An Historical Sketch of Ridgefield

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Ridgefield in Colonial Days

QUEEN ANNE'S WAR was raging all along the New England frontier when, in 1708, Ridgefield was born. Only four winters previously had occurred the famous attack of the French and Indians upon Deerfield, Massachusetts, in which fifty-three of the colonists had been killed and more than a hundred dragged into captivity. In the summer that the site of Ridgefield was purchased, Haverhill was attacked and several scores of inhabitants slain. Scarcely a village of the Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire borders escaped a raid by small scalping parties. During much of the war the colony of Connecticut kept 600 men in service, most of them being used on the Massachusetts and New York frontiers, but some at home. In the early part of 1707 Connecticut was much alarmed by the threat of an invasion, and border towns were hurriedly fortified, while a watch was kept on all resident Indians. But these alarms did not check the constant spread of the colonists into new settlements.

Connecticut in 1708 was a province of thirty-six towns, whose whole population did not exceed 20,000. They fairly encircled the site of Ridgefield, Norwalk, to the south, having been settled before 1650, and the hamlet of Danbury, on the north,

having been founded in 1673. A number of people in Norwalk had cast longing eyes upon the higher, drier, and unoccupied region between the two towns. This was the property of the Ramapoo Indians, one of the Hudson Valley tribes which had been driven by Dutch pressure eastward into New England. The site was called, in their tongue, Caudatown, or high-land, in reference to the ridge, rising 800 feet above the sea and extending north and south, along which the present village of Ridgefield is built. It was in May, 1708, that the legislature, answering a petition presented by a group of Norwalk men, gave them permission to buy the site. On September 30, a deed was executed by Katoonah, the sachem of the Ramapoos, by which twenty-nine purchasers paid him £100 for the property. Included among the twenty-nine were men bearing names—as Keeler, Rockwell, Olmstead—which have ever since figured in the history of Ridgefield.

Actual settlement did not take place until after the spring of 1709, when the legislature ordered the tract surveyed and plotted, and granted it to twenty-one of the purchasers, and to four Milford men who had associated themselves in the enterprise. The legislature stipulated that homes must be built within four years, and the proprietors at once fixed upon the long central ridge as the position for the village street. A road six rods wide was here laid out, running north and south along the eastern slope of the ridge. In the middle was left a common plot to afford room for a town hall, schoolhouse, and church. It was a compact settle-

ment. At first there were only twenty-five homesteads, which were placed twelve on one side of the street and thirteen on the other, so that the most distant houses had only five or six others between them and the common. Each householder was allotted two and a half acres abutting on the street, and in the rear an additional plot of five acres, or seven and a half in all. The first assignment of home sites was made by lottery.

The very earliest houses erected may have been mere log cabins, chinked with clay, but it is much more probable that they were made of good boards, timbers, and shingles, well finished though unpainted. Connecticut settlers had a strong attachment to "English houses," and a traveler in 1680 wrote that their homes were "comely for a wilderness." The village soon attracted newcomers from other settlements. In 1715 a second bargain for land was struck with the Indians, and the next year four more sites for houses were granted to colonists. Before 1740 no less than half a dozen purchases had been made from the Ramapoos.

The aspect of Ridgefield in those earliest days was one which visitors to the present trim borough can hardly imagine. The general features of the landscape were, to be sure, the same. Looking to the east from upper casements along the street, the eyes of the inhabitants were carried across the same wide stretch of country as now. If they climbed to the top of the ridge behind and looked west, the villagers saw, three miles away, the same irregular ridge of hill and rock, several hundred feet lower than that on which they stood, called

West Mountain. Beyond this rose in the distance the Highlands which mark the course of the Hudson. From high points on clear days they could look southward fourteen miles to the Sound, stretching for ten leagues, with Long Island blue beyond it. To the east they could sometimes even discern West Rock, near New Haven.

But instead of a landscape diversified by fields, little but shaggy woods and brush were then visible from the ridge. All the valleys about were very wet, and many were impossible of cultivation until they had been drained. The roads in rainy seasons were little better than quagmires. There were a number of small ponds in or near the village which have long since disappeared. The soil was full of rocks, and before it could be tilled, they had to be gathered together; not into the compact, attractive walls now seen, but into rude and unsightly piles and loose fences. Testimony exists that as drainage and tillage advanced, the very climate seemed to improve.

For a generation the town was exceedingly poor. Twice, in 1725 and 1729, probably following partial crop failures, it petitioned the legislature to be exempted from taxes and the petitions were granted. Not until 1743 did the people feel able to erect a town house, which served also as a schoolhouse, though such a building cost far more in labor than in cash. But the soil was naturally good, and when it had been cleared, cornfields, gardens, and pastures flourished. By 1756 Ridgefield had 1,115 inhabitants, and by the Revolution probably well over 1,200, or more than today.

Almost all the structures in Ridgefield dating from Colonial times have been swept away by time. The most notable landmark left is the old Keeler Tavern, a building of two stories and an attic, near the old green and the Congregational Church; it is now the home of Cass Gilbert, the architect. The rearmost portion, with the two white brick chimneys and three dormer windows, is a new addition; but the greater part of this building appears just as it did in King George's day. Especially to be noted are the low railing around part of the roof; the solid shutters of the windows all around the old tavern; the fine old knocker of the side door on the south; the old wooden benches on the porch; the well, originally with a long sweep, and still with the old coping of rough stone surmounted by lattice-work; the stone walks around the tavern; and the stones piled at the side gate into a crude stile for guests to dismount from carriages.

In Titicus Cemetery, reached by a short walk from the centre of the village north on Main Street, may be found the gravestones of some of the oldest settlers. The oldest legible inscription shows that—

HERE LYES BURIED
THE BODY OF YE REV.
MR. THOMAS HAULEY
PASTOR OF YE CHURCH
AT RIDGEFIELD. HE DIED
NOV. YE 8TH, 1738
AGED 49 YEARS

Beside him lies Mrs. Abigail Hauley, "relict" of the first minister, who died in 1749. In the same part of the graveyard are the graves of several veterans of the old French wars; among them Lieut. Joseph Hawley, who died in 1749; Capt. Joseph Hawley, who died in 1765; and Lieut. Josiah Stebbins, who died in 1767. Some of the stones of the Stebbins, Walless, and Saint John families are fine examples of Colonial handiwork.

Ridgefield in the Revolution

Connecticut has not a dozen towns which can boast of Revolutionary battlefields, or rather skirmish-grounds, and Ridgefield lays title to one of the most interesting. It was within her borders that one of the State's three first Revolutionary generals (Putnam, Wooster, and Spencer) met his death—its best known sacrifice apart from Nathan Hale.

Ridgefield was one of the few towns in Connecticut which was reluctant to enter the Revolution. It is possible that it was influenced to take this attitude by its Congregational minister, the Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll, who had served as a chaplain with the Colonial troops in the French and Indian War, and whose brother Jared was one of the noted Tories of the province. There was a considerable knot of Episcopalians in Ridgefield, Anglican services having been held there as early as 1725 by Dr. Samuel Johnson, the founder of King's College, and as beyond doubt most of them

were disposed to be Loyalists, they may have swayed the town. At any rate, on January 30, 1775, less than three months before Lexington, the town-meeting voted its disapproval of the acts of the Continental Congress. In particular, it refused to subscribe to the non-importation agreement or "Association," declaring it "dangerous and hurtfull," unconstitutional, subversive of the real liberties of the Colony, and an encouragement to licentiousness. The town reaffirmed, instead, the right of the Crown and Parliament to govern every part of the British Empire. In March the legislature took notice of the fact that Ridgefield and Newtown had published resolutions "injurious to the rights of this Colony" and appointed a committee to ascertain in how far they have been influenced by "any persons holding commissions under this government."

