

Photo by K. T. Sheldon

VIEW FROM THE GROUNDS OF MR. M. B. RICHARDSON

## IN THE CONNECTICUT HIGHLANDS

LIME ROCK, THE FAIR VILLAGE AMONG THE HILLS  
— WHERE JOHN KERNICKERBACKER, DUTCHMAN,  
EARLY ERECTED HIS HOME AT THE MOUTH OF  
THE SALMON FELL-KILL — HISTORICAL ARTICLE

BY

REV. R. H. GESNER

Rev. R. H. Gesner, the writer of this article, is a grandson of Dr. Abraham Gesner, the inventor of kerosene oil, and a son of the late A. H. Gesner, a distinguished clergyman of the Episcopal church. Mr. Gesner was graduated from St. Stephen's College with honors in 1883, and from the General Theological Seminary in New York in 1886, receiving the degree of B.D. for high rank in the following year. He has been rector of several important parishes in New York State, but for the past nine years has been in Connecticut. He came from the venerable parish of West Haven in 1899 to the Rectorship of Trinity Church, Lime Rock. Mr. Gesner has for some years been a writer on the Staff of the New York Churchman and the Church Standard of Philadelphia and has contributed verse regularly for the Boston Evening Transcript. He has a well deserved reputation as public speaker and preacher—EDITOR

**B**EAUTIFUL as are the villages of famous old Litchfield, none excel in loveliness of situation, salubrity of climate and delightful air of thrift and neatness, the assemblage of comfortable homes and tasteful public buildings that form the village of Lime Rock. The major part of the town extends along the tongue of land that shoots out from the precipitous sides of a rocky range of hills that fringe the southern edge of the town of Salisbury. A mile away the Housatonic flows peacefully through broad meadows on its tortuous course to the Sound. Coming down through a gap in the range of hills, the Salmon Fell-Kill, formed by the confluence of three smaller streams, the chief of which rises on distant Riga, furnishes water power to the old mill at the upper end of the

The Rev. Richmond Herbert Gesner, author of this article, was the 4<sup>th</sup> Rector of Trinity Church, Lime Rock. He was known at Trinity as Herbert, his middle name. He came to this parish in 1899, was Rector during extensive renovations, and was subsequently called to Christ Church, Oswego, NY in 1906. This article was printed in 1905, likely in the *Connecticut Quarterly*.



Photo by K. T. Sheldon

TOMBSTONE MARKING THE GRAVE OF  
MR. JOHN KERNICKERBACKER  
THE FIRST SETTLER IN LIME ROCK

village, and gliding down through the vale past the shops, finds peace for its iron-stained waters on the bosom of

the Housatonic. Three miles to the northward, over steep Norton Hill, lies Lakeville, and four miles and a half to the northeast the churches of Salisbury Center lift their spires against the blue slopes of the Taghkanic range.

Small as the village of Lime Rock is, comprising perhaps some seven hundred souls, it is in many respects an historic locality. The earliest settler in this part of the town of Salisbury, was Thomas Lamb, "a shrewd and hardy speculator, Indian interpreter and Jack of all trades." Lamb owned what is now known as the Davis mine and brought from it in 1734 the ore which supplied his forge at Lime Rock under what is now known as Forge mountain where now stands the great blast furnace whose ever-glowing chimney belches flame against the blackness of the night. On this spot in later years Canfield and Robbins manufactured from the Salisbury ores wrought iron for the rifle and musket barrels which were made at the United States armories in Harper's Ferry and Springfield.



Photo by K. T. Sheldon

AN ELM-SHADED VILLAGE STREET SHOWING RESIDENCES OF THE LATE WILLIAM H. BARNUM AND THE LATE LEONARD RICHARDSON ON THE LEFT

The Kernickerbacker gravestone is still standing in the Lime Rock Cemetery, located near the entrance on Dugway Road. Of the buildings shown in the photograph above on this page, the Barnum house is no longer present, nor is the Barnum and Richardson factory building that appears on the right side of the photograph – the former lost to fire circa 1920, the latter a casualty of the flood of 1955. The Richardson house is still present. At the time the photo was taken, the street was called Barnum Street. It has since been renamed White Hollow Road, and is the most direct route between Lime Rock and Sharon.

The other name most closely associated with this part of the town of Salisbury, which in early days went by the name of "the Hollow," is that of John Kernickerbacker, as his name is spelled on his tombstone. He was one of the Dutch settlers who for the most part, took up their abode in Weatogue, the northeastern part of Salisbury, about 1720. This man settled near the mouth of the Salmon Fell-Kill and the old homestead stood on the site of the residence of Mr. John L. Owen. The old house was pulled

This mortal body mouldering back to dust  
 Shall rise again to mingle with the just,  
 And Death, the conqueror, no more enslave  
 While honest virtue triumphs o'er the grave.  
 A wit's a feather and a chief's a rod;  
 An honest man's the noblest work of God.

