

February 24,
- 1977 -

NOW AND THEN © 1977 By John D. Bell

Last week two of my favorite people made my fingers itch to write about them, but there's too much to tell. Forgive me in advance, John and Grace? No, I don't mean myself and my wife, but John "Powerful" Patrick and Grace DesChamps. You know John, formerly d/b/a Fall River Cesspool Service. You know Grace, best known around these parts for her "Truro Tales" in *The Advocate* since 1964. Both of them amount to much more than the sum of "these parts."

Oddly enough, their activities cross. John is a historian and writer, and Grace, as a Hearst-trained reporter, has dug up a lot of dirt.

1975 to Date

In the "Abstract of Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts" for 1970, the Worshipful John R. Patrick wrote the history of the Provincetown Masonic Lodge. It's too long to print in full, but here's a bit of it: "King Hiram's Masonic Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons was instituted in 1795 by Paul Revere...the Grand Master of Masons in the Commonwealth...King Hiram's Lodge ranks seventh or eighth in seniority [of the 23 lodges Paul Revere instituted].... "In 1798 the members voted to build what they termed a Mason's house. The lumber was sent by a sailing ship from Maine. Members toted this lumber on their backs to the site where the house was to be erected... [It] was to be a two-story building in which the Masons could hold their meetings upstairs. Downstairs, two schoolrooms were to be built, one for the boys and one for the girls.

"Brother Lowe was to build for the same price that the Masonic Lodge in Wellfleet cost, but it had to be two feet larger. [Good old Provincetown pride.] Therefore the members had to donate all the time they possibly could. The State did not contribute to education in those days...The fisherman who earned the least amount of money fishing the previous year had to teach the boys the following year. Was this considered a demotion or a promotion?" (John's humor is dry as dry ice.)

"Boys were taught how to mend nets, rig trawls, splice ropes, etc. The girls learned cooking and other domestic arts." (When I interviewed John, Betty Patrick had started supper, and it smelled good.)

"The building later became the first

Catholic Church in Provincetown. It is still standing, but is now the private home located at 119 Bradford Street."

"History is Good Business"

When Josephine Del Deo heard this, she rushed over to photograph 119 Bradford. She's headed up the Historic District Study Committee for the past three years and is now writing its report for the October 1977 Town Meeting. Librarian Alice Joseph showed her around the 1798 house that she and Capt. Anthony Joseph of the Alice J. live in. (Hey Jo, how about nominating that to the National Register of historic landmarks?)

Back to John's history: "After that Mason's house, the next meeting house was Marine Hall, which was recently torn down to make room for parking. It was located next to Odd Fellows Hall." (1845, Jo—got that on your list?)

"The present meeting place on Masonic Place was built 100 years ago in 1870... This Fall, King Hiram's Lodge will not only celebrate its 175th year as a Lodge, but also the 100th anniversary of its Temple." (That was seven years ago.)

In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt used Masonic ritual in laying the cornerstone of the Pilgrim Memorial monument, and in 1910 President William Howard Taft was aided by Grand Lodge members in dedicating it. (Our list of candidates for historic landmark status should include this seamark.)

In fact, the whole town is historic. And with President Jimmy Carter in office, we could get federal funds that would look like peanuts to him, and use them for historic preservation.

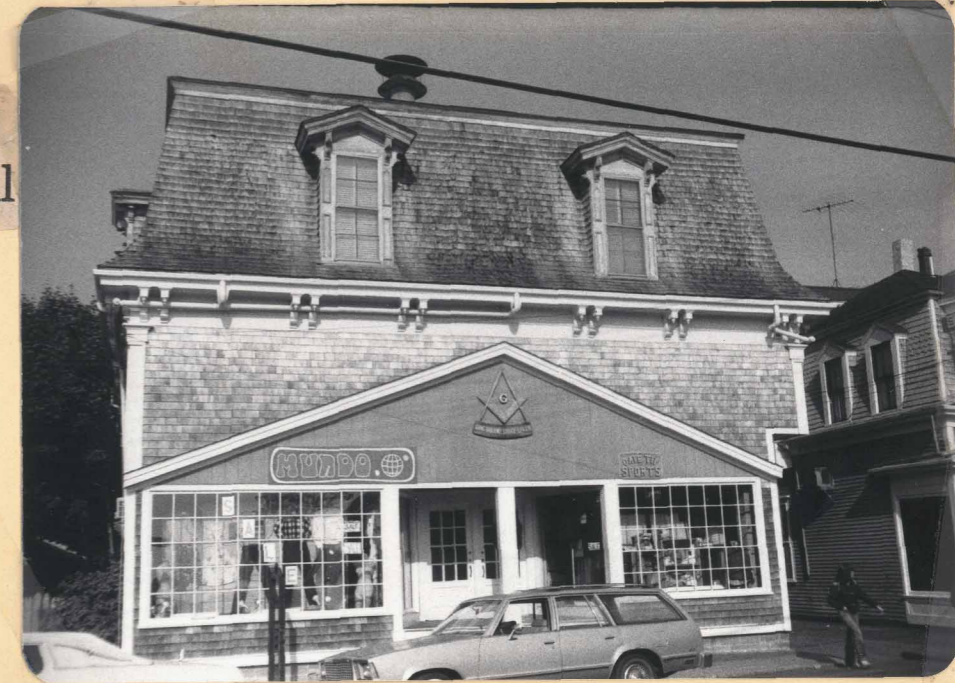
John Patrick, Newcomb Descendant

John is proud of his Masonic status (past District Deputy, 32nd degree Mason, member of the Knights Templar) and of his engraved gold "jewels" that he wears on Masonic occasions. He's also proud of his Newcomb ancestors on his mother's side. "My grandfather was Robert Newcomb. Susy O'Donnell comes down from Elisha Newcomb, and Leona Batt from Alexander Wilton Newcomb. I used to fish on the James R. Burke with Capt. Teddy Newcomb.

"Then I went west for 17 years. Worked in a factory in Detroit, where I met my wife. She fell in love with Provincetown the first time she saw it."

Betty chimed in: "When we had to go back to Detroit, I cried all the way to the bridge [over Cape Cod Canal]. You know, John's quite a writer too. Out west he had pages and pages written...but he threw it away—said it wasn't good enough." (They call that the writer's curse, Betty.)

Folks, let John show and tell you more, when you're in the mood for entertainment.



King Hiram Masonic Lodge AF & AM
with shops in the bottom floor - Oct. 1980