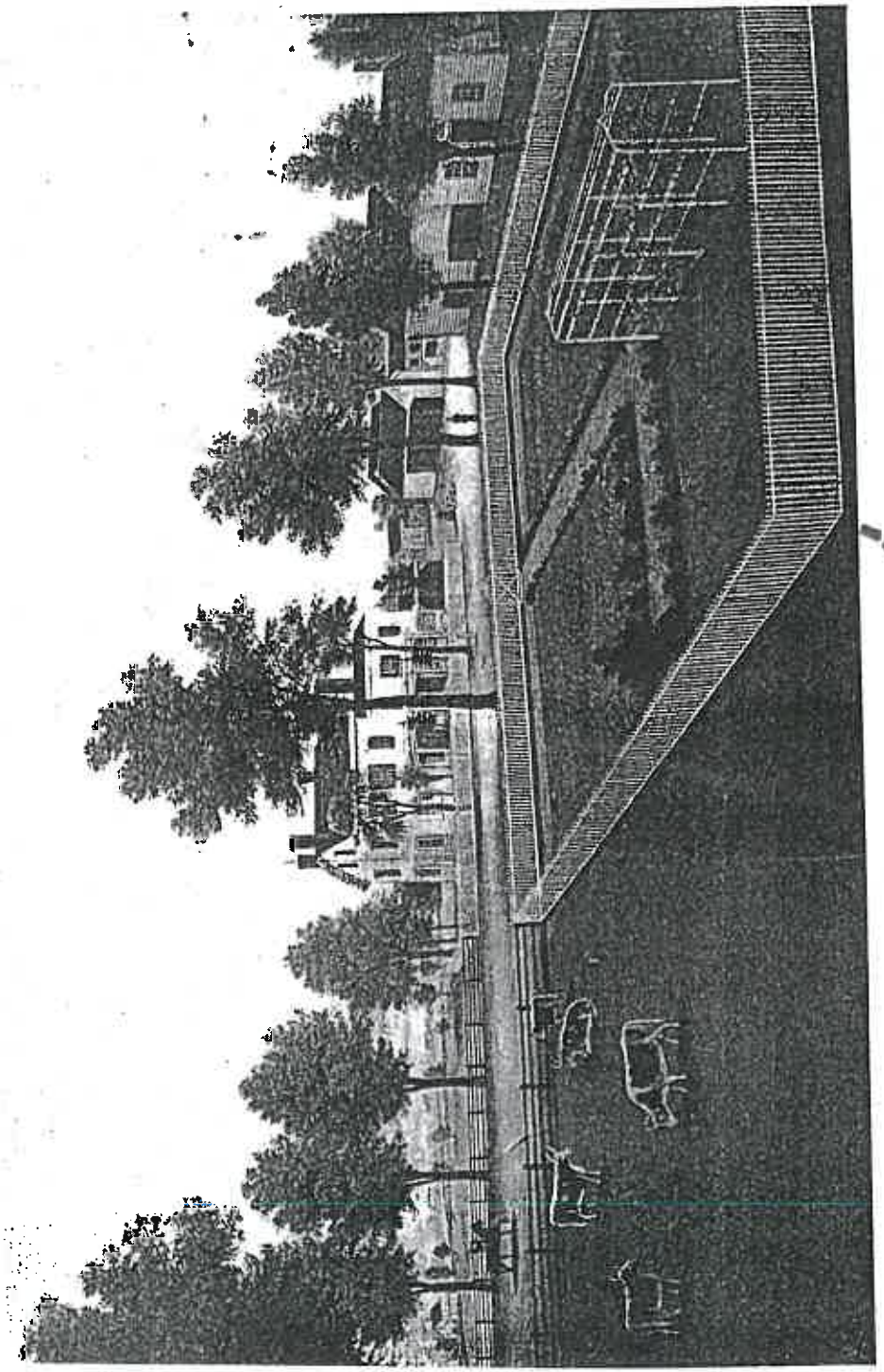

FROM A PAINTING—1854.

