

The Chamber of Commerce Views the Port of the Pilgrims

by Roger Hawthorne



Chalked on a blackboard at the Chamber of Commerce is a notice that packs a wallop. Few see it, but it is mighty important. In large letters it says simply — THE BOAT IS NOT RUNNING.

Therein lies a story that goes back to steamboat days when paddle-wheelers from Boston frothed up the Penobscot to Bangor, and in a wintry gale the "Portland" foundered off Race Point with all aboard. True, the "Portland" was not exactly headed for Provincetown but it has been traditional for generations that every summer day a deep-throated whistle announce noon arrival of "the Boston boat."

For many years it was the chaste, straight-stacked and most dearly-beloved "Dorothy Bradford" that eased alongside Town Wharf. Her decks were crammed with sun-seared, hungry, souvenir-seeking visitors eager to spend money and ogle "the quaint natives". We, in turn, made quite a thing of congregating on the pier head to ogle the new arrivals and it is a toss-up which group got the best show. There were happy shouts of recognition; small boys lunged like gannets for pennies or dimes and almost always something happened maybe like a tipsy deckhand falling overboard. Then the Town Crier would tread Commercial Street to spread the word to restaurants to heat up the skillets. In gift shops the cash registers would start ringing and everybody, just everybody, was happy.

Next came the "Boston Belle" with her bulky hull and modernistic stack. Some of the old-time flavor was gone but, still, there was the daily boat from Boston. This summer there has been none and even those merchants, and some Selectmen, who doubt that the Boston boat in recent years brought much revenue to the town admit that they miss the excitement that spread along Commercial Street when the Boston boat rounded Long Point and signalled for the wharf. It was part of the summer pattern.

There may be good news even as we go to press. If the Selectmen and Captain Joseph T. Gelinas, owner of the

"Martha's Vineyard", now docked at Hyannis, can come to terms, as they are trying to do, steamboat service between Boston and Provincetown may be restored in a matter of days. (And the whistle of the "Martha's Vineyard" is just as deep-throated and venerable as that of the "Dorothy Bradford".)

Mostly, it is a question of money. The Selectmen have pegged a price for use of MacMillan Wharf which Captain Gelinas cannot afford to pay. He will be starting late in the season, even if he starts running this week. Advertising and publicity won't show any results for at least two weeks, even if he can get it, and that gives him only about three weeks before Labor Day puts a halt to summer trippers. The doughty captain, who has fought an expensive and losing fight for two years with the Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority to operate out of Hyannis, where he has invested heavily, cannot meet the Selectmen's present demands. A compromise, however, is not entirely unlikely.

In shops, banks, and among restaurants, meantime, there is no unanimity as to whether a summer steamer does, or does not, aid the town's economy. Some argue that people already have spent their ready cash aboard the vessel and have eaten lunch before setting foot ashore. Others believe that there must be SOME loose money among 500 or 600 people who wander in and out of shops and eating places for three hours. Admittedly, the gift shops, especially those offering low cost items, get the greatest "take", but so do eateries. Swank shops and hotels may not profit outwardly but money has a way of circulating rapidly and in the end, everybody gains.

The "Martha's Vineyard", a proud old steamer completely re-fitted with powerful engines, modern navigational aids, including a bow thrust rudder and every safety device in use today, should be given a rousing welcome by all of Provincetown if, and when, she snakes her lines onto MacMillan Wharf.

Martha's Vineyard Starts Boston Run Saturday As Selectmen Sign Lease

The Provincetown Board of Selectmen last night voted to sign a lease this morning with Captain Joseph P. Gelinas, principal representative of the Island Steamship Line, Inc., for the Martha's Vineyard, a 210 foot long, 1,100 passenger, excursion steamer to make the Provincetown-Boston run for the remainder of this season. This single screw steamer, which can carry about 30 cars or mixed cargo and is certified at 585 gross tons, has two diesel electric engine which can generate 2,950 horsepower. The boat is reported in excellent condition, having been completely refitted. It has been approved by the U. S. Coast Guard for the run and has passed all inspections with the exception of its routine sea-run, which it will make today between Hyannis and Boston.

The Martha's Vineyard, which has been docked at Hyannis for nearly two years has been the subject of a controversy between Captain Gelinas and the Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority.

The new Cape End boat will leave Rowe's Wharf in Boston, daily at 10 a.m., arriving in Provincetown shortly after 1 p.m., and will leave Provincetown at 4:15 p.m.

A reception is being planned by the Provincetown Chamber of Commerce to greet the Martha's Vineyard upon its initial arrival, Saturday, August 5 at 1 p.m. The town sirens and whistles from the fishing fleet will announce its approach, as it enters the harbor after rounding the bend at Long Point. A committee of town officials will meet the boat at MacMillan Wharf, to welcome Captain Bradshaw, the crew and the passengers to Provincetown.

