

Transcription from The Hanover Branch and Norwell Advertiser, May 27, 1937

[Note: This article shares the same title as a booklet written in 1899. The reader may wish to consult this work in the NHS library; the following article was largely based on the diary of Charles W. Simmons of Prospect Street; the whereabouts of the original diary is unknown.]

“FORGOTTEN FAMILIES OF VALLEY SWAMP” by George Cushing Turner

Lonely Locale Out on Hingham Road Proves to be Treasure House of History

“Found’em in Valley Swamp” used to be the rather proud remark of some wood rover of early spring, as he displayed a bunch of fragrant mayflowers, which used to grow here in profusion. Never was the spot localized by town name, but almost everyone knew where it was, in Norwell, on the road leading down from “Al Thomases” or “Half-Way House Corner” straight east over Grove street. For a full half-mile the forest paths and mossy banks held the roots of the Pilgrim’s flower, and fortunate hikers find them there yet, although they are now very scarce.

Near To Nature’s Heart

For some reason Valley Swamp mayflowers were very early, and have been known to appear by the middle of March. In summer, the rewards of another group of nature seekers, the blueberry pickers are reasonably rewarding.

Down at the extreme end of the Swamp section, and around the four corners of the Grove and Prospect street intersection, the area of a half-mile square holds the cellars and former home-sites of a half-dozen pioneer families. Here flowered the true type of New England life, which was destined, thru some trick of chance, to move along to other scenes, and in some instances, to crumble and die, even as the old hearth-stones chip and disintegrate under the remorseless hands of time.

“ An old lane, an old gate, an old house by a tree;
A wild wood, a wild brook---they will not let me be;
In boyhood I knew them, and still they call to me.”

Most Valley Swamp mayflowers were taken away from the spot they grew, most memories of the old-time families are treasured elsewhere. The stone walls raised with such toil are tumbling, the brambles cover the foundation stones of the home-sites, but it is a pleasure to re-people the farms, in retrospect and to bring back a sturdy race of men and women, through the pages of some old journals of account and record laboriously written here from 1762 to 1863.

Vital History Here

The books were by members of the Simmons family and were evidently preserved by the branch of that family which occupied the “Charlotte Simmons place” on a little knoll on the west side of the present Prospect street and about 800 feet, more or less, south of the junction of Prospect and Grove streets. This house was burned in 1913. A new house was built here, last year, by W.S. Higgins. Mr and Mrs. Higgins and their interesting family of four children now occupy the old site. The name of the head of the family who wrote the earliest book, commencing 1762, was Joshua Simons. (Note how the second m in the name so familiar to us nowadays, has not been added.). Joshua seems

to have carried this book through to the year 1767, and, in 1765, we find him “settling accounts with Elipelet Northy” whose name is to appear later in this article.

A Priceless Document

A very important and significant document of Revolutionary times was found with these books. It was a broadside, or handbill pronunciamento, evidently with a head prepared in Boston or some large center, and sent to the smaller towns for signatures. To it is appended the original signatures of many prominent men of the town of Scituate (this Valley Swamp neighborhood being West Scituate territory, and a part of the lower town.) One notes David Barnes, strong and able clergyman at South church (now First Church, Norwell) signing himself without ant Rev. or other prefix.

This document, in possession of Arthur C. Jones of Oak street, Norwell, reads as follows:

We the subscribers Do each of us severally for ourselves profess, testify and declare before GOD and the World that we verily believe that the War, Resistance and Opposition in which the United American Colonies are now engaged, against the Fleets and Armies of Great Britain, is on the Part of the said Colonies, just and necessary. We do hereby severally promise, covenant and engage, to and with every person of this Colony, who has or shall subscribe this Declaration, or another of the same Tenor and Word, that we will not during said War, directly or indirectly, in any Way, aid, abet or assist, any of the Naval or Land forces of the King of Great Britain, or any employ'd by him; or supply them with any kind of Provisions, Military or Naval Stores, or hold any Correspondence with or communicate any Intelligence to any of the Officers, Soldiers or Mariners belonging to the Said Army or Navy, or inlist into the Land or Sea Service of Great Britain, or take or bear arms against this or either of the United Colonies, or undertake to pilot any of the Vessels belonging to the said Navy, or in any other Way, aid or assist them; But, on the contrary, according to our best Power and Abilities, will defend by Arms, the United American Colonies, and every Part thereof against every hostile attempt of the Fleets and Armies in the Service of Great Britain or any of them according to the Requirements and Directions of the Laws of this Colony that now are, or may hereafter be provided.

