

HISTORICAL ADDRESS DELIVERED UPON THE
UNVEILING OF THE MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN
AT MILFORD AUGUST 27, 1910

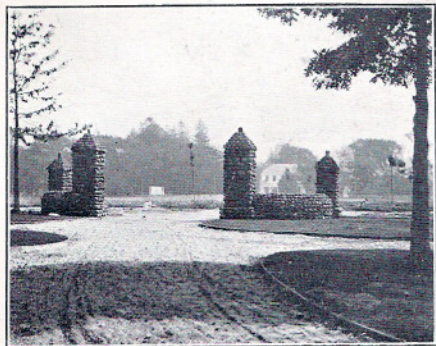
By GEORGE HARE FORD

Officers and Members of the Village Improvement Association, Selectmen and Officers of the Town of Milford, Citizens, Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I presume I may be permitted to indulge in a few words of personal explanation. Some time ago I received a circular letter announcing the organization of your Village Improvement Association, and inviting me to become interested as a member and contributor. Having for some time been impressed with the thought of furnishing the town with a memorial fountain for its beautiful green, and of providing for its erection, it occurred to me that if an organized effort was being made for improving and beautifying the town, why not assist in this way *now* instead of later.

The idea resulted in correspondence with your secretary, and met with the approval of the Village Improvement Association and the authorities of the town, and was endorsed by the people at a town meeting. And let me say that to the energetic officers and loyal members of your Village Improvement Association, high credit and honor are due for the interest they have created in town improvements, and the benefits they have effected by their efficient work, with the coöperation of your town officials, and they well merit the thanks of all.

And now let me add that few American towns, if any, are as rich in history and memorials as this beautiful old town of Milford. Represented first by your stone bridge, the most unique historical memorial of its character in the country, I cannot pass here without referring to that dear old citizen, the late Nathan G. Pond, the moving spirit who conceived the idea of this memorial, and did so much with your assistance



Entrance to Wilcox Park



Chapter House, Daughters of the American Revolution



Soldiers' Monument, Civil War, 1861-5



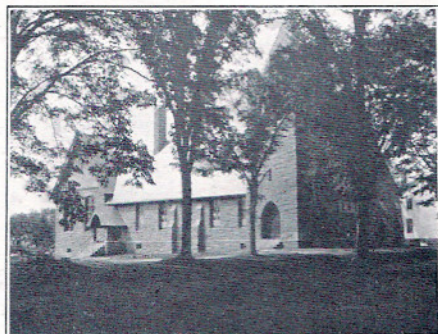
Revolutionary
Soldiers' Monument



Ford Memorial Fountain



Taylor Memorial Library



Mary Taylor Methodist Episcopal Church

MILFORD MEMORIALS



1639 MEMORIAL BRIDGE 1889

Erected in honor of the founders of the town on the 250th anniversary of its settlement. It is built of stone over the river upon whose banks the first habitations were placed and near the spot where the first mill in the colony was erected. It contains about 40 memorial blocks placed at intervals; each block dedicated to and engraved with the name of the founder, his wife and other data concerning them.

Imbedded in the artistic tower is a large tablet in memoriam to Robert Treat. Another to Jonathan Law. "This stone once his doorstep." On the seat north of the buttress, Mr. William Fowler "the founder of the first mill in the colony in 1639 wherein he used this stone." On the blocks in the buttress are cut "Law Order Morality Liberty Charity."

On the keystone of the arch is carved the head of an Indian Chief (Ansantawae) and his mark, a bow and arrow; the gift of Ansantawae Lodge F. & A. M. No. 89.

towards erecting this artistic structure in memory of the founders of the town. Many of you will recall his lovable character, his unselfish interest in the town and its people, and his study of and wonderful familiarity with old New England ancestry.

Then we have here also the Taylor Memorial Library, the gift of the generous and esteemed citizen, the late Henry A. Taylor; the church at yonder corner, a gift of his children, as a memorial to their mother; and Wilcox park, a gift to the town, from your liberal fellow townsman, Clark Wilcox.

The Chapter House of the Daughters of the American Revolution made possible by the generous contribution of Mary Hepburn Smith.

Nearly three centuries have passed since our ancestors selected this location for their future home. On an occasion like this, mid the mad whirl of this twentieth century of steam, electricity, motor cars, and air ships, it may not be inappropriate or uninteresting to pause for a moment and reflect "whence came all this" and who made it possible, and in doing so to recall some of the men and incidents associated with the event, and the founders of the old New England towns.

This thought will readily take your mental vision across the ocean to England, and impress you with the valor and courage of those two thousand Puritans, who between 1620 and 1639, following their convictions, left their homes confident of enlarging their liberties and their fortunes in the new world. And well may Americans of the present day, scattered the country over, be eager and proud as they are, to trace their ancestry back to the early settlers of New England.

