

Leif Ericson's Brother Is Buried In The West End, et alia Lancy's Corner, The Red Inn, And The Portland Gale

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The West End of Provincetown is usually called the "historic end" or "quiet end" of town. Protected by strict zoning laws, it has been able to preserve itself and its visual history. The streets are still shaded with large trees, and the eighteenth and early nineteenth century houses have not changed much in outward appearance.

The West End, naturally, ends at the tip of Cape Cod at Long Point. But there is strong disagreement on where it begins. In the days when the town had a railroad, everything west of Railroad Wharf (now MacMillan Wharf) was considered the West End.

Today, the generally accepted starting point is Central Street. Still, some conservative West Enders—determined to separate themselves from the rest of town—consider the curve in Commercial Street (now called Kelley's Corner) the beginning.

Wherever it starts, it is a community of its own. "The East End is the East End, and the West End is the West End, and never the twain shall meet," says one of the older West Enders. Others shake their heads in dismay as they walk toward the other end of town. They say they can still recall what Provincetown used to look like "before it sold its soul and heritage to tourism and let the New York money come in," as one West Ender put it.

Provincetown is about three miles long, and long ago the East and West became distinct communities. Throughout the town's history, there has always been jealousy and snobbishness between the two parts. Once, there were even two Methodist Churches, and, so the story goes, the East End Methodists would have nothing to do with the West End Methodists, and vice versa.

Some West Enders boast about how the Pilgrims landed in their end of town. Indeed, they did.

In 1917, the Research Club of Provincetown made a careful examination of all the existing records of the Pilgrims and determined that the Pilgrims landed and lay

at anchor off the extreme western end of town, near the present Provincetown Inn. Today, there is a stone commemorating the landing at the traffic rotary at the end of Commercial Street.

It is reported in Mourt's Relations, the collected writings of the Pilgrims, that the Pilgrim women washed their dirty clothes on a Monday when they came ashore. For many years, the late poet Harry Kemp and others annually reenacted the first washday near the breakwater. Kemp thought so much of the event that he wanted to have a statue erected depicting a Pilgrim woman cleaning her clothes on the shore.

It is believed that Thorwald, Leif Ericson's brother, is buried on Chip Hill (today the top of Tremont Street). Early historians report that both Thorwald and Leif explored the entire Cape area.

Herman A. Jennings, in his book *Odds and Ends from the Cape End*, writes that when Francis A. Paine was building his house on Chip Hill, he uncovered the remains of a wall or fortification. Paine was anxious to finish his house, however, and paid little attention to the find; he built right over it. Jennings says that the fragments of the wall were similar to other supposed Viking artifacts found elsewhere in New England.

In the early 1900's, Harvard archaeologists wanted to dig up the cellar of the Paine house, but the owners of the house at the time refused. No documented attempts have been made since to unearth the wall. Today, the remains are said to run diagonally from the old Francis A. Paine House at 7 Cottage Street across the street to the Joshua Paine House at 15 Tremont Street. And the Viking Wall remains one of the West End's mysteries.

Another West End anecdote concerns Kelley's Corner, the place some consider the West End's starting point. Originally, the curve was known as Lancy's Corner, after Benjamin F. Lancy, the owner of a saltworks there and, to many West Enders, a kind of community hero.

Until the mid-1830's there was no curve in the road at what became Lancy's Corner, because there was no road. In fact, there was no single road running the length of Provincetown, so it was decided to build one—to be known as Front Street (now Commercial Street). The road was begun in 1835; land was taken from property owners along the route.

Many of the townspeople thought the road a needless extravagance. Lancy, although he was a wealthy man, opposed it as well—because it was planned to run straight through his saltworks.

Nancy W. Paine Smith, in her *Provincetown Book*, tells of the conversation between Lancy and Joshua Paine, one of the county commissioners who had come to take the Lancy land.

Lancy stood in front of his property with his arms folded and called out, "Anyone who saws through my salt works, saws through my body."

Paine replied, "Where's a saw?"

Nevertheless, Mrs. Smith reports, Lancy held out, and the road finally went around his property, creating the famous bend in the road.

Today, the bend seems to serve as a deterrent to swarming tourists and a safeguard to the tranquility of the West End.

The traffic can be bumper-to-bumper all through the East End and the center (which, incidentally, neither East nor West Enders want to claim for their own), but it rarely gets past Conant Street on Commercial. Many of the cars never bother to drive around the bend and continue straight up Tremont or turn down a side street and follow Bradford to the beach.

The tourists who do come around the curve generally come to view the old houses that line Commercial and the side streets.

Unfortunately, none of these old houses can be given an accurate date of construction. The county records, kept in the Barnstable courthouse, were destroyed when the courthouse burned in 1877, and the town records, kept in the old Town Hall (on