Many years ago the few remains of the original settlers who were buried in the graveyard in the upper village

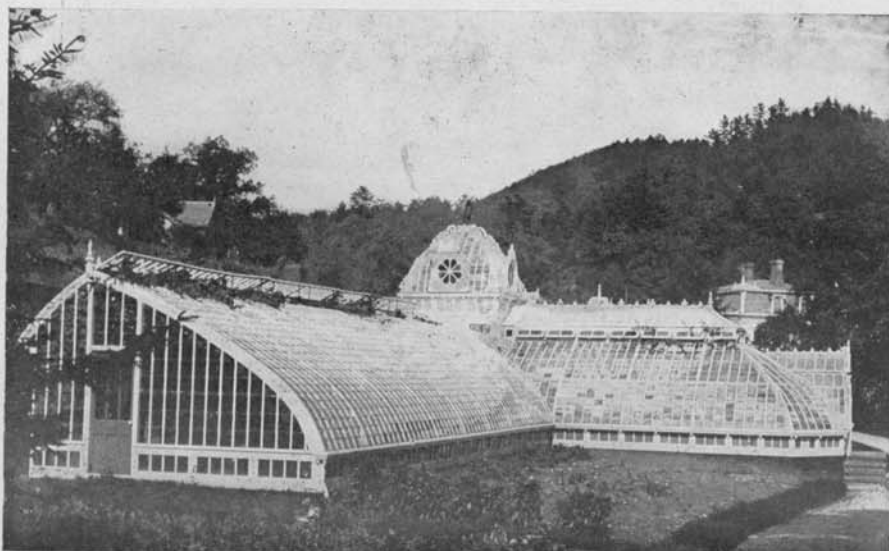


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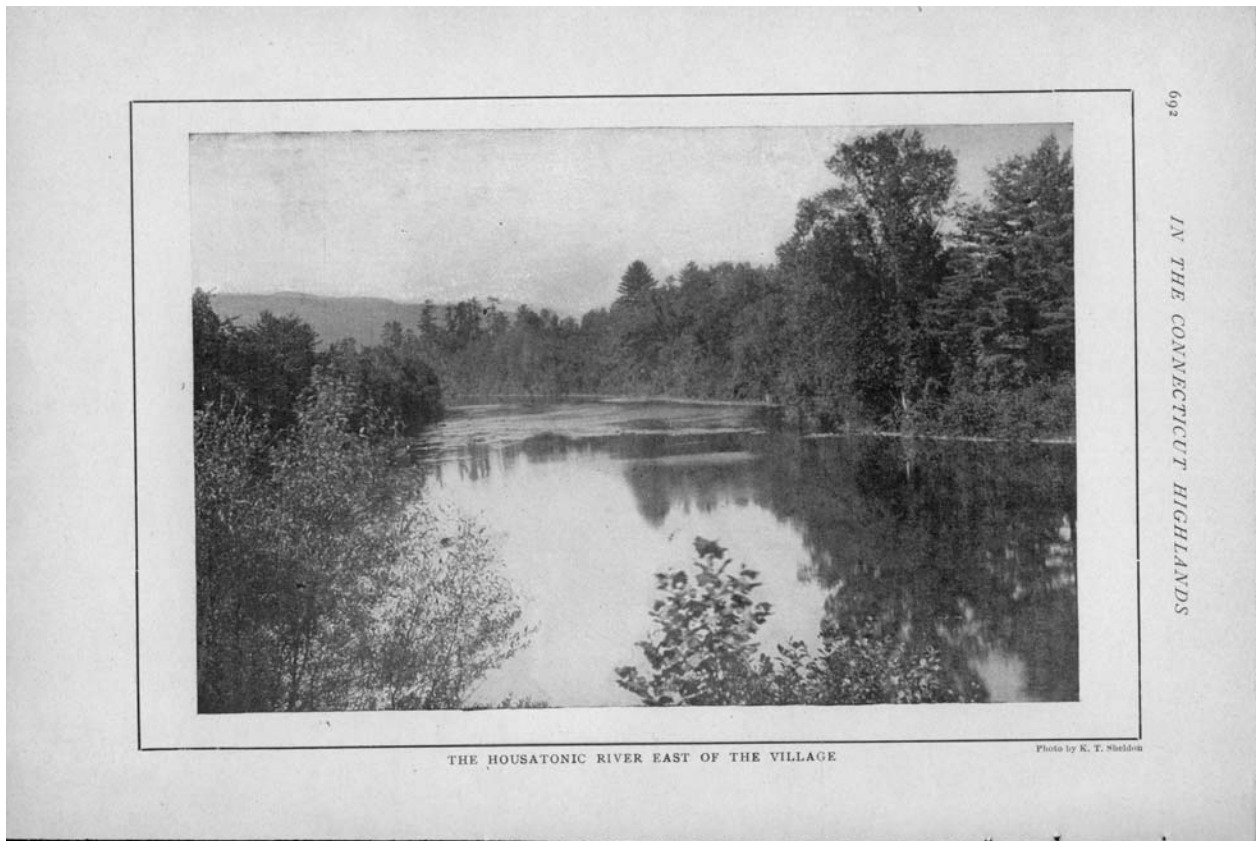
GREENHOUSES ON THE GROUNDS OF THE LATE WILLIAM H. BARNUM

down to make room for the more modern dwelling of its present owner. Kernickerbacker owned a large tract of land hereabout and gave the land for the beautiful God's acre in which, oddly enough, his body was the first to repose. The old slate stone may be seen in a prominent place in the well-kept cemetery. It bears in clearly defined characters the following inscription:

Here lies the body of  
 Mr. John Kernickerbacker,  
 Who departed this life  
 Nov. 10th, 1786, AE. 76.

were carefully removed and now rest in this beautiful spot, surrounded by an evergreen hedge, and where it borders the highway encompassed with a well-laid stone wall. In the years that have gone by, it has been greatly enlarged, as the silent dwellers, one by one, have come to take up their long abode in its environs. Many linger here on pleasant afternoons, and in spring time the village folk loiter along the graveled walks, tending the plots that are their special care or conversing quietly as they drink in the bracing air and enjoy the distant vista

The greenhouses are no longer present. The roof in the right background is that of the Richardson house; the Barnum house would have been to the right in this picture.



