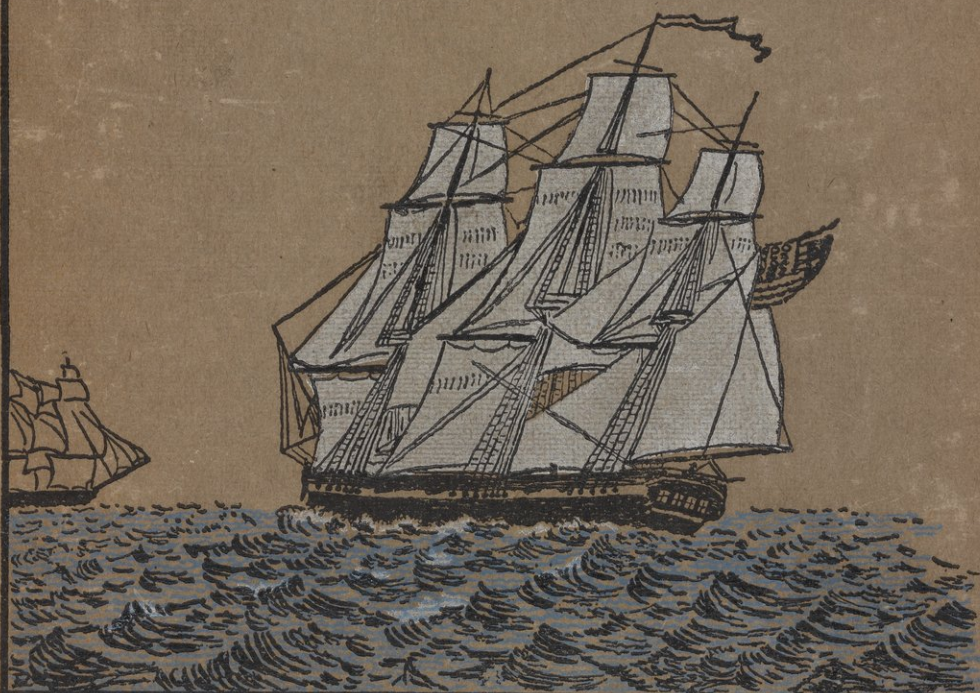
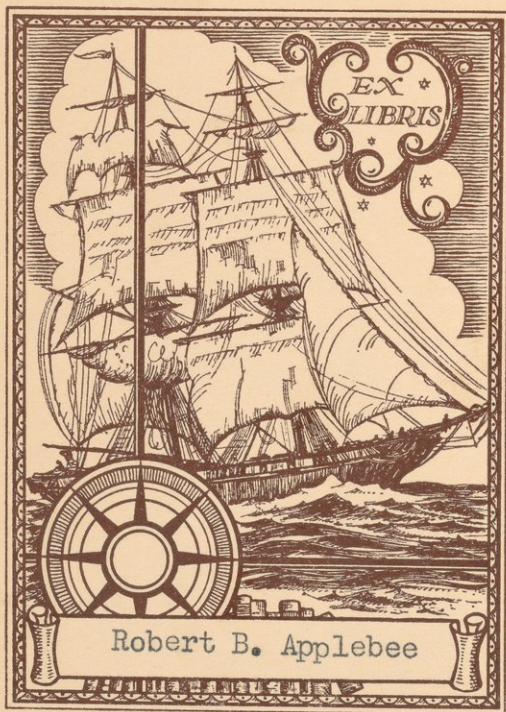


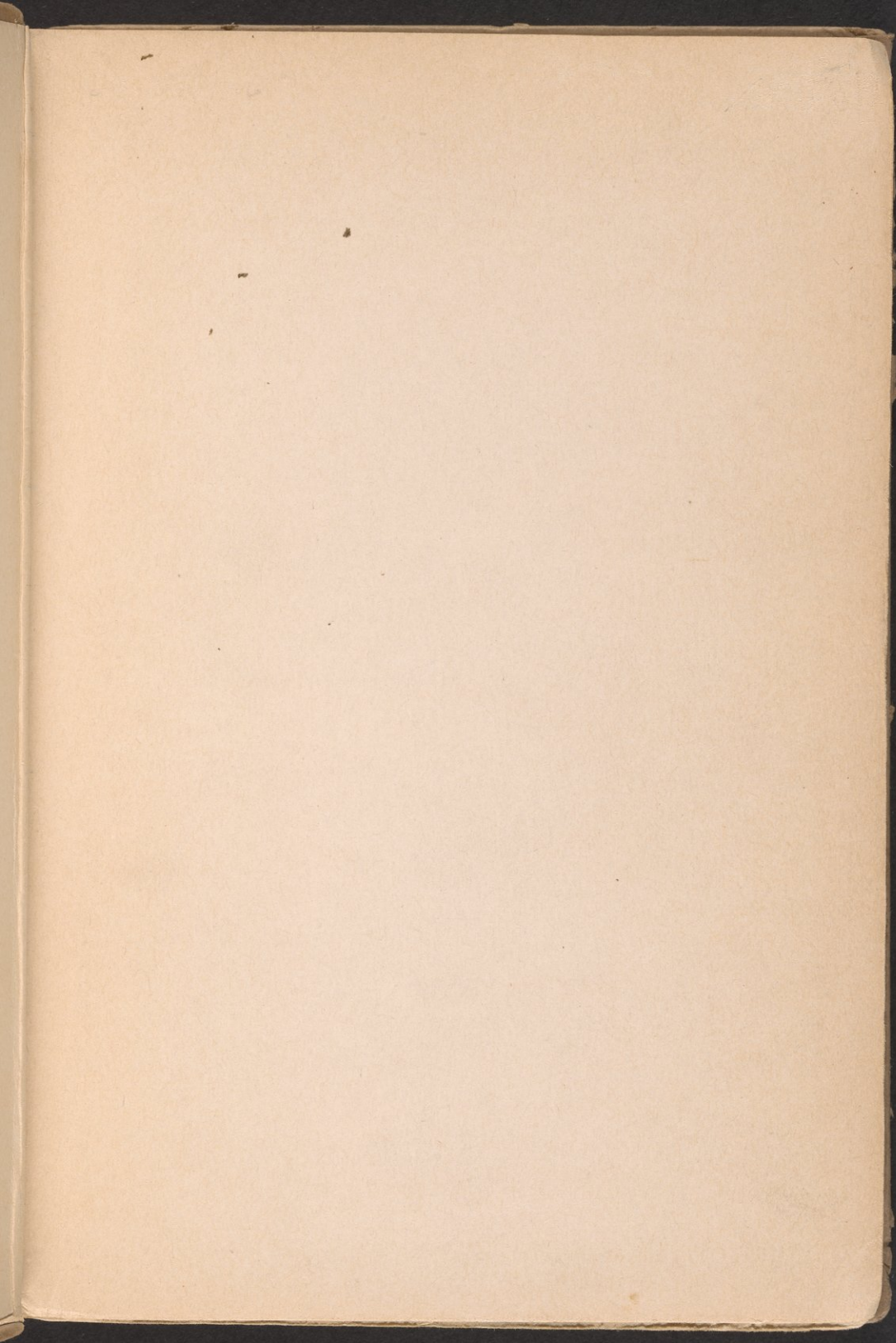
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SALEM SHIPMASTER  
AND MERCHANT

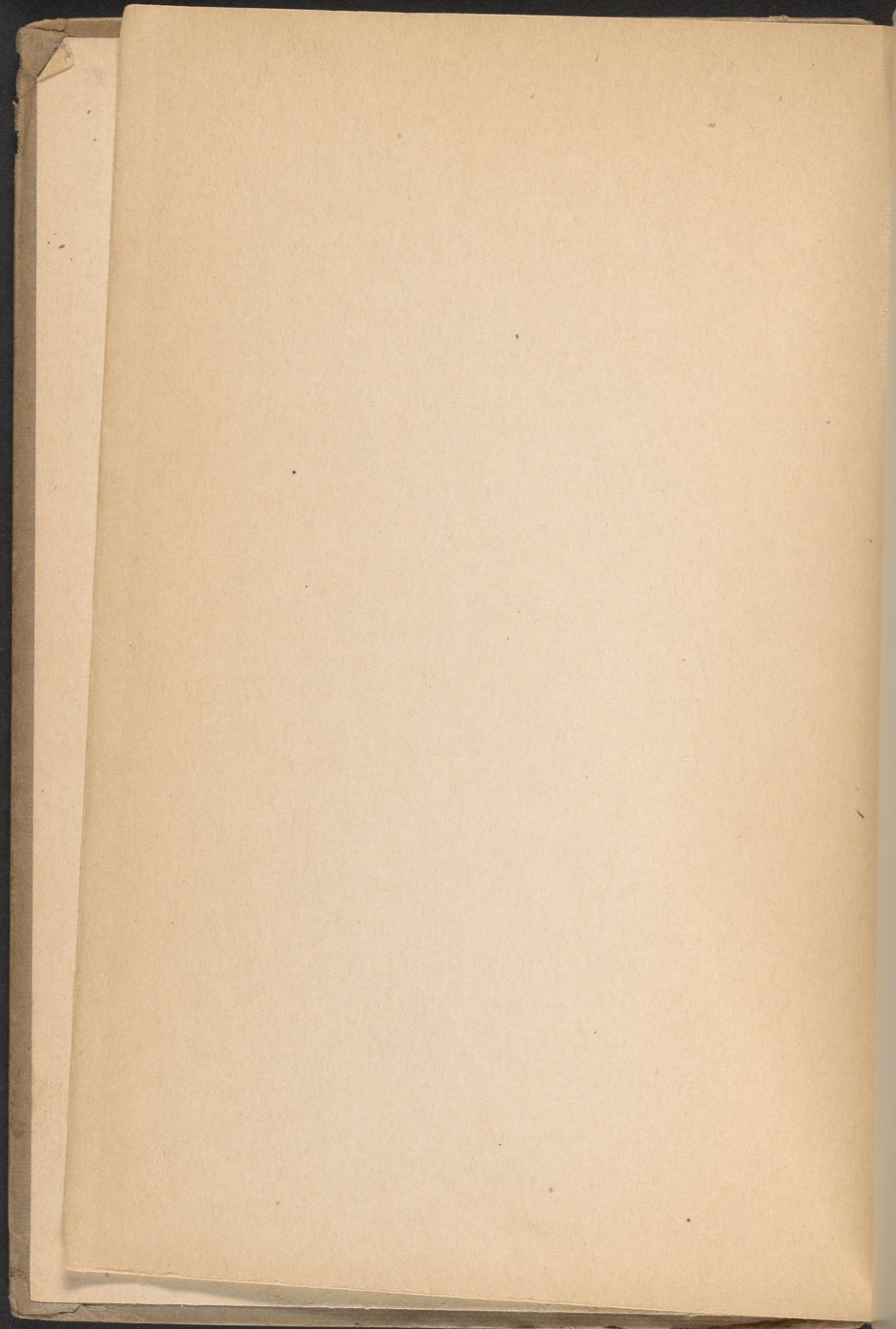


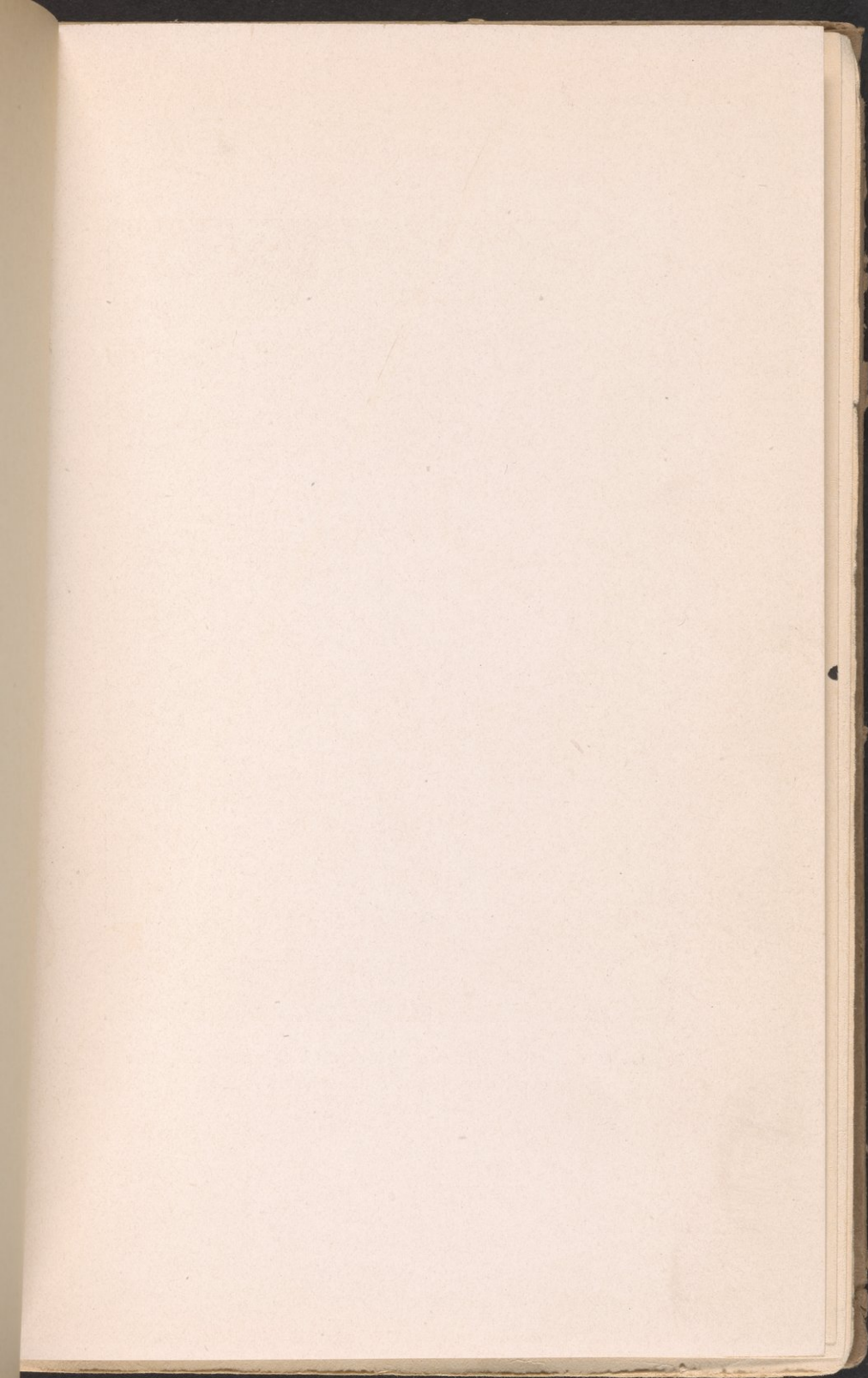
RAMBLER, SALEM

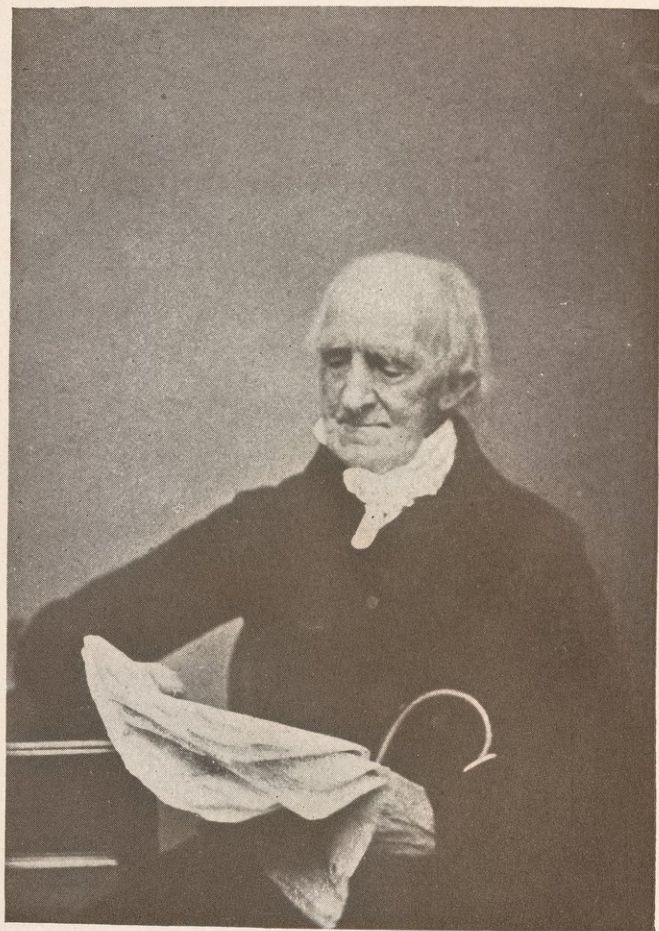


Robert B. Applebee









George Nichols, from a photograph taken during the  
civil war, about 1862, when about  
84 years of age.

GEORGE NICHOLS  
SALEM SHIPMASTER  
AND MERCHANT

---

*AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY*

---

*Dictated by him over fifty years ago, when he  
was eighty years old.*

---

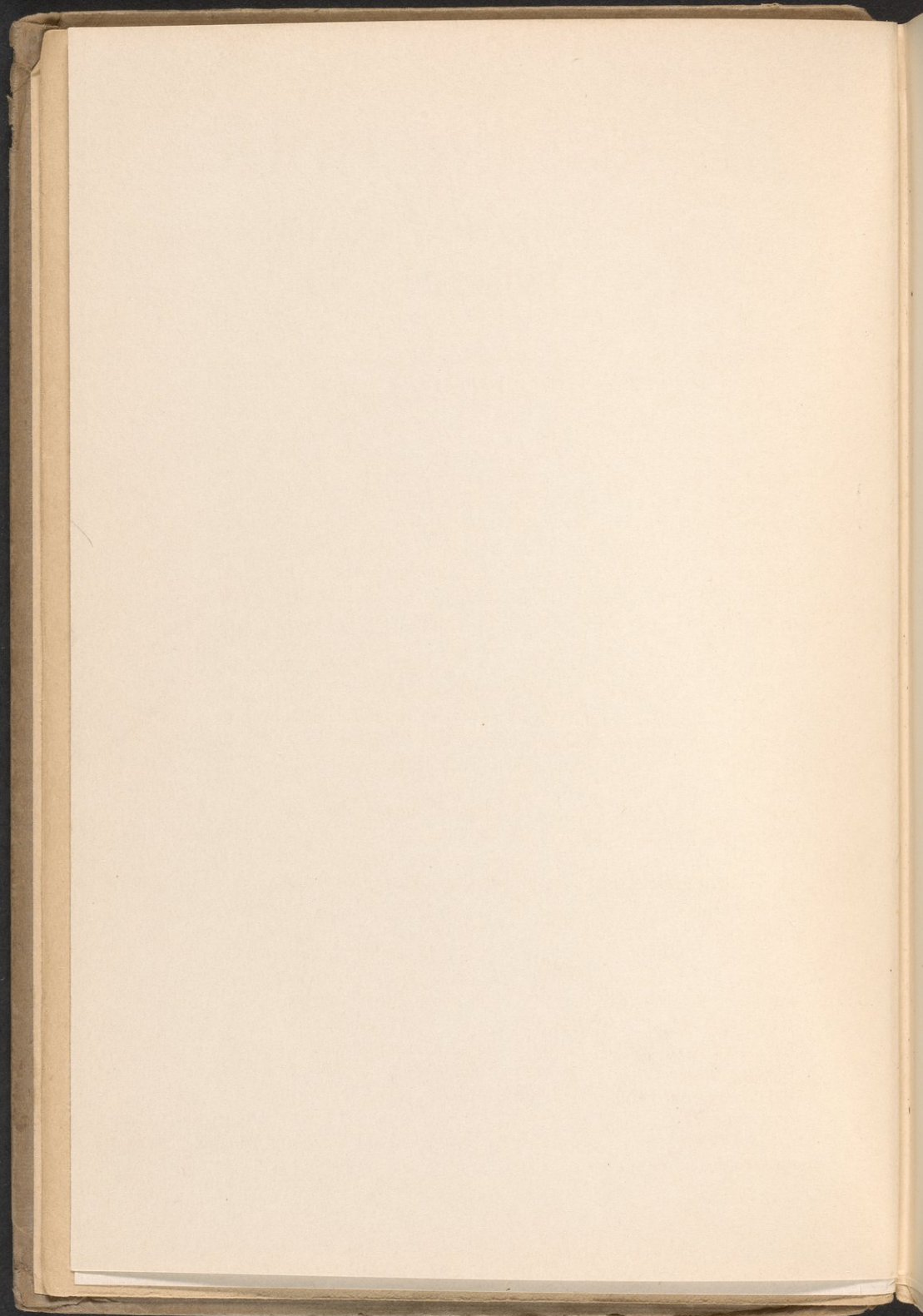
The narrative deals chiefly with his seafaring life at the close of the 18th century and the opening of the 19th. His voyages were principally to the far East: he sailed also to the north of Europe, to England and the Mediterranean.

