



Picturesque America; or, the land we live in

a delineation by pen and pencil of the mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, water-falls, shores, cañons, valleys, cities, and other picturesque features of our country ; with illustrations on steel and wood, by eminent American artists

Bryant, William Cullen

New York, 1874

The Conneticut Shore Of The Sound.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-65884](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-65884)

THE CONNECTICUT SHORE OF THE SOUND.

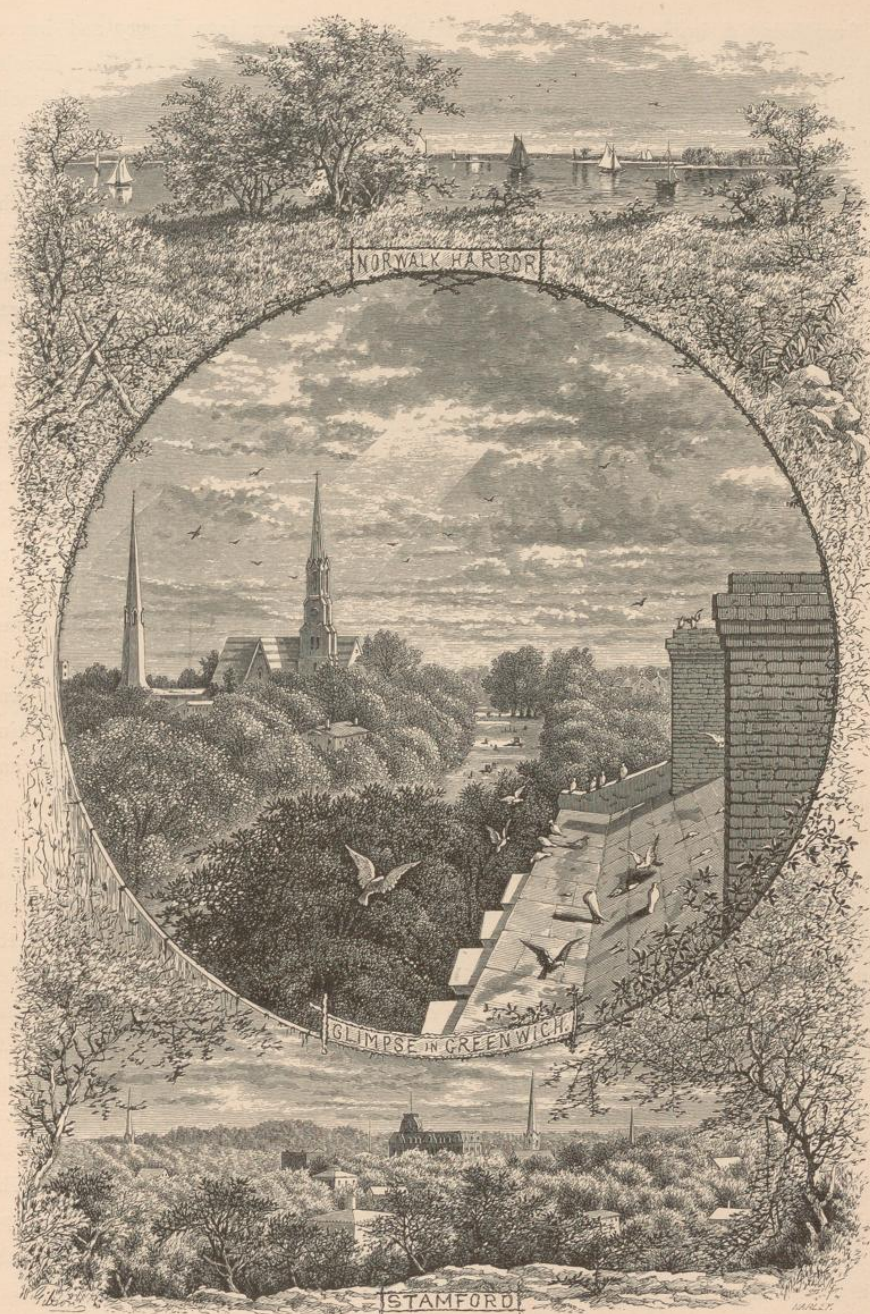
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY WILLIAM H. GIBSON.

