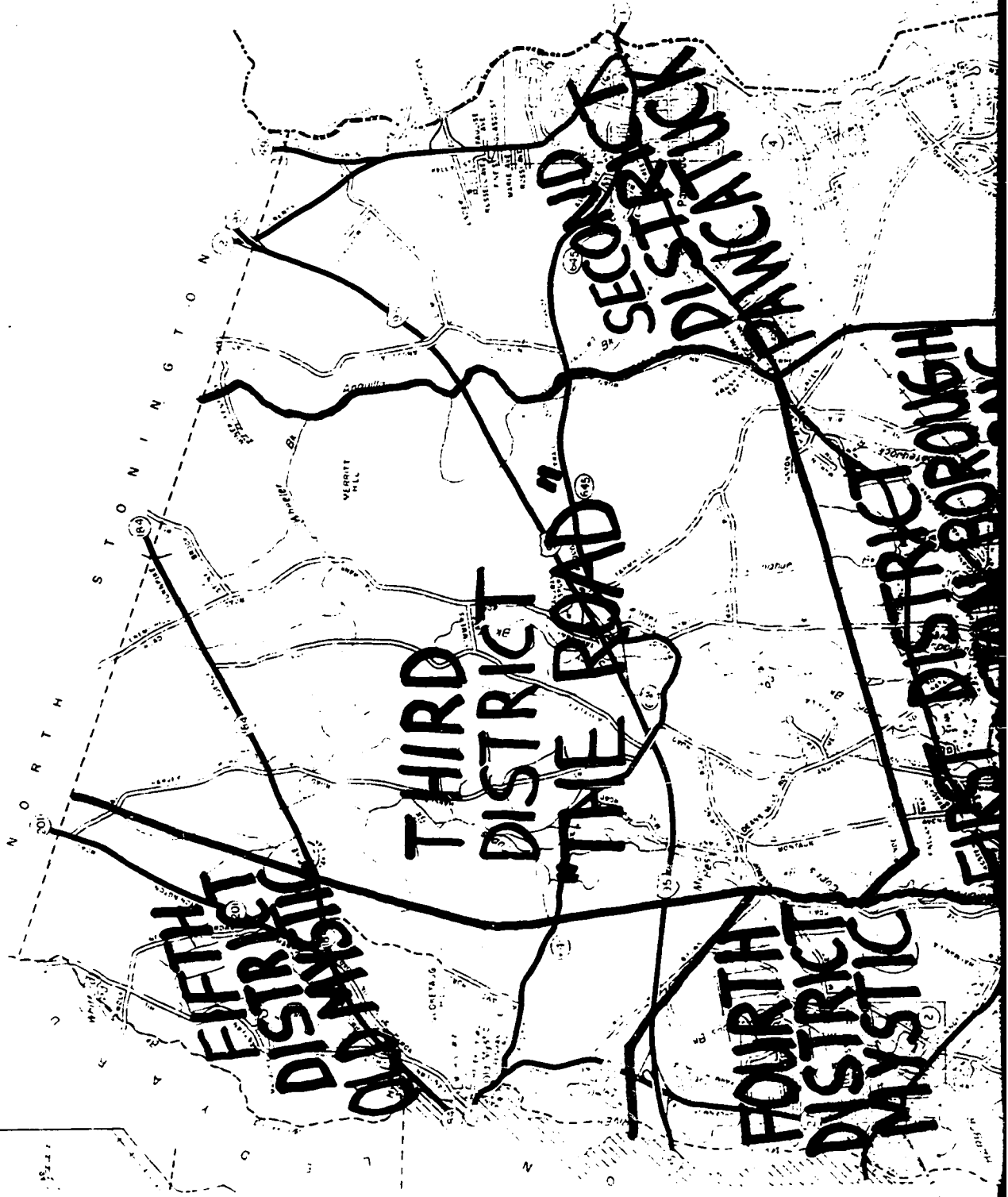
The City University of New York

STONINGTON BOROUGH





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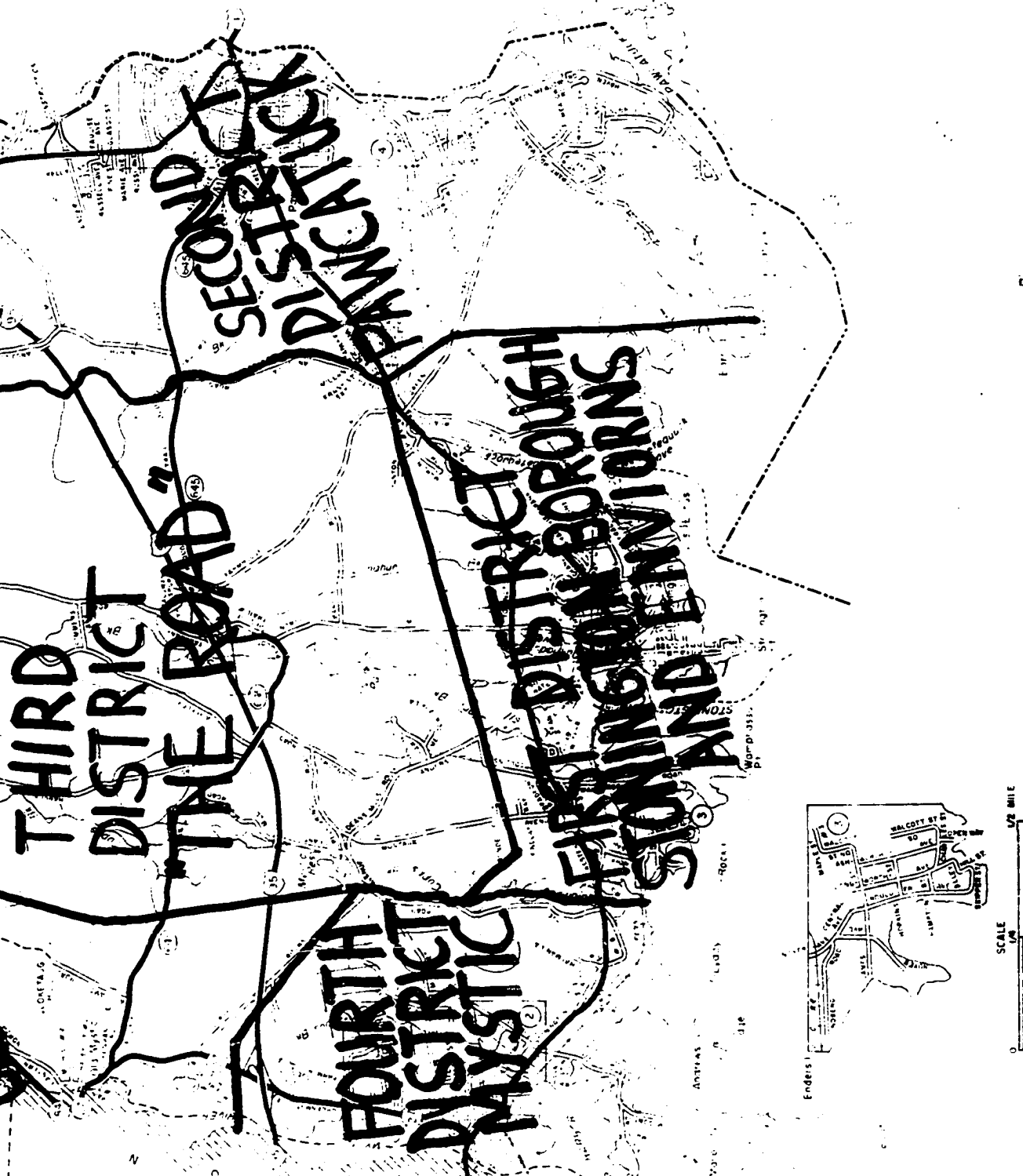


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INTRODUCTION

There are few communities in the United States as beautiful as Stonington Borough, and my admiration for its beauty kindled an interest in its history. I wondered where those who built its lovely homes got their money, and what it was like to live in Nineteenth Century Stonington. The first question was easily answered: sealing and whaling, especially the latter, made Stonington Borough wealthy. The second was more difficult; because limited sources restrict the investigation of the borough's economic, social, institutional, and intellectual history, but enough records have survived to provide some reasonable suggestions.

The Borough of Stonington was never a large community. During the American Revolution it was estimated that 550 people lived on Long Point, which was incorporated as Stonington Borough in 1801. In 1810, when the first federal enumeration of the borough was taken, the population was 804. The population of the town of Stonington in 1810 was 3,043. At the height of the whaling era, in 1850, the borough population was about 1700. With the decline of whaling after the 1850's, came a slight reduction in population; in 1870 there were 1550 people living in the borough. In 1910, when the population of the town of Stonington was 9154, about 2500 people lived in the borough. The increase was largely due to the arrival of the American Velvet Company and the Atwood Machine Shop in the late Nineteenth Century. Although small, Stonington Borough was wealthy. Several times the Stonington Mirror reported that Stonington Borough was the richest community per capita in Connecticut, a state which since the early 1800's has been one of the wealthiest in the Union.

Stonington Borough was essentially a one industry town. Although the Atwood and Velvet companies revived for a time Stonington's sagging

economy, after the departure of the whaling fleet there was little possibility of making one's fortune there, and most enterprising young men probably moved out of the borough in the years following the Civil War. But unlike Nantucket, Stonington did not face a severe depression in the post-whaling era; nor did it, like New London and New Bedford, find new industries to replace the vanished whale ships. Rather, the wealth brought home by the whalers, securely invested in various places, financed a quiet Indian Summer for the former business leaders of Stonington's Golden Age. By 1900, almost all of them were dead. Many of their descendants had scattered taking with them the remnants of the fortunes initially made from whaling.

The borough of Stonington was dominated intellectually, economically, and socially by a small group of Yankees, most of whom owed their fortunes to the sealing and whaling fleets. Entry into this group was exceedingly difficult. It is probable that only one or two individuals rose from the ranks of the propertyless to the upper class of Stonington Borough during the Nineteenth Century. Though never more than 5% of the population, the borough's elite exercised an influence over local affairs and institutions out of proportion to its size, and religion, politics, education and poor relief in Stonington Borough all reflected the upper class Yankee's point of view. By 1900, the world of the Yankee elite of Stonington Borough had disappeared, for the erosion of their economic strength meant the end of their dominant position in society.

I cannot think of another subject which would have been more enjoyable to investigate. I wish to thank the staffs of the Connecticut State Library and Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford; officials and employees at the Stonington Town Hall; Roger Williams of the Stonington

Historical Society; the staff of the Mystic Seaport Library; Walter Savage; Mrs. Grace Garth for a superlative typing job; Professor Ari Hoogenboom for contributing more time, energy and skill to editing and criticizing the manuscript than duty required; Professors Hans L. Trefousse, Edward Pessen and Richard C. Wade for their criticisms; and finally to my wife Martha Jones, and my mother Mrs. Mary Jones for putting up with their seemingly perpetual graduate student.

CHAPTER I

STONINGTON: EARLY HISTORY

The territory south and west of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies was part of the King's demesne which was granted to the council for New England in 1620. The English Crown which claimed the ~~territory~~ territory by right of discovery and possession was the original source of title to the New England soil. The King as immediate owner and Lord of the soil exercised unlimited power in its disposition.¹ The English Colonists at Plymouth knew little about the land until 1631 when a band of Mohegan Indians came to Plymouth to suggest starting a trade with them in the Connecticut Valley.² Supposedly the southern part of Connecticut had been granted by the Crown in 1632 to a group of Puritan lords and gentlemen who planned to settle there if conditions in England became unbearable. But there is no proof that the patent was ever issued, although many in Connecticut, as well as the grantees, believed that the title was valid.³ Connecticut colonists held their land merely by de facto possession or purchase from the natives until the granting of the royal charter in 1662, after which title no longer rested solely upon occupation and purchase.⁴

¹ Roy Hidemichi Akagi, The Town Proprietors of the New England Colonies (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963), p. 5.

² Dorothy Deming, The Settlement of the Connecticut Towns Tercentenary Commission of the State of Connecticut, VI (New Haven: Yale University Press), pp. 1-2.

³ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴ Akagi, Town Proprietors, p. 6.

Massachusetts claimed part of the territory embraced in the 1632 patent by right of conquest after their victory over the Pequots in 1637. But Connecticut resisted the claims of Massachusetts, and the commissioners of the United Colonies decided in Connecticut's favor.⁵ Acting under a Massachusetts commission before this decision was made, John Winthrop, Jr. (later Connecticut Colony's first governor) established the first settlement in Eastern Connecticut at Pequot, now New London.⁶ In 1649, The Connecticut General Court established the boundaries of Winthrop's new township. It would be four miles wide on the east side of the Thames River and six miles northwardly from the sea.⁷ Among those Winthrop invited to his new plantation was William Chesebrough, then a resident of Rehoboth in Plymouth Colony. Chesebrough, however, found New London unsuitable, and in 1649 removed to the east, to an area which later became part of the town of Stonington. The Connecticut General Court, composed of good Puritans, was hostile to the idea of men living outside the control of church and town which facilitated the enforcement of the religious and moral principles involved in the Puritan ideals of a spiritual commonwealth.⁸ Chesebrough told the General Court that he did not intend to

⁵Richard Anson Wheeler, History of the Town of Stonington, From Its First Settlement in 1649 to 1900 (New London, Conn.: Day Publishing Company, 1900), p. 1.

⁶Most proprietary grants in New England after 1640 were responses to petitions to the General Courts. The government when satisfied that the proprietors were proper men to conduct the planting of a new settlement would make the applicants grantees of a township. During the Seventeenth Century the proprietors usually paid nothing for their lands. Charles S. Grant, Democracy in the Connecticut Frontier Town of Kent, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 13.

⁷Wheeler, Stonington, p. 3.

⁸Marcus Wilson Jernegan, Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America - 1607-1783 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1960, orig. pub. 1931), p. 66.

lead a solitary life in the wilderness, but planned to invite a number of friends to join him and establish a new township.⁹

One of the first to follow Chesebrough to Stonington was Thomas Stanton who procured a license in 1650 to erect a trading post at Pawcatuck as the eastern portion of the new territory was called.¹⁰ Stanton, who was acquainted with Indian languages and became the Interpreter General of New England, did not bring his family to Stonington until 1658. Thomas Miner moved from Hingham, Massachusetts to New London in 1645, and in 1652 he removed to Wequetequock Cove (Stonington).¹¹ Walter Palmer, a deputy to the General Court of Plymouth, "yielded to the request of his old friend Chesebrough" and moved to southeastern Connecticut in 1653.¹² In 1654, Captain George Denison, who had fought on the side of Parliament in the English Civil War, Robert Park, Capt. John Gallup (whose father had served as a captain in Boston) and Thomas Wheeler (made a freeman by the Massachusetts General Court in 1642) joined the settlement. The planters believed they would be incorporated as a town by the General Court of Connecticut as soon as sufficient numbers joined them.¹³ New London, however, opposed the establishment of a new town so close to its

⁹Wheeler, Stonington, p. 3.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹Wheeler, Stonington, p. 4.

¹²Ibid., p. 5.

¹³Wheeler, Stonington, p. 5. There is no indication that any of Stonington's earliest settlers had to pay anything for their land, nor were they required to pass under the scrutiny which subsequent newcomers had to endure in order to become admitted inhabitants. Dorothy Deming wrote that in the earliest years of settlement, Connecticut pioneers usually purchased from the natives the right to soil, the purchase price being raised by subscription. But since Stonington's settlers were occupying territory claimed by right of conquest over the Pequots, there was undoubtedly no need to pay off the Indians. Deming, Settlement, pp. 8-9.

borders.¹⁴ New Londoners probably feared loss of population and consequent loss of revenue, particularly for the church. The new settlers of Pawcatuck and Mystic (as the western part of the new territory was called), felt "to be taxed for a minister at New London, some twelve miles away," was a serious hardship, and were determined to have a town and church of their own. But their petitions to the General Court of Connecticut were rejected as often as they were submitted.¹⁵ Since Massachusetts had originally claimed the territory where the planters were situated, they petitioned the Massachusetts General Court to proclaim their jurisdiction over the area. The conflict was referred to the Commissioners of the United Colonies (in England), who ruled in 1658 that the territory east of the Mystic River to Weekapaug (now part of Westerly, R.I.), belonged to Massachusetts.¹⁶ In 1659 the Massachusetts General Court declared that this plantation be called Southertown and it became part of the county of Suffolk, Massachusetts.¹⁷

The new town was under Massachusetts jurisdiction for only three years, however, since the new colonial charter which John Winthrop Jr. secured from the government of Charles II in 1662, set the Pawcatuck River as the eastern boundary of Connecticut.¹⁸ In 1665, the Connecticut General Court changed the name of the town from Southertown to Mystic "in memory of that victory God was pleased to give this people of Connecticut

¹⁴Wheeler, Stonington, p. 6.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 6-11.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁸Benjamin Tinkham Marshall, ed., A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1922), p. 281.

over the Pequot Indians."¹⁹ In May, 1666, an act was passed which read: "The town of Mystic is by this Court named Stonington, the Court doth grant to the plantation to extend the bound therof ten miles from the sea up into the country northward and eastward to the River called Pawcatuck."²⁰ As the town historian, Richard Anson Wheeler, indicates, it is not known who had the idea of calling the town Stonington, exactly when the name was first used, or what its origin was. "I have searched as with lighted candle two books entitled Gazatteers of All the Known Civilized Nations of the World, one published in London in 1782, and the other . . . in Philadelphia in 1806, in neither of which does the name Stonington appear except as a place in Connecticut. So the name or word Stonington may have been coined, I think, by one or both of our representatives viz. Thomas Stanton Senior, or Samuel Chesbro."²¹

In 1667 the Stonington planters convened in town meeting and decided to set apart and lay out five hundred acres of land, the profits of which were to be applied to the support of the ministry.²² In 1668 a committee of planters laid out the town plot of forty three lots, one for each of the town's inhabitants.²³ These forty three men, as the proprietors or

¹⁹Wheeler, Stonington, p. 17.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Marshall, New London County, p. 1.

²²Wheeler, Stonington, p. 18.

²³Inhabitant meant an admitted inhabitant--"any householder who had taken an oath of fidelity to the Connecticut Colony saying he was neither Jew, Quaker, nor Atheist. . . . He could take part in local affairs, and in the election of local officials, and vote for deputies to the General Court. A man was made an admitted inhabitant by a vote in the town meeting." Eleanor E. Fuller, "Social History of Stonington, Connecticut, 1650-1700," Typed manuscript prepared at Connecticut College under a grant of the Denison Society, 1941, p. 29.

commoners of Stonington, constituted a privileged group like their counterparts in other New England towns. Proprietors were the original grantees or purchasers of a town, and they controlled the distribution of undivided lands.²⁴ In addition, once the town was incorporated, all prospective inhabitants had to be approved by the town meeting; thus the proprietors retained their power to restrict immigration.²⁵

The title to these "home lots" was obtained by lottery on condition that if built upon and inhabited within six months the title would be complete, except that each one must reside on his lot two years before he could sell it, and then he must first offer it to the town and be refused before he could sell it to a new inhabitant.²⁶ Thus the town could prevent

²⁴Percy Wells Bidwell and John I. Falconer, History of Agriculture in the Northern United States - 1620-1860 (Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1925), p. 56.

²⁵Apparently the word inhabitant in Connecticut in the Eighteenth Century did not have its English legal meaning of a householder or landholder, but rather was applied only to those who were formally admitted into the town, or the descendants of such persons. Albert Edward McKinley, The Suffrage Franchise In The Thirteen English Colonies In America, Publications of The University of Pennsylvania - Series in History, No. 2 (Philadelphia: Published for the University of Pennsylvania, 1905), p. 421. In 1660 the Connecticut General Court passed an act that no one should be received as an inhabitant in any town unless he were known to be of an honest conversation and admitted by the vote of the majority of the town inhabitants. Stonington Town Records, Vol. I, May 14, 1669. Stonington Inhabitants in 1668 - Thomas Stanton, George Denison, Thomas Minor, Thomas Stanton, Jr., John Gallup, Amos Richardson, Samuel Chesebrough, James Noyes, Elihu Chesebrough, Ephraim Minor, Moses Palmer, James York, John Stanton, Thomas Wheeler, Samuel Mason, Joseph Minor, John Bennett, Isaac Wheeler, John Denison, Josiah Witter, Benjamin Palmer, Gershon Palmer, Thomas Bell, Joseph Stanton, John Fish, Thomas Shaw, John Gallup, Jr., John Frink, Edmund Fanning, James York, Jr., John Searles, Robert Fleming, Robert Holmes, N. Chesebrough, G. Palmer, Henry Stevens, Ezekiel Main. Fuller, "Social History," p. 13. (Mrs. Rebecca Palmer and Mrs. A. Chesebrough were among the 43 inhabitants. Their sons drew their lots.) Stonington Town Records, Vol. I, p. 220.

²⁶Grace Denison Wheeler, Old Homes in Stonington (Mystic, Connecticut: The Mystic Standard, 1930), p. 18.

the transfer of the land to outsiders.²⁷

The home lots were laid out upon each side of the ministry land about two miles north of Stonington Borough where the Congregational Church, known as the Road Church, now stands.²⁸ The church lies on the old Indian path, now a country road named the Pequot Trail, in a fairly rural area a few hundred yards south of U.S. Route 95. Its lonely and beautifully lighted spire is quite visible from the highway at night. Since the Road District (as it was known later) lies inland, obviously the town's founders were interested in establishing a primarily self sufficient agricultural community.

Land in Stonington, like other Seventeenth Century New England towns, was abundant and cheap. In Seventeenth Century New England it was relatively easy to obtain without cost all the land one could effectively use.²⁹ Liberal grants were made by the towns to anyone they judged

²⁷ Fuller, "Social History," p. 44. It was the Connecticut General Court which sent down the order regulating the sale of lands: as reported in the Stonington Town Records, "It is . . . ordered that no inhabitant in the Colonies shall have power to make sale of his accommodations of house or lands unless he has first propounded the sale therof unto the town where it is situated and they refuse the sale tendered." Stonington Records, I, May 14, 1669. This law was passed by the General Court in 1660, and "is the only instance in New England History in which the towns were unable to settle such matters for themselves." Charles McLean Andrews, The River Towns of Connecticut: A Study of Wethersfield, Hartford and Windsor, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Seventh Series VII, VIII, IX, (Baltimore: July, August, September, 1889), p. 73. Undoubtedly these orders were acceptable to Stonington and other Connecticut towns all of which had a definite interest in controlling the character of their populations.

I found only one conflict in the town records resulting from an attempted sale of land to an outsider. In 1670 Thomas Bell tried to sell his land, but the town opposed the sale to "John Randall unless the said Randall come to Stonington and give the town satisfaction according to order and to the law of the colony." Stonington Town Records, Vol. I, August 9, 1670. Randall was later admitted as an inhabitant.

²⁸ Fuller, "Social History," p. 44.

²⁹ Bidwell, Agriculture, p. 71 & 72.

to be of good character. This grant was usually accompanied by conditions, particularly for the encouragement of industry, and it was usually required that granted lands be improved or built upon.³⁰ The Stonington Town Records give some idea of land prices in the Seventeenth Century. "At the [town] meeting it was voted that John Stanton should have fifty acres of land as in satisfaction of monies due to him for service respecting recording at public town meeting days."³¹ "It is agreed by the selectmen according to a town order for that purpose the 25th of December 1660 viz. that wheras Walter Palmer is to receive of the town eight pounds, ten shillings, it is ordered that he have two hundred acres of land."³²

A common practice in New England was the granting of land to induce skilled artisans to become inhabitants of town where their services were needed. The following agreement made with James Dean was taken from the Stonington Town Records for 1676. "For encouragement of James Dean, in order to find settlement in our town . . . [he is] granted twenty four acres of upland . . . provides that he doth the town's iron work . . . [for] three years."³³

Apparently as early as 1667, the granting of free lands by the town had come to an end. "At the same meeting it was voted that there shall

³⁰ Andrews, River Towns, pp. 49-50.

³¹ Stonington Town Records, I, p. 60.

³² Ibid., p. 48.

³³ Stonington Town Votes, No. 2, February 26, 1676. The town had attempted to attract a blacksmith before their offer to Dean, but either he had not been suitable or perhaps did not ever come to Stonington. "This town grants to James Bates twenty acres of land . . . upon condition that . . . Bates shall set up the trade of blacksmith and shall do the town's work and supply them for plow iron, hoes, etc. for the space of four years." Stonington Records, I, p. 94.

be no more hundred acres laid out nor granted to any man by virtue of any former order."³⁴ In December of 1668 "it was voted and agreed that the commons belonging unto the town shall belong only unto the inhabitants that are now in the town."³⁵ According to Bidwell, the cessation of town grants often created friction within the towns. "As the settlement grew . . . the non-commoners [commoners were those early settlers with rights to use certain town lands, often pastures, which were set aside for general use] came to equal and finally surpass the proprietors in numbers. In the gathering of the political community, the town meeting, the newcomers struggled hard to wrest from the proprietors the control over the land."³⁶ In Stonington, if such conflicts did occur, they went unrecorded, for there is no mention of them in the town records.

Since there was such a large supply of extremely inexpensive land available in New England the towns tried to control the admission of new inhabitants, both for religious and practical reasons. Becoming an inhabitant of a Seventeenth Century New England town was not easy. Only those who could give a satisfactory reason for coming, and appeared able to supporting themselves were wanted.³⁷ As late as 1766, Stonington retained control over the entrance of inhabitants: "The civil authority and selectmen admitted Ezra Barnes to be an inhabitant of Stonington."³⁸

The percentage of the admitted inhabitants of Stonington who had no

³⁴ Stonington Records, I, p. 41.

³⁵ Stonington Records, I, p. 61.

³⁶ Bidwell, Agriculture, p. 56.

³⁷ Anne Bush MacLear, Early New England Towns: A Comparative Study of Their Development (New York: Columbia University, 1908), p. 132.

³⁸ Stonington Town Records, Stonington Selectmen, April 26, 1766, p. 49.

property is unknown, but it was certainly quite small. A subsistence agricultural community, whose residents made most of the things they needed, had few places for landless laborers or artisans. There are records of a shoemaker (one of Stonington's few illiterates), a cooper, blacksmith, and miller living in Stonington in the Seventeenth Century.³⁹ The presence of landless inhabitants is obvious because the town in 1671, "agreed that those that have no lands may work upon the present highways provided that they give an account to the Selectmen where he wrought."⁴⁰ In 1672, probably in an attempt to exclude propertyless laborers from entering the town, "it was voted that for the future none shall be admitted inhabitants but such as are householders and of an honest conversation."⁴¹ But seemingly the law was not enforced for in 1676, "it was voted that Robert ? is admitted to have his liberty to work in the town for his living . . . provided that he follow honest labor and conduct himself well."⁴²

Unhappily, there is little more that can be said about Stonington in the Seventeenth Century. A few volumes of fragmentary town and church records are practically the total literary relics of the town. We can hardly expect much more from a group of people whose daily labor left little time for belles lettres. Thoreau wrote in his journal, "wherever men have lived there is a story to be told, and it depends chiefly on the

³⁹ Fuller, "Social History," p. 84.

⁴⁰ Stonington Records, I, June 27, 1671.

⁴¹ Ibid., August 23, 1672, p. 117.

⁴² Stonington, Town Votes, no. 2, December 3, 1673, p. 10.

story teller, the historian, whether that is interesting or not."⁴³

But the historian is limited by his sources, and our idea of Seventeenth Century New England, like that of many other places and eras, is oversimplified, impersonal, and unsatisfying.

Barn Island, a State Reserve in the southeast corner of Stonington, is probably much the same as the town was in the Seventeenth Century. It is a land of salt marsh and low bramble covered hills where the first farms were laid out 300 years ago. Now huge old oak and maple trees, many planted by the first settlers, tumbled down rock walls surrounded by second growth forest, overgrown farm roads and a few old cellar holes are all that remain of those Seventeenth Century farms. In the fall and spring, strong winds blow in off the green Atlantic, and the huge old oaks, and the younger scrub trees which surround them, creak and scrape in the wind. Somehow the creaking limbs sound like sailing ships at anchor. Three hundred years ago English farmers stood on the hills; some may have gazed toward the ocean, but none could have dreamed of the wealth it would provide for a fortunate handful of their descendents.

During the first half of the Eighteenth Century Stonington remained a subsistence farming community, having little commerce with the outside world. Settlement was still clustered inland around the Road Church. The future business center of the town, Wadawanuck Point, later the Borough of Stonington, was uninhabited and used to pasture cattle until 1750.⁴⁴ The land which became the Borough of Stonington, was a portion of the original grant of 2300 acres made to William Chesebrough by the town of Pequot

⁴³ Henry David Thoreau, Early Spring in Massachusetts, from the Journal of Henry David Thoreau, ed. H.G.O. Blake (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1893), p. 176.

⁴⁴ Jerome S. Anderson, comp. Anderson's Stonington Directory (Stonington, Conn.: Jerome S. Anderson, 1881), p. 20.

(New London). Chesebrough in his will gave "unto my sons Nathaniel and Elisha, ye neck of land called Wadawanuck."⁴⁵

In 1750 a road was laid out from Wadawanuck north to the Pequot Trail. Three years later, Elihu Chesebrough Jr., grandson of Elisha, sold Edward Denison three acres for a shipyard, and granted him permission to cut timber from the surrounding land.⁴⁶

The story of the growth of Wadawanuck during the Eighteenth Century must be brief, for aside from a few petitions sent by the inhabitants to the Connecticut General Assembly, there are almost no existent source materials relating to Wadawanuck Point from its settlement to its incorporation as Stonington Borough in 1801. From the Stonington town records, which are much more informative for the period of town history before 1750, it would be difficult to ascertain that such a place as Wadawanuck or Long Point even existed; never mind trying to find out what was happening there. The first glimpse of Long Point is provided by a memorial sent to the Connecticut General Assembly in 1762 requesting "eight or ten cannons to protect against possible raids. There is thirty five families, part of them your memorialists, that live . . . at a place called Long Point, in plain view of hostile ships of war should they appear. . . . There is four good schooners fitted out . . . for codfishing . . . and flakes [for drying codfish] erected on the west." Over forty buildings stood on Long Point.⁴⁷ In 1763, there were enough inhabitants to propose a school.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Grace Wheeler, Homes, p. 195.

⁴⁶Williams Haynes, Stonington Chronology (Stonington, Conn.: Pequot Press, 1949), p. 37.

⁴⁷"Memorial Requesting Protection," Connecticut Archives, War 1675-1775, Colonial, Vol. 9, French Wars, 1760-62, pp. 312-313. Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

⁴⁸"First Settlers in the Borough," Historical Footnotes (publication

Commerce had been of little importance to Stonington in the early days of the settlement. In 1680 the town possessed only one small sloop.⁴⁹ Thomas Wells and George Denison were the first shipbuilders in Stonington, but they resided in Westerly during the time Stonington claimed it. Their first ship was launched in 1680 on the Pawcatuck River (which separates Stonington, Connecticut from Westerly, Rhode Island).⁵⁰ Thomas Stanton, who built his trading house at Pawcatuck Rock (across the river from Westerly) was the only merchant in Stonington in the late Seventeenth Century.⁵¹ He had been granted a license by the Connecticut General Court for the exclusive trade at Pawcatuck River for three years.⁵² Ships from Boston called there to obtain furs, horses and agricultural goods from the nearby settlers.⁵³ Stanton, who soon expanded his business to the firm of Thomas Stanton and Sons, attracted the interest of New London parties, and joined with them in the West Indian trade, centering at Barbadoes.⁵⁴ By 1682, the business had become so successful that Daniel Stanton removed with his family to the West Indies to take care of business there.⁵⁵

of the Stonington Historical Society), 2 (August 1965): 3.

⁴⁹ Fuller, "Social History," p. 128.

⁵⁰ D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., History of New London County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1882), p. 674.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 128.

⁵² R. A. Wheeler, Stonington, p. 130.

⁵³ Fuller, "Social History," p. 128.

⁵⁴ R. A. Wheeler, Stonington, p. 130. The New London West Indian trade had begun with Master John Cort, who in 1664 went into the business of building shallops and pinnaces for trading voyages along the coast to Connecticut ports, Boston and New York. W. Storrs Lee, The Yankees of Connecticut (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1957), p. 68.

⁵⁵ Fuller, "Social History," p. 128.

But Stonington trade was centered at Pawcatuck on the Rhode Island border until 1752, when Edward Denison, son of the Westerly ship builder, moved to Long Point, building there the first house and wharf in the future borough.⁵⁶ Edward, and his son, John, continued their West Indian trade, which they had previously operated at Pawcatuck. Samuel, Nathan, and Ebenezer Stanton, father, son, and grandson, were other important figures in the establishment of West Indian trade at Long Point,⁵⁷ which had expanded to such an extent that it was constituted a port of delivery, Stonington-Port in 1753.⁵⁸

The West Indian trade involved only a small portion of the inhabitants of Long Point, at least according to a 1774 petition requesting a lottery to build a meeting house. The petitioners described the roughly 80 families or 500 people inhabiting Long Point "as generally poor, they living principally by the whale and cod fishery there carried on . . . there is not among them more than one horse to ten families, so that but few are able to attend meeting at the meeting house."⁵⁹

But pleas of poverty notwithstanding, Long Point possessed sufficient wealth to attract a British raiding party during the Revolution. Wheeler wrote "some of the Tories of this region . . . had notified Commander James Wallace of the English Navy . . . that Stonington was rich in requisite food for an army and navy, and was also in receipt of a large number

⁵⁶"The Denison House was built for the farmers who came to sell their produce and stock to those engaged in the West India Trade." Henry Robinson Palmer, Stonington By the Sea (Stonington, Conn.: Palmer Press, 1913), pp. 22-23.

⁵⁷R. A. Wheeler, Stonington, p. 130.

⁵⁸Hurd, New London County, p. 663.

⁵⁹"Petition for Lottery To Build a Meeting House," Connecticut Archives, Ecclesiastical Affairs, First Series, Vol. 14, Doc. 181. Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

of meat stock from Block Island, which had been brought here in a vessel and landed at Long Point, and driven back into the country." Wallace demanded that these cattle be surrendered. The citizens of Long Point refused and raised a number of men from the surrounding countryside to meet the assault. The village was under bombardment for several hours, but the British finally withdrew after wounding only one townsman.⁶⁰

In 1801 the citizens of Long Point petitioned the Connecticut General Assembly for incorporation as a borough. The growing population of the village had created a need for services which the largely rural government centered at the Road Church was unable to provide. The petition described the village as containing one hundred and fifty dwelling houses and stores with two hundred families within a circumference of a mile and a quarter.

Most of the inhabitants are employed in trade, navigation, fisheries, and manufacture which are rapidly increasing and said village being situated at a considerable distance from central part of said Stonington, and where the officers of said town chiefly reside, many and great inconveniences are experienced by said inhabitants for want of proper and necessary laws and regulations relative to trade and commerce, relative to building houses, stores, wharves . . . relative to the preservation of buildings from destruction by fire, relative to health and cases of sickness—also for want of proper officers to enforce and execute . . . laws . . . in said village. . . . your petitioners pray your honors to . . . grant relief . . . by an act of incorporation . . . a body corporate and politic . . . by the name of the warden, Burgesses and Freemen of the Borough of Stonington.⁶¹

In the summer of 1813, the Connecticut Coast was blockaded by a British squadron. The blockade destroyed Stonington's commerce, although a few vessels did manage to run the blockade and carry out business with

⁶⁰R. A. Wheeler, Stonington, pp. 38-39.

⁶¹"Petition Requesting the Incorporation of Stonington Borough," Connecticut Archives. Towns and Lands—Second Series May 1649—May 1820 - Vol. IV, Document 138. Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

New York.⁶² On August 9, 1814, the British fleet left New London and sailed east, but the people of Stonington Borough did not believe that ships of such size would venture in Fishers' Island Sound, on account of its shallow depth and reefs. But the British sailed toward Stonington, apparently bent on burning the town. They ordered its immediate evacuation, which the citizens refused. The militia from the surrounding countryside armed only with two eighteen pound and one four pound cannon, successfully withstood the shelling of the British fleet which included the 74 gun Ramillies and 44 gun Pactolus.⁶³ Throughout the Nineteenth Century, this was looked upon as the pinnacle of Stonington's history by its citizens. Philip Freneau wrote a poem about the British attack, and local Fourth of July orators would consider their speech incomplete without an allusion to the Battle of Stonington.

Four Gallant Ships from England came,
 Freight'd deep with fire and flame,
 And other things we need not name,
 To have a dash at Stonington.

 The Yankees to their fort repair'd
 And made as though they little cared
 For all that came - though very hard
 The cannon play'd on Stonington.

 They [The British] kill'd a goose, they
 kill'd a hen,
 Three hogs they wounded in a pen -
 They dashed away and pray what then?
 This was not taking Stonington.

 But some assert, on certain grounds,
 (Besides the damage and the wounds),
 It cost the king ten thousand pounds
 To have a dash at Stonington.

⁶²R. A. Wheeler, Stonington, p. 61.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 68-74.

Philip Freneau, "The Battle of Stonington on the Seaboard of Connecticut."⁶⁴

According to the Census of 1810, the population of the Borough was 804. It contained an "arsenal belonging to the United States, two woolen mills, a cotton factory, an academy, and two houses of public worship (one Baptist and one Congregational) . . . and ten or fifteen vessels employed in the fisheries, and the amount of shipping owned . . . [was] about 1100 tons."⁶⁵ One of the principle articles of trade in the town was cheese. "Connecticut . . . was one of the nations biggest producers of cheese . . . with the Stonington area alone sending out about 400,000 lbs. a year in the early 1800's to meet the great request throughout America."⁶⁶ Cheese, with the addition of general farm produce represented the bulk of Stonington's export trade in 1800. (Much of this produce went to the West Indies.) The most obvious peculiarity of the young borough was its poverty in comparison to the rural districts of the town. Only 4 of Stonington Borough's 131 householders possessed more than \$5000 worth of taxable property in 1813; 46 of 249 householders in Stonington exclusive of the borough owned taxable estates greater than \$5000 the same year.⁶⁷ In 1820, 67% of Stonington's "rural" householders were property owners, but only 38% of borough householders owned any taxable property.⁶⁸ Politically,

⁶⁴ Philip Freneau, "The Battle of Stonington," in Palmer, Stonington, pp. 41-44.

⁶⁵ Haynes, Chronology, p. 57.

⁶⁶ Gaspare John Saladino, "The Economic Revolution in Late Eighteenth Century - Connecticut" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1964), p. 340.

⁶⁷ "Stonington Tax List, 1813," New London County Historical Society, New London, Connecticut.

⁶⁸ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1820.

the borough was solidly Republican in the early years of the Nineteenth Century, and its Jeffersonian sympathies contributed to a fairly liberal religious atmosphere which disappeared after the Second Great Awakening. The common schools of the borough met intermittently and were inadequately funded. The education they offered was undoubtedly unsatisfactory since the more comfortable residents of the town and borough of Stonington preferred to send their children to the Stonington Academy. By the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, Stonington Borough was greatly changed. A regular and fairly adequate public school system was in operation. A two party system had arisen which was split generally along economic and ethnic lines. And the position of religion in the community, at its Nineteenth Century zenith in the 1820's and 30's after the Calvinist revival, was gradually declining in an increasingly secular society.

But the most remarkable change in Stonington Borough in the Nineteenth Century, was the emergence of a new type of wealthy class there, a phenomenon due largely to the whaling industry. Unlike most of the wealthy citizens of the town of Stonington in 1800, who might best be described as dour country squires whose principal assets were their farmlands, and whose vision could hardly have extended much beyond the borders of the town; the rich of late Nineteenth Century Stonington were an "urban" and sophisticated elite, whose wealth consisted primarily of various types of investments, and whose lifestyle set them apart from their less affluent contemporaries. Certainly no Stonington child of one of the "first in society," after visiting New York in the late Nineteenth Century, would have been depressed, as Martha Denison Peete was in 1811, by the differences between life in the provinces and the metropolis. "When I was in my fifteenth year I visited the city of New York. . . . I was invited to visit in houses

richly furnished . . . and [this] led me to feel, as I had never felt before, that I was inferior in style and insignificant in society. It taught me a humbling lesson that I had never felt, and should not in my native place where I felt my father one of the first in society."⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Martha Denison Peete, "My Home in Connecticut Fifty Years Ago," Bulletin of The Connecticut Historical Society 11 (April 1946): 12.

CHAPTER II

THE STONINGTON SEAL FISHERY

Introduction

Stonington Borough would have remained a poor and insignificant little fishing village if it was forced to depend solely for revenue upon codfishing and coastal trade, the king-posts of the economy in the early Nineteenth Century. Possessing neither a hinterland worth exploiting, nor the necessary water power for manufacturing, the residents of Stonington Borough could only seek their fortunes on the distant oceans. After Captain Edmund Fanning, a veteran sealing master, retired in 1818 to his birthplace in Stonington Borough, the Frederick, first of a fleet of Stonington sealers sailed for the Antarctic. The money brought home by the sealers was the first trickle of a flood of wealth which would transform Stonington Borough by the 1850's.

The antarctic seal fishery was initially pursued by American whaling vessels during the latter part of the Eighteenth Century. American whalers (largely from Nantucket) first crossed the Equator around 1774. During the next few years they hunted along the South American coast as far as Patagonia, often approaching Tristan da Cunha and the Falkland Islands where fur, hair, and elephant seals abounded. Occasionally the whalers killed seals and brought home seal oil as part of their cargo.¹

¹A. Howard Clark, "The Antarctic Fur Seal and Sea Elephant Industry," in Section V, Volume II of The Fisheries and Fishery Industries of the United States, ed. George Brown Goode (Washington, D. C., Government Printing Office, 1887), p. 400.

The opening of the oriental market for fur seals led to the rapid expansion of the antarctic seal fishery. Furs formed the main article of clothing of the people of northern China; sea otter commanded the highest price, while fur seal skins were used by those of a lesser station.² The southern fur seal has a dense, soft shiny undercoat which made it the prey pursued almost to extinction by the China bound Yankee seaman in the two decades before the war of 1812. The southern hair seal - the "sea lion" - had no value at Canton and was never taken as part of the outward cargo for the trade to the Orient. But there was a market for its skin in America and Europe.³ (The hair seal was used for harnesses and trunks.)⁴ The journal of a Connecticut explorer, John Ledyard, who had sailed on Captain Cook's last Pacific expedition in 1778, emphasized the value of fur skins in the Chinese trading capital of Canton. Although Ledyard's journal was published in 1783, its advice to fur traders was evidently neglected, since most of the early trading vessels to China, carried mainly ginseng root and silver specie.⁵

²James Kirker, Adventurers to China: Americans in the Southern Oceans, 1792 to 1812 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 8.

³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴Henry Robinson Palmer, Stonington By The Sea (Stonington, Conn.: Palmer Press, 1913), p. 60. The Huron, a New Haven sealer which circled the globe 1802-1806, was involved in the capture of both hair and fur seals. "The first object of the voyage was to procure a cargo of hair seal skins for the American market, after which I was authorized to stop at the island of Massafuero . . . for the purpose of procuring a cargo of fur, seal skins for the China market, while the ship returned home with the hair seal skins." Joel Root, Narrative of a Sealing and Trading Voyage in the Ship Huron, from New Haven, Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society, Volume V, 1894.

⁵Kirker, Adventurers to China, pp. 4-5.

A. Howard Clark claims the first vessel from an American port especially equipped for the seal fishery was the States, outfitted after the close of the Revolutionary War by a Boston woman named Haley.⁶ Edouard Stackpole rejects this claim. The States, Stackpole wrote, belonged to the famous Nantucket whaling firm of Francis Rotch, and sailed from Nantucket under Captain Benjamin Hussey to the Falkland Islands in 1784. The ship was not especially outfitted for sealing, but like earlier American vessels in the South Seas took whales as well as sealskins.⁷

Whatever the ownership and outfitting of the States might have been, there is no doubt that the voyage was extraordinarily successful. Thirteen thousand skins were sold in New York for .50 each, on her return in 1786. This \$6,500 shipment was put on board the brig Eleanor and taken to Canton where it was sold for \$65,000. The voyages of the States and Eleanor inaugurated the Canton trade for American sealers.⁸

Added impetus to American sealing was given by the European wars, beginning in 1792, which destroyed both European commerce and trade restrictions, and opened trade opportunities for the United States all over the world, since Europe had to devote her attention to the war effort. James Kirker claims that New England's lesser merchants and smaller ports were the primary figures in the trade. While the leading merchants of New England were sending ships directly to China for cargoes, principally tea, in return for Spanish dollars, smaller businessmen based their venture's

⁶Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal," p. 400.

⁷Edouard A. Stackpole, The Voyage of the Huron and the Huntress: The American Sealers and the Discovery of the Continent of Antarctica, The Marine Historical Association, Publications, 29, Mystic, Connecticut, 1955 p. 75.

⁸Ibid.

success on the capture of seals in the Southern oceans.⁹ The proceeds from the seal skins sold at Canton were invested in teas, silks, and nankeens, which were then brought back to the United States.¹⁰

By 1795, a large number of vessels (out of New York, New Haven, Nantucket, Salem and other ports),¹¹ were engaged in carrying fur seal skins to Canton from Falkland, South Georgia, Mas A Fuera, and other islands in the southern oceans. Reports by explorers like Bougainville, Hawkesworth, Cooke, and Anson, of the vast seal rookeries in the southern oceans led American sealers to the Antarctic.¹² One unusually successful voyage was made by the brig Betsey which sailed from Stonington in 1797. (The Betsey, however, was not a Stonington ship, but was registered and owned in New York, and had sailed from there to Stonington in order to complete her crew.) The Betsey's commander was a Stonington native, Edmund Fanning. Her cargo of one hundred thousand fur seal skins was obtained principally at Mas A Fuera, and exchanged at Canton for goods that yielded a net profit of \$52,300 to the owners in New York.¹³

Amasa Delano, an ancestor of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and one of the most successful sealing captains, wrote an excellent concise account of the grisly and brutal business of sealing.

⁹Kirker, Adventurers To China, p. 12.

¹⁰Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal," p. 402.

¹¹Thomas A. Stevens, The First American Sealers in the Antarctic, 1812-1819, and The First Voyage of the Brig Hersilia of Stonington, Report for the United States Department of State, May 1, 1954.

¹²Kirker, Adventurers To China, p. 12.

¹³Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal," p. 401.

When the Americans first came to . . . [Mas A Fuera, an island off the coast of southern Chile] about the year 1797, and began to make a business of killing seals, there is no doubt but there were two or three millions of them on the island. I have made an estimate of more than three million that have been carried to Canton from thence, in the space of seven years. I have carried more than one hundred thousand myself. . . . The method practised to take them was, to get between them and the water, and make a lane of men, two abreast, and then drive the seal through this lane, each man furnished with a club, between five and six feet long; and as they passed he knocked down such of them as he chose, . . . this is easily done, as a very small blow on the nose effects it. When stunned, knives are taken to cut or rip them down on the breast, from the under jaw to the tail, giving a stab in the breast that will kill them. After this, all hands go to skinning. . . . They take off all the fat, and some of the lean, with the skin as the more weight there is to the skin the easier it will beam. This [beaming] is performed in the same manner in which curriers flesh their skin; after which it is stretched and pegged on the ground to dry. It is necessary to keep it two days in pegs in fair weather to make it keep its shape. After this they are taken out of pegs, and stacked in the manner of salted dried cod fish. . . . [They] will keep for years . . . if kept dry. . . . They are carried to Canton, . . . they have been sold there as high as three or four dollars a skin, and as low as thirty-five cents; but the most common price . . . has been about one dollar. Three fourths of the payment for them is generally made in tea. Seals in the Southern latitudes go on shore in the months of November or December, for the purpose of bringing forth their young.¹⁴

In the seal rookeries of the Antarctic, Americans, encountered for the first time a limited, valuable, and fragile, animal population, which would soon disappear unless moderation controlled their actions. But it is difficult to expect moderation from men who saw such easy money lasciviously dangling before their eyes. With the smash of a club, and the rip of a knife, they obtained a sealskin worth \$1.00, a day's wages as late as 1870. Any idea of leaving enough to replenish the herds for the following years was probably absurd, since what they did not kill, their competitors would. Men living close to the soil, as did most men 175 years ago,

¹⁴ Amasa Delano, A Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres (Boston: the author, 1817), pp. 306-307.

felt little compunction about slaughtering and butchering animals, be they calves, pigs, chickens, or seals. And few people living in 1800 would have seriously contended that animals might have as much right to life as humans did. Once discovered, it was an easy task to strip an island rookery of its seal population; certainly a less arduous and more certain one than hunting whales in the vast oceans. So, of course, in almost no time at all, the newly discovered sealing grounds in the Southern Hemisphere, were exhausted.¹⁵

At the beginning of the present century [1800] the fur seal was in great abundance on nearly all the islands off the west coast of South America, from Cape Horn to the Equator, . . . everywhere on islands in those cold waters, the fur seal was found and captured; but so eager were the sealers for gain that no regard was paid to the danger of exterminating the animals by an indiscriminate slaughter of young and old seals, so that it was but a comparatively short time before once famous sealing grounds could no longer be visited with profit to the hunter.¹⁶

After the extermination of the seals at Mas A Fuera and other islands of South America's west coast by the early 1800's, vessels cruised throughout the southern seas in search of new grounds. Large cargoes were obtained at South Georgia, the Auckland Islands, The Crozets and other places.¹⁷

The number of sealing voyages from America declined sharply after 1804 although the exact number is difficult to discover. The statistics

¹⁵ Thomas Stevens compared the discovery of an island with a large seal population to discovering a gold mine. Not only was it a potential source of tremendous profits, but "secrecy of operation, became the principal stock in trade of the American sealer. In many instances the Captain and mate of a vessel were the only ones on board who were aware of the vessel's location. In some cases the crew was pledged to secrecy." Stevens, First American Sealers, p. 2.

¹⁶ Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal," p. 403.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

of A. Howard Clark, who evidently made the only compilation of American sealing voyages, are incomplete. Clark made no claim that his material on sealing was complete, but neither did he mention that more vessels might have been engaged in sealing than he had information on. His records were "compiled from the files of New London and New Bedford newspapers, from custom house records, and from information from merchants, retired sealers, and others at the various sealing ports." Edmund Fanning wrote that in 1801, off the Chilean coast "we found a small fleet of American sealers, being five ships and a schooner, from whom we learned there were upwards of thirty American sealing vessels on this coast whose cargoes were destined for the China market."¹⁸ Yet according to Clark's figures only five American vessels were involved in sealing in 1801.¹⁹

Although the number of voyages in the early days of Antarctic sealing was certainly more numerous than Clark would have us believe, he lists a decline from nine voyages in 1803 to two in 1804. The latter date marked the beginning of the decline of the first period of Antarctic sealing. According to Clark, only nine sealing voyages were made from America between 1804 and the War of 1812. The last sealing voyage before the war, ended abruptly when a Nantucket vessel was captured by a British warship soon after the outbreak of hostilities.

Sealing voyages in the period 1812 to 1820 are much more reliably documented by Thomas Stevens. In 1812, there is a record of only one sealing voyage, made by the brig Nanina of New York, while in 1813 and

¹⁸Edmund Fanning, Voyages and Discoveries In the South Seas, 1792-1832 (Salem, Mass.: Marine Research Society, 1924, (orig. pub. 1833), p. 223.

¹⁹At one point Clark, citing Edmund Fanning's Voyages and Discoveries, mentions that Fanning visited the South Shetlands. But nowhere in his book did Fanning claim that he ever visited those islands.

1814 there are no records of any clearances of American sealing vessels.²⁰ The end of the war in 1815, as might be expected, led to a revival of sealing. In that year three ships left from Nantucket, one from New Haven, and two from New York. One of the New York ventures, the voyage of the Volunteer, commanded by Edmund Fanning, had an important influence on Stonington's maritime history, for it served as a training cruise for several key figures in the town's whaling and sealing industries. Captain Fanning's first mate was Benjamin Pendleton, master of the Frederick, Stonington's first sealer, in 1818. Two years later Pendleton was commander of the first Stonington sealing fleet. Second mate on the Volunteer was James Pendleton Sheffield, master of the Hersilia, which, in 1819, became the first American vessel to work the vast seal rookeries of the South Shetland Islands. Two other officers on the Hersilia were also members of the Volunteer's crew: third mate Daniel W. Clark was first mate on the Hersilia, and William Fanning, Edmund's son, who was managing owner and supercargo of the Hersilia. (The supercargo was in charge of the cargo and commercial concerns of a merchant voyage.) Another crewman on the Volunteer was Benjamin Cutler, only 15; he was second mate on the Frederick, and later one of Stonington's most successful sealing and whaling captains. The Volunteer arrived back in New York April 13, 1817 with a full cargo of seal skins taken at the Falklands, Mas A Fuera, Gallipagos and St. Mary's Islands.²¹

In 1816, two vessels, both from Nantucket, went sealing in the southern oceans, in 1817, four: two from New Bedford and two from New York. One of the New York vessels was the Sea Fox commanded by the veteran sealer

²⁰ Stevens, First American Sealers, p. 20.

²¹ Ibid., p. 21.

Edmund Fanning on his last voyage.²² Tender to the Sea Fox was the Jane Maria, commanded by Benjamin Pendleton; first mate was James P. Sheffield.²³ Among the five sealing vessels that sailed in 1818, was Stonington's first, the Frederick.

It is difficult to explain why Stonington did not send a sealing vessel to the Antarctic before 1818.²⁴ Certainly many of the town's residents were aware of the tremendous profits which could be made in the seal fishery, since one of its leading figures, Edmund Fanning, was a Stonington native and had close ties with his old home. (The Betsey had completed her crew at Stonington, and departed from there for the Antarctic in June of 1797,²⁵ and many other local men had served under Fanning on his sealing voyages out of New York.) In addition, sealing voyages had been reported as early as 1799, in Stonington's first newspaper, The Journal of the Times. "Seal skins will be landed this week from on board

²²"I have this day agreed with Edmund Fanning that he shall have as compensation for his services to go out in new ship Sea Fox as Captain, eight percent out of all the oil, skins, etc. that the crews of said ship and brig Jane Maria shall take or procure during their respective voyages and fifty dollars per month wages and cabin stores for himself and officers furnished by the owners. James Myers, Esq. New York, Aug. 16, 1817." Fanning Collection, New York Geographical Society, New York.

²³Stevens, First American Sealers, pp. 24-25.

²⁴Although I have found no definite evidence, it is possible that Stonington sealers were operating in the Antarctic before the War of 1812. The following was taken from an 1831 petition to Andrew Jackson, signed by a number of key figures in the Stonington seal fishery, seeking protection for American sealing vessels at the Falkland Islands. "For more than thirty years the undersigned and other residents of this vicinity have been engaged in the seal fishery in the southern oceans . . . [at] the islands of South Shetland, South Georgia, Staten and Diego Ramirez, Tierra del Fuego and other islands in the vicinity of Cape Horn including the Southern Coast of Patagonia touching at Falkland Islands as a place of rendezvous and refuge." "Sealing Petition," Miscellaneous Collection, Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Connecticut.

²⁵Fanning, Voyages and Discoveries, pp. 40, 44.

the schooner Little Sarah. A number of excellent hair and fur seal skins of various sizes preserved in salt . . . for cash or short credit . . . George Howe, Stonington Port, Feb. 27, 1799."²⁶ The following year, another sealing voyage made by Howe was noted by The Journal of the Times, from Norwich. (It is not clear from where the Sarah sailed on her first voyage.) But these brief notices from the marine columns of Stonington's newspaper are the only mention of sealing before 1818 that I found.

Edmund Fanning was the key figure in the establishment of Stonington's seal fishery; without his efforts it is doubtful if Stonington would have become the nation's leading sealing port in the decade between 1820 and 1830.²⁷ One of his major contributions was the training of future sealing masters. Indeed, most of the sealing captains who went to antarctic regions in 1820-22 had previously sailed under Captain Fanning.²⁸ Fanning's family was one of the oldest in the town, and many of his ancestors, were, like Edmund, seafaring men. Thomas Fanning had settled in Mystic in 1665; his son Gilbert, Edmund's grandfather, was baptized in Stonington in 1694; soon after, the family moved to Long Island. Edmund's father, also named Gilbert, was born in Suffolk County, Long Island in 1733 and moved to Stonington in 1752. During the American Revolution, Gilbert sold provisions to the Continental Army. His brother remained loyal to the King and later became Governor General of Prince Edward Island.²⁹

²⁶ Stonington Journal of the Times, 27 February, 1799.

²⁷ John R. Spears, Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer: An Old Time Sailor of the Sea (New York: MacMillan Co., 1972), pp. 113-114.

²⁸ Lt. ---- Kane, "Earliest American Sealers in the Antarctic," Victor Collection, Yale University Manuscript Division, New Haven, Conn.

²⁹ "Fanning Genealogy," Unsigned typed manuscript, Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Conn.

Edmund Fanning was born at Stonington, July 16th, 1769.³⁰ At fourteen he went to sea as a cabin boy: "In the performance of several coasting and West India voyages out of Stonington and New London [I] rose through the regular grades of a seaman, second, and then first mate; and after performing in the last mentioned station three voyages to the West Indies, came to the resolution . . . to . . . sail from New York, as there were no prospects of a field opening for us suitable to our then ambitious views and desires, at our native place."³¹ Fanning made his first sealing voyage in 1792 as first mate on the brig Betsey bound for the Falkland Islands for fur seals and thence to Canton.³² In 1796 he received his first command: the schooner Dolly of New York, engaged in the Curacao trade: "While exercising a master's usual privilege of having several tons freight free allowed him, I had stowed the same with eighteen dozen beaver hats . . . together with one hundred and sixty kegs of butter. It was a most fortunate venture, the Curacao market was greatly in want of [butter] it readily brought fifty cents per pound. . . . This butter cost but twelve and a half cents [a pound] at home."³³

In 1797, at the suggestion of Capt. John Whetten, who was involved in the China trade, Fanning took command of the 100 ton brig Betsey (he also owned a 1/8 share of the vessel). His orders were to procure a cargo of fur seal skins and proceed to Canton. The Betsey's crew was obtained at

³⁰Fanning, Voyages and Discoveries, p. VIII.

³¹Ibid., p. 1. Fanning's book of memoirs, Voyages and Discoveries in the South Seas, first published in 1833, is a first rate adventure story as well as the autobiography of a modest, thoughtful, and attractive man.

³²Ibid., pp. 4-6.

³³Ibid., pp. 33-34.

New York, New Haven, and Stonington.³⁴ In 1800, he sailed south again, this time on the Aspasia, for a two year exploring and sealing expedition in the southern oceans.³⁵ In 1812, Fanning was commissioned to lead an official government expedition to the South Seas, but shortly after getting under way war with Britain broke out and he had to return.³⁶

In 1817, Fanning assumed his last command: the brig Sea Fox, on a seven month sealing voyage to the Falkland Islands. The following year he retired from active life to his home in Stonington.³⁷ In 1818, Edmund's son, William A. Fanning, visited New Haven where he purchased the brig Frederick, and brought her back to Stonington to be fitted out for a sealing voyage. William's principal associate in the venture was Captain Benjamin Pendleton of Stonington. "When Stonington's first sealing vessel was registered at the New London Custom House on September 30, 1818, her managing owner was recorded as William A. Fanning of New York, merchant, together with Captain Benjamin Pendleton, master and part owner."³⁸ Several of the men on the Frederick's crew served on subsequent sealing and whaling voyages out of Stonington: (some as masters), Benjamin S. Cutler, Nathaniel Niles, and Luther Fuller; while the names of Thomas Burtch and Henry Tinker are found on the crew lists of a number of Stonington ship's in the following years.

³⁴Fanning, Voyages and Discoveries, pp. 40-42.

³⁵Ibid., p. 206.

³⁶Kane, "Earliest American Sealers," p. 10.

³⁷Stevens, First American Sealers, p. 31.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 31-32.

TABLE 1

CREW LIST OF THE BRIG FREDERICK BOUND FOR THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Age</u>
Master	Benjamin Pendleton	Stonington	Stonington	
	Jonathan Pendleton	Stonington	Stonington	24
	Benjamin S. Cutler	New York	Stonington	18
	John Cullum	New York	New York	20
	Thomas Burtch 2nd	Stonington	Stonington	37
Cooper	Luther Fuller	Hampton	Stonington	23
	Gilbert H. Wheeler	Virginia	Stonington	20
	John A. Stevens	Scotland	Stonington	25
	Charles M. Brown	Rhode Island	Stonington	25
	Henry Tinker	Lyme	Stonington	21
	Sylvester Willcox	Stonington	Stonington	17
	Samuel Rathbun	Rhode Island	Stonington	25
	Ira Chesebrough	Montville	Stonington	25
	Nathaniel Niles	Stonington	Stonington	25
	John Dring	Stonington	Stonington	18
	William M. Aken	Athens, N.Y.	Stonington	19
	Augustus Burdick	Rhode Island	Stonington	28
	Nathaniel Miller	Stonington	Stonington	23
	Philip Huffman	Rhode Island	Stonington	21
	Edward Cullum	New York	Stonington	18

(This crew list was dated Nov. 15, 1819, and probably meant that these were the men on board when the ship returned to Stonington.)³⁹

The Frederick sailed south from Stonington on October 10, 1818 and returned November 13, 1819 with a cargo of 28,000 sealskins taken at St. Mary's and the Gallipagos Islands off the west coast of South America.⁴⁰

³⁹"Crew Lists," New London Customs District, Record Group 26, Federal Records Center, Waltham, Mass. Nineteen of the Frederick's twenty crewmen listed Stonington as their home, but I don't think they were all actually residents of the town. For instance, no trace of the names Cullum, and Huffman can be found on any of Stonington's census schedules or tax rolls and they were probably not bona fide residents. I am not sure why a sailor's residence would be of interest to anybody, unless it was to insure, that in the event of any debilitating injury he could be sent home to become a charge on the town he legally resided in. It would seem that no proof of residence was required of seamen, (it would have probably been difficult for most people to produce any document proving residence in 1819), for apparently many, merely for the sake of convenience, listed the hailing port of the ship they were currently serving upon, as their home. Still, more than half of the Frederick's crew were probable residents of Stonington, a much higher proportion than was later found on the crews of whale ships.

⁴⁰Stevens, First American Sealers, p. 27.

Her cargo was sold at auction in Stonington Borough in December. "Will be sold at public auction, at the Port of Stonington, Conn., . . . the 8th of December, next . . . the entire cargo of the brig Frederick, Capt. B. Pendleton, from the South Seas, consisting of 28,000 salted, fur and hair seal skins. Terms, cash for all sums less than \$500 - over that, approved notes at 90 days. . . . Also at the same time and place, the said brig Frederick as she arrived from her voyage. She was built at Guilford, is five years old - has two decks, is 147 tons . . . terms of sale - 90 days. . . . Benjamin Pendleton, E. Faxon, Jr. agents."⁴¹ The Frederick's cargo was sold at Stonington for \$21,378.⁴²

Stonington's most important contribution to the American seal fishery was the voyage of the Hersilia, the first American ship to work the seal rookeries of the South Shetland Islands. Kane notes that sealers from Stonington possibly reached the South Shetlands before 1819 since Niles Weekly Register of September 30, 1820 reported that: "The newly discovered land in the Pacific Ocean, south of Cape Horn, has been known to Brother Jonathan, at least so long that a voyage to and from the island has actually been completed out of the port of Stonington, Connecticut. But less ambitious about the honor than the profit, he was content, from the experience of the first voyage to move on quietly in the purchase of ships, which he had done to the extent of seven or eight within a few months."⁴³

⁴¹New London Gazette, 17 November 1819, p. 3. The practice of selling a whaler or sealer along with her cargo was not uncommon, I am not certain why it was done. One might have expected a little sentimental loyalty to a ship which had made such a lucky voyage, but often captains were instructed by owners to sell their ships whenever a good profit could be made.

⁴²Stevens, First American Sealers, p. 27.

⁴³Kane, "Earliest American Sealers," p. 5.

But, according to Kane, no records exist to substantiate this claim.⁴⁴ Captain Edmund Fanning, who was undoubtedly the man responsible for the voyage of the Hersilia, makes no mention in his book, published in 1833, of a voyage to the South Shetlands before 1819. The discovery of the sealing rookeries were based, Fanning wrote, upon a hunch. Fanning was certainly the "purchaser of seven or eight ships," since he and his son were the organizers of the Stonington sealing fleet assembled after the Hersilia's return. But, there was no reason for him not to mention an earlier voyage, if he had made one, in his book.

Yet Kane did give some credence to the possibility that Americans had been operating in the South Shetlands earlier than 1819, and given that secrecy which characterized sealing, it is possible.⁴⁵

Three months before the Frederick returned to Stonington, the port's second sealer, the Hersilia, sailed for the southern Oceans, around July 22, 1818.⁴⁶ Prime mover in this expedition was again Edmund Fanning,⁴⁷ who had supervised the building of the 130 ton brig in the yards of Christopher Leeds, master shipbuilder of Mystic. "The Hersilia was registered at New London July 20, 1819, by her new captain, James P. Sheffield of Stonington. Managing owner was William A. Fanning Merchant, of New York. Involved in the venture with Fanning were James P. Sheffield, Mariner of Stonington,

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁵Kane believed that a communication from Captain J. Hasburgh, Hydrographer to the East India Company to Heinrich Berghaus, author of the Physical Atlas, in which Hasburgh claimed that American sealers had been at work in the South Shetlands since 1812, and had kept their field of operations secret to exclude competition, could perhaps have had some basis in fact. Kane, "Earliest American Sealers," p. 4.

⁴⁶Stevens, First American Sealers, p. 30.

⁴⁷Spears, Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer, p. 20.

Ephraim Williams, Elisha Faxon, Elisha Faxon, Jr., Samuel F. Denison, Henry Smith and Jedidiah Randall, all of New London County."⁴⁸ (Randall was actually a New Yorker, all the rest were residents of Stonington.) Edmund Fanning was convinced that land existed south of Cape Horn, and if this land could be reached, vast numbers of seals would be found.⁴⁹ Fanning's convictions were based on two things: the manuscript chart of Captain Dirck Gherritz's voyage in the Dutch ship Goodnews in 1599 which described the discovery of land south of Cape Horn,⁵⁰ and a natural phenomenon Fanning had witnessed on an earlier voyage to the Southern Oceans.

I had previously been in the spring, at South Georgia at the breaking up of the winter ice a few days after a gale had set in from W.S.W.; fleets of ice islands came from that quarter giving decisive evidence that land did exist in that direction . . . [for ice islands] must have had land to form at, or they could never have been in existence. Thus the master and supercargo were instructed [by me] to sail to the Falkland Islands, to take on water and some fresh provisions, and then to search for the Aurora Islands, and should seals be there found, to procure their cargo, . . . [and if not finding seals there to return to Staten Land then sail south to latitude 63° then sail east] where it was confidently expected they would meet with land.⁵¹

The Hersilia did reach the Auroras, but found them to be not much more than rocks, with "no landing place, even for amphibious animals, on them." After leaving the Auroras, the brig sailed westward for Staten Land; where they took on wood and water, and then steered south to about 63° South latitude, arriving at a group of islands they named the Fanning Islands, anchoring at one which they named Ragged Island. Here they discovered vast seal herds, estimated at 50,000. They took several thousand

⁴⁸Stevens, First American Sealers, p. 33.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 32.

⁵⁰Fanning, Voyages and Discoveries, p. 301.

⁵¹Fanning, Voyages and Discoveries, pp. 301-302.

skins, but not having sufficient salt for curing, and the weather being too wet for drying the skins, the Hersilia left with less than a full cargo.⁵² The Hersilia arrived home May 21, 1820, her cargo of 8,868 fur seal skins, the first taken from the South Shetlands by an American vessel, sold at auction in Stonington for \$22,146.⁵³

The return of the Hersilia prompted intense excitement in New England,⁵⁴ for unlike the Frederick, whose voyage was to places previously visited by sealers, the Hersilia had opened new grounds which might prove to be the most valuable yet discovered. "By a stroke of luck, when the Hersilia arrived, Captain Dunbar, the master of the Free Gift, tender to the Frederick, had not yet sailed."⁵⁵ William A. Fanning, supercargo of the Hersilia, gave Dunbar the information regarding the South Shetlands, which Dunbar communicated to Captain Benjamin Pendleton of the Frederick, when they rendezvoused as planned at the Falklands. During the next two months, William A. Fanning and his father organized the rest of the Stonington sealing fleet. The second unit of the fleet included the Hersilia, the Express and the Hero, but because the location of the South Shetlands

⁵²The South Shetland Archipelago lies in the South Atlantic 300 miles south of Cape Horn. These Islands had been discovered 15 months earlier by a British mariner, Captain Smith and named by him the South Shetlands. Fanning, Voyages and Discoveries, pp. 303-4. Stevens wrote that knowledge of land south of Cape Horn did not reach America until 1820, (Stevens, First American Sealers, p. 1), after the Hersilia had left Stonington.

⁵³Stevens, First American Sealers, pp. 48-49.

⁵⁴Spears, Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer, p. 42.

⁵⁵According to marine columns the Free Gift sailed on May 21, 1820 - the same day the Hersilia arrived at Stonington. Stackpole, Voyage of The Huron, p. 15. The duty of a tender was to take the men from the larger ship to the shore and later pick up and return the skins taken. The men landed would set up camps at the rookeries selected along the shore, erecting rude tents for shelter and caching their provisions. Whaleboats were used to carry men and provisions between tender and shore. Stackpole, The Voyage of The Huron, p. 33.

was known by Dunbar, the Stonington fleet was in complete domination of the sealing grounds on the southern shores of the islands, when vessels from other ports arrived.⁵⁶

Only six American vessels had made sealing voyages the previous year, but in 1820, aroused by the possibilities which the South Shetlands offered, twenty four sealers set out from the United States (including vessels from New York, Nantucket, and New Haven), as well as English and Russian vessels, making a total fleet of thirty.⁵⁷ The sealers arrived in late autumn but unfortunately for them, Stonington held the dominant position in the sealing grounds. Out of the 150,000 sealskins which Clark estimated were taken in the 1820-1821 season, Stonington vessels took 88,000.⁵⁸ But the bottom of the horn of plenty was much closer than had been imagined. The New London Gazette of May 2, 1821 printed an extract from a letter written at the South Shetlands a few months earlier by Captain Joseph Henfield of the Catharine. "We have been much mistaken about sealing in this country, as there is but little ground that the seals come upon, and a greater number of vessels than were supposed there would be. The country is a wild, cold disagreeable mass of snow and ice and its shores are extremely dangerous."⁵⁹ (One of the Stonington fleet, the brig

⁵⁶Stevens, First American Sealers, pp. 49-50. The Stonington sealing fleet of 1820 (taken from Stackpole Voyage of the Huron, pp. 15-16): Frederick, Master Benjamin Pendleton (commander of the fleet), the schooner Freegift, tender to the Frederick under Capt. Thomas Dunbar of Westerly, brig Hersilia, Capt. James P. Sheffield, schooner Express, Capt. Ephraim Williams, sloop Hero, Capt. Nathaniel B. Palmer, Ship Clothier, Capt. Alexander Clark of Nantucket, Brig Emeline, Capt. Jeremiah Holmes, and brig Catharine, Capt. Joseph Henfield.

⁵⁷Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal," p. 406.

⁵⁸Ibid., in addition Stonington vessels took 1500 barrels of sea elephant oil worth \$10 a barrel. Spears, Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer, pp. 90-91.

⁵⁹New London Gazette, 2 May 1821, p. 3.

Clothier, was wrecked at the South Shetlands.)⁶⁰

As might have been expected, the growing scarcity of seals led to friction among the sealers, and a pitched battle between Americans and British was narrowly averted in January of 1821. Nine American masters, including Pendleton, Sheffield, Williams, and Dunbar of Stonington, agreed to act together "to muster all our men from our several camps and as one body to go on to said beach at Sheriff's Cape and to take seal by fair means if we could but at all events to take them."⁶¹ Stackpole believed hostilities were avoided probably because the British were too well armed.⁶²

Soon there would be nothing left to fight for anyway, because "the slaughter of the seals resulted in their almost total extinction [at the South Shetlands]. Never again would there be the rich harvest of pelts."⁶³ Clark estimated that 250,000 skins were taken in the 1820-21 season, the Americans taking 150,000 of those, while thousands more were killed and lost. The New London Gazette of May 9, 1821, reported that the Frederick, Free Gift, and Express had returned to Stonington with "65,000 large size prime, salted fur seal skins, in excellent order for the London or European market," and by June 20, the Catharine and Emeline had returned with 20,000 more sealskins.⁶⁴ But the greed of the sealers resulted in the destruction of the South Shetland seal rookeries in only one season. "A system of

⁶⁰Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal," p. 448.

⁶¹Stackpole, Voyage of the Huron, p. 44.

⁶²Ibid., p. 46.

⁶³Ibid., p. 70.

⁶⁴New London Gazette, 9 May 1821, p. 3; 20 June 1821. According to the Stonington Yankee of December 27, 1826, the skins brought back by the first Stonington fleet brought over \$102,000 in the auctions at Stonington Borough.

extermination was practised at the South Shetlands; for whenever a seal reached the beach of whatever [sex] it was immediately killed. . . . At the end of the second year the animals became nearly extinct, the young, having lost their mothers when only three or four days old of course died, which at the lowest calculation exceeded 100,000." No more than 5000 seal skins were taken at the South Shetlands the following year.⁶⁵

During the summer of 1821, apparently ignorant of the extent to which the seal population had been decimated, the Stonington sealers prepared another fleet for the South Shetlands. It was to be a joint operation and included the brigs Frederick and Alabama Packet, schooners Express and Free Gift, and sloops Hero and James Monroe. The following sailing orders to N. B. Palmer indicate something about how the operation was to be conducted.

Captain Nathaniel B. Palmer: Sir, you will proceed to sea with the sloop James Monroe in company with the brig Alabama Packet [and sail for] Deception Harbor in New South Iceland [the name Gherritz had given to the South Shetlands],

⁶⁵ Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal," pp. 406-407. The Hersilia did not return to Stonington with the rest of the sealing fleet but sailed for the west coast of South America, (Stackpole, Voyage of the Huron, p. 85) where she was captured off Chile in May of 1821, by Spanish loyalists attempted to hold Chile in subjection to Spain. The vessel was subsequently destroyed in a battle with the Patriots. Her crew was liberated by a British naval squadron and returned to the United States. (Spears, Nathaniel Brown Palmer, p. 88). The New London Gazette of January 30, 1822, contained a report of the incident. "E. Fanning Esq., has obligingly furnished us the following information. 'Letters by New York Mail have been received from Messrs. Luther Fuller and Jonas Horn, the second and third officers of Brig Hersilia, Capt. J. Sheffield . . . stating that the Hersilia, with a cargo of 14,000 seal skins on board, was taken possession of by the Spaniards, on the 13th of last May, at the islands of St. Mary's coast of Chile and carried into port, where the brig was discharged and dispatched immediately to sea. Capt. Sheffield, his officers and crew were kept at the town of Oroco, as prisoners. . . . Messrs. Fuller and Horn, with three of their crew took a boat and made their escape. They arrived at Concepcion where they took passage on board of an English vessel for . . . Monte Video.'" Apparently some restitution was made to the owners of the Hersilia, but how much and by whom, I have no idea. "Notice - a dividend of 17 per cent will be made and paid to the stockholders of the South Sea concern of brig Hersilia on application to the office of the agents in the borough. E. Fanning, B. Pendleton, agents." Stonington Yankee, 8 December 1824, p. 3.

where you will employ your crew in taking elephant blubber and procuring seal skins. You will consider yourself and crew and vessel mated with the brig Frederick and Alabama Packet, schooners Express and Free Gift and sloop Hero, and you will share with them in proportion to the number of their and your crews. Your vessel is fitted out for the express purpose to act as a tender to the vessels of this concern. E. Fanning, B. Pendleton, agents for the concern.⁶⁶

In a letter to his father the following January, William A. Fanning wrote that the South Shetland expedition would have to be abandoned.

Dear Father, I shall now attempt to give you some account of our voyage hither to. [We] all arrived safe at Deception [Harbor]⁶⁷ where we found the Express and Freegift, turned all to immediately, secured the vessels and began our sealing, after being 70 or 80 days having got only about 1000 skins and 11 bbls. of oil, no prospect of seal, we have thought best to send home the Express and the Freegift and proceed with the others around Cape Horn where we shall endeavor to fill the Frederick this season and send her home, the Alabama and Hero must remain so long as their resources hold out.⁶⁸

By August, 1822, it was evident that the second Stonington sealing expedition, which had looked so disastrous in January, would be successful, though on a smaller scale than that of the previous year. This time Fanning wrote his father from St. Mary's Island, off the west coast of South America,

Dear Father, we have now on board the Alabama 11,000 skins, hair. . . . The Frederick, had on board, near 24 or 25 thousand, which will make in all 35 or 36 thousand, 1/2 to each vessel. The sealing season is now over here and I shall proceed to the Leward after one more trip with the sloop to Mocha, I am in hopes to make up 20 thousand in about 5 months from now if not, I must return home as I have but 8 or 9 months provisions . . . and 3 or 3 1/2 months must be allowed for my passage home. Neither

⁶⁶Balch, "Stonington Antarctic Explorers," pp. 10, 11.

⁶⁷Fanning was aboard the Alabama Packet which left Stonington July 25, 1821 and reached Deception Harbor on November 6, the vessel returned home the end of June, 1823. Log 107, Marine Historical Association, G. W. Blunt White Library, Mystic, Conn.

⁶⁸William Fanning to Edmund Fanning, 27 January 1822, Fanning Collection, New York Geographical Society.

Benjamin [Pendleton] nor myself know what to do with the sloop [the Alabama's tender] in case I should not be able to sell her at Valparaiso, after we have done sealing she must go for what she will fetch.⁶⁹

The cargoes of the Alabama Packet and Frederick were sold at auction in Stonington for \$41,500.⁷⁰ Three of the small ships of the Stonington fleet, the Express, Free Gift and Hero, had a combined cargo of 1200 barrels of sea elephant oil⁷¹ and 1200 large fur seal skins, all sold at auction in Stonington in April, 1822.⁷² Three additional sealing vessels, the Catharine, the Essex, and the Emeline, evidently not allied with the second Stonington fleet, also sailed from the borough to the Southern Oceans. The following returns were reported in the New London Gazette in 1822. "The cargoes of brig Catharine and sloop Essex, 1000 bbls elephant oil and 600 fur seal skins were sold at auction in May, 1822." The agents for these two ships were William Williams, Samuel F. Denison and Gurdon Trumbull. On November 3, 1822, the brig Emeline was home from the South Seas, after an 80 day passage, with 9000 hair and 150 fur seal skins.⁷³

The indifferent returns made by the second sealing fleet ended any dreams there might have been for annual incursions into the antarctic seal rookeries by large numbers of vessels out of Stonington. Generally, in

⁶⁹ Ibid., St. Mary's, 8 August 1822.

⁷⁰ Stonington Yankee, 27 December 1826.

⁷¹ "The sea elephant, or elephant seal, yields an oil but little inferior to sperm oil. [They are] found . . . generally in about the same localities as the fur seal. The place of [their] greatest abundance is at Heard's Island in the Southern Indian Ocean." Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal," p. 403.

⁷² New London Gazette, 24 April 1822, p. 3.

⁷³ Ibid., 22 May 1822, p. 3; 6 November 1822, p. 3.

each year between 1823 and 1854, only one or two sealing vessels left Stonington and sailed southward, although in 1825 four sealing vessels left Stonington for the Antarctic. In 1835, an attempt was made to prosecute the fishery on a large scale once again. In that year, nine sealing vessels left Stonington for the Antarctic, but the returns were disappointing: only 18,700 fur seal skins, 2750 hair seal skins, and 34 barrels of elephant oil.⁷⁴ By 1837, when only three sealers cleared for the Antarctic, the Stonington sealing fleet had reverted to its normally modest proportions. The perpetual bonanza which the opening of the South Shetlands seemed to promise never materialized. The Antarctic seal population was simply insufficient for exploitation on the scale of that first season. By the 1830's whaling had become the principal concern of Stonington's sea faring men, and by 1846, sealing was just about dead.

Of the sealing voyages made out of Stonington between 1823 and 1854, only those of the Seraph and the Penguin in 1829 merit any attention. The Seraph sailed in company with the brig Annawan and schooner Penguin in a combined sealing and exploring expedition that "marked the first time an American scientist entered Antarctic regions, resulting in the remarkably advanced reports of Dr. James Eights."⁷⁵ Prime mover in the expedition, as in nearly all of Stonington's sealing ventures, was Edmund Fanning, an early advocate of government exploration of the Antarctic. In fact, Fanning had been commissioned by President Madison to lead an Antarctic expedition in 1812, but the outbreak of war with Britain ended the scheme.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal," p. 402

⁷⁵Kenneth J. Bertrand, Americans in Antarctica (New York: American Geographical Society, 1971), p. 144.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 144-5.

In the late 1820's Fanning was again pressing for a government financed expedition to the Antarctic, but the inauguration of Andrew Jackson ended any hopes for such a project. So Fanning and several others formed a South Sea company to sponsor a private expedition in which sealing would help meet expenses. Associated with Fanning were two New Yorkers, a New Bedfordite, and fellow Stoningtonians Benjamin Pendleton and "Nat" Palmer.⁷⁷ On board the Penguin, flagship of the expedition, was scientist James Eights who produced the first scientific accounts of Antarctica.⁷⁸

Between 1854 and 1872, no sealing vessels left Stonington for the Antarctic. Clark reported that after the 1840's few fur seal were taken in the Antarctic, and American vessels concentrated on the capture of elephant seals.⁷⁹ In 1871, a group of New London merchants attempted to revive the dormant Antarctic seal fishery, sending a fleet of three schooners to the South Shetlands for fur seal.⁸⁰ The following year, Stonington merchants purchased two Gloucester, Mass. schooners, previously used in the cod and mackeral fisheries, the Thomas Hunt and the Charles Shearer.⁸¹ The 63 ton Thomas Hunt's second voyage out of Stonington, was probably the only profitable sealing venture from the port after the 1830's. "The sealing schooner Thomas Hunt, Capt. Appleman, arrived here from the South Shetlands Sunday morning, with a cargo of 1408 prime seal skins. As the

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 146.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 427.

price of skins has advanced within a short time, the voyage will probably be a profitable one to all concerned. The remaining vessels of the sealing fleet made losing voyages, the Thomas Hunt taking more seal than all the others combined."⁸² Unlike the salad days, auctions of sealskins were no longer held in Stonington, and the Thomas Hunt's cargo was shipped to London where it was sold for \$33,000.⁸³

The Thomas Hunt's sister ship, the 97 ton schooner Charles Shearer, was not nearly as fortunate. In October, 1877, a crew of seven men from the Shearer, was left with three months supplies on the Island of Diego Ramirez. The seven men were to take what seals they could, while the Shearer went on a search for new rookeries, but the vessel never returned. The men left on Diego Ramirez were rescued by a merchant ship, but a search party was unable to locate any trace of the Charles Shearer, or the rest of her crew.⁸⁴

By the 1880's it was evident that the attempt to revive the Antarctic fur seal fishery was futile, and in 1884 the Stonington Mirror reported the disappointing voyage of one of the town's two remaining sealing vessels. "Sealing schooner Thomas Hunt, Capt. Andrew J. Eldred, reached this port last Monday. The Hunt has been absent twenty two months and has taken 3,760 seal skins. The voyage is said by the owner to be a losing one, in consequence of the great decline in the price of skins in the London market.