(Signatures:)

Benj. Holmes, Nathan Cushing, John Cushing Jr., Lazarus Bowker, Gideon Jenkins, Charles Ash, Ignatius W_____, Consider Merritt, Wm. Cushing, Barnabas Little, Joseph Bailey, Lawrence Litchfield, Elisha Foster, John Clap, Israel Vinal Jr., James Briggs, Hayward Peirce, William Barker, Peleg Crooker, Joshua Otis Jr., Increase Clap, Jo—Otis Jr., Nathaniel Winslow, Hawke Cushing, James Briggs, Benjamin Clap, Benjamin Woodward, Samuel Stockbridge Jr., Eleazer Lock, James Jenkins, Barnabas Barker, Nathl Chittenden, Gideon Chittenden, Nathl Turner, Joseph Briggs, Isaac Stetson, Samuel Litchfield, John Dorroty, Thomas Lechfield, Elisha Lapham, Benja Curtis, Philip Turner, Prince Cole, Job Neall, Levi Wade, Francis Cushing, James Otis, Natl Waterman, Joseph Thomas, John Elmes, John Turner, Charles Turner, Thomas Silvester, John Douglas, Jesse Turner, Jonathan Turner, Nathaniel Cushing, David Barnes, Roland Turner, Elisha Litchfield, Caleb Torrey, Nathl Vinall, John Briant, Garshom Ewell,

Jonathan Brown Junr., Elijah Clap, Joshua Bryant, Elisha Randall, Pickels Cushing, Benja Randall, Jonathan Brown, James Clap, Elisha Silvester, Isaac Torrey, Joseph Silvester, Caleb Cushing, Lemuel Silvester, Hezekiah Stockbridge, Ebenezer Belsher, Elijah Sylvester Jr., John Barker, Barnabas Barker Jr., Benjamin Perry, Thomas Gross, Eman Gross, Abia Hinds, Isaac Damon, Stephen Damon Jr., Calvin Damon.

Fortunate In Saving Books

At this point in our article, we must include the fact that these old documents, Revolutionary pronunciamento, journals, old school copy books, etc. were found in an old trunk when the estate and household goods of the late Charlotte Simmons went up at public auction some time in the "nineties" [1890s]. Arthur C. Jones, a young man with a keen sense of appreciation for the old and curious historical things, eagerly took care of them when they were about to be thrown away by the purchaser of the trunk. Mr. Jones has had the Revolutionary document photographed and all the books are in his possession, a fact duly noted by members of the Norwell Historical Society, who regard the collection as most remarkable.

A Farmer's Journal

Among the most interesting of the books of memorandum are those of Charles W. Simmons, "seveyor of highways," as he writes it. His first book begins in May, 1825, and says, "Scituate, with fence." "Town-county tax for 1825, \$4.85; Parish tax for 1825, \$2.60." "Sot out an orchard in 1829." "1831, Bote a dictionary, gave \$1.25, Bote a flute, gave \$2.75, bote a surtout, gave \$21, bote a book, directions for the flute, 50 cts. Bote a vest, gave \$2.50." "1832, bote a pew of Loring Jacobs, gave \$66 and choice money, \$9, \$77" "gave four dollars toward the bell, and three days to level in," "bote two him books, gave \$1.22." [It was traditional for someone to buy their box or pew at the church they attended; he apparently donated toward the purchase of a church bell; the "him books" should be hymn books for church singing; he needed that dictionary.]