This photograph appears to have been taken near the crossing used by Barnum and Richardson wagons transporting railroad car wheels fabricated at their wheel foundry in Lime Rock to be loaded on trains at Lime Rock Station, near the present Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Falls Village. Interestingly, Barnum and Richardson, despite an ownership interest in the Housatonic Railroad, never caused a siding to be built to the Lime Rock village, which would have facilitated shipment of the car wheels made there.

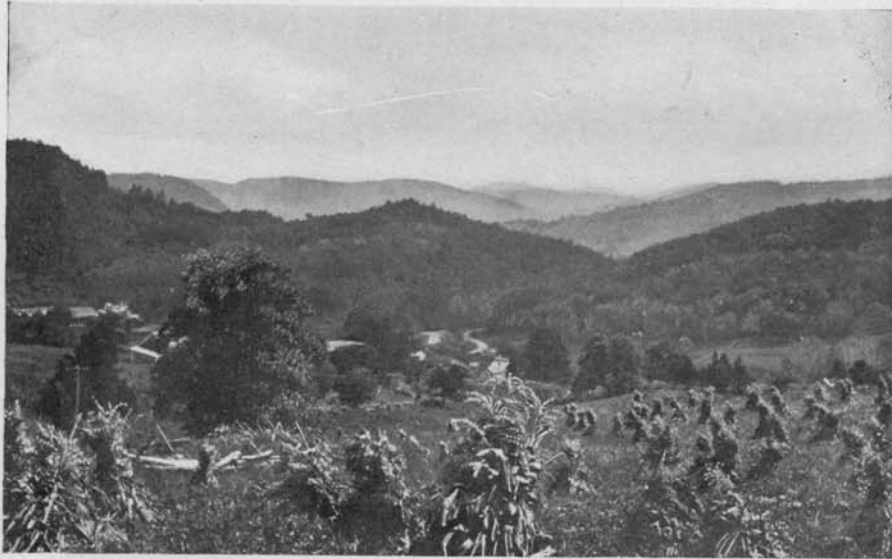


Photo by K. T. Sheldon

SCENE FROM NORTON HILL OVERLOOKING THE UPPER VILLAGE, SHOWING THE BLAST FURNACE AT THE LEFT

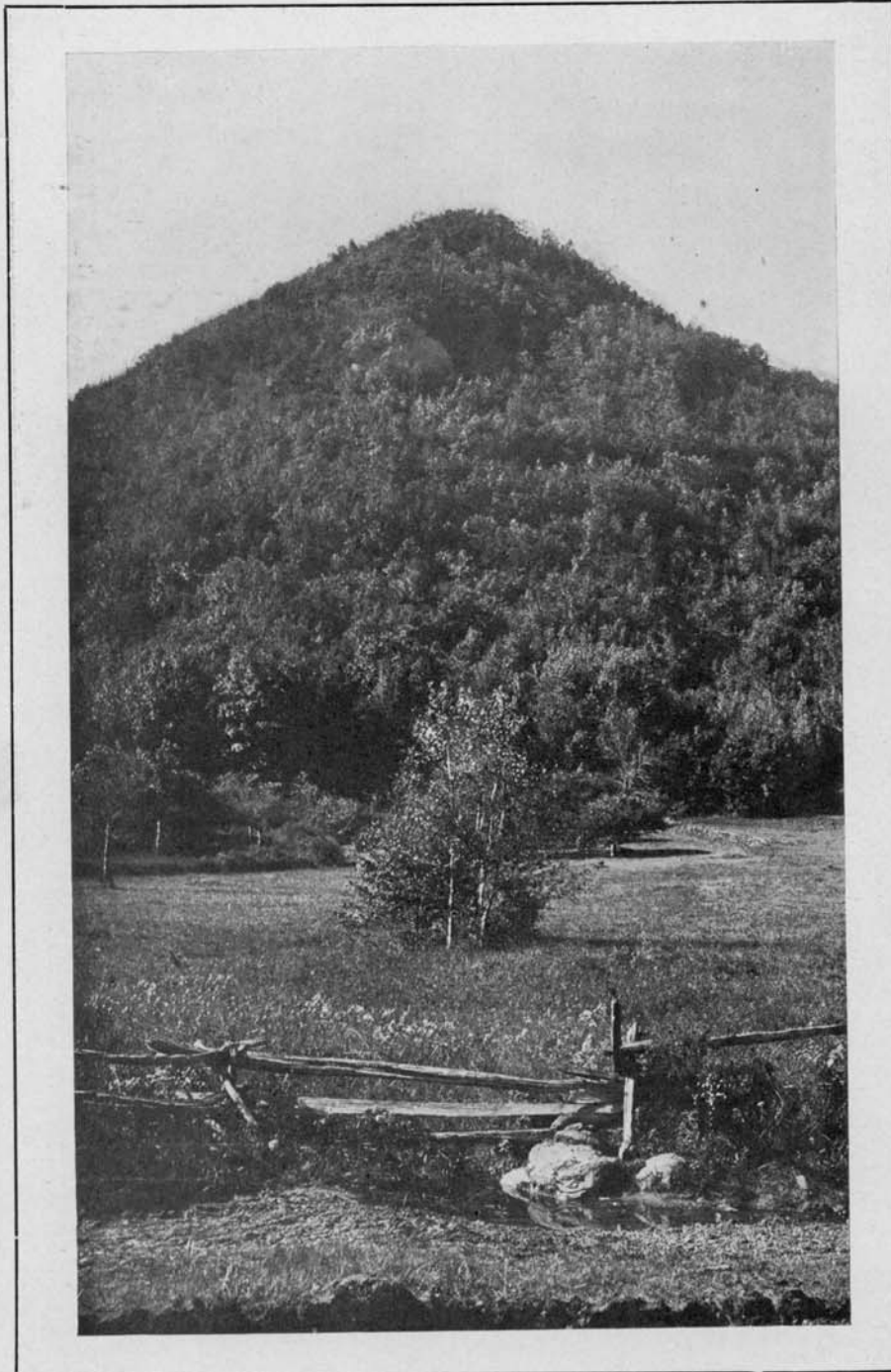
of the Canaan hills that, like the Delectable mountains, lure one's thoughts to higher realities.