⁸² Mystic, Conn., Journal, 14 May 1874, p. 2. Four men died on the voyage. "January 21st in an attempt to land, the boat capsized in the surf and four of the crew were drowned: Andrew Jacobs of New York, James Mehan of Pawtucket, R.I., and two Portuguese." Ibid., 14 May 1874, p. 2.

⁸³ Stonington Mirror, 2 July 1874, p. 2.

⁸⁴ Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal," p. 404. The Shearer was valued with outfits at \$16,000. Approximately 15 men including Captain William Appleman of Mystic were presumed dead.

It is probable that she will not be refitted."⁸⁵

If the 1887 log of Stonington's last sealer, The Sarah W. Hunt, is a true indication of conditions, only a lunatic would have continued in the business anyway. Four men deserted at the Azores, two weeks after the Sarah Hunt left Stonington. (This in itself was not too unusual since many Portuguese seamen, natives of the Azores, would sign on whaling vessels, with no intention of sailing any further than their homes. By jumping ship they saved passage money which they could ill afford.) The Sarah Hunt's second mate, Antone Perier, died off Argentina in March of 1888, after a brief illness. Two weeks later the steward tried to stab the captain and was taken off the ship in irons. On May 7th, at the Straits of Magellan, "found two of our crew missing supposed they undertook to swim ashore." Judging by the water temperature in those latitudes they must have really wanted to leave. On the 11th of May, the new second mate, a Mr. Potter, took the starboard boat, a rifle, a pair of boots, and deserted with five of the crew.

Presumably the captain of the Sarah Hunt, James W. Buddington, failed to warn Potter's replacement, A. Peterson, of the hazards of the position; for the new second mate was knocked overboard by the main sheet and drowned, in August of 1888. The Sarah W. Hunt returned to Stonington in December, 1888, with 1500 sealskins for her trouble, which was, it must be admitted, considerable.⁸⁶ The Sarah W. Hunt was not only Stonington's last sealer, but the town's last whaler as well. The Sarah Hunt's final voyage from

⁸⁵ Stonington Mirror, 19 April 1884, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Log Sarah W. Hunt, 1887-1888, Log 43, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.

Stonington was made in July 1891. She returned the following year with 1500 seal skins and 300 pounds of whalebone. On October 1, 1892, the Mirror announced that "the whaling and sealing schooner Sarah W. Hunt, has been sold to go to New Bedford, where she will fit for another whaling cruise."⁸⁷

Stonington Sealing Crews

Among the documents deposited at the Federal Record Center in Waltham, Massachusetts are crew lists for 60 sealing voyages made out of Stonington between 1818 and 1842. The majority of crewmen on Stonington sealers, as on Stonington whalers, were not residents of the town. Out of the 892 crewmen who served on the 60 sealing voyages, only 217 or about 25% gave their residence as Stonington. As in whaling, there was a rapid turnover in help in the seal fishery. Only 24 local residents made more than one voyage as crewmen on Stonington sealers. Of these 24, four, Phineas Wilcox, Gilbert and Thomas Davidson (or Davison), and Jonas Horn, eventually rose to command Stonington sealers. Another, Daniel Carew, who made three sealing voyages in the late 1820's, took command of the sealing schooner Breakwater in 1830, although he was only 21 years old. Two years later Carew was captain of the whaler Francis, and in 1836 he was master of the whaler Charles Adams.

Eleven Stonington men, Green Wilcox, Gordon Spencer, Joseph Bailey, Isaac Pendleton, James E. Dewey, Allen and Ambrose Fish, Edward P. Dewey, Isaac Wilcox, Joseph Peters who was black, and Evan Evans (a Welshman who later made a number of whaling voyages), made only two sealing voyages on Stonington vessels. Thus a surprisingly small number of Stonington men

⁸⁷Stonington Mirror, 1 October 1892, p. 2.

made their living as sailors before the mast, either on sealers or whalers, of their home town. Only Amos Nugent, Nathaniel Dewey, Nathaniel P. Brown, Oliver York, Henry M. Tinker, John Perry, Nathan Wilcox, and William M. Akins; eight men in all, made more than two voyages as crewmen on Stonington sealing vessels. The salty dogs among these old "tars" were Nathaniel P. Brown who made six voyages between 1818 and 1842, Oliver York who made five (the first on board the Alabama Packet in 1823 at the relatively advanced age of 33), and Henry M. Tinker who made five voyages, his first on the Frederick, Stonington's first sealer.⁸⁸

Unfortunately, the logs kept on board Stonington sealers were not of much value, and I know very little about daily life on Antarctic seal fishery. Antarctic sealing had little of whaling's grandeur and romantic appeal. In place of the warm and dreamy tropical Pacific with its beautiful green islands, which lured many young men, including Herman Melville, on board whaleships; were the icy southern oceans, barren rocky uninhabited coasts, and almost constant cloudiness and precipitation. The absence of journals, which were common on whaling voyages, is perhaps an indication that sealing held little attraction for the type of man who went whaling in search of adventure. The few Stonington sealing logs I looked at were dreary workaday accounts of latitude and longitude, number of skins taken, provisions consumed, etc. The best general accounts of Antarctic sealing are Edmund Fanning's Voyages and Discoveries in the South Seas, first published in 1833, and Amasa Delano's Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, published in 1817.

Almost all of the vessels engaged in the Antarctic seal fishery out

⁸⁸"Crew lists," Records of the United States Coast Guard for the New London District, Record Group 26, Federal Records Center, Waltham, Mass.

of Stonington were smaller than the typical whale ship. They were generally schooners; few exceeded 100 tons. A ships company averaged about 16 men. As a rule voyages lasted nearly two years; vessels usually left between July and October and returned in the spring. I have found almost no information on wages and profits, but assume that sealing crews, like those on board the Betsey under Edmund Fanning, always worked on shares, as this was the usual practice in fisheries and whaling.

The seal fishery offered excellent opportunities for advancement. At least eighteen of forty eight Stonington residents who made sealing voyages between 1819 and 1839, rose to command sealing, whaling or trading vessels. Opportunities for command were especially abundant for those who participated in the earliest sealing voyages out of Stonington. All four of the Stonington residents on board the Alabama Packet in 1821, William Pendleton, Robert S. Bottom, William L. Williams, and Alexander S. Palmer;⁸⁹ and four of the six on board the Frederick in 1818, Jonathan Pendleton, Benjamin S. Cutler, Nathaniel Niles and Luther Fuller; became ship's captains. None of the eight crewmen were over 24, for sealing, like whaling, was an occupation for very young men. It was unusual for a crewman, other than a captain, to be over 25. Although they probably never became captains of vessels, twelve of the forty eight Stonington men who made sealing cruises between 1819 and 1839 nevertheless became members of a rather restricted group of local society. These twelve men, as property owners (all of them owned their own homes except William Akins who owned a share of the Only Son in 1823), belonged to an elite from which most of their neighbors in Stonington Borough were excluded throughout the Nineteenth Century.

⁸⁹ Palmer, brother of "Nat" Palmer, was only 15 when he sailed on the Alabama Packet. At 23 he was captain of the sealer Penguin.

There is little that can be said about the other eighteen Stonington men who made sealing voyages, i.e., those who neither rose to command their own vessels, nor accumulated enough money to become property owners in the town. Some like Henry Tinker, Nathaniel P. Brown, and Amos Nugent, participants in a number of sealing expeditions, resided in Stonington Borough for years. All of them were undoubtedly respectable, but poor men who eked out a modest living at sea. Others like Gardiner Spencer, Thomas Miner 3d, and Benjamin F. Wheeler, must have sought their fortunes elsewhere as their names are absent from census lists and tax rolls. But in general, none of the Stonington sealmen seem to have been anything like the riff-raff who infested whaleships, especially in the latter years of that industry.

Sealing: Cost and Ownership of Vessels

Sealing required a much smaller investment from its financial backers than whaling. The most significant saving was in the cost of the vessel since sealers were generally less than one half the price of a whale ship. (Of course the smaller crews on board sealers and shorter voyages contributed to reduction of costs.) One result was that the economic status of a number of shareholders in Stonington sealing vessels was lower than most of the investors in the Stonington whaling fleet. For instance, with almost no exceptions, no whaleman below the rank of captain owned shares in Stonington whalers, while a number of crewmen (other than captains) owned shares in Stonington sealers, particularly during the early years. Benjamin S. Cutler, second mate on the Frederick in 1818, owned a share of the schooner Express (part of the first Stonington sealing fleet) in 1820-21. William Pendleton, first mate on the Alabama Packet in 1821, also owned a share of the Express in 1820. Asa Lee, who had been sealmaster on board

the Hersilia in 1819, (a sealmasters duties are not clear but he ranked below boatswain, so he was apparently no more than a minor officer) owned shares of the Frederick, Clothier, and Emeline, three vessels of the first Stonington fleet. William H. Akins, who was on board the Hero in 1821, owned a share of the Only Son in 1823; Luther Fuller, who had been a cooper on the Frederick's first voyage in 1818, owned a share of sloop Hero of the first Stonington fleet; and Thomas S. Breed, who in 1823 was second mate on the Only Son, also owned a share in a vessel of the first sealing fleet, the schooner Free Gift.

My main point is that sealing, not whaling, approached that capitalist propagandist's ideal of widespread ownership of the means of production, since in the seal fishery a man did not have to wait until he became a captain to purchase a share in a vessel. Many of these plebeian capitalists were undoubtedly aided by their participation in the extraordinarily successful voyages made by Stonington's first sealers, since the cash outlay for even the 1/128th share sold to druggist David S. Hart, would have been difficult for most individuals to meet in 1820. "This certifies that I have this day sold to Mr. David S. Hart, one hundredth and twenty eighth part of the brig Hersilia and outfits for voyage to the South Seas for the sum of ninety three 75-100 dollars. The said David S. Hart is to receive the profits or bear the loss of the same, like proportion of her said Brig's voyage. Stonington. June 14, 1820, Benjamin Pendleton."⁹⁰ As in almost all corporate enterprises, however, the real owners of Stonington sealing vessels were not small shareholders like David S. Hart, but rich men like General William Williams. Williams, who was born in Stonington in 1765, was engaged for a time in the West Indian trade at New London.⁹¹

⁹⁰"An Old Bill of Sale," Stonington Mirror, 14 June 1890, p. 1.

⁹¹D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., History of New London County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1882), p. 700.

In 1820, after he had moved back to Stonington, Williams and ten others subscribed \$23,000 to purchase and outfit three vessels for the Antarctic seal fishery: the Clothier, Catharina and Emeline. Williams, a gentleman farmer and merchant, was one of the wealthiest men in Stonington. He lived outside of the borough and in 1820 owned two houses worth \$1700, 200 acres of land, \$500 worth of bank stock, and one of the few carriages in the town. The carriage was rated at \$100, \$10 more than Azariah Stanton, Jr.'s house.⁹² Williams owned 70 shares of the three vessels; at \$100 a share his total expenditure was \$7000. Largest shareholder in the enterprise was George Astor of New York who owned 80 shares. Only three of the ten shareholders lived in the town of Stonington: Williams, his son William Williams, Jr., and Peleg Denison, a merchant from Mystic, who owned a house worth \$720 and \$3500 worth of land in 1820.⁹³

By the time the Clothier and Emeline were registered at the New London Customs House in 1820, some of the original investors had sold their interests. Most of the new owners were residents of Stonington.⁹⁴ The problem with ship's registry papers is that they seldom list the amount owned by a particular shareholder, so that one might imagine that Asa Lee, the minor officer on the Hersilia, and the aforementioned David S. Hart, two of the new owners of the Clothier, were coequal partners with William Williams. But of course, neither Lee, who owned only a house worth \$270 in

⁹²Stonington, Conn., Grand List Abstract, 1820.

⁹³Trumbull Account Book, Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Connecticut; Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1820.

⁹⁴Stackpole, Voyage of the Huron, Appendix C.

1820,⁹⁵ nor Hart who owned no taxable property at all, could have raised \$7000 to purchase 70 shares of the Stonington sealing fleet.

Although it was easier for a person of moderate means to invest in a sealer, most of the owners of both sealing and whaling vessels had accumulated a fair estate before they ever purchased a share. Almost all of the thirteen Stonington residents who were shareholders in the Frederick and the Hersilia, the borough's first sealers, were members of the miniscule and relatively modest economic elite of the place. There were eighteen different shareholders in the two vessels. William A. Fanning, one of the organizers of the expeditions, was a resident of New York, as was Jedidiah Randall. Daniel Packer and Thomas Perry may have lived in Groton; Jonathan Pendleton in Westerly. The richest investor was Enoch Burrows, a merchant and gentleman farmer who lived in Mystic. In 1818 Burrows owned 470 acres of land, 6 second rate, 6 third rate and 10 fourth rate chimneys, and a carriage.⁹⁶ Cash value of his estate in 1814 was \$24,000.⁹⁷ Thomas Ash and Elisha Faxon owned ropewalks in Stonington Borough. Ash also owned two houses, a shop and a store in 1814, and Faxon was taxed as a speculating merchant the same year.⁹⁸ Samuel F. Denison had opened a

⁹⁵ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1820.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 1818. By the public statutes of Connecticut "each dwelling house shall be set in the list at Five dollars for each fireplace therein whether used or not, but the listers may abate for old and decayed houses one quarter, one half or three fourths of the said sum according as the houses shall appear to them more or less to be decayed or depreciated in value." Connecticut, Public Statutes, 1808, bound with The Public Statute Laws of the State of Connecticut (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1806), 1: 469.

⁹⁷ 1814 Stonington Tax List, New London County Historical Society, New London, Connecticut.

⁹⁸ "Copy of Descriptive Lists of Lands Lots & Ground with their improvements, Dwelling houses . . . within the town of Stonington . . . with the valuation therunto annexed, February 1, 1814." Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Connecticut.

store in Stonington Borough in 1300. Zebulon Hancox owned a house and a half share in two others plus five acres of land in 1814. Giles Hallam owned eighteen acres of land, house and shares in two others the same year.⁹⁹

Although several of the Stonington investors in the Frederick and the Hersilia owned no taxable property before 1818, their economic situation was above average. Elisha Faxon, Jr. was a merchant who probably lived in his father's household most of his life. Alfred Bailey and Ephraim Williams paid only the \$40 assessment on merchants in 1818; but Williams had inherited part of his father's \$23,000 estate and was a successful merchant in New York before he returned to Stonington.

Neither James P. Sheffield nor Benjamin Pendleton, mariners, possessed any taxable property previous to 1820. But Pendleton had been captain of several vessels before he took command of the Frederick in 1818. Serving as first mate under Edmund Fanning on the sealing voyage of the Volunteer probably enabled Pendleton to purchase a share in the Frederick. It is likely that Sheffield, captain of the Hersilia, had also accumulated the necessary capital to purchase a share in his vessel by participating in a sealing voyage under Edmund Fanning. In 1817, Sheffield was first mate on the Jane Maria, tender to the Sea Fox, Edmund Fanning's last command.¹⁰⁰

There may have been only two Stonington men of relatively modest station who invested in the Frederick and the Hersilia. Henry Smith paid only a poll tax in 1818,¹⁰¹ while Simeon Carew owned only a house worth

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Stevens, First American Sealers, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰¹ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1818.

\$200 in 1814.¹⁰²

Most of the shareholders in the Frederick and the Hersilia bought interests in the Stonington sealing fleets of 1820 and 1821. Nineteen of the new shareholders in these ventures were residents of Stonington Borough. As previously mentioned, shares from the immensely successful early Stonington sealing voyages made it possible for a few crewmen to invest in sealing vessels. Thus at least five of the nineteen new shareholders had served as crewmen on the Frederick, the Hersilia, or one of the vessels of the first Stonington sealing fleet: "Nat" Palmer was second mate and Asa Lee, sealmaster on the Hersilia; Benjamin S. Cutler crewman and Luther Fuller, cooper, on the Frederick; and Thomas S. Breed was probably a crewman on one of the vessels of the first sealing fleet since he was a second mate on the Only Son in 1823. But generally, the new owners of the Stonington sealing fleets, like the owners of the Frederick and Hersilia before them, and the sealing and whaling vessels which came after, had amassed respectable fortunes before they ever purchased shares. I found no evidence that any man of low economic standing ever became rich solely through his investments in sealing or whaling; nor could any person of ordinary means become rich today by playing the stock market. Fortunes were made, but they were made by people who had more excess capital to invest than the average person could expect to see in his lifetime.

Based on the evidence of the few sealing vessel prices I was able to find, the cost of acquiring and outfitting a sealer was about one third that of a whaler. In 1820 "Payments made by William Williams as agent

¹⁰²"Copy of Descriptive Lists, etc. 1814," Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Connecticut.

for the owners of the ship Clothier and brigs Catharina and Emeline in the purchase of said vessels and their outfits on their voyage to the Southern Hemisphere" were 22,935 so the average cost of each vessel with outfits was about \$7500.¹⁰³ In 1834 one half of the 68 ton schooner Pacific sold without outfits for \$2350 (thus the total price was \$4700);¹⁰⁴ while two years later 3/32 of the vessel with outfits was listed at \$843, or \$8992 total cost, outfits included.¹⁰⁵ So outfits for a sealing voyage cost about \$4000, again one third of the cost in whaling. (See section on whaling for costs of whaleships and outfits.)

It is difficult to accurately assess how much wealth Antarctic sealing brought to Stonington, because none of the financial records of any of the men involved have survived. One good indication of what sealing meant to Stonington Borough is the growth of the Grand List which increased by \$103,000 between 1820 and 1831. In 1820 the borough Grand List was \$97,656; in 1831 it was \$200,877.¹⁰⁶ The ratable estates of the twenty one borough householders directly involved in sealing, i.e., crewmen like Thomas Burtch; sealing masters like William L. Williams¹⁰⁷ and Jonas Horn; merchants like Samuel F. Denison and Henry Smith; and sealing agents like Gurdon Trumbull and Peleg Hancox; amounted to \$36,000 of that \$103,000 increase. Jonas

¹⁰³ Trumbull Accounts, Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Conn.

¹⁰⁴ Bills of Sale, 1829-1882, for vessels. Charles P. Williams Collection, 86- G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut, Box LI.

¹⁰⁵ Stonington Probate Records, Vol. 15, p. 442.

¹⁰⁶ Compiled from Stonington Grand List Abstract, 1820, 1831. These totals do not include money invested in vessels which must have been a considerable amount.

¹⁰⁷ Probably a relative of General William Williams.

Horn, William L. Williams and several others were new additions to the tax rolls; the estates of Trumbull, Hancox and others grew considerably between 1820 and 1831.

Several of the fortunes of Stonington Borough had their origin in money acquired from seal skins. Samuel F. Denison, a merchant whose estate was rated at \$4400 in 1820, was worth \$16,000 in 1831. Gurdon Trumbull, a merchant and sealing agent, i.e., one who organized and outfitted sealing expeditions and directed the auctions of booty and dispersal of the funds thereby obtained, paid only a poll tax in 1820. In 1831 Trumbull's estate was rated at \$4800. Peleg Hancox, was also a sealing agent, whose name, like Trumbull's was occasionally found in Stonington Yankee advertisements announcing auctions of Antarctic seal skins. In 1820, Hancox' estate was rated at \$300; by 1831, it was \$3000. The name of William L. Williams, master and owner of a number of Stonington sealing vessels, was not on the 1820 tax lists. In 1831, Williams estate was rated at \$3500.¹⁰⁸

But much of the growth in the Stonington Borough Grand List cannot be attributed directly to sealing profits. The estate of William W. Rodman, who owned a share in only one Stonington sealer, was rated at \$1230 in 1820. By 1831 he was the richest man in the borough, with an estate worth over \$22,000. George Hubbard, a lawyer, who was a shareholder in two Stonington sealers, owned \$104 worth of unspecified property in 1820. By 1831 he had acquired two houses, land, and a store, and was rated at \$5500. Charles H. Smith was living in his father, Joseph's, household in 1820, so his name was not on the tax lists or census rolls. By 1831, Charles Smith, who never owned a share in a Stonington sealer, was worth

¹⁰⁸ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1820, 1831.

over \$10,000. Finally William Woodbridge, who was absent from the tax rolls in 1820, was worth over \$11,000 in 1831.¹⁰⁹

The rapid economic rise of Smith and Woodbridge, was I think, unrelated to the success of Stonington's sealing fleet. Although Smith was a contractor who may have built some houses in Stonington Borough which were paid for with sealing profits, his account books show that his principal concern in the late 1820's was the construction of lighthouses at various places on the northeastern coast, including Staten Island.¹¹⁰ Woodbridge, like Smith, was probably living under his father's roof in 1820; by 1831, he had inherited the family farm. Woodbridge owned shares in five Stonington sealers, but the bulk of his interests were in lands and other investments. (He owned \$2500 worth of bank stock.) Since Rodman was a merchant who owned a general store in Stonington Borough, it is likely that sealing was at least partly responsible for the dramatic rise in his fortune. He may have sold supplies needed for sealing expeditions, and those who had participated in them had money to spend in stores like Rodman's. It is difficult to speculate on the relationship between Hubbard's growing estate and the sealing fleet, and it is difficult to discover whether his law practice was aided or unaffected by Stonington's successes in the Antarctic.

Sealing was only the initial step on Stonington's road to riches; it did not, like whaling, transform the community. But had it not been for the Antarctic seal fishery, it is probable that the Stonington whaling fleet would have been considerably smaller, and as a consequence, much less profitable. Sealing's most valuable legacy, was of course, capital. A

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Smith Accounts. Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

number of the men who had been successful in sealing ventures in the 1820's, became prominent shareholders in Stonington whaling vessels during the 1830's and 40's. Ephraim and Charles P. Williams, Samuel F. Denison, Gurdon Trumbull, Simeon Carew, Benjamin F. and William Pendleton, Peleg Hancox and Elisha Faxon invested some of their sealing profits in the Stonington whaling fleet. The smallest investor was Samuel F. Denison who owned shares in 6 whalers; the largest were Charles P. Williams, 27, and William Pendleton and Peleg Hancox who each owned shares in 20.

Antarctic sealing expeditions also served as training cruises for many of Stonington's whaling masters. Benjamin S. Cutler, William L. Williams, Jonathan and William Pendleton, Alexander S. Palmer, John S. Barnum, Daniel Carew, Charles T. Stanton, Thomas Davison, Franklin Hancox, and other Stonington whaling captains, had all been masters of sealing vessels.

APPENDIX A

STONINGTON SEALING VESSELS

1818 - 1892

<u>Year Bought in Stonington</u>	<u>Name of Vessel</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Place Built</u>	<u>Year Built</u>
1818	<u>Frederick</u>	67'	147 ton	Brig	Guilford [Ct.]	1815
1819	<u>Hersilia</u>	68'	130 ton	Brig	Stonington [Mystic]	1819
1820	<u>Express</u>	-	137 ton	Schooner	New York	1816
1820	<u>Clothier</u>	94'	284 ton	Ship	Philadelphia	1810
1820	<u>Freegift</u>	50'	52 ton	Schooner	Pawcatuck (Prob. R.I.)	1807
1820	<u>Catharina</u>	71'	160 ton	Brig	?	?
1820	<u>Hero</u>	?	?	Sloop	?	?
1820	<u>Emeline</u>	67'	108 ton	Brig	Lyme, Ct.	1818
1821	<u>James Monroe</u>	61'	71 ton	Sloop	Stonington	1818
1821	<u>Alabama Packet</u>	78'	168 ton	Brig	Groton, Ct.	1819
1821	<u>Essex</u>	52'	47 ton	Sloop	Saybrook, Ct.	1821
1823	<u>Only Son</u>	52'	47 ton	Sloop	Stonington	1818
1825	<u>Chile</u>	49'	45 ton	Schooner	Stonington	1823
1825	<u>Penguin</u>	67'	82 ton	Schooner	?	?
1825	<u>Eliza Ann</u>	63'	71 ton	Sloop	Groton, Ct.	1822
1826	<u>Lafayette</u>	67'	51 ton	Schooner	Groton, Ct.	1824
1826	<u>Albatross</u>	67'	97 ton	Brig	Stonington	1826
1828	<u>Superior</u>	60'	73 ton	Schooner	?	?
1829	<u>Breakwater</u>	54'	53 ton	Schooner	Stonington	1828

<u>Year Bought in Stonington</u>	<u>Name of Vessel</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Place Built</u>	<u>Year Built</u>
1830	<u>William</u>	70'	118 ton	Brig	Stonington	1830
1830	<u>Harriet</u>	62'	81 ton	Schooner	Stonington	1825
1831	<u>Alonzo</u>	52'	48 ton	Schooner	Westerly	1818
1831	<u>Courier</u>	61'	58 ton	Schooner	New York	1824
1831	<u>Colossus</u>	63'	85 ton	Schooner	Massachusetts	1826
1831	<u>Montgomery</u> ?	54'	71 ton	Schooner	New York	1824
	(May not have been a Stonington Sealer)					
1833	<u>Hancox</u>	52'	57 ton	Schooner	?	?
1833	<u>Swift</u>	64'	85 ton	Schooner	Maryland	1829
1833	<u>Eveline</u>	63'	62 ton	Schooner	?	?
1834	<u>Pacific</u>	60'	68 ton	Schooner	?	?
1839	<u>Somerset</u>	77'	133 ton	Brig	Maine	1833
1840	<u>Enterprise</u>	66'	94 ton	Brig	North Carolina	1821
1841	<u>Plutarch</u>	68'	80 ton	Schooner	Maryland	1826
1851	<u>Sarah E. Spear</u>	82'	149 ton	Brig	Maine	1851
1852	<u>Flying Cloud</u>	68'	99 ton	Schooner	Maine	1851
1872	<u>Charles Shearer</u>	?	97 ton	Schooner	Massachusetts	1865
1879	<u>Thomas Hunt</u>	?	63 ton	Schooner	Maine	1866
1879	<u>Henry Trowbridge</u>	96'	163 ton	Brig	Maine	1848
1879	<u>Express</u>	?	69 ton	Schooner	Boston	1846
1887	<u>Sarah W. Hunt</u>	?	109 ton	Schooner	Maine	1887

(Information taken from ship's registers at G. W. Blunt-White Library,
Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.)

APPENDIX B

EDMUND FANNING AND THE DISCOVERY
OF THE SOUTH SHETLANDS

The position of Edmund Fanning as the motive force behind the South Shetland expedition has been challenged. An unsigned first person article appearing in the Stonington Mirror in 1872, an article by Edwin Swift Balch, "Stonington Antarctic Explorers," published in 1909, "Nat" Palmer's biographer, John R. Spears, and Thomas Stevens in his article on Antarctic sealers; all raise objections to Fanning's description of the voyage of the Hersilia. The Mirror article tells the following story: After arriving at the Falkland Islands, Nathaniel Brown Palmer, second mate on the Hersilia, and two men were left to gather a supply of penguin eggs at Berkeley Sound while the Hersilia left to search for the Auroras, a voyage which lasted forty days. Ten days before the Hersilia returned, the Espirito Santo, a brig from Buenos Aires arrived at Berkeley Sound, and Palmer went on board. According to the article, Palmer immediately deduced the Santo was on a sealing expedition, but her captain refused to say where they were headed. The Santo's mate, however, an Englishman named Hearn, told Palmer they were headed for the South Shetlands and gave him the exact location of the islands. The Santo's owners had received word that a Captain Smith, commander of the English brig William, had discovered a group of islands south of Cape Horn which were populated by vast seal herds. Acting upon this information, a group of Buenos Aires merchants outfitted the Santo for a sealing voyage. When the Hersilia returned to the Falklands,

Palmer communicated his information, and the Stonington brig sailed for the South Shetlands, reaching them thirteen days after the Santo.¹

Balch's article was based "on letters belonging to Mrs. Richard Fanning Loper, of Stonington, Connecticut, who inherited them from her father, Capt. Alexander Smith Palmer [N. B. Palmer's younger brother]."² Balch tells much the same story as the Mirror article but with one rather preposterous variation. He claimed that Palmer had piloted the Santo into Berkeley Sound, and found out she was bound for an island teeming with seals, but the Santo's captain refused to reveal his destination. When the Hersilia returned, Palmer had the bright idea of convincing his commander to follow the Argentine brig. "Captain Sheffield, having great confidence in his second mate, followed his advice, and in a few days reached the South Shetlands."³ What the Espirito Santo was doing while being followed, Balch leaves a mystery. Spears claimed that Palmer was not given any exact information as to the location of the South Shetlands, but cleverly deduced it from the sketchy information the Espirito Santo did give him. Stevens, too, believed that the Hersilia reached the South Shetlands after meeting with the Espirito Santo in the Falklands, and was aided in reaching them through information received from the Argentine brig.⁴

All of these arguments stumble at the same hurdle, which is: How did Palmer and the crew of the Hersilia get information on the South Shetlands'

¹ Stonington, Conn., Weekly Mirror-Journal, 25 July, 1872, p. 2.

² Edwin Swift Balch, "Stonington Antarctic Explorers," reprinted from the Bulletin of the American Geographical Society 41 (August, 1909), p. 1.

³ Ibid., pp. 4, 5.

⁴ Stevens, First American Sealers, pp. 38-39.

location? Balch's explanation seems too absurd to even consider. How could the Hersilia follow the Espirito Santo without being discovered? Once discovered, wouldn't it have been easy to lose the Hersilia, especially at night? In addition, in the Mirror article, apparently written by one of the Hersilia's company, the Hersilia arrived at the South Shetlands twelve days after the Santo. It is also difficult to believe that a first mate on a sealing vessel would gratuitously give information to a rival, sketchy or precise; information which could quite conceivably reduce his own profit. Yet this is what Spears, Stevens, and the author of the Mirror article would have us believe. Common sense leads one to accept what Stevens wrote about secrecy being the watchword in the seal fishery, so why should Hearn, or any of the Santo's company, tell Palmer about the South Shetlands since it was quite possible seals enough for only one ship were on the islands? In the opinion of Kenneth Bertrand, author of Americans in Antarctica - 1775-1948, Captain Sheffield had received information which led him to the South Shetlands some time after the Hersilia left Stonington for the Antarctic. Bertrand doesn't speculate on how this information was transmitted to Sheffield; but he discards the accounts which give the credit to "Nat" Palmer.

Considering the instructions given by Captain Edmund Fanning, it is possible that Captain Sheffield would have independently rediscovered the South Shetland Islands, or as Fanning called them, New South Iceland. As it turned out, however, he made a successful search for them after learning, somewhere enroute, of their existence.⁵

⁵Kenneth J. Bertrand, Americans in Antarctica, pp. 43-44.

Although the weight of the evidence seems to lie with Edmund Fanning, one omission in his book Voyages and Discoveries in the South Seas, undermines somewhat the readers confidence in Fanning's veracity, and indicates that Fanning may have been a bit too anxious to magnify his own importance. In the account of the Hersilia's voyage to the South Shetlands, he does not mention the Espirito Santo, or the fact that a South American vessel had begun sealing operations before the Hersilia arrived there. He merely wrote that the Hersilia was believed to be the first American vessel to have visited the South Shetlands. The only explanation I can offer for the omission is that Fanning felt some of the glory of the Hersilia's voyage would be tarnished if he reminded his readers that an Argentine sealing brig had reached the South Shetland before the Americans. Fanning, however, made no claim to the discovery of the South Shetlands: "The fact is I do not consider this land as a new discovery. It was first seen by a Dutch captain in the latter part of the Fifteenth Century, and Frazier saw it in 1712, and called it South Iceland."⁶ Fanning did imply, (quite obliquely, I must say) in a letter, that the Espirito Santo was at the South Shetlands at the same time the Hersilia was. "The Hersilia did not speak with the English brig William while on her voyage, nor did her supercargo during this voyage [Fanning's son William] previous to his being at those new islands know that there was such a vessel in existence as the English brig William, Captain Smith."⁷ In other words, William Fanning learned of Captain Smith's discovery from some one on board the Santo while the ships were engaged in sealing at the South Shetlands.

⁶ Stevens, First American Sealers, pp. 57-58.

⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

APPENDIX C

"NAT" PALMER AND THE DISCOVERY OF ANTARCTICA

While the first Stonington sealing fleet was at the South Shetlands, Nathaniel Brown Palmer made a voyage in search of new sealing grounds which has aroused considerable controversy. John R. Spears, Palmer's biographer, gives the following account of the voyage: "On January 14, [1821] Captain [N. B.] Palmer sailed from Deception Island, [one of the south Shetlands], on that voyage which was to place him beside Columbus [as] the only men who have discovered continents."¹ Spears story was probably based upon verbal accounts made by Palmer in later years.² Sometime after leaving Deception Island, (Spears gives no exact date) Palmer sighted land at 68° South Latitude, specifically, that peninsula of the Antarctic continent now known as Palmer Land. On his return to the South Shetlands, Palmer fell in with two Russian exploration vessels under Captain Bellingshausen, whereupon Palmer related his discovery, much to Bellingshausen's chagrin, for he had been searching for the same land himself. The story of Palmer's discovery, became, along with the repulse of the British fleet in 1814, cherished sources of civic pride

¹Spears, Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer, p. 66.

²The story reported by Spears about the discovery of Antarctica, was supposedly told by Palmer to Frank T. Bush, former United States Consul to Hong Kong, in 1844. Philip I. Mitterling, America in the Antarctic to 1840 (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1959), p. 45.

among local residents. In fact, a laudatory feature story of Palmer's voyage appeared in the Norwich, Connecticut, Bulletin, in July, 1973. Since much of the story was lifted almost verbatim from Spears' book, not surprisingly it agrees completely with his account of Palmer's voyage.

But, Edouard Stackpole, in an article on the voyage of the Huron, a sealer out of New Haven, argues that Palmer had explored Livingston Island, one of the largest of the South Shetland chain, not Antarctica,³ and furthermore, Palmer's account of his meeting with Bellingshausen had no basis in fact. Stackpole claims that Bellingshausen made no mention of Palmer's discovery, which certainly would have been the case had Palmer communicated such important information. Secondly, upon receiving news of the discovery of a continent, Bellingshausen would certainly turn south and investigate for himself, since he was on a voyage of exploration.⁴ Stackpole believed the actual discoverer of Antarctica was a Captain Davis, master of the shallop Cecelia, tender for the Huron and Huntress, two New Haven sealing vessels. Davis made the first recorded landing on the Antarctic continent, February 7, 1821, entering in his log, "I think this southern land to be a continent."⁵ Nathaniel Brown Palmer was somehow at the center of two of the important events in the history of the Antarctic region, the opening of the South Shetland sealing grounds, and the discovery of the Antarctic continent. Whether this fame resulted

³ Stackpole, Voyage of the Huron, p. 28.

⁴ Stackpole, The Voyage of the Huron, pp. 61-62. Spears wrote that Bellingshausen did mention meeting Palmer in his journal which was untranslated at the time Spears wrote his book (1924). But Spears cited Balch's "Stonington Antarctic Explorers" to support his contention, and I don't think he himself had read Bellingshausen's book. Spears, Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer, p. 81.

⁵ Ibid., p. 55.

from self promotion or the designs of others - Palmer apparently did nothing to discourage the dissemination of legends about himself - the evidence indicates that his career in the Antarctic was less dramatic than his champions, particularly Spears, would have us believe.

Spears' unsatisfactory biography exaggerates Palmer's activities in the Antarctic. An example of Spears' craftmanship is the following speech on the discovery of Antarctica which he put into "Nat" Palmer's mouth. (Although it was not written by Spears, but some unknown earlier "historian." If it actually had been uttered by Palmer, there would be little doubt in my mind he was an American windbag in the Davy Crockett tradition.) "I pointed the bow of my little craft south and with her wings spread, the mainsail abeam, and the jib abreast the opposite bow, she speeded on her way like a thing of life and light. With her flowing sheet she seemed to enter into the spirit which possessed my ambitions, and flew along until she brought me into sight of land not laid down on my chart."⁶

I think the most conclusive evidence against Palmer is in Philip Mitterling's America in the Antarctic to 1840. From the Hero's logbook (Palmer's ship), Mitterling deduced that Palmer had coasted the shores of the Antarctic continent on November 16th and 17th, 1820. But Palmer was not the discoverer of Antarctica, since a British surveyor, Edward Bransfield, had sighted the continent on January 20th of the same year.⁷ Mitterling based his argument on Bellingshausens' journal, translated

⁶Spears, Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer, p. 68.

⁷Mitterling, America in the Antarctic, p. 41. The controversy over the discovery of Antarctica seems to have no end: Stevens claimed that the crew of the Hersilia sighted the main land of Antarctica two weeks before Bransfield. Stevens, First American Sealers, p. 53.

from the Russian in 1942. The journal shows that Bellingshausen did meet with Palmer, but off Deception Island, not off the coast of Antarctica. There is no mention in the journal of any of the account related by Spears. It is "all too apparent that exaltation of their hero [Palmer] is the central theme of the stories told by Americans. It is extremely doubtful if Palmer and Bellingshausen talked about anything except the sealing business. Had he known of Palmer's discovery he would have mentioned it. Throughout his journal Bellingshausen lauded all discoveries by other explorers. Since Palmer remembered (in 1844) he had coasted the mainland of Antarctica (November, 1820) and had conversed with Bellingshausen (January, 1821) it is evident that a faulty memory caused him to dovetail the two accounts."⁸

⁸From Bellingshausen's journal, January 24, 1821 - "Land in sight above the clouds. We were all greatly pleased, for we possessed two pieces of information about the existence of this land. One . . . from Baron Teille von Seraskerken, . . . the other by the captain of an East Indian ship in Port Jackson. At 8.0 a.m. we set our course S. 17°E., with the intention of approaching the south side of New Shetland, in the event the land sighted not proving to be a continent." At the Island of Little Yaroslavitz, a small island in the South Shetland chain, now known as Boyd Island Bellingshausen saw eight British and American sealing vessels at anchor. Bellingshausen then proceeded E.S.E. where "I soon saw to starboard . . . a high island (Deception Island - editor's note) it has a circumference of 20 miles and is separated from the high rocky headlands opposite by a strait 11 miles wide. At 10 o'clock we entered the strait and encountered a small American sealing boat. I lay to . . . and waited for the captain. . . . Soon after Mr. Palmer arrived and informed us that he had been three or four months sealing in partnership with three American ships. They were engaged in killing and skinning seals, whose numbers were perceptibly diminishing." After a brief account of sealing operations at the South Shetlands, "Mr. Palmer soon returned to his ship and we proceeded along the shore." As Mitterling wrote, nothing in Bellingshausen's journal supports Spears' account of Palmer's discovery. Frank Debenham, ed., The Voyage of Captain Bellingshausen To The Antarctic Seas, translated from the Russian (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1945), pp. 423, 425.

The best defense of Palmer's side of the case was made by Kenneth Bertrand in Americans in Antarctica. Bertrand quotes a rather subdued letter written by Palmer which recounts the meeting with Bellingshausen in a much more attractive and believable manner than the bombastic speech in Spears' biography.

On March 13, 1876, in a letter to Mr. Frank T. Bush . . . Palmer gave an account of the meeting with Bellingshausen.

My first command was the sloop "Hero" in 1820 - it was on this voyage that Palmers Land was discovered & subsequently we fell in with the Russian squadron under Admiral Bellingshausen. . . . Among other things I informed him of our trip to the South in Latt 68° & the discovery of a Land (never before seen) and it was him that named it Palmers Land.⁹

Bertrand also gives a plausible explanation of why Bellingshausen did not follow up Palmer's information and sail south to confirm the discovery. Bertrand felt that language difficulties may account for the differences between Bellingshausen's and Palmer's accounts. Secondly, Bellingshausen may not have mentioned any discoveries made by Palmer because they did not seem credible.¹⁰

Frank Debenham, editor of Bellingshausen's journal, like Bertrand, believes that language difficulties hindered communication between Palmer and the Russian admiral. Debenham offers a strong piece of evidence which indicates that Bellingshausen had not learned about the existence of land south of the South Shetland chain from Nat Palmer. Two days after the meeting between Palmer and Bellingshausen was entered in the latter's journal, the Russian wrote: "Farther south it appeared to me that land was visible in the heavy clouds, but the thick weather hindered our observing it properly. I therefore left it to some future navigator to

⁹ Bertrand, Americans in Antarctica, p. 78.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

determine if there really is an island in this direction." Debenham remarked, "that would be the strangest language to use if indeed Bellingshausen had understood from Palmer that in every direction there was extensive land."¹¹

In summation, what can be said of Palmer's activities in the Antarctic in 1820-21? All except Stackpole agree that "Nat" Palmer did coast the continent of Antarctica either in 1820 or 21, certainly a remarkable accomplishment for a young man of 20. That he may not have been the continent's actual discoverer does not really make a great deal of difference; although I think anyone can understand Palmer's desire to be regarded as a new Columbus. It is difficult to reach a conclusion about the meeting with Bellingshausen. It is quite likely that Bellingshausen would have had trouble understanding Palmer, and if he did understand, would be skeptical about such a tale from the lips of a youth barely 20 years old. But Bellingshausen's journal proved that he could at least understand some of what Palmer was telling him. If Palmer's information about the seal fishery was intelligible to Bellingshausen, wouldn't he be able to tell him he had discovered a new continent? And if Palmer had told Bellingshausen that a continent lay to the south, wouldn't the Russian have entered such a statement in his journal, even if only to register his disbelief in such an absurdity? Unfortunately, no definitive answer can be given about Palmer's activities in the Antarctic. Perhaps the discovery of a lost log or journal will give that answer; perhaps the controversy surrounding Palmer will never be settled.

¹¹Debenham, The Voyage of Captain Bellingshausen, 1: XXVI, XXVII.

APPENDIX D

"Sales of Ninety Fur Seal Skins made by John F. Trumbull on acct.
risque of Gurdon Trumbull"

Sale Cash

63 clapmatches ¹ at \$9	-	\$567.00
22 yearlings at \$9	-	\$198
2 clapmatches at \$9		18
2 yearlings at \$9		18
1 wig at \$9		<u>9</u>
a wig was an adult male seal		\$810.00
charges - cartage		.25
freight		1.00
Advertising		1.00
com. on \$810 at 2 1/2 p/c		<u>20.25</u>
		22.50
Balance Due		\$787.50 ²

¹"The female was dubbed by hunters in the Southern Hemisphere, a 'clapmatch'." Fredericka Martin, Sea Bears: The Story of the Fur Seal (Philadelphia & New York: Chilton Company, 1960), p. 29.

²Miscellaneous Documents, Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, n.d. Connecticut.

APPENDIX E

Memorandum for equipment needs on a sealing voyage

20 hogsheads bread	1 key saw
35 barrels beef	1 rasp
20 barrels pork	1 large iron file
7 barrels flour	3 chisels
2 half barrels rice	2 gouges
1 bolt canvas	4 augers
1 bolt duck	2 cabin lamps
33 ft. twine	2 candle sticks
2 cannisters of verdigris	1 bunch slate pencils
2 kegs white lead	2 dozen studs
2 kegs black paint	3 dozen knives
1 role sheet lead	2 harness casks
1 speaking trumpet	1 bundle of rivets
1 barrel tar	1 boat hook
6 muskets	1 square
2 drawing knives	3 boat anchors
1 grind stone	2 half barrels sugar
1 smoothing plane	1 barrel rum
1 jointer	1 barrel gin
1 jack plane	50 lbs coffee
2 hatchets	1 chest tea

2 axes	1 box soap
400 pump tacks	25 oars
2000 clapper nails	6 paint brushes
3 hammers	1 crooked drawing knife
1 pine saw	1/2 bundle of hoops
3 camp kettles	1 pr. blacksmith bellows
1 spider	1 beaming knife
1 wet stone	2 barrels vinegar
2 barrels beans	2 barrels rye ¹

¹Journal 107, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.

APPENDIX F

Stonington Sealing Voyages 1831 - 1892

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name of Vessel</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Fur Seal</u>	<u>Hair Seal</u>	<u>Elephant Oil</u>
1831	<u>Alonzo</u>	Schooner	2200		
	<u>Charles Adams</u>	Ship	1000		2100 bbls
	<u>Penguin</u>	Schooner	1400		
1832	<u>Alonzo</u>	Schooner	2200		
	<u>Penguin</u>	Schooner	3000		
	<u>Superior</u> (3 voyages to 1833)		8000		
1833	<u>Courier</u>	Schooner			
1834	-				
1835	<u>Colossus</u>	Schooner	430	1000	
	<u>Eveline</u>	Schooner	622	800	300 bbls
	<u>Harriet</u>	Schooner	5000		
	<u>Hancox</u>	Schooner	450		
	<u>Penguin</u>	Schooner	2000	350	
	<u>Swift</u>	Schooner	1500		
	<u>William</u>	Brig		6000	
1837	<u>Penguin</u>	Schooner	1500		
	<u>Plutarch</u>	Schooner	3500 (Two voyages)		
	<u>Bolton</u>	Schooner	(seal, elephant, & whale oil)		
	<u>Corvo</u>	Ship			1200 bbls
1842	<u>Enterprise</u>	Schooner	500	1000	
	<u>Pacific</u>	Schooner	1500		
1845	<u>Pacific</u>	Schooner	1500		
1852	<u>Sarah E. Spear</u>	Brig	500		530 bbls
	<u>Flying Cloud</u>	Schooner	no report		
1873	<u>Thomas Hunt</u>	Schooner	1400		
1874	<u>Thomas Hunt</u>	Schooner	1400		
1875	<u>Charles Shearer</u>	Schooner	1600		
	<u>Thomas Hunt</u>	Schooner	1600		

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name of Vessel</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Fur Seal</u>	<u>Hair Seal</u>	<u>Elephant Oil</u>
1876	<u>Charles Shearer</u>	Schooner	2700		
1877	<u>Charles Shearer</u>	Schooner	400		50 bbls
1878	<u>Thomas Hunt</u> <u>Charles Shearer</u>	Schooner Schooner	5000	lost near South Shetlands	
1879	<u>Thomas Hunt</u>	Schooner	3200		
1880	<u>Express</u> <u>Thomas Hunt</u>	Schooner Schooner	835 1025		
1881	<u>Henry Trowbridge</u>	Brig	2000		
1882	<u>Express</u>	Schooner	1500	cape seal skins	
1884	<u>Thomas Hunt</u>	Schooner	3760		
1888	<u>Sarah W. Hunt</u>	Schooner	1700	Shetland & Cape Skins	
1892	<u>Sarah W. Hunt</u>	Schooner	1600	"	" " " " 1

¹Taken from Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal."

APPENDIX G

Price List of Sealing Vessels Including Outfits

(taken from Stonington Probate Records)

- 1820 - Brig Hersilia - \$12,375.
- 1831? - Schooner Colossus - \$7,376
- 1836 - Schooner Pacific - \$8992
- 1839 - Schooner Penguin - \$5600
- 1839 - Brig Somerset - \$7792
- 1840 - Brig Rebecca Groves - \$7928
- 1855 - Schooner Tekoa - \$8000
- 1858 - Schooner Tekoa - \$11,968

Prices of Sealing Vessels-Outfits not Included

(taken from miscellaneous bills of sale and C. P. Williams Papers)

- 1825 - Schooner Penguin - \$2100
- 1830 - Schooner Breakwater - \$3000
- 1831 - Schooner Colossus - \$2568
- 1835 - Brig Rebecca Groves - \$3600
- 1840 - Brig Enterprise - \$1500

APPENDIX H

Owners of Stonington Sealing Vessels

(✓ - Owned Stonington vessels other than sealers previous to 1820)

<u>Name</u>	<u>No. of ships owned shares in</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Taxable Property 1820</u> *
William A. Fanning	8	Master Mariner sealing Master-1821	N.Y. Resident
Benjamin Pendleton	12	Sealing Master Sealing agent (headed sales of skins, 1826)	\$1300 (1830)
Elisha Faxon	11	Rope Mfg.	\$4000
Elisha Faxon, Jr.	4	Merchant owned General store also sold real estate	poll tax
Jonathan Pendleton ✓	5	1st mate-Frederick 1818	\$700 (1830)
Thomas Ash ✓	1	rope walk owner	\$1500
Samuel F. Denison ✓	8	merchant owned Grocery in 1800	\$4400
Henry Smith	5	Merchant	poll tax
Alfred Bailey	1	Merchant	
Simeon (or Simon) Carew	11	Merchant-store owner	\$1350
Giles R. Hallam	9	owned General Store-1825	\$1000
Ephraim Williams	14	Merchant in N. Y. Sealing Master-1821 Sealing Agent	\$7200
Thomas Perry	3		
Zebulon Hancox ✓	5	[Deacon Zebulon Hancox]	\$ 750

James P. Sheffield	3	Sealing Master-1822	\$ 90
Jedidiah Randall	5	Merchant & store owner in Mystic (Groton side) also lived in N.Y.	\$ 225
N. B. Palmer	3	2nd mate- <u>Hersilia</u>	
Peleg Denison	9	Merchant in Mystic owned 4 stores dealt in ship timber	\$4200 \$4800 in 1831
George Haley ✓	9	Master Mariner & Shipowner	\$4000-Same in 1831
Benjamin S. Cutler	7	2nd Mate <u>Frederick</u> 1818	\$600-(1830)
Benjamin F. Phelps	3	New York resident	\$2300
William Pendleton	7	1st mate <u>Alabama</u> <u>Packet</u> (1821)	\$1000-(1840)
William Woodbridge	5	large landowner	\$30,000
Asa Lee	4	seal master on <u>Hersilia</u> 1819	\$ 270
William Williams	8	Wealthy farmer & merchant (Also a sealing master by the same name)	
David S. Hart	1	Druggist	\$50-(1830)
Gurdon Trumbull	5	Storeowner before War of 1812-merchant & sealing agent	poll tax \$4800-1831
Nathan Smith ✓	4	ship master-1816	\$1000-(1830)
Oliver Burdick	1	Shoe maker	\$ 900
Cyrus Williams	3	(N. Y. resident)	\$1800-(1830)
Benjamin Pomeroy	4	Lawyer	\$2000-(1840)
Zeba D. Palmer	2	Storeowner-1824	poll tax \$ 800-(1831)
Thomas S. Breed	2	2nd mate- <u>Only Son</u> 1823	\$ 200 \$ 300-(1831)
Aza Stanton, Jr.	1		\$ 250
Luther Fuller	2	Cooper on <u>Frederick</u> -1818 later sealing master	

(All those above owned shares in Stonington sealers previous to 1820)

Isaac Williams, 2nd	1	Owned 2 stores & extensive acreage	\$9500
Nathan Sanborn or Sanford	1		
Wm. Williams, Jr.	1	?	
Isaac Thompson	1		
Peleg Hancox	4	Merchant	\$ 300
Wm. H. Akins	1	Crewman on sloop <u>Hero</u> -1821	
George Hubbard	2	Lawyer	\$ 150 \$3550-(1831)
George L. Meacham	1	General store owner & sold sealskins	
Charles T. Stanton	1	Sealing Master-later a cooper	Poll tax
Charles P. Williams	9	Ships agent-sealers, whalers and merchant vessels	\$7000 (1830)
Abel Pendleton	2	Probably a farmer	\$1350
Simeon Palmer	1		\$3000 (1830)
Nathan Pendleton	1		\$ 450
Frederick Pendleton	2		\$1000 (1840)
Joshua Swan	1		Poll tax
John W. Hull	1	Probably a farmer	\$5600
William W. Rodman	1	Ship master-1814 Store owner & merchant 1820	\$1230
David S. Hart	1	Druggist	\$ 50-(1830)
Gurdon Trumbull	5	Storeowner before War of 1812-merchant & sealing agent	Poll tax
Nathan Smith	4	Ship master-1816	\$1000-(1830)

Cyrus Williams	3	(New York Res.)	\$1800-(1830)
(All those above owned shares in Stonington Sealers previous to 1821.)			
Isaac Williams 2 ^d	1	Owned two stores and extensive acreage	\$9500
Joseph Palmer	1		\$2100
William Willcox	1	Sealing Master-1829	
John S. Barnum	3	Ship Master-1831	
Charles E. Phelps	1		\$3200
Jonas Horn	1	Sealing Master	\$ 900-(1830)
Jonathan C. Waldron	2		Died 1840 Leaving \$1560 to heirs
Gilbert R. Davison	1	Sealing Master 1825	
Thomas Davidson	1	1 st Mate- <u>Alonzo</u> 1825	\$1500 (1840)
Reuben Hancox	1		\$ 300
Benjamin F. Pendleton	1		\$ 300
John F. Trumbull	5	N.Y. Merchant. In 1820's opened J.F. Trumbull & Co. in borough-Merchant & Ship Chandler	\$ 500 (1830)
Stiles Stanton	2	Ship Master-1827 (later a banker)	\$2200 (1840)
Freeman Pulsifer	1		Poll tax (1830)
Joshua K. Pendleton	1	Ships Master	\$ 600 (1830)
James B. Storer	1	Sealing Master	
John Denison, Jr.	1		\$1800
Joseph E. Smith	2	Ship Master-1835 also Sealing Master	\$ 800 (1840)
Harris Pendleton	2	Ship Master-1817	\$ 630

George Palmer	1	Physician	\$ 600 (1830)
Oliver York	1	Crewman on <u>Alabama</u> <u>Packet</u> over 30 yrs. old.	\$ 900
William Hyde, Jr.	1	Physician	Poll tax (1830)
Thomas Wilcox	1	Whaling Master	\$ 350 (1830)
Henry O. Langworthy	1	Farmer	\$7000 (1840)
Horace N. Trumbull	1	Merchant & Ship's Chandler	
John F. Trumbull, Jr.	1		
Alfred Ross [Black]	1	Marble Worker	

(Names of owners taken from ship's register at G. W. Blunt White Library, Mystic. Occupation from crew lists and newspapers, property holdings from Stonington tax abstracts).

APPENDIX I

Invoice of Brig Betsey and Outfits

Edmund Fanning, Master, bound on a sealing voyage to the South Seas,
kept by the said Master, May 16, 1797.

17 bushels white beans	£ 8 1' 6
30 barrels of pork	£ 210
24 barrels of beef	£ 100
7 beaming knives	£ 12 16'
6 barrels flour and 6 of meal	£ 29 9'
bread	£ 146 18'
2 bbls. Rum	£ 23 2'
7 bushels corn	£ 2 9'
To Mr. Nexen bill of ship chandlery and sundries with duck and rig- ging for shallop. 259	£ 259
To Mr. Nexen bill for brig <u>Betsey</u> with 2 sutcs of sales. 1000	
groceries and sundries	£ 146 17' 11"
8 bushels of potatoes	£ 1 12'
Seamen's advance wages	£ 43 12'
70 ? of cheeses	£ 4 15'
Total outfits and supplies	£ 2552 35 6 1/2p.

Reckoning of Voyage 1798

(Clark, "Antarctic Fur Seal," p. 428, gave the following estimates
of shares. The captain is usually allowed 1/11 to 1/15 of the net pro-

ceeds (that is of the sales minus auctioneers commission, transportation charges and other expenses, mostly minor) First Mate 1/20 to 1/30, Second Mate 1/30 to 1/50, Third Mate 1/40 to 1/60, Sealers 1/80 to 1/125, green hands 1/175 to 1/200.)

Edmund Fanning	9 shares is 1440 skins - \$2160
Mr. C. Brintnal	4 1/2 shares 720 skins - \$1000
Mr. O. Williams	4 shares 640 skins - \$ 960
Greeland - carpenter	2 1/2 shares 400 skins - \$ 600
Dagett - steward	2 1/2 shares 400 skins - \$ 600
W. Right	3/4 share 120 skins - \$ 180
G. Cronk	3/4 share 120 skins - \$ 180
T. Morrell - blacksmith	1 1/2 shares 240 skins - \$ 360
J. Monsin	1 share 160 skins - \$ 240
J. Glass	1 share 160 skins - \$ 240
Cato Vanderbert - cook	3/4 share 120 skins - \$ 180
D. Right	3/4 share 120 skins - \$ 180
E. Jones	1 share 160 skins - \$ 240
H. Graham	1/2 share 80 skins - \$ 120
E. Hunt - cooper	2 shares 320 skins - \$ 480
7 deserving shares?	1 1/4 200 skins - \$ 420
J. Cary	1 share 160 skins - \$ 240

Sales of 10,710 prime sealskins at 1 1/2 dollars per skin \$16,065.

(Below is a list of money paid to the ships crew at Canton. I don't know whether this was in addition to the wages listed above, but I believe it was probably deducted so that the crew could buy goods in China to trade in New York where they were a good deal more valuable.)

Mr. Brintnal	\$175
Mr. Williams	\$150
W. Dagett	\$110
Carpenter - Greeland	\$ 60
Cooper - Hunt	\$ 40
John Maney	\$135
John Lines	\$135
Job Cary	\$ 35
George Cronk	\$ 40
T. Morrell	\$ 30
W. Right	\$ 35
Jones	\$ 30
J. Glass	\$ 35
H. Graham	\$ 10

In addition to the shares listed above it is possible that all of the crew received \$250 when the Betsey's two year voyage ended, for they

all signed the following agreement, May 1, 1799:

Received . . . of Edmund Fanning, Master . . . of the ship Betsey of New York, two hundred and fifty dollars in full of all demands against him the said E. Fanning and owners of the ship Betsey and I hereby release and discharge the said Fanning and owners and officers of said ship Betsey from all demands course of courses of assault or battery of any kind whatsoever which I now have or ever had against them.

Elisha Jones
etc., etc.

James Kirker writes that it was possible for the crewman on sealing ventures to return home from a single voyage with enough money to purchase a farm or start a small business.¹ Whether they were inclined to such practical goals or not, the wages paid to the Betsey's crew were excellent for the time and certainly much better than paid to whaling crews later on.

Manifest of ship on return from China to New York

160 half chests of Bohea tea
80 ? quarter chests of Bohea tea
200 chests Hyson tea
52 ? of silk
200 bundles of rattans
22 small chests of green tea
74 chests of china
93 chests of ?
22 bales of Nankeen

(From an undated newspaper clipping taken from the New York Gazette)

"American Enterprise"

As an evidence of the early enterprising spirit of the American character, we give place to the following communicated statement showing the result of a voyage of the small American ship Betsey, Captain Fanning, out of this port, only of 93 tons, in 1797 and '98, to the South Seas, doubling Cape Horn, and through the Pacific to China, and thence proceeding by way of the Cape of Good Hope around the world, home, being

¹Kirker, Adventurers to China, p. 27.

absent . . . about 23 months.

Amount of the first cost of vessel and outfits	-	\$6,345
Two years interest at 6% on \$6,345		761
Premiums of Insurance on Voyage on \$6,345		<u>761</u>
Cost of vessel with premium and interest		\$7,867

Amount of net proceeds of vessel and cargo procured in the South Seas, and which was exchanged in Canton for China goods, that brought by this sale in New York . . . the net sum of \$120,467, out of which amount of duties on cargo brought home \$19,210, Captain's amount (as supercargo of shares, commission, etc.) \$15,112, Amount of officers and crews pay then being on shares \$25,160, amount of owners capital invested in vessel outfits, etc. \$7,867 at a total of \$67,349.

Amount of net proceeds	-	\$120,467
Minus expenses, etc.	-	<u>67,349</u>
Amount of clear profits	-	
to her owners		\$ 53,118

²Fanning Collection, New York Geographical Society, New York.

CHAPTER III

THE WHALING PORT OF STONINGTON

A visitor to Stonington Borough must be impressed by the beauty of its architecture. If he has some historical sense he may wonder where the money that built the graceful homes there came from. Like so many other New England towns, the answer lies in the ocean, for almost all of the old homes in the borough were built with profits wrested from the sea. Coastal and West Indian trade in the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, sealing and fishing, all contributed to Stonington's prosperity; but it was whaling, above all, which made Stonington Borough the wealthiest village in Connecticut.

Stonington entered whaling comparatively late; not until 1822 did a whaling vessel clear from the port. But by the 1830's, whaling had replaced sealing as the principal maritime activity of the borough. The greater cost of whaling was apparently an important factor in Stonington's reluctance to abandon sealing.¹ Although whaling required a greater investment of capital and was far more important in the town's

¹Carl Cutler claimed that a whole fleet of sealers could be outfitted for the cost of a whaleship of average size. This claim is exaggerated; the cost of an average Stonington sealer was about one third that of a whaleship. (See price lists at the end of the chapters on whaling and sealing.) A second factor hindering the development of whaling according to Cutler, was that whaling required a longer apprenticeship than sealing in order to learn the necessary skills and knowledge of whaling grounds. Stonington's first whaling master, Peter Paddack was from Nantucket. Carl C. Cutler, "Mystic: The Story of a Small New England Seaport," The Marine Historical Association Publications, II, No. 4., p. 147.

economy than sealing, an outline history of Stonington's whaling industry is rather prosaic and uninteresting in comparison with sealing. Stonington whaling vessels made no new discoveries; none ever participated in an event which had the national impact of the opening of the South Shetland seal rookeries. Stonington occupied only a minor position in the American whaling industry and was dwarfed by the larger ports of New Bedford, Nantucket, Sag Harbor and New London. The borough's whalemen visited grounds first opened by other ports (primarily Nantucket), used methods which others had developed, and met with no more than the usual share of adventures, disasters and successes.

Shore whaling had been a sporadic activity on the northeastern coast of America even before the earliest European settlement. The first American whalemen were Indians, who hunted the whales in canoes, although their primitive weapons made capture an uncertain affair at best.² On the south shore of Long Island, organized pursuit of whales by English settlers was begun before 1650. In 1644, the town of Southampton was divided into four wards, in each ward eleven persons were designated to attend to the drift whales cast ashore.³ By 1650, week long whaling expeditions were sent out from Southampton. These expeditions were made in small boats, which were pulled ashore at the end of each day; the whalemen spending the night camped out on the beach.⁴ By 1665, organized pursuit of whales (as contrasted with the sporadic business of

²Elmo P. Hohman, The American Whaleman (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1928), p. 33.

³Alexander Starbuck, History of the American Whale Fishery From Its Earliest Inception to the Year 1876, with a preface by Stuart C. Sherman (New York: Argosy Antiquarian Ltd., 1964), 1: 9.

⁴Ibid., p. 10.

waiting for dead drift whales to be cast upon shore) was begun on Martha's Vineyard, Cape Cod, and Nantucket.⁵

In these days, whales are rarely seen near the New England Coast, but they were abundant enough in the Seventeenth Century to make shore whaling fairly lucrative. They appeared generally during cold weather, beginning early in November. After March or April, there were few to be found.⁶ By 1725, shore whaling had greatly declined. "Relentless pursuit for nearly a century had finally killed or driven off the whales that frequent our shores. It is probable that the whales of the western North Atlantic were so greatly reduced in numbers that they have never been able to recover their former abundance."⁷

Nantucket, which came to dominate the American whale fishery during the Eighteenth Century, at first lagged behind Cape Cod and Long Island whalers. In 1690 the people of Nantucket, "Finding that the people of Cape Cod had made greater proficiency in the art of the whale - catching than themselves sent and employed Ichabod Paddack [probably an ancestor of Stonington's first whaling master, Peter Paddack,] to remove to the island and instruct them in the best method of killing whales and obtaining the oil."⁸ Whether due to Paddack's instruction or not, the town of Sherburne (later changed to Nantucket) by 1700 was the leading whaling

⁵ Hohman, American Whaleman, p. 25. There are indications that off shore whaling in boats from the eastern end of Long Island probably began in 1669-70. George Francis Dow, Whale Ships and Whaling (Salem, Mass.: Marine Research Society, 1925), p. 13.

⁶ Starbuck, Whale Fishery, p. 5.

⁷ Glover M. Allen, The Whalebone Whales of New England, Memoirs of the Boston Society of Natural History, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Boston: Printed for the Society, 1916), p. 158.

⁸ Starbuck, Whale Fishery, p. 17.

port in the colonies.⁹ In 1698, the first whaling vessel was registered at Nantucket, the sloop MARY, of 25 tons.¹⁰ Alexander Starbuck, whose two volume history of the American Whale Fishery is absolutely indispensable to anyone interested in the subject, wrote that the killing of a sperm whale in 1712 changed the entire nature of Nantucket whaling. Now vessels were employed in voyages which often lasted six weeks. The blubber taken was packed in casks and brought back home to be tried out. In 1715, Nantucket had six sloops in the fishery, producing oil to the value of £1,100 sterling.¹¹

The golden age of American whaling began about 1835. Led by New Bedford which had replaced Nantucket as the nation's leading whaling port in the 1820's, "the whale fishery assumed its greatest importance and reached the zenith of its commercial value. . . . [In] 1846 . . . there belonged to the various [whaling] ports of the United States 678 barks and ships, 35 brigs, and 22 schooners, with an aggregate capacity of 233,189 tons, and valued at \$21,075,000."¹²

In 1647, the Connecticut General Court of Hartford passed the following resolution: "If Mr. Whiting, with any others shall make Tryall or prosecute a design for the taking of whale within these libertyes, and if uppon Tryall within the term of two years they shall like to goe on, noe others shall be suffered to interrupt them for the term of

⁹Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁰William B. Weeden, Economic and Social History of New England, 1620-1798 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1894), 1: 439.

¹¹Starbuck, Whale Fishery, p. 20.

¹²Ibid., p. 98.

seven years."¹³ This was the first recorded mention of whaling in the colony of Connecticut. Nothing further is known of Whiting's experiment.

Connecticut neglected whaling until the early Nineteenth Century when New London sent out the first ships of a fleet which later became the second largest in the country. There is almost no definite information on whaling voyages out of Connecticut before the Revolution. There were probably very few, although it is certainly likely that drift whales were taken and shore whaling in small boats was pursued whenever an opportunity to capture a whale arose.

Probably the earliest evidence of small boat whaling in Connecticut is a letter from Walt Winthrop of Boston to his brother Fitz-John at New London, in 1700. "I am sorry for the accident about the two Indians, who I suppose to be lost tho you do not say so, and tis well the others escaped. If there should be any difference about the pumme (i.e., possession) of the whale, I doubt I must com and hold a court of admiralty about it."¹⁴ The only other bit of evidence pointing to the existence of small boat whaling in Connecticut during the Eighteenth Century is from Joshua Hempstead's diary which contains the following entry for January 13, 1718: "Comfort Davis hired my whale boat to go awhaling on Fisher's Island; till the 20th of next month, to pay 20 shillings for hire and if he stays longer, thirty shillings. If he be lost and they get nothing he is to pay me £3, but if they get a fish £10."¹⁵

The first Connecticut vessel to make a whaling voyage south of the

¹³Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁴Allen, Whalebone Whales, p. 154.

¹⁵Francis Manwaring Caulkins, History of New London, Connecticut (New London: H. D. Utley, 1895), p. 638.

Equator, the Commerce, cleared from New London on February 6, 1794. Although leaving from New London, the Commerce was owned and fitted out at East Haddam, on the Connecticut River.¹⁶ In 1799, a company was formed in Norwich to prosecute the sealing and whaling business.¹⁷

Frances M. Caulkins, author of excellent histories of New London, and Norwich, Connecticut, placed the actual commencement of New London whaling in 1805. In that year, Dr. H. P. Lee led the formation of New London's first whaling company, which purchased the ship Dauphine and fitting her out for whaling.¹⁸ According to Robert Decker, who wrote a dissertation on New London merchants, one or more whaling voyages per year were made from New London between 1784 and 1809, but it was not until after the War of 1812 that the town's merchants centered their attention upon the whaling industry.¹⁹

Stonington did not send out its first whaleship until 1822, but like other New England coastal towns, the local residents would not let slip a chance to procure whales if they drifted on shore or lay within reach of small boats. There is almost no information on small boat whaling in Stonington. It was probably highly unorganized and informal; when whale were sighted close to shore, the word passed rapidly, and men rushed for their small boats. Even if they did reach the whale, success was far from assured, since their weapons were primitive, and their skills much

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Frances Manwaring Caulkins, History of Norwich, Connecticut (Hartford: Published by the author, 1866), p. 489.

¹⁸Caulkins, New London, pp. 640-641.

¹⁹Robert Owen Decker, "The New London Merchants: 1645-1909: The Rise and Decline of a Connecticut Port" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1970), p. 133.

less developed than those of regular whalers. The earliest mention of shore whaling in the Stonington area comes from a Westerly town meeting in 1686. The Rhode Island men complained that whales "cast up within the confines of this towne, have been monopolized by particular persons belonging to other jurisdictions [probably Stonington or New London]." A fine of £30 (quite large for the times) was imposed to prevent men of neighboring towns from cutting up or carrying off drift whales from Westerly's beaches.²⁰ Williams Haynes, wrote that in 1701 whales were captured in Long Island Sound, brought ashore at Wamphasset Point, tried out, and the oil sent to Boston or the West Indies.²¹

The only description located of early shore whaling in Stonington is in the Journal of The Times of April 1, 1800, which reported that "ten or twelve days since, a large number of whales of different sizes (estimated by some to 200) were discovered in Long Island Sound, about 8 miles from this port. . . . A number of citizens went out for the purpose of taking one, but not being well prepared, their attempts proved fruitless, altho they harpooned two or three. On the Thursday . . . following, however, (being fortified with better warps [ropes] etc.) . . . [they killed one] which was towed in the same day, to the admiration of a great number of people. It was 40 feet in length and about 30 in circumference." Two weeks later, the Journal carried the following advertisement: "Five barrels of good whale oil for sale by Bartholomew Hedden, Stonington

²⁰ Allen, Whalebone Whales, p. 169.

²¹ Williams Haynes, Stonington Chronology (Stonington, Conn.: Pequot Press, 1949), p. 28. Unfortunately Haynes' book has no documentation so I don't know the source of this interesting bit of information.

Port."²²

There are no other reports of whaling ventures out of Stonington until 1822, when the Hydaspe, the borough's first whaler, left for the South Atlantic. Indeed, to meet its own needs, Stonington had to import whale oil. In 1814, the whaling firm of William Rotch of New Bedford informed Joseph Schofield, who owned a woolen mill in Stonington: "Thy letter of this day is received and we wish we could fulfill thy order for 100 or 150 gals. of oil (whale or sperm), but [because of the British blockade] we have no way of conveying it either to Stonington or Newport."²³

According to Starbuck, the first returns of whale oil to Stonington were made by the sloop Essex, tender to the second sealing fleet, which he reported as bringing home 200 barrels of whale oil along with seal skins.²⁴ But in the marine columns of the New London Gazette, the Essex' cargo was listed as seal skins and sea elephant oil, with no mention of whale oil.²⁵

Stonington's first whaleship, the 94 foot, 312 ton ship Hydaspe, was built at Upper Mystic by Christopher Leeds in 1822.²⁶ Her owners were local men, most of whom had been shareholders in the town's sealing

²²Stonington Journal of the Times, 1, 15 April 1800.

²³William Rotch, Jr. & Sons to Joseph Schofield, 13 January 1814, Accounts and Letters of Joseph Schofield, Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

²⁴Starbuck, Whale Fishery.

²⁵New London Gazette, 22 May 1822, p. 3.

²⁶Virginia B. Anderson, "Maritime Mystic," The Marine Historical Association Publications, No. 39, January 1962, pp. 54-55.

vessels.²⁷ The Hydaspe sailed from Stonington in 1822, and returned, probably in 1823 with 1600 barrels of sperm oil, 200 barrels of whale oil and 1400 pounds of whalebone.²⁸ The Hydaspe may have made a second voyage from Stonington, probably leaving in 1824, but the only possible record of the voyage is the following entry from the marine columns of the Stonington Yankee: "Left on the coast of California, in November, ship Hydaspe, (Capt. Paddack), of this port, with 500 bbls. of oil,"²⁹ but I am uncertain whether this referred to the first or second voyage, or if the phrase "left on the coast of California" means that the Hydaspe was wrecked there.

In 1828, a group of men involved in Stonington's maritime activities, purchased the borough's second whaleship, the 330 ton Acasta, built in New York in 1818. Owners were listed as William Williams, Charles Mallory, Jasper Latham, Samuel P. Robinson, Charles Phelps, Benjamin F. Babcock and two Massachusetts men. The following year, Charles Phelps Williams, who became the town's wealthiest man, and most important whaling agent, bought a share of the Acasta, his first whaling venture.³⁰ The Stonington

²⁷Hydaspe Owners - Works Progress Administration. Extracts of Registers, Enrollments, and Licenses For The Ports of New London and Stonington. Manuscript copies of Custom House records in the G. W. Blunt-White Library, The Marine Historical Association, Mystic, Conn. - Benjamin F. Phelps, James P. Sheffield of Stonington and Peter Paddack of Nantucket (Master) with William A. Fanning, Benjamin Pendleton, Jonathan Pendleton, William Pendleton, Peleg Hancox, Francis Pendleton, Giles R. Hallam, Benjamin Pomeroy, George Hubbard, Simon Carew, Charles H. Smith, Azariah Stanton, Jr., Zebulon Hancox, Zeba D. Palmer, Thomas S. Breed, Benjamin S. Cutler, Nathan Pendleton, Latham Hull, Charles Mallory, Enoch Burrows, Henry Smith, Peleg Denison, David Leeds, Elisha Faxon, Horatio Lewis and H. B. Palmer.

²⁸Starbuck, Whale Fishery.

²⁹Stonington Yankee, 8 September 1824.

³⁰Ship's Registries, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

Telegraph carried an advertisement for the Acasta's first voyage on May 28, 1828. "Wanted, one or two coopers, a blacksmith and several seamen, to go in the ship Acasta, on a whaling voyage. Apply to William Williams or Nathan Smith, Stonington."³¹ But sealing remained the dominant interest in Stonington until about 1835. Most of the early whaling voyages made from the borough were to the Brazil Banks or the South Atlantic, and rarely did a ship like the Hydaspe in 1824, or the Thomas Williams in 1833 venture into the Pacific. A New London customs official described the whaling industry of southeastern Connecticut in response to a federal inquiry in 1828.

The right or black whale oil is not usually fished for in the Pacific, but it happens sometimes when the sperm whale are not plenty, when on the coast of Japan, and getting a little northward of their usual cruising ground they fall in with the black whale and take some of that oil. Vessels that are fitted out for the Brazil Banks never go into the Pacific, but return home whether successful or not; no vessel from this district have [sic] ever gone to a foreign port for a market but have invariably returned to this district. There were no vessels captured during the war, as there was [sic] no vessels employed from this District in that business during the war.³²

The right whale (called so by whalers who believed it the "right" one to catch) and the sperm whale were the backbone of the industry. The right whale which includes the Greenland or Arctic right whale as well as the Bowhead of the Pacific, attains a length of forty-five to fifty feet. The Southern right whale is distinguished from the former species by possessing a smaller head in proportion to its body. The right whale contains whalebone, used by the animals when feeding to

³¹Stonington Telegraph, 28 May 1828.

³²"A Statement Exhibiting a View of the Annual Product of the Whale Fishery," Records of the United States Coast Guard for the New London District, Record Group 26, Federal Records Center, Waltham, Mass.

strain its daily diet of small animals from sea water. Its oil usually sold at one half the price of sperm oil. Sperm whales reach a maximum length of 60 feet, and feed on giant squid. In place of whalebone, they have two rows of sharp teeth. The most valuable part of their oil, known as spermaceti, is found in the head. Spermaceti was used in the manufacture of candles, unguents, and ointments. Whale and sperm oil were used for illumination and as lubricants.³³

The beginning of the Golden Age of Stonington whaling was 1835 when six whalers sailed from the borough. In the next 25 years, approximately 157 whaling voyages were made out of Stonington, with the peak year being 1845, when 14 whaleships headed south. Stonington, however, was never more than a minor whaling port, ranking only thirteenth among American ports in number of voyages. By 1860, whaling in Stonington, as in most other American ports, was just about dead, although there were a few feeble twitches left in the carcass.³⁴

Between 1860 and 1879, not a single whaleship sailed from Stonington, but in the latter year, the 176 ton brig Henry Trowbridge sailed for the

³³Foster Rhea Dulles, Lowered Boats: A Chronicle of American Whaling (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1933), pp. 12-13.

³⁴Charles R. Schultz (name supplied), "List of American Whaling Ports, 1784-1928," Information Bulletin 69-1, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Conn. "The decline of the American Whale Fishery is commonly attributed to the discovery of petroleum and the extraordinary cheapness and abundance of kerosene oil. But very much more important . . . was the scarcity of whales, and the heavily increased cost of conducting the industry." Winthrop Lippitt Marvin, The American Merchant Marine: It's History and Romance from 1620 to 1902 (New York: C. Scribners & Sons, 1902), p. 167.

South Atlantic. The voyage of the Trowbridge, like almost all of Stonington's post-Civil War whaling expeditions, was not particularly successful. Heggarty reported the ship was abandoned at Fayal in 1882.³⁵ Out of the ten voyages made in the declining years of Stonington whaling, only the 67 ton Thomas Hunt, which took 850 barrels of sperm oil and 450 barrels of whale oil on an 1885 voyage,³⁶ made a respectable catch. All of the post Civil War voyages probably combined whaling and sealing, and required a smaller investment than in the pre-war period; since none of the ships were larger than 176 tons, and the crews were one third the size they had been. Most of the vessels were schooners which required fewer men to work than square riggers. As noted earlier, the 115 ton schooner Sarah W. Hunt had the dubious distinction of being Stonington's last whaler as well as its last sealer. The Sarah Hunt, after returning from a 10 month voyage in 1892, was sold to New Bedford.³⁷

This brief outline of Stonington's whaling history concludes as it began, with a newspaper notice about shore whaling. In 1895, the Wilcox brothers of Stonington captured a sperm whale off Quiambaug, a shallow inlet west of Stonington Borough. The Stonington Mirror reported that "the whale yielded about six barrels of oil, [which was worth \$90, according to Heggarty's price averages] as a result of the trying out process."³⁸

³⁵ Reginald B. Heggarty, Returns of Whaling Vessels Sailing From American Ports, 1876-1928, with additions by Philip F. Purrington (New Bedford, Mass.: The Old Dartmouth Historical Society and Whaling Museum, 1959).

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Stonington Mirror, 1 October 1892, p. 2.

³⁸ Ibid., 4, 11 January 1895.

WHALING - COSTS AND RETURNS

There were approximately 157 Whaling voyages out of Stonington from 1821 to 1891. Whaling in the borough was at its height between 1837, when the value of oil brought home first passed \$100,000, and 1856. The greatest returns were made in 1851 when the oil and bone from eight ships sold for \$339,000. From 1844 to 1856, there were only two years when the Stonington whaling fleet returned with cargoes totalling less than \$200,000. Returns for the entire forty year period were at the very least \$4,219,410. I say at the very least, because these figures, all based on Alexander Starbuck's lists of whaling voyages from American Ports, are incomplete and only approximate. For instance, there is no information on cargoes for some whaling voyages made out of Stonington. In 1838, Charles H. Smith received \$1,966 for his 1/16 share of ship Thomas Williams second voyage, but Starbuck has no information on this voyage.³⁹ Secondly, at times whalebone returns are omitted from the cargo returns of right whalers by Starbuck, but most right whalers took whalebone as well as oil, especially after 1840, when whalebone's value increased.⁴⁰ But Starbuck's figures will have to suffice, since

³⁹Smith Collection, MSS 70298-703000, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

⁴⁰"Often during recent years [the late Nineteenth Century] the remainder of the carcass is cast adrift if other whales are in sight, because bone is so much more valuable than oil." In 1891, for instance, whalebone which was valued at 13 cents a pound in 1833 (Starbuck, American Whale Fishery), sold for \$5.38 a pound (Heggarty, Returns of Whaling Vessels), while sperm oil, which was .85 a gallon in 1833, was worth only .69 a gallon by 1891. "It seems unquestionable that with the low prices and limited demand for [whale] oil the whale fishery would cease entirely but for the more valuable bone." Walter S. Tower, A History of The American Whale Fishery, University of Pennsylvania Publications, No. 20 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1907), p. 51.

there is no way of getting any idea of the total returns of Stonington whalers without using his book.⁴¹

The cash value of cargoes can be ascertained by multiplying the number of barrels of whale and sperm oil listed by Starbuck, first by 31.5, the number of gallons of whale oil in an average barrel,⁴² then by the average price listed by Starbuck and Heggarty for whale and sperm oil in a particular year. Documents from the C. P. Williams Collection for the Stonington Whaler Bolton, indicate that a barrel of whale oil did average about 31.5 gallons and supports my estimates of whaling returns from Stonington: "Charles P. Williams annexed we hand sales of 165 casks crude sperm oil cargo of ship Bolton. Proceeds \$25,062. at thy credit as cash." Josiah Macy & Sons had already deducted a 2 1/2% commission for handling the sale of the cargo.⁴³ Starbuck placed the Bolton's cargo at only 700 barrels or 22,050 gallons, which if sold at the average market price for 1848 of \$2.00 a gallon, would have brought in \$22,050. This is about \$3,500 under the actual selling price according to the receipt sent to Williams, but the discrepancy is not so outlandish.

Starbuck wrote that the expense of purchasing and fitting out a ship

⁴¹Starbuck's whaling statistics were, for the period after 1843, based on the New Bedford shipping list, which compiled yearly figures for the American whaling fleet. For the period previous to 1843, when Starbuck's statistics are much less complete, they were compiled from a number of sources, customs records, marine lists of local papers, as well as inquiries to prominent figures in the whaling industry of various ports. (In the C. P. Williams collection at Mystic Seaport, there is a letter from Starbuck requesting whatever information Williams might have on Stonington's whaling industry. I don't know if Williams replied.)

⁴²"Statistical and Financial Results of the 37 voyages of the Ship Charles W. Morgan," Information Bulletin 66-1, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.

⁴³Charles P. Williams Papers, Collection 86, Box 52, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

for a whaling voyage increased greatly during the Nineteenth Century, until in 1860 the cost had actually become prohibitive. In 1790, a ship with a capacity of 1,900 barrels fitted out for a two year Pacific sperm whaling voyage, cost \$12,000. By 1858 the capacity of the standard sperm whaler had doubled to 3,800 barrels, the average voyage was now four years instead of two, and the cost with outfits was \$65,000.⁴⁴ According to Hohman, the average value of a vessel engaged in right whaling in 1844 (most of Stonington's whaling voyages were after right whales) was about \$28,000.⁴⁵ Hohman placed the cost of a right whaler "outfit", that is all necessary supplies such as oil casks, food, cordage, whale boats, tools, etc., at \$17,129 in 1844.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, there is little information on the financial aspects of Stonington whaling. Only a few whaling records of Charles P. Williams and none of John F. Trumbull survive, and they were the borough's leading whaling agents. The most complete accounts available are those of Charles H. Smith, a building contractor who specialized in lighthouse construction, for whom whaling was no more than a sideline. These accounts are far from voluminous, but they do give some idea of whaling expenses and profits. In 1835, Smith bought 1/16 of the 340 ton ship Thomas Williams for \$2339. Thus the total cost of the vessel (outfits most likely included) was \$34,424. The Williams, only two years old, had been built in Westerly, Rhode Island, in 1833. The Williams cost \$28,800 (again probably with outfits included) in 1833.⁴⁷ The Thomas

⁴⁴ Starbuck, Whale Fishery, I: 110.

⁴⁵ Hohman, American Whaleman, p. 279.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 326.

⁴⁷ Gurdon Trumbull made two payments totalling \$3600 to Ephraim Williams in 1833 for a 1/8 share of the Williams. Williams Papers, Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Connecticut.

