

Provincetown Becomes Christmas Card Town

December 30, 1954



LOOKING EAST ON West Commercial Street after last week's snow storm. The snow clung to rain soaked branches and cottage roofs making a beautiful scene of sparkling splendor.

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The Seaweed You See

along the high-water mark when tides recede is of more interest and importance than perhaps is at first apparent. The seaweed is a flowerless plant. It grows from spores. Some of these seaweed plants are so tiny that they can be seen only by means of a microscope. Others are of such immense growth that they almost fill up the seas in which they live.

Notice carefully, the next time you stroll a Cape Cod shore, the varied greens and very dark brownish hues of the seaweed strewn along the beach or swashing back and forth in the nearby waves. There are seaweeds of almost every color. Some are white, green, pink, purple, red, and brown. Those in deep water are mostly brown in different shades. Those nearer the surface, and often floating, are mostly green.

The pink and red seaweeds are found chiefly in shallow water and near the shore.

A MOST USEFUL WEED

The seaweed is not the purposeless, useless thing it seems to be as it lies in the sun on a warm beach, or tosses aimlessly in the incoming tide. Far from it. Some seaweeds are very useful. The variety called Irish Moss is widely used as a valuable food. In some places seaweeds are used to build dykes. Still others are used as fertilizers, and to make glue, agaragar, and isinglass.

One of the most appreciated sources of iodine is the seaweed.

The long-stemmed seaweed that gets wrapped around your oars and seems simply a nuisance, is thus proved to be very interesting, world-wide, and useful member of a world-wide family of flowerless plants.

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More About Seaweeds

THE seaweed in its various forms and colors is one of the wonders of nature which go unappreciated by us. There are many facts about the seaweed of special interest, however, to us, who are summing or holidaying on Cape Cod.

For example, do you know that seaweeds have neither blossoms nor roots? Seaweeds are able to "anchor" themselves to the seabottom. Land plants must be rooted in the earth and draw their nourishment therefrom. Seaweeds draw their food from the surrounding water. Hence, seaweeds have no need to send roots down into the seabottom. Instead, they find their best grip is obtained by fastening themselves to a rocky bottom and avoiding soft mud and silt.

Do you know that some species of seaweed have air bladders or sacs? These give the seaweeds buoyancy to uphold them as they sway in the moving water, keeping them away from the muddy or rocky bottom and upright so as to derive full benefit from the food that is about them.

The long, rubbery-stalked seaweeds—kelps—end in a single leaflike formation, popularly called "devil's aprons." Another kind has very slender string-like stems, called "dead man's hair."

The seaweed that is processed to yield what is called "Irish moss," is a beautiful plant. Where the tides cover and uncover rocks it is found in its various striking colors of yellow, red, green purple, brown, a near black, and a dainty creamy-white. The Irish moss

makes an old-fashioned, delightful pudding, not well known nowadays.

Perhaps you'd like to chew "dulse" — a dried, purplish seaweed. Dulse is seen hanging up in some small stores, awaiting purchase. It is also used in stews and broths.

Just as the whale is the longest of sea animals, so the seaweed is unquestionably, in some of its forms, the longest of all plants ashore or in the sea. It is said that the giant kelp reaches the enormous length of even twelve hundred feet! Pace that distance off on the beach sometime and you will wonder how anything could attain such growth. Its fronds (the process where leaf and stem

join, are fifty-feet long.

Occasionally you will find cast up on the beach the dainty little red algae,—small seaweeds, whose leafy parts in drying out form tracery of a most delicate and beautiful sort. One can be lifted for examination, and even preservation between the pages of a large book — an interesting souvenir of your days at the beach.

Contrasting with the giant kelp, hundreds of feet in length, are the purple, red, or blue-green algae. You may find them on rocks, pilings of piers, etc., but you will need a magnifying glass to discern them.

As one comes to know more and more about seaweeds, the more he recognizes it as not merely an unattractive thing bobbing up and down in the waves of the tides, but members of a very remarkable family, ranging from microscopic length to the greatest length of any living plant, world-wide in distribution, useful for food, of value in chemistry and medicine, worth while as fertilizer, and even having, in some cases, a delicacy of form and beauty of color all its own.

Where Wagon Wheels Rolled

PIONEER farmers discovered that seaweed was an excellent fertilizer and they cut roads through the pines and oaks to the beaches. Here after a good storm a man could gather tons of the valuable greenstuff without cost to spread on his planting acres. Before whaling and fishing supplanted farming as the chief occupation, husbandmen discovered that marsh cut hay during August had value for livestock feeding. Among clumps of cedar the brown stacks of fox and spear grass dotted the upper levels of the marshes. Farming made rough roads through this woodland, winding down to the bird-haunted marshes that provided free fodder for their cattle.