A tradition persisted long after the Revolution that at least one Tory in the town had been silenced by tarring and feathering. On December 17, 1775, when Connecticut troops had played their part in expelling the British forces from Boston, the town meeting reversed its attitude and approved the "Association." Nor did Ridgefield take a lesser part than other towns of equal resources in the war. Capt. Gamaliel Northrop raised a company of 64 men, and a number of Ridgefield recruits served in another under Captain Daniel Olmstead. The town voted each soldier £6 a year, and appointed a committee to see that the families of men in the service were not neglected.

The year of the three gallows, as Tories called

1777, was that in which Ridgefield and her neighbor, Danbury, had their bitter taste of the realities of war. Washington had retreated through New Jersey toward Philadelphia, taking with him a large part of Connecticut's fighting men; and the British forces in New York conceived the idea of a descent upon some of Governor Trumbull's provision-depots. One of the chief of these was located at Danbury. For some time British vessels had landed parties on the coasts, which did their chief damage to chicken-roosts and farmers' herds.

On April 25, 1777, General Tryon, the one-time Governor of New York and North Carolina, was dispatched with 1,800 men and a body of dragoons up Long Island Sound, reaching Saugatuck, where the river of that name empties into the Sound a little beyond East Norwalk, late in the afternoon. Debarkation was finished at ten o'clock that night, and the column at once set out northward for Danbury, its route carrying it well to the east of the Saugatuck River. Early on the afternoon of Saturday, April 26, the British reached their destination, in a pouring rain. They found the stores much more extensive than they had expected, and the task of burning them or otherwise destroying them harder. One British report, which was somewhat exaggerated, speaks of 4,000 barrels of beef and pork, 1,000 barrels of flour, 100 hogsheads of sugar, 89 barrels of rice, 1,020 tents, 120 puncheons of rum, 30 pipes of wine, and much grain. According to later Yankee stories (no contemporary account mentions it) a good many British troops were temporarily disabled by the rum and

wine, but this in turn was probably an exaggeration. All afternoon and into the night the work of destruction went on, and more remained to be done the next morning, which was Sunday. Along with the stores, a number of houses, shops, and barns, and the Congregational Church, were put to the torch.

The Connecticut militia had begun to collect within a few hours after Tryon began his landing, and word was sent to Continental detachments. In the afternoon of Saturday, the 26th, Major-General David Wooster, and Brigadier-Generals G. S. Silliman and Benedict Arnold, brought together a force of some 600 at Reading, and set out after Tryon. Hampered by the rain, they did not reach Bethel, three miles below Danbury, until 11 o'clock at night, the men exhausted and their arms useless from the wet. That night they stayed within sight of the flames in Danbury. On Sunday morning Tryon decided not to march back by the way he had come, but to take a more westerly road to the Sound through Ridgefield. His intention was known to the Americans a few minutes after he started, which was before nine o'clock.

Wooster, who was in command, divided his force, sending 400 men under Arnold and Silliman to hold a position in front of the British at Ridgefield, and taking 200 men himself to fall in behind them and attack them simultaneously in the rear. Both the American forces had time to execute the movement, for the rain had recommenced, and the British, who had six three-pounder cannon with them, moved slowly. Wooster showed great energy.

When the enemy were only a few miles from Danbury he struck their rear at a place where it was particularly exposed, threw it into confusion, and took a score of prisoners—not forty, as most later accounts say. The British continued steadily southward, marching in column with three fieldpieces in front and three behind, and with strong guards thrown out on both flanks to protect them against an ambuscade. At eleven o'clock, at a point two miles north of the centre of Ridgefield village, Wooster made his second attack upon the rear-guard, and this time found it better prepared.

The fieldpieces were hastily brought into position, and grapeshot was discharged at the patriots, causing them to waver. Wooster, who was mounted, rose in his stirrups and partly turned, shouting to encourage his men, when a musket ball struck him in the spine, and passed through his body. He was mortally wounded. His men retreated, making a stretcher for him out of his broad sash, and the engagement thus ended in favor of the British.

Meanwhile, Arnold and Silliman had hurried their force into Ridgefield, where they were joined by 100 additional troops, making 500 in all. Arnold posted this body in a line cutting across the main street, his right flank being partly covered by buildings, and his left by a ledge of rock. A hasty barricade was thrown up on the road. The British column approached at noon, discharged its cannon without much effect, and unwilling to waste time, came on within musket shot. With only one-fourth the numbers of the enemy, the Americans made a smart resistance, and in their own words "acted

with great spirit." They were not forced from their breastwork until they had been outflanked, and then they made off in good order through a shower of grape and musketry. Arnold had a horse shot under him when the enemy was within thirty feet, but extricated himself, and with his pistol killed a soldier advancing to bayonet him.

Though the Americans kept up a scattering fire from a distance for some hours, the village now lay open to the British. The enemy marched into it, most of the inhabitants having fled during the battle. Here, as in Danbury, supplies had been stored in the Episcopal Church, and it was fired by Tryon's orders, while five dwellings were also burned. The British having heard that Keeler's Tavern was used as a manufactory for bullets, fired several rounds from the cannon into it, and applied the match; but a Tory next door found that the sparks would endanger his own dwelling and received permission to quench the flames. When Keeler returned, this neighbor remarked: "You may thank me that your house is safe." "No, sir," vociferated Keeler, surveying the ruins of other dwellings, "I will not thank a Tory for anything. I thank the Lord for the north wind."

In the fight with Arnold the British had suffered heavily, losing sixteen killed to the American's eight. To care for their wounded, Tryon now encamped on an eminence just south of the village, and when darkness fell burned another house as a signal to his ships on the Sound that he was homeward bound. The next morning they recommenced their march, soon crossing to the east bank of the

Saugatuck again. Arnold's forces followed them along the west bank, and before the enemy embarked for New York another sharp skirmish was fought.

Upon the whole, this British raid was more of a success than the Americans cared to confess. It completely effected its object, the destruction of valuable Continental stores. In the fighting at Danbury—where four Americans were killed—at Ridgefield, and on the Sound, the losses were not far from even. The patriots admitted sixty killed and wounded, among those who lost their lives being Lieutenant-Colonel Gould and four lieutenants, as well as General Wooster. On both sides there was a good deal of boasting, which has obscured the real facts. Thus the New York *Gazette* of May 5, for the British, described the encounter at Ridgefield as one quite inglorious to the American force. "At nine o'clock," it says of Tryon's force on Sunday morning when it had finished its work at Danbury, "they began their march back to the shipping, and proceeded without interruption until they approached Ridgefield, when they found a body of rebels under the command of Mr. Arnold, who had fortified the entrance of the town, which they carried after small opposition, with considerable loss on the side of the rebels; the rear repulsing another body, who attacked them at the same time, under Mr. Wooster. The troops continued their march next morning at 4 o'clock, the rebels firing on their flanks and rear, but from such a distance as to do them little injury."

Quite different the tone and the assertions of

the news-story which appeared in the Boston *Gazette* of the same date. It is worth extracting in full.

Boston, May 5.

The following Account of the late Affair at Danbury we receiv'd from a Gentleman who came thro' that Town the Middle of last Week, and arrived here last Saturday Evening, viz. That on Friday Afternoon the 25th ult. about 2,000 of the Enemy landed at a Place called Compoo, about 6 miles from Fairfield. That the next Day they marched to Danbury, where were the following Stores belonging to the Continent, viz., 1600 Barrels of Pork and Beef, 600 Barrels of Flour, 15 Bales of Clothes, and about 1630 Tents, which they destroyed, and also burnt 16 Houses.—That the Day following they marched to Ridgely, and from thence to Ridgefield, where they also burnt six Houses; at this Place a Skirmish happened between a Body of our Men and the Enemy, in which we lost 6 Men killed and the Enemy 34, when they retreated. That on their Retreat our People came up with them again near Compoo, when a second Skirmish happened, in which we had only a few wounded, but the Enemy lost several. That the whole loss of the Provincials did not exceed 8 killed, and about 14 wounded; but that of the Enemy, in killed, wounded, and Prisoners, to between 80 and 100, 19 of the Prisoners were at Danbury when our informant came through. The Enemy reimbarked last Monday Afternoon, and set sail for New York. General Wooster of the Provincials is badly wounded, and General Arnold had his Horse shot under him.