Williams returned from her second voyage (the first in which Smith owned a share) in 1838, with a net cargo worth \$31,756, of which Smith received \$1966 for his 1/16. Eight hundred eighty five dollars was paid out of Smith's portion toward the \$14,060 for outfits, which probably included necessary repairs as well, for the Williams third voyage. Smith's share of the third voyage, completed in 1840, was \$1568, \$863 of which was paid toward outfits for the fourth voyage. Returns from the Williams fourth voyage are missing from the Smith accounts, as are the assessments for the fifth voyage outfits. In 1845 The Williams made her sixth voyage out of Stonington, and Smith was assessed \$1,037 for his 1/16 share of outfits. But the Williams never returned, as it was completely destroyed by a fire off the Azores on June 11, 1845.⁴⁸ Like most whaling vessels, the Williams was insured, and Smith was paid \$1,461 for his 1/16 share.⁴⁹

⁴⁸"Wednesday, June 11, [1845] At half past 2 o'clock A.M. discovered the ship to be on fire in the lower hold between the main and after hatches - used every exertion to subdue the fire but without success and was forced to take the boats and leave the ship. We landed at Graciosa [Azores] at 6 o'clock A.M. So ends this voyage." "Log Book of Ship Thomas Williams, Frederick Williams, Master, bound to the Northwest Coast on a Whaling Voyage," Log 39, G. W. Blunt-White Library Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Conn.

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SHIP THOMAS WILLIAMS TO C.H. SMITH

DEBIT	CREDIT
1835 1/16 <u>Thomas Williams</u> & outfits 2d voyage \$2339	1838 1/16 share cargo T. Williams 2nd voyage \$1966
1838 1/16 share <u>T. Williams</u> outfits 3d voyage \$885	1840 1/16 <u>T. Williams</u> cargo 3d voyage \$1568
1840 1/16 share <u>T. Williams</u> outfits 4th voyage \$863	1842 (Hypothetical returns based on average of 1840 and 1844 voyages) \$1554

In ten years, Smith received \$8,089 for his 1/16 share of the Thomas Williams. This sum includes a projected return of \$1554 for the missing fourth voyage, arrived at by averaging the third and fifth voyages. Smith had invested \$5998; his total earnings for the ten year period from the Thomas Williams were \$2091 or about 34% on his original investment. For a modest income which averaged about \$210 per year, Smith had to originally invest more than \$2,300, a sum quite beyond the reach of the ordinary citizen. Even 1/64 of the Thomas Williams, usually the smallest share sold in Stonington vessels, would have cost \$575, the price of some of the houses in Stonington Borough. Jabish Holmes, who died in 1831 left a "house and lot on Stonington Point where James Clark lives" valued at \$500.⁵⁰ But Smith's accounts are evidence that whaling,

1842 (Hypothetical projection based on average of 3rd and 4th voyage outfits) \$874	1844 - 1/16 <u>T. Williams</u> 5th returns \$1540
1845 1/16 share <u>T. Williams</u> outfit 6th voyage - \$1037	1845 1/16 <u>T. Williams</u> 5th voyage insurance money \$1461
Total Debit	Total Credit
\$5,998	\$8,089

Total Profit - \$2,091

Source: Smith Collection, MSS 70298 - 70300, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

⁵⁰ Stonington, Connecticut: Probate Records, Volume 15, pp. 86-87. In 1835, Smith bought 1/32 of the 251 ton bark George from Elisha Faxon. Built in Maine in 1826, the George was sold to Stonington in 1835. Smith's 1/32 share cost \$156 which meant that the total cost was only \$4992. (This undoubtedly could not have included outfits.) The George returned from her first voyage out of Stonington in 1838 but there are no records of it in Smith's accounts. In 1838, Smith paid \$308 for his 1/32 share of the George's outfits, total outfits thus cost \$9856. The George returned from her second voyage out of Stonington in 1841, and Smith received \$780, minus \$366 the assessment for outfits for the third voyage. Smith's share of this cargo was \$670, minus \$404 for outfits for the 4th voyage. In all, Smith had made \$216 profit on his \$1234 investment.

like most industries did not offer great opportunities for wealth to moderate investors. Although a number of Stonington men, particularly those who owned shares in many vessels, became quite wealthy from whaling, according to Hohman the long-run, normal rate of profit for the industry as a whole was essentially a modest one.⁵¹ The average rate of profit was estimated by Samuel Enderby, head of the famous English whaling firm, at 6.5 per cent per annum in right whaling, and 1.3 per cent in sperm whaling.⁵²

The best source of information on the cost of Stonington whaleships is the Charles P. Williams Collection at the G. W. Blunt-White Library of Mystic Seaport, which includes 20 of the vessels he owned shares in. The prices of ten other vessels, Thomas Williams, George, Cincinnati, Acasta, Charles Phelps, Herald, Fellows, Newark, Tybee and Newburyport, were secured from various sources including probate records, miscellaneous bills of sale, and the Charles H. Smith Accounts. The prices are fairly close to Hohman's estimate of \$28,000 as the average cost of a right whaler with outfits in 1844. The price of outfits varied from

ACCOUNT OF BARK GEORGE TO C.H. SMITH

DEBIT

CREDIT

1/32 bark George bought from
Elisha Faxon - 1835 - \$156 Cost
of 1/32 outfits 1st voyage ?

1/32 return 1st voyage ?

1/32 outfits 1838 \$308 2nd voyage
1/32 outfits 1841 \$366 3d voyage
1/32 outfits 1845 \$404 4th voyage
Total outlay \$1234

1/32 returns, 2d voyage 1841 \$780
1/32 returns 3d voyage 1844 \$670
1/32 returns 4th ? voyage
Total returns \$1450

Profit to 1845 - \$216

Smith Collection, MSS 70298-70300, Connecticut Historical Society,
Hartford.

⁵¹Hohman, "Wages, Risks and Profits in the Whaling Industry,"
Quarterly Journal of Economics 40 (August 1926): 668.

⁵²Ibid., p. 667.

\$9856 for the 251 ton George in 1838, to \$21,312 for the 457 ton Cincinnati in 1845.⁵³ But in general, the cost of outfits for whaleships were fairly standardized, varying mostly I think, with the size of the ship; so there was little possibility of reducing initial costs in that area. A considerable expense, however, could be saved by purchasing an older vessel, and hoping it would hold together long enough to make a decent return on investments. For example, in 1845, Charles H. Smith bought 1/64 of the 457 ton Cincinnati, built - in New York in 1831, for \$219, which would make the total cost \$14,016,⁵⁴ considerably less than the \$31,000 price tag on the 1844 New Bedford ship in Hohman's tables.⁵⁵ The Cincinnati must certainly have paid off her investment since the vessel made four voyages between 1845 and 1860 before being resold in New York.⁵⁶

The Acasta, Stonington's second whaling vessel, was built in New York in 1818, and sold to Stonington owners in 1828.⁵⁷ Gurdon Trumbull paid William Williams \$687 for 1/16 of the 330 ton ship in 1829, which put the vessel cost \$10,992.⁵⁸ In September of the same year, Charles H. Phelps and Maria Babcock sold 1/16 of the Acasta with outfits for \$1110 which meant the total cost was \$17,760.⁵⁹ The Acasta made eight

⁵³Smith Collection, MSS 70298-70300.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Hohman, American Whaleman, p. 324.

⁵⁶Starbuck, Whale Fishery.

⁵⁷Ship's Registries, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

⁵⁸Trumbull Purchases, No. 2, June 4, 1829, Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

⁵⁹Ibid., No. 4. I have found little evidence that sellers of shares in whaleships tried to make a fast buck off the purchasers, and generally

whaling voyages out of Stonington, foundering on her last one in 1840. Apparently, all of these transactions were on a strictly cash basis, for none of these bills of sale mentioned anything to the contrary.

STONINGTON WHALING CREWS

Most of the 84 crew lists of Stonington vessels found were for voyages made while the port was included in the New London Customs District. In 1842, Stonington was made a port of entry with its own customs house. But only a few customs records for the period between 1842 and 1912, when the borough's maritime activity had declined to such an extent that a customs house was no longer required, have survived. Out of 1540 names on 68 Stonington whaling crew lists between 1829 and 1842, only 269, or about 17%, were listed as residents of the town of Stonington. These figures are only approximate and are complicated by the doubtful validity of many of the residences listed. The residence of a whaleman was probably of little concern to anyone;

the sale price was nearly the same for all customers. I don't know whether this indicates integrity or a true spirit of partnership on the part of the seller, or if the buyers were aware of the value of the merchandise. Three weeks after Gurdon Trumbull bought 1/16 of the Acasta for \$687, William Williams sold Charles P. Williams 1/32 of the vessel for \$343, almost exactly one half of what Trumbull had paid - One year later C. P. Williams bought an additional 3/32 of the Acasta for \$934. C. P. Williams Collection, 86, Box 51, - G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

often an entire crew would list their hometown as Stonington; but if no trace of their family names could be found on the town's census schedules, they had done so probably merely for convenience. Even so, a number of the men among the 269 judged as residents, probably never did live in Stonington. The main point is that most of the crewmen on Stonington whalers came from other places.

Large numbers gave New York as their residence. Most of these men had undoubtedly been recruited by various whaling agents in that city, then shipped up to Stonington (travel costs were deducted from the whaleman's lay), to complete the crew of a whaleship. Even on the earliest whalers out of Stonington, when voyages usually lasted only a year, local citizens formed a minority of the crews. For instance, on the 1829 voyage of the Acasta, Stonington's second whaler, only 10 out of a crew of 27, were listed as residents of the town. By the late 1830's, there were usually no more than three or four Stonington residents on board each of the borough's whaling vessels. Ten years later, judging by the census of 1850, which listed crewmen on Stonington whaleships, crews were made up almost entirely of outsiders. Of the 462 crewmen on board the borough's 16 whaleships, only 56, or about 12%, were listed as Connecticut residents. Of these 56, only 18 were possible residents of Stonington: James Pendleton, W. B. Worden, Samuel Stevens, William Sisson, John Watson (Black), John Stanton (Black), Luther Ripley, Jr., Charles Tinker, William H. Hill, John Main, Peter Williams, William Staplin (age 16), Ethan A. Collins, Austin George, Lyands Tinker (33, old for a whaleman), George W. Gardner, and Pharoah Potter (Black). Many of the 16 vessels had crews which were half foreign; in fact, only about one fourth of the 26 man crew of the

Charles Phelps were Americans.⁶⁰

The obvious explanation for the small number of Stonington residents among the crews of borough whaling vessels, is that it was impossible for a young man not to be aware of the real conditions of whaling life in a place so closely connected with the industry. By 1850 all the local boys had gotten the message that a whale ship was a good place to keep away from.

A second characteristic of Stonington whaling crews was the rapid turnover of help. Of the 269 Stonington residents who sailed on borough whaleships between 1829 and 1842, only 30 made more than one voyage. For at least 17 of these 30, the opportunities offered in the whaling industry outweighed the disadvantages, and they went on to become masters of their own vessels. Benjamin F. Pendleton, Thomas Swan, John Brown, William Beck, Joshua T. Stevens, Gurdon Pendleton, Otis Pendleton, Charles Nash, Billings Burch, Franklin Hancox, Edmund Pendleton, Joseph E. Smith, George Hubbard, Jr., William E. Brewster, and Thomas Willcox; all rose to the command of whale ships,⁶¹ while Thomas Burch, Jr., and Gilbert R. Davison were masters of sealing vessels.

One interesting career was that of Billings Burch. Not only is the name of Burch's father, Samuel, who was a carpenter, not to be found on any of the Stonington tax records; he was apparently never even head of his own household. Although Billings' brother, George C. Burch, was born in 1820, his father's name was not among the borough householders on the 1820 census schedule. The entire family probably lived with their grandfather, Billings Burch, a carpenter like his son, who left a modest estate of \$1721 at his death in 1836.⁶² Young

⁶⁰ U.S., Bureau of the Census. Seventh Decennial Census, 1850. Connecticut. New London County, Stonington.

⁶¹ Walter Coelho, "The Stonington Whaling Fleet" (Master's Thesis, Central Connecticut State College, 1971).

⁶² Stonington, Connecticut, Probate Records, Vol. 15, pp. 483-486.

Billings made his first voyage on the trading schooner Alonzo, at age 14 in 1833. His first whaling voyage was on the Acasta in 1835, when he was 17. In 1837, he was again a member of the Acasta's crew, and in 1839, at 21, became third mate of the whaleship Caledonia. Two years later, he was first mate of the Caledonia, and by 1847 he had become master of the Charles Phelps.⁶³ The careers of the other whaling captains, although unfortunately not so well documented as Burch's were probably quite similar: a couple of voyages on a whaleship, possibly serving as a boatsteerer on the second; promotion to mate, and eventual command.

Only a minute handful of Stonington's residents (borough population in 1840 was 1383, town population, 3898), made their living as crewmen on board the borough's whaleships, and it must be concluded that if a man was not interested in, or unsuited for, assuming command, he generally looked for another line of work. Five of these whalers, Pharoah Potter, Peter Dorell Jr., Philip Palmer, Alexander Sharper (or Sharp) and Pero Palmer (listed as steward on several voyages), being black, were just about excluded from any possibility of advancement at home and found on a whaleship one of the few means of livelihood open to their race. There were numerous black men on a majority of Stonington vessels, although with one exception, they were excluded from any rank higher than seaman. Many served as cooks and stewards. By 1848, the difficulty of getting any men at all, probably forced the owners to accept George Thompson, "American Coloured," as second mate on board the bark Cavalier. Thompson became first mate when the captain left the vessel in South America due to illness, and Thomas Dexter, the previous first mate was

⁶³This and all other information in this section were taken from the "Crew Lists", No. 104, Record Group 26, Records of the United States Coast Guard, for the New London District. Federal Records Center, Waltham, Massachusetts.

promoted to Captain. William H. Wilson who kept a journal on board the Cavalier, found Thompson to be a tough officer. "The mate is a hard worker indeed; he is quick and energetic a word and a blow and the blow comes first. He catches everything even to crowbars darted down the hold."⁶⁴

Several other Stonington residents who made more than one voyage on borough whaleships may have risen to the rank of captain in vessels out of other ports. George Gabriel who was second mate on the Philetus and probably first mate on the Mercury in 1838, and George Gavit and William Clark who were probably first mates on the Philetus in 1837 and the George in 1835, respectively, might have commanded vessels out of other ports. Out of the 1540 men who served on Stonington whaleships between 1829 and 1842, only two Stonington white men, Thomas Burch, and Evan Evans, made more than one whaling voyage with no expectation of rising to command. Evans, born in Wales, was listed as a mariner in the census of 1850, and according to the tax lists of 1851, owned \$900 worth of taxable property. Thomas Burch's name first appears on the crew list of the pioneer Stonington sealer, Frederick in 1819, the oldest man aboard at 37. Twelve years later he served on the Charles Adams bound on a whaling voyage for the South Seas. In 1833, Burch was again on the Charles Phelps, this time serving with his son Thomas Jr., who later became master of the Stonington sealer Bolton in 1836. Thomas Burch, Sr. made five voyages on Stonington whalers, the last known being on the Corvo, when his age was listed at 54.⁶⁵ According to the Stonington tax rolls of 1831, Thomas Burch, Sr. owned his own home worth \$300, his only taxable property.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ William H. Wilson, "Journal of a Voyage on the Bark Cavalier," Log 18, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.

⁶⁵ "Crew Lists," Federal Records Center, Waltham, Massachusetts.

⁶⁶ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1831.

Contrary to what might be expected, surprisingly few Stonington residents made careers out of serving before the mast on whaleships. Since so few did make whaling their life's work it is impossible to offer some sort of profile of the "typical Stonington Whaleman." By the 1840's, the crews on Stonington's whaleships consisted almost entirely of non-residents. Unfortunately, all that is known about these strangers are their names, although most historians of the whaling industry agree, that in general, they were a pretty disreputable lot.

WAGES IN THE WHALING INDUSTRY

The responsibility of command in whaling was well rewarded, since a captain usually received 10 to 15 times as much money for a voyage as an ordinary seaman. According to Hohman, during the mid-Nineteenth Century, whaling shares or lays ranged from 1/8 or 1/10 in the case of a few captains (1/17 was a figure I have seen several times on Stonington shipping papers), to 1/100 - 1/160 for seamen, stewards, and cooks. 1/150 seemed the usual lay for ordinary seamen on Stonington ships. Hohman reported that wages paid the ordinary seaman were decidedly lower in whaling than in the merchant marine or unskilled occupations on shore,⁶⁷ but Captain Hezekiah Dickens found that the command of a Stonington whale ship was considerably more lucrative than the merchant service. Captains of packets and clippers, however, were also extremely well paid. In 1833, Dickens "agreed to take charge as captain" of a sloop "at twenty two dollars and a half per month and if said sloop's business should pay her owners eight hundred dollars or more (after expenses) . . . we agree to pay sd. Dickens twenty five dollars per month."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Hohman, American Whaleman, pp. 16, 17.

⁶⁸ Hezekiah Dickens Collection, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

Between 1846 and 1855, Dickens made three voyages for Stonington whaling agent John F. Trumbull. In 1846, Dickens took command of the Tybee for a three year voyage, for which he was paid \$2,184. In 1849, he was captain of the Newark, making two voyages on that vessel. The first, a year and a half long, paid him \$1,278; and the second, a voyage of four years, paid him \$3,991. In addition, he owned a share of the Newark and outfits, so Dickens' total income from whaling in eight and a half years was \$10,945, certainly not a fortune, but a good living for those times.⁶⁹

The pay of an ordinary seaman serving under Dickens on the Tybee and Newark, receiving the 1/150 lay for the same three voyages would have been \$240 or \$80 a year for the first, \$145, about \$100 a year for the second, and \$433 about \$125 per year for the third. These figures are based on the assumption that Dickens received the 1/17 lay. It must be remembered that deductions were taken from these wages for outfits, "luxuries" from the slop chest, and cash advances from the captain for shore leave pocket money.⁷⁰ All in all, the wages on a whaling vessel were nothing short of ludicrous. In comparison, in 1837, a seaman on Boston merchant vessels was paid \$14 a month, or \$168 a year.⁷¹ In addition, he was home at least part of the year, and did not have the deductions for outfits and slops a whaleman did. According to the 1850 census, the average monthly wages for a farmhand in Stonington, with

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰It was estimated that \$125 was the average indebtedness of an ordinary seaman on a whaler, and \$225 the average lay for a two year voyage. Whaling Masters, Compiled and written by the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration of Massachusetts. (New Bedford: Old Dartmouth Historical Society, 1939), p. 18.

⁷¹U.S., Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 604, History of Wages in the United States From Colonial Times To 1928 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1934), p. 98.

board, were \$12 a month (board being estimated at \$2 a week) so a year's wages for a farm laborer would have been about \$350. The average wage for an unskilled laborer without board was \$1.00 a day, or assuming he could find work all year, \$300 a year.⁷²

Why were men willing to accept wages this low for an occupation so full of hardship and discomfort? Were they forced by economic necessity to accept any opportunity to earn a living? Were they careless, unconcerned about money, impractical, or just plain ignorant? There is not much on the economic background of Stonington whalers, since so few local residents served on borough ships. Unfortunately, there is no definite answer to the intriguing question of why young men signed on whaling vessels. Adventure, not money, did seem to be the main interest among those who set down their whaling experiences in writing, but these articulate few formed a small minority among whaling crews, and might perhaps have differed significantly from the majority. Undoubtedly ignorance and that "absurd optimism," characteristic of most humans played a large part in involving young men in something so economically unrewarding as whaling. After all, how many people are capable of coldly calculating the exact debits and credits of any venture? And how many come to find that there are always more debits than originally foreseen? Was rationality to be expected of young men, many of whom were uneducated and ignorant, if even a respectable authority like William B. Weeden could write the following nonsense as late as the 1890's? "The method of whaling on shares, or a 'lay', matured late in the Eighteenth Century was the best cooperation of capital, capitalism, and labor ever accomplished."⁷³ "The lay system . . . tempted the enterprise

⁷²U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Seventh Decennial Census, 1850. Connecticut, Volume 6, New London County. Schedule 5, Products of Industry in Stonington for Year Ending June 1, 1850.

⁷³Weeden, Economic History, 2:430.

and inflamed the greed of every possible adventurer. His subsistence was assured and any losses were borne by rich owners. A lucky chase would bring large returns for his labor."⁷⁴

Seaman's wages on the few Stonington whalers for which exact returns are available were about the same as on the Newark and Tybee, ranging from \$8 a month for the George's 1838-1840 voyage to \$15 a month for the Thomas Williams, 1842-1845 voyage.

Even skilled laborers on whaleships often received less pay than unskilled workers on shore. One of the most important men on a whaling voyage was a cooper, since it was vital that oil casks be well maintained or precious oil would be lost through leakage. The cooper's lay varied from 1/50 to 1/63. Thus at 1/50, a cooper's share of the Tybee's cargo would have been \$740 for the first voyage, which lasted about three years, or \$260 a year; \$434, or \$288 a year for the Newark's first voyage under Dickens, and \$1300 or \$326 a year for the second.⁷⁵ The latter being the only voyage on which his earnings would have been greater than an unskilled Stonington laborer for a similar term

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 446. Probably one of the few voyages which deserved Weeden's enthusiasm was made by the Pioneer which left New London, June 4th, 1864, and returned a little over a year later, September 18th, 1865 with a cargo worth \$150,000. Starbuck, Whale Fishery, p. 148. An ordinary seaman on 1/150 lay would have received \$1000 for his fifteen months labor on the Pioneer. What is most remarkable about the voyage is not merely its success, but the fact that it was so successful in such a short period of time. Since most whaling voyages were two to four years long, it is safe to say that a \$1000 payday for fifteen months work was certainly unique.

⁷⁵All these figures are approximations and were arrived at in the following way. Dickens was paid about \$4000 as master of the Newark on its 5th voyage (his second as captain). Thus, if he was receiving the 1/17 lay which I assume he was, the total net proceeds of the Newark's voyage were about \$65,000. The total net proceeds was the value of cargo after a number of charges, warfare, pilotage, commission on sales, cooperage, etc. were deducted. (Hohman, "Wages, Risks and Profits" p. 645) The share of a member of the crew can be arrived at by dividing his lay, in the case of a cooper the 1/50, of an ordinary seaman, the 1/150, into the total net proceeds.

of employment.

It is perhaps significant that despite the high rate of literacy in Nineteenth Century New England, neither of the two skilled men, a boatsteerer⁷⁶ and cooper who signed the only Stonington shipping contract found, could write.

OWNERS OF THE STONINGTON WHALING

FLEET AND THEIR PROFITS

In one of the early chapters of Moby Dick, Herman Melville described the owners of the Pequod.

Seated on the transom was what seemed to me a most uncommon and surprising figure. It turned out to be Captain Bildad, who along with Captain Peleg was one of the largest owners of the vessel; the other shares, as is sometimes the case in these ports, being held by a crowd of old annuitants; widows, fatherless children, and chancery wards; each owning about the value of a timber head, or a foot of plank, or a nail or two in the ship. People in Nantucket invest their money in whaling vessels, the same way you do yours in approved state stocks bringing in good interest.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Stonington, May 10, 1847. "This is to certify that I, Austin George of the town of Ledyard have this day agreed to go on a whaling voyage in either the ship Mary and Susan or Corvo as I may prefer as boatsteerer for the 1/80th lay. . . . I hereby bind myself to fulfill the above contract or pay all damages that may be sustained by my not complying with the contract."

his
Austin † George
mark

Charles P. Williams Papers, Collection 86, Box 52, G. W. Blunt-White Library Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut. The boatsteerer sat at the head of the whaleboat as an oarsman. He was the man who actually harpooned the whale after which he changed position with the officer, usually one of the mates who had been sitting in the stern. The officer then attended to the killing of the whale with a hand lance, while the boatsteerer tended to the steering of the whaleboat. George Brown Goode, The Fisheries and Fishing Industries of the United States, Section V, Volume II, (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1887), p. 259.

⁷⁷ Herman Melville, Moby Dick (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1942), p. 66.

The theme of this passage, the widespread ownership of wealth, is a treasured American belief; but in Stonington Borough, whaling vessels were the property of a small segment of the population. In the first place, almost all of the shareholders in the whaling fleet had owned taxable property before they ever purchased shares in whaleships. Throughout the Nineteenth Century only about one third of Stonington Borough householders owned taxable property.⁷⁸ Nor was the price of shares within reach of the small investor: \$156, which C. P. Williams paid for 1/32 of the George in 1835, was the lowest found. Add to that amount, an additional \$400 or so needed for 1/32 of the George's outfit for a whaling cruise, and the total investment would be about \$550; \$75 more than a skilled carpenter could expect to earn in a year during the 1850's at \$1.25 a day.

Finally, the occupations of Stonington whaleship owners placed them well above the average resident of Stonington Borough, for as appendix A shows, the majority were whaling captains or merchants, with a sprinkling of professionals, farmers and small manufacturers like ropemaker Samuel Bottum. The only exceptions were Thomas S. Breed, who was a second mate on the sealer Only Son in 1823, and owned a share in the Hydaspe in 1822, which was probably purchased with wages from a sealing voyage; Nelson Carpenter, a stone mason; G. L. Prouty, a railroad ticket agent; and Alfred Ross, a black man who worked as a marble cutter. The latter two owned shares during the late 1850's when the value of Stonington whaling vessels was considerably reduced.

The widows and orphans who owned whaling shares were generally the families of whaling captains who usually sold their shares after a single voyage was completed. Malvina Bottum Beebe, who owned shares in eleven Stonington

⁷⁸ For more on property ownership in Stonington Borough see chapter 11.

whalers, was probably the only borough woman who was regularly involved in whaling investments.

Approximately 109 borough residents invested in the 37 whaling vessels which were registered in Stonington Borough between 1822 and 1860. Joining local residents in whaling ventures were a number of outsiders, mostly from Mystic and Westerly, plus a few New Yorkers; but the large majority of owners of Stonington whaleships lived in the borough. Localism seems to have been a characteristic of the whaling industry for there is little evidence that borough residents ever had much interest in whaling vessels of other ports. With almost no exceptions, all of the borough residents who possessed fairly comfortable estates, i.e., those rated at \$5000 or more on the 1840 and 1851 Stonington tax lists, owned shares in Stonington whaling vessels. But only a handful of local men were primarily interested in whaling; yet they were, by 1851, the richest men in the community. Fifteen borough householders possessed estates worth \$10,000 or more in 1851 according to the Stonington Grand List Abstract. The fortunes of all of them, except physician William Hyde, who owned shares in seventeen whaling vessels, building contractor Charles H. Smith whose shares were worth only \$400 in 1851, and physician William M. Lord, one of the borough's few comfortable citizens who owned no whaling shares, depended mainly on the whaling industry. The town's wealthiest men, Charles P. Williams, whose estate was rated at \$93,000 in 1851, over \$60,000 of which was in vessels; and John F. Trumbull, whose estate of \$57,000 included \$22,000 in vessels; were called whaling agents by the Stonington Mirror. Thus it would appear that the bulk of their energies were devoted to managing whaleships. Usually Williams and Trumbull were the largest single investors in a particular vessel. There may have been some sort of rivalry between the two, since they

never once invested in the same ship.

Five of the wealthy men of Stonington Borough, John Brown, Benjamin Pendleton, Joseph E. Smith, Alexander S. Palmer, and William Palmer, were whaling captains who also owned shares in whaling vessels. Brown, who owned shares in only two whalers; and Palmer and Benjamin Pendleton who owned shares in six each, probably made most of their money commanding successful whaling voyages. But Smith, part owner of twelve vessels, and William Pendleton, shareholder in twenty, were among the largest investors in Stonington. The remaining five wealthy borough residents whose fortunes depended largely on whaling, were called merchants on the 1850 census schedule. Ephraim Williams, Peleg Hancox, Stiles Stanton, Samuel F. Denison, and Gurdon Trumbull, all owned at some time, general merchandise stores, and a good deal of their business must have involved outfitting whaling vessels. Additional profits were derived from their shares of whalers: Denison owned shares in 6, Trumbull in 8, and Williams, Hancox and Stanton shares in 14, 20, and 17, respectively.⁷⁹ Most of the 109 borough shareholders did not become wealthy by investing in whaling. Forty seven owned shares in only one vessel; many for only one voyage. For the average shareholder, a whaleship was, as Melville indicated, like "an approved state stock bringing in good interest," and whaling profits could only supplement one's regular income. In 1851, of 65 borough shareholders, only 11 owned more than \$5000 worth; 27 owned less than \$1000 worth.⁸⁰ At 6.5% per annum, Enderby's estimate of the average profit derived from right whaling, a \$1000 investment would pay only \$65, hardly a munificent income even in 1851.⁸¹

⁷⁹Ship's Registries, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

⁸⁰Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1851.

⁸¹Hohman, "Wages, Risks and Profits," p. 667.

Although the Golden Age of Stonington whaling began in the late 1830's, it was some time before the wealth brought home by the whaleships appeared in the borough tax rolls. In 1840, twelve years after the Acasta had revived Stonington whaling, the borough grand list was not much greater than it had been in 1831. In 1840, property owned by residents of Stonington Borough was rated at \$219,000; in 1831 it had been \$205,000. The one new feature on the 1840 tax list related to whaling was the addition of Charles P. Williams and John F. Trumbull, leading figures in the whale fishery, to the company of fairly wealthy men in Stonington Borough. Williams' estate was rated at \$22,750 in 1840 and Trumbull's at \$13,900. But the estates of Ephraim Williams, Peleg Hancox, Gurdon Trumbull and several others who had accumulated some wealth earlier in sealing, and a good deal more in whaling, were not much larger in 1840 than they were in 1831.⁸²

By 1851, however, the Stonington tax rolls reflected the success of the whaleships. Property owned by residents of Stonington Borough, not including investments in vessels, had increased more than \$150,000 in 11 years to \$372,000. For the first time since the death of Dr. Charles Phelps, there were rich men living in the borough. At the top of the list was C. P. Williams, with an estate rated at \$93,000. John F. Trumbull was rated at \$57,000; and C. P.'s brother Ephraim, at \$35,000. But it is difficult to set an accurate figure on the amount of money whaling brought to Stonington between 1840 and 1851. As Professor Pessen noted, tax lists registered on the average only one sixth of a wealthy man's possessions.⁸³ A second problem is that the 1840 Grand List, like most Stonington tax records, gives no figures on ownership of vessels,

⁸² Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1831, 1840.

⁸³ Edward Pessen, Riches, Class and Power Before the Civil War (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1973), p. 19.

which constituted an important part of the estates of a number of borough citizens. The 1851 Grand List did assess property in vessels, so an additional \$178,750 was added to the ratable estates of borough residents bringing the total borough list that year to \$551,000.⁸⁴

A more accurate picture of the wealth brought to Stonington by whale-ships can be gotten by comparing the 1861 and 1831 tax lists because vessels were assessed in 1861, and a fairly accurate estimate of the value of vessels owned can be made for 1831.⁸⁵ In 1831 vessels registered in Stonington Borough included the sealers Alonzo and Penguin, and whalers Francis, Charles Adams, and Acasta, worth a total of about \$76,000.⁸⁶ (The number of small fishing and trading vessels belonging to Stonington is unknown, but their cash value was not great.) About \$60,000 of the \$76,000 invested in whalers and sealers was probably contributed by borough shareholders,⁸⁷ so the property of borough residents in 1831 was worth somewhere around \$265,000.⁸⁸

By 1861 it was obvious that most of the money which ten years earlier was invested in vessels had been diverted elsewhere, for total investments in vessels and commerce had declined from \$178,000 to \$17,000. John F. Trumbull, who owned \$22,000 worth of vessel shares in 1851, owned none in 1861. Fifteen thousand dollars of his money was now invested in four manufacturing enter-

⁸⁴ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1851.

⁸⁵ I don't know how many vessels were registered in Stonington Borough in 1840, so it is impossible to estimate their value for that year.

⁸⁶ See vessel price lists in appendix. Vessel names taken from Clark's "Antarctic Fur Seal" and Starbuck's Whale Fishery.

⁸⁷ Generally about 75% or more of the owners of Stonington sealing and whaling vessels lived in the borough.

⁸⁸ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1831.

prises including a nail factory in the borough. Charles P. Williams, who had over \$60,000 invested in vessels in 1851, had only \$5,000 in 1861. In 1861 Williams had \$85,000 in stocks, bonds and money at interest and \$100,000 employed in trade and manufacturing; ten years earlier he had invested only \$10,000 in such enterprises. William's and Trumbull's financial history was repeated on a smaller scale among the lesser magnates of Stonington Borough as they all sought new sources of income now that whaling was dead.⁸⁹

Between 1831 and 1861 property owned by residents of Stonington Borough more than tripled from \$265,000 (includes estimates of vessels owned) to \$890,000. The source of almost all of this wealth was the whale fishery. According to the census of 1850 the annual value of Stonington Borough products was \$517,000. \$462,000 of this amount were the returns of eleven whaling vessels registered in Stonington Borough. Twenty eight thousand dollars worth of products were manufactured in the cooperages of Charles Stanton and Cortland Chesebro; the sailloft of Jacob Blackledge; and the ropewalk of Elisha Faxon; all of which were auxiliaries of the whale fishery. Part of Reuben Hancox' \$6,500 worth of baked goods were undoubtedly sold to whaleships. Most of the remaining \$21,500 of Stonington Borough products were the output of service trades indirectly related to whaling. The business of men who made money in whaling must certainly have benefitted shoemakers B. F. Hancox and Washington Ashby, cabinet maker R. A. Denison, and painters Azariah Stanton and Nathan Smith. In fact, the only borough business listed on the 1850 census which could have existed in complete independence of whaling was Asa Wilcox' cod fishery which consisted of a small boat worth \$650, employed six men, and

⁸⁹Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1851, 1861.

produced an annual product worth only \$850.⁹⁰

The problem of the economic effects of whaling may also be examined by investigating the profits of some of the men involved. Ten borough residents in 1851, whose fortunes depended largely on whaling, were listed on the Stonington tax rolls in 1840. It has already been noted that property in vessels was not included on the 1840 Grand List, so it is necessary to deduct value of vessels from the 1851 totals to get some idea of how much money was made in whaling. In 1840 the total ratable estate of the ten men was \$68,750; in 1851 it was \$129,900, excluding investments in vessels. So more than \$61,000 had been made by these men in 11 years, primarily in whaling.⁹¹

⁹⁰ U. S., Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of The United States, 1850. Schedule 5, "Products of Industry in Stonington." The figures above are misleading, for the annual product of the Stonington whale fishery was not \$462,000 as it was listed in the census schedule. For instance, the annual product of the Newburyport was listed in the census as \$56,000. Actually these were the returns for a voyage which lasted nearly three years. So the annual returns of whaleships were only about one third of what was listed in the schedules, and the total annual value of Stonington Borough products was lower than \$517,000. Secondly, six Stonington whaling vessels are listed in the census schedules as "not returned," and no estimates of value of product were made for them. Still, it is quite obvious that the only source of wealth for Stonington Borough in the 1850's was whaling.

⁹¹ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1840, 1851.
Profits Made in Whaling

	Estate in 1840*	Estate in 1851*	Profit
Ephraim Williams	\$15,000	\$21,000	\$6,000
Peleg Hancox	4,000	12,000	8,000
Benjamin Pendleton	2,850	4,000	1,150
Stiles Stanton	2,000	7,000	5,000
Charles O. Brewster	1,100	1,900	800
John F. Trumbull	14,000	35,000	21,000
Joseph E. Smith	800	5,000	4,200
Charles P. Williams	22,000	33,000	11,000
Gurdon Trumbull	6,000	13,000	7,000
William Pendleton	1,000	3,000	2,000
Totals	<u>\$68,750</u>	<u>\$134,900</u>	<u>\$66,150</u>

* does not include investments in vessels. List compiled from Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1840, 1851.

APPENDIX A

OWNERS OF STONINGTON WHALESHIPS

First property listing taken from 1831 Stonington tax rolls unless otherwise noted. Second listing 1861 unless noted. d. - died - amount taken from Probate Records.

NAME	NO. OF SHIPS OWNED SHARES IN	OCCUPATION		TAXABLE PROPERTY
Charles P. Williams	27	Shipowner, whaling and sealing agent.	1840	\$ 22,750 261,055
Charles T. Stanton	22	Sealing & Whaling captain, also owned cooperage in borough.	1840 1851	1,250 5,300
William Pendleton	20	Sealing & whaling captain.	1840	1,000 18,800
Peleg Hancox	20	Store owner - Whaling outfitter. d.1855		3,000 65,000
John F. Trumbull	18	Merchant-ship Chandler in borough 1825-Whaling Agent.	1840	13,900 57,108
Stiles Stanton	17	Sealing Captain-1827 Merchant & Banker	1840	2,000 16,495
William Hyde, Jr.	17	Physician	1840	900 24,230
Robert S. Bottum	17	Boat builder		1,050 6,900
Francis Pendleton	15	Merchant & Ship owner sealing interests		135 35,580
Ephraim Williams	14	Merchant-Sealing Master 1st Stonington Fleet-Sealing Agent	1820 d. 1861-	1,100 195,000
Joseph E. Smith	12	Whaling Captain		2,450 16,750
Malvina Bottum Beebe	11	- - - - d. 1858		4,600
Samuel Bottum	11	Rope Manufacturer		1,350 5,300

NAME	NO. OF SHIPS OWNED SHARES IN	OCCUPATION	TAXABLE PROPERTY
Elisha Faxon	11	Owned Ropewalk Merchant d. 1849	\$ 3,550 44,000
Simeon Carew	10	Bookbinder - 1800 Grocer - 1851 d. 1864	1,500 7,691
Thomas Davison of Davidson	10	Master Mariner 1840 Ship's Captain 1861	1,500 6,950
Oliver York	10	Coal Dealer-1851 1840 1861	Poll Tax 15,650
Hiram Shaw	10	Ship Smith d. 1861	6,000
Franklin Hancox	10	Sealing & Whaling 1840 Captain 1851	Poll Tax 8,200
George S. Brewster	9	Whaling Captain 1840	950 7,210
Gurdon Trumbull	8	Merchant-Store owner Sealing agent 1851	4,850 16,850
George Hubbard	8	Lawyer	5,550 4,425
Charles G. Chesebro	8	Probably a Farmer d. 1835	9,975 12,000
Horace N. Trumbull	8	Merchant-owned grocery store 1851	3,400 4,495
Jonathan C. Waldron	7	?	(on 1830 census but not on tax rolls.)d. 1837- no inv.
Nathaniel B. Palmer	7	Sealing captain 1840 Commanded packet ships	Poll tax \$ 15,650
Billings Burch	7	Whaling Captain	- - - 20,300
Alexander S. Palmer	6	Sealing & whaling 1851 captain	21,800 39,420
William Beck	6	Whaling Captain d. 1841	- - 13,500
Nathan Smith	6	Ship's Captain 1816	1,000 4,050

NAME	NO. OF SHIPS OWNED SHARES IN	OCCUPATION	TAXABLE PROPERTY
Benjamin Pendleton	6	Whaling captain d. 1848	\$ 31,000
Lodowick Latham	6	? 1840	Poll tax 6,875
Samuel F. Denison	6	Merchant-opened General store in 1800 d. 1855	16,000 40,000
William Hyde	5	Physician d. 1862	1,500 5,300
Azariah Stanton	5	House Painter d. 1857	350 2,450
Andrew P. Stanton	5	Rope maker 1860 Census d. 1867	Poll tax 2,500
Elisha Faxon, Jr.	5	Merchant 1840 1861	975 4,700
Henry D. Langworthy	5	Farmer 1840 1861	6,400 10,387
Thomas E. Swan	5	Whaling Captain d. 1865	5,570
Joshua K. Pendleton	4	Ship's master	600 1,800
George E. Palmer	4	Physician d. 1868	1,300 40,000
Charles Edward Phelps	4	? d. 1833	11,000 18,000
William E. Brewster	4	Whaling captain 1851	2,289 7,210
Zebulon D. Palmer	4	Owned general store	1,800
Denison Chesebro	4	? 1851	225 3,100
Stanton Sheffield	4	Shipbuilder 1851	2,800 6,250
William Williams	3	Whaling & sealing captain (prob. died before 1840)	3,500

NAME	NO. OF SHIPS OWNED SHARES IN	OCCUPATION		TAXABLE PROPERTY
Gurdon Pendleton	3	Whaling captain	1840	Poll tax \$ 3,655
Thomas Willcox	3	Whaling captain	d. 1854	1,050 8,919
John W. Hull	3	Farmer		6,000 38,585
Otis Pendleton	3	Ship's captain		- -
Nelson Carpenter	3	Stone mason	1840	450
Jacob Blackledge	3	Sail maker		- - 5,955
Benjamin Pomeroy	2	Lawyer	1840 d. 1855	2,140 44,872
Samuel P. Stanton	2	(Several Samuel Stantons on census rolls)		
George S. Keene	2	Whaling captain	1840	700 1,800
G. L. Prouty	2	Listed as railroad Ticket agent on 1860 census		
Mrs. Mary Brown	2	- -		
John Brown	2	Whaling captain	1851	21,500
Benjamin F. Pendleton, Jr.	2	Ship's captain	1851	800 2,100
Antone Levy	2	Seaman - later ship's captain	1851	800 2,200
Ephraim Williams, Jr.	2	Merchant	1861	875
Theodore Palmer	2	?	d. 1865	42,000
Eliza Ann Palmer	2	- -		
William C. Woodbridge	2	Wealthy farmer		11,250
Thomas Noyes	2	Farmer	d. 1861	950 4,715

NAME	NO. OF SHIPS OWNED SHARES IN	OCCUPATION	TAXABLE PROPERTY
Giles R. Hallam	1	Merchant-owned General store 1825 d. 1863	\$ 1,000 600
Franklin Williams	1	Possibly a mariner	150 700
Zebulon Hancox	1	Possibly a fisher- 1840 man	600 1,400
Thomas S. Breed	1	2 mate on sealer <u>Only Son</u> - 1823	300
Jonas Horn	1	Sealing captain d. 1836	900 4,229
Eleazer Williams	1	Farmer	4,800 17,380
John P. Hall	1	Ship's master 1851	Poll tax
John Denison, Jr.	1	? 1840	1,800
Hannah Williams	1	? d. 1861	700 660
James M. C. Lee	1		300
Joshua Stevens	1	Whaling Captain - name on census - not on tax rolls	
Austin Beebe	1	Ship's Captain	400 1,900
Benjamin F. Langworthy	1	Farmer 1840 1851	11,000 2,500
Samuel B. Butler	1		1,750
Eunice Hancox	1		
Alfred Ross (Black)	1	Marble worker	
Sally P. Palmer (Widow)	1		5,200 9,352
Charles E. Phelps	1		d. 1840 155,000
John S. Barnum	1	Sealing & whaling captain 1840	500

NAME	NO. OF SHIPS OWNED SHARES IN	OCCUPATION	TAXABLE PROPERTY
Daniel Carew	1	Sealing & whaling captain d. 1837	\$ 1,500
Horace Lewis	1	? 1840 1861	1,100 300
Robert Cardwell	1	? 1840 d. 1861	450 1,200
Reuben C. Hancox	1	Shipbuilder d. 1862	300 3,280
B. S. Cutler (Probably Benjamin S.)	1	Whaling Captain (On census roll 1850 - not on tax lists)	600
Joseph Carpenter	1	?	300
Hannah Dixon	1	- -	
William Noyes	1	Whaling Captain	
Noyes Palmer	1	Probably a farmer	3,200 6,200
George Hubbard	1	Whaling captain d. 1850	3,000
Maria Hubbard	1		
Lucretia Hubbard	1		
Phebe R. Davidson	1		
N. Pendleton	1	Several N. Pendletons	
Mary S. Stanton	1	1850	6,000
Mary Ann Breckenridge	1		
John F. Trumbull, Jr.	1	1861	300
John D. Noyes	1	Farmer	250 2,030
James P. Sheffield	1	Sealing captain d. 1828	3,733
William A. Fanning	1	Sealing master - Merchant	
Jonathan Pendleton	1	Sealing & Whaling Captain 1840	700 Poll tax

NAME	NO. OF SHIPS OWNED SHARES IN	OCCUPATION	TAXABLE PROPERTY
Henry Smith	1	Farmer	\$ 4,450 6,195
H. B. Palmer (possibly Horace)	1	? 1861	300
Samuel P. Robinson	1	Died 1830 - declared insolvent	1,000

Source: Works Progress Administration. Extracts of Registers, Enrollments, and Licenses For the Ports of New London and Stonington. Manuscript copies of Custom House records in the G. W. Blunt-White Library, The Marine Historical Association, Mystic, Connecticut; Stonington Grand List Abstracts; Federal Census Schedules, 1850, 1860; Various Genealogies; Newspaper Advertisements; and Stonington Probate Records.

APPENDIX B

OWNERSHIP OF VESSELS IN STONINGTON BOROUGH-1851, 1861

NAME	AMOUNT OWNED
Benjamin F. Ash	\$ 350
Jerome S. Anderson Heirs	200
Captain John Brown	1,250
Austin G. Beebe	1,480
Samuel Bottum	1,880
Billings Burch	3,000
Charles O. Brewster	1,600
George S. Brewster	1,200
Jacob Blackledge	830
Elias Brown	600
Simeon Carew	2,010
Charles G. Chesebro	1,150
Denison P. Chesebro	600
Nelson Carpenter	600
Benjamin F. Collins	175
Samuel F. Denison	820
Hezekiah Dickens	800
Thomas Davidson	1,830
Peter Forsyth	5,000
Franklin Hancox	2,150
Benjamin F. Hancox	200
Peleg Hancox	7,840

NAME	AMOUNT OWNED
Charles R. Holmes	\$ 950
Daniel Hobart	570
Benjamin F. Holmes [may not have been borough Res.]	550
George Hubbard	1,100
William Hyde, Jr.	4,520
William Hyde, Sr.	1,600
Henry D. Langworthy	1,520
Antonio Levy	800
Stephen D. Merritt	300
Benjamin Pendleton	6,180
Benjamin F. Pendleton	1,100
Edmund F. Pendleton	800
B. F. Pendleton, Jr.	800
Benjamin F. Palmer	700
Sally Palmer	250
Alex S. Palmer	3,580
William Pendleton	9,760
Joshua K. Pendleton	800
Frederick Pendleton	2,800
Francis Pendleton	5,400
Gurdon Pendleton	900
Nathaniel B. Palmer	28,420
H & F. Sheffield & Co.	2,000
Nathan Smith	500
Charles H. Smith	400
Joseph E. Smith	8,490

NAME	AMOUNT OWNED
Samuel G. Stanton	\$1,100
Charles T. Stanton	2,000
Stiles Stanton	7,220
Charles Stanton	2,360
Andrew P. Stanton	400
Azariah Stanton	700
John P. States	250
Nathan G. Smith	700
Horace N. Trumbull	2,440
Gurdon Trumbull	3,200
John F. Trumbull	22,000
Elisha Wilcox [may not have been borough resident]	1,400
Elnathan Wilcox	1,020
Captain Thomas Wilcox	2,480
Ephraim Williams	14,470
Charles P. Williams	60,643
Franklin C. Walker	3,440

Total amount employed in Stonington vessels and commerce - 1851. Residents
and non residents \$349,648.¹

¹Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1851.

Investments in Vessels - 1861

Jacob Blackledge	\$ 1,500
Captain John Brown	300
Charles O. Brewster	200
Peter Forsyth	4,000
Joseph N. Hancox	2,000
Alexander S. Palmer	3,500
Nathaniel B. Palmer	5,000
Theodore D. Palmer	7,500
Benjamin Pendleton Est.	4,000
Benjamin F. Pendleton, Jr.	800
Francis Pendleton	3,000
Frederick Pendleton	2,000
Gurdon Pendleton	1,200
Stanton Sheffield	1,400
Joseph E. Smith	2,200
Nathan G. Smith	400
Stiles Stanton	250
Horace N. Trumbull	675
John F. Trumbull	0
Captain George Wilcox	500
Charles P. Williams	5,000 ²

²Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1861.

APPENDIX C

The following price list of whaleships was taken from estate inventories found in the Stonington probate records. I presume that the value of shares included outfits.

Inventory of the Estate of Charles H. Phelps - Stonington Probate Records,
Volume 17, pp. 158-167, 1840

1/16 ship Corvo and outfits \$1250 total cost \$20,000.

Inventory of the Estate of Robert S. Bottom - Stonington Probate Records,
Volume 17, pp. 363, 1844

1/64 ship <u>Newark</u>	\$360 total cost	\$23,040
1/64 ship <u>Tybee</u>	\$382 total cost	\$24,448
1/32 ship <u>Philetus</u>	\$468 total cost	\$14,976
1/64 ship <u>America</u>	\$325 total cost	\$20,800
1/64 ship <u>Charles Phelps</u>	\$480 total cost	\$30,720
1/64 ship <u>George</u>	\$250 total cost	\$16,000
1/64 ship <u>Caledonia</u>	\$400 total cost	\$25,600
1/64 bark <u>Eugene</u>	\$300 total cost	\$19,200
1/64 bark <u>Fellowes</u>	\$400 total cost	\$25,600

Inventory of the Estate of Samuel F. Denison, Stonington Probate Records
Volume 20, pp. 6-9, 1855.

1/32 ship <u>Newark</u>	\$600 total cost	\$19,200
1/32 ship <u>United States</u>	\$600 total cost	\$19,200

Inventory of the Estate of Peleg Hancox, Volume 20, p. 43 - 1855

1/16 barque <u>Cavalier</u> outfits	\$1554 total cost	\$24,864
3/64 ship <u>Charles Phelps</u>	\$1403 total cost	\$29,288
1/16 ship <u>Eugene</u>	\$1582 total cost	\$25,312

	1/32 barque <u>George</u>	\$ 542 total cost \$16,344
	1/16 ship <u>Mary and Susan</u>	\$1637 total cost \$26,192
	1/16 barque <u>Prudent</u>	\$1142 total cost \$18,272
	1/16 <u>S. H. Waterman</u>	\$2981 total cost \$47,696
Inventory of the Estate of Malvina B. Beebe - Volume 20, pp. 349-350, 1858		
	1/64 ship <u>Eugene</u>	\$ 225 total cost \$14,400
	1/64 ship <u>Tybee</u>	\$ 400 total cost \$25,600
Inventory of the Estate of Capt. Benjamin Pendleton, Stonington Probate Records, Volume 20, pp. 272-74, 1858.		
	5/64 ship <u>Newburyport</u> & outfits	\$1500 total cost \$19,200
	1/16 ship <u>Tybee</u>	\$1500 total cost \$24,000
Stonington Whaleships owned by Charles P. Williams, Charles P. Williams Collection, Box 51, "Bills of Sale," 1829-1882, for vessels, Collection 86, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Conn. (The price should indicate whether or not outfits were included. In general, when the price listed was \$15,000 or under, outfits were not included.)		
1846	1/64 ship <u>Betsey Williams</u>	\$ 588 total cost \$37,632
1835	7/32 ship <u>Caledonia</u>	\$2187 total cost \$ 9,984
1849	3/64 ship <u>Calumet</u>	\$ 695 total cost \$14,848
1845	1/2 bark <u>Cavalier</u>	\$3150 total cost \$ 6,300
1833	1/64 ship <u>Charles Adams</u>	\$ 328 total cost \$20,992
1851	1/8 ship <u>Charles Phelps</u>	\$3000 total cost \$24,000
1845	1/16 ship <u>Cincinnati</u>	\$ 875 total cost \$14,000
1836	all of ship <u>Corvo</u>	\$10,550
1848	1/32 ship <u>Eugene</u>	\$ 724 total cost \$23,168
1856	1/32 bark <u>Fellowes</u>	\$ 900 total cost \$28,000

1832	1/32 bark <u>Francis</u>	\$ 501 total cost \$16,032
	(Williams had paid \$500 for a 1/8 share of <u>Francis</u> in 1830- thus outfits cost approximately \$12,000 two years later)	
1835	1/32 ship <u>George</u>	\$ 156 total cost \$ 4,992
1849	1/64 ship <u>Mary and Susan</u>	\$ 520 total cost \$33,280
1844	3/8 bark <u>Prudent</u>	\$1500 total cost \$ 4,000
1850	1/4 bark <u>S. H. Waterman</u>	\$6500 total cost \$26,000
1830	1/8 brig <u>Uxor</u>	\$ 375 total cost \$ 3,000

Price list of Stonington Whaleships taken from U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Seventh Decennial Census, 1850 Connecticut, Volume 6, New London County, Schedule 5, Products of Industry in Stonington for Year Ending June 1, 1850. Prices probably included outfits.

170 ton bark <u>Byron</u>	\$12,000
305 ton ship <u>Calumet</u>	\$25,000
323 ton ship <u>Newark</u>	\$22,000
341 ton bark <u>Newburyport</u>	\$27,000
311 ton ship <u>Tiger</u>	\$28,000
244 ton bark <u>United States</u>	\$18,000
362 ton ship <u>Charles Phelps</u>	\$25,000
297 ton ship <u>Eugene</u>	\$25,000
298 ton bark <u>Prudent</u>	\$21,000
400 ton ship <u>Betsey Williams</u>	\$34,000
295 ton bark <u>Cavalier</u>	\$22,000
251 ton bark <u>George</u>	\$21,000

The Census schedule listed only the names of Masters of these ships. Ships' names taken from Walter Coelho, "The Stonington Whaling Fleet" (Master's Thesis, Central Connecticut State College, 1971). I have no idea how the prices of the ships were arrived at.

Prices taken from Charles H. Smith MSS at the Connecticut Historical Society.

1830	2/32 of ship <u>Acasta</u>	\$625	total cost	\$10,000
1856	1/64 of ship <u>George</u>	\$300	total cost	\$19,200
1856	1/64 of ship <u>Cincinnati</u>	\$100	total cost	\$ 6,400

APPENDIX D

C. P. Williams Bill of Outfits of Ship Acasta, 1839, January 1.

Captain C. H. Smith in account with C. P. Williams 1838

	Dr.		Cr.
Feb. 9, P. Hancox Bill	\$ 4.89	1/8 amt. received of Ins. Co.	\$ 7.50
?	\$ 4.84	1/8 nett sales ship & tender	
to cash	\$300.00	cargo & Int.	\$2669.73
" "	\$305.47	1/8 amt. of Ins. on Brig	\$ 4.31
" "	\$100		
To 1/8 ships outfits on new voyage	\$1598.46		
Cash	\$ 50.00		
To balance Int. to Jan. 1840	18.16		
To the Amt. to your credit in my private Acct.	\$ 199.27		
[Total]	\$2581.09		\$ 2681.54

Smith thus received \$755.47 in cash, and \$199.27 in credit as his 1/8 share of the Acasta's 1837 voyage. He had paid \$625 for 1/16 of the vessel in 1830.¹

¹Charles H. Smith Collection, MSS 70298-70300, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford. One hundred dollars and forty five cents in the debit column are unaccounted for. What happened to this sum is a mystery, but quite often Stonington accounts were incomplete.

APPENDIX E

Sailing Orders - Presumably from Charles P. Williams to Captain Henry Lewis

Stonington, June 26, 1846.

Capt. Henry Lewis

Dear Sir

The Barque Bolton now under your command being ready for sea. You will improve the first favorable opportunity and proceed on your destined voyage for Sperm Whales.

I would advise you after leaving here to cruise in the Atlantic up to September. After passing the Grand Banks I would steer up North as far as Lat 52 and from there cruise down toward the Western Islands for Sperm Whale until September. You will then go into one of the Western Islands and procure your recruits. After leaving the Islands I would recommend your going to Madagascar, where you will cruise off Fort Dolphin during the months of December, January and February and if you are successful you will continue in this vicinity as long as you may think advisable. After leaving Fort Dolphin you will cruise for the next six months in the vicinity of where the Bark Hope cruised during her last voyage and if successful you will continue until your ship is [full]? if not you will go where your better judgement may dictate. Your ship is well fitted and we expect you to procure a full cargo of spermoil before you return. You can take whale or blackfish whenever an opportunity offers and sell the same wherever you have an opportunity. And if you have more than sufficient funds to recruit? you can remit some. Our wish

is for you to procure a full cargo of spermoil before your return.

I have put on board a few articles of trade which you will recruit with whenever it is necessary.

If any of your boat steerers prove bad you will make such changes as you may think best. You will write me every opportunity and inform me of your proceedings and of what your intentions are.

Wishing you a pleasant and prosperous voyage I am your friend.

(Unsigned) ¹

¹Charles P. Williams Collection, 86; G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

APPENDIX F

Report and Manifest of the cargo laden on board of the Ship Corvo whereof William Beck is Master, . . . owned by C. P. Williams and others, merchants at Stonington as per register granted at Boston the 26th day of October, 1832 bound for the Falkland Islands and elsewhere.

One hundred and twenty five barrels Mess Beef at \$10-\$2500

Thirty Eight Barrels Prime Pork at \$17 - \$648

Twenty seven? casks Bread 17,600 lbs. at 4 3/4 \$836

Eight Tierces Molasses 560 gals. 46 \$257.60

One Barrel Sugar \$25

Two Chests Tea \$45

Three Bags Coffee \$38

Three Bags Cocoa \$33

Ship & Cabin stores for the vessels use on a whaling voyage with Whaling apparatus estimated at \$2000

\$6382.60 ¹

¹Records of the United States Coast Guard, for the New London District, Record Group 26, Federal Records Center, Waltham, Massachusetts.

APPENDIX G

Report and Manifest of the cargo laden at the Port of Stonington on board the ship George, J. B. Forseth, Master, bound for Pacific Ocean.

22 h hds Bread	\$ 495
106 bbls Beef	954
57 - Pork	741
52 - Flour	573
4 - Coffee	50
3 - Meal	12
2 - Sugar	24
1 - Hams	28?
6 - Vinegar	24
2 - Pickles?	9
6 - Beans	36
2 - Peas	12
15 tierces molasses	250
1200 barrels new casks	1800
2200 " old casks	2000
Cabin & Ship Stores & Whaling	
apparatus, Boats, Whale lines Rigging, etc. 1600	
(total outfits \$8608)	

District of New London 29th May, 1841.¹

¹Records of the United States Coast Guard, For the New London District, Record Group 26, Federal Records Center, Waltham, Massachusetts.

APPENDIX H

SHIPS MANAGED BY JOHN F. TRUMBULL 1850

MASTER	VESSEL	VALUE	NO. EMP.	MONTHLY WAGES	VALUE OF PRODUCT
Frederick Williams	<u>Thomas Williams</u>	\$28,000	31	\$ 750	not returned
George Wilcox	<u>Byron</u>	\$12,000	23	?	900 bbls whale \$13,000 6000 lbs bone \$2,000
Humphrey Hathaway	<u>Flying Cloud</u>	\$25,000	30	\$ 700	not returned
Hezekiah Dickens	<u>Newark</u>	\$22,000	26	\$ 650	not returned
William Lester	<u>Newburyport</u>	\$27,000	32	\$ 1200	2700 bbs whale \$44,000 30,000 lbs bone \$12,000
J. Shephard	?	\$18,000	35	\$ 750	2200 oil \$25,000 25,000 bone \$8000
William Brewster	<u>Tiger</u>	\$28,000	32	?	Sent home 700 bbls whale \$10,000 23,000 bone \$7,000
A. Barker	?	\$20,000	26	\$ 800	2300 bbls whale \$28,000 25,000 bone \$9000
John Barnum	<u>United States</u>	\$18,000	30	\$ 600	not returned
Ships Managed by Charles P. Williams - 1850					
Billings Burch	<u>Charles Phelps</u>	\$25,000	31	?	2700 whale) 400 sperm) \$63,000 37,000 bone)
John Brown	<u>Mary & Susan</u>	\$25,000	31	?	3250 whale) 50 sperm) \$68,000 47,000 bone)
Edmund Pendleton	<u>Eugene</u>	\$21,000	27	?	2550 whale) 50 sperm) \$46,000 30,000 bone)

MASTER	VESSEL	VALUE	NO. EMP.	MONTHLY WAGES	VALUE OF PRODUCT
Ellery Nash	<u>Prudent</u>	\$21,000	27	? 2100 whale) 50 sperm) 30,000 bone)	\$46,000
Benjamin F. Pendleton	<u>Fellowes</u>	\$22,000	26	? 1400 whale) 430 sperm) 18,000 bone)	\$45,000
Franklin Hancox	<u>Betsey Williams</u>	\$34,000	31	? Bone & oil	\$44,000
Thomas Dexter	<u>Cavalier</u>	\$22,000	30	? Not returned	
William Pendleton	<u>George</u>	\$21,000	28	? Not returned	¹

¹United States. Bureau of the Census, Seventh Decennial Census, 1850. Schedule Five - Products of Industry in Stonington. Vessels names taken from Coelho, "Stonington Whaling Fleet."

APPENDIX I

The list below was taken from a whaleman's shipping paper from the last voyage of the Thomas Williams. Next to the shares listed, I have written in the cash each crewman would have received had he sailed at the same lay on the Williams' previous voyage. These figures are based on the Charles H. Smith accounts at the Connecticut Historical Society, and are only approximations, but they do give some idea of what wages were like in whaling. E. P. Hohman has estimated that approximately 30% of the net proceeds were paid to the crew including captain and officers and 70% went to the owners and agents.¹ Smith received \$3002 for his 1/16 share of the Thomas Williams' fourth voyage in 1845;² so the owners' 70% amounted to about \$48,000, and the crews 30% to about \$20,500.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Whaleman's Shipping Paper

It is agreed between the owner, Master, officers, seamen and Mariners of the ship Thomas Williams of Stonington, Frederick Williams, Master, or whoever else may go master, now bound on a whaling voyage, from the Port of Stonington to N. West Coast & elsewhere,

That in consideration of the shares affixed to our names, we, the said officers, seamen and Mariners, shall and will perform the above mentioned voyage, promising thereby to obey all the lawful commands of said Master or other officers of said ship. . . . On no account whatever to go on shore . . . without leave first obtained from the . . . commanding officers . . . forty eight hours absence without such leave, shall be deemed a total desertion. . . . It is further agreed by both parties, that . . . every lawful command . . . suppressing immorality and vice of all

¹Hohman, "Wages, Risks, and Profits," p. 652.

²Charles H. Smith Collection, MSS 70298-73000, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

kinds, shall be strictly complied with, under the penalty of the persons disobeying, forfeiting their share. . . . They also further agree that they will each of them perform twenty days labor in fitting, loading, and unloading said vessel . . . and the owners of said ship . . . hereby promise under fulfillment of the above conditions, to pay the shares of the net proceeds of all that shall be obtained by the crew, during said voyage, as the oil or whatever else may be obtained, can be sold . . . first deducting all such sums as may be due from them to the officers or owners thereof, for advances, supplies, or debts arising from any other consideration. . . . In testimony of our free assent, consent, and agreement to the premises, we have hereunto set our hands, the day and date affixed to our names. Stonington - May 21, 1845.³

(Hypothetical cash shares based on returns made by Thomas Williams on its fifth voyage, June 1842 to February 1845. Total returns, \$68,500. Crew's share \$20,500.⁴

NAME	CAPACITY	SHARE	CASH VALUE
Frederick Williams	Master	1/17	\$ 4,235
Edmund Dunott	Mate	1/28	2,446
Williams Bowser	2d Mate	1/50	1,370
Joseph Ozario	3d Mate	1/65	1,054
Antonio Seal?	Boat Steerer	1/80	856
Gilbert N. Cheeseborough	" "	1/80	8,566
Green M. Brown	" "	1/85	806
James M. Lee	" "	1/80	856
John Hastings	Carpenter	1/140	489
James R. Magakey?	Cooper	1/63	1,087
Thomas Berry	Cook	1/140	489
Peter L. Benahy	Steward	1/140	489
John Coke	Ordinary Seaman	1/150	456
Mingo ? Antone	" "	1/150	456
John Dick	" "	1/150	456
Benjamin S. Cutler	Boy	1/165	415
Joseph Rollins	Ordinary Seaman	1/140	489
John ?	Seaman	1/140	489
Benjamin Williams	Seaman	1/140	489
Manuel Gonzales	Seaman	1/160	428
Henry Lawrence	Ordinary Seaman	1/165	415

³"Whaleman's Shipping Paper," V.F.M. 548, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.

⁴As the Williams burned at sea July 11, 1845, it was impossible to base crew earnings on this voyage.

Manuel Lagruse?	Ordinary Seaman	1/165	\$ 415	
Pharo Potter	Ordinary Seaman	1/165	415	
John Delaney	Ordinary Seaman	1/180	380	
Joseph Cleaveland	Green Hand	1/180	380	
Charles M. Warner	Green Hand	1/180	380	
Antone ?	Ordinary Seaman	1/165	415	
Washington Cunningham	Boy	1/200	342	
George Shaw	Carpenter	1/50	1,370	5

⁵"Whaleman's Shipping Paper," V.F.M. 548, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.

APPENDIX J

STONINGTON WHALESHIPS 1822-1860

Since whaling was only a minor feature in the Stonington economy after the Civil War, I have not included material on vessels in the post war period. Neither have I included those vessels which took an occasional whale during a sealing voyage.

NAME OF VESSEL	SIZE AND CLASSIFICATION	DATES OF SERVICE
<u>Hydaspe</u>	318 ton ship	1822-1826?
<u>Acasta</u>	330 ton ship	1828-1840
<u>Charles Adams</u>	268 ton ship	1831-1837
<u>Francis</u>	212 ton ship	1831-1834?
<u>Uxor</u>	96 ton brig	1832-1835?
<u>Thomas Williams</u>	340 ton ship	1833-1845
<u>George</u>	251 ton bark	1835-1854
<u>Bolton</u>	270 ton ship	1836-
<u>Henry</u>	98 ton brig	1835-
<u>Mercury</u>	305 ton ship	1835-1849
<u>Philetus</u>	278 ton ship	1835-1850
<u>Corvo</u>	349 ton ship	1837-1847
<u>Caledonia</u>	416 ton ship	1837-1848
<u>Eugene</u>	297 ton ship	1841-1857
<u>Herald</u>	241 ton ship	1845-1851
<u>Newark</u>	323 ton ship	1841-1855
<u>Tybee</u>	299 ton ship	1841-1860
<u>America</u>	464 ton ship	1842-1847
<u>Charles Phelps</u>	362 ton ship	1842-1856
<u>Fellowes</u>	268 ton ship	1842-1853
<u>United States</u>	244 ton ship	1842-1853
<u>Byron</u>	170 ton bark	1843-1853
<u>Cabinet</u>	305 ton ship	1843-1854
<u>Calumet</u>	317 ton ship	1843-1849
<u>Richard Henry</u>	223 ton bark	1843-
<u>Mary and Susan</u>	392 ton ship	1844-1854
<u>Newburyport</u>	341 ton bark	1844-1859
<u>Prudent</u>	298 ton bark	1844-1855
<u>Sophia and Eliza</u>	206 ton ship	1844-
<u>Warsaw</u>	332 ton ship	1844-1847
<u>Autumn</u>	181 ton bark	1845-1849
<u>Cincinnati</u>	456 ton ship	1845-1860
<u>Cynosure</u>	230 ton bark	1845-1847
<u>Cavalier</u>	295 ton bark	1845-1855

NAME OF VESSEL	SIZE AND CLASSIFICATION	DATES OF SERVICE
<u>Tiger</u>	311 ton ship	1845-1856
<u>Betsey Williams</u>	400 ton ship	1846-1854
<u>S.H. Waterman</u>	480 ton ship	1851-1855

Source: Vessel names taken from Starbuck's History of the American Whale Fishery, Volume II; dates of service from ship's registries at G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

CHAPTER IV

CONDITIONS IN THE STONINGTON WHALING FLEET

Journals kept by whalers are among the most interesting historical sources; and this chapter describing some aspects of life on Stonington whaleships is drawn largely from whaling journals. Out of all the whaling voyages made from Stonington between 1822 and 1892, perhaps forty logs and journals remain. Logs are of little use since they are generally prosaic records of such things as latitude and longitude, distance sailed, whales taken, etc. They are indispensable of course to a mariner, but not to a student of history. About ten of the Stonington whaling journals are valuable historical documents.

Journals are actually diaries kept at sea and they record distinctive events which occur during the course of a day on board ship. Since diarists are usually highly literate, it is not surprising that all these journals were kept by decently educated, perceptive people. Most of the journals I found useful were written by ordinary crewmen, (although the most valuable Stonington whaling journal was written by a captain's wife) and quite naturally were biased against owners and officers. But the bias is never so outrageous as to corrode our sympathy for the ordinary seaman, and the weight of the evidence is on the side of those who think like E. P. Hohman "that whaling at its worst represented perhaps the lowest condition to which free American labor has ever fallen."¹

¹Elmo P. Hohman, The American Whaleman (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1928), p. 13.

Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of American whaling was its romantic appeal to the minds of so many young men. Who, upon reading Moby Dick, is unaffected by the passage describing the Pequod's journey from wintry Nantucket toward the warm green southern oceans? Who isn't excited by the feeling of escape and adventure? Melville magnificently captured an industry, as no other has ever been captured, but he left out of his picture two of its most essential features, dreariness and boredom. Moby Dick remains above all else a grand adventure, but almost everyone, including romantic young men who had gone whaling searching for adventure, were most impressed by whaling's boredom, misery and drudgery. Melville, of course, was aware of what life on a whaler was really like, he had not deserted for nothing; and in Redburn, White Jacket, Typee and Omoo, there are far more realistic treatments of the life of a seaman than in Moby Dick. Although had Moby Dick been a more realistic presentation of whaling life, it would have been far less wonderful a book.

But the same spirit of adventure that motivated Ishmael's whaling voyage, infected other young dreamers, and even during the 1840's when the reputation of whaleships had become so bad that few Americans would sign on one, an occasional man of good family, education, and prospects, could be found among their crews.

William Davis, wrote of his first whaling voyage, on the Chelsea out of New London (owned by the temperance reformer Thomas Williams who would not permit liquor on board any of his ships): "This moment [shipping on a whaler] was the fulfillment of the dream of my short life. . . . I had devoured Cook and Delano . . . looking forward to the time when I too should visit the strange

¹Elmo P. Hohman, The American Whaleman (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1928), p. 13.

seas and scenes I had pictured in imagination," and like many another he fantasized about the future.

The spirit of the enthusiastic captain touched an answering chord in the heart of the young dreamer who leaned against the idle wheel. And he stood no longer the slouching, half-clad sailor, at the beck and call of every superior, but was master of a ship, beautiful as the one he steered. I had a good boat under me with a crew who could trust in me, and in whom I could trust. A good whale had just risen a short half mile ahead of me, three minutes in time, ten capping seas lay between the harpoon's point and Leviathan. I would change places with no king, for no royal huntsman from the days of Nimrod was ever so equipped or had such royal game to tempt to the chase! I have girdled the world that I might be here, I have swept a planet to run this race. With five brave fellows, [beside me] trained in many a contest, until my life is their life, and my will is their will. . . . The whale rises and sinks . . . foot by foot we draw on our game. . . . The blood is on fire with the madness of the moment. . . . Now my merry men, for him, . . . another mighty effort, the whale glides beneath us. . . . Now give it to him! With hissing plunge, the keen iron pierces the rising game, . . . an eighty foot whale whirls the line from the tub, until the loggerhead is lost in the smoke of burning wood. This is royal sport which wild democracy may love. In this supreme moment the hunter is uppermost, and few men then count the value of the oil, be it measured in pennies or human lives, my teeth are set deep in the huge flank of our gigantic prey, and we will not calculate the dollars until blood returns to a level with arithmetic. Only a dream yet! Only a dream interrupted by the captain's voice which awakened me to the conversation.²

The passage is certainly overwritten, in that pretentious and theatrical style characteristic of so much Nineteenth Century literature, but the fact remains that whaling seems more romantic than any other industry. Perhaps much of its basic appeal was to an atavistic lust for the hunt, "royal sport which wild democracy may love," but it lured young men away from the comparative comforts of home, a move which most apparently come to regret. As late as 1866, when it would be imagined that everyone knew what the life was really like, Charles Nordhoff prefaced a book on whaling with a statement that the books' purpose was to dissuade dreamy young men from running off to whaleships.

²William M. Davis, Nimrod of the Sea or the American Whaleman (Boston: Charles E. Lauriat Co., 1926), pp. 18, 239, 240.

"I have borne in mind the usual objection to books of this class; That they are likely to inspire youth with an uneasy longing for a wandering, worthless mode of life, and as my little books were likely to interest young men and boys, my aim has been to give a plain common sense picture of that about which a false romance throws many charms. If anything I have written on the subject shall induce a young man launching into life, to make a sensible choice of evils, by looking elsewhere than to the Sea for the adventurous existence which his spirit requires, I shall be rewarded."³

There was a second attraction of whaling, which though unexpressed specifically, certainly must have been real: a whaling voyage offered a chance to escape the oppressive atmosphere at home. For Tocqueville, the dominant repressive force in American society was the tyranny of public opinion, and probably nowhere was it stronger than New England. Lacking large cities (with the exception of Boston) or frontier areas, and dominated by a religion whose influence was almost all pervasive, which insisted on a right of public scrutiny of personal morality, and was intolerant of divergent opinions, where else but to sea could a man turn who wished to divest himself (often perhaps unconsciously) of some of the excessive trappings of civilization? At sea, he could, like Thomas Roe, experience things of which the people at home hadn't the slightest intimation. "July 4, 1831 - all hands . . . knocked off at noon, dressed ourselves and prepared to celebrate the day. Capt. D. in very good humour. All hands very lively. The cook . . . commenced playing [his fiddle] accompanied by one of the crew with the tamborine. Capt. and all hands joined in the dance, barefooted, white and black, they looked more like so many savages than civilized beings. (But whalemens are not more than half civilized.) It was a fine moon-

³Charles Nordhoff, Nine Years a Sailor, Book II, Whaling and Fishing (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstock, Keys & Co., 1866), preface.

light night and a scene that I shall never forget."⁴

But those who went whaling in search of adventure and escape were soon disillusioned. Hohman wrote that on the average three out of every ten men who shipped from a home port deserted.⁵ In journals written by ordinary seamen there was a steady stream of complaints about life on a whaler. Once the voyage got underway apparently no one could find anything attractive about it. Not only crewmen, but captains as well were repulsed by the unnatural burden of being away from home and cooped up in a hundred foot ship for as much as four years. Captain Gilbert Pendleton, commander of the Stonington whaler Charles Phelps, told his shipkeeper that the "only good feature of a whaling voyage is the pleasure of getting home again."⁶ Of course, the ordinary seaman, who stood to gain much less profit from a whaling voyage than the captain was far more dispirited. On December 31, 1849, William Wilson, on board the whale-ship Cavalier wrote, "So ends the year 1859 - what a year to me! Shall I be in here or at home when the next year comes around? [I am]. . . a dog, a slave, at the beck of an ignorant coarse tyrannical brutish coward. . . . I have passed so many lost days without thought prospect, or even hope of the future. The life of a sailor in its best light is hard and unsocial. The sea, the deep blue sea has its fascination, and its nails, like the abandoned female, is overlooked."⁷

Like Gurdon Hall on board the Charles Phelps in the South Atlantic, the

⁴Thomas H. Roe, "Journal of a Voyage to the Pacific in the Whaleship Chelsea June 1831 to September 1834," Roll No. 41, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Conn. (The Chelsea was a New London ship.)

⁵Hohman, American Whaleman, p. 69.

⁶New London, Connecticut, Day, 6 November 1926.

⁷William H. Wilson, "Journal of a Voyage on the Bark Cavalier," Log 18, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.

sailor's fondest wish was for the end of the voyage, which many had begun with such optimistic expectations. "I hope that Captain Hall will make the best of our way to the port of Stonington for I want to get home where I can enjoy the precious privilege of hearing a preached gospel. . . . Set the sail the Charles Phelps is gliding through the water in a majestic stile [sic] carrying me onward toward the land of my birth and the earthly residence of those that are near and dear by the ties which bind human nature together. O that the heavenly breezes may continue."⁸

The most serious problem in whaling life was the separation from home, family, and friends for years at a time (one New London voyage lasted 9 years!), but since the length of the voyage depended so much on capricious fortunes, there was little owners could do about making it shorter. But the whaleman's discomfort was often compounded by tight fisted owners anxious to squeeze out the last cent of profit, and those captains who had been brutalized by the perverted life of whaling. One Captain estimated he had spent only one and a half years of his adult life on shore. An almost universal complaint on whaleships was about the food; a basic staple was salt beef and pork, packed in wooden casks and jocularly called salt horse by the men. An important part of the diet was the rock hard bread called ships biscuit (quite similar to soda crackers). This invariably became worm infested before the voyage was far advanced, forcing the men to the unappetizing preliminary of soaking their biscuits in hot coffee to drive the worms out, then skimming off the carcasses which floated to the top. The basic diet was supplemented by fresh provisions whenever a whaleship could obtain them. Because whaling voyages were often made in climates conducive to rapid deterioration of food in areas where supplies

⁸Gurdon Hall, "Journal of a Voyage from Stonington to the Indian Ocean on Board the ship Charles Phelps," Log 141, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.

could not easily be replenished, and since there were no better methods in existence than pickling for preserving meat, it was inevitable that food on a whaleship would be inferior.

But although owners may be absolved from some of the blame for unappetizing diets, there were a number who were guilty of stinting on the amounts allowed the crew. On board the bark George, an increased supply of food was promised the crew only when a whale was "alongside": in other words only when a whale had been captured and the crew were employed in cutting up the blubber, trying it out, etc. When the ship was merely cruising for whales, the crew would be on reduced rations. Seemingly the thought behind this scheme was to encourage the taking of whales, but it is difficult to see how the crew could expedite something over which they had so little control. The George's captain, George S. Brewster, was not suprisingly, faced by a rebellious crew, angry at the short rations. "After supper I called all hands aft and asked them what was the matter, when they said . . . they had nothing for supper and breakfast but wormy bread - Their allowance . . . is five barrels of meat per month . . . their fare is precisely the same as my own (a little butter and cheese excepted.) They said they would not work without meat. I told them that as long as we had nothing more to do than work ship I could not give them anymore - but as soon as we had blubber they might have ten barrels if they could eat it without waste." The crew refused duty without better bread, meat, and molasses, and Brewster, a reasonable man, decided that concessions would be necessary for the success of the voyage. "I then told them better bread they should have if [it was] on board and also a gallon of molasses a week, but that I could not give them any more than 5 bbls [of meat] per month until we had whales. . . . I then read over to them the allowance in the navy and the shipping articles - and after asking one another what was best to do - they said they would go to

their duty."⁹

But one of the George's crew, Ross Niles, refused to be mollified by Brewster's compromise. Niles protested to Brewster that Charles P. Williams, (The George's agent or manager) had told him there would always be enough food on board and the crew would always have enough to eat. "Niles said that he had not much encouragement to work, alluding to the allowance of meat, tea and coffee, which allowance is one half barrel of beef and half a bunch [sic] of pork for eight days (when without whale) only. For when we have whale there has been no allowance at all. For the last few days (being short of water) I told the cook to reduce their coffee and tea from a quart to a pint . . . a man. If this is cutting men when they have nothing to do, I am no judge."¹⁰

Yet, for all the problems over food, which Brewster handled with considerable skill, the George made a successful voyage, returning in February 1841, after two and a half years, with 900 barrels of sperm oil and 1800 barrels of whale oil, which sold for approximately \$45,000.¹¹

The bill of fare on board another C. P. Williams' whaler, the 297 ton Eugene, was also less than enchanting, at least in the opinion of John A. States who kept a journal for a voyage made in 1844. States, however, blamed the captain, not Williams for the shortage. "We have hardly enough to keep us from actual starvation. Hard bread and slush are our greatest luxuries and we have a taste of beans six times in the week. I never before knew what it was to be hungry, but now I feel it often. . . . His [the captain's] officers fare but

⁹George S. Brewster (Master), "Log Book of Bark George of Stonington," Log 86, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Cargo value computed from C. H. Smith Accounts, MS 70298-300, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

little better than we do. . . . A miserly man ashore is an object of scorn though he only pinches himself, while he who has forty men under an absolute command can starve them for years without their having their means of redress and then go home and take a place amongst honourable citizens whose children and relatives he has reduced to want for the necessaries of life."¹²

Bad food and boredom were the two most common complaints in the whaling journals. To the distress of the journalists, work on board a whaling ship continually fluctuated from tedium to drudgery. While cruising for whales, the crew had little to do; many found this agreeable at first, but it wasn't long before the seemingly unending idleness grew unbearable on the voyage southward from Stonington. John T. Perkins seemed quite contented with his first taste of idle whaling life. "I am growing fatter and fatter as are most of the crew. So far we have easier work than any mechanic on land, though they say that during the three months on cruising ground, we will have to spring night and day. We can get nearly twenty four hours sleep out of forty-eight."¹³ But there is nothing so dreadful as idleness which lacks any possibility of diversion. "It is about three weeks since we took our last whale, and we have had the greatest trial which attends the whaleman. The dullness and tedium of life on board ship at such times is almost unendurable. . . . The men become morose and quarrelsome; we hate each other and numerous scores are run up, and appointments made to fight them out in the first port we make."¹⁴ For a

¹² John A. States, "Journal on Board the Barque Eugene of Stonington, Conn. On a Whaling Voyage Toward the Atlantic, Pacific & Indian Oceans, 1844-45," Log 69, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.

¹³ John T. Perkins, "Journal at Sea - 1845," from the original copy owned by Mrs. Grosvenor Ely - Publication of Mystic Historical Association, Mystic, Connecticut, Vol. I, No. 8, February 10, 1934, p. 139.

¹⁴ Davis, Nimrod, p. 156.

whaleman so unfortunate as to be burdened with imagination and intellect, boredom was intensified by the absence of reading matter on board most whale-ships (with the exception of the Bible and religious tracts of devastating dullness), and the insensitivity of many masters and officers who had little use for book learning. On board the Cavalier, William H. Wilson complained "time begins to hang heavy as we have nothing to read, the after guard [the officers] offer us nothing of the sort and we dare not ask them for fear of a refusal, so go without."¹⁵ Judging by the captain's attitude toward reading, their reluctance to ask the officers for books was probably justified: "Old man saw me reading and sent cooper to get it. He is a dog - he will not lend or offer a book, but if he sees that a man wishes to read, he takes the book from him."¹⁶

Once a dead whale was alongside the ship, however, the crew found rest as difficult to find as diversion had been previously. The usual practice was to work without a break until the whale blubber was stripped from the carcass, tried out, and stored in wooden casks in the hold. If, when the work was finished, another whale was sighted, the men dashed for the whaleboats and the laborious cycle was begun again. This meant that at times men would go for days with almost no sleep. On board the Eugene, John States wrote: "This is the comfort of whaling, yesterday twenty two hours steady hard work, last night four hours sleep and then eighteen hours [work] again."¹⁷ From the comment of Gurdon Hall on board the Charles Phelps it might be imagined that four hours was a pretty good night's sleep on the whaling ground. "At 11 o'clock finished cutting took in sail got supper, set the watch and turned in tired and sleepy

¹⁵Wilson, Log 18.

¹⁶Ibid., December 24, 1849.

¹⁷States, Log 69, January 13, 1846.

and did not turn out again until all hands were called at 4 o'clock in the morning."¹⁸

Boredom, overwork, sleepless nights, unappetizing food, separation from family and friends, were in themselves sufficient cause for discontent, but these were often accompanied by treachery on the part of owners, masters, and outfitters. One of the methods by which owners cut costs was to have their crews assembled and equipped (with clothing, etc. needed for the cruise) by outfitters who charged the owners no fee in return for the privilege of selling the men their outfits at exorbitant prices.¹⁹ These outfits were issued to the men as an advance on their wages and naturally interest was charged. In addition, there was a \$10 commission paid to the agent who signed up the man for a particular voyage. The Federal Writer's project Whaling Masters stated that \$70 was charged for the outfit, although the actual value was under \$25. With interest and commission, the final cost of the outfit came to \$125, which was deducted out of the whaleman's share of the voyage, or lay.²⁰

Once on board, additional supplies of clothing and necessities like needles, thread, tobacco, etc., could be purchased from a cache of supplies under the captain's control, called the slop chest. Like the outfits advanced at the beginning of a voyage, slop chest articles were exorbitantly priced.²¹ According

¹⁸ Hall, Log 141, June 2, 1843.