---

*Edited with introduction and notes by his  
granddaughter, Martha Nichols*

---

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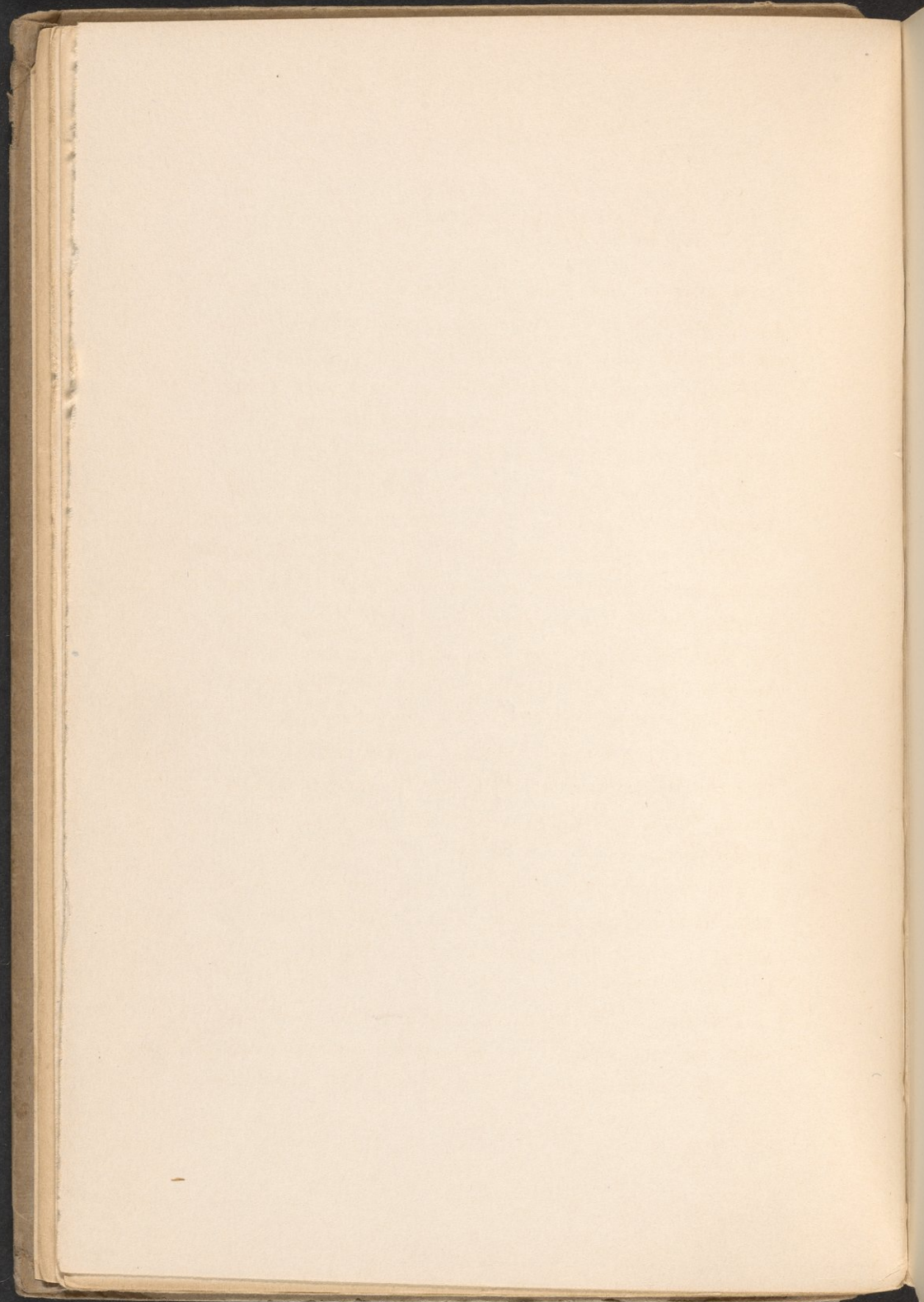
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## INTRODUCTION

IN EDITING the following Autobiography of my grandfather, George Nichols, I am influenced by the valued advice of a friend who, having read the manuscript, expresses the opinion that it ought to be given to the public, not only on account of its worth historically, but as an interesting character sketch.

My grandfather came from a long line of sturdy ancestors, men and women of strong convictions and with the courage to maintain them. One of his ancestors on his grandmother Nichols' side was Provided Southwick, who was ordered to be sold into slavery for inability to pay the fines imposed upon her for being a Quaker and unwillingness to yield her principles, a fine example of faithfulness to an ideal.

The story is told by Whittier in his poem, entitled "Cassandra Southwick." She was the mother of Provided, but it was the daughter, not the mother, who was sentenced.

The frequent references to the disturbed political conditions in Europe at the close of the 18th century, giving opportunity for occasional feats of daring, add spice to the narrative.

This Autobiography was dictated by my grandfather when he was eighty years old, in the Nichols house, No. 80 Federal Street, Salem, Mass., now so widely

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

known through photographs and magazine illustrations, and generally considered as the masterpiece of Samuel McIntire,\* whose name and work have become famous.

In this house he married his cousin, Sarah Peirce, and in this house he passed the last twenty-five years of his life.

The fact that he was born on the fourth of July gave an added interest at the period when that date meant so much to the nation. For the family, at least, it was the day of days, when children, grandchildren and friends gathered to do him honor.

In looking over some papers recently I found the following sketch in the handwriting of my aunt, Miss Lydia R. Nichols, narrating the facts given to her by her father, George Nichols.

“Sketch of the latter years of my grandfather, Mr. Ichabod Nichols’† life, dictated by my father, George Nichols.”

---

\*Samuel McIntire was born in Salem on the corner of Norman and Mill Streets in 1757, and died in 1811 at 31 Summer Street. He was a noted architect and “planned the old Court House, which was very much admired for the symmetry and gracefulness of its proportions.” He also designed the South Church, Hamilton Hall, the Assembly House and many of the most beautiful private residences of that period, which are still standing in Salem.—Ed.

---

†Ichabod Nichols, born in Salem, May 1st, 1749; died July 2nd, 1899, married Lydia, second daughter of Benjamin Ropes. She was a woman of great dignity, unusual executive ability and strength of character. They had eleven children, nine sons and two daughters.

## INTRODUCTION

"About the year 1808† he purchased a part of the Pickering estate on the borders of the Salem turnpike and about a mile from the centre of the town. It was a very hilly, rocky piece of land of about 230 acres. His design from the first was to make of it a milk farm, an undertaking but very few people would have engaged in, but his great energy of character and fondness for agricultural pursuits enabled him to overcome all obstacles and after a few years of persevering industry he had the pleasure of looking upon a farm which was the wonder and astonishment of all who had known it before it came into his hands. He kept from thirty-five to forty cows, besides cattle and horses to do the work of the farm. His milk bills amounted to two or three thousand dollars annually. He set out a large orchard of apple trees, several hundred of which were in a bearing state at the time he sold the farm.

"My grandfather spent a great deal of time upon his farm and frequently walked up to it from his place of residence, a distance of a mile, two or three times a day.

"He was a very early riser, and I have known him to walk up and back again by 6 o'clock to breakfast; he walked very rapidly always, in the latter years of

---

†According to the Court Records, a portion of this land was bought in 1813, the remainder in 1824.

The farm was sold to Horace Ware in 1835.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

his life carrying a cane, and anecdotes are told of gentlemen trying to keep pace with him, but finding it very difficult, they would sometimes give up in despair.

"When more than eighty years of age he would do more work than most men of forty. On one occasion when getting out stones for a wall, a large rock fell upon the forefinger of his right hand, bruising it so severely that amputation was soon found to be necessary. 'Well, doctor,' he said, 'do it as soon as possible, for I am in a great hurry to be at my farm.' Upon that he held out his hand, not allowing anyone to support it and in less than half an hour the finger was off and dressed, and he was on his way walking to the farm, I believe, as usual.

"My grandfather was said to be one of the best practical farmers in the county of Essex. He continued to hold this farm for about twenty-five years, during which time his interest in it was unabated. After the death of my grandmother, which occurred four or five years before his own, his interest and energy failed somewhat. His health, however, continued almost unimpaired until within a fortnight of his death, and he was seldom confined to the house even for a day.

"He died of old age, appearing to have no particular disease, at the age of ninety years and six weeks, on the second of July, 1839.

"While interested in farming pursuits, he was also

## INTRODUCTION

engaged in foreign commerce with my father and others, but took no active part in the business.

“An incident characteristic of my grandfather occurred when he must have been nearly or quite eighty-five years old. He owned several acres of grass land in North Salem and in the haying season he was in the habit of working there. One very hot day, when the thermometer was nearly or quite a hundred, my father missed my grandfather and going over to his field, he found him there hard at work, and in a high state of perspiration. ‘Sir,’ said my father, ‘I think you do very wrong to be here this hot day.’ He looked up quite disturbed. ‘George, I never mean to rust out.’ ‘Oh no, sir,’ my father replied, ‘If you should never do another hour’s work, people would not call you lazy.’

“My grandfather was always a great reader, and he retained his interest in reading until within a few years of his death, when his sight failed, after that, he took as much pleasure in having his friends read to him, listening to them many hours every day with unabated interest. He read as he did everything else, with his whole soul. It is said that he read through Marshall’s ‘Washington’ every year and the ‘Spectator’ was a very favorite book of his.

“His feelings were very social and continued so to the close of his life.

“He possessed strong religious feelings, but made no public profession of his faith until within a few

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

years of his death, when he joined the North Church\* under the charge of Rev. Dr. Brazer, but without being baptized."

In reading the above sketch, it is easy to see from whom my grandfather, George Nichols, inherited his energy, determination and boldness, but I leave him to portray his own character in the pages that follow.

MARTHA NICHOLS.

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\*The North Church was founded in 1772, liberal Congregational. The first pastor was Rev. Thomas Barnard, Jr., whose influence with Col. Leslie on that Sunday afternoon in February, 1775, prevented bloodshed at the North Bridge, and forms a dramatic and historic incident in the church's annals.

Later it became Unitarian, and was the third society of that denomination in Salem.

Rev. Dr. Brazer was the third pastor, from 1820 to 1846.—Ed.

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The House in Derby Street, Salem, where George Nichols was born. Built by Richard Derby in 1756. The oldest brick house now standing in Salem.



## CHAPTER I

### BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

I was born in Salem, Mass., on the fourth of July, 1778, in the house\* now occupied by Henry Ropes,† near the Custom House in Derby Street. When about eleven months old, my parents removed to Portsmouth,

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\*This house was built by Richard Derby in 1762. My great grandfather, Ichabod Nichols, moved to Portsmouth in 1779, and a few years later, Elias Haskett Derby, the son of Richard Derby, sold the house to Henry Prince, whose daughter married Henry Ropes, a cousin of my grandfather. For more than ninety years the house remained in the Ropes family until sold to Daniel Leahay in 1872. It was a fine house in its day, and the staircase is beautiful. The bricks of which the house was built came from England. It is now in 1912 the oldest brick house standing in Salem.—Ed.

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†Henry Ropes, an own cousin of my grandfather, born Sept. 25, 1791, married his cousin, Mary Prince, and died Sept. 29, 1861.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

N. H. We occupied a house\* purchased by my father, of the Wentworth family, in the south part of the town. In this house we resided until we returned to Salem in December, 1793. When quite a child I was something of an invalid, being very much afflicted with the rickets, but after recovering from that complaint, I became a very healthy boy. When not more than two years of age I was sent to school to an old woman named "Molly Shaw," and my cradle was sent with me. I remained with her some time. Mrs. Mills, grandmother of the late Luke Leighton was my second teacher, but for how long a time I cannot now remember.

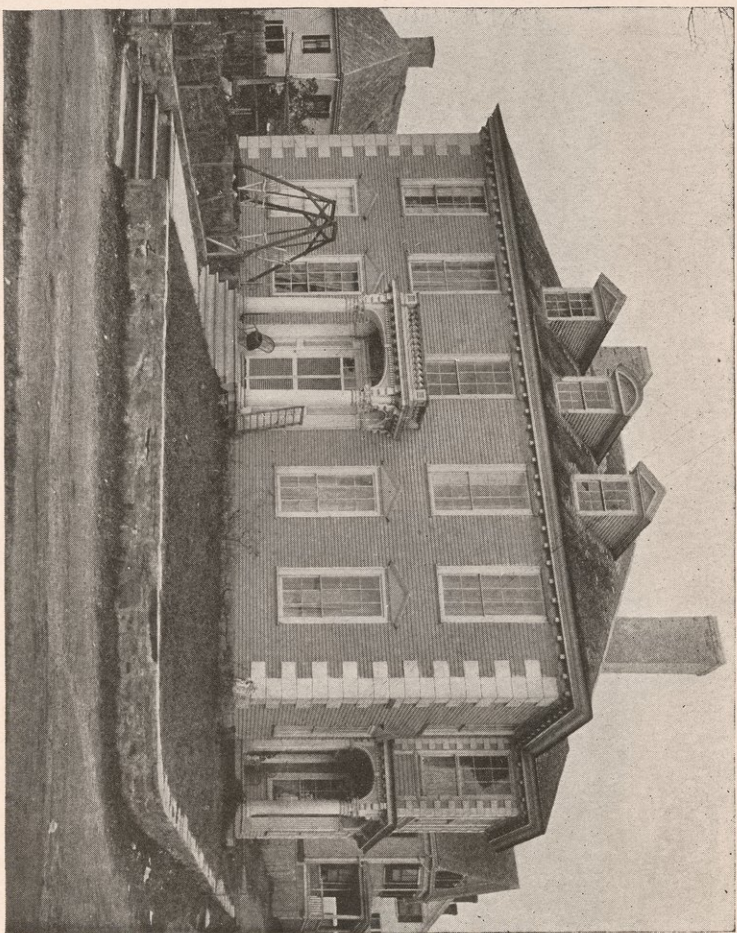
The first incident in my life of which I have any recollection is the falling from a wharf, a distance of twelve feet, when the tide was low, and striking my head with so much force, that the scar is still to be seen. I knocked out, too, all my front teeth. This happened when I was about six or seven years old.

Many times I narrowly escaped being drowned. When very young and before I learned to swim, I fell into very deep water a short distance from my father's

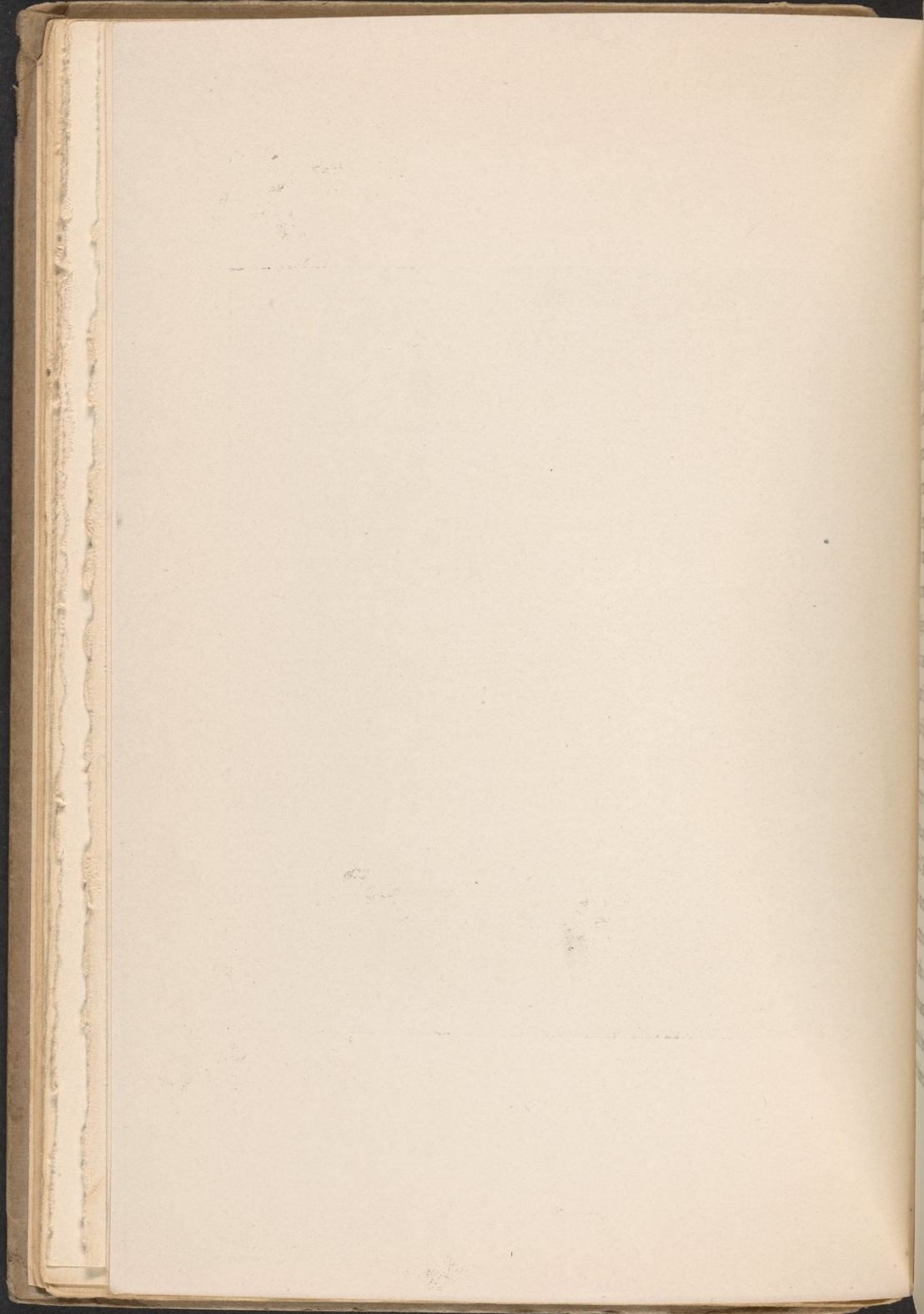
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\*Built by Madame Mark Wentworth in 1760. Sold to Major Gardner about 1792. Situated on the corner of Gardner and Mechanic Streets.—Facts gathered from Brewster's "Rambles About Portsmouth," and from other sources.

Six of my great-grandfather Ichabod Nichols' children were born in this house, two daughters and four sons.—Ed.



House in Portsmouth occupied by Ichabod Nichols. Built by Madame Mark Wentworth in 1760. Known now as the "Gardner House."



## BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

house, but I saved myself by paddling with my hands and feet until fortunately I got where the water was shoal.

Again, when swimming across the Piscataqua River, my strength began to fail me when in the middle of the river. I coolly turned over on my back and lay quite still (only moving my hands and feet a little to keep myself from sinking) until I got rested, when I commenced swimming again, and by resting in this way several times, I finally succeeded in reaching land.

The street in which my father's house stood sloped down toward the water, the foot of the street being about twenty feet from the wharf. In the bright moonlight evenings in the winter, the boys were in the habit of assembling here in great numbers for the pleasure of coasting. One very cold evening in the month of January, when as I suppose, I was about nine or ten years old, I went out to coast with a very large party of boys. In my ambition to go as far as possible I went head first directly over the wharf, sled and all. The water was very deep, probably six feet, and it was not frozen—that river seldom freezing, as the current is very rapid. There was an anchor in the river within a few feet of the spot in which I fell. With the assistance of some boys, I succeeded in getting out of the water, went home, dried and warmed myself before a large fire, and in the course of half an

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

hour, I was out coasting again and came near going over the wharf a second time.

As I crossed the bridge one morning on my way to school, I slipped under the railing of the bridge and fell about twelve feet into the mud, the tide fortunately being low. I went home all covered with mud and got a severe box on the ear for my carelessness, and this from my mother, which I thought very strange treatment, considering the risk I had run.

When quite small, I took it into my head one day to climb the chimney of my sleeping apartment, which had never been used. I mounted it with about as much ease as one would go upstairs and, after this, climbing chimneys was quite a favorite amusement with me. At one time I recollect that I got my clothes very much soiled in going up a very large old-fashioned chimney, and not liking to appear before my mother in that state, I took off my clothes and washed them, and while they were drying, I danced about on the grass.

When about eight or ten years old, we had a troublesome old cat, which the domestics were wanting to get rid of, and they asked me to kill her, which I readily undertook to do.

I borrowed a large horse pistol and put into it a double charge of powder and shot. I then went in pursuit of the cat and soon found her sunning herself near the house.

## BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

By the way, I knew nothing about shooting, had never fired off a pistol in my life. Notwithstanding this, I took up my pistol, heavily loaded as it was, without any feeling of fear, held it in the direction of my eye and pointed it at the cat. I snapped it two or three times, but it would not go off. I then scraped the flint, when suddenly it went off striking me with great force in the forehead.