THE vagueness which in many minds attaches itself to the region known as "Yankee-land"—which abroad expands itself into a generic term for the whole territory of the United States—has, nevertheless, its sharp lines of definition; and the phrase "from the Hudson to the Penobscot" is hardly a successful rival, in this respect, to the more common expression, "from Quoddy Head to Byram River." The former of these distinctive localities lies on the remote margin of Maine; and the latter is the dividing line of Connecticut and New York, on the border of Long-Island Sound. It is at Byram River that this sketch of the Connecticut shore of that extensive and beautiful water begins. Its scope is the stretch of that varied shore along the Sound, for a century of miles, with a final slight digression to Norwich, at the head of one of its tributary rivers.

The traveller by the Shore-Line route, from New York to Boston, follows the entire line of the Connecticut shore; but, in the swift rush and whirl of his fiery journey, he can get only the briefest and most unsatisfactory suggestions of the beauty which lies all about, if not exactly along, his way. Its most attractive and fascinating aspects are not, indeed, in most cases, to be seen without digression and search, involving delay, and, here and there, delightful excursions. The temptations to this delay are everywhere enhanced by the general comfort of the hotels at and near the important railway-stations.

About twenty miles from our great commercial metropolis lies the first station on the Connecticut shore, that of Greenwich, a very attractive village, occupying finely-wooded slopes just north of the station. Its antiquity is unquestionable; for, two centuries and a quarter ago, it was designated by the Dutch-English Commission, in convention at Hartford, as the western limit of the province of Connecticut. The principal lion of the region is the famous declivity down which the gallant Putnam, of Revolutionary fame, rode on horseback to avoid the close fire of a pursuing troop of British dragoons, who, not daring to follow him in his "break-neck flight," were fain to content themselves with sending volleys of bullets after him. This spot, now called Old Put's Hill, is a long flight of rude cuttings, or steps, made in a steep hill-side for the convenience of the people in reaching a place of worship on the summit of the hill.

The village and vicinity of Stamford will well repay the tourist of ample leisure for delay there. Stamford, like the vignette village of this portfolio of sketches, claims a notable antiquity of origin; but, for a little less than two centuries, it had scarcely more to be proud of than a name. Within the last forty years alone, it has exhibited vitality,



GLIMPSES OF GREENWICH, STAMFORD, AND NORWALK.

and, from being a simple and unattractive hamlet, it has grown into beauty and importance; its hundreds of 1834 almost augmented to thousands in 1874. It is a favorite resort of New-York merchants, many of whom have embellished its heights and knolls with elegant mansions and villas. Much taste, as well as wealth, is displayed in its architecture, making its streets and avenues attractive. Shippen Point, on the Sound, less than a mile from the station, is a place of summer resort to many hundreds, who crowd the spacious Ocean House and numerous smaller places of entertainment.

Close by is one of many ledges of rock which diversify the level aspect and tame-ness of the Long-Island shore. Pound Rock stretches its dark ramparts into the water, and commands a very fine view of the Sound and its scenery. There are beautiful drives in the adjacent country, with, here and there, pretty glimpses on Mill River, "the ancient Rippowam."

Epicures who are particular in regard to the quality of their oysters will have special associations with the name of the next important place in our eastward progress along the Connecticut shore of the Sound. It is Norwalk, whose fine, picturesque bay affords the bivalves in great abundance, and of proverbial excellence. The oyster-trade is one of the most flourishing of the industries of the now populous and rapidly-growing town—city, perhaps, we should say—of South Norwalk; and the white sails of the numerous oyster-smacks lend one of their chief charms to the prominent points of the harbor in its vicinity. Of these, Roton Point, so happily pictured by our artist, is the resort, by eminence, of the festive parties from the town. It is admirably adapted for picnics, uniting extensive areas with fine groups of noble pines, and these flanked by a broad and beautiful beach.

