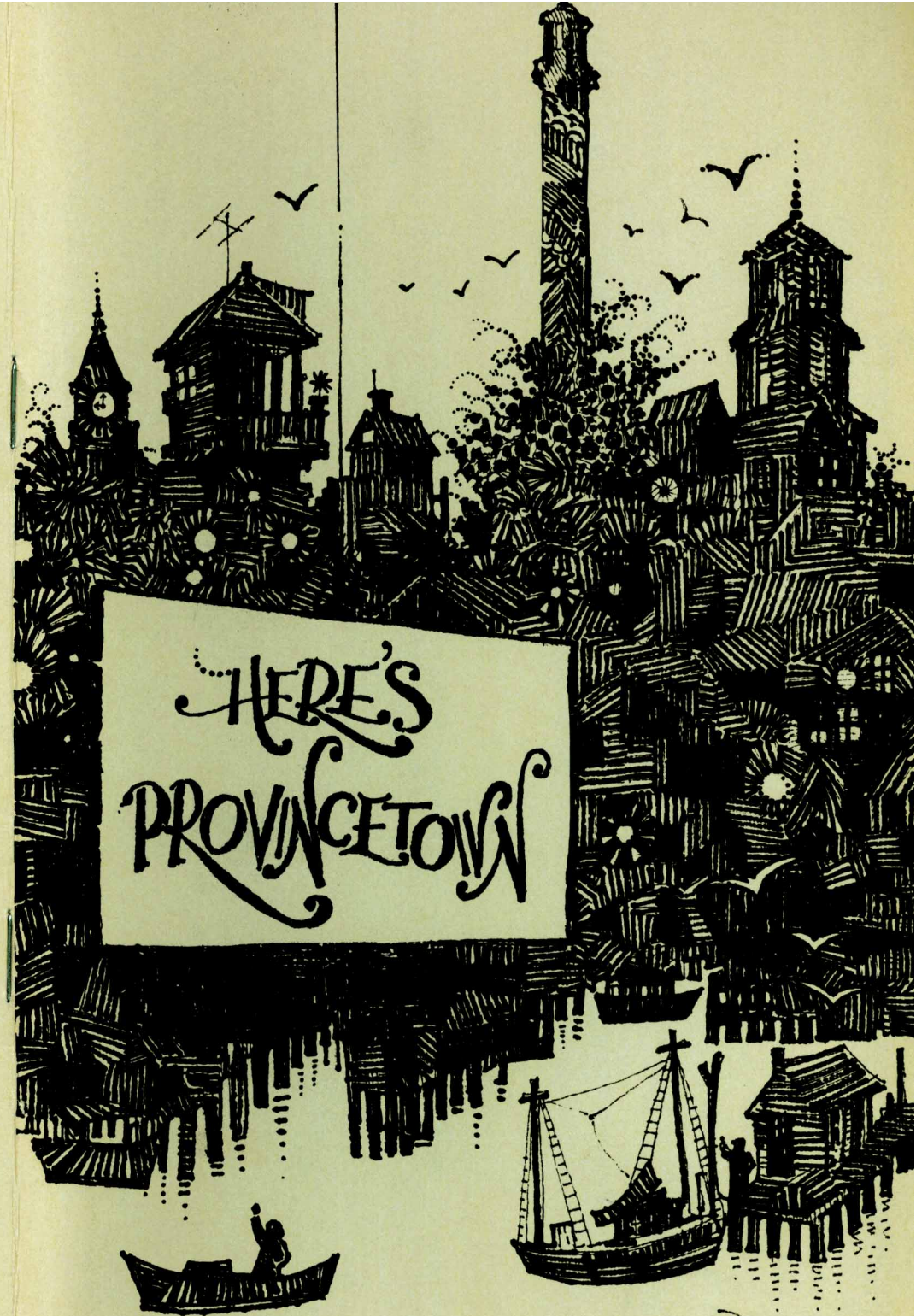
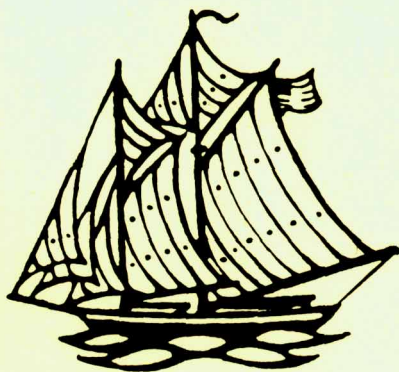


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**PROVINCETOWN HIST**

by Joel O'Brien

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HERE'S PROVINCETOWN

Historical Facts and Hysterical Fiction

*This book is published with a great sense of affection  
by the Provincetown Historical Association  
and dedicated to the many who have walked  
these narrow streets and gotten sand in their shoes.*

PROVINCETOWN HISTORY

by Joel O'Brien

Everything has happened to Provincetown. And I'm sure everything will happen to her again. It's been her nature over the decades of her existence. While other towns lie placid and well-groomed under the Cape sun, Provincetown will be afire under the impact of some cause celebre or convulsed with Rabelaisian laughter at some local indiscretion. When other Cape towns were dry (and this happened long before Prohibition) Provincetown would be the drop point for rumrunners. Life has always bowled down the streets of this town, not so much with abandon as for a hearty appetite for living.

For a newcomer coming to the Cape End there is no middle ground. He either hates Provincetown or loves it. He either sees a town whose houses and shops are crowded too close together, whose roads are too narrow, whose center has more than a little honky-tonk quality and who smells from time to time of fish and old seaweed. Or, he realizes that he's fallen in love. Reason vanishes and he's hooked. He's had it. He's caught a strange and euphoric virus which will stay with him for the rest of his life.

The late Dr. Daniel Hiebert came to Provincetown for a weekend visit when he was doing post-graduate research work in Boston and remained to devote his life to the town and its people. He told me the town had a European quality which completely intrigued him. My mother came for a week's vacation in 1908 and died here 58 years later.

Provincetown is unique. No matter from what corner the wind blows the air you breathe comes right off the water. The gracious Harbor cradled in the ultimate curve of land thrust into both the Atlantic and Cape Cod Bay presents a hundred different faces in as many days. There's no other town on the Cape like Provincetown. And up-Capers say, "Thank God for that!" Well, we never try to point out the town's virtues to a non-believer. We don't think he deserves them.

