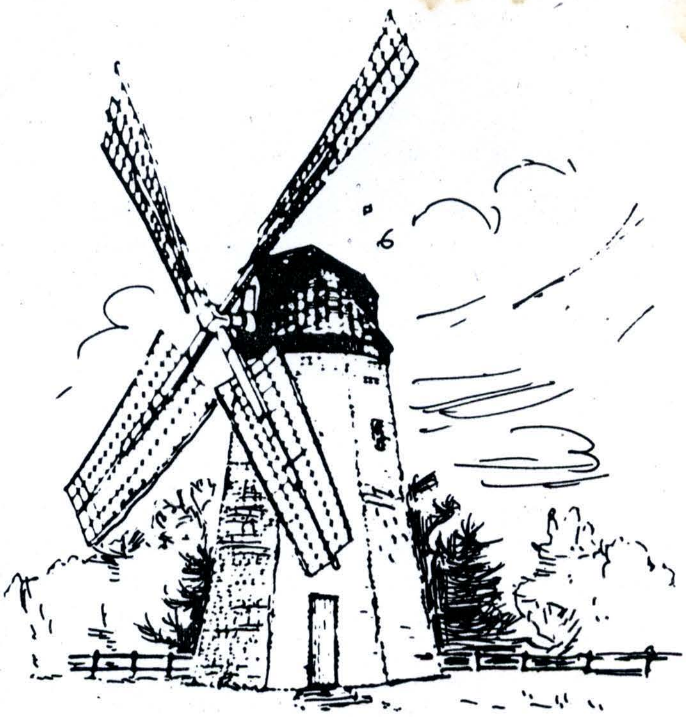
Kelly's Corner

By Jan Kelly

That light frost under the waning Hunter's Moon was evidenced not only by whitened grass and ground cover, but also by the steady falling of leaves. Being in the Beech Forest at dawn allows you to view a brief period of temperature change. The dropping leaves were not occasional but constant and falling throughout all that entanglement of underbrush. They sounded more like rain drops than leaves. I will see the daily disintegration of these leaves until they are mulch—more scent than sight. As you move down the bike trail, the black of the path is patterned by the yellow of cottonwood, then the red of tupelo, the brown of oak, and the mixed yellow and green of sassafras. Then you enter a stretch of empty black path and, except for the nip in the air and the angle of the sun, you could think it is still summer. Pines grow here, not deciduous trees. The macadam trail surface is uncluttered and pristine with a just-swept look. (Macadam is named for the Scotsman John L. McAdam, who developed the boring but efficient black well-traveled strips that slice across the world.) Minutes after the sun rises, no more whitened ground. If it had been a harder frost, for a short time you would hear the drops as they melt and fall heavily to the ground. This one was a dusting and did not rise that high on the vegetation. The chickadees were happy to have the bit of suet I brought as a little practice for the coming winter.

The winds are starting to blow. Gather your cranberries and mushrooms soon. This has not been a bumper year for either, but there are some. Bolete mushrooms are ripening and are my daily fare. There are many *S. trullisatus*, too—that was Harry Kemp's favorite mushroom. The *Suillus* species have been fewer. They are Heaton Vorse's specialty. He's got three or four iron skillets going all fall, testing types and methods of preparation. Heaton is so ambitious he has tried the fetid *Russula* fried, boiled, baked, and sauteed. It still comes out tasting like cotton or wood, but he has tried. The good types he prepares deliciously, the reward for a five-mile walk. Heaton will be eighty-three on December 18, and he's our local movie star. I wish they would show *Reds* in Town Hall one night so we could see him on the silver screen again.

Only in Provincetown could you have the Entre Nous black-leather-and-studs motorcycle club and the transvestites holding conventions on the same weekend. Hell's Angels and Tootsies on the same slim Commercial Street. I'm sure some tourists must have gazed at this jumble, paired the wrong persons, and wondered about the many strange couples in Provincetown—husbands in motorcycle clothes and wives dressed for a wedding.



Oh, yes, the wind that switches from southwest to northwest and at times to northeast—we are surrounded by it in our peninsular life. Windmills are one of the symbols of Cape Cod. In 1800 there were 39 working mills for grinding flour on the Cape. The embargo on salt after the War of 1812 caused many more mills to be built as saltworks because curing fish requires salt. At first salt-making was done in vats with sun rays and required 350 gallons of seawater to make one bushel of salt. Windmills changed and speeded up the salt-making process, developing a major local industry second only to fishing. Provincetown did not get as involved with corn-grinding mills as the rest of the Cape because there was little space here to plant corn. Provincetown has always gone to the sea for its living, rather than to the land. In 1837 there were 78 saltworks, and salt was a dollar a bushel. Discovery of salt in upstate New York, where it proved to be less expensive, ended the saltworks of Provincetown. If you want to see how a typical salt windmill was built, take a look at George Bryant's next to the market. Salt mills did not have the typical bulky octagonal building as part of their structure. They were bare-boned.