The Plymouth people had established their settlement. Then came the Massachusetts Bay Colony, under Winthrop, a company of distinguished men of wealth, well organized in the other country for the purpose of commercial pursuits, and protected by a liberal patent granted under the great seal of England by Charles I, and they were engaged in the founding of prosperous towns adjacent to Boston.

Captivated by the meadow lands, the natural scenery, the water facilities and the commanding ridges, settlements soon began in Connecticut. Windsor 1633, Wethersfield and Saybrook 1635, Hartford 1636, New Haven 1638. The year 1639 seems to have been a propitious year for the founding of new towns. From eight to ten families located at Fairfield, ten at Stratford, forty at Guilford and fifty-four heads of families (estimated by Lambert as containing 200 people), located on the banks of the "Wepowage," a name which translated from the Indian implies "the crossing, or place of the narrow pass."

Most of these founders came from the counties of Essex, Hereford and York. Many came with the Davenport-Eaton company and first appeared in New Haven. Peter Prudden had preached to them in the old country and at Wethersfield, and after his arrival here a number from that place followed him to the new settlement. It is said they were more liberal in their views than the New Haven colony, hence they declined to participate in the New Haven caucus at the Newman barn when the famous "plantation covenant" was adopted by that company.

We will now picture them under the leadership of Capt. Thomas Tibbals (a direct ancestor on my maternal side). He had served under Commander John Mason in the Pequot War, and had traversed the country between Mystic and Fairfield, and being impressed with the advantages of this situation, he was commissioned to lead the new colony through the wilderness to this selected spot. They followed the Indian path along the shore on horseback and on foot, with their families, cattle, household goods, and materials for house building.

The first settlers located on each side of Mill River and West End Brook—undoubtedly for the convenience of water for themselves and their cattle. The house lots each contained three acres, some double lots. Each planter was to erect a good house within three years or the plot was to revert back to the town. The purchase of the land was transacted with

all the formality of a business proposition. According to the Indian method, the twig and the turf were forms and symbols of the transfer of property. The consideration was rather small, like a few coats and blankets, a kettle, some hoes and hatchets, a mirror, and trinkets, and the chiefs and their families were guaranteed protection by the English.

Their first vote was that they should "guide themselves in all their doings by the word of God till such time as laws should be enacted and established."

On November 20th, 1639, at the town's first general meeting, it was voted that the town seal should be the letters MF joined together, and surrounded by a shield as appears upon the invitation and the program of to-day, this being a facsimile of the seal as illustrated in Lambert's History. By a



1639

singular coincidence it might be construed on this occasion to apply to the initial letters of the memorial fountain. If this seal is not now in use as a town seal, would it not be well, if not inconsistent with any existing condition, for the proper authorities to revive its use and design, and associate with it a suitable motto and the date 1639.

At a General Court, 1640, with common consent the plantation was named Milford, although the letters of the town seal indicate that the name had been chosen at an earlier date, and this formal action was taken for the purpose of legalizing it.

Some authorities say the town was named after an English town, and others that it had reference to the mill by the ford.

The first purchase of land was on the 12th of February, 1639, or February 23rd, present calendar, although the settlement was not made until the summer following.

Somewhat interesting are the names that appear to indicate localities within the boundaries of the town, such as East Field, West Field, Bladdin's Brook, Snake Hill, Lebanon Brook, Peconis Point, Mill Neck, Bear Neck, Dreadful Swamp, Beaver River, Fresh Meadows, Essex Plain, Round Meadow, Calf Meadow, Oyster River, New Meadow, Swamp Meadow and Beaver Pond Meadow, New Field, Indian Neck, Wolf Harbor, Oyster Neck, and Ferry Lands, Plain Fields, Oronoque, Stubby Plain and Turkey Hill.

Broad Street was laid out forty rods wide. It is said the first houses built on the south side were probably set on the Common, and the fences were placed in front, Lambert says. Encroachment of two rods have been made on the north side of the street. The land between the lower half of Broad Street and the harbor was a parade ground. Additions to the original purchase were made from time to time, until the town extended twenty miles north as far as Waterbury, with the Housatonic and Naugatuck rivers as a boundary on the west, Long Island Sound on the south, and the New Haven line on the east. As a parent town Milford has contributed from her estate land occupied by the towns of Naugatuck, Seymour, Derby, Woodbridge, Bethany and Orange. Early settlers acquired lands in other localities and some bought sections in what is now the town of Huntington, L. I., and settled that town. The towns of New Milford, Farmington, Saugatuck (Stamford), Naugatuck, Wallingford, Cheshire, Southington, Ridgefield, Greenwich, Woodbury and Washington, Williamstown, Mass., and Talmadge, Ohio, were all settled by people from Milford. And most important of all, the settlement on the banks of the Passaic River in New Jersey, where now stands the flourishing city of Newark, was begun by people from Milford and Branford.