¹⁹ Elmo P. Hohman, "Wages, Risks and Profits in the Whaling Industry," Quarterly Journal of Economics 40 (August 1926): 663.

²⁰ Whaling Masters, Compiled and Written by the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration of Massachusetts. (New Bedford, Massachusetts: Old Dartmouth Historical Society, 1939), p. 18.

²¹ Apparently "slops" were supplied by ships outfitters as a speculative venture. The following entries in the Stonington probate records were taken from the estate inventory of Peleg Hancox, who owned a general merchandise store and was one of the largest whaling outfitters in the town. "1/2 interest in invoice of slops on board Barque Prudent at sea \$486.57. Invoice of slops on board ship Charles Phelps at sea \$557. 1/4 interest in slop chest on Barque Waterman at sea \$418.20." Stonington, Connecticut, Probate Records, Vol. 20, p. 40.

to F. A. Olmstead, it was the practice of whaling owners to mislead seamen in regard to the slop chest, by telling them everything needed for the voyage could be purchased on board, but neglecting to tell them of the price.²² The end result of slop chests and outfitters was indebtedness for the seaman, which meant some returned home from whaling voyages of two years or more owing money to the owners.²³

The problem of the captain was at times the most serious problem of all for the whaleman. Although many captains were decent men, anxious only for a successful voyage with the least possible discomfort for all concerned, there were those who were markedly different. One of the memorable incidents in Melville's Redburn was the abrupt about face performed by the captain who had been so charming when trying to entice the boy to become a member of the crew, but revealed his true colors as soon as the ship sailed. . Like Melville, Jacob Hazen discovered that a captain was capable of concealing his true character in order to complete his crew. Sailing on the whaleship Hudson out of Sag Harbor in the 1830's, Hazen at first "had the greatest confidence in the kindness and friendly disposition of the officers of the ship. Yet, before I was three weeks at sea, I had ample reason to suspect that the kindness and friendship they had formerly manifested for me were altogether feigned. The captain now addresses himself very seldom to any member of the crew, and when he did his words were spoken with an imperative growl."²⁴

In the Pacific, where constant desertions encouraged whaling masters to go to great lengths to procure a crew, John States was tricked on board a whaler

²²Francis Allyn Olmstead, Incidents of A Whaling Voyage (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, Co. 1969, orig. published in 1841), p. 53.

²³Whaling Masters, p. 18.

²⁴Jacob Hazen, Five Years Before the Mast: Or Life in the Forecastle Aboard a Whaler and Man of War (Philadelphia: Willis Hazen, 1854), pp. 64-65.

by the promise that the vessel was sailing for home. "I shipped on board the Nantasket to go straight home . . . as I was told when I shipped [by the Captain] but to stay cruise [in other words to continue cruising for whales]. . . is more than I like for I consider I have been shamefully deceived."²⁵

In the course of his voyages, States discovered that liberality and generosity, as well as honesty, were dispensible attributes for a whaling master. If a whaleman wished to find human community, he had best look toward his fellow crewmen. "In the evening, I saw Captain Morse and asked him to advance me a little money telling him I would give my order in pledge for the same, but it was no go. This morning I asked the cook [who was very likely a black man] to lend me some money and without hesitation he let me have all that I asked for, for which I gave him my order in pledge. Such is the difference between a captain and cook."²⁶

Whaling Captains

Although many types of men become whaling captains, there was absolutely no place for a coward. Often hundreds of miles from any assistance, the captain and his officers had to maintain control over a crew many of whom were like the "men of little principle, rowdies from the stews and low alleys of New York" that Gurdon Hall found on board the Charles Phelps.²⁷ Since discipline depended upon physical force; courage, and considerable strength were indispensable characteristics in a whaling master. The captain who entered the following in his log was certainly no marshmallow: "This day for disobedience and disrespect of my orders, and for sulky provoking looks (repeatedly),

²⁵ States, Log 69, 1 January 1846.

²⁶ Ibid., 18-19 March 1846.

²⁷ Hall, Log 141, 11 November 1842.

I slapped John McKenzie in the face with my flat hand, which got his nose to bleeding; I also pulled Jack Monroe's hair, for not doing as I told him."²⁸

The usual punishment for insolence or refusal to perform ship's duties, was confinement below deck in irons. After a few days on bread and water, most men were willing to submit to the captain's wishes. "George Williams came on board and refused to go to work, which the captain went to him and asked him if he was not going to work, if not he would put him in the fort [they were in an unidentified South American port] and the captain of the port took him, gave him 12 biscuits for to last him until Saturday."²⁹ "At 3 p.m. [Saturday] the Captain went over to the fort to see George Williams and he was willing to go to work. The Captain received him again."³⁰ Williams deserted on February 6th, 1838, and nothing further was heard about him. More serious cases were punished by flogging with a cat-o-nine-tails, which was not prohibited on American merchant vessels until 1850.³¹ "For neglect and repeated disobedience I scored tied up Jack Monroe and gave him a flogging. Also for leaving the boat without liberty and stopping on shore for the night, scored up the cook and flogged him also."³²

Since whalemens were always ready to desert, and replacements were often difficult to obtain, a captain had to carefully straddle the line between strictness and leniency, or he might find himself without a crew. At Guam in 1849, Mrs. Mary Brewster, wife of Captain William Brewster noted: "We fear we shall

²⁸Brewster, Log 86, 7 November 1839.

²⁹"Journal of a Voyage to the South Atlantic Ocean in the Ship Acasta" (author unknown), Log 98, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut; 24 January 1838.

³⁰Ibid., 27 January 1838.

³¹Hohman, American Whaleman, p. 75.

³²Brewster, Log 86, 28 July 1839.

get nothing in the way of recruits. The island has been visited by 80 ships who have taken all that could be spared."³³ After a number of desertions from the George while laying off Chile, Captain George Brewster (William's brother), gave orders to stop all further liberty. Two of the men, A. Buross and Samuel Gavit, refused duty unless they were allowed to go on liberty. Gavit's presence on the George was an indication of the lengths a whaling captain would go to keep any type of crewmen on board his ship, since Brewster had already punished him several times: for insolence, refusal to perform duty, and falling asleep on watch. This time Gavit told Brewster he could live on bread and water as long as the captain could give it to him. Brewster took Buross and Gavit to the American Consul who suggested imprisoning them. But the men were clever enough to know they had Brewster over a barrel. They "said that if I would let them have liberty, till 8 o'clock tomorrow they would be on board . . . and go to their duty like men." Because the ship was already short-handed, "I let them go not being able to do better it being to the interest of the voyage."³⁴

A man did not become a captain of a whaleship until he had made several whaling voyages. Thus, it is to be expected that no romantic visions of adventure filled his mind. Those dreams were only for men who had never been whaling; a captain knew what the life was like, and his sole purpose was to fill his ship as quickly as he could and return home as early as possible. For every captain

³³ Mrs. Mary Brewster, "Journal Kept on Board the Whaleship Tiger on a Whaling Voyage to the Indian Ocean and Northwest Coast," Log 38, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut, 2 March 1849.

³⁴ George Brewster, Log 86, 11 September 1839. Years later, Captain Billings Burch proudly recalled handling a more serious mutiny off California. "Captain Billings Burch, who, with the exception of Captain B. F. Pendleton, is the only survivor at Stonington of the great company of whaling masters of half a century ago, once quelled an uprising on the Charles Phelps off the coast of California by chastising the ringleader and putting eighteen of his companions in irons. 'And if he is alive now,' says the quiet old captain with a twinkle in his eye,

the worst of tortures was an empty ship and time wasted searching for whales. Captain Benjamin F. Pendleton, master of the Caledonia wrote, "This day begins with fresh gales . . . do not know when it is going to alter for the better. I am tired of this no oil no money. O, Lord have mercy upon us."³⁵ A month and a half later, still no luck: "Nothing in sight, O God pity us poor devils."³⁶ "This day begins with light winds and calms and nothing in sight but the land - which makes me think of the poor-house."³⁷

Every day without a whale added a day to the voyage. Captain George Brewster wrote on July 1st, 1840, "Thus ends dull lonesome and tedious. Without whales, so long a loss of time, which dooms us to be so long from those we hold most dear on Earth."³⁸ To the captain as well as the ordinary seaman, the worst part of whaling was separation from home, and Captain George Brewster wrote on his 29th birthday, "By the blessing of God through another year and this day I am permitted to see my natal hour return for which O may I feel utterly grateful to Him who has been my protector - How every fond recollection fills our minds when we think of those days and of those that will think of us at home sweet home. O how I long for thee and all that's dear to my heart."³⁹

'he remembers the thrashing I gave him.'" Henry Robinson Palmer, "Stonington, Connecticut," The New England Magazine 20 (April 1899): 241-242.

³⁵ Captain Benjamin F. Pendleton, "Journal of a Whaling Voyage to the Pacific Ocean in the Ship Caledonia," Log 98, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut, 27 September 1838.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 11 November 1838.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 November 1838.

³⁸ George Brewster, Log 86, 1 July 1840.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 14 April 1840. One of the striking things about whaling, and sealing, as well, was the utter unconcern of almost all participants to the brutal aspects of the business. Passages like the above reveal Brewster to be a man of decent impulses, and yet he could enter the following in his journal without the slightest twinge of sensitivity: "At 7 a.m. . . . struck a cow having a calf - parted from the cow spouting blood and left the calf turned

The only possible defense against a tyrannical captain was desertion, since it was generally agreed that the sailor's supposed protectors, the American Consuls were habitually predisposed to take the master's side in any argument. Any "appeal on the part of the seaman from the tyranny of his captain, to that representative of the free people, the American Consul, is generally answered by confinement in the jail of the place."⁴⁰

As noted, desertions were extremely frequent from whaleships, thus, "a shifting personnel came to be commonplace on board American whalers - only in the rarest instance did a vessel return from a voyage with substantially the same crew with which she sailed."⁴¹ Nordhoff wrote that most of the men who did complete the voyage "did so not from choice, but because the vigilance of their captain, or their own ignorance and poverty of resources, has rendered their escape impossible."⁴² There were desertions mentioned in almost all of the Stonington whaling journals. At times captains were able to recruit Americans in various Pacific ports as well as natives. Since most of the former were deserters from other whaleships, and many of the latter had little stomach for an extended whale cruise, there was no easy solution to the problem of maintaining an adequate crew. William Wilson commented on the prevalence of desertion "spoke [to communicate with a passing vessel at sea] the Mary and

up - thinking it not worth taking to the ship." George Brewster, Log 86, 8 December 1839. Edmund Fanning, like Brewster, an attractive individual, also seemed unaware of the darker side of American maritime ventures. In his book Voyages and Discoveries, Fanning tells an anecdote, intended to be humorous, about an Irish blowhard, who, frightened by full grown seals, occupies himself by bashing out the brains of baby seals.

⁴⁰ Nathaniel Ames, A Mariner's Sketches (Providence, R.I.: Cory, Marshall and Hammond, 1830), p. 102.

⁴¹ Hohman, American Whaleman, p. 62.

⁴² Nordhoff, Nine Years, p. 235.

Susan of Stonington, twenty two months out, with fifty [bbls.] of sperm and thirty two hundred [bbls.] whale. . . . The Mary and Susan had every man she brought from home, this is singular for a two seasoner and speaks well for the officers. The captain would not allow his officers to abuse the men, he broke one officer for doing it."⁴³

Mrs. William E. Brewster, wife of captain William of the Stonington whaler Tiger was convinced that many of the crew were worthless wretches anxious only to live as indolently as possible, then jump ship before the work began. "I long to see my husband free from this vexatious business and away from such ragamuffins as are on board of this ship whose only business is to get on board of ships, be well kept and fed for a few months . . . then run away the first chance. This is more than half of the number who start on a voyage like this with no character nor principle."⁴⁴ The problem of keeping a crew on board a Pacific whaler was much more difficult after the discovery of gold in California, since the gold fields offered opportunities which a whale ship could not begin to match. "A month since we left Honolulu. . . . Mr. B [rewster] . . . took no peace while there. The crew acted like evil spirits and lastly refused duty. Accordingly, they were discharged and new ones shipped. California is all the cry and all are anxious to get there and there is no peace of mind for a master when he has 30 unruly men to look after and another artic [sic] season in view which is our situation."⁴⁵

But aside from deserting, there was little a whaleman could do against a captain he detested, except perhaps to vent his rage impotently like William Wilson. "Barber [the Cavalier's previous captain who was forced to leave the

⁴³Wilson, Log 18, 7 August 1849.

⁴⁴Mary Brewster, Log 38, 31 December 1848, off South America's western coast.

⁴⁵Ibid., 19 December 1849.

ship at Rio due to illness] we learn has recovered contrary to the prayer of the crew who were anxious to hear of his death. Yes - so it is - so little do sailors feel for a bad officer or master, and the sea appears to infect all who follow it, with a certainty of retributive justice - and they confidently look for it."⁴⁶

Sex and the Whaleman

The intriguing problem of sex on board a whaleship reveals something about the ridiculous Puritanism of 19th Century America. Few Americans before the Civil War defended the idea of extra-marital sex, no matter what extenuating circumstances existed, although private behavior might have been quite another thing. Ignoring the fact that sex was an integral part of human nature, nearly everyone involved in whaling (including many of the crewmen) expected that healthy young men were to live without any sexual release for years at a time, and any deviation from this ascetic moral standard was viewed as an aberration. For instance, Lt. Charles Wilkes in his Narrative, a book designed to encourage American maritime activities in the Pacific, stressed that: "above everything, a strict morality should be preserved on board . . . so instead of our "tars" being considered, as they now frequently are, worthless reprobates, opposed to everything that is sacred, they will be found a band of industrious advocates in the cause of civilization."⁴⁷ It was nearly impossible for Nineteenth Century writers to be explicit about sex, but Wilkes was referring to sexual contacts between sailors and native women on the Pacific islands.

Men on whaleships were expected to behave like Captain George Brewster at

⁴⁶ Wilson, Log 18, 14 March 1850.

⁴⁷ Charles Wilkes, Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1845) 5:502.

Easter Island, although few whaling captains would have admitted even the existence of temptation as Brewster did.

Found the natives very anxious to trade with the produce of the island in exchange for slops - the natives, both male and female swimming through the breakers . . . to the distance of 1 1/2 miles to meet the boats with their stuff, found them . . . very handsome and fair, especially the females, who were certainly good looking and quite tempting in their native loveliness (O, for shaim, [sic] George) . . . the shores were literally covered [with natives] which made the rocks to look quite red with them, they being in a state of total nudity. At three sent in again two boats, at 7 they returned with a fine load of yams and potatoes - Many of the females were quite anxious to come off - but I thought best not - accordingly took up the boats and made all sail to the east with many peculiar feelings.⁴⁸

Brewster had been at sea a year and a half, so we may appreciate the strength of his "peculiar feelings." But the natives were unable to comprehend such behavior and when the George returned to Easter Island a year later, "this afternoon, after getting on shore [the natives] commenced heaving stones . . . and shewing gestures of resentment as they were offended at something - and for the life of me I cannot imagine what they could be offended at, without it is because I would not allow the females to stop on board - for an evil purpose."⁴⁹

But few men have willpower like Brewster's and confronted by a culture worlds apart from Stonington and America, most whalers probably succumbed to temptation whenever they could. In Hawaii, William Wilson of the Cavalier noted "women making money some twenty dollars the day."⁵⁰ A few weeks later, at two unidentified islands, Wilson saw women he was attracted to, but was unable to take advantage of the situation. "Several pretty women, quite so - they are willing but shy - closely watched."⁵¹ "A few inhabitants well behaved - women

⁴⁸ Brewster, Log 86, 5 July 1839.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 7 July 1840.

⁵⁰ Wilson, Log 18, 2 November 1849.

⁵¹ Ibid., 26 November 1849.

dare not."⁵²

But later the aptly named Cavalier touched at islands where nothing prevented contacts between sailors and native girls. One wonders what the good citizens of Stonington would have thought of the ensuing scenes. "Anchored in a good place - furlled sails - lots of canoes from all points. . . . King [of the island] came off all got girls . . . the spare girls left with regret."⁵³ Happily for the crew of the Cavalier, Captain Dexters' morality was less rigid than Brewster's, although Dexter seems to have been a rather unpleasant individual. "Old man [Dexter] talking to Jack about getting another girl - they are going to keep the old one in the cabin - girls do not like to go."⁵⁴ But Dexter was afraid that word about the women would reach Stonington, and Wilson blasted the hypocrisy of the pious shipowners that Dexter feared. "The old man told us not to blab and tell that females had been aboard the ship - He was afraid of talk - that it would reach the ears of the owners. What morality - the owners will ship a man under false pretences, starve him, cheat him, and it is right, but if a woman comes aboard . . . it is a terrible shame!"⁵⁵

Dexter was also apprehensive about the effect of the three month debauch on his crew's efficiency. The captain "has been making threats that we would be [can't read] before we go off the whaling ground - says we are half drunk the other half fucked to death."⁵⁶

The scenes on board the Cavalier and similar ones on other vessels

⁵²Ibid., 30 November 1849.

⁵³Ibid., 23 February 1850.

⁵⁴Ibid., 29 February 1850.

⁵⁵Ibid., 22 January 1850.

⁵⁶Ibid., 9 March 1850.

touching at Pacific islands in the Nineteenth Century, were not simply innocent recreation and enjoyment of healthy natural instincts. The girls came on board because gifts were given to them and the men of the island. Apparently at least some did not go willingly. "Plenty of ships visit the island. [Wilson never identified it.] Girls come on board. Have to if brother tells to - if they cry they are beat - a man can get any girl he wishes - small girls go."⁵⁷ Wilson, however, defended American sailors against charges of mistreating the natives. "Everybody knows that they [Americans] are mild, pleasant . . . and treat the natives well - but the Englishmen who are old man of wars men are dead to any feeling but sensuality."⁵⁸

While a number of Stonington whaling journals mentioned sexual contacts between crewmen and native women, I found only one explicit instance of homosexuality. If one may judge from the comments of the journalist who did mention it, Gurdon Hall, homosexuality was held so loathesome, that, notwithstanding the pressures created by extended periods without women, homosexuality must have been a rare occurrence on whaleships. The incident took place on the Charles Phelps in January 1843. "Nine of the men from forward came aft and entered a complaint to the Capt. about the steward, William H. Smith, who it appears had solicited some of the crew to do that which is not common or decent for 2 to be engaged in as one man." The steward, apparently miffed by rejection, attempted to murder the crew, but the supposed deadly poison he added to a cake merely acted as a laxative. Smith thus had two charges against him, attempted murder, and that "which is too indecent to mention among human beings a charge that the brute creation is utter strangers to."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid., 19 February 1850.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 21 February 1850.

⁵⁹ Hall, log 141, 30 January 1843.

After hearing the witnesses, the captain then told Smith that according to the marine laws of the United States of America he was guilty of enough to imprison him for life if not to hang him, but Smith was merely flogged by the captain. After the flogging, Smith refused to return to duty, so he was put ashore near an English whaling station, and nothing further was heard about him.⁶⁰

Cases such as Smith's were certainly rare, but it is probable that many of the crewmen on whalers felt emotions similar to John States on the Nantasket although like him they remained unaware of their real significance, and would have been horrified if they had not. "All of my happy hours are those passed in his [William States, John's cousin, a boat-steerer on the Nantasket] society and my hours of dreariness are those in which I cannot be near him. Let others say what they will, to me the pleasures of friendship are the sweetest pleasures that I can enjoy."⁶¹

Mrs. Brewster's Journal

The most interesting Stonington whaling journal was kept by Mrs. Mary Brewster, whose husband William was captain of the Tiger; during a whaling voyage to the Indian Ocean and Northwest Coast. Mrs. Brewster's journal is valuable not for its whaling information, since it has very little material on whaling, but as a record of the ideas and attitudes of one of Stonington's leading citizens. If there was an elite class in Stonington, an important segment of it consisted of whaling masters and their families. During the latter days of whaling, it became rather common for captain's wives to accompany their husbands at sea. This practice was probably a direct result of the increased

⁶⁰Ibid., 30 January & 2 February 1843.

⁶¹States, Log 69, 1 January 1846.

length of voyages. Between 1815 and 1840 the average length of cruises had been 29 months, but the growing importance of the sperm whale industry lengthened voyages to four and one half years.⁶² Allowing captains' wives on whalers, was an attempt to ameliorate somewhat, whaling's worst feature, separation from home. Perhaps it may seem unfair to extend to the captain a privilege permitted no one else on board, but two things should be remembered: first, as mentioned above, most whaling captains, unlike the majority of crewmen, spent a large part of their lives away from their families; secondly, owners could be expected to go to great lengths to conciliate a good whaling master, since the success of a voyage depended on him to a far greater extent than anyone else.⁶³

Pasted to the front cover of Mrs. Brewster's journal was a newspaper clipping which touched on the subject of captains' wives at sea: "Of late years a very sensible custom has arisen among the masters of vessels visiting the Pacific, that of being accompanied by their wives. We have heard of some close fisted and niggardly owners who object to the custom, but everybody knows that their objections are founded upon the lowest principle of selfishness. . . . The system however, works so well, that we predict it will become more and more fashionable."⁶⁴

Absence from home, was of course as hard on the sailor's family as it was on the sailor. "Well do I recollect the feelings which a year ago pervaded my mind: That of my husband's desired return. Winter passed, spring came and with it brought his return. Then did I say we will part no more - but if the sea must be your home it shall be mine. To this I cling and to this resolve

⁶²Hohman, American Whaleman, p. 84.

⁶³In the 1870's, Chas. P. Williams lost the captain of one of his clipper ships for not allowing the captain's wife to accompany her husband on a voyage to California.

⁶⁴"Unidentified Newspaper Clipping," Mary Brewster, Log 38.

I owe my present happiness."⁶⁵ Mrs. Brewster found the physical hardships of a whaling voyage far less painful than separation from her husband. "Three weeks out for the first time I went on deck for a short time. Tonight took tea with the officers have not felt before to sit long enough without vomiting. Found the weather this morning far from being good . . . this is a specimen of many such days of fog and rain and cold. . . . I am well satisfied with my lot and withall have no disposition to complain."⁶⁶ "I am far more happy here than when I was home though it appeared to some I knew no sorrow then. Alas, they could not see my feelings nor will they ever know of the many bitter hours I have experienced. All are past and never will I be subject to the like again . . . I desire we will never be separated."⁶⁷

Mrs. Brewster exhibited the worst characteristics of the upper middle class. She was smugly ethnocentric, narrowly provincial, racially and religiously prejudiced, and never once doubted her own righteousness or that of those who thought like her. The product of an environment so hostile to dissent and deviations from the "norm" that she refused to even consider the possibility of its existence, Mrs. Brewster made a number of comments like the following: "In the course of the conversation, the . . . isms of the day were spoken of [probably primarily socialism]. [I claimed those Americans] which had embraced such absurd and foolish isms were mostly emigrants, and only a few of our people had embraced the same and that we were trying to civilize and educate the immense numbers of foreigners which had found a home in America."⁶⁸

⁶⁵Ibid., 31 December 1845.

⁶⁶Ibid., 22 May 1846.

⁶⁷Ibid., 22 May 1846.

⁶⁸Ibid., 16 September 1846.

Naturally, for Mrs. Brewster, like multitudes of others, there was only one true religion; in her case Calvinist Protestantism, which she believed was perfectly suited to every person in the world, if they only could see the light. At Hawaii, where she left the ship while her husband sailed to the Northwest Coast of North America for the summer whaling season, Mrs. Brewster visited a native church. "Attended the native church meeting. . . . The number present was about 600 . . . the sermon was in the native language. The scene solemn and interesting. I could not but be reminded of the power of God's truth and the reality of Religion. In looking at the group before me I could not help comparing their situation now with what it must have been when the Missionaries first commenced their labourous task of trying to enlighten such depraved minds. Before me I could see that his labours had been blest and from heathen many had become civilized and worshippers of God."⁶⁹

But a year's stay in Hawaii altered her opinion about the success of the missionaries which had seemed so marvellous at first acquaintance. "I think it is the wish of the missionaries to try to raise this degraded people to a higher standard - but in many instances their labours are of not much avail, their habits and such are so permanently established that it is almost impossible to correct them."⁷⁰

⁶⁹Ibid., 26 April 1846. Captain George Brewster, Mary's brother in law, was also a person of strong religious convictions, but he seemed much more humble and charitable than she was. At Guam he commented, the natives "know but little about mankind and nothing about the true religion or Jesus Christ. - I think they have a kind of idol worship. . . . O what a field of labor for a truly elevated man of God - Oh for that day to come when we shall all worship the true and only God and the uttermost parts of the earth become his possessions and the heathen no longer bow down to dumb idols and stones, but praise Him who is worthy of all honor and adoration."
George Brewster, Log 86 -

⁷⁰Mary Brewster, Log 38, Hawaii, 1847.

In general, Mrs. Brewster found the natives at Hawaii outrageous. One of their principal offenses was against her ideas of propriety and decorum. "After breakfast took a walk to see the country. Concluded I was an object of curiosity to the natives. A large number had collected and followed me every step. . . . They are very disagreeable. I had expected to see them much farther advanced or sufficiently so, as to be covered, but instead of that not more than half seem to think dress is of importance. I saw a number of men with nothing but a piece of cloth round the middle of the body. I shortened my walk and was glad when I had once more got to the house."⁷¹

Like many others, before and after her, Mrs. Brewster found filth and indolence basic characteristics of primitive people. After a visit to a native village at Hilo, Hawaii, she wrote, "They live in small grass houses. Sleeping, eating and drinking is all they attend to. They are very indolent and do just enough to live from day to day. They are very filthy and the place that I saw was better suited for their dogs than for human beings."⁷²

Mrs. Brewster was not the only person on the Tiger to keep a journal. A crewman, John T. Perkins also recorded his impressions of the 1845 voyage.⁷³ It is interesting to compare Mrs. Brewster's opinion of the Kanakas (Hawaiian natives) with Perkins who was utterly charmed by them. "Never have I met with any people who please me so much as the Kanakas. There is no theft among them. . . . Their houses are clean and comfortable. . . . If a person enters a hut . . . all the fruit they possess is brought for the stranger and in short

⁷¹Ibid., 21 April 1846.

⁷²Ibid., 25 April 1846.

⁷³Mrs. Brewster was evidently not much to look at. "The Captain's lady sits on deck every pleasant day. There is nothing remarkable in her appearance. She never speaks to any of the officers when on deck but her husband." Perkins, "Journal at Sea," p. 133.

they do everything that they think will please him. . . . Not an unkind word have I heard among them, no signs of fighting. They live with little or no labor. . . . Every female is open for the desires of sailors. They even seem to think the offers they give to everyone who enters their huts a part of hospitality."⁷⁴ While much of Mrs. Brewster's detestation of native Hawaiians probably had sexual connotations, e.g., her revulsion at the half clad men, she never mentioned the promiscuity of the young girls, something which few male visitors failed to comment upon. Even the merest mention of sex was a strict taboo for a Nineteenth Century American woman.

Basically, Mrs. Brewster's hostility to Hawaiians was racial, for she found natives who affected western standards as objectionable as the half-clad inhabitants of grass huts. "I visited Mr. Pitman's who has the best situation and most beautiful garden I have ever seen. . . . His house is furnished genteely and in good order. But a native wife spoils the whole and leaves a dark side to the pleasant place. . . . Her lands (she was the daughter of a chief), probably took his eye as much as her person which is very good looking."⁷⁵

Apparently Mrs. Brewster's daily life in Hawaii did not differ greatly from what it had been in Stonington, and was similar to that of other childless women of her class in Nineteenth Century America. Respectable married women were expected to perform only those duties connected with home and family and little else. Not surprisingly, according to the Manuscript Census Schedules for Stonington Borough, the only women employed throughout the Nineteenth Century were either unmarried (teaching school was probably the only acceptable employment

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 145-146.

⁷⁵Mary Brewster, Log 38, 17 September 1846.

for middle class women), or poor. This proscription against non-domestic occupations might have made sense in those times when large families and limited conveniences made household drudgery practically unavoidable, even among the fairly comfortable; but to insist that a married woman without children, like Mrs. Brewster, spend her days in utter boredom and uselessness, was an absurdity. The ultimate blow for such a woman was separation from her husband, for without him, what reason for existence did society allow her at all? On her first season in the Pacific, Mrs. Brewster went with her husband to the Northwest Coast of North America, rather than stop over in Hawaii as she did the following year. Even in summer, this area is cold, wet, and foggy, and she probably spent most of the time cooped up in her tiny quarters. But she went nonetheless, for her purpose in life, like other married women was to "be a useful companion, a soother of woes, a calmer of troubles, and a friend in need, a sharer of his sorrows as well as his joys."⁷⁶

Mrs. Brewsters' status as the wife of a ship captain was evidently a sufficient passport for entry into the highest levels of Hawaiian society, which was dominated by Protestant missionaries from the United States. John Perkins found the missionaries an unattractive set. "The missionaries live in the utmost luxuriance in large houses. . . . Kanaka servants wait upon their table. They are held in dread by the natives."⁷⁷ Mrs. Brewster's days there were anything but scintillating, since most of the things which would have made the visit enjoyable were not deemed proper for a respectable woman. She evidently spent the summer in Hawaii without once swimming in the Ocean, unless Mrs. Brewster's code of ethics forbade even the mention of bathing in her journal. (One is reminded of the little old English ladies in E. M. Forster's Room With

⁷⁶ Mary Brewster, Log 38, 2 May 1846.

⁷⁷ Perkins, "Journal at Sea," pp. 145-146.

a View who say "s." instead of stomach so as not to be vulgar.) Mrs. Brewster's journal while at Hawaii was a succession of entries like the following. "Employed in sewing a great part of the day. Towards night went out to ride . . . enjoyed the ride very much - passed the evening pleasantly and at 10, am thinking of sleep."⁷⁸ "Got to sleep twice this afternoon. At seven went out and took a walk to get waked up."⁷⁹ As might be expected, all her thoughts revolved about her husband's return. "The last few days I have felt lonesome and impatient . . . praying . . . that God would return my dear companion in safety to me."⁸⁰ Spending time so aimlessly disturbed Mrs. Brewster, but in all truth, there was no way she could have avoided it, given who she was, and what her world was like. "I have been thinking how much of my time runs to waste which I might employ in trying to benefit someone - The prayer goes up from my lips teach me oh Lord thy will to know and may I try and do what good I can to my fellow creatures."⁸¹

⁷⁸ Mary Brewster, Log 38, 22 May 1847.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 23 May 1847.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 21 August 1847.

⁸¹ Ibid., 22 August 1847. It was, I think, to Mrs. Brewster's credit that she at least felt uncomfortable about riding in the native drawn carts which were the obnoxious means of transportation for many of the well-bred white ladies of Hawaii. But like almost all of us, she feared offending public opinion, and did ride in them. After a visit to a native school, "as it was raining a small wagon was offered and as I could not well refuse I got in and was dragged home. This practice is customary I am told and the ladies prefer it to walking." Log 38, 21 April 1846. "I received an invitation from Mrs. Peck to spend the day . . . as she had sent a wagon and two natives to draw it, I could not refuse. . . . My escorts seemed pleased with the privilege of drawing me. . . . It was hard riding and I should have preferred walking, but the wagon was sent on purpose and it being the fashionable way for the ladies in this country and all these considerations put together which with the thoughts of the old saying when amongst romans do as they do I had a fine jolt." Log 38, 30 April 1846.

Mrs. Brewster's husband returned to Hawaii on August 25th, 1847, after a voyage to the Northwest Coast which lasted almost five months. On March 8th of the following year, the Tiger reached Stonington. The voyage had lasted two and a half years, but the Tiger brought home a full cargo which sold for almost \$40,000.⁸² Mrs. Brewster concluded her journal for this voyage with the following entry. "I often think I shall look back upon the past two years . . . with much satisfaction and count these days as some of my happiest, for I never enjoyed myself so well as during my whole life as I have the past two years."⁸³

Less than four months later, June 29th, 1848, the Tiger sailed again for the Northwest Coast and Mrs. Brewster was on board once more. This voyage was much less pleasant than the first had been. Deprived of the novelty which had made the first voyage at least bearable, Mrs. Brewster had no sooner left Stonington than she was longing for her return, although at the very least it was two years away. "Poor dull Tiger . . . if you will once more carry us to the land we have left, Thy speed shall never more trouble us. Neither shall you ever be burdened with me or mine again."⁸⁴ She was hoping that the proceeds of this voyage would allow her husband to quit the sea. "We come . . . hoping to realize sufficient to enable us to settle down should we live to accomplish this voyage."⁸⁵

The first part of the voyage was disastrous. As noted above, the entire crew, anxious to go to the California gold fields, refused duty, and a new one had to be shipped. At the Bering Straits, a year after the Tiger left Stonington, with only two whales captured, Mrs. Brewster wrote in despair, "I want to get

⁸²Computed from Starbuck, Whale Fishery.

⁸³Mary Brewster, Log 38, 25 February 1848.

⁸⁴Ibid., 16 July 1848.

⁸⁵Ibid., 20 September 1848.

home once more - and if I have any influence my husband shall not again be tormented with anyone's ships or vessels - codfish and potatoes the year round rather than thus be situated."⁸⁶ This was the final entry in Mrs. Brewster's journal. The voyage, which had begun so inauspiciously, was in the end successful. The Tiger returned in May 1851, after a voyage of almost three years with a full cargo worth \$51,300.⁸⁷

Curiously, Mrs. Brewster was in her early twenties when she sailed on the Tiger. Every entry would lead one to believe that its author was a middle aged woman. There is not the slightest trace of humour or spontaneous happiness; nor curiosity or interest in any of the strange places she visited. She was a perfect stereotype for the prim, dour, straightlaced New England woman; though in her twenties she could have been sixty, and forty years would probably have had little effect upon her mind.

Less than a decade after the Tiger's return to Stonington, the borough's last large whaleship, the 456 ton Cincinatti, tied up at the docks on the west side of the village. The end of the whaling industry was followed by a gradual depression of the Stonington economy. Only the residue of riches brought home by the whaleships, which were not depleted until the 1880's, and the establishment of two factories in the last decades of the Nineteenth Century, saved the borough from becoming a poverty stricken ghost town. Thirty years of whaling had made Stonington a wealthy community. As noted above, the borough Grand List was \$600,000 larger in 1861 than in 1831, and as late as 1882 Stonington had the largest tax roll in Connecticut in proportion to population.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ibid., 17 July 1849.

⁸⁷ Computed from Starbuck, Whale Fishery.

⁸⁸ Stonington Mirror, 14 January 1882, p. 2.

CHAPTER V

A SKETCH OF STONINGTON POLITICS DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Sources on Stonington politics are scarce. The most serious deficiency is the absence of a Stonington newspaper between 1829 and 1869. Several attempts were made to establish papers after the demise of the Telegraph in 1829, but all were short-lived. In 1869, Jerome Anderson brought out the first issue of the Mirror, which was published into the 1950's.¹ Thus, from the Jacksonian Era through the administration of Andrew Johnson there is practically no information on Stonington's political attitudes. This deficiency is particularly unfortunate since Stonington's earliest papers, the Journal of the Times, later the Impartial Journal, and the Patriot, a weekly collection of Republican essays, (all published by Samuel Trumbull) were lively and entertaining "Jeffersonian Rags." There is little information on how Stonington's citizens reacted to the Democratic and Whig parties in the Age of Jackson, abolitionists and slaveowners, the break-up of the Whig and the rise of the Republican parties, or the Civil War and Reconstruction.

A second complication is the difficulty of finding the party

¹In October 1798, Samuel Trumbull issued the first number of the Journal of the Times. In 1800, the title was changed to Impartial Journal. Trumbull left Stonington about 1805. On July 28, 1824, William Storer Jr., issued the first number of the Yankee; in 1827 he changed the title of the paper to the Stonington Telegraph, which was published until July 22, 1829. Between 1832 and 1834, the Stonington Phoenix (later the Stonington Chronicle) was published. (I have located only one issue of this paper.) The Stonington Spectator was published for six months in 1834. This brief summary was taken from the Stonington Mirror, 15 November 1879.

affiliation of elected officials, particularly for the period before 1850. At the Connecticut State Library in Hartford, there is a catalogue, taken from the Journal of the General Assembly, of members of that body, but only rarely is there an indication of the political party Senators elected from Stonington's district before 1850, belonged to. The index cards for Representatives, which do list party affiliation, go back only to 1849. As for local officials, their names were entered in the town records without mention of party affiliation.

Little information relating to the sources of support for a particular political party in Nineteenth Century Stonington could be found. There is some evidence that the less affluent residents of the community gave their allegiance to the parties which traditionally have been identified with the lower economic orders - the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Democrats. But no strong case linking the working class to either party, or for that matter, businessmen with the Federalists and Whigs, can be made. Still, according to Mirror editor Anderson, the Democrats, from the 1830's on, usually carried Stonington Borough,² where property ownership was less widespread than in the town's rural districts which were loyal to Whigs and Republicans.

Finally, no attempt has been made to separate Stonington Borough from the town of Stonington in this discussion of local politics. To do so, would in the first place be virtually impossible; and secondly, the result would be a sketch of thumbnail proportions.

²Stonington Mirror, 10 October 1872.

Stonington Politics in the Jeffersonian Era

Stonington, in the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, was above all else, a boiling cauldron of Jeffersonian **Republicanism**. In 1791 Samuel Trumbull, publisher and printer of Stonington's Impartial Journal, issued the first number of the Patriot, or Scourge of Aristocracy, "a weekly collection of Republican Essays and Articles of intelligence calculated to diffuse the pure principles of Rational Liberty, dispel the gloomy clouds of Despotism, and unveil the arts, intrigues and designs of the enthusiastic adherents of aristocracy. 'Error of Opinion may be tolerated, where reason is left to combat it,' Jefferson." According to Trumbull, (whose brothers, Gurdon and John F. incidentally become two of Stonington's wealthiest citizens), the Patriot would be sold throughout the Northeast United States, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Its purpose was to

faithfully relate to you Republicans the deeds, transgressions, intrigues, and base exertions of that party humbled and degraded by the United and harmonious voice of thousands, of the junto, hardened in wickedness and sin, who have for a long time past propagated the diabolical sentiments of aristocracy, (passive obedience and non-resistance) in the United States, after being systemized by the British Court and their agents in the United States, to aid the cause /of Republicanism/ to awaken the thoughtless, to lay open to view the deceptions of the enemies of the United States, the Patriot is designed /to do/.³

The Patriot, Journal of the Times, and the Impartial Journal, like other small town American papers of the time, consisted almost entirely

³Stonington Patriot, - December, 1798.

of extracts, often including poems, and short tales, universally wretched in quality, and generally moralistic in tone (although the earlier papers were not nearly so bad as later ones), taken from other newspapers and periodicals. The literary contributions of a printer, publisher, and editor, like Trumbull, were usually limited to a brief column in each issue. But he, like many other small town editors, could wield a meat-axe, and the result was political writing which has disappeared. Trumbull's vehemence however, often resulted in absurd accusations, as in the following charges levelled at Connecticut's ruling Federalist clique.

A good deal of concern is expressed, it is said, by Long John, Pope Dwight, Exterminator, and other Arnolds of this state,⁴ on account of the success of the Republicans at the late elections in the United States [Jefferson's victory]. How pleasing it would be to this Junto of disappointed "Disorganizers" . . . were the "Steady Habited" rulers of Connecticut empowered to authorize them to raise an army of "ragamuffins" from among their adherents in order to "exterminate" every man, woman and child of the 13 Democratic states.⁵

At times, a contributor to the Patriot would also allow his enthusiasm to overwhelm his intellect, as in the following letter "from a citizen" in 1802.

⁴Pope Dwight was Timothy Dwight, a brilliant and conservative Congregational clergyman. Dwight was a strong Federalist and served as President of Yale University. Long John was probably Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., Federalist Governor of Connecticut from 1797 to 1809.

⁵Stonington Patriot, 24 July 1801, p. 3.

A candid and willful perusal of the recent debates in the Senate . . . on Mr. Breckenridge's motion for the repeal of the judiciary system cannot fail of convincing every judicious and honest man . . . that the views of the Federalists are, to destroy the basis of American freedom. . . . We are surrounded by designing, desperate men, who have no chance of acquiring wealth or importance, but by convulsions, and the establishment of a monarchy in the United States, in which they would be aided by secret emissaries of a Foreign Tyrant.⁶

It is interesting that this "diabolic aristocratic conspiracy" had few adherents in the Stonington area, and those elections in the early Nineteenth Century for which reports exist, were overwhelming Republican victories. Trumbull's attacks were always aimed at Hartford and New Haven, twin capitals of the Federalist dominated Connecticut government, and Federalist members of Congress and their allies. The two main concerns of Stonington's Republicans, it would seem, were Federalist Anglophiles in Washington, downgrading their country by subservience to Britain, and the aristocratic rulers of Connecticut, "The Standing Order". "The Presbyterian Consociated Congregational Church [Congregationalists] and the Federalists [of Connecticut] were so closely allied that the party of the government, and the party of the [church] establishment were familiarly and collectively known as 'The Standing Order'."⁷

⁶Dumas Malone, Jefferson's biographer, called the Judiciary Act the "last gasp of the Federalists." The act, which went into effect in 1801, three weeks before the end of the last Federalist Congress, provided for sixteen new Circuit court judges and relieved Supreme Court Justices from circuit duty. Republicans were hostile to a federal judiciary, particularly because of its enforcement of the sedition laws (some of which were aimed at repressing political attacks by Republicans), and at Adams' appointment of Federalist judges just before he left office. In 1802, John Breckenridge, Senator from Kentucky, and a strong ally of Jefferson, introduced a bill calling for repeal of the Judiciary Act which was hotly contested by Federalist members of Congress. Dumas Malone, Jefferson and His Time, Vol. IV: Jefferson The President: First Term, 1801-1805 (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1970), pp. 113-115. Stonington Patriot, 12 February 1802.

⁷M. Louise Green, The Development of Religious Liberty in Connecticut (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), p. 357.

Trumbull usually did not level specific charges at the Federalist ruling clique of Connecticut and his commentary was for the most part rather general billingsgate flung at the opposition. But historians writing on Connecticut in the period between 1776 and 1818 (when a relatively liberal constitution was developed) agree that the state was dominated by a small group of aristocratic families. "No less a Federalist than David Daggett, in describing the government before the Revolution, said 'This state and many others were under a most perfect aristocracy - the name truly was disowned yet quietly submitted to a government essentially autocratic.' Certainly there was no change in the ruling personnel in church or state in 1776, nor until the election of 1817-1818."⁸

What made this domination possible was the exceptional lack of interest of the general population in political affairs. According to A. E. Van Dusen, author of the most recent comprehensive history of Connecticut, during the 1790's, only a small minority of Connecticut residents, about 3 or 4%, voted, so a small coterie of Federalist voters was all that was necessary to insure the continuation of their party in office.⁹ Richard Purcell, whose excellent book on early Nineteenth Century Connecticut was republished in 1963, wrote that an important bulwark of this aristocratic edifice was the historical deference of Connecticut Freemen. (Freemen were those allowed to vote in state elections.) "The Freeman was determined to reward only men of inherent proven worth. The Puritan might hate King and bishop, but in Connecticut he allowed a rule of the educated, well-born, and respectably wealthy. Their rule was benevolent and probably half unconscious, even to themselves."¹⁰

⁸ Richard J. Purcell, Connecticut in Transition (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1963), p. 135.

⁹ Albert E. Van Dusen, Connecticut (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 178.

¹⁰ Purcell, Connecticut in Transition, pp. 136-137.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly the causes which led to the establishment of a Republican party in Connecticut. Purcell saw its birthdate as the decade between 1790 and 1800, and its principal basis of cohesion as the national party platform of Thomas Jefferson. The Jeffersonians in Connecticut, as elsewhere, educated the people to use the ballot and to prevent the business of government from being monopolized by a professional class.¹¹ Gaspare Saladino, in a dissertation on the economic history of Connecticut during the Federalist Era, writes that the origin of Jeffersonian Republicanism in the state was a conflict between the rising business community, and the agrarian politicians who became their bitter antagonists.¹² M. Louise Greene, writing on the development of religious liberty in Connecticut, stresses the importance of religious dissent in the formation of a Republican opposition. "All the agitation attending both the certificate acts¹³ and western land bills, [the Congregationalist backed scheme to use funds from sale of Connecticut's western lands for religious purposes was defeated by Dissenter opposition], had demonstrated the intense opposition of the dissenting minority and that they were beginning to look to the increase of their numbers and the power of the ballot as the only means of changing the vexatious laws under which they were

¹¹Ibid., pp. 149-150, 151.

¹²Gaspare John Saladino, "The Economic Revolution in Late Eighteenth Century Connecticut" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1964), p. 104.

¹³Certificates were given to those who attended Protestant dissenting churches, thus exempting them from penalties for non-attendance at the established church. Van Dusen, Connecticut, p. 119. In 1791, the Connecticut Assembly required that certificates be signed by two civil officers who were likely to be Congregationalists and thus inclined to reject such applications. But dissenters raised such a storm over the new law that it was soon repealed. Ibid., p. 180.

treated as inferiors."¹⁴ Purcell, however, downgrades the importance of the religious issue in the formation of the Connecticut Republican party, although he does regard the anti-clerical plank, as the crucial issue in the party platform after 1801.¹⁵

William McLaughlin, chronicler of New England's Baptist Church, agrees with Purcell that religion did not become important to Connecticut Republicans until after 1800. According to McLaughlin, Connecticut Baptists began a petition movement in 1800 to repeal any laws which established religion in the state. After its failure became apparent around 1804, the Baptists realized the attempt to win Congregational and Episcopalian support was useless, and turned to the Republican Party. Disestablishment in Connecticut became a political issue only after the failure of the petition movement forced the Republican Party to take a stand on it.¹⁶

In a dissertation on Ephraim Kirby, a leader of the early Jeffersonian Party in Connecticut, Allan Briceland rejects any possibility of grassroots formation of Republicanism in the state. "The Jeffersonian Republican Party was created in Connecticut not by a popular demand, but by the persistent efforts of individuals who for personal reasons opposed the Standing Order and sought means of enlarging their opposition through political action."¹⁷

But, whatever the seeds which germinated into the Connecticut Republican party, by 1800, when party leaders met for the first time in New Haven,¹⁸

¹⁴ Greene, The Development of Religious Liberty, p. 392.

¹⁵ Purcell, Connecticut in Transition, p. 152.

¹⁶ William G. McLaughlin, New England Dissent, 1630-1833: The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 988, 1004.

¹⁷ Alan Vance Briceland, "Ephraim Kirby, Connecticut Jeffersonian, 1757-1804: The Origins of The Jeffersonian Party in Connecticut" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1965), p. 129.

¹⁸ Van Dusen, Connecticut, p. 182.

it was a political force to be reckoned with. "The election of 1800 saw the Connecticut clergy drawn up in solid order to prevent the election of Jefferson. . . . Politics of no negative type were openly preached from the pulpit. Religion was in danger . . . the safety of the Bible was jeopardized by American Jacobins.¹⁹ . . . They [the Connecticut clergy] refused to dissociate Republicanism from Jacobinism."²⁰

In Stonington, Jeffersonian Republicanism reigned triumphant from 1800 down through the War of 1812. A report from the Patriot in 1801 gives some idea of the strength of the Republican majority. "Republicanism completely triumphed in this town on Monday last in Freeman's Meeting, over tyrrany, Despotism, Anarchy, Error, Jacobinism, Steady-Habits, Intrigues, and every other system laid down in the voluminous records of 'Federal Philosophy.' . . . This town . . . a few years since was considered in the Federalist interest . . . [but now] out of upwards of 200 votes for Members of Congress, not more than two were given for Federalist candidates."²¹ One of the most important factors leading to such Republican victories in Stonington was British depredations upon American commerce, particularly the impressment of seamen, but none of the historians of the rise of the Jeffersonian Party in Connecticut have mentioned this factor. Judging by the articles and letters appearing in the local papers, Stonington's citizens saw a close correlation between Federalist ideas and British actions.

¹⁹"The use by the Federalists of the term Jacobin and Democrat to denote their opponents became common in 1793, when interest in the French Revolution reached its height." William A. Robinson, Jeffersonian Democracy in New England (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 71

²⁰Purcell, Connecticut in Transition, p. 153.

²¹Stonington Patriot, 25 September 1801, p. 74.

In the first issue of the Journal of the Times, Samuel Trumbull, stated that: "Notwithstanding the false report that the editor wished to publish a party paper . . . he has staunchly preferred in his first declaration of printing one that was impartial . . . [and] devoid of party calumny."²² Yet a few weeks later, Trumbull assailed the Federalist party for its supine attitude in the face of British aggression. "We are happy in being able to lay before the public, the ingenious and spirited observations of Mr. Otis, upon the impressment of our seamen by the British. . . . [It had appeared] that the Federalist Party (so-called) in Congress, were willing to suffer without complaint, any insults which the British Nation . . . think proper to offer this country [as to impressment of American seamen]. Is it not therefore high time that the Republic of America should convince haughty, insulting Albion, as she has haughty, imperious Galia, that she will not bear patiently their infamous conduct?"²³ It was natural that such high handed actions by the British, should outrage the sense of manhood of a young nation, especially one that saw itself so recently freed from "Perfidious Albion's" yoke. Impressment of seamen was not only an insult to the dignity of the United States as an independent nation, but it could not fail to offend the sensibilities of its citizens, who were proud, above all else, of their freedom, which they believed to be unequalled in the world. Regarding impressment of seamen, a Westerly farmer wrote the Journal in tones reminiscent of the patriotic fervor of the Revolution.

I am one of those kind of people who are called Federalists, I have been and still continue to be a staunch friend to the government of America, and am sorry to add, have also been too fond of British men and measure. . . . [But as I have become aware that] the British have been committing depredations on our commerce, under vicious pretences, and have hundreds of our seamen on board

²² Stonington Journal of the Times, Dec. _____, 1798, p. 1.

²³ Ibid., 16 January 1799, p. 3.

their ships - my blood boiled at this information - Shall the people of the United States set down and submit to these sea robbers because they have a treaty of amity? . . . Although I am now advanced in years . . . I would willingly march into the field against them, before I would crouch the least to their haughty spirit. A Farmer, Westerly.²⁴

For at least some of Stonington's Republicans, the reason British outrages went unanswered, was the rule of Federalist politicians and their allies, who as old Tories, would remain loyal to the British Crown.

Sir . . . Have those [Federalist] papers ever represented to the people the conduct of the British in capturing our vessels - impressment of our Fathers, sons and brothers - abusing and flogging our countrymen, after plundering our defenseless ships, and otherwise insulting our flag? And are not all the old Tories and British agents who assisted the British in the American Revolution . . . now called Federalists?²⁵

The true beliefs of a Federalist were the subject of a column in the Patriot in 1802. The column, entitled the "Anglo-Federal Creed," probably written by editor Samuel Trumbull, was a parody of the Apostle's Creed.

I believe in George the Third, King of Great Britain, and in the Prince of Wales, his eldest son, and in William Pitt and Henry Dundas and the House of Lords, and in the British Navy and in the murder of millions for the glory of the King and the wealth of the nation. I believe . . . in the federal capitol and the new judiciary bill and the officers appointed under it. I believe Jefferson and Burr, Gallatin and Madison, wicked men. I believe that McKean and Dallas, Coxe and Duane²⁶ deserve death, and that

²⁴Stonington Journal of the Times, 5 August 1800, p. 1.

²⁵Stonington Patriot, 4 September 1801, p. 53.

²⁶Henry Dundas was one of the leading advocates in the House of Commons of severe treatment for the colonists after the outbreak of the American Revolution. He opposed any concessions to the Americans until they acknowledged the supremacy of Britain. Dictionary of National Biography. Thomas McKean, a moderate Republican, and ally of Jefferson, was Governor of Pennsylvania in the early Nineteenth Century. Alexander Dallas was a Pennsylvania lawyer and friend of McKean and Jefferson. He served as a district attorney under Jefferson and Secretary of the Treasury under Madison. Tench Coxe was a political economist who severed his connection with the Federalist Party and moved over to the Republicans after Adams removed him from his post as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in 1797. William Duane was a Republican journalist in Pennsylvania. His paper, the Aurora, was the most important Jeffersonian journal. Dictionary of American Biography.

all of the states south of the Byram River [which forms part of the boundary between New York and Connecticut] will be sunk or burnt up, and that New England, with all its piety and honesty and knowledge will be preserved during all ages and will finally govern the world.²⁷

Down to the War of 1812, Stonington's citizens remained faithful to the policy of resistance to British violations of American sovereignty on the high seas. Surprisingly, they even supported the Embargo Act, something which must have been quite unusual for a New England seaport town. The Embargo, Jefferson's unsuccessful attempt to economically retaliate at Great Britain for impressing American seaman, prohibited American vessels from leaving for foreign ports.²⁸ Since shipment of produce and livestock to the West Indies was a major facet of Stonington's maritime commerce, the Embargo must have been a hardship (not only to merchants, but farmers as well), and this surely represents an instance where economic motivations took a backseat to a matter of principle. In 1809, Connecticut Governor Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., addressed the legislature, asserting that "Whenever Congress exceeded its constitutional powers, the state legislature were in duty bound to interpose their protecting shield between the rights and liberties of the people and the assumed power of the general government."²⁹ The Connecticut Legislature adopted a resolution condemning the Embargo, which prompted this response from the Stonington Town Meeting:

Voted the following Resolve - Resolved as the opinion of this meeting that the attempts made in different parts of the United States to bring into disrepute the late measures of the general government is unjustifiable, as the liberties and happiness of

²⁷ Stonington Patriot, 1 January 1802, p. 192.

²⁸ Dumas Malone, Jefferson and His Time: Vol. V: Jefferson The President: Second Term, 1805-1809 (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1974), pp. 481-482.

²⁹ Richard Brandon Morris, ed. Encyclopedia of American History (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p. 137.

the people depend upon a strict adherence to the laws of a government which is elective and not hereditary, so long at least as such laws are not derogatory to the Constitution. Resolved that the administration of the general government since the 4th March 1801, has been wise, dignified, and patriotic and merits the approbation of the United States and that the measures and expedients adopted to avoid war were highly judicious and honorable.³⁰

According to Purcell, liberal (i.e., Republican) towns were those in which dissent was a force,³¹ and it is to be expected that non-Congregationalists would flock to a political party which promised the defeat of the "Standing Order." Because of its proximity to Baptist Rhode Island, Eastern Connecticut was one area of the state where dissenters, principally Baptists, were most numerous. But how were religious differences between Baptist and Congregationalists within Stonington reconciled to produce overwhelming Republican victories at the polls?³² Possibly the nearly unanimous Republican victories in Stonington were influenced by the Connecticut Election Law of 1801, which had a "provision that a voter must stand up when stating his vote, thus this law became known as the 'stand up law'. It was passed by a Federalist legislature and Republicans claimed it was designed so that opposition would be squelched

³⁰ Stonington Town Records, February 1809. At the special session of the Connecticut Legislature called in 1809 to protest the Embargo, one of Stonington's Representatives, Coddington Billings, who had been elected as a Republican, voted with the Federalists in condemning the Embargo. Norman L. Stamps, "Party Government in Connecticut, 1800-1816," Historian 18 (Spring, 1955): p. 187. Billings, incidentally, owned shares in a number of Stonington vessels in the period before the War of 1812, and thus had a definite economic interest in opposing the Embargo.

³¹ Purcell, Connecticut in Transition, p. 172.

³² The following town votes were taken from 1802 issues of the Patriot and Impartial Journal, and they indicate how strong the Republican majority in Stonington was. "This day the Freemen of this town assembled, to give in their suffrages for Representatives to the General Assembly, Governor, Lt. Governor, Assistants and for 18 persons to stand in nomination for Members of Congress. Capt. Amos Palmer and Latham Hull, Esq., firm Republicans were chosen almost unanimously, for Representatives to the Assembly. Ephraim Kirby, Esq. (Republican) obtained 221 votes for Governor and David Trumbull (Rep.) about the same number for Lt. Governor.

by Federalist aristocrats."³³ If squelching opposition was indeed the Federalist intent, it would probably backfire in areas with Republican majorities like Stonington, since the pressures of public opinion could work against the Federalists as well as for them.

Another possible explanation for cooperation between Baptists and Congregationalists at the polls, was the singular destitution of the Congregational Church in Eastern Connecticut in the period before the War of 1812. A Congregationalist minister, Rev. Dr. McEwen, recalled the religious situation of the area when he was ordained in 1806.

Eleven large contiguous parishes, stretching from Sterling about 20 miles north of Stonington to the seaboard on the line of Rhode Island, thence to the Western boundary of East Lyme, thence northward . . . to Colchester, were except New London, destitute of Congregational ministers. . . . This awful desolation was the result of the fanatical ministry of Davenport [James Davenport was a Congregational clergyman who fell under the influence of George Whitefield. Davenport conducted a series of "New Light" revivals in Eastern Connecticut in 1741, and organized a "New Light" church in New London in 1743.]³⁴ and his co-adjutors, who invaded these churches, seventy years before. . . . The area was rapidly degenerating

The Republican Ticket for Assistants prevailed. John Allen, a Federalist, had only 2 votes and John Chester, of the same principle, only 3 votes for assistant." Stonington Patriot, 16 April 1802, p. 311.

"On Monday, the 20th Inst., the Freemen of this town assembled for the purpose of choosing two representatives to the General Assembly, and to give in their votes for Assistants and Members of Congress. . . . On canvassing the votes (which amounted to 457), it was found there was no choice there being seven candidates, all professed Republicans. On a second trial Col. William Williams, obtained a majority. The Freemen then made choice of Capt. Nathan Pendleton, for their other Representative.

Union and harmony was the order of the day among those of the Freemen who were not blinded by party zeal and unreasonable prejudices - we discovered but very few of the patrons of monarchy and licentiousness [Federalists] . . . real and unadulterated Republicanism was the object of the Freemen." Stonington Impartial Journal, September 1802.

³³ Robinson, Jeffersonian Democracy, p. 114.

³⁴ Dictionary of American Biography.

toward a state of heathenism, in a land of Christianity.³⁵

It was also possible that religious differences were glossed over, because the religious issue was simply not that important to Stonington's citizens. During the religious revivals of the 1820's, Congregationalist ministers often referred to the preceding era as an age of Godlessness (which some attributed to the deistic Jeffersonians), and there was a movement toward a greater spirit of unity among Baptists and Congregationalists in the town during the Nineteenth Century. For a time, they even used the same church. Based on the limited amount of attention devoted to the religious question in the local papers in comparison to a topic like British impressment of American seamen, religion evidently played a minor role in the town's political attitudes. One of those rare occurrences when religion was mentioned, was a letter attacking Connecticut's Congregational Clergy which appeared in the Patriot on October 9, 1801.

It is . . . my design to enquire whether the clergy come under the denomination of Patriots. Should the Connecticut clergy be asked, are you Patriots? They would undoubtedly answer in the affirmative. I say Connecticut clergy, for in no other state in the Union, can there be found such a combination, formed for the purpose of finally establishing a heierarchy (undoubtedly on the Papish plan), in opposition to the United dictates and demands of patriotic and republican principles. . . . They claim a right to dictate to their hearers, not only their religious, but political creed. Those who presume to differ from them, they anathematize as heretical and immoral. . . . They are most constantly preaching passive obedience and non-resistance to the dictates and sentiments of their own religious and political sect. The clergy are an order of men highly useful to the community while moving in their proper orbs. But as soon as they wander from them, they become not only useless, but highly dangerous to the public welfare of the people. Amicus ejus Patriae.³⁶

But aside from an occasional snide remark like the following from "Brutus"

³⁵"Rev. Dr. McEwen's Half Century Sermon," in William Clift, A Funeral Discourse on the Occasion of the Death of Mrs. Maria Hart (New London, Conn.: Starr and Farnham, 1858," p. 15, Note A.

³⁶Stonington Patriot, 9 October 1801, pp. 93-94.

of Middletown, there was apparently little attention paid to the religious issue in Stonington. "The time is fast approaching . . . when the good people will become Republicans and shake off the burden unjustly imposed upon them by the 'steady habits' of priests, Tories and Federalists."³⁷

As it is difficult to ascertain the political affiliations even of Stonington's elected officials in the early Nineteenth Century, any attempt to discover which groups in the community supported a particular political party is well nigh impossible. But there are two bits of evidence which indicate that small farmers were perhaps the heart of Stonington's Republican party. First, of the eleven men who served as representatives from Stonington to the Connecticut General Assembly between 1801 and 1812 (apparently all were Republicans and there is no evidence to the contrary), five were farmers, three merchants, one a "mechanic" (or master craftsman of some sort), one a mill owner, and one a ship's captain.³⁸ The town's wealthiest men, lawyers, physicians, and large landowners were not among Stonington's representatives to the General Assembly during this time which would indicate some degree of difference with Republican politics, especially since throughout the Eighteenth Century and after 1820, many of the town's wealthy men served in the General Assembly. But, if there was a Federalist minority in Stonington, judging by the Republican victories at Freemen Meetings, it was either very small or very silent. The loyalty of the two merchants who served in the General Assembly as Representatives from Stonington, Peleg Denison and Coddington Billings, to the Republican party was of the most questionable sort. Billings' reaction to the Embargo controversy

³⁷ Stonington Patriot, 14 August 1801, p. 25.

³⁸ Farmers: Latham Hull, Edward Smith, Amos Palmer, Sands Cole, and Amos Gallup. Merchants: Coddington Billings, William Randall, and Peleg Denison. Nathaniel Pendleton, Mechanic; Jesse Dean a Mill Owner; and Enoch Burrows a Ship's Captain.

has already been discussed (see note 30); while Denison, elected as a Republican in 1812, voted with the Federalists in the General Assembly.³⁹

Secondly, the Republican Party was probably strongest in the poorer rural northern part of Stonington. In 1806, citizens from the northern section of the town, an area which consisted almost entirely of farms, sent a petition to the Connecticut General Assembly requesting that they be set off from the town of Stonington, and incorporated as an independent community. The petitioners claimed that the "inhabitants of the Borough [of Stonington] and its vicinity being engaged in commerce, and your petitioners in agriculture, their pursuits differ and their interests often clash."⁴⁰ The Stonington Town Records for 1806 contain the following entry: "At a town meeting . . . the fifth day of April 1806 . . . voted to divide the town of Stonington into two separate towns. . . . Voted that the town laying northward . . . shall be called by the name of Jefferson."⁴¹ The General Assembly rejected the name of Jefferson undoubtedly because the Federalist majority found the idea of naming a Connecticut town after their most hated opponent quite distasteful, and Jefferson has been known as North Stonington down to the present day.

³⁹ Mystic (Conn.) Pioneer, 1 September 1866, p. 1.

⁴⁰ "North Stonington Petition for Incorporation," Towns and Lands, Second Series, May 1649-May 1820, Vol. III, Documents 134-136, Connecticut Archives, Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

⁴¹ Stonington Town Records, III, April 5, 1806. According to town historian Richard A. Wheeler, the cause of the division was the objection of those living in the northern section of the town to the expenditures required for the construction of a highway and bridge between Stonington Borough and Mystic, (later Old Mystic). Wheeler claimed that the question of roads had been a bone of contention between the two sections since the 1790's and I think it gives some indication of the general frugality which those attracted to the Republican Party expected from the government. Richard Anson Wheeler, History of the Town of Stonington, From Its First Settlement in 1649 to 1900 (New London, Conn.: Day Publishing Company, 1900), p. 91.

Most of the historians who have written on Connecticut politics in the Jeffersonian Era stressed the importance of class conflicts in the Federalist-Republican struggle. To Richard Purcell, Republican politicians were with some exceptions, "men of little standing in the community. . . . They were not of the elect, old ruling families, but new men rising up from the people under improving opportunities."⁴² Norman Stamps, in an article on Connecticut politics in the early Nineteenth Century, argues that "the chief strength of the Federalist Party was with the men of property, the educated classes, the lawyers and the clergy; while the Republicans represented the dissenter, the propertiless, and the unenfranchised."⁴³ William Robinson, a historian of New England's Jeffersonians, found "abundant evidence that the Republican movement was that of the non-property holding classes. . . . [Their] electioneering appeals bears [this] out. They are full of assaults on the merchants, the banks, and other corporations, and the defenders of property interests, the courts and lawyers."⁴⁴

Nevertheless, class conflict was not an important issue for Stonington Republicans. In the first place, all of the Stonington Freemen responsible for the overwhelming Republican victories were required by Connecticut law to be property holders. (An 1805 law required that a man have a freehold estate worth \$7 per annum or \$134 in personal property on the general tax list, before he could vote in state and national elections.)⁴⁵ All of the men elected to the General Assembly from Stonington were men of substantial property, albeit not among the town's wealthiest. Secondly, although it seems likely that the

⁴²Purcell, Connecticut in Transition, p. 208.

⁴³Stamps, "Party Government," pp. 172-173.

⁴⁴Robinson, Jeffersonian Democracy, p. 99.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 71.

town's richest men did not wholeheartedly embrace Republicanism, I do not think they would have stood idly by and allow the Republicans to roll up 200 to 0 electoral victories if they felt their property rights threatened. Thirdly, none of the letters or articles in Stonington's Jeffersonian papers, ever attacked local aristocrats, or even identified a citizen of the town as a Federalist. Rather, the "enemy" was always a Washington, Hartford, or New Haven politician, although Stonington certainly had some fairly wealthy men, many of whom might have harbored pro-Federalist sentiments. Finally, the property issue attracted little attention in the columns of the local papers. Other than an occasional epithet of "well-born" or "aristocrat" hurled at the Federalist opposition, and the following letter to the Impartial Journal in 1803, there was simply no discussion of class conflicts to be found in print. Even the writer of this letter, which attacked Connecticut's suffrage law, would not call for universal manhood suffrage, but merely for the extension of "freemanship" to all tax payers, not just those possessing a certain amount of property.

On the Right of Suffrage, as inseparably connected with Republicanism, and a constitutional right of the people of Connecticut. A Republican government is a government that is vested in its people. . . . Who are the people? Are they a separate part of the community who possess property to a certain amount, or are they all who are subject to taxation? The part of the community only, who possess real estate, are promoted by the infinite wisdom of the rulers of the state to the appellation of people. But I am of the opinion that the possession of property is not a necessity. . . . I believe the inhabitants of this state who are not possessed of real estate to be people and not porpoises as they have been stiled by their oppressors, and . . . are as much entitled to the right of suffrage as they are bound to pay their poll taxes. The inhabitants of this state are divided into two ranks or grades, that is, freemen or electors and their subjects. A majority of the inhabitants who are not freemen are as much the subjects of the minority who are freemen, as the peasantry of Russia or Poland are to the nobles.

The writer also felt it unfair that property escaped the heaviest valuation while a head tax of \$60 was levied on Freemen.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Stonington Impartial Journal, 5 July 1803.

One of the principal reforms proposed by opponents of Connecticut's Federalist regime was a new constitution with provisions removing suffrage and religious inequities from state law. In 1805, one of Stonington's Representatives to the General Assembly presented a resolution calling for a constitutional convention, but it was voted down by the Federalist majority.⁴⁷ Thirteen years later on February 16, 1818, the town of Stonington "voted that it is expedient to instruct the Representatives to the General Assembly to . . . use their efforts in procuring a written Constitution for the State of Connecticut."⁴⁸ A new constitution was drawn up in 1818 and its most important revisions provided for a new suffrage law which allowed all those who had a freehold estate worth seven dollars a year or served in the militia, or paid local taxes within the year, the right to vote in state and national elections; and for the disestablishment of the Congregational Church which placed all religious bodies on a common basis of voluntary support.⁴⁹

Stonington Politics in the Age of Jackson

The Federalist Party gave up the ghost not long after the War of 1812. Opposition to the war which culminated in the Hartford Convention, and the reactionary policies of the Federalists led to an eventual erosion of support, even in New England, the citadel of Federalism. But the Connecticut Republican Party which defeated the Federalists in 1817, and remained in power until 1827, was never a real political party according to John Niven. Niven, biographer of Gideon Welles, Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy, argues that the Republicans were assembled merely to destroy Federalist rule and establish a constitution

⁴⁷ Purcell, Connecticut in Transition, p. 173.

⁴⁸ Stonington Town Records, III, February 16, 1818.

⁴⁹ Van Dusen, Connecticut, p. 189.

for Connecticut.⁵⁰ Nor were the Connecticut Republicans particularly progressive under the leadership of Governor Oliver Wolcott, a former Federalist and disciple of Hamilton who had served as Secretary of the Treasury under Washington and Adams. In his book The Neglected Period of Connecticut History, Jarvis Morse discussed Republican government during this period.

State aid for the poor was restricted to such narrow limits that the system of relief reverted to conditions characteristic of the late Eighteenth Century. . . . In regard to public finance also, the party endorsed policies of a reactionary nature. Economy and tax reduction were encouraged because of a conservative attitude toward governmental functions.⁵¹

What the citizens of Stonington thought of the policies of this Republican government is largely a mystery since sources for Stonington politics are particularly scarce for the Jacksonian period. The only insights into the politics of that era are provided by occasional comments made by publishers William Storer and Thomas Peabody which appeared in the Yankee and Telegraph between 1824 and 1828, and the Spectator in 1834, and Stonington voting records in state and national elections. Storer and Peabody found the political antics of the Age of Jackson distasteful and seemed to long nostalgically for the vanished gentility of the Era of Good Feelings.

In the first issue of the Yankee, William Storer declared "In relation to the political sentiments of the editor, it is only necessary to remark that he is a Republican."⁵² Storer's definition of Republicanism which appeared in the paper three weeks later, supports Morse's conclusion of the conservative nature of the party;

We mean that Republicanism which characterized the administration of Jefferson and Madison, and has peculiarly distinguished the administration of James Monroe; . . . we hold ourselves the

⁵⁰ John Niven, Gideon Welles, Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 37.

⁵¹ Jarvis Means Morse, A Neglected Period of Connecticut's History, 1818-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933), p. 87.

⁵² Stonington Yankee, 28 July 1824, p. 1

advocates of this Republicanism, and shall not willingly abandon it for the chimerical notion that a change of policy, either in our national or state governments, would be productive of any important benefits to our citizens generally. . . . We esteem most fortunate, in having located ourselves in a section of the country where the political sentiments of the community so nearly coincide with our own. We do not know of an individual elector, in this part of our country who advocates the promotion of an anti-administration candidate for the presidency.⁵³

Storer remained a supporter of John Quincy Adams, and previous to the election of 1828, he repeated his theme of opposition to political factions which he saw as disruptive to national harmony. Storer felt that the Jacksonian party was based not on party principles, but on a love of disorder for disorder's sake.

There are in Connecticut, as there will be in every community, a few restless individuals, who can no more breathe without the atmosphere of opposition, than a fish could live on dry land. These men have become associated . . . with the ambitious and discontented in other states, who have waged war against the national administration, for no other reason than because they love the turmoil of opposition, and to gratify an itching desire to see a military chieftain at the head of the government.⁵⁴

Storer saw the issues in the election of 1828 as revolving around the personalities of the candidates, not political differences. The economic programs expounded by Jackson's New England supporters, which Storer agreed with, were in direct opposition to the policies Jackson later pursued as President. "The friends of General Jackson in New England have claimed . . . that our favorite 'American System' would be brought into more complete and effectual operation, under his auspices."⁵⁵ Morse wrote that "Connecticut people, at least the great majority of them, were antagonistic to Andrew Jackson, for his did not include the virtues a public servant was expected

⁵³ Ibid., 18 August 1824, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Stonington Telegraph, 30 July, 1828, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 24 December 1828, p. 2.

to possess. From a conservative point of view, Jackson was uneducated and irresponsible."⁵⁶ For Storer, the personality of Andrew Jackson was the most serious weakness of the Jacksonian party. In 1827, he criticized "The Worshippers at the shrine of General Jackson . . . who have even styled him 'a second Washington', and on this title have predicated his claims to the Presidential Chair. But in what traits of the General's character are to be discovered the resemblances to the illustrious father of our country? We have looked for them in vain, and his disciples have failed to point them out to us."⁵⁷ The difference between the National Republican and the Jacksonian Democratic parties was "produced by differences of opinion on matters of national policy characterized these parties we might have expected them to have fought on," after the election.⁵⁸

Storer had hoped for an end to contentious party politics with Jackson's election, because he was disturbed by this "first attempt to range our citizens under the personal banner of any citizen . . . and to distinguish his adherents as the servile worshippers of his person, rather than as the independent advocates of his principles."⁵⁹ He expressed surprise that the Jacksonians seemed to be laying plans for a permanent political organization. "We are told, that the [Connecticut] Jacksonites are to meet in convention at Middletown . . . to concert plans for future operations . . . intending thereby to perpetuate division among our good citizens, which must otherwise 'cease and determine'. We are at a loss to conjecture any motives to justify

⁵⁶Morse, Neglected Period, p. 72.

⁵⁷Stonington Telegraph, 31 October 1827, p. 2.

⁵⁸Ibid., 24 December 1828, p. 2.

⁵⁹Ibid.

this measure. If they intend to preserve their organization for hostile operations, we ask, where are their antagonists?"⁶⁰ The salvation of the country, according to Storer, lay with Henry Clay. "The people of the United States look forward to the day when Mr. Clay shall take the head of the government, and redeem the country from threatened destruction."⁶¹ Thomas Peabody, editor of the short-lived Stonington Spectator (its motto was "We are the Advocates of No Party"), found party politics far more outrageous than William Storer had a few years earlier. In a statement of policy which appeared in the first issue of the Spectator, Peabody wrote

It will be our most studious endeavor . . . to leave the sty of politics for those to wallow in, whose revel has made it such, and unless its intrusion is rendered intolerable, we shall not be easily provoked to interfere, but we shall frequently speak out of the blighting effect and serious consequences and destructive tendency of party spirit upon the prosperity of our well beloved country, as well as expose the insinuating demagogues who advance and foster them, and fatten on their spoils. . . . [This journal] is intended to pay a marked regard to the best interest of the cause of Zion. . . . Let politicians exclude from their claims that subject which treats of their redemption, and publicly disown, if they choose 'The Lord that brought them', let them exhaust all of their might, exert every faculty, and strain every nerve to applaud a Jackson or elevate a Clay - for our own self, we shall find time . . . to bear testimony of Him, to the extent of our ability, who triumphed over death and the grave, and brought life and immortality to light.⁶²

The voting records for the years between 1821 and 1827 reveal the quiescent nature of Stonington politics following the Republican constitutional victory of 1818. In 1819 and 1820, when the turmoil over the new constitution was still simmering, over 300 voters participated in the elections for State Senator. But as the Republicans strengthened their hold on Connecticut's government, no more than 110 went to the polls each year to

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 6 May 1829.

⁶² Stonington Spectator, 28 May 1834, p. 2.

return the unopposed candidates to the Senate. In 1819 and 1820 Stonington voters gave Jonathan Brace, candidate for the State Senate in Stonington's district 275 and 227 votes respectively, while his opponents, whom I presume were Federalists, received 73 and 81 votes in those two years. (As I mentioned above, it is quite difficult to discover the political affiliation of state senators or legislators before 1850.) From 1821 to 1827, Republican candidates for the State Senate ran unopposed in Stonington's district. In 1823 and 1826, Stonington voters gave overwhelming victories (112-7 and 67-0) to Oliver Wolcott, the Democratic (or Republican, the terms were at this time interchangeable) candidate for Governor.⁶³

With the rise of the Whig party came a startling resurrection of the two party system in Stonington, dead since at least 1800. What is most amazing is the close parity of strength in the two contending parties (a characteristic of Stonington politics throughout much of the remainder of the Nineteenth Century), as if the Whig Party in the town had existed as a vapor in need only of something solid to condense around. In 1827 and 1828, Nathan Johnson and Henry W. Edwards, both Democrats, won electoral victories in Stonington in the contest for State Senator, of 242 to 94, and 215 to 49, respectively; these were the first senatorial elections contested in the district since 1820. In 1830, Elisha Haley, a Democrat (one of the few State Senators for the period before 1835 identified as to political party), polled 116 votes to his National Republican or incipient Whig opponent, John Hyde's 130. In 1826, Oliver Wolcott, the Democratic Governor of Connecticut, had received 67 votes in Stonington, to his Federalist opponents 0. In the 1835 Gubernatorial election, Samuel Foote, Whig, received 198 votes, while Henry Edwards,

⁶³Records of the Secretary of State, Votes for Governor 1819-1843, 1843-1900; Votes for Senator, 1819-1912. Record Group 6, Connecticut Archives, Hartford.

Democrat got 195. Down to the 1850's and the break-up of the second political party system both Whigs and Democrats in Stonington always made respectable showings at the polls, although the Whigs usually won.⁶⁴

Who were the Whigs and Democrats in Stonington in the 1830's and 40's? Unfortunately, less is known about the composition of political parties during this period than about the early Republicans of the first decade of the Nineteenth Century. Ephraim Williams, one of the town's wealthiest men, served in the State Legislature as a Democrat, as did his son, Ephraim, Jr. Asa Fish, a well-to-do merchant from Mystic, John F. Trumbull, the second richest man and second most important whaling agent in Stonington, and William Hyde, a Borough physician, all served as Whigs in the State Legislature. Jesse Dean, who served at least two terms, was a member of the family that owned the largest mill in town. Dean and his relatives were "decided" in the Democratic faith, and "their ideal of human and political perfection, materialized in the old hero of New Orleans, General Andrew Jackson."⁶⁵ But of others nothing can be said, and any attempt to construct an economic profile of Stonington politics during the Jacksonian Era, is impossible. Although generally the wealthy men of Stonington seemed to prefer the Whig Party, and the borough, where the largest proportion of propertyless citizens of Stonington resided, generally went Democratic, gentlemen of property and standing led the Whig, Republican, and Democratic Parties until the late Nineteenth Century.

⁶⁴ Votes for Governor and Senator, Record Group 6, Connecticut Archives.

⁶⁵ Grace Wheeler, Old Homes, p. 51. "It can be generalized that rural elements controlled the Republican Party [in Connecticut] and this would include the powerful mill owners." William John Niven, Jr., "The Time of The Whirlwind: A Study in the Political, Social and Economic History of Connecticut from 1861 to 1875" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1954), p. 439.

Stonington Politics - 1850 - 1900

After their early infatuation with Jeffersonian Democracy, voters in the town of Stonington looked to the Whigs, and later the Republicans. With a few exceptions, they consistently voted against Democratic candidates for President and Governor throughout the remainder of the Nineteenth Century. In all but five of 54 Gubernatorial elections between 1835 and 1900 (elections were held annually until 1878 and every two years thereafter), Democrats were outpolled in Stonington. Among Democratic Presidential candidates between 1856 and 1900, only Grover Cleveland whom Stonington supported in all three of his campaigns, received more votes than Republicans. In local elections, however, Democrats were somewhat more successful. Between 1846 and 1900, nine Democratic candidates for State Senator in Stonington's district received more votes than their Republican opponents from Stonington voters. And a number of Democratic Representatives served the town from 1850 on. Democratic candidates for the Connecticut Legislature achieved their greatest successes in Stonington between 1884 and 1895. Twelve of sixteen Representatives who served in the Legislature during that period were Democrats.⁶⁶

As noted above, there is little known of the political history of Stonington between 1830 and the early 1850's. Aside from the Connecticut Archives voting records which reveal a string of victories by Whig candidates for Governor after 1837, there is virtually nothing on local politics in those years. By the mid-1850's, the

⁶⁶Votes for President, Governor, and Senator, Record Group 6, Connecticut Archives. Hartford Evening Post Annual, 1884-1895, Biographical Sketches of The . . . Members of The General Assembly of Connecticut (Hartford: Evening Post Association).

Whig party, reeling in the turmoil over slavery, was in a state of dissolution, and the voting pattern in Stonington reflected the confused state of national politics. In 1852, Whigs had won handily in the Stonington elections for Governor and State Senator; but in 1853, a Free Soil candidate for Governor, Francis Gillette drew 125 votes, enough to insure the first Democratic gubernatorial victory in Stonington in sixteen years. But the Democrats' taste of victory, however sweet it might have been, was mighty short; in 1854 Clark Greenman, Free Soil candidate for State Senator received 360 votes in Stonington to his Democratic opponent's 175. In 1855, candidates of the newly organized American, American Whig, or Know Nothing party, walloped their Democratic opponents in Stonington.⁶⁷

The emergence of the Native American or Know Nothing Party, brought to the surface a subcurrent of anti-foreignism which ran through Stonington's history during the Nineteenth Century, just as it did throughout America. The break-up of the national Whig Party over the issue of slavery necessitated a new theme of unity for opponents of the Democrats. According to Niven, the American Party in Connecticut was the child of local Whig Party leaders, who, anxious to preserve their political careers after the Whig Party began to disintegrate, turned to the Know Nothing movement.⁶⁸ The Connecticut Know Nothing's attack upon foreigners was directed at the Irish, the only immigrant

⁶⁷Votes for Governor, Election of 1855: William T. Minor, American, 418; Samuel Ingham, Democrat 104. Votes for State Senator - Christopher Comstock, Democrat 115; Edward Prentiss, American Whig - 436. This election is a fitting commentary on the condition of the Whig Party. The Whig candidate for Governor received only 46 votes in Stonington, while no Whig candidate was even entered in the contest for State Senator. Record Group 6, Connecticut Archives.

⁶⁸Niven, Gideon Welles, pp. 258-259.

group of any size then residing in the state.⁶⁹ In a dissertation on the Connecticut Know Nothings, Robert Parmet claims that Eastern Connecticut was the hot bed of nativism in the state.⁷⁰ Why it should have been is uncertain, unless it was a manifestation of the comparative intellectual backwardness and provincialism of the area. The main centers of Irish population in Connecticut before the Civil War were Hartford and New Haven. Until the 1860's there were few Irishmen in Stonington.

The American Party was, for a short time, successful in Connecticut and Stonington. In 1855 and 1856, the party elected its gubernatorial candidate, William T. Minor, a former Democrat.⁷¹ Stonington gave Minor 418 votes to his Democratic opponents 104 in 1855; the following year Minor got only 206 votes in Stonington to the Democrats' 277. Gideon Welles, who ran as a Republican in 1855, got 63 votes in Stonington.⁷² But the Know Nothing's day in the sun was exceedingly brief. Unable to suppress the emergence of the nation's most serious political issue, slavery, the American Party split on sectional lines during the 1856 campaign. In Connecticut, the Know Nothings' decline also began in 1856, with the formation of a Republican Party in the state.⁷³

It is difficult to determine whether Nativism was the primary motivation of those Stonington citizens who voted for American Party candidates. Perhaps

⁶⁹ Robert David Parmet, "The Know Nothings in Connecticut" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1966), pp. 52-53.

⁷⁰ Parmet, "Know Nothings," Appendix. The Anti Masonic Party was also strong in Eastern Connecticut; particularly among Baptists and Methodists. Niven, Gideon Welles, p. 51. Although there were many Baptists in the Stonington area, nothing at all is known of the Anti Masonic party there.

⁷¹ Alfred C. O'Connell, "The Birth of the G.O.P. in Connecticut," The Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin, 26 (April 1961): 35.

⁷² Record Group 6, Connecticut Archives.