THE PITNEY FARM

MENDHAM, NEW JERSEY

1760-1925

Compiled and printed for members of the family by
John O. H. Pitney

THE PITNEY FARM

HISTORY

IN 1760 Jonathan Pitney, who was born at Woodbridge, N. J., in 1720, purchased of Nicholas Stillwell 196 acres, embracing most of the present Pitney Farm. It was part of a larger tract of 1,114 acres acquired in 1715 by Charles Brockden by warrant and survey from the Proprietors of East Jersey. The north line of the Brockden tract ran a due east and west course and is referred to in subsequent conveyances as the "Brockden line." The tract acquired by Jonathan Pitney was bounded on the north by the Brockden line, on the south by the highway from Morristown to Mendham, and on the west by the road running due north and over the mountain as now laid out.

Jonathan Pitney sold 54 acres out of the southeast corner fronting the Morristown-Mendham Road.

In 1768 the remaining 142 acres were sold by the Sheriff on a judgment against Jonathan Pitney in favor of Nicholas Stillwell, presumably for the unpaid purchase price, and bought in by his brother, James Pitney (1722-1809). James allowed Jonathan three years in which to redeem the property. Failing this, James' title was made absolute in 1771.

James Pitney's wife was Desiah Thompson. His son, Mahlon, (1759-1834) was a soldier in the Revolutionary War.

In 1802 James conveyed the farm of 142 acres to his son, Mahlon, at the same time conveying another farm farther east on the Morristown road to another son, Samuel.

On his death, December 30, 1834, Mahlon Pitney by his will devised the farm to his son, Mahlon Pitney, 2d (1795-1863), subject to payments of one dollar to each of his older sons, Aaron and Joseph T., and five dollars to his second wife, Rebecca, in addition to her jointure, executed before their marriage in 1823; and devised to his younger son, Samuel, the farm called the Carne Place, of 70 acres, on the opposite side of the road from Mendham to Morristown, then known as the Washington Turnpike. The older sons, Aaron and Joseph T., had been generously educated and were making their way in the world as practicing physicians—Aaron in Chicago, where he died without issue, and Joseph T., in Auburn, New York, the ancestor of the Auburn branch, of whom some are still living there, grandchildren of Joseph's daughter, Mary, who married Christopher Morgan and whose two daughters married brothers named William and Eugene Barber. A third daughter, Frances, married William Benson.

Mahlon (2d), whose wife was Lucetta, daughter of Henry Cooper, of Chester N. J., continued to live on the farm until his death in 1863. By his will he devised it to his only son, Henry Cooper Pitney (1827-1911), then a lawyer practicing in Morristown, afterward prominent throughout the State and Vice-Chancellor from 1889 to 1907. During the remainder of his life Henry resided in Morristown and operated the farm on shares through resident farmers—John F. Yawger (who had farmed it for Mahlon during the later years of his life), Henry H. Tiger, Lewis E. Hill and Eli H. Hulbert. For several years after his

father's death, Henry C. Pitney also continued to operate the old cider mill on the premises, which, later converted to other uses, was torn down after his death.

He also added to the farm acreage by the purchase of several detached pieces along the north line, including the Smith tract of about 17 acres between the old north line of the farm and the recently built railroad through Brookside, and extending eastward from the road running to the mountain; the Owen tract of 16 acres, between the north line and the railroad, to the east of the Smith tract; the Loree tract, adjoining the Owen tract on the east and running from the old north line of the farm across the railroad to the Brookside road, containing about 9½ acres; also the Byram tract to the east of that, containing 14 acres and extending from the Brookside road across the railroad southward to a line in continuation of the old north line of the farm.

These purchases increased the farm to 200 acres.

Henry C. Pitney died January 10, 1911, and under the provisions of his will the farm came to the ownership of his son, John O. H. Pitney, who in 1923 acquired from Mrs. King (nee Thompson), 50 acres to the southeast of the farm, being nearly all of the tract that was conveyed away by Jonathan Pitney between 1760 and 1766, as above stated. This purchase, with the purchases made by Henry C. Pitney as additions to the original Mahlon Pitney Farm, squared its lines to nearly an equilateral, with a frontage of about 4,000 feet on the turnpike road and a total area of 250 acres.