I killed the cat, but in doing it, I nearly killed myself. I lay on the ground for some time entirely insensible, and when I at last came to, I made out to crawl into the house, the blood streaming from my forehead and nose and from one finger of my right hand, which was cut nearly to the bone. I now carry with me two scars from that accident, on my forehead and finger.

One afternoon at dancing school a girl brought me a crooked, rusty pin, and said, "You dare not swallow that?" "Yes, I dare do it," I said. So saying, I put it in my mouth and it went down my throat head first. Not satisfied with that, they kept bringing more to me, until finally I swallowed seven crooked rusty pins. Afterwards I danced and played about as unconcerned as possible. Evening came and a sister told my mother what I had been doing. She was exceedingly alarmed and immediately sent for the family physician. He came and gave me medicine, but no inconvenience was ever after experienced by me.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

In childhood, as in mature years, I was always fond of a joke. My mother one day made some sugar gingerbread, but was disappointed in the baking, it proved heavy. "Oh," said she, "it is not fit for the dogs to eat." "Well," said I to myself, "if that is the case, I think I may venture to eat of it." So accordingly, I filled my pockets with it day after day until it was all gone. A few days after, a neighbor came in to take tea with us. Mother went to her pot of gingerbread, and lo, it had vanished. "George," said she to me, "Do you know what has become of that gingerbread?" "Why, yes ma'am. You said it was not fit for the dogs to eat, but I liked it very much and so I have eaten it." She was very much amused and turned away to conceal a smile.

Mother had an old nurse in her family by the name of Fishley. She was a petulant old woman, and when a child it was my delight to tease her. She belonged to the sect of the Methodists, not a very numerous sect in those days. Having frequently attended their meetings, I had become quite familiar with their cant phrases.

And now imagine me on a Sunday afternoon in an outer kitchen, on the top of a high pump, with my head up in a scuttle, the children assembled around me, and I addressing them in the true Methodistical style. "Oh, my dearly beloved brethren! Sweet Sister



## BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

Fishley! Dear Brother Crosswell," etc., and so on.

And now Aunt Fishley comes in. She listens. Her anger arises, she becomes more and more excited, till at last she breaks out, "Get down, you Satan, get down."

The uproar reaches mother's ears. She comes out — "What is all this disturbance about?" I still keep on preaching, "Oh, my dearly beloved! Oh, Brother Crosswell, the child is ruined," etc. Convulsed with laughter, mother turns upon her heels and leaves me to finish my sermon.

My father had a fine large garden in Portsmouth and I was early put to work in it. I did a great deal in it and I enjoyed it, as I have ever enjoyed working in a garden. Besides this, I had to drive the cow to pasture, feed the pigs, etc. Indeed a great deal of care came upon me, particularly when my father was away. And I had to work very hard in order to get any time to play.

I think it was in the year 1783 I was sent to Benj. Dearborn's\* school. Mr. D—— was the most unsuit-

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\*From "Rambles About Portsmouth," I find the following sketch of Mr. Dearborn, written by the widow of Capt. Wm. Brewster, when she was eighty-five years old, entitled "A Few Recollections of Mr. Dearborn's School in 1780": "Mr. Dearborn taught the first school in Portsmouth for misses in a large room in his own dwelling house. The scholars brought the "Spectator" and the "Guardian" and such books as they had, until suitable books for reading could be procured from Boston. Mr.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

able person for a teacher that I ever knew, being very tyrannical towards all the scholars, girls as well as boys, but particularly so towards me; but being a very high spirited boy his severity had a bad effect upon me. I felt that I was not made to be flogged and I would not submit to it. One day entering the room, just after the school had commenced, Dearborn, who was standing near the door, gave me a blow with his fist on the side of the head. I fell, but before reaching the floor he caught me and gave me a blow on the other side. These blows were repeated until I became nearly insensible. His scholars were very much alarmed and burst into tears, supposing that he intended to kill me. Notwithstanding all this cruel treatment, I continued at his school, I think, two or three years, though without learning anything.

From him I went to Amos Tappan,\* brother of Professor Tappan, and remained at his school until

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Dearborn wanted to get up a class in grammar, but could only prevail upon six scholars to join. Many parents thought it an unnecessary branch for misses to attend to. The grammars were obtained from Boston. I have mine still, bought in March, 1781."

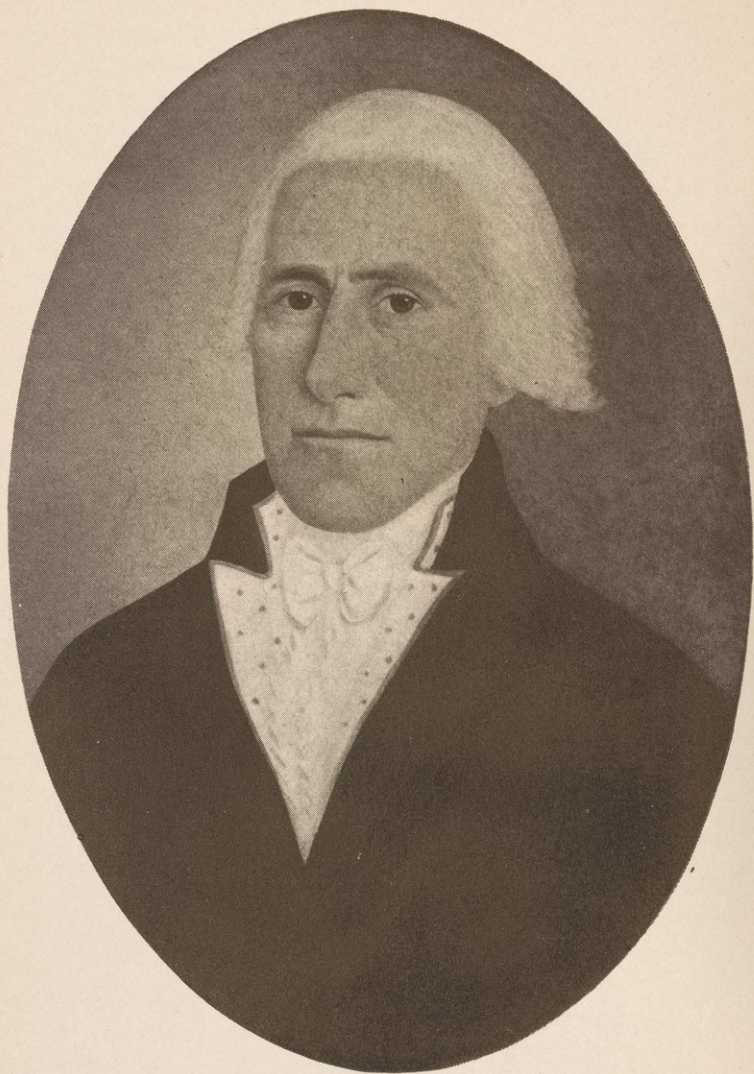
Later, according to Mrs. Brewster, the school was enlarged, there were assistant teachers, and it was in a flourishing condition, when Mr. Dearborn left for Boston.—Ed.

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\*Amos Tappan was one of the three deacons in the old North Church in Portsmouth in 1812. "They all took their seats in front of the pulpit, facing the congregation. No boy smiled when he passed a deacon in those days."—Brewster "Rambles About Portsmouth," p. 327.

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Ichabod Nichols, father of George Nichols, "in the 'Court' dress which he was obliged to wear when as a young captain of a Salem vessel in the port of St. Petersburg he was summoned to court by Catherine II of Russia." From a portrait in possession of Mr. John White Treadwell Nichols, of New York.

## BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

September or October of 1790. He kept a very good school, excepting that, like Mr. Dearborn, he was too fond of using the ferule and particularly so upon me, having probably heard from Mr. D.— that I was a very unruly boy. I still resolved, however, that I would not be beaten with impunity, and so the more he flogged me the worse I behaved. After being with him some months, he changed his course of treatment, which had a very happy effect upon me, so much so that he never again had recourse to the rod.

My brother Ichabod\* went to Mr. Tappan's school

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\*Ichabod Nichols, the fourth son of Ichabod and Lydia Ropes Nichols, was born July 5th, 1784, in Portsmouth, N. H. When he was nine years old, his parents returned to Salem, Mass. He graduated from Harvard College with the highest honors, in the celebrated class of 1802, numbering sixty members.

He at once began his studies for the ministry with his pastor, Dr. Barnard of the North Church in Salem. In 1805 Harvard College sought him as a tutor in mathematics. He kept that position for four years until he accepted a call as colleague to Dr. Deane at the First Parish Church in Portland, Maine. The salary, \$1,200, was much larger than any received in the town or State, and it was not changed during his whole ministry. He was installed on June 7th, 1809, and on the death of Dr. Deane, in 1814, he became sole pastor, and so continued until January, 1855, when Rev. Horatio Stebbins became his colleague.

On account of failing health, Dr. Nichols wished to withdraw entirely from the ministry, but his people were unwilling to sever a connection which had always been so harmonious.

He consented to retain his official position, but refused a salary that was offered to him.

He lived four years longer, dying in Cambridge, Jan. 2d,

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

with me. He was a fine scholar, very much of the stamp of Buckminster,\* but two or three years younger than he. At one time he had a severe cold and earache which kept him awake a greater part of the night. Appearing very unwell in the morning, his mother tried to dissuade him from going to school, but he was so earnest to go that she at length consented to his going. When called up to recite, his master asked him a question, but he appeared very stupid and did not answer as readily as usual. Mr. Tappan not understanding the reason, and being a very passionate man, caught him by the ear, pulling it very violently. This gave him great pain and he screamed as though a sword had been run through him, upon which all the scholars shouted. I felt very indignant and rising

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1859. In 1821 he received the degree of D. D. from Bowdoin College, and in 1831 the same from Harvard College.—From an obituary notice in a Portland paper, Jan. 5, 1859.

The ladies of the First Parish in Portland erected a monument to his memory. It was a marble statue of St. John, the Evangelist, life size, by Akers, who executed the work in Italy.—Ed.

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\*Joseph Stevens Buckminster was born in Portsmouth, N. H., May 26th, 1784. His ancestors on both his mother's and father's side were clergymen for several generations. He was fitted for Harvard College at twelve years old, but did not enter until he was thirteen. After graduation he prepared for the ministry and was ordained as pastor of the Brattle Street Church in Boston when he was twenty years old. His sermons placed him in the front rank of the preachers of his time. He died June 9th, 1812, at the age of twenty-eight.—From Memoirs prefixed to the Sermons of Buckminster.

## BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

from my seat could hardly refrain from throwing a large Bible which I had in my hand at his head. I cried out involuntarily, "You are a set of fools, altogether." After school the master desired me to stop, I supposed with the intention of flogging me, but in this I was mistaken. Had he attempted it, I should have defended myself to the utmost with the tongs or a stick of wood, both of which were near. He appeared very calm and asked me if I did not think I had spoken very improperly to him. "No, sir," said I, "that child was awake all last night with the earache, and was altogether too sick to be at school to-day." Upon hearing this Mr. Tappan appeared quite disturbed and afterwards came and apologized to my mother for his severity.

After leaving Mr. Tappan's school, I went to Phillips Academy at Exeter, under the charge of Mr. Benjamin Abbott, one of the best men I ever knew. To him I am indebted more than to any other man for much of my success in after life. Nothing worthy of note occurred to me while there, which was rather more than a year.

From Exeter I returned to Portsmouth, and at the

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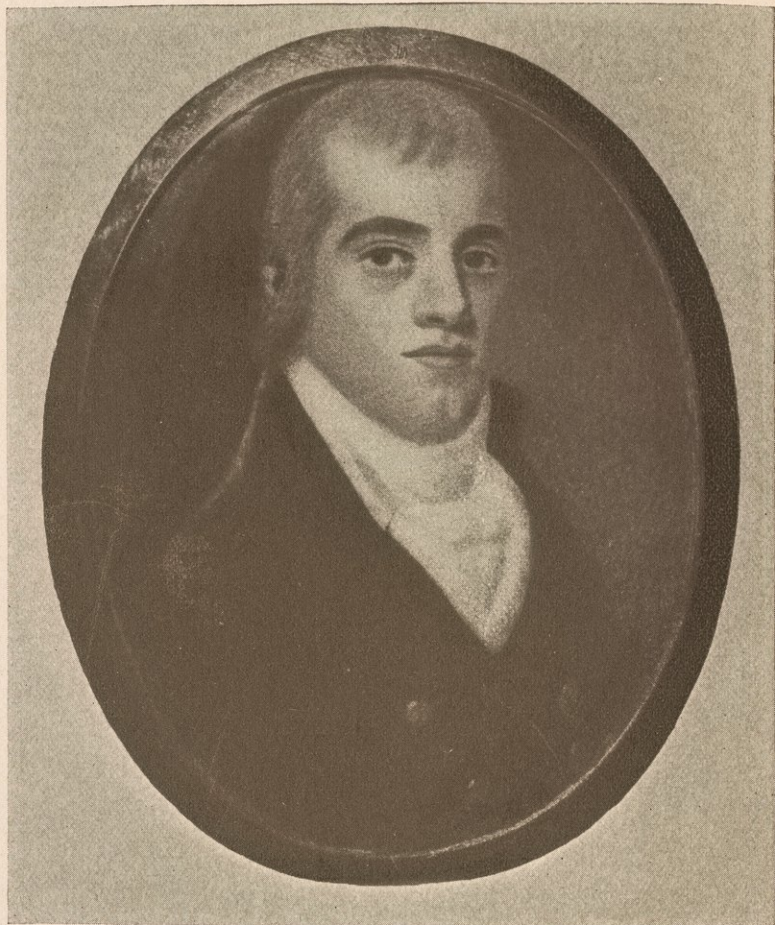
\*Benjamin Abbott, born about 1762, died in Exeter, N. H., Oct. 25, 1849. Graduated at Harvard in 1788 and took charge of Phillips Academy, Exeter, which he conducted until 1838. Among his pupils were Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, Lewis Cass, Jared Sparks, George Bancroft and John G. Palfrey.—Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

age of thirteen years, or a little more, I entered my father's store as a clerk; a wholesale grocery store. This was an office of great responsibility, as my father would frequently go to Boston or New York and leave me with the charge of the business for a week or ten days together, with no one in the store but a man to do the drudgery. My cash receipts were then more than one hundred dollars a day, and I have on his return home, handed over to him ten or twelve hundred dollars, a large sum of money for those days.



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George Nichols as a young man.  
Copied from a miniature.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY SEAFARING DAYS

At the close of the year 1793, my father gave up this business and removed to Salem,\* leaving me to settle the business, assisted by my oldest brother,† who was then visiting Portsmouth from Philadelphia, where he was established as a clerk in Mr. Anthony's counting room.

This done, on the third of December I joined the family in Salem. Here my father connected himself

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\*In the Salem Court House Records I find the following: "William Gray, merchant of Salem, sold to Ichabod Nichols, in consideration of £800, land and two houses on Washington Street and Barton Square, the two houses parallel to each other, distant 59 ft. 9 in. from each other.

"Deed given by Mr. Gray, Dec. 28th, 1791."

My great-grandfather, Ichabod Nichols, occupied the house which was 59 ft. 9 in. west of the corner house, and here he died July 2nd, 1839.

The two houses were taken down in 1895, and the site of the house where Ichabod Nichols lived is now occupied by the office of "The Salem News."—Ed.

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†John Nichols, the oldest son of my great-grandparents, Ichabod and Lydia Ropes Nichols. He was born in Salem, Dec. 26th, 1776, died at Point Petre Guadaloupe, June 8, 1798.

In 1793 he was apprenticed to Messrs. Anthony & Son, merchants in Philadelphia. At the time of his death he was engaged to Miss Peters of Philadelphia.—Ed.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

in business with Capt. Benjamin Hodges.\* They purchased several small vessels and engaged in the West India trade. For more than a year I was employed as a clerk in their counting room. I felt at this time a strong desire to see the world and obtain some knowledge of the seafaring life, so on the 28th of March, 1795, I sailed in the bark "Essex" owned by Capt. William Orne,† with Capt. John Green,‡ for Copenhagen and St. Petersburg. I went as a passenger and to do duty when able. Our passage out was extremely rough and I was for a week or ten days very seasick, after which I was able to stand my regular watch. Capt. G——proved a very unsuit-

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\*"Capt. Benjamin Hodges, born in Salem, Mass., April 26th, 1754, died 13th of April, 1806, married Nov. 19th, 1778, Hannah King, daughter of William King. He lived on the corner of Essex and Orange Streets. His daughter Mary married William Silsbee. Mr. Hodges was master mariner and commanded the ship Grand Turk, Astrea and many other vessels in the employment of Elias Haskett Derby."—Essex Institute Hist. Coll., Vol. IV., p. 10.

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†Capt. William Orne, born in Salem, Mass., Feb., 1752, died Oct., 1815. He was an eminent merchant, very highly esteemed. He married a daughter of Judge Ropes, who died in 1774 in the house on Essex Street, facing Cambridge Street, an estate which he bought from the Barnard heirs."—Salem Gazette, Oct. 18, 1815.

Capt. Orne's daughter married Judge Daniel White, who was the grandfather of Miss Eliza Orne White, the present-day novelist.—Ed.

‡Capt. John Green, a master mariner, born in Beverly, 1753, died 1827.—Essex Institute Hist. Coll., vol. 3, p. 178.

## EARLY SEAFARING DAYS

able person for a young man to sail with, having no system on board his vessel. We arrived at Copenhagen after a passage of thirty-nine days, having met with no incidents worthy of note. Copenhagen is a beautiful city, one of the pleasantest I have ever seen. We were there a fortnight, which time I spent ashore.

Having landed our cargo, an assorted one of sugar, etc., we sailed for Cronstadt, the outport of St. Petersburg, where we arrived in seven or eight days. In less than ten days after leaving Copenhagen it was visited by a most destructive fire, which consumed thirteen hundred houses, including the one in which I boarded. A few days after we arrived at Cronstadt I went to St. Petersburg and passed a week there. This city far exceeds in magnificence any city that I have ever visited, both as regards its public and private buildings. Having passed four weeks here and in Cronstadt and taken in a return cargo of Russia goods, hemp, iron, etc., we returned to Copenhagen. Catherine II was at the time Empress of Russia, one of the ablest sovereigns that ever sat upon that throne. We stopped at Copenhagen two or three days to stop a leak in our vessel. In coming out of port we ran aground and remained in the sand some twenty-four hours. This accident we owed to the stupidity of the Captain. The vessel was so much injured in getting her off as to give us serious trouble afterwards. We stopped at Elsinore, the port of clearance, and from

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

thence proceeded on our passage home. When half way across the Atlantic we encountered a severe gale of wind which lasted several hours. A heavy sea followed, which unhung our rudder and placed us in a very unpleasant situation. In the course of ten days the rudder was repaired and rehung, we steering the vessel in the meantime with cables together with the sails. We arrived in Salem about thirty days after encountering the gale, about the sixth of October, 1795.

Although I had had rough passages and not the most agreeable companions, I still felt a strong desire to pursue a seafaring life. I had been in my father's counting room about six months when my father, with others, purchased a vessel to send to Manila, and appointed Capt. Enoch Swett\* master and; as he was very ignorant of business, I was appointed joint supercargo with him. We sailed from Salem on the 10th of May, 1796, in the brig "Eunice," a most unsuitable vessel for such a voyage, being a very slow sailing vessel. We were about four and a half months to the Cape of Good Hope. We went into Table Bay for the health of our crew and to obtain provisions. Cape Town is a very delightful place, has a fine climate and all kinds of tropical fruits in great abundance. Here

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\*"Capt. Enoch Swett, a native of Newburyport. Shipmaster. He married Frances Williams, whose parents lived on Union Street in Salem. He died at sea, Dec. 21st, 1803, aged 37 years."—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. III., p. 178.

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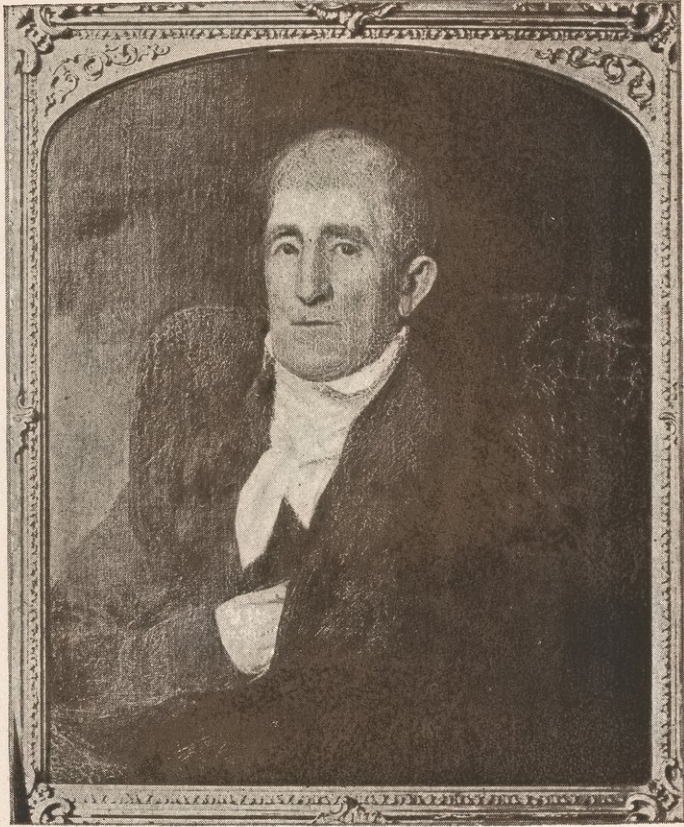
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Copied from a portrait of George Nichols when he  
was seventy years old.