Ridgefield's property loss was severe. The selectmen petitioned the legislature for aid, and the next spring a legislative committee reported that the British "did in their mereiless rage consume with fire about six dwelling houses, with sundry barns, a cornmill, and other buildings, together with a large quantity of household goods,

cloathing, provisions, etc., belonging to individuals, amounting to the sum of £2,625.1.8 at the time when destroyed." This damage was nearly one-sixth that suffered by the much larger and richer town of Danbury. Some of the inhabitants were reduced to penury. The legislature, following its rule of reimbursing towns for one-fourth the loss suffered, granted Ridgefield more than £600.

When the Revolution ended Ridgefield welcomed home a number of sons who had made notable careers in the war. Jeremiah Keeler during a considerable part of it was an orderly sergeant under Lafayette, who presented him with a sword; he had fought at Monmouth and Yorktown. His brother, Lieutenant Thaddaus Keeler, enlisted in July, 1775, and served until the end of the conflict. Lieutenant Joshua King, of Colonel Sheldon's light dragoons, was in charge of the guard over Major André when the latter was lodged at South Salem, a few miles distant from Ridgefield, a prisoner. At the end of the war Lieutenant King became a merchant in Ridgefield. Philip Burr Bradley, who had come to Ridgefield in 1759, was made colonel of the Fifth Connecticut Regiment on January 1, 1777, and during the war had some acquaintance with Washington.

The central point of Arnold's skirmish line when he met Tryon, on Main Street, five minutes' walk north of "The Elms" and library, is marked by a stone placed there long after. The line of battle extended to right and left for probably an eighth of a mile on the north and more than that distance

on the south. By walking or driving two miles north of the centre of the village, as marked by the Congregational Church, the visitor will find himself in the approximate spot where the second encounter between Wooster and the British took place. A walk a mile south of the Congregational Church will bring him to the hillock atop of which the British encamped the night after the skirmish. The spot where Arnold's horse was shot under him is fixed by tradition at the tamarack tree near the residence of Mr. G. H. Newton.

In the north wall of the Keeler Tavern is preserved one of the cannon-balls fired into it by the British. It lodged near the third window from the road, a few inches to the west of the window-frame; it is covered by a shingle, which can easily be pulled out. The stone marking the skirmish-line on Main Street recites that—

IN DEFENCE OF AMER. INDEPENDENCE
AT THE BATTLE OF RIDGEFIELD
APRIL 27, 1777,
DIED
EIGHT PATRIOTS,
WHO WERE LAID IN THESE GROUNDS
COMPANIONED BY SIXTEEN BRITISH SOLDIERS

but there is nothing to indicate the exact position of the graves.

Congress at an early date passed an act for the erection of a monument to General Wooster; but this was not done until 1854, when a column of Portland granite, forty feet in height, was unveiled,

with appropriate exercises, in Danbury. Wooster is represented in relief on one side, falling from his horse under the British fire, and the column is topped by a globe, on which stands the American eagle. The inscription runs:

DAVID WOOSTER,
FIRST MAJOR-GENERAL OF THE CONNECTICUT TROOPS
IN THE ARMY OF THE REVOLUTION;
BRIGADIER-GENERAL OF THE UNITED COLONIES.
BORN AT HARTFORD, MARCH 2, 1710 OR 11;
WOUNDED AT RIDGEFIELD, APRIL 27, 1777, WHILE
DEFENDING THE LIBERTIES OF AMERICA,
AND NOBLY DIED AT DANBURY,
MAY 2, 1777.

One of the most attractive homes on Main Street is the old Deacon Hawley house, "where," we are told, "many of the patriots gathered in the first days of the nation." The houses of Colonel Philip Burr Bradley and Thomas Hawley, who both fought in the Revolution, have been rebuilt and enlarged. The estate of Lieutenant Joshua King was still in the hands of the King family till recently, but the house has disappeared.

Ridgefield's Greatest Literary Son

Two generations ago Ridgefield was sufficiently identified to every American if it was named as

the birthplace of "Peter Parley," or Samuel Griswold Goodrich. He has few readers today, but he deserves to be remembered as the most prodigious literary hack of his time—he boasted that he wrote or edited 170 volumes—and as author of one picture of old New England, his "Recollections," that is without a rival for the period of which it treats.

"Peter Parley" was the son of the third of the Congregational ministers of Ridgefield, and was born in 1793 in a house on Main Street long since destroyed. His father, like all village clergymen, tilled a small farm, one of some forty acres; for he was paid only £120, or $400, a year, and he had a family of ten children, of whom "Peter Parley" was the sixth. He pruned his own fruit trees, cut his own corn and later shelled the ears by drawing them over the handle of a frying pan, helped the hired men in the hayfields, and tended his four cows, two horses, and two dozen sheep; while he found time not only to preach two sermons each week, but to visit the sick, attend funerals, and perform other pastoral duties.

Young Goodrich was largely self-taught He attended an old dame's school in West Lane, and in later life, when asked where he had been graduated, was in the habit of replying, "From West Lane"; his hearers usually taking this to mean either Lane Seminary or some obscure college. Here Aunt Delight taught him during the summer months, until a little later he went on to the principal village school on Main Street, where the curriculum was as narrow as the discipline was severe. His father taught some private pupils preparing

for college, but Samuel did not share this instruction. He read widely, however, from "Robinson Crusoe" and Mme. de Genlis's "Tales of the Castle," to Hannah More's "Moral Repository." That he was a preternaturally sober child appears from the fact that Mrs. More's work, and especially "The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain," he devoured with delight, while he turned in pained disappointment from stories of fairies and giants.

The literary bent of "Peter Parley" was confirmed after he went in 1808 to Danbury to clerk in a country store kept by his brother-in-law. The work was ungrateful, but his employer was a graduate of Yale, and threw Goodrich into contact with some of the most cultivated residents of Danbury—Judge Cooke, who had succeeded to Wooster's command when the latter was killed in Ridgefield; Squire Hatch, the leading lawyer; and so on. From here he proceeded, in 1811, to Hartford, where he was installed as clerk in first one drygoods store and then another. His uncle, Chauncey Goodrich, who lived in the same town, was a United States Senator, and once more the boy was able to meet some of the best minds in a town which had been given literary reputation by the "Hartford Wits." Here he lived during the larger part of the War of 1812, a conflict execrated in Connecticut, and here he served for a time in the militia. The war destroyed the drygoods trade, and to support himself he started, in the fall of 1814, a pocketbook manufactory, which the peace in turn soon made unprofitable. Then, his best friend having set up in Hartford a business as bookseller and publisher,

Goodrich joined him, and found himself fairly launched upon his career.

They were ambitious, and in their first two years published, among other works, Scott's "Family Bible," in five quarto volumes. The partner died, but Goodrich carried on and expanded the business. At this time all American publishers relied principally upon the reprinting of English books, and Goodrich was no exception. He took especial pride in his edition of the Waverley novels, for example. But he ventured before 1820 to publish a two-volume edition of the poems of Trumbull, who had theretofore sought in vain for someone to bring out the full collection; and though Goodrich lost the thousand dollars he paid Trumbull for the copyright, he did not regret the enterprise.