The scarcely less attractive picture of Wilson's Point is on the opposite side of the harbor, and a little farther up the Sound. It includes a glimpse of the Norwalk Islands. The "Ancient Landmark," with which the artist has flanked, on the right, the pretty, nameless bit of moonlight, is not far from Wilson's Point, and stands, indeed, upon the grounds of the proprietor of that beautiful spot. It is believed to be the chimney of an old Revolutionary building of historic interest, and the subject of many legendary anecdotes. It presents some internal evidence of having been used as a place of concealment, perhaps by Tories hiding from pursuing colonists. Its preservation for so long a time in its ruined condition is said to be the result of government care, utilizing it as a literal landmark to guide vessels over the harbor-shoals.

Norwalk—without prefix—is a twin-town, on the north side of the railway. The hundredth anniversary of the burning of this place by the Hessians will occur in 1879, and afford the enterprising citizens a fine occasion for distinguishing themselves in the popular centennial line!

A few miles east of Norwalk, and in the broad fields of Southport, there was, a hundred years ago and more, an extensive marsh, known as the Saco Swamp, which



GLIMPSES OF SOUTH NORWALK AND SOUTHPORT.

possesses historic interest as the scene of the subdual of the Pequot Indians by English troops from Massachusetts. There are, indeed, few points along the shore of Connecticut about which some antiquarian interest does not centre in memorials or legends of aboriginal adventures, battles, and defeats.

Southport bears to-day no trace of the fiery ravage to which the Hessian troops, under the notorious Tryon, subjected it in 1779, when it shared the fate of Norwalk, but was more fortunate in having poetic commemoration of its

". . . smoking ruins, marks of hostile ire,
And ashes warm, which drink the tears that flow."

Black Rock is a noticeable village of the township of Fairfield, and quite famous, both for its very excellent harbor and for many beautiful prospects which characterize its vicinity.

Bridgeport, which is reached on the railway, fifty-nine miles from New York, deserves more extended mention than the limits assigned to this paper will allow. It is finely situated on an arm of the Sound, where the Pequannock River empties itself into it. The ground it covers was once owned by the Paugusset Indians, whose name is, somewhat apocryphally, and very remotely, connected with the noble stream bearing the musical name of the Housatonic. In the discomfiture and flight of the guilty Pequots before Mason, the harmless Paugussets were involved in misfortunes from which they never recovered.

Bridgeport has been a city about forty years, and has a present estimated population of more than twenty thousand souls. It is a place of great enterprise and thrift in manufactures, foremost of which are the extensive Sewing-Machine Works; manufactories of arms, cartridges, brass and steel wares, carriages, and water-proof fabrics, giving profitable employment to thousands, and adding rapidly to the wealth of the place.

Seaside Park is justly one of Bridgeport's lions. It is finely situated, looking over the harbor and the expansive Sound beyond. A broad esplanade affords attractive walks and drives on the beach.

Few, if any, New-England cities have a more beautiful street than Bridgeport can show in its Golden Hill, a long line of elegance, taste, and wealth, in private dwellings.

Three miles eastward of the city lies old and picturesque Stratford, where the new has not yet displaced the old, where the racket of mills and machinery does not vex the quiet-loving ear, or harrow the nerves of the sensitive; and where one may dream away a sweet summer twilight in the shadows of grand old trees, more ancient even than the quaint but stately houses of the village. These fine, ancient elms make up, together with broad reaches of the stately Housatonic River, the noblest aspects of Stratford. Its light-house is of a quaint style of architecture, matching well the primitiveness of the place, which, however, is not utterly antiquated. The old church, of which Adam



CONNECTICUT SHORE SCENES.

Blackman was pastor in the dim colonial days, has now a handsome though rural Gothic house of worship, in striking contrast to the old, quaint sanctuary of its early devotions.

Five miles from Stratford, eastward, on the railway, and across the broad bosom of the Housatonic, we come to Milford, picturesque with stately, shadowing elms, and a most seductive length of green neatly inclosed. Here flows the silvery Wap-o-waug, giving the railway-passenger free transit over its clear waters by a pretty bridge and bosky banks. Here, too, is a tall monument, built over the remains of many soldiers, cast ashore here from British cartel-ships, in 1777.

