

Sept. 5, 1963



MY  
PAMET

BY  
TOWN  
FATHER

Know anybody with an idle dredge, readers? Our earliest memories of the Pamet Harbor area go back to the twenties . . . they used to call it the Depot in those days—the New Haven Railroad with its tiny complex of buildings—and cattle-loading platform and freight house and passenger station, dominated the scene. Across the spur siding was a big coal bin, from which Ike Freeman, the station agent, used to fetch soft coal for the pot-bellied stove in the depot . . . and it seems there was always a box car on the siding, loaded with freight. (One of the last cars to be shunted onto the spur by the ancient, puffing steam rattler fetched a load of dynamite for Cobb Farm—Col. Dick Magee used the stuff to blast the sand away so's he could get a view of the bay from his Hogsback home . . .

But we digress. Then, as now, the Depot was a popular bathing beach. Feller could go down there at low tide, and dig himself a bucket of clams and soon's the tide was high enough, he could go for a swim . . . Dive off the trestle if he'd a mind to (remember how we used to stand trembling on the outboard platforms that held the water barrels while the three o'clock passenger train rumbled across the bridge, breathing steam and sparks just inches from your bare hide?)—and then you could hitch a ride up town with Ezra Hopkins in his ancient Model T beach wagon, or climb up on the Democrat wagon beside Roger Burhoe after he'd loaded the bread for Eben Paine's store, up town . . .

But the harbor itself was entirely different in those days. . . . the main crick used to flow out through an opening way down Corn Hill way—trap boats, we recall, could chug in there for shelter at half tide, the water was that deep. And Gull Island was connected with what is now Depot Beach by a narrow isthmus that had been banked with neat squares of brown peat that had been cut from the river bed when the original channel was dug, some years before. So there were actually two separate entrances from the foreshore—the aforementioned Pamet River, and the channel, so-called, which began at the present entrance, ran due east to a rather sizeable basin that still exists, abaft the Yacht Club.

On the shore of the basin, about where the boat ramp is now located, there used to be a beached sloop, (you could just make out her name, lettered across the transom—IRIS—) and rumor had it she'd been engaged in the rum-running trade, had sprung a leak, and had been abandoned on the shore of the newly-dredged basin. In any event, the Iris lay there for years, her water-filled hold swarming with crabs and minnows, eels skulking about the weed-grown and barnacled keel at high water. "Don't go near the channel" our parents used to warn us, every time we set out for the Depot. And with good reason. The steep banks of the dredged cut, the swiftly rushing current, had trapped many an unwary swimmer. One of the Glass boys, for instance, had slithered down the peat bank into deep water . . . Gladys Snow, who lived on the hill above the Depot, had managed to locate

his body in the murky waters, and had hauled him ashore, but the poor feller was dead when Doctor Bell examined him on the wood platform of the Depot.

Ironically, the channel was navigable for some years in the twenties and thirties—but few folks had boats then. And now, when no family considers itself socially in step without at least a skiff and outboard combination, there just isn't enough water in Pamet Harbor to float a toothpick at low tide. And when you consider that Pamet Harbor, properly dredged, affords a harbor of refuge, and access to deep water with a maximum of ten minutes sailing time (how long does it take to get from the inner basin at Wellfleet, by comparison, across Billingsgate Shoals?) seems something should be done about stabilizing this historic harbor. Write to your Congressman, folks.



TRURO TALES and TRAILS.

May 14, 1964

... by Grace DesChamps

Old Truro Landmark May Disappear  
By Vote At Special Town Meeting

To obtain voter authorization to dispose of pressing Town business, Truro Selectmen have announced a Special Town Meeting Monday night, May 25, at 7:30 in Town Hall. To date, three articles are in the Warrant. One article seeks to raise and appropriate \$2500 to take down the old New Haven Railroad trestle across the Pamet River. Another asks permission to sell at auction the Town-owned building which formerly housed the North Truro Library. A third would place Truro in a Public Welfare District to include Truro and Wellfleet — and later, possibly, Eastham.

Old Landmark

With passing of the old railroad trestle, disappears a landmark closely associated with the lives of many Truro folk. In childhood, especially when the river was deeper, they played, fished and boated there, dived from the trestle — and tragedy touched it when two youngsters, at least, lost their lives there.

Guiding a skiff, under the trestle pilings in a swirling high tide — before river waters had dwindled to present shallowness — could provide first-class excitement to youngsters who lacked luxuries, but probably didn't know it for the adventure they found in the materials at hand.

The trestle is the only foot link between this section of Town and Corn Hill, across the river. The Pilgrims, in their shallop from the Mayflower, sailed up the river here, searching a refuge be-

fore Winter closed in on them. A century ago, before the harbor filled in, this was a center of Town activity, with wharves and ships' stores for the fleet of fishing schooners that sailed in and out of Truro.

First Train In 1873

The trestle was built by the Old Colony Railroad. The first train through Truro passed over it in 1873, with President Ulysses Grant, reportedly, on the rear platform. For many years afterwards two trains daily, to and from Boston, divided the hours for local folk — brought them news, parcels, and visitors. The locomotive whistle could warn them it was later than they thought — and chores could be stepped up when the "afternoon" train snaked around the bend toward Corn Hill.

Everyont waved at the train and nearly everyone, passengers

and crewmen, waved back — the friendly crewmen tossing off newspapers or even parcels to inhabitants along the track. The depot, removed some years since, was a gathering place for the surrounding community. As for the train ride, itself — clicking along through woods, by bay shores or over sparsely tenanted hills — it was an adventure not to be had over today's expressway.

There's no doubt the passing of the trestle will touch some chords here. But the Conservation Commission, Mr. Perry says, recommends it.

Currents from the river's upper course reportedly, are trapped here, blocking the natural outflow of the stream. Besides other harmful effects, the present flow is believed to be driving sand over the clam beds and destroying shellfish deposits.

Bridge Across Years

Finance Chairman Snow says accidents on the trestle, badly in need of repair, might lead to expensive suits against the Town. Legal responsibility for the trestle, nominally the property of the bankrupt New Haven Railroad, is confused, he added, and could well be the Town's. The New Haven has long since given permission for its removal. But with the trestle, for many here, goes a bridge across the years.

Mr. Perry, incidentally, said the urgent need of a bulkhead here, to prevent erosion at the Town

Beach, has been under investigation by Army engineers. They estimate the cost at \$42,000. The Town's cost, Mr. Perry estimated, would be \$20,000. For the immediate present, however, this matter is not up for a decision.