

Shipyard Park

During the period from 1700-1820 the dream of Thomas Williams to build the greatest ship landing and ship building center upon the river materialized. Hundreds of boats were built in the shipyards of Rocky Hill, some of which saw service in the American Revolution, others in triangular trade between the Colonies, West Indies and more. Many a ship left Rocky Hill loaded with onions, cattle, swine, and shingles and manufactured articles to return months later with rum and molasses. Forty per cent of the male inhabitants were in seafaring, and navigation and higher mathematic were in Academy Hall, the present headquarters of the Rocky Hill Historical Society.

The riverfront was the center of activity with the shipyards, taverns and mills. One house known as "The Sail Loft" still stands opposite the Ferry landing. In this house of odd lines, sails were fashioned for the ships built nearby. The house is two stories in front rising to three stories in the rear, so that sails could be raised up as they were worked upon. The Rope Walk, a long covered building, 600 feet in length went up the hill to a spot at the rear of Riverview Road. Here bemp rope was woven and the worn rope dried and ended upon the return of a ship months later.

In 1949, Mrs. Myrtle Stevens, Chairman of the Town's Recreation Committee, suggested that the Rocky Hill Garden Club take on the project of creating a park on Riverview hillside. After consulting town officials and taking care of various problems, the members agreed to do so. In 1952 Mrs., Katherine Stevenson was engaged by the town as landscape architect. On July 5th a flagpole and flag were donated by Mr. & Mrs. Hall, and Mrs. Inez Wormcke traced the history of the area as written by Mr. Jared Standish of Wethersfield. Mr. Hall took good care of the flag for many years.

The Civic Improvement Committee of the Garden Club located a bolder on the farm of Leland Gilbert and he moved it to its present place. The boulder is flanked with two blue-gray benches and a pebbled path extends to the road. Evergreens and laurel were planted and a historic bronze marker placed on the boulder. In 1962, the Garden Club had Mr. Gilbert remove rocks and the stumps of old trees on the hillside extending from the Memorial area down to the railroad tracks. Later the area was graded and seeded, and a hedge planted to prevent children playing on the hillside from going on the tracks.

The beautiful view of the Connecticut River is now obscured by the growth of the trees on the lower part of the slope.