

From the Historical Society

Founding Fathers of Nayaug, Part IV

by Susan Goodrich Motycka

During the first seven years of their marriage, John Hollister, Jr. and his wife Sarah Goodrich lived in a house that was built in 1649 on his father's Nayaug property. John tilled the soil and grazed his cattle in the meadows surrounding the riverside home. The nearby ferry provided transportation across the Connecticut River to attend mandatory church services and town activities.



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Unfortunately, the idyllic setting was vulnerable to frequent flooding. In 1675, between the birth of their third and fourth child John, or perhaps Sarah, got tired of coping with the flooding, and the family moved to higher ground.

The fate of the early structure is unknown. Some claim it was hauled to the new location, while others believe only the back ell was moved. Perhaps it was abandoned and an entirely new house was constructed at 14 Tryon Street. There are no records, but it's possible that the ongoing site exploration by the State Archeologist will provide some answers.

In her history *Glastonbury*, Florence Hollister Curtis describes the family home on higher ground as a typical four-room building with two rooms below and two above. No major improvements were made until 1840 when it was occupied by John and Sarah's great-great grandson Roswell, his wife Elizabeth Stratton and their seven children. Roswell added a lean-to on the rear of the house and installed fine paneling in the front two rooms. He put a second flue in the chimney, which he connected to the downstairs oven for baking, and added a smoke oven.

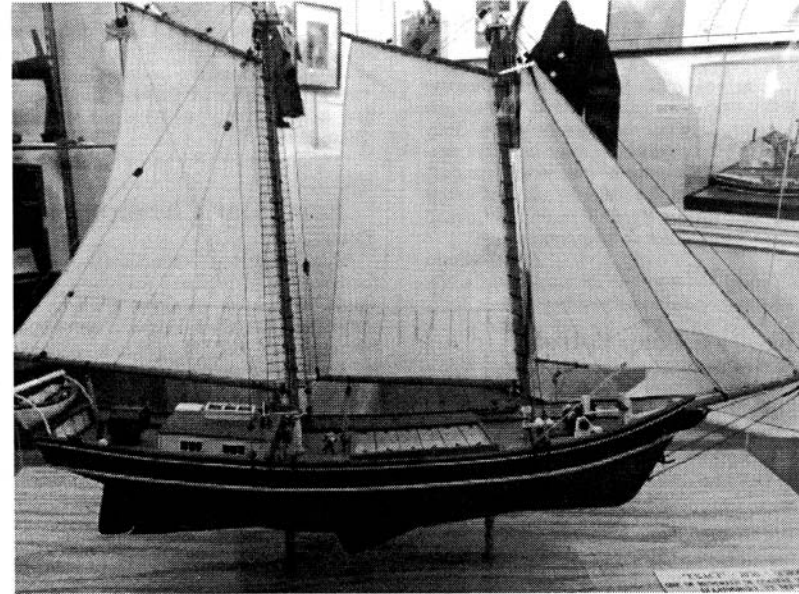
According to family members, Roswell was "a staunch Episcopalian." He was well re-

spected in the community and served several terms in the legislature. However, he is best remembered as one of Glastonbury's most productive ship builders. Between 1793 and 1842 over 100 sloops, brigs and schooners were built at his Nayaug shipyard.

Roswell owned the former Welles shipyard at Log Landing. He hired master carpenters to build his ships and also made space available for other local shipbuilders. Many of these ships were built for Hartford and Glastonbury investors. According to Curtis, who was his granddaughter, he launched as many as three in one day. Triple launchings called for cider, rum and other liquors, which were enjoyed by the workmen, their wives and children, as well as guests.

The Connecticut River was a vital link for commerce, which is why, in 1998, it was designated as one of the 14 American Heritage Rivers. Ships from Glastonbury carried lumber, beef, pork, potatoes, onions and other products to the West Indies and South America. They brought back sugar, salt, molasses and rum. On one voyage Roswell negotiated the sale of a schooner for which he was paid 10,000 Mexican silver dollars. When he returned to Log Landing, he devised a way to get the silver to his home. At dusk, he unloaded the coins into wheel barrows and covered them with potatoes. He kept a close eye on "Black Ross," whom he urged to be "extremely careful not to let potatoes roll off" while pushing the heavy loads up today's Pease Lane to the house. As a reward, Ross received an extra mug of grog at dinner.

One of the finest ships built in the shipyard was the "Copper-sheathed" broad beamed brig *Nestor*. To Roswell it was a "thing of beauty"—his masterpiece. It would be a "grand whaling vessel, one that could sail the seven seas and trade with China and the East Indies." In 1830, with his son Elijah as captain, the *Nestor* set sail for Cape Horn. At Cape Hatteras it encountered a great storm and disappeared. There were no survivors. Roswell never built another ship. "His heart went down with his son and his vessel." A copper spike retrieved from the wreck-



A model of the *Exact*, which Roswell Hollister built at Log Landing in 1830. This model, made by William Doolittle, is on display at the Museum on Hubbard Green.

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Sampson Horton was a sea captain who moved to Nayaug from Hebron in 1800, the year his brig *Sampson* was built at Log Landing. He purchased land in "Naug Meadows" and by 1818 owned the house at 262 Tryon Street where he lived with his wife Lucy Phelps and their eight children. Eventually he acquired over 183 acres including meadowland in Nayaug, Chatham and Wethersfield. He also had a share in the "Nohagg fish place," which included the use of boats, line, rigging and tackle. In 1836 he and James Killam purchased riverfront property on the south side of Ferry Lane, for the Glastonbury Wharf Company.

Besides being owner and master of his own ship, Sampson sailed vessels for Roswell Hollister. He sailed south along the east coast delivering local produce and products. When the ship was empty, he sailed to Cuba and the Caribbean Islands to buy rum and molasses, which he sold on the return trip. It's said that "What they didn't sell they drank."

Sampson's son Horace began his career sailing Hollister's ships. Like his father, he became master and owner of his own ship, the schooner *McDonough*, which was built at Log Landing in 1818. In 1832 Horace settled in Pike County Illinois where he was known as the "old sea captain, a jolly tar [sailor] from Connecticut who sailed from Glastonbury to Louisiana and up the Mississippi!"

Howard Horton, who supplied much of the information here about his seafaring ancestors, recalls the story of an unpopular man named Page, who made a habit of finding out when ships were sailing and who was on board. While they were at sea, he called on their wives and girlfriends. To everyone's relief, he was finally arrested which led to the chant: "Lift the anchor, furl the sail, Page is safe in Haddam Jail."

[This is the fourth in a series of articles by Mrs. Motycka about Nayaug's founding fathers. For more information or to join the Historical Society, please call 860-633-6890. Our email is hsglastonbury@sbcglobal.net, our website is www.hsgct.org and we are on Facebook.]