

NOBLE'S ISLAND

"There is some stir in the new shipyard of Messers. Tobey & Littlefield on Noble's Island...."

From the Chronicle 27 Aug 1853

PJ 25 Oct 73 -- "That famous locality, Noble's Island, on which some of the best ships that ever sailed the ocean have been built, is now hardly recognizable. Scores of men have been for several weeks engaged in extending, filling-in, grading and building wharves.

"It was first proposed to extend the work to the long Portsmouth Bridge, but this has we hear been abandoned. The laying of the network of tracks will be pushed forward, and by early spring the entire island will be ready for general traffic."

See Marginal RR for 25 Oct 73

PJ 13 Sept 73

—The bridge from Noble's Island to Kittery, which rumor says the Eastern Railroad is to supplant by a suspension bridge sometime, was built in 1822 by wealthy and enterprising citizens. It is 1750 feet in length, and originally contained 70 piers. For a distance of 900 feet under this bridge the water varies from 45 to 53 feet in depth at low water. The draw is 1336 feet from the island, the water there being 21 feet at low tide. A large gang of men are yearly employed whose special work it is to keep this structure in repair.

PJ 24 Jan 74 -- The transformation of Noble's Island into a railroad center and coal and freight depot progresses well, the work of grading being continued as weather permits. The wharf now well advanced is to be 200 feet long. A turntable is to be located there for the general use of the railroads.

PJ 23 May 74 -- "The filling in of Noble's Island and the laying of tracks being about completed, it is suggested that as the locality has no name, it be called Pennsylvania Pier. Why not Noble's Island still?

PJ 27 Sep 79 -- The ERR is to erect a building at Noble's Island wherein to prepare sleepers by a new and patented process.

PJ 4 Oct 79 -- The brick piers have been put in for the new building on Noble's Island in which the RR are to cyanize railroad ties.

PJ 11 Oct 79 -- The building at Noble's Island now erecting by the ERR for the preparation of its railroad ties with creosote. will measure 33 x 70½ feet. It is intended to have all the ties used on the road, landed at their wharf, and prepared in this building, which adjoins the wharf.

PJ 4 Oct 79 -- The brick piers have been put in for the new building on Noble's island in which the ERR are cyanize railroad ties.

PJ 14 Feb 1880 --

—Work is progressing on the cyanizing works for the Eastern railroad, on Noble's Island; one of the boilers, upwards of 80 feet in length, is already in position, and one of 60 feet will be set in a few days. while on all sides are huge stacks of hemlock railway ties, ready to take the benefit of the creosote, and near the ties are several hundred piles, some of them nearly 80 feet in length, which were brought from Norfolk, Va. last fall, and will go through the process.

PJ 6 March 1880 -- Pile-driving at Noble's Island is lively. Over 400 piles will be set before the work is completed, and on which is to rest the coal pocket. The latter will be 183 feet long and 40 feet wide.

PJ 17 April 80 --

—Early Monday evening the cyanizing works at Noble's island, belonging to the Eastern railroad, and which were completed on that day, were discovered on fire. In a very short time the building was a mass of ruins, the flames also communicating to the immense piles of sleepers which are heaped up close by all ready to be "creosoted," but through the hard work of the fire department this material was saved with only slight damage. The building was a substantial one, about 75 feet long, and its destruction involves a loss of many thousands of dollars to the Eastern railroad. The work of creosoting was to have commenced on the following day, Tuesday. The fire was first seen around the chimney, and the high wind prevailing at the time greatly increased the fury of the flames.

PJ 12 June 1880 - On Sunday the Rev. John A. Goss baptized 20 persons at Noble's Island. Eight also received the rite by the Advent minister. --- Goss was pastor of the Court Street Christian.

PJ 25 Dec 80 -- Luther Noyes, treasurer of the Granite State Ice Co., Milton Three Ponds, came to arrange with ERR to locate a large ice house on Noble's Island with dockage

PJ 12 Feb 81 -- Boilers and tanks damaged in fire in cresote plant taken down and carted away. In works is being erected.

PJ 15 Oct 81 -- ERR to erect wharves between its present wharf and Portsmouth Bridge. Ice houses and coal pockets to be built.

PJ 25 March 82 -- Charles Roberts, baggage master on ERR, is soon to take charge of the creosoting wroks on Noble's Island.

PJ 15 Apr 82 -- The building owned by the Noble heirs, and occupied by John O'Brien, tinman, destroyed by fire Sunday nite. Two adjoining buildings damaged. Insured.

PJ 9 Jun 83 -- J. Albert Walker has secured a lease for 20 years of that portion of Noble's Island running from the ERR's cyani works to the bridge. Walker is expected to spend about \$30,000 in the erection of coal pockets, an elevated railway and other conveniences for the extension of his business.

