

OSSINING.

THE HISTORY OF A NAME AND A PRETTY HUDSON RIVER VILLAGE.

For many years the name Sing Sing has been so closely associated with crime—so many people believed that there was nothing in the village but a prison—that residents of the village and visitors to the place suffered much annoyance at the hands of ignorant people and of those who used the name as a hook upon which to hang a bit of fun. But people who go there to spend their summer vacation this year will not be asked, "Who sent you up?" and when they return from their vacation will not be bored with the stock questions—"How did you like the fare?" "Are they strict there nowadays?" "For how long were you in?" etc. The name of the place has been changed to Ossining, and Sing Sing now applies to the prison only and not to the beautiful village built upon natural terraces overlooking the Hudson at one of its most picturesque points.

From the broad streets which run parallel with the stream one sees the majestic panorama of the river, the broad expanse of the Tappan Zee and Haverstraw Bay, divided by the peninsula known since Revolutionary times as Teller's Point. To the south are the Palisades, and to the northwest is the triple-headed mountain known as High Tarn, which rises nearly nine hundred feet above the river. The land upon which Ossining is built rises from the river in a distance of about half a mile to an altitude of three hundred feet, and further back from the river the hills are from five hundred to one thousand feet above tide water. The streets wind about the hills in the lower part of the village, and lead to the plateau on which the business part of the place is built. Near the central part of the village is one of the notable features of the countryside—a great span of the Croton Aqueduct, which at that point crosses the Kill Brook. The aqueduct traverses the entire length of the town. At the point where it



SOUTH HIGHLAND-AVE., OSSINING.

Looking north from the Presbyterian Church.

was the word which was to form the basis of a name for the stony part of Mount Pleasant, and "Ossin-Sing"—stone on stone—was finally decided upon. A year later one "s" was dropped, and the name was changed to "Ossining."

on stone. The village was the home of a tribe of Mohawk Indians in the early part of the seventeenth century, who were known as the "Sint Sincks." They were rich and prosperous, and owned all the river land as far north as the

as "Sink-Sink," and the Kill brook, which runs through the place, was known as "Sint Sink," and is so designated on a map made in 1609.

The land was acquired by Frederick Philipse under the grant issued to him in 1680, by which he was "permitted to freely buy" the district extending from Spuyten Duyvil Creek northward to the Croton River. He purchased the Ossining property in August, 1685, and the transaction was recorded as referring to the "tract or parcel of land commonly called Sink-Sink." The name was written at various times "Cinque Singte," "Cinquesingte," "Sink-Sink," "Sinck-Sinck," "Sin-Sinck," "Sint Sinck" and "Sin-Sing," and finally "Sing Sing" was agreed upon.

In 1834 eight acres of land situated about one mile east of the village were acquired from Robert Knowlton by the Mount Pleasant Methodist Episcopal Camp Meeting Society, and Sing Sing became a popular resort for many years for people who were interested in camp meeting work. In 1867 the corporate name was changed to the Camp Meeting Association of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the City of New-York. The interest in this form of religious work is not as great as it was in the early days of the Sing Sing camp meeting, but the place continues to be popular because of the beauty of its situation, its accessibility, and the admirable arrangement of the grounds.

Despite the fact that the prison had a depressing influence on the village, the residence part has grown continually. Proximity to the market induced many manufacturers to establish workshops and factories there, and the village has in every part the appearance of a well-governed and prosperous place. The business street with its tidy, well-stocked stores; the little public square with its soldiers' monument looking on a hotel, a bank and a handsome church; the deep stone quarry, where great quantities of stone are taken out during the busy season, and the pretty houses along the line of the smaller streets may attract the favorable attention of the visitor; but the chief beauty of the place can be seen only by driving along the two streets that mark the upper terraces of the series in



MAIN-ST., OSSINING, SHOWING THE SOLDIERS' MONUMENT.

crosses the brook it is more than one hundred feet above the river level, and the span of the granite arch is eighty-eight feet across.

On the way up the hill from the station to the village proper one sees a well-constructed, solid and ornamental retaining wall. This was built by convicts from stone which is found in large quantities near the village. Sing Sing marble, as it is called in the trade, differs from the ordinary marble in so far that instead of being simply a carbonate of lime it is a combination of carbonate of lime and carbonate of magnesium. The stone is granular and readily disintegrates, and for that reason it is not employed extensively as a building material. It is burned in kilns in the manufacture of builders' lime, and it is also shipped extensively to the iron regions, where it is used as a flux for the reduction of iron ore.

The first charter granted to the village was issued in 1813, and contained a curious provision, which read as follows: "That it shall be lawful for the trustees of said village . . . to make, ordain, constitute and publish a bylaw prohibiting any baker or other person within the aforesaid limits from selling any bread at any higher price or rate than bread of like quality at the time of such sale shall be assessed in and for the city of New-York by the corporation of said city, under penalty of \$1 for every offense."

"This action was taken to guard against the rapacity of bakers," an old history says, "who were likely to take advantage of the high price of breadstuffs which resulted from the war with England."

The town was formerly a part of the town of Mount Pleasant. In May, 1845, the new town was formed, and it received the name Ossining, which is undoubtedly of Indian origin. "Ossin" in the Ojibway language means "stone," and "Ossinee," or "Ossineen," is the plural. This

Then a few years later the hyphen was omitted and the name became what it is now. The name of the village also came from the Indians, but it was more ancient than the Ojibway stone

Croton River, which was known at that time as the "Kitchewan." The tribe north of the stream had the name "Kitchawongs." Where Ossining now stands there was an Indian village known



THE METHODIST CAMPMEETING GROUNDS AT OSSINING.