Looking back into Provincetown's past is a most pleasant, but complex task. Dates don't jibe and historians don't agree. But no matter. Enough emerges as fact to paint a broad canvas in which this treatise will be but a tangential touch. I want to thank Historian Margaret Mayo of the Pilgrim Memorial Museum for much invaluable material. And I must confess that I borrowed liberally from the book **Time and the Town** by Mary Heaton Vorse, who was my mother.

Traffic to Provincetown didn't start with the arrival of the Mayflower on November 21, 1620. Leif Ericson, son of Eric the Red, sailing from Scandinavia in 1003, is given credit for discovering the Cape. An Icelandic manuscript says they found long and sandy strands as they sailed along the back side of the Cape.

The next year recorded a visit from Thorwald, an Icelandic Viking. He broke his keel and hauled his vessel ashore at the end of the Cape for repairs. Later, he was wounded in an encounter with the Indians in Boston Bay and feeling he had received a mortal blow, he asked that he be returned to the place where "we repaired our ship and there bury me with a cross at my head and another at my feet, and call the place Cape of the Crosses." This was done, but, as we know, the name did not stick.

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Other visits are recorded but a significant one happened in 1602, after Bartholemew Gosnold sailed from Falmouth, England, in March 1602, in the ship **Sparrow Hawk**. On sighting the Cape, a Gosnold chronicler wrote, "Near this cape we came to anchor in 15 fathoms, where we took great store of cod-fish, for which we called it Cape Cod."

Over the years Provincetown was called a half-a-dozen different names by as many different nations. Provincetown Harbor, on Capt. John Smith's map, was called Milford Haven. And in 1727 we almost got landed with the name Herrington. The Province Lands of the Cape End had been constituted a Precinct of Cape Cod by the General Court of the Commonwealth and had been annexed to Truro, a much larger Town. However, the Cape Enders expressed growing dissatisfaction with Truro's laws, high taxes, and the fact that Truro landowners let their cattle overrun the scant pastureland at the Cape End.

They petitioned for a separate Township and in the State House archives in Boston may be found a document reading, "An act for erecting the precinct of Cape Cod into a Township by the name of Herrington." A heavy black line was then drawn through the name "Herrington" and substituted was the two-word name "Province Town." The date was 1727.

But we've skipped our founding fathers. After a harrowing, storm-tossed crossing they found themselves somewhat north of Virginia, where they were headed, and came to anchor in the sheltering hook of Provincetown Harbor. Before they came ashore, November 21, 1620, the men of the company wrote and signed the Mayflower Compact which the famous Edward Everett Hale later said was more important than the Declaration of Independence and, indeed, was its father. This was because all the signators, loyal subjects of King James, "Solemnly and mutually covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for the better ordering and preservation and furtherance of (establishing a colony); and by virtue hereof, do enact, constitute and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony . . ."

The first Pilgrim child to be born in the new country was Peregrine White, delivered aboard the Mayflower in the Harbor. Just 12 years short of 300 hundred years later, Peregrine White's descendant, Albert White Vorse, a writer who had been to the North Pole with Admiral Peary, bought a rambling sea-captain's house in Provincetown at 466 Commercial Street. His son, Heaton White Vorse, lives there now.

In the more than 350 years since the Pilgrims' landing there have been many changes in the Lower Cape topography. Headlands and islands described and charted by early voyagers have disappeared, as have hills, inlets and harbors. The Pilgrims didn't land on a barren, sandy spit. Provincetown was richly wooded down to the water's edge. This was attested to by the huge tree stumps taken out of the flats at low tide when the long wharves started to be built around 1835 to '40. And where do you think Wood End got its name? Barren now, but a verdant, wooded last turn in the great arm of the Cape years ago. Directly to the northeast of Wood End, inside the harbor, was an island called House Point Island, which shows large and clear on a State-surveyed map dated 1833, now in the Monument Museum. Toward Race Point from Wood End, and before Hatches Harbor, was another harbor called Lancey's Harbor, where small boats could take refuge on their way back from the fishing grounds. Lancey's Harbor not only had an opening to Massachusetts Bay, but another right into Provincetown Harbor. And most Provincetownians know that East Harbor in North Truro,

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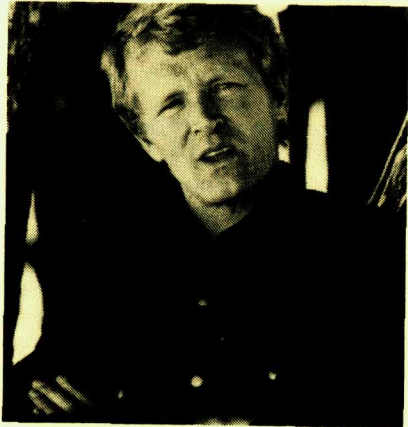
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for some unknown reason renamed Pilgrim Lake, was once a navigable body of water off Provincetown's main Harbor and that Beach Point, now a stretch of road running parallel to East Harbor, was a long finger of land running north from Truro which guarded the Harbor entrance. In the War of 1812, East Harbor was a vital factor in getting food to the Cape, which was blockaded by the British. Although the Harbor was already silting up, a few small craft like the **Golden Hind**, Captain Small, Master, would run the blockade at low tide and by a secret channel through the willows, enter East Harbor, unload the cargo of food, and get sunk. At daylight and high tide when the British frigate nosed around, there would be no sign of her. Come dark, she would be refloated to sneak out under the nose of the British. The Chinese aren't the only clever ones.

It is recorded that, "Almost from the time of the arrival of the Mayflower, the Harbor became a place of yearly resort, not only for the Colonists, but also for English and French adventurers." But this was just for the good weather months. No one, it seems, wanted to settle here. By 1646, strangers who wanted to fish Cape waters, had to pay five shillings to the Plymouth Colony. According to Margaret Mayo, one record has it that in 1654 one Thomas Prence bought all the Cape land from the Nipmuck Indians, a family of the Wampanoags. Unlike the later Manhattan Island transaction with another group of Indians, we today don't want to give it back to them. The records don't say how Thomas Prence disposed of his Cape holdings.

It wasn't until the 1680's that a settlement took hold in Provincetown.