PJ 24 Nov 83 -- Steam shovel to be used on P&D RR in excavating gravel for fill under bridge from Noble-s to Freeman's Ppoint.

PJ - 15 dec 83 -- Cyanizing plant at Noble's Island now using water from well owned by ERR at the Plains.

PJ 14 June 84 --

--The Baptism at Noble's Island on Sunday afternoon was witnessed by between four and five thousand people. Rev. John A. Goss, pastor of the Christian church, immersed sixteen persons, and sprinkled two. Rev. J. D. Waldron of the Pearl street Free Baptist church baptized six. In the evening the Christian church was filled, when a sermon was preached by the pastor from the text, Philippians, 1:6, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

PJ 9 May 1885 --

—Since the rebuilding of the wood preserving works on Noble's Island, belonging to the Eastern railroad, they have been constantly occupied in the preserving of railroad ties and timber for building bridges and the repair of roads. They contain four pits which will hold 750 ties each. These are submerged in a weak solution of corrosive sublimate and kept in four days, when they are taken out and ready for use. By experiment it has been proved that ties subjected to this process keep from decaying several years longer than if used in their condition when received from the woods. There are 33,000 sleepers now piled up on the island waiting for a baptism, besides two vessels, the Dahlia, and Ocean Gem, with several thousand more.

PJ 30 May 85 --


—The lighthouse steamer Iris came up the river on Monday evening, and took up the buoy on the Ham ledge, between the Concord and Boston & Maine railroad wharves, and replaced it with a new mooring and spar. It will be remembered that the schooner Uncle Sam, though venerable in years of ocean life—but repaired up to almost newness, went ashore on this rock some years ago, and being loaded with lime soon burned to the water's edge. Part of her remains lay there now. The upper ends of her timbers are plankless, the planks having been used to warm the hearthstone of many an Elliot-Neck home. It is only to be regretted that the whole hull had not perished the same way. Another wreck adorns the western side of the Noble's Island bridge, and is equally a disfigurement to the surroundings of that entrance to the city. Some inducement should be offered to the robust lads of Elliot to make a raid on them, if their removal can be effected by no other means.

PJ 12 December 1885 -- Broken stone from Dover st. ledge being used to rip-rap the fill on the Noble's Island bridge, on the P&D.

PJ 20 Feb 1886- Truss put across Noble's Island bridge of the P&D and the pilings will be taken oht.

PJ 13 Nov 86 -- New coal pocket for B&M 250 feet long, 12 wide and will hold 1,400 tons.

PJ 27 October 1888 --

—Another runaway accident at Noble's Island bridge, Tuesday morning, and a narrow escape from a fatal ending. It appears that Mrs. Albert Chick, of Butler's crossing, Kittery, and her sister, were riding to Portsmouth and had reached the toll-gate when the horse took fright and started to run. Mr. Benjamin Miller, the gate-man on the Noble's Island bridge, saw the team coming, and, thinking to stop it, shut one of the gates just as the frightened animal reached it. The effort was in vain, as the horse jumped over the gate, dragging the carriage over after him, throwing Mrs. Chick out, knocking down and trampling upon Mr. Miller, and, continuing his mad career, ran out upon the railroad bridge and finally wound up his performance by falling overboard near the draw, the carriage still accompanying him. The remaining occupant of the vehicle was thrown out just before the horse jumped into the river, and escaped with a few bruises. Mrs. Chick was considerably bruised about the head and face, while Mr. Miller received several severe contusions on his head, body and limbs and was at first thought to be fatally injured, as he was knocked senseless. After a short interval, however, he recovered consciousness and it was seen that his wounds, although very painful, were not dangerous. The horse was rescued from drowning by some of the employes of the Portsmouth coal pocket, and safely landed, practically unhurt. The carriage and harness were only slightly damaged.

PJ 31 May 1890 - Large no. of people at Noble's Sunday to witness baptism of seven by Rev. OS Baketel of Trinity ME church and rev. John A Hainer former pastor Christian Society.

PJ 9 April 1892 -- Kyanizing works on Noble's leased by B&M to Allen & Co. of Lowell for one year. Work will begin at once.

PJ 17 April 1897 -- "The ancient Noble house on Noble's Island was torn down on Saturday by carpenters attached to the B&M RR. The road needs the room.

PJ 18 September 1898 - Ground broken for new power plant for the electric railroad. Plant to cost \$17,000, car barn \$10,000.

