

PROVINCETOWN AND CAPE COD

Approaching the tip of Cape Cod, we notice the tall Provincetown Memorial Tower, high above the ocean. We gradually draw closer to the first landing place of the Pilgrims, recalling that the ladies of the Mayflower went ashore here to do their washing. The day being Monday, ever since that time Monday has been wash day for American women. Perhaps some time a monument will be erected here to commemorate this event.

We sail in by Race Point and are soon abeam of Wood End Light, the wharves and buildings of Provincetown taking shape as our journey nears its end. Off to port is Long Point Light. Our ship docks, and we go ashore at one of America's most interesting coastal centers.

Let us now delve into Cape Cod history. If we exclude the possibility of the Norsemen's visit to the Massachusetts Coast, Bartholomew Gosnold and John Brereton were the first white men to land on Cape Cod. Gosnold gave the name of Cape Cod to this important location, and although John Smith tried to change it to Cape James, Gosnold triumphed, and it is Cape Cod today. We are told the Cape was wooded right down to the shore when the Pilgrims came. The first European killed in Massachusetts met his death on Cape Cod in 1605. He was "un charpentier Maloin," one of Champlain's sailors.

By 1749 Provincetown consisted of "two or three settled families, two or three cows, and six to ten sheep." Ancient Provincetown had its windmill on the hill to serve as a landmark for the ships at sea. The monument now stands to guide the sailor.

Let us visit the great beach of Cape Cod to explore famous Dead Man's Hollow, where the ghosts of the British sailors lost on the *Somerset* are said to lurk. When Thoreau walked the beach here he said that Cape Cod was the bared and bended arm of Massachusetts. Such it proved to the *Somerset*, a frigate of the British navy. The story of this man-of-war, mentioned by Longfellow in his *Ride of Paul Revere*, forms perhaps the most remarkable chapter in Cape Cod history.

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THE PROVINCETOWN MONUMENT FROM THE AIR
SEEN FOR MILES AT SEA

In the early years of the Revolutionary War the *Somerset* had as her home port Provincetown Harbor, much to the distress of the patriotic Cape Cod residents. In November 1778 when a violent easterly storm lashed the coast, the *Somerset* was at sea. Captain Ourry tried to run for the comparative safety of Provincetown Harbor, but treacherous seas caught the great ship, pushing her aground on the dreaded Peaked Hill Bars. Scores of sailors and marines on the decks were swept to their death before the vessel slid over the bars and came up on the beach.

The people of Provincetown had been waiting, however, and a young blacksmith, William Spenser, organized a small band of Cape Cod minutemen to surround the frigate. When the tide went down, blacksmith Spenser went aboard and demanded Captain Ourry's surrender. The proud British captain bowed deeply, unbuckled his sword, and presented it to the blacksmith of Cape Cod. It was one of the most unusual surrenders in the history of the British navy. By this time the beach was crowded with people salvaging what they could from the cargo of the ship. Incidentally, goods to the value of \$150,000 were recovered from the wreck.

There were now 480 prisoners from the *Somerset* to be accounted for, the rest of the men having perished in the sea. This unwieldy group was marched off in the general direction of Boston, 120 miles away, but the Cape Cod men grew extremely tired of their task of guarding the English marines before reaching Plymouth. Many of the British prisoners were forced to make the long journey to Boston by themselves. It is amusing to realize that a guard had to be placed at Boston Neck to guide the sailors as they came along in groups to board their prison ship in Boston Harbor. Later on, many of them enlisted in the American navy, while others were exchanged.

As the years went by the wreck of the *Somerset* was eventually buried in the sand, although at various times even today it is revealed after a particularly violent storm has swept the beach. But Dead Man's Hollow is all that is left to remind the visitor of the Revolutionary days when 480 men began their long march of captivity from the wreck of that once proud ship of the British navy.