Strawberry Bank’s — and The Marquis de Lafayette 1824

GEORGE A. TREFETHEN
"Were American Newcomen to do naught else, our work is well done if we succeed in sharing with America a strengthened inspiration to continue the struggle towards a nobler Civilization—through wider knowledge and understanding of the hopes, ambitions, and deeds of leaders in the past who have upheld Civilization's material progress. As we look backward, let us look forward."

—CHARLES PENROSE
Senior Vice-President for North America
The Newcomen Society of England

This statement, crystallizing a broad purpose of the Society, was first read at the Newcomen Meeting at New York World's Fair on August 5, 1939, when American Newcomen were guests of The British Government

"Actorum Memores simul affectamus Agenda"
American Newcomen, through the years, has honored notable anniversaries of numerous communities, corporate enterprises, and institutions. The beginnings of these lie in the courage, vision, imagination, determination, and Faith of their founders, no matter what the character of institution. Such a Newcomen manuscript, dealing with such beginnings, is this which centers in events of 125 years ago, in New Hampshire—and the visit to Portsmouth by Washington’s staunch friend and comrade-in-arms, General Lafayette.
The great Lafayette, at the age of 67, found comfort in this conveyance, still preserved in New Hampshire, which carried him through the streets of Portsmouth, receiving enthusiastic reception by its people, during his historic visit on Wednesday, September 1st, 1824, just a century and a quarter ago.
Strawberry Bank's Bank
—and The Marquis de Lafayette
1824

George A. Trefethen
Member of The Newcomen Society
President
New Hampshire Bankers Association
Executive Vice-President & Cashier
The First National Bank of Portsmouth
Portsmouth
New Hampshire

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This Newcomen Address, dealing with the life of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 125 years ago, and with the beginnings of the financial institution which today is The First National Bank of Portsmouth, was delivered during the "1949 New Hampshire Luncheon" of The Newcomen Society of England, at which Mr. Trefethen was guest of honor, held at Hotel Rockingham in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, U.S.A., on September 7, 1949
“Portsmouth, first called ‘Strawberry Bank’, has rich heritage of New England traditions. This old colonial seaport town has looked toward the Sea during long generations. Its harbor attracted the admiring attention, in the 1600’s, of the Royal Navy. The Royal Mast Ships sailed from here. In 1800, the United States Navy established a great Navy Yard on the Piscataqua River, opposite Portsmouth. It is a town where seafaring is part of its life!”

—George A. Trefethen
Biographical Sketch
of The Author

So long as sea gulls wheel and dive and call, above the swift tidal waters of the Piscataqua; so long as old colonial gardens still are cherished and add their beauty of loveliness to mansions where Washington and Lafayette once visited; so long as elm-shaded streets continue to delight the eye and give charm of sunlight and dancing shadows—so long as these costless yet priceless things do not fade, then shall Old Portsmouth, colonial seaport town of wealth and influence, persist: to an unending joy of all Americans who can revere beauty, can appraise history, and can drink deep of the golden wonders of the past! Much has been written of Portsmouth. Poet and painter; historian and novelist; traveller and lecturer—all have sought to pay tribute. Portsmouth deserves such recognition. Portsmouth, like other venerable towns in America, has been a storehouse of adventure, of tradition, and of seafaring legend. Whether on land or by sea, Portsmouth's men have made history for New Hampshire: its only seaport. Blue ocean and blue sky mix upon a palette of inspiration: for those privileged to live amongst salty surroundings! Such is the privilege of George Albert Trefethen, who, during 32 years, has been identified with The First National Bank of Portsmouth, of which, today, he is the Executive Vice-President & Cashier. Well-known New Hampshire banker and citizen, Mr. Trefethen is the able President of The New Hampshire Bankers Association. From boyhood he has lived in his native Portsmouth and been within an atmosphere unspoiled in its continuing beauty of colonial surroundings. Never has he been forced to live away from the swift tidal waters of the Piscataqua. Always has he gloried in the old colonial gardens still cherished and still adding their beauty of loveliness to mansions where Washington and Lafayette once visited! Banker, experienced fiduciary, student of finance and banking and economic history, good citizen, Mr. Trefethen is an Associate Treasurer of the New Hampshire Committee, in The Newcomen Society of England.
My fellow members of Newcomen:

GIDEON BECK, still youthful newspaper publisher and editor of Portsmouth, dismounted from his tired horse this 1st day of September, in the Year of Grace 1824, finding himself at his temporary destination by a wooded turn of the venerable Boston Post Road, near to the Massachusetts State Line.

