

1763

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Buried In The Back Shore

Like a book for which we have no code, like a strong box for which we have no key, the sands along the Great Back Shore of the Cape End hold securely more stories of grief and disaster than have yet been told and clutch in unrelenting grasp vast stores of wealth in minted gold and precious goods than anyone can reckon.

From time to time adventurous souls will come along with charts, figures and, perhaps, a modern gadget or two, in the high hope of finding great fortune coupled with fame in the finding.

It is not at all unlikely that the sands of the Cape End which have been mounting ever since the glacier piled in the solid stuff to stop them, hide the remains of every kind of sea-going craft devised by man. Certainly they hold far more than has ever been recorded and the list of vessels known to have been lost out there is long and tragic. There are old-timers in Provincetown who have seen the hulk of what was once the proud British man-o'-war, Somerset, banked with guns, entering and leaving the frightened Colonial ports with impunity matched only by arrogance, only to be destroyed by our Peaked Hill bars. But somewhere, far beneath the Somerset may also lie the remains of a Viking long boat! Such may be the layered story of disaster in the Great Shore.

Along with the great hopes and fervent prayers that have gone out with ships and which, too, are buried in those sands, may be counted enumerable cargoes of rich wares. Somewhere out there are tons of precious block tin and somewhere, too, is the strong box of the Steamer Portland with the money, jewelry and precious things of her passengers. A Danish ship went down laden with Italian marble, only eighty tons of which were saved.

Time was when the wrecks along the Great Shore brought great quantities of food, many bolts of fabrics, barrels of flour, molasses, yes, and rum, to the people of the Cape End, along with vast supplies of lumber which even today are parts of their homes. Within the past decade a cargo ship from Maine provided homes and bakers with more frozen blueberries than they could handle.

But today the cry of "Wreck along the Back Side" is seldom heard. No longer is there a scramble to hitch horses to wagons in a mad dash to bring back loot from disaster and no longer are the winds of the Cape End mingled with the cries of the doomed.

