

Pamet

# OF TRURO'S PAST

John Atkins place. Here, in 1726, Lieutenant Paine sold his negro boy, Hector, to Benjamin Collins, and this was the last bill of sale for slaves made in Truro. In 1890 Truro had 262 dwelling houses, "and an appearance of thrift, without ostentation, prevails."

### Bought Indians' Land

In December, 1888 the town was out of indebtedness, had money in the treasury and the tax rate was \$16.20 on one thousand dollars. In 1889 the tax rate was reduced to \$14.50. The civil history of Truro really begins from 1709, when, by incorporation, the town commenced its municipal government.

In 1710 Jedediah Lombard and Thomas Paine were appointed as a committee "to buy all the lands of the Indians when, and so often as any of said Indians shall see cause to sell." The crows and blackbirds were voted out of the pale of Puritan society because they pulled up and destroyed the young corn. In 1711 every housekeeper was compelled to bring eight blackbirds' heads and two crows' heads to the selectmen or pay a fine of three shillings, for the benefit of the poor. In 1713 the first bounty on a wolf's head was set; three pounds per head was a sum that greatly tended to diminish the number of these thieves in the town.

The first burial ground was ordered in 1714. It seems that as early as 1745 the boys of Truro were not attentive listeners to the long sermons of the day. That year the town appointed a committee, in open Town Meeting, "to take care of the boys that they don't play in meeting on the Sabbath."

NOVEMBER 21, 1946

## Was "Mother Melt" a Witch?

(From a record of Truro, Cape Cod, in the whaling era.)

About 95 years ago there lived in this little village a middle-aged man by the name of Jonathan Collins. He pursued the occupation of whaling, in a large sloop, as was then the custom, and it is said he was one of the first adventurers to Falkland Islands in search of whales. At that time there lived at "Head of Pamet" an old woman, famed as a witch, and who was called "Old Mother Melt."

Well, this old woman wished for Capt. Collins to take her son with him on one of his voyages, but owing to some misunderstanding the boy did not go. She threatened him, and told him he would be sorry for it. The sloop sailed—nothing was thought or heard of the old woman's prophecy—when one day, just as the cook had summoned to dinner, although the day was fair, the sea smooth, there came suddenly a succession of monstrous waves, which, breaking completely over the vessel, wrecked her. The decks were swept, boats stove, rigging parted, and part of the chain plates carried away. It took several days to repair the wreck. The Captain declared Mother Melt had bewitched him, and that if he ever reached home he would kill her. He was as good as his word, for one of his

- July 1849 -

Truro—The crops in this place are very forward, and promise a plentiful increase to the husbandman. Our fishermen are home in great numbers—they have not done so well this season as usual. The Lighthouse is in rapid construction and will be lighted to the admiring gaze of spectators about the 1st of August. Yes sir, a Lighthouse at Pamet harbor. It is looked on here as a perfect nuisance and a laughing stock, yet there are more candidates for it than there ever were for the Russian embassy.

### Town of Truro.

1798 . . Voted: To raise 50 Dollars for a Singing School. Voted: the Selectmen shall settell the Singing School . . . This day advertisement: Taken up this day by the Subscribers and others concerned a Quantity of timber and Rigging in the Backside of Truro, the owners applying and Proving Property and Paying Costs may have the articles aforesaid. Isaac Whorfe, Joseph Whorfe.

I hereby subscribe and say that I was born in the Northeast corner of Wellfleet, and that in the division of my father's estate, the place for me to build was assigned and set off to me in the Southeast corner of Truro, and that by building in on said spot, I have to sustain serious and great difficulties which it is in your power to remove: I am placed seven miles from the Meeting house in Truro, while I am but two miles from the one in Wellfleet. I am four miles from a school house in Truro, and but half a mile from one in Wellfleet. I have seven children to attend school, but by reason of the distance and the doings of the Town of Truro I have no school to send them to. Whereas I was an inhabitant of Wellfleet I could send my children to a Town School six months in the year, four months to a private school. I would further state to your honours that I am obliged to beat the seas for my living, and always come in of Wellfleet Harbour, and that at Wellfleet flats there is Clams and quohogs, but by law I am prohibited from taking any for my family use for these reasons pray your honours to set me off from the Town of Truro and annex me to the Town of Wellfleet, agreeable to the following lines. Joseph Sweet, January 1, 1825.

first acts, on reaching home, was to get his sword and march straight to the old woman's residence. He accused her of bewitching him and nearly destroying his vessel, and told her he had come to kill her. She denied it all and begged so hard for life, that upon her swearing never to bewitch him or his in any way, he let her live.

This was in Truro and less than a century ago. It don't take a wonderful memory to remember a hundred whims that we ridicule now. The sword which Capt. Collins carried on his errand of vengeance is in good preservation, is owned by Mr. James Collins, and can be seen any day at his workshop.

No self-respecting grocery store in the old days in Pamet, was without its plug tobacco cutter—a sort of miniature guillotine which sliced the pungent cakes of Mayo's dark or light, or B. L., or Apple into portions small enough to suit the customer. None of your perfumed, or mentholated, or vitamin enriched tobacco in that period, when men only, smoked. A necessary accessory was the jackknife, used to worry the plug into chips small enough to be packed into the bowl of a favorite pipe, and a plentiful supply of matches to keep it lighted. The plug was a versatile item used not only for smoking but also for pest control—a mild spray solution of Mayo's for instance, made an excellent insect spray for household plants, and would repel hen lice efficiently. For years the Selectmen's office at Town Hall was furnished with an elegant spittoon, the board being composed of men who found chewing tobacco a decided help in figuring taxes. In cases where the accuracy of the users was doubted, the spittoon was usually placed in a box of sand to increase the target area: no such crutch was needed at Town Hall. So far as we know, the last two plug addicts in town are Archie Holden and David Snow.

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