A fallen tree trunk at roadside proffered a vantage seat, while, with girth loosened, his horse could graze near by. Gideon Beck had been in the saddle since daybreak; was the first to arrive. Indeed, such was his energetic intent. Must not an editor perforce be on the ground first? News travels fast, but an editor must needs travel faster; and he had—from Portsmouth, some 17 miles distant.

It was a peaceful scene that greeted the editor’s eyes. There was that quite indescribable mixture of the smell of the pines and the tang of the Sea. As he looked about him, Beck could see the beginnings of red and gold and brown and purple creeping over the foliage of maple and birch and elm, amid the greater evergreen mass of pine and fir and hemlock. Above it all was the broad, blue, sunlit canopy of heaven—with here and there a dignified procession of
small white clouds. It was a scene many of you have enjoyed and treasured in memory. It was a scene of which only New England can boast.

A happy content came into Gideon Beck’s entire being.

However, *stirring events* were destined to come—this very morning!

This early Autumn morning held promise of *no ordinary day* both for Southern New-Hampshire and for the old colonial seaport town of Portsmouth. Coming happenings, of international interest, had been awaited these many months! Each of Portsmouth’s 7500 souls was alert as rarely before.

“Since I took over the proprietorship in 1813,” mused Beck, “my *New-Hampshire Gazette* has had no journalistic opportunity equal to today’s.”

In fact, all of the seacoast region roundabout was agog—and why shouldn’t they be? Was not the great Lafayette to pass along this very post road, this very morning?

He might be leaving Newburyport this moment and be in the act of ferrying across the historic Merrimack. However, not yet was there any sight or distant sound of his escort and suite, in the direction from Massachusetts.

It was forty years since New England, and indeed America, had seen the now aged Revolutionary hero. If only Washington had not died 25 years ago, then the Father of his Country might well be expected to accompany the Marquis and his son, George Washington Lafayette, this day to Portsmouth.

The roadside log provided pleasant opportunity for quiet meditation upon recent events:
Gideon Beck reflected upon crowded doings reported in Boston’s great reception to the valiant Frenchman.

In quick succession, Lafayette had been entertained by His Excellency Governor William Eustis, at his seat in Roxbury; had been welcomed by Josiah Quincy, Mayor of the City of Boston; had been the central figure in the most impressive and most extensive procession in Boston’s history, including uniformed military and “a full band of music, consisting of thirty two performers.” And then had been conducted to Cambridge, received by President John Thornton Kirkland of Harvard College, with opening words: “We bid you welcome, General Lafayette, to the most ancient of the seminaries of our land. The overseers and fellows of the University, the professors and other officers, the candidates for the academic honors of this day, and the students, tender you their respectful, their affectionate salutations.”

At the conclusion, General Lafayette had responded in graceful reply, ending with a Latin quotation “not distinctly understood.”

All these recent happenings passed through Gideon Beck’s mind, as he sat by the wooded roadside. A breeze from the distant ocean gave salty tang of the Sea. High above yonder pinetree wheeled a lone sea gull. He was glad he lived in New England!

And then, he reflected, there were the most recent events, scheduled for yesterday, the 31st of August, again honoring America’s great visitor:

Lafayette was to have left Boston yesterday morning, escorted by a troop of cavalry.

The first stop was to be at Lynn, where John White, Esq. would make the address of welcome. Then, the visitor would journey to Marblehead, where a song went up: “General, thou gavest to us thirteen talents—Lo; we have gained eleven more. The voice of ten millions welcomes you,” even as a salute of thirteen guns rang out.

Next on the program: an escort to Salem, a salute of twenty four guns, a welcome by Colonel Putnam, chairman of the Selectmen of Salem, and a public dinner in Hamilton Hall.
If Gideon Beck had been endowed with a gift of prophecy, then would he know that yesterday’s occasion at Salem was to be reported in the public press in these words: “The whole was enchanting, and resembled the embellishments of a fairy palace, as described in Eastern tales.”