According to Chairman of Selectmen John C. Snow, the lease provides that the steamship company shall pay \$25.00 per day, up to \$750, for the use of the wharf this season and that the company shall have an option for next year for a total of \$3,000 for the season from June through September. It is expected that, for this season, the boat will run until the weekend after Labor Day.

It was reported that the ramp now available at the town pier is completely adequate for load-

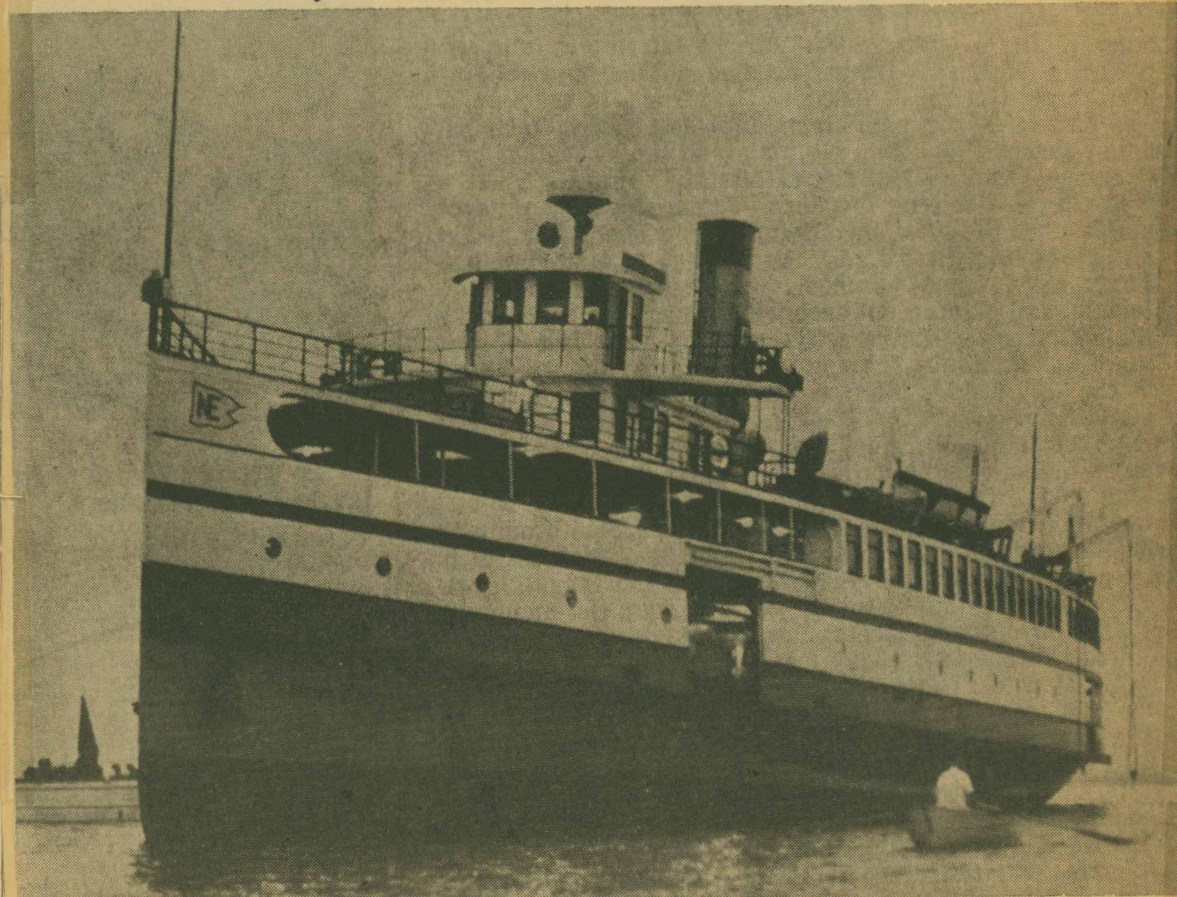
ing and unloading cars.

The belated arrival of a boat this season has been due to difficulty in finding one suitable for the run. This boat, built like the Steel Pier, was the only one found to be satisfactory, said Mr. Lawrence, after much searching among steamboat companies on the east coast.

PROVINCETOWN, MASS.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 1961

"Martha's Vineyard" Due Here Saturday On First Run



Courtesy Falmouth Enterprise

The 210-foot steamer Martha's Vineyard is due to arrive in Provincetown harbor about 1 p.m. Saturday afternoon on her first excursion trip from Boston, according to Timothy J. Casey, at Rowe's Wharf in Boston. The Advocate contacted Mr. Casey, who said that the Martha's Vineyard was being taken for a shake-down cruise today and certain adjustments made tomorrow and that she would be quite ready to leave Rowe's Wharf promptly at 10 a.m. Saturday and arrive at Provincetown three hours later.