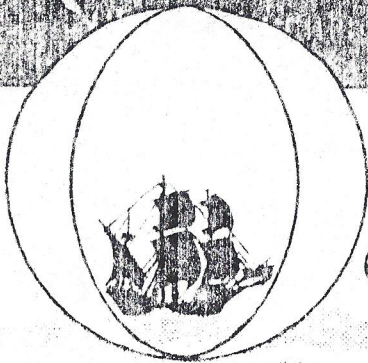
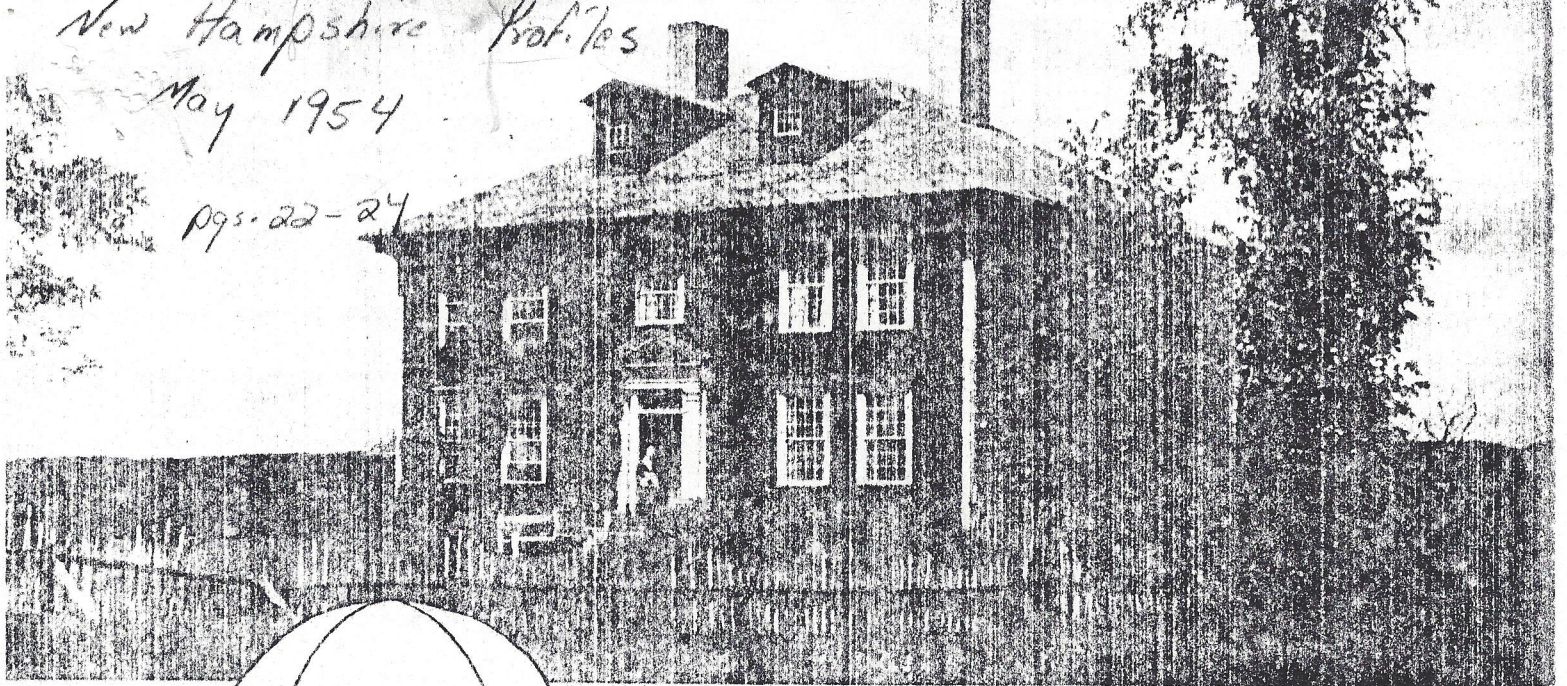


May 1954

Pgs. 22-24



MEMORIES  
AND  
LEGENDS OF

# Ocean-Born Mary

**H**ISTORY, LEGEND, and artistic imagination have created a halo of glory around a lovely old home in the southwest part of Henniker, known as the Ocean-Born Mary house. Tales of pirates, buried treasure, a whole family of ghosts, and whisperings of foul play bring tourists from near and far to follow the sign on the highway between Henniker and Hillsboro that points the way to this famous place. Whether or not such visitors receive any supernatural satisfaction, they will be rewarded by the trip up the country road and by the house itself with its quaint, often handsome mementos of colonial times.