Many miles more was Lafayette destined to travel that day of yesterday: in his progress eastwards from the Massachusetts-Bay to New-Hampshire and to the swift tidal Piscataqua.

After the General left the dinner table in Hamilton Hall in Salem at half past five o’clock he again was escorted, this time toward Beverly, where the march was continued under a triumphal arch spanning the roadway at the draw of Beverly bridge. There he was welcomed by The Hon. Robert Rantoul, whose father, a sea captain, had been lost at sea in 1783.

During succeeding evening hours, Lafayette still journeyed on: to Ipswich, where he was addressed by Nathaniel Lord, Jr., in the meeting house; and then on to Rowley and Newbury Old Town, “in both of which towns the houses on the way-side were illuminated for the occasion.” Massachusetts was giving warm welcome!

As he surveyed the deserted post road at its wooded turn, little did Beck know that it was not until half past ten o’clock last evening that the General and his party had reached Newburyport and had found lodgings ready in the mansion house of James Prince, Esq.; while all the town’s bells rang out and rockets flared. Immediately thereafter, did The Hon. Ebenezer Moseley make the usual address of welcome. Lafayette gave verbal reply.

Then supper was served up—“and the General and his suite, the committee of arrangements of Newburyport—the marshals and clergy partook of the same. . . . After breakfast next morning, the doors were thrown open to the citizens generally. The General cordially took by the hand, all who were introduced to him.”
Although Beck, from his seat along the New-Hampshire roadside, did not know—that latter episode was taking place this very morning of Wednesday, the 1st of September, 1824. We now have explanation as to why the General was behind schedule. However, Generals are worth waiting for!

Gideon Beck looked! Far down the post road, from the direction whence he himself had come, appeared six figures on horseback, riding three abreast. He believed the party looked familiar; probably were Portsmouth men, doubtless valued subscribers to his 80-year-old Gazette. He trusted they were not in arrears to the paper. To prevent such hapless occurrence he always printed, in every issue, the pertinent statement: "No paper discontinued, except at the discretion of the editor, until all arrearages are paid."

The six men approached closer. Now Beck could recognize each. Those in the forefront were the managers of the Grand Ball that will be given tonight at Franklin Hall in Portsmouth, honoring the General. The three managers were: Samuel Larkin, Eben Wentworth, and Joshua W. Peirce. They drew near.

"Gideon Beck," began Mr. Larkin, "Good morning to you. You have preceded us and are first here to greet the Marquis, when he shall appear on this post road. We six came for like purpose."

"I thank you," responded Beck, "and I have been thinking of the great tribute General Lafayette pays Portsmouth in visiting us before he visits Philadelphia, nor Baltimore, nor our Nation's Capital, nor even the Tomb of his beloved Washington. You know that Lafayette arrived at New-York aboard the Cadmus only on the 15th of August."

"You speak rightly," said Eben Wentworth, "but we should remember how well we of Portsmouth came to know the French
when their warships came into our Piscataqua’s harbor, in August 1782—and so the Marquis may cherish a special sentiment towards us.”

By this time, the three other Portsmouth citizens, each widely known, rode up. Gideon Beck, although himself only 38 years of age, knew these older men well.

The three were Samuel Lord and Ichabod Rollins and the younger W. H. Y. Hackett. These men, too, were Portsmouth leaders.

Mr. Lord imported much from London and Liverpool. Mr. Rollins, a partner of Rollins & Hale, was a West India merchant. And Mr. Hackett, solicitor, was a promising leader of the New Hampshire Bar. Surely the great Lafayette would be received by Portsmouth’s best—at the State Line.

Mr. Lord was first to speak: “Mr. Beck,” said he, “it is misfortune that my associate, Captain Ichabod Goodwin, is away in English waters in the Ship Hetty, and cannot be with us. He, at this very moment, should be entering the Port of Liverpool.

“It had been our hope, too, that Mr. Reuben Shapley, Mr. James Sheafe, and Mr. William Gardner might have accompanied us. But their advanced age precluded.”

There was no time for further parley; because, as Gideon Beck was about to make rejoinder, a joyous din was heard, in the direction of Massachusetts!

Yes, it was true!

