Quincy Point As I Knew It

By Joseph Lincoln Whiton

Mr. H. Hobart Holly, President of the Quincy Historical Society, of which I am a member, informed me that the Society is anxious to obtain historical data on the various parts of Quincy, and he has asked me to write what I know in regard to the early days of Quincy Point.

When I was a small boy an elderly gentleman came into my father's yard, this was about 1880, and requested the privilege of looking around my father's estate. He said that his reason for doing so was because he was born in that house, and pointed up to one of the chambers and said that he was born in that particular room. This man's name was Johnson. He said that his father was a jeweler, and that his father had purchased the house and estate from one Major Vinal. He said that there was a family named Quincy, and this family manufactured tallow candles in the vicinity of where the present Proctor & Gamble plant now stands. He said that the Quincy family apparently got into financial difficulties, and Major Vinal, who was one of the creditors, settled his claim by acquiring Quincy Point. The territory he acquired was from Chubbuck Street down to the Fore River from the west and the east, and from Town River to Bent's Creek on the north and the south. He said that Major Vinal built my father's house in 1796.

At that time there was no Washington Street and no bridge across the Fore River. Agitation started for the Quincy and Hingham Turnpike Corporation. His father, Mr. Johnson, who was then the owner, offered to give the land to the Corporation provided that they maintain an eighty foot street and that elm trees be set out along each side of the street. This turnpike was laid out from Quincy Square by the Unitarian Church. The request for the eighty foot street was carried out, and those who knew and were familiar with Washington Street will remember how much wider Washington Street was from Chubbuck Street to the Fore River Bridge, prior to 1918 when it was widened the rest of its length. Some of the elms are still standing.

The way of traveling prior to the laying out of Washington Street was over what is now South Street, which is largely in the same location as it was in those days. According to Mr. Johnson, at that time there were only a few fishing shacks along the shore. This story, of course, was very interesting to me and I am quoting what Mr. Johnson told me in person.

My father's place, of which I write, was on the lower end of Washington Street by the present circle on the Quincy end of the Fore River Bridge, and comprised what is now Dee Road, Whiton Avenue, Lawn Avenue and Whiton Park. Next door to the west was the Federhan place, formerly the Bramhall's. On the east was the residence of the family of Deacon George Thomas, the shipbuilder. East of that was where the Phillips brothers, the divers, lived; Peleg Jones the shipbuilder lived there before the Phillips.

1. Joseph L. Whiton 1873-1966, a prominent citizen through his long life in Quincy, Mayor of the City 1917-1920. This paper was developed through conversations with H.H. Holly and dictated to Vincent McCabe in November 1957. The annotations are by Daniel J. Johnson and H.H. Holly.

2. William Johnson of Dorchester, jeweler, purchased the Vinal House in 1821 and owned it until after 1850.

3. No record has been found of Quincy-owned land on Quincy Point. Josiah Quincy and his son Edmund had a sperm-candle works across the river in Weymouth from 1753 to 1768.

4. William Vinal 1765-1818 of Scituate purchased 31 acres on land at Bent's Point from Nedebiah Bent in 1805 and built the house shortly thereafter.

5. The Vinal-Whitot House was representative of the fine homes at Quincy Point. The Eliphalet Smith House was moved and now stands at 17 Miles Road in Hingham.

6. Major Vinal conveyed the land for the road to the Turnpike Corporation. The bridge replaced the old Bent's Point ferry in 1812.

7. Quincy Historical Society has recently been given papers of Hiram W. Phillips.
In my younger days Quincy Point was really a village by itself. The residents were called "whittlers" from their habit of carving their names on the old Fore River Bridge railings. Washington Street was ruts from gutter to gutter; when it was dry it was dusty, and when it rained it was mud. As time went along houses were built and a local society was formed; that brought a horse-drawn water tank to sprinkle the street. A pump was placed down near the Fore River Bridge and drew salt water for the tank which sprinkled Washington Street as far as Chubbuck Street. At that time grass grew on each side of the street to the length of a long swath. Our home at the time was fenced in since cattle dealers drove their cattle along the street to the farms below on the South Shore. There was no city water, telephone, electric lights, or fire alarm, and each family obtained its water from a well; naturally there were no modern improvements.

Our means of fire protection was to go to the old Methodist Church, which was then on the corner of Washington Street and South Street, and ring the bell. This gave the alarm for the volunteer fire department to man the old hand tub "Vulture" which was located on the same location where the fire house is today; that is, on the corner of Washington Street and Cleverly Court.