## EARLY SEAFARING DAYS

we obtained such information as to lead us to alter our course to Batavia. This was at that time considered one of the most unhealthy parts of India, which caused Capt. Swett to hesitate about going there, fearing the climate might prove fatal to me. I insisted, however, upon his going. We left Cape Town after a week's stay.

Nothing of importance occurred until we arrived at the Islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam, about fifty degrees east and two or three degrees south of the Cape of Good Hope. Our passage from the Cape was about twenty days. Knowing that seals and fish were very abundant near these islands, we concluded to land at St. Paul's. Manning our boat we rowed in shore to fish and soon loaded the boat with fish and returned aboard, when fish could be caught from the vessel. Capt. Swett having on a previous voyage landed on this island, thought he would go again to catch seals. He accordingly took a boat and with two or three men and myself, all armed with clubs, made for the shore. But on approaching we found no good landing place and the surf ran high. I sprang, however, upon a rock and gained the island. The noise aroused the seals with which the whole shore was lined and they at once made for the water. Among them was a very large one, which, with mouth open, and making a horrible noise, came directly towards me. The monster came within a few feet of me and then

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

stopped and growled hideously. He was much larger than a common-sized calf and weighed probably from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds. The boat had been carried off some distance by the surf. The captain became very much alarmed for my safety and called out to me to retreat. "Where shall I retreat to?" said I, for I was entirely surrounded by water. Fortunately for me the water had receded somewhat, leaving here and there a rock bare. Catching up one as large as my fist I threw it at the animal and hit him on the nose, a most tender spot. He fell. This encouraged me to advance, though the boat was still off shore and no one had been able to land. The captain and sailors, however, soon joined me and we advanced up into the island, first hauling our boat upon the beach out of reach of the surf. We encountered as we went an incredible number of seals. In one small place there appeared to be more than one hundred lying basking in the sun asleep like so many sheep. As we approached they aroused and made for the water. We succeeded in knocking down a great many of them with our clubs, say twenty or thirty, and desired the men to carry them to the boat. We, in the meantime, went farther up into the island to visit a tent which had been erected by Mr. Thomas Russell\* of Charlestown, then one of the most distinguished

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\*The tent was erected not by Mr. Thomas Russell himself, but by the captain of a vessel belonging to him.

## EARLY SEAFARING DAYS

merchants in New England. It was put up for the accommodation of seamen and was about a quarter of a mile from the shore. We made but a short stay, as we were anxious to get back to the vessel. We expected, on our return to the boat, to find it filled with the seals which we had knocked down, but the men, instead of complying with our instructions, had been amusing themselves with killing more. For this the captain reprimanded them severely and they immediately proceeded to execute his orders. One of them, a stout Dutchman, would shoulder a seal weighing from one to two hundred pounds, supposing him to be dead. After going a few paces the seal would open his mouth and growl, and the fellow would throw him down near the boat and go off for another. In the meantime, he would get up and run into the water. We succeeded, however, at last in filling the boat, and having obtained about a dozen skins, we proceeded to the vessel after a most fatiguing but exceedingly interesting day's work.

We then proceeded to Batavia, at which place we arrived about the fifth of December, 1796, after a passage of about two hundred and ten days from Salem. Feeling quite unwell and that I had symptoms of the yellow fever upon me, I remained on board the vessel by the advice of the physician. This I was the more ready to do, as no business could be transacted for some days. Soon after this a violent gale came

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

on which caused much destruction among the shipping. One large ship of more than a thousand tons was sunk within a stone's throw of us. After the gale I went ashore with a number of our men. On our way we met Capt. Swett, who had remained on shore. He was rejoiced to see me, as he feared that I had by this time fallen a victim to the fever. We went to the hotel upon landing, a most superb building belonging to the Dutch East India Company, where all foreigners are required to put up. Here we remained about nine weeks, during which time we purchased our return cargo, consisting of sugar, coffee, pepper and spices.

I left Batavia on the 7th of February, 1797. This city is said to have been the most beautiful in the East Indies, with a population perhaps of one hundred thousand. Before leaving the city I invited two gentlemen with whom I had been intimate to come to my room and take a parting glass with me. While sitting together one of the gentlemen said to the other, at the same time pointing to my bed, "Such a person, a particular friend of mine, died on that bed," to which the other replied: "A friend of mine," mentioning his name, "also died there." Both deaths had occurred just before I occupied the bed. And what is still more remarkable the same day in which we left our second mate, Mr. Carnes, came ashore sick with the fever, took my bed and died within a few days. I left the

## EARLY SEAFARING DAYS

captain ashore to attend to some trifling business, and when he came aboard he brought compliments from several friends, congratulating me upon the preservation of my life, so entirely unlooked for. This I attributed to my strictly following the directions of a most excellent physician whom I consulted immediately after my arrival in Batavia, and upon my always keeping up good spirits.

I had forgotten to mention an incident that occurred on our passage from the Cape of Good Hope to Batavia. When one or two degrees south of the Straits of Sunda, we found sharks very abundant. I caught one with a common cod hook and line, drew him alongside of the vessel, and then threw a rope with a noose over him. Then with the help of a tackle all hands succeeded in getting him aboard. He was from nine to eleven feet long and weighed, we estimated, eight or nine hundred pounds. Upon opening him we took from his stomach the back shell of a turtle, which must have weighed thirty pounds. We cut off the head and cleaned the jaw, in which were seven long rows of teeth, I think about thirty in a row, and large enough to admit a man's head and shoulders. Considering it a great curiosity, I brought it home and deposited it in the East India Museum. We caught several other sharks in these straits, of a smaller size, from one of which we took a turtle weighing perhaps twelve or fifteen pounds, in so perfect a state that the sailors would have eaten it had we allowed it.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

But to resume our narrative. We returned through the Straits of Sunda and in passing Anjer were boarded by a boat with supplies of fruit and other needful articles. As we passed the Cape of Good Hope, we put into Table Bay to get bread and other supplies, which we found there in great abundance. We remained at Table Bay about a week and then sailed for home. Nothing worthy of note occurred until we arrived within a few days of home, when we spoke a vessel and were informed that war had broken out between America and France, and that the French were capturing our vessels wherever they could find them. This intelligence made us feel very uneasy. Within a few days of this, very early one morning, we saw a vessel which we took to be a French Privateer. Fortunately our vessel appeared to be well armed which made them cautious, and after maneuvering about us for some hours, we showed that we were prepared to fire into them, they hauled down their sails and allowed us to pass. They were only one or two hundred yards from us and could have taken us without difficulty in five minutes. Without further adventure of note, we arrived in Salem between the 1st and 10th of August, 1797. This, my second voyage was a pleasant one, and Capt. Swett was a kind, good-hearted man.

I remained at home about a month when I engaged

## EARLY SEAFARING DAYS

a voyage as joint supercargo in the bark *Vigilant*, bound to the Isle of France, Daniel Hathorne,\* master, and a more unprincipled, intemperate man I never knew, or one more uncomfortable to get along with and withal very ignorant of business. This vessel was owned by Capt. Simon Forrester.† We sailed on the 7th of October, 1797, for Alexandria, where we took in a cargo of flour and tobacco and arrived safely at the Isle of France, after a passage of about one hundred days. Here the market was overstocked and we were compelled to sell at great loss. We took aboard a cargo of sugar and coffee and returned to Salem, arriving here about the 10th of October, 1798, having been absent a year. This voyage was badly planned, and it proved a losing one to Capt. Forrester. More than all, it was a most unpleasant one, owing to the

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\*"Daniel Hathorne was a shipmaster. He died at sea in 1805, aged 37 years. Unmarried."—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. III, p. 175.

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†"Simon Forrester, a native of Ireland, came to Salem in early youth and became a very active and wealthy merchant. He lived in a house on Derby Street, opposite his wharf and warehouses, the wharf now named Central. He died July 9th, 1817, aged seventy-one years."—Essex Institute Records, Vol. IV, p. 82.

In 1816 Mr. Forrester built the handsome house on the corner of Washington Square and Mall Street, living there until his death in the following year. Later, it was bought by Mr. George Peabody. Now it is owned and occupied by the Salem Club.  
—Ed.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

captain's intemperance. On two or three occasions he was so intoxicated as to be obliged to leave the vessel in the charge of the mates. Before closing my account of this voyage, I would observe that Louis, the port at which we stopped, and the seat of government of the Isle of France, was rather a pleasant place, small and much frequented by foreigners. Sugar was the principal article of produce. We visited Bourbon Island, from one to two hundred miles distant from Louis, one of the most beautiful islands in the world, with a very fine climate. Coffee grows here abundantly. It is said that there is a volcano in the interior of the island, but we did not see it, as our vessel stopped here but a day or two.

After remaining at home about two months, I went in the "Sally," a schooner of about one hundred and twenty tons burden, to Petersburg, Va., to get a load of tobacco which was wanted by the owners to complete a cargo destined for the north of Europe. The "Sally" was chartered by my father, Capt. Hodges and others, and commanded by Capt. Tim Bryant,\* with whom I was joint supercargo. We sailed the latter part of November, arrived at Petersburg about the middle of December and remained there about ten days. We purchased our cargo and got back to

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\*Capt. Timothy Bryant, a well-known Salem shipmaster, was born in Cambridge in 1765, died in Salem in 1838. He married Miss Lydia Brookhouse in Salem in 1786.



## EARLY SEAFARING DAYS

Martha's Vineyard the 1st of January, 1799. Being in a hurry to get home, I left the vessel here and crossed the Sound to Falmouth, where I took a horse to Salem, a hundred miles distant. The winter of 1799 was a very severe one, the coldest that had been known for many years. When I left Falmouth it was very cold, the thermometer was but little above zero. After traveling a few miles, I entered, about sunset, a piece of woods about six miles long. It soon commenced snowing, the night was very dark, and I had nothing for a guide. When about half way through the woods I came to where three roads met. Which road to take I knew not, so I left the horse to take his own course and, as he had often traveled the road, he kept on in the right path and at length brought me into Sandwich. Here, assuming the direction, I went a mile out of my way, as I found upon inquiring at a house, so I left the horse again to himself and he carried me to my place of destination, to the very house where I wished to stop. I was so chilled that I found it difficult to alight from my horse. The inmates of the house were Friends, and they received me in a most friendly manner. They provided me with a good fire and an excellent supper, and after getting well warmed I retired to bed. The next morning I persisted in resuming my journey, although the thermometer was ten or twelve degrees below zero. The snow had fallen three feet on a level and had covered up the

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

stone walls most of the way. I arrived in Boston that evening. Capt. Bryant came around in the schooner and got here about a week after I did.

Having loaded the ship "Betsy," a ship of about two hundred tons burden, we sailed from Salem on the 4th of February, 1799, for Copenhagen and St. Petersburg, with a cargo of sugar, coffee and tobacco. The charge of the business was principally entrusted to me. We had a very pleasant passage for the season. Early in March the weather was so warm that our men went about the deck barefoot. An unfavorable wind obliged us to put into a small port in Norway. Here I hired three men to take me in a boat to North Bergen, a distance of seventy miles. North Bergen is the principal city of Norway. I remained there only a day or two and then returned to the ship. The weather, which had been so warm that I hardly needed a great coat, became the day after my return extremely cold and we found it difficult to keep warm on board with the largest fires that we could make, and in the North Sea the cold was so intense that vessels there were almost unmanageable. We went from one port to another in Norway, as the wind would permit, and at length reached an outpost near Mandal, where we found a Salem ship, whose commander, Capt. Moseley,\* had

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\*"Captain Joseph Moseley, born about 1760 at Niscontin, North Carolina, a town which lies near the Virginia border. He was skillful and faithful in his profession, so that his ser-

## EARLY SEAFARING DAYS

recently been killed by a Dutch Privateer. His body was brought to Mandal to be buried. From Mandal we went to the neighborhood of Christiansund, a place of considerable business. Knowing that there were several French Privateers in the neighborhood, we took a careful survey from the Highlands before venturing out to sea. We were just on the point of sailing when Capt. Bryant saw a privateer coming out of Christiansund. A consultation was held and we decided to remain where we were. The following morning we saw a large fleet of English merchant vessels under convoy of two or three ships of war. We soon got under way and joined them. Among them was the French privateer that we had seen the day before

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vices were sought by some of the largest merchants of the time. He was for several years in the employ of William Gray, Jr. In 1795 he commanded the schooner 'Active,' belonging to Ichabod Nichols and Benjamin Hodges, on a voyage to St. Petersburg.

"His last voyage was in the ship 'Enterprise,' in 1799. In March of that year he was hailed by a privateer which showed Dutch colors. Having mounted an elevation on the deck, he stood, with the trumpet at his mouth to return an answer, when a shot from the privateer shattered the trumpet and struck him in the head. Falling back, he gasped out the words, 'I am a dead man,' and expired in the arms of his men. When the other captain came on board and discovered the innocent character of the vessel, his regret was excessive, especially when he discovered that Captain Moseley was an old acquaintance and one who had been in port with him. His only excuse was that he thought the vessel was an Englishman under American colors."

—E. S. Waters, E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. IV, pp. 259 and 260.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

hovering about Christiansund, in pursuit of our vessel and two other Salem vessels.

Nothing worthy of note occurred on our way to Elsinore, which place we reached about the middle of May. We saw quantities of drift ice, but fortunately sustained no injury from it. On the 18th of May we arrived at Copenhagen, where the captain and I went ashore and took lodgings at a boarding house. At the dinner table on the first day a gentleman sat next to me who proved to be the captain of the above named French privateer. I entered into conversation with him and asked him if he had captured many Americans. He made no reply, but appeared quite disturbed by the question. We were in this city ten or twelve days, and having landed our cargo, sailed for Cronstadt, where we arrived in about a week. Paul was then the Emperor of Russia. He was a very tyrannical man and his regulations as respects foreigners were extremely severe. None but captains of vessels were allowed passports to go to St. Petersburg, consequently I, as supercargo, could not obtain one. But Capt. Bryant, determined that I should go, went up with his first, and then sent it down to me. I did not hesitate to use it, though a detection of the fraud would have cost me a banishment to Siberia. Upon landing we encountered two or three police officers who we suspected were intending to arrest us because we had not on the court dress or a very important part of it,—

## EARLY SEAFARING DAYS

the cocked hat. This dress consisted, besides the cocked hat, of a single breasted coat and vest, a stock instead of a cravat, buckled behind, and Suwarrow boots, and the hair must be brushed up in front. Finding that we were pursued by these officers we walked rapidly to the first boarding house and immediately sent out for a lot of hats with which we equipped ourselves. Mr. William Silsbee,\* who was one of the party, and I chose the largest we could find, though we were both very thin. After a week's stay in this city, we returned to Cronstadt, where I contrived to get a passport, which would have carried me all over the Empire. This passport I afterwards showed to Mr. Vernon,† with whom I boarded in St. Petersburg, and whose wife was a sister of Mr. T. Sanders,‡ of Salem. Upon looking at it he appeared

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\*"William Silsbee was the son of Nathaniel and Sarah Beckett Silsbee and brother of the late Hon. Nathaniel Silsbee. He went to sea, became a shipmaster, and later a merchant.

"His wife was Mary, daughter of Benjamin and Hannah King Hodges, and his sons were Rev. William, John Henry and Benjamin Hodges Silsbee."—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. V, p. 247.

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†"Mr. Augustus Vernon, a merchant of St. Petersburg, Russia, married Sarah, a daughter of Hon. Thomas Sanders of Gloucester, and a sister of Mr. Thomas Sanders of Salem."—Babson's Hist. of Gloucester, 2nd Series, p. 76.

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‡"Mr. Thos. Sanders was one of a family of twelve children. His father, Hon. Thomas Sanders, was one of the prominent men in Gloucester, where the family had lived since 1702.

"Mr. Sanders was born in 1759, settled in Salem and died a wealthy citizen of that place June 5th, 1844. He married Miss Elizabeth Elkins, who survived him with two sons and three daughters."—Babson's Hist. of Gloucester, 2nd Series, p. 76.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

very much astonished, and observed that the penalty of furnishing me with such a passport was a very severe one, nothing less than banishment to Siberia.

Having purchased a return cargo of hemp, iron and manufactures, I returned to the ship and we sailed for Copenhagen about the middle of June. Our passage of a week was a very pleasant one.

We stopped at Copenhagen a day or two and then went to Elsinore, where we found a dozen or more American vessels and several English vessels. We agreed to sail in company, and proceeded down the Cattegat under convoy of a British man-of-war. When nearly through the straits a head wind obliged us to put into a port in Norway. After lying there some days, as the British manifested no disposition to proceed, the Americans became impatient. I called a meeting of the masters of the vessels to consider what it was best to do. I was permitted to meet with them, though not the master of a vessel. Capt. Clemens, who had taken particular pains to supply his ship with arms and ammunition, was very desirous to proceed. He maintained that we could defend ourselves without the aid of the British against any enemy that might appear in these seas, and about one-half of the captains were of the same opinion. Capt. George Hodges,\*

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\*Capt. George Hodges, born in Salem, July 18th, 1765, died July 28, 1827.

"A sea captain and merchant. He was a very large man. A farmer coming into town with produce for him inquired for

## EARLY SEAFARING DAYS

who was then in command of a vessel, one-half of which was owned by my father, asked me to express my opinion, but this I declined doing, not being a master. However, when urged strongly to do it on the ground that I was perhaps more interested than any person present, as my father was largely concerned in two of the vessels, I frankly told them that we had lost ten days to keep under the protection of the British, and that I saw no reason now for leaving them, and that we were as great a protection to Capt. Clemens as he was to us with all his guns. The vote was now taken and they decided to remain with the British. The wind soon becoming favorable we resumed our voyage, but we kept company with the British only three or four days, as they were bound for England and we for America. We Americans resolved to keep together as long as possible. Soon after leaving the British we saw one morning in July a French privateer steering directly towards us. Our vessel, being a fast sailor, was in advance of the others,

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his residence in these words; 'I don't want the Mr. Hodges who is as high as you can see,' (meaning his brother, Gamaliel Hodges), 'but the one who is as big round as you can see.'

"During President Jefferson's administration he was surveyor of customs for Salem and Beverly, which office he resigned in 1820. During the Revolution he was active in upholding the cause of his country, and in 1780 he commanded the 'Pallas,' a 10-gun vessel, which was built and fitted out in Massachusetts."

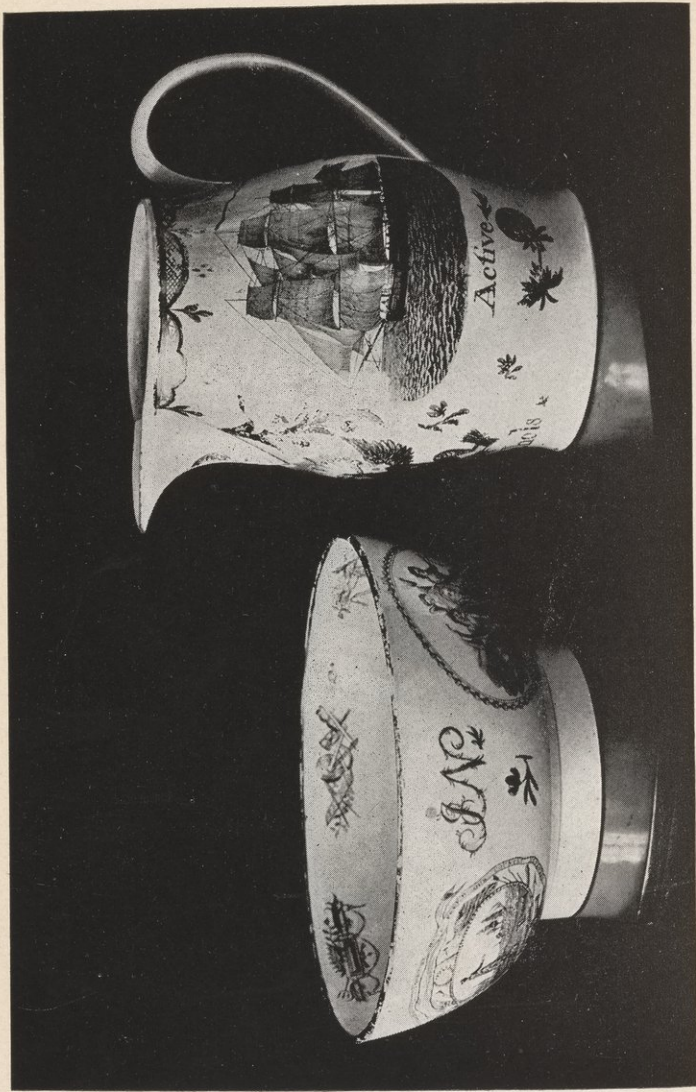
—From "Hodges Family of New England," by Almon D. Hodges, Jr., p. 44.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

and was the only one which looked like a man of war, having a tier of sixteen guns, all wooden. We hoisted a flag, and made the usual preparations for action, firing off a swivel, a small gun which we had borrowed from an American vessel in Norway. Seeing this, the privateer made sail, and soon disappeared from view. The commodore, Capt. Clemens, meantime remained quite in the background, thus proving the truth of what I said in Norway, that we were as great a protection to him as he was to us. We proceeded on our passage together through the North Sea, when each vessel made the best of her way home. We arrived about the Middle of September, 1799. This, my fourth foreign voyage, proved a good one, and was the pleasantest I had yet made.



