

-October 25, 1956 -

## Squid Used For Bait On Cape Cod But Eaten As Delicacy In Orient

By Gustavus Swift Paine  
Genealogist and Cape Historian

The squid has always been important to the Cape Cod economy, mainly as bait, sometimes as fertilizer. Though in Mediterranean and oriental countries people like to eat squid, I have no records that Cape Codders have ever had a taste for it. A prejudice against these beautiful creatures may be unintelligent. I say beautiful enthusiastically as I look at the photograph of a living Loligo at Woods Hole.

As an ignorant amateur, I present a few facts about this Cephalopod. The word means head-footed. The foot is around the head! The squid is a highly developed invertebrate. The foot has a funnel and ten sucker-bearing arms around the mouth. The predatory beast can extend two of its arms to seize with their suckers the prey and draw it toward strong horny jaws.

Besides organs for smell, the squid has two large image-perceiving eyes, remarkably like those of human beings. Lying between the eyes and encircling the esophagus is a large brain. I respect and admire this always hungry animal with tremendous digestive powers, which has always been familiar to Cape Codders.

Around its body a thick muscular mantle ends in two triangular folds or fins, useful in steering. At the top the mantle has a free edge, the collar, which surrounds the neck between the head and the viscera. Beyond the collar, on the underside of the head, projects a conical muscular tube, the funnel.

Relaxing the mantle, the squid takes in water around the edge of the funnel. Then it contracts the mantle, tightly sealing the edge, and forcing out water through an opening in the funnel. An excited squid contracts the mantle strongly, expelling a jet of water from the funnels, and pushing itself in the opposite direction. Bending the tip of the funnel backward, the squid darts quickly forward to seize its prey. Bending the tip of the funnel forward, the creature shoots

backward like a torpedo, escaping its prey. It emits ink as a sort of smoke screen or to distract a pursuer. Whatever it chooses as food it holds firmly with its arms, while its two strong horny jaws kill the captive, biting out large pieces, which the captor swallows rapidly. The squid is splendidly competent in the ruthless struggle of marine living.

Giant squid of which I have not heard around Cape Cod, started many stories of sea monsters. One fifty feet long and twenty feet in circumference weighed about two tons. When you see an ordinary squid cast up on a Cape beach, imagine one a thousand times larger, the formidable giant squid.

Of squid as "most capitial bait" near Cape Cod Alonzo Tripp of Hyannis wrote in 1858, "twenty fishes . . . have been exchanges for a single one, by some shrewd old fishermen, used to tip the points of the hooks after stringing on the other bait. Hence no possible event is so calculated to awaken from their habitual lethargy a fishing crew and to precipitate one and all headlong toward the rail as if the very fiends were in possession of them as the cry of 'Squid O!' . . . What adds fun to catching them is that they are wont to eject their ink bolt into the face of their captors, just as she is taking them over the rail. Really the squid is brainy."

### Old Cape-tip Law

PROVINCETOWN — In the town record of March 4, 1816, there appeared a vote to the effect that every person caught or convicted of flinging out of their boat any dogfish, or any other kinds of filth above low water mark, should forfeit \$1 for the first offense and \$2 for the second, and so on doubling the forfeiture for every conviction. The informer would receive one-half the fine, and the rest went to the town.