A railway stretch of seven miles brings the tourist to West Haven, where he may well miss a train, if only to indulge himself in a pleasant stroll to Savin Rock. It is a walk of twenty minutes, and rewarded, at its close, with beautiful prospects over the Sound and shore alike.

The City of Elms is now close at hand, and there is much in New Haven to interest the intelligent visitor—very much, indeed, of which this sketch can take no cognizance. Its grand avenues of elm-trees are certainly unsurpassed in New England; and the one, especially, which separates the beautiful and attractive Green from the grounds of Yale College, is a great Gothic aisle of such interlacing boughs, and such interwoven masses of rich, green, and sun-gilded foliage, as would surely have either inspired or paralyzed the facile pencil of Birket Foster.

New Haven has a population of over fifty thousand, and the city is not more attractive for its picturesqueness than it is for its intellectual culture and social refinement. These characteristics are doubtless due, in great part, to the influence of Yale College, which, in its real comprehensiveness of scope, in the number of its departments, and in the richness of its educational accessories, more nearly approaches the order of a true university than any other institution in the United States, that at Cambridge alone excepted. It was founded in 1700, and, for now almost two eventful centuries, has exerted a widely-diffused and beneficent influence upon American character and development.

Only two years ago, New Haven divided with Hartford the legislative "honors" of Connecticut, but now her chief and sufficient distinction is her noble and expansive college.

Numerous converging and intersecting railways, extensive manufactures, and a considerable West-India commerce, contribute to the life and wealth of this beautiful city. Its suburbs are adorned with tasteful villas, and afford inviting drives and charming prospects. Of principal interest among its suburban attractions are the crags known as East and West Rocks—two bold and striking bluffs of trap-rock, lifting themselves, in magnificent array of opposition, about four hundred feet out of the plain which skirts the city. Their geological origin was probably some anomalous volcanic convulsion; and their grim heights may have sentinelled, in remote ages of our planet, the flow of the Connecticut River between their august feet to the Sound. Their summits afford very



SCENES IN BRIDGEPORT, STRATFORD, AND MILFORD.

fine but quite dissimilar prospects. East Rock overlooks the ample interval and river-reaches of the Quinnipiac Valley, which are almost hidden from West Rock. The view of the beautiful city from East Rock has afforded to the pencil of our artist rare scope for boldness, amid the average level of the landscape. The cliffs are rough, and difficult to climb, but they well repay the toil of surmounting them, while, from the top of either, the spectator may stretch his vision, and feel, with the poet—

“What heed I of the dusty land,
And noisy town?
I see the mighty deep expand,
From its white line of glimmering sand,
To where the blue of heaven over bluer waves shuts down.”

On East Rock there is a little inn, where the weary pilgrim may obtain refreshment in summer. While this rocky crest is more easily accessible than the other, and certainly bears the palm in breadth of view, the West Rock has the counterbalance to these advantages of a positive historic charm in the shape of the Regicides' or Judges' Cave. In a deep cleft, among a wild group of large, loose bowlders, the famous regicides Goffe and Whalley were concealed for several days, in 1661. This cave is reached by a difficult path over the rocky table of the cliff. The legend is, that the regicides were frightened out of this inhospitable place by the glittering eyes of some wild animal glaring in upon them.

The water-supply of the city is pent up on West Rock, in a lake having a superficies of seventy-five acres, and formed by an extensive dam of rock and earthwork. The water-works are planted near the foot of the rock, and close at hand is Maltby Park, a tract of eight hundred acres, most tastefully laid out, and in the course of elegant embellishment.

The view of the city from Fort Hill, which is included in the accompanying series of illustrations, is a picture which well rewards the visitor for an excursion to the point in question, which was once the site of an old fortification, of which, however, few traces remain. The corner vignettes of this beautiful picture have all found some mention in the text, as objects and points of great interest. The meadows, or plains, which lie northward of the city, and out of which the great ranges of trap-rock vault, as it were, into the sky, are well pictured at the bottom of the artistic page.