⁷³ Parmet, "Know Nothings," p. 336.

the necessity of reestablishing any political organization to replace the moribund Whig Party was most important. But throughout the rest of the century, the Democrats remained the party of the immigrant and minorities in Stonington. The Stonington Correspondent of the Narragansett Weekly, a Westerly, Rhode Island newspaper, wrote concerning the April 1859 election,

Monday . . . was election day for the state of Connecticut, and Stonington was not behind for excitement. The Democrats worked well for their country, sent about three dozen Irishmen to New Haven to make them voters, previous to election, and did everything to save Stonington and after all they were badly beaten. They lacked a few more Irishmen.⁷⁴

Pawcatuck, across the river from Westerly, had a large Irish population, and was Stonington's Democratic stronghold.⁷⁵ Not only was the first Irish selectman in Stonington, Thomas O'Neill, a Democrat; but that party was also the first in the town to nominate a black man for office.⁷⁶

In 1867, Richard Anson Wheeler, a staunch Republican who had served in the State Legislature as a Whig (he also wrote a history of Stonington) wrote to Charles P. Williams, the town's wealthiest citizen, regarding the Democratic attempt to repeal the poll tax.

The unscrupulous efforts being made by the copperheads to carry our state elections are ? themselves very fast. At the caucus . . . /their/ candidates pledged themselves to the immediate and unconditional repeal of the poll tax. Business looks with apprehension on such an innovation. The idea of bringing to the polls so many foreigners who have no taxable property, with the assurance ? they shall have no tax to pay is wrong.⁷⁷

⁷⁴Westerly (R.I.) Narragansett Weekly, 14 April 1859, p. 2.

⁷⁵Stonington Mirror, 25 September 1880, p. 3.

⁷⁶Ibid., 5 October 1876.

⁷⁷R.A. Wheeler to C.P. Williams, 28 March 1867, C.P. Williams Collection 86, G.W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Conn. In an attempt to gain some support from

The Connecticut Republican Party was organized in 1856, under the leadership of two former Democrats, John Niles and Gideon Welles,⁷⁸ who had also been instrumental in the formation of the Jacksonian Party in Connecticut.⁷⁹ The Connecticut Republican Party was associated with conservative issues such as a tariff, a national bank, and states rights; and its membership was drawn from both the Whig and Democratic Parties.⁸⁰ But the issues which divided Stonington Republicans and Democrats, as in other towns throughout the North, were not national banks or tariffs, but war and rebellion. At a peace meeting held in Stonington in 1861, two of the town's wealthiest citizens debated government policies and the recent action at Fort Sumter. "Mr. Ephraim Williams [a Democrat] reported a set of resolutions condemning government policy, etc., and favoring an armistice . . . two resolutions were offered by J. F. Trumbull, Jr. [Republican, and a son of the whaling entrepreneur] recommending halts to traitors."⁸¹ The following year, the Mystic Pioneer, carried a resolution adopted by the Stonington Democratic Party, which placed much of the blame for the outbreak of war upon the abolitionists, and rejected Republican appeals for a "union Party."

Abolitionism and the anti-slavery agitation . . . has finally culminated in the present unfortunate condition of our country. . . . In our opinion, political abolitionism is as justly chargeable with war as secession. . . . [We believe abolitionists are the secret enemy of an honorable peace. . . . We deem it our duty to maintain the organization of the Democratic party, notwithstanding the parrot cry of 'no party', now so vociferously

labor the Stonington Republican caucus adopted a resolution in 1867 calling for a reduction in hours of labor, an increase in wages, and a "diminution of the poll tax." Mystic (Connecticut) Pioneer, 30 March 1867, p. 2.

⁷⁸O'Connell, "Birth of the G.O.P.," pp. 38-39.

⁷⁹Niven, Gideon Welles, p. 51.

⁸⁰O'Connell, "Birth of the G.O.P.," pp. 38-39.

⁸¹Westerly (R.I.) Narragansett Weekly, 15 August 1861.

sounded by our opponents [and press for the restoration of] the rights of all the states under the Constitution, and that this war shall not be waged to gratify any sectional revenge, or carry out any sectional purpose.

Although they were opposed to abolitionists and abolitionist goals, the Democrats stated they would actively press for the defeat of the rebellion.⁸²

Although critical of the war, Stonington Democrats remained a "loyal opposition." In 1863, the Town Meeting accepted Ephraim Williams proposal for aid to the families of men drafted into the army. Since many of the men drafted "are poor, and the families or dependents of such drafted men . . . may become a public charge to this town; . . . [Resolved that] a sum not exceeding thirty thousand dollars be . . . appropriated by the town of Stonington for the purpose of defraying [such expenses] . . . not exceeding three hundred dollars each . . . for the support of their families."⁸³ A year earlier the town voted to accept the petition of Charles P. Williams (the Town's wealthiest man and an ardent Republican) and others "to pay a bounty of one hundred dollars to every man now a resident of this town . . . who shall enlist . . . into the service . . . of the United States."⁸⁴ A little more than a month later, the bounty was increased to \$400 and in 1864 to \$500; stupendous sums for times in which a day laborer got \$1 a day. The Stonington Democratic Party was badly beaten in state and local elections in the last two years of the Civil War, but immediately after the end of the war it resumed its old position as a strong minority party in the town.⁸⁵

⁸² Mystic (Conn.) Pioneer, 22 March, 1862.

⁸³ Stonington Town Records, IV, July 31, 1863.

⁸⁴ Ibid., July 21, 1862.

⁸⁵ Stonington votes in the elections of 1864 and 1865: For Governor, 1864 William A. Buckingham, Rep. 421 - Origen S. Seymour, Dem. 243. 1865-Wm. A. Buckingham, 454, Seymour, 172. For State Senator, 1864 Jonathan W. Harris, Union-421, Stephen N. Wheeler, Dem. 244. 1865-Charles Mallory, Union 442,

The principal controversy in Stonington from the end of the Civil War until 1900 was over temperance reform. Although apparently the Stonington Republican Party never adopted a prohibition plank during the Nineteenth Century,⁸⁶ the Republicans, as the party of the Yankees - there is no evidence that an Irishman or a Portuguese belonged to the Republican Party in Stonington in the Nineteenth Century - more likely favored than opposed temperance reform. The Democrats were strongest in those areas where the Irish were most numerous, and these were precisely the areas where most votes were cast in favor of liquor licenses. The Connecticut license law provided that the county commissioners could grant a license to sell liquors to those persons giving a bond of \$1,000. But any town could by vote forbid the issuance of licenses in the town for that year.⁸⁷ In 1871, Jerome Anderson, editor of the Mirror wrote of Irish, Democratic Pawcatuck, "Ho-everyone that thirsteth, go ye to the Village of Pawcatuck, which with twelve hundred inhabitants, has thirty-five liquor stores."⁸⁸ In 1898, Anderson reported that the town of Stonington had voted "no license

Julius Bishop, Dem. 162. 1866-Hiram Appleman, Union 483, John S. Bacon, Dem. 358. Record Group 6, Connecticut Archives.

⁸⁶The November 1, 1890 issue of the Township, a short-lived Stonington Temperance sheet, blasted the Republican Party (probably for not adding prohibition to the party platform). "To Christian Republicans-Can you cast your ballot next week for the Republican Party, knowing that its leadership is corrupt, its causes tainted, its attitude with regard to the greatest social and political evil of the day cowardly and evasive? Will you feel that your vote represents your convictions, if it is cast for the Republican nominees?" (On the back page of the Township was a similar appeal to "Christian Democrats.") Stonington Township, 1 November 1890, p. 2.

⁸⁷Stonington Mirror-Journal, 15 August 1872, p. 2. Some idea of the ancestry of Stonington liquor dealers may be gained from a notice which appeared in the Stonington Mirror in 1889. "Five licenses were granted to borough applicants Wednesday, the lucky ones being John Duffy, John McCaffrey, Robert F. Murphy, John Sylvia and John P. Vaughan. Stonington Mirror, 9 November 1889.

⁸⁸Stonington Mirror-Journal, 24 August 1871.

twenty times in the last twenty-six years. Pawcatuck has voted against license nine times in that period."⁸⁹

The Democratic courtship of Irish Catholics for whom a man's right to a glass of beer was as important as free speech, confirmed its reputation as the party of "rum and Romanism". After publishing a letter critical of the local temperance committee, Jerome Anderson was "charged with going over to the 'loco-focos', but [Anderson noted that he was] a staunch Republican, having never voted the Democratic ticket in his life."⁹⁰ For many Republicans, temperance was a religious crusade. The efforts of reformers, led by the clergy, had worked a revolution among New England Yankees : from the days when even ordination ceremonies were notable for the amount of liquor consumed. An example of the irritating self-righteousness of prohibitionists was a sermon by Baptist Minister A. G. Palmer attacking Mirror editor Anderson. (Anderson had rebuked Palmer in print for calling one of his opponents a liar.) "A short time ago, a small paper started in this village under the name of the Mirror. This paper, ever since its first issue, has shown the cloven foot. Yes, gentlemen, this paper has, ever since its publication taken up the cause of vice, rowdyism and intemperance. No good Christian or temperance man will give the least support to this foul and immoral sheet."⁹¹ As a matter of fact, Anderson was a moderate who felt that attempts to legislate morality were futile, and the abuse, not the use, of liquor, was the real evil.

According to Anderson, who was generally reliable, the liquor interests captured the Stonington Democratic organization in 1892.

⁸⁹ Stonington Mirror, 4 October 1898.

⁹⁰ Stonington Mirror, 8 January 1870.

⁹¹ Ibid.

The Democratic caucus held in Borough Hall . . . was the most noisy and disgraceful public assemblage ever congregated in the town. . . . [Among the nominees for State Senator] are . . . B. F. Mahon . . . [who as] Prosecuting agent . . . has prosecuted . . . illegal [liquor] dealers in this town, yet, strangely . . . he made his canvass through them. Friday . . . he was in Pawcatuck and organized his forces, and Saturday they came to the borough by hundreds and attempted to control the caucus. . . . James Dougherty, who keeps a saloon in Pawcatuck . . . proclaimed himself the proper authority to inaugurate the proceedings . . . at this juncture pandemonium existed . . . [and] people who have⁹² been prominent in the Democratic party for years looked on in disgust.

Yet, the effect of this affair on Stonington, if it had any effect at all, was shortlived, for the opponents of liquor licenses won a large victory in the election of 1895, by a majority of over 300 votes. "A stupendous overwhelming [victory]. . . . Even Pawcatuck, that much derided district of the town, because of its propensity for rolling up license majorities, came into line with the other districts."⁹³

Mirror editor Anderson's comments on the Presidential elections of 1876 and 1896 are virtually the only worthwhile remnants on national politics in the 35 years following the end of the Civil War. In 1876, Anderson abandoned his usual non-partisanship, and called for the election of Samuel Tilden. The Republicans, he wrote, "are convinced there is no way to escape the condemnation of the people, other than to divert attention from the corruption, knavery and robbery which have marked their administration of government, and so like the thief, they wave the bloody shirt. The election of Tilden means reform and will accomplish it. The election of Hayes means only the promise and postponement of it."⁹⁴ Stonington voted against Tilden, however, 663 to 584.⁹⁵

⁹²Ibid., 3 September 1892, p. 2.

⁹³Ibid., 11 October 1895.

⁹⁴Ibid., 2 November 1876.

⁹⁵Votes for Electors of President and Vice President of The United States, 1876, Record Group 6, Connecticut Archives.

Anderson did not publicly support another presidential candidate until 1896, but he saw the Bryan-McKinley campaign as a moral struggle, and felt the basic integrity of the nation demanded a repudiation of the "Boy Orator of the Platte's" financial schemes. Commenting after the election on the decline of the Prohibition Party, he wrote, "Evidently there were thousands of prohibitionists in the country who thought more of their country's honor than they did of party, and consequently voted for McKinley and honest money, knowing that by so doing their votes would count in the grand summing up for national integrity and sound currency."⁹⁶ From the Civil War through 1900, the Democratic Party was supported by the non-Yankee residents of Stonington. The poorer residents of the town in general were probably also loyal to the Democratic Party. Richard Anson Wheeler, a leader of the Stonington Republicans, believed that Democratic gains in the 1870's could be blamed on that party's support among immigrants. In two letters to Charles P. Williams requesting aid for the Republican cause Wheeler wrote: "the large increase of the foreign vote has given the Democrats the majority in this town;"⁹⁷ and "the extensive business done at the quarries in Westerly has added a large number of foreigners to our voting list, quite a large majority of which are Democrats."⁹⁸

Although the town of Stonington usually went Republican, Stonington Borough was a Democratic stronghold. Mirror editor Anderson wrote after a Republican victory in the borough in 1872, "the usual Democratic majority of this borough has been lost or stolen, and the person finding it and returning it to the proper

⁹⁶ Ibid., 8 December 1896.

⁹⁷ R. A. Wheeler to C. P. Williams, 23 October 1876, C. P. Williams Collection, Box XXII.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 20 March 1871, CPW, Box XI.

authority, will be rewarded by the best office in the gift of the Party."⁹⁹

The borough's loyalty to the Democratic Party is an indication of the political sympathies of the less affluent residents of Stonington. Throughout the Nineteenth Century only about one third of the householders in Stonington Borough owned taxable property; in the rural districts of the town about two thirds of the householders owned taxable property.¹⁰⁰

There was also a difference in the leadership of the Democratic and Republican Parties. Although both parties were usually led by substantial members of the community, when the Stonington Republicans did elect a relatively poor man to state office, he was usually a farmer or shopkeeper, such as Elias Williams, a butcher, who was a State Representative in 1880.¹⁰¹ The Democrats, on the other hand, elected steamfitter Warren Chase, and teacher Silas B. Wheeler to state office in 1889.¹⁰² The Democrats also selected several young extremely well educated men for positions of party leadership. Hadlai Austin Hull, a State Representative in 1884, was a graduate of Amherst and the Yale Law School;¹⁰³ A. S. Palmer, Jr. (son of the whaling captain and nephew of "Nat"), was a civil engineer who had graduated from Yale;¹⁰⁴ and Robert McKenna, a State Representative in 1893, who was a Yale Law School Graduate.¹⁰⁵ Republican leaders tended to be older men who had been successful in business in Stonington,

⁹⁹ Stonington Mirror, 10 October 1872.

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter 11 for more on property ownership in Stonington.

¹⁰¹ Stonington Mirror, 17 January 1880.

¹⁰² Ibid., 26 January 1889.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 19 January 1884.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 28 January 1882.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 7 January 1893.

such as Joseph E. Smith, a merchant and former whaling captain who served in the legislature in 1877 and 1879; or Peleg S. Barber, a merchant, manufacturer and banker who served in 1885 and 1888. Four of the eleven Democrats who represented Stonington in the Connecticut Legislature between 1880 and 1900 were college graduates; two had been educated at private academies. Frank Hinckley, a lawyer who served in the legislature in 1899 was the only Republican Representative from Stonington between 1880 and 1900 who was college educated; Ebenezer Crouch and Stiles Stanton were academy graduates.

Finally, Republicans chose as their candidates for the Connecticut Legislature men whose families had been long established in Stonington, while Democrats gave their endorsement to a number of new faces. All of the Republican Representatives from Stonington between 1870 and 1900, except Charles Perrin who was elected in 1875, bore names well known in the area. But the Democrats elected at least four outsiders in that period, including Minthorn Tompkins, a former New York City fireman, and Thomas R. McKenna, son of an Irish immigrant.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ William Goodwin, Goodwin's Annual Legislative Statistics (New Haven: William Goodwin, 1850-1882); Hartford Evening Post Annual Biographical Sketches, 1882-1895.

CHAPTER VI

STONINGTON RELIGION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Stonington Borough, like all New England communities in the Nineteenth Century, was affected by religion to an extent which is becoming ever more alien to the secular society of the present age. Secularism is of course the enemy of all religions, but perhaps none have been so successful in their opposition to it as New England's Calvinist Protestants. Calvinism was then the chief obstacle to the new society which arose in Stonington Borough in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century; and until the tenets of Calvinism were altered, or its power in the community weakened, life in Stonington would remain much like it had been in the Eighteenth Century.

Congregationalists and Baptists: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

The Stonington Congregational Church was formed June 3, 1674.¹ Like all New England Congregational Churches, except Rhode Island's, it was established, and every freeholder in Stonington was taxed for its support.² Until 1720, ministers

¹Richard Anson Wheeler, History of the Town of Stonington, From Its First Settlement in 1649 to 1900 (New London, Conn.: Day Publishing Company, 1900), p. 87.

²Benjamin Tinkham Marshall, ed., A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1922), p. 281.

rates or taxes were set and collected by the town, but thereafter these duties rested upon the Congregational Ecclesiastical Society of Stonington, a group of laymen within the church who handled all its temporal affairs.³ Although almost everyone in Massachusetts and Connecticut considered himself a Congregationalist in the Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries, actual membership in the church down through the Nineteenth Century was restricted to those who made a profession, in church before the congregation, of a "special or conscious religious experience" which was strictly investigated before admission to the church was allowed.⁴ While everyone in Stonington might attend services on Sunday, only a small number were in full communion with the church.⁵ "Though congregations were large, [actual] membership was small, so that a congregation of five hundred persons might contain no more than fifty who were members."⁶ The

³Richard A. Wheeler, History of the First Congregational Church, Stonington, Connecticut (Norwich, Conn.: T.H. Davis & Co., 1875) p. 48.

⁴Alexander Johnston, Connecticut: A Study of a Commonwealth Democracy (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), p. 229. The "Articles of Faith professed by the First Church of Christ in Stonington," gives an idea of what the church required from its prospective members: "We believe that a church of Christ consists in a number of persons publicly and credibly professing repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, with suitable evidences of grace in the heart, attended with answerable fruits of life and conversation, and that these are the qualifications for such fellowship and admission to the ordinances of the gospel." May 1789, Extracts of Stonington First Congregational Church Records 1674-1833. Connecticut State Library, Hartford. Since "suitable evidences of grace" as well as "answerable fruits of life and conversation," were prerequisites for entrance, it obviously was no easy task for a hypocritical reprobate to fool those in charge of investigating his worthiness.

⁵Anthony N.B. Garvan, Architecture and Town Planning in Colonial Connecticut (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1951), p. 143.

⁶Mary Hewitt Mitchell, "The Great Awakening and Other Revivals in the Religious Life of Connecticut," Tercentenary Commission of the State of Connecticut, No. XXV (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), pp. 41-42.

Half Way Covenant of 1657 had "diluted the purity of the original covenanted group," and allowed those who did not meet the rigid requirements of membership to maintain a half-way affiliation with the church.⁷ The earlier doctrine held the "necessity of individual experience and strict investigation of it before admission,"⁸ but the Half Way Covenant, the result of a synod of Massachusetts and Connecticut clergymen, provided that "individuals who had received baptism but were not full members, might, if they led upright christian lives, sign the covenant and thereby obtain for themselves and their children the right to be 'half-way' members. These offspring might be baptized and were considered within the Covenant, although neither they, nor their parents, were permitted to go to the communion table, nor could they vote on [the ecclesiastical matters of the church]."⁹

All of those who contributed to the financial welfare of the church, both "half-way" members, and members in full communion, constituted the church society, which had financial and administrative control of the congregation. According to Alexander Johnston, the Church Society and the town meeting were one and the same in early Connecticut. "For nearly a century (until 1727) the same persons in each town discussed and decided ecclesiastical affairs indifferently, acting as a town or a church meeting. The same body laid the taxes, called the minister and provided for his salary."¹⁰

⁷ Charles S. Grant, Democracy In the Connecticut Frontier Town of Kent (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 159.

⁸ Johnston, Commonwealth Democracy, p. 229.

⁹ Charles Roy Keller, The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), pp. 28-29.

¹⁰ Johnston, Commonwealth Democracy, p. 60.

Nine years before the Congregational church was founded, the planters of Stonington agreed at a town meeting to set aside a plot of land the profits of which were to be used for the support of a minister. "It was agreed . . . that Mr. Noyes [Stonington's first minister] shall have two hundred acres of land which is granted to him this day."¹¹ It was increased in 1667, to 500 acres.¹² In a society organized primarily for religious purposes,¹³ the minister naturally played a leading role, and his importance to the community may be gauged by his salary. In 1672, the Stonington town meeting "voted that Mr. Noyes shall for the time to come have . . . sixty pounds annually . . . to be paid . . . in wheat, peas, Indian corn, pork, cheese and butter."¹⁴ By 1708, the salary of the minister had been increased to 100 pounds per year. In 1668, the town of Stonington had given Walter Palmer 200 acres of land in repayment of a debt

¹¹Stonington Town Records, I, January 11, 1665.

¹²Wheeler, Congregational Church, p. 40. The ministerial land was sold in 1744 for £6300 (possibly the original 500 acres had been added to) and the money was put at interest for the benefit of Stonington's three ecclesiastical societies. The "parish committee for the North or Second Society . . . have this day received of the town of Stonington . . . the sum of 2135 pounds old tenor . . . in two bonds . . . one third part of the principle sum of money that the land called the ministry land in sd town was sold for." Stonington Town Records, II, January 22, 1744/5, p. 195.

¹³"To the men and women of Colonial Connecticut, religion was a far more important factor in their daily lives than was agriculture or commerce or even politics, for it had to do with the life to come, and to them their future destiny was all that really mattered." Charles McLean Andrews, The River Towns of Connecticut: A Study of Wethersfield, Hartford and Windsor, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Seventh Series, VII, VIII, IX, (Baltimore: July, August, September, 1889), p. 19.

¹⁴Stonington Town Records, I, October 1, 1672.

of £8, 10 shillings,¹⁵ so it may be readily seen that Noyes' salary was, at least in theory, an excellent one.

The early Connecticut churches were governed under the rule of the Cambridge Platform set forth in 1648, which gave to each church complete control of its own affairs.¹⁶ To preserve the church from schism or corrupting innovations and the commonwealth from discord, the supreme control of the churches was lodged in the General Court of each colony.¹⁷ But in 1708, the Connecticut General Court, seeking to establish a system for unifying the Colony's churches, called a synod of the forty-one Connecticut churches to meet at Saybrook. "The synod recommended an explicit covenant between churches, to be called the 'consociation'; it was to be a permanent organization, to consist of [a] minister and delegate from each church, which should be a court of resort for all disputes, and for general united church action."¹⁸ In October, 1708, the Connecticut General Assembly approved the Saybrook Platform.¹⁹ A pastor or church who refused to be bound by the decision of the Consociation would be expelled from it, and although any church was allowed to dissent from the United Churches, the

¹⁵ Ibid., I, 1668.

¹⁶ Paul Wakeman Coons, "The Achievement of Religious Liberty in Connecticut," Tercentenary Commission of the State of Connecticut, No. LX. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), p. 4.

¹⁷ M. Louise Greene, The Development of Religious Liberty in Connecticut (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970, orig. published, 1905), p. 61.

¹⁸ John Calvin Goddard, "The Protestant Church of Connecticut," in History of Connecticut in Monographic Form, Norris Galpin Osborn, ed. (New York: The States History Company, 1925), pp. 287-288.

¹⁹ Albert E. Van Dusen, Connecticut (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 117.

dissenting churches would be taxed to support the established churches.²⁰ The effect of the Saybrook Platform was to establish a "modified Presbyterianism. There was no formal coercive power, but the public provision for the minister's support, and the withdrawal of it from recalcitrant members, formed a coercive power of no mean efficacy."²¹

From its inception, the New England Congregational Church attempted to suppress unorthodox belief and demanded an absolute monopoly in religious affairs. In 1650, the Commonwealth of Connecticut proclaimed the churches founded and recognized up to that time were established (i.e., were state institutions) and forbade anyone to form a new church within the Colony without consent of the General Court and the neighboring churches.²² Johnston claimed that in 1669, the Connecticut General Court adopted a more liberal attitude when it advised "That all persons approved in law and sound in the fundamentals of the Christian religion," would be allowed to set up another church within the town limits. According to Johnston, this relatively democratic precedent guided the gradual emancipation of other religious sects in Connecticut.²³ But the 1669 act, as quoted by Johnston, merely allowed orthodox Congregationalists, "those approved in law and sound in the fundamentals of the Christian religion," the right to set up a second Congregational church within the borders of a particular town, and granted no such liberty to any dissenters. For over 100 years, the Connecticut Legislature regulated the formation of new churches within

²⁰ Johnston, Commonwealth Democracy, p. 231.

²¹ Ibid., p. 32.

²² Ibid., p. 225.

²³ Ibid., p. 229.

its boundaries; not until 1791 did it grant the right of free incorporation to all religious bodies.²⁴

Under pressure from the Anglican government in Britain, the Connecticut General Court incorporated an act of toleration in the Saybrook Platform of 1708, based on the toleration act of William and Mary, which allowed all who wished it, the right to worship God independently of the established religion.²⁵ But the act did not excuse non-Congregationalists from paying taxes required by law to the approved ministers of the Congregational church. It was not until 1727 that members of the Church of England were exempted from paying taxes for the support of any other denomination if they lived close enough to attend and support one of their own. This exemption was extended to Baptists and Quakers in 1729.²⁶ In 1784, Connecticut passed a general toleration act which allowed a dissenter, who was a member of a regular church society recognized by law, to be exempt from the payment of a Congregational tithe.²⁷ Those not connected with a church were forced to pay taxes to the established church until 1818, when Connecticut adopted a constitution, which among other things, placed the Congregationalists on an equal footing with all other religious bodies, and made all religious contributions voluntary.²⁸

²⁴ Ibid., p. 237.

²⁵ Stonington Mirror, 6 July 1889, p. 2.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Richard J. Purcell, Connecticut in Transition (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1963, originally published, 1918), p. 11.

²⁸ Johnston, Commonwealth Democracy, p. 237. This tax was mentioned rarely but one of the few instances was in the Impartial Journal of December 31, 1799: "The tax of two cents on a dollar to pay the Rev. Hezekiah N. Woodruff's salary and arrears, for the years 1798 and 1799, is payable 1st February 1800, at which time the Rate will be put into the hands of the collector, all persons wishing to save expense to the Society

There is little material relative to the tenets and practices of Stonington Congregationalism in the early days of its history. The First Congregational Church of Stonington, was like all New England churches of the Seventeenth Century, wholeheartedly Calvinist; and of course its most distinctive doctrine was a belief in predestination. The first article of the Confession of Faith of the Stonington Church read: "We believe . . . God hath from all eternity foreordained what shall come to pass, and did not only foresee, but foredetermine the eternal estate of men and angels."²⁹ In 1727, a second Congregational Church was organized in Stonington, in the northern part of the town, now North Stonington. The Great Awakening led to the division of this new church and the creation of a "strict Congregational or Separatist Church" in 1746. For 80 years thereafter, the two North Stonington churches remained separate; in 1827, they were finally reunited.³⁰ The Articles of Faith adopted by the Second Congregational Church when formed in 1727, specifically referred to the Protestant ethic.

We believe that a conscientious discharge of the various duties which we owe to God, to our fellowmen and to ourselves, as enjoined in the Gospel, is not only constantly binding on every Christian, but affords to himself and to the world the only decisive evidence of his interest in the Redeemer. John 15:14, James 1: 26-27 (etc.)³¹

In the Nineteenth Century the reference to the Protestant ethic was

and themselves, will call on the Rev. H.M. Woodruff, or Elijah Palmer, Esq. and settle this tax previous to said 1st day of February."

²⁹ Congregational Extracts, May 1789.

³⁰ Wheeler, Stonington, pp. 89-90.

³¹ Article IX of "The Articles of Faith of the Second Congregational Church, adopted at the time of its Formation"; Congregational Extracts.

more explicit. Those who signed the church covenant of the Stonington Borough Congregational Church, promised "that we will not frequent taverns nor . . . go in the way of temptation to a sinful expense of time and substance, but will diligently attend our respective callings."³²

In 1774, Congregationalists residing at Long Point (the future Borough of Stonington) petitioned the Connecticut General Assembly requesting a lottery so that they could build a meeting house. According to the petitioners, the inhabitants of Long Point were "generally poor, they living principally by the whale and cod fishing there carried on," and were greatly inconvenienced by living so great a distance (about four miles) from the nearest Congregational meeting house. The First Congregational Society had attempted to relieve the situation by sending its minister to Long Point to preach one sermon every Sabbath, but many more would attend worship, claimed the petitioners, if they had a more commodious meeting house than the small school building or private dwellings they were forced to use. Because of the depressed condition of the fishing and markets, and the "various and different sentiments in the Religious Denominations of Christians among them, viz. First Day Baptists, Seven Day Baptists, and Quakers . . . are such real grief and great Discouragements to your Memorialists, who are of the established religion of this Colony, that they can no longer think of obtaining a Meeting House by subscription or any other way among themselves," except by a lottery.³³ But until 1833, when a number of borough residents withdrew from the

³²"Congregational Church Covenant," Stonington, Connecticut, 1833. Yale Manuscripts Division, New Haven, Connecticut.

³³"Petition For a Lottery to Build a Meeting House," Connecticut Archives, Ecclesiastical Affairs, First Series, Vol. 14, Doc. 181. Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

Congregational Society of the First Church of Stonington (the Road Church), and formed the Second Congregational Church of Stonington, there was no church of that denomination on Long Point.

There was a close connection in New England between the Great Awakening led by Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, and the growth of the Baptist Church. In his history of the New England Baptists, Henry S. Burrage wrote, "Those who were converted in the powerful revivals that occurred at different points at that time, found that the churches of the Standing Order had little sympathy with evangelistic work. . . . Many in the Congregational Churches therefore, who sought union with those who manifested a warm, earnest evangelical spirit, found their way into Baptist churches, and in a few instances New Light or Separate churches, became Baptist churches."³⁴ The founding of New London County's first Baptist Church, at Old Mystic (Groton) in 1705 probably by immigrants from Rhode Island,³⁵ antedated the Great Awakening by thirty years, but the first Baptist Church in Stonington from its inception had close ties with the "New Light" reformers.³⁶ The Stonington church was founded in either

³⁴Henry S. Burrage, A History of the Baptists in New England (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1894), p. 63.

³⁵"The First Baptist Church in Groton was constituted as not at 1705; of the immediate circumstances of its origin we have no definite information." Albert G. Palmer, A Discourse Delivered at the One Hundredth Anniversary of . . . The First Baptist Church in North Stonington, September 20th, 1843 (Boston: Gould, Kendall & Lincoln, 1844), p. 8.

³⁶"The revolters from the Saybrook Platform -one of their important objections was to the Platform's Presbyterianism which restricted the independence of individual congregations -were known as Separatists or New Lights, though they preferred the term Strict Congregationalists." Purcell, Connecticut in Transition, p. 44. The "Old Lights" were the conservative traditional Congregationalists who opposed the wild enthusiasm of the New Lights or followers of Whitefield and Edwards." Mitchell, "Great Awakening," p. 16.

1741 or 1743, during the time when the Great Awakening was at its height.³⁷ The new church was located in the northern part of Stonington, (on Pendleton Hill, now an isolated rural district of North Stonington, a mile or so south of Voluntown), a district which depended almost entirely on farming for its livelihood, and was generally less prosperous than the southern portion of the town. Its first pastor was Wait Palmer, one of the converts "of that Glorious Revival."³⁸ The Baptists must have attracted a number of dissidents from the Second Congregational Church, which split, as noted above, in 1746. Burrage quoted a Stonington parish minister (probably pastor of the Second Congregational Church), who said in 1767, "not less than two thirds of the congregation formerly under my care have withdrawn from my ministering and formed themselves into Baptist and Separate Churches."³⁹

In 1765, a second Baptist church was founded in the northern section of Stonington and members of this church were probably instrumental in the formation of the Baptist Church on Stonington Long Point (the third Baptist church in Stonington, and the first of any denomination in the future borough), under Elder John Rathbun in 1775.⁴⁰ The Long Point church, which reported a membership of thirty three in 1781, was evidently quite poor and met in halls and other public buildings until sometime between 1787 and 1793, when the congregation could afford to build a

³⁷ Palmer, Discourse, pp. 14-15.

³⁸ Palmer, Discourse, p. 8.

³⁹ Burrage, Baptists in New England, p. 63. "Of the names and numbers of [the] original members [of this church] . . . we have from the records no information. Indeed there is an entire blank from 1743 to 1762 . . . about which little can be known." Palmer, Discourse, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Minutes of the Seventy Third Anniversary of the Stonington Union Association . . . June 18th & 19th, 1845 (Norwich, Conn.: H. Harden, 1845), p. 50.

meeting house.⁴¹ Joshua Swan one of the "moving spirits in the building of that first house . . . was obliged to sell his own house to meet his liabilities. He owned three-fourths of the meeting house and sold or rented the pews as best he could."⁴²

Both Congregationalists and Baptists viewed humanity with the same pessimistic Calvinist eyes. The Long Point church was a "Calvinistic Baptist Church," which held "the doctrine of total moral depravity, Election by the saving Grace of God, the final perseverance of the Saints and believers [and] baptism by immersion."⁴³ Like the Congregationalists, Baptists expected strict conformity to rigid rules of morality and interfered in the private lives of their members to an extent that seems amazing today. What separated the two churches were their attitudes toward baptism, the role of church and state, evangelism and church government. For Baptists the rite of baptism was restricted to those who were mature enough to understand its significance. Secondly, Baptists objected to the interference of civil authorities in matters of church discipline and demanded the complete separation of church and state;⁴⁴ while Congregationalists "clung to the proposition that the state's first duty was the maintenance and support of religion. Thereby they meant enforced taxation for the support of its predominant type, conformity to its mode of worship, and in the last analysis, supervision or control by the state or by the General Court of each colony."⁴⁵ Thirdly, Baptists were driven by the

⁴¹Stonington Mirror, 6 July 1889, p. 2.

⁴²Ibid., 8 November 1890.

⁴³"Membership Affidavit from the Diamond Grove Baptist Church," Records of the First Baptist Church, Stonington Borough, Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Connecticut.

⁴⁴Palmer, Discourse, p. 11.

⁴⁵Greene, Religious Liberty, pp. 58, 59.

personal experience of conversion to communicate that experience to others and reject the "increasing formalism" of the Congregational Church, in favor of a more vibrant and spontaneous faith.⁴⁶ Finally, each Baptist Church "formed a complete and autonomous democracy . . . linked by a common belief to all similar bodies,"⁴⁷ and their associations contained none of those tendencies toward Presbyterian discipline which characterized the Saybrook Platform or the "consociations" set up under the Saybrook Platform which enforced religious orthodoxy in the Congregationalist Church. Baptist associations such as the Stonington Association founded in 1772, which was made up of churches in Eastern Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island,⁴⁸ were purely voluntary.

Stonington Religion in 1800 and

The Second Great Awakening

Few materials relating to Stonington churches during the latter part of the Eighteenth Century have survived, but it may be assumed that both Baptists and Congregationalists were losing their ascendancy over the community. Leonard W. Bacon wrote in his History of American Christianity that the two decades following the close of the American Revolution was "the period of the lowest ebb of vitality in the history of American Christianity."⁴⁹ Religious life in Puritan New England was as depressed as in the rest of the country. "This era was marked by the inception and

⁴⁶ William G. McLaughlin, New England Dissent 1630-1833: The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 28, 31.

⁴⁷ Marshall, New London County, p. 299.

⁴⁸ McLaughlin, New England Dissent, p. 920.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Keller, Second Great Awakening, p. 2.

rapid spread of infidelity. Irreligion finally permeated all ranks of society. . . . Connecticut Congregationalism was at a low ebb. The trying years of the Revolution were critical for New England orthodoxy. It was an unsettled period filled with demoralizing tendencies. The use of intoxicants was well nigh universal . . . men were becoming materialistic. The minister was fast losing his autocratic sway in the parish. . . . A reader of the records finds no difficulty in accounting for President Dwight's observation that war is fatal to morals."⁵⁰

Even in provincial towns like Stonington, the decline of religious fervor was a matter of concern. The Journal of the Times reported a special meeting of the Stonington Justices of the Peace was called in 1800 to counteract one of the distressing fruits of the religious depression, namely, Sabbath breaking. "It is considered that vice and immorality, and particularly the neglect of a due observance of the Sabbath, has become an increasing evil among the people, therefore, Resolved by this meeting that we will individually double our dilligence to detect and punish all Sabbath breakers and all other breakers of the laws of this State, that shall come to our knowledge."⁵¹ As for the Stonington Borough Congregationalists, not since the days when cows grazed on Wadawanuck Point, were they less visible than in the first decade of the Nineteenth Century.

Martha Denison Peete wrote of her Borough home in the years around

⁵⁰Purcell, Connecticut in Transition, pp. 7, 9.

⁵¹Stonington Journal of the Times, 29 April 1800.

1805, "religion was in a very low state. Dancing, card playing and novel reading was almost universal. We had no pastor and only occasional preaching by candidates. Some of these young men scarcely escaped the pollution of the place for I have heard of the young people boasting they joined in card playing. The church was destitute of a pastor for six years and was reduced to two male members in the village and a few praying females."⁵² Yet, so powerful and pervasive was the revival of religion effected after 1800, that no citizen of Stonington could for the next hundred years write of her parents as she did: "My teacher was a Christian, and from her I received all the religious instruction adapted to my age, for my parents were not religious and there was no sabbath schools or religious libraries for children in those days."⁵³ After the 1820's infidelity became concentrated in sophisticated urban centers except for an occasional solitary village atheist.

The condition of religion in the United States inevitably improved after 1800, because people could not rid themselves of something so basic to their lives only a generation earlier. After 1800 religion revived from its temporary depression and remained a vital part of American life well into the Twentieth Century.

Charles Keller, author of a book on Connecticut religion in the early Nineteenth Century, attributed the Connecticut religious revival to the

⁵² Martha Denison Peete, "My Home in Connecticut Fifty Years Ago," Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society, 11 (January, 1946): 4.

⁵³ Ibid., (April, 1946): 9-10.

conjunction of two forces in the 1790's. "One was the widely voiced conviction that irreligion and immorality had so developed as to threaten the very foundations of society. The other was the rise to power of the New Divinity group [whose most important member was Timothy Dwight,⁵⁴ President of Yale University] who felt that aggressive measures must be taken to bring about an upturning in religion." Those influenced by the New Divinity in the 1790's soon assumed pastorates throughout Connecticut.⁵⁵ The work of the revival was entirely in the hands of settled ministers,⁵⁶ most of whom were trained at Yale.⁵⁷

Apparently, around 1808, the first revival of the "new awakening" was held in Stonington.⁵⁸ Jabez Swan, a Baptist minister and evangelist, recalled the striking outburst of religious frenzy at one of Stonington Borough's early Baptist revivals.

The first deep and lasting religious impression made upon my heart was in my father's house at a conference meeting. I was then seven or eight years of age. As the meeting progressed Deacon Elnathan Fellows commenced talking while nothing appeared unusual up to that time. He at length broke out in raptures of praise and thanksgiving to God, accompanied with clapping of hands. This was so different from anything known of him before, that the whole meeting presented such a

⁵⁴ At Dwight's accession to the presidency of Yale in 1795, "infidelity was rife, . . . Lyman Beecher [a Temperance reformer and anti-Catholic crusader, he was the father of Henry Ward Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe], writing of his undergraduate days, emphasized above all else the prevalence of infidelity and the bravado with which students used such names as Voltaire and Rousseau." But Dwight waged an aggressive campaign against infidelity at Yale, and the religious reform which swept New England after 1800 was led by Yale and New Haven. Purcell, Connecticut in Transition, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁵ Keller, Second Great Awakening, p. 36.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 36.

⁵⁸ "In 1808, there was the first revival I had ever heard or known much about." Peete, "My Home," p. 8.

scene as I never witnessed. . . . The audience filled two rooms; I with perhaps five and twenty others, mostly youth, was in one of the rooms; and a memorable scene it was. Wailing over sins, with cries to God for pardon, filled all the place where we were assembled. A young lady was so wrought upon that the attention of the meeting was wholly directed to her. Her lamentation on account of having ridiculed religion, exceeded anything I have ever heard since. For a long time prayer was offered seemingly in vain. The sighings of that poor sin-stricken soul seem to reverberate in my ears while I write. "Oh, I have ridiculed religion." Very late in the evening God appeared for deliverance. The change in her was so visible, that her countenance reflected the glory of God through the Assembly. Many years after I became her pastor, and on looking her up, found she had held on her way. I believe about all who were in that meeting at length came to the light and united with the churches of Stonington.⁵⁹

One of the keys to the hysteria so often produced by revivals must have been the intense and constant pressure exerted upon those who attended to focus their minds almost entirely upon religious matters. One may imagine, upon reading the diary of George Noyes, regarding the Baptist revival in 1842, that neither he, nor any of the other Stonington people who attended it, had anything else to occupy them for almost a month but labor and religion. On returning home from a trip in the West in December, 1842, Noyes found that "a protracted meeting had been held about two weeks in the Minor Meeting House." On the 10th he attended a meeting where "Elder Scott preached to a full house." On the following day, Noyes spent the afternoon at a "prayer and conference meeting," and the evening at another meeting where Elder Scott again preached. On December 12, "eve at meeting Elder Scott preached, had the importance of seeking religion impressed on my mind [Noyes had not once before mentioned religion in his diary] so that I was humbled enough to go forward with others and

⁵⁹ Rev. F. Denison, A. M. ed., The Evangelist or Life and Labours of Rev. Jabez S. Swan, second ed. (Waterford, Conn.: William L. Peckham, 1873), pp. 44-45.

take a seat with the anxious and be prayed for. From this eve for 3 weeks heard Elder Scott preach every evening and attended prayer meetings at sunrise and conference meetings in afternoon." On December 14th, after a prayer meeting held at his house, Noyes "felt somewhat relieved from a burden of sin and felt a desire to praise God, also had a strong desire for salvation of others." Ten days later, Noyes was "baptized by Elder Scott at conference meeting."⁶⁰

The Congregationalist ministers of Connecticut, who had originally expressed revulsion at such vulgar Baptist and Methodist exhortations, were forced to admit their effectiveness, and led religious revivals of their own beginning in 1801.⁶¹ The first Congregationalist revival in Stonington Borough, which was held at about the same time as the Baptist meeting Swan found so impressive, was undoubtedly a much more sober affair. Martha Denison Peete wrote "a revival commenced and a number were hopefully converted. My mother joined the church the same time I united, and nine others . . . when I stood up, and it was said: 'In the presence of God, Angels and men, you make this covenant', I rejoiced that I had such witnesses and the season was one of great enjoyment. . . . Our female meetings continued many years . . . we met Saturday evenings. . . . We read the Evangelical Magazine [published in England] almost the only periodical of that day, and our rules were very strict, binding each other to refrain from all amusements, and we were faithful in watching over each other."⁶²

⁶⁰ "George Noyes Diary," December 2 - December 24, 1842, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

⁶¹ Jarvis Means Morse, A Neglected Period of Connecticut's History, 1818-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933), p. 22.

⁶² Peete, "My Home," p. 10. A covenant was a sort of contract between an individual on the one part and God and the church members on the other, in which the individual agreed to abide by the rules of God as set forth in the church. (See Appendix A to this chapter.)

One new church institution which grew out of the Second Awakening was the Sunday School; its purpose was the religious training of children which had hitherto been ignored. "It seems strange that although Calvinist preachers were strict in their views of the right training of children, they did not believe in child piety; children were brought up to be converted at or after they arrived at maturity."⁶³ Indeed, Sunday Schools were viewed by many Congregational ministers as profanations of the Sabbath and they were not allowed in a number of churches for years.⁶⁴ But Stonington's Congregational minister, Ira Hart, saw the value of Sunday Schools, and the first one in the state was founded in Stonington by Phoebe Moore Smith in 1815.⁶⁵

Results of the Second Great Awakening

One of the important effects of the new awakening, which was completed by 1825,⁶⁶ was a repudiation by Calvinist churches of tendencies toward liberalism and toleration which had arisen since the Revolutionary War.⁶⁷ In 1801, about the time the new revival was getting underway in Connecticut, the Rev. Hezekiah Woodruff, pastor of the Road Congregational Church in Stonington, gave a sermon at an ordination ceremony, in which he sternly warned his fellow ministers to resist the temptations of the profane world. Woodruff's subject indicates that the worldliness of the clergy was a matter of concern to Congregationalists. "Every instance of

⁶³ Grace Denison Wheeler, Old Homes in Stonington (Mystic, Conn.: The Mystic Standard, 1930), p. 196.

⁶⁴ Alice Morse Earl, The Sabbath in Puritan New England, 7th ed. (New York: Charles Scribners & Sons, 1893), pp. 108-109.

⁶⁵ Westerly, R.I. Sun, 12 June 1890.

⁶⁶ Keller, Second Great Awakening, p. 225.

⁶⁷ McLaughlin, New England Dissent, p. 918. By the statutes of

unnecessary commerce, which carries with it, the idea of profit or pleasure is degrading the character of the Christian minister. . . . They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts. But thou o man of God, [must] flee these things; for the love of money is the root of all evil. . . . Nor ought the political, civil, commercial, or agricultural interests of mankind too engross [a minister's] attention. . . . If their country or their friends, demand their aid, their principal theatre of action is at the throne of grace."⁶⁸

Among Congregationalists, the conservatives or Calvinists aligned themselves against the growing Unitarian spirit in the church, which accepted membership on the basis of a good moral character rather than deep conviction, had little interest in evangelism, and was increasingly self contained and intellectual.⁶⁹ In 1810, the members of the First Congregational Church of Stonington (which included the borough), rebuked one of their brethren, a Reverend Clark Brown, for preaching sermons which seemed to question the divinity of Christ. "This church has been dissatisfied with the Rev. Clark Brown a member of the church . . . for having maintained and preached sentiments concerning the character of our Blessed Saviour which we conceive to be subversive of one of the most distinguished and essential doctrines . . . in the sacred volume, in consequence of which we could not continue with him our fellowship. . . .

Connecticut, in 1808 atheists and deists were classed with felons. This law was a dead letter as no convictions ever resulted from it. Purcell, Connecticut in Transition, p. 31.

⁶⁸ Rev. Hezekiah N. Woodruff, AM, A Sermon Delivered at the Ordination of Rev. Ephraim T. Woodruff (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1801), pp. 12-13.

⁶⁹ Marshall, New London County, p. 275.

[But as he has lately expressed] his belief in the divinity of Our Blessed Saviour and, also has acknowledged his belief in the articles of faith with which he consented when he entered into church covenant with us as founded upon the Westminster Confession of Faith . . . therefore voted unanimously that we again receive him into cordial fellowship."⁷⁰

A second result of the Second Awakening was the creation of a spirit of moral reform among New England churches. Led by Congregational ministers, they crusaded against Sabbath breaking, swearing, and intemperance.⁷¹ The disdain with which the respectable elements in the northern United States publicly condemned "Demon Rum" during most of the Nineteenth Century, has obscured the fact that around 1800, drinking was well nigh universal. But the work of religious reformers had a revolutionary effect upon the habits and attitudes of New England from 1800, when an election ceremony for Connecticut ministers could arouse criticism by the size of its liquor bill, to 1900, when the espousal of anything but total abstinence would have probably resulted in the dismissal of a Baptist or Congregational minister. "During the early years of the Nineteenth Century, the use of 'ardent spirits' in Connecticut was widespread. Not only was tavern frequenting common, but drinking was by no means confined to these public places. A social visit invariably called forth strong drink."⁷² Stonington Borough was no different than the rest of the state. "Intemperance was almost Universal. Scarcely a house was without a drunken

⁷⁰ Congregational Extracts, June 27, 1810. This was the only conflict noted between Calvinists and Unitarians in Stonington churches and unfortunately it was not specified if Brown held other objectionable liberal views.

⁷¹ Keller, Second Great Awakening, p. 136.

⁷² Ibid., p. 138.

inmate, and in the first families it was not uncommon that a member was a perfect vagabond."⁷³ These habits were a legacy from colonial times when "the minister and people regaled themselves and no one was considered hospitable, who did not offer his guests some good rum, home made wine, or cider."⁷⁴ In Stonington during those early days, the tavern was located across from the church, "that celebrated tavern, where all classes, ages and sexes used to stop on Sunday mornings to 'fix' before entering church."⁷⁵

Connecticut's first temperance sermon was preached around 1805.⁷⁶ By 1825, mere temperance was no longer enough: Congregational ministers led by Litchfield's Lyman Beecher demanded total abstinence "on the ground that intemperate drinking too frequently led to excesses."⁷⁷

The anti-liquor crusade became the most vital issue for Protestant churches in America during the rest of the Nineteenth Century. It is interesting that one reaction to the "age of infidelity" which preceded the Second Great Awakening was a reforming spirit in the leaders of the temperance movement, the Calvinist churches. Calvinists, perhaps alarmed more seriously than any other religious bodies by the abyss of faithlessness which "Jacobinism" seemed to represent, might have needed to throw themselves into moral struggles whose results would be more substantial and obvious than the standard promises of rewards in the afterlife. To

⁷³Peete, "My Home," p. 6.

⁷⁴Letter from Grace Stanton to a Friend c. 1852, in Grace Wheeler, Old Homes, p. 22.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 20.

⁷⁶Keller, Second Great Awakening, p. 141.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 154-155.

Martha Denison Peete, and probably many other Stonington Calvinists, there was a close connection between the political currents of the post- Revolutionary War period and public morality. After commenting upon the universal intemperance in Stonington she continued,

The famous Tom Paine was invited into the place [Stonington Borough], and into the desk of the Baptist church, by one who had been a member of that church. The apostate who invited Tom Paine died a horrid death, leaving the deathbed of his son who was dying of delerium tremens. . . . His other two sons died drunkards. This was the end of a scoffer who had used the Bible for waste paper and ridiculed the Saviour as a vile imposter.⁷⁸

Involvement in moral crusades must also have provided a Calvinist with an opportunity to assure himself that he was one of the elect, and at the same time demonstrate it to the rest of the congregation.

But however self serving the motives of many of the reformers may have been, and selfishness is a characteristic of almost all of us, alcoholism was a serious problem in America, and it was the Protestant churches which first brought it to the public's attention. Perhaps the reformers overestimated the pervasiveness of intemperance among all classes of society around 1800 (given the depressed state of religion at the time it is quite likely that drunkenness was more widespread than it was earlier), but the disastrous effects of liquor upon one class at least, the poor, were readily apparent. One of the first items dealing with temperance to appear in the Stonington Yankee after the initiation of Beecher's crusade connected poverty and liquor. "The demoralizing effects of intemperance are so palpable, that scarce a word is necessary to portray them. Our little village . . . contains too many lamentable examples of its pernicious effects. There is scarcely an individual case

⁷⁸Peete, "My Home," p. 6.

of poverty and distress, but may be traced back to drunkenness."⁷⁹

There was a distinct tinge of noblesse oblige to the Stonington temperance movement. All of the officers of the first Stonington temperance society, formed in 1829, Elisha Faxon, David C. Smith, Wm. W. Rodman, Alexander G. Smith, Charles H. Phelps and Charles P. Williams;⁸⁰ were wealthy men. Most of them were prominent in the town's maritime industries. The idea that the town's economic leaders should play a prominent role in temperance reform among the lower classes was the theme of a letter to the Stonington Telegraph from Doctor George E. Palmer, Warden of Stonington Borough.

It is a common observation, that we cannot get men to labor for us; if we will not furnish spirits - especially at certain times of the year, such as sheep shearing, hay making, harvesting, etc. Mechanics, also, are in the habit of receiving their daily allowance. . . . At my father's, the experiment was tried last summer, when both farmers and mechanics were found to labor cheerfully and industriously, without the aid of spirits. . . . It is said that substitutes which are generally furnished, such as milk, etc. . . . are as troublesome and expensive as common rum. But have we no concern or regard for our fellow creatures, beyond that of obtaining the greatest quantity of labor at the cheapest rate? I trust there is a redeeming spirit in the present age and that men will begin to feel some higher motives than those which spring from the cold calculations of dollars and cents. If an immortal soul is worth an effort, let us make it, to save that soul from degradation and everlasting ruin.⁸¹

Stonington's churches of course played the lead role in the local temperance movement. In 1829, Rev. Ira Hart, pastor of the Road Congregational Church, became president of the newly formed temperance society; Jabez Swan, pastor of the borough Baptist church, (whose conversion experience was recounted above), was one of the vice presidents.⁸² In 1833,

⁷⁹ Stonington Yankee, 20 December 1826.

⁸⁰ Stonington Telegraph, 29 April 1829.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

Congregationalists from Stonington Borough split amicably with the Road Church, and formed the Second Congregational Church of Stonington. The following year, the new church adopted a resolution presented by Deacon George F. Palmer: "Resolved by this church, that we will not admit to our communion and fellowship any person who will not give and act upon the pledge of entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirits as a drink." Nor would they "admit to church membership any person engaged in the [liquor] traffic."⁸³ A year earlier, members of the mother church at the Road had expressed a more lenient attitude toward liquor; requiring only that it be used in moderation, and not demanding total abstinence. Zebulon Hancox, who had been elected a deacon of the church in 1817,⁸⁴ was forced to resign his office in 1831 because of a drinking problem.⁸⁵ After the failure of repeated efforts by the church to persuade Hancox to mend his ways, he was finally suspended from communion for "improperly using intoxicating liquors . . . so much so that his intemperence has become a matter of public notoriety; and . . . he has often been so intoxicated as to manifest it in his speech, walk, and action." Hancox' wife had also "for a long time been in the habit of an improper use of intoxicating liquors," but after she confessed in church and promised to swear off drinking, she was allowed to return to fellowship.⁸⁶

In 1846, the Baptist Church in Stonington Borough adopted a resolution which required all future candidates for Baptism or membership to totally

⁸³Records of the Second Congregational Church in Stonington, I, January 23, 1834.

⁸⁴Records of the First Congregational Church and Ecclesiastical Society of Stonington, V, April 12, 1817.

⁸⁵Ibid., June 9, 1831.

⁸⁶Ibid., August 26, 1833.

abstain from "the use and traffic of intoxicating drinks."⁸⁷ In 1848, Thomas Hinckley, clerk of the borough Baptist Church sent letters to Dr. William Hyde and Gilbert Wheeler objecting to the renting of their houses "for the traffic of ardent spirits." Wheeler agreed to cease, but Hyde refused and withdrew from the church.⁸⁸ With unconscious humour, the Baptist Records for February 14, 1838 reveal that: "Whereas Brother Burdick has discontinued selling rum for the present, because he could not procure a license, therefore, resolved his case be dismissed."⁸⁹

Throughout the remainder of the Nineteenth Century, the spirit of temperance reform was strong in Stonington, its staunch supports were the Protestant churches, and the respectable class.⁹⁰ The crusaders were particularly active in the fifteen years following the Civil War, and again in the 1890's. In 1869, the creme de la creme of Stonington society, C.P. Williams, William Pendleton, H.N. Trumbull, Jr., William Hyde, O.B. Grant and others, formed a visiting committee to ask dealers to stop selling liquor. They met with little success; not surprisingly, most of the liquor dealers refused to end something which they found so profitable,

⁸⁷Records of the First Baptist Church, Stonington Borough, II, February 2, 1846.

⁸⁸Ibid., June 26, July 3 & 10th, 1848.

⁸⁹Ibid., February 24, 1838.

⁹⁰Stonington's two wealthiest men were extremely active in the temperance movement. A barn owned by Charles P. Williams, Stonington's only millionaire, was destroyed by incendiaries in 1870. Jerome Anderson, editor of the Stonington Mirror, theorized "that Mr. W. from his prominence in the temperance movement has incurred the hatred of someone, who has taken this method to revenge himself." Stonington Mirror, 24 November 1870. In the Westerly (R.I.) Narragansett of December 12, 1867, it was reported that a temperance speech was given at the Stonington Baptist Church by "John F. Trumbull, Esq., the veteran apostle of Temperance in this part of the state."

and support for the committee gradually subsided.⁹¹

In 1878, a series of particularly effective temperance meetings were held at the Baptist Church in Stonington Borough. Mirror editor Anderson credited the success of these meetings (1,058 people had signed the pledge to abstain from liquor), to David Frost, a layman and reformed drunkard who led them. Frost succeeded where Stonington's clergymen had failed because "having himself suffered, he knows how to sympathize with . . . [the drinking] class of men."⁹² A noteworthy sidelight to these meetings was the participation of the Catholic Church: "A large number of pledges [was] taken at the altar by the pastor of the Catholic Church who . . . is at work most heartily and zealously among . . . his flock."⁹³

Unlike many northern communities, the most important moral reform of the Nineteenth Century, the abolition of slavery, seemed to arouse little interest in Stonington churches; at least, there is no mention of it in the church records. The only entry in reference to slavery was the copy of a letter sent to the Stonington Union Association in 1863 by the Borough Baptist Church. "In this dark hour, we humbly pray that, in the accomplishment of his holy will, and purpose our beloved country repentous, chastened, purified from every national sin that may have called down upon us his avenging wrath, may be restored to harmony and peace."⁹⁴ The Baptist Church in Noank, a few miles west of Stonington, split over the slavery issue, and in 1846, the black members of the Borough Baptist

⁹¹William Haynes, Stonington Chronology (Stonington, Conn.: Pequot Press, 1949), p. 74.

⁹²Stonington Mirror, 20 June 1878.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 27 June 1878.

⁹⁴Baptist Records, III, June 14, 1863.

Church withdrew to establish the Third Baptist Church of Stonington. But whether racism, segregation, or black separatism caused the division is unknown, since the letter requesting permission to withdraw gave no clear reason for the decision.

A third effect of the religious revival was a renewed effort to suppress frivolous amusements, like card playing and dancing, and the resurrection of obsolete laws such as those regulating the strict observance of the Sabbath.⁹⁵ Yet, even in 1791, when infidelity and liberalism were at their height, Stonington Baptists had a low opinion of hi-jinks. In March of that year, Sands Niles, clerk of the Baptist Church at Long Point, "complained to the church, that he was grieved and wounded at the conduct of Brother John Rathbun, for his not restraining his daughter from going and attending on a vain carnal frolic of fiddling and dancing. . . . And after deliberating the case Br. John promised . . . to do his endeavor to restrain her for the future: which relieved my mind. Sands Niles, Clerk."⁹⁶ The Baptists in 1846 declared "that dancing school was no place for a Christian," and "the keeping of nine pin alleys tends to immorality, therefore it is unbecoming of a church member to keep one."⁹⁷ In 1848, a Deacon Palmer of the Stonington Baptist church was appointed a committee of one "to cite to our next meeting such as have attended dancing school and theatres and such like places of amusement." The following year, two young women, Ann Pendleton and Frances Taylor, were excluded from the Borough Baptist Church for refusing to acknowledge their guilt in attending

⁹⁵ Mitchell, "Great Awakening," p. 34.

⁹⁶ Baptist Records, I, March 2, 1791.

⁹⁷ Ibid., II, December 4, 1846.

a ball and not yielding to the discipline of the church in the matter.⁹⁸

It is well-known that the sanctification of the Sabbath was carried to great lengths in Nineteenth Century New England. An example is the following confession made by Betsey Appolonia, a member of the First Congregational Church of Stonington, in 1814. "I, Betsey Appolonia . . . do now confess, that in opposition to my covenant obligations . . . and in open violation of the law of God, I did irreverently forsake the public worship of God's House on the Holy Sabbath in June last, and went on a party of pleasure to Fisher's Island, for which . . . I desire to humble myself before Him and implore His gracious pardon - and also to ask forgiveness of this church - and all whom I have thus grieved and offended."⁹⁹

In 1816, the members of the First Congregational Church, meeting at Stonington Borough, formally pledged themselves to maintain a strict observance of the Sabbath. "The Church . . . agree that they will not without great and urgent necessity commence or prosecute a journey on the Sabbath either by land or water and that they will not do this for sake of gain or convenience. . . . They will as far as possible, except attendance on public worship, keep their Sabbath at home and restrain their children and domestics from wandering abroad in the streets and in the fields on the Sabbath day."¹⁰⁰

Throughout the remainder of the Nineteenth Century, the sanctity of the Sabbath was a strong conviction in Stonington, even for those who were otherwise fairly moderate in their religious views, such as Mirror

⁹⁸ Ibid., II, April 17, 1848; III, July 30, 1849.

⁹⁹ First Congregational Church Records, IV, October 1814.

¹⁰⁰ Congregational Extracts, January 14, 1816.

editor Jerome Anderson. In 1873, Anderson warned the boys who were guilty of sledriding on a previous Sunday, that if they tried it again, "they will stand a chance of being arrested and confined in the lockup until Monday morning. The Constable has been notified to arrest all who then break the Lord's day."¹⁰¹ In 1879, Anderson expressed his outrage at the sacrilegious behavior of those citizens who had spent Sunday sleigh riding through Stonington. "Sleigh riding on Main Street was the popular amusement last Sunday. We noticed some professed Christians among the many who took advantage of the excellent sleighing to test the speed of their animals. And this in a Christian community. A bad example for non-believers."¹⁰²

By the end of the Century, the civil authorities of Connecticut had abandoned their attempts to prohibit recreation or travel on Sundays, and these restrictions were omitted from the Blue Laws which were reenacted in the 1890's. "Every person who shall do any business or labor, except works of necessity or mercy, or keep open any shop, warehouse or manufacturing establishment, or expose any property for sale or engage in any sport between 10 o'clock Saturday night and 12 o'clock Sunday night shall be fined not more than \$50."¹⁰³ In 1975 Sunday Blue Laws are still in effect in Connecticut.

Characteristics of Religion in Nineteenth Century Stonington

Calvinist Churches and Their Congregations

With the completion of the work of the Second Great Awakening, Calvinist

¹⁰¹ Stonington Mirror, 30 January 1873.

¹⁰² Ibid., 23 January 1879.

¹⁰³ Stonington Mirror, 16 July 1897.

churches enjoyed a brief Indian summer during which they regained much of the influence over the behavior and opinion of New England communities which they had lost during the latter part of the Eighteenth Century. The source of much of the Calvinists' power lay in the extent of their interference into the private lives of their members, and the consequent enforcement of an outward appearance of piety through fear of offending the ever-watchful eyes of the congregation. In a small place like Stonington Borough, where, almost without exception, the leading members of society were affiliated with one of the Calvinist Churches (although a number of wealthy people did become Episcopalians after the Civil War), the result must have been an atmosphere of stifling oppressiveness. And yet, the yoke upon freedom of expression, and action, evidently was universally accepted since no complaints have been uncovered. This habit of "minding thy neighbors business" extended even to the editor of the local paper, Jerome Anderson, son of a former pastor of the Baptist church in the borough, who had the gall to print items like the following fairly often:

She belongs to one of the first families, and goes regularly to the post office to meet him. 'Him' is a young man of leisure and he goes to the post office to meet her. Pa doesn't know about it, and in fact, objects seriously; having forbidden the intimacy. When she meets him, she is all smiles, and she catches him by the lapels of his coat, talking in an animated way and acting as if she would like to clasp him in her arms. If pa only knew, wouldn't there be a row though. We advise her to quit it as no good can come of 'such conducts as those.'¹⁰⁴

The right of the church to monitor the behavior of its members was fully agreed to when the covenant was accepted. Article five of the "Articles of Faith Professed by the First Church of Christ in Stonington," read, "we believe church discipline to be an institution of Christ which

¹⁰⁴ Stonington Mirror - Journal, 23 May 1872.

is to be exercised towards offending members according to the rules prescribed in the Holy Scriptures."¹⁰⁵ The machinery of discipline was made more explicit in the 1833 covenant of the new Congregational Church in Stonington Borough. "As soon as we, shall have the knowledge of any scandal committed by a brother or sister of our community, we will speedily go and tell the offender his fault in meekness and love."¹⁰⁶

In 1813, Elisha Faxon, a merchant who was prominent in Stonington's ecclesiastical and economic affairs (he later owned shares in a number of sealing and whaling vessels), ignored a request from the Congregational Church to appear before it and answer charges made against him. Faxon declared himself, "No longer subject to the rule, regulations or discipline, [of the church], reserving to myself the privilege, by divine permission, of associating for worship and church fellowship with a church of any other denomination whose sentiments accord with my own."¹⁰⁷ To Rev. Ira Hart, pastor of the church, Faxon's claim was absurd, and he was determined that any prospective excommunicant of the church be forced to undergo the humiliation of an appearance before it. "The absurd claims of the above communication [is] subversive of all gospel discipline . . . as it opens a door to all offenders to avoid an appearance . . . [before] the church . . . and prevent an investigation of their conduct. A covenant made before 'God, angels and men' by an individual with this church cannot be revoked at pleasure by that individual. . . . The Lord Jesus Christ has given to the pastor and church the key of discipline, with the assurance that what they bind on earth, agreeably to his word, shall be bound

¹⁰⁵ Congregational Extracts, May 1789.

¹⁰⁶ Congregational Church Covenant, Yale Manuscripts Division, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹⁰⁷ First Congregational Church Records, IV, 1813, pp. 109-110.

in Heaven." Faxon was therefore excommunicated, and furthermore as "Mr. Faxon has claimed the right of uniting himself 'to a church of any other denomination', this church declares to the churches of all denominations . . . he ought not to be received as a member of any church until he returns to his duty with us by repentence."¹⁰⁸ Whether this admonition to other churches, which were in theory competing with Congregationalists for members, would have been effective, is difficult to determine. But Faxon apparently never attempted to join another church, and in 1820 was reunited with the Congregationalists after acknowledging his error.¹⁰⁹

Church discipline filled the records of Stonington's Congregational and Baptist churches with cases like the following: "At a meeting of the Church under my pastoral care at the Borough, July 2, 1814 - whereas Mr. Samuel Stanton 3d . . . has in several instances been guilty of the sin of intemperance in an open public manner, whereby great disgrace and injury has come to this church and the cause of religion for which he refuses to make a public confession . . . voted, that the sd Samuel Stanton be suspended from our communion until he make a satisfactory confession, Ira Hart pastor."¹¹⁰ Stanton later confessed and was readmitted to communion. "Lucy Solomon was excluded from the church for the sin of fornication under the most aggravated circumstances of deception and falsehood."¹¹¹ "At a

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 110-111.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ First Congregational Church Records, IV, July 2, 1814.

¹¹¹ Ibid., September 4, 1824.

meeting of the church . . . Nancy Hoffman was excluded from the church for the sin of intemperance and other scandalous vices."¹¹²

In the borough Baptist church, a vigilant committee investigated charges made against members; if the charges were substantiated, the committee attempted to persuade the sinner back to the paths of righteousness. If this failed, the case was brought before the congregation for action. Occasionally the accused requested an investigation of allegations made against him. In June 1841, Horace Wilcox asked that the committee call on him "concerning certain reports prejudicial to his Christian character,"¹¹³ but the committee reported the charges against him could not be proved.¹¹⁴ In 1845, the vigilant committee "reported on the case of Brother Orrin Prentice [reports prejudicial to his Christian character had been in circulation] as follows - that they had a personal interview with Bro. Prentice and without attempting to bring any proof to substantiate the charges preferred against him they appealed to his anxiousness of his standing with God . . . and he frankly acknowledged himself an unfit member of the Church of Christ. They notified him that his case would be brought before the church for consideration . . . [and if he could offer any reason why] the hand of fellowship should not be withdrawn [he should appear and make it known]. But Prentice did not appear and was dismissed from the church by a unanimous vote."¹¹⁵

In addition to controlling the morality of its membership by forcing

¹¹² Ibid., September 10, 1829.

¹¹³ Records of the First Baptist Church of Stonington Borough, II, 1826-1848, June 7, 1841.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., July 5, 1841.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., March 28, 1845.

transgressors to undergo humiliating public scrutiny of their private behavior and excommunicating those who failed to satisfy the congregation, Nineteenth Century Calvinists continued to regulate strictly the admission of communicants to fellowship with the church. Prospective members had to assure the Church just as they did in the Eighteenth Century that they were fit for admission. Prospective church members had to relate the experience of their religious conversion before the other members, who would decide by vote whether he or she was to be admitted. "Covenant meeting - opened with the prayer by Elder Palmer. . . . Eliza Ann Chesebro related her religious experience with the view of uniting with this church, the covenant was read in her hearing, and also the resolutions of the last church meeting [against the use of liquor] both of which she assented to, it was then voted unanimously to receive her into membership after Baptism."¹¹⁶ The Baptists found a number of candidates unfit for membership. In July, 1828, Anson Merritt's request to gain admission to the church was denied for "keeping bad company and other misconduct."¹¹⁷

Newcomers who claimed membership in a church of a different locality were required to produce certificates of good standing from their former churches. "The Baptist church of Christ located at Stonington Borough to the Baptist church of Christ in South Carolina sends Christian love. Brethren, this is to certify that Brother Stanton S. Burdick, sustains a good character and has the confidence of his Brethren of this church as a Christian and minister of Christ and as he has requested a dismissal from us, his request has accordingly been granted and when we are informed of

¹¹⁶ Baptist Church Records, February 21, ____?

¹¹⁷ Ibid., II, July, 1828.

his having been received by you, we shall consider him no longer a member with us. Done by order and signed in behalf of sd. church - David N. Clark Church Clerk."¹¹⁸

Although all the material on admission of members was taken from the Baptist Church Records, it may be assumed the Congregationalists used exactly the same procedures. According to Keller, the elimination of the Half Way Covenant was one result of the Second Awakening. Thus, stricter discipline was enforced and those who applied for admission to a Congregational church were carefully scrutinized.¹¹⁹

Baptists and Congregationalists in the Nineteenth Century

Within a few decades after the commencement of the Nineteenth Century whatever competition had existed between Baptists and Congregationalists in Stonington declined, and a spirit of cooperation marked relations between the two churches.¹²⁰ Exactly what the situation had been in the time when Eastern Connecticut was, in the words of a Congregationalist minister, "a waste . . . degenerating toward a state of heathenism,"¹²¹ because of the work of Separatists and Baptists, it is difficult to say; as I found only one entry in the Eighteenth Century church records of Stonington relating to the Baptist-Congregationalist conflict.

¹¹⁸ Baptist Church Records, II, July 25, 1827.

¹¹⁹ Keller, Second Great Awakening, p. 225.

¹²⁰ McLaughlin wrote that by 1830, the New England Baptists had entered into the mainstream of American life and were no longer dissenters. "They belonged to the new establishment - The Evangelical Protestant Establishment which dominated the national morality, directed the nation's industry and fostered its culture for the rest of the century." McLaughlin, New England Dissent, p. 1274.

¹²¹ William Clift, A Funeral Discourse on the Occasion of the Death of Mrs. Maria Hart. (Delivered at Stonington, September 27, 1857), (New London, Conn.: Starr & Farnham, 1858), p. 15.

In the records of the Baptist Church at Long Point for October 5, 1773, it was noted that the Stonington association (of Baptist Churches) had agreed "not to covenant and build with Congregational members that hold the Doctrine of and practice Infant Sprinkling; nor to commune with them at the Lord's Table."¹²² This declaration probably aimed at ending cooperation with those Separatist churches which refused to divest themselves of orthodox Congregationalist doctrines.

By 1827, Jabez Swan, the Baptist evangelist could write, "had Mr. Hart [Ira Hart, pastor of the Stonington Congregational Church] been my father, he could not have treated me with more kindness than he did. His church and society followed a similar course. In his charge, he preached to a church out of the village in the forenoon of each Lord's Day. This afforded his people an opportunity to hear me in the Sabbath services of the morning." Swan was even offered the pastorate of the Congregational Church after Hart's death.¹²³ The two churches also cooperated in holding religious revivals. Swan commented on the revival held in Stonington in 1824, "Our Congregational friends also united with us in earnest efforts to save souls. Prominent among them was Judge Pomeroy and Elisha Faxon, Esq."¹²⁴ In 1868, the borough Baptist church "voted to unite with [the] Congregational Church in inviting Rev. M. _____? to labor with us in a series of meetings."¹²⁵

¹²²Records of the First Baptist Church, Stonington Borough, I, October 5, 1773.

¹²³Denison, Evangelist, pp. 78-79. Even as early as 1816, the difference between Connecticut Congregationalists and Baptists could not have been great, for Swan wrote, "Near 1816, my father removed with his family to the town of Lyme, Conn. . . . It was two miles to a Baptist Church and they had preaching but a portion of the time. . . . I shortly commenced attending the Congregational Church where Rev. Josiah Hawes preached." Ibid., p. 47.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 185.

¹²⁵Records of the Stonington Borough First Baptist Church, III, February 16, 1868.

In the early Nineteenth Century, membership of the Baptist church in the Borough was apparently drawn mostly from the lower class, but only a few years later, the leadership of both borough churches were in the hands of the community's elite. The Stonington Baptist Church in 1810 "was financially weak. It was made up of the labouring class who found their chief employment in the uncertain work of fishing . . . they were poor, their members few, their social standing nothing."¹²⁶ Since the founding of their churches in the Seventeenth Century, New England Baptists were socially persecuted by the Congregationalist neighbors: "Throughout the Colonial period Baptists were the pariahs of New England."¹²⁷ One of the striking indications of their social inferiority was the condition of the ministry. "Before 1818, only one Baptist church in Connecticut ever had a college educated minister."¹²⁸ In Stonington, the Baptist ministers were as uneducated as in the rest of the state. In his book of travels, Timothy Dwight called the Baptist ministers of Stonington "mere uneducated farmers or mechanics."¹²⁹ Elijah Chesebro, who became pastor of the borough Baptist church in 1810, was typical of New England Baptist ministers. "His educational advantages had been few, only such as the common school of that day afforded. . . . Six days in the week he toiled on a farm . . . the church did little or nothing for his support."¹³⁰ Like Chesebro, Jabez Swan was forced to do that which Timothy Dwight claimed

¹²⁶ Stonington Mirror, 8 November 1890.

¹²⁷ McLaughlin, New England Dissent, p. 15.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

¹²⁹ Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York, ed. Barbara King Soloman with Patricia M. King (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 4:19.

¹³⁰ Stonington Mirror, November 8, 1890.

he never saw done by a Congregationalist clergyman, i.e., manual labor. Swan supported himself while a lay Baptist minister in North Lyme, Connecticut by working "hard with my hands."¹³¹ Swan, however, later graduated from Hamilton Theological Institute in New York, again supporting himself by manual labor, and was the first college educated Baptist minister in Stonington.

Although members of the working class in Stonington may have continued their preference for the Baptist Church, the church leaders by 1825 were men of substantial means. Among those listed in the Stonington Yankee of October 19, 1825, as members of the Baptist Sunday School Society was Elnathan Fellows, prominent in Baptist and Republican affairs since the late Eighteenth Century, as a Vice President. Fellows was one of the "mechanics" who petitioned the Connecticut Legislature for a reduction of the Poll Tax in 1804. By 1831, he owned a house worth \$950, and \$1,200 in stocks and money at interest.¹³² John Trumbull and Charles P. Williams were respectively, the Secretary and Treasurer of the Sunday School Society. Although Williams and Trumbull became the town's wealthiest men, neither was listed in the tax rolls for 1831, probably because they lived in households headed by relatives. But both did own shares in Stonington sealing vessels.¹³³ Superintendents of the Baptist Sunday School Society were Simeon Palmer, who owned a house worth \$3,000 in 1831, Samuel Chesebrough, 2d, (a Samuel Chesebrough was listed on tax rolls of 1831 as owning \$1,600 worth of taxable property), and Robert Bottum, later a whaling captain and

¹³¹Denison, Evangelist, p. 58.

¹³²Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1831.

¹³³Ship's Registries, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

owner of a house worth \$1,050 in 1831.¹³⁴

The Trustees listed in the Borough Baptist Records in 1846, were as socially acceptable as anyone in Stonington. Included were whaling captains George S. Brewster and William Pendleton, sailmaker Jacob Blackledge, storeowner O.B. Grant, and merchant and whaling outfitter Peleg Hancox, who was probably one of the five or six richest men in Stonington. Hancox was instrumental in bringing Jabez Swan to the town in 1842 to lead a revival.¹³⁵ In 1881, Jerome Anderson published a directory of Stonington, which contained among other things, the names of deacons in the town's churches. All of the deacons in the Baptist Church in Stonington Borough, were, like the Trustees in 1846, and the members of the Sunday School Society, "gentlemen of property and standing," and I have found no evidence to indicate there were, after the first two decades of the Nineteenth Century, any social distinctions between Stonington's Baptist and Congregational churches.

The Calvinist Clergy in Nineteenth Century Stonington

Both the Congregational and Baptist churches required that a prospective pastor satisfy an examining committee prior to his installation. This procedure was outlined in the Congregational Church Records in 1834. "At the meeting of an ecclesiastical Council at Stonington . . . for the purpose of installating the . . . Revd. John C. Nichols over [The Second Congregational Church and Society], Present, Revd. Mr. Abel McEwen, Timothy Tuttle, Edward Bull, Joseph Ayres, James T. Dickens," and delegates from six neighboring churches. After Nichols' regular standing in the ministry

¹³⁴ Stonington Grand List Abstract, 1831. List of names taken from the Stonington Yankee, 19 October 1825.

¹³⁵ Denison, Evangelist, p. 184.

was examined, and approved, he "was then examined as to the evidence of his personal piety, his knowledge of the doctrine of natural and revealed religion, and other qualifications for sustaining the pastoral offices. After which it was voted, That the Council approve of the pastor elect, and will proceed to his installation tomorrow."¹³⁶

Once installed, Stonington's ministers, particularly the Baptists, found the life of a clergyman threadbare and lean. Jabez Swan wrote of his ministry in Stonington, "I left Hamilton [Theological Institute] in . . . 1827, having accepted a call to settle with the Baptist Church in Stonington Borough. . . . My salary was to be two hundred and fifty dollars. [Not much more than an unskilled day laborer could earn.] I was now subjected to a more rigid economy than when a student. If I needed a suit of clothes, I obtained them a piece at a time."¹³⁷ In order to make ends meet, Swan accepted a part time ministry at North Stonington, which necessitated a journey of eight miles each way on horseback. "Nor was I protected from the weather as I should have been by a warm overcoat; neither was I able to pay for one. I preferred to nearly freeze rather than to run into debt."¹³⁸ Even in 1866, when the financial condition of the Borough Baptist Church had certainly improved, Pastor A.G. Palmer's salary

¹³⁶ Second Congregational Church Records, I, May 14, 1834. The procedures required by the Baptists were undoubtedly much the same: "The following Resolutions were presented. That we call an ecclesiastical council, to meet in the vestry . . . for the purpose of examining Bro. R. J. Wilson with a view to his ordination as Pastor of this church. Second, that the following churches be requested to send delegates, 2d and 3d Groton, Noank, 2d and 3d North Stonington, Huntington Street New London, 3d Stonington, 1st Westerly. Baptist Church Records, III, October 11, 1852.

¹³⁷ Denison, Evangelist, p. 70.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 178. Swan wrote of his pastorate at Stonington, "I was at times exceedingly straightened in my temporal affairs. I remember on one occasion, of being quite in want of a suit of clothes. I made my request known to God as a last resort. I soon met a young man in the street

was only \$700,¹³⁹ admittedly not the starvation wages paid to Swan, but far from munificent.

Wages paid Congregational clergymen in Stonington were a significant improvement over those of their Baptist counterparts. In 1871, a Reverend Mr. Wales, was offered a salary of \$1,600 a year, plus the use of the parsonage, if he would agree to accept the pastorate in Stonington Borough.¹⁴⁰ Still, in 1854, William Clift requested dismissal from the pastorate of the Congregational Church in the borough because the salary was too low and he could not afford to educate his children properly.¹⁴¹

The most important source of revenue for the Stonington Baptist Church (and probably for the Congregational Church as well), was the annual auction of pews. Each pew was assigned to a particular family or individual and presumably the more desirable locations brought higher prices from the bidders. What this amounted to, in effect, was a system of forced contributions whereby all who wished to attend church were required to support it; for aside from a few spaces reserved for visitors, all

who belonged to the Church. He informed me he had been absent upon the ocean for a long time, and he had done nothing for the cause of God; and handed me ten dollars. . . . I recognized in this the hand of God, while I did not forget the donor." Ibid., pp. 81-82.

¹³⁹ Baptist Church Records, III, March 24, 1866.

¹⁴⁰ Second Congregational Church Records, II, July 22, 1871.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., March 9, 1854. The pastors of the Episcopal Church in Stonington (usually thought of as representing the most affluent sector of American Society) were paid as poorly as the Baptists. In his history of Calvary Church, Minor Myers, Jr. wrote, "during the 1880's and 90's Calvary in hard times could only pay her ministers \$800 a year. Even as late as 1900, the salary was only \$800 and Calvary had a difficult time attracting ministers." Minor Myers, Jr., History of Calvary Church, Stonington (Stonington Conn.: Calvary Churchwomen, 1973), p. 59.

seats were the private property of those who had paid for them. In 1895, the Mirror reported the recent auction of pews held in the Borough Baptist church. "Monday evening, the seats in the First Baptist Church were rented for the ensuing year, the gross receipts being about \$1450. . . . The highest price paid for a pew was \$60 a year, two being bid at that amount, while the balance ranged from that sum down to \$3.00."¹⁴²

Roman Catholics and Episcopalians

There were two other churches in Stonington Borough in the Nineteenth Century; the Roman Catholic and the Episcopal, but I think both played a minor role in the community until the Twentieth Century. St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church was founded in Stonington Borough in 1851. Although its membership was large (630 in 1881¹⁴³), it was made up almost entirely of Irish and Portuguese immigrants who occupied the lowest rung of the economic and social ladder. Calvary Episcopal Church, consecrated in 1849, certainly ranked higher in Stonington's social hierarchy than the lowly Catholics. Its officers, as reported in 1874 by the Stonington Mirror, included some of the borough's wealthiest men: R.F. Loper, A.S. Palmer, N.B. Palmer, B.F. States, Ephraim Williams and others.¹⁴⁴ According to its historian, Minor Myers, Jr., a number of members were attracted by Calvary's relative freedom from restrictions. Some had been excommunicated from the Baptist and Congregational Churches in Stonington. "The establishment of the Episcopal Church works a transition from the

¹⁴² Stonington Mirror, 22 March 1895, p. 2. In 1884, the Calvary Episcopal Church made all its seats free. "Free seats seem to suit the masses, as the building has been filled during Sunday services under the new pian" Ibid., 10 May 1884, p. 2.

¹⁴³ Anderson's Stonington Directory (Stonington, Conn.: Jerome S. Anderson, 1881), p. 125.

¹⁴⁴ Stonington Mirror, 9 April 1874, p. 2.

Eighteenth Century system of community supervision through social pressure to the more individualistic tolerance of the Nineteenth Century. The Episcopal Church undoubtedly appeared less restrictive. Calvary Church never had a vigilant committee and the parish never even considered a temperance pledge."¹⁴⁵ At least half of those excluded from the Congregational Church joined Calvary.¹⁴⁶

Calvinism and The People of Stonington

The intellectual atmosphere of Stonington grew more oppressive after the Second Great Awakening. With few exceptions, the authors of any material written in Stonington after about 1830, which was designed to guide personal behavior, were almost hysterically anxious to demonstrate before the world their true-blue religious orthodoxy. Apparently to be found guilty of harboring even the slightest deviant opinion was the greatest of disgraces. For although the power of religion in the community declined after the 1840's, everyone still wished to appear fervently religious. Thus the genial humanistic poem "The Good Things of Life," which appeared in the Impartial Journal in 1802, would never have been published in the Stonington Mirror, because it made fun of the clergy, and did not constantly remind the reader that the only good things in life were God and religion.

The Good Things of Life

The good things of life, if to all we should look,
 Would swell our poor ballad quite up to a book.
 The mere calls of nature, contrasted, are small:
 'Tis greedy ambition that grasps at them all.
 Then keep within bounds and limit the ring,
 Contentment, You'll find, is a very good thing.

¹⁴⁵ Myers, Calvary Church, p. 11.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

A competent income enough to supply
 All we want, or can modestly wish to enjoy.