Still greater energy and originality was displayed by Goodrich when he began entering the neglected field of schoolbooks, being convinced that there was need for their improvement. "I wrote, myself, a small arithmetic, and half a dozen toy-books, and published them," he tells us. "I also employed several persons to write school histories, and educational manuals of chemistry, natural philosophy, etc., upon plans which I prescribed—all of which I published." Among these texts was the first popular school history of the United States ever written, the subject then being little taught in our common schools, the author of which was his brother, C. A. Goodrich, a Yale graduate. Another was a fresher and better treatment of geography than had been theretofore available. It became a prime favorite, and millions of schoolboys

first learned from it that, as it expressed the fact,

> The world is round, and like a ball,
> Seems swinging in the air.

Goodrich's greatest service to pure literature was performed when, in 1828 — having removed his business to Boston two years previously—he began to publish an illustrated annual, the *Token*, which he edited (save for one year) thereafter until 1842, frequently himself contributing. It was one of the earliest of the once-familiar annuals, having been preceded only by Carey and Lea's *Atlantic Souvenir* in Philadelphia; and Nathaniel Hawthorne pronounced it the best—"a sort of hothouse, where native flowers were made to bloom like exotics." These publications were a distinct commercial success, and they could pay as much as $50 a page for poetry, a price then stupendous. The *Token* contained both literary contributions and engravings of high merit. Hawthorne published a number of his "Twice-Told Tales" there, and the other contributors included Longfellow, Edward Everett, John Adams, Willis Gaylord Clark, N. P. Willis, J. T. Fields, Horace Greeley, and Mrs. Sigourney. Certain volumes, as those for 1836 and 1840, were so good that they were widely pirated, and sold all over the country, the former in at least ten reissues. Goodrich became a figure of importance in the literary world. "A gentleman of many excellent qualities, although a publisher," wrote Hawthorne.

Hawthorne, indeed, owed Goodrich a heavy debt, which he frankly acknowledged, for encouragement while he was still totally unknown. Goodrich saw the romancer's first sketches when they were

published anonymously, and inquired concerning their authorship, thus bringing about a correspondence. Finding Hawthorne dejected by the failure of his early productions, he says, "I combated his despondency, and assured him of triumph, if he would persevere in a literary career." Most of Hawthorne's tales in the *Token* passed unnoticed, while the flashy contributions of N. P. Willis were received with general applause. Annoyed by this, Goodrich took the pains to write several articles for the press, directing attention to Hawthorne's merits, while he also called them to the notice of some of his personal acquaintances. In 1837 he urged Hawthorne to publish a volume, and helped him find a firm to issue "Twice Told Tales," Goodrich himself having in the meantime ceased to bring out books; he joined with one of Hawthorne's friends in a bond guaranteeing the publishers against loss.

But Goodrich is not chiefly remembered for any connection with pure literature. One of his convictions, on which he built his greatest reputation, was that there was a lamentable dearth of good books for children in America. Much of Mother Goose seemed to him "coarse, vulgar, offensive," while "Jack, the Giant Killer," and the various tales or ogres and wizards, he felt, reeked with murder and other criminality. The silly nonsense jingles, in his opinion, ought to be replaced by simple verses embodying rational ideas and teaching a plain moral, be it only that toads should never be stoned to death, nor haymows set on fire. Monstrous tales like "Puss in Boots" should be

replaced by lessons in history, science, and art, dressed in the most interesting narrative form.

Goodrich's idea was not wholly original. It had already been applied in England by Maria Edgeworth and Mrs. Barbauld, whose Little Charles of the Reading Book won the right to listen to stories by counting nicely and stroking the pussy-cat. But it was remarkably successful. In 1827 he made a timid venture by publishing "The Tales of Peter Parley About Americe." For a few months nothing was heard of it; then the press began to notice it, and within the year it was selling widely. In 1828 Goodrich published "Peter Parley's Tales About Europe," and then came his "Winter Evening Tales," "Juvenile Tales," and his "Asia, Africa, Sun, Moon, and Stars." The orders became an increasing avalanche. Goodrich relates that—

> I gave myself up wholly for about four years—that is, from 1828 to 1832—to authorship, generally writing fourteen hours a day. A part of the time I was entirely unable to read, and could write but little, on account of the weakness of my eyes. In my larger publications, I employed persons to block out work for me; this was read to me, and then I put it into style, generally writing by dictation, my wife being my amanuensis. Thus embarrassed, I still, by dint of incessant toil, produced five or six volumes a year, mostly small, but some of larger compass.

After a trip to Europe in 1832 for medical advice—his second journey thither—Goodrich resumed his pen. His stories became almost as popular in England as in America. One answer sometimes made to the old taunt, "What man in England ever reads an American book?" was to reply, "What child in England does not read Peter Par-

ley?" Imitators at home and in Great Britain tried to steal his name. "Peter Parley" became wealthy, noted, and petted. When he traveled into sections of the country where he was a stranger, ceremonial receptions were extended him.

He sat in the Massachusetts House in 1836, and the State Senate the following year. In 1851 he was sent by President Fillmore to Paris as the American consul there, holding the position more than two years, and seizing the opportunity, with his characteristic enterprise, to publish some of his books in French. But until shortly before his death in New York in 1860 he continued to write, or to compile with the aid of others, his Peter Parley tales. Of the 170 volumes published with his name, he boasted in 1857 of having sold seven million copies, and that they were still selling at the rate of 300,000 copies annually.

On High Ridge Avenue still stands the house of "Peter Parley's" boyhood. It was begun late in 1796, a Ridgefield tradition preserved for many years being that the cellar was dug by a community "bee" on Christmas Day. Goodrich's father, the minister, was able to remove his family thither during 1797. For that early day the house, at first distinguished from the generality of weatherbeaten home by a coat of white paint in front and red behind, was regarded as spacious and beautiful, and is now an interesting specimen of the older architecture.

It is a clapboarded structure, in part of three stories. With its latticed porches, one of them covered by a projecting wing of the second story,

its low-sloping roof, set off by high brick chimnies, its long ell stretching back in the rear, its quaint corners, and its high shade trees, it looks homelike and comfortable. A particularly attractive porch runs along the whole side of the ell, and is flanked by a wooden parapet two feet high. The walks in front are of modern brick; those at the rear, of the original stone, as are the steps. The house is just below the very crest of the ridge, so that it escapes the winds but commands views as extensive as any in Ridgefield. Those to the west, overlooking West Mountain and the rolling hills beyond, are particularly fine.

Ridgefield Life in Federalist Days

No picture of a New England village in early republican times excels in fulness and graphic quality that which Goodrich drew of Ridgefield in his "Recollections," published only three years before his death. He regarded his birthplace, which he revisited during the composition of the book, as typical of old New England, and wrote of it with loquacious delight. In fiction the New England town has been treated with more literary art and greater interpretive faculty; but no reminiscences —not those Lyman Beecher wrote of his life in North Guilford, Conn., or Lucy Larcom of hers in Beverly and Lowell, Mass., or E. E. Hale of his in Boston when Boston was a very small city—are quite so comprehensive as Goodrich's.

Ridgefield when Goodrich was born was a village

of more than 200 families, and every family was self-dependent to a degree now hardly credible. With a few exceptions, all tilled the soil. Most of the food was home-grown. There was no baker; every family made its own bread of rye, mixed with Indian meal, its own pies and cakes. No grocery supplied soap or candles, for they also were made at home. Most of the sugar was bought, but a considerable supply was obtained from the Ridgefield maples, tapped every March and April. Every housewife knew how to break curds and press cheeses as well as she knew how to churn. Home-made utensils, from wooden trenchers and splint brooms to spinning-wheels, abounded.

Wool and flax were home-grown, home-dressed, and home-spun; but their weaving was left to an itinerant workman, who set up his hand-loom in the ell or attic, and threw his shuttle till the needed stock of cloth had been made. Such weavers were traveling newspapers, welcomed for their gossip. Most of the women's and children's garments, though not all, for there were milliners and mantua makers in those days, were made at home; and the idea of purchasing hose or other knitted garments would have seemed preposterous to any housewife. The best clothing of the men, however, was entrusted to a traveling tailor who came winter and spring, and whose operations were called "whipping the cat." Each family sent its own calfskins and cowskins to the local tanner to be made into leather, and kept the leather ready for the shoemaker, who came with his bench, lapstone, and awls when wanted.