The venerable General Lafayette, accompanied by his numerous companions, was approaching!

The General himself, in his chaise, led the cheering procession. No journalistic opportunity equal to this ever had knocked at the well-worn door of the New-Hampshire Gazette!
The seven men, Gideon Beck and the six riders, stood spell-bound. Lafayette, still distinguished at 67, was before them—*in the flesh!*

Truly had Beck written, in yesterday's *New-Hampshire Gazette*, these ringing and prophetic words:

"Tomorrow will be a proud day for the people of New-Hampshire; and while the hearts of ten millions in our wide spreading empire are overflowing with gratitude to the hero and veteran of two revolutions, to the early companion and tried friend of the immortal Washington, the citizens of the capital (*Portsmouth*) of this State will express the spontaneous effusions of their grateful acknowledgements."

Beck had not prophesied in vain!

So far, *Mr. Chairman*, in this informal recital, Mr. Gideon Beck, still youthful newspaper publisher of Portsmouth, has served as our narrator. I may add that all those whom he has brought into our picture *really lived and had their being* at Portsmouth, just *a century and a quarter ago*. Their journey to the Massachusetts State Line serves only by way of introduction of *two events*, happily almost in coincidence, which form the twin theme of this equally informal Newcomen manuscript.

Up until now, Gideon Beck has done the talking. However, by your leave, let me now say something.

The *two happenings* of long ago—because 125 years is a long span—to which I would call your attention, are these:

The *first*, as you already suspect, are the picturesque circumstances surrounding an historic visit of the great Lafayette to Portsmouth, in September 1824. And, *secondly*, the almost coincident establishment of an institution destined to continue and to thrive in the old but still active seaport town of Portsmouth, along banks beside the swift tidal waters of the Piscataqua. That institution, founded in 1824, was The Piscataqua Bank, which today is The
First National Bank of Portsmouth, celebrating, this Year of 1949, its 125th Anniversary. That event becomes the milestone which American Newcomen graciously is observing now.

There are not a great number of banks in the United States of America which are old enough yet to celebrate a century and a quarter of existence. In fact, America's oldest chartered bank, a great New England institution at Boston, was founded in 1784, which is only exactly 40 years prior to our beginning. That we are proud of our heritage goes without saying!

Again, Mr. Chairman, taking ourselves back to the great Lafayette, let me say that his triumphal progress, from where we greeted him after he left Newburyport and entered New Hampshire, was a greatest event for the villages of Seabrook, the Hamp- tons, Breakfast Hill, and the environs of Portsmouth.

We could dwell at length upon the crowded happenings arranged, this first day of September 1824, by the good people of Portsmouth and by their nearby Maine neighbors. We could follow Lafayette through elm-shaded streets, past even then old mansions and gardens; and we could go with him across the newly-completed drawbridge that spanned the Piscataqua River and led him to an official visit to the Portsmouth Navy Yard, with its gun salutes, where he was received by The Commandant, Captain William Montgomery Crane, U.S.N., who entered the United States Navy as a Midshipman, on May 23, 1799.

We could be at Lafayette's side at the receptions in Portsmouth given him that day: the Great Banquet in Jefferson Hall, with its early 19th Century eloquence and its multitude of toasts; and finally the crowning event of color and beauty and elegance, in the Grand Ball in Franklin Hall, held in his honor that night, with display of all of the wealth and luxury and culture of Old Portsmouth.

However, there are limits of time and patience and endurance. Accordingly, and by your leave, I now return you to our narrator,
Mr. Gideon Beck, still youthful newspaper publisher of Portsmouth; but not as of September 1824, and rather when the leaden skies of December tell that a Winter Season is upon Portsmouth. The year still is 1824.

Snow was beginning to fall, as Gideon Beck looked from his office windows, out upon the sloping roofs of Portsmouth’s trim houses, this Christmas Eve—still in the Year of Grace 1824.

Beck could see the stately tower of Old St. John’s Church, with its belfry and lantern. These, during generations, had commanded Portsmouth’s finest view, atop the high hill to which Chapel Street leads. The weathervane over which the kindly Evangelist St. John presides showed that the snow was coming from the East. It might prove heavy.