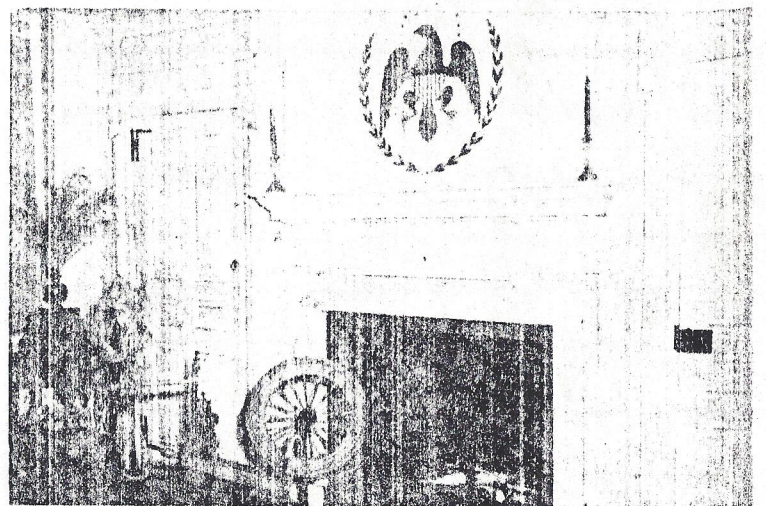
The town histories of Londonderry and of Henniker have in them the facts about this house, as the writers knew them. But legend has enlarged upon these facts as they were told from father to son to grandson down to this century. The full blooming of the tale has reached a widespread public through an artist who bought the house over thirty years ago and has restored it to its present beauty.

The actual history, as nearly as can be determined, dates back to 1720, when a company of emigrants sailed from Ireland to settle in Londonderry, New Hampshire, then a very new colony. Their calm passage was interrupted when the ship was captured by a pirate vessel whose captain is the basis for many of the present-day romantic reports. Some give his name as Philip Babb, while others would have him "Captain Pedro," black sheep of a titled English family. Whatever his name may have been, it is certain he intended to plunder his prize and perhaps murder the passengers—until he was informed that one of the women, Mrs. James Wilson, had just given birth to a baby girl below decks.

The news so moved the pirate that he promised to liberate the entire company upon the condition that he should be

permitted to name the child Mary, after his wife—or his mother, according to some sources. Mrs. Wilson agreed, and good to his word, the pirate freed the colonists' ship and restored their possessions. Indeed, baby Mary was given many costly gifts by her self-appointed godfather, the most noted being a piece of Chinese silk brocade for her wedding dress.

The ship completed its journey to Boston in safety, and when James Wilson died there, soon after the landing, his widow and baby Mary continued on to Londonderry to take possession of the land which had been granted to him. Late Mrs. Wilson married James Clark, the great great-grandfather



FIREPLACE IN THE "EAGLE ROOM," so called because of the handsome decoration painted by an unknown artist. Sixteen stars and stripes date it about 1800.

er of Horace Greeley. Mary lived in their home until she was twenty-two, although her mother died when she was twelve.

Even as a child, Mary was probably regarded as a person of significance because of the circumstances of her birth. records show that for a full century the town of Londonderry celebrated, with a service of thanksgiving, the deliverance from the pirates caused by her timely arrival.

Thus her marriage on December 18, 1742 to Thomas Wallace, was undoubtedly a great occasion. Appropriately, Mary's wedding gown was made from the silk which she had received from the tender-hearted pirate, and pieces of it have been preserved down to the present.

With her husband, who had come in 1732 with his parents from Burnt Mills, in Northern Ireland, she made her home at first in Londonderry, where her four sons (and perhaps a daughter) were born.

