

**REMINISCENCES OF
TAUNTON. IN YE
AULD LANG SYNE**

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Reminiscences of Taunton. In ye auld lang syne by Charles R. Atwood

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CHARLES R. ATWOOD

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OF

TAUNTON.

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BY CHARLES R. ATWOOD.

TAUNTON :

PRINTED AT THE REPUBLICAN STEAM PRINTING ROOMS,

1880.

T. A. W.



REMINISCENCES.

ARTICLE I.

As quite a number of correspondents have been giving their recollections of Tamton as it appeared in the early part of the present century, and have confined their communications principally to the locations of the streets and buildings, without giving the names of the owners, their business, occupations, social status, etc., I propose to go over the ground and supply, so far as I can, this omission, briefly, in a series of articles for the *Republican*. As I have no records to consult, and nothing but memory to rely upon, it is quite possible that some inaccuracies and mistakes may be found in these reminiscences of the past, as they will be solely the recollections and impressions of early boyhood.

THE OLD GRIST MILL.

In giving the topography of the place as it appeared in 1810 and succeeding years, we will commence at the Old Grist Mill located at the foot of the hill on the road to Westminster, opposite the old Brick Mill of Crocker Bros. & Co., recently torn down, leaving a further description of that portion of the town to another time. The dam across the river was located where it now is, and there was a canal cut across the street, about half way up the hill, to conduct the water to the grist mill, and also to a fulling mill near

the grist mill, where the farmers brought their home-made cloths to be prepared for use. The grist mill was owned by Col. Robert Crossman, living on the hill, in the house now standing, on the left of the road a little in the rear of the same, and nearly opposite the Winslow Church. Col. Crossman was a prominent, wealthy and notable person, occupying responsible positions, was a deacon of the church, and the father of a numerous family, and many of his descendants are still among us. The old grist mill was an important institution in those days, and the farmers in the vicinity and all the families of the town depended upon it for their rye and corn meal. It was constantly employed and was very profitable to its owner. The whole of that portion of the city now occupied and covered by dwelling houses, from the livery stable occupied by Messrs. Church & Burt to the Britannia Works, and extending west to the base of the hill, in the rear of the Baptist Church, was flooded, covering some acres of ground, with a small island in the centre partly covered with underbrush and reaching to the main river, which ran in the same channel that it does now. This land was owned by the Colonel, and flooded in consequence of the dam built below by the Taunton Cotton Factory Co. It made a capital skating pond for the boys in winter. The grist mill flume emptied its waters into this basin below, which was used for watering horses very extensively, having an opening from the road where the teams and horses could drive down into the same and turn about with ease. In this basin "Uncle Jessie," the stage owner, had his horses regularly in the summer season, driven to swim, and it was the general custom in the town at that time, for the owners of horses to swim them for

their health and to keep them clean ; and a large portion of the horses owned in the town were regularly driven there to water. The boys had rare sport in riding these horses in the water. This locality, therefore, became both a necessity and a celebrity.

CATCHING HERRINGS IN COLLANET STREET.

There were two wooden bridges over the main stream, and a large hotel stable on the north of the road extending over the river some distance, which served as a railing for the bridges on that side. From these bridges there was good fishing at night for lamprey eels, and some other fish also were very plenty and easily caught with salted herring for the bait. At the end of the flume at the grist mill we boys used to watch the herrings as they came up in schools which darkened the waters when the mill was running. They followed the running of the grist mill stream up to the wheel, and then would fall back in such crowds as would enable us easily to catch them in nets and also with our hands. On the opposite side of the road where the main stream came over the dam there was great fishing in "herring time." There was below the dam a rough, stony passage, which the fishermen would line on either side by rolling in stones on which to stand. This passage they would extend down the stream as far as the depth of the water would allow, for the herrings to enter on their way to the dam. The fishermen would then take their stands, scoop-net in hand, on both sides of the passage-way, having their baskets securely anchored in their rear ; and as the passage-way was necessarily narrow, when the herrings entered it they were crowded together in dense masses, and frequently in their

struggles to get up to the dam would leap over each side of the passage-way, and could easily be taken by the hands. Here the fishermen would scoop them out during the jam, as fast as they could put in their nets. It took but a few days for each man or boy to obtain sufficient supplies for the year. Very many families in those days made dependence upon the cured herrings as their main stay during the year, and the old corn house, shed and barn were always lined with herrings strung on sticks for the purpose of drying. In this condition they remained, always ready for use, thereby enabling the poorer classes at all times to have on hand an ample supply of healthy food during the season, at a nominal cost. And doubtless many families were saved from seeking help from the town during the long, protracted winters of those times, when the snow used to fall early in the season and remain late into spring; when the days and nights were bitterly cold, with no coal or steam at hand, and nothing but half-built houses, large fire-places and wood fires to depend upon in order to keep at bay Jack Frost with his conglaciating breath and pinching fingers.

RUM HOLLOW IN 1810.

The river at that time had a small outlet or narrow channel on a straight line with its present course, which separated the main land at the foot of Crossman's hill, below the stone bridge, from an island that ran from east to west. A large portion of this island, as it then was, now makes a part of the main land, and is now occupied by Crocker Bros. & Co.'s nail mill and other buildings on Winthrop Street. The main river ran around this island, passing in the rear of the Fisher house, the Harris house, and the