Beck could see wreathes of smoke ascending, in the still air, from the many chimneys of Portsmouth’s houses. Dusk was falling, this Friday evening. However, he yet could discern the masts of ships, tied up at docks in the Piscataqua. Many a fisherman and mariner, he mused, was glad to be back in the home port, this Christmas. It betokened a white Christmas.

Across the river, in Maine, lights were appearing at windows. Christmas Eve was at hand! It was a pleasant scene. New England is at its best at Christmastide.

A knock at his publisher’s door awoke Beck from the quiet reverie.

Two old friends, leading citizens of Portsmouth, made their entrance. They were Messrs. Samuel Hale and Samuel Lord. The latter we have run into, some four months ago.

“We have come,” said Mr. Hale, to acquaint you with the favorable action of the General Court, on December 17th, just a week ago. Here is the notice:
"Friday, December 17th, 1824

General Court of New Hampshire:

The Committee on Banks reported a bill incorporating The Piscataqua Bank with amendments, which were adopted.

In the debate on this bill Messrs Mason, Woodman, Doe, Blaisdell, Haven, Quincy and Drown participated.

"It passed by a majority of 91... yeas 145-nays 54."

"It may be," mentioned Mr. Lord, "that you will want to make editorial mention. We believe The Piscataqua Bank, named in honor of our swift-running and beautiful river, is destined to do great things for our thrifty Town of Portsmouth. It is likely to enjoy long life."

"However," interjected Mr. Hale, "our present purpose in calling upon you is to arrange that a notice be inserted in your coming issue for January 4, 1825. It concerns The Piscataqua Bank and will be signed by both of us."

This is what that notice read:

"Piscataqua Bank

"Notice is hereby given to the subscribers to the capital stock of the Piscataqua Bank, that the first meeting of said corporation will be holden at the office of Samuel Lord, on Tuesday the 18th day of January inst. at 3 o'clock P.M. for the purpose of making, ordaining and establishing such by laws, or ordinances and regulations, as may be deemed necessary, and for the choice of the first Board of Directors, and for the transaction of such other business as may legally come before them.

Samuel Hale
Samuel Lord

"New Hampshire Gazette, January 4, 1825"

It was in this wise, Mr. Chairman, that The Piscataqua Bank was organized, a century and a quarter ago!
The meeting, as above, was indeed held on January 18th, in Mr. Lord's office at Portsmouth, and the bank commenced its operations on Monday, January 31st, 1825, as per the following final news item, appearing in the *New-Hampshire Gazette*:

"Piscataqua Bank"

"The Piscataqua Bank commenced its operations in this town on Monday last (January 31) under the direction of the following gentlemen;

Samuel Hale, *President*
Langley Boardman
Samuel Lord
Ichabod Rollins
John N. Sherburne
John Ball
William Stavers
Nathaniel A. Haven, jr.
Augustus Lord
Samuel Lord, *Cashier*
W. H. Y. Hackett, *Solicitor*

"*New Hampshire Gazette*, Tuesday, February 1, 1825"

Before I conclude this informal Newcomen Address, it may be of interest to you to learn the following:

Gideon Beck, born in 1786, lived to the ripe old age of 75 years; and died in Portsmouth, on January 3, 1861.

Langley Boardman, a noted cabinet maker, was "an industrious and successful mechanic," who acquired wealth, and became a member of the New Hampshire State Senate and Council Board, and died in 1833, at age of 59.

Samuel Hale, son of Judge Samuel Hale and grandson of Major Samuel Hale, the celebrated Portsmouth schoolteacher, was a graduate of Bowdoin College, in the Class of 1814, and took his Master's degree at Dartmouth, in 1818; also, Harvard College conferred a degree upon him. Only six years later, in 1824, he became a bank president, as we have seen. Many years a merchant in Portsmouth, of the firm of Ichabod Rollins & Samuel Hale, he was President of Portsmouth Marine Railway Company
and of Portsmouth Iron Foundry Company; and a Director of Piscataqua Bridge Company. At various times, he was identified with shipbuilding. In 1843, he became Agent of The Manufacturing Company, at South Berwick, Maine, serving until his death. He was a tall, fine-appearing man like his father and grandfather, and a man of great business capacity. He died in 1869.

