

Jabez Delano and His Candle Works

By Muriel Cushing

Located on the south coast of Massachusetts, across the river from New Bedford, the quiet town of Fairhaven has a rich history dating back to the Pilgrims. Its militiamen fought in the first naval battle of the American Revolution, and during the 1800's Fairhaven became a very prosperous community mainly due to shipbuilding and the whaling industry. The Delano Family were prominent figures and deeply involved in town affairs, having a significant impact on the maritime and commercial activities in the region.^[1]

Candle making in Fairhaven began as early as 1800 on the heels of a rapidly growing whaling industry. When Jabez Delano Jr. built his candle works in 1835, there were a dozen whale ships bringing in about 5,000 barrels of sperm oil.^[2] It is from this sperm oil, Spermaceti, a waxy substance derived from the head of sperm whales, that was historically used to make high-quality candles that burned brightly and produced little smoke. The process involved extracting the spermaceti, purifying it, and then pouring it into molds to create candles. Spermaceti candles were highly valued for their bright clean light^[3].



This two-story stone Candle Works and whale oil refinery building built by Jabez Delano, Jr., his cousin, Warren Delano 1st, and Samuel Borden was located at the head of Middle St., just north of Washington Street.^[4]



OLD CANDLE HOUSE -- OLD-TIME FAIRHAVEN

Warren Delano 1st acquired "North Wharf" just north of Washington St. and when the Delano Candle Works building was razed in 1896 the granite was used to repair the Delano Wharf.^[2]

As well as co-owning the Candle Works, Jabez Delano, Jr., owned a ship chandlery and settlement house, was a commander of whaleships, including the *Oregon* and the *Amazon*, and the owner/agent of other ships.^[5]

In 1832, Jabez Delano, Jr., Warren Delano 1st, and Joseph

Bates raised funds to build the Washington St. Christian Meeting-House on the northwest corner of Washington and Walnut Streets. The following year Jabez served as a Selectman for the town of Fairhaven. He was also known as a man of many interests in poetry, philosophy, science and astronomy.^[6] In about 1850, he built a gothic stone home on Washington Street, "with its steeply pitched gables, pointed arches and masonry construction, is Fairhaven's most unique Gothic Revival structure. It is, in no small way, a reflection of the man who built it."^[2]

Jabez Delano, Jr., b. 1799, d. Fairhaven in 1874, was the son of Jabez Delano and his first wife Deborah Delano. In 1836 he married Elizabeth S. Terry.

^[1] Wikipedia - Highlandcandlecompany.com

^[2] Hemingway, Natalie S., "100 years of East Fairhaven, MA.", 2007.

^[3] Oceanconservancy/wildlife-library/sperm whale

^[4] Charles A. Harris, "Old-Time Fairhaven," Reynolds Printing, New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1947, p. 161.

^[5]  whalingmuseum.org

^[6] Fairhaven, MA., History: Fairhaven Chronology: 1800-1849-Blogger