

ITS BATTLE WITH STORMS ENDED, PEAKED HILL MAY BE SOLD

**Abandoned Coast Guard Station Has Long and Dramatic History of Wrecks and Disaster—
Barnstable Patriot Tells Story**

Although no official confirmation could be obtained it is rumored that the famous Peaked Hill Coast Guard Station which looks out over the dangerous and turbulent shoals which, because of the ships they have wrecked, have become known as "the graveyard of the Atlantic" will soon be put up for sale by the government.

The following history of the Peaked Hill Station is one of the series of nine stories from The Barnstable Patriot which is now describing the Coast Guard Stations of Cape Cod.

Peaked Hill Bars station is another of Cape Cod's original nine life saving stations, built during the winter of 1872 and manned in 1873. It is reached either along the outer beach from Race Point, or winding Snail road, over the sand dunes of the Province Lands. Of both routes, motorists beware. Only the extra-large balloon tires, or deflated ordinary tires, provide safe traction, and even then a skilled navigator is essential. Those who have the time, find Peaked Hill Bars station terminus for a fascinating trip of duneland exploration.

In September, 1937, Peaked Hill Bars station, along with Pamet River, was decommissioned, or placed on inactive status, in a reorganization of the Coast Guard for economy and efficiency.

Sand dunes of the Province Lands constantly change form. "Why Peaked Hill Bars?" Isaac Morton Small, who lived near Highland Light for many years, was once asked. He answered: "Because on the sand dunes between the ocean beach and the foothills of the eastern line between Truro and Provincetown, in the long ago, was a very prominent hill rising from the sands, conical in shape and surmounted with oak trees of considerable growth. A 'peaked hill.' Then the dangerous bars lying off shore took on this name. The brush covered hill disappeared entirely long ago."

Peaked Hills Bars surfmen meet those of Race Point on the north patrol, and those of Highland to the south. Between Peaked Hill Bars

and Highland, the service formerly maintained High Head station. It has been closed for many years, and the two stations have split the duty of covering this section of seacoast. Officially, Peaked Hill Bars has number 35, for aviation purposes. It is one of the more lonely, infrequently visited stations, because of the sea of dunes between the station and Provincetown village.

Station Moved in 1930

In 1914 a new station was built for Peaked Hill Bars coast guards. In 1930 it had to be moved for safety from the encroaching surf, to a site 300 yards back from the beach.

To digress a bit from these notes on shipwrecks, disasters and life-savers, it should be mentioned that Peaked Hill Bars has attained great literary fame. "A dark, shy young man named O'Neill," as Susan Glaspell later described him, joined the Provincetown colony in 1916. He purchased the abandoned Peaked Hill Bars station and made it his workshop. A few of the dark young man's plays were produced on an old wharf, along with other one-act plays by Provincetown writers. In the years to come the dark young man, Eugene O'Neill, became America's first playwright. His Peaked Hill Bars workshop, abandoned when even three miles of sand dunes failed to give him privacy, toppled into the ocean a few years ago. It is now another of the Peaked Hill Bars wrecks, under water at all times.

Had Strange Vision

O'Neill had a companion, Terry Carlin, who lived with him at the old station house. A picturesque, vagabondish chap, Carlin, now dead, is something of a Provincetown mythical character. One of the stories of him was that awaking in the old Peaked Hill Bars building one morning, he gave a vivid description of a vision he had during the night, of seeing the bodies of 13 sailors stretched in a row on the floor, victims of a disaster. Coast Guards subsequently corroborated the vision as a faithful report of an occurrence many years before, when the station was on the active list and a great shipwreck had occurred. Carlin swore he had never even heard the story.

In Provincetown O'Neill had occupied for a time an apartment above the office of the late John Francis, real estate man. On its four beams supporting the ceiling, lettered neatly by the hand of O'Neil, were these lines:

"Before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears
"Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness!
"Before the voice can speak, it must have lost its power to wound!
"Before the soul can fly, its wings must be washed in the blood of the heart!"

In 1802 three great Salem East-Indian men, Brutus, Velusia and Ulysses, came to grief on Peaked Hill Bars. All three ships were total losses and the only survivors were five of the crew of the Brutus.

Peaked Hill Bars station lost her captain and two surfmen in one of the first great Coast Guard tragedies, on Nov. 30, 1880. The sloop C. M. Trumbull had stranded on the bars. Captain David H. Atkins, station keeper, and five of his crew pulled out to the ship, picked off three men. They jumped, but the sloop's skipper and mate refused to leave. When the three had been taken ashore safely, brave Captain Atkins insisted on returning for the other two, who he felt in grave danger. As the surfboat neared the vessel, a projecting beam and loosened main sheet carried over, caught under the surfboat's bow, and capsized her. Captain Atkins, Surfmen Elisha Taylor and Stephen Mayo drowned. Three others reached shore.

One of the most ghastly of the Peaked Hill Bar disasters was that of the Italian bark Monte Tabor, which struck on Sept. 14, 1896. Surfman Silvey reported a ship just outside the bar, in distress, just after midnight as a northeast gale raged. Nothing could be done on shore. At dawn, rolling in the surf, three swarthy dead men, two with slit throats, a third with a powder-blackened bullet wound through his head, shocked life savers. Clinging to the Monte Tabor's cabin, torn from the hull, seven men reached shore. Two others were never found. It looked like murder. One of the bodies with slit throat was that of Captain Luigi Genero.

A Case of Suicide

An investigation by the Italian consul at Boston, plus a note which carried a message written in Italian, washed ashore in a bottle, soon revealed the case as one of suicide. Recounting how an hurricane had struck by will of Providence, they gave their souls to God, thanking Him for the destiny assigned them. One prayer was asked, from the finder for their souls." It was signed, "The Captain, Genero." The Consul's verdict was the

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captain and seaman had gashed their throats, and the steward, Olivari, had shot himself. Local records do not show how the three men got into the surf. Nor were the two missing crew members ever picked up.

Somerset, Brutus, Volusia, Ulysses, Trumbull, Peruvian, Monte Tabor, these are but a few of the many ships dashed to their graves on the treacherous sands of Peaked Hill Bars.