Nathaniel A. Haven, Jr. was bred a physician. He graduated at Harvard College, in the Class of 1779. Served as a Naval Surgeon, at sea, in the latter part of the Revolutionary War. Was captured by the British and confined on board the Prison Ship Jersey, at New York, but soon exchanged at the special request of General Washington. At the close of the war he became a merchant, at Portsmouth. Was the first President of The Portsmouth Savings Bank. In 1809, he was elected to Congress. He died in 1831, at the age of 69.

Samuel Lord was born in South Berwick, Maine, in 1788; and came to Portsmouth in 1803, where he received his mercantile training in the counting house of N. A. & J. Haven, leading merchants and ship owners. Governor Ichabod Goodwin was one of the clerks in that counting room, at an early date. He was Cashier of The Piscataqua Bank and its successors, for 45 years. In 1863, at the age of 75, he became Cashier of The First National Bank of Portsmouth. It is said of him that he "held that position and performed its duty with uninterrupted diligence and unfaltering ability to the end of his life—his last official act having been performed on the Saturday preceding his death on Tuesday morning. Even on Monday he gave directions as to certain matters at the bank. He had a total of 94 years service as a bank officer, a period of service unusual, if not unknown."

William Henry Young Hackett was born in Gilmanton, New Hampshire, in 1800. He came to Portsmouth in 1822, entering the law office of Ichabod Rollins. Was admitted to the New Hampshire Bar in 1826. In 1861, he was chosen President of the Senate, in the New Hampshire Legislature. Later, he became President of The First National Bank of Portsmouth. He was renowned as a biographer, and known for able service as a director of railroad companies. He died in 1878.
Ichabod Rollins was born in Rollinsford, New Hampshire, in 1790. During the War of 1812, he was sent to Stockholm as supercargo on an American ship, and took part in hostilities between the United States and England. In partnership with Samuel Hale, he later engaged in extensive ship operations and ownership. He died in 1873.

Samuel Larkin, universally known as “Major Larkin,” was distinguished as the father of 22 children. He was a man of most agreeable and social disposition, having come from Boston and opened a book shop on the Parade, in Portsmouth. His store was burned in the Great Fire of 1802. He was Chief Fireward of Portsmouth, from 1817 to 1825. During the War of 1812, he was an Auctioneer, selling under the hammer many prizes and prize cargoes captured from the British by Portsmouth privateers. He died in 1849, at age of 75.

Reuben Shapley was one of the leading merchants of Portsmouth. These merchants sent their Portsmouth-built ships to the West Indies, the Mediterranean, the Baltic, and many distant ports, with cargoes that brought back wealth and luxury. 169 vessels were registered in Portsmouth, in 1824. A marble tablet in Old St. John’s Church attests Reuben Shapley’s virtues and character. He died in 1825, at an advanced age.

James Sheafe, merchant, graduated at Harvard College, in the Class of 1774. In 1801, he was elected United States Senator from New Hampshire. He often was spoken of as “Our Duke of Wellington—in sagacity and manners.” He died in 1829, at the age of 74.

William Gardner, known widely as “an honest man,” was one of the most venerable and respected citizens of Portsmouth—and a true patriot. He, too, has a marble tablet in St. John’s Church. He died in 1834, at the age of 83.

Captain Ichabod Goodwin, who was at sea in 1824, was elected a director of The Piscataqua Bank in 1834. He was one of New Hampshire’s outstanding leaders. He entered the Counting Room of Samuel Lord in 1808; and, in 1817, went out as a supercargo of the Ship Elizabeth Wilson. Later, became a sea captain. In 1832, we find him a member of the shipping firm of Coues & Good-
win, at Portsmouth. He was President of Portsmouth Whaling Company, and of numerous enterprises, including early railroad lines. Twice he was elected Governor of New Hampshire; and he was the Civil War Governor of the State, when he raised regiments of Union troops. He died on July 4th, 1882, at age of 88.

These Portsmouth men were typical of their times. Each, in his own field was a leader; each had inborn integrity; each did his part, along with 10 million others, in building America.

And now, Mr. Chairman, I am done—and you have been patient.

Together we have come to know something of the colorful and historic happenings in this quiet old colonial seaport town of Portsmouth, in the Year 1824.