A few of the houses in Ridgefield were then made of the plentiful stone, that of even "Old Chichester," one remove better than a pauper, being so constructed; the remainder were plain frame structures. All furniture was simple and substantial. There were no carpets, and only a few families had home-made rugs in the sitting-room and parlors. The curtains were of calico. The chairs, sometimes rush-bottomed, and the tables, were likely to have been made by Deacon Hawley, the village cabinet-maker. Every house had its large four-poster beds, and the matron took pride in equally large mattresses, stuffed with goose feathers, and in linen which, though home-spun and home-bleached, was snow white. The village had its share of mahogany chests of drawers and sideboards, but there were few articles of luxury anywhere in it beyond plain mahogany mirrors. Probably in not a few homes the most valuable single pieces of furniture were the brass and copper pots and kettles of the kitchen.

The centre of each house for more than half the year was the kitchen fireplace, which each family replenished from its own woodlot of hickory, chestnut, oak, and ash. At dawn each day in winter began the building of the fire, a genuine architectural achievement: the backlog first, five feet long and as much as two feet in diameter on occasion; then a toplog, then a middle-stick, and finally a fore-stick, with kindling in the interstices and smaller wood piled atop. If the fire had died during the night and the neighbors had no coals, a spark had to be struck with flint, steel, and tinder. There-

after, in bitter weather, it required the almost constant attendance of one member of the family to keep the fire fed and blazing. An ordinary fireplace was six feet wide and four feet high, and it needs hardly to be added that the size of the woodpile near each house was one indication of the wealth and rank of the owner.

Cellars were in those days an equally indispensable part of dwellings, and November found them regularly stuffed with provender and potables. The usual family, which meant one of at least a half-dozen children, required a half-dozen barrels of salt beef and pork, in addition to sundry quarters of "hung" beef, smoked in the vast chimney corner. A dozen barrels of cider, the universal drink, even for children, were placed at hand, and bins were filled with vegetables. In the attic the rafters were garnished with dried herbs, including fennel, a sovereign antidote for sleepiness in church, and the floor was covered with dried pumpkin, dried apples, and other fruits. A modern dinner table would groan to look at a breakfast table of 1810, and Goodrich leaves no doubt that larders were kept full.

There is evidence that Ridgefield had fully as great a variety of amusements as most New England villages. Funerals, though hardly appealing to youngsters, were a diversion for adults. Thanksgiving and training day, the latter marked by much manœuvring, a few general volleys, and a contest between rival drummers, came each once a year. Dances, whether at private homes or taverns, were in no wise deemed ungodly, partly because they

bore no resemblance to modern dances. Singing meetings to practice church music interested most of the young people in winter. But for boys in especial, outdoor sports were the principal diversions. Besides sleighing, skating, and nutting, there were certain pursuits which are now unknown in New England. The passenger pigeons moved back and forth over Connecticut like a yearly tide, the flocks every autumn covering West Mountain in tens of thousands. The Ridgefield boys and their elders would spread snares in the bushes, plant decoy pigeons to call down the passing flocks, and when they sprang their traps would often find fifty to one hundred pigeons struggling in a single net.

"Tavern-haunting," says Goodrich, was then common in winter, the farmers repairing nightly to a common centre for talk and drink. Liquor was not regarded as it came to be when in the early seventies the town voted "no license." Everybody drank rum, and no day laborer felt well treated if a half-pint was not served out to him. Rich and poor families alike offered it to all gentlemen who called. "Women," writes Goodrich, "took their schnapps, then named Hopkins' Elixir, which was the most delicious and seductive means of getting tipsy that has been invented. Crying babies were silenced with hot toddy, then esteemed an infallible remedy for wind on the stomach. Every man imbibed his morning dram, and this was esteemed temperance." At this time, when the cinders and blackened fragments of glass from one of the houses burnt by Tryon were still pointed out on Main Street, old veterans were ready at the tavern

to tell how they had seen Putnam or Washington, and had fought at Harlem or Monmouth. One tottering fellow, who could never be broken of the habit of hurrahing for King George, had seen service in two of the wars with the French.

The chief inn of Ridgefield was the Keeler Tavern, dating far back of the Revolution, and known by everyone who, passing from Boston to New York, or making shorter trips, had occasion to use the Danbury-Hartford-Worcester road, for it was a favorite stopping-place at night. Here, as a hitching post, was stuck upside down a four-pounder fieldpiece which had figured in the battle of 1777. The room at the southwest corner of this building was the bar, where stingaree, sillebut, toddy, and other drinks could be called for. To the east of it was the dining-room, where roast beef, cooked on a spit, was supplemented by pork, geese, and game in season, and where along with dishes still familiar, others were served which are now rare, like pumpkin cake and pan dowdy.

When Goodrich was but eleven years old he saw Jerome Bonaparte and the young Baltimore bride whom Bonaparte afterwards so basely abandoned dash up to the Keeler Tavern in a coach and four. The coach alone was a rare sight, for in all Ridgefield and the country about there was no vehicle larger than a topless chaise, and in 1800 but one of these, the property of Colonel Bradley. But Bonaparte, his brother then being the centre of the world, was a man whose arrival excited Ridgefield as nothing since Tryon's visit had excited it. Upon another occasion Oliver Wolcott rode up on horse-

back at the tavern late one Saturday evening. Wolcott had known all the Revolutionary leaders, had served as Secretary of the Treasury under Washington, and was at this time president of a bank in New York; and as one of the most eminent of Federalists he was regarded with high respect by all Connecticut people save a few rascally Democrats. He pursued his travels the next day, stating that he was on public business and could not tarry after the morning service; this conduct scandalizing Deacon Olmstead, who shook his white locks and denounced the desecration of the Sabbath. Beyond doubt Wolcott's later conduct, including his support of the wicked war of 1812 and his acceptance of the governorship from the Democrats, was held by Ridgefield to justify all that Deacon Olmstead said of his godlessness.

Early in the century the Danbury-New York stage passed southward through Ridgefield every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and the return stage from New York every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. The fare from Danbury to Ridgefield was 55 cents, or about as much as a laborer could earn by a day's work; that from Ridgefield to New York was $2.90. The stage was accustomed to leave New York with six horses, to drop two of them at White Plains, where the passengers had thinned out, and unless there was an unusual load, to leave two more at Northeastle, below Ridgefield. By leaving New York at four in the morning it was possible to reach the Keeler Tavern slightly before six in the evening.

At that time, of course, the life of the village

was wholly centred in its churches, and almost wholly in one of them. The Congregational meeting-house stood not far from its present site, in the centre of the green which has since disappeared. This was the second of the denomination's edifices in the town, and with its graceful spire and fine Colonial outline was a possession worth cherishing. It had a bell—Ensign Keeler, who had served in the army throughout the war, was bell-ringer—and a choir, but it was innocent of organ or stove. Women and children were allowed in mid-winter to bring foot-stoves to the church to mitigate the cold during the hour-long sermon, for the wind whistled through a score of cracks; but had any man, even the venerable Deacon Olmstead and Granther Baldwin, used them, they would have been indelibly disgraced. The pine pews were unpainted; the rough oaken floor was uncarpeted. Not for nearly two decades after the beginning of the century was the battle over the introduction of stoves to begin to rage in Connecticut.

The church choir was divided into four parts, on three sides of the meeting-house gallery. The tenor voices, led by Deacon Hawley with a home-made pitch-pipe, were ranged in front of the pulpit; the treble and counter were on the right, and the bass voices on the left. Fuging tunes were sung with gusto:

Bass: Long for a cooling . . .
Tenor: Long for a cooling . . .
Treble: Long for a cooling . . .
Counter, with swing and vigor:
Long for a cooling stream at hand,
And they must drink or die.