It was in 1820 that Milo Barnum, the founder of the present Barnum, Richardson Company, came to Lime Rock. He had come originally from Dover, N. Y., but previous to his coming here had lived in Sharon. At first he engaged in keeping the little inn in the village, but before long entered upon the business of a merchant in the general store. His industry soon gave him opportunity to enter upon the iron business which has since developed into such large proportions. When Milo Barnum drove into Lime Rock there were but few houses in the place, and most of them were in what is now known as the "upper village," near the furnace. In early times this was the real settlement. Here lived in colonial days the Johnson family occupying an immense house which stood on the spot near where an old barn now stands on the left as one follows the road toward Salisbury. Further along this road in what is now

the Belcher place, a large red brick house, lived Col. Nathaniel Buell, of Revolutionary fame, and the Robbins family, still having representatives in the town, lived near the forge and furnace. One of the most substantial houses in the Hollow was that in which Milo Barnum afterwards lived, just east of the bridge which crosses Salmon Fell-Kill in the heart of the village. For many years it was used as a tenant house, but recently it was pulled down and removed. The antique fireplace, so richly suggestive of comfort, the solid frame and massive timbers, were ample witness that there were giants in those days when great timber trees were plentiful and people depended on huge open hearthstones for genial warmth and comfortable lodging during the prolonged winters.

Some few years after entering upon business in Lime Rock, Milo Barnum associated with himself his son-in-law, Leonard Richardson, and a few years afterward, his son, William H. Barnum.

Photos of the Lime Rock furnace and of the "Upper Village" of Lime Rock are fairly rare today, although the furnace has been substantially restored and serves as the centerpiece of a private garden. The most notable feature visible in the photograph on this page is the three-roofed building that was used to store charcoal for use in the furnace. The absence of any visible smoke suggests that the furnace was not in blast at the time the photograph was taken.



RED MOUNTAIN—THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LIME ROCK Photo by K. T. Sheldon



TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Photo by K. T. Sheldon

These enterprising men soon began to place the iron business upon that solid and permanent foundation which it has ever since maintained. The Barnum, Richardson Company, now known throughout the country as the only manufacturers of the famous Salisbury iron, have an enviable name among the great industries of our nation. It may with candor and honesty be said that their reputation and prosperity is largely the result of the strong mutual interest which both the employers and the employes feel in the business, and of the good feeling and kindness of spirit, which, pervading both the members of the firm and those who have long been associated with it, have in the hard times served to weld hearts together instead of severing them. William H. Barnum, who afterwards attained national distinction as Congressman and Senator from this State, and as manager of the campaign which resulted in the election of Cleveland in 1884 became even better known, as a young man drove his team with loads of iron to Poughkeepsie and by actual experience knew hard work and could sym-

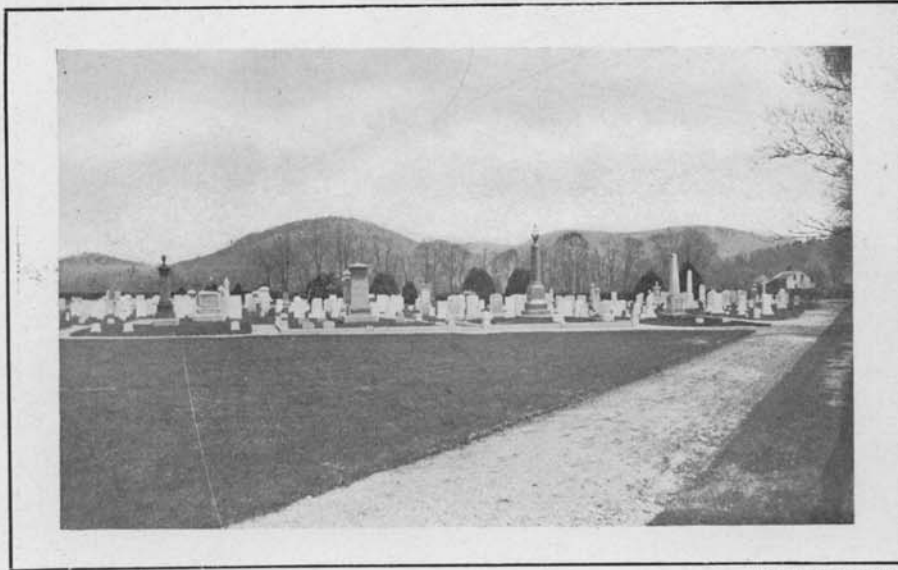
pathize with the toiler. In the hard times of the "seventies," this company kept its men at work, enabling them to keep the wolf from the door, when other great companies felt obliged to shut down their works. It is such men as these who have made the name of Connecticut and New England honorable and our nation the peer of the older England beyond the sea.