THE FARMHOUSE

There is no authentic record of the date when the homestead was built. The proceedings against Jonathan Pitney, above outlined, recite him as living on the premises, and under his agreement with his brother James, he was "to continue to dwell on said premises." The agreement also speaks of the "dwelling house and barn lot." The indications, architectural and structural, are that the main west part of the house, three stories high, was built over 150 years ago. The partition walls are of broad oak plank, to which the lath for plaster was directly applied. Garrabrant, the carpenter in Mendham who recently made some changes in the house, told the owner that he had never seen that construction in any other house around Mendham except one, the Thompson house, on the road from Mendham through Ralston to Chester, which authentic records proved was built about 1745. (Rachel Thompson, mother of Lucetta Cooper Pitney, was born in that house.)

The indications are that the high part of the present dwelling constituted the main homestead, and that one of the two rooms on the first floor or the broad hallway was used as a dining room, and that originally there was a small leanto for a kitchen to the east, to which led the present door on the right of the hall with its old wrought iron hinges.

The present two story extension to the east, with its one story extensions to the north, differs in clapboarding and other elements of construction from the main house, and was probably built about one hun-

dred years ago, possibly when Mahlon Pitney (2d) came to live on the farm during the later years of his father's life. Henry C. Pitney, Sr., was born in this part of the house.

The farm cottage to the east of the main house opposite the lane leading from the cowyard to the pasture lots is understood to have been built in the later years of the life of Mahlon Pitney (2d) for the family of the working farmer.

The old barns were destroyed by an accidental fire in 1907 and were replaced by the present buildings and cowyard by Henry C. Pitney.

The Brookside cottage was on the Loree tract when acquired by H. C. P. The house and barns on the King tract were built by Mrs. King's brother, Baldwin Thompson, about 1910, when the previous buildings were destroyed by fire.

The wood lots owned on Mendham Mountain fronting on the mountain road comprise about 325 acres, of which the center tract and nucleus known as Gray's Hollow containing 150 acres was acquired in parcels by James and Mahlon Pitney in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Many small additions were made to this by Henry C. Pitney in his lifetime, and since his death by the present owner. They are all shown on a detailed map prepared by Frederic V. Pitney in 1915.

FARM LIFE

There is practically no record or tradition as to the mode of life on the Pitney Farm in the eighteenth century.

Mahlon Pitney (1st) having received a conveyance of the farm from his father in 1802, lived there until his death in 1834. In that interval he educated his two older sons, Aaron and Joseph T., as physicians, which apparently was a severe drain on his resources.

His first wife was his cousin, Sarah, daughter of Benjamin Pitney. In 1823 he married his second wife, Rebecca Chidester, who exacted from him a marriage agreement or jointure whereby after his death she was to have "the use of the south lower front room" of the dwelling house where he lived and an eight acre lot in front of the dwelling house. This marriage apparently did not contribute to his happiness or prosperity. They were separated two years afterward and on Mahlon Pitney's death, his son, Mahlon, for $75, secured a release from his stepmother of her rights in the dwelling house and the lot in front.

By oral tradition from Henry C. Pitney, his children understood that his father, Mahlon, at about the age of twenty, was obliged to forego further education and take charge of the farm and the cider mill and the forge in the mountain in an effort to extricate his father from his financial embarrassment, and in this effort impaired his health, which he never fully recovered.

MAHLON PITNEY (2D)

This tradition is confirmed by the draft or a copy of a heartbroken letter he wrote to his brother, Joseph, December 2, 1827, and also by entries in a cashbook he kept starting 1825, both found recently in the attic of the farmhouse.

