

LOOKING EAST ACROSS RIPPOWAM PARK



Among the many attractions in Stamford are its delightful little parks, that are scattered here and there throughout the commercial center. The triangular Central Park with its great elms, St. John's Park with its soldiers' monument glistening through the trees, West Park with its historic cannons, and several other parks, including Rippowam Park, all help to make the city beautiful. Perhaps the most recent one, Rippowam Park, is more of a direct benefit to the public welfare, for there one may find the usual park benches situated under spacious trees, where during the hot Summer one may rest in more or less of a cool shadow. Then, too, the

river itself, from which the park derives its historic name, flows close by. There in Winter has been heard for generations the voices of happy skaters.

This section of the river has long been known as the mill pond. Today it is bordered on each side by a rather high cement wall, and directly to the eastward, one can see through the interlaced branches a modern hotel—the "Roger Smith"—whose name undoubtedly is wholly in keeping with its historic neighborhood, for, indeed, this locality has a history. Tradition tells that the father of our country—General George Washington—admired the beauty of the Rippowam River near this

point. That on travelling from Stamford to Rye, he made a sudden turn and came upon the dashing waters of the river kindled by the distant rays of the late afternoon sun. Stopping his horse abruptly by the wayside, he wrote a few lines in his diary describing the scene.

Later history pictures this identical spot, now known as Rippowam Park, as a large pond, where in Winter ice was harvested and at the east end of the dam a woolen mill was active. This mill was operated by William C. Harding and John A. Smith until about 1886, when a great fire destroyed most of the building, only the original chimney now remaining.

Bill Harding was a staunch Republican, who headed many a torchlight procession during political rallies and on election nights. In fact, Bill Harding's political cannon is still remembered, as it thundered a salute across old Rose Park, breaking many a window in the vicinity. Doubtless Harding and his party had to settle many a fine after election night was over. As one of the old natives remarked to the writer: "That 'Harding Battery' might have amused some people, but I was glad when some Democrat spiked it, even though I be a Republican."

Whitman Bailey.