There were an abundance of whales in Provincetown Harbor when the Pilgrims arrived. Captain Jones of the **Mayflower** wrote of a school which played around the ship as it lay at anchor. They were so numerous that the early settlers hunted them from the shore. A lookout on a hill would sight the large mammal, point its direction, and men on shore would launch boats ready for the attack. Once killed, the whale was towed ashore, flenced, and the oil boiled from the blubber in try-works on the beach. In time, the whales began to shun the shallower waters and the search for them then began in ever larger boats and in more and more remote waters until some of Provincetown's whaling fleet would be gone for two and three years at a time.

The first recorded trip to the Davis Straights in the northern seas was 1723. Five years later a dozen Provincetown vessels were fishing those grounds, taking most of the Town's able-bodied men with them. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, salt works had started along Provincetown's shore and by 1837 there were 78 salt works and windmills producing almost 50,000 bushels of salt for the burgeoning salt fish trade, mainly cod and mackerel. This was just two years after the first long wharf was built. And by now we were pointing into Provincetown's Golden Age.

A few years earlier, incidentally, in 1834, a school of over 600 blackfish whales, chasing a dinner of herring, beached themselves in Truro at Great Hollow. The Town was in a carnival mood as most of the citizens turned out to help harvest the oil for which this smaller mammal was famous. The stench from the renderings must have been horrendous. But even that record beaching was broken in 1874 when over 1400 blackfish came ashore, again in Truro, stretching a mile or more along the Bay beach from Great Hollow to Pond Landing. It was the largest school ever known to have come ashore and produced 27,000 gallons of oil.

Old David Stull, whom I remember as a small boy walking with a pronounced limp, in his white trousers and jacket to match his flowing white hair

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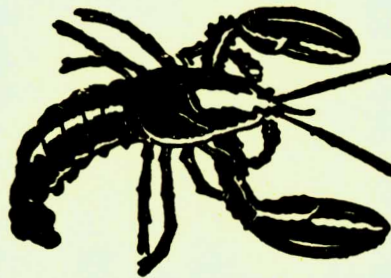
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and mustache, made the finest watch oil known from the head of the black-fish and shipped it all over the world. He had a shop and try-works in a small building next to what is now Bryant's Market. The place was always redolent of the smell produced by his trade. As a matter of fact, so was old David. His secret oil formula died with him.

The largest whale ever known to have been captured on this coast, according to historian Mayo, was taken in 1843 by the small, pink-stern schooner **Cordelia** out of Provincetown, Captain Ebenezer Cook, Master. The leviathan was of the right whale species and it was estimated that it would have made nearly 300 barrels of oil and produced about a ton and a half of bone. But the little **Cordelia**, not having the facilities to handle such a catch, could only load 125 barrels of oil and 300 pounds of bone. Even so, the value was over \$12,000.

During the latter half of the 19th Century, Provincetown reached the peak of her prosperity. We had 54 long wharves, totally engaged in the business of fishing and shipping, a mackerel fleet, Grand Bankers and Georges Bankers and 56 whaling ships. At times as many as 700 ships would crowd the Harbor and the Town was one huge chandler providing tackle and gear, rope and sail, tar for rope and nets and oil for lamps. Provincetown, now the most depressed area of Cape Cod, was the richest town per capita in Massachusetts.

In 1859 oil was discovered in Pennsylvania, and soon kerosene made from petroleum replaced whale oil as a fuel for lamps. The low cost of the new product signalled the demise of the great whaling industry and Provincetown's Golden Era.

That demise was helped to some extent by the Portland Gale of Nov. 27, 1898 which blew for 24 hours straight. The steamer **Portland**, on her way home from Boston with passengers and crew numbering 175, was sunk off Highland Light with all lives lost. In all 500 people perished in this storm and 20 ships of Provincetown's fleet were destroyed despite the protection of the Harbor. Damage to the rest of the fleet, the long wharves and homes ran into the millions. The late Arthur Bickers, Provincetown historian, was eight years old at the time of this disaster and I taped this interview with him shortly before he died.

**BICKERS:** Well, that afternoon the weather was very warm, then later in the day there was a heavy thunderstorm with lightning. And then around five o'clock it turned into a north-east gale with one of the worst winds we've ever had around here. My father was number one Surfman at the Race Point Life Saving Station and we were living at 33 Franklin Street. I remember sitting on the couch with my mother listening to the howling of that wind. And it was snowing so hard you couldn't see outdoors anywheres.

**JOB:** When was it known that anything had happened to the **Portland**?

**BICKERS:** John Johnson who was a surfman at the Life Saving Station while he was patrolling the beach noticed some milk cans coming ashore at four AM. And soon afterwards all kinds of wreckage started coming ashore, including the upper deck staterooms and the life-buoy with the name, **Portland**.

**JOB:** Did you go out to the outside shore?

**BICKERS:** No, I didn't. But I remember the next morning my mother and I came out to the gate in our yard—the storm had subsided by then and we could look down the street to Kelly's Corner where they were taking people out of second story windows by dory because of the 20-foot rise of tide. Later I walked along the shore in the west end and saw all the wreckage piled up from where the wharves had washed away, and where Pickett had had a canning factory there were a lot of tins on the beach. We had 54 wharves at that time and all of them suffered damage.

Continued on Page 89

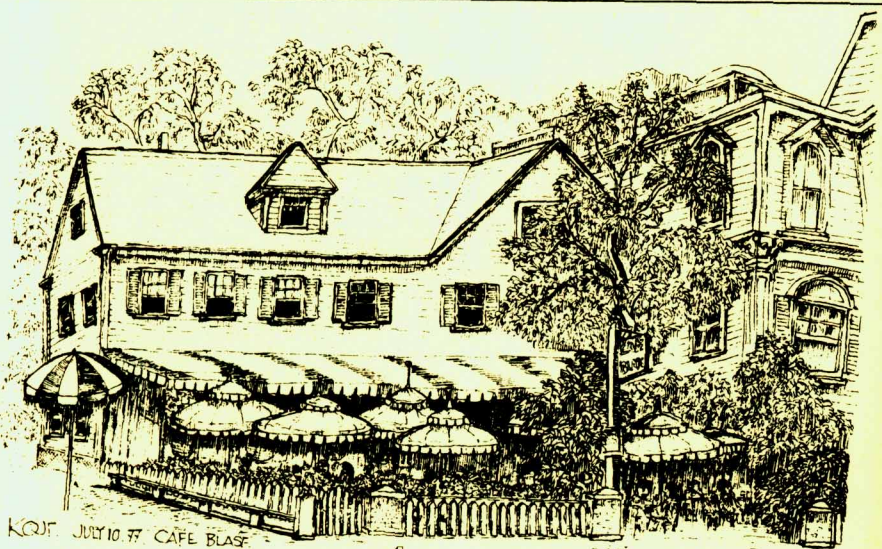
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## THE KRAKEN by Heaton Vorse