Along the pleasant elm-fringed avenue which appropriately goes by the name of Elm street, one notes the smooth and grassy lawns, well-trimmed hedges and cleanly borders. The citizens of Lime Rock pride themselves on having the neatest and cleanliest country streets in the State. Coming into the town, passing the Brazie house (perhaps the oldest in the village), which stands on the crest of the hill, one sees the white shafts of the village cemetery at his right, and far across the valley to the left old Sharon mountain smiles protectingly down, dominating all the landscape. On that side of the valley through which flows the turbid Salmon Fell-Kill, is Nature in all her primitive grandeur; on this side the simple art of man beautifying his

Gesner mentions an aspect of the Barnum & Richardson management style that was somewhat unusual in those times and is increasingly rare today: caring for the welfare of the workers. Keeping the men working even when there was no market for their products was one aspect of this, as was paying the medical expenses of workers and their families. The company houses seen today in Lime Rock compare very favorably to "company houses" seen elsewhere. Barnum & Richardson heavily subsidized leisure time pursuits of workers and their families, including Trinity Church. William H. Barnum also was financially very generous to the Roman Catholic churches many of his workers attended.

The Elm Street mentioned on this page later was known as Main Street, and today is called Lime Rock Road – or Route 112. Pictures of Trinity Church with the picket fence are quite rare. Interestingly, only one cross is visible along the roofline of the church. At various times in its history, it had several crosses along the peak of the roof. Note the wall of the Lime Rock Cemetery in the lower left corner of the photograph.





THE VILLAGE CEMETERY

Photo by K. T. Sheldon

home and surroundings. In the angle of the roads opposite the place where the "forefathers of the hamlet sleep," stands Trinity Episcopal church, a beautiful building of fawn-colored freestone of which a city might well be

proud. It is veritably a monument to the zeal and labors of those saintly Christian women, Mrs. Charlotte A. Barnum and Mrs. Lucy Ann Richardson, whose names will ever be cherished in Lime Rock. These thought-



"HEPHZIVALLA"—RESIDENCE OF MR. C. W. BARNUM

Photo by K. T. Sheldon

Hephzivala – one of the grandest of the Barnum and Richardson family houses -- was destroyed by fire in the 1920s, following the closure and sale of the eastern works of Barnum and Richardson. The view of the cemetery is an interesting one. The monuments for the Richardson and Barnum families are in place, but the wall clearly had not yet been built around the cemetery – although it appears in the photograph on the previous page. When the wall was built, it enclosed some of what appears to be a road running close to the front of the Barnum and Richardson plots.

ful women, seeing the need of a church in the community, because the mother church of St. John in Salisbury was so far away, bent their energies toward securing funds for the erection of a church which should be the home of the people and the center of the religious life of the community. As a result of their labors, in 1870 Trinity church was erected and has since grown into one of the strongest distinctively rural parishes in Connecticut. Within the past few years it has been beautifully redecorated within. Hard wood floors have been laid and many costly and appropriate memorials have been given. Among these may be mentioned the superb eagle lectern given in memory of Senator and Mrs. Barnum, the eagle on which was carved from life; the memorial altar of quartered oak, the substantial commemoration of Mrs. Lucy Ann Richardson; the vases and font cover, which keep in mind Helen Gilbert, the little grand-daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Barnum. The most recent gift to the church is a magnificent pulpit of brass and oak, most chaste and simple in design, in memory of Mrs.

Lucy Caroline Richardson Harwood, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. M. B. Richardson and wife of Mr. Robert Winch Harwood of Natick, Mass. The afternoon sun, shining through the numerous memorial windows on the delicately tinted walls enhances the beauty and quiet dignity of this house of God, which stirs the soul to worshipful mood and brings back to recollection the good lives of those whose names will ever be remembered here, as their virtues and labors are recalled.

Any town might well be proud of the public-spirited citizens who reside in the comfortable homes along Elm street. In succession stand the residences of Mr. N. A. McNeil, Mr. Charles W. Barnum and Mr. M. B. Richardson, interspersed with cosy cottages, venerable homesteads and stuccoed farm houses, many of which have borne the weather brunt of the flying years.

In the heart of Lime Rock are located the car wheel and gray iron foundries, and adjacent thereto the machine shop. The old inn, greatly changed since the early days of the century, and now known as the Rocky



Photo by K. T. Sheldon

THE CASINO—WHERE THE SOCIAL GATHERINGS OF THE VILLAGE ARE HELD

Rev. Gesner errs in the date of Trinity Church. While the Barnums may have been preparing to construct it as early as 1870 – indeed it is likely that they were planning for some time, as the architect of the structure, Henry Martyn Congdon, of New York City (according to the first Parish Register), would have had to be retained and the plans drawn before the cornerstone was laid in 1873. Subsequently, the building was consecrated in 1874, the parish was officially organized in 1875, and the first Rector of Trinity was called in 1876.

The Casino also served as the church hall for Trinity Lime Rock until its sale. Its construction was jointly financed by the people of the Lime Rock Village (many of whom were employed by Barnum & Richardson) and the Barnum & Richardson Company.