As time went on, the Quincy Water Company, a private corporation as it was called, laid pipes down to Quincy Point. After that came electric lights and a fire alarm. The first telephone was placed in the office of J.F. Shepard & Sons, who were in the coal

8. This became the Quincy Point Congregational Church.
9. Shepard's was located on the river north of the bridge.
business. If anyone wanted a doctor or a necessity he would have to walk down there and pay twenty-five cents for the use of the telephone.

Across Fore River, where the Edison plant now stands, was Lovell's Grove. Pine Point House, which later burned, was off to the left. The present coal wharf[10] was the landing place for the steamer STAMFORD from Boston. Very high tides would cross the highway at the low point beyond.

The old Fore River Bridge opened in two lifts cranked by hand. The tender would walk over and raise the Weymouth half first, then walk back over a plank that extended from the Quincy half, and finally crank that half up. Large sloops and schooners would pass through the narrow opening under sail. The keeper of the Bridge was a man named Joe Hayden. He did the work for years, and so did his family. He cranked the draw until a new bridge was constructed, that was the one before the present one[11]. They tell a story of Joe Hayden who was the keeper of the key to the fire alarm box in that area. They say that Joe would not give you the key to the box until he had filled his pipe.

A landmark, which is long since gone, was the Toll House which stood in the middle of Washington Street at the beginning of the original old pile bridge. The man who operated the Toll House and collected the tolls was named Cushing. At the water's edge was Lapham's lobster shanty where a lobster cost five cents, all cooked.

Wharf Street branched off Washington Street and went in a northerly direction to what we then called "the shipyard"[12]. Here Deacon George Thomas built wooden vessels, and here the ship RED CLOUD was built. The old sail loft of Thomas Lincoln and Isaiah G.

Whiton occupied the former candle factory and stood near the shipyard location. Here sails were made for many square riggers and other sailing vessels. At the lower end of Wharf Street was where people went to cross over to Germantown in the little ferry. This ferry was a row boat twelve to fifteen feet long with seats for passengers along the sides aft and across the stern. It was manned by the old sailors who lived in Sailors' Snug Harbor[13] which has since been done away with. There was a shanty and float at the Germantown end across the narrows. To get the boat you would wave a handkerchief from the Quincy Point side. The Methodist minister from Quincy Point would go over to Snug Harbor to preach.

At the end of Wharf Street there was also a stone wharf and a big derrick. Here very heavy stones were hoisted from old stone teams and loaded on lighters or vessels. A three masted schooner by the name of FANNY AND FAY was well known at that time along the New England coast. This schooner was owned by the Quincy granite firm of Churchill & Hitchcock[14], and was named after Mr. Hitchcock's two daughters. In those days it was a familiar sight to see stone teams with from two to ten horses pulling stone along the road from the Quincy quarries to this stone wharf. The stone was shipped to New York and other destinations.

All of our fuel at that time came from the two coal wharves. On the north side of the bridge was J.F. Shepard & Sons, and on the south side of the bridge was C. Patch & Sons.

At the corner of Washington and South Streets on the left hand side as you entered South Street, stood a small building which was the U.S. Post Office, and was owned and operated by one Ella May Freeman. There was no free delivery and we all went to the Post Office morning and night to get our mail. In addition to the Post Office she operated a

10. This was just north of the bridge on the Weymouth side.
11. The old bridge was replaced by a steel draw bridge in 1900. The present bridge was dedicated in 1936.
12. Wharf Street was located in what is now Proctor & Gamble property. The shipyard was toward the end of the point.
13. Sailors' Snug Harbor was a home for retired merchant seamen which operated in Germantown for about one hundred years.
14. Churchill & Hitchcock's quarry was the largest in the North Common area around Quarry Street.
small general store. On the opposite corner stood the old Methodist Church, which was later raised and a vestry put under it, and still later moved to its present location near the Southern Artery.

The old Washington Street School, where I went to school, stood in front of the present one. This old wooden school had no modern conveniences. The method of obtaining drinking water was from a pump which was located down by the sidewalk inside the fence in front of the schoolhouse. In the school there were really two factions. The “Pointers” who were largely of Yankee descent, and the “Dublinites” who were largely of Irish extraction. The Dublin district, so called, included Main and Sumner Streets, and this section was developed by Irish immigrants whose sons and daughters later became priests, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and business men.