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Ship "Active" in which George Nichols made his most important voyages. This picture was made from a photograph of a basin and pitcher belonging to Ichabod Nichols, and probably ordered by him to commemorate the building of his ship, the "Active," in 1799, a custom which was not unusual at that time to celebrate important events. The pitcher and basin have passed out of the hands of the immediate family, and are now in the possession of a distant connection in Orange, N. J., who has kindly consented to have them photographed. —E.P.

## CHAPTER III

### MASTER AND SUPERCARGO

After remaining at home two or three months, I sailed again as joint supercargo with Capt. Bryant, December, 1799. Our ship, the "Active,"\* was a new vessel owned and built by my father, Capt. Hodges and others, and was bound for Bombay for a cargo of cotton. We carried principally specie from \$15,000 to \$16,000. Nothing of importance occurred during our passage, which was a very pleasant one of three and a half months. We arrived out about the last of March or the first of April, 1800. Bombay is a very pleasant island, and the city was a convenient, healthy city. The business was carried on by Parsees, some of the most intelligent people I have ever known, rich and very honorable in their dealings. The merchant

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\*"Ship 'Active,' 206 tons burthen, built in Salem in 1799, later altered to a bark and then to a brig. It was owned by Ichabod Nichols, Benjamin Hodges, Gamaliel Hodges and Edward Allen. In 1803 George Nichols was also one of the joint owners, Edward Allen having withdrawn. In 1804 Benjamin Peirce and Timothy Bryant had an interest in the vessel with Ichabod Nichols, Benjamin Hodges and George Nichols. This is the last date of the above named owners; later the ship passed into other hands."—Ship Register, p. 3.

Dr. Bentley has the following note in his diary August 3rd, 1799: "Becket launched a ship ('Active') for Hodges & Nichols at noon this day."—Ed.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

with whom I did business, Nasser Vanji Monackjee\* was a very fine man. We were at Bombay about six weeks, during which time we sold what small stock we had at a very handsome profit, purchased a return cargo, principally of cotton, and then sailed for home. Our passage home was about as long as the passage out, and like that, was void of incident worthy of note.

Having landed, we reloaded the principal part of the cotton for the English market. I was appointed master and supercargo of the same vessel in which I had made my previous voyage, the "Active." I was then a little more than twenty-two years of age. I sailed about the first of September for Liverpool, and arrived there after a most stormy passage of about twenty-five days. We found on arriving that our cotton could not be landed there, and accordingly we proceeded to take it to London. We were detained in Liverpool about twenty days by severe storms, and ours was the only vessel out of one hundred and sixty sail that escaped without damage.

Here I must go back to relate an incident that occurred five days after leaving Salem. Perceiving signs of an approaching gale, I desired the mate to put the ship in a situation to meet it, upon which he immediately gave orders for all hands to come on deck and

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\*There is a life size figure of Nasser Vanji in the Peabody Academy of Science.—Ed.

## MASTER AND SUPERCARGO

take in sail, etc. Mr. Sinclair,\* our third mate, was at the time below with a lighted candle in a candlestick. In his haste to be first on deck he very imprudently left the burning candle on the till of his chest. Walking the quarterdeck soon after I saw a column of smoke coming from the cabin. I hurried down and ordered water to be handed to me. Everything in Mr. Sinclair's chest was on fire, but I filled the chest with water and soon extinguished the flames. There was a keg of from two to three hundred pounds of powder within three feet of the fire, and had it spread at all we must have inevitably been blown up. Everything conspired to make our situation a truly alarming one. Our cabin was nearly filled with combustible articles. The wind blew very fresh, but continued to increase in violence throughout the night and

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\*"John Sinclair was born in Salem, Mass., son of John and Elizabeth Ropes Sinclair. He commanded the Private armed schooner 'Revenge' in the fall of 1812, was captured in December and carried to Halifax, from which place he was liberated just in time to pass the 'Chesapeake' as it was being taken into Halifax by the British captor 'Shannon.' The following month he was one of the thirteen captains who manned the vessel provided by Captain Crowninshield to bring back the remains of Captains Lawrence and Ludlow to the United States.

"He afterwards sailed with Capt. Shaw, and the 'Portsmouth,' from Portsmouth, N. H., was transferred to his command on Nov. 7th, 1814. After sending in some valuable prizes, the vessel was lost, probably in a storm, but not impossibly taken by Algerines."—Eliza Sinclair Blunt, from notes on her grandfather, John Sinclair.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

most of the following day. All on board agreed that it was the most terrific storm they had ever encountered.

To return to my story. I took a coasting pilot at Liverpool to carry me around to London. Nothing of note occurred until we arrived off Dover. It was evening and I set up a light and fired off guns for a pilot to carry me up the river. A British man of war was in the river, and mistaking us for smugglers, sent a boat alongside with three officers and from twenty to thirty men. I soon found that the former were quite intoxicated. Boarding our vessel, the commanding officer in a very insolent tone said to me, "What ship is this?" "The 'Active' from Salem." "How long has that been her name?" In the same tone I replied, "We never have but one name for *our* vessels. I am from Liverpool, bound to London. I have just signalled for a pilot." The British officer, second in command, was so much intoxicated that he would have fallen overboard but for my mate, Mr. Peele. I had by this time become so much excited that I reprimanded Mr. Peele for rescuing him, which the first officer hearing, "None of your insolence, sir." "I'll order the Lion Cutter and cut you up and sink you." "Curse you and your Lion Cutter, too! If I had a few more guns, you would not dare use such language to me." "What would you do?" "I would send you to hell, where you belong. Send me into port if you

## MASTER AND SUPERCARGO

dare, and I'll call upon your master and know if he allows such language." This determined manner calmed him at once. Wishing to examine my papers the two officers went below with a purser. I took them from a tin canister and threw them on the table. The purser was desired to examine them. He took up the Sea letter, but was so intoxicated that he could hardly hold it. He commenced reading, "Bart—Bart—Bart." Thoroughly aroused, I cried out, "Bart Putnam."\*

"Oh, that will do," said he, and threw down the letter. Receiving soon after a river pilot, we were conducted up the Thames and arrived in London the following day. I gave my business to the charge of Thomas Dickerson & Co., one of the oldest and most respectable houses in London, and delivered my cargo to the East India Company to be sold. We realized a monstrous profit from the sale of it, more than three hundred per cent. on the first cost in Bombay. I then purchased a part of a cargo for Calcutta, which I put aboard, together with specie, amounting to nearly \$40,000.†

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\*"Bartholomew Putnam, son of Bartholomew and Ruth Gardner Putnam, born Feb. 2nd, 1757, died April 17, 1815. He was surveyor of the port and lived in the house that stood where the East Church (Second Unitarian) now is. His wife was Sarah, daughter of Gamaliel Hodges."—B. F. Browne, E. I. Coll., Vol. IV, p. 138.

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†The day before leaving London Mr. Gill, the out-door clerk of Dickerson & Co., called upon me, and requested me to pay ten guineas for services rendered at the Custom House. Suspecting it to be an imposition, I said to him, "Give me your bill,

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

I remained in London about four weeks; was pleased with the city. Went one evening to the Covent Garden Theatre, where I saw the Royal family—George the Third, his wife and two or three daughters; one of whom, Princess Elizabeth, was very handsome, reminding me very much of Dolly Treadwell.\* I was very much gratified with the performance, the "Mer-

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and I will give you, according to custom, an order upon your house." "No," he replied, "I cannot do that, but you can put your hand in your pocket and take out the money. Capt. Olney, of a Providence ship, gave me that sum a few days since for a similar service." "I can't help that," said I. "Oh, then give me five guineas." "No," I replied. "Then give me three guineas." "Not one," said I. "My order is as good for one hundred guineas as for one." He appeared very much excited. "Then you are no gentleman." "I will soon see whether I am a gentleman or no," said I. The next morning, I called at the counting room of Dickerson & Co., where I saw the senior partner, a stately old gentleman towards seventy years of age, and also, the active partner, whose name was Burgess. Addressing the latter, I said to him, "Is it customary for persons doing business at your house to pay your clerks for services rendered?" He appeared very much surprised, and said in a stern voice, "I don't understand you." I then repeated my question, and related the interview that I had with his clerk the preceding day. "I am very much obliged to you, Capt. Nichols," said he, "for your information. We pay Mr. Gill sixty guineas a year for attending to that particular business." When I again visited London about twenty months after this, I was told that Mr. Gill was immediately dismissed by Dickerson & Co., and that Capt. Olney was refunded his ten guineas.

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\*Dolly Treadwell, or Dorothy, was the wife of Dr. John Dexter Treadwell. She was the daughter of Jonathan and Dorothy Ashton Goodhue, and was born in February, 1777, died January 29, 1858.

She had one son, John Goodhue Treadwell, born August 1st, 1805, a very successful doctor in Salem. He died the 5th of August, 1856, unmarried.—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. IV, p. 278.



## MASTER AND SUPERCARGO

chant of Venice," by Cooke,\* one of the greatest actors then living. He took the character of Shylock. No one person appeared to enjoy it more than the old king.

Having completed my preparations for continuing my voyage, I sent the vessel down the river. I joined her at Gravesend, about thirty miles below London. The wind being ahead, we put into Ramsgate, where we lay wind-bound fifteen or sixteen days. This is a small town with a harbor built into the sea for the protection of vessels. When the wind became fair, we proceeded on our voyage, with the purpose of stopping at Madeira for wine. We arrived there without accident after a passage of about eighteen or twenty days. Madeira is one of the most beautiful islands you can imagine. The scenery is beautiful, and the climate is remarkably healthy. The principal production is wine of a very superior quality. We were on the island about a week, during which time we took in a

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\*George Frederic Cooke, an English actor of great prominence, born in Westminster, April 17, 1756. He early showed a taste for the stage, and made such rapid strides in his profession that in 1794 he was engaged by the managers of the Dublin Theatre. The following year he returned to England.

On Oct. 31st, 1800, he made his appearance at Covent Garden, London, in the character of Richard III. His reputation was at once established as an actor of the first class.

Later he came to the United States, where he had formed a theatrical engagement.

He died in this country March 25th, 1812.—Encyclopedia Americana.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

part of a cargo of wine. In clearing from the island, we met with some trouble which had liked to have proved very serious to vessel and crew. Their regulations forbid all vessels leaving port after dark. Supposing that the clearing officer had informed the government of our wish to leave at that time, we got under way; when they immediately commenced firing upon us from the port. Each shot came nearer than the last, and at last were so near as to throw the water into the ship. Fearing that the next shot would sink the vessel, I hoisted a light, and prepared to go ashore. Seeing this, they ceased firing. The people ashore, as I afterward learned, supposed that they meant to sink our vessel. I remained on shore that night and in the morning, accompanied by the American Consul, I went to the proper officers and obtained permission to leave the island, which I did immediately, and before noon reached the ship, and we proceeded on our voyage.

Nothing of note occurred until our arrival at St. Paul. The wind being light, we approached the island very slowly. Towards noon, supposing we were about eight or ten miles from it, I left in a boat with four men for the purpose of fishing, and gave particular directions to my mate, Mr. Peele, not to lose sight of my boat for a moment. I took my musket with me, and told Mr. Peele that I should fire it off if I wished him to stand in nearer the island. After rowing about

## MASTER AND SUPERCARGO

an hour I found myself farther from shore than I had supposed and accordingly fired off my gun, not doubting that Mr. Peele would comply with my instructions. As we drew near to the island we found fish so abundant that in less than twenty minutes we filled our boat with them. Suddenly one of the sailors looking around said to me, "Captain, there is a squall arising and they are reefing the topsails." I immediately gave orders to row for the ship as fast as possible. She was then three or four miles off, and appeared to be going from us. The squall was rising rapidly, my men were very much alarmed, and I, too, felt extremely anxious, but thought it very important to control my anxiety. So I said to the men in a tone as encouraging as possible, "Pull away, my men; 'tis a pity to lose all these fine fish." All our efforts to reach the ship would probably have been fruitless, but one of her men fortunately went aloft and saw our boat at a distance. They immediately made all sail towards us, and had no sooner got alongside than the squall struck us. Had it come five minutes sooner we must all have been lost. As it was, we were not only spared ourselves, but we were able to save our fish, to get which we had unintentionally encountered such a risk. We were received on board as persons from the dead, for they had seen nothing of the boat for several hours, and so strong was Mr. Peele's feeling that we were all lost, that he had made all his plans to proceed with the vessel to Calcutta.

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Proceeding on the voyage we arrived at Colombo, in the Island of Ceylon, in about twenty days. We remained there two or three days to get information, and then left, proposing to stop at two or three points on the Coromandel coast. We went first to Pondicherry, formerly possessed by the French, now in the hands of the English, and considered one of the finest European cities in India. As I could do nothing there, I soon left for Madras, the principal business city on the coast. Here I sold my cargo very advantageously through the house of Lyss, Saturi & Demonte. The latter gentleman was a Portuguese, very black, but one of the smartest men I ever knew. Lyss was an Englishman and Saturi was an Armenian. War had recently been declared between England and Denmark. I was the first to carry the news to Madras, and was thus the means of saving the Danes a great deal of property, as they had several fine vessels then lying in port, all of which would have been taken in a few hours but for my information. In consequence of this war the business of the place was very much disturbed, and that of the house above mentioned was particularly so; but from information that I had received I thought I could make a very good arrangement with that firm to load my vessel, and thus save myself the trouble of going to Calcutta. For this purpose I met them one evening and terms were proposed by them, which I declined, thinking that I might

## MASTER AND SUPERCARGO

do better. At ten o'clock I left them without having effected any arrangement. I went home to bed, but not to sleep, for I felt upon reflection that I had made a great mistake in not accepting Mr. Demonte's offer, and that I had missed an opportunity of making a fine voyage, so I thought I would accept his invitation to breakfast with him, and would get the offer renewed if possible. Rising early the next morning, I sent my servant with a polite note to Mr. Demonte, telling him that I would meet him if he would have an early breakfast. Upon meeting him, he immediately renewed his proposals, which I told him were impossible. Finally I wrote upon a slip of paper what I told him was my ultimatum, and asked him if he would accept it. He acceded to my terms, the papers were then signed; thus the business was settled. This was considered a very remarkable negotiation, and a very happy one for me, as it most effectually established my reputation. As I was then quite young, only about twenty-three years of age, all the owners, excepting my father, were strongly opposed to my taking charge of the vessel. After lying at Madras about three weeks, and taking aboard a very valuable cargo of assorted goods, I sailed for home.

I arrived in Salem, I think, in September, 1801, after a passage of about three and a half months. All my friends were very much surprised to see me, as they had not expected my arrival under three months;

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

knowing that I had received orders to go to Calcutta. Two of the owners, my father and Mr. Gamaliel Hodges,\* met me on my landing at Union Wharf. The former appeared quite agitated, and asked me where I was from. "From Madras, sir," I replied. "From Madras? I thought you had orders to go to Calcutta?" "I had, sir, but I changed my course." "What cargo have you?" "A full cargo. But very little for you," I replied. Upon hearing this he appeared still more agitated and asked, "What have you been doing?" "Sir," said I, "I have not made the worst of voyages, and if you will accompany me, I will tell you all about it." He accordingly went with me to the counting room. There I took out my papers and handed him bills of exchange amounting to \$65,000 or \$66,000 on Messrs. Sears, Dickerson & Thorndike, then the richest firm in Boston.

"But will they accept these bills?" my father asked. I told him I hoped not, at which he expressed sur-

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\*"Gamaliel Hodges, son of John and Mary Manning Hodges, born at Salem, Aug. 15, 1766, died Dec. 25, 1850. Shipmaster and merchant. His wife was Sarah Williams. His daughter, Margaret Manning, married Dr. George Choate."—E. I. Hist. Coll.

"John Hodges, the father of Gamaliel, had six sons who grew to manhood, all of them very tall. One of these sons having been taken prisoner by a French frigate, his size was commented on. He proudly drew himself up and said, "I am the shortest of six brothers."—Hodges Family of New England, p. 44.

Hon. Joseph H. Choate, late ambassador to England, was a grandson of Gamaliel Hodges.—Ed.

## MASTER AND SUPERCARGO

prise. I then informed him that I had property on board the vessel more than double the amount of the bills for my security, and we could get a handsome commission out of them.

"Is this all?" said my father.

"Oh, no, sir," and handed him a bill of lading of goods which cost me about \$10,000, and would, I thought, pay me a handsome profit. I then showed to father and Mr. Hodges that it was exceedingly important to keep this business a profound secret, as a vessel was daily expected from Madras with a very valuable cargo aboard, and if the commander of a French frigate then lying in the Boston Harbor should hear of it, she must inevitably fall into his hands. Notwithstanding all my injunctions to secrecy, Mr. Hodges disclosed the whole business to Capt. Perkins before leaving the wharf, and it was soon known throughout the town.

To ascertain the validity of my papers my father and Capt. Benj. Hodges took them to Mr. Prescott,\*

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\*Lawyer Prescott was probably William Prescott, born at Pepperell, Mass., Aug. 19th, 1762, son of Col. William Prescott of Revolutionary fame, commander at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

He graduated from Harvard in 1783, married in 1793 Catherine G. Hickling. In the early part of the nineteenth century he was a lawyer in Salem. He was afterwards made a judge. He was the father of William H. Prescott, the historian. He removed to Boston, where he died Dec. 8, 1844.—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. IV, p. 7.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

the lawyer, who said after examining them very carefully, that nothing could be stronger than that contract; there was no getting clear of it; that George had tied them up strong enough. This contract I had made out without the assistance of anyone. As I had engaged to deliver my goods in Boston, I took the first favorable wind to go there and fulfil my engagement. I also presented my drafts, which were duly accepted. And now, having accomplished my business, I returned to Salem with the ship. Thus ended a voyage to *me* the most lucrative and happy one I ever made. Indeed, it is said to have been one of the greatest voyages, considering all the circumstances, ever made by a Salem vessel.



CHAPTER IV  
MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

I remained at home about two months, during which time occurred an event of the deepest interest to me, viz., that of my marriage, after a long engagement of several years. The ceremony took place on the 22nd of November, 1801, on Sunday evening. We were married by Rev. Dr. Hopkins,\* in my Father Peirce's† great eastern room, which was finished and furnished

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\*Rev. Daniel Hopkins, D. D., was the first pastor of the South Church in Salem, having been ordained Nov. 18th, 1778. He died Dec. 14, 1814.—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. XIX, p. 116.

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†Jerathmiel Peirce was the youngest of the seven children of Jerahmeel and Rebecca Hurd Peirce, of Charlestown, Mass. He was born Feb. 1st, 1747, and died August 20th, 1827, in the 81st year of his age.

His brother Benjamin, nine years his senior, was a baker in Charlestown. In 1763, he sold his property to Daniel Waire, and moved to Salem, taking his youngest brother Jerathmiel with him. Benjamin was killed at the battle of Lexington, April 17, 1775.—Peirce Genealogy.

Jerathmiel Peirce began his business life as a leather dresser; later he was one of the successful East India merchants of the firm of Peirce & Waite.