In the clock tower atop Town Hall there hangs a deep-toned bell whose purpose it is to ring the hours. There was a time when it did so with a certain amount of accuracy. But now the very time, which once the clock recorded so well, has brought on a wistful trait of unpunctuality that is sometimes characteristic of the elderly. The chime it rings rarely matches the time shown by the four faces of the clock. For that matter, the different faces may not match either. One has a choice of time as seen from Commercial or Bradford, from Ryder or Gosnold Streets. Of course, if a person really wishes to know the correct time, he or she should glance at his or her wrist whether a watch is there or not.

This attribute, this idiosyncrasy of never being altogether accurate, is quite in keeping with the character of the Town. If that bell rang once each time a lie was told in Provincetown, it would jangle from sunrise to dusk and then far on into the night. It is not simply the quantity of the fibs that are told here that is remarkable, the stories are concocted from a ripe vineyard of imagination. Elsewhere, the purposes of prevarication are to draw a curtain over wrongdoing. Here sagas and yarns are gently bent out of shape for the sheer joy of creation. Neither malice nor evasion is involved. They lie for the greater glory of the world around them and for the sheer fun of the thing.

For instance the tale told by George Washington Reedie of the sea serpent he saw back along about 1889 has so many variations that another one won't do any damage. This one is a compilation distilled from the various versions he told all those who asked him to repeat his tale. It was something he was always very glad to do.

George was beachcombing along Herring Cove when he came across a flagon of rum that was still almost half-full. He sampled the fluid and it was good. So he sampled it again and then again. After that he hauled up above mean high tide and canted himself on the beach for repairs.

When George woke up again the moon was casting a dappled path across Massachusetts Bay from Duxbury Heights to Race Point. It was beautiful and he was cold. To celebrate both events he took another swig from the bottle. Once more he gazed at the moon-flecked waters. Suddenly, to his horror, a serpent of the sea appeared, a fearsome beast even though it was bathed in Selene's soft light.

George gasped and coughed. That was the wrong thing to do. The snake turned its head, saw George on the beach, and headed toward him. George did not walk down to the water's edge to greet the visitor from the Abyss. Quite the contrary. He got to his feet and sped inland looking over his shoulder as he ran. The serpent landed and took after George on tiny caterpillar feet and to the latter's horror, he saw that it was gaining on him. George hurled the flagon back over his shoulder. The kraken broke the bottle and slurped its contents in a second, but the delay gave George time to make it to the low forest somewhat back of the beach. He selected the largest scrub pine tree he could find and tangled his way up to the top. Anybody who can make it to the top of a Scotch Pine has to be inspired. George was inspired.



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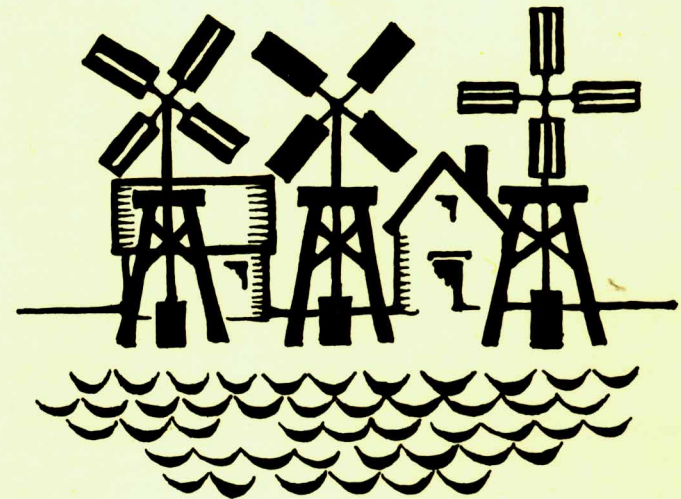
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The several versions George recited on how he spent the night gripping the topmost tiny branches of a tree, while a strange beast below circled and fumed, varied in direct proportion to the teller's alcoholic content at the moment. With the dawn the dragon gave one last desperate howl, turned eastward and sank itself in one of the several ponds in the area, never to be seen again. Since none of these ponds is more than a few inches deep, it's rather hard to see how it would be possible for the monster that George described to vanish below the surface of any of them. But it's a lovely story.

\* \* \*

\*Reedie's name is sometimes spelled Ready. Professor Ready, as he called himself, who was the town crier for many years, died at eighty-eight in 1920. A traveler of note in his younger days, he had been all over the world, and, as he put it, a "good many other places besides."



### FACTUAL FILLERS

The reason Commercial Street has a continuous sidewalk only on the north side of the street is that it replaced the plank walk which was built in the 1850's so people would not have to walk in the sand.

\* \* \*

Many people are curious about the old Cape custom of building two circular cellars underneath the houses. Nancy Paine Smith tells us that one was a cistern for catching rainwater from the roof, the other a frost-proof storeroom.

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## BIRDS AT THE EDGE OF LAND

by Priscilla Bailey

Massachusetts Audubon Society

Birds view Provincetown as either land's end or land's beginning. A bird of the open ocean, sweeping through shroud of fog or surge of storm wind, finds a sudden obstacle in the looming headland of Race Point. A denizen of grassland or forest, coming abruptly to the end of everything familiar, sees only endless watery wastes beyond. Both must resort to the avian equivalent of scratching heads and checking maps and compass bearings. That pause gives bird observers a chance to record unusual quantity and variety.

About four hundred species have occurred on the Outer Cape. Some are as regular as clockwork. Early spring always brings gannets moving northward just off shore; mid-September marks the beginning of their long, meandering return journey through autumn and winter. By contrast, other species are lone wanderers carried here by strong weather systems or weak directional instincts. Among such accidental strays are the swallow-tailed kite, black vulture, Sabine's gull, and western tanager.

