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Hell Town Settlement

The other community which was closer to the end of the Cape than is Provincetown was the picturesque settlement of Hell Town. Hell Town was built just above the high water line near what is now the New Beach. According to descriptions it was a down-at-the-heels sort of town. Its inhabitants constituted a handful of fishermen and longshoremen.

Fishing schooners unloaded their catches at the beach to save a two-hour trip to Provincetown Harbor. Horse-drawn wagons then brought the cargoes overland to the railway terminus in Provincetown.

When steam and gasoline engines drove the sails from the sea Hell Town literally collapsed. In a few years there were only a few rotting timbers to mark the site of the settlement and Provincetown had again become the "Cape End Community."

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YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO CAPE COD July 2, 1949

Miracle of Mary's Flower

On Cape's end through the townships of Wellfleet, Truro and Provincetown, the dunes are covered with patches of lacy grey moss that blooms each year with a pale yellow flower. Named Mary's flower by the religious Provincetown Portuguese, it has become Mary's Flower to all Cape-enders. The fisherfolk tell the following story of how the flower came to the end of the Cape.

A young, poverty-stricken Portuguese fisherman lived with his wife and infant son in one of the battered lean-tos of Helltown in Provincetown. Unable to buy a power dory and forced to do his fishing in a sailboat, the fisherman could not compete with the others.

One spanking, brisk day, the young man rose early and set off in his sailboat hoping to land a catch big enough to buy a little extra milk and bread for his family. But the sky darkened and the wind rose to gale force. All the power dories came in, but the sailboat did not return.

The young wife grew frantic. One, two, three days went by. She scraped the larder to prevent herself and her son from starving. She held her baby in her arms to keep him warm, and spent most of her waking hours praying. On the third night, the terrible storm rose to a frenzied force. And then

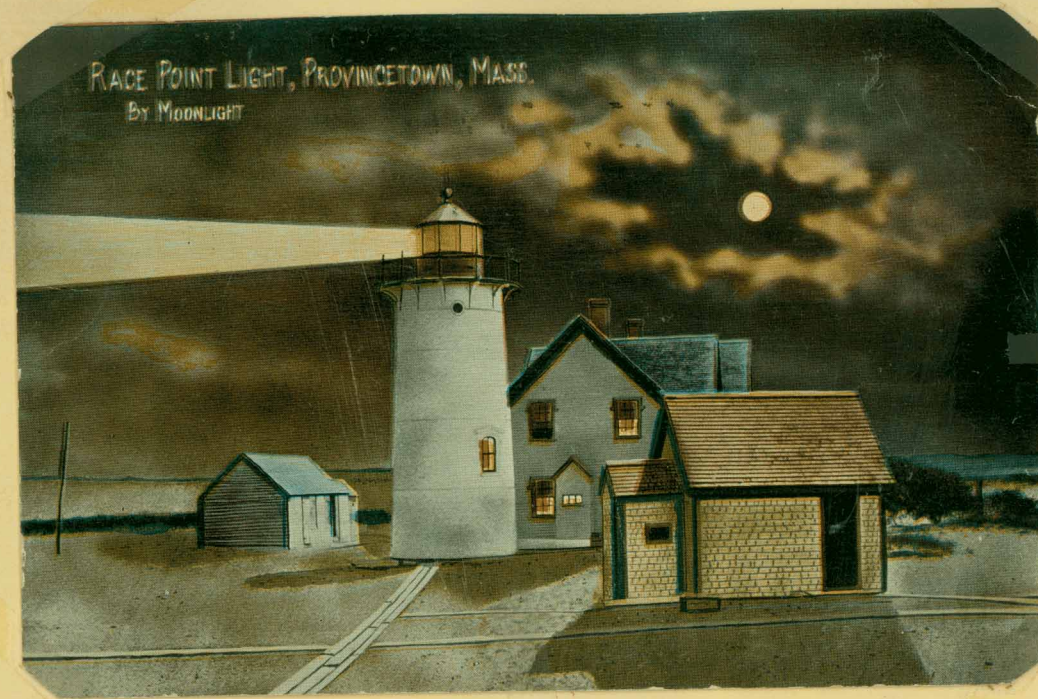
it was that the fisherman's wife heard a light but insistent tapping at her door. She ran and opened the door and found a lovely youthful woman standing there, holding a sleeping baby wrapped in a shawl.

The fisherman's wife asked no questions, but led the strange woman to the tiny fire in the stove. She gave the woman the last of her bread, and to the baby she gave the last drops of milk she had been saving for her own child. She asked the woman to spend the night.

The next morning broke clear and serene. The stranger, who had told the fisherman's wife nothing of herself, merely said goodbye and smilingly walked off with her baby in her arms. The young wife stood in the doorway looking after her and wondering, when an amazing thing occurred! For as the stranger walked across the grey moss of the dunes suddenly pale gold flowers blossomed in her footsteps. And as the strange lady faded into the morning mists, a pale gold halo blossomed around her head and that of her infant. That very afternoon another miracle happened, for the young fisherman returned home with a catch so tremendous that he was able to buy a power dory.

And that, say the fisherfolk, is the way the golden flowers came to the grey moss of the dunes.

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Race Point Lighthouse by Moonlight - 1915



The Mariner's Friend

Photograph by John Porteous