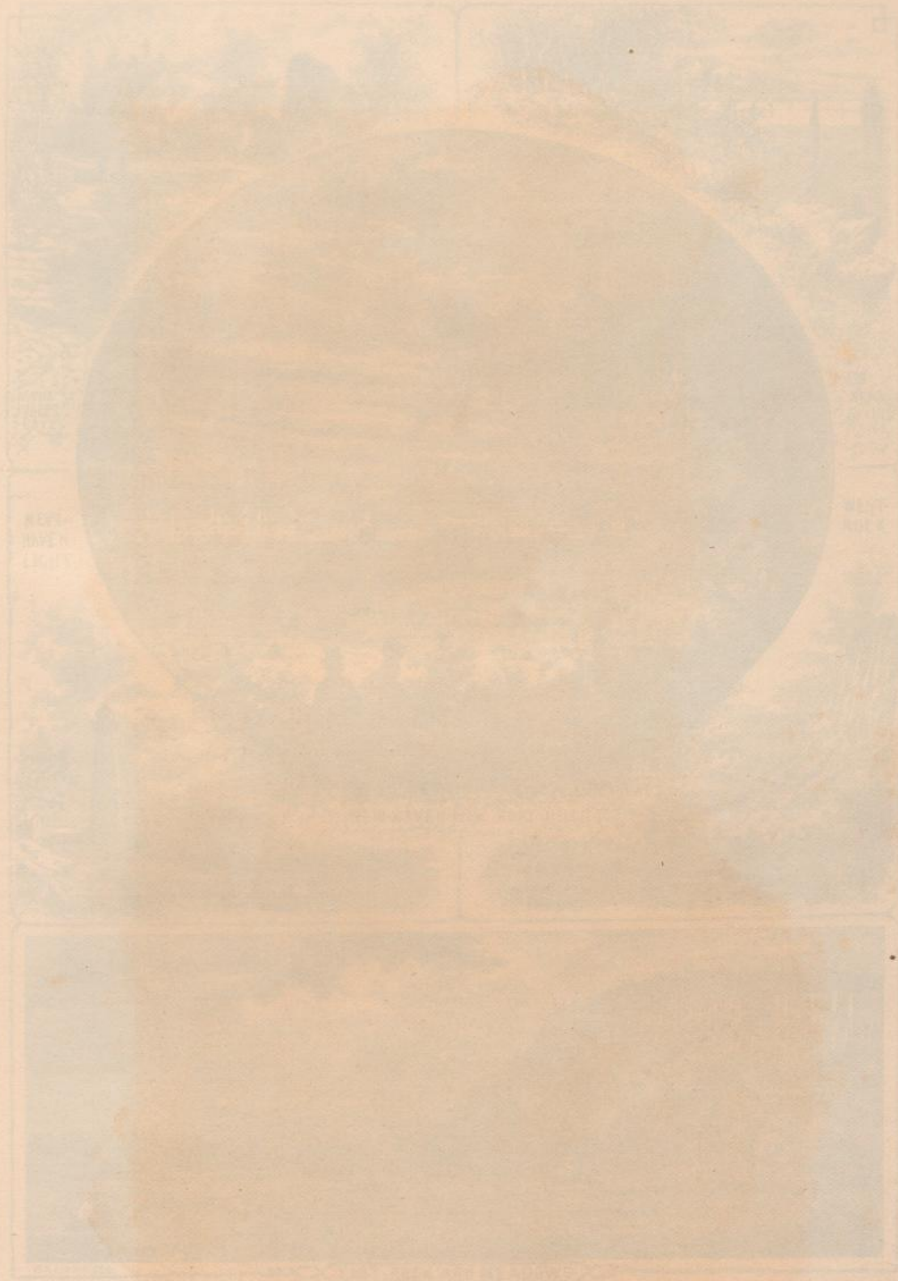
The railway reach of fifty miles, from New Haven to New London, is less attractive in picturesque elements than the same distance, which this sketch has already overpassed, from Greenwich to New Haven. There are not wanting, however, points of historic interest; and the whole region has attractions to those who love boating and fishing. Fairhaven oysters have a fame of their own.