On Feb. 6, 1772, he married Sarah Ropes, the oldest daughter of Benjamin Ropes. He had nine children, five of whom lived to mature age.—Ed.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

only a short time before. Aunt Adams\* was buried from the same room, only three days before. My wife wanted only a day or two of being twenty-one years old, and I have often laughed and told her she was never free. No one was present at the wedding but the two families. Betsey† and Charlotte‡ were the bridesmaids, or at least considered themselves so. Sally's dress was a beautiful striped muslin, very delicate, made in Bombay for some distinguished person. I purchased it of Nasser Vanji, at five dollars per yard. He gave me at the same time a camel's hair shawl, quite a handsome one. I returned the compliment, by presenting him with a set of Mavor's Voyages. Afterwards he sent me a shawl of a larger size and handsomer. This muslin Sally wore over white silk. Her headdress was a white lace veil, put on turban fashion. Her cake, of which she had a large quantity, was made in a great bread tray by Nellie Masury, a sister of the late Deacon Punchard. She was quite celebrated as a cook. I had forgotten to mention that the day we were married, Sally went to meeting in the morning with the family, dressed in mourning, and in the P. M., she went in her usual dress. We immediately went to housekeeping, in a

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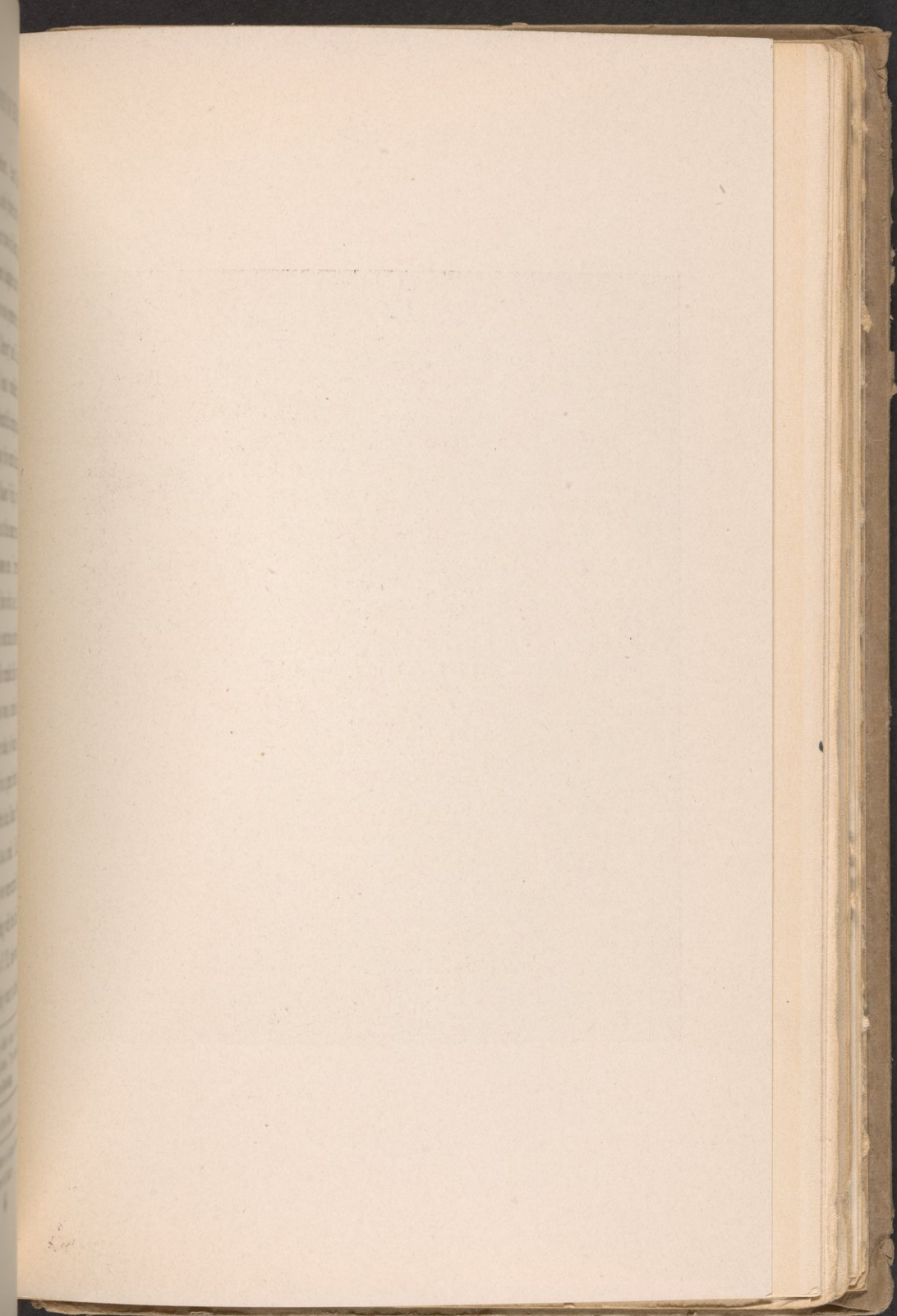
\*Rebecca Peirce, the oldest sister of Jerathmiel Peirce, married in 1770, Joseph Adams. The husband died in 1796, leaving no children.—Peirce Genealogy.

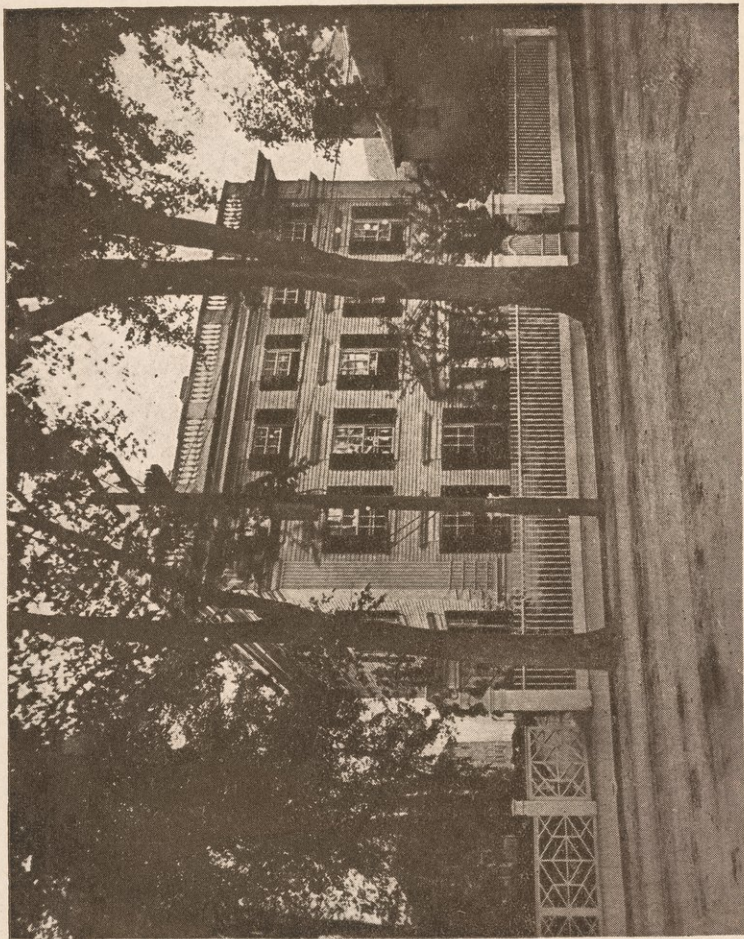
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†Betsey, young sister of the bride.

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‡Charlotte, youngest sister of George Nichols. Later, she married Mr. Charles Sanders of Salem.





The House No. 80 Federal Street, Salem, where George Nichols was married and where he died. It was built by his father-in-law, Jerathmiel Peirce in 1782. Samuel McIntyre of Salem was the architect.

## MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

house on the corner of Washington and Federal Streets, then County Street. This house is now standing, 1858.

The week following a wedding was in those days given up to receiving guests, and almost every afternoon our parlor, a common-sized one, was filled with company. Among the visitors were Mr. Joshua Ward and wife;\* Mr. Joseph Sprague† and wife; Mr. Pickering Dodge‡ and intended wife; Mr. Robert Stone§

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\*"Joshua Ward, son of Miles and Hannah Derby Ward, was born Oct. 29, 1752, died Sept. 14, 1825. He was a merchant and owned a distillery near the southern corner of Front and Washington Streets. He owned and lived in the brick house on Washington Street, where Dr. John E. Fiske afterwards lived. Here he entertained General Washington, when he visited Salem in 1789. His first wife was Sarah Lander, mother of his children. His second wife was Susan McGee of Boston."—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. IV, p. 177.

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†"Major Joseph Sprague, born at Medford, Mass., July 13th, 1739, died Feb. 13, 1808, in the house on the corner of Flint and Essex Streets, which he bought and occupied in 1775. He also built for his son the brick house adjoining his homestead, occupied later by Col. Francis Peabody, by Samuel L. Williams, the London banker, and by John H. Silsbee.

"Mr. Sprague had a distillery on the northwest corner of North and Federal Streets, behind which the Danvers Company of Minute Men was drawn up at the repulse of Leslie."—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. XXXVIII, p. 352.

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‡"Pickering Dodge, son of Israel and Lucia Pickering Dodge, born April 6th, 1778, married Nov. 5th, 1801, Rebecca, daughter of Daniel and Mary Jenks. Mr. Dodge died in August, 1833, well known as an active, enterprising, intelligent and honorable merchant, universally esteemed."—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. XV, p. 301.

Mr. Dodge built in 1822 the brick house No. 29 Chestnut Street, in Salem, now owned and occupied by Dr. Octavius B. Shreve.—Ed.

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§Robert Stone, a Salem merchant of the firm of Silsbee, Pickman and Stone. He married Miss Osgood. They had eleven children, six sons and five daughters.—Ed.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

and Mr. Dudley Pickman\*. One P. M., when quite a number of young friends were present, who should make their appearance but Aunt Peggy Ropes and her daughter, with an infant child. They were very peculiar people, and Aunt P—— in particular caused a great deal of amusement among the young people by her vulgar speeches. Then the baby began to cry, and when evening came and they wanted to go home through the "Fields," as they called North Salem, the bridge was up, and they were obliged to stay until nearly nine o'clock.

About four weeks after my marriage, I engaged another voyage to India in the same vessel, the "Active." I sailed about the middle of December for Sumatra as master and supercargo. We had a pleasant passage to the Cape of Good Hope, when a number of our men being sick, we felt obliged to put into Table Bay for medical advice. At the end of a week their health was so much improved that we were able to proceed on our voyage. When we arrived in the neighbor-

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\*"Dudley Leavitt Pickman, son of William and Elizabeth Leavitt Pickman, baptized May, 1779, married Sept. 6, 1810, Catherine, daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Elkins Sanders."  
—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. XV, p. 303.

Mr. Pickman was a Salem merchant of the firm of Devereux, Pickman & Silsbee. He built the brick house on the corner of Chestnut and Pickering Streets. He was the grandfather of the present Mr. Dudley L. Pickman, of Boston and Beverly.  
—Ed.

## MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

hood of St. Paul, the weather was so pleasant that I could not resist the temptation to stop and fish. We caught as many as we could dispose of, and then landed upon the island in pursuit of seals, which we found very abundant, though not so much so as formerly. I returned to the vessel in half an hour with about one dozen and a half of seals and skins. The day after losing sight of this island, I saw an immense shoal of black fish coming directly towards us. I desired Mr. Sinclair, my second mate, to load my gun with two balls. I fired at one of them, but my first attempt was unsuccessful, but the second time I fired I hit a fish and caused him to spout blood. A few moments after he died, about half a mile from the ship. I immediately lowered the boat, and taking two or three hands, rowed to the fish. He was very large, weighing not less than a thousand pounds. Having towed him alongside of the vessel, we cut out the blubber, which we tried out, and got thirty-two gallons of oil from it. After this adventure, we resumed our voyage, and arrived on the coast of Sumatra without further incident worthy of note.

I cruised for a day or two along the coast in search of a landing place, when I saw the masts of a ship in a small harbor. I entered, and found it was the port of Mukka, and the ship was the "America" of Salem, Capt.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

Briggs, master.\* I went ashore in my boat, and saw great numbers of Malays, all well armed. I soon negotiated with the Governor for a cargo of pepper. We fixed upon a price, but he said he could not deliver any to me until Capt. Briggs' vessel was loaded. Now the "America" was more than three times the size of the "Active," and she had as yet received but half of her cargo, so I declined waiting, unless the Governor would fix upon a time for me to begin to receive. It was finally agreed that I should begin to receive in a week, whether the "America" was loaded or not. Capt. Briggs objected strongly to this, and insisted upon having all the pepper that was brought in until his cargo was completed. A week elapsed. I now used every argument in my power to induce Capt. B—— to come to some amicable terms, but all my efforts were fruitless. I told him if three hundred piculs† were brought in daily, he might have two of them, but

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\*Capt. Jeremiah Briggs was captain of the Ship "America" in 1802. Her original name was "Blonde." In the French war she carried twenty guns. Said to have been the largest vessel in the merchant service in the United States. Sold in France in 1812. Owners, the Crowninshields. Ship 654 tons burden, purchased in Bordeaux in 1798.—Salem Ship Register, page 8.

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†Picul or Pecul. A weight varying in different Oriental countries from 133 lbs. 5 oz. to 200 lbs."—Worcester's Dictionary.



## MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

if only two hundred, I should feel myself entitled to one hundred. "You shall not have a pound, if I can help it," was his reply. "If it has come to fighting," said I, "the hardest must fend off." Every effort was made by him to prevent me from getting pepper, notwithstanding which I got the first day one-fourth of all that was brought in, and the second day I got one-third. "Now," said I, "you see I can get pepper as well as you can. It is a pity to quarrel about it. Let us work together harmoniously." But no, he would not yield to my wishes. A great deal of pepper was brought from a village, which was about one-half mile distant from the harbor where our vessel lay. The natives brought it in bags upon their backs, and were obliged to cross a river about two feet deep. Capt. Briggs, thinking to get the advantage of me, employed his men, of whom he had about three times as many as I had, in transporting it through the water to his vessel. Seeing this, I observed to my men that I was very sorry to call upon them to do such drudgery as that, but I must do it, otherwise Capt. Briggs would obtain all the pepper. They replied with a great deal of feeling, "Capt. Nichols, we will go as far as Capt. Briggs' men, let them go as far as they may." So saying, they went cheerfully to work, and at the close of the day I found that we had one-half of all that had been received. I again renewed my first offer to Capt.

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B——, but he declined it and replied to me as before. Observing on one occasion that a large quantity of pepper had been brought in in boats during the night, I resolved to secure it if possible. Accordingly I arose at daylight, jumped into my boat, and taking four of my men, with my bags, rowed to the shore. We passed the "America" on our way, the crew of which were surprised to find us stirring so early, but when Capt. B—— discovered our object, he, too, manned his boat and went ashore. He was too late, he found to his great mortification, to obtain any pepper; we had it all, a larger supply than we had received in any one day.

Before I had completed my cargo, I narrowly escaped being cut off by the natives. I was ashore one day receiving pepper, when Mr. Ward, joint supercargo with Capt. Briggs, saw one of his bags in the hands of a native. He suddenly snatched it from him and ran off. The man enraged, drew his creese and pursued him, but failing to get at him, he turned upon one of my men who was near, receiving peppers. The man sprang,—the Malay after him, and immediately all the Malays drew their weapons. I was from one to two hundred yards distant at the time, and seeing the confusion I hastened to the spot to ascertain the cause. There I saw my man and the Malay within ten feet of him, with his drawn creese in his hand. To retreat was impossible, for the Malays were

## MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

between me and my boats. So, alone and unarmed, I went into the midst of the natives, and they, perceiving that my designs were pacific, assisted me in arresting the offender. I clapped my hand upon his back, and asked him what he meant by such doings. Then sending for the Rajah, I complained of the man to him, and assured him if ever anything of the kind occurred again, I would immediately resort to my ship, fire upon the town and destroy it, adding, "You know I could do it." He assented, and after that I had no more trouble. It was now about noon, so I went aboard my vessel and dined. On my return one of the first persons I met was the Malay who attempted to kill my man. He was seated upon some bags of pepper, and being at leisure, I sat down by him. With his permission, I took his creese in my hand, and found, upon examination, that it was poisoned, and the least wound with it would have caused instant death. This Malay was a very civil, pleasant fellow, and one of the smartest men I ever knew. We afterwards became very good friends.

The morning after this adventure, Capt. Briggs left for a neighboring port, a few miles distant, though he had received only about two-thirds of his cargo. His reason for leaving, we may infer without much difficulty. From this time I received pepper about as fast as I could ship it. A few days after this, Capt.

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Thomas Webb,\* of the brig "George Washington," came into port for a cargo of pepper. As my cargo was nearly completed, I requested him to wait till my vessel was loaded, and then he would have the market to himself. He agreed not to interfere with me, but fearing to be left there alone on account of the natives, he left the port in the course of a day or two. When Capt. W—— first saw me ashore he eyed me with astonishment. "Why, you look like a devil," said he. I was dressed in striped, loose trousers, a thin jacket, without vest, an old slouched hat, and shoes without stockings, but the shoes I took off when wading through the water. Nothing pleased the natives more than to find me ready to conform to their customs. I often walked arm in arm with their leading men, went into their huts to light my cigars, and offering them some, would sit down and smoke with them. A little act of imprudence on my part came very near bringing me into serious difficulty with the Rajah. About the time I began to receive pepper, they raised the price of it one dollar on a picul. This was in consequence of their charging more in other ports. I met the Rajah and other leading men in a room, which they called their council chamber, and remonstrated

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\*"Thomas Webb was a shipmaster and during the war of 1812-1815 was the keeper of the prison ship at Rust's wharf in Salem. He died in 1825, aged 69 years."—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. IV., p. 7.

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Gateway of the House 80 Federal Street, Salem.

## MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

with them upon raising the price, after the contract which they had made with me, but all to no purpose. In the excitement of the moment, I called the Rajah a bad man, which exasperated him very much. Conscious that I had erred, I immediately sought means to pacify him. I patted him on the shoulder and asked him to go with me into another room. I then offered to give him one hundred dollars if he would fulfil his contract with me, but he would not consent to do it for that sum. Finally I agreed to give him five hundred dollars, and told him that he could pocket the whole if he chose. This sum satisfied him, and secured to me his friendship. In less than a fortnight after Capt. Briggs left Mukka I completed my cargo, and made arrangements to continue my voyage.

It was very important for the health of all on board that we should get a supply of poultry before leaving. The Malays, however, were too indolent to furnish it for the usual sum, so I offered five times the common price for two dozen good fowls. They engaged to furnish them, but supposing that they could have that price for any number which they might bring, they brought, as I supposed they would, about ten or twelve dozen. I selected two dozen of the best fowls, and paid them the price stipulated. They urged me to take the rest. "No," I replied, "I have all that I have engaged to buy, and you may carry the others home." They were unwilling to do *that*, however, but preferred

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to let me have them at the rate of from fifty to seventy-five cents per dozen. During my stay at Mukka, which was about four weeks, I never could prevail upon Mr. Slocum,\* my first mate, to go ashore, he was so much afraid of the natives. And now having completed my business in this port, I left for Manila, and as Capt. Benj. Hodges advised me to go through the straits of Malacca, I took that course, though attended with so much danger on account of large numbers of pirates infesting the coasts, that he was unwilling to go through several years before without the convoy of a well-armed vessel. As my vessel was poorly armed, I felt no little anxiety on my passage, a tedious one of twenty days. I saw several vessels at a distance, which I took to be pirates, only one of which, however, showed any disposition to molest me, and knowing that I could not escape from him, I steered directly towards him, determined to run him down if possible, seeing which, he immediately made off.

On my arrival at Cavete, the out-port of Manila, and about nine miles distant from it, I found several American vessels there for cargoes of sugar and indigo. People at Manila were surprised that pepper should be brought there for sale, but my merchant, Mr. Kerr, a Spaniard, managed to sell mine at about the cost. My next object was to procure indigo, which was, however, very scarce, and in such demand

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\*Mr. Ebenezer Slocum.



## MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

that it was thought very doubtful whether I should be able to get a cargo. Still, determined to spare no pains to obtain it, I went about twenty miles up the river in a boat, with Mr. Kerr, and found it in such abundance that in two days I got all I wanted. The company's officers were astonished at my success, for they had no idea of there being so much on the island. And now my indigo must be assorted and packed, and with my own hands, too,—a dirty job, one of the dirtiest I ever undertook. I got me some thin blue clothes and went cheerfully to work, and in a few weeks' time the task was accomplished. Capt. Derby, with whom I kept bachelor's hall, laughed at me a great deal, and would not come within two or three feet of me, I was so colored with the indigo. But the natives had a weed, which they called the soap weed, which removed the color very easily from the skin. One day, while busily at work upon my indigo, Mr. Kerr set a large American ram upon me, without giving me any notice of his intention. True, he did it in sport, but it was very dangerous sport, for the animal came very near costing me my life. He advanced within eight or ten feet of me, and was then on the point of springing directly upon me, when I happened to see him and instantly stepped aside. I caught up a club and gave him such a blow on the side of the head as almost to stun him. He was a very powerful creature, twice as large as a common sheep, with horns

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proportionately large. After this I often had sport with the old ram. I would entice him towards me and then parry off his intended blows with a club, with which I always took the precaution to arm myself. On one occasion I struck him with such force upon the nose that I never afterwards could induce him to come near me.

