

First Cape End Minister Now Ghost With Pale Memories, No Descendants

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We all know that Cape Cod was for a long time the name for what is now Provincetown. When the settlement coagulated into a village, of course there had to be a church with a minister. The first Provincetown minister, naturally of the Congregational church, was the Rev. Samuel Spear.

The Rev. Samuel Spear went on the Louisburg expedition, and died there in December 1745, aged 51. Among the countless Cape Cod ministers, he is today the palest of ghosts. If he had any children or descendants, I know nothing of them. We must have a certain admiration for his struggling with his exceedingly rough parishioners. It was really a thankless task then for a man to preach in wild Provincetown.

He was born July 6, 1696, a son of Samuel Spear and Elizabeth Daniel of Braintree. In 1716 he graduated from Harvard. At once he began teaching school in Truro at forty pounds a year, boarding himself. In 1718 he was teaching at Needham, and the next year he was preaching at Cohasset, which disliked him. His wife was Thankful Nichols of Hingham.

At length the new church at Provincetown called him, and ordained him August 28, 1722, when he was twenty-six years old. He served there until 1741. Of Provincetown he wrote: "Cape Cod is a seaport place whereto there is a great resort by fishermen and others who frequently carry it very disorderly amongst us by excessive drinking, quarrelling, profanation of the Sabbath, etc. The like vicious practices being much to the dishonor of almighty God, a grief to all sober persons."

At that time the population was small, though many came and went. The chief citizen appears to have been William Rotch, tanner, whaleman, and keeper of an inn or groggery. The church was under the eye of the Truro minister, the Rev. John Avery, who later married William Rotch's widow. The Provincetown minister got his pay largely from a tax of four pence per man per



- About 1910 -