In the letter he says, "Our whole situation stands thus. Father is now 69 years old and owes upward of $3,000 which is called for more or less of it every day" "we live completely from hand to mouth. If we get a dollar in money it is promised to two or three different ones before we get it"; and in reference to his younger brother, Samuel,—"a poor helpless young man hardly capable of taking care of himself" "his wife left him about the last of October. She has gone to her father's and took everything with her and she says she never will live with him again. She says he is a poor miserable creature and not capable of taking care of himself. These are facts which I must reluctantly allow are true and what is to become of brother Samuel I don't know. His wife has stripped him entirely of everything that she and her father could take away and run him in debt all she could get trusted besides. It troubles me very much what is to become of Samuel and in fact what is to become of all of us together." "I have four children, three daughters and one son, the youngest a son." "We have twelve in family steady and sometimes fourteen and sixteen—Father, myself, my wife and four children, brother Samuel, Rach, Jude, Sylva and Tom" (the last four were colored slaves or servants) "make our present family * * * Rach an old servant

who must be supported, and our stepmother no doubt intends to be supported out of the property as long as it lasts whenever she shall stand in need of help. She is not with us nor hasn't been for two years. For my part I feel almost discouraged of ever seeing my father's debts paid and I in the peaceable enjoyment of any of Father's property. I have strove for more than twelve years" (since he was twenty) "faithfully hoping to see Father's debts paid but they are no nearer paid now than they were then. Our farms are poor, the distilling business poor, spirits but 26c per gallon, the iron making business so that we have done nothing at it for nearly two years. We intend to do something at the iron business again in the spring."

The family tradition is that Mahlon (2d) worked hard all day at the farm and the forge lot on Mendham Mountain, where iron ore, carted from Dover, was converted into blooms; and carted the iron and other products to the market in Newark or New York, making the journey usually by night. There are frequent entries in the cashbook of items of iron sold to Burnet & Kinney in Newark, with incidental expenses for nights spent at Condit's Tavern at Chatham, which seems to have been the halfway house to Newark, and payment of tolls at gates at Chatham and also at Elizabeth; and of other produce, principally cider brandy, alias "applejack," carted to New York by way of Elizabethtown Point, thence by sail or steam boat. Detailed expenses of these journeys usually taking the best part of two days frequently occur including cake and beer on the road; and supper, lodging and

breakfast in a New York Hotel usually costing 94c. The iron was usually quoted at about $85 a ton and the applejack at 25 to 30c a gallon. The steamboat fare from Elizabeth to New York was 25c and the coach fare from Elizabeth to Mendham 12½c.

The hospitality of the old home is suggested by such items as "Two strangers two suppers and lodgings, 62½c"; "Stranger for keeping cows, 62½c", "for keeping drove of cattle $12.50" and after an item for delivering cider brandy in New York, "Received from stranger for bringing up six bushels of oysters, $1.12½c."

All receipts from these sources seem to have been balanced by the expense of maintaining the forge and the cider mill, and by payments on account of notes and judgments against Mahlon Pitney, Senior, of which there are frequent entries.

Slaves were still on the farm early in the nineteenth century, as the New Jersey law of 1804 abolishing slavery only applied to slaves thereafter born when they reached the age of twenty-one years. In October, 1825, and in the following months, there are detailed entries of Mahlon's expenses in pursuing Harry and Tom, two slave boys who ran away from the farm, showing that he drove by way of Easton to Doylestown, Pa., where he captured Harry and brought him to Flemington and put him in jail, leaving him there for five months, and returned through New Hope and New Town to Attleboro, where he employed a Quaker as a scout, and thence proceeded through Milford and Frankfort to Philadelphia and spent three days in

searching for Tom. While there he put an advertisement in two newspapers, bought liquor for the constables at different times, and left for home by boat to Trenton and stage to Princeton, and drove home through Somerville, stopping at Mendham Village to buy candy for the children at 3c. Later he had correspondence with the high constable of Philadelphia and paid 25c postage on the letters to and from him, indicating that in those days letters could be mailed C. O. D.

As a result of his correspondence he made another trip to Philadelphia to bring home Tom, who had been apprehended. He drove to Princeton and spent the night at an expense of less than a dollar, took the stage to Trenton at 50c and a steamboat to Philadelphia for another 50c, attended at the Mayor's office on the examination and committal of Tom to jail, paid Tom's prison expenses of $1.60 for eight days, and paid the high constable for capturing Tom $10 in cash and $10 by note. Some months later he went to Flemington, paid Harry's board at the Flemington jail at 23c a day for 144 days, brought him with him to Morris County, and, evidently satisfied that he was incorrigible, hunted for a purchaser and finally sold him to Aaron Denman, of Springfield, N. J., on credit. Later he made a trip to Springfield and secured $50 from Denman on account of the purchase, but so far as the books show never was able to recover the balance. Perhaps on trial Denman thought he had already paid all the boy was worth.