In general congregational singing, the paucity of hymnbooks sometimes made it necessary to resort to the "deaconing" of the hymn; that is, the deacon would "line out" two verses, and the singers go through them.

The Episcopal Church, now housed with such dignity, then had its home in a small brown structure on Main Street—on the site of the present building—sometimes called the Episcopal Church, and sometimes the Episcopal Barn. It had never counted many communicants in Ridgefield, Anglicanism having been nearly confined to the large towns of Connecticut; and its first building had been lost in the war. The post-Revolutionary pastor, a Dr. Perry, had retired from the pulpit when he found that his sermons, being tinctured by his political views, were exposing him to the danger of being expelled from town. In Goodrich's childhood services were held only a few times each year, at which times the dozen Episcopalians were augmented by a flock of people eager to hear the strange ritual. The Methodists made few converts in Ridgefield until a Dr. Baker became a supporter of the sect, and began to hold meetings in his kitchen. Great success attended these gatherings. The Congregationalists grew deeply alarmed, fearing loss of many of their flock, and the deacons were called into a solemn conference with the father of "Peter Parley." In a sudden access of zeal, the church members paid up the lagging salary of the Rev. Mr. Goodrich, and furnished him the twenty cords of wood which they were supposed to bring annually, but had seldom supplied. In the

end, neither of the older churches was injured; while the Methodists "converted a large number of the idle, dissipated, and irreligious, who had become, like Ephraim of old, so joined to idols that there seemed no other way than to let them alone."

In Ridgefield, as in other towns, politics were taken with the grimmest seriousness. The leader of the Federalists was Colonel Bradley, who was appointed Marshal of the District of Connecticut by Washington, and was also at one time county judge. He was a cold, austere man, an aristocrat from head to heel, and a devout churchman, but withal had not a little capacity for secret political management. Over against him as Democratic leader stood Joshua King, who was respected far more than the generality of such leaders in Connecticut. Nearly all men of substance were Federalists, while to the Democratic standard there rallied—says Goodrich—"men of blemished reputation, tipplers, persons of irregular tempers, odd people, those who were constitutionally upsetters, destructives, come-outers." A staunch Congregationalist minister like the Rev. Mr. Goodrich, who believed implicitly in the "standing order" in Connecticut, in the good old intimacy between church and government, saw with agony the steady rise of the Democratic tide and of hostility to the ecclesiastical establishment. But "Peter Parley" left Ridgefield long before that tide engulfed Connecticut, giving the State a new Constitution and a new political and social order.

Ridgefield was on the whole a favorable specimen of the New England village of that date. The population was purely English in extraction, there

being not even an Irish servant. Crime was not wholly absent—Goodrich says that "drunkenness, profane swearing, Sabbath-breaking, noisy night-rows . . . were common"—but serious crime was rare, and high character was the rule. A public library was maintained, containing some two hundred volumes; and in addition to the Rev. Mr. Goodrich's private classes, an academy was established early in the century. Not much time was spared by the townspeople for books, but when they were opened they were read thoughtfully. There were not more than three newspaper subscribers in the whole town, and stray copies were handed about to be perused with care; but the constant stream of travelers between New York and Hartford kept the villagers acquainted with recent events. Congressmen from New England used to come through regularly on their saddle-horses, bound for Washington, and Goodrich vividly remembered seeing Timothy Pickering on one of these journeys.

Soon after the beginning of the century a small manufactory was actually set up in the village. Jesse J. Skellinger, an Englishman skilled in making chaises, took up his residence there, and produced his first vehicle in the Goodrich barn, of oak and ash seasoned to last as long as the shay which Holmes celebrated. Skellinger was then engaged by Deacon Hawley, the cabinet-maker, and Ridgefield shortly became noted for the good appearance and quality of its chaises.

Ridgefield's Later History

The later history of Ridgefield is in the main that of the development of a summer resort, and of a residential colony where, winter and summer, citizens of New York and other cities can find quiet and recreation. Early in the century families in the seashore towns, as Norwalk, Stamford, and Bridgeport, formed the habit of visiting Ridgefield for the advantages and change which its elevation gave. Its attractions grew much better known after 1852, the year in which trains were first run from Norwalk to Danbury on the newly completed line which is now part of the Danbury and Berkshire division of the New Haven. All the beautiful spots of the region were becoming well advertised by the time of the Civil War. In 1860 an enterprising citizen of Danbury saw the opportunity to make Lake Kenosia, in that town, a summer centre and built the Kenosia Hotel on its shores.

After the opening of the Norwalk-Danbury railway, it was possible to reach Ridgefield from the former town within less than two hours, the journey requiring forty minutes on the railway and a little longer by stage-coach from the junction. Formerly it had taken a day. Now passengers came from New York or New Haven in only three hours. In 1870 the trip was rendered still easier by the building of a branch railroad over the four miles from the junction, Branchville, to Ridgefield.

When Goodrich revisited his birthplace in 1855, he found that the first of the many changes which have transformed it into the present charming vil-

lage had occurred. "The old houses are mostly gone, and more sumptuous ones are in their place," he wrote. "A certain neatness and elegance have succeeded to the plain and primitive characteristics of other days." The principal street, Main Street, was shaded by two continuous lines of trees, elms, sycamores, and maples, and some of them were already "truly majestic." It is probable that the best had been set out before the beginning of the century, though some Connecticut Valley towns, as Greenfield, Mass., trace equally fine elms to only that date. Fine lawns extended along the sides of the way, and the town had good gravel footpaths. Most of the houses, unlike those of New Haven and Hartford, were still unpainted, the owners thinking the brown hue of weatherbeaten wood more attractive. Goodrich found lodging at the Keeler Tavern, though its owner, Mrs. A. Resequie, whose maiden name had been Keeler, no longer regarded it as an inn, but entertained occasional strangers chiefly for courtesy's sake.

Wealth had greatly increased in Ridgefield by 1855. Indeed, the population had reached its maximum, and was beginning to decline; in 1810, it was 2,103; in 1820, it was 2,301; in 1840, it was 2,474, and then it began slowly to fall. When the century opened most of the farmers had been in debt, struggling to rid their land of mortgages; but just before the Civil War not four farms in the town were thus encumbered. "Tavern-haunting" was a practice of the past. The three churches were flourishing. The Congregationalists had remodeled the interior of their church, painted the

pews, brought in a Kidderminster carpet, and installed a melodeon. The dilapidated Episcopal "barn" had been replaced by a substantial new building, in which services were held regularly. The Methodists, who had once met in Dr. Baker's kitchen, and had comprised the uneducated and socially despised, now had a large church, "white and bright," crowded every Sunday with some of the best people of the town. To Goodrich the most surprising evidence of change in Ridgefield was that the Congregational and Methodist ministers sometimes actually exchanged pulpits.

The first regular summer residents, returning year after year, were members of the King, Hawley, and Ingersoll families. Old General Joshua King, of Revolutionary fame, was a man of large family, four sons and six daughters. The only son who married, Rufus H. King, lived in Albany, and often came to Ridgefield in summer. So, even before the Civil War, did Irad Hawley, a son of Deacon Hawley, who lived in New York. The Ingersoll family, descending from the Revolutionary minister of Ridgefield, were an extensive clan, some members of which reached prominence in Connecticut. Jonathan Ingersoll, son of the minister, was an eminent lawyer of New Haven, who became Lieutenant-Governor and a judge of the Supreme Court; his family came back to the ancestral home, where two of Jonathan's brothers long lived, during many summers.