We see only a fraction of the shifting tides of vibrant activity which birds comprise. When six million birds a night surge overhead in the peak of migration, we may find only a few stragglers the next day. But if bad weather catches the migrating flocks, they will drop into shoreline thickets to feed and rest. The beech forest offers such haven for land birds, particularly those struggling back to the coast after being blown to sea by storms. It is most productive in May and again from late August through October.

The beech forest and nearby dunes may also prove good for hawk-watching. Spring flights of hawks over the mainland can be shunted east by prevailing westerly winds. They work northward over the reassuring mass of Cape Cod, only to have the land end abruptly at Provincetown. There they mill and spiral in the updrafts from dune kettles, equally unwilling to hazard an ocean crossing or to reverse their instinctive push northward.

The Race Point headland offers an unusual opportunity to see pelagic birds—those species that seldom come ashore except to nest. Best viewing is from August to December, especially after a strong northeasterly storm when the wind shifts to northwest. Then jaegers, shearwaters, phalaropes, kittiwakes and others that have been blown into Cape Cod Bay reorient themselves and move around the point and back to sea.

The meeting place of land and sea is home instead of hazard to sandpipers and plovers and to gulls and terns. They mingle on the sandy beaches, bars, and tidal flats from May through October. Many gulls remain throughout the year. Shorebirds are largely migrants to and from northern nesting grounds. Among the local nesters are herring and black-backed gulls, piping plover, least and common terns. Their nests lie on the open sand, where they are beset by the natural dangers of high tide, storm wind, temperature extremes, and predators. More dangerous yet are people and their pets and vehicles. National Park Service rangers and local conservationists ask your help in protecting these beleaguered nests, particularly the dwindling least terns and piping plovers. Please observe boundaries of posted colonies and leave individual nests undisturbed.

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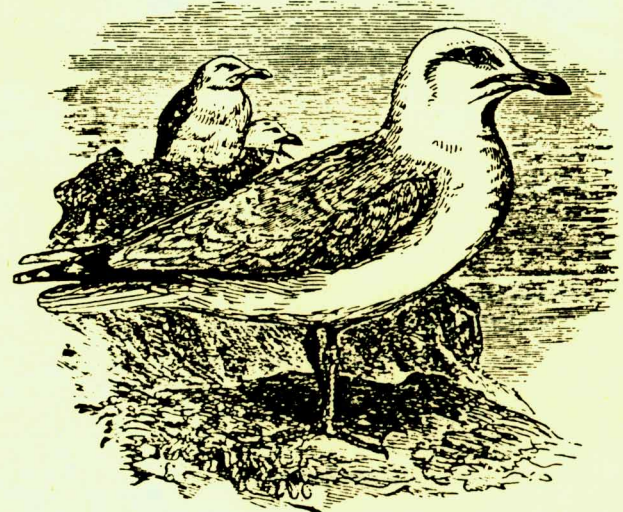
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Resist the kindly impulse to "rescue" stray chicks. Likely their mother is nearby and anxious for you to leave.

Along with shorebirds, waterfowl are naturally at home around Provincetown. The sandy hook intercepts flights of many species across the Gulf of Maine, and the food supplied in sheltered bays and broad marshes provides good wintering areas. Provincetown Harbor is noted for its winter specialties like guillemot, white-winged gulls, and Barrow's goldeneye. It regularly hosts a collection of eiders, scoters, loons, grebes, and various diving ducks.

These are only glimpses of a complex and kaleidoscopic natural resource of Provincetown. Details and timely information can be secured from several sources. The Cape Cod National Seashore includes bird study in its seasonal walks and programs. The Massachusetts Audubon Society maintains a wild-life sanctuary in South Wellfleet, offering summer programs and year-round information service. The Cape Cod Museum of Natural History hosts the Cape Cod Bird Club and promotes bird study and conservation.



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## NOTES FROM A JOURNAL

by Hazel Hawthorne

Hazel Hawthorne Werner spent summers on the Back Shore for over fifty years, walking across the dunes to reach her dune shacks.

Ms. Hawthorne is the author of two published novels, **Salt House** and **Three Women**, a tale of Truro during the Civil War, and has written for both the *New Republic* and the *New Yorker*.

She first came to Provincetown in 1918, walking the Back Shore in search of a shack overlooking the ocean, which she had seen in a dream. She found it overlooking Peaked Hill Bars at the suggestion of her friends, the Eugene O'Neills, who were living out there at the time.

She paid twelve dollars a month for that first shack, which was one of those built out of driftwood by Coast Guards attached to the new Peaked Hill Bars Life-Saving Station. It has long since fallen into the sea but she has acquired two of her own since then, one of which she named **Euphoria**, the other **Thalassa**.

These scattered notes from Ms. Hawthorne's journal record the plants she observed on her walks. They paint a delicate picture of the flora of the Province Lands from early spring until late fall.

March

Duckweed and mountain laurel on Plymouth Road were the only green.

April

The cowslip is a fragile flower; it has the rich, strong sweetness of spring. Stalk, leaves and blossoms are juicy and sturdy. It is a better expression of the earth in this season, I think, than the delicate and pale flowers.

May

The old bear berry leaves are full, with dark stains, but the blossoms will soon appear; they are pendent pale and rosy jars.

Branches of leaves, later to be ordinary, are in May tipped with colors! Here's a young twig with scarlet spires. The drooping unfolding tawny red cluster of leaves of the scrub oak beside the white beach plum blossoms. Ah—!

These delicacies of spring are strewn under the trees and brush in this beguiling month of May. Chenille-soft tufts dangling from minute branches of the deep valley trees, below them silver-haired leaves and their long, narrow envelopes, bright blown . . . brought home sprays of myrtle and boughs of apple blossoms.

June

The flower now brightening the low wet places is sheep laurel, or lambkill. In the procession of spring blossomings the yellow flowers of poverty grass have just passed . . . in the festival procession of flowering . . . first the shad bush, then the beach plum, then wild cherry, and now this yellow on the ground. These flowers bloom in rain and in early morning fog, contrary to my flower book's word for it that they open only in sunlight.