Windmills for grain were the "land ships" of the Cape. When Thoreau visited in 1849, he thought they looked like huge wounded birds trailing a limb. As to the sound, Robert Louis Stevenson said about all the clacking and squeaking that they seemed to bicker and be half alive. However they looked and however they sounded, the windmills were a necessity so that early Cape Codders could enjoy their johnny cake, hasty udding, hominy, mush, Indian pudding, and brown bread. The fine straw left behind was for human bedding; the coarse straw, for animal bedding or for insula- ion around the foundations of the houses. No waste—that's Yankee thrift—and for all this work the miller was iven a share of the grain, a "pottle." Corn was cash n early New England because there was almost no oined money in the colonies.

Plymouth had the first and only mill for a while but ransport of the heavy grain was difficult and more local mills were needed. The first mill on the Barnstable ecord was in 1687 and the job was assigned to Thomas Paine of Eastham. He was first in his field. By 1800 there were 39 grain mills, mostly the dutch smock style. They had to be sturdy to take all that strain of winds and gusts and so they were constructed of white oak. The millstone was imported. They weigh 3500 pounds and those of France or Germany were referred. They were used as ballast on the America-bound journey. The stone was 14 inches thick, 5 feet n diameter with an 8 inch hole in the center. It had deep grooves radiating from the center. The grooves ripped he husks off, guided the corn to the edges and ven- ilated. Ventilation was important because with so much friction there was always danger of fire. So the gravestone cutter would sharpen and keep precise the depth of the grooves. If the stone became too smooth, he corn would be oily. If the grooves were too deep he corn would be too gritty. You had to have a miller's humb to know the correct consistency. You can see one of these stones at the Congregational Church graveyard in Truro. It is the memorial stone for Charles W. Snow and family. It's worth a visit—then you will see all the other interesting stones and names there.

Mill day was a break in routine. A farmer could have a rare idle pipe and talk. The miller knew all the news since everyone came to him. So gossip, politics, and good humor prevailed. It was social as well as prac- cal. There were many trips a season as whole grain kept better.

When commercial grinding was introduced, the windmills use declined and the structures were taken apart ke a prefab and were either used in other structures or reassembled as part of a home or business. Their matronly shape was very comforting. A minor industry of toy windmills was started from the one built by a Cape Cod lifesaver in his spare time—copied over and again and hauled off by tourists as well as locals. Gates and lawns all over the US had a miniature Cape Cod windmill. Once off the Cape they were probably considered Dutch again.

The Farris mill had a unique fate. It is probably the oldest mill in the country. When the town of West Yarmouth hesitated about the purchase of it, it was sold and sent to Dearborn, Michigan, as a birthday present for Henry Ford. It is at his museum there still.

The windmill is eclectic. The still-standing windmill 'Falcon" in Leiden, Holland, was familiar to our Pilgrims before they reached America and Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks gave the idea for an independent cap which could turn with the arms to face the direction of the wind, rather than turning the whole structure as was clumsily done before. Those notes were written 200 years before being interpreted into reality.

Third world countries depend heavily on windmills. The mill of today is a skeleton in comparison to the wooden hulks of other centuries. Many private homes use them. If you want to see an operating one, visit the New Alchemy farm in Hatchville. There's plenty more than the windmill to see there. Ideas in action. If you would like to visit the older smock style windmill, there are seven open to the public. They are at Eastham, Brewster, Chatham, Yarmouth, Sandwich, Bourne, and one in Nantucket. You can browse in several centuries at once.

Have you ever seen the ad in *The Advocate* that says: When in Brooklyn, dine at Mamma Lucia's? It would make anybody curious, so on a trip to New York last week I did just that. Mamma Lucia's is small, rustic, Ischian, and delicious. I swear an elf prepared the antipasto, an angel prepared the manicotti, a specter the small shrimp, a kelpie the chicken, and a sprite the veal. A white wine of the Veneto region accompanied the meal. The zabaglione was a bit of cloud perched in a glass-stemmed bowl. Who can cook food like this? We humans make mistakes. I checked the kitchen to see if the cooks touched the ground. I found Peter Migliaccio and his mother Lucia hard at work, surrounded by the freshest of ingredients and gleaming pots and pans. Their involvement in their restaurant is total and familial. Brother Giorgio is *maitre d'* and manager. Papa is back in Ischia for a visit. Ischia is an island off the West coast of Italy at the Bay of Naples. The food there is lighter than standard Italian fare.