The first summer cottages were built on High Ridge by the King and McHaig families. It is said that the first established summer resident outside

of the old village names was William S. Hawk. As years passed, Ridgefield began to grow noted for the residential estates of New Yorkers and others in the beautiful country surrounding the village. Among these were Wild Farms on West Lane, formerly occupied by Milbert B. Carey; Casagmo, belonging to George M. Olcott; the home of A. Barton Hepburn; and Grove Lawn, the residence of the Hon. Phineas C. Lounsbury. Artists and architects began to be attracted by the scenery and seclusion: Cass Gilbert purchased the historic "cannon-ball tavern" from the Ressequie family, George Smillie, the painter, took up his residence next door, and J. Alden Weir on Branchville Road.

Ridgefield's first newspaper was established in 1875, a monthly journal which soon became the weekly Ridgefield *Press*. As a new social life sprang up, two clubs were established: the Ridgefield Club, which had a casino, and owned South Lake and the boats upon it; and the Country Club, with its house, golf links, and tennis courts beyond High Ridge. The Ridgefield Club has since been sunk in the Country Club, and the buildings are now owned by the Congregational Church. The old Congregational Church was replaced by a larger, more substantial stone structure in 1888. At the same time, the appearance of the village was not a little altered by the straightening of Main Street at the old green, and the distribution of portions of the common to surrounding property owners. The town did not surrender its title to the common, nor was any part of it enclosed. It has simply been cared for, as an extension of their lawns, by the adjoining householders; but casual visitors would

not suspect that a common had ever existed. Ridgefield was visited by a fire in 1896, which burned out a considerable part of the business district, and for the town as a whole proved rather a blessing in disguise than a calamity, for the new buildings have been a great improvement upon the old.

Ridgefield has furnished two Governors of Connecticut within the last generation — the Hon. Phineas C. Lounsbury, 1887-89, and George E. Lounsbury, 1899-1901. The former, a manufacturer of South Norwalk and a New York banker, is remembered as framer of the rigid local option laws which Connecticut once had. A Lieutenant-Governor, several judges, and several members of Congress have been born in the town. So also were Cyrus Northrup, for many years president of the University of Minnesota; and Austin Scott, once president of Rutgers College and still professor there.

Ridgefield and Its Surroundings

Few towns in New England unite such accessibility with so much seclusion as Ridgefield. It is just outside the commuting zone from New York, and is equally close to New Haven. The traveler can leave the Grand Central Terminal at eight o'clock and be in Ridgefield before ten. From South Norwalk the town is less than seventeen miles by rail, and from Danbury a little less than eleven. It is on the Berkshire Division of the New York, New Haven & Hartford, while from Katonah on the Putnam Division of the New York Central

it is reached by a short drive. Yet it is as free from noise, bustle, and confusion, as quiet and restful, as any town in Connecticut far from a railway. No hill village in the Berkshires is more peaceful than its elm-shaded streets.

From points in Westchester County—Bedford Hills, White Plains, Goldens Bridge—motorists can reach Ridgefield by a short drive across the State line. From New York city it is equally easy to reach Ridgefield by following the shore road to Norwalk, turning north on the State road up the valley of the Norwalk River, and diverging to the west at Branchville.

With a population in 1920 of only 1,030, Ridgefield is a purely residential centre. It is set high above the surrounding country. The views embrace the Hudson and the hills beyond, the lower Berkshires to the north, and the Sound to the southeast. In the immediate vicinity are a number of beautiful small lakes, considerable stretches of woodland, and a pleasant diversity of dairy farms and estates. All the inhabitants of the town are prosperous—there are almost literally no poor; the architecture of the homes, much of it of Colonial derivation, reflects this prosperity, and the wide streets and fine lawns and shade-trees can be compared only with those of the most attractive other New England towns.

In spite of its slender population, Ridgefield has a vigorous social life. There is a country club, whose links and tennis courts are open to strangers on payment of a fee. Among the well-known summer or year-round residents are Mrs. A. Barton

Hepburn, Cass Gilbert, Walter Hampden, Phineas C. Lounsbury, Mrs. Anson Phelps Stokes, Mrs. J. Alden Weir, Senator H. P. Bissell, and George Doubleday. The village has five churches: Congregational, Episcopal, Methodist, Catholic, and Christian Science. On Main Street stands the Ridgefield Library building, erected at a cost of $40,000, by the late James N. Morris of New York as a memorial to Mrs. Elizabeth Morris. The collection of 12,000 volumes includes a considerable number of rare historical works, and is constantly growing. Ridgefield has excellent banks, stores, markets and garages.

Walks and Drives About Ridgefield

The country surrounding Ridgefield, easily explored on foot or by automobile, is as interesting as it is beautiful. Fine views are offered among the hills, there is much untouched woodland, lakes and reservoirs are scattered in every direction, and all the towns near by have points of literary or historical interest.

For the modest pedestrian a pleasant walk is offered to Mamanasquog Lake, distant about three miles by road from "The Elms." Main Street is to be taken north past the Titicus Cemetery on the outskirts, and the North Salem road, bearing northwest, thereafter steadily followed. Mamanasquog Lake soon comes in sight, an irregular triangle of water three-quarters of a mile in length and at its base a fifth of a mile broad. The fields and woods thereabout will repay any tramper for exploring

them. A somewhat shorter walk is that to Round Pond. Ascending Main Street north, the walker should turn to the right upon the intersecting road just beyond Titicus Cemetery. This leads almost due west for nearly a mile to West Mountain Road, which is to be followed northwest for a mile and a half to the pond.

By the same West Mountain Road pedestrians are brought into a position to ascend and clamber along the ridge, lying roughly two miles west of Ridgefield and across the State line, called West Mountain. The chief point of interest here is the cave of Sarah Bishop, which is distant some four miles from Ridgefield, and is in the town of North Salem, though on the eastern slope of the ridge. Sarah Bishop was an eccentric woman who took refuge in this shallow cleft soon after the Revolution. She was living there when Goodrich grew up in Ridgefield—"a thin, ghostly old woman, bent and wrinkled, but still possessing a good deal of activity." She made a garden in a small clearing near the cave, and gathered nuts and roots, but most of her subsistence was furnished by neighboring farmers; she never begged, but took what they offered. Water she obtained from a spring a short distance below the cave. From time to time she visited the villages, occasionally taking the sacrament in the Congregational Church of Ridgefield; but she avoided human companionship, and preserved a total silence upon her earlier history. As might have been expected, one winter — 1810 or 1811—she was found frozen to death.

To the southeast of the village, along the road

to Ridgefield, lie some fine stretches of woodland. The walker simply follows Orchard Street south, parallel with Main Street, and at its southern extremity turns to the left to reach the Branchville Road. To the northeast of the village there are more ponds—Great Pond, Little Pond, and Bennett's Ponds—all to be reached by following what is called the Hill Road. None of these little bodies of water is as large as Round Pond or Mamanasquog Lake, but they lie so close together they can all be seen at once. Just beyond Bennett's Pond, still to the northeast, begins the ascent to Pine Mountain, 1,150 feet above the sea and some 250 feet above the highest point in the village of Ridgefield.

To those who wish to walk for longer distances, or to make short motor trips, the nearer towns and hamlets offer convenient objectives. Only a few miles to the northeast lies Redding, where in 1755 was born Joel Barlow, the author of the "Columbiad" and "Hasty Pudding," famous in his day as one of the Hartford wits. Here Mark Twain and Jeanette L. Gilder had their summer homes, while the later residents include Mark Twain's biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine, and Ida Tarbell. The Israel Putnam Camp Ground here is kept in a better state of preservation than any other Revolutionary camping site save perhaps Valley Forge. To the north-northeast, between Redding and Danbury, is Bethel, the birthplace of P. T. Barnum, the showman, whose father was a tavern-keeper there. It may be mentioned that it is not far distant on the other side of Ridgefield, across the line in New York, to

Somers, the birthplace of Hachaliah Bailey, Barnum's partner. In Somers stands the curious Elephant Monument, in honor of "Old Bet," said to have been the first elephant brought to America. Bailey for a time kept the Elephant Hotel, which stood opposite the monument.