Photo by K. T. Sheldon

"EDGEWOOD"—RESIDENCE OF MR. M. B. RICHARDSON

Dell Hotel, stands facing the general offices of the Barnum, Richardson Company. Just across the bridge are the old homesteads of William H. Barnum and Leonard Richardson, embowered among the elms that arch the street, in whose well-kept bounds stand the fine greenhouses whose flowers these many years have carried fragrance and cheer into homes of sickness and sorrow.

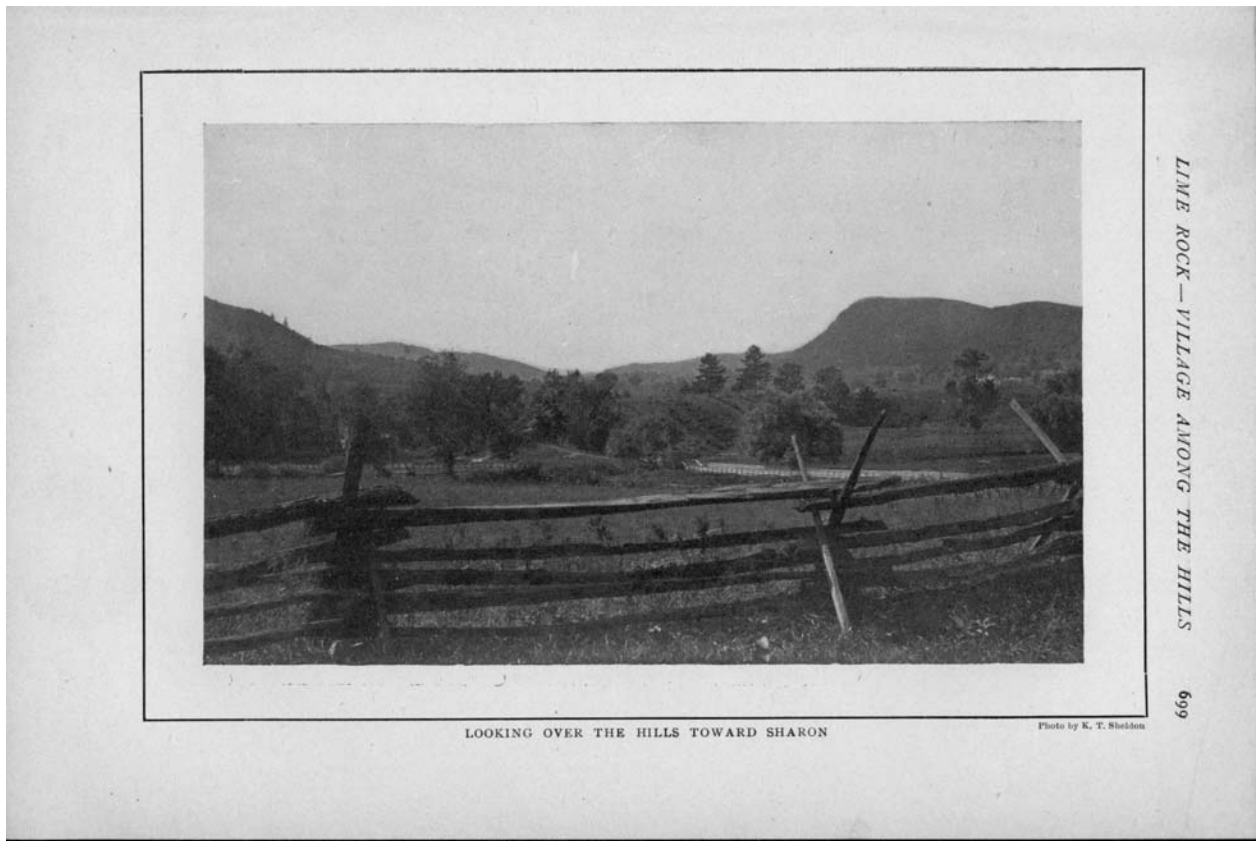
The little Methodist chapel, a quaint old building once used as a union meeting house, stands on the river bank opposite. Here the road rises, going up the hill toward White Hollow and Sharon, and just at its crest stands the home of Mr. Richard N. Barnum. This pretty house was for many years the residence of Mr. Porter S. Burrall, treasurer of the Barnum, Richardson Company. Beyond, at the left, lie the pleasant farm lands, meadow, pasture land and woodland, through which Pierce brook pursues its course; at the right Red mountain lifts its forest clad head, reminding one of a crouching lion as its dark outlines stretch athwart, the glowing sunset over its mane. The fertile and

productive farms of Mr. James L. Richardson and Mr. Gibson Gillette extend beneath the mountain's brow.