## Fishing Fleet Fans Out Into Circle For Annual Blessing

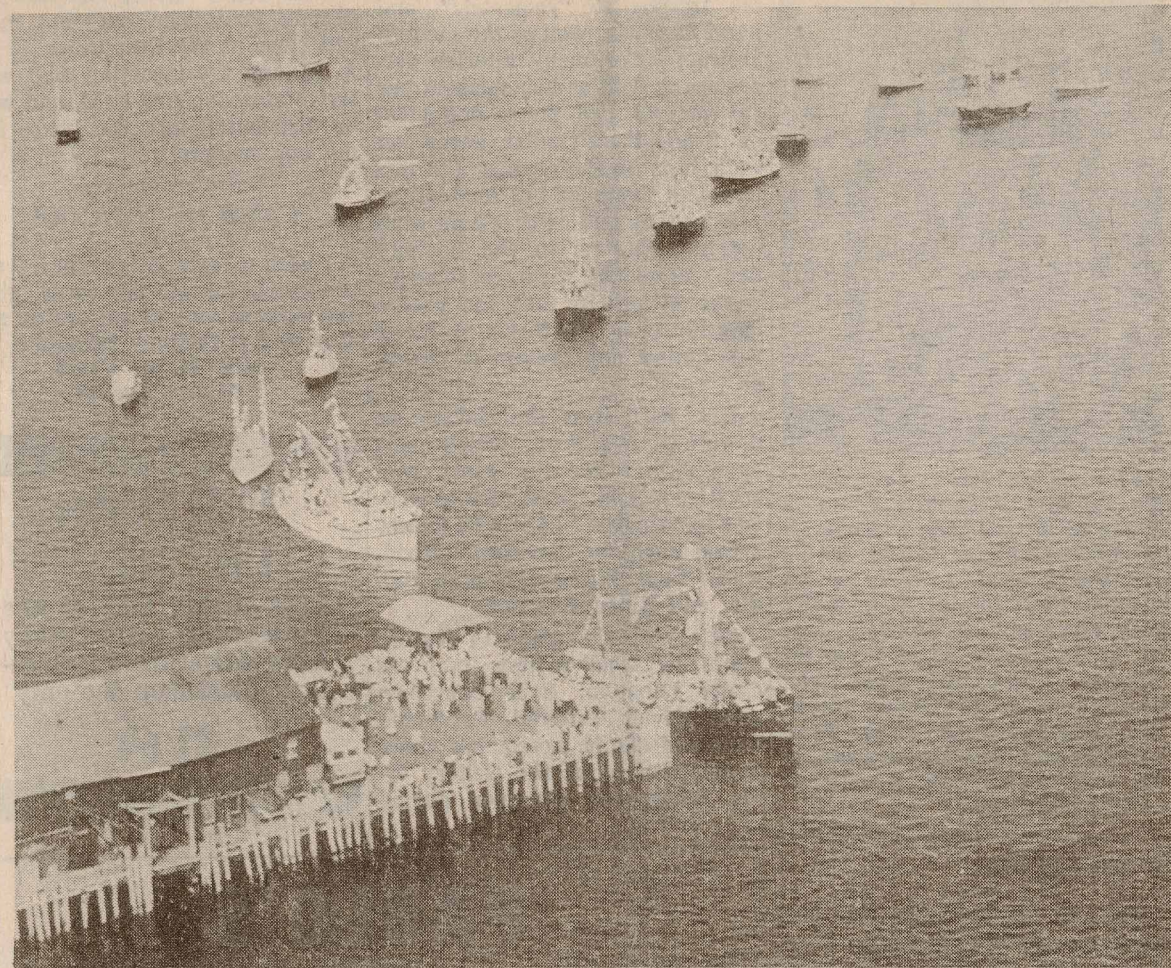


Photo by Tad Arnold

The Cape End harbor is ideal for an event such as the Blessing of the Fleet. The above photograph, taken from a Provincetown-Boston Airline plane shows the boats of the fishing fleet in position and moving slowly up to the end of Town Wharf for the Bishop's blessing. The boats, large and small were laden with relatives, friends and guests with food and beverages for all to be enjoyed in the lee of Long Point following the ceremony.

### MAY 23, 1901, SUNDAY STORM

Sloop Bessie Kelley lost her bowsprit and was badly chafed by the piling, while moored at John O'Neil's fish wharf during the storm . . . Parts of the old Dominion Wharf went adrift during the storm and caused some damage to small boats along the shore.

### PROVINCETOWN.

— Mr. Charles Cook fell from his wharf Wednesday forenoon, but escaped with no other injury than what the boys call a "ducking."

— Capt. E. W. Smith, who was injured by a swordfish several weeks ago, left the hospital at Vineyard Haven, Tuesday, July 16th, to rejoin his vessel for a fishing trip.—[Advocate.]

Get rid of that tired felling as quick as possible. Take Hood's Sarsaparilla, which gives strength, a good appetite, and health.

Yarmouth Register  
July 27, 1889

Schooner Ella May, Capt. Mayo arrived at this port Jan. 11, 1871, from the West Indies, with the Capt. and nearly all the crew sick with fever. One man had died. The vessel was leaking badly and was brought in by the mate with one man to steer and one to work the pumps. . . .

### AUGUST 21, 1884:

Codfishing schooners Charles F. Mayo, Captain Silva, Freddie Alton, Captain Allen, John Simmons, Captain Bailey, all arrived from the Grand Banks in company.