Branford and Guilford, eight and sixteen miles respectively from New Haven, have their beaches; and numerous hotels invite summer guests to the enjoyment of delicious



East Rocks New-Haven

New York, D. Appleton & Co.



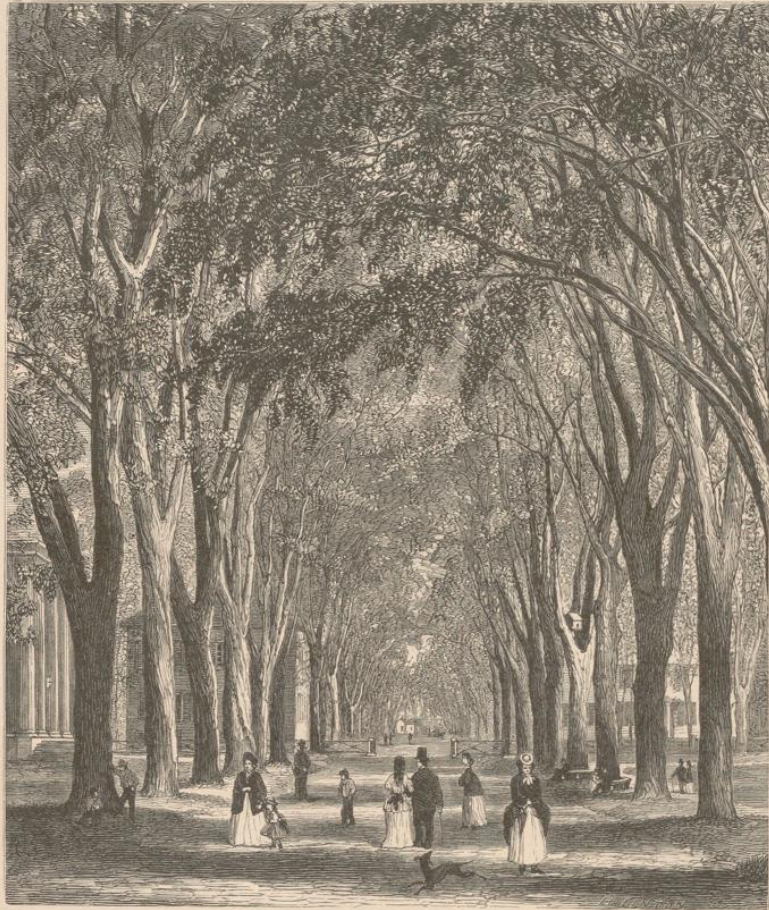
NEW HAVEN AND VICINITY



NEW-HAVEN AND VICINITY.

breezes, with bathing and boating at pleasure. Guilford is both the birth and burial place of the poet Halleck, although he spent much of his life in New York.

The aboriginal history and traditions of this region, and, indeed, of all the Connecticut shore of Long-Island Sound, are full of interest to the antiquarian and student.



The New-Haven Elms.

Guilford shares with New Haven the fame of having given shelter for a season to the regicides.

Between Branford and Guilford lies Stony Creek, a railway-station, from which a pleasant excursion may be made to the Thimble Islands, a picturesque group of rocky and wooded islets. The names of Money and Pot, belonging to two of this cluster,



NEW HAVEN, VIEW FROM EAST ROCK.

may well suggest to the reader the legends of Captain Kidd and his hidden treasures; and these localities have again and again tempted the cupidity of deluded diggers.

The old and quaintly rural village of Saybrook lies thirty miles east from New Haven, and, just beyond it, the Connecticut River flows into the Sound. Beyond the Connecticut, eastward, lie the villages of Lyme, three of the name, and also of Waterford, covering a reach of seventeen miles to the banks of the Thames River at New London. All this tract was once the home and hunting-grounds of the Niantic Indians, a Narraganset clan, whose somewhat renowned sachem, Ninigret, defeated the Long-Island tribes.

New London, less attractive, perhaps, than either Bridgeport or New Haven, is nevertheless a pleasant town. It has great facilities for traffic and communication both by land and water, railways and steamboats connecting it with New York, and various iron ways leading out of it to the north and east.

