



# ALDRICH PARK

THIS CORNER LOT WAS DONATED TO THE CITY in the 1940s by the Aldrich Family and redesigned as a neighborhood pocket park in 1992 to memorialize one of Portsmouth's most important nineteenth century authors, Thomas Bailey Aldrich.



## PORTRAIT OF THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

Hailed as a father of the American boyhood novel, Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836–1907) was an American poet, novelist, travel writer, and editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* who loved his native Portsmouth.

*The Story of a Bad Boy*, a semi-autobiographical account of his childhood here, portrays the mid-nineteenth century city and its neighborhoods with a young "Tom Bailey" as its juvenile hero. This breakthrough book inspired his great friend, Mark Twain, to write *Tom Sawyer*.

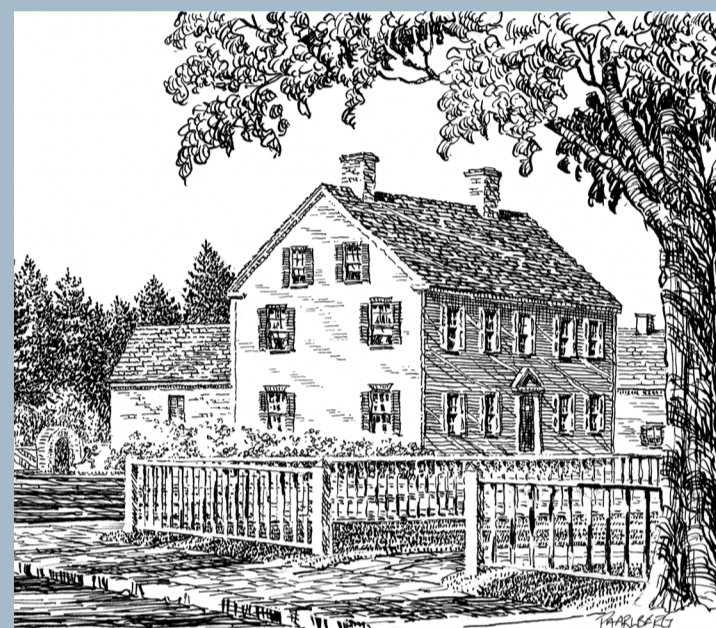
Alfred Houghton Clark, *Thomas Bailey Aldrich*, 1908, Oil on canvas, 36 x 30 3/4", Painting of Thomas Bailey Aldrich after a photograph. Courtesy Strawberry Banke Museum.

## PITT TAVERN BEFORE RESTORATION

The restored tavern across Court Street, to the left of the Aldrich Memorial, was originally built in 1766 as the Earl of Halifax Tavern. It was owned and run by John and Katherine Stavers, who brought their "Earl of Halifax" sign from their earlier tavern on State Street. The third floor was designed as St. John's Masonic Lodge.

During the American Revolution, it is suspected that the tavern was the meeting place for the pro-British faction. In 1777, a revolutionary crowd attacked the tavern, threatening Stavers and his enslaved servant James, who is remembered for defending his master's property. The tavern was soon renamed after a more conciliatory British statesman and former Prime Minister, William Pitt.

At right: Pitt Tavern before restoration, postcard. Courtesy Portsmouth Athenæum.



## SKETCH OF NUTTER HOUSE FROM ALDRICH PARK

When Aldrich was a child, his father moved to New Orleans and took the boy with him. In 1846 the ten-year-old was sent back to Portsmouth to live with his grandfather Nutter who owned the house across the street from this marker. Aldrich later inherited the family home and after he died in 1907 it became The Thomas Bailey Aldrich Memorial, New Hampshire's first house museum.

Bill Paarlberg, *Sketch of Nutter House from Aldrich Park*, 1992, pen and ink.



## THE JOHN AND MARGERY BRAY UNDERWOOD HOUSE

On this site once stood the John and Margery Bray Underwood House. Built in the early eighteenth century, the large gambrel mansion and its later constructed ell stretched along Atkinson Street where it stood until the early twentieth century.

Sarah Haven Foster (1827-1900), *Underwood House Court Street*, about 1700, from "Views of Portsmouth Album," watercolor. Courtesy Portsmouth Public Library, Portsmouth, N.H.



## THEODORE ATKINSON (1697-1779)

On the lot immediately to the west stood an elaborate 1730s home of Colonel Theodore Atkinson (1697-1779) and his wife, the widow Hannah Plaisted, daughter of his political ally Lt. Governor John Wentworth.

A Harvard graduate, Atkinson was an important political figure in New Hampshire, serving as a member of the Governor's Council, Chief Justice of the Superior Court, and Secretary of the province of New Hampshire from 1741 to 1760, when he passed the office to his son, Theodore, Jr. (1737-1769). Upon the son's death in 1769 he resumed that office until the outbreak of the American Revolution.

This portrait by the artist Joseph Blackburn in 1760 demonstrates his great wealth. One document under his hand lists "Expenses of Government." Another titled "Enlistments returned for 1760" reflects his role in New Hampshire's part in the attempt to defeat the French at Montreal.

Widowed with no surviving children, on his death Atkinson left £100 apiece to the libraries of Harvard and Dartmouth College. For the distribution of bread to the poor in Portsmouth, he also left £200 to the Anglican Church (St. John's Episcopal Church today) which he had helped found.

Joseph Blackburn, *Colonel Theodore Atkinson*, 1760, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 3/4", Worcester Art Museum (MA), Museum Purchase, 1918.

Funding for this historic marker was provided by the City of Portsmouth, 2015.

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