Editor's Note--- Barry's History of Hanover, which included the record of the Universalist church, West Scituate, which has always stood on the West Scituate side of the [town] line, says: "In 1832, during the pastorate of Rev. Robert W. Killam, the second structure owned by the society was constructed, John Gross being the contractor." [One of the Jacobs daughters married Rev. Killam. The Jacobs family was long connected to this church. Another Jacobs daughter would marry a son of the famous Universalist preacher, Rev. Hosea Ballou, a biography of him being in the NHS library and a portrait at the Jacobs Homestead.]

Quaint Entries, 100 Years Ago [1830s]

Charles Simmons' entries continue: "paid on share in the meeting house, April 15, 1833, worked at meeting house one day, April 17, 1833."

"Charles W. Simmons, seveyor of highways, March 1834." (The prominence of this entry reveals the feeling of pride which this man of a quiet neighborhood felt in his only public honor, we believe, during his whole lifetime. This was evidently the first year of his service as surveyor of a small school district, stretching along Prospect street, as we know it, and going down a mile or more into "Damon" or "Back" street, now Grove. The western part of Grove street, the present "Valley Swamp road," was to be laid out by the County commissioners and this same Simmons, the surveyor, but not until the year

1854. Charles Simmons seems to have held this office for much more than 30 years.---
Editor)

To continue: "snow come two or three inches deep, April the 27th, 1834."
"Freeman S. (Simmons) built his barn Nov. 1834." (The site of this barn may be seen
between the Charles Simmons barn and the Valley Swamp corner, on the Mazur place.
This old structure became decrepit and was taken down, but the Charles---Charlotte
Simmons barn remains on the knoll overlooking the Freeman Simmons site. As stated in
another paragraph, the Simmons barn is perhaps the oldest now standing in the limits of
the town of Norwell. It is, no doubt, the barn of the father of Charles W. Simmons,
Charles Simmons, who married in 1794, Tamsin, daughter of Elijah Whiton of Hingham,
a soldier of the Revolution. This accounts for the mention of two women bearing this odd
name, one that no compilation of proper names or biblical phrases seems to contain. The
nearest approach to a clue, which we have found, was a derivation in mythology of a
name, Tamarine, supposed to be the daughter of Tamor, and the meaning thereof, a twin.
As neither Tamsin (Whiton) Simmons or her daughter seems to have been a twin, no
reason appears in our present study.)

More Memoranda

1836: "Common rule of making a yoke (an oxen-yoke, of course---Editor),
4 ft. 2 inches long, 22 inches from the center, of the inside holes. 8 inches from the center
of one hole to the other center.

April 1833: "Built a wall against Joshua Jacobs, 4 ft. 7 inches high."
Jan. 1, 1842: "horned sheep lambded, and 2nd day the old no-horned sheep lambded, one
lamb apiece. Feb. 28th, Tamsin Simmons went Charlestown." March 9: "underpinning
fence on Northey place." June 12, 1842: "C.H. Simmons died in the morning." June 14:
"C.H. Simmons berried." July 23: "P. Simmons broke out with the measles." Sept. 12,
1842: "town, county and state taxes, C.W. Simmons \$16.55; Wid T. Simmons \$6.18;
T. Simmons Jr. \$2.20; Ch Simmons \$2.90." Sept. 17, 1842: "went to the salt meadow &
turned part of the hay, Joseph & I." Sept. 19: "raked up my salt hay." Sept. 20: "poled it
down to the bank." Sept. 21: "boated it up to the Colamore place." Sept. 22: "carted it
home, 3 loads." Sept. 21: "turned oxen into lateer feed." Nov. 10 "filed up the Northey
well." (So near to the time of abandonment of the old Nothey homestead, wherever and
whenever it was----Editor)

Getting Ready for Winter

Nov. 8, 1842: "tied up the cows, first time, Nov. 11, tied up the four oxen";
Nov. 26, "battening (battening) the east end of the barn." Dec. 2, 1843 "killed my beef,
weighed 443 lbs" Dec. 12: "killed the hog" Dec. 13: "salted it" Dec. 19: "put up a well
sweep to Sam & Ruth well" Dec. 18, 1852: "sledged up four ox loads of fire wood."