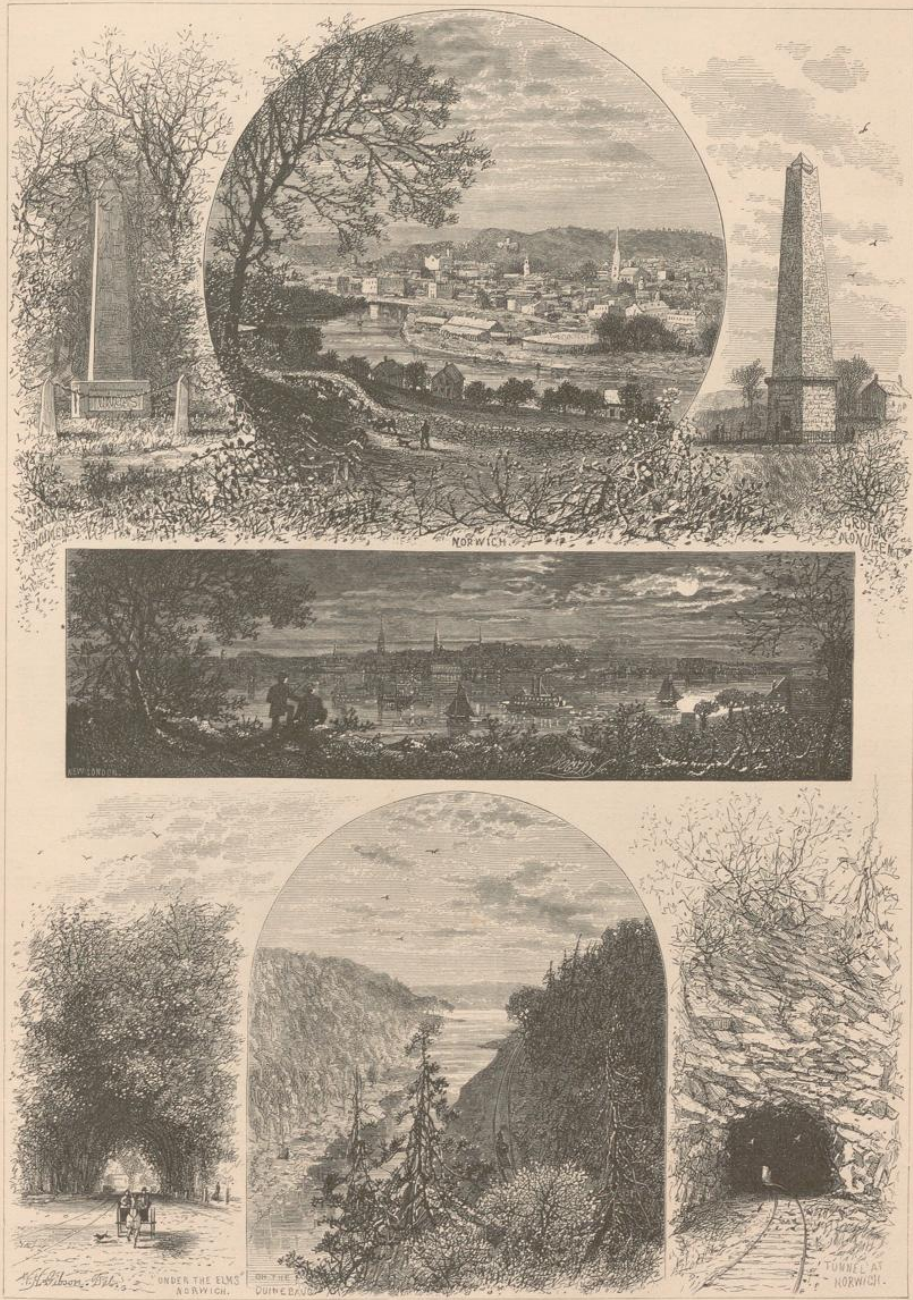
The Pequot House, which is picturesquely situated on the Harbor road, about two miles from the city, and at the mouth of the Thames, is one of the most fashionable summer resorts along the shore. It is surrounded by quite an extensive settlement of pretty cottages, rented for the fashionable season to families from the cities; and upon the opposite shore of the Thames are also abundant accommodations for summer guests, though of a little lower rate of expense, if not, perhaps, of real comfort.