PJ 24 June 1899

—A marinerailway issadly needed at this port and would be a great benefit to Portsmouth mechanics, remarked a well known Portsmouth man recently. Since the marinerailway at Kittery became unfit for use, many of the vessels that would have been repaired here have been obliged to go to Gloucester to be caulked and repainted, and Portsmouth mechanics have been the losers. It is stated that if Portsmouth had a suitable marine railway many of the larger coasting vessels that visit this port would have necessary repairs made, as it could be done cheaper than at large coal ports. There are many suitable locations for a marine railway, particularly at Noble's island, and it is earnestly desired that one might be established here so that our mechanics might reap the benefit thereof.

PJ 3 August 1901

Last Wednesday witnessed the successful accomplishment of the difficult work of the laying of a new water pipe to Noble's island.

Several years ago a pipe was laid across the river to Noble's island to furnish water for the island residents and also for the creosote works of the Boston & Maine railroad. For several years the supply proved inadequate because of the needs of the railroad and in the winter by frozen pipes. Since the building of the power station a still greater demand for water has been made but the service was found wholly inadequate.

The railroad officials therefore conferred with the water commissioners and it was agreed to lay a new pipe to connect with the main at Northwest street, and to bring it across the river to the westerly side of Noble's island.

This seemed a small undertaking at the time, but later on experience showed that it was no mean task.

The force of the current and the way in which the channel sloped caused such a bend to the pipe that more than once it burst and carried a volume of mud which shot into the air several feet above the surface of the water.

Undaunted by these and similar mishaps Superintendent Philbrick would not give up the undertaking, and personally worked from early morn to late at night, and sometimes all day in the drenching rain, to overcome the obstacles and to accomplish his object, and this has been done, thanks to the most unremitting work.

PH 12 June 1903 -

Within the last few weeks Noble's Island, a part of the city for many years very quiet, seems to have been hit by a business boom and at present is a very busy place. The saw mill set up by Major David Urich has commenced operations and a large crew of men is at work unloading and handling the timber from the navy yard which arrives each day by water. A large force of carpenters and bridge builders is also doing work for the Boston and Maine railroad and a busy force is soaking lumber at the kyanizing works for Otis Allen and Son of Lowell, Mass.

Even if only a few vessels are now discharged at the old Eastern wharf, compared with the number once handler there, this section of the city is by no means sleeping.

!904 reminiscence in Herald of times 70 years before:

"We see Jeremish and Moses Noble handling fish on the flakes at what is still known as Noble's Island, this particular island being covered with those flakes on both sides of the road. The Nobles had an extensive fishing business operating out of the island.

Herald 9 August 1905

A large crew of carpenters and bridge builders of the Boston and Maine railroad began this (Wednesday) morning taking down the coal handling apparatus and the coal pocket at Noble's Island, which has been out of commission for the past ten years on account of the unsafe condition of the wharf and the transferring of all work to the other wharf, formerly managed by J. A. and A. W. Walker.

This wharf was the first in this city to be fitted out with modern machinery for the handling of coal, but it has been practically idle for the past ten years, except when used for the storage of coal.

It is likely that the wharf has seen its best days and will never be repaired sufficiently to see service again.

PH 28 May 1906 -

Otis Allen and Son, owners of the cyanizing works at Noble's Island, have just finished the work of preparing a large shipment of lumber which will be sent across the ocean.

The lumber is consigned to parties in England and is the first lot of foreign lumber ever put through the vats of the plant.

PH 6 October 1910 == B&M putting Noble's Island Bridge in shape to accommodate heavier locomotives

PH 1 Dec 1910 - Texas Oil Co. leases land in Noble's Island to establish a distribution point.

PH 15 Dec 1910 - Things booming on the island. Buildings for Texas Co. and Standard Oil going up

PH 28 Dec 1910 ---

The new oil distributing plant of the Texas company on Noble's Island is fast assuming proportions at which some idea of its importance can be formed.

Contractor Edward L. Paterson has five buildings under way. They consist of an office 12 by 12 feet; a pump house of the same dimensions, a warehouse 30 by 30, a stable 26 by 26 and a carriage house 16 by 30.

Alfred Spinney of Eliot has started

work on a wharf which is to extend 135 feet into the river. Piling for the wharf is now being hauled to the island. It is intended to receive consignments of oil by water in barges.

W. H. Smith, local manager of the company, is also superintending other work about the premises, such as the erection of a big tank and extensive grading work. It will probably be spring before the work is completed entirely, though actual operations will begin before that time.

PH 29 Dec 1914 --

Mayor H. B. Yeaton has found that the roadway across Nobles' Island belongs to the City of Portsmouth, and not to the Boston and Maine railroad as has been the opinion. City Clerk Drew after a long search of the old city records, finds that the road was laid out and accepted by the city in 1822.

There has been a dispute as to who should repair the road the Board of Public Works maintaining that it was the duty of the Boston and Maine Railroad, but the railroad said nay, and now that it has been found to belong to the city, the road will be given a good overhauling next spring.