

Museum Has Many Relics

Cape-tip Exhibits Need Explanation

PROVINCETOWN, May 15—Visitors to museums are often mystified by the actual working process of an old-fashioned item on display, regardless of its name or perhaps because of its name. In the Historical Museum here, where so many relics of by-gone days are exhibited, are several interesting articles which need explanation.

One item is a bed wrench—a stout oblong timber about two feet long with a deep slot in one end and a dowel crosswise through the other end. When this 18th Century item was in use, feather ticks and cornshuck mattresses were laid upon a rigging of stout cords, tied in parallel rows from the headboard to the footboard.

When the weight of the sleeper's body had stretched the cords beyond comfort, the bed wrench was brought into use. The slotted end was fitted over the cords, one at a time, and after twisting the implement as far around as possible, the taut strand would be knotted, thus taking up the slack.

Another item of interest, whose name does not explain its use, is the swift, a rod-and-clamp implement used with a spinning wheel. It bore the skeins of yarn produced by the spinning wheel. Some swifts were made of wood, others of whalebone, carved by Provincetown mariners during watches below decks on long voyages.

THE LANCY HOUSE

The stories of Provincetown houses could fill a book, some humorous, some tragic. Such is the story of the Lancy house. It stands out like a sore thumb from all the other houses, with its brown-stone finish and three-storied architecture. It is made of wood, but covered with a mixture of a sort of plaster giving it an appearance of stone.

This was the discovery of Mr. Lancy, who with great care guarded his secret in the hope of selling it to the world and making a fortune from it. However, he died before fulfilling his dream, and the son hoping to find the father's formula, searched the house from cellar to attic, taking out bricks from the hearth, prying up boards, and looking for hidden panels in the walls, but to no avail. The disappointment must have been great, for after giving up hope, he closed the house with its pretentious furnishings, and together with his sister, moved into the basement, where they lived in miserly frugality, forever to dwell upon the fortune that has escaped them.

The house today stands in appearance as it did when the old man first built it, enduring the weathering of the years, as though it were truly his monument in stone. It has been purchased by the Research Society and is today the Museum.



HISTORICAL MUSEUM, PROVINCETOWN, MASS.

- About 1930 -

CAPE COD STANDARD-TIMES, TUESDAY, MAY 19, 1959

Women Toiled For Museum

PROVINCETOWN—In 1910, eight women, all Mayflower descendants, desirous of preserving the history of the town, organized the Research Club. Ten years later they decided to start a collection of relics before the antique dealers carried them all out of town.

Their first modest exhibit was in the town hall, where the selectmen had allowed them to hang a wall cabinet. So much interest was evinced by the natives as well as the tourists, that they started to enlarge the collection and worked toward a goal of buying a house in which to display their treasures.

To this end a series of suppers, lawn parties, cake sales and the like were held, until in 1924 these persevering women had accumulated enough capital to make a down payment on the Lancy House, a large three-story building in the center of town. They called it the Provincetown Historical Museum. At the end of six years the mortgage was burned and the membership increased to 76 women.

The Admiral Donald B. MacMillan collection occupies the entire top floor. There may be seen the many primitive paintings and handwork of the Eskimos brought back from expeditions to the North by a native son, Admiral MacMillan. Included in the exhibition is one of a pair of white wolves, the mate of which the admiral gave to the Natural History Museum in New York City. There are only these two specimens in this country.

VISIT THE
HISTORICAL MUSEUM
Reconstructed Provincetown
Colonial Kitchen
Sandwich Glass, Old Documents
MacMillan's Arctic Exhibit
Whaling Implements, Local Relics
Peregrine White's Signature
Fascinating large, fully furnished
Doll House
Room of Relics of Every
American War
Admission 25c plus 5c tax
Children under 12—15c plus 3c tax

Provincetown Advocate, Dec. 9, 1874:

"Mr. Benjamin Lancey last week had 10 cargoes of Lumber afloat at his wharves in this place and Wellfleet."

RARE SANDWICH GLASS SHOWN

Exhibit Opens for Week at Historical Museum in Provincetown

Special to Standard-Times 1932

PROVINCETOWN, July 29—In olden days it was quite proper to drink from one's saucer; Cape Codders rested their cups in little plates of Sandwich glass to protect the tablecloth while in the act of sipping. There may not have been many Cape Cod children "raised with a silver spoon" 100 years ago, but in that far-off day babies whose papas owned fat pocketbooks were nourished from bottles with solid silver nipples.

About 100 pieces of rare Sandwich glass, handed down through many generations of Provincetown folk, comprise a special exhibit at the local Historical Museum, presented by Mrs. E. A. DeWager, one of the largest contributors to the exhibition besides being owner of one of the finest collections of Cape antiques.

The display will be on exhibition the remainder of this week. Mrs. Mary E. Sparrow, assistant curator, likewise a contributor of particularly rare pieces, explains the exhibit includes the earliest and latest specimens of handwork from the famous Sandwich glass factory which opened in 1825 and closed in 1888.

Fascinating episodes reflecting the homely and sometimes adventurous life of the Cape many years ago are linked to each article. A relic of stagecoach days is a big cut glass globe with an ornate pattern that helped to illumine the old Methodist Church, built in 1837, that stood below Town Hill near the present site of the Pilgrim bas-relief. It was given to the museum by Mrs. Joseph Ellis.

Others whose Sandwich glass collections are represented are, Miss Maria Rich, Miss Elsie Long, Miss Grace Hall. Particularly rare is the set of scallop shell salt holders. The old-time nursing bottle used by pampered little newcomers generations ago is plain and unadorned, but the silver nipple is intact.

Mrs. Sparrow, formerly a Provincetown school teacher, has a special fondness for one of her specimens on exhibition, a fruit dish presented her by the graduating class of 1880, whose members included Town Clerk George S. Chapman Sr.; Mrs. Elizabeth Pidgeon, prominent in Boston educational affairs and former member of the Boston school committee; Harry West and Joseph Manta of Provincetown.