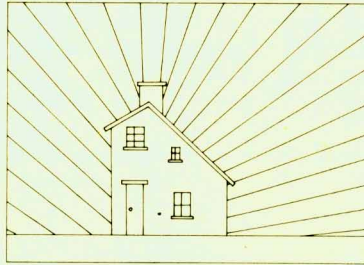
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### July

Charlock, a single plant of this field mustard has taken root on the upper shore and is in flower. Or has taken hold this year in abundance and as I go towards the sea, I am knee-deep in the little tinted (pinkish) flowers. Flower book writers make aesthetic judgements in their texts. Charlock is described as "coarse and vexatious" and as "uninteresting" but against the sand they invite interest as do forms on a blank, stretched canvas.

The cubed plants (standing upright in modern architecture) are saltwort.

White campion, evening *Lychnis*, found near the entrance from dunes to Snail Road.

The sundew has tiny white buds.

The Ponds. We saw: *Pipsissewa*; prince's pine; *Chimaphila umbellata*. These last were waxy-cream color. A "dome-shaped green ovary," next to it a circle of pale magenta. Thoreau: "It is a very pretty little chandelier of a flower . . . its buds are nearly as handsome." Here he is describing the species I found, *Chimaphila maculata*, or spotted wintergreen. I know because of the leaves, pointed at the tip, dark-green and strongly marked with white-green in the region of the ribs. Also seen on this walk: the Indian pipe, pickerel weed, *Pontederia*; the arrowweed has white flowers. Things happen to pickerel weed: dragonflies and damselflies climb up it to shed their skins, and deer feed upon it. Also seen: pussy toes, small yellow-fringed orchids, and pond lilies, naturally.

### August

After tea with Edwin yesterday I walked in the valley. The grass pink is still in bloom. *Calopogon pulchellus* from the Greek means beard and beautiful. The name grass pink is belittling to an orchid. One linear bright green leaf, magenta pink. The other small orchid, seen less frequently here, is snake mouth, *Pogonia ophioglossoides*. Sepals and petals "of equal length overhang a crested and fringed lip curved like the hollow of one's hand . . ."

Sprigs of the new marram grass (beach grass) have shadows in the late afternoon, shadows three times their own length. The sprigs are close to the sand but the shadows have long, thin stems (delicate long) and I think how the sun acts as wind to blow these shadows, these flags, from west to east.

The marram grass is seeding, the signal flown that autumn will come.

### September

Blue curls (bastard pennyroyal) growing in the railroad track. Also blue toad flax. The blue curls are small, the toad flax is tall, up to my knees.

### October

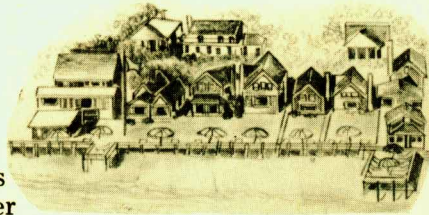
. . . drop of water in the absinthe plant. The grey-white color can be scraped from the leaf because it is only a veil, a tenacious skin. This plant in autumn—its under-leaves show every variation of beige, and of yellows and greys as well.

### November

The zinc white of bayberries.

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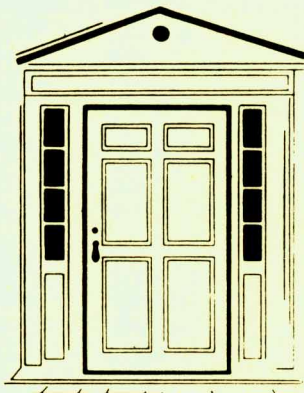
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## MAMMALS OF CAPE COD

by Jennifer Linton

The changing seasons of Provincetown provide the nature enthusiast a melting pot of sounds, sights and smells. Marvels of nature reflect the incredible design and diversity of life.

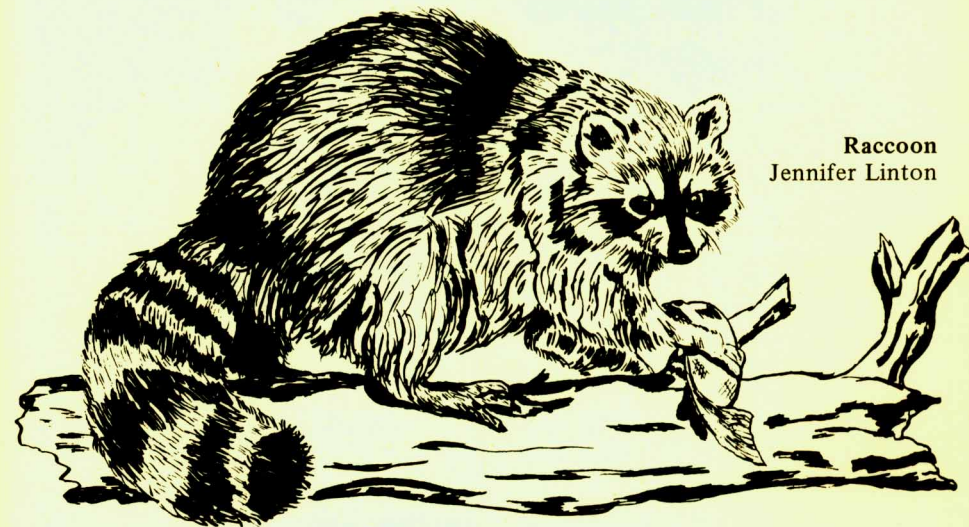
The naturalist visiting Cape Cod will find approximately forty-four mammalian species inhabiting this fragile deposit of shifting sand. Two of the most primitive animals are the shrew and the mole, which are probably the closest in structure to the early mammals from which all other types developed.

The surrounding waters of Cape Cod provide a migratory home for the largest of all living animals, the whale. Porpoises, dolphins, and even seals can occasionally be seen in the open waters.

Cape Cod abounds in wildlife and like all living creatures everywhere, the mammals of the Cape are active in their struggle for existence. Many like the weasel and fox are skilled masters in the art of elusiveness while others like the raccoon and the gray squirrel are born comedians who can provide hours of entertainment to the lucky observer.

We are even fortunate in having one marsupial neighbor, the opossum, who has evidently found the climate of Cape Cod conducive to its propagation. Mice delight in setting up housekeeping in this area and pay frequent visits to the homes of that other mammalian species, *homo sapiens*, which resides in such abundance on the Cape.

A mammalian check-list is available from JNL Publications, Box 989, Village Green, North Eastham, Mass. 02651.



