

FROM: Provincetown Advocate - December 8, 1977

MY PAMET

By Town Father

Our genial extrovert neighbor, Jim Whitelaw, has been seen around town, here to set the wheels in motion for the moving of his summer home at Ballston Beach. "Dern sand dune has eroded so's our front porch is perched over the bluff, explained Jim. "If we don't push our cottage back a mite she'll be in the Atlantic Ocean come spring," he said. This will be the third time the Washburn-Whitelaw cottage has been relocated. Each time, needless to say, the cost has increased in direct proportion to the spiralling effects of inflation.

Jim estimates the current contract will equal a fair year's pay for the average contractor of the 30s when the building was last moved—and then some. It's hard to believe that the narrow strip of barrier dune at Ballston Beach was once a broad expanse of strand that contained the original complex of Pamet River Coast Guard Station and the Sheldon Ball summer colony, with its numerous cottages, dining hall, bowling alley and auxiliary buildings. There's hardly enough room for a doghouse on the area now. Could it be we'll some day awake to the sound of surf rushing down the fresh crick as the ocean breaks through that fragile thread of sand?

But the business of moving buildings here in Truro, as least in the old days, was not unusual. Back in the 30s, for instance, when the ocean engulfed the area in front of Pamet River Coast Guard Station, the government decided to abandon the venerable building and construct a new facility up the road a piece at North Pamet. The original structure was sold at public auction. Highest bidder was the late Alfred Marx, and he promptly engaged the services of Horace Pop Snow. Pop set to work before you could say Obadiah Brown and put his men to the task of flaking the building and carting it off to a new location on Castle Corn Hill Road, where it became with many alterations the summer home of the late Alfred Marx and wife Lilly.

The nearby cottages of the Ball estate were jacked up, part of the same contract, and rolled back to locations

considered safer from the ravages of the sea at the time.

Under a special arrangement between owner Ozzie Ball and certain long-time lessors of the cottages, the ramshackle shacks, as Ozzie used to refer to them, the cottages were enjoyed and occupied by such folks as Ernie Andrews, Jack Carleton and other folks whose names escape our memory. The National Park eventually bought these holdings from the Ball estate and razed them. The elements have over the years molded the dunes to a natural condition so there's no trace of the former building sites.

But let's go back a few decades when the isolated settlements of the outlying areas of Truro engaged the attention of some of Pamet's early developers. Consider, for instance, the abandoned houses of Paradise Valley and of Prince Valley in South Truro. If you've read Shebna Rich's "History of Truro," (copies still available if you'll contact us at Town Hall), you'll learn that with the economic decline of Pamet following the shoaling of Truro's harbor and the loss of its maritime industry there were many houses that could be bought for minimal prices from owners who had moved out of town.

See these cottages
a page or two ahead
with old Life Saving
Station