 The Parson himself, who holds self denial
 As a very good thing, when proved in the trial
 That by losing the world, we gain the grand prize,
 Neglected by fools, though the wish of the wise;
 Though money, he says, is of evil the spring -
 Will grant a good livings a very good thing.

 With reverence an authorized passage we bring,
 "He that hath a good wife hath a very 'good thing';"
 And the proverb says plainly, "a wife in her thrift,
 Is allowed on all hands, a heavenly gift."
 To the queen of good wishes then strike every string;
 Ye bard, a good wife is a very good thing.

But in all things while in life we exist,
 The blessing of health, stands the first on the list,
 All orders of men will subscribe to the test,
 That this health, florid health, surpasses the rest;
 Then granting good health such a very good thing,¹⁴⁷
 Let us wish it to all, from the peasant to King.

Nor would the following poem, written by a borough resident, S. A. Seabury, and published in the Stonington Yankee in 1824, have been approved at a later date, for Seabury admitted the possibility of a happy life without religion.

What is life, A fervid dream
 Few are its hours of real bliss;
 And distant far our footsteps seem
 From calm domestic happiness
 Oh, would that on some lonely wild,
 Where no intruding foot could stray,
 Where none but love and nature mild
 That we might dream our days away.

Far from this crowded busy scene,
 Far from a world of storm and strife;
 Where blighted hopes still intervene,
 Like clouds to damp the sun of life,
 There like those placid streams that run
 Where never ocean ebbs or flows
 Our days should gently glide in one -
 One peaceful scene of calm repose. ¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Stonington Impartial Journal, 28 September 1802, p. 4.

¹⁴⁸ Stonington Yankee, 20 October 1824, p. 4.

What the Calvinists sought in life, was another thing entirely from the languid fantasies of a romantic like Seabury. Lucy Ann Sheffield, a young student at a Stonington academy, knew all about Seabury's dream world.

Hope is the star that charms the youthful eye,
A something still beyond for which we sigh,
And if confined to earth will mark our care,
For though we taste, the blessing is not there.

Believe me now my friend for I have sought
And found it all a dream not worth your thought
Be sure of this, there is a purer joy
A hope of heaven, which nothing could destroy -
(Last two lines illegible) 149

The lines of another young Stonington poet, only a few years older than Lucy Ann, were written, like her's were, to meet the approval of those Calvinist elders who seemed to be looking over everyone's shoulder. The world it describes is a universe apart from that of "The Good Things In Life."

Poem for the Stonington Spectator. Please give the following lines, written on my 21st birthday, a place in your paper.

How solemn, how mournful, how drear the sad day,
Some twenty one years of my life's past away,
While many, who cheered me in youth with their glee,
Now sleep in their resting place 'neath yon willow tree.

O, God could I call back those seasons gone by,
Ere twenty one years shall again pass away,
I feel that my body must sink to decay!
The singing of birds will be heard in the vale
Which shall cheer the sad spirit, and the lonely regale
But the owlet, the dove, their sad requiem may pore
O'er the sod of his grave who will hear them no more
Friends will meet them as cheerful, as oft as before,
Though I am not with them 'twill be as of yore.

.....

¹⁴⁹ Lucy Ann Sheffield, "Poem", March 16, 1832, VFM 193, Manuscript Collection, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

None will then think fondly, or mourn over me.¹⁵⁰

Perhaps the most grotesque distortion created by the religious atmosphere of Stonington was the purported attitude of its residents toward death, which was seen as a perfect example of the divine mercy of God even when children were the victims. Yet, this was not an attitude which prevailed throughout the entire century. A poem taken from a tombstone which appeared in the Yankee in 1824, would have found no place in the Stonington Mirror, since it suggested that the death of a child might be a tragedy from which there was no recovery, nor succour for the living, even from God.

A little spirit slumbers here,
 Who to one heart was very dear;
 Oh he was more than life or light,
 Its thoughts by day, its dreams by night!
 The chill wind came, the young flower faded
 And died! The grave its sweetness shaded
 Fair boy thou shouldst have wept for me,
 Nor I have had to mourn o'er thee;
 Yet not long shall this sorrowing, be -
 Those roses I have planted round
 When spring gales next those roses wave,
 They'll blush upon thy mother's grave. 151

With few exceptions, the predominant theme of poems, sermons, and letters, written by citizens of Stonington and dealing with the subject of death from about 1830 onward, was an attempt to make it acceptable by claiming that death was actually preferable to life. Didactic articles and poems on a variety of subjects were a feature in almost every issue of the Stonington Mirror. I have tried to use only those captioned "for the Mirror", or if the writer was somehow identified as a resident of Stonington. Didactic articles in general and those dealing with death

¹⁵⁰ Stonington Spectator, 2 July 1834.

¹⁵¹ Stonington Yankee, 10 November 1824.

in particular were uncommon before 1830, and in those rare instances in which the theme of death was discussed, I never discovered any attempt to soothe the bereaved by stressing death's superiority to life. A typical example of the latter idea is the following letter from Fanny Noyes of Stonington to a relative in New Canaan.

[The last] hours of your dear departed brother, how peaceful! how tranquil! Yea, how triumphant was his victory! Ought we not to rejoice rather than mourn that he was so early prepared and made meet for a heavenly inheritance. Had his life been spared even to old age, he must have had pain and sickness, care and sorrows in common with other men, . . . yet nature will mourn the separation from one so amiable so lovely and affectionate. . . . But we should not be so selfish enough to wish him back again . . . but prepare to meet him, where parting is no more.¹⁵²

Not only would we be spared the pain of life by not lingering too long in it, but an early death provided a wonderful vehicle for God's teachings. This was one of the ideas expressed in a sermon delivered by Rev. N.B. Cook, pastor of the Road Congregational Church in 1850, at a memorial service for four young brothers drowned in a steamboat accident.

God's providences, like his perfections, are a great deep. The mother of the beloved youth . . . seems especially impressed with the mysteriousness of the event. In a letter . . . she says "it looks mysterious to us in a high degree." We must and can only leave it to Almighty God to solve to us hereafter. . . . This mysterious providence, by which we are made to feel so deeply, is undoubtedly fraught with love and kindness. . . . [In Cook's opinion, God's kindness and wisdom were manifested in this occurrence by reminding us of our liability to a sudden death.] The possibility of a sudden removal, and our apprehension of it, has a tendency to restrain us from many a sin into which we might have rushed, were we assured that a long time would intervene between our transgression and our removal. God, I say, displays his kindness in the sudden deaths which are occurring all around us . . . [because they are] signals of man's mortality.¹⁵³

¹⁵²Fanny Noyes to Julia Noyes, Undated, Noyes Diaries, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

¹⁵³Rev. N.B. Cook, The Voice of God in His Providence (Norwich, Conn.: John Stedman, 1850), pp. 5-7.

The Second Great Awakening not only altered the intellectual attitudes of Stonington's residents, it affected their social behavior as well; for a number of harmless amusements which were features of life in the early 1800's entirely disappeared until the end of the century. One of them was the dancing school such as the one Joseph Stebbins advertised in 1802.

Dancing School

Joseph Stebbins, presents his compliments to the ladies and gentlemen of Stonington and requests liberty to inform them that he intends to open his Dancing School . . . at Landlord York's Hall. /Ladies and Gentlemen would meet separately until/ after the Ladies and Gentlemen have acquired so much knowledge of dancing, that they are able to keep time with the music, they will meet together at an hour which will be most convenient for both. . . . Parents who entrust the instruction of their children to the subscriber may be assured he will exert himself to the utmost of his abilities, to form early and graceful manners, and to attend particularly to a decent deportment and good morals.¹⁵⁴

How popular Stebbins' school was, or how long it existed, is not known; apparently it caused little controversy. There were no reports of it in the local church records, unlike the dancing school founded by Killian Van Rensallair (sic), a New Yorker, in 1846.¹⁵⁵ Probably in response to Van Rensallair's establishment, the borough Baptist church appointed Deacon Palmer to "cite to our next meeting such as have attended dancing school and such like places of amusement."¹⁵⁶ As late

¹⁵⁴Stonington Impartial Journal, 21 September 1802, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵Haynes, Stonington Chronology, p. 64.

¹⁵⁶Baptist Church Records, December 4, 1846.

as 1878, when in many respects religious power in the community had weakened significantly, it could still force a dancing school to close. The Mirror, however, protested: "The pressure was so great that Prof. Cowan was forced to discontinue his dancing schools. It's a queer community where one cannot indulge in a little harmless amusement."¹⁵⁷

There were also, at least for a time, theatrical entertainments in early Nineteenth Century Stonington; their subsequent disappearance must again be laid at the door of the Calvinist churches.

Theatre . Mr. Ormsby, respectfully informs the ladies and gentlemen of Stonington, that having fitted up a little theatre . . . he flatters himself that the entertainment proposed may be deemed a moral and pleasing winter evening's amusement.¹⁵⁸

At Mr. Davis' Coffee House, will be presented a variety of theatrical entertainments called an Evenings Regale: Consisting of Recitation, song and spectacle . . . tickets at 1s.6d each.¹⁵⁹

After the Civil War, theatre-going again became respectable in Stonington, and the Mirror carried occasional reports of well-to-do citizens rail excursions to Westerly and New London. There were also, at times, theatrical performances in the borough.

¹⁵⁷ Stonington Mirror, 26 December 1878.

¹⁵⁸ Stonington Impartial Journal, 11 February 1800, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

Religion At the Close of the Nineteenth Century

As early as 1833, judging by the names of members dismissed by the Road Congregational Church in order to form the new church in Stonington Borough, women were a majority of the congregation. In 1849 members of the Second Congregational Church (at Stonington Borough) included an equal number of men and women; but by 1898 two thirds of the members were women.¹⁶⁰ Finally realizing the absurdity of denying the majority of their congregation a voice in church affairs, the male members of the Borough Congregational Church resolved in 1874 "that all female members of this church over the age of sixteen years be entitled to a vote in church matters."¹⁶¹ From the predominance of women in the church, it may be inferred that the influence of religion in the community had declined. It had become something which could be "left to the women", while men concerned themselves with more serious affairs. Sporadic comments in the Mirror lamenting the state of religion, are about the only clues to the decline of religion and the increasing secularization of Stonington society in the late Nineteenth Century. In 1871, Jerome Anderson wrote, "Lent doesn't seem to be very strictly kept this year, for we hear of any number of social entertainments for next week."¹⁶² In 1882, Anderson expressed his continuing concern over the decline in church attendance: "Five churches in the borough and the entire attendance on a Sunday is less than one quarter of the population. Why is this?"¹⁶³ Three years later, things

¹⁶⁰ On February 23, 1849, there were 111 male members in the borough Congregational Church and 109 females; on December 29, 1898, there were 48 males and 102 females. Records of the Second Congregational Church, II.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., July 6, 1874.

¹⁶² Stonington Mirror, 2 March 1871.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 25 March 1882.

were even worse. "By actual count last Sunday barely one-eighth of the borough's population attended church. What is the reason for this falling off in church attendance?"¹⁶⁴ But unlike the churches of almost one hundred years earlier, these were not fated for an inevitable revival, and protestantism Stonington entered a decline after the Civil War which to this day it has shown no signs of recovering from.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., 6 June 1885.

APPENDIX A

Church Profession and Covenant

In the presence of Almighty God, the searcher of hearts, and before this assembly, you profess your unfeigned belief of the Holy Scripture as given by Divine inspiration, your acceptance of all the doctrines contained in them, and your submission to the whole will of God revealed in his word.

You do now acknowledge the Lord Jehovah, the living and true God, to be your God, and rely upon divine assistance, do promise to walk humbly with God.

Professing your repentance of all your sins, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, you sincerely receive him as he is offered in the gospel, as the teacher come from God - the High Priest of our profession - and the King and head of the church, believing that there is none other name under heaven given men whereby you must be saved.

You do now solemnly give up yourself and all that you have unto God, promising that you will endeavor to walk as becometh the gospel of Christ, to give no cause for others to speak evil of it on your account; but that the name of God be glorified in you _____. This you profess and covenant.¹

¹Noyes Diaries, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

CHAPTER VII

EDUCATION IN STONINGTON: 1800 - 1900

The one significant development in education in Stonington Borough during the Nineteenth Century was the creation of a public school system which provided an adequate free education for every child in the community. In 1800, there were two school systems in Stonington Borough. One, the private Stonington Academy, was attended entirely by children from the middle and upper economic echelons. The borough public schools of 1800 did not meet regularly, and were probably avoided by those parents who could afford the moderate rates charged at the Stonington Academy and wished a decent education for their children. By 1900, only the free public schools remained in Stonington Borough. Classes were held thirty weeks out of the year, and were accessible to all but those who were dependent on the wages of their children.

Laws Relating to the Development of Public Education in Connecticut

It is impossible to discuss the development of public education in New England without touching upon religion. "No such thing as public education not dominated by religion was known in the Seventeenth Century. From dame school to university, all was ostensibly, perhaps ostentatiously, religious."¹ For New England Puritans, the fundamental purpose of education was to enable every man to read the Bible, so that he would be able to interpret it for himself.² Thus in Connecticut in the Seventeenth and

¹Edward Eggleston, The Transit of Civilization: From England to America in the Seventeenth Century (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1901), p. 237.

²Richard Anson Wheeler, "Stonington", in History of New London County, Connecticut, ed. D. Hamilton Hurd (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis, & Co., 1882), p. 656. Education was also expected to provide New England with citizens

Eighteenth Centuries, "the lower schools were essentially Congregational parochial schools. Prior to . . . 1798 . . . complete control of the town schools was vested in the Congregational society. The minister was apt to consider education as under his special care, examining teachers in their behavior, morals, and religious tenets. . . . Apparently more attention was paid to the 'moral' side of the teacher than to his preparation."³

In an excellent brief summation of the history of public education in Connecticut, Richard Anson Wheeler wrote that the establishment of common schools in Connecticut antedated colonial legislation on the matter, and when laws were passed they merely enforced practices which had arisen in the colonies of Hartford and New Haven. In 1641, the first common school law in Connecticut provided for free schools under the control of the minister and magistrate. In 1646 every Connecticut township of fifty families or more was required to maintain a school for all of its children. Two years later, a Hartford law provided that common schools would be supported partly by tuition fees from those able to pay; but poor children were to be educated at the expense of the town. The revision of the Connecticut Code in 1700 reenacted a number of laws which had been passed

capable of handling the administration of public offices. Wheeler, *Ibid.*, p. 657. Timothy Dwight observed "that probably three fourths of all the male inhabitants in . . . Connecticut sustain in the course of life some public office or other. To such a state of society, extensively found in New England at large, this general diffusion of knowledge /provided by the common schools/ seems indispensable." Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York, ed. Barbara King Soloman with Patricia M. King (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 4: 212.

³Richard J. Purcell, Connecticut in Transition (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1963), pp. 63-64.

up to that time dealing with the common schools. One of these required that "every town . . . having seventy householders be provided with a schoolmaster to teach children to read and write." Secondly, the code required that the "inhabitants of each town in the colony should annually pay forty shillings for every thousand pounds in their respective county lists . . . towards the maintenance of the schoolmaster in the town where the same was levied." If the sum raised was insufficient one half of the schoolmaster's maintenance would be made up by the town's inhabitants, and one half by the parents of the pupils. (This law was reenacted in 1784.)⁴

The citizens of Stonington apparently refused to provide funds for those unable to pay the schoolmaster, requiring that all deficiencies between expenditures and the Connecticut allowance be made up by the parents of pupils. "The town chose Mr. Daniel Mason and Mr. John Barnard Schoolmasters for ye ensuing year. Mr. Mason to keep school at his own house and Mr. Barnard at Wequetequack and they to have the country's allowance between them. The Remainder of ye maintenance of the schoolmaster besides what ye Court hath allowed shall be payed by ye parents and masters of such children as shall be sent to school for this present year."⁵

Marcus Jernegan wrote that the system of compulsory education, which was established in all of New England (except Rhode Island) by 1671,⁶ was

⁴Wheeler, in Hurd, New London County, pp. 657-659.

⁵Stonington Town Records, II, December 22, 1703; March 21, 1705.

⁶Marcus Wilson Jernegan, Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America - 1607-1783 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1960, first pub. 1931), p. 99.

greatly weakened by subsequent compulsory education acts passed in Connecticut and Massachusetts. In Connecticut, a revision allowed illiterate masters and parents to claim they were unable to teach their servants and children to read. Illiterates were thus exempted from the law which prescribed fines for those who neglected the education of their children and servants. But, in 1750, Connecticut returned to the earlier strict idea of compulsory education. According to the new law, "all parents and masters of children, shall by themselves, or others, teach and instruct, or cause to be taught, and instructed, all such children as are under their care, and Government, according to their ability to read the English tongue well; and to know the laws against Capital offenders."⁷

The administration of the Connecticut common schools was placed in the hands of the ecclesiastical societies (see chapter on religion) by a 1712 law. At first subordinated to the town government, the church societies gradually came to assume complete control of education. In 1717, they were given the right to collect school taxes.⁸ But eventually, pressure from the dissenting sects, hostile towards Congregationalists, grew too great, and the system of ecclesiastical control was abandoned in 1798,⁹ and members of all denominations subsequently could participate in choosing a school committee. A notice regarding the new system appeared in the Journal of the Times in October 1798. "Take notice, These are to warn all the inhabitants of the first ecclesiastical Society of Stonington

⁷ Ibid., pp. 109, 110.

⁸ Wheeler, in Hurd, New London County, p. 658.

⁹ George Stewart, Jr., A History of Religious Education in Connecticut to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924), pp. 363-364.

that have legal right to vote in Society Meetings, to meet at the white meeting house in Stonington Port . . . to choose a School Committee, and other school officers for said Society. . . . [Because] all the Inhabitants, of all denominations in said society are concerned in choosing said [school] officers it is hoped they will attend."¹⁰

The school societies governed the common schools in Connecticut until 1856, when the General Assembly returned control of the schools, to where it had been in the Seventeenth Century, in the hands of the town governments.¹¹ In Stonington, the school society chose fifteen committees (in 1799, these committees each had only one member¹²), which served as administrators for the common schools in their respective districts. A 1766 Connecticut law had authorized "each town and society to divide themselves into . . . districts for keeping their schools. . . . The districts would receive that portion of tax money for support of schools according to their respective tax lists."¹³ District committees were chosen by the school societies until 1837 when each school district in Connecticut was given the right to elect its own officers.¹⁴

Certainly, the most distinctive feature of New England education was the attempt made to provide at least the rudiments of learning to all members of society, even the poorest. When compared with much of the United States, particularly the South, which for all practical purposes

¹⁰ Stonington Journal of the Times, 17 October 1798.

¹¹ Richard Anson Wheeler, History of the Town of Stonington (New London, Conn.: Day Publishing Co. 1900), p. 101.

¹² Stonington Mirror, 2 July 1870, p. 1.

¹³ Wheeler, in Hurd, New London County, p. 659.

¹⁴ Stonington Mirror, 2 July 1870, p. 1

did not have public education until after the Civil War, the system was truly remarkable. Common school funds were raised by taxes on property (the forty shilling tax), and money obtained from the sale of land owned by the colony and state of Connecticut. In 1737, proceeds from the sale of seven townships in Northwestern Connecticut were distributed among the towns of the colony as a school fund.¹⁵ Stonington had considerable trouble collecting this money. "Taxed a bill to Capt. Thomas Prentice for his extraordinary trouble and expense in collecting the school money granted to this town in ye sales of ye town of Norfolk [in Northwestern Connecticut]."¹⁶ Additional education funds were raised in Stonington, at least in 1766, by a tax on tea and liquor. "We, Thomas Prentice, Samuel Plumb [etc.] . . . school committee for ye North Society in Stonington have received of . . . [the] selectmen of Stonington the sum of forty pounds two shillings and five pence . . . monies collected by ye collectors of Stonington on Spiritous Liquor and Tea by virtue of a late act of Assembly (May 1766) . . . [by which] sd. monies were appropriated for ye use of ye schools and ye sd. selectmen was by act of assembly ordered to receive sd. monies and deliver the same to ye school committee."¹⁷

One of the important incidents in the history of Connecticut education was the sale of lands in Ohio, which had been granted to the colony of Connecticut by Royal Charter in the Seventeenth Century. These lands, known as the Western Reserve, were sold by order of the General Assembly in 1795 for \$1,200,000. It was finally decided that the money "become and

¹⁵Wheeler, in Hurd, New London County, p. 659.

¹⁶Stonington Town Records, Volume entitled "Stonington Selectmen," April 25, 1768.

¹⁷Ibid., September 22, 1766.

remain a perpetual fund, and the interest of the same should be applied to the support of schools in the several societies in the State, and divided among them according to the polls and rateable estate."¹⁸ Thus Connecticut was the first state in the Union to establish a fund for the support of common schools.¹⁹ By careful management, the school fund was increased until it reached \$2,049,000 in 1849.²⁰ Additional money for education was provided after 1837 when excess federal revenues from land sales and customs receipts were divided among the several states. Connecticut declared that one half the income of its share was to be used for common school education. Stonington's share was \$8,734.²¹

But the fiscal problems of public education could neither be solved by any of these funds, nor by the old system of taxation. In response to the general deterioration of common schools in Stonington, a town meeting was called in 1853, when it was decided that the town should "levy a tax of one cent on a dollar of the grand list for the benefit of common schools in the town."²² According to R.A. Wheeler, who was instrumental in the passage of this educational reform, Stonington's action made a favorable impression in Connecticut, and in 1854, the General Assembly passed a law requiring each town to raise one cent on a dollar of tax lists for the benefit of common schools.²³ Even with the new tax, however, the money needed by Connecticut common schools was greater than that provided, and

¹⁸ Albert E. Van Dusen, Connecticut (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 117.

¹⁹ Benjamin Tinkham Marshall, ed., A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1922), p. 33.

²⁰ Wheeler, in Hurd, New London County, p. 660.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 660-661.

²² Wheeler, Stonington, p. 101.

²³ Wheeler, in Hurd, New London County, pp. 661-662.

in 1858, "several districts were authorized to fix a rate of tuition, not exceeding two dollars for any one term, but they might exempt these from all persons whom they considered unable to pay the same."²⁴ Finally in 1868, the State of Connecticut passed a law which placed the burden of maintaining common schools on the towns, requiring them to increase their taxes to a point where all local schools would be free for everyone.²⁵

Stonington Schools, 1800-1900

There is not much information on common schools in Stonington Borough between 1800 and 1859, although a good collection of school visitors' annual reports deposited at the Stonington Town Hall provide some insight into public education in the period thereafter. Apparently there were two school houses in the borough since the late Eighteenth Century.²⁶ In 1859, Stonington School District No. 9 (Borough) was the largest in the town with 270 registered in the winter session and 209 in the summer. There were three school houses and five schools in the district; two primary, one intermediate, one higher, and one colored.²⁷ Judging by the following notice which appeared in the Journal of the Times in 1799, sessions at the early schools were sporadic and irregular. "Notice is hereby given, to all the inhabitants within the school District of Stonington - port, that by a dividend of the public money, belonging to said district, two

²⁴Ibid., p. 662.

²⁵Bernard C. Steiner, The History of Education in Connecticut (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893), p. 42.

²⁶Annual Report of the Acting School Visitors of the Town of Stonington . . . For the Year 1874-75 (Mystic, Conn.: L.M. Guernsey's "Mystic Press", 1875), p. 8.

²⁷Annual Report of the Acting School Visitors . . . of the Town of Stonington For the year ending October 1, 1859 (Westerly, R.I.: J.H. Utter & Co., 1859), pp. 14-15.

free schools will commence on the first Monday of May next, under the direction of Elisha Faxon and Daniel Tillotson both of whom had previously taught schools in Stonington-Port in the two houses now occupied by said gentlemen, for twelve weeks. All persons in said District, desirous of being benefitted by said funds are invited to send their children for that purpose."²⁸

All those who could possibly afford it, and wished a reasonably good education for their children, sent them to private academies.²⁹ But the 25¢ a week tuition charge of the Stonington Academy,³⁰ was more than most of Stonington's residents could afford. Twenty five cents is not much today, but in the time when a "good able bodied man" was paid 64¢ for 12 hours work,³¹ it was a lot. Most of the local children who attended the Stonington Academy in 1811 were scions of the upper crust of the town; and there is no evidence that any of the pupils came from families of modest means (see appendix).³² Some of the children at the Stonington Academy were only six years old; the oldest was sixteen. Thus, it is obvious that the Academy was not expected to provide additional training for common school pupils, but to take the place of the common schools.

²⁸Stonington Journal of the Times, 14 May 1799, p. 1. Faxon had advertised his earlier school in the Journal of the Times in 1798. "E Faxon will remove his school on Monday . . . to the new school house near Mr. Crary's. . . . His terms for tuition are, - for reading - 8d per week, for writers 9d; for those who learn arithmetic 10d; and 1s per week for those who study the latin language, english, grammar and elocution. . . . N.B. he teaches navigation, mensuration, etc. as usual." Stonington Journal of the Times, 17 October 1798.

²⁹Samuel Hart, "The Common Schools of Connecticut," in William F. Davis, ed., The New England States: Their Constitutional, Judicial, Educational, Commercial, Professional and Industrial History (Boston: D.W. Hurd & Co., n.d.), 2:705.

³⁰"School Bill, Stonington Academy," Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Conn.

³¹"Road Tax Labor Rates," Stonington Town Records, III.

³²"List of Scholars in Stonington Academy," Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

In 1824, the Stonington Academy offered "a fundamental and thorough knowledge of the Greek, Latin and French languages, surveying, navigation, and other branches of the Mathematics; English grammar, Bookkeeping, and the rudiments of the English tongue;" in addition, pupils "conduct out of school" would be "regulated by the principal of the Academy; if required by parents and guardians."³³ This tremendous amount of scholastic and moral education cost only \$2 to \$4 a term!

For those whose parents couldn't afford tuition fees, educational prospects in early Nineteenth Century Stonington must have been pretty dismal; for girls, they were bleak indeed. Martha Denison Peete wrote of her education in Stonington Borough, "My education had been neglected. My parents taught me habits of industry and reading; but schools were very different from the present day. Few females had more than the first rudiments of education. Among my earliest recollections are the scenes of my school days in the house of the widow Franklin. . . . It was then the custom to devote most of the school hours to sewing, and little girls would make fine shirts for their fathers or brothers . . . and often a girl of nine or ten years would make the entire garment."³⁴

As late as 1854, Reverend William Clift, pastor of the Congregational Church, requested that he be dismissed from his position because the salary was so low he could not afford a decent education for his children. "I am unable to educate them in our private schools, even if these were all that is desirable. And the prospect of graded schools upon a liberal basis,

³³ Stonington Yankee, 1 December 1824, p. 3.

³⁴ Martha-Denison Peete, "My Home in Connecticut Fifty Years Ago," Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society 11 (January and April 1946): 1, 2, 12.

seems remote and unpromising."³⁵ Parents who sent their children to private schools away from home found the expense was considerable. In 1836, Asa Fish, a well-to-do merchant from Mystic, received a letter from Frederic Morgan, headmaster of the Colchester (Conn.) Academy, outlining the costs of education there. Board, which included lodging, meals, and washing, cost \$2.50 a week. Tuition ranged from \$4 to \$6 a term, one text book cost \$2.00 and another \$1.50.³⁶ A laborer of those days was lucky to make \$5 or \$6 a week.

Obviously, an adequate system of public education could replace the private schools only if there was an adequate tax base to support it. As already noted, during the middle of the Nineteenth Century Connecticut officials began an overhaul of the outmoded system for financing public schools. In Stonington, as in all New England, public expenditures for education in the Ante-Bellum Period were ridiculously low even if allowances are made for the high value of the dollar. Samuel Hart wrote, "from 1821, when the income of the school fund was held sufficient to make the tax for schools unnecessary, until 1854, there was practically no town or society school tax in the state. Rate or tuition bills were made out in varying ways against those whose children went to the school, the town assuming the bills of those who were unable to pay them."³⁷ In 1838, the citizens of Stonington "voted that this town appropriate one half of the interest

³⁵ Second Congregational Church Records, March 9, 1854.

³⁶"School Bill, 1836"; Asa Fish Papers, Yale University Manuscripts Division, New Haven, Connecticut.

³⁷Hart, "Common Schools," p. 706. "Voted, that the Selectmen of this town shall draw an order on the treasury of the town in favor of the District committee of any school district in this town . . . for the amount of all school bills . . . against persons within their district who are not able to pay said bills." Stonington Town Records, IV, October 2, 1854.

of the town deposits fund the present year to the Benefit and use of common schools and the other half for the ordinary expenses of said town. Whole amount of fund was in 1838 \$8,734.91. The above amount is loaned to the following named persons on notes secured by Mortgages on Real Estate. S.F. Denison \$2,911.26, William Hyde, \$2,912.39; Wm. H. Rodman, \$2,911.26. Interest on above notes at 6% \$524.09."³⁸ Thus the fund provided \$262 for common schools in Stonington. A school bill made out to Charles H. Smith, a fairly wealthy construction contractor, illustrates the costs of education for those who were judged able to pay for it. Smith's son Joseph had attended the High Street School from December 1st, 1856 to February 20th, 1857; the tuition fee for the term of almost three months was \$6.00.³⁹ The school district, not the town, paid for construction and repair of school buildings. "Voted that a tax of thirteen cents on the dollar . . . be laid on the tax list of this district, to defray the expense of building the new school house for this district, and purchasing the land on which said school house stands, and furnishing appendages for said school house."⁴⁰ Failure to pay taxes to the school district could result in imprisonment. If a person failed to pay his

³⁸Stonington Town Records, III, June 1, 1839. The town received additional school funds from the state (the proceeds of the Western Reserve) although I don't know how much this amounted to. Voted "that this town appropriate the one half of the interest of the Town Deposit fund the present year, for the benefit and use of common schools . . . to be paid among the school districts in the same manner as the public school money shall be divided." Stonington Town Records, IV, October 4, 1841.

³⁹Smith Collection, MS 70300, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

⁴⁰Sixth School District Records, May 22, 1839, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

taxes, "for want of goods and chattels on which to make distress you are to take the body of the person so neglecting and him commit unto the keeper of the jail of said county . . . until he shall pay the same together with your fees."⁴¹

The fiscal footing of Connecticut education became considerably more secure after the passage of the 1868 law which required that all towns raise sufficient funds by taxation to make all schools free. Exactly how much the annual school budget of Stonington was before the Civil War, it is impossible to say, but I would venture to guess it was leagues away from the \$7,000 appropriated in 1869. "Voted that the sum of Seven Thousand Sixty Eight 10/100 Dollars . . . is hereby appropriated to make the common schools of this town free of expense to the several Districts therein, for the period of thirty weeks during the ensuing school year, which amount is equal to the amount of money received by this town during the past year from the Connecticut School Fund, and from its Town Deposit fund, and to one mill on the dollar of the Grand List of this town and an additional amount is hereby appropriated, sufficient to make said schools free of expense to said Districts, if it shall appear that the foregoing appropriations shall fall short of this purpose."⁴²

Toward 1900, there was a gradual increase in money expended on public education. In 1889, Stonington schools cost \$13,329. They received \$2,366 from the state, \$524 from the town deposit fund, \$228 from the town

⁴¹"Record Book, 1857," Third School District Manuscript Papers, 1823-1879, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

⁴²Stonington Town Records, September 13, 1869.

of Groton, and \$9.210 from the taxpayers of the town.⁴³ In 1900, total expenditures for schools in Stonington were \$17,790 with the town paying \$12,272 of this amount.⁴⁴ The population of the town of Stonington had increased by 2200 since 1870, from 6,313 to 8,540,⁴⁵ while expenditures for education more than doubled during the period.

It is interesting to note that it cost almost as much to maintain one child in the Stonington Borough public school for 30 weeks in 1890 (\$15), as it did to pay a woman teacher's salary for two months in 1819 (\$16).⁴⁶ Although Stonington throughout the Nineteenth Century was one of the wealthiest towns per capita in Connecticut, money expended on education, both in the borough and the town, was less than the statewide average. In 1895, the cost per student in Connecticut was about \$24, while in Stonington it was only about \$15.⁴⁷

Money was not the only obstacle standing in the way of a good public school system in Stonington, for racial, ethnic, and class antagonisms also hindered the efforts of educational reformers until late in the Nineteenth Century. The borough of Stonington had the dubious distinction of being probably the last community in Connecticut to have a segregated school.

⁴³Annual Report of the Board of School Visitors of the Town of Stonington . . . for . . . 1889 (Westerly, R.I.: G.B. & G.H. Utter, 1889).

⁴⁴Report of the Board of School Visitors . . . of Stonington (Westerly, R.I.: Geo. H. Utter, 1900).

⁴⁵Register and Manual of the State of Connecticut; 1870, 1900.

⁴⁶"Voted that the committee be instructed to hire a woman teacher for the summer season to board at one or more places at one dollar per week for tuition and one dollar per week for board." Second School District, Stonington; Correspondence, February 28, 1819. Smith Collection, MS 70295, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

⁴⁷Report of the Board of School Visitors of the Town of Stonington for . . . 1895 (New London, Conn.: The Day Print, N.D.), p. 7.

The editor of the Norwich Argus wrote sarcastically of the situation, "will not someone inform the voters of Stonington that some changes have occurred in the rest of the country during the last twenty-years, and suggest that in this respect, the Borough is behind the time?"⁴⁸ The citizens of the borough preserved the racial purity of their children at considerable expense. The 1877 report of the school visitors, which recommended that the colored school be abolished and the children enrolled in the white schools claimed that "the cost to the town of educating one of these colored pupils, has been more than three times the cost of educating a pupil in the High School, and about four times as much as it cost to educate a pupil in any of the other Departments."⁴⁹ Finally in 1876, "the colored school was abolished, the scholars to be distributed according to their standing, among the other schools."⁵⁰ Discrimination against blacks in Stonington schools, however, was not abolished along with the colored school. "Having visited the grammar school . . . we were much displeased to notice the great partiality shown to the detriment of a few of the fellow students, stowed away in the furthest corner of the schoolroom, simply because God in his wise providence chose to variegate them in colors, thereby rendering them obnoxious subjects for ostracism, in this New England Christian community. . . . Will the Board of Education inform us if there is anything in their code that justifies such treatment, that we may know whether the blame and shame should be charged to them or to the prejudice of the school visitors and teachers."⁵¹

⁴⁸Stonington Mirror, 9 December 1875, p. 2.

⁴⁹Annual Report of the Board of School Visitors of Stonington . . . 1871-72 (Stonington: Stonington Printing Company, 1872), p. 5.

⁵⁰Stonington Mirror, 31 August 1876, p. 2.

⁵¹Letter from "T.F.B." in the Stonington Mirror, 17 May 1877.

Education and Class Relations in Stonington

The only outburst of class conflict in Nineteenth Century Stonington occurred during the 1870's. The cause was a proposal to construct a graded school in Stonington Borough. Although the names of most of those on both sides of the argument are lost it is safe to say that opposition to the new school came mostly from Stonington's wealthier citizens, and that they opposed the project because of its expense. The 1859 report of the Stonington school visitors had suggested that the purpose of common schools was to provide a decent education for all children, rich and poor. "One great and leading purpose of the Board has been, so to elevate the character of the common schools, as to enable them to afford to all the children of the town the means of a thorough academic course of study, without the appendages of private schools and academies. . . . It is only in the district school where the poor enjoy equal opportunities with the rich, for it is only in the district school that poor children are furnished with books and tuition without money and without price. This feature of our common schools should endear the district school house to every child of poverty, and should inspire every philanthropist and Christian to render them fully adequate to their high ideals."⁵²

The admirable sentiments of the school visitors, however, were harshly received when an attempt was made to put them into practice by building a consolidated and graded school in Stonington Borough after the Civil War. The first call for a graded school found was in an 1870 editorial by Jerome Anderson. "Experience", he declared in the Mirror, "has shown that we are unable to support a good private school, and the public schools furnishing no instruction in any but the common branches, those wishing their children

⁵² School Visitors Report, 1859, p. 6.

to be accomplished in something beside the 'three R's', have been obliged to send them away. This difficulty a graded school would obviate, and we see no reason for opposition to its establishment. There will doubtless be many objections offered by those to whom money is dearer than knowledge, but we believe that the number of our citizens who work for the public good will override all opposition."⁵³ The 1871-1872 report of the Stonington school visitors suggested "if all the schools in the District [No. 9 - Stonington Borough] could meet in one House, and be divided into five regular grades, the benefits of the money expended on them would be fully doubled."⁵⁴

Anderson realized that the normal apathy of Stonington citizens toward education would vanish once their pocketbooks were threatened. "It is truly astonishing to see what an interest is displayed by our citizens in regard to our public schools and the management thereof. At the annual [Ninth School] district meeting, last Friday evening, there were only eleven persons in attendance, which is about the average number on such occasions. Unless it is proposed to build a new school house - when the number is swelled by scores of people, who fearing they may be taxed a few dollars, turn out in force to defeat the project."⁵⁵

Because governments were expected to provide the barest minimum of services, taxes in the Nineteenth Century were incredibly low. For instance, Charles P. Williams, whose total taxable estate in 1870 was \$584,000,⁵⁶ would have paid only \$3,500 in taxes to the town of Stonington

⁵³ Stonington Mirror, 12 March 1870, p. 2.

⁵⁴ School Visitors Report, 1871-72, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Stonington Mirror, 7 September 1871, p.2.

⁵⁶ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1870.

in 1876, when the tax rate was six mills on the dollar.⁵⁷ In addition, Williams paid taxes only on about one sixth of his total wealth as he died a few years later, worth over three million dollars. So the rich of those days were freed from the unhappy burden of employing sharp tax accountants and lawyers searching for loopholes to make sure the government took the least possible amount of their property. Nevertheless, several of Stonington's wealthy citizens opposed the new school because the \$15,000 needed to construct the school would increase taxes by three mills. C.P. Williams, one of the opponents of the new school, would have been required to pay about \$1,750 for the building. Men of more moderate, but still quite comfortable means, like Stiles Stanton and Joseph E. Smith, who were also opponents of the new school,⁵⁸ would have each paid \$42.50, since both possessed estates of about \$14,500.⁵⁹ The stinginess of the good burghers of Stonington prompted a poem, sent into the Mirror by "Tom Slender", after the defeat of a graded school proposal in 1875.

"The Graded School"

In the case of the school, there's men going agin it
Cause they see a big tax comin out from within it
Why, bless yer soul Zekel, there's men in this town
That don't spend their interest, but salt it all down
for the next generation, who ez soon ez they git it
will make it as useful ez a match when you relit it.

Thar was men at that meeting, who voted agin us,
Who could build the whole school, and not feel a pin wuss
And there goes a man smart's any in the nation,
Who says that the poor don't need any eddycashion
Them's bully sentiments, for a man thats got money
The poor take the gall, and the rich get the honey.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Stonington Town Records, IV, September 11, 1876.

⁵⁸Stonington Mirror, 26 August 1875.

⁵⁹Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1870.

⁶⁰Stonington Mirror, 29 January 1874, p. 3.

But there were a number of well to do citizens who voted in favor of the tax and the new school. One of them, Capt. Benjamin F. Cutler, who had been a whaling captain, and also commanded a Pacific clipper during the 1870's, wrote a remarkable letter, which deserves to be quoted at length, explaining his support of the school project to C.P. Williams.

This question of schools is no new thing with me for I have had all through my life so far to feel my own need of a better education and I have often felt if I could at any time of had the chance to study that I was capable of something more than simply navigating a ship across the ocean but as you probably know I had to go to sea at 15 yrs. of age and since then have had no (or very few) opportunities of improvement. Feeling my own need so much I have always felt that the next generation should have better opportunities than I had . . . [since] from among these boys must come our future and if there is any talent among them I want them to have a chance to improve it. . . . In a free country like ours [education is] a poor man's right which the state is bound [to provide]. . . . Several years ago I proposed . . . publicly that if \$40,000 dolls. could be raised voluntarily in our district that I would give \$1000 . . . much more than a tenth of all I had. But in so doing I did not feel that I should be wronging my family for what I may leave them in this world of changes some of them may probably loose but a good school well founded would be a lasting benefit to my children's children when I am gone from this life.⁶¹

A second motive for those who opposed the construction of a graded school, was hostility toward the "lesser breeds" who were becoming more numerous in both the borough and town of Stonington. During a meeting discussing the school appropriations, an opponent claimed that only the Irish and Portuguese went to public schools. Capt. George S. Brewster (whose whaling journal was discussed above), one of the leading advocates of the new school house replied, "It has been said that there were no children excepting Irish and Portuguese who went to the public schools, I ask, sir, who built our railroads, killed the whales and filled our ships

⁶¹ B.F. Cutler to C.P. Williams, 26 January 1876, C.P. Williams Papers, Box XXI, G.W. Blunt-White Library, Mystic, Connecticut.

with oil, and made our town the sixth - as it was a few years ago - in point of wealth in the state."⁶² Perhaps at the same meeting, "when some one complained of the lack of ventilation in the brick school house . . . one of our leading citizens answered, 'It's good enough for niggers anyhow'."⁶³ There was also an objection raised to the participation of Portuguese, Irish, and Blacks at meetings discussing the graded school and other school matters.⁶⁴

Finally in 1875, after recommendations from the Board of School Visitors that construction of a graded school was a necessity, Ninth District voters appropriated \$15,000 for the new school. One of the visitors, J.S. Fitzpatrick had even called the old borough schools "educational shanties."⁶⁵ The following year, the voters decided to postpone construction, but the State Board of Education intervened, claiming construction of a graded school could not be delayed.⁶⁶ The borough school was not completed until 1889. The building, now abandoned, is beautifully located on the east side of Stonington Borough, overlooking the water. To the southeast Napatree Point and the Atlantic Ocean are clearly visible, inspiring or distracting generations of Stonington's young scholars.

The capstone to the educational reforms in Stonington Borough during the Nineteenth Century, was the establishment of a free high school, which was apparently designed primarily to train teachers. "For the first time in their history, a class in the Senior department completed the studies in

⁶² Stonington Mirror, 26 August 1875.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 19 August 1875.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 23 December 1875.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 19 August 1875.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 March 1876, pp. 2-3.

the course prescribed by the town Board of Education and graduated with honor, each member receiving a diploma, entitling the recipient to teach in either of the public schools of the town without further examination."⁶⁷ Although the number of graduates of the new school was small - the class of 1892 consisted of two girls -⁶⁸ its establishment, along with the construction of the graded school, meant that private schools, like the old Stonington Academy, were no longer needed in Stonington Borough.

⁶⁷ Annual Report of the Board of School Visitors of . . . Stonington . . . for . . . 1885 (Providence, R.I.: Providence Press Company, 1884), p. 10.

⁶⁸ Stonington Mirror, 9 December 1875, p. 2.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF SCHOLARS IN STONINGTON ACADEMY

Summer Term, 1811, Rev. Ira Hart A.M.

Principal, Mr. William Rodman, Assistant¹

Name of Student	Father's Name	Ratable Estate
Thomas Ash Benjamin Ash)	Thomas Ash - Ropemaker-employed a servant in 1810 ²	\$2,614 taxable estate *
Noyes Billings) William Billings)	Coddington Billings	\$ 31,000 *
John N. Brown	Probably Jonas Brown-owned 3 3d rate smokes & 42 acres of land in North Society of Stonington [North Stonington] in 1802 ³	
Ezra Chesebrough, Jr.	Ezra Chesebrough	\$ 1,894 *
Giles R. Crary	Probably Edward or Peter Crary, New York residents - owned 3 3d rate smokes in 1811. ⁴	
Thomas Davison) Gilbert Davison)	Probably John Davison - paid poll tax and \$10 assessment in 1811. ⁵	

Benjamin S. Cutler - father probably a resident of New York.

¹"A List of Scholars in Stonington Academy," Houghton Library, Harvard University.

²Federal Census Schedule, 1810.

³Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1802.

⁴Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1811.

⁵Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1811. Davison was undoubtedly a self employed mechanic: "Persons carrying on a mechanical business of any kind, shall be assessed according to their profits . . . not less than ten nor more than two hundred dollars." Connecticut, Public Statutes, 1808, p. 470. By 1812 John Davison had acquired 120 acres and 2 3d rate smokes. Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1812.

* All estates so designated taken from the 1813 Stonington Tax List at the New London County Historical Society.

Name of Student	Father's Name	Ratable Estate
Charles Dewey	Home was in New Bern, N.C.	
James G. Forrester	Home was in Charleston, S.C.	
David S. Hart	Rev. Ira Hart, a Congregational Minister. [thus not taxed in Connecticut where Congregationalism was an established religion.]	
Charles E. Phelps	Dr. Charles Phelps - in 1802 he owned 5 1st rate smokes, 6 2d rate, 14 3d rate, and 39 4th rate, 35 head of cattle, 6 horses, 3500 acres of land and a carriage. ⁶	
Anson Merritt	Archibald Merritt 3 3d rate smokes worth \$500 in 1813* [a third rate smoke was the type of house the majority of Stonington residents lived in in the early Nineteenth Century. Only Charles Phelps of all the Stonington residents whose estates I investigated ever owned "first rate smokes." In fact the classifica- tion was omitted entirely on Stonington tax lists after about 1808.]	
Peleg Phelps	Jonathan Phelps 152 acres 6 3d rate and 3 4th rate smokes in 1810. ⁷	
Giles C. Smith	Col. Joseph Smith 5 acres of land and 5 second rate smokes in 1810 [A "second rate smoke" was an expensive house.] ⁸	
George Stanton	Zebulon Stanton 6 acres of land, 5 second rate smokes in 1810. ⁹	
Lazarus Moss) Jesse L. Moss)	Father Congregational minister Reuben Moss.	
William R. Palmer	Amos Palmer \$13,395 estate in 1813.*	
Nathaniel Palmer 3d in 1813.*	Nathaniel Palmer, Jr. \$18,170 estate	

⁶Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1802.

⁷Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1810.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

Name of Student	Father's Name	Ratable Estate
Courtland Palmer) George Palmer)	[Amos Palmer - above]	
John Palmer	Lemuel Palmer	\$2890 estate in 1813 - 12 cows, 87 acres land, 3 3d rate smokes.*
Joshua Pendleton	Otis Pendleton	Ship's Captain owned 1/2 of a vessel worth \$500 in 1813.*
Isaac Pendleton	?	
Charles Phelps	Joseph Phelps	\$21,400 estate left to heirs in 1813.*
Horace S. Phelps	Stiles Phelps	10 531 acres, 6 2d rate - 11 3d rate smokes in 1812.
John D. Smith	?	
George W. Territt	either William Territt or William Teritt, Jr.	The former owned 7 3d rate smokes and had \$250 at interest and a store in 1812. The latter owned 3 3d rate smokes in 1810. ¹¹
William L. Territt	Father probably William Territt, Jr. [above.]	
Charles Territt	[see George W. Territt above.]	
Stiles P. York	Oliver York - kept a Hotel in the borough.	Owned 6 3d rate smokes in 1810. ¹²
John Trumbull	Probably John F. Trumbull the whaling magnate.	John's father published a newspaper in Norwich, Connecticut.
Ebenezer S. Cobb) Oliver Cobb)	?	

Females

Mary T. Ash) Selina Ash)	(See Thomas Ash above)	
Frances Ann Babcock	-	Westerly, R.I.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1812.

¹¹ Ibid., 1812, 1810.

¹² Ibid., 1810.

Name of Student	Father's Name	Ratable Estate
Lucy Ann Brewster	- only Brewster on 1810 tax lists was Stephen who owned 6 3d rate smokes. ¹³	
Abigail Cobb	?	
Catharine Cobb	- Father Henry Stanton Cobb paid only a poll tax in 1810. ¹⁴	
Phebe L. Crary	[see Giles C. Crary above.]	
Eunice Denison	Oliver Denison	\$7,000 estate in 1813.*
Almira D.H. Faxon	Elisha Faxon possessed no taxable property until 1820; but he was called a speculating merchant on the tax list of 1814, and assessed as a merchant for \$70 in 1810. ¹⁵	
Harriet E. Hart) Louisa M. Hart)	Father Rev. Ira Hart	
Anne Rhodes Hammond	- Newport, R.I.	
Mary Esther Moss) Tirzah Moss)	Father Rev. Reuben Moss	
Caroline Pendleton	Charles Pendleton's heirs rated at \$1,100 in 1813.*	
Martha Phelps) Nancy Phelps)	Joseph Phelps [see above.]	
Sally Phelps	Dr. Charles E. Phelps [see above.]	
Abigail Sheffield	- Two Sheffields on 1810 tax list. William Sheffield's heirs - 6 2d rate smokes; Acors Sheffield's heirs 3 3d rate smokes.	
Mary Smith	Col. Joseph Smith [see above.]	
Betsey S. Smith	Joseph Smith - son of Col. Joseph whom he probably lived with as his name does not appear on Stonington tax records.	

¹³Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1810.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵"Traders of all kinds shall be assessed according to their profits, . . . not less than 40, nor more than three hundred dollars." Connecticut, Public Statutes, 1808, p. 470.

Name of Student	Father's Name	Ratable Estate
Sally Ann Swan -	Two Swans on 1810 tax list - Thomas Swan (Thomas Swan & Co.) owned 5 2d rate smokes and was assessed \$60 as a merchant. Joshua Swan owned 22 acres of land and 3 3d rate smokes. ¹⁶	
Lucinda Trumbull	Samuel Trumbull, publisher of the <u>Impartial Journal and Journal of the Times</u> . Owned 2 3d rate smokes in 1802. ¹⁷	
Jerusha Williams	Isaac Williams	
Harriet York)	Oliver York - see above.	
Eliza P. York)		

¹⁶Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1810.

¹⁷Ibid., 1802.

CHAPTER VIII

POOR RELIEF IN STONINGTON

Poor relief in colonial New England was left almost entirely to the towns. The first important general poor law in New England was passed by Connecticut in 1673. The law provided that "every town within this colony shall maintain their own poor." Any person, who, after residing three months in a town, "by sickness, lameness or the like comes to want," was to be supported by that town.¹ Unlike England, which had numerous paupers who were able to work, but could not find any, the colonies suffered from a chronic labor shortage,² and only the lazy and the infirm lacked employment. In answer to a request from the English Privy Council in 1680 regarding provisions made for poor relief, the Connecticut colonial government replied: "For the poor, it is ordered that they be relieved by the towns where they live, every town providing for their own poor, and so for impotent persons. There is seldom any want relief; because labor is dear, viz., 2s, and sometimes 2s.6d a day, for a day laborer, and provision cheap."³

As the responsibility and expense of poor relief fell on the towns, they were naturally anxious to avoid supporting legal residents of other communities. One important reason why New England towns strictly regulated

¹Edward Warren Capen, The Historical Development of the Poor Law of Connecticut, Columbia University Studies in the Social Sciences, No. 57 (New York: AMS Press, 1968, orig. published, 1905), p. 29.

²Stephen Foster, Their Solitary Way: The Puritan Social Ethic in the First Century of Settlement in New England (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 136.

³Capen, Poor Law, p. 22.

the admission of inhabitants and the residence of transients was a desire to keep taxes as low as possible.⁴

In 1636, a Connecticut law forbade any young man to maintain a residence with another family, without permission of the inhabitants of the town where he planned to reside.⁵ In 1643, the Connecticut General Court declared that only those persons who were admitted by a majority vote of a town were considered admitted inhabitants.⁶ A law passed in 1667 forbade any person to remain in a town after being warned to depart by the selectmen.⁷ These laws were designed not only to prevent unnecessary expenditures, but also to exclude contentious disturbers of the peace from the Puritan Commonwealth.⁸ To relieve the distress of those paupers who were not admitted inhabitants of any town in the colonies, a 1711 Connecticut law provided that "such indigent persons not . . . inhabitants . . . of any town in this colony . . . the charge of their sickness shall be defrayed out of the public treasury of the colony."⁹

There was, of course, no charity for the willfully idle. Religion, environment, and memories of their old homeland all played a part in the Puritan's attitude toward idleness. Idleness was detested first of all, because as the Puritans interpreted the Bible, it was sinful. Secondly, the harsh environment of New England necessitated a society based on industry and frugality. Finally, the Puritans were anxious to avoid the heavy burden of taxes for poor relief which England had experienced: some

⁴Foster, Solitary Way, p. 141.

⁵Capen, Poor Law, p. 23.

⁶Ibid., p. 30. A subsequent law provided that strangers inhabiting a town for three months should be considered residents of that town. Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 25.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 44.

parishes spent nearly a third of their income for support of the poor. Thus the "New England colonies were extremely hostile to idlers, vagrants, and vagabonds and passed numerous laws to compel them to work."¹⁰ The Connecticut code of 1650 included one law entitled "Idleness", in which it was proclaimed "that no person, householder or other, shall spend his time idly or unprofitably, under pain of such punishment as the court shall think meet to inflict, and for this end . . . the constable of every place shall use special care and diligence to take knowledge of offenders of this kind . . . and present the same unto any magistrate, who shall have power to hear and determine the case or transfer it to the court."¹¹ In their reply to the Privy Council query in 1680, members of the Connecticut colonial government commented, "beggars and vagabonds were not suffered but when discovered, were bound out to service."¹²

By the Eighteenth Century those misfits who viewed labor with the eye of a cavalier were treated to a term in the workhouse. The first workhouse in Connecticut was established in Hartford in 1727. "Those who might be committed were all rogues, vagabonds and idle persons going about in town or country begging, or persons using any subtil [sic] craft . . . feigning themselves to have knowledge in physiognomy, palmistry [etc.], common pipers, fiddlers, runaways, stubborn servants or children, common drunkards, common night walkers, pilferers, common railers or brawlers such as might neglect their callings, misspend what they earn, and do not

¹⁰ Marcus Wilson Jernegan, Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1960), p. 199.

¹¹ Capen, Poor Law, p. 35.

¹² Alexander Johnston, Connecticut: A Study of a Commonwealth Democracy (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), p. 267.

provide for themselves or the support of their families."¹³

New England poor relief in the 1800's did not stray much from the paths laid out in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. As in the Seventeenth Century the administration and financial burden of caring for paupers remained almost entirely with the town; there was a continued hostility toward idleness; there was reluctance to expend more than the barest minimum; and citizens maintained the right to prevent residents of other communities from becoming charges of their own.¹⁴ One feature was added to the New England system of poor relief in the Eighteenth Century, pauper auctions; and one in the Nineteenth, town farms. During the latter half of the Eighteenth Century, the practice of "pauper auctions" or contracting the poor out to the lowest bidder, that is, the one who would charge the town the least amount of money, arose. Pauper auctions originated in New England some time before the Revolution; by the early 1830's their popularity was waning.¹⁵ Contracting of the poor was first mentioned in the

¹³Capen, Poor Law, p. 59.

¹⁴The Connecticut residence law was liberalized in 1792. According to the new law "any inhabitant of a Connecticut town who moved to another town and remained for six years from his arrival without putting either town to any expense for him or any of his family, gained a settlement there. So long as he supported himself and his family, he could not be . . . removed." Capen, Poor Law, pp. 100-101.

¹⁵Benjamin J. Klebaner, "Pauper Auctions: The 'New England Method' of Poor Relief," Essex Institute Historical Collections, 91 (July 1955): 203. In 1820, the Republican administration of Connecticut, which according to Morse was notable for its parsimony, Jarvis Means Morse, A Neglected Period of Connecticut's History, 1818-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933), p. 17; abandoned the practice of supporting all paupers without settlements in the state, which it had assumed since 1711, in favor of pauper auctions. "The comptroller was empowered to contract with any person . . . for the relief and support of the state paupers, 'on the best terms.'" Capen, Poor Law, pp. 139-140. In 1886, Stiles Stanton, a resident of Stonington Borough, and State Senator from Stonington's district, introduced a petition in the Senate calling for the "prohibition of town's farming out their poor wards to the lowest bidder. . . . As the governor in his message favors such an act, doubtless this legislature will abolish the inhuman custom of selling the

Stonington Town Records in 1770. "This day agreed with Mr. Benajah Parks to take Asa (a Bastard child) the son of Penellope Meach at 2 shillings a week for the term of one year and to be returned as well cloathed. The same day agreed with Mr. Charles Wheeler to take Penellope Meach & Elizabeth her child and bord them & find them washing & lodging for their labor without charge to the town and dismiss her as well cloathed as at present."¹⁶

Exactly how poor relief had worked before the adoption of the contract system in Stonington, is difficult to say. Apparently paupers were placed for a specified fee in the homes of persons designated by the town. These persons would then periodically submit their bills for payment. "January ye 28th 1750/1 John Chapman had a bill allowed for keeping John Bennet towns poor from ye 24th day of April 1748 to April 23, 1749 for the sum of forty nine pounds and Eight shillings and 14 shillings for making a pair of shoes. £50:2:0."¹⁷ The duration of one of these accounts was amazing: "The selectmen allowed a bill of 27 pounds to Mr. David Denison it being for keeping Charles Hill Fifty three years."¹⁸ In 1761, Stonington was involved in a dispute over the support of an orphan, Joseph Pendleton. After losing the argument, a notice was entered in the town records that

poor into bondage." Stonington Mirror, 6 February 1886, p. 2. It was abolished the following year. William Walter Thomas Squire, Charities and Corrections in Connecticut, publ. of Tercentenary Commission of the State of Connecticut, No. LVII (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), pp. 14-15.

¹⁶ According to Klebaner, an important consideration was the amount of labor which could be expected from the pauper. "The lowest bidder understood that in return for the maintenance he gave the town charge, he could make use of the pauper's labor power." Klebaner, "Pauper Auctions," p. 198.

¹⁷ Stonington, Miscellaneous Records, Selectmen's Meetings, January 28, 1750/1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, n.d., 1727.

"In behalf of this town [a committee] agree with any person or persons to maintain and support the Boy called Joseph Pendleton . . . and to give such a sum, . . . not exceeding twenty five pounds . . . in case any person shall give sufficient bonds for the maintenance of said boy."¹⁹

The evils inherent in the system of pauper auctions are readily apparent. Through the philanthropy of one of its citizens, which made possible the establishment of a town farm in 1826, Stonington was able to abandon it much earlier than most New England towns. Whether or not Stonington's paupers preferred the town farm to pauper auctions is impossible to say. In North Stonington the contract system was still in operation 50 years later. "A contractor has agreed to board two of North Stonington's poor for 90 1/2 cents a week, and another for 35 cents and is understood to make money out of his contract."²⁰

The Town Farm

As early as 1803 the citizens of Stonington decided that a town farm was the best solution for the problem of the poor, when the town meeting accepted a proposal to provide a poor house. "Voted that the town will make provisions for a House for the poor of sd town."²¹ The initial plan was to rent a house and farm, and the concern of town officials was to

¹⁹ Stonington Town Records, II, June 22, 1761. I found several of these bills puzzling. For instance, "The same day ye selectmen gave an order to the treasurer to pay John Gibbons, Jun. £20 for keeping his father." Stonington Selectmen, Jan. 26, 1740/1. And "Hannah Jones received £13 7 shill. 6.P for keeping her father 53 weeks and a half at 5 shillings per week." Stonington, Miscellaneous Records, June 8, 1728. I would have thought that the primary responsibility for maintaining paupers would have been with their families (if they had any), but perhaps the town would assist those who were too poor to support their indigent relatives.

²⁰ Stonington Mirror, 13 April 1876, p. 2.

²¹ Stonington Town Records, III, November 21, 1803.

reduce expenses, and also to improve the living conditions of paupers.

In 1824, at a town meeting, it was "resolved that the Selectmen be authorized . . . to hire a house and farm to accommodate the poor of Stonington . . . with a suitable person to oversee them, if in their opinion it will immelorate [sic] the condition of the sd poor and not increase the Expenses of sd town."²² But in the following year, a bequest by a wealthy resident, William Woodbridge, led to a decision to purchase a house for the poor. "Voted to accept the Donation given to sd town by William Woodbridge Esq. in his last will for the purpose of building or purchasing a house for accommodating the poor, and a house of correction."²³

By 1826, a committee reported on ending the contract system of poor relief and purchasing a town farm. It found "that the old system of selling the poor to the lowest bidder is invariably . . . more expensive to the town than the plan of owning a farm of good productive land, with suitable buildings and stock and having a man and wife whose sole business it should be to manage its affairs under the direction of the Selectmen."²⁴ At that time, there were twenty people on public charge in Stonington. Seven lived at the house of Gilbert Collins, five lived in Stonington Borough (exactly where is unspecified), while each of the remaining eight lived with a different family.²⁵ Hannah Edgecomb, the contractor for one of these eight, Hannah Grant, charged the town of Stonington 75 cents per week.²⁶ Although

²² Ibid., February 9, 1824.

²³ Ibid., November 28, 1825.

²⁴ Stonington Town Records, III, 13 February 1826.

²⁵ Stonington Town Accounts, March 20, 1826. MS 70286, Charles H. Smith Collection, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

²⁶ Ibid., April 17, 1827.

the committeemen were, I think, humanitarians, they found it necessary to appeal to the economic interest of Stonington taxpayers. "Your committee have to state that at Norwich, Colchester and Lyme . . . the old system of selling the poor has proved not only much more expensive . . . but objectionable on account of not furnishing maintenance for the poor equal to what humanity dictates." One of the advantages of a town farm was that it would allow paupers to contribute something toward their own support. "In Norwich . . . it is . . . found that almost every individual is able to earn something towards their support [if] they have lands. . . . During the last year, the average number of paupers was about 42, the whole charge to the establishment was but little over \$900. Oakum and other articles [are] sold and labour performed by some of the paupers on the roads diminished [this cost] so that the actual expense of supporting the poor and correcting the vicious amounted to . . . \$460 per annum or less than 22 cents [per pauper] a week."²⁷

The committee discovered that the inmates at the Norwich town farm were healthy and contented. "The inmates of that institution look cleanly, have good wholesome provisions, appear cheerful and contented and evince no disposition to leave the house." The committee recommended that Stonington purchase a farm of "at least one hundred acres of good land. . . . Your committee believe that the sum of four thousand dollars together with the legacy left by the late Wm. Woodbridge Esq. [\$1000] will be fully adequate. . . . They fully believe a saving will accrue to the town . . . [and expenses will be reduced] to about \$260 p/a, [compared to] an average of about \$800 pr. annum for the last 15 years."²⁸ In April of 1826, the

²⁷ Stonington Town Records, III, 13 February 1826.

²⁸ Ibid.

town purchased a 120 acre farm with buildings for four thousand dollars.²⁹ It seems that the relative cheapness of the farm compared to the contract system was its chief attraction: the selectmen decided "to bring Mr. Josua ? Eldridge and all his family to our town house provided he is not able by this time to provide for himself and his family. We can keep them much cheaper than we can contract with J. & H. Chesebro."³⁰

Although there will always be people like the committeemen who recognize "the strong obligation resting upon us to provide a comfortable support for those whom misfortunes have reduced to penury and want,"³¹ it also seems that there will always be those determined to make the poor suffer for their poverty. The Stonington selectmen who drew up a list of rules for the almshouse in 1850, consciously or unconsciously, made the poor suffer by turning the town farm into a virtual prison. Article number three of the rules and regulations forbade paupers to leave the farm without permission. "For any person leaving the lands adjoining said almshouse without permission of the overseer, will be considered as having undertaken to support himself or herself and will not be received into the almshouse again without an order from one of the selectmen."³² To insure

²⁹ Stonington Town Records, III, April 3, 1826. The price of the farm was probably about average for the Stonington area in 1826. In 1828, two farms owned by William Stanton were valued in the Stonington Probate Records (Vol. 13, pp. 405-6) at \$39 and \$48 an acre. In 1834, Joseph Latham died leaving a 193 acre farm in neighboring Groton valued at \$6250. Stonington Probate Records, Vol. 15, pp. 325-327. In 1827, Acors Rathbun died at North Stonington, where soil is generally thin and poor, leaving a farm of "110 acres of land, dwelling house, stable, corn house & sawmill, worth \$1800." Stonington Probate Records, Volume 13, pp. 216-218.

³⁰ Stonington Town Accounts, July 5, 1830, MS 70286, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

³¹ Stonington Town Records, III, February 13, 1826.

³² February 4, 1850, Stonington Almshouse Records, 1850-1858, MS 70288, Charles H. Smith Collection, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

that every able bodied person not be allowed a life of dreamy idleness at the town farm, article five of the selectmen's rules required that "Every pauper that is able to work must be steadily employed according to their ability either in or out of the House except Sundays."³³

However dreary life at the town farm might have been, there were at least substantial amounts of food, and the bill of fare required by the selectmen certainly compares favorably with that served on whaleships of the time. The selectmen adopted the following bill of fare for the paupers of Stonington:

Breakfast - Saltfish & potatoes - or fresh fish with suitable dressing and bread and butter (the bread to be warmed in cold weather) and coffee of a good quality with milk and sugar in the same once or twice in each week. . . . [also] Meat and potatoes and bread or bread and milk or pudding and milk or pudding and molasses with coffee.

Dinner - Meat five times each week with bread and potatoes and other seasonable vegetables and twice in each week either salt or fresh fish . . . potatoes . . . bread . . . vegetables of the season . . . pies or pudding twice in each week.

Supper - spoon victuals such as bread and milk or pudding and milk or pudding and molasses with tea . . . and bread and cheese.

One third of the bread required . . . shall be made of good wheat flour. The other two thirds to be made of rye flour, or Indian meal.

In furnishing the paupers food care must be taken to prevent any disposed to eat or drink to excess from so doing.³⁴

The overseer of the poorhouse was a farmer who was paid about \$340 a year. He was also allowed to sell what produce on the farm was not consumed by the paupers.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

This indenture . . . between Caleb P. Saunders . . . and the town of Stonington . . . witnesseth that Caleb P. Saunders . . . doth agree . . . to take charge of and manage and improve . . . the town farm . . . containing one hundred and sixty acres of land. . . . Said Saunders to furnish . . . cows, oxen and sheep . . . all farming tools and utensils, perform all the labour . . . according to the rules of good husbandry, for the term of one year . . . to plant no more . . . than 10 acres . . . also to be keeper of the almshouse . . . on said farm, to take charge of all paupers of said town, to provide food . . . according to the Bill of Fare. . . . To furnish them with rooms and fuel . . . and support . . . to the satisfaction of the Selectmen . . . produce and benefits of the said farm to be applied to the wants . . . of said paupers . . . and Saunders family . . . or to be sold for benefit of Saunders.³⁵

There is not much information about the residents of the town farm, but it seems reasonably certain that most of them were old people, for anyone who could earn even the scantiest of livings, would, I think, prefer to keep away from a place where there was so little freedom, and where his labor paid only for bare subsistence. (As for children, they could always be bound out as apprentices.) From time to time, the Stonington Mirror would carry an obituary of one of the poor house tenants; they seem to have been, as a rule, respectable labouring men or their widows, who were unfortunate enough to outlive any relatives that might have supported them in their old age. An 1870 article in the Mirror contained a few bits of information about the people then living at the town farm.

The house . . . contains at present twenty inmates the total number of the town's poor. We noticed Joseph Hiscox, formerly a painter in this village, and Charles Dean an idiot, who was born, and has lived for thirty-five years, in that institution. . . . In the woman's department was Julia Buckley, coloured. . . . She used to dress in the most gorgeous manner . . . always having several yards of ribbon, of various colors, attached to different portions of her clothing. Last, and least in size, though not in importance, is the infant found two years ago near the old 'Robinson' grave yard. At that time, it was not expected to live, but owing to the good care received at the hands of Mrs. Hill and Mrs. Lord [the wife and the daughter of the overseer]

³⁵ Ibid., The salary was reduced in 1854 to \$300.

it is now enjoying good health, and is rather good looking, its complexion being almost white.³⁶ . . . "That the farm is properly conducted, is shown by the retention of Mr. Hill for so long a period [ten years].³⁷

The town farm also served as a refuge for the incurably ill, although the wisdom of sheltering a consumptive along with the other residents is certainly questionable: "William, son of Nelson Dewey [who had made a number of voyages as a crewman on Stonington whalers and sealers], whose home is near the lighthouse, has been removed to the town farm, and is not expected to live but a short time as he is in the last stages of consumption. His father is also seriously ill at his home here."³⁸

But I think that most of the residents of the farm were like John Barclay, whose obituary was carried in the Mirror April 6, 1890. "John Barclay, a resident of Stonington for the past half century, died at the town farm last Sunday, after a brief illness. . . . Mr. Barclay came from Salem, Mass., and settled in the borough during the whaling days, and was a worker among the town wharves for many years. Some months ago, his mind became impaired and he was removed to the town house, where he received the best of care from Keeper Hill and his good wife until his death occurred. Deceased was about 89 years of age."³⁹

For over 60 years, the aged poor of Stonington had gone to the town farm to die. "Two old veterans descended to the tomb - Died - at the Poor House in this town . . . Mr. Amos Brown, a soldier of the American Revolu-

³⁶ A State law passed in 1884 prohibited town officials from sending children between 2 and 16 to alms houses, providing county orphanages for temporary shelter until suitable permanent homes could be found. Stonington Mirror, 16 June 1883, p. 2.

³⁷ Ibid., 7 May 1870, p. 2.

³⁸ Ibid., 9 March 1891.

³⁹ Ibid., 26 April 1890, p. 2.

tion, aged 88 years, also, . . . Mr. Joseph Cook, aged one hundred and two years. Mr. Cook came to this country from England. (He served in the American Army during the Revolution.) Since the close of that war, he has resided in this town. Although poor and extremely illiterate, he ever sustained the character of an honest; industrious and temperate man. Even since he arrived at the age of 100 years, he partly supported himself by his own labor."⁴⁰

During the 1880's a controversy arose over the expense of outside relief, particularly in the second district (Pawcatuck), which was inhabited mostly by recent immigrants from Ireland. In 1890 more money was spent on outside relief in the Second District (\$2,193) than it cost to run the Stonington Town Farm.⁴¹ It was the policy of Stonington at that time to render temporary relief to the town poor in the form of small amounts of credit at local groceries; the tab would be paid by the town, usually at the end of the year.⁴² In 1881, a plea for the "Poor Irish" was sent in to the Mirror by "W" from Stonington Borough.

There has been a good deal of factious criticism . . . because our Selectmen expended last year a large amount . . . for relief of the poor in the Second or Pawcatuck district. . . . [But] if some [Irishmen] depend upon daily wages to support themselves and their families, through accident, sickness, lack of employment, or their own improvidence, . . . require seemingly an undue proportion of the money spent by the town for the 'outside poor', . . . is not our town . . . much more largely enriched . . . by the taxes . . . and . . . labor of this class of the population? . . . There can be no tyranny so offensive and galling, as the tyranny of money and snobbish uncharity. What nation, other than [Ireland] . . . has transmitted so much of its blood to this country, landing upon our shores with no capital but their sturdy arms, toilers and seekers for a home who assimilate so readily to our manners and institutions, and so

⁴⁰ Stonington Telegraph, 4 March 1829.

⁴¹ Stonington Mirror, 8 September 1888, p. 2.

⁴² Stonington Mirror, 8 September 1888, p. 2.

speedily obtain a decent livelihood and dwelling place?⁴³

The argument simmered for about a decade; occasionally letters were sent into the Mirror on both sides of the question. One of the most virulent, entitled "Pauperism in Pawcatuck," was written in 1888 by "Justice."

From year to year, the tax payers have looked in vain . . . for some reform in the matter of expenditures, for what is termed "outside poor". . . . Pawcatuck . . . has always ranked highest [in outside relief] . . . while Stonington Borough has always ranked next highest. . . . But the laboring class of Pawcatuck are favored [with a number of factories as well as the quarries in Westerly] . . . while Stonington Borough . . . has one-half [these] . . . advantages for the laboring class. Either our local selectmen have been terribly imposed upon by a set of unprincipled bummers, or else the injudicious distribution of the town's money for outside poor in Pawcatuck has encouraged the immigration into our village of a horde of unthrifty families.⁴⁴

Ironically, the Town Farm, planned at first as a place of refuge for the poor of Stonington, eventually was seen as a place to punish them. This was evidently the implication of an 1890 directive to the Stonington Selectmen which was designed to solve the problem of outside relief.

"Voted - that the Selectmen of this town be . . . directed to remove to the alms house of this town, there to be supported by the town every person who shall make application . . . for pecuniary assistance from the town. . . . Every person who is a pauper shall be supported at the Alms House."⁴⁵

But the proposed reform never went into effect, probably because it would have been impossible to house all those needing outside relief at the Town Farm. Between 1890 and 1900, letters discussing outside relief disappeared from the Mirror, while the town continued to provide money for it.

⁴³Ibid., 22 October 1881.

⁴⁴Ibid., 15 September 1888, p. 3.

⁴⁵Stonington Town Records, 1 September 1890.

By 1900 expenditures for outside relief were somewhat less than they had been ten years before. The town spent about \$1800 on outside relief in 1900,⁴⁶ which was only half the expenditure in 1890.⁴⁷

The Stonington town farm remained in operation well into the Twentieth Century. In 1900 the town spent \$1875 to support a total of 32 inmates; the average cost per inmate was \$1.56 a week.⁴⁸

Keeping the Relief Rolls at a Minimum

Stonington authorities used a number of devices to reduce the number of those applying for relief. All of them, warnings to depart, indentures, and appointment of caretakers, were legacies from colonial times. Although the Connecticut residence laws were, at least in theory, liberalized in 1792, Stonington officials throughout the Nineteenth Century expelled any non-resident who might become a public charge, and zealously guarded against the dumping of paupers from other communities. Only a few warnings to depart survive in the Stonington Town Records. The following, taken from the Stonington Selectmen's Records of 1849, is a typical one. "Issued a warrant directing a constable . . . to warn Edwin P. Berry to depart from this town. Also notified John Brown by letter that said Berry who lives on premises owned by said Brown had been warned to depart from this town."⁴⁹ In 1826, a regular wholesale deportation was planned: "At a meeting of the Selectmen at the Boro Hotel Monday, Jan. 2, 1826 - the Selectmen entered a complaint to the Justices to remove the following

⁴⁶Selectmen's Report of the Current Expenses of the Town of Stonington for 1900 (New London, Conn.: 1900), p. 31.

⁴⁷Stonington Annual Report, 1890.

⁴⁸Ibid., 1900.

⁴⁹Stonington Selectmen's Records 1843-1857, November 5, 1849. Charles H. Smith Collection, MS 70290, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

persons, they having been warned to wit - Gilbert Sisson and family, Isaac Bliven and family, John L. Gould, Abraham Burdick, Sambo Potter, Pomp Babcock and family, Juhua Lamphere, John Bent and family, Charles Hoxie, Jack Noyes, John Brinks, Samuel Brown, William Miller."⁵⁰

Presumably, paupers warned to depart would return from whence they came, to become public charges there. People who had no legal residence, would become, as previously noted, charges on the state government. Strangers without money or means to support themselves faced harsh times. In 1850, the selectmen of Stonington sent a letter to the contractor for state paupers, regarding a non-resident pauper woman. "We have given her [this woman] to understand that if she is found travelling and begging in this town she will be dealt with as a vagrant and her children taken from her which we think will prevent her being an expense in this town again."⁵¹

Stonington officials waged a never ending battle with their counterparts in other towns over the legal residence of paupers. What was to be avoided above all, was supporting a pauper who belonged to another community: "About two weeks ago one Walton moved a pauper family from Westerly . . . into Stonington whence they at once became a town charge. The selectmen of Stonington last week issued a complaint . . . and ordered Constable William Sisson to remove them to the town whence they came." Westerly officials promptly arrested Sisson for carrying out this order.⁵² Unfortunately, questions of humanity were often shunted aside in quibbles over legal residence, as in the case of a young runaway in 1871.

⁵⁰ Stonington Town Accounts, January 2, 1826.

⁵¹ Stonington Selectmen's letters, 1841-1857, August 15, 1850, Charles H. Smith Collection, MS 70292, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

⁵² Stonington Mirror, 8 February 1877.

Mr. Jeffrey stated to the board that on Tuesday . . . a coloured girl came to his house for shelter . . . hungry and half dead . . . having absconded from the Employ of Henry D. Langworthy [a wealthy farmer] because of ill treatment (she stated). We learnt - she does not belong to this town but was taken by Mr. Langworthy from an asylum of New York. The Board addressed the following letter to Mr. Langworthy - Mr. Jeffrey has been before us today, relative to a coloured girl in your employ. . . . She having been taken by you from an asylum of another State and town, we have no jurisdiction in the matter - only to protect her in her rights. We therefore would recommend you if she is not obedient and willing to do as you expect of her; that you take her back to where she belongs.⁵³

Once it was definitely established that a person was a legal resident of a particular town, the officials of that town had to accept responsibility for supporting him. "To the Selectmen of Preston [Conn.], gentlemen These may certify that we own the barer . . . Mr. Andrew Frink to be an inhabitant of this town, and as such we will receive him from you. Ch. Phelps, Nath. Minor Justices of Peace."⁵⁴

By indenturing orphans and children whose parents could not afford to keep them, towns were able to avoid the burden of providing for their support and at the same time insuring that they received some schooling, for state laws made masters responsible for educating their minor servants. Most of the indentures entered in the Stonington Records occurred in the Eighteenth Century, and probably the practice declined after 1800. In 1761, "the selectmen bound Timothy Coats, a fatherless child, to Mr. Robert Coats to serve as an apprentice till he arrive to the age of twenty one years."⁵⁵ By so doing the town saved about five pounds a year. A bill "in favor of Mr. Peter Main for keeping Joseph Pendleton [an impotent boy]

⁵³"Records of Special Meetings and Meetings of Stonington Selectmen" - Late Nineteenth Century, Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Conn. June 5, 1871.

⁵⁴Stonington, Town Records and Accounts, September 6, 1773.

⁵⁵Stonington Miscellaneous Records, Selectmen's Meetings, November 19, 1761.

for the sum of 14 18'6" was presented to the selectmen.⁵⁶ One of the few involuntary Nineteenth Century indentures in Stonington, was the binding out of Harriet Shelby by the selectmen in 1848. "Voted that Harriet Shelby, a coloured girl, ten years of age . . . be indentured to Joseph Wheeler until she is eighteen years of age, or until she is married."⁵⁷ Indentures were also made by parents, some of whom wished their children to learn a trade; others like Joshua Yeomans, bound out their children because they couldn't care for them.

This indenture made . . . in 1830, between Joshua Yeomans of Stonington, father of Mary A. Yeomans, a minor . . . and Joseph Robinson of said Stonington, . . . witnesseth, that . . . Yeomans . . . hath bound . . . his . . . daughter . . . [as] an apprentice to the said . . . Robinson to be instructed in the art . . . of house keeping and spinning serving and knitting, until she arrives to the age of eighteen years . . . and . . . Robinson on his part doth . . . agree . . . to instruct . . . Mary . . . and teach her to read and write in an intelligible hand and to feed said girl with good and wholesome food and comfortably cloth her . . . and . . . Mary . . . shall faithfully serve and obey him and his wife . . . and when she has served her time out, the said Joseph Robinson shall give her two good suits of common cloths for every day and a good handsome suit and bonnet for Holy Days, also a good pair of common shoes, and a good pair of meeting shoes and let her go free.⁵⁸

The third means used by town governments to keep people off public relief, was the appointment of conservators to make certain that those who were incapable of managing their estates would not squander what they had and become charges on the town. At times, conservators were appointed at the request of a person who recognized his inability to handle affairs for himself. "John ___?___ of Stonington is an Impotent person and by

⁵⁶ Ibid., August 13, 1760.

⁵⁷ Charles H. Smith Collection, MS 70290, Connecticut Historical Society, March 6, 1848.

⁵⁸ Grace Denison Wheeler, Old Homes in Stonington (Mystic, Connecticut: The Mystic Standard, 1930), pp. 268-269.

reason of old age and bodily infirmity is altogether unable to take care of himself and hath no relation obliged by law to take care of and support him, that said John hath some estate, praying that a conservator be appointed to take care of him and his estate . . . the court appoints Mr. Paul Wheeler."⁵⁹ But in most cases, the town simply imposed conservators on those who appeared likely to become public charges through their personal deficiencies. "This may certify that we the . . . selectmen of Stonington . . . having inspected into the affairs of Mr. Robert Coats (possibly the man to whom Timothy Coats was apprenticed in 1761) find that by reason of age and bodily infirmity his judgement and capacity is much impaired and by reason of mismanagement and bad husbandry is likely to be reduced to want, have therefore appointed Mr. Elijah West to . . . take care of, oversee and advise the said Coats in the management of his business as the law directs."⁶⁰

Unlike indentures, which became less popular after 1800, there were numerous entries regarding appointment of conservators and overseers⁶¹ in the Nineteenth Century Stonington records. In 1851 at "a special meeting of the selectmen . . . sufficient proof of the mismanagement and bad husbandry of widow Mahitabel Wilcox of Stonington being given, voted, that Elnathan M. Wilcox be . . . appointed overseer to said Mahitabel Wilcox."⁶² After the Civil War, there were a number of conservators appointed to protect

⁵⁹ Stonington Miscellaneous Records, Selectmen's Meetings, June 12, 1764.

⁶⁰ Ibid., April 7, 1769.

⁶¹ The overseer's position was advisory, if he was unable to effect any change in behavior, a conservator was appointed who probably assumed complete control of the property.

⁶² Selectmen's Meetings, February 18, 1851, Charles H. Smith Collection, MS 70290, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

the estates of immigrant Irishmen, many of whom suffered from intemperance. "To Patrick Coniff and his wife Eliza, both of you are hereby notified that the selectmen of . . . Stonington after due inspection of your conduct and management find that by intemperance, idleness and mismanagement, you are likely to spend and waste your estates . . . and become chargeable to said town [thus an overseer was appointed] to have full power to order advise, and direct and manage all your affairs."⁶³

At the same meeting, the selectmen appointed overseers for Patrick Mullens, George Mabett, Ellen McVeigh, and Cornelius O'Connor.⁶⁴ O'Connor refused to obey his overseer, Clark T. Champlin, and was determined to continue his vagabond career; so a few months later a conservator was appointed in Champlin's stead. The Stonington Selectmen having "legally appointed Clark T. Champlin as an overseer to . . . O'Connor . . . [who] has ever since refused to submit to [his] authority . . . and continues to waste his estate, misspend his time, and is likely to be reduced to want and become chargeable to said town, therefore we request your honor [probate Judge Richard Anson Wheeler] to summon said O'Connor before said court of Probate for the purpose of appointing a conservator over him."⁶⁵

The Lives of the Stonington Poor

The poor of past ages are distressingly mute. What could it have been like for the poor in a place like Stonington, so wealthy and so fond of its wealth? Perhaps the best introduction is a beautiful short story by Sarah Orne Jewett, "The Town Poor"; its description of destitute old

⁶³"Records of Special Meetings and Meetings of Stonington Selectmen," Stonington Historical Society, February 7, 1871.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., June 5, 1871.

women in a Maine village would probably have fit Stonington as well. As to specific cases, there are only a few instances where the poor revealed themselves. One of the saddest of these was John Lawrence's letter to Joseph Schofield, a Stonington factory owner and merchant. "I took the liberty to write you a line by Mr. Christopher Greene offering to place my little boy, Henry Lawrence with you in your factory. . . . Farming work is too heavy for a boy only nine years old. . . . Should you have occasion for a man to do the factory writing probably you may see fit to employ me. I assure you, sir, I have seen better times than the present ones. Embargo's, War, etc., have reduced me indeed."⁶⁶

Stonington could be a harsh community, especially when poverty led to transgressions of the Calvinist code, particularly offenses against property. The Stonington Mirror of the 1870's offers numerous examples. "Charles Sylvia, a youth of nine years, was brought before Justice Palmer last Monday, charged with robbing the store of J.E. Smith & Co., of shoes, money, and other valuables. His guilt being proved, he was sentenced to the State Reform School for one year."⁶⁷ "James Congdon, the boy sent to jail for fruit thieving, will probably be released by his mother on payment of the fines inflicted, and a younger brother convicted of the same offense, coupled by a conviction of vagrancy and truancy from school, was sentenced to one year in Reform school by Justice Anderson."⁶⁸

But glimpses of another side of Stonington also appeared often in the columns of the Mirror. Although the people of Stonington were anxious to

⁶⁶ John A. Lawrence to Joseph Schofield, 2 May 1814, Accounts and Letters of Joseph Schofield, Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

⁶⁷ Stonington Mirror-Journal, 29 June 1871, p. 2.