Raccoon  
Jennifer Linton



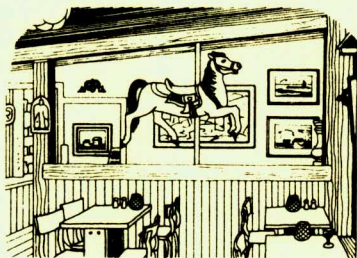
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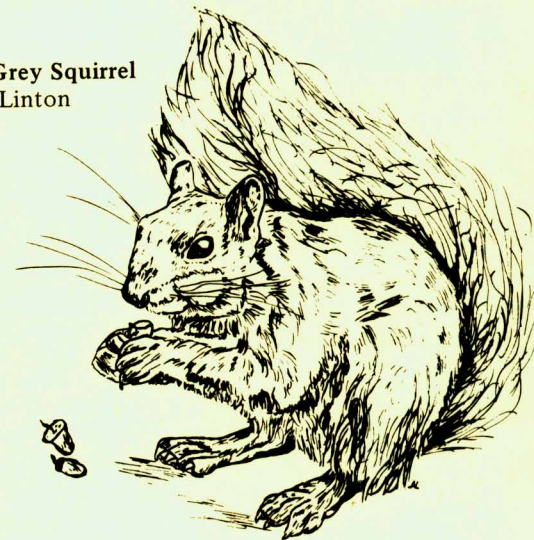
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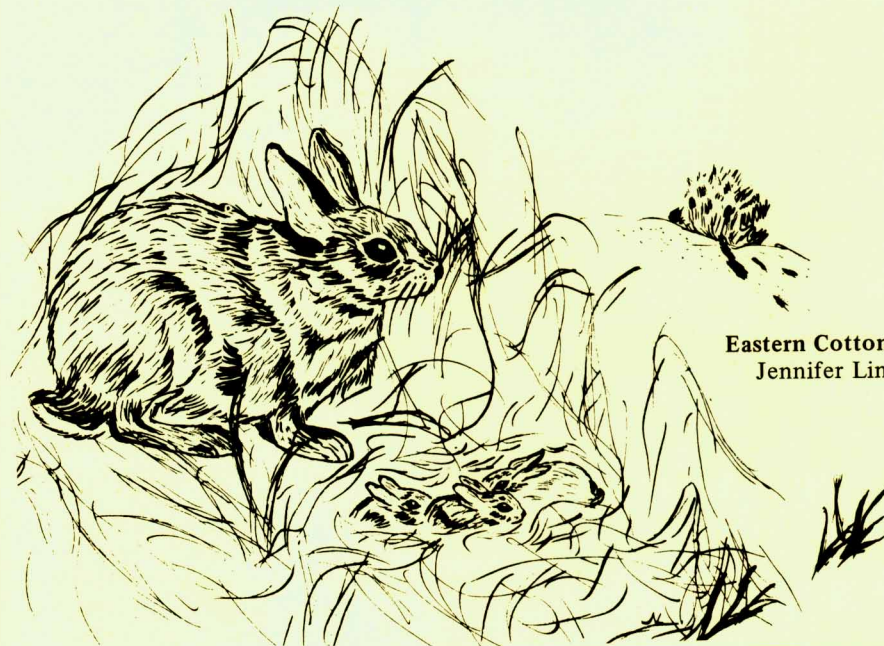
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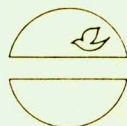
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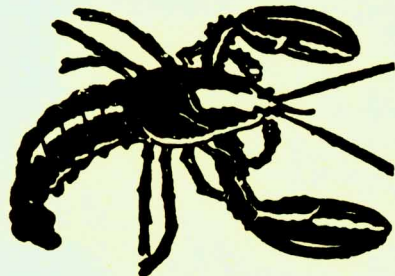
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## MARGIE III

by Heaton Vorse

Looking north and west from the Visitors' Center in the Provincetown sector of the Cape Cod National Seashore one sees nothing but dunes bordered only by the blue of the ocean. While comparatively small in area, these sands are quite as dry as those of any professional desert. Not an oasis in sight.

If one turns around and walks across the few feet of the observation platform the view becomes quite different. Here a person looks over the top of a low woodland to the church spires and an occasional roof of a New England village: Provincetown. A tall slim tower, a monument built to commemorate the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620 dominates the town from its perch on a hill, and unseen from the Visitors' Center, two massive motels bracket the cluster of houses that form the populated area at the tip of the Cape; the Provincetown Inn at the West, the Holiday Inn on the East. Both have a lobby, a pair of dining rooms, a swimming pool and several bars.

Going through the town from either direction it is obvious that, unlike the dunes, the village is liberally supplied with watering holes. In the section known as the Center, they practically jostle one another. From the top of the monument just named it is possible to count a score of them by simply turning one's head to a limited extent.

It was not always so.

Provincetown went dry by local option sometime during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Like its national counterpart, the 18th Amendment, Prohibition, this ordinance was more or less a farce from the very beginning. While, unlike today, there were neither bars nor package stores to be found among the commercial establishments, almost every house in town had a bottle of wine or whiskey in the closet. Beer, because of its bulk, was the only kind of alcoholic drink which was in comparatively short supply, and even that could be found by anybody who set out to look for it. The Georges Bankers out of Provincetown always stocked up with a case or two for use back home while they were up to the city. Trainmen who unloaded the baggage car on the 12:15 or the 8:30 always gave each trunk and valise careful handling as the chances were that a bottle was stashed somewhere inside.

If worse came to worst, one arrived at a local doctor's office coughing and sneezing, the obliging M.D. at a small price would write out a chit which could be redeemed for a pint of either whiskey or brandy at Adam's Drugstore. The only change that occurred when national prohibition went into effect is that it made liquor easier to get. There was a brief period of aridity throughout the country that lasted just long enough for the mechanics of the illegal distribution of bottled goods to be set up. Once Rum Row twelve miles out to sea became a reality, Provincetown and the outer shores of Cape Cod changed from being the end of the line to being one of the main distribution points on the Atlantic coast. The Bay shore from Race Point to Billingsgate Island off Wellfleet was awash with everything from raw alcohol to fine cognac and champagne, all imported, of course.