That justice might be done in buying and selling to each other, a fine of five shillings was established for use of a measure if it were not legally sealed by Jasper Gunn.

Trade and commerce received immediate attention. The enterprising Fowler mill was established and it was soon fol-

lowed by other mills until Milford became distinguished as a mill town.

In 1650 a public wharf was built, and a coasting trade with Boston was established, in the carrying of furs and produce to Boston, and the bringing back of household necessities.

It is said that the credit of Ensign Alexander Bryan, Milford's leading shipping merchant of those days, was so great in Boston that his notes passed as current as bank bills.

In 1675 we find that there were three merchants owning brigs and sloops with a trade to the West Indies, in taking horses, beef, pork, corn, meal, and bringing back rum and molasses. In 1730 ships were sent to Bordeaux, France. At one time ships were built on the banks of the harbor and on the Housatonic river at Wheeler's Farm and were sold in New York. Moreover, Lambert's History says that the people were so enterprising that if the "Devil" should come to Milford in the shape of a lamb, they would skin him for his saddle.

A militia company was organized in 1640. The late John W. Fowler, of honored memory, in his history of Milford Grenadiers (which was one of the most celebrated organizations in New England) refers to the following Milford men who had served as brigade and regimental commanders, and were held in "high esteem for their superiority in efficiency and attainments": Col. Daniel Sackett, Col. Benjamin Bull, Col. William Fenn, Col. Stephen B. Ford, Col. Andrew Beard, Col. William Platt, Col. Abel R. Hine, Col. Isaac T. Rogers.

The town has furnished some of the most eminent men of the state and country, included among whom were three resident governors, Robert Treat, Jonathan Law and Charles Hobby Pond. Gov. Thomas Fitch, Gov. Gideon Tomlinson, Gov. Roger S. Baldwin, and Gov. Charles R. Ingersoll were descendants of Milford founders. Three presidents of Yale University were identified with the town, Pierson, Andrews and Cutler. Col. Ethan Allen, the hero of Ticonderoga, and Gen. David Wooster came from Milford stock, while their

sons and daughters early married into ancient families of prominence, like the Piersons, Mathers and others. The ancestors of three of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were from Milford, Roger Sherman, of Connecticut, Abraham Clark of New Jersey, and Robert Treat Paine of Massachusetts.

Mindful of all these as citizens of this prominent old New England town, we may each of us exclaim, in the words of Paul of Tarsus: "I am a citizen of no mean city."

We do well then, to recall the events of past centuries, and re-write them on the pages of history. Organize your Village Improvement societies, your uplift clubs. Make your church, your organizations, your village and town the best and worthy of the highest aims, keep in touch with your native town, continue to create an interest in old New England. Keep alive the old traditions. Tell them to your children, and reiterate them to your children's children. Keep the fires burning on the old hearthstones, maintaining the high standards established by your forefathers.

"Though many and many a year has fled
Since they were gathered among the dead;
And now their names, with the moss o'er-grown
Are veiled from sight on the churchyard stone
That leans away, in a lingering fall,
And owns the power that shall level all."

And now we come to the special occasion of this gathering on this spot to-day. The importance of fountains of water for the use of man and beast was recognized soon after the creation. Exodus tells us that the children of Israel murmured against their leaders for want of bread and water, and Moses in his perplexity appealed to the great Jehovah, and "bread was rained down from Heaven," and Moses was commanded to gather the assembly together, and "before their eyes the Rock was turned into a fountain of water," and the congregation and their children and beasts did drink, and Moses built an altar there for a memorial.

The French have distinguished themselves by their magnificent fountains in Paris and Versailles. England has done likewise at Chatsworth, and the Crystal Palace. In fact, the capitols of modern Europe abound in fountains that are works of art, and their utility has never been lost sight of.

In Rome opposite the palace of the Quirinal in the open plaza stands the world renowned fountain of Monte Cavallo. At the base are colossal statues of Castor and Pollux who are represented as reining their horses. Above stands a red granite obelisk over one hundred feet in height brought from Egypt by Claudius as a present to Nero. The original fountain was erected by Tiberius in Christ's time.

Tradition says that there came to Rome two young men who were philosophers. The Emperor observed their wisdom, and kept them near his palace. One day they promised that whatever the Emperor should think of by day or night, they would tell him his thought the following day, and he in reply promised that if they succeeded he would give them anything they desired. The next day they were able to tell the Emperor of what he thought out during the night. They asked not for money, only a memorial. He therefore erected to them the grand memorial—the fountain of Monte Cavallo.

