

A description of Riverside from...

King's Handbook of Newton

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THE NEWTON NAVY. — THE PLACID RIVER CHARLES. — A FEW BITS OF POETRY. — THE BOAT CLUBS. — COUNTY ROCK. THE CARNIVAL IN SEPTEMBER. — AN OLD-FASHIONED APOSTROPHE.

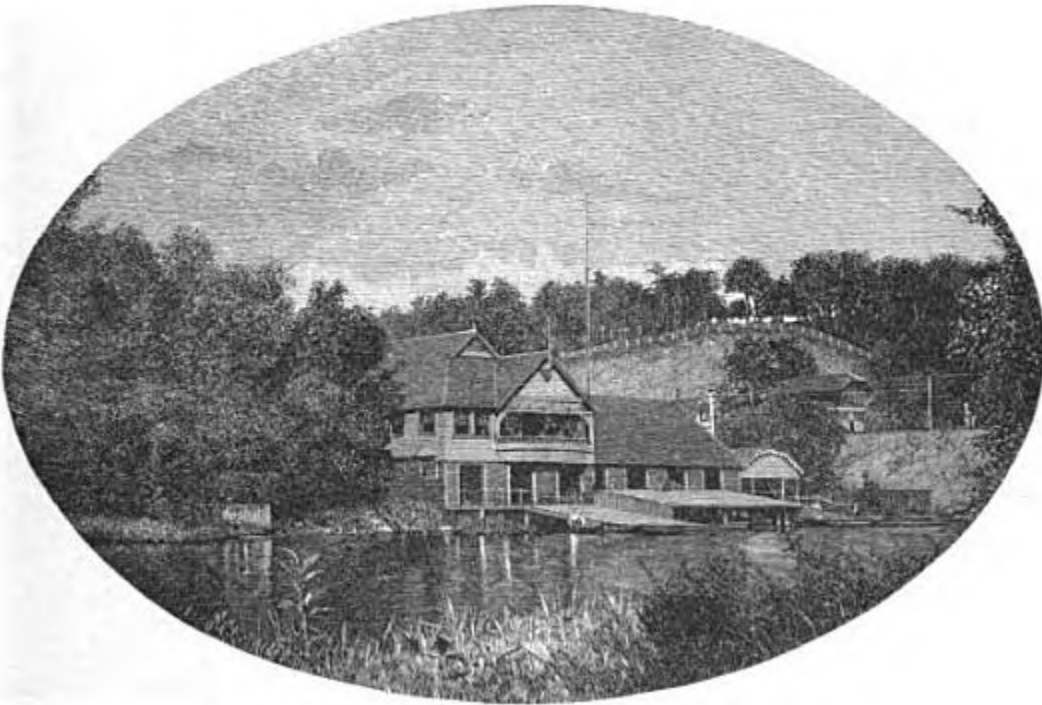
Turning away from these high and breezy plains, let us visit the bright pleasure port of Newton, not far away. Riverside, a station of the Albany Railroad, is indeed a charmingly picturesque point, where the Auburndale plateau bends away, to let the Charles River sweep by, with the broad emerald meadows of Weston and the craggy heights of the legendary Norumbega beyond. The great railway throwing off here its spur-track to Newton Lower Falls, and the Circuit Railway to Newton Centre, after wards crosses the river on a high bridge, and fares away towards Natick and Nebraska. Here the river is narrow and still, flowing between high grassy banks embroidered with sweet-brier and daisies, and among cool and shadowy thickets and groves, where the young people, in their pretty boats, enjoy the charms of solitude a deux. The scene can hardly be better described than in the words of the kindly Chamberlain, whose "Listener" chapters, in the Boston Transcript, suggest the sweetness and strength of Charles Lamb: —

"It is to be doubted whether any other large city in the civilized world has, within easy access to its heated human masses, a reach of river at once so attractive and so quiet as the Charles River between Waltham and Newton Lower Falls. The entire river has its delights, but below the dam at Watertown the navigator is subject to the exigencies of the tide, and, moreover, the shores are not of the wooded sort that the boatman loves to see as he floats along. Beginning at the watch works at Waltham, there is a stretch of river four or five miles long, taking in the windings, that is without rival anywhere for pleasure-boating purposes ; a deep, clear river, with shores lined everywhere with vegetation. Riverside commands the whole stretch, and it is there that the excursionist from the city leaves the train and gets his boat. Below Riverside the river is entirely placid, and the low woods and thickets everywhere touch the stream, except where an occasional residence reveals a bit of lawn. Above Riverside there is a little more of wildness, with here and there a fallen trunk, over which luxuriant vegetation has scrambled, jutting into the stream, and making incomparable nooks of shade, in which our boating parties seem to have a strong and perfectly natural propensity for mooring their boats while they read or dream. Here, too, the current flows more rapidly, making navigation a bit more interesting, though it is still perfectly safe. Above the Newton Falls there is still more of lovely river, and through Dedham there are river views quite as beautiful as anything in this stretch which borders Newton, Waltham, West Newton, and Wellesley ; but the Charles there is scarcely so easily accessible as it is at Riverside, and this strip will probably always be what the Seine at Bougival is to the Parisians, and the Thames from Putney to Mortlake to the English. And, compared with these hilarious resorts abroad, what a placid home of quiet respectability, the Charles is ! "