A Human Barometer

This Mr. Simmons was scarcely ever ill, and signs of the extreme caution which
he used, in the somewhat amusing entries in his diary which are constantly occurring in
these lines : Oct. 30, 1853 "put on my draws" June 4, 1856: "pulled off my draws."
These entries occur and recur, year by year, and the farmer never varies much from
putting on the red flannels about Nov. 1 and removing them about June 10, or even a
little later.

New England Types

Here was the life of old New England exemplified. The effort to make a living was never relaxing evidently, and what recompenses of fine neighborly qualities or Christian fortitude were developed to bring their largesse to the home can only be guessed.

After the death of Charles Simmons Sr. in 1835, Charles W. Simmons seems to have been the head of the family, who dealt very strictly with Tamsin, his mother, and Tamsin and Charlotte, his sisters. Every bit of extra material or special work, be it no more than seven cents, was charged up to the women folks. The reviewer [G.C. Turner] is glad to read that Widow Tamsin's 'thirds' are carefully regarded, also, payment made regularly for 'Charlotte's grass.' On the other side of the ledger, one is glad to learn that the brother paid Charlotte, the sister, one shilling for 'making a vest.'

The matter of dollars and cents must have been uppermost here, everything having to be earned out of the fields and the woodlots. The budget, however, becomes larger, however, as Charles Simmons begins to loan money to his neighbors, buy goods and farmland at "vandue" or auction, etc. Gone are the days of his young manhood when he purchased a flute, instruction book, etc.. He becomes, as a man of 50, a man of affairs, with his fortune gaining all the time. At this time he never relaxes, but goes right along, hauling his half dozen or ox loads of wood each day, planting, in May, as many as 1,368 hills of corn in a day, "collaring" the house chimney each fall as winter approached (a custom we do not understand) on May 31st, 1858, "to Pim's (Pyam Jacobs) to raise a barn." Benjamin Loring may be using this same barn today [1937], as this, the Joshua Jacob's property, was the place referred to. Usually the efforts of an apprentice or "bound boy" was included in this labor, but the stolid old farmer rarely gives credit to this help. Once in a while, though, he says, "Joseph and I, Walter or Thomas," accomplished this or that farm chore.

Some Big Days Work

It would be possible, by a close study of the journals, to decide what constituted an average or a good day's work by a Scituate farmer in the period of 1825-1860. Some of the best accomplishments of Simmons of Valley Swamp were "Feb. 27th, 1849, sledged three ox loads in the afternoon, began to cut on the road in my Cushing lot."

Dec. 18, 1852: "sledged up four ox loads of firewood." "Dec. 29, 1855, snow a foot deep, Dec. 30, Sunday, shoveling to barn, well and spring. Jan 6, 1856, Sunday, tuff snow storm, [Jan.] 7th, shoveled 6 hours on the highway."

"Jan. 22 and 23rd, beating a track into the long pasture and seader [cedar] swamp. March 12th, splitting rails, March 22nd, sledged home four ox loads of wood from Mother's pines. Over 80 days sledging." "April 16, 1856, got home four large loads of hay, and other jobs." (Please note—the "other jobs." Loading and unloading four loads of hay was not much evidently—Editor) "Jan. 18, 1857, glass 10 degrees below zero, come on a N.E. snowstorm; 19th, snowstorm and wind blowed verry hard, [Jan.] 20, shoveled on the road 5 hours; 24th, shoveled on the road 7 hours, glass 15 [degrees] below zero."

"Sept. 27th, 1858, finished plowing my my rye ground, and sowed 18 quarts and harrowed it in, and went to Mahalah Damon's funeral, and pulled the beens back of the Totman barn."

"Jan. 5, 1859, shoveling tracks about home, snow 3 or 4 feet deep, Dec. 17th, 1859, got up 4 ox loads of wood, and 4 horse loads, rain at knight." (The reader will

decide, perhaps, that the latter day was the hardest, as there are a lot of sticks in eight loads of wood and they each have to be handled twice.)

Gets Sick, Just Once In 38 Years

At just one time, in the month of January, 1849, Charles Simmons gave up to a cold, and was “sick with a cold, Jan. 21, 22nd, 23, do, 24, do,” to be ashamed of it and soon was “cutting wood up by Mother’s pines, going to Hingham for shingles, to get horse and oxen shod, sleding firewood, etc., etc.” Right in the pink again, good for twenty or thirty more years, surely. And for vacations, we do not find them.