Where the present Washington Street School stands now was a quarter mile racetrack owned by a man named John R. Graham. He was a shoe manufacturer and he trained his horses there. In Quincy at that time there were several shoe factories: the Graham factory at Washington Street and the present Glenwood Way, the John E. Drake factory on Baxter Street, and the Whizzer factory at the corner of Main and Union Streets. There was another Drake factory on Sumner Street, and the Noah Curtis factory on Granite Street by the railroad bridge where the parking area is now.

The old families gradually left the Point, and as far as I know I am the only living resident from the old Quincy Point section.

The winters in Quincy Point in those days seemed to be entirely different than today. I well remember on Washington Street at the head of Edison Park when the snow was piled as high as the trolley wire; when my father, my brother, myself and our coachman drove through a tunnel of snow one morning. The northeast snowstorms would last for several days. When I first went to work in Boston it was very common for us to walk to the station from Quincy Point in the wintertime, as everywhere was piled high with snow. The method at that time for breaking out the roads was to take one of the old stone pungs, which were built very heavy and strong, put a heavy timber across the front sled with four or six horses on it, and drag the street to make it passable. Town River would freeze solid in those days, and there would be no shipping on the River. Snow storms with freezing rain and freezing weather would make a coating of smooth ice, and we would all skate on the River and sail ice boats. Fore River would freeze also, and on a number of occasions we boys would put on our old rocker skates at the Fore River Bridge and skate to South Boston.

At that time, before there was any sewage, it was an easy matter to dig a bucket of clams there, and in the fall to catch smelts.

The mode of traveling from Charles Hall’s store at the corner of Wharf and Washington Streets, to the Quincy Depot was by two horse-drawn vehicles, one operated by Joe Lapham and the other by Wilson Tisdale. Later the Quincy Street Railway Company operated from the corner of Temple Street to the Fore River Bridge. Their vehicles were horse-drawn, and the horses and cars were put up in a livery stable located where the Catholic Church now stands. Later the road was electrified and was extended to Weymouth over the Fore River Bridge. The tracks were along the south side of Washington Street. During World
War in 1918, the U.S. Government widened Washington Street all the way to Quincy Center, and double tracks were put in the middle of the street. Today all this kind of travel has been done away with, and bus travel has replaced it.

As I have said previously, Quincy Point was a beautiful country village with the shady elm trees. About 1900, however, Mr. Thomas A. Watson and Mr. Wellington20, who had a plant in East Braintree known as the Fore River Ship and Engine Company, bought the land in Quincy Neck between Bent’s Creek and Howard Street. In East Braintree by the Monatiquot Bridge21, where they were located, they built two destroyers for the U.S. Government, the MACDONOUGH and the LAWRENCE. The first ship they built when they moved to Quincy was the DESMONEES. I was very well acquainted with both Mr. Watson and Mr. Wellington. They were ardent bicycle riders and we had many bicycle rides together with my boyhood friend George Maybury.

In Quincy Point we had Civil War veterans, one Thaddeus Newcomb and one Benjamin Mead who saw a lot of service in the Battle of Gettysburg. We also had a number of ship masters, one of whom, Capt. Amesbury, was killed in a mutiny on his ship.

In those days, when you spoke of anyone living above Chubbuck Street, you called it part way up town; farther up you called it half way up town.

In Quincy Point there were three famous yacht builders. One was Capt. Charles C. Hanley who was located where the Baker Basin now is. Capt. Hanley built some famous yachts and one, the MEEMER, was never beaten in a yacht race. This boat was built for Alonzo Baker, the founder of the United Fruit Company, who lived in Wellfleet on Cape Cod22. Other famous Hanley boats were the VELELLA and the CALYPSO. Another famous yacht builder was William F. Maybury whose yard was located where the Standard Oil Company now is. The other yard was that of the Embree Brothers whose shop was located right where Proctor & Gamble now stands. Capt. Hanley later moved his yard across the River, and that plant is now owned by the Quincy Adams Yacht Yard23.

There are many other incidents which happened in my boyhood, while of no historical interest, were very interesting to me. One of these incidents was the building and launching of the RED CLOUD, which was a full rigged ship built by Deacon Thomas in his yard. This yard also was where Proctor & Gamble now stands. I had a model of the RED CLOUD made by one Capt. Weeks who lived in Provincetown. He made this model from the original model and sail plan which I obtained from Deacon Thomas’ son. This model is now in the office of the Fore River Plant of the Bethlehem Steel Co.24. At the time Capt. Weeks made this model, he presented me with a harpoon used for whaling and a marline spike that the sailors used in splicing rope. These two items are now on exhibition in the Quincy Historical Society Library. The RED CLOUD was the last wooden sailing ship built in Quincy.