Some other items in the cashbook may be interesting as throwing light on the life of the times, for instance—

In 1825,	"Two pairs vests and pantaloons for Samuel [the son] and Harry [the slave boy] $1"
March 24, 1825,	"Paid $1 for horse to go to Newark to see Lafayette—Mahlon and Samuel."
March 27, 1825,	"Paid nurse for Lucetta 10 days $1" (His daughter Phebe was born March 18, 1825.)
July 14, 1825,	"Paid expenses at Morristown to see Lafayette, Mahlon, Sr. sixpence, Mahlon, Jr. 3 shillings." (Apparently even in those days the younger generation were more extravagant than their elders.)
July 6, 1825,	"Paid for large watermelon; Father and my family had a fine feast on it 18¾c"—presumably a Fourth of July celebration in the old fashion.
December 7, 1825,	"Paid Mr. Vandervort for marrying brother Samuel $7." "Paid Pat Boyles for brother Samuel's wedding suit $4." "Paid for wedding cake 49c." "Paid for 10 sheets of paper 10c." (Evidently the wedding invitations.)

Some items indicate that in 1825-6 the sons were active members of a military battalion, for which

expenses of a few shillings are periodically charged, one mentioning "officers' drill of battalion."

In 1826 there is an entry "paid for schooling children last summer $1.50"—not high for overtime work.

There are also some interesting personal items.

"Paid for a comb for Sarah Ann to pay her for picking apples 18¾c."

June, 1836, "Paid daughter Phebe 10c."
"Let Henry have $1."

(These were Mahlon (2d's) children, then aged respectively 11 and 9.)

June 11, 1836, "Paid Peter A. Johnson for a docket $1.25."

This is undoubtedly for Mahlon Pitney's docket as squire or justice of the peace which is now among the farm heirlooms. He was actively engaged in this work for many years and apparently succeeded his neighbor, Jesse Upson, who for many years was the leading squire of the vicinity and whose docket is also in our archives, presumably having been kept in Mahlon Pitney's possession for access of those interested after Upson's death. In his later years, Mahlon was generally spoken of as "Squire Pitney." He was also considered the sage of the neighborhood and his counsel and advice was freely sought; he was also a leader in public affairs in his community. He installed the first aqueduct in Mendham Village, supplied with water pumped by hydraulic rams, new in those days but which he had studied and successfully installed and operated on the farm, which until the

new aqueduct was established in Mendham was the sole source of supply of water for the farmhouses and barns. His wife, Lucetta, was a woman of intellectual culture and a constant reader of the best literature of the day.

From the books and papers recently found in the attic of the old farmhouse, it appears that Henry C. Pitney attended Dr. Ezra Fairchild's school at Mendham in 1834-37, but only during about half of the school years. He spent the year 1840 and the year 1842 at Dr. Fairchild's boarding school at Plainfield. The interruptions were due partly to his delicate health and partly to the necessity of his helping his father in farm work. In the summer of 1846 he spent ten weeks at Dr. Fairchild's Flushing Institute; entered Princeton in the fall as a junior, and graduated in 1848. Also, that his sister, Phebe, attended Miss Dayton's boarding school in 1840, tuition fee being $10 a half year, board $2 a week and music tuition $1 a week, with extra charge for use of the piano. The books charged indicate that she studied reading, spelling, arithmetic, geography, botany and astronomy. She later married Joseph Watkins, and in 1848, with her four small children, Sarah, Joseph, Helen and John, joined the farm household. Another son, Mahlon, was born while they lived there. The Watkins family continued a part of the household until the death of Mahlon, in 1863.

Mahlon Pitney's other daughters were Sarah Ann, who died in youth, Lydia, who married Henry Hillard,

of Peapack, and Mary Brayton, who with her only son, Henry, died while traveling in Italy in 1883-1884.