Once He Went Native

Regarding vacations, there is one entry where he went native. The diary says, “went a-rabbiting.” Not so cheerful is the line, “June 2, 1845, went after herring, got none.” Better is this, “March 27, 1844, went a-clamming, got 1 bushel.” This man usually won; his goods increased, but he was actually too busy to take time off. The trips to “Briton (Brighton) market” were half-way pleasure trips, we may well believe, even if the errand was always to buy or settle cattle. It could not have been much fun, if the farmers were drovers at the same time. Hingham Fair came and went with its glories of outdoor spectacles and indoor exhibitions, a high relaxation for most of those who tilled the soil, but no cessation of labor for Simmons of Valley Swamp. A reviewer [the reader] must be highly delighted as he studies the atmosphere of this old story when he finds the laconic item (referring to young Thomas Kilburn) “Sept. 26, 1860, got my oats and rye into the house, & cut 4 pikes of stalks, Tom went to cattle shoe.” (Good for Tom, is our thought--Editor.)

Rather Stubborn, But Could Change

The essence of country town difference of opinion crops out, every now and then, in these journals. Mr. Simmons certainly attempted to assist the church, but he insisted upon his Yankee point of view when he said [wrote] on Jan. 14, 1843, “subscribed \$5 if Barry preaches.” (Evidently the scholarly John Stetson Barry, author of the History of Massachusetts and Barry’s History of Hanover, was the subject of some discussion around the parish.)

The farmer, evidently, got a bit peeved at the parish meeting of March 23, 1850, as he says, “went to parish meeting, and left the society.” Too bad, it seems, after all these years, but look at this: “March 12, 1856, subscribed 5 dolls for preaching.” At another time, early in his career, he, evidently, imbibed the earnestness for reform of some minister or mentor or something, for he says, “Sept. 20, 1835, Left of smoaking, July 25, 1835, left of chewing tobacco.” [In other words, he gave up using them.] This is just the order in which these important entries are made. Possibly, the two sentences ran concurrently, as other stern edicts do today, but, alas and alack, even the Simmons stubbornness was not enough, as the resolutions seem to have gone the way of all the earth. On Nov. 20, 1836, we find the entry, “two pounds of smoaking tobacco.” Perhaps it was for the hired man, but we doubt it. Note the consistency in the spelling, in the word “smoaking” a year apart. The use of the dictionary, purchased according to [a previous] note, in 1831, was showing some effect. The curious word “bote” for “bought,” although persisting to 1849, when he “bote” the Abijah Brown place, 32 acres for \$420, plays out completely by 1852. On Dec. 9 of that year, he “went to Briton [Brighton], and ‘bought’ a yoke of oxen.” On March 13 of the next year [1853], he still spells ‘night’ with a “k” as we note that “Joshua Hersey died at knight.” But, what chance did he have for “learning”

or the three R's, even if he did frequently attend "school meetings." Splendidly did he carry on, in his place and station, steady, honest, steadfast. Just an old bachelor, and of this we must think, "What a pity."

Three Women of the Household

Of these maiden sisters of his, Tamsin and Charlotte, the latter living until 1890 (within the memory of some of us), passing away at the age of 82, and leaving the property to the care of Thomas Kilburn, the last of the "bound boys" who took hold of the farm work here in the year 1853, and was the inheritor of this farm and accumulated property in 1894, the time of his death.

Very, very quiet was Charlotte, unobtrusive, concerned only with the things of her household, leaving the old Valley Swamp homestead only twice in her 1st twenty years of life, and then, only to visit the Savings Bank. What a pity, we say again. The older sister, Tamsin, electrified the neighborhood, we are told, by stepping out of the family circle one day, and taking a position as a housekeeper with a cousin, who almost lived within sight, across the fields. She died in 1861, only 42 days before her mother, the dates being: Tamsin, the daughter, "March 31, 1831, sixty years and four months and 14 days." Tamsin, the mother, "My mother died at 20 min past 9 o'clock in the evening, May 12, 1861."