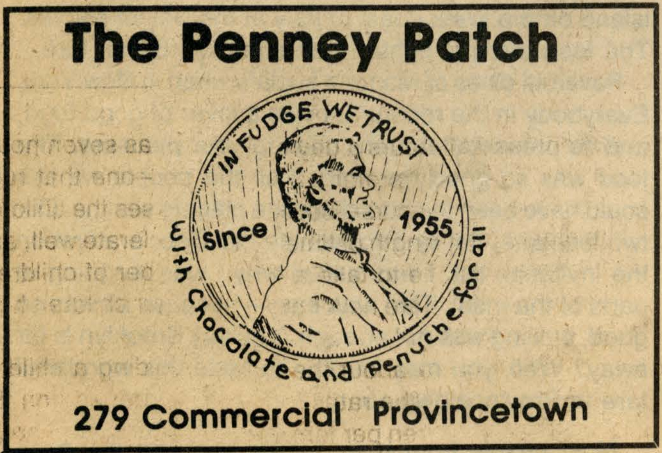
Pavarotti dines at Mamma Lucia's when in New York. Everybody in the restaurant was a lover of good food, and its presentation here adds to your pleasure. The food was so good we wished all the people we like could have been there to share the platters with us. Our two Ischians, Sal and Josephine Del Deo, are first on the invitation list. I was asked why I was laughing at parts of the meal. That was easy—because all was so good, smiling was not enough. You say Brooklyn is far away? Well, you may be able to taste this wonderful fare in Provincetown soon.

Most people from New Jersey who visit the Cape come for lobster dinners, dune rides, whale watching, and shopping—the obvious benefits of our area. When three New Jerseyites came on their surprise visit recently, they were in for a non-T-shirt, non-half-shell day. Nicholas Skinner and I had planned to go to the Audubon Society's Wellfleet Sanctuary for a "rail hike." In aerobics class that morning Joyce Blackwell reported that she had found a dead rail, its wing severed. Joyce had put the unfortunate bird and wing into a plastic bag and then into the freezer. When she asked, I replied that, sure, Nick and I would take it to Bob Prescott at Audubon. After all, I had a thrush and a catbird in my freezer. Well, Bob was amazed. "You've come to a lecture walk about rails, one of the least seen, yet most ubiquitous, birds, and you bring a fresh specimen!" Rails are common, not rare, but are rarely spotted. Beyond shy, this species is. Next to invisible. Well, after a brief but good lecture and a look at stuffed specimens, as well as our recently faded creature, we were off into the early evening, hoping for a look at this crepuscular hermit. Peter Trull, armed with a tape recording of the Virginia rail, the clapper rail, the black rail, and the sora, first trotted us to the marsh. As he played the tape at the edge of the marsh, calls came back from the thick grass answering the mechanical voice, comical in sound and so exciting to an expectant audience! Three blurs were seen. We knew they were brown and had feathers. Trull was euphoric. "It's the first I've ever seen one on a rail walk. I'm always alone and practicing when I see them." We were all just as merry at our scant sighting. At the next stopping place the tape squalked on, but no call came back, so we were off to Fort Hill to try that beautiful area where Champlain first met the Nauset Indians. (If you've never been to Fort Hill, please go when you feel you're due a gift.) Sunset was upon us as we trudged down salt hay woven almost into compactness, through dewberry clinging to our toes and ankles to give us a little trip, past phragmites and rock walls, all in uneven terrain. The eager rail routers reveled in the route. One of us was 75 years old with a cane, but no problem. The moon was rising; Jupiter showed first, Saturn soon after. Gold and lavender splendored in the west; gray-blue faded in the east, with touches of day-blue in the south. As the temperature dropped, a dozen humans were playing a tape over and over, edging the phragmites and hoping to glimpse a common, yet little-seen, bird. Despite wet feet, on the first cold evening of the season all trudged on consentingly.

Well, one by one, two by two, the chilled birders crept away while the moonlight shone on the water. You know it was chilly. There is one question each of those birders wonders: Is the dedicated Peter Trull still out in that marsh playing the tape that sounds like two pebbles hitting each other? Such a beautiful walk, the most esoteric I've ever taken. Now in my daily walks I am always looking for those Rallidae. They are most elusive but always there. That makes them sound like paranoids, a Monty Python adventure.

Nicholas just phoned to tell me of a book which is now available, *Rails Of The World* by S. Dylan Ripley. It is a definitive study on rails, listing 129 *known* species (who knows what's still lurking out there undiscovered), with taxonomic keys and fossil rails (432 pages, 10" x 15", 8 lbs 4 oz, $125).

This is the last column of the year. I want to thank you all for your support and feedback. It's a pleasure to write for you. I'm off to Singapore next week. I'll ink you in the spring.


The Penney Patch

IN FUDGE WE TRUST
Since
1955
With Chocolate and Penuche for all

279 Commercial Provincetown

Bayberry Gardens

Fall Is For Planting
Spring Bulbs
Shrubbery
Perrenials
Trees
30% off All Nursery Stock
Open Mon - Wed - Fri - Sat 9-5

Rt. 6 Truro 349-6764

PARADOX

clothes for
any encounter

New Fall
Arrivals

487-9446
39½ Commercial

20 % off all summer
merchandise

PARA-SHOES

Kenneth Cole
Shoes
for every
encounter
Summer Clearance
487-1425
389 Commercial