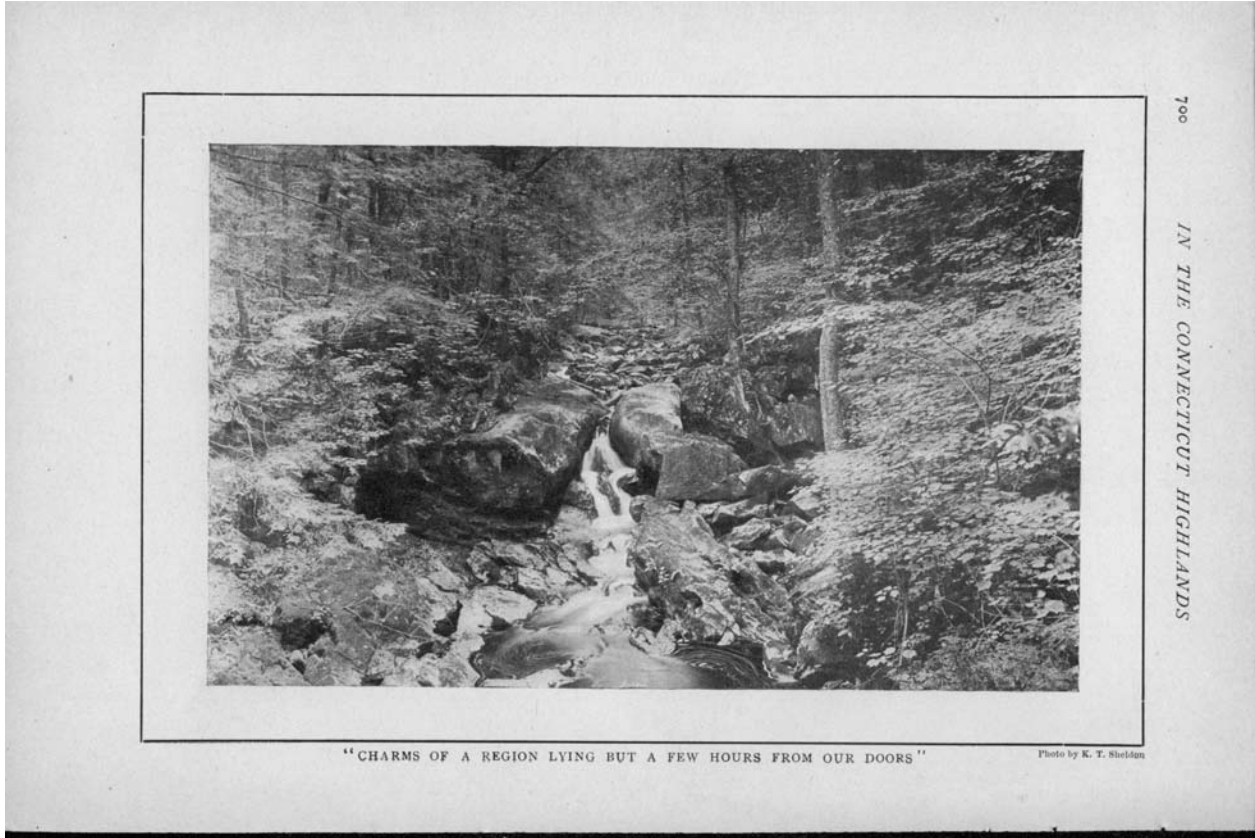
Retracing steps to the bridge we may follow Riverside Drive through the dark pine-fringed gorge in which sleeps the quiet pond whose waters turn today, as they have for close upon a hundred years, the mill wheel in the old grist mill. As we emerge we come into "the upper village." Straight ahead lie the steep slopes of Norton Hill; to the right the creek descends by old Thomas Lamb's natural dam, above which Forge mountain rears its jagged crest. In the intervals are the tidy, pleasant homes of many citizens. Near the furnace the old red brick building with quaint bell tower, was once the office and store of Canfield and Robbins, and later, until its more commodious office was built, the Mc Neil and Co.'s fire insurance agency, which does an extensive business in this region, had its abode here.

Lime Rock is a busy little village, and as one stands in front of the general offices of the company; the burr and buzz of machinery; the hurrying of workmen; the clink, clink of the

Edgewood was torn down in the 1940s or 1950s. It was reported that the social families of Lakeville and Salisbury mightily resented the grand houses built in Lime Rock by the Barnum and Richardson families. Interestingly, the houses Barnum and Richardson build for their workers have proven to be far more long-lasting than the fine houses of the management, and today the former tenant houses constitute much of the housing stock of Lime Rock.



Today, one would see Lime Rock Park, the world-famous automobile road racing course, in this photograph. However, the scene had ceased to be bucolic before the construction of the race track, as the area had been an active gravel pit for several years previous – indeed, Lime Rock Park was the opportunistic construction of a son of the owners of the gravel pit.



This could, of course, be any of a number of mountain streams in the area.



Photo by K. T. Sheldon

"FOXHURST"—RESIDENCE OF MR. RICHARD N. BARNUM

heavy car wheels as they are rolled into the wagons; the chirk, chirk of the polisher; impress the fact that this is the home of one of America's greatest industries. It is an interesting fact that a large proportion of the ore taken from the mines of the company, after being smelted into pig iron, finds its way into the manufacture of car wheels, of which the factory here has a capacity of eighty per day.

One very marked feature of the community is the good feeling prevailing among all classes. Many of the workmen have spent the greater part of their lives in the place, and it is a common saying, that "Lime Rock is a good place for a poor man to live." In a small community a degree of fellowship and friendliness can be attained which is not possible in a larger place. Moreover, though as in every village there are representatives of many Christian creeds, all live in amity and good will, cordially co-operating in the entertainments which are held in the artistic Casino which crowns the southern hill crest above the shops. The Casino is fitted with all conveniences for culinary and social purposes, having drawing rooms and dining rooms down stairs, and a large hall with stage and drop curtain on the second floor.