The writer has delved diligently, hoping to find some trace of things that brightened the lives of these three lone women up on the Simmons farm. Probably they never had time to be lonesome with all the labor of an old-fashioned household to occupy their attention, but one would like to know that they found "all beautiful the march of days, as seasons came and went," and that "love deepened 'round the hearth," but all that can be traced is that, at one time, the sisters "sat in the singing seats" at the Assinippi church. Thought lingers on the secret hopes, the girlhood ambitions which may have stirred here, but had to subside in the drab atmosphere of sowing and reaping, buying and selling, providing for both the immediate and far-distant future.

A Crucial Period

Much is said by the farmer concerning the many town meetings of the year 1849, that is, the dates are given in much detail. We look in vain for the note "town divided." However, on Feb. 5, 1849, he says, "Went to the town meeting for the first time after the town was divided." Other meetings that spring and summer were: March 14, April 1 (afternoon), April 17, June 25, July 16, and on April 17, 1858, "went to town meeting on building a new town house." The Civil War [1861-1865] must have put an end to these plans, for the old hall served its purpose until 1884, when it was burned, although it was moved from the Common in 1876 to make room for the Soldier's monument.

On June 5, 1853, he writes "The Kilburn boy come here to live." This was Thomas H. Kilburn, before referred to as an apprentice or "bound boy." From that time on, little notes, with a kind of sympathetic interest or implication, dot the records. The flinty granite of New England character could not melt enough to show real interest, of course, but one is glad to get these unfamiliar touches: "Dec. 25, 1853, Christmas." (First mention of any great holiday of observance except Thanksgiving; did the youngster bring this refinement to the farm?) April 22, Thomas went to Boston, May 1, Thomas come home (Must have had permission, this farm boy, in the spring planting season.

Reviewer's note)

“Oct. 15, 1856---Cut up Tom’s parching corn, 16th, husked out Tom’s parching corn, May 26th, 1857, planted Tom’s parching corn” (It must have been an innovation, a concession to youth, this planting of such a luxury crop. Reviewer’s note).

Jan. 1, 1860 (Reviewer’s impressions—Anti-slavery conflict at what heat, Civil War approaching, but the farmer goes on with his wood-cutting; second thought: What else could he do? This Simmons was 62 years old now.) The dates of 1860 and 1861 seem to mean so much more than acres and cords of wood. Why doesn’t he ever mention some big war meeting at the town hall or something of that kind? Was this one of the few neighborhoods where the great conflict never penetrated?

Civil War Echoes

One begins to think that the guns trained on Fort Sumter were never heard in Valley Swamp until at almost the close of the diary, the reviewer finds this note and marks it, “Looks Promising.” “Dec. 28, 1861---Thomas gone to Boston with John E. Grose, and Joshua Kilburn to stay till Tuesday—.”

Somehow the reviewer’s sub-consciousness grasped this circumstance as clearly indicative of the fact that these youngsters, full of the red blood of country boys, would catch the spirit of the day---hear much, see much, concerning what was going on, and, never be the same again. Anyway, the great arm of the Civil War seems to have reached up into this lonely district soon after this occurrence, for on Sept. 15, 1862, we find the laconic and only reference to the Civil War by farmer Simmons: “Thomas gone to Dedham camp.” Many another Norwell, Scituate, Marshfield, and Hanover boy went to this same camp in training for service in the 43rd, 44th and 45th Regiments. “Tom” Kilburn’s line on the Simmons family monument in Assinippi cemetery says, “Thomas H. Kilburn, Co. G, 45th Mass. Volunteers, 1843-1894.” Just ten years old when he became a member of the Simmons family [household], and began [begun] to work hard no doubt. No wonder he liked “parching corn” at that time of life. The date of his death was keyed, curiously, to the first Grand Army hall (now a dwelling on High street, Ridge Hill, but then standing where Thomas J. Haslett’s residence now stands on Washington street.). Walter M Jones remembers, as a small boy, seeing the funeral procession of veteran “Tom” Kilburn from the old hall (and this could have only been from 1891 to 1897 as these were all the years of the hall’s active life.) Just 19, when he enlisted, he brought honor to the old neighborhood through his leaving a quiet life for patriotic duty. He sacrificed a “generous” offer by his employer, Charles Simmons, which is duly recorded on April 1, 1862. “Hired Thomas H. Kilburn for one year from April 3, 1862, for eighty dollars and board, washing and mending.”