Henry C. Pitney after his graduation from Princeton in 1848, studied law in Morristown in the office of Ira C. Whitehead, afterwards a Judge of the New Jersey Supreme Court. He was admitted to the Bar as an attorney in 1851 and as a counsellor in 1854. On April 7, 1853, he married Sarah Louisa Halsted, daughter of Oliver and Sarah Crane Halsted, of New York City. She died May 28, 1899. Their children were:

Sadie Pitney Johnson, born April 12, 1854.
Henry Cooper Pitney, Jr., born August 6, 1856.
Mahlon Pitney, born February 5, 1858, who was Judge of the New Jersey Supreme Court, Chancellor of New Jersey, and a Justice of the United States Supreme Court, and died December 11, 1924.
John O. H. Pitney, born April 14, 1860.
Katharine Pitney Van Dusen, born April 5, 1862, whose husband, George R. Van Dusen, was a prominent Philadelphia lawyer and died February 12, 1916.
Mary B. Pitney, born May 5, 1866, and
Frederic V. Pitney, born April 20, 1869.

Henry C. Pitney's personal traits are well described in an article on the Court of Chancery of New Jersey, in the Newark Sunday Call, May 16, 1926, as follows:

"From a human standpoint, probably Vice-Chancellor Henry C. Pitney, who occupied the office for eighteen years, from 1889 to 1907, was the most outstanding figure the court has pro-

HENRY C. PITNEY

is a statement of facts and the more concise the statement the better we like it. Don't use oratory before the Court. It likes to do all the orating that's necessary itself."

Henry C. Pitney's career as lawyer, advocate and judge, is fully recorded in the various New Jersey biographies, in the official reports of his Chancery decisions, and the pamphlets containing the addresses at his eightieth anniversary banquet in New York, and on his retirement from the Bench in the following April, and in the memorial proceedings in the Court of Chancery after his death.

RESTORATION OF HOMESTEAD

In 1925 the present owner restored and enlarged the main part of the old house, adding in the rear a kitchen extension with rooms above, and to the west a sun porch with room above.

His good wife has furnished it throughout with antique furniture and fittings appropriate to the style prevailing one hundred years ago, and on Thanksgiving Day, 1925, gave a house-warming luncheon to the descendants of Henry C. Pitney and their respective spouses. Those present were:

Of the first generation

Sadie Pitney Johnson
Henry C. Pitney and Laura Wood, his wife
John O. H. Pitney and Roberta A. B., his wife
Katharine Pitney Van Dusen
Mary B. Pitney
Frederic V. Pitney and Elizabeth, his wife

Of the second generation

Lucetta Pitney Johnson (daughter of Mrs. Johnson)
John Ballantine Pitney and Francise, his wife
Robert Henry Pitney
(The last two, children of John O. H. Pitney)
Shelton Pitney and Etta, his wife
Mahlon Pitney
(Shelton and Mahlon being sons of Mahlon Pitney, (3rd), deceased)
Katharine P. Van Dusen
Rev. Henry P. Van Dusen
(Children of Mrs. Van Dusen)
Elizabeth, Emily and Sally Pitney
(Children of Frederic V. Pitney)

Of the third generation

John Williams Pitney
James Duncan Pitney
(Sons of John B. Pitney)
Shelton Pitney
Mary Foster Pitney
(Children of Shelton Pitney)

The foregoing twenty-five comprised all of Henry C. Pitney's descendants, and their wives, excepting Florence Shelton Pitney, widow of Mahlon Pitney, and Beatrice Pitney, her daughter, who were in Washington, D. C., and Henry C. Pitney, (3rd) son of Frederic V. Pitney, who was away at boarding school.

Before luncheon Rev. Henry P. Van Dusen made a prayer of thanksgiving and asked a blessing upon the mansion house, the family gathered there and the feast provided.