Danbury, north and east of Ridgefield some eleven miles, is noted as the centre of the felt-hat industry of the United States, having fifty factories and a product valued at $20,000,000 annually. The industry dates from 1780, and had attained importance before the beginning of the nineteenth century. Here are also located the factories of the Rogers Silver Plate Company, the Ball & Roller Bearing Company, and large textile mills. Though Danbury has thousands of operatives, many of them foreign-born—its population in 1920 was 18,943—it has also a fine residential section, and large estates on the hills about the city, stretching down towards Ridgefield. Danbury was known just before the Revolution as the home of Robert Sandeman, the founder of the Sandemian sect, who died here in 1771, and is buried in one of the cemeteries. Later it became well known through the Danbury News Man, J. M. Bailey, the author of many humorous sketches, and of a posthumous history of the town. Near the Lincoln Monument in Danbury stands the Museum of Mr. Ives, which contains a wealth of old furniture, old hardware, old pictures, and other objects of antiquarian interest.

Turning to the west, just across the State line in New York, is a beautiful rolling country, a large

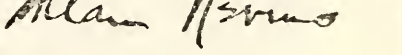
part of which is owned and cared for by New York city, most of the valleys being filled by the reservoirs of the Croton system. North Salem, one of the hamlets nearest Ridgefield, is reached by the same attractive road which leads past Mamanasquog Lake. It has a population of less than 1,000. Within the village centre is a curiously balanced rock, poised on a slender pedestal at the side of the road. Not far from the village is the country home which General Grant occupied after his retirement from the Presidency. The lodge at the entrance of the ample grounds was used by Mrs. Grant for a summer home after General Grant's death.

An equally attractive road for motorists and pedestrians, southwest of Ridgefield, winds through South Salem and Cross River to Katonah, a distance of eleven miles. Visitors from New York will find no pleasanter walk than that between Ridgefield and the station of the Putnam Division at Katonah. The road, soon after leaving Ridgefield, passes several small lakes, and a branch from it to the right leads through the Titicus Reservation to Titicus Mountain, where an elevation of 969 feet commands splendid views over the Hudson Valley. Throughout the so-called Titicus Hills there is unusual scenery. Cross River overlooks some of the largest reservoirs of the Croton chain. Two miles to the east of Katonah, or nine miles west of Ridgefield, is the Jay Homestead, where lived John Jay, Governor of New York, diplomat, and first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The grounds here have been in the Jay family since 1743, having been inherited by Jay's

mother from her father, one of the Van Cortlandts. Jay built the house now standing (which has since been enlarged), and retired to it as his permanent home after finishing his second term as Governor in 1801. The fine elms and maples which shade the roads thereabout were set out under his direction.

Brewster, farther to the north, near the State line, is worth visiting for its iron mines, which are more than a century old. They are owned by the Lackawanna Steel Company, but are unused—the State forbade further mining after a disastrous cave-in in 1895.

There is a wealth of hotels, tea-rooms, and road-houses along all the roads leading from Ridgefield. On the road between North Salem and Katonah lies Waccabuc Lake, and here stands the well-known Waccabuc Inn, a new and finely-equipped hotel with delightful surroundings. Equally well-known is the tea house called the Port of Missing Men, located on Titicus Mountain, just off the Ridgefield-South Salem-Katonah road. There should also be mentioned the Horse and Hound, at South Salem; the White Turkey, a combined roadhouse and antique shop, beyond Danbury; the Post Road Inn, at Brookfield Centre, eight miles north of Danbury; and Martha Leonard's Tea-Room, near the Greek Theatre in Mount Kisco.



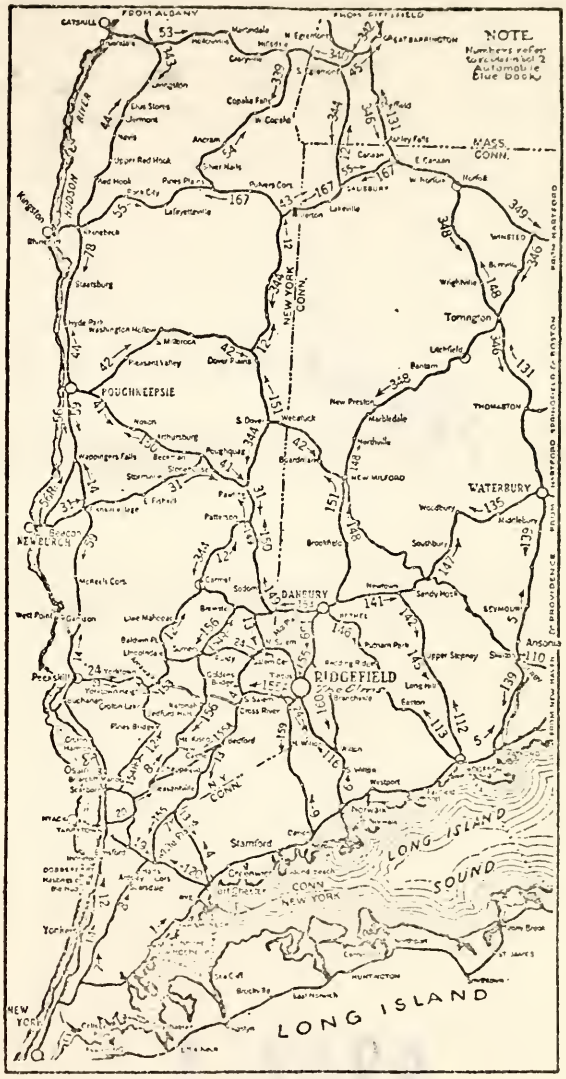
The Elms

Today travelers can find only one hostelry in Ridgefield with a history that is really part of the town's. The Keeler Tavern long since ceased to take guests. An inn built by Amos Smith in 1797 —the Smith Tavern—was removed to clear a site for the public library. But there remains the group of three cottages on Main Street, looking not like a hotel but like the quiet residences about them, called "The Elms."

Originally the two oldest of these cottages were the property of Thomas Hawley Rockwell, a post-Revolutionary cabinet-maker, rival in this trade to Deacon Hawley. The cottage before which the sign of "The Elms" swings was built in 1799 as his home. It was a residence of some distinction, as the doorway, the paneling, and the evidences that the room across the front was used as a ball-room, all show. Next door on the north he built his workshop. When the cabinet-making business decayed, this smaller structure was converted into another cottage. About 1860, when summer travel set in, a descendant named John Rockwell began to take boarders. He and those who came after him called their establishment "The Elm Shade Cottages," a name not abbreviated until recent years.

In summer all three cottages are open to visitors;

in winter, only one, the newest. They offer about forty rooms, some *en suite* and a number with private bath. They have electricity, hot and cold water, excellent heating arrangements, and other modern appointments, though the two oldest cottages retain their quaintness. "The Elms" is noted for the excellence of its meals. Guests will find themselves in the heart of the village, with the clubs accessible, the shops and garages only a few blocks away, the railway station two blocks distant, and the library only a few doors south. These elm- and maple-shaded cottages, however, are secluded, and thoroughly protected from noise and dust. They are an ideal stopping-place for a single meal or for a stay of weeks.


NOTE
Numbers refer to routes in the Automobile Blue Book
FROM ALBANY
FROM SPRINGFIELD
CATSKILL
GREAT BARRINGTON
MASS.
CONN.
HUDSON RIVER
Kingston
POUGHKEEPSIE
NEWBURGH
NEW YORK
CONN.
DANBURY
RIDGEFIELD
WATERBURY
TORRINGTON
THOMASTON
FROM HARTFORD SPRINGFIELD & BOSTON
FROM NEW HAVEN & PROVIDENCE
Stamford
LONG ISLAND SOUND
LONG ISLAND
NEW YORK