⁶⁸ Stonington Mirror, 20 September 1877, p. 2.

avoid supporting residents of other towns, when one of their own was a victim of misfortune, it is probable that the community joined together to give whatever assistance was needed.

Nearly every person in this and adjacent villages have heard of "Mrs. Golden," or rather, in a more familiar phrase, "Aunt Mercy." A sad event within a few days past has befallen her. Yes! this poor, blind, maimed, old woman had \$35 stolen from her. For six years past she has carefully treasured up \$20 of this toward her burial - the other \$15, given her at different times, she hoped to apply toward her winter stores. . . . She needs coal, and many other comforts, and as you all know the reward offered in the promise to those who give to the poor, I will only add, give cheerfully.⁶⁹

Stonington and New England remained as hostile to "sturdy beggars" as their Puritan ancestors had. Part of the 1826 report on the town farm was devoted to the possibility of establishing a work house in Stonington, and the committee were quite impressed by the Norwich workhouse. "Connected with the alms house is another important establishment, a house of Correction where vagrants, common drunkards and all without visible means of subsistence may be taken up under the laws of the State and by summary proofs before any justice may be sentenced to solitary confinement in cells made for that purpose and kept on bread and water, or made to labour, until justice is satisfied or reformation effected and it is seldom a person of this description found there a second time."⁷⁰ The committeemen were certain that a workhouse was the ideal remedy for "common drunkards and vagabonds." "Your committee doubt not that by connecting this salutary discipline with the institution many who are now common drunkards and vagabonds may be rescued from evil habits, made to earn a support for themselves and families, and thus save the town from a lamentable increase of paupers. It

⁶⁹ Ibid., 8 December 1870, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Stonington Town Records, III, February 13, 1826.

is a fact generally known . . . that a considerable portion of our paupers have become so by the intemperate use of ardent spirits."⁷¹

Yet, the citizens of Stonington, so hostile in 1826 toward vagrancy and idleness, were capable, in the period after the Civil War, of extending considerable hospitality toward tramps. Whether this represented a change in attitude toward the unfortunate; passive acceptance of any necessary method of dealing with large numbers of wandering unemployed men in times of economic hardship; or genuine sympathy with the lot of these men; is difficult to say since references to tramps in Ante-Bellum Stonington have not been discovered. But from the 1870's on, there were occasional references in the Stonington Mirror to the temporary housing and feeding of tramps at town jails. "Almost every day our village is visited by persons in search of employment who wander about the streets all day, and at night seek the protecting cover of the lockup, where they remain until morning. They are then furnished with a substantial meal, and apparently satisfied, trudge along to the next town. During the past week some fifteen persons have been accommodated with lodgings at this public institution."⁷²

In fact, the arrival of the tramps seems to have been a regular seasonal phenomenon; the coming of winter meant preparations for the return of the

⁷¹Ibid. By the state laws of Connecticut any justice of the peace could upon conviction sentence to the workhouse "all rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars, lewd, idle, dissolute, profane, disorderly persons, run-away, stubborn servants, and children, common drunkards, common night-walkers, persons who neglect their callings, misspend what they earn and do not provide for the support of themselves and families, and persons under distraction of mind, and order them confined and kept at hard labour for any time not exceeding forty days. . . . All persons sent to sd. house, . . . shall be kept at labour in or out of sd. house." Stonington Town Records, III, April 3, 1826.

⁷²Stonington Mirror, 12 January 1871, p. 2.

wanderers. "The several lock-ups will soon open their doors to the poor old tramps. Beds, crackers, cheese and water supplied gratis by the town."⁷³ Their supper the previous year was more meager: "The tramps lodged at the lock up are fed with half a pound of soda crackers, which is enough to appease any ordinary appetites, and all a man ought to eat who wishes peaceful slumber."⁷⁴ But there must have been a good number of people in the state who objected to this kindly treatment, for Connecticut passed a law in 1890 which provided that tramps could be sent to State Prison. "State officials say that the tramp law now in force here has rid the state of most of its tramps. Last week four tramps were released from state prison, and for the first time since the passage of the law there are none in the institution."⁷⁵ How effective the tramp law was is questionable as it was reported in the Mirror a year later, that more tramps were visiting Stonington than ever before: "From one to six tramps are accommodated with lodgings in the lock up nightly. There has never been a winter before when the Knights of the road have been put up in the borough in such numbers."⁷⁶ A few days later the Mirror remarked, "tramps are now furnished sumptuous lodgings in the borough lock up, and allowed to depart in peace next morning."⁷⁷

The amount of relief provided for paupers in Stonington was of course inadequate; but it is difficult to imagine a time or place that it hasn't been. In 1771, the selectmen of Stonington made an agreement with a

⁷³ Ibid., 24 October 1878.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 20 December 1877.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 31 January 1891.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 30 January 1892, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 6 February 1892, p. 2.

contractor of the poor named William Thompson "to keep John Miner one year from this date at 6/8 a week and he finds him his clothes provided that sd. Miner is no poorer than at present and lives the year out."⁷⁸

In 1793, the town paid "Nathan Steward by keeping Susannah Church from the 1st day of May 1792 to the first day of May 1793 ± 4."⁷⁹ And around 1795, "Joshua Swan by keeping Amos Budingtons child . . . 9 weeks and finding clothes at 4/6 [per week]."⁸⁰ These figures may best be appreciated by comparing them to wages and costs of certain commodities in Stonington at the time of the American Revolution. During the Revolution, there was an attempt made in a number of states to curb inflation by establishing maximum prices for labour, services, and some commodities.⁸¹ In compliance to Connecticut laws, the civil authorities of Stonington produced two lists of maximum prices, one in 1777 regulating the amount which could be charged by "Taverners and common victualers"; and one in 1778, "to ascertain the prices of Labour produce, etc.," based on the price levels in Stonington in 1774. Thus a field laborer in 1778 was paid 4/ 6⁸² for a day's labor ,⁸³ exactly the amount the town allowed per week in 1795 to Joshua Swan for keeping "Amos Budington's child." While for a gill (4 oz.) of gin (6d), a dinner (1/) and a night's lodging (6d), an innkeeper could charge no more

⁷⁸ Stonington Miscellaneous Records, Selectmen's Meetings, April 1, 1771.

⁷⁹ Stonington Town Accounts, April 1793.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1795?

⁸¹ Richard Brandon Morris, ed., Encyclopedia of American History (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p. 517.

⁸² Around 1800 in Virginia, Rhode Island and Connecticut a shilling meant 16.7 cents. Edgar W. Martin, The Standard of Living in 1860 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 19.

⁸³ "Price Lists, 1777 and 1778;" Stonington Town Records and Accounts, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

than 2/ in 1777,⁸⁴ about one third of the weekly allowance paid by the town to William Thompson for keeping and clothing John Miner.

Both the wages received by laborers in Stonington, and the amount of relief allotted to paupers remained fairly stable between the Revolution and the Civil War. As previously noted, in 1827, Hannah Edgecomb a contractor for the town poor, received 75 cents per week for keeping Hannah Grant; which was about the same as the 4/6 (with a shilling worth about 16 cents) paid to the keeper of the child Amos Budington. A week's allotment to an individual on the public charge, was in 1826, as it was before 1800, about equal to a day's wages for an unskilled laborer. Sometime around 1826, James White was paid 4/6 (about 75 cents) by building contractor Charles H. Smith for a day's work setting glass in a barn. Since Smith, who was a master mechanic, received 7/6, about \$1.25⁸⁵ for his day's work, I assume White was unskilled. Four shillings, six pence was the same amount paid to a farm labourer in Stonington in 1778, as well as the week's expenditure for pauper Hannah Grant in 1827. In 1855, Horace Willcox, keeper of the town farm in Stonington, agreed to "support the number of eight paupers. . . . For each additional pauper said Willcox is to have one dollar per week for supporting him." For his duties as overseer Willcox was paid two hundred dollars.⁸⁶

As already mentioned, after the Civil War, in addition to the maintenance of paupers at the town farm, a system of outdoor relief was established, whereby aid, often temporary, could be extended those in need.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Charles H. Smith Collection, MS 70318, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

⁸⁶ March 5, 1855, Stonington Almshouse Records, MS 70288, Ibid.

Total yearly expenditures generally exceeded those at the almshouse. Most of the recipients of this aid were women, probably widows who had families to support. Since there were almost no opportunities for women to find employment in a place like Stonington (especially in the borough), public relief was the only alternative. The devotion to detail of the civil authorities of Stonington, especially where any outlay of public money was concerned, was marvelous. Several of the annual town accounts included a complete list of monthly bills submitted by local grocers for each person in Stonington who received outdoor relief. All of these bills were similar to the following one for the Blosser family in 1888.

Supplies furnished Blosser family, cookies 20, lard 11, beans 35, pork 17, meat 25, squash 8, cukes 10, crackers 10, flour 85, butter 25, peas 25, corn 20, cookies 10, citron 18, raisins 15, currants 10, salmon 36, sugar 10, cherries 10, lemon 15, bologna 24, crackers 20, salt 4, eggs 25, butter 50, lard 11, cookies 20, Jamaica ginger 25, pepper 12, lard 16, beef 30, eggs 12, apples 28, sugar 50, crackers 20, starch 10, cookies 10, cherries 20, meat 38, soup 15, eggs 25, extract lemon 30, cheese 18, sugar 50, butter 25,⁸⁷

This list illustrates certain items, which might be considered luxuries, such as cookies, raisins, currants, salmon, butter, Jamaica ginger, lemon extract, etc., were part of the daily diet of even the poorest Stonington citizens. Apparently each family was allowed a maximum limit they could spend on groceries, generally, as in the case of the Blosser family, about \$10 a month, which they could spend in any way they chose. In addition, rents were sometimes paid by the town.

Before the Civil War, poor relief was Stonington's largest expense. After the war it usually ranked second or third behind education and highways. In Stonington Borough in 1879, outdoor relief totalling \$890 was

⁸⁷ Annual Town Account of . . . Stonington . . . for 1888 (Providence, R.I.: Providence Press Company, 1888), p. 42.

extended to 16 people (a number of whom undoubtedly had families), ranging from \$3 to \$147 for the year.⁸⁸ In 1878, Stonington provided \$8161 for support of the poor, including \$479 for tramps temporarily housed and fed at the town's jails, and \$1955 for care of Stonington residents at state institutions; in 1879 poor relief cost \$7000.⁸⁹ But during the last 20 years of the Nineteenth Century, the annual expenditures for poor relief in Stonington were generally about \$4000. Money spent on the poor in Stonington does not seem to have been related to national economic trends. Two thousand dollars more was spent on the poor in 1876, when the country was in the midst of a severe depression, than in 1879. But between 1893 and 1897, also a period of depression, about \$1500 less was spent per year on poor relief than in 1889 or 1890.⁹⁰

The town was virtually the only source of charity in Nineteenth Century Stonington. As Edgar Martin wrote, "There were few large philanthropies [in America] before the Civil War. [First] there was no 'social conscience' to demand that the rich give back their fortunes in the form of philanthropies, and there was little disposition on the part of rich men to do. . . . [Secondly] there were few really wealthy men."⁹¹ Aside from a few bequests made to missionary societies there were few legacies for charitable purposes in the several hundred Stonington probate records examined. The old maxim, "charity begins at home," was taken literally in Stonington. It meant that a man provided first for his family, and it was in the family that the main bulwark against poverty could be found. Charles P. Williams, who claimed

⁸⁸ Annual Town Account . . . of . . . Stonington for . . . 1879
(Stonington, Conn.: Mirror Job Print, p. 28.)

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 30.

⁹⁰ Stonington, Annual Town Accounts, 1875-1900.

⁹¹ Martin, Standard of Living, pp. 291-292.

in 1869 that he gave \$12,000 a year to charity,⁹² never, as far as I can tell, answered any of the numerous personal requests for charity found in his papers, except those from relatives. And yet, to those related to him, even distantly, Williams could be extremely generous; supporting a number in various parts of the country, including an old man in Alabama, whom he had probably never met.

Only two sizeable bequests for the relief of the poor in Stonington were made during the Nineteenth Century. One by William Woodbridge, has already been mentioned. The other was by John C. Waldron, a New Yorker, who, as far as I can tell was never a resident of Stonington. Waldron, who owned shares in a number of Stonington sealers and whalers, left a fund of \$1060 in his will, the interest of which was to be applied annually for the benefit of the borough poor.⁹³

As for the churches, only after 1850 did the issue of poor relief appear in Stonington church records, and then the amounts provided were pitifully meagre. In 1850, the "poor committee" of the borough Baptist Church recommended that each member donate 1¢ a week for care of the church's poor, but the Baptists were usually able to appropriate only small amounts in times of extreme emergency. For instance, James Simpson, a member of the borough church, was given \$5.00 in 1852 toward his support so that he could remain in the borough and not be forced to remove to the town farm.⁹⁴

In a recent book on Nineteenth Century asylums, David Rothman writes that institutions such as the Stonington Town Farm were viewed by the men who

⁹²Letter from unidentified party in Mystic Bridge, Conn. to Charles P. Williams, 19 May 1869. Charles P. Williams Collection, Box VII, G. W. Blunt-White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Conn.

⁹³Mystic Pioneer, 17 May 1862.

⁹⁴Baptist Church Records, III, September 27, 1852.

created them as bulwarks of a society threatened by the chaotic conditions of the Jacksonian Era.⁹⁵ According to Rothman, in the Eighteenth Century almshouses were made as homelike as possible, since their purpose was not to ostracize the poor but merely to reduce expenditures for poor relief.⁹⁶ But during the 1820's and 1830's, a new idea of poverty arose, and the poor became a social problem and potential source of unrest.⁹⁷ The solution would be to remove the pauper from the unhealthy environment which corrupted him,⁹⁸ and place him in an asylum where habits of self discipline could be instilled.⁹⁹ The disorders of Jacksonian America, particularly its excessive social mobility,¹⁰⁰ were responsible for the creation of the Nineteenth Century almshouses, penitentiaries and insane asylums. Such institutions were the result of a profound malaise which afflicted Americans during the Jacksonian Era, and a belief that the basic traditions of society were threatened by pauperism, insanity, and crime.¹⁰¹

The foundation of a town farm and the treatment of the poor in Stonington during the Nineteenth Century bears little relation to Rothman's thesis. In the first place, Nineteenth Century attitudes toward poverty in New England do not seem greatly different from those in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. According to Rothman, rejecting the slothful became

⁹⁵ David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum; Social Disorder in the New Republic (Boston: Little Brown & Co. 1971), p. XVIII.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 156.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 165, 166.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. XVIII.

a primary concern of poor relief during the Nineteenth Century, but harsh codes against "sturdy beggars" were adopted throughout the New England colonies. Secondly, the voters of Stonington had approved a plan to rent a town farm as early as 1802, and twenty one years later they decided to buy one. There is no evidence to indicate that the motives behind maintaining paupers at a town farm either in 1803 or 1824 were anything other than a desire to reduce expenses and at the same time improve the living conditions of the impotent poor.¹⁰² In late 1825 or early 1826, a committee of Stonington residents visited several town farms in neighboring communities, and these were viewed as models for Stonington's Town Farm. Since town farms in East Lyme, Norwich, and Colchester were in operation before the Jacksonian Era began, it does not seem likely that they were a reaction to the social disorders which Rothman discusses. Nowhere in the lengthy report of the Town Farm Committee was there any mention of segregating the poor for their own good or that of society; the dominant themes are reduction of expenses and improvement of living conditions.¹⁰³ The twenty one year delay between the time when the town farm plan was first proposed and its revival and eventual implementation, was probably the result of insufficient funds, since after William Woodbridge donated \$1000 for a town farm (1825), the project moved quickly.

Finally, the Stonington Selectmen who drew up the restrictive list of rules for the Town Farm in 1850, like the 1826 Town Farm Committee, expressed no desire to segregate the poor or fears over the impending destruction of society. The Selectmen's obvious lack of sympathy for the distress caused

¹⁰²Stonington Town Records, III, 21 November 1803; 9 February 1824; 28 November 1825.

¹⁰³Ibid., 13 February 1826.

by poverty, is no different from that of many public officials who hold office today, and cannot be attributed to peculiar conditions arising during the Jacksonian Era. Article Six of the Poor House Rules, may have been intended to instill some discipline into the paupers, but it seems more likely that the selectmen were anxious to insure good order at the Town Farm by insisting that the residents go to bed early. "Every Pauper unless otherwise directed by the Overseer must retire to bed at 9 o'clock P.M. at which time a signal will be given and all lights are to be immediately put out except in case of sickness."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴February 4, 1850, Stonington Almshouse Records, 1850-1858, MS 70288, Charles H. Smith Collection, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHANGING SOCIETY OF STONINGTON BOROUGH: 1801 - 1900

One of the most perceptive Eighteenth Century travelers in America was a French aristocrat, the Comte de Ségur, who was entranced by the simplicity, honesty, and democracy of the new republic. But de Ségur felt America's continued felicity was threatened by its opulent future. "The only danger to be apprehended hereafter for this happy Republic . . . is the state of excessive opulence of which its exclusive commerce seems to hold out the promise, and which may bring luxury and corruption in its train."¹ Yet, even if this republican simplicity were to last for only one hundred years, America would still have been the wonder of the world. "I shall, perhaps, be told that America will not always preserve such simple virtues, and such purity of morals; but were she to retain them no longer than a century, is a century of happiness so inconsiderable a blessing?"²

The Comte de Segur proved to be a remarkable prognosticator. America was drastically changed by its almost inevitable legacy of opulence; and although a place like Stonington Borough, with its strict New England Calvinist heritage, remained untainted by corruption, wealth there produced luxury and wrought a veritable revolution. In the first chapter of this dissertation, a young Stonington girl's comments after a visit to New York

¹Comte de Segur, Memoirs and Recollections, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1825), 1: 374.

²Ibid., p. 385.

City in the early Nineteenth Century were quoted.³ Martha Denison Peete's realization that Stonington and New York were different worlds in 1811 could not have occurred after the Civil War. Although only two or three men in post-war Stonington possessed wealth approaching the scale of New York grandees like Astor or Vanderbilt, the fashions and pleasures of all of the "first" in borough society then were not much inferior to or different than those of the metropolis.

Unlike the inhabitants of the austere provincial society of ante-bellum New England, devoted to work and dominated by a religion which frowned on pleasure, the Stonington upper middle class of the late Nineteenth Century, anxious for entertainment like their brethren throughout the North, traveled to Europe, wintered in Florida and California, took hunting trips to North Carolina and New Hampshire. They were fortunate to be alive and comfortable in the period of American history, perhaps, when to be wealthy was most enjoyable.

Stonington Borough in the Early Nineteenth Century

Not only was there a striking change in the habits and attitudes of many of the residents of Stonington Borough, there was an equally remarkable change in the general economic conditions of the place. In the

³"When I was in my fifteenth year [1811] I visited the city of New York. . . . I was invited to visit in houses richly furnished, . . . and [this] led me to feel, as I had never felt before, that I was inferior in style and insignificant in society. It taught me a humbling lesson that I never felt, and should not in my native place where I felt my father one of the first in society." Martha Denison Peete, "My Home in Connecticut Fifty Years Ago," Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society 11 (April, 1946): 12.

Eighteenth Century, Long Point, the future Stonington Borough, was a residence of "poor fishermen and widows." There was only one wealthy man living on Long Point in 1790, Charles Phelps, a physician, whose estate was rated at 633.⁴ Phelps owned 2470 acres of land and a number of houses boasting twenty "first rate chimneys".⁵ In 1785, twenty five Baptist and Congregationalist residents of Long Point signed a subscription list pledging contributions toward the construction of a new meeting house. Since usually the leading members of a community participated in projects such as this, it may be assumed that the men who signed the subscription list were from the top echelon of Long Point society. Nine of the subscribers either possessed no property or paid no taxes in 1790. Some may have moved, others may have been fishermen who were exempted from paying poll taxes. Twelve of the subscribers were obviously yeoman farmers, possessing only an ordinary house, some land, and a few head of cattle. Only four of the subscribers owned what might be called luxuries, such as Sands Niles who owned two third rate and two fourth rate chimneys, (in other words two houses), a silver watch, and 11 worth of silver. But none of the subscribers

⁴Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1790. Although Stonington Borough was not incorporated until 1801 and the first census was taken there in 1810, I was able to get some idea of its residents before the latter date from petitions in 1774 and 1785 requesting a lottery to build a meeting house at Long Point, a 1792 petition for relief from the Poll Tax, a 1770 subscription for a new school house and the 1801 petition requesting the incorporation of Stonington Borough.

⁵Ibid.

owned more than £100 worth of ratable estate in 1790.⁶

Exactly what the occupations of the citizens of Long Point were around 1800, is difficult to say. According to the 1810 Grand List, 50 adults and 10 minors were engaged in the cod fishery, so it is probable that fishing was the most important industry.

My father moved to the Point when I was in my sixth year [1802]. . . . The principal business of the place at that time was [blank, but undoubtedly fishing as the next sentence indicates]. The codfishing vessels loaded with salted undried fish would spread their load upon the flakes upon the common around the light house, and at night, pile them in stacks as high as they could reach, resembling stacks of hay or grain, but not as fragrant.⁷

As the habitation of fishermen, Stonington Borough was no high rent district, for the proverbial poverty of "Fisherfolk" is no exaggeration. In his History of New England Fisheries, Raymond McFarland reported on the low pay received by fishermen:

The share of the cod fishermen in the decade between 1840 and 1850 was \$62.31 a year on an average; his part of the government allowance [passed by the national government in the Eighteenth Century to encourage fisheries] was \$14.58 more, making his total income from the codfishery \$76.89. The income seems incredibly low, but it is a larger share than the mackerel fishermen received. . . . The fishermen themselves might manage to live very well on the scanty income because food and shelter were provided him at sea, and there was no opportunity, or need of his spending money when aboard the vessel. At the close of the fishing season he usually found employment ashore along the water front or in curing the codfish . . . for the markets.⁸

A few men probably served as mariners in the West Indies and coastal trades, but since the crews were small, and the number of ships belonging to Stonington Port equally small, the number of men employed could not have

⁶"From a Petition to Build a Meeting House in 1785," Stonington Mirror, 2 March 1900, p. 1; Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1790.

⁷Peete, "My Home in Connecticut," (January 1946): 5.

⁸Raymond McFarland, A History of the New England Fisheries (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1911), pp. 174-175.

been great. In 1792, 63 residents of the town of Stonington (which at that time included North Stonington) identified themselves as mechanics in a petition requesting relief from the poll tax and special assessments levied on mechanics. The term "mechanic", however, is a broad one, and included carpenters like Joseph Smith and mill owners like James Dean. A "mechanic" was usually a self employed master craftsman who was often a man of considerable social and economic standing in the community. For instance, Samuel F. Trumbull, editor and publisher of the Impartial Journal, Patriot, and Journal of the Times, was called a printer on the 1799 Grand List Abstract; and served as secretary of the Stonington Mechanics Society in 1801.⁹ There were, according to the 1801 Grand List, 17 merchants¹⁰ in the South Society of Stonington, 20 mechanics, 7 mill owners, 7 taverners, 2 attorneys and 4 physicians,¹¹ most of whom probably lived in Stonington

⁹ Stonington Impartial Journal, 10 March 1803, p. 3.

¹⁰ The majority of these merchants were involved in the ownership of general merchandise stores, but it should be noted that a storeowner was a far more important figure in the economic life of a community in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries than he is today. (Most of Stonington's wealthy men, including whaling tycoons like C.P. Williams and J.F. Trumbull, at one time or another, ran general merchandise stores in the town.) In a community like Stonington, which did not have a bank until 1822, the storeowner often was the primary source of credit. He also served as a middleman receiving various imported commodities, including manufactured articles like clothes, tools, etc., which were then exchanged with local farmers for "country produce". Ads like the following were found in every issue of the Journal of the Times and Impartial Journal. "Five Thousand bushels Flaxseed. Any Person . . . wishing to supply the subscribers with any quantity of Flaxseed, not exceeding 5000 nor less than 200 bushels, to be delivered in all the month of December. . . . Apply to Stiles Phelps & Co., who have for sale, on very accomodating terms of credit 10 hogsheads of Grenada Rum." Stonington Journal of the Times, 5 December 1798, p. 1. "For sale by the subscriber 35 hhds . . . Antique & Essequibo Rum, and 21 hhds, Sugar. . . . Payment received in cash, pork, corn, oats, hogsheads, tallow and many other kinds country produce. . . . Elisha Denison." Ibid., 13 February 1799, p. 1. "New and Fashionable goods. Benjamin Bells, has just received from New York, a general assortment of India, European and W. India goods . . . Hardware . . . Coarse and Fine Salt." Ibid., 5 December 1798, p. 1

¹¹ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1801.

Borough. There is no information about artisans or day laborers in the borough in 1801.

In the early Nineteenth Century, there were three classes in the town of Stonington. At the top of society were a few large farmers and merchants. Eighteen Stonington men owned property rated at \$10,000 or more in 1814. These men possessed more than was necessary for the maintenance of a decent standard of living in the early 1800's. A typical wealthy man of Stonington around 1810 owned several hundred acres of land, several houses, one of which, his own home, had "first" or "second rate chimneys," gold watches, wrought silver, and shares in vessels, turnpikes and canals. Like Asa Fish, they could afford to send their sons away to boarding schools, or to medical school where Amos Palmer's son George was educated.¹²

The middle class consisted of all those who owned taxable property: farmers, merchants, ship's masters, artisans and mechanics. A Stonington artisan or mechanic usually owned an ordinary house, "a third rate chimney," and perhaps an acre of land. A farmer might own his own home and land which he could work with the aid of his family and an occasional hired hand. At the very least he owned a herd of cattle and worked land and lived in a house owned by someone else.¹³

At the bottom of Stonington society were the propertyless, who formed a majority of the population of Stonington Borough throughout the Nineteenth

¹²"Copy of Descriptive Lists of Lands, Lots . . . Dwelling Houses, etc. in Stonington, 1814," Stonington Historical Society. For Fish's boarding school expenses see chapter on education. Palmer graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York in 1825. Benjamin Tinkham Marshall, ed. A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1922), p. 398.

¹³Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1800 - 1820.

Century.

There is not a great deal that can be said about class relations in Stonington before the Civil War, but two pieces of evidence indicate that there were formidable barriers between the lower class, and the middle and upper classes. In the first place, with few exceptions, only those whose fathers owned property, became property owners in Stonington Borough between 1800 and 1860.¹⁴ Secondly, all of the pupils at the Stonington Academy, which was the only adequate educational institution in Stonington at the time, were from the middle and upper classes.

Although there were no barriers between the middle and upper class in Stonington, and the majority of those residents who became wealthy in the Nineteenth Century were from middle class families, there were a number of articles and letters published in the Journal of the Times and the Impartial Journal which criticized the behavior of the upper class; almost none can be found in the post-Civil War period. Most of these attacks on the "aristocracy" have already been examined in the chapter on politics, where I expressed the belief that they should be viewed as political hyperbole designed to rally support around the Jeffersonian Republican party. Critics of the aristocracy in the early Stonington newspapers also struck at the Federalist oligarchy that dominated Connecticut politics and from which Stonington, like many other communities in the state, was excluded. There was, however, a debate carried on in the columns of the Journal of the Times in 1799, between "A Stonington Mechanic" and "A friend to Industry" (the latter probably an allusion to Federalist schemes for government aid to business), which indicates that conflicts between the middle and upper classes were not entirely unknown. By his title and

¹⁴See Chapter XI for more on acquisition of property.

obvious education the "Stonington Mechanic" reveals that he could not have been from the lower class. The first letter from the "Stonington Mechanic" appeared in February. His principal complaint was against the harassment and imprisonment of debtors.

The present predominant fashion is to dun, sue, and distress the poor, but industrious citizen. Picture an industrious mechanic by chance become reduced, taken like a murderer, lodged in gaol for a small debt, which an unfeeling creditor would not wait a moment for, although he knew, that the debtor could not pay without distressing his family.

Let me entreat all honest, humane and good citizens to refrain from adopting this plan of accumulating riches, by another of their fellow-creatures ruin. . . . Think of one of the commands of him who reigns supreme, which is "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁵

"Friend to Industry", like most conservatives, knew that poverty was the product of personal shortcomings, and he was as adept at biblical quotes as his opponent.

The Stonington Mechanic assumes the character of being an industrious, honest man, an appellation I judge no one will favor him with who reads his piece. The next thing which attracts my attention, is to discover what this class of men's [those harassed by creditors] industry and honesty consist of. In my opinion, it is spending their time in taverns or ale houses, and neglecting their own business and families, . . . and undertaking business which they are not qualified for, whereby the honest creditor is defrauded out of his living. . . . Let me entreat you all to be industrious, honest and prudent; by so doing you will all be enabled to pay your honest debts, and verify that devine command "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's."¹⁶

The next letter from the "Stonington Mechanic" would have us believe that mechanics as a class suffered from the snobbish treatment of their aristocratic customers. "Many of these people [like "Friend to Industry"]

¹⁵ Stonington Journal of the Times, 13 February 1799, p. 4.

¹⁶ Ibid., 20 February 1799.

think that if they encourage a mechanic or trader, by giving them their custom, a great and lasting kindness is done, and in return [mechanics]. . . are in duty bound to stoop and beg for a continuance of their custom. . . . I do not consider that if I am employed to do a piece of work for a man, that I am forever to be a menial servant to him, because he employed me."

It is possible that the "Stonington Mechanic" was exaggerating the insults he received from aristocrats, since there were few in Stonington whose economic position was much better than mechanics. For instance, Joshua Swan, listed as a mechanic on the 1799 tax rolls, paid taxes on an estate rated at \$96, owning a house with 3 chimneys and 155 acres of land; while William Lord, a physician, owned only a house with 3 chimneys, no land, and paid taxes on an estate rated at \$72.50. Out of a total of thirty eight Stonington Port taxpayers on the 1799 Grand List, eight were mechanics paying taxes on estates rated from \$17 to \$94. Only five residents of the place, paid on estates rated in excess of \$100.¹⁷

The final rebuttal in the "Friend-Mechanic" debate came from the "Friend to Industry" who once again hammered out his theme of the unworthy poor.

Charity in this last and iron age of the world is grown so cold that there is scarce anything to be got upon that account; if you are cold charity won't warm you within, if you are hungry will it fill your belly? But industry will remove both complaints. Some is made miserable by vicious living, as upon drink and women, . . . others again loiter about and squander their time, as if it was of no value, when it is the most precious thing in the world, there being nothing in the world that is more certain indication of ruin and destruction

¹⁷ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1799. It must be remembered that these figures do not represent the market value, but as already noted the state set a fixed value on various pieces of property such as houses ("chimneys") land and cattle from which towns compiled their tax lists. So Charles Phelps' estate rated at \$2488 in 1799 was worth much more, but the tax lists do at least give some idea of relative wealth.

than the waisting [sic] and misimproving of our time. . . .
 The sacred oracle tells us that the diligent hand maketh
 rich and assures us that the slothful shall suffer hunger.
 . . . [The idle person] ranks . . . amongst wine bibbers,
 drunkards and gluttons, that shall come to poverty.¹⁸

The only other evidence that might be interpreted as conflict between the middle and upper classes in Stonington before the War of 1812, were two petitions, dated 1792 and 1804, requesting relief from the Poll Tax and the assessment levied on Mechanics. It certainly was not a serious dispute, and it represented not a real struggle between two social classes, but an attempt by craftsmen to relieve themselves of a burden which they believed was unfairly placed on them by the dominant landed interests. It was also an attempt by members of a society, wherein thrift was a by-word born out of necessity, to escape any expenditures they possibly could. A number of signers of both petitions were men of substantial property buildings, which included in some cases, ownership of land. For instance, Oliver York, who signed the 1804 petition owned twenty acres of land according to 1799 tax list. In 1792, the petitioners wrote that Mechanics were "burdened with a poll tax and an unreasonable assessment tax," they concluded that "every kind of discouragement to Mechanical arts is a great injury to the landed interest in this state." Also, the poll tax levied on minors prevented many mechanics from taking apprentices unless their parents provided some allowance for them.¹⁹

In 1804, the mechanics petition only called for relief from the assessment tax,²⁰ stating that they were "taxed likewise with other citizens for

¹⁸Stonington Journal of the Times, 12 March 1799, p. 4.

¹⁹"Stonington Mechanics Petition, 1792," Connecticut Archives, Finance and Currency, Second Series, Vol. XIII, Document 182. Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

²⁰"Persons carrying on a mechanical business of any kind, shall be assessed according to their profits not less than ten, nor more than two hundred dollars." Connecticut, Public Statutes, 1808, p. 470.

their polls and all rateable [sic] estates and whether in prosperous or depressed circumstances are also assessed extra at least Seventeen Dollars for their facility [i.e., their trade]." If successful, they were charged proportionately more. The petitioners argued that they had learned their trades through expensive and lengthy apprenticeships and that the current policy was driving good workmen from the state.²¹

Stonington Borough in the Sealing and Whaling Eras

Although there was only one rich man in Long Point in 1800, and in 1813, the wealthiest men in Stonington lived outside Stonington Borough,²² by 1820, the borough had acquired a few men who were comparatively wealthy.²³ But, it was not until the 1830's, when the profits from sealing and whaling began to roll in, that a real change in the economic structure of the place occurred. In 1831, thirteen residents of the borough possessed estates worth over \$5000. (One was a widow, Sally Palmer.) For the first time the property of a borough resident was rated at over

²¹"Stonington Mechanics Petition, 1804," Connecticut Archives, Finance and Currency, Second series, Vol. XIII, Document 192. Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

²²In 1813 the richest men in the town of Stonington included Isaac Williams, Jr., whose estate was rated at \$34,500; William Woodbridge, \$28,400; Enoch Burrows, \$23,900; and Ephraim Williams, \$22,930. Only five residents of Stonington Borough possessed estates rated at more than \$5,000: Nathaniel Palmer, Jr., \$18,100; Amos Palmer, \$14,400; William Stanton, \$11,200; Amos Denison, \$9600; and David C. Smith, \$8600. The comparatively wealthy men in both the borough and town of Stonington were substantial farmers, whose principal asset was land. "Copy of Descriptive Lists of Lands, Lots . . . Dwelling Houses, . . . etc. in Stonington, 1814," New London County Historical Society, New London, Connecticut.

²³Amos Denison's estate was rated at \$16,500 in 1820, Ephraim Williams at \$7200, Samuel F. Denison, \$5400, Isaac Page \$5300, Doct. William Lord, \$15,200. Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1820.

\$20,000: William W. Rodman who had commanded a merchant vessel in 1814,²⁴ owned one half of a store by 1820,²⁵ and by 1826 was a merchant and owner of a General Store in Stonington Borough.²⁶ Rodman, whose estate was rated at only \$1,230 in 1820, was worth over \$22,000 eleven years later.²⁷ There were six additional residents of the borough with estates rated at over \$10,000; in 1820, there had been only two. Three of the seven men whose estates were worth over \$10,000, Rodman, Samuel F. Denison, and Ephraim Williams, owed their fortunes at least partly to the Antarctic seal fishery. The growing prosperity of the borough was not restricted to these fortunate few: forty three borough residents now possessed estates worth more than \$1,000, eighteen more than in 1820. Still the majority of the borough's householders (102 of 196) owned no taxable property at all.²⁸ In 1851, when whaling was at its height, there were thirteen men in Stonington Borough whose estates were rated at \$10,000 or more. At the top of the list was Charles P. Williams with \$93,000 (\$60,000 of this sum was invested in vessels, primarily whaleships) and John F. Trumbull, with \$57,000 (\$22,000 invested in vessels.) Sixty five of the borough's 1700 residents owned shares in Stonington vessels (whaleships were by far the most important), worth a total of \$349,648. But although the wealth of the borough had increased significantly since 1831, it was less widely dispersed than it had been 20 years before. In 1831, more than half of the householders

²⁴Works Progress Administration. Extracts of Registers, Enrollments and Licenses for the Ports of New London and Stonington. Manuscript copies of Custom House records in the G.W. Blunt-White Library, The Marine Historical Association, Mystic, Connecticut.

²⁵Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1820.

²⁶Advertisement in Stonington Yankee, 1826.

²⁷Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1831.

²⁸Ibid.

in the borough owned some property; in 1851, 98 of 313, or less than a third of the householders were property owners.²⁹

Around 1870, there were probably more wealthy people living in Stonington Borough than at any other time during the Nineteenth Century (and probably more per capita than anywhere else in Connecticut). Nineteen residents of the borough were rated at over \$10,000 on the 1870 Grand List Abstract; five of them possessed estates rated at over \$25,000 including C.P. Williams, with \$584,000; Richard F. Loper, \$33,000; and Francis Pendleton, \$30,000. But the majority of borough householders owned no taxable property (203 out of 345), which meant they possessed only such things as personal effects, clothing and household goods; for all houses, land, livestock, stocks and money at interest had to be declared.³⁰

The emergence of a number of wealthy men in Stonington Borough was not the only change that was taking place there, for the nature of their wealth was changing also. In 1820, \$14,500 of the taxable estate of the borough's wealthiest man, Amos Denison (his total taxable estate was \$16,500), who was almost certainly a farmer, was in land. (He also owned 5 houses worth \$1900.) Even the bulk (\$10,000) of Physician William Lord's

²⁹Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1831, 1851. Although C.P. Williams estate was princely compared to anyone living in the borough fifty years before (with the possible exception of Charles Phelps), no one in Stonington possessed wealth commensurate with that of large cities, or of the South's planter aristocracy. Frederick Law Olmstead wrote of the wealthy plantation owners living near Natchez, Mississippi in 1853: "I asked how rich the sort of men were of whom he spoke. 'Why sir, from a hundred thousand to ten million.' 'Do you mean that between here and Natchez there are none worth less than a hundred thousand dollars?' 'No, sir, not beyond the ferry. Why, any sort of plantation is worth a hundred thousand dollars. The Niggers would sell for that.'"

Frederick Law Olmstead, A Journey in the Back Country: In the Winter of 1853-4 (New York: G.P. Putnam Sons, 1907, orig. pub. 1860), 1:20, 21.

³⁰Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1870.

\$15,200 estate was land. The total value of bank stock and money at interest in the entire town of Stonington in 1820 was but a little over \$32,000.³¹

By 1851, of the twenty three men worth over \$5,000, only building contractor Charles H. Smith possessed an estate whose most valuable component was acreage. (Smith's estate was rated at \$17,000; \$12,500 of it was land.) As might be expected, the principal portion of the estates of whaling magnates C.P. Williams, J.F. Trumbull and Ephraim Williams lay in investments in vessels: \$60,000, \$22,000 and \$14,500 respectively. Although the wealthy men of Stonington still owned real estate (C.P. Williams owned \$10,000 worth in Stonington, Trumbull \$6800, and Ephraim Williams \$7100); stocks and loans were a much more popular investment. Peleg Hancox, whose estate was rated at about \$20,000 in 1851, owned no land (other than two house lots), two houses worth \$4200, \$5000 invested in trade, including a general store in Stonington Borough, \$7840 in vessels, and \$2760 in stocks and money at interest. Stiles Stanton's estate was rated at about \$13,000 in 1851; \$4000 of it in stock and money at interest, \$500 in land and \$7220 in shares of vessels. Gurdon Trumbull, brother of John F., and Impartial Journal editor Samuel, had \$9000 in stock and money at interest, out of a total taxable estate of about \$18,000. In 1851, there was invested in the town of Stonington over a half a million dollars in insurance, bank and manufacturing stock, and money at interest. Total investments in vessels and commerce were over a third of a million dollars while the value of land was \$644,000, only \$34,000 more than it had been thirty years before.³²

In 1870, the value of the relatively poor farm land of Stonington was

³¹ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1820.

³² Ibid., 1851.

not much greater than it was in 1820, \$725,000; by 1880, at \$585,000, it was actually less than in 1820. There were almost three times as many dwelling houses in Stonington by 1870 (924), worth about \$1,100,000. But stocks, investments, and money at interest, which had formed an inconspicuous 5% of the town's wealth in 1820, constituted well over 50% in the years after the Civil War. Although whaling was no longer important in Stonington after the 1850's, the wealth brought home by whaleships was registered on the Grand Lists down through the 1880's. In 1870, Stonington's total grand list was at its Nineteenth Century zenith, \$4,830,000. Approximately \$2.8 million of this amount was money at interest, investments in vessels, commerce, manufacturing, railroad and city bonds, and bank, insurance and manufacturing stocks. In 1880, the Grand List total was \$4,700,000, of which about \$2.5 million was in various investments.³³

The increased value of investments and declining value of land was indeed a new economic order. But the reactions of the citizens of Stonington Borough to it are largely unknown; the only comments upon it which survive, were made in 1846 in a lecture by the Rev. Albert Gallatin Palmer. Palmer's father, a substantial farmer in Jeffersonian North Stonington, gave evidence of his loyalty to the Republican cause by naming his son after one of its heroes. Speaking on the "Dignity of Labor" at the "Mechanics and Workingmen's Literary Association of Stonington" (unfortunately

³³ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1870 and 1880. Although there were great changes in the economic structure of Stonington Borough in the Nineteenth Century in one respect, the ratio of property owners to total population, there was almost no variation. In 1810, the federal census listed 138 householders in the borough. Sixty three were taxpayers according to the 1810 Grand List; fifty of these sixty three, or about 36% of the householders, owned real estate (houses, land, or money at interest). In 1870, out of 345 householders (Federal census Schedule 1870) 127, or about 37%, owned real estate. In 1880, 141 of 404 householders were property owners, or about 35%.

nothing is known about this group so intriguingly named), the Rev. Palmer attacked the present tendencies of an age which was alien to the old agrarian utopia.

Man's divinely appointed work, whether as indicated by natural or revealed truth, is the tilling of the earth for the support of himself. . . . The tilling of the earth is emphatically the work of man (other labours are honorable exceptions to this general rule). . . . It is . . . very obvious that these exceptions . . . have been multiplied to a dangerous extent. . . . The consequence is, that while the field has been deserted, the use of the plough and hoe abandoned, the mechanical mercantile, and professional vocations have been overstocked and over-run with a horde of unskilled, inefficient, poverty stricken, half starved incumbents.³⁴

But Palmer was optimistic about the future. This unhappy situation will be corrected, he said,

The onward . . . rapid march of science will drive out from the arts and professions this worthless clan of speculators, and hasten the day when the law of the gospel shall be literally and rigidly enforced - that "He who will not work, neither shall he eat." The invention of labour saving machines inevitably tends to this result. . . . [Should they continue for 25 years] there will be left little to be done by the hands of operatives. The tendency of things on every hand is to force men back to what we believe emphatically to be the great and noble work of man, that of cultivating the earth.³⁵

The new wealth of places like Stonington was not, in Palmer's opinion, "the true wealth of a nation, which consists primarily in its soils, and secondarily in the cultivation of its soils. All other wealth is artificial, and the result of conventional policy."³⁶

There is little information about daily life in Stonington before the Civil War; certainly far less than the post-war period, when almost

³⁴Edward T. Hiscox, ed., A Memorial of Albert Gallatin Palmer, DD (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1893), p. 316.

³⁵Ibid., p. 320.

³⁶Ibid., p. 322.

every issue of the Stonington Mirror contained items relating to the social activities of the towns' citizens. Yet it is safe to assume that in common with the rest of the country, (the South possibly excepted), the pursuit of pleasure was buried by the more serious concerns of life.

Edgar Martin wrote of American society of the period:

There was little leisure time in which the labouring man could enjoy himself, and, apart from the southern planters, there does not appear to have been much of a disposition on the part of those who could afford leisure to avail themselves of it. Businessmen found their chief enjoyment in working or, if they did not actively enjoy it, at any rate felt lost outside their offices. Thomas Law Nichols wrote, "in no country are the faces of the people furrowed with harder lines of care. In no country that I know is there so much hard, toilsome, unremitting labour: in none so little of the recreation and enjoyment of life. Work and worry eat out the heart of the people. . . . It is seldom that an American retires from business to enjoy his fortune in comfort. Money making becomes a habit. He works because he has always worked, and knows no other way." ³⁷

Around the middle of the Nineteenth Century, changes produced by the new economic order began to emerge, bringing signs of the type of society which would dominate Stonington in the post-war period. For the first time, the town and borough of Stonington came to be considered as a resort for wealthy vacationers.³⁸ In 1859, the Stonington Correspondant of the Narragansett Weekly wrote, "The summer mansion built for J. Warren Stanton, Esq., of New Orleans . . . will be one of the finest mansions in the county, or state."³⁹ During the Civil War, the Wadawanuck House, built

³⁷ Edgar W. Martin, The Standard of Living in 1860 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), pp. 345-6.

³⁸ The first attempts to promote tourism in Stonington were a series of items which appeared in the Yankee in 1827. The following is the conclusion of one of them. "Were the beauties and advantages of the general vicinity more generally known to that portion of the community who spend the warm season in pursuit of health and rational pleasure, we feel confident that Stonington would be much resorted to as a place combining the objects sought by that class of traveller." Stonington Yankee, 27 June 1827.

³⁹ Westerly, R.I., Narragansett Weekly, 21 April 1859.

in 1837 to serve travelers on the steamboat - rail route between New York and Boston, became a fashionable watering place for summer visitors. "The patrons . . . were of the best class summering at the coast from all over the country. . . . A review of the old registers . . . shows the names of prominent men from all over the country."⁴⁰ Rates at the Wadawanuck were steep: "The price of board was \$4 per diem, and from \$18 to \$25 per week for regular boards."⁴¹ Frederick Law Olmstead had called exorbitant the \$1 a night he had been charged by southern plantation owners for food and a night's lodging in 1854.

The immigration of the rich which was begun before the war apparently continued during it. "Stonington is rapidly filling up with men of wealth. Mr. Palmer Loper of Philadelphia, has arrived with his family, and occupies the new house lately built for him near the Wadawanuck Hotel."⁴² A correspondent to the Mirror wrote wistfully in 1896 of this springtime of the beau monde in Stonington Borough, "We find that over 30 years ago, the summer life was different from what it is now. Society parties were in order. . . . In the borough, the residences of the Williams' (Capt. C.P. and Hon. Ephraim, respectively) the Trumbulls and others were often the scene of much society life and beauty. 'Twas then that many city fellows

⁴⁰ Stonington Mirror, 3 September 1897.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Mystic, Conn. Pioneer, 15 April 1865. Loper was the son of Richard Fanning Loper, who was born at Long Point in 1800, and later removed to Philadelphia where he became a wealthy shipbuilder and inventor. R.F. Loper moved back to Stonington sometime during the 1860's. In 1866, Palmer Loper was convicted of arson, after it was proved that he ordered a servant to set fire to a number of barns and the home of the warden of Stonington Borough. According to the Mirror, "Loper was the chief engineer of the place, and it came out in trial that he caused the buildings to be fired in order to display himself and show how quickly he could subdue a conflagration. Stonington Mirror, 26 April 1866, p. 2.

visited here during the summer period, attracted mostly by the beauty and sweetness of the daughters."⁴³

The New "Leisure Class" of Stonington Borough

What I think was really new in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century in Stonington was an increase in the size and wealth of the upper class, and a new attitude toward leisure which was produced by the secularization of society, and the focus of public attention for the first time upon the entertainments of the upper crust. While the Stonington newspapers of the early Nineteenth Century restricted themselves almost entirely to "news items" and didactic essays and poems reprinted from other sources, and contained nothing resembling a society column; there was hardly an issue of the Stonington Mirror, which began publication in 1869, without a paragraph on the most recent frolic of the town's residents at a picnic, a sleighing party, or the more serious entertainment of a literary tea. The names of the attendants were always those of the families of the economic elite. Ordinary citizens could watch the upper class - from which they were excluded, for the possibility of rising from the middle to the upper class in Stonington had vanished with the whaling fleet - enjoy itself, for previously the Calvinist religion of New England had dictated that the lives of the rich be almost as dreary as those of the poor. Yet, if the outsiders felt slighted, or even if they felt themselves to be outsiders, they kept it to themselves. There were few complaints. As previously noted, only in the controversy over the graded schools did something resembling class antagonism erupt during the Nineteenth Century in Stonington. And the source of that problem was more hostility to foreigners than

⁴³ Ibid., 10 July 1896, p. 2.

class conflict.

Beneficiaries of the whaling fleet (directly and indirectly) the new "leisure class" of post Civil War Stonington, consisted largely of men, who had pursued successful business careers before the Civil War; and their female relatives to whom servants gave freedom from domestic responsibilities. With few exceptions, every young man, even those from the wealthiest families, had occupations listed next to their names on the manuscript census schedules and Anderson's Stonington Directory. It is unlikely that men who had won their fortunes at the cost of so much sweat and toil, and who often publically expressed a high regard for the virtues of work, would allow their sons to squander their earnings. Freed for the first time in the history of provincial New England from the yoke of religion, and possessing sufficient wealth to allow them to take advantage of this freedom, they led enviable lives in a quiet and lovely little town. Stonington Borough did not become a haven for wild Sybarites, for scandal and indecorum were at no time tolerated in Nineteenth Century New England.⁴⁴ Nor did a group of hard eyed, tight fisted New England business men abruptly shed their traces to enter a social whirl of literary teas, sleigh rides, and hunting trips. There are a number of reasons that pastimes for which Stonington had little time before the war, became matters of interest after it. In the first place, almost all of the wealthy people

⁴⁴ About the only scandals involving wealthy local residents which reached the columns of the Mirror were Palmer Loper's arson conviction and the death of Charles P. Palmer, who had left his wife and became a theatrical producer in New York, at the Long Island cottage of his "protege", a young English actress. However, Charles P. Palmer and Charles P. Williams, Jr., perhaps would qualify as playboys in the Twentieth Century style. Palmer's father Courtlandt Palmer, Sr. "owned at one time nearly all of the property around Union Square, New York, and his estate was valued at \$7,000,000. . . . The interest of Charles P. Palmer in the estate was a life one, and his income was \$45,000 a year." Stonington Mirror, 1 July 1893.

on the Stonington tax lists from the 1860's on, were relatively old; with few exceptions, in their fifties and sixties. Secondly, for the most part, their fortunes had been made either directly or indirectly out of the whaling industry and its subsequent prosperity. Whaling in Stonington was moribund by the 1850's, so these people's days of active business life were mostly behind them.

Thirdly, Stonington Borough entered a period of economic stagnation after the decline of whaling, and anyone who wished to make or increase his fortune had to go somewhere else to do it. The boosters of Stonington Borough believed that an economic revival would occur if only the wealthy men of the place would invest their money in industries at home. But actually the borough possessed few advantages for large scale manufacturing enterprises, lacking both waterpower and a hinterland with valuable natural resources. In 1887, attempting to attract industry to the town, Stonington citizens "voted that the property of all manufacturing establishments hereafter established in this town shall be exempt from taxation for a period of three years."⁴⁵

A series of satirical letters written by a latter day Gulliver were published in the Mirror in 1870. One of them dealt with the economic decline of the borough. In reply to the question of why there is no business in Stonington Borough, an old aristocrat remarked, "We do not wish it sir. Would you fill our town with common mechanics? Would you erect noisy puffing intolerable factories along our quiet streets, and upon our beautiful shores? Would you sir, be one to spoil our lovely promenade with the burden and litter of cargoes and freights? . . . We now send all our money out of town. We invest it carefully in every direction

⁴⁵Stonington, Town Records, V, September 19, 1887.

but at home. For then we are assured that our town will remain as it is, at least till we are gone. . . . We are determined to keep down this infidel spirit of the age, that has the basis of its creed in steam, and progress, and improvements."⁴⁶

The most important reason behind the rise of a "leisure class" in Stonington Borough was that Calvinism, which had possessed sufficient vitality to counteract the secular trend in society after 1800, was incapable of arresting a similar change in society after 1850. Subsequently, the power of Calvinist Protestantism over personal behavior in Stonington suffered a certain and steady decline.⁴⁷

Evidence that religion became far less important in the daily lives of Stonington Borough residents after the 1840's is not very concrete. But, there was no place at all, in the lives of the respectable classes of early Nineteenth Century Stonington, for the entertainments which they found so attractive later. This generalization was not true of the first decade or so of the century, however, for until the Second Great Awakening

⁴⁶ Stonington Mirror, 30 August 1870.

⁴⁷ One of the clues to the change in the religious climate lies in the church records of the Borough's Baptist church which are deposited at the Stonington Historical Society. During the 1840's, when the aforementioned Rev. A. G. Palmer first assumed the pastorate of the church, there was an attempt to enforce the rigid moral strictures of Calvinism which led to numerous excommunications. At first, those outcasts who wished to maintain affiliations with some religious body had nowhere to turn, for the standards of the Congregational church in the borough were almost as strict as the Baptist. But after 1849 with the founding of an Episcopal church in the borough (which it should be remembered never adopted a temperance pledge, one of the main interests of Stonington's Baptists and Congregationalists) Calvinists no longer held a religious monopoly. Probably, the increased liberalism of the borough Baptist church (manifested by a sharp decline in excommunications and cases of moral turpitude reported in the church records after about 1850), was at least partially influenced by the competition of Episcopalians. However, the most important factor in the liberalization of the churches was the realization that harsh discipline had no place in a world in which religion had moved away from center stage.

had reestablished the dominance of Calvinism, Stonington Borough was infested with the diestic heritage of the Revolutionary Era, and such abominations as dancing schools and theatrical performances were flaunted before the public eye. The Calvinists were responsible for the somber outlook of mid Nineteenth Century Stonington. There is no evidence that Calvinists ever abandoned their avowed hostility to the idea of secular pleasure during the Nineteenth Century. Their attempts to reestablish the rigid Sunday Blue Laws in the 1890's illustrate this hostility. They remained in doctrine faithful to the spirit espoused by Hezekiah Woodruff, who in 1800 warned Congregationalist ministers that "Every instance of unnecessary commerce which carries with it, the idea of profit or pleasure, is degrading the Character of the Christian Minister."⁴⁸ The only possible conclusion is that people paid less attention to the tenets of their religion after the 1840's and had little time for the "blue nose puritanism" of their ancestors.

The wealthy citizens of Stonington Borough ostentatiously disported themselves in a manner that was unknown in small New England towns before the Civil War. The social world of New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Brooklyn, described by Prof. Edward Pessen in his book Riches, Class and Power Before the Civil War,⁴⁹ was completely alien to places like Stonington until the latter part of the Nineteenth Century. After the Civil War items like the following filled the columns of the Stonington Mirror: "Charles P. Palmer drives the handsomest tandem team with English dog cart attachment ever seen on our

⁴⁸Rev. Hezekiah N. Woodruff, A.M., A Sermon Delivered at the Ordination of Ephraim T. Woodruff (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1801), p. 12.

⁴⁹Edward Pessen, Riches, Class and Power Before the Civil War (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath & Co. 1973).

streets."⁵⁰ The new pleasures of the wealthy would have aroused thunderous attacks from old-time Calvinist preachers; nowhere in the Puritan Kingdom would shenanigans like those at Charles Palmer's private race track have been tolerated.

At least one thousand people assembled at the private race track of Charles P. Palmer, at Walnut Grove, about a mile and a half north of the borough. . . . [A] large number of persons went there from the borough. . . . The principal race . . . was . . . between the stallions Happy Thought, owned by Theo D. Palmer of Stonington, and Happy Thought Jr., owned by George E. Tripp of Mystic Bridge. This was for \$175. . . . Considerable money was wagered by the outsiders. . . . The second race was between T.D. Palmer's . . . Linda Dooley and C.P. Williams' [son of the whaling magnate] Ginger Snap. . . . The last race was between George Denison's Jennie, and C.P. Williams' . . . Ethel Medium. . . . The Stonington Band was there to furnish music.⁵¹

Apparently there were no protests over this affair; none have survived if there were.

There was also a new mobility in search of pleasure and recreation among the comfortable classes, which had no parallel in pre-war Stonington. "Most of our borough belles and beauties have returned from New York where they have been passing the spring months."⁵² "The exodus to Florida of Stoningtonians this winter will be large. The family of Rev. Mr. Pitt have migrated to Florida to spend the winter."⁵³ "Mr. C. P. Williams' summer place, Stoneridge, is being made ready for the occupancy of the family, which will return from New York City, about April 1st."⁵⁴ "Mr. John Atwood, Mrs. Harriet Atwood, and a maid will pass the cold season at

⁵⁰ Stonington Mirror-Journal, 12 June 1873.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 11 August 1888, p. 2.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 20 June 1872, p. 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3 November 1883.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 20 March 1896, p. 2.

San Diego, Cal., keeping house during their sojourn there."⁵⁵ There were even pleasure trips to Europe, a thing unheard of, in early Nineteenth Century Stonington. "Mr. N.B. Palmer 2d, and wife are enjoying themselves in Paris. We are glad to learn that Nat's health is greatly improved."⁵⁶

The servant problem now became a source of vexation. "Some of our citizens have sent to Sweden for girls to do housework. It is almost an impossibility to get any help in the borough."⁵⁷ "Warm weather brings out the French nurses and handsome babies in force and the sidewalks are monopolized by baby carriages of all descriptions. By the way, can anyone explain why French women only are employed as nurses?"⁵⁸ New wealth had led to specialization among the servant class as compared to the days when a neighbor's daughter might assist with housework, or a son with farm chores. In 1870 C.P. Williams wrote to an unidentified friend in New York, "I wrote you yesterday in relation to getting me a gardener . . . I am willing to pay 25 or 30 dollars a month and board him."⁵⁹ In 1866 Williams received the following answer from a B. Wheeler ? in New York in reply to a query about hiring a coachman: "You wish me to procure for you a coachman . . . [but those whp] call themselves first class coachmen won't go for less than \$30 to \$35 per month and do nothing else but attend to that branch."⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Ibid., 10 November 1888, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 5 December 1872, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 22 May 1873, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 31 May 1884.

⁵⁹ Charles P. Williams to unknown party, 19 April 1870, C.P. Williams Collection, Box LXIV.

⁶⁰ B. Wheeler? to C.P. Williams, 26 April 1866, C.P. Williams Collection, Box IV.

Although their material wants were satisfied, the respectable citizens of Stonington still hungered for the trappings of culture.

Our village has been thrown into a state of excitement the past week by invitations to a Dickens party to be given by Mr. J.W. Stanton. Something quite new and strange in this part of the world, for although Stonington generally keeps up, and is sometimes a little ahead of prevailing fashions, this was something never attempted before. Such a rush as there was for Dickens' works, never was he in such demand before, and such a host of questions as to what character to take, and what to wear, by everyone you met, was something very funny to outsiders, but of vital importance to the invited guests.⁶¹

The "Martha Washington Tea Party" at the "Road Literary Circle" must have been a stupefying extravaganza.

Washington's Birthday was observed by the Road Literary Circle in a Martha Washington Tea Party at the house of Mrs. Eliza P. Noyes. . . . Many members of the circle were in costume, some of them rare and elegant. Mr. Everleigh Lord, as George Washington, was dressed in a suit of black velvet in "ye olden style." . . . Washington's cabinet was represented by Charles Williams, as Thomas Jefferson; Avery Noyes as Alexander Hamilton; Amos Hewitt as Maj. Gen. Knox, and Duane Wheeler as John [sic] Randolph. . . . A number of tableaux were presented, consisting of "George cutting his father's tree" (Josie Noyes), "Young Martha" (Maria Smith), "Mrs. Washington talking to George" (Annie Denison and Alfred Miner), (etc.). . . . After the tableaux, the large company was served with an elegant supper prepared by the members of the Circle.⁶²

Attacks upon the foibles of the Stonington elite were not numerous and rather mild. In the first place, the only forum in the town for such attacks was the Stonington Mirror, whose editor, Jerome Anderson, although slightly to the left of the leaders of society, in general accepted most of their values. Secondly, critics of the wealthy have always been accused of being merely envious of those whose superior abilities and efforts have earned them just rewards. And it is not surprising that

⁶¹ Stonington Mirror-Journal, 7 November 1871.

⁶² Stonington Mirror, 3 March 1888, p. 3.

Stonington Borough, like most places, had a certain reverence for the rich. Nevertheless the behavior of the upper class was not entirely without its critics. In 1866, the Narragansett Weekly carried a satirical letter, purportedly written by a Stonington Belle, which poked fun at the exclusiveness of the upper crust. "The elite of the town have all called on me, and the commoners have, in consequence of the position I have assumed, learned to treat me with greater deference and respect. . . . We have also adopted the plan of marking our stones at the Breakwater [socializing and sparking on the breakwater was a favorite warm weather pastime], so that the plebeians have no excuse for not knowing them, and keep at a respectable distance."⁶³

The most frequent criticism, the failure of the upper classes to give monetary support to local businesses, was a regular subject of Jerome Anderson's editorials. In an 1869 editorial, Anderson suggested that the moral standard of Stonington was being ruined by the tightfistedness of the town leaders.

We are convinced that there are yet untried popular and practical measures, equal to the emergency of checking this growing evil of intemperance. In this place, the prime cause of the difficulty can be summed up in one word - idleness! Give any young men steady employment; establish free lectures, and moral entertainments, that are instructive as well as recreative, and my word for it they will not spend their evenings at beer saloons and places of low resort. Do not send them to crowded cities, where they will be deprived of a mother's or sister's influence, and encompassed with all matter of besetting sins. . . . No human being with ordinary brains was ever yet reformed by coercive or persuasive measures while remaining in idleness, that fruitful parent of physical and moral turpitude.⁶⁴

⁶³ Westerly, R.I., Narragansett Weekly, 19 July 1886, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Stonington Mirror, 18 December 1869, p. 2.

Some of the more progressive neighboring communities dubbed the borough "Sleepy Stonington" because of its torpid economy. After the Norwich Bulletin had ridiculed Stonington's bucolic atmosphere, Anderson, thirsting for revenge wrote, "The Norwich firemen turned out to extinguish the aurora borealis the other night."⁶⁵ "Stonington's Gulliver" wrote in the Mirror in 1870 that there are "no signs of any real commercial activity." Young people "as fast as they grow old enough to act for themselves . . . shake the dust of their sleepy old birthplace from their feet, and start off for new fields where they may win a fortune or, at least, employment and recognition. . . . Overall the town there is an indescribable air of stillness and quiet - 'a land where all things always seem the same.'"⁶⁶

Yet, at least in the opinion of the Stonington chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the moral and intellectual value of a community was not related to its economy.

A New London paper has intimated that Stonington . . . is a sleepy old town. . . . From the superior heights of its bustling activity, the city at the mouth of the Thames looks down with disdain upon our inactivity and reproaches us with our fallen greatness. . . . But what is the truest test of a community's vigor? Not always the number of mills that whirl and smoke upon its streets, not always the forest of masts that line its noisy wharves. . . . Intellectual activity is more than the display of mere physical energy.⁶⁷

By 1900, the title of "sleepy Stonington" was probably applicable to Stonington's social life as well as its economy, for the money which had made the leisure of the upper class so enjoyable had almost entirely disappeared. In 1900, not a single resident of the town of Stonington possessed an estate worth more than \$25,000; and only three were rated at

⁶⁵ Ibid., 15 January 1870, p. 2.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 4 June 1870, p. 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 15 January 1897, p. 3.

more than \$10,000: Eugene Atwood, a manufacturer from Willimantic; August Muller, a German born mortician and furniture dealer; and B.F. Williams.⁶⁸

The wealthy citizens of the post Civil War Stonington had been decimated by death. The only survivors in 1899 of the whaling era, source of most of Stonington's wealth, were former whaling captains B.F. Pendleton and Billings Burch.⁶⁹ Of those who died, only a few, such as Charles P. Williams, possessed estates large enough to allow the heirs to occupy a comfortable position in society. Charles P's son, Charles, evidently maintained a residence in Stonington after his father's death, but his name is not on the 1900 census or tax rolls. But opportunities for most of the scions of the borough's wealthy families could only be found outside of Stonington. Those who chose to remain would have to be satisfied with a much more austere style of life than their parents had been accustomed to.

⁶⁸Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1901.

⁶⁹Henry Robinson Palmer, "Stonington, Connecticut," The New England Magazine 20 (April 1899): 241.

CHAPTER X

CAPITALISM AND STONINGTON

The remarkable business acumen of Connecticut and New England is a part not only of American history, but of American folklore as well. Yet, the traditional picture of the sharp Yankee trader, foisting wooden nutmegs on his rustic customers is not too far from the truth. Timothy Dwight, commented with some pride, "all the people of New England without an exception . . . are men of business. The observation is applicable alike to those who are appropriately styled men of business and to all others."¹ A number of contemporary writers, however, found the excessive devotion of New Englanders to profit an unhealthy situation. In their 1819 Gazetteer, Pease and Niles² wrote,

If there are any prevailing or peculiar vices belonging to the inhabitants of this state [Conn.], we think that an avaricious or mercenary spirit is the most conspicuous. This probably is owing in part to the prevailing spirit and habits of trade; but principally to civil institutions and the established principals and customs of society, which attach an undeserved importance to property. These causes are not peculiar to this state; yet, perhaps, from their connection with others, their influences may have been more extensive.³

Another writer, T. L. Nichols, commented on the discrepancy between

¹ Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York, ed. Barbara King Solomon with Patricia M. King (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 1:235.

² John Niles, along with Gideon Welles, was one of the founders of the Jacksonian Democratic Party in Connecticut. John Niven, Gideon Welles, Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 51.

³ John C. Pease and John M. Niles, A Gazetteer of The States of Connecticut and Rhode Island (Hartford: William S. Marsh, 1819), p. 13.

the region's religious ideals and its business behavior. "Most of the New England people whom I knew were religious but they made hard bargains. To cheat in swapping horses, or in trade generally was considered a kind of game, not prohibited, at which the winner was merely a cute fellow. . . . It has never, perhaps occurred to the average American, that getting the best of a bargain had any relation to the Commandment, 'Thou shalt not steal', or the golden rule of the gospel."⁴

In the whaling industry of Stonington, of which Charles P. Williams was the most prominent figure, one may see this discrepancy between religious ideals and business practices. For without exception, the leaders of Stonington whaling, C.P. Williams, John F. and Gurdon Trumbull, Samuel F. Denison, Peleg Hancox, Ephraim Williams, William and Francis Pendleton, et al; were "pillars" of the Calvinist churches in the borough. Yet, it was common knowledge that working conditions on board whaleships were abominable, and some of these conditions could have been improved by a little added expense on the part of the owners. But apart from pious attempts to prevent fornication and drunkenness, owners paid little attention to the condition of the crewmen. What could possibly have been their justification for such tight fistedness? Evidently in a profit oriented free enterprise society, every man was seen as the master of his own fate, and if the whaleman found his life uncomfortable, that was his "look out." Since the comfort of the crew seemed to have little bearing on the profits of the voyage, and the only motivation for owners was maximum profit, no pains were taken to improve conditions. Sailors who could not take the life were replaceable, since any set of arms and legs could

⁴Quoted in Burrows Mussey, Yankee Life: By Those Who Lived It (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 381.

work a whaleship.

Apart from some of the crewmen who kept journals on Stonington whale-ships, capitalists and capitalism received kindly treatment in Stonington, as they and it did throughout most of America in the Nineteenth Century. Respectable opinion in the town would have no quarrel with the editor of the Stonington Advertiser who saw America as an open society, where no barriers prevented ascents to wealth.

The Self Made Man

Somebody has said that "the greatest architects for genius are poverty and Republicanism." . . . There is no excuse for failure in this land; all the incentives to action exist, and the means of success are amply provided to the majority. From every point comes a call for men. Milk and water individuals are out of the question, mediocrity may hardly be tolerated. - Brains! Brains! That's the commodity. Communities will search out the working brains in their midst and make the most of them.⁵

Throughout the Century, the Stonington papers carried advice to young men on how they too, could join the ranks of the wealthy. In the last issue of the Stonington Spectator in 1834, editor Peabody wrote a "Solemn Calculation" on how to get rich.

A young man who earns from six to eight or ten dollars per week, and spends but three or four of it in boarding, and what beside is necessary for comfort and convenience, may lay up from one to two hundred dollars yearly, toward setting up for himself at a proper time - If the capital required, be not large, in three or four years, he may calculate upon being a master instead of a journeyman. [But if he spends all his earnings] in idle Sunday excursions, and frivolous evening balls, or billiard playing . . . he may calculate upon remaining a journeyman for life. . . . But from every vicious cause youth will find no surer protection than religion. . . . Piety is the parent of every virtue, impiety of every vice.⁶

Over 60 years later, the theme of getting rich retained its fascination;

⁵Stonington Advertiser, 22 April 1854, p. 2.

⁶Stonington Spectator, 20 August 1834, p. 4.

this time, in a letter from Henry Ward Beecher to his son, there were more specific instructions.

How to make a fortune - extracts from a letter written by Henry Ward Beecher to his son. . . . Make yourself necessary to those who employ you by industry, fidelity and scrupulous integrity. Selfishness is fatal. . . . Do not speculate or gamble. Steady patient industry is both the surest and safest way. . . . The art of making a fortune is to spend nothing. In this country any intelligent man may become rich if he stops all leaks and is not in a hurry.⁷

William Dean Howells in his fine novel A Modern Instance, traced the rise to power of the new man of business, a species which became prominent on the American scene after the Civil War, and came to typify all the abuses associated with the Gilded Age. Utterly ruthless and amoral, men like Fiske, Vanderbilt, and Gould, represented an urban anonymity, alien to a small town like Stonington, whose wealthy men were always an integral and honored part of the community. As such, they were expected to behave in a certain manner; to contribute some money to charity, to be fairly liberal spenders, to show a little compassion toward the honest poor, to be pillars of the church. The wicked villain of the melodramas, threatening poor widows with eviction if they didn't pay their mortgages, would have been hissed in Stonington as surely as they were in the theatres. Deprived of the adulation and respect of one's neighbors, of what use is it to be wealthy? For one of the favorite figures of popular ridicule was the tight-fisted man, whose wealth was of little use to himself or anyone else.

If by underhanded methods, a local businessman did secure advantages at the cost of the misfortunes of the local residents, it certainly would have led to a tirade of abuse. The following item which appeared in the Mirror is evidence that such "smartness" was not at all appreciated. "The coal supply in Stonington is almost exhausted, but we shall have plenty of

⁷ Stonington Mirror, 23 November 1897, p. 1.

coal soon. It is creditable to our coal dealers to say that so far we know with one exception, they have not taken advantage of the scarcity of the commodity to put up their prices. . . . In many other places dealers almost every day added a dollar per ton to the price, and people had to pay it, but such extortion brings its own reward."⁸ It was perhaps because whaling crews were not local boys and generally came from the lowest rungs of society, that the whaleship owners felt little sympathy for their plight.

In the opinion of one contributor to the Mirror, capitalists, could if they wished, become the community's most valuable asset. "There are two opposite policies in the use of capital. The one is to increase your wealth by taking so much from your neighbor in the form of usury or interest, whether at home or abroad. The other is to so employ your capital, as, while you increase your own wealth, you also better the condition of your neighbor, and stimulate the social thrift and industry."⁹

The only serious local criticism of the capitalists of Stonington Borough was that they tended to invest their money out of town. The belief that good times in the borough would return again was a theme often repeated during the last forty years of the Nineteenth Century.¹⁰ The Stonington correspondent to the Narragansett Weekly was disturbed by the stagnant economy of the borough compared to neighbors Westerly and Mystic. The

⁸ Ibid., 18 March 1875.

⁹ Ibid., 9 July 1870

¹⁰ As early as 1853, the borough's economic stagnation was a matter of concern, at least to the editor of the Stonington Advertiser. "We believe it to be a fact notorious, that as a practical business community, we are and for years have been greatly behind the times, while our neighbors on either side [Westerly and Mystic] are fully up to the proper standard - Thriving and prosperous. And that by holding out superior inducements for the employment of both labor and capital, literally taking from us what we have." Stonington Advertiser, 29 January 1853.

reason was that in the latter places

Their wealthy men employ their capital at home. Not so the capitalists of the Borough. Although there are men of great wealth here, and in what may be called the "sub-urbs" yet their capital is used mostly in New York, Chicago, New Orleans and other places. It is true that they [borough capitalists] employ a number of common laborers, masons, etc., . . . but in ship building, foundries, manufactories, and other mechanical enterprises, they employ but a small part of their capital.¹¹

The citizens of Stonington Borough seemed remarkably ignorant of the operations of the new breed of businessman (the "robber baron"), or of the abuses perpetrated by the monopolies they operated during the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century. Because of its stagnant economy, Stonington lacked opportunities for men like William Dean Howell's Bartley Hubbard to pursue their nefarious careers. Apparently unaware of the economic consequences of the growing power of monopolies; and perhaps not seriously affected by any of them, it remained blissfully dominated by its old business elite. Judging by the borough's only forum of opinion, the Stonington Mirror, the place was supremely uncritical of the alarming direction toward which the American economy seemed to be moving.¹²

¹¹ Westerly, R.I., Narragansett Weekly. 15 November 1860, p. 2. A second and minor note of discord was sounded once by Jerome Anderson in the Stonington Mirror in 1889. His complaint was directed at the unequal taxation of money as compared to real estate, but since nothing further on the subject was ever written, I think the matter aroused little interest. "Many of the bonds sent to Hartford for registration, although owned in the town for years, have never paid any taxes heretofore. What a farce the present system of taxation is. A man worth \$75,000 pays on one-tenth of that amount, while a man who has nothing but a small house and lot has to pay on all his taxable property." Stonington Mirror, 17 August 1889, p. 2. But this brief comment from Anderson and occasional remarks made about capitalists failure to invest at home were about the only criticism of the wealthy in late Nineteenth Century Stonington.

¹² As far as I can tell, only in the ownership of the Stonington Railroad did the trusts directly enter the orbit of Stonington's world during the Nineteenth Century. In 1850, Daniel Drew and Cornelius Vanderbilt "obtained the majority of stock in the old Stonington Road." Stonington Mirror, 8 February 1898. In 1892, the Stonington Railroad, or the New York,

The Mirror's attitude can be surmised from the following: "It is commonly believed that the holders of national bank stock are the rich. But that impression is not correct. Out of 208,486 shareholders over a hundred thousand own less than one thousand dollars each, and only one-twentieth in all hold over ten thousand dollars. The banking capital of the country is mostly owned by widows and orphans."¹³

A Stonington Capitalist: Charles Phelps Williams¹⁴

Certainly the brightest star in Stonington's constellation of wealthy men was Charles Phelps Williams, who was worth over three million dollars at his death. (His nearest rival John F. Trumbull, was worth about \$600,000.)

Providence and Boston Railroad Company, the last important independent line in Connecticut, was absorbed into the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. Ibid., 2 April 1892, p. 2. Although the New Haven Register reported that most of the residents of Stonington opposed the consolidation, it was not through fear that the N.Y., N.H. & HTRFD. would indulge in rate gouging or the like, but a belief that the end of the Stonington Railroad's independence would mean the end of the Stonington Steamship Line, and the relegation of Stonington Borough to the role of a minor way-station. Ibid., 2 February 1889. The subsequent operation of the consolidated line was probably satisfactory, since it evidently inspired no complaints.

¹³Stonington Mirror, 6 December 1877, p. 1.

¹⁴This section is based largely on the Charles P. Williams Collection at the G.W. Blunt-White Library at Mystic Seaport, which appeared that it might be an excellent source for Stonington history, since it consisted of 35,000 pieces and thirty volumes of correspondence of Stonington Borough's wealthiest and most important businessman. But the Williams Collection was a great disappointment. In the first place, most of it was dreadfully dull business correspondence. Secondly, most of the letters in the collection were written between 1863 and 1892 and dealt primarily with Williams' out of town business operations. Had they been written during the time when the Stonington whaling fleet was in operation, their value would have been greatly increased.

But there were two sets of letters which I found quite interesting. One set was written during the 1870's by captains of clipper ships managed by Williams which were engaged in the California grain trade. The second set was written by several southern merchants and plantation owners who were seeking northern capital just after the Civil War.

Charles Phelps Williams was born in 1804. His parents were among the wealthiest citizens of Stonington, in fact, he was one of the few business leaders of the town who might be considered "to the manor born." His father, Ephraim Williams, a substantial farmer, possessed an estate which was rated at about \$23,000 in 1813; a figure which was surpassed by only three other residents of Stonington.¹⁵ Ephraim was descended from Williamses, Wheelers, and Denisons, all of whom had been prominent in Stonington since the Seventeenth Century. Charles' mother, Hepsibeth Phelps, was the daughter of the wealthiest man in Stonington Borough, Dr. Charles Phelps,¹⁶ who was born in Hebron, Connecticut, and later moved to Stonington.¹⁷ In 1820, Charles came into his inheritance, which must have been a sizable nest-egg for a 16 year old boy, although there was no cash value set on it in the Stonington Probate Records.

The honourable Court of Probate for . . . Stonington . . . divide and set off the real estate of Ephraim Williams late of said Stonington . . . to and among the widows and heirs of sd deceased. . . . We have set off to Charles P. Williams . . . all the land said deceased purchased of William Chesebro . . . together . . . with all the lands . . . purchased of George Palmer and Hannah Palmer, with all the buildings, etc. . . . Also set off to said Charles P. Williams, one other lot of land on Palmer Neck, . . . another lot of land . . . near Oxecosset Creek. . . . [And] one other lot of land situated in Stonington Boro. . . . The foregoing real estate . . . is under the incumbrance of one third of the widow's dower on said Estate.¹⁸

¹⁵"Stonington Tax List, 1813," New London County Historical Society, New London, Conn.

¹⁶Biographical Review, 26 (Boston: Biographical Review Company, 1898), p. 466.

¹⁷Genealogical and Biographical Record of New London County (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1905), p. 178.

¹⁸Stonington Probate Records, Vol. 11, pp. 71, 73, May 30, 1820.

In 1821 Williams served as supercargo (an officer on a merchant vessel who was in charge of the cargo and the commercial aspects of a voyage) of a Stonington trading vessel on a voyage to Bilboa, Spain. Before he was 20, he commanded a vessel on a trading voyage to the West African Coast. In 1825, Williams purchased (for \$130) his first share of a vessel, 1/16 of the 82 ton sealing schooner Penguin. By the early 1830's, Williams was probably the most important owner of Stonington sealers. Using profits made in the Antarctic seal fishery he next turned his attention to whaling, and in 1830 was a shareholder in the Acasta, Stonington's second whaler.¹⁹ According to the Stonington tax list of 1851, Williams had over \$60,000 invested in vessels, almost three times as much as his nearest rival in the borough, John F. Trumbull.²⁰

Sometime during the 1840's, Williams began investing money in mid-western real estate. Although the would be boomers of Stonington's home industries were critical of the local capitalists penchant for out of town investments, they had a very simple reason for doing so: profits were much better. According to a biographical sketch which appeared in the Mirror in 1897, Williams invested much of his capital during the 1850's in Kansas farm mortgages which paid as high as 1 1/2% a month,²¹ or 18% a year. Similar mortgages in the Stonington area almost never exceeded 6%. Williams also borrowed money from local residents, particularly whaling captains and their widows, according to the Mirror, and then reinvested it in Western real estate. "People in those days preferred to loan the money rather than

¹⁹ Works Progress Administration, Extracts of Registers, Enrollments and Licenses For the Ports of New London and Stonington. Manuscript copies of Custom House records in the G.W. Blunt-White Library, The Marine Historical Association, Mystic, Conn.

²⁰ Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1851.

²¹ Stonington Mirror, 21 September 1897, p. 1.

to risk any other investment. . . . There were no Government bonds, or like securities to absorb surplus capital, hence farmers, captain's widows, and maidens and others having idle money, sought out Captain Williams to whom they could safely loan their money."²² As late as 1878, Williams was paying interest on some of these loans. "Sir, some years ago my mother, Mrs. Louise Stanton, loaned \$1600 through you, on a 'farm loan'. The semi-annual interest due February 4 has not come to hand. Will you give the matter your attention and remit the amount. Edmund Courtland Stanton, New York, February 11, 1878."²³

C.P. Williams was definitely not the type of businessman to put all his eggs in one basket; the correspondence in the Williams Collection deals with ventures ranging from plantations in Georgia and South Carolina to Pennsylvania oil wells. Like the Kansas farms of the 1850's, the ruined plantations of the South offered a more alluring prospect for northeastern capital than prosaic investments at home, with their almost universally standard 6% return. In 1878, Williams received the following letter, regarding a plantation he owned, from the William C. Bee Company of Charleston, South Carolina, his business agent in the South.

We enclose our account with Captain J.C. Haskell, in connection with your "Grove Point" plantation on the Ogeechee River, Georgia . . . [and] a check for \$7,364.19. Captain Haskell is desirous of renewing with you, for the coming year, . . . you to advance in the course of the season six thousand dollars, to enable him to cultivate a rice crop, interest . . . at 12 percent per annum. . . . We stated to Captain Haskell, that you would prefer a sale of the property to renting it [at \$1500 a year payable quarterly] but he has not the means to purchase it.²⁴

²²Ibid.

²³Edmund Stanton to Charles P. Williams, 11 February 1878, C. P. Williams Collection, Box XXV.

²⁴William C. Bee to Charles P. Williams, 8 November 1878, C. P. Williams Collection, Box XXVI. A letter which a member of a firm of

Williams was also a stockholder in the New London Oil Company, which was involved in the development of oil fields in Pennsylvania.

The news from our oil region continues to improve - as you will notice by Mr. Palmer's letter the well so near our tract is now yielding 80 bbls. per diem. As this is a very extraordinary yield for this time it will doubtless lead to the rapid development of the territory contiguous to Dennis Farm, on all sides so that we shall I think be obliged to develop in self defense. . . . I am exceedingly anxious that the Co. may do the best with the property. . . . With careful and timely development and good management the property will prove very valuable.²⁵

Manwaring's optimism however, was unwarranted. The Dennis Farm remained unproductive; and eight months later Williams offered his shares in the New London Oil Company for sale.²⁶

Although whaling out of Stonington was practically non-existent after 1860, and the ocean commerce of the borough by then was only a shadow of its former condition, Williams was involved in the ownership and management of vessels until his death. But ships were only a sideline for Williams after 1860, and most of those he owned shares in never touched at Stonington but spent their careers sailing out of other ports. A good number of these

Alabama bankers sent to Williams in 1866 runs counter to the stereotype of avaricious northern bloodsuckers aggressively seeking out victims among the fallen aristocracy of the South. Williams received a number of similar requests from southern businessmen and plantation owners for agricultural loans, but for some reason, perhaps the relative insecurity of such ventures, he preferred to invest his money in the Midwest. "Dear Sir - I am a member of the firm of Petty Sawyers & Co. Bankers, Mobile. . . . I am seeking to engage northern capitalists to invest in the South and I think we can make investments for you . . . secured by mortgages on real estate that will pay 10 to 15% per annum and so secured that there is positively no risk. I can also effect desirable partnerships for capitalists with old planters who have the farms and understand the cotton growing but have not ready money to buy tools, teams and provisions." J.M. Petty to Charles P. Williams, 31 December 1866. C.P. Williams Collection, Box IV.