During my stay at Manila, I had occasion one day to go to my ship for money, and Mr. Zach Silsbee,\* who was there at that time, wishing to visit his vessel, we took a boat with two men to row us. Our passage to Cavete was a pleasant one, but while there it commenced raining, and the weather looked very threatening. Notwithstanding this, we ventured out again in our little boat to return to Manila. It soon began to blow very hard, and there was every appearance of a gale, but go on we must now, for the wind would not allow us to return. The wind increased rapidly, and our situation soon became very alarming. Moreover, we had got to cross a bar, which in pleasant weather was considered dangerous to pass in such a boat as ours was. Our only hope now was in keeping as calm and collected as possible.

Observing that Mr. S—— looked pale and anxious,

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\*Mr. Zachariah Silsbee, son of Nathaniel and Sarah Becket Silsbee, and a brother of Mr. William Silsbee. A shipmaster and merchant. He married in 1810 Sarah Boardman, daughter of Francis and Mary Hodges Boardman.—Hodges Family of New England, page 41.

## MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

I said to him in as cheerful a tone as I could command, "We have shipped for this voyage, and we must go through with it." We drew near the bar, the sea ran so very high that it seemed impossible for us to cross it. By-and-by the sea dashed over us, filling our boat more than half full of water. Fortunately for us, when in our vessel, we had exchanged our common hats for leather ones; but for that we must have inevitably been drowned, for with these we bailed out the water, and soon cleared the boat. We had rowed but a short distance when we again shipped a tremendous sea. "Off hats and bail away," I cried out. Again and again while crossing the bar was our boat filled nearly to sinking, and when finally we succeeded in getting into comparatively smooth water our boat was nearly balanced and our men, mulattoes, were white with fear. Our escape was indeed almost mirac-

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\*While at Manila, thinking it might be two or three months before the season would allow me to return home, I planned to take a trip to Japan. I was to go in the "Active" with a small cargo of sugar, piece goods, etc. A gentleman from New York then at Manila, took great interest in this enterprise, which, by the way, was considered a very bold one, as the Japanese ports were closed against all foreigners, the Dutch alone excepted, and assisted in purchasing my cargo. My intention was to ship for Ningpo. But arrived at Japan, I was to feign distress and put into Nagasaki for repairs. Once allowed to land, I hoped to be able to dispose of my cargo advantageously. I set sail and had been out about a week, when the monsoon changed, and I was prevented from going on. A day or two more of favorable weather would have brought me to Nagasaki.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

ulous, for I afterwards saw a boat ten times the size of ours, swamped in crossing this bar, and many lives were lost.

Nothing more worthy of note occurred while I was at Manila, and having completed the cargo, an assorted one of indigo, sugar, etc., we sailed for home, via Europe, on the 12th of November, 1802. We had a safe and pleasant passage to the Cape of Good Hope, arriving there about the 10th of January. We put into Table Bay for refreshments, when we were informed of a very interesting event which had occurred there a few days before. This Cape, which was taken by the English from the Dutch some years previous to this, had been by a late treaty of peace ceded to the Dutch, and they sent officers and troops to take possession. They arrived the latter part of December. The British general and officers proposed surrendering the fort immediately, but the Dutch General said, "No," that he should prefer to wait until the first of January, as that was a gala day with them. On the 31st of December most of the troops that garrisoned the fort embarked for England, and the keys of the Arsenal were sent to the Governor. Early in the morning of the 1st of January an English packet arrived with instructions to the Commander to retain the fort if he had not already surrendered it. Upon which he sent a polite note to the Governor, requesting him to return the keys, as he wished to put everything in order in

## MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

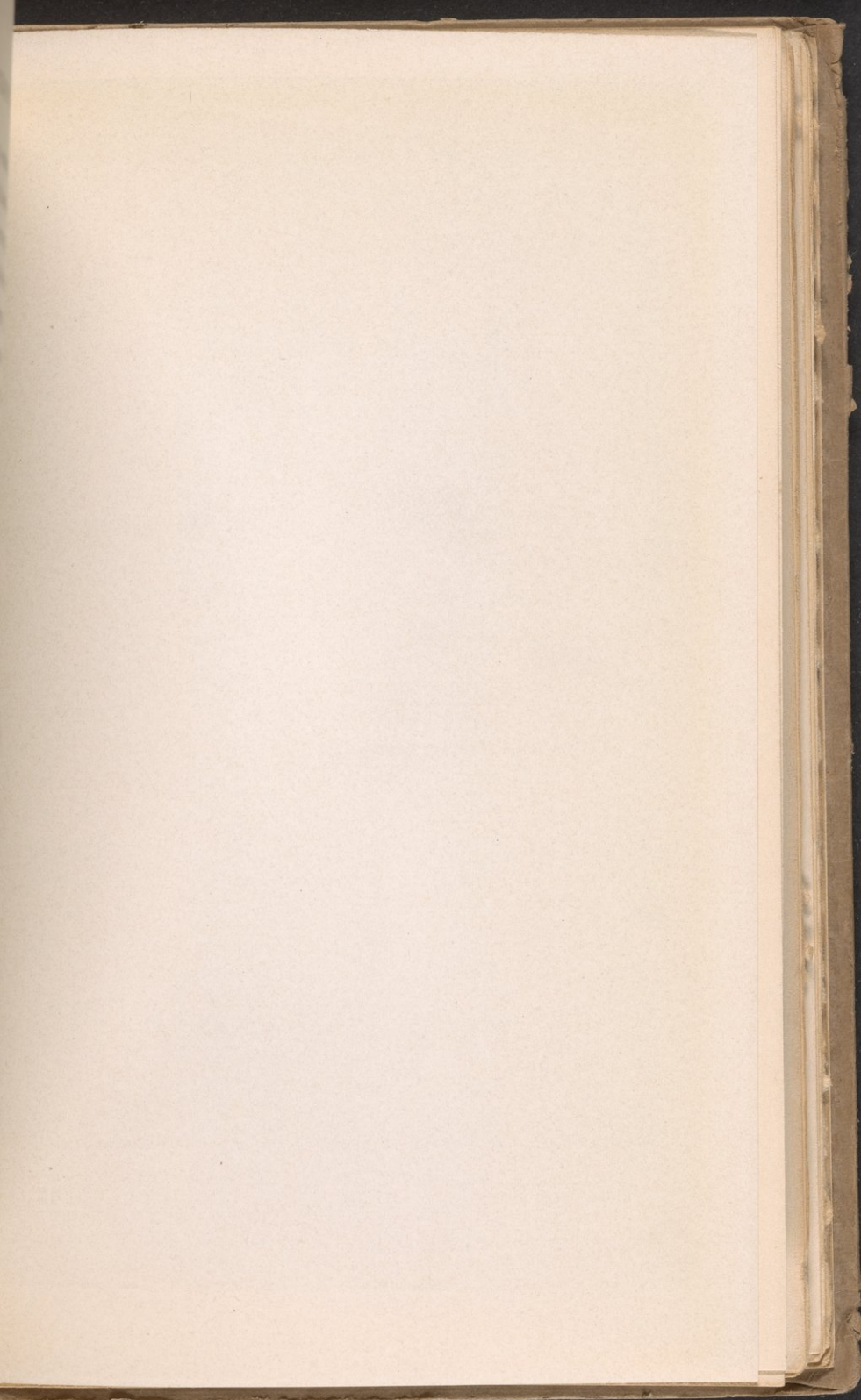
the fort, and he then proceeded to land the troops. When noon arrived, the time proposed for surrendering the fort, and which they intended to do with great ceremony, the Dutch were informed that orders had just been received not to give it up. The people were very much enraged with Gov. Janson, then considered one of the most celebrated characters in Holland. Their anger, however, had cooled down somewhat when we arrived. A treaty was made by which it was agreed that the Dutch should depart without molestation.

After being at Cape Town about a week, I waited upon the British Admiral, Sir Roger Curtis, for permission to leave. He gave me a most friendly, cordial greeting, and granted my request. The middle of March found me in Falmouth, England. I had a most delightful journey by stage from Falmouth to London, a distance of from two to three hundred miles. The country most of the way was under the highest state of cultivation, and far exceeded in beauty my most sanguine expectations. I remained in London only two days, got all necessary information with regard to my business and returned to Falmouth. My next place of destination was Rotterdam, Holland. On my way there, when passing through the Straits of Dover, we encountered one or two British ships of war, and presently an officer from one of them put off in a boat and made for our vessel. Our men, knowing that im-

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

pressment was constantly going on among seamen, were very much alarmed and appealed to me for protection. "There are my military stores," said I, pointing to a chest, and addressing myself to the oldest of my sailors. "I must go below to take care of my property. If one man is taken from my vessel, I declare to you that I will go to the ends of the earth if necessary, to recover him." The man appeared very grateful; he took off his hat and made me a low bow. The British officer failed in his attempt to board our vessel.

We outsailed him, and he made for another vessel. Two or three days after this incident I arrived at Hellevoethius, took a pilot and went to Rotterdam, situated on the Maas, more than one hundred miles from its mouth. I found the people here very much alarmed lest there should be war between England and France. Immediately after my arrival I went to one of the first houses in Rotterdam, and they advised me by all means to sell my cargo at once, telling me that there was no prospect of war. "I think otherwise, therefore shall not sell," said I. Day after day they continued to urge my selling, when at length I told them that I did not want their advice; that I would sell when I was ready, and not before. In the course of three weeks my expectations were realized and war was declared. I was now ready to sell my cargo, and I got for it 50 per cent. more than I could have obtained





The mirror over the drawing room mantel was ordered from France by Jerathmiel Peirce, when the room was decorated in 1801



The lower hall, with its delicate carving and broad low stairway, where friends were always made welcome.



Drawing Room Door, opening into the hall. Noted for the wonderful delicacy of its carving and purity of style.



Parlor Closet, where the China was kept which was sent home from India in the ships of Jerathmiel Peirce, father-in-law of George Nichols.



## MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

when I first arrived. Having purchased a quantity of gin and some other articles, I put them on board. I sent the vessel down the river to Hellevoethius, to await my arrival. Having remained in Rotterdam about ten days longer, I rejoined the vessel. We got under way about the 10th of March, 1803, and had a very pleasant passage home. One little incident occurred on the passage which I have often thought of with great pleasure. When we arrived on the Bank of Newfoundland, we had a great deal of calm weather, which retarded our progress very much. One evening at supper, the mate observed to me that there was very little bread aboard, only about two-thirds of a barrel, much less than I had supposed. I requested him to bring it up on deck. I then called the men aft and told them I was extremely mortified to be obliged to put them upon allowance, the first time I had been obliged to do so during the whole voyage of twenty months, but that they should share equally with me and the other officers. One of the sailors replied, (I think it was the same one who came to me for protection a few months before, when he feared impressment by the British officer), "Capt. Nichols, we should have no cause to complain if we should not have another mouthful of bread before we got in." The wind breezed up, however, and two days after we arrived in Salem after a pleasant voyage of about twenty months. All the ship's company returned in

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

perfect health, and I think no one had been confined by sickness for a single day during the whole time.

After remaining at home a few weeks, I concluded to go on a third voyage in the "Active." I sailed for Amsterdam about the first of September, 1803, with a cargo of tea and colonial produce. We arrived at the Texel after a very short passage of about twenty-seven days; so short for those days that sea captains there would not credit my statements until I had showed them my papers.

I was as usual boarded by a government officer to ascertain where I was from, where bound, and of what my cargo consisted. I told him I was from Salem, was bound to Antwerp, though I had intended to go to Amsterdam, and my cargo was made up of tea, sugar and coffee. When I spoke of tea the officer observed, "That is a contraband article. It is unlawful to bring it into Holland."

"Oh," said I, in a careless tone, "I put in here in consequence of head winds. I had no idea of landing my cargo here."

The Government, however, was immediately informed of the matter, and I proceeded to Amsterdam by land, a distance of a hundred miles. I called upon the house to whom I had been recommended, and whose agent had grossly deceived the owners of the "Active," as well as me, with regard to the carrying teas to Holland. I found them feeling very anxious, and

## MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

they promised to give me all possible aid to extricate myself from this difficulty. They told me that the city officers were to have a meeting in the evening to consider my case, and one of the partners offered to go with me to see one of the senators and ascertain the result of their meeting. Accordingly, about eight o'clock in the evening, we waited upon the senator and were informed by him that nothing prevented my vessel being seized but my saying I was bound to Antwerp. Assuming a bold front, "My orders to you are that you shall go to sea immediately." I replied to him, "I shall go to sea when convenient, and not before. You may put as many soldiers aboard my vessel as you choose; I suppose I am entitled to as many privileges here as I should have among savages." The next morning I saw the merchant who had deceived me. He was a venerable old man. He congratulated me upon my escape and asked me where I intended going. "You have deceived me," I replied, "and I shall now go where I think best." As I could not decide whether it was best for me to go to Antwerp or Emden, I consulted Mr. Wills, one of a distinguished firm in Amsterdam. He advised me to go to Antwerp. Then observing a gentleman approaching us, he said: "Here is a gentleman from Emden, who can advise you better than I can. The gentleman then asked Mr. W—— if I could speak Dutch. Addressing myself to Mr. W——, I said: "I will thank

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

you, sir, to be my interpreter. Will you ask him if tea, the most valuable part of my cargo, will sell well in Emden?" The question was put to him in Dutch, and his reply I perfectly understood. It was, "It will sell very well, there." "Do you understand him?" said Mr. Wills. "What did he say, sir?" said I. He replied, "The gentleman says your cargo will not sell at all there." Mr. W——, as I afterwards found, was actuated by purely selfish motives in the course he pursued towards me. As he was daily expecting the arrival of a cargo of his own tea at Emden, he did all in his power to prevent me from going there, lest I should interfere with him. The next morning I sent him a note informing him that I was about leaving for Emden, and should be happy to take anything he might like to send. Upon my arrival at Emden I found the market for tea as had been represented, and in a few days I disposed of mine at a handsome price, realizing ten per cent. more for it than I could have obtained in Antwerp. The remainder of my cargo I concluded to send to Bremen by land, where I disposed of it quite advantageously in the course of two or three months. And now, having sent my vessel home under charge of Mr. Slocum and settled my business, I took passage myself in a vessel sailing from Amsterdam to New York, Captain Isaacs, master. Our passage was without incident worthy of note. When we arrived the captain received orders from the

## MARRIAGE AND LAST VOYAGES

owners of the vessel to go to Philadelphia with the ship, in consequence of which the Collector at New York refused to let me land there, but said I must go in the vessel to Philadelphia. Having stated my case to him fully without effect, I became quite indignant, and declared to him that if I went in the vessel it must be in irons; that as an American citizen I had a right to land, and was determined to do it, and that he was welcome to my duds if he chose to take them. Seeing my determination, he permitted me to come on shore with my baggage and papers. The morning following, Sunday, I embarked for Boston, via Providence, in a packet. I arrived in Boston Monday evening, and the next morning, July 31st, 1804, breakfasted in Salem. Thus ended my last voyage, since which I have never felt any desire to cross the Atlantic.

## CHAPTER V.

### WATCH STORY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

#### *My Watch Story.*

As this is a story of which my friends never seem to weary, I will here record it, for the pleasure of those who may have forgotten it, or who like to listen to an oft-repeated tale.

Previous to sailing on my second voyage to India, I purchased in Boston a good watch, with a second hand, for which I gave \$42. I then went to the Isle of France, and while there I bartered it for, I believe, four bags of coffee. After disposing of our cargo, I returned home without any watch. I afterwards went to Norway, where I found one similar to that, and obtained it for one bag of coffee. My next watch adventure was in London, where I had a gold watch made by one Tobias, a Jew, very much thought of by Americans, but an unprincipled man. It cost me about \$120. I had now two watches. From London I went to Ramsgate, where I disposed of my silver watch, getting for it one equally good, and two and one-half guineas in addition. While in Madras I kept

## WATCH STORY

bachelor's hall with Capt. Townsend\* and Mr. Cabot, the latter of whom I saw one day take from his trunk a silver watch. Said I to him, "I have a watch just like that." "And I, too, have one like it," said Capt. Townsend. "Now," said I, "let us turn up a copper and see who shall have the three." "No," says Mr. C——, "We will draw lots for them." Upon this we drew lots, and I got them all. When about leaving Madras I wished to make a present to an under broker, who had transacted my business, and who had given me several pieces of thin goods. I observed to him that I knew of nothing that would be more acceptable to him than a watch, and I accordingly gave him one of my silver watches, with which he appeared very much pleased. When I returned home I took the two remaining watches to a watch maker to be cleaned. When they were done I asked him what they were worth. "Seven or eight dollars," was his reply, and he agreed to take one of them at that price. The other I gave to my brother Benjamin,† who was then in college, and was needing a watch. My next watch opera-

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\*"Capt. Moses Townsend was a shipmaster and afterwards President of the Union Marine Insurance Company. He died Feb. 14, 1843, aged eighty-two years."—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. III, p. 177.

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†Benjamin Ropes Nichols, born in Portsmouth, N. H., March 18, 1786, died in Boston, April 30, 1848. He married Mary, daughter of Col. Timothy Pickering. They had five daughters and one son.—Ed.

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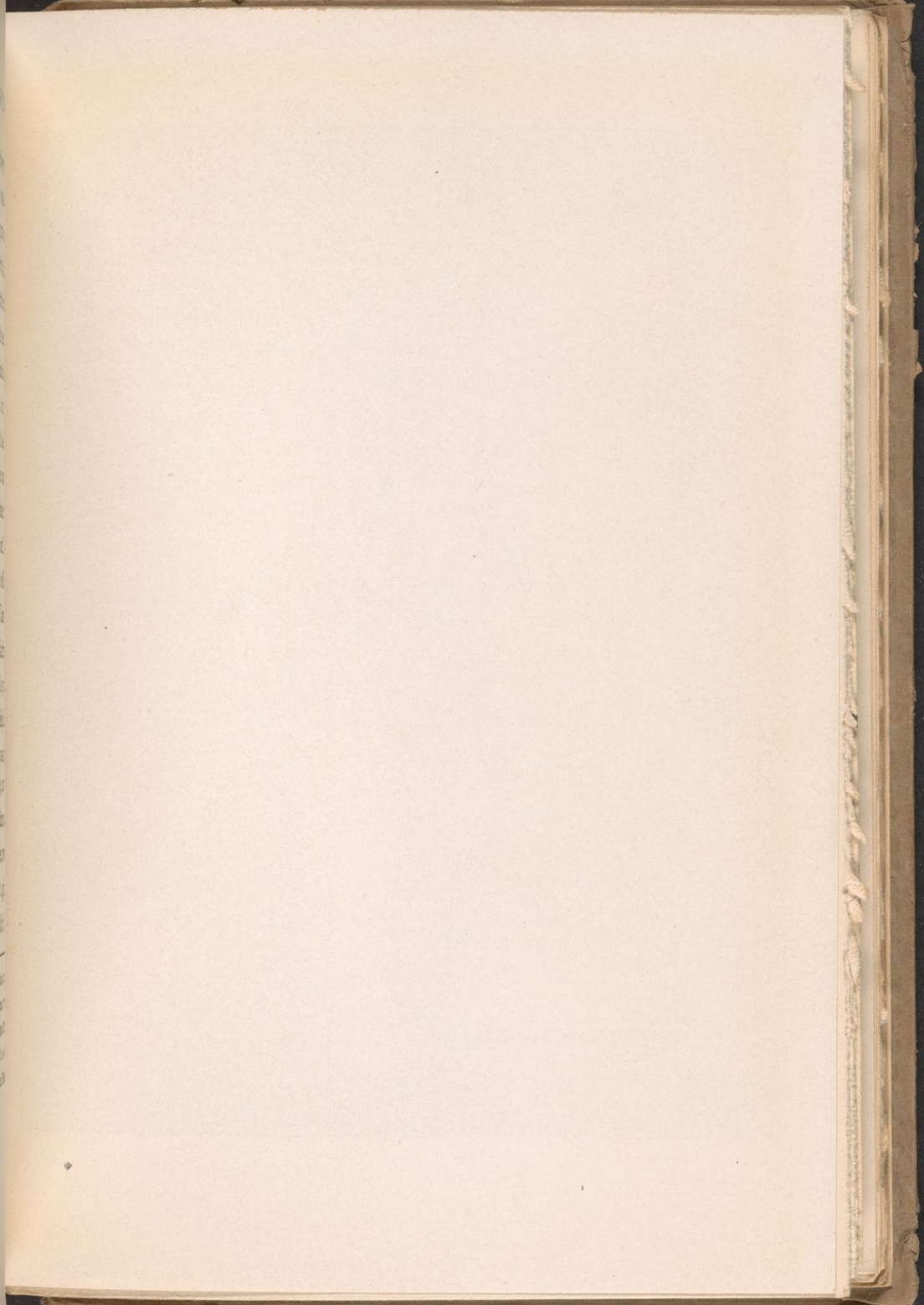
tion was in July, 1802, at Manila, where I employed a Mr. Kerr, to assist me in my business. He took a great fancy to my watch and proposed giving me his watch with some indigo to boot in exchange for it, and we finally fixed upon a quintal and a half, worth then more than \$160, and I retained my chain and seals. This indigo I afterwards sold for \$130 more than the original cost of my watch, besides getting a watch, which proved a better timepiece than mine had been. Some twelve years or more after this I was in company with Capt. William Lander\* of Salem, when he took from his pocket a gold watch. "Oh," said I, "That watch looks exactly like the one I sold to Mr. Kerr in Manila." "Oh," said Mr. Lander, "I know the whole history of that watch. I was in Manila after you left, when Mr. Kerr told me that he had sold your watch to a sea captain from New York or Philadelphia, and that he, the captain, afterwards, when passing Agulhas Bank, near the Cape of Good Hope, accidentally lost it overboard. Two or three days after, as another vessel was passing the Banks, one of the crew caught a fish, and upon opening it he found a gold watch. He carried it to Calcutta and then sold it, I

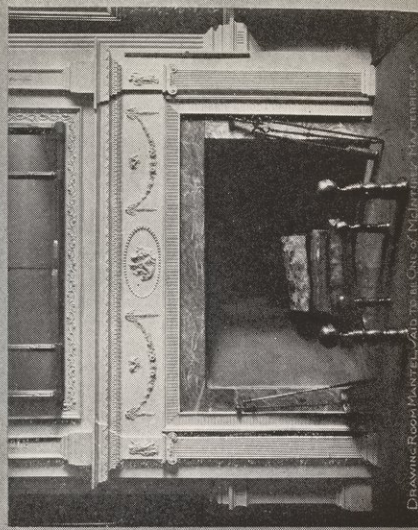
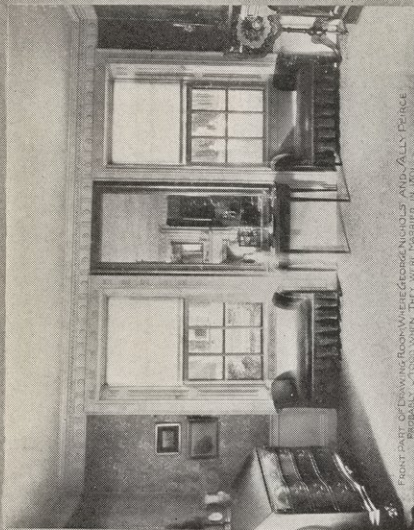
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\*Captain William Lander was the son of Peter Lander, and was a native of Salem. He was a sea captain and a man very highly esteemed in the community. He married Miss Mary Jenks and was the father of a large family. One of his sons was William Lander, the father of the Misses Lucy and Helen Lander of Washington and Danvers.—Ed.



