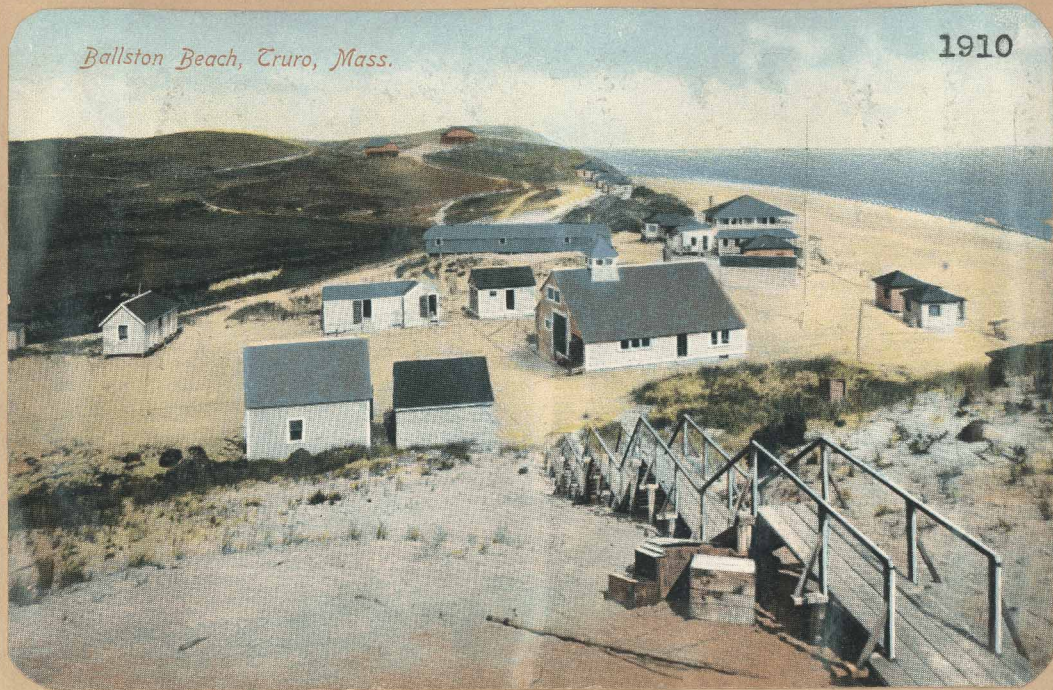


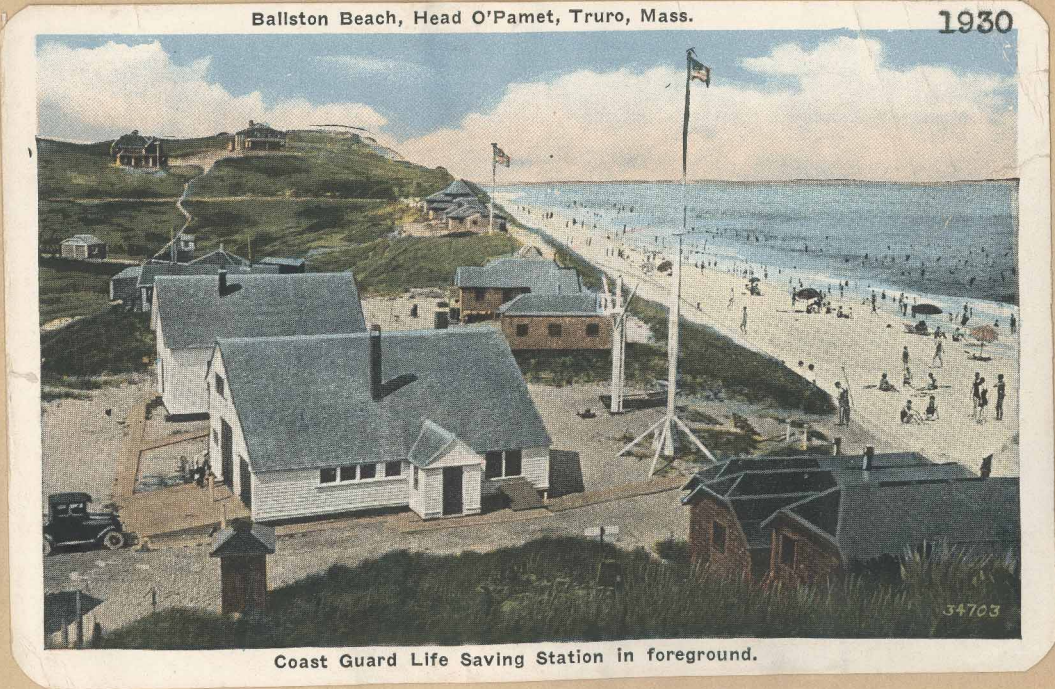
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Ballston Beach, Truro, Mass.

1910

Ballston Beach, Head O'Pamet, Truro, Mass.



1930

Coast Guard Life Saving Station in foreground.

34703

## Cape Cod Life Savers and Shipwrecks

### VI PAMET RIVER

Pamet River station, another of the original nine Cape Cod life-saving stations erected in 1872, stands in an hollow, Pamet Hollow, along the outer beach. It is about two miles easterly from Truro Center, and about two and one-half miles south of Cape Cod Light. When it was built, Pamet station stood several hundred feet from high water mark. The assault of the ocean caused it to be moved back. In 1932 it was necessary to erect a new station.