²⁵R.A. Manwaring to Charles P. Williams, 24 February 1870, C.P. Williams Collection, Box IX.

²⁶C.P. Williams Collection, 4 November 1870, Box X.

vessels were engaged in the southern lumber, rice, and cotton trades; some carried coal from the Potomac River to Providence and Boston; only the giant wheat carrying clippers sailing between California and Europe retained a little of the glamour and romance of the whaling era. And even they were reduced to carrying guano from islands off the west coast of South America after excess competition had wrecked the wheat carrying trade. The letters from the captains of several of the vessels engaged in the California grain trade, especially those from R. P. Wilbur and D. W. Chester, illustrate that the master of a merchant vessel had to be as good a businessman as he was a navigator, since he was constantly making business decisions in situations where his sole advisor was his own judgement. In a letter to Williams in 1878, Chester wrote

Upon arrival at San Francisco in April, the largest wheat crop was in anticipation that was ever known here. War was in actual progress across the water with a fair prospect of drawing in many, if not all of the European powers. American shipowners and merchants here were resting easy expecting by the time new wheat came upon the market things would be very lively and freights would range from 3 to 4 pounds [per ton].²⁷ But before that time came around, British ships were flocking in by the score having been chartered months previous to arrival at 3 pounds. . . . Our American fleet was obliged to lay idle while our foreign friends . . . continue to carry off this wheat at a very good rate. . . . About 70,000 tons of shipping is now laying idle in San Francisco, . . . a few charters have been made at 2 pounds. We could hardly pay expenses at that rate.²⁸

But these rather exotic investments, sailing vessels, oil fields,

²⁷ In 1873 R. P. Wilbur, master of the ship Dauntless, wrote Williams that he had 1405 tons of wheat on board for which the freight charge was \$7026 or about \$35,000. A vessel was contracted to carry wheat generally before the crop was harvested. It was the captain's duty to keep rates low enough to compete with masters of other vessels, and at the same time insure a good rate of profit for the owners. R. P. Wilbur to C. P. Williams, 20 October 1873, C. P. Williams Collection, Box XVI.

²⁸ D.W. Chester to Charles P. Williams, August 1878, C. P. Williams Collection, Box XXVI.

southern plantations, were only of secondary importance to Williams, whose main interests after the decline of whaling were in the midwest. There he invested in farm mortgages, real estate (including a number of house lots in Chicago),²⁹ city and utility bonds, and bank partnerships. In 1860 Williams wrote to a Mr. B. F. Carver Esq. concerning the establishment of a bank in Chicago: "I will accept of your offer to put in \$100,000 for Courtland and my son, you to put in \$50,000 and receive 2/5 of the net profits the first year and after 1/3."³⁰

Williams apparently owned some railroad stock, but few shares in manufacturing enterprises. Perhaps he judged them to be too risky. The majority of business transactions recorded in the Williams Collection during the late 1860's and early 1870's involved the National Bank of Kalamazoo, Michigan, which Williams helped establish and whose president, Latham Hull, was a former North Stonington businessman and Williams' son in law. Many of these transactions were farm loans arranged by Hull for which C.P. provided the money.

The Charles P. Williams Collection at Mystic Seaport consists almost entirely of business correspondence and contains very little about the personal life of Stonington's wealthiest man. Like all of the borough's Nineteenth Century business leaders, he was, at least ostensibly, religious. In 1825, Williams was Secretary of the Baptist Sunday School Society in Stonington Borough,³¹ but he later became a Congregationalist and made

²⁹Regarding his Chicago real estate, Williams received the following letter: "My brother and myself would each buy 20 ft. at \$50 pr ft paying 1/4 down in cash and the balance in 10 years. . . . I do not know what to say as to interest. We shall find it difficult enough to pay more than six per cent but suppose you would not be willing to let your money at less than eight." Henry K. Walker to Charles P. Williams, 11 February 1863. C.P. Williams Collection, Box I.

³⁰C.P. Williams to B.F. Carver, 17 September 1860, C.P. Williams Collection, Box LII.

³¹Stonington Yankee, 19 October 1825.

several sizable donations to the borough Congregational Church although he never became a member in full communion of that body. Williams appears to have been a businessman of the old type, unlike the new business elite of the late Nineteenth Century whom Richard Hosstadter claimed had dispossessed and therefore disenchanted the old line patricians who became the founders of Progressivism. In a memorial biography which appeared in the Mirror in 1897, it was written of Williams, "Perhaps one of the most distinguishing features of his personal character was the thorough simplicity of his life. . . . He was averse to all ostentation and avoided public life. . . . His integrity was spotless and in the management of all the interests he controlled with the innumerable attendant possibilities of error, his reputation, stood always above reproach."³² Two of the few comments made by Williams on business practices that I found, appeared in letters he wrote in 1860 on the subject of speculators. Regarding the establishment of a bank in Chicago he wrote, "One thing I wish understood that neither of the partners . . . shall speculate in stocks either individually or on account of the house."³³ "I seldom ever knew a man who was fortunate in the speculation of stock in the beginning, but what became a bankrupt, besides . . . speculation ruins the credit and standing of the house."³⁴

But although almost the entire Charles P. Williams Collection fails to reveal his personality, in one remarkable letter he showed the toughness of a man who had become a millionaire in the whaling industry. Anyone who has ever felt the hot breath of a creditor on the back of his neck, may

³² Stonington Mirror, 21 September 1897, p. 1

³³ C.P. Williams to B.F. Carver, September 15, 1860, C.P. Williams Collection, Box LII.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, September 17, 1860.

appreciate the feelings of Edwin Ball who was evidently attempting to avoid repayment of a loan which Williams had co-signed for him.

Edwin Ball, Esq. Supt. _____[?] Mills, Emigrant Gap, California. Dear Sir, Some years since you are aware that I endorsed your notes for two hundred dollars and am without any news from you since and did not know until a few days that you had not paid these notes. [The treasurer of the bank had informed Williams that if Ball did not pay some interest, he, Williams, would have to pay the principal.] Now Sir, if you do not remit me the interest at least, I shall give you TROUBLE. I know and you know that you have done wrong in not paying before. I endorsed these notes to help you and if you do not pay, if you are anywhere in the United States, I shall find you and shall punish you all in my power for your wrong doing.³⁵

Ball was sufficiently impressed by this letter to immediately send off \$150, an action which mollified Williams considerably. "I received your draft. Your letter has given me much pleasure as I had reason to fear your intention was not to pay if you could avoid it. But your letter gives me renewed confidence in you and I trust and hope that you will meet with good [success?] and live and die an honest and upright man. I so regarded you when I guaranteed your notes for you and I kindly believe that you do not mean to disappoint me in my expectation. I am still your friend and best wishes."³⁶

In 1858 Williams celebrated his ostensible retirement from active business life by taking a year long vacation in Europe with his family.³⁷ But the volume of his business correspondence indicates that Williams' varied interests occupied much of his time during the 1860's and 70's. In 1876, however, Williams, who was then 72 years old, wrote a letter to the

³⁵ C.P. Williams to Edwin Ball, 16 September 1869, C.P. Williams Papers Vols. 1-3 Letterpress Copybooks, Box LXIV.

³⁶ Charles P. Williams to Edwin Ball, 30 October 1869, Ibid.

³⁷ Stonington Mirror, 21 September 1897, p. 1.

Stonington Savings Bank, announcing his retirement. "It has long been known to you and your board that it has been my desire to retire from the active duties of business life, and resign all such official trusts as now have claim upon my time and attention, including the position which I hold as President of your Board of Directors."³⁸ Three years later, a melancholy letter regarding Williams' mental condition was received by W. J. H. Pollard, President of the Ocean Bank and later executor of C.P.'s estate. "We were aware of the state of Mr. Williams' mind, but not to the extent of his entirely failing to recognize some things, [and] events, at times. It makes me feel sad to think of his present mental condition."³⁹ Williams died soon after, on October 28, 1879.⁴⁰

Accompanying a memorial biography of Williams which appeared in the Stonington Mirror in 1897, is a photograph which was taken probably when he was in his sixties. He was a strange looking, homely man, who bore a remarkable resemblance to his older brother, Ephraim. Dressed in a rumpled suit, and wearing a pair of tiny wire rimmed spectacles, he was the very antithesis of fashion. Yet, it is difficult to look at his picture without feeling envious, for he was a millionaire at a time when a million dollars was a huge amount of money. C.P. Williams' indifference to haute couture may well have been the self assurance of a man who was held in awe by all his neighbors, for on reading his correspondence, one is struck by the fact that few who wrote him considered themselves to be his equal. Had he lived in New York, Philadelphia or Boston, or on a southern plantation, Williams

³⁸C.P. Williams to the Secretary of the Stonington Savings Bank, 2 January 1876, C.P. Williams Collection, Box XXI.

³⁹S.D. Fish to W.J.H. Pollard, 21 June 1879, C.P. Williams Collection, Box XXVIII.

⁴⁰Stonington Town Records, Births, Marriages, and Deaths, 1879.

would have been merely one of a number of millionaires, some of them far richer, but in Stonington he was virtually sui generis.

CHAPTER XI

A PROFILE OF THE PEOPLE OF STONINGTON BOROUGH - 1800 - 1900

Since Stonington Borough was not incorporated until 1801, neither the first nor second federal census separated the population of Stonington Port or Long Point as the place was then called, from that of the town of Stonington. The first accurate enumeration of the population of Stonington Borough was the third federal census, taken in 1810. In that year, there were 804 people living in the borough; the population of the town of Stonington was 3043.¹ In 1774, the estimated population of the village of Long Point was 500.² Of course, the most obvious characteristic of the population of Stonington Borough in 1810, was the nearly absolute predominance of Yankee names. Jarvis Morse wrote that the Connecticut population was "more homogeneous than that to be found anywhere else in the Union. In 1820, the state contained very few foreign born residents, its 275,248 inhabitants boasting an ancestry of several generations in America. This unique situation was characteristic of local society until after 1850."³ Out of 138 householders living in the borough in 1810, only John Dunphy, who was probably an Irishman, had a name which indicated descent from non-English ancestors. There were also four black householders in the borough; while 16 blacks were listed as servants in white households. There were

¹U.S. Bureau of the Census, Third Census of the United States, 1810. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington.

²"Petition for a Meeting House," Connecticut Archives, Ecclesiastical Affairs, First Series, Vol. 14, Document 181, Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

³Jarvis Means Morse, A Neglected Period of Connecticut's History, 1818-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933), p. 286.

still two slaves living in Stonington Borough.⁴ In all, only 38 of the 804 inhabitants of Stonington Borough were not Yankee which meant that over 95% of the population was of English ancestry,⁵ and probably most, like Connecticut residents in general, were descended from families which had been in America for several generations.⁶

Probably as a result of the depression which affected American ports after the War of 1812, the population of Stonington Borough had declined by 1820 from 804 to 756. That lone Irishman, John Dunphy, had left for other parts, and until 1830 there were apparently none of his countrymen living in the borough. Dunphy's position as the only non Yankee in Stonington Borough was taken by Elaf Benson, a Swede who was a mate on the first voyage of the Hersilia to the Antarctic; although according to the 1820 census there were five naturalized foreigners living in the borough. Perhaps a Jacob Jonson was one of them; the names of all the other borough residents were Yankee. While the number of blacks had increased from 33 to 64, only one slave remained in the borough, a woman over 45 years old, owned by Hepzibah Williams. Stonington Borough was undoubtedly segregated,

⁴Third Federal Census, 1810. In 1784, Connecticut enacted a gradual emancipation of slaves. No Negro or mulatto child born from thereafter "shall be held in servitude longer than until they arrive to the age of twenty five years." Ralph Foster Weld, "Slavery in Connecticut," Tercentenary Commission of the State of Connecticut, No. XXXVI (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), p. 31. "The formal end of slavery in Connecticut . . . was not consummated until 1848. In that year the legislature passed the first act against the system providing that no person should thereafter be held in slavery in the state, and that no slave might be brought into Connecticut." Ibid., pp. 29, 30. According to Bernard C. Steiner, there were 310 slaves in Connecticut in 1810, and 6,453 free Negroes. Bernard C. Steiner, History of Slavery in Connecticut, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1893), Appendix.

⁵Third Federal Census, 1810.

⁶Around 1680 Connecticut declared "that the immigrants into the colony from Great Britain did not number more than one or two a year. . . . All the evidence confirms the opinion of an English merchant who described the New Englanders in 1689 as 'a very homebred people.'" Marcus Lee Hansen, The Atlantic Migration 1607-1860 (New York, Harper & Row, 1961), p. 36.

since all of the nine black families were grouped together, and census schedules were generally arranged by order of visitation.⁷

By 1840, the growth of the Stonington economy, based at first on the Antarctic seal fishery, and then on whaling; was reflected in the tax lists and census rolls of Stonington Borough. The population had almost doubled since 1820 (1383); and the growth of population in the borough represented the bulk of the increase in the town's population since 1810. The population of the town of Stonington in 1810 was 3043; by 1840 it was 3898. The number of foreigners and blacks, many of whom were listed as seamen on the 1840 census schedule, had also increased noticeably since 1810. For the first time Portuguese names appeared on the borough census rolls. Most of the Portuguese men had arrived as crewmen on Stonington whaleships, which like vessels of other ports, made a practice of stopping at the Azores on their outward voyage to complete crews and get fresh provisions. Sixteen Portuguese names were entered on the 1840 census rolls, while 145 blacks were listed as residents of the borough in 1840 (there had been 141 in 1830), a figure which was never again reached. The Irish, previously represented on the borough census rolls only by John Dunphy in 1810, and Henry Nugen (probably Nugent) in 1830, now numbered five families totalling 19 people. Although the names of the foreign born and their descendents were becoming more common in the borough, old-line Yankees still constituted about 90% of the population.⁸

In 1850, at the height of the golden age of Stonington whaling, the population of the borough was 2148, a figure it did not approach again until

⁷U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourth Census of the United States, 1820. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington.

⁸U.S. Bureau of the Census, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington.

In 1880, the Atwood Factory employed 66 people during the year, although the average number employed was 23.¹² The American Velvet Company opened its factory, which was located on the northern edge of Stonington Borough, in 1892.¹³ The velvet company employed a large number of Germans, who for the first time became an important element in the Stonington population. There had been only 23 Germans living in Stonington Borough in 1870; in 1900 there were 211. Irishmen, Canadian, and a few Frenchmen were also listed as velvet weavers on the 1900 census schedules. There were few native born Americans so employed.¹⁴

Of the 2114 people living in Stonington Borough in 1900, 1240 or almost 60% were non-Yankee. Most numerous were the Irish, 502; followed by the Portuguese, 327; and Germans, 311. Blacks, whose numbers had been declining steadily since 1850, now numbered only 55, down from 88 in 1870.¹⁵

Population Mobility

With the exception of the years between 1870 and 1900, the rate of spatial mobility in Stonington Borough remained fairly stable throughout the Nineteenth Century. This conclusion is based on the names of heads of families listed in the Federal Census Schedules for Stonington Borough. By ascertaining if a head of a household listed on a federal census schedule

¹²U.S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington. Manufactures, Schedule 3, Products of Industry in Stonington . . . ending May 31, 1880.

¹³Westerly (R.I.) Sun, 22 April 1896, p. 3.

¹⁴U.S. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington.

¹⁵Included among these 1240 were the families of blacks (identified as such on the census schedules), those in which the head of the household was listed as being born outside of the United States; and those like Joseph Gilmartin and John Sylvia, both of whom were born in the United States. But Gilmartin was obviously of Irish ancestry, and Sylvia, just as obviously, Portuguese.

1900. The actual population of Stonington Borough was about 1700, since only a handful (18 or so), of the crewmen on Stonington whalers were genuine residents of Stonington, though 462 of them had been included in the enumeration.⁹ Twenty years later, the population of the borough, again reflected, as it had in 1820, the condition of the local economy, which by 1870 was in a state of decline. The population of the borough then was approximately 1550; just a few hundred more than it had been forty years earlier. Not only was the population declining, it was also becoming more heterogeneous. Old-line Yankees, who had constituted 90% of the population in 1830, now represented only about 70%. Included among the 445 people of non old-line Yankee descent were blacks, and immigrants from Ireland, England, Germany, and Portugal, with 227 Irish comprising the most numerous group.¹⁰

The trend toward a cosmopolitan population in Stonington Borough, culminated in 1900, when for the first time, residents of non old-line Yankee ancestry were a majority of the population. A second trend, loss of population following the demise of the whale fishery, was reversed and a little over 2100 people now lived in the borough. Probably most responsible for the resurgence of Stonington Borough were two factories, the Atwood Machine Company, and the American Velvet Company. The Atwood Company, which manufactured machinery for weaving silk, moved to Stonington in 1876 after a fire had destroyed their plant in Willimantic. It occupied the factory building which whaling magnate John F. Trumbull had erected in 1851.¹¹

⁹U.S. Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington.

¹⁰U.S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1860. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington.

¹¹WilliamsHaynes, Stonington Chronology (Stonington, Conn.: Pequot Press, 1949), p. 78.

as a resident of Stonington Borough was still living there ten years later, or if any trace of survivors could be found if he or she had died, the rate of spatial mobility has been determined. In order to achieve greater accuracy, the number of householders who would have died during the intervening decade has been estimated by selecting the death rates in Stonington for one year per decade between 1850 and 1900 (evidently Connecticut did not publish such vital statistics before 1850), and taking an average. Thus the approximate annual death rate in Stonington was about 15.4 per thousand in the last 50 years of the Nineteenth Century. The death rate in Stonington between 1855 and 1892 varied from a low of 11.2 per thousand in 1871 to a high of 19.1 per thousand in 1892. It is extremely difficult to get figures on mortality in America during the early Nineteenth Century since Massachusetts was the only state to collect such information before the 1840's. According to Warren Thompson and P. K. Whelpton, authors of a book on American population trends, the data for Massachusetts probably give a fairly accurate picture for all of the northern states. Thompson and Whelpton found that mortality rates in Massachusetts declined gradually between 1789 and 1855 from 27.8 per thousand to 21.4 per thousand. Between 1789 and 1890, the death rate in Massachusetts declined only about .8 per thousand per decade. If the figures for Massachusetts give an accurate picture of mortality rates throughout the North, it may be assumed that the death rate in Stonington Borough did not change much between 1810 and 1855.¹⁶ Generally, around 40% of the

¹⁶ Connecticut. Report of the State Librarian to the General Assembly - Relating to the Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths - For the Year Ending Dec. 31, 1855, 1861, 1871, 1881, and 1892. Warren S. Thompson and P.K. Whelpton, Population Trends in the United States (New York and London: McGraw Hill, 1933), pp. 229-230.

population of Stonington Borough moved out of it every ten years between 1810 and 1870. From 1870 to 1900, only about 25% of the population moved out of Stonington Borough each decade.

Surprisingly, the rate of population movement appeared to bear little relation to periods of economic growth in Stonington Borough. For instance, in the decade between 1810 and 1820, when the population of the borough declined from 804 to 756, 80 householders either left the borough or died. If 15.4% of the population died between 1810 and 1820, the names of approximately 18 of the 131-1810 householders would have been absent from the 1820 census schedule because they had died during the previous decade. Therefore approximately 62 of the 1810 householders or 47% of the 1810 population had moved out of the borough.¹⁷ Yet, the percentage of people moving from the borough remained essentially the same for the decades between 1820 and 1850, when the economic situation was greatly improved by the success of the whaling and sealing industries. Seventy eight householders out of 137 listed on the 1820 schedules were not listed on the 1830 schedules. Twenty one of these 78 may be assumed to have died which means that about 42% of the 1820 population moved on. One hundred sixteen out of 196 householders in 1830 were not listed on the census schedules for 1840; again probably about 30 died, so 86 or about 44% had left the borough. In fact, the one decade in which a significant decline might be expected, 1840 to 1850, the height of the whaling era, the rate of mobility was exactly the same as it was in the depressed decade 1810-1820. Only 94 out of 253 borough householders in 1840, still resided there in 1850. If 39 of the 159 absentees had died, 120 or approximately 47% had left. In 1850-1860, about 45% had moved.¹⁸

¹⁷ Federal Census Schedules, 1810, 1820.

¹⁸ Ibid. 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860.

Although the economy of Stonington Borough never did fully recover from the decline of whaling, the rate of population movement immediately after the Civil War again was at odds with the economic situation. Of 345 householders who had resided in the borough in 1870, 148 no longer lived there in 1881, according to Mirror editor Jerome Anderson's Stonington Directory.¹⁹ If 53 householders died during those ten years, 95, or about 27% moved out. In the last twenty years of the Nineteenth Century, population mobility was again significantly lower than it was from 1810 to 1870. One hundred eighty four names found in Anderson's 1881 Stonington Directory were listed among the 514 borough householders on the 1900 census schedules. About 124 of the 404 householders living in the borough in 1880 would have died by 1900, which meant that only 96 or about 25% moved out of the borough in the last 20 years of the century.²⁰

Although the population of Stonington Borough had increased by about 550 between 1880 and 1900, the new citizens were not Yankees. The borough had 647 more Irish, Portuguese, Black and German residents in 1900 than in 1880; while the number of Yankees had actually declined from 964 to 874. What was clearly happening was that Yankees were leaving the borough through death and removal as they had done throughout the Nineteenth Century (although obviously at a slower rate), but now their numbers were replenished by people of foreign ancestry, rather than other Yankees as was previously the case. Gradually the families which had been prominent in Stonington Borough since its settlement were disappearing. In

¹⁹Anderson's Stonington Directory is more convenient than the 1880 census schedule because names are listed there in alphabetical order. Most of the 1890 census schedules, including Stonington's, were destroyed by a fire in 1921.

²⁰Jerome S. Anderson, comp., Anderson's Stonington Directory, 1881 (Stonington, Conn.: Jerome S. Anderson, 1881). Federal Census Schedule, 1900.

1880 there were 8 Palmers listed as heads of households on the borough census schedules; in 1900, only 3. The number of Williamses had declined from 4 in 1880 to 1 in 1900; Pendletons from 12 to 9. Their places were taken by people like the Gilmores who numbered 7 families in 1880, 14 by 1900; and the Sylvias; two families in 1880, 14 in 1900.²¹

There were two noteworthy features about the rate of population mobility in Stonington Borough during the Nineteenth Century. The first was its limited range of fluctuation (between 1810 and 1870), and the second was its tendency to remain independent of economic trends in the borough. For instance, the decade of greatest economic growth in the borough, 1840-1850, when the Grand List of taxable property more than doubled, from \$219,000 to \$551,000,²² was precisely the decade in which the largest percentage of people moved out: 47%, a figure which was matched in 1810-1820. Evidently, the lucrative prizes brought home by the Stonington whaling fleet, were a matter of small concern for a large sector of the population, since they took no share of them. Certainly the peculiar nature of the whaling industry would lend itself to such a conclusion, for a Stonington whale ship's connection with the home port was primarily through its ownership. Ships, crews, supplies, officers, everything needed for a whaling voyage were in varying

²¹Federal Census Schedules, 1880, 1900. The percentage of people who left Stonington Borough each decade during the Nineteenth Century was lower than those communities discussed in an article on urban population mobility by Thernstrom and Knights. They reported that only 25% of the farm operators living in five Kansas townships in 1860 could be found there ten years later. A similar rate of population mobility existed in Trempeleau County, Wisconsin during the same period. Both of these areas were frontiers, where a highly mobile population might be expected, yet Thernstrom and Knights found that several older eastern cities were no more stable than Trempeleau County. In Newburyport, Massachusetts, less than a fifth of all the families listed in the 1849 city directory lived in the community thirty years later; while in Poughkeepsie, New York, only 30% of its 1850 residents were living there ten years later. Stephen Thernstrom and Peter B. Knights, "Men in Motion: Some Data and Speculation About Urban Population Mobility in Nineteenth Century America." Journal of Interdisciplinary History 1 (Autumn, 1970): 7-11.

²²Stonington, Grand List Abstracts, 1840, 1850.

degrees obtainable elsewhere; but capital was the umbilical cord which connected individual vessels with particular ports.

From the 1850 Federal Census Schedules and the 1851 Grand List Abstract, one may get some idea of the number of Stonington men who were closely involved with the whaling industry. One of the headings on most of the Stonington Grand List Abstracts was "Investments in vessels and commerce." Although generally it is quite difficult to get any information on ownership of Stonington vessels from the tax lists (the vessels column was for some reason largely ignored), the 1851 Grand List Abstract is an excellent source. Sixty five borough residents owned shares in Stonington vessels, (most important of which were whalers) that year, ranging from Benjamin F. Collins' \$175 to Charles P. Williams' \$60,000.²³ With the single exception of Antonio Levy whose shares were worth \$800, all of them had surnames which were well established in the borough, and had appeared for years among the property holders on the Grand List Abstracts. Only 20% of the borough's 317 householders owned shares in whaleships; and, as already noted, since investments in whaling vessels implied a fairly respectable economic standing in the community, these owners of whaling vessels and the wealthiest fifth of the community were closely conterminous.

What about those employed by the whaling industry? In 1850, more Stonington men were employed in navigation (87) than in any other occupation,²⁴ though its importance declined gradually thereafter. But the bulk of the navigators were not employed in whaling, as there were no more than 18, if that many, residents of Stonington Borough on the crews of its whaleships. Seventeen borough residents were identified as ship's captains in

²³Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1851.

²⁴Federal Census Schedule, 1850.

the 1850 census schedule. Nine of the seventeen, George Wilcox, George S. Keene, Charles O. Brewster, John S. Barnum, Billings Burch, Franklin Hancox, William Pendleton, Joshua Stevens, and John Brown commanded whaling vessels.²⁵ So there was a total of only 27 men, 18 crewmen and 9 captains employed by the whaling vessels of the place.²⁶ All of the borough's whaling captains owned shares in its whaling vessels.

There were also a number of auxiliary trades which were dependent on the whaling industry. In 1850 there were 43 men employed as coopers, ship's caulkers and carpenters, boat builders and rope makers. All of them, particularly coopers, who made the barrels for storing whale oil, provided necessities for whaleships. In 1860 and 1870, when the whaling industry had vanished from Stonington, 19 and 16 men respectively, were employed in these occupations, so about 20 to 25 men had lost their jobs with the demise of whaling. Elisha Faxon's rope factory employed 4 men in 1850 at an average monthly payroll of \$60, while the rope they produced that year was worth \$3,000. Charles Stanton, a cooper, employed 6 men during 1850; monthly payroll averaged \$270, and value of the barrels they produced was \$8,500. Jacob Blackledge, a sail maker, employed 5 men during 1850, average monthly payroll was \$250, and the average value of the sails they made, \$13,000. Cortland P. Chesebro, a cooper, employed 2 men during the year at an average monthly payroll of \$100, value of barrels produced was \$3,500. Finally, James Pendleton, a sailmaker, employed 2 men at an average monthly payroll of \$100; the sails they made were worth \$5,000. If the masters of these "shops" are included among those employed in trades auxiliary to navigation,

²⁵Walter Coelho, "The Stonington Whaling Fleet" (Master's Thesis, Central Connecticut State College, 1971).

²⁶U.S. Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850. Schedule 5, "Products of Industry . . . etc. in Stonington." Ten of the 17 masters commanding Stonington Whaling vessels in 1850 were not borough residents. Federal Census Schedule, 1850.

a total of 24 of the 43 so employed according to the census schedules are accounted for.²⁷ An unidentified observer commented about the borough in the declining years of whaling, "now the bakery where the sailor's hard biscuit used to be made is deserted . . . the cooper shops are all closed. . . . Where once our whaling list numbered thirty vessels, it shows us only five now."²⁸

The only other group of borough men with a direct interest in the whaling industry were approximately eight merchants, most of whom owned general merchandise stores which outfitted vessels. All of the eight merchants held shares in a number of whalers. Ephraim Williams, Elisha Faxon, Jr. and Gurdon Trumbull, were three of the most successful borough merchants. Five other borough merchants were subscribers to a borough map issued in 1851: Austin G. Beebe, grocery; Simon Carew, grocer; Stiles Stanton, merchant; Francis Pendleton & Co., dry goods, groceries; and Peleg Hancox, dry goods and groceries.²⁹ The latter two were among the most important whaling outfitters in the borough. Also directly interested in whaling were the clerks or assistants of these merchants. Of these, there could not have been a great many since only 18 men were engaged in clerk or "white collar" occupations in the entire borough according to the 1850 census schedule. Finally, the two whaling agents, John F. Trumbull and Charles P. Williams, appear to have been the only borough "landlubbers" whose occupation was concerned almost entirely with whaling. The merchants listed above undoubt-

²⁷ Ibid., The remaining nineteen were either self employed or employed only occasionally. For example, Samuel Bottum operated a rope-walk in the borough in 1851 and probably had done so before that, but it was not reported on the 1850 census. "Way Back in '51," Stonington Mirror, 19 March 1897, p. 3.

²⁸ "Ye History Class, 1858," Ibid., 19 February 1897, p. 2.

²⁹ "Way Back in '51," Stonington Mirror, 19 March 1897, p. 3.

edly did a good deal of business apart from whaling. How both Williams and Trumbull, the wealthiest men in the borough, further occupied themselves is a mystery; since managing the affairs of 17 whaling vessels could not have been a full time job.

In all, about 118 Stonington Borough men were directly concerned with the borough whaling fleet; the majority came from the upper economic echelons: forty eight owners, 7 captain-owners, 8 merchant-owners, two whaling agent-owners. Of their opposite number were 18 crewmen, 25 artisans, at most, and perhaps 10 or so clerks.³⁰

Indirectly, most of the community could hardly fail to be affected by whaling. It perhaps provided some of the borough's 80 day laborers periodic employment around the docks (although crews probably unloaded the oil casks), or in the service of men whose whaling profits had allowed them to hire others to perform menial chores. The 26 people employed as servants and in service trades (barber, shoemaker, waiter, hostler, etc.); the 20 small shopkeepers, and 85 artisans and skilled mechanics of the borough could not have been worse off for living in a community with many rich people. But for most of the 444 borough householders for whom occupations were listed in the 1850 federal census schedule, the benefits of whaling were tangential at best, and their passage into and out of the community was related to whaling only in the sense that the growing affluence of Stonington for which whaling profits were responsible, provided some opportunities for employment.

Down through 1880, the majority of the residents of Stonington Borough were people with little economic stake in the community, possessing neither property, nor occupational skills; and these deficiencies made them highly mobile. In 1860, out of 598 borough residents for whom occupations were

³⁰ Federal Census Schedule, 1850.

listed in the federal census schedule, about 360 or 60% were employed at poorly paid jobs for which little training or knowledge was required, and which offered little security. In 1870, 58% of 511 employed borough residents worked in low status, low paying jobs; in 1880, 56% did so; in 1900, 51% of 451 employed heads of family were unskilled, poorly paid workers.³¹

Topping the list in 1860 were those employed as servants and in service trades which had grown phenomenally in the previous decade from 26 to 140. The large majority were servants, an eloquent testimonial to some of the social changes produced by whaling wealth. There were 103 day laborers residing in the borough, which meant in essence casual workers who could not even count on full time employment. There were 45 railroad and steamboat company employees, with the railroad a particular haven for the Irish. A few of the 45 were minor officials; the rest were brakemen, deckhands, firemen, etc., jobs preferable to day labor only for their relatively greater security. Railroad jobs were extremely dangerous. Accounts of accidental deaths of railroad employees were quite common in the local papers. Seventy nine men were employed in navigation. With the exception of a small handful of officers and captains, they followed a career which was as low in esteem and even lower in pay than day laborers, with the added discomfort of extended periods away from home and family and the dangers of the sea.³²

People of low occupational status were very seldom property owners in Stonington Borough, particularly before the Civil War. In fact, probably only one unskilled laborer owned taxable property in the borough between 1801 and 1861. It is not surprising that those who owned no property were much more likely to move out of Stonington Borough than property owners.

³¹Federal Census Schedules, 1860-1900.

³²Federal Census Schedule, 1860.

About 100 of the approximately 120 householders who moved out of the borough between 1840 and 1850, were propertyless. Twenty four borough residents who were listed as property owners on the 1840 tax abstracts were not living there in 1850. Four of them had probably died by 1850. None of the 24 absentee property owners were members of the upper economic strata of Stonington Borough. Sixty six of the 94 householders who remained in the borough between 1840 and 1850 owned property; and not one of the wealthier citizens there had emigrated. Not more than 5 of the 28 propertyless householders who remained in the borough between 1840 and 1850 had acquired property by 1851, but the economic situation of the majority of the 28 was fairly good. Only 4, Edward Carr, an Irishman; Gabriel Gardner, Alfred Ross and Soloman Church, black men, were listed as laborers on the 1850 census schedules. No native born white borough householder, listed as a laborer in 1850 (there were a total of 13 so listed), had been a resident of the borough in 1840, and it may be safely assumed that this class of people would be the first to move in search of economic opportunities. Six of the 28 propertyless householders who stayed were skilled laborers; six were ship's captains; two were merchants; two widows, and one a farmer (Joseph Chesebro who probably inherited his father's farm by 1851).³³

Although the status and pay of sailors was as bad, if not worse, than that of day laborers, seven propertyless residents of Stonington Borough, followed careers before the mast, and chose to remain in the borough rather than seek their fortunes elsewhere. Asa Wilcox was the only sailor who remained in Stonington between 1840 and 1850, who had acquired property by 1851.³⁴ But there were definite advantages to seafaring as opposed to

³³U.S. Bureau of The Census, Sixth and Seventh Census of The United States, 1840, 1850. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington. Stonington Grand List Abstracts, 1840, 1851.

³⁴Ibid.

unskilled labour on land which would account for the continued residence of 6 propertyless native born white sailors in the borough, while all of their labouring counterparts had apparently emigrated. For one thing, in the coastal trade, in which most of these men were probably employed, there was always an opportunity for advancement to mate or captain, but an unskilled laborer would remain one for life. Secondly, a sailor was forced to save some of his pay since he received it when the voyage was over and had few opportunities to spend money at sea. Finally, if he was married, his food, which is probably a poor family's largest single expense, would be paid for by the vessel owners.

In the decade between 1870 and 1880, those without property remained a majority of the emigrants from Stonington Borough. One hundred forty eight of 345 householders on the 1870 census schedule were not living in the borough in 1881; if 53 of these had died, then 95 moved out. Of these 95, 30 or so owned property; thus, over 60% of the emigrants were propertyless. But the rate of population mobility during the decade had declined markedly to 27% down from 45% in the previous decade. One explanation for the decline may have been the relatively advanced age of borough householders, especially Yankees, in the post Civil War Era. In 1850 the average age of all borough householders was 43, in 1880 it was 50. But the most important reason for the decline of mobility was an improvement in economic opportunities for the lower classes, which meant that a smaller number of propertyless people left. From 1840 to 1850 only 28 propertyless householders remained in the borough out of a total population of 253 householders, or 11%; from 1870 to 1880, 85 propertyless householders out of a borough population of 345 (about 22%) stayed. Not only was property ownership becoming a possibility for those whose families never had any,³⁵ but life in Stonington

³⁵ For information on property ownership among the foreign born in post Civil War Stonington see p. 418 below.

Borough was apparently becoming more comfortable even for those who would never acquire property. At least 11 of the 85 propertyless householders who remained in the borough between 1870 and 1880 were employed by railroad and steamship lines. The steamship line probably also offered occasional employment for the 15 propertyless laborers who stayed in the borough between 1870 and 1880. The new wealthy class of Stonington Borough also provided a source of employment for the unskilled. Finally, a number of service jobs, also the fruits of affluence, began to appear after the Civil War; these too, must have tended to anchor the propertyless in Stonington Borough. Among the 85 propertyless householders were hostler Dennis Gilmore, gardeners Matthew Gilmore, Edward Garity, and Benjamin F. Ross; whitewasher Abraham Morrison; "Tailoress" Harriet Bennett, Policeman S. H. Tillinghast, cook Stephen Carter, and wood carver Stephen Taylor.³⁶

The Wealthy Men of Stonington Borough: 1820 - 1880

Between 1820 and 1900, forty one men in Stonington reached a respectable level of affluence: an estate rated at \$10,000 or more on the Grand List Abstracts. Professor Edward Pessen estimates that most rich men were assessed at about one sixth of their total personal wealth,³⁷ and that the information provided by probate inventories was often as misleading as tax rolls because of the practice of granting legacies before a person died. In Stonington there was quite a discrepancy between the value of estates on inventories and those on tax rolls. For instance, Elisha Faxon, a merchant who also owned a rope walk in Stonington Borough, was rated at \$6,050 on the

³⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth and Tenth Census of the United States, 1870, 1880. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington; Stonington, Grand List Abstracts, 1870, 1880.

³⁷ Edward Pessen, Riches, Class and Power Before the Civil War (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1973), p. 19.

1840 Grand List, yet according to the probate inventories, his estate was worth over \$44,000 at his death in 1849.³⁸ Thus, Faxon is listed among the wealthy 41 even though he was never rated at \$10,000 on the tax lists. At least two other borough residents who possessed considerable estates were never rated above \$10,000 on the Grand List Abstracts: Benjamin Pomeroy, an attorney, at his death in 1855 was worth over \$44,000;³⁹ but his estate had been rated only at \$8,100 in 1851; and Francis Amy, a banker, whose estate was rated at \$9,325 in 1861; but was actually worth over \$45,000 when inventoried in 1868.⁴⁰ Peleg Hancox, a store owner who fitted out many borough whalers, was rated at \$19,800 on the 1851 tax list, but when his estate was inventoried in 1855 his total worth was \$65,000. Of this amount \$30,000 was invested in vessels and "accounts, notes and ventures at sea" (as noted earlier ships and ships supplies were speculative ventures on the part of merchants);⁴¹ but only \$7,040 was recorded on the 1851 Grand List Abstract.⁴²

John Brown, a whaling captain, was another of the wealthy forty one whose actual estate was considerably larger than his assessment. In 1851, Brown's estate was rated at \$21,500, but according to the probate records three years later, its actual value was \$73,000. Brown was taxed in 1851 on \$10,800 in stock and money at interest, but his probate inventory listed \$6600 in notes from the "Steam Mill Co.," a note from James Babcock for \$1,100, \$16,000 worth of shares in various banks, and a note to "Thomas

³⁸Stonington, Probate Records, Vol. 18, pp. 186-188.

³⁹Ibid., Vol. 20, pp. 129-134.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 675-7.

⁴¹Ibid., Vol. 22, pp. 245-9.

⁴²Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1851.

Cooper of New York for \$5,000."⁴³

Ephraim Williams, Charles P. Williams' elder brother, was rated at \$57,925 on the 1861 Grand List. His total worth at his death the same year was \$195,000: \$40,000 of this amount was New York real estate, \$35,000 investments in Southern and Mid-western stocks and bonds, and \$37,000 in notes and accounts with various Stonington citizens.⁴⁴ But according to the 1861 tax lists, Williams possessed only \$19,000 worth of stocks and money at interest. The estate inventories of William Lord, Benjamin Pendleton, Samuel F. Denison and Charles H. Smith were also at variance with the tax rolls. Lord's estate was rated at \$8805 on the 1861 tax roll, \$40,000 at his death; Pendleton's at \$10,000 in 1851, and \$31,000 at his death in 1858; Denison \$12,700 in 1851, and \$40,000 when he died in 1855; and Smith \$17,000 in 1851, and \$39,000 at his death eight years later.

Finally, Charles P. Williams, who was, according to the 1870 Grand List worth \$584,000. Ten years later, after Williams had died, his estate, which was worth over \$3 million when it was finally inventoried, was set at \$1,431,000 in the 1880 Grand List Abstract. C.P. Williams was listed on the 1870 census as owning \$30,000 worth of real estate and \$600,000 of personal estate. Generally, the property holdings listed in the census schedules seem to give a more accurate picture of a man's wealth than the tax lists, but they are still inferior to probate inventories. Stocks and bonds and money at interest seemed consistently under assessed in the majority of these examples.

Eighteen of the wealthy borough forty one were merchants, which meant in most cases, the owners of general merchandise stores which sold everything

⁴³ Stonington Probate Records, Vol. 18, pp. 441-446.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Vol. 20, pp. 503-6.

from hardware to clothing and food. The important role store owners played in small towns during the Nineteenth Century has been noted. Eight made their money primarily in whaling. At the top of the list were whaling agents Charles P. Williams and John F. Trumbull, neither of whom ever made a whaling voyage. Trumbull was probably never on board a vessel in any capacity other than that of a passenger. The fortunes of the other six were made primarily as whaling masters. Four of the wealthy forty one were professional men. Three, William Lord, William Hyde, Jr.; and George E. Palmer, were physicians; while Benjamin Pomeroy was an attorney. Four were men of various occupations. Francis Amy was a bank president, A. S. Matthews a civil engineer and superintendent of the Stonington Railroad; Charles H. Smith, a building contractor who specialized in the construction of lighthouses, and Eugene A. Atwood, a manufacturer. Two, Amos Denison, and William H. Woodbridge were probably farmers. The occupation of one of the forty one, Charles H. Phelps, son of Dr. Charles, the richest man in Stonington in 1800, is a mystery. Charles Jr. may have resided in New York City most of his life.

The wealthy men of Stonington Borough were, of course a small percentage of the population, yet they owned a disproportionate share of the wealth there. Six or 3% of the 196 householders living in the borough in 1831, possessed estates rated at over \$10,000, yet they owned 43% of the borough's taxable property. As previously noted, the rich in Stonington Borough were for the most part the only beneficiaries of the whaling fleet. A study of the 1851 Grand List Abstract supports this contention. In 1851, 14 or 4½% of the borough's 313 householders possessed estates rated at over \$10,000. Their total taxable worth of \$365,500 was 66% of the borough's taxable property. In 1880 the wealthy residents of the borough had an

even larger share of the wealth. The 13 residents rated at over \$10,000, who were 3% of the population, owned 81% of the taxable property in Stonington Borough.⁴⁵

The burning question, is of course, was there any social mobility into the ranks of the Stonington Borough wealthy during the Nineteenth Century? As far as rags to riches stories, ascents from the property-less class to wealth, there was possibly one. With the aid of various family genealogies, Wheeler's Stonington (which contains an excellent genealogy of many Stonington families) contemporary newspaper accounts, and the Stonington Birth Records, I have traced the ancestry of twenty four of the forty one rich men who were born in Stonington, and seven of those who were born outside of the town. It can be seen from the lists in appendix B that most of those born in Stonington were descended from fathers who possessed fairly substantial property holdings in the town. Those born outside of Stonington, seemed to be, just as the native born, sons of reasonably prosperous fathers. For instance, Charles O. and George S. Brewster, were according to the Brewster genealogy, descendants of a ship's captain from Norwich, Connecticut, Stephen Brewster. Elisha Faxon's father, Azariah, was a graduate of Harvard, and a substantial farmer and businessman in Braintree, Massachusetts. Gurdon and John F. Trumbull's father published a newspaper in Norwich, Connecticut. A. S. Mathews' father was a physician who had graduated from the University of Dublin. William Rodman's father Daniel, according to the family genealogists was a "prominent merchant in New York, Norwich, and New London." The family name of two of the forty one rich men, Jesse and

⁴⁵Stonington, Grand List Abstracts, 1831, 1851, 1880.

John Brown is so common that I could not definitely pin down their ancestry. I couldn't find any information on the names of the fathers of Dr. William Lord, Peleg Hancox or Francis Amy, all of whom were probably born in Stonington. But, Dr. Lord, and Attorney Benjamin Pomeroy, who was born in Hebron, Connecticut, were probably descended from prosperous families, for the educations needed by a doctor or lawyer in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries could only be afforded by the affluent. A Connecticut rule which was established by custom in 1795 and by the State Supreme Court in 1807, required a lawyer to have two years of legal study if he was a college graduate, and three years if he was not.⁴⁶ After the Revolutionary War, the usual procedure for medical training was through apprenticeship with a doctor. The apprenticeship, which lasted generally about three years, often required that the student have a knowledge of classical languages, especially Latin. The usual yearly fee was \$100, a large sum at the time.⁴⁷ Later in the Nineteenth Century, doctors were usually trained at medical schools, which were also beyond the reach of the average person.

The only Horatio Alger stories which took place in Stonington Borough during the Nineteenth Century were those of Billings Burch, Stanton Sheffield and Richard Fanning Loper. Loper was born in

⁴⁶ Anton Hermann Chroust, The Rise of The Legal Profession in America (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 2: 36, 36n.

⁴⁷ William Frederick Norwood, Medical Education in the United States Before the Civil War (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1971), pp. 32-33.

Stonington in 1800.⁴⁸ His father, Abraham Loper had died before Richard was born. According to Thede Kenyon, who wrote a fictional account of Richard's life, Abraham was a ship's captain from Nantucket. Abraham's name was recorded on the 1800 census schedule, but not on the Stonington tax lists of 1799, 1800, nor 1801, which meant that he owned no property. Since he did not even pay a poll tax in those years, he was probably engaged in the cod fishery of Stonington Port, since "the polls of men employed four months on board a fishing vessel was exempted from taxation."⁴⁹ The economic status of everyone involved in fisheries, even captains, was not distinguished. Richard's widowed mother, Nancy Loper, was listed as a resident of Stonington Borough on the 1810 census, but she, like her husband owned no property. In a Mirror article, it was written of Loper, "when a barefoot lad, here at the borough nearly ninety years ago, he drove cows . . . for the sum of two cents for each morning."⁵⁰ Richard became a ship's master at seventeen and later a shipbuilder and inventor of several devices for steamships at Philadelphia.⁵¹ He returned to Stonington during the 1860's and was one of the richest men in the state.

Sheffield's biography was less spectacular. Where he was born and the circumstances of his family is unknown. Moving to the borough at

⁴⁸Stonington Mirror, 10 September 1897, p. 1.

⁴⁹D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., History of New London County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Co., 1882), p. 677.

⁵⁰Stonington Mirror, 10 September 1897, p. 1.

⁵¹Ibid.

seventeen, Sheffield worked several years as a journeyman carpenter, later superintending the construction of a number of vessels. Eventually he became a shipbuilder in his own right, constructing the first marine railways in the borough.⁵² Burch's career has been outlined in the chapter on whaling.

Neither Sheffield nor Burch rose from the lowest rung of society to the highest, for they were born into families which had some advantages over unskilled, propertyless laborers. Loper's poverty was probably due to his father's untimely death. Sheffield and Burch's father, Samuel, were both carpenters, which meant that they had served lengthy apprenticeships without pay. It is likely that the poorest families were unable to take advantage of the numerous opportunities to obtain a skill in early Nineteenth Century Stonington (calls for apprentices in various trades appeared in almost every issue of the early paper), since it meant they would be deprived of a son's earnings for five to seven years. Most very poor people were probably forced to send their children to work at menial tasks such as driving cows, so that they could contribute something to the household. In the chapter on poor relief, the efforts of John Lawrence to obtain employment in a Stonington factory for his young son, who was too frail for farm work, were touched upon. If apprenticeships were not difficult ventures for the wretchedly poor, Mr. Lawrence would have allowed his son to be apprenticed in a trade, for he was obviously a man concerned with his son's welfare. According to Paul H. Douglas, author of a book on the American apprenticeship system, apprenticeship, which required a five to seven

⁵²Ibid., 10 February 1883, p. 2.

year training period in which an apprentice received no wages, "continued practically unchanged . . . wherever hand production prevailed, well down into the Nineteenth Century."⁵³

For a Stonington boy as poor as Richard F. Loper, the sea was the only refuge; as a sailor he could at least earn his wages while acquiring a skill which would provide opportunities for advancement.

But though there were few rags to riches stories in Stonington Borough, a number of men rose from the status of fairly substantial farmers or artisans, which had been their father's lot, to become men of genuine wealth, albeit not on the opulent scale of some in the large urban centers or the South. For example Samuel F. Denison's father, Joseph, owned 50 acres of land and 3 third rate chimneys, meaning probably a large, fairly ordinary house; since there were only a few "first rate chimneys" in the entire town of Stonington in 1790. Samuel's estate was worth \$40,000 at his death in 1855. Charles H. Smith's father, Joseph, assessed ("persons carrying on a mechanical business of any kind, shall be assessed according to their profits . . . not less than ten, nor more than two hundred dollars"),⁵⁴ as a carpenter in 1790, owned no real estate that year. By 1814, Joseph had accumulated an estate worth

⁵³Paul H. Douglas, American Apprenticeship and Industrial Education, Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, No. 216 (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1921), pp. 51-52.

⁵⁴The Public Statute Laws of the State of Connecticut, Book I (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1806), p. 370.

\$2,400; but Charles' estate was valued at \$39,000 at his death. Oliver B. Grant's father, Oliver, owned twenty eight head of cattle and forty five sheep in 1802, but neither house nor land, which means he was probably a tenant farmer. The estate of Oliver, Jr., was rated at \$39,000 on the 1880 Grand List. And even though the Williams boys, Ephraim and Charles Phelps, were sons of one of the richest men in Stonington, their father Ephraim's \$23,000 estate of 1813 did not begin to match the former's \$197,000 estate, nor the latter's \$3 million.

The "Average" Citizen and the Acquisition of Property

Not only did the rich men of Stonington Borough tend to be scions of families of at least fair estate, the immediate ancestors of the less affluent property owners during the first sixty years of the Nineteenth Century, were also members of the propertied class. This material was assembled, as was the information on the Stonington rich, from Wheeler's Stonington, various family genealogies, and the Arnold Copy of Stonington Birth, Marriage, and Death Records, at the Stonington Town Hall. A few names also were traced through probate records. The search was limited only to males of Yankee ancestry born within the town of Stonington. Women were eliminated for two reasons. First, with few exceptions, the only way a woman could acquire property in Stonington during the Nineteenth Century was to inherit it, usually from her husband. Almost all of the female property owners listed on the Nineteenth Century Stonington tax rolls were identified as widows. Secondly, the most difficult part of this genealogical research - discovering the name of a particular individual's father - is much more difficult in the case

of women, because the maiden names of most of the female property owners in Nineteenth Century Stonington are unknown. It is assumed that Black, Irish, and Portuguese property owners, who became fairly numerous in the borough after the Civil War, descended from propertyless parents. Finally, with a few exceptions, no effort was made to trace the ancestors of Yankee males born outside of Stonington.

In 1810, there were sixty one taxpayers in Stonington Borough, out of a population of 804. One hundred thirty eight heads of household were listed as living in the borough on the federal census schedules. Ten of these sixty one taxpayers owned no property at all and paid only a poll tax. One, Hepzibah Williams was a fairly wealthy widow who owned a slave,⁵⁵ five chimneys, and 511 acres of land.⁵⁶ Thirty four of the fifty male property owners were sons of men who had also owned property in the town of Stonington. For the remaining sixteen, either I could not find out their father's names, or there was no trace of them on the early tax rolls.⁵⁷ Five of the "mystery men," Elnathan Fellows, born in 1751; Ebenezer Cobb, born 1761; Joshua Swan, born 1766; Joseph Copp, born 1760; and Samuel Bottum, born in 1759; were born early enough that their fathers may have died before 1790. The last name of another, Joseph Wright, cannot be found on the 1800 federal census schedule for Stonington, so it is

⁵⁵Federal Census Schedule, 1810

⁵⁶Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1810.

⁵⁷At the Stonington Town Hall there is a complete set of Grand List Abstracts running from 1790 down through the Twentieth Century, but I located none earlier than 1790.

probable that his family was not from Stonington.

With the exception of Archibald Merit, whose father's estate was inventoried at only \$17,⁵⁸ and those whose ancestors I was unable to trace, all of the property holders of Stonington Borough in 1810, were descended from families who had also owned a fair amount of property. For instance, Stiles Phelps according to the 1810 Grand List Abstract owned seventeen chimneys and 543 acres of land rated at \$622; his father, Dr. Charles Phelps owned 20 first rate chimneys and 2400 acres of land rated at £633 in 1790. David C. Smith, owner of a store and 170 acres of land rated at \$149 in 1810, was the son of Edward C. Smith, Esq. who paid taxes on 176 acres of land rated at £56 in 1790. Elisha Williams, Jr.'s estate in 1810, rated at \$213, consisted of six chimneys and 245 acres; while his father owned 265 acres and 4 third rate chimneys rated at £107 in 1790.⁵⁹

In 1820, the number of property owners in the borough decreased from fifty one to forty eight. The identity of the fathers of fifteen of the forty six male property owners is unknown. Eight of the fifteen were on the 1810 tax lists, so their cases have already been discussed in the previous paragraphs. The last names of four - Stanton Stevens, Richard Lee, Asa Gregory and Simeon Carew - were not on the 1800 census schedule for Stonington, which points toward their being immigrants from other towns. (Simeon Carew according to the 1870 census schedule was not born in Connecticut, yet he was listed as Connecticut born in the 1850 and 60 schedules.) Azariah Stanton was born in 1761, so his father may have been dead by 1790, and Otis Pendleton was born in Westerly, so the absence of the name of Amos Pendleton, his father, from the Stonington tax rolls is not remarkable.

⁵⁸Stonington Probate Records.

⁵⁹Stonington, Grand List Abstracts, 1790, 1810.

This leaves Thomas Howe and Horatio G. Lewis as the only newcomers on the 1820 Grand List, of whose ancestors I can give no account. Horatio Lewis was possibly one of the few men in the first 60 years of the Nineteenth Century to rise from the propertyless class and become a property owner in Stonington Borough. He was living in Stonington as early as 1805 when his son Horace was born, and paid only a poll tax in 1810. By 1820, he owned a house worth \$720,⁶⁰ but unfortunately, nothing is known about his parents. But thirty one of the forty six owners in 1820 were definitely sons of earlier property owners in the town of Stonington; and there is nothing to indicate that any more than one of the remaining fifteen was descended from propertyless men.

By 1831, the increase in the number of property owners (forty eight to seventy six) and the rise in the value of property there (from \$97,000 to \$200,000) were evidence of the growing prosperity of the borough, for which the Antarctic seal fishery was largely responsible. At least eight of the seventy one male taxpayers on the 1831 Grand List Abstract were not born in Stonington: Oliver Burdick, a shoemaker (born 1786, father also Oliver); Phineas Wilcox, son of Capt. Phineas Wilcox; and Daniel Wilcox whose father was probably Hezekiah Wilcox; Charles Holm, a master mariner, who was possibly from Greenwich, Conn.; George S. Keene was also a ship's master, probably born in Nantucket; Thomas N. Brown was born in North Stonington, Freeman Pulsifer in Boston, and Dr. William Hyde in Ellington, Conn. Since Hyde was a doctor, and Phineas Wilcox' father was "Capt. Phineas," they were both probably sons of property owners. I knew nothing of the financial status of the other six.

⁶⁰Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1820.

Little information has been found on nineteen of the male tax payers on the 1831 Grand List. The names of eight of these nineteen appeared on either the 1810 or 1820 tax abstracts, but there were eleven newcomers listed on the Stonington tax rolls in 1831. The surnames of Robert Bottum, Jonas Horn, David Weld and Benjamin S. Cutler, four of the eleven, were not on the 1800 census rolls, nor were their last names ever common in Stonington. They were probably immigrants from other parts. Cutler attended the Stonington Academy in 1811, so his father could not have been poor. I have found out very little about the backgrounds of the remaining seven. Peleg Hancox (who became one of Stonington's wealthy forty one) was born in 1787, but his father's name is unknown. Thomas Burch, a seaman, whose career was discussed in the chapter on whaling, was born in 1776. His father Henry's name never appeared on the Grand List Abstracts, but he may have been dead by 1790. Francis Amy and George Hubbard may have been born outside of Stonington, but Amy was a banker, and Hubbard a lawyer, so it is likely that they grew up in comfortable surroundings. Of the other three, Zebulon D. Palmer, Samuel P. Robinson, and Alexander G. Smith, I know nothing. But all of the forty four men born in Stonington who were property owners on the 1831 Grand List Abstract, and whose backgrounds I was able to trace, were with no exceptions, descended from fathers who had also owned property in the town.

There were ninety three property owners in Stonington borough according to the 1840 Grand List Abstract. Although the number of property owners had risen markedly since 1831 (seventy six), the total valuation of the borough was not much greater than it had been nine years earlier: \$219,000 to \$200,000. Six of the property owners were women, all probably widows. I have no information on forty of the male property owners. Twelve of the missing have already been accounted for in the paragraphs on the earlier

tax rolls, while thirteen were born outside of Stonington. Like their counterparts, on earlier Stonington tax lists, these immigrants seem for the most part to be descendants of property owners. For instance, Elnathan Wilcox, was born in Westerly in 1808. His father, Capt. Jesse Wilcox died in Stonington in 1828, with an estate inventoried at \$602. Capt. Joshua K. Pendleton was probably born in Norwich, where his father, also named Joshua, was a ship's master. Benjamin Pomeroy was born in Hebron, Connecticut, but he was an attorney, which was an occupation closed to all but the fairly comfortable in Connecticut. The father of forty eight of the eighty seven property owners on the 1840 Grand List Abstract had owned property within the town. Of the fourteen property owners for whom I cannot account, only one, a black man named Peter Dorell, who owned a house worth \$150, was a probable refugee from the ranks of the propertyless.

By 1851, the number of property owners in Stonington Borough had not increased appreciably (ninety nine, up from ninety three in 1840), but the value of their holdings reflected the wealth brought back by the whaleships, since it had more than doubled. The total ratable estate in the borough was \$551,000 in 1851, though it was only \$219,000 in 1840. I have no information on forty two of these property owners. Twenty six were omitted because they were born outside of Stonington (including those listed on the 1850 census schedules as born out of Connecticut); eleven have been accounted for already, and five were women. Four property owners on the 1851 Grand List Abstract were sons of propertyless fathers. Cortland Chesebrough, who was born in 1804, owned a house worth \$800 in 1851, but his father, Thomas Randal Chesebrough was never a property owner according to the Stonington tax records. Nor was Andrew Chesebrough's father, Andrew, a property owner. His name was listed among the residents of the borough in the 1820 census schedule, but is absent from the Stonington tax rolls.

The Burch brothers, Billings and George C., were born in 1818 and 1820 respectively. Their father was Samuel Burch. Apparently, Samuel, a carpenter, not only owned no property, for his name was never recorded on the tax lists, but he probably was never the head of a household for he was not listed on the 1820 census schedule. The whole family, including sister Mary, later Brewster (whose journal was discussed at length in the chapter on whaling), lived with Samuel's father, Billings Burch, a carpenter whose modest estate was worth \$1,726 at his death in 1836. Nevertheless, the large majority of men for whom there are records (forty three out of forty seven) descended from property owners.

Of the 126 property owners on the 1861 Grand List Abstract, twelve were women, twenty one were native Americans born outside of Stonington, and four were of foreign ancestry: Evan Evans, August Muller, Thomas Murphy, and Antoine Levy. Evans was a sailor born in Wales, Muller a furniture dealer and mortician from Germany, Murphy was listed as a farmer on the 1860 Federal census schedule, while Levy served on a number of whaling voyages and commanded at least one vessel during his nautical career. Out of the twenty four Connecticut born property owners on the Stonington tax rolls for 1861, for whose backgrounds I have no information, the names of eleven were found on the tax lists already discussed. Thus, there were thirteen new names on the 1861 tax lists whose ancestors I was unable to trace, but sixty five of the seventy eight "active" names, (that is, where women, foreign and native born immigrants and those already investigated on earlier tax lists have been eliminated) were descended from men who owned at least some property in Stonington. Except for George and Billings Burch, all of the native born male property owners seem to be sons of property owners. (Andrew and Cortland Chesebrough, those two other social climbers, had departed from the borough by 1861.)

The rise from the ranks of the 'propertyless' to property ownership is a difficult step; and in Stonington Borough, like everywhere else, those who were born into families with at least some property appear to have had a definite advantage over those who did not. Becoming a property owner was difficult, because the occupations by which property could be accumulated, were not open to everyone on an equal basis. Two of the occupations of those who became property owners in the borough, farming and the professions, were absolutely closed to anyone but descendants of propertied fathers. The professions as already mentioned required extensive education out of reach of all but the comfortable, while only a madman would scrimp and save to buy unproductive New England farms when cheap and fertile western lands lay open for development. It is a safe assumption that all of the borough's farmers inherited most of their land. As for merchants, most of those in Stonington Borough seem to have been descended from families of affluence not much inferior to those of professional men. Artisans and master mechanics were also somewhat exclusive, since all of the skilled trades required lengthy apprenticeships which worked a hardship on those families dependent upon the earnings of their children. Evidently, the only unskilled laborer who acquired taxable property in Stonington Borough in the sixty years before the Civil War, was the aforementioned Peter Dorel, who owned a house worth \$150 in 1840. Of all the ways by which a resident of the borough could accumulate a respectable estate, only the sea offered relatively equal opportunities for everyone. The only Stonington born men who rose from relative poverty to the upper class during the Nineteenth Century, Billings Burch and Richard Fanning Loper, were sailors.

The acquisition of property by those whose families had lived without it, the rise from propertyless to propertied status, which I believe was almost impossible in Stonington Borough before the Civil War, appears to

have become easier after the 1860's. The one clue which leads to this conclusion is the growing number of foreigners, the vast majority of whom probably came to this country with little or no property, listed as property owners in the Stonington tax records. The four property owners of foreign ancestry in 1861 expanded to nine by 1870. There were twenty eight non Yankee property owners living in the borough in 1880, (out of 153 borough property owners), while forty five of the 134 property owners living in the borough in 1900 were not Yankees. Most successful perhaps of these newcomers, were August Muller, the furniture dealer and undertaker, who owned \$11,495 worth of taxable property in 1900, including 6 houses;⁶¹ and Frank Sylvia whose career was briefly outlined in the Stonington Historical Society's Historical Footnotes in 1965. Sylvia, a native of Fayal in the Azores, came to Stonington in the 1840's. By the 1890's he had a thriving ice business, and with his family, owned more than twenty houses in and around Stonington Borough.⁶²

What caused the changes in Stonington Borough from 1860 onwards which allowed descendants of propertyless ancestors (i.e., the Irish and Portuguese) to become property owners? Apparently, the coming of the railroad and steamboat lines, and later the Atwood and Velvet Companies, and the presence of an affluent upper class in the borough who hired menial laborers,

⁶¹"August Muller . . . was born in 1820 in . . . Prussia." He was apprenticed to a cabinet maker in Leipzig and later built the pulpit of a cathedral in Germany. Muller came to New York in 1852, where he worked as a cabinet maker. In 1855 "he was induced by a friend to locate in Stonington, Connecticut where a cabinet maker by the name of Dayton was in need of help. . . . [In 1861] the only furniture dealer in town moved away and he hired of Dr. Ira Hart the building . . . on Gold Street. . . . In 1887 . . . he purchased the corner of Gold and Pearl Streets and erected a modern three story business house now known as the Muller Block." Biographical Review, 26 (Boston: Biographical Review Co., 1898), pp. 202, 205.

⁶²Donald Lewis, "Stonington's Portuguese Fishermen," Historical Footnotes, Publication of the Stonington Historical Society 2 (August 1965): 1-2.

gave for the first time, some of the unskilled, an opportunity to earn a regular steady wage without having first to go through an apprenticeship. While the pay given to unskilled railroad workers was no better than that of day laborers (on the Stonington railroad in 1853, engineers were paid \$60 per month, while firemen and their assistants received \$30 and \$25 respectively), it was steady and a man could be assured in most cases of a full week's work every week. Many of the Irish property owners were railroad employes, a number of others worked for the steamship line.

Property Ownership in Stonington Borough

Throughout the Nineteenth Century Stonington Borough was a haven for the propertyless, and a study of the tax lists shows a striking disparity between the borough and the rural districts of the town in the ratio of property owners to inhabitants. In 1800 there were approximately 850 families living in Stonington (including North Stonington). Five hundred four, or about 60% of these families owned at least some property; a figure which was never approached in Stonington Borough down through 1900. The percentage of property owners in the rural districts of Stonington was actually somewhat greater than 60%. Because census schedules were arranged by order of visitation, I was able to roughly identify the residents of Long Point with the aid of the 1810 census. One hundred of the 140 or so householders of Long Point owned no property. Thus, 464 of the 710 householders of the rural parts of Stonington, or about 65%, owned some property.⁶³

In 1820, there were 355 households in Stonington exclusive of Stonington Borough. The names of 140 heads of household in "rural" Stonington (there

⁶³U.S. Bureau of The Census, Second Federal Census of the United States, 1800. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington; Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1800.

were small villages on the Mystic and Pawcatuck Rivers), do not appear on the 1820 Grand List Abstract. If the names of the 23 black householders are subtracted from this 140 (State law exempted blacks from payment of property taxes), 67% of Stonington's white "rural" householders were property owners. Admittedly, in a number of cases, the property owned didn't amount to much, perhaps only a horse or a cow; but the majority, well over 50%, of Stonington residents living outside the borough owned substantial property: houses, land, or herds of livestock. Many of the propertyless householders of rural Stonington partly supported themselves by home industries. The 1820 census schedule lists substantial amounts of cotton cloth woven in a number of Stonington households. For instance, the family of Joshua Lamphere, twelve members, owned only a cow worth \$14 in 1820; the 1200 yards of cotton cloth they wove for market must have been absolutely necessary for survival.⁶⁴

In Stonington Borough in 1820 there were 138 households; only forty eight, or about 38% of them owned some kind of taxable property, so 62% of borough householders owned nothing other than clothing or household furniture.⁶⁵ In fact, only fifty nine borough householders paid taxes in 1820; a large number were exempt from paying the poll tax because they were engaged in the fisheries.⁶⁶

⁶⁴U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourth Census of the United States, 1820. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington; Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1820.

⁶⁵Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1820.

⁶⁶A law was passed some time after the end of the Revolution exempting men employed four months on board a whaling or fishing vessel from the payment of poll taxes. Hurd, New London, p. 677. At the end of the 1810 Grand List Abstract was the statement "50 adults & 10 minors employed in the cod-fishery," with no further explanation; but this was probably to account to the state government for the town's failure to collect the poll taxes of these 60 individuals. In 1826, it was reported in the Stonington Yankee that 113 men were employed on borough fishing vessels. Stonington Yankee, 8 November 1826.

In 1850, 238 of the 449 Stonington householders living outside the borough, or 53%, owned some kind of property. The names of the property-less householders are bunched together at the beginning and the end of the census schedule in the relatively "urbanized" villages of Pawcatuck and Mystic. In the middle of the schedule which lists residents of the shrinking rural districts of the town, property owners predominate. But as an indication of how few borough residents shared in the rewards of whaling, only 31% (99 of 314) of borough householders, 7% less than in 1820, were property owners in 1851.⁶⁷

The town of Stonington is divided into several enumeration districts on the 1880 federal census schedule. One of the districts was "Pawcatuck Village," which had replaced Stonington Borough as the most populous district of the town. Pawcatuck was heavily Irish, and many of its residents worked in textile mills. The ownership of property in Pawcatuck was as narrowly restricted as it was in Stonington Borough. Only 160, or 32%, of Pawcatuck's 500 householders owned property in 1880. In Stonington Borough the same year 153 of 404 householders, or 38%, were property owners. In the rural first district (not further identified on the census schedule but most of the householders were farmers), 55%, or 36 of its 65 householders, owned some kind of property in 1880. Four First District householders' names did not appear on the 1880 tax rolls because they were over seventy and thus exempt from paying property taxes. If these four did own property, it would mean that 62% of the First District's householders were property owners, a figure quite similar to those for the "rural" parts of Stonington

⁶⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of The United States, 1850. Connecticut. New London County, Stonington. Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1851.

throughout the Nineteenth Century.⁶⁸

What the Stonington tax records imply is that during the Nineteenth Century rural districts had no place for those without property. The most serious difficulty for the propertyless in rural areas was employment; for although a day laborer and farm laborer received about the same wages, on the farm there were large parts of the year when additional labor was not needed, while in the borough there was always the possibility of joining a codfishing or trading voyage. Even tenant farmers were probably expected in most cases to possess at least some property. A number of tax payers on the early tax rolls owned large herds of livestock, but neither house nor land.

Another problem for the rural laborer was finding living quarters. Tenements were few and far between in rural districts. In the 1870 federal census schedule, the Road District, entirely rural, contained ninety houses for ninety two separate families, while Stonington Borough in 1880 contained 314 dwellings for 402 families. Mystic like the borough, an "urbanized" section of Stonington had 402 dwellings for 482 families, and Pawcatuck 420 for 554. As the proportion of property owners to dwellings in the borough indicates (only 144 property owners lived in the borough in 1870 yet there were 314 houses there),⁶⁹ a number of borough residents owned several houses. Rents charged in the borough were quite reasonable: "Lorenzo Wood, 1860 - to rent of upper part of Glines House from April 1/60 to April 1/61 - including barn and garden \$62 - J. L. Clark to rent of lower part of Glines

⁶⁸U.S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States, 1850. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington; Stonington, Grand List Abstract, 1880.

⁶⁹U.S. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1870. Connecticut, New London County, Stonington.

House from April 1/60 to April 1/61 \$75."⁷⁰

For the average person, Stonington Borough was a better place to live in 1900 than at any time in the previous hundred years. Although it was no longer possible to become rich in the borough, the unskilled could at least expect steady employment and look forward to the possibility of owning their own homes some day. For all its disadvantages, industrialization had at least given these boons to the lowly born. In rural Stonington, however, the agricultural depression which had begun in much of New England in the Eighteenth Century, was still unchecked. Although a dollar was worth less in 1880 than it was in 1820, the cash value of Stonington's farm lands in 1880, was actually less than it had been sixty years before. In 1880, the "Road" or rural district of Stonington was inhabited almost exclusively by Yankees⁷¹ many of them clinging to decaying farms which had been in their families since the Seventeenth Century. It was to "urban" areas such as Stonington Borough where immigrants to New England flocked, for there were no places to live or work in the rural Northeast.

⁷⁰Ledger 70308, Charles H. Smith, MSS., Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

⁷¹Anderson's Stonington Directory.

APPENDIX A

TAX LISTS VS. PROBATE INVENTORIES

NAME	YEAR OF DEATH	PROBATE INVENTORY	YEAR ON TAX LIST	RATABLE ESTATE
Oliver York	1827	\$ 1,387.	1820	\$ 900
William Territ	1821	12,658	1813	1,250
Elkanah Cobb	1815	3,192	1813	700
Elnathan Fellows	1836	6,278	1831	2,190
William M. Lord	1863	19,672	1861	9,805
Peleg Hancox	1855	65,000	1851	19,800
Capt. Amos Palmer	1816	16,851	1813	13,935
Billings Burch	1836	1,721	1831	350
Thomas Ash	1827	2,188	1820	1,525
John Brown	1854	73,000	1851	21,500
Jabish Holmes	1831	11,893	1831	3,650
Elijah Palmer	1822	586	1820	200
Elisha Faxon	1849	44,500	1851	8,550
Reuben Chesebrough	1830	3,353	1830	1,490
Capt. Robert Palmer	1822	1,727	1813	1,400
Capt. Jabez Stanton	1819	4,356	1813	2,433
Capt. Joseph Wright	1824	2,721	1820	450
Giles R. Hallam	1863	523	1861	1,600
Simeon Carew	1864	7,691	1861	5,060
Capt. Otis Pendleton	1828	129	1820	1,080
Edward Hancox	1837	3,829	1831	835
William States	1823	3,206	1820	1,215
Daniel Wilcox	1835	309	1831	945

NAME	YEAR OF DEATH	PROBATE INVENTORY	YEAR ON TAX LIST	RATABLE ESTATE
Joseph Palmer	1823	\$12,614	1820	\$ 1,620
Benjamin Morrel	1833	2,647	1830	700
Asa Lee	1828	4,000	1820	270
George Palmer	1868	45,000	1861	11,340
Zebulon Stanton	1828	1,300	1820	900
Ephraim Williams	1861	195,002	1861	57,925
Richard Gregory	1827	466	1820	360
Isaac Page	1821	6,468	1820	5,625
Alexander G. Smith	1834	2,549	1831	650
Jonas Horn	1836	4,229	1831	900
Edward Hancox	1837	3,829	1821	835
Oliver Burdick	1861	2,789	1851	3,700
William Rodman	1855	17,067	1851	5,350
Capt. Benjamin Pendleton	1858	31,000	1851	10,100
Samuel F. Denison	1855	40,000	1851	12,700
Andrew P. Stanton	1867	2,310	1861	500
Capt. Phineas Wilcox	1839	2,504	1831	400
Capt. Lodowick Niles	1813	7,649	1813 (Heirs)	2,130
Francis Amy	1863	24,000	1861	9,325
Daniel P. Collins	1862	15,000	1861	7,450
Dr. William Hyde, Jr.	1862	12,550	1861	24,320
Franklin A. Palmer	1864	3,313	1861	1,165
Benjamin Pomeroy	1855	44,372	1851	8,100
Charles H. Smith	1859	39,330	1851	17,100
Hiram Shaw	1861	6,206	1861	4,150
Col. Joseph Smith	1834	8,033	1831	2,450

APPENDIX B

THE WEALTHY MEN OF STONINGTON BOROUGH: 1820 - 1880

NAME	OCCUPATION	FATHER'S ESTATE & OCCUPATION	PROPERTY 1ST And LAST YEAR ON TAX LIST
Amos Denison	Probably farmer	Amos Denison, Farmer, Owned 2 3rd rate chimneys 170 acres land, £83 ratable estate-1790	1814 - \$ 9,600 1830 - 14,700
Dr. William Lord	Physician	?	1801-3 1st rate chimneys 1851 - \$10,100
Ephraim Williams	Merchant 1821 commanded sealer <u>Express</u> Sealing Agent Sold cargo of <u>Alabama Packet</u> (<u>Stonington Yankee</u> advertisement)	Ephraim Williams, Farmer \$23,000 estate in 1814	1820 - \$ 7,200 1861 - \$57,925
Samuel F. Denison	Merchant-opened grocery in bor- ough in 1800.	Joseph Denison-3-3d rate chimneys & 50 acres of land in 1790.	1820 - \$ 5,410 1851 - \$12,700
William W. Rodman	Ship Master-1814 Merchant & Gen'l. Store owner-1826	Daniel Rodman prominent N.Y., Norwich & New London merchant.	1820 - \$ 1,230 1840 - \$22,700
William H. Woodbridge	Probably farmer	?	1831 - \$11,250 Probably died before 1840.
Charles H. Smith	Building Contractor	Joseph Smith, House Car- penter-1790. Master Car- penter-\$2,405 estate in 1814. Left son land in N.Y.	1831 - \$10,325 1851 - \$17,500
Charles H. Phelps	?	Charles Phelps-Physician Owned 2700 acres land & 60 chimneys in 1799.	1831 - \$11,000 Only year on tax roll

NAME	OCCUPATION	FATHER'S ESTATE & OCCUPATION	PROPERTY 1ST And LAST YEAR ON TAX LIST
Elisha Faxon	Began life as a teacher-rope manufacturer & merchant. ¹	Born Braintree, Mass. Father a Harvard Grad. and substantial farmer.	1820 - \$ 4,000 estate valued at \$44,000 at his death 1849.
Charles P. Williams	Whaling Agent & Capitalist	(See Ephraim)	1840 - \$22,750 1880 - \$1,431,000 left \$3 million es- tate at death.
George E. Palmer	Physician	Either Capt. Amos Palmer or Amos Palmer 2nd. ²	1830 - \$ 1,300 1861 - \$11,340
Gurdon Trumbull	Merchant owned store in borough before 1812. Seal- ing agent - 1827	Published newspaper in Norwich	Poll - 1820 1850 - \$16,250
John F. Trumbull (brother of Gurdon)	Merchant in N.Y. 1820-opened prob. in 1830's. J.F. Trumbull & Co. Ships Chandlers- Whaling Agent	(above)	1830 - \$ 500 1861 - \$57,108
Peleg Hancox	Merchant-Store owner, fitted out whaleships.	Born in Stonington 1787 Father's name unknown	1831 - \$ 3,000 1851 - \$19,800
John Brown	Whaling Captain	?	1851 - \$21,500 1870 - \$ 8,250
Benjamin Pendleton	Whaling Captain	Abel Pendleton owned 13 cows and 1 horse in 1802- total estate \$167. Probably a tenant farmer.	Poll - 1831 1851 - \$10,000
Stiles Stanton	Sealing Capt. 1827 Merchant, Whaling agent & banker	Samuel Stanton, 2 3d rate chimneys, 7 acres land- 1790 Total estate £5	1840 - \$ 2,000 1861 - \$16,495
Alexander S. Palmer (brother of 'Nat' Palmer-see chapter on sealing)	Whaling Captain	Nathaniel ³	1851 - \$21,800 1861 - \$39,420

¹Called a "speculating merchant" on 1815 tax list.

²Both Amos and Amos 2d possessed property in 1793 - former owned 6 First rate smokes, 1 third rate smoke, 1 fourth rate smoke and land; Latter owned 2 third rate smokes and land. Estates of both rated at £30.

³Two Nathaniel Palmers on 1802 Tax List - Sr. owned 170 acres, three houses, ratable estate \$300-Jr. owned 220 acres, & \$1,200 money at interest-ratable estate, \$266. (Latter probably A.S. father).

NAME	OCCUPATION	FATHER'S ESTATE & OCCUPATION	PROPERTY 1ST And LAST YEAR ON TAX LIST
William Pendleton	Sealing & Whaling Captain	Jonathan or Nathan Pendleton ⁴	1840 - \$ 1,000 1870 - \$86,000
William W. Palmer (Brother of 'Nat' & Alexan- der S.)	Called merchant on 1861 census	Nathaniel Palmer, \$18,170- 1813 tax list	1861-\$10,000 1870 - \$24,000
Jesse N. Brown	Store owner	Poss. born 1805/ father Jesse Brown	1861 - \$10,250 1880 - \$ 3,360
Andrew S. Mathews	Civil Engineer & RR Superintendent	Born in Maryland ⁵	1861 - \$12,190 1880 - \$30,345
Francis Pendleton	Merchant, Ship owner & outfitter	Jonathan Pendleton 2-3d rate smokes \$5.00 on 1805 tax list	1861 - \$35,580 1870 - \$30,000
William Hyde, Jr. (Harvard Grad.)	Physician	William Hyde, Physician \$3,300 ratable in 1840.	1840 - \$ 900
Joseph E. Smith	Whaling Captain Merchant-owned general store	B. 1808-Joseph Smith	1840 - \$ 800 1880 - \$14,450
George S. Brewster	Whaling Captain	Capt. Stephen Brewster lived at Norwich.	1840 - \$ 950 1870 - \$ 7,800
Benjamin F. Palmer	Merchant	Noyes Palmer-38 acres 42 head cattle in 1790 \$128.	1870 - \$15,350 (Only yr. on tax list)
Harris Pendleton	Merchant (called a speculator on 1870 census sched).	Harris Pendleton, Ships Captain \$630 estate on 1820 Grand List.	1861 - \$ 8,200 1880 - \$13,095
Horace N. Trumbull	Merchant, partner in general store	John F. Trumbull (see above)	
Billings Burch	Whaling captain	Samuel Burch-carpenter not on tax lists or census schedules.	1851 - \$ 4,000 1880 - \$13,500
Moses Pendleton	Merchant-owned grocery store	Harris Pendleton-ships captain \$630 estate in 1820.	1861 - \$ 8,700 1880 - \$14,500

⁴ Jonathan Pendleton a resident of Westerly, R.I., Nathan owned 94 acres & 3 third rate chimneys in 1802 - ratable estate \$260.

⁵ Father Doctor William P. Mathews a graduate of the University of Dublin.

NAME	OCCUPATION	FATHER'S ESTATE & OCCUPATION	PROPERTY 1ST And LAST YEAR ON TAX LIST
Oliver B. Grant	Banker	Oliver-28 cows, 45 sheep in 1802. \$244-neither house nor land-prob. a tenant.	1851 - \$ 2,800 1880 - \$39,000
Richard Fan- ning Loper	Ships Captain Marine Engineer & Inventor	Born 1800-Abraham Loper Prob. a ship's captain	1870 - \$34,000 (Only yr on tax list)
Joseph N. Hancox	Coal Dealer	Peleg Hancox, (see above)	1870 - \$10,440 1880 - \$14,000
Stanton Sheffield	Shipbuilder (began career as a journeyman carpenter)	Born in Mass.?	1851 - \$ 2,800 1880 - \$10,000
Samuel H. Chesebro	Merchant-owned grocery store began career as a carpenter/worked as a wagonmaker	Samuel B. Chesebro \$1600 estate in 1831.	1870 - \$ 4,850 1880 - \$10,000
Charles S. Hull	Merchant	John W. Hull, owned house, 228 acres land, \$3500 in bank stock-\$10,000 estate in 1830.	1870 - \$ 5,600 1880 - \$15,225
Gurdon S. Crandall	Merchant	Possibly Gurdon	1870 - \$ 8,280 1880 - \$13,900
Eugene A. Atwood	Manufacturer	From Willimantic, Conn.	1900 - \$25,000
Francis Amy	Banker	?	1831 - \$ 400 1863-prob. inv. \$24,000
Benjamin Pomeroy	Attorney	Born in Hebron, Conn.	1840 - \$ 2,140 1855-prob. inv. \$44,000

Source: Stonington, Grand List Abstracts 1790-1880; Stonington Probate Records; Arnold Copy of Stonington Birth, Marriage and Death Records; Richard Anson Wheeler, History of The Town of Stonington, From Its First Settlement in 1649 to 1900, with a Genealogical Register (New London, Conn.: Day Publishing Co., 1900); plus various family genealogies.

CONCLUSION

In 1904 the blow which many borough residents had been fearing since the Civil War finally fell: the Stonington terminal of the steamship line to New York was moved to New London.¹ It was, of course, merely symbolically significant, for Stonington's water borne commerce had not been of much importance since the early part of the Nineteenth Century. But the once proud Borough of Stonington, terminus of the first railroad in Connecticut, the state's second whaling port, and one of its richest communities, was now only a milk stop on the main line between New York and Boston.

A few descendants of the borough's leading families remained after 1900, but the numbers, circumstances, and power of the old elite were greatly reduced. The decline of Yankee domination of Stonington society was not the only change which had taken place by 1900; local institutions were also greatly altered. One of the greatest changes was in religion, for along with the ending of the Calvinist monopoly of religious life in the 1850's came a gradual weakening of Calvinism's control over the minds and behaviour of Stonington's citizens. An adequate public education system was developed by the end of the Nineteenth Century, and there was no longer any need for institutions such as the Stonington Academy which had segregated the children of the comfortable from those of the average citizen. The poor were more adequately provided for in 1900 than earlier, and the importance of the town farm was declining in favor of a program of outside relief. Finally, in politics the once

¹Roger Williams McAdam, Salts of the Sound (Brattleboro, Vt.: Stephen Daye Press, 1939), p. 87.

dominant Yankees were forced to make room for the sons of immigrants, particularly the Irish, who were playing an increasingly prominent role in local affairs through their involvement in the Democratic Party.

"Sleepy Stonington" became almost comatose in the Twentieth Century, and only the proximity of bustling places like Pawcatuck and Westerly to the east and New London to the west, plus the borough's two factories saved it from becoming a ghost town. The heirs to the whaling fleet of the 1840's and 50's were in the 1970's a handful of small fishing vessels, manned mainly by sons of Portuguese immigrants, and the number of these craft grew smaller every year. But though Stonington Borough's commercial activities were as unimportant in the 1970's as they were in 1910, the borough could hardly be termed "Sleepy Stonington", for a change in American lifestyles put beautiful backwaters like Stonington in great demand. The influx of affluent residents, many of them retired, affected most noticeably the price of real estate, which in some cases tripled in a few years, but the place remained, and no doubt will continue to remain, as beautiful as ever.

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