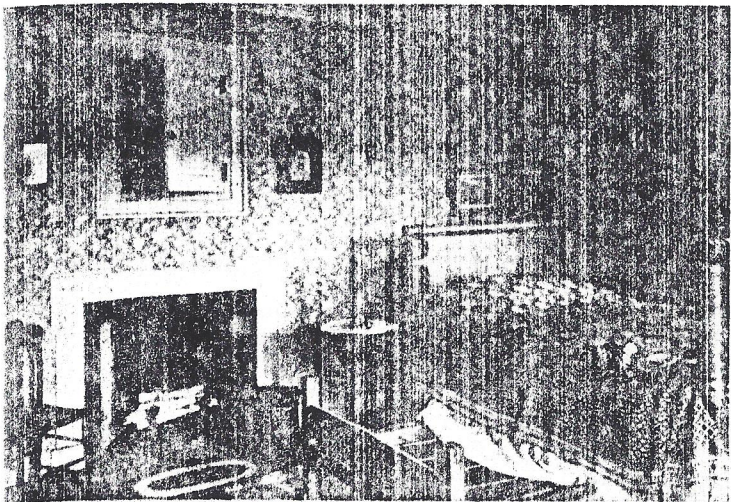
All of Mary's sons were noted men of their day, but the second oldest, Robert, is most important to this story, for it was he who built what we know as the Ocean-Born Mary house in Henniker. He moved to this town in 1774, married here two years later, and stood as one of the leading citizens of the area during the dark times of the Revolution. Subsequently he was very active in local and state government, serving as a state councillor for fourteen years and as a delegate from Henniker to help frame New Hampshire's constitution.

Henniker's historian, Colonel Leander W. Cogswell, wrote that Robert Wallace was "the possessor of a large and highly cultivated estate, upon which he erected a noble mansion, around whose hearthstone everyone was made welcome, and whose hospitality was unbounded."

It was in this "noble mansion" that Mary Wilson Wallace spent her later years, with her son and his family. She was described as quite tall, resolute and determined, and old records tell that she had a strong mind, was quick of comprehension, and sharp in conversation. Her florid complexion, bright eyes, and elegant manners were in keeping with the special place she held socially because of her birth. History says that in her younger life she experienced toils and hardship, but her last years were sunny and happy. She lived to be ninety-four, to see her son Robert marry twice and raise a family of eight children.

A large slate stone still stands in the cemetery behind what was Henniker's town hall for many years. On the back is a large letter "M," and on the front is this inscription:

In Memory of Widow Mary Wallace  
Who died Feb. 13, A. D. 1814 in the  
94th year of her Age. Ocean Mary.



RUNDLE BED, "ROLLING-PIN" BEDPOSTS, and Double Chariot wheel design coverlet—but a few of the heirlooms in the Ocean-Born Mary house.



"RUNNING CANDLES"—one of a series of atmospheric photos and paintings in which Mr. L. M. A. Roy, present owner of the Ocean-Born Mary house, posed his mother, the late Mrs. Flora E. Roy, as a model pursuing old time household occupations.

These are the facts of Mary's life, but wild indeed are the other stories that have grown up to live after her. Although none of these tales are substantiated by reliable histories, various newspaper articles and their illustrations have created quite a body of fanciful literature. It is supposed that the pirate visited Mary, and one version has it that he built himself two large houses—one in Londonderry and one in Henniker—to be near her. "What happened later to these two houses would make an absorbing novel, if it had been recorded," was the observation of one of these tall talk writers.

As other papers and magazines picked up these narrative and sent reporters to get added details, so the Ocean-Born Mary legend spread and grew. The pirate became a gentleman farmer with a retinue of Negro slaves, according to some accounts. It adds to the gruesome pleasure of a visit to the house to have a spot on the lower hall floor pointed out as the place where one of his slaves was murdered.

Most of these stories, however, were little known (or non-existent) in the early years of this century. Robert Wallace's once-noble mansion had fallen well toward decay by 1911 when this writer was working in the Henniker post office. In that year a young artist from Wisconsin wrote to the postmaster, who was also a real estate salesman, to inquire if there were any interesting old places in this town where he could settle with his widowed mother. The postmaster laughed and was about to throw the letter into the wastebasket, when I asked if I might answer it. Two weeks later Mr. L. M. A. Roy appeared at the office and soon was the owner of the old place.

He has done much to restore this fine historic house, and the pictures that he has painted of his sweet little mother now deceased, show her as a fitting subject for his early American settings. She wore old-fashioned clothes and was pictured pursuing ancient occupations. The first time I saw her, she was seated at a loom weaving yarn into fabric, and I felt that somehow I had dropped back through time into the early history of our town.

## To Our Readers . . . .

The following sixty-four pages of this issue are devoted to a directory of inns, cabins, restaurants and attractions which will be of interest to our summer visitors whom we welcome each year . . .