At Riverside are the club-houses of the Newton Boat Club and the Boston Canoe Club, with the Partelow and Robertson boat-houses, where visitors may hire yachts, canoes, wherries, lapstreaks. randans. Whitehall boats, steam-launches, and other craft. As a local poet has sung : —

" You will find the public boat-house
Very near where you leave the train,
While midway down the river
Another is seen again,
That belongs to the Newton Boat Club,
And from its central float
Many a lad and lassie,
Taking canoe or boat,
Have drifted down toward Waltham,
Telling the old, old tale
Of a love they bore each other,
Of a love that should never fail.

" Others not quite so romantic,
Because not as far along,
Spend their boating time in a social way,
Singing portions of popular song ;
For the fellows are very attentive
In paddling young ladies about,
And it quite often occurs they escort them to town.
Taking the late cars out."



Newton Boat Club House on Charles River at Riverside.

The house of the Boston Canoe Club is oddly enough placed on the top of a hill, west of the river, with a broad veranda overlooking miles of the winding stream ; and has a great brick fireplace in its main room, surrounded by pictures and trophies.

The Newton Boat Club was organized in 1875, to encourage boating on the Charles River, and other forms of physical and social culture, and as much as possible of goodfellowship in all other ways. The club-house stands amid picturesque grounds, and has a bowling-alley and dancing-hall attached, and other conveniences for merry days and evenings. There are about 200 members in the club, active and honorary, and its house is but a few minutes' railway ride from any of the Newton villages. It contains many handsome boats, shells of all kinds, Rob-Roys, and canoes, with lockers, landing-stages, and other essentials: and on pleasant summer afternoons and holidays, and on fair moonlight nights, the river in this vicinity is dotted with rowing parties, pleasure-boats, birch-bark canoes, and occasional little steamboats. In June they have the annual races, in Rob-Roys, shells, birches, pleasure-boats, and tubs; and if the stroke-oars do not land them among the reedy margins, or the canoes do not spill out their solitary crews, the boats usually reach their goals before nightfall. For the Newton navy resembles that of the United States, in that it is more to be counted on for contemplative comfort and sedate conviviality, than for indecent and unseemly speed ; and the high and shadowy wooded banks, and cool nooks between the islands, and beautiful riparian estates, invite to philosophic drifting and a placid lengthening of the happy hours of the voyage. The boating-ground is about five miles long, from Waltham up to where the rapids come down near County Rock, a midstream boulder on which the Norfolk and Middlesex county lines converge ; and one may row across Maple Bay, and Crehore Bay, or drift along the rippling reaches of Lake St. Francis, with easy oar.

Occasionally, in September, a spectacle is presented here that not even Venice in her palmiest days could have far surpassed. On an appointed night the steamer White Swan starts up river from Waltham, followed by upwards of 400 boats, of every variety, from leaky yawls and crazy rafts to costly cedar shells and aboriginal canoes, and the kerosene steamers of the newspaper reporters. Every boat is belted with lines of lanterns, and filled with joyous monarchs of the wave; and from sundry islands and moored rafts salvos of artillery, rockets, golden rain, Japanese fires, fiery colored stars, and other pyrotechnics flame across the black sky, while the great estates along the shores, and the railroad and corporation properties, arc brilliantly illuminated. On the river there are thousands of people, with myriads on the shores; and the music of military bands is taken up from point after point, as the magnificent cortege moves up to Fox Island and Islington, following the White Swan as its Bucentaur, Newton Boat Club, Boston Canoe Club, Arlington Canoe Club, Somerville Boat Club, Waltham Canoe Club, Upper-Charles-River Boat Club, Aurora Canoe Club, Harvard Club, and others, each with from a dozen to fifty boats in massed column, their oars and paddles keeping time to the sweet music of the bands and the choruses of the rowers, whose charming boat-songs reverberate from the forested banks and the island thickets. Here and there advance small Chinese junks, floating light-houses, miniature Mayflowers, Spanish galleons, lit up by Roman candles, mines, bombs, water-rockets and other pyrotechnics, and by myriads of Chinese lanterns strung along the shores, in lines and groups and masses. Vast crowds from Boston and other cities come hither to enjoy the fairy scene; and in 1886 the Governor and his staff inspected the procession from Riverview, and no fewer than 3,000 persons assembled on the Pulsifer estate alone.

The White Swan is a small but commodious steamboat that makes several trips daily, in summer, from the bridge at Waltham, past the Watch Factory, Lily-Point Grove, and the gentlemen's estates above, and ends its quiet voyages at the stone bridge near Auburndale and Weston.