The Quincy Yacht Club had its beginnings at the Point. It started on the beach next to Shepard’s coal wharf with races among the fishing boats - the ANNIE B., FLORA LEE, BELLE and others. The Club soon moved to the Federhan’s boat house which stood just east of the wharf which still shows at the foot of Baker Street which was the location of the Federhan’s driveway. The Club later moved to Hough’s Neck. The Federhan’s LENA, a big club topsail sloop, was one of the early leaders of the fleet.

A character at the Point who must be mentioned was Charlie Hall who operated a small general store at the corner of Washington and Wharf Streets. Charlie was known to have everything in his store from needles to pulpets. In the hall upstairs the Baptists held their services.

The writer was first elected to the Quincy City Council in 1902, the representative from Ward 2. I served in the Quincy City Council for twenty-two years. I was president of the Quincy City Council for five years under the old Quincy charter. We served in those days in the Quincy City Council without pay. I was elected mayor of Quincy for the year 1917 and served as mayor for four years. When I took office as mayor it was under the new Charter Plan A. In April 1917, after being in office for only a short time, the United States declared war, and I served through all of World War I. The first president of the Quincy City Council, when Quincy first became a city, was my friend and Quincy Point neighbor, Herbert F. Federhan.

Joseph Lincon Whiton
29 Whitney Road
Quincy, Mass

November 1957.

Morison

It is hoped that at some time we may be able to publish the interesting journal kept by an Adams Academy student in 1879, of which we have a photocopy.

We have researched the author of the journal, George Burnap Morison of Baltimore. It was discovered that his brother John Holmes Morison was Adams Academy Class of 1874, married Emily Marshall Eliot, and had a son, Samuel Eliot Morison.
The Quincy Point Bell

For the Patriot

For years I have hung in the belfry tower,
So little above the ground
That the noise I made as I swung to
And fro
Was only a doleful sound.

Though I tried my best whenever I spoke
To be cheerful, pleasing and bright,
Yet in spite of my efforts to please
The folks
I never could sound just right.

Some said I rang well, some said I
did not,
Upon that they could never agree;
For few ever stopped for a moment
to think
Just what was the trouble with me.

They seldom thought that in common with them
I needed my sphere and my place,
And couldn't succeed where I didn't belong
Any more than the human race.

They muffled my voice with houses and trees,
And placed me close to the ground,
What wonder I sounded so toneless to some,
And rang with no cheerful sound?

I must stay here for evermore, I thought,
And never a change should see;
But a few months ago I heard some news
Which was glorious news to me;

For then, in my home in the belfry tower,
Where I'd lived for years and years,
I heard the folks vote to raise up the church;
How I wished I could give three cheers!

How I wanted to ring for the change to come!
How I wished that the time would fly!
How dreary and tired of waiting I got!
How slowly the days went by!

But the workmen came and they raised the church,
And of course they raised me too;
And now I'm up in a beautiful place,
Where I have a splendid view.

When I swing to the South I see the woods;
To the North, the fields and the bay;
I'm happier now than I used to be,
As I'll show you day by day.

I'm thankful I'm lifted nearer the sky,
Above the houses and trees,
And where I can launch my sweetest tones,
To float on each passing breeze.

And now that I'm up where I ought to be,
I will speak so the folks will tell
How pleasing and sweet, how cheerful and clear
Is the voice of the Old Point Bell.

Houghs Neck 3500 Years

Quincy is famous for both the richness and diversity of its historical heritage. This diversity extends to neighborhoods that have distinctive histories of their own that are reflected in the distinctive communities of today—West Quincy, Squantum, Germantown, Houghs Neck, and others. How many neighborhood communities in Massachusetts have such historical background and anniversaries worth commemorating?

Houghs Neck has had the same name since its history began. It was named for Atherton Hough, a Bostonian, who received it as a part of a land grant from the town of Boston. The name is pronounced "Hoff" except when followed by "Neck" or "School" when it is pronounced "How". Mr. Hough never lived on the peninsula but farmed it through tenant farmers and leases, setting a farming pattern that continued for over two hundred years mostly with the Spears and then the Littlefields. This continued while its neighbors Germantown and Quincy Point were turning more to the sea. In the 1860's, resort activities started in the Landing area. Before the end of the century it had become a famous resort, and the farmlands were replaced with residential developments.

Houghs Neck's geography has made it a close community; its history has made it a distinctive and a proud one.

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