

UNTOLD TALES OF FALMOUTH

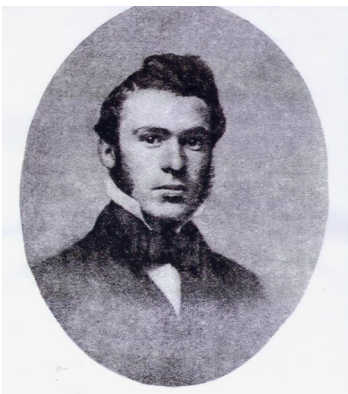
from the archives of Museums on the Green

O.F. Swift Recalls a Rescue at Shiverick's Pond

We had good skating when there was not too much snow, or we had been industrious enough to clear the ice. One incident in regard to Shiverick Pond I shall never forget. One winter afternoon towards sunset, I saw my brother, Elijah, coming up the yard leaning on the arm of a friend, and another boy carrying my brother's skates. There evidently had been an accident, for my dear brother looked very much used up. His companion told us of what had happened.



Eeling Through the Ice by Franklin L. Gifford. Postcard in the archives of Museums on the Green. Painting owned by the Woods Hole Historical Museum.



Elijah Swift, Jr., in 1852, at the age of 21. He enjoyed a long, successful life after his mishap on the ice.

There had been an unusually interesting game of hockey that afternoon on the pond. The ball had been hit by one of the opposing players, a heavy blow, and went sliding down towards the opposing guide. My brother was one of the best players. In the rush for the ball he was in the lead, cheered on by his companions. Suddenly he disappeared! Although the dangerous spots of thin ice and open water had been properly marked and known to all, at this time, with the sun shining in his eyes and eager for the chase, he did not notice his danger – until too late. He was a good swimmer, and strong and vigorous. As he came to the surface he swam to the projecting ice. The edges were thin and as he endeavored to climb on the ice, it continued to

break with each effort until he was utterly exhausted. Fortunately the boys' cries were heard by a Mr. Whittemore, clerk and proprietor in a nearby store. He hurried to the rescue, seizing as he ran a long board which he placed on the ice, and succeeded in getting a rope fastened to the drowning boy.

What is most impressed upon my mind is the sight of my brother shivering from the cold and the water dripping from his clothes, and the composure of my mother—seeing her stand at the foot of the bed, which had been arranged with woolen blankets, moving the long handled brass warming pan up and down and all around the inside of the bed, then drawing down the curtains to darken the room and saying, “let us all go down stairs and leave the dear boy rest.” I remember the discussion afterwards by the family as to the best way to acknowledge our obligations to Mr. Whittemore. Mother proposed that father write him a note. Others suggested some money reward, until finally father seized his hat and coat, saying he would attend to the matter personally.

Oliver Franklin Swift



Nineteenth century bedwarmer, on display at Wicks House, with detail of its decorative cover.



The boys' double gravestone is here at the Museums on the Green.

Editor's Note: Other Falmouth children were not as lucky as young Elijah Swift. Two generations earlier, tragedy had struck Deacon Timothy Crocker, who lost two grandsons on March 8, 1798. Six-year-old Joseph Dimmock Crocker and his cousin, William Henry Lincoln, aged 5, both drowned “in Crystal Lake behind B.B. King's house.” This would likely be Palmers Pond, to the east of the lower end of Shore Street. Their epitaph, from David's Lamentation, reads, “They were lovely and pleasant, and in their death they were not divided.”