Tom’s place on the farm was taken before long, as a note says: “May 2, 1863, Wm. Sprague come to stay with me.” Another “bound” boy due to know what hard work and long hours were, no doubt.

On April 30, 1863, a note in the journal says, “Fast Day in State.” This is as near to a Civil war entry as the book holds, and, no doubt, this was the famous Wartime Fast Day suggested by President Lincoln. With the Simmons’ custom of doing things about right, it probably broke into the farm work, and, that is probably why it made the diary.

Warm Human Interest In Notes

A plaintive note is that of Sept. 3, 1860, “mowed a load of litter at the Brown place. Mother was taken sick & I had to stay at home in the afternoon, 8th, rain storm, Mother is better---.” Poor old lady, this must have been the beginning of the end, her iron

frame rallying from this attack, but on May the 12th, 1861, Tamsin Whiton Simmons goes the way of all earth.

The reviewer like the human touches in the diary like these: "Dec. 24, 1845, G. Jacobs got cut with an ax in the side. Dec. 29, went to town meeting and sot up with George. March 7, 1846, Geo. W. Jacobs died, quarter past six in the morning, March 9, G.W. Jacobs berried." This accident and tragedy of the neighborhood was known by Benjamin Loring (The young George Jacobs was his great uncle). Young Jacobs was cutting wood with a cousin, Theophilus Cushing of Hingham. One must pause over the thought of the weeks of suffering, and the weariness and sadness of those who watched over him. How fine was this spirit of neighborhood friendliness which expressed itself in this "sitting up" custom, which far antedated the days of nurses, and was, at least, one hundred years ahead of the district or municipal nurse.

The Valley Swamp Road [The extension of Grove Street to Washington St.]

Charles W. Simmons must have been pretty nearly the originator of the Valley Swamp road. Grove street of today. Tradition tells of an old family about a mile west of the corner. Their access to the stage road (present Washington street) was over a cart path which crossed the swamp on a bridge of logs, called a corduroy road. It emerged to the southwest [on Washington St.] at the Farrar place, now owned by Mrs. William J. Leonard. Attempts to reach Queen Ann's Corner by a more direct route [from corner of Grove and Prospect streets] had probably been in progress for some time when Mr. Simmons writes on Oct. 31, 1848, "jobing around home, laid out road through valie swamp." Nov. 23, "jobing about home & went to Hingham across the swamp." This survey or track through the woods does not seem to have been official. It was just a gesture of what was to come, it seems. And, it was done by Surveyor Simmons personally and at a time when the land was a part of the old Town of Scituate. With the advent of the new town, South Scituate, public interest evidently centered here. "June 20, 1854, Commissioners on Sept 26 run out the Valy swamp road." On April 6, 1855, occurs the entry, "notified to cut and clear the vally swamp road by the 1st day of May."

Linking the Past and Present

We have written this somewhat lengthy article from a sincere feeling that the story of an old New England neighborhood is accurately revealed in the entries of these farm journals. We may have erred in our title, as several of the families of the corner, the Jacobs, Damons, Browns, Totmans, and one family of Simons, have representatives now living. Few families die out entirely; it is the records which are lost. The Northey family of the corner [Grove & Prospect Sts.], whose pathetic doorstone and little hillock of unmarked graves remain, is entirely extinct, so far as can be learned. Through the study of the Norwell Historical Society and others, the neighborhood has received much publicity this year [1937], and is certainly being remembered rather than forgotten.

G.C.T.

[Note: The transcriber took some liberty to avoid too many run-on sentences by breaking some up and modernizing punctuation, but the meaning remains the same. Brackets are used for transcriber's notes while parentheses were used by Mr. Turner for his reviewing, editing, and explaining. Original diary spellings were retained.]