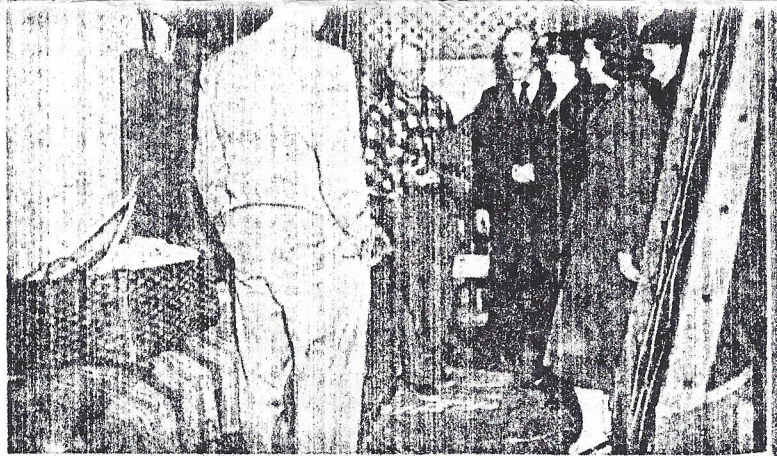


- Additional copies of this Vacation Guide have been printed for the New Hampshire Planning and Development Commission and "This Is New Hampshire, Inc.," who will distribute them throughout the nation. Everyone who requests vacation information from New Hampshire through either of these agencies will receive a 1954 issue of New Hampshire—Your Complete Vacation State.

NEW HAMPSHIRE PROFILES is pleased to include a copy of the Summer Directory in this May issue.

- Acknowledgment should be given the advertisers appearing here-in whose farsighted planning will make traveling in New Hampshire so much easier this year. We wish to thank the resort area operators, the Regional Secretaries' Association and all those individuals whose cooperation and assistance were donated willingly to make this Vacation Guide possible.

**HERBERT F. GEORGES**  
PUBLISHER



**VISITORS PAUSE IN THE HALLWAY** to examine a collection of early American objects shown by Mr. Roy (in checkered shirt).

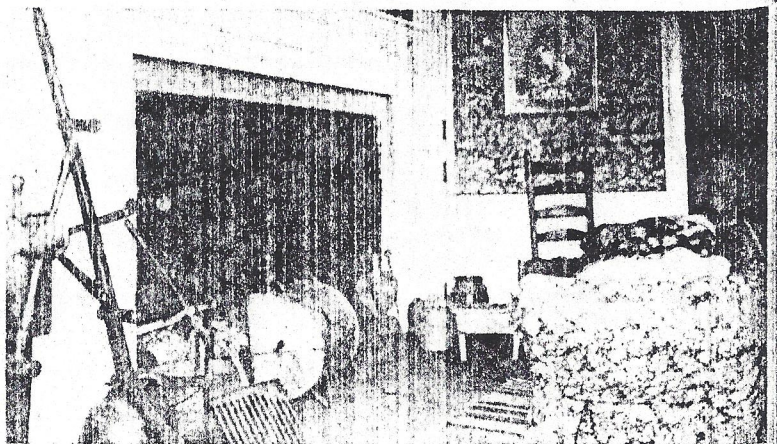
Today the Ocean Born Mary house probably attracts more visitors than any other place in the vicinity. It is not surprising to find cars from several states parked along the dusty road by the yard on summer days. Mr. Roy has filled the house with fine pieces of antique furniture, and he is always on hand as an interesting guide and intelligent interpreter.

Psychically sensitive folk are sure, even now, that there are ghosts about the place. Visitors have come to watch for the phantom stagecoach believed to pass the house at midnight, and adventurers have appeared now and again to dig for buried pirate gold, inspired by messages "from the other side." Mr. Roy has said that such treasure hunting has been done extensively, but none has yet been discovered.

Only one spot remains undisturbed—the hearthstone in the kitchen—which is, ominously enough, the exact size of a man's tomb. Whether the hearthstone conceals the remains of the pirate or the long sought gold—or nothing—no one knows. Some day Mr. Roy plans to find out by having the stone lifted.

These romantic notions and the many others make interesting folklore, enriching our everyday lives that have become so practical and scientific. Who is to discredit or laugh at them? The house and its present occupant are an attractive part of a lovely country picture. Henniker is richer in its memories of pioneering days because Mr. Roy is taking such a keen interest in the perpetuation of the Ocean Born Mary house, the place where she lived happily those last years of her long, eventful life.

**Marion Sargent Connor**



**OCEAN-BORN MARY'S KITCHEN.** One grisly story has it that the pirate captain was buried under hearthstone, which measures 8 feet by 32 inches.

**New Hampshire Profiles**