So down the ages fountains have been considered of the greatest importance, and have served as public monuments. In Assyria were erected statues of Neptune and dolphins from which were spouts of water. Among the Greeks fountains were common in the cities and it is said as springs were plentiful, little engineering skill was required. These fountains were dedicated to the gods and goddesses, nymphs and heroes, and were frequently placed on the sides of their temples, with a grand façade. The excavation of Pompeii revealed most interesting forms of public and private fountains, with which the city was well supplied.

The aqueducts of the Romans are instances of the importance in which they regarded the fountains of their city, and at the time of Constantine there were in Rome more than twelve hundred public fountains, many of monumental char-

acter, rich in works of art. Agrippa decorated those existing at this time with three hundred bronze and marble statues, and four hundred columns. They were erected to commemorate victories, and were adorned with the trophies secured.

Of this Marion Crawford writes :

“Standing upon the spot, I beheld these statues towering gigantically above the pigmies of the present day, looking like Titans in the act of threatening the Heavens, while overhead the stars were looking out, and might have been taken for guardian angels keeping a watch over the temples below. Behind and on the left were palaces and on the right were gardens and hills still with the orange tint of sunset over them, and in the distance were visible the seven hills on which is built Rome, the Eternal City.”

In conclusion permit me to add: May this modest contribution to one's native town inspire others to contribute from time to time some memorial that will commemorate the deeds and names of those who have given to this community much prestige, and whose memory deserves to be perpetuated.

ROBERT TREAT

And right here I want to make an earnest plea to you members of the Village Improvement Society, to organize an effort to secure a suitable memorial for that great public man and founder, Robert Treat, who was the first commander of the regiment, in continuous existence ever since his day, now known as the Second Regiment Connecticut National Guard. He won great distinction while leading the Connecticut troops in the King Philip War, assisted by Maj. John Baird, and Capt. Benjamin Fenn, two founders of this town. From 1683 to 1708, a period of thirty years, Robert Treat was governor and lieutenant governor of the colony. He was an educated farmer, a military commander, a statesman, and a diplomat, for years by far the foremost man in the commonwealth, and undoubtedly the most distinguished man with the most distinguished career of any citizen the town has produced from its foundation to the present day.

In the list of passengers on the *Mary and John*, in 1630, appears the name of Thomas Ford. Trumbull, in his history of Dorchester, page 17, refers to him as a gentleman past middle life, with adult family and good estate. This Thomas Ford settled in Windsor in 1633. He was a Deputy to the First General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, under the first Governor, John Haynes. Thomas, Jr., one of the founders of this town, came here as a young man, and married Elizabeth Knowles, daughter of Alexander Knowles of Fairfield, Conn., who was assistant to Governor John Winthrop in 1658.

To the memory of this Thomas Ford, who died in 1662, and to his children, Elizabeth, John, Thomas, Mary and Lydia, and his descendants who to-day bear the name of Ford, and also among whom we find the name of Treat, Trowbridge, Gunn, Fowler, Clark, Baird, Buckingham, Fenn, Smith, Fitch, Mallory, Hawley, Rogers, Northrup, Gilbert, Canfield, Baldwin, Sanford, Sherwood, Andrew and Prudden, many of whom have continuously lived in this community, this fountain is erected.

To you, Mr. President, and to these descendants, and to all the people of this goodly town is committed its future care with this line by the late Robert Treat Paine:

“While the earth bears a plant, or the sea rolls its waves.”

Inscription on Fountain :

TO THOMAS FORD, ONE OF YE FOUNDERS OF THIS TOWN, AND TO
HIS DESCENDANTS THIS FOUNTAIN IS ERECTED BY GEORGE HARE FORD.

The base is constructed from field stones collected from the farm occupied by the Fords continuously since the settlement of the town.

The lantern is modeled from the Paul Revere lantern.

COMPOSED FOR THE OCCASION.

We stand upon this sacred spot
Where, many years ago,
Our ancestors were gathered:
They came by a trail below

With their wives and all their families
To make this place their home,
That no more through the wilderness,
Unsettled, they should roam.

The little stream that purred along
Attracted these brave men,
So by the ford they settled,
No more to wander then.

At once began their homes to build,
Felled pine and elm and oak:
Enthusiasm and love they put
In every single stroke.

And now all down the ages ring
The memories of their works;
Each toiled with pride and honor—
Those times *did not* make shirks.

And so they made for our delight
This lovely, peaceful town.
All honor to the energy
Of these men of renown.

We've erected to their memory
Memorials choice and rare—
The library, the fine old bridge
Receive our loving care.

A park, a church, too, have been given
And other gifts between—
To-day we have a fountain,
Erected on the green.

In memory of the Fords of old,
First settlers of the town,
That to future generations
Their old name may go down.

This fountain's placed 'neath rare old trees
That make for the eyes a feast.
Through the centuries the water clear
Will flow for man and beast.

M. Graves Watson (Ford)