In September, 1937, the Pamet River station was placed on inactive status, along with the Peaked Hill Bars station, when the shore stations were reorganized in the interest of economy and efficiency.

Pamet River is named for the river which rises near the station and flows across the Cape into Cape Cod Bay. The marshes in which the river rises extend to the backdoor of Pamet Station. Cape Cod, from Pamet River to the very tip, a stretch of 13 miles, has come near to being an island many times as the wild ocean beat against the narrow barrier between marshes and the outer beach.

Henry David Thoreau, in 1849, noted: "We had already come to Pamet River, which empties into the Bay. This was the limit of the Pilgrims' journey up the Cape from Provincetown, when seeking a place for settlement. It rises in a hollow within a few rods of the Atlantic, and one who lives near its source told us that in high tides the sea leaked through, yet the wind and waves preserve intact the barrier between them and thus the whole river is steadily driven westward, butt-end foremost—fountain-head, channel, and light-house, at the mouth, all together."

#### Surf Smashes Windows

This driving process still goes on. "Tip of Cape in Danger of Being Cut Off by Battering Waves," is a regular winter's headline in the Boston newspapers, on lower Cape storm news. Members of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey agree there is considerable danger in Pamet River valley, of the Atlantic, in a storm, rushing across to visit the Bay. In a storm about five years ago the old Pamet River station had surf smashing against its windows, undermining its foundations, its heavy breeches buoy post crashed from its concrete foundation.

The word Pamet comes from the Indian tribe which inhabited the lower Cape, the northern neighbor of the Nausets of Eastham. In old histories it is variously spelled Pamet, Payomet and Pawmet. Captain John Smith noted: "On the Cape doth inhabit the people of Pawmet," and Bartholomew Gosnold mentioned a young Pawmet Indian, "...with plates of copper hanging in his ears, and with a bow and arrow in his hand, came to him in a friendly manner, offering his services."

#### Great Shipwreck Day

Pamet River surfmen patrol on the north about two and one-half miles, to meet men of Highland Station, and on the south, about

the same distance, to exchange checks with Cahoon's Hollow surfmen. The patrol, like that of Highland, is a dangerous one. Often in storms Pamet surfmen must climb to the top of the dunes, and sand-cliffs to escape the crashing surf of the beach.

One of Pamet's great shipwreck days was when the Pow-wow, the Miles Standish and the E. Pavey were all wrecked in one storm. Of their crews, numbering 34 sailors, only 12 were lost.

The Pamet shipwreck most often recalled is that of the British ship Jason—one of the greatest of all disasters along Cape Cod shores. Twenty-six men were drowned, one saved, when the Jason went to her grave on Dec. 5, 1893. A Nauset life-saver saw the outlines of the great ship, two miles offshore in the afternoon. A Pamet River surfman rushed into the station about 7:15 that night with the message: "She's ashore, half a mile north of the station." Life savers of several stations gathered, built bonfires on the beach, shot their mortar guns with lines across her, but the Jason's men were doomed. One of her crew, Samuel Evans, reached shore alive, through the surf. Let Isaac M. Small, shipwreck historian of the lower Cape finish the story:

#### Driven on Bar

"Like many another shipwreck, the irony of fate pursued this ship's company. When her keel was driven into the sand bar by force of the mighty waves which hurled her forward, the only spot upon the whole ship which seemed to offer a place of refuge from the boiling surf which tore across her deck, was the mizzenmast. Into the rigging of this spar every man hurried, except the one man who was saved. He was swept from the rail before he could gain a foothold with his shipmates; but what they had hoped would be their haven of safety was their doom.

"Scarcely had they climbed above the maelstrom of rushing waters, when the mast went down with a crash into the sea, killing many of the sailors in its fall and drowning the others in the wreckage. The foremast stood unmoved by the winter's storms for many weeks. Could this unfortunate crew have reached this portion of the ship many of them would have been rescued the following day.

#### Tide Shows Wreck

"Out there today, when the tide is low, protruding through the sands of the bar and the white

caps that watch them, are broken fragments of the sunken ship, looking like tombstones in the village churchyard."

Down through Cape Cod's history many years are remembered for great storms. In such years Truro shores, like the Cape's outer beach, have been strewn with shipwrecks. The first great storm hereabouts was recorded by the Pilgrims, in 1635. "The wrecks of it will remain a hundred years," wrote William Bradford. Another great storm was that of 1841, when Truro sustained an almost unbelievable loss—57 citizens and seven fishing vessels!

Now, nearly a century later, who can read the inscription on the marble shaft on Truro's "Hill of Churches" without a reverent pause?

"Sacred to the memory of fifty-seven citizens of Truro who were lost in seven vessels, which foundered in the great gale of Oct. 3, 1841.

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.

"Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets."

#### Buys Pamet Station

George Kimball of Nashua, N. H., recently purchased the Pamet River Coast Guard Station in Truro, which he is remodeling as a summer residence. Mr. Kimball travels between Nashua and Truro by a pontoon-equipped light plane which lands in Truro Bay. He reaches New Hampshire just an hour after leaving Cape Cod. 8-19-48