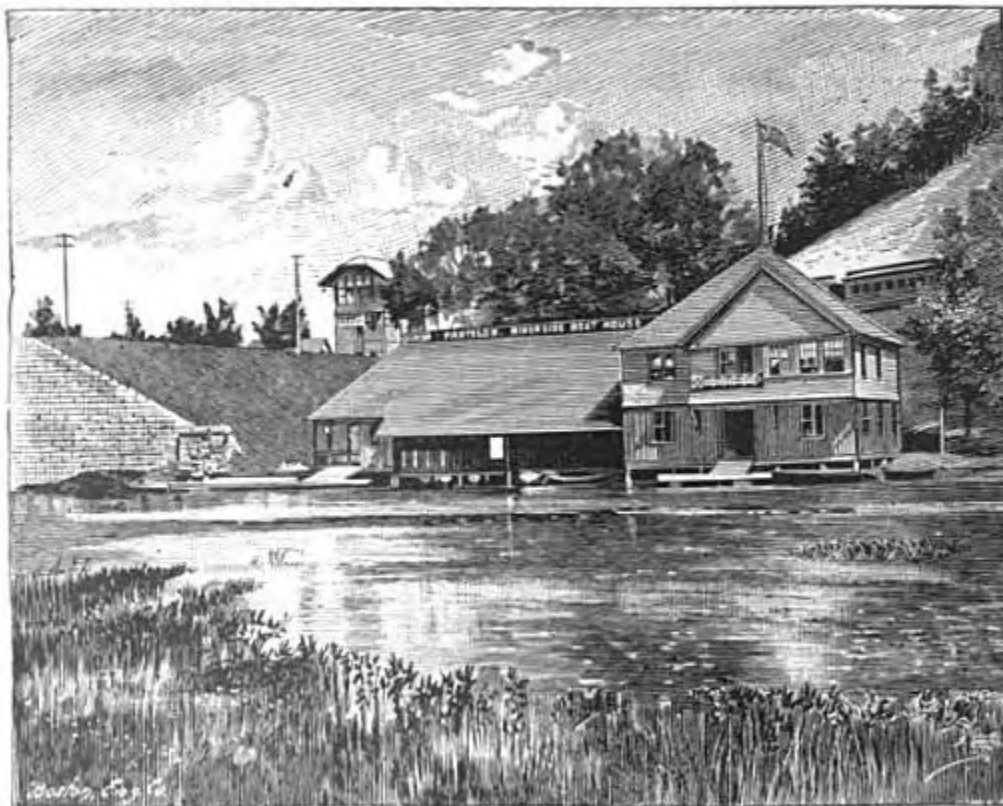


Lazell Seminary Boat House at Riverside.

This expanse of river has been thus happily described by an enthusiastic writer: "Within ten miles of Boston, there is a stretch of river scenery that cannot be surpassed in the United States, and which cannot easily be equaled. Until within a few years this lovely spot has scarcely been known beyond the limit of the inhabitants who have quietly taken possession of the elegant sites on either bank, and beautified and adorned them for their own pleasure. Many who have travelled through Europe affirm that for quiet beauty it is not equaled. One familiar with our Southern streams is reminded of the Yazoo, with the deep green and luxuriance of the foliage on the banks and the quiet of the waters. At sunset, the river is alive with canoes, row-boats, shells, and sail-boats, filled with ladies and gentlemen, adding, with their delightful music, greatly to the natural charms of the scenery."

Nor can we forget the enthusiastic words of Oliver Wendell Holmes who once astonished a committee of the Massachusetts Legislature by saying: "You need not go to the Rhine nor to the Bay of Naples for scenery; you have it in perfection on the River Charles." Another philosophic writer has remarked that, "The man who has made up his mind that life is not worth living, ought to take a canoe voyage on the picturesque Charles before he shuffles off this mortal coil." For in these peaceful glens are the fairest scenes of the little river which has been more beloved by American poets than any Mississippi or Cumbia of the great West, flowing through thousands of long miles. Longfellow's "To the River Charles" and Lowell's "Charles-River Marshes" are perhaps the best of these hymns of the flowing stream, and their sweet pastoral music gives a peculiar interest and distinction to the scene, and the sentimental

interest is deepened by the reflection that on those rugged and imposing heights across the river Professor E. N. Horsford has discovered the remains of the ancient city of Norumbega, that prehistoric metropolis



Partelow's Boat-house and Boat-livery, Riverside, Newton.

about which the old French discoverers romanced so enthusiastically, like Marco Polo after he returned from the land of Prester John. Only some fragments of its old defences remain, as if to show how their martial invincibility outlasted all the constructions of peace, of worship, of love.

The only manufacturing in this vicinity is of so unusual and delicate a kind as to merit the name of an art. Down by the old Weston bridge the Partelows (H. V., A. E., and A. B.) have a factory for making all sorts of small boats, from steam-launches of extraordinary swiftness down to cedar canoes, floating as lightly as egg-shells. And so apt and skilful are these artificers, after many years of experience, that they could no doubt fashion and fabricate to order a Thames wherry of the old style, or a Venetian gondola, or a Nile dahabeeyeh. Many of the best boats in use around Boston, especially those on the upper Charles, were turned out at this well-known shop, and now float on the calm inland waters of Longfellow's river. The Partelows also carry on a boat and canoe livery, and provide for the resident or the transient visitor a luxurious ride on the picturesque stream.

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