We have come likewise, to know something of the background of the God-fearing men who had the vision to establish, a century and a quarter ago, The Piscataqua Bank.

We, their successors, take pardonable pride in the rich heritage these early leaders have left to us. And it is our constant ambition and effort that this same bank, under its present national name, shall continue to live up to the fine traditions these men have given us as their cherished legacy.

Lest we forget, let me remind you that the swift running, tidal Piscataqua has traditions, too, of colonial commerce and trade and shipbuilding and navigation—of which all America may be proud. The Piscataqua is one of our truly historic American rivers.
New England and New Hampshire have done a full share in developing American character. Of this, likewise, we all of us may gratefully be proud. America well may follow such example!

THE END

“Actorum Memores simul affectamus Agenda!”
This Newcomen Address, dealing with Old Portsmouth in New Hampshire a century and a quarter ago and dealing with the beginnings, in 1824, of The Piscataqua Bank, which today is The First National Bank of Portsmouth, was delivered during the "1949 New Hampshire Luncheon" of The Newcomen Society of England, held in Ballroom of Hotel Rockingham, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, U.S.A., on September 7, 1949. Mr. Trefethen, the guest of honor, was introduced by the Senior Vice-President for North America in this international Society whose headquarters are at London. The luncheon was presided over by Richard W. Sulloway, President & Treasurer, Sulloway Mills, Franklin, New Hampshire; former Chairman, Industrial Development Committee, New England Council, Boston; Chairman, New Hampshire Committee, in American Newcomen.
It was in Jefferson Hall, on the East side of Market Square in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, that General Lafayette was entertained at the great Public Dinner on the evening of September 1, 1824. Today, The First National Bank of Portsmouth occupies this same site!
“James Monroe was President when The Piscataqua Bank was opened in 1824. Only 24 States constituted the Union, all but Missouri being east of the Mississippi River. Daniel Webster, after nine years’ residence, had left Portsmouth seven years previous. Jeremiah Mason, Levi Woodbury and Ichabod Bartlett were the leading lawyers. Lincoln was splitting logs and Grant was an infant. No resident can recall the opening of the bank. Not till after the expiration of the charter of The Piscataqua Bank was the telegraph used. The first telephone message in Portsmouth was in 1879.”

—George A. Trefethen
“In the early days, many of the directors of The Piscataqua Bank were retired deep-sea Captains. A decade before the establishment of the bank, large fortunes were made by resident owners of privateers. In 1824, there were registered in Portsmouth 169 vessels. The U.S. Steam Sloop *Kearsarge* was launched at the Portsmouth Navy Yard October 5, 1861, and sailed February 5, 1862, sinking the Confederate Man-of-War *Alabama* on June 16, 1864.”

—George A. Trefethen
"The Piscataqua Bank was lighted by candles and whale-oil lamps until over a decade after the establishment of The Portsmouth Gas Light Company, in 1850. Fire was obtained by striking flint and steel, and the spark was caught in a tinder box. The first practical friction matches were 'Congraves' made in England in 1827."

—George A. Trefethen
“There were eight fireplaces in the Piscataqua Bank building: open fires were used to heat the banking rooms of the State banks, and a cheerful open fire greeted the directors of the national bank at their morning meetings. Stoves had just been placed in the North Meeting House, opposite the bank. No heat in the meeting house except from portable foot stoves until 1821.

“An imported glass-covered clock and the comfortable chairs still retained in the Directors’ Room were purchased by the founders of The Piscataqua Bank. The marble-faced clock in the main room was for half a century in The Rockingham Bank.”

—George A. Trefethen
“The Piscataqua Bank, the predecessor of The Piscataqua Exchange Bank and The First National Bank of Portsmouth, was incorporated in 1824, Portsmouth had a population of 7500 people. It was even then an ‘Old Town by the Sea,’ for in the previous year it celebrated the 200th Anniversary of its settlement. It had seven churches, seven school houses, one academy, and 286 stores. It was using its first directory, published in 1821. The bridges to Kittery and New Castle had been in use but two years. 1824 also was memorable, as the town was entertaining Lafayette on his second visit with the same enthusiasm that it extended to Washington in 1789, and to President Monroe in 1817. Previous to the death of the first cashier in 1871, all the bank bills were signed by the cashier and president with quill pens. Ink on their letters was sprinkled with fine sand, and erasures with pounce. ‘Bank hours 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. and from 3 to 5 P.M. N.B.—The banks are not open Saturday afternoons after 1 o’clock.’ The Portsmouth Savings Bank was only open in its early years on Wednesday afternoons from 3 to 5 o’clock.”