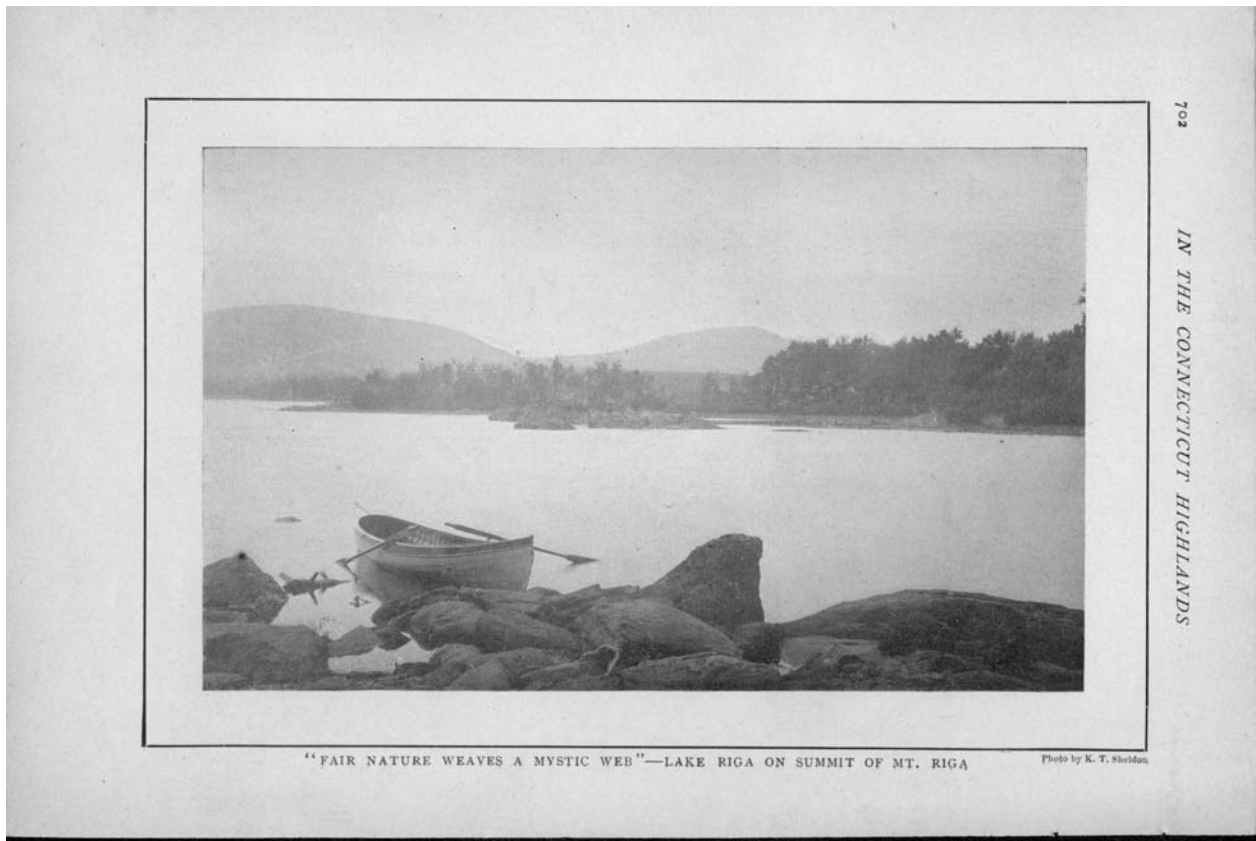
The past few years have brought to city dwellers a revelation of the beauty of their own land and of the charms of a region lying but a few hours from their doors. The excelling grandeur of the highlands of Connecticut, their glory and wealth of natural beauty of forest, field, stream and mountain, can



Photo by K. T. Sheldon

THE METHODIST CHAPEL

Foxhurst was destroyed by fire. One can identify the location of the old Methodist Chapel today most easily by locating the columns next to the driveway to it. They are on White Hollow Road, not far from the bridge. We do not know the fate of the chapel itself. It is no longer present at its previous site, possibly another casualty of the flood of 1955.



Although it takes quite an ambitious view of the boundaries of Lime Rock to justify inclusion of Mt. Riga within them, there is some justification for inclusion of the photograph in an article about Lime Rock. That, of course, is that Barnum and Richardson had an iron blast furnace at the outlet of the lake pictured above. Remains of this cold blast furnace – the last cold blast furnace for which any substantial structure remains in the area today -- can still be seen atop Mt. Riga, although it is rapidly deteriorating.



RESIDENCE OF MR. N. A. MCNEIL

Photo by K. T. Sheldon

be no better illustrated than in the glorious scenery of this corner of the State. A stranger coming into this locality is always impressed by the beauty of his surroundings. The serrated range of hills to the north, the bold Barack-Matiff to the east, the distant Canaan mountain far to the northeast, the wide valley overlooked by Sharon's wooded peak, and Red mountain peering out from the oppo-

site side, — are all striking features in the varied scene. Though no battlefield or historic ruins attract the antiquarian, yet the beautiful locality by the Salmon Fell-Kill must ever linger in the memory of the casual pilgrim or the short-tarrying pleasure seeker, for the grace and charm of fair Nature weaves a mystic web of enchantment over the oft-recurring vision of the fair village among the hills.



Photo by K. T. Sheldon

The McNeil house is still present on Lime Rock Road and is still quite a grand structure — in fact, it was the site of a horror movie filmed in 2008. The most notable difference one notes today is the growth of trees around it, and particularly behind it. The picture at the bottom of the page appears to have been taken along Salmon Kill Road ("Fell" has been dropped from the name of both the creek and the road), and Red Mountain appears to be the mountain in the rear of the picture.

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