As in the old days the fishing boats that had gone by Boston in the course of the business of catching and selling fish now passed near Rum Row for the same reason. As they had stopped in Boston to replenish their own personal supplies of booze, they now tied up to some ship in mid-ocean to pick up a



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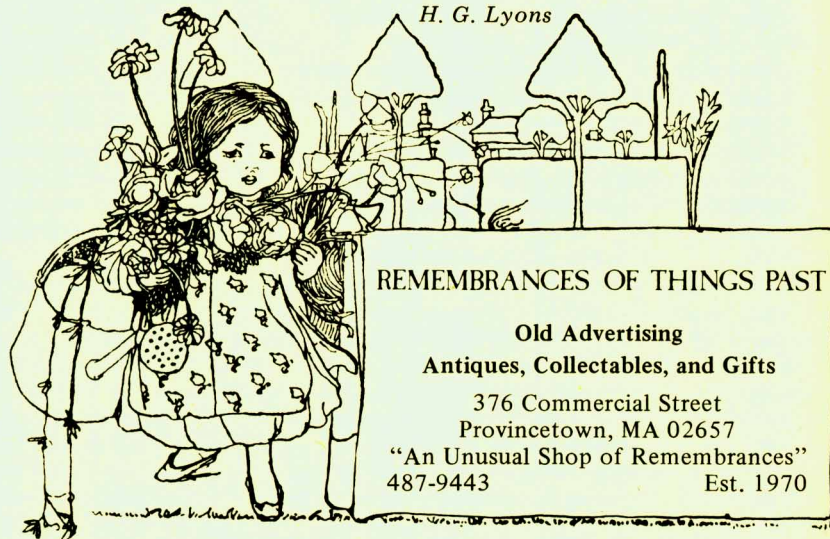
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case or two for their own use and to help out land-bound relatives and friends. But after World War I, the secondary local industry of tourism was rapidly overtaking that of fishing and would become, in the future, the town's primary source of income. The people who came here to swim and take the sun on the beaches during the day wanted to enjoy themselves after nightfall as well. These souls provided an active market for wet goods.

It was for this reason that many of the fishing boats took to carrying more than just a few bottles below decks when they came to dock to unload cod and flounder. However, their principal cargo was still fish. None really became active rumrunners in the big sense. There was a lot of bonafide rum running, naturally, throughout the whole length of Cape Cod, but few local people, and no local vessels, were very much involved.

In this respect, the saga of the Margie III is interesting, and should be told. On some certain date she rounded Long Point, carrying a crew of three sturdy gents, who were pleasant enough, but of a nature that did not encourage familiarity on the one hand, nor hostility on the other. The boat itself had rather good lines. She had been built as a submarine chaser during the war. There were bolt holes in her foredeck to mark the location of what had once been a gun emplacement, and a couple of tubs of line trawl stowed aft showed that she was now intending to be a fishing boat. Otherwise, she was a floating wreck. She departed at odd times and came back at stranger ones.

Retired fishermen hanging around the end of the dock never ceased to be amazed when she limped around the point to complete another voyage. Bets were placed that even though she had managed to stay afloat long enough to come abaft the spar buoy, there was an even chance that she would be at the bottom of the harbor before making it all the way across to Railroad Wharf. It was considered lucky that her crew had not caught more than a dozen fish. One more cod aboard would have been enough to sink her. How the three chaps managed to live on such poor hauls was a mystery, but they did. Nor did they ever seem to be at a lack for cash; and for another thing, while the sturdy young chaps hailed their fellow fishermen merrily enough, no one was ever invited to come aboard their rickety ship.

After the Margie III had been around for a while, say a couple of years, she and her exclusive crew started to be taken for granted by the seamen of Provincetown. Then one day a dragger on its way to Rum Row for supplies saw quite a different Margie III skimming across the waves. The same boat that took almost half an hour simply to sail across the harbor was now dashing over the open ocean in a cloud of spray leaving a foaming wake behind. Her destination, like that of the dragger, was Rum Row. The Margie III was a rumrunner.

Later it came to light that under the dilapidated wooden hull was still another made out of steel plates, and also that one of the reasons that nobody but her own crew was ever permitted to come aboard her was that if they had chanced to go below decks, they would have discovered that she was powered by a quartet of liberty engines, the kind that were used to power the airplanes of World War I. They were lined up two and two in tandem to drive a pair of screws. There was nothing else afloat in that day and age that could have caught up with the Margie III out on the open ocean with her throttle all the way down, not even a four-stacker at flank speed.

But there was one trouble. If the Margie III was built for speed, she wasn't constructed to carry cargo. She had no hold and her deck space was limited. Whenever it was covered with cases of booze, the trim 80-foot craft dragged in the water, defeating the power of her engines. Loaded, she was slowed down to



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not quite a crawl, and could no longer outrace her hunters. Hence, when she had taken an illicit cargo aboard, she would stay at sea outside the twelve-mile limit until the sun had set and only then attempt, with lights out and motors muffled, to make an outer Cape landfall where she could transfer her load of liquid cheer to a waiting truck for the completion of its journey to some center of population. After having done her share of carrying fine European wines, rums, gins, and whiskeys, to the parched shores of America, the Margie III would put out to the fishing grounds, set a tub or two of trawl, hook a few cod, and then limp back to Provincetown, just a tired little old fishing boat doing its work.

The Margie III and its crew kept up the pretense of being a line trawler until the very day that Prohibition was finally repealed. This was nice of them . . . actually her true trade had long since been discovered by those whose dirty business it was to prevent the ingredients of the cups of cheer from coming in over the shoreline. Though she was chased repeatedly over the years that she was in operation the Margie III was never caught with the goods. Her close scrapes with capture vile became more and more frequent as the experiment, "noble in purpose" (Hoover), approached its final heave-ho after Roosevelt had been elected in the early '30s.

At first, her speed and the fact that she stayed clear of the shore with her merry cargo of contraband until after the dipper was over the yardarm, was sufficient to keep her out of trouble. Then, too, the number of access roads leading to the beach along the end of the Cape gave the craft a wide choice of landfall. The roads used primarily as a pathway towards a swim and a bit of sunning during the day by vacationers were used for quite another purpose after the day was done. As an example, the road that runs along Beach Point, now solidly lined with motels and summer cottages, had fewer than a dozen homes constructed along it during the dry '20s, and they were lived in only during July and August, places to keep the kids out of their parents' hair during the summer recesses. The people who lived on the Point probably couldn't have cared less what happened on the beach after the brats were in bed. More than a few were even sympathetic with the idea of booze being smuggled in the first place.

So all the