—George A. Trefethen
“Conflagrations visited Portsmouth in 1802, in 1806, and in 1813. In addition to the town fire engines which were supplied with water from buckets, there were three independent fire societies in 1824: The United, instituted in 1761, the Federal in 1789 and the Mechanics in 1811. The last two retain their organizations and hold regular meetings. Portsmouth has suffered severely from fires. On Dec. 24, 1802, 132 buildings were destroyed; Dec. 24, 1806, 14 buildings; and on Dec. 22, 1813, 241 buildings covering 15 acres with a loss of $300,000. Bank buildings were destroyed in each of these fires.”

—George A. Trefethen
"A mail stage ran to Boston and Concord on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. The postage for letters composed of one piece of paper was 6 cents for 30 miles, 12 cents for 100 miles, 25 cents for 450 miles. It took nearly a week for a letter to go from Portsmouth to New York. The postage on letters to England was 33 cents and upwards. Duplicates of letters were copied with a quill pen in letter books."

—George A. Trefethen
"The first railroad train from Boston entered Portsmouth, in 1840, over tracks of The Eastern Railroad of Massachusetts and of The Eastern Railroad of New Hampshire; and, in 1842, from Portland over The Portsmouth, Saco & Portland Railroad. In 1844, three trains ran to Boston daily, and two to Portland. A bell in the tower of the 'Depot' was rung before the departure of trains. When the lookout in the belfry saw the cars on Portsmouth Bridge he rang the bell."

—GEORGE A. TREFETHEN
"In the records of the Old Portsmouth Navy Yard, now the United States Naval Base at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, appears the following entry of an Official Order issued by direction of President James Monroe:

"'August 17, 1824: The President, in a general order, directed 'Gen. La Fayette to be received at all the United States naval stations, and by all the United States ships in commission with the honors due the highest military rank in our service,' and at 1 p. m. September 1 a salute was fired from the Yard on the arrival of Gen. La Fayette at Portsmouth.'"

—George A. Trefethen
“There is a further record, for Wednesday, September 1st, 1824, in the archives of the Portsmouth Navy Yard, in the three following entries:

"At 1 P.M. a Salute was fired on the Arrival of General La Fayette." and
"Yard men going in boats to luminate the Yard at ½ past 8 o’clock P.M."

"Thermometer at Sunrise 51
"Noon 64 Sunset 56"

—George A. Trefethen
"The first overt act against Great Britain by the colonists was at New Castle, New Hampshire, on Portsmouth Harbor, in the attack on Fort William and Mary on Dec. 14, 1774, instigated by a letter to Samuel Cutt, delivered by Paul Revere on his first historic ride from Boston to Portsmouth, Dec. 13, 1774, four months before his ride to Lexington. The first overt act against the United States Bank was the attempt to remove Jeremiah Mason from the presidency of the Portsmouth branch, instigated by Levi Woodbury, a political opponent of Webster and Mason."

—GEORGE A. TREFETHEN
“Lest we forget, let me remind you that the swift running, tidal Piscataqua has *traditions*, too, of colonial commerce and trade and shipbuilding and navigation—of which all America may be proud. The Piscataqua is one of our truly historic American rivers.

“New England and New Hampshire have done a full share in developing *American character*. Of this, likewise, we all of us may gratefully be proud. America well may follow such example!”

—George A. Trefethen
American Newcomen, interested always in banking history, whether in the United States of America or in Canada, takes satisfaction in this Newcomen manuscript dealing with the beginnings of The Piscataqua Bank, in 1824, which today is The First National Bank of Portsmouth (Charter No. 19), at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, U.S.A. The Manuscript attempts to recreate the atmosphere of a century and a quarter ago, in the historic colonial seaport town of Portsmouth, as well as to give insight into the everyday lives of those Northern New England leaders whose vision and courage and Faith led them to establish a banking institution which has survived during generations and which holds its head high!
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