The harbor of New London is defended by two forts, which, in these times of peace, frown only at each other from opposite sides of the river. Fort Trumbull is a massive granite structure on the west shore, and in perfect condition; while Fort Griswold, on the eastern side, is little more than the remnant of old earthworks, of historic interest, although there is very near it a well-constructed twenty-gun battery, in good condition.

Around, or rather beneath, the latter, spreads the village of Groton, once a suburb of New London, and now closely connected with it by steam ferries, at one of which the trains of the Shore-Line route are transported bodily across the river. Groton is a centre of historic and revolutionary memories. The tourist should make an excursion to the ruins of Fort Griswold, the scene of the infamous murder of Colonel Ledyard, with his own sword, by the Tory officer to whom he had honorably surrendered it.

Near by is the monument erected in memory of the soldiers who were massacred in that surrender. It is a granite obelisk, nearly one hundred and thirty feet high, and, besides its commemorative tablets, it possesses the charm of such a broad and various view from its summit as one can hardly afford to miss in a level region, and one, indeed, which is not surpassed along the shores of the sound. It realizes fairly the poet's picture of the height—

“Where was wide wandering for the greediest eye,
To peer about upon variety;
Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim,
And trace the dwindling edges of its brim.”



NEW LONDON AND NORWICH.

This point affords the finest view of the city, as well as of the beautiful harbor of New London. The city, jointly with the State of Connecticut, recently gave to the United States a tract of land on the east bank of the Thames, where a navy-yard is established. It borders the widening reaches of the river about the village of Groton.

At New London, the tourist who follows the course of this rapid sketch will have to make a slight departure from the strict shore-line of the sound, taking, if he pleases, the railway, or, better still, a charming drive to Norwich, thirteen miles along the west bank of the picturesque Thames.

He may linger, if he will, a little while at Mohegan, five miles south of Norwich, where, upon the highest land in the village, stands the ancient fortress of Uncas. Here, also, he may see some remnants of the once famous tribe which that brave but treacherous chief led so often on the war-path. It may, indeed, be better that he should not encounter these degenerate sons of the forest—half-breeds at the best—unless he is prepared to resign all his romantic and poetical impressions of the lofty heroism and splendid qualities of the aboriginal red-men of the New-England forests and hills. There is nothing in the present aspect of the Pequot or Mohegan remnants to aid him in the maintenance of his old and it may be obstinately cherished fancies.

Norwich is a larger and finer city than its neighbor, New London, and of a very romantic aspect, much of the town being built on terraces, lying between the Yantic and Shetucket Rivers, which, by their confluence there, make the Thames. It has really noble avenues, with fine trees, antique and modern mansions, and very handsome public buildings.

The monument of Uncas is a prime object of antiquarian interest in the city. It is a granite obelisk, standing in the midst of other memorial stones built to commemorate the ferocious exploits of immemorial chieftains and warriors of the Mohegans. Uncas was once a great sachem of the Pequots, but he became afterward, by revolt and secession, the most renowned leader of the Mohegans for fifty years, during which period he elevated them in point of influence, and held them, in spite of many wars with other tribes, to peaceful relations with the colonists. The monument to Uncas was built in 1841. A cluster of gloomy pine-trees infolds this Indian cemetery, not far from the site of the once highly picturesque falls of the Yantic, which, however, have dwindled greatly from their old renown under the encroachments of both natural and artificial changes, so that the tourist is puzzled to account for the enthusiasm which inspired the early poets and topographers in their praises of the wild, tumultuous lapse of the Yantic.

The glimpse which the artist has given of Norwich, in the fine general view and in the dainty side-scenes which accompany it, are fit suggestions of the picturesqueness of its ways and of its romantic environs, much relieved from the oppressive monotony of the more level shore along which this sketch has been compelled, by the requirements of art, to run.