After luncheon and a sip of applejack produced on the farm over fifty years ago, the host welcomed the guests to the restored mansion house, recalled some of the historical incidents above set forth, and expressed the hope that in these venerable surroundings and antique fittings the guests might imagine the Mahlon Pitney of one hundred years ago returned to enjoy the warmth of the hot air furnace, listening over the radio to the score of the Army-Navy game, or strolling to the barn to watch the cows milked by electric-driven machinery, dashing in his motor over paved roads to the movies at Morristown or telephoning to the doctor for something to relieve his cough. He also hoped that all the guests in the years to come would feel at home in the ancestral mansion and enjoy the reminders of their forebears and their life here in years gone by.

The host also called attention to the portrait of his grandfather, Mahlon Pitney, which hangs in the old farmhouse, portraying in his face the courage, firmness and determination through which he had saved the farm from his father's creditors and built it up to a high state of cultivation, traits that were transmitted to his son, Henry, also plainly written in his portrait there, and which enabled him from modest beginnings to achieve fame and honor in his day and generation. He hoped these traits might be an inspiration to all their descendants.

Henry C. Pitney, Jr., recalled the romantic times when Indians were still on the farm as follows:

THE HILL-TOPS AND THE BROOK-SIDES
A TALE OF THE PITNEY FARM IN MENDHAM

When Columbus discovered America, in the year 1492, two tribes of Wild Indians lived in this part of the country. Their names are uncouth and unpronounceable today. The western tribe, whose name sounded like HIGH-AN-MIGH-TI, were called "Hill-Tops" by the white settlers; and the eastern tribe, whose name sounded like LO-AN-CO-ZI, were called "Brook-Sides" by the whites.

The Indians lived in wig-wams in little villages scattered thro the big woods which covered nearly all the ground. The young "braves" played foot-ball in an open bare field or 'clearing' which is now right before us. The older braves with their bows-and-arrows hunted wild game-animals thro the forest on the up-lands or they fished and trapped the game in the lower valleys.

Sometimes the hunting with bows and arrows made accidents in which neighbors were hurt; and so ill-feeling and anger arose; and the injured family and sometimes the tribe would try to repay the injuries with other injuries inflicted upon the offending neighbors. Hence came wars and raids and various troubles between the neighbors and the tribes.

News of these wars and troubles went down to the distant settlements of Whites. A wide-awake doctor named Byram (one of our ancestors) down there declared that he would go up among those Indians and *"mend 'em!"* This adventurous doctor did visit the Indians in villages and did labor so hard among them that he induced the Indians to make a lasting peace between the rival tribes.

This happy event was signalized by a rare and solemn ceremony. The two tribes met in a grand council and general "smoker" and "smoked the pipe of peace"; and they "buried the hatchet," that is: they hid a stone-hatchet or "tomahawk" in the roots of a great sycamore

or "button-ball" tree, one of a row of tall sycamores that stood along the eastern side of the foot-ball field. That great tree remained there until the time of our grandparents.

From that day when the Indians "buried the hatchet" they lived peaceful and happy on their lands in Mendham—until the Whites moved up closer and sought to buy the Indians' land. After long doubt and hesitation, the Indians did sell their lands to the Whites—for a price which then was worth to them a thousand dollars an acre but now would not pay rent for three months. And the Indians packed up their wig-wams and gathered up their children and their animals; and they took the western trail and journeyed on and on and on, until they reached the Great Smoky Mountains and discovered the Happy Hunting-Grounds, in which they have lived ever afterwards.

The Whites removed all the forest and turned the lands into plow-fields; and the foot-ball field became a garden. And one day a farmer named John F. Yawger or Henry H. Tiger—for two Dutch farmers bearing those names in turn have cultivated the Indian lands in the Pitney Farm—in plowing thro the roots of the Great Sycamore Tree turned up the buried Indian Stone Hatchet or Tomahawk. And shortly he brought it as a present to the Lady Pitney of his day. And now I have the honor to bring the same Stone Hatchet or Tomahawk as a present to the Lady Pitney of our own day.

And I hope that the Tomahawk will be preserved as a memento of the Indian Tribes who made the lasting peace and of the brave Doctor Byram who carried out his resolution to *"Mend 'em."*

The tomahawk was gratefully accepted and placed in the cabinet in the front room as an addition to the collection of Indian tomahawks and arrowheads that had been turned up by the ploughs on the farm.