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FRONT PART OF DRAWING ROOM - GEORGE NICHOLS AND ALLYN PRINCE PROBABLY SAT DOWN WHEN THE LADY PASSED IN 1801

DRAWING ROOM MANTEL - SAID TO BE ONE OF MARY'S DRAWING ROOMS

THIRD FLOOR BACK GUEST ROOM FOR THE GRAND CHILDREN

SOUTHWEST ROOM THIRD FLOOR FRONT - BETSEY BELICHS ROOM WHEN SHE WAS A CHILD - 176

## WATCH STORY

believe, to Capt. Blackler of Marblehead." This is Capt. Lander's story, and I have no doubt that the watch taken from the fish was the same that Mr. Kerr had from me.

I would here observe as regards sailors generally that I found them a much better class of people than I had supposed them to be; very kind-hearted, very generous and very easily governed if one only treats them kindly. It will not do to treat them with familiarity; if you do they will take advantage of it, as any ignorant person will. I had very strict regulations with regard to cleanliness, consequently my men were seldom sick, never *very* sick, but if, at any time, they were indisposed, I nursed them with as much care as I should my own children. Whenever they had leisure to read, as they often had in a long voyage, I was always ready to lend them my books, provided they would promise to use them carefully, and I was ever ready to give them any nautical information in my power. The first voyage I made, after I was master, I imprudently took several men who were much older than I was, and who had been with me when I was supercargo, consequently they expected to have their own way. But I commenced by showing them that I was to be captain, and by firmly pursuing this course I got along without trouble. When starting on my second voyage as master, I called my men around me and thus addressed them: "Now, my men, I begin

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

fair with you. If you do your duty faithfully and cheerfully, you shall say at the end of the voyage that it has been the pleasantest you ever made, but if you are unfaithful, I will feed you on shavings and sawdust." They were a fine looking set of men and proved themselves a very good crew. When making preparations for my last voyage I shipped among others a large, powerful looking man by the name of John Bunyan. Soon after Mr. Webb, formerly mate of the "Active," called and asked me if I intended taking *that* man with me, calling him by name. "Why," said he, "he is the worst man I ever knew aboard a vessel. I sailed with him from England and I expected he would have got charge of the vessel before we arrived." Notwithstanding what Mr. W—— told me, I determined to carry him, for I was too high spirited to dismiss him for such a reason after I had engaged him. After we had got out to sea I called the ship's officers around me, according to practice. I then related to them what I had heard about Bunyan and desired them to watch him narrowly, not to strike him excepting for insolence, but for *that* I would allow them to knock him down. The following day when I ordered him to do something, he turned upon me an eye which reminded me more of a black snake than of anything which I could think of. There was an air of hesitation about him which seemed to say, "I don't know whether to obey you or not." "You rascal,

## WATCH STORY

move," said I in a most resolute tone. This had the desired effect and in a few days he was an altered man, and his manner was so completely subdued that I was never obliged after this to speak harshly to him. He was the smartest man on board,—worth two common men in an emergency.

The following quaint ballad was sung by one of the sailors from "down east" to cheer the men when the ship was becalmed and it never failed of its purpose.

### SWEET WILLIAM.

Sweet William, he married a wife,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
To be the sweet comfort of his life,  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

Jenny couldn't card, nor Jenny couldn't spin,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
For fear of hurting her gay gold ring,  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

Jenny couldn't brew, nor Jenny couldn't bake,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
For fear of soiling her white apron tape,  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

Jenny couldn't into the kitchen to go,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
For fear of hurting her high-heeled shoe,  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

Sweet William came whistling in from plaow,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
And "Oh, my dear wife, is my dinner ready, naow?"  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

She called him a dirty, paltry whelp,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
"If you want any dinner, go get it yourself."  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

Then to the sheepfold quickly he did go,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
And out a fat wether from there did pull,  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

Then down on his knees he began for to stick,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
And from the sheep's back the skin did strip,  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

He laid the skin upon his wife's back,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
And with a good stick he went whicketty whack,  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

"I'll tell me fayther and all me kin,"  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Maire,  
"How still the quarrel you've begun."  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

"You may tell your fayther and all your kin,"  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
"How I have thrashed my fat wether's skin,"  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

## WATCH STORY

Sweet William came whistling in from plaow,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
And "Oh, my dear wife, is my dinner ready now?"  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

She drew her table and spread her board,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
And "Oh, my dear husband," was every word,  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.

And now they live free from all care and all strife,  
Gentle Jenny, cried Rose Marie,  
And now she makes William a very good wife,  
As the dew flies oer the mulberry tree.

It was the practice in those days when crossing the line, if there were any green hands aboard to play tricks upon them. The first voyage I made with Capt. Swett we had a man aboard named John Killam, a mean, contemptible country fellow, whom the sailors all despised, and as they drew near the line they determined to show their contempt for him by a rougher treatment than was usual at such times. Accordingly, the most humorous one among them covered himself with old mats, and with a swab, some two or three feet long, all dripping wet as if directly out of the water, suspended from his head. Thus decked out in imitation of Neptune, he came on deck and addressing the sailors asked if any of his children were aboard. "Oh, yes, there is one," pointing to John. "I am very

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glad to see you," says Neptune, catching hold of him and at the same time throwing a bucket of dirty water over him. Bucket after bucket of water was poor John obliged to receive, until at last he was completely drenched. Then he must be shaved, and instead of a razor they took a piece of an old iron hoop to shave him with. Last of all Neptune said his wife was very fond of cheese, and John's chest was ransacked and a cheese which he had kept carefully concealed for his own private use, was found and brought forth. Thus did they continue to torment him for two or three hours, until at last his patience was well nigh exhausted. While Neptune was preparing to come aboard I was below, but unseen by any one I managed to get out of the cabin window and climb up the side of the vessel and was on deck to receive him with the rest. This was looked upon as quite a dexterous feat and a pretty dangerous one, too. As I was a green hand it was necessary that I should conform to the custom of the times, so I submitted to the trifling inconvenience of having a bucket or two of clear, cold water dashed over me.

The life of the sailor I found to be a life of great fatigue and anxiety. Many sleepless nights is the captain of a vessel obliged to pass through. When going through the Straits of Malacca, where the navigation was very intricate, I was on deck most of the time for sixteen days and nights, only sleeping an hour or two in twenty-four.



## WATCH STORY

Before closing the account of my seafaring life, I would mention what has often appeared to my friends a proof of a strong memory, that I can recall the names of all the men who have ever sailed with me, both before and after I was master, and the names, too, of all the persons with whom I did business abroad.

While absent on my last voyage my oldest child, Sally, was born. My wife was very sick at the time, and was, for some time, in a very critical state. My father purchased for me the house on Federal Street, built and then occupied by Aunt Leach,\* and in late years occupied by Deacon Punchard. My sister Lydia† had recently been married and she took the western end of the house and I took the eastern. I soon engaged in commerce with my brother-in-law, Benjamin Pierce, and I was also concerned in the "Active" with my father for several voyages. We were generally prospered in business and when the war broke out in 1812 I was quite a rich man for those times, being worth at least \$40,000. This was a very

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\*"Ruth, daughter of Benjamin Ropes, born in 1761, died in 1850. She married John Leach, born in Salem, 1747, died October, 1804, at sea. He was a master mariner, and commanded several private armed vessels during the Revolutionary war."  
—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. III, p. 91.

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†Lydia Nichols, born in Portsmouth, N. H., Jan. 3, 1781, married her cousin, Benjamin Peirce, Dec. 11, 1803. At the time of his death, in 1831, he was librarian of Harvard College and author of the Catalogue of the Library.—Peirce Genealogy.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE NICHOLS

disastrous war to me. I lost in it nearly one-half of all my property, notwithstanding I had a great deal of insurance. Every vessel in which I was concerned was captured. Among them was the "Rambler," a beautiful vessel, owned by my brother Peirce and myself. She was making a fine voyage, but she was taken by the British, off the Cape of Good Hope. Privateering was very common in that war, as in all wars, but I could not feel it to be right and therefore did not engage in it. At the close of the war in 1815, I engaged again in commerce with Benjamin Pierce and others, and for several years affairs went on somewhat prosperously. Then came on a long series of disasters, ruinous voyages were made, the effect of bad management, and in 1826 I found myself a bankrupt, as were also my father, Peirce and his two sons. No sooner had I discovered the state of my pecuniary affairs, than I determined to stop payment (notwithstanding the earnest solicitation of some of my friends to the contrary) and divided my property equally among my creditors. And now I must begin life again, with nothing to look to but my own resources. My situation, I felt, was a sad one, reduced as I had been in a few years from affluence to complete destitution. Still, I kept up a good heart and felt confident that if my life and health were spared I should still be able to support my family comfortably. When my minister, Mr. Coleman, came to sympathize with me he in-

## WATCH STORY

quired of me what I intended doing for a support. "I never felt less anxiety in my life," was my reply to him. "The Being who gave me my children will assuredly take care of me and of them if we only strive to do our duty." "Capt. Nichols, I envy you," said he. My friends frequently questioned me about my business plans. I told them I meant to consider well for a few days what I had best do, and having made up my mind nothing but death should prevent me from persevering in that business, whatever it might be. I soon decided to engage in the auction and brokerage business. My earnings for the first few weeks were very small, hardly sufficient to pay for my shoe leather, but I persevered and at the close of the first year I not only paid my family expenses, but had something left besides. I have many times walked to Boston when fifty years old and upward to attend auction sales, and returned the same day. My business increased rapidly every year and in the course of fifteen years I paid my own creditors about \$10,000. I can now, at the age of eighty years, truly say that my change of fortune has proved one of the greatest blessings of my life. I shall never forget the beautiful smile upon my wife's countenance, when I told her that I was a bankrupt. Said she, "Is that all? I feared from your manner that you had something dreadful to communicate." My misfortunes were not the result of any extravagance in her. On the contrary,

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she had ever been a great economist, and many a yard of nice cambric and muslin sent home by me for her own use has she sold, because, as she said, she would not indulge in luxuries while her husband was ploughing the deep. The first voyage I made after our marriage I put \$600 in her hands and desired her when that was gone to call upon my father for more, as I had left with him a large sum of money for her benefit. When I got home, after an absence of about twenty months, she returned to me from the \$600, \$140 or more, and she had paid house rent and had boarded in Andover a part of the time. A decanter of wine which I had left in the closet, I found in the same spot, and it was about as full as when I left it. After my failure she kept one year an account of her personal expenses, but the sum was so small, only \$7.50, that she thought it not worth while to take the trouble of doing it after that.

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My grandfather's narrative closes with the year 1841 when he was sixty-three years old.

There are incidents that he has not mentioned, which may be of interest; to these I shall refer briefly, then carry the account on to the close of his life.

In 1805 he was one of a number of gentlemen who formed a corporation to build Hamilton Hall, on the corner of Chestnut and Cambridge Streets, for an Assembly hall. Samuel McIntire was the architect.

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Here Lafayette was entertained in 1825 and many other eminent men have been honored guests here, while from its foundation, the culture, wealth and beauty of Salem have gathered here for their choicest festivities.

In 1811 he bought land on Chestnut Street of Benjamin Lander\* between the estates of Thomas Sanders and Samuel Putnam, Esq.,† but he did not build the brick house No. 37 until after the close of the war of 1812 to 1815. I have often heard him say that he watched the workmen with great interest until they reached the top of the chimneys, then he said to them, "Now you may cheat as much as you please."

In the autumn of 1816 he moved into the house with his wife and seven children, four daughters and three sons. On Christmas Eve, 1819, his fourth son and youngest child was born.

In 1824 my grandfather withdrew from the North Church, and with others from that society and the First Church, founded the fourth Unitarian Church in

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\*Son of Benjamin and Sarah Luscomb Lander, born 1768, died 1816.—Essex Inst. Hist. Coll., vol. 3, p. 177.

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†"Samuel Putnam, son of Deacon Gideon Putnam of Danvers, born April 3rd, 1768, died in Somerville, July 3rd, 1853. A prominent lawyer in Salem, afterwards appointed Judge of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts. He married Sarah, daughter of John and Lois Pickering Gool, a niece of Col. Timothy Pickering. He lived in the old Assembly house on Federal Street. In 1833 he removed to Boston."—E. I. Hist. Col., Vol. XV, p. 291.

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Salem, which took the name of the Independent Congregational Society, in Barton Square. The cause of separation was the desire to have Rev. Henry Colman\* for their pastor.

The heavy financial losses in 1826, which my grandfather bore so bravely, fell cruelly on my grandmother's father, Jerathmael Peirce, then in his eightieth year. In 1782 he had built the Colonial house, now No. 80 Federal Street. At that time it was called the New Street, which was laid out across private land from 1765 to 1769, and did not take the name of Federal Street until 1794. At that period the name ended at North Street, the portion between North and Washington Streets was Marlborough, and from Washington to St. Peter Streets was County Street. The change to one name Federal Street, the entire length, was not made until 1853. This house designed by Samuel McIntire was the pride and joy of my great grandfather's heart during the forty-four years that he lived there.

The terraced garden at the back of the house extended to the North River, which at that time was

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\*Rev. Henry Colman, born at Boston, Sept. 12, 1785, graduated from Dartmouth College, 1805. He studied for the ministry, and was ordained at Hingham in 1807. Installed in Salem 1825, and preached there until 1831.

The remainder of his life was devoted to agricultural pursuits. His writings on the subject had an extended circulation. He married in 1807 Mary, daughter of Thomas Harris of Charlestown, Mass. He died at Islington, England, in 1849.—E. I. Hist. Coll., Vol. XV, p. 298.

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deep enough to float his vessels as they returned laden from the East Indies. The warehouse was on the estate at the side of the garden and was removed only a few years ago.

On June 23rd, 1827, the house was sold to Mr. George\* Johonnot, a friend of the family.

Many of the beautiful pieces of furniture, china and silver were scattered, and my great-grandfather with his daughter Betsey went to live with my grandfather, George Nichols, in the western end of the Tontine Block on Warren Street.

Only once after he left his home did he pass it, and on August 20th he died.

In 1835 the great sorrow of my grandfather's life came to him in the death of his wife, on June 22nd of that year, after an illness of a few days.

In September of 1836 he married his sister-in-law, Betsey Peirce, who had had her romance in her youth, but remained unmarried until past middle life.

In 1840 came a great change. Mr. and Mrs. Johonnot, who had bought the house, No. 80 Federal Street, died within a short time of each other, leaving it by

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\*"Mr. George Stuart Johonnot, of Huguenot descent, fourth child of Francis and Mary Johnson Johonnot of Boston. Born Nov. 23rd, 1756; died at Salem, 1839, aged 83 years, a merchant. He married the widow of Joseph Grafton, whose maiden name was Martha Elkins."—New England Hist. and Genealogical Register, Vol. 7, p. 144.

Miss Martha Elkins married first, William Pynchon, son of Judge Pynchon; second, Joseph Grafton, and third, George S. Johonnot. She was the sister of Mrs. Thomas Sanders of Salem.—Ed.

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their wills to my grandfather and grandmother during their lives, and to their four daughters outright after their parents' death.

In 1840 my grandfather made his last move in taking possession of the house where as a young man he had passed so many happy hours, where he married his first wife and where his second wife was born.

He remained in active business until he was on the verge of seventy years, when he relinquished the chief care and responsibility to two of his sons, although he still retained an interest and his name remained at the head of the firm until his death.

He was thus enabled to lead the life of a gentleman of leisure, but he did not lead an idle life; he was a great reader and his garden was an unfailing source of delight and occupation to him.

He gave full scope to his hospitality, and friends were always welcome from far and near.

He was one of the earliest members of the East India Marine Society, having joined it in 1800, and he cherished a love for the institution throughout his life. The Museum of the East India Marine Society was founded in 1799, the requirements for membership being to have doubled the Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn in the capacity of captain or supercargo.

Its treasures were first placed in the third story of the Stearns Building, on the corner of Essex and



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Washington Streets. In 1804, needing larger quarters, they were moved to the second story of the Salem Bank Building, in the rear of buildings just above St. Peter Street, on the opposite side. There they remained until 1824, when the present fine edifice was erected and the second story was ample for its needs. In 1868, when a large number of the members had died, Mr. George Peabody, the London banker, donated a large sum of money to the Museum, and the name was changed to "Peabody Academy of Science," or, as it is now called, "Peabody Museum." Since that time, its quarters have been very much enlarged, the lower story not only being used, but more rooms have been added. Contributions are continually made by friends far and near, and its fame is widespread. But there was an especial artistic charm about the place when I was a child, which has passed with the change to a more scientific arrangement.

When my oldest sister and I were very young nothing pleased us more than to have our grandfather say to us, "Little girls, do you want to go to the Museum?" Of course we always wanted to go, and we started off gaily, each one holding a hand, until we reached the magic door which opened unto so many wonders. There, while our grandfather joined a group of sea captains (for there always seemed to be a group there), my sister and I wandered almost breathlessly around the hall, glad to stay there for hours if we

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were permitted, in spite of the fact that we were in mortal terror of the janitor, Captain Saul, who glided silently about, every now and then saying to us in a sepulchral tone, "Don't make so much noise, little girls," when we had not dared to speak above a whisper.

So the serene, happy years glided on, my grandfather retaining his mental vigor, although physically more delicate as the end of his life approached.

In politics he was always on the liberal side. When the Free Soil party was formed, he joined its ranks, later becoming a Republican. He voted both times for Lincoln, the second time being so feeble it was hard for him to go to the polls, even in a carriage, but throughout his life he always felt it his pleasure as well as his duty to vote.

In 1908 my sister received a business note from a gentleman, in which he stated that he remembered her grandfather, George Nichols, very well, adding "I saw him cast his last vote in 1864 for Lincoln and the people in the ward room gave him three cheers." That was indeed his last vote, as before another year came round he had passed on. He died on the 19th of October, 1865.

The following notice is from The Salem Gazette:

"19th, George Nichols, Esq., 87 years, 3 months, 15 days; having been born July 4th, 1778, being the oldest native born citizen of Salem. A gentleman distin-

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guished alike for purity of character, honorable and conscientious dealing, benevolence of heart, and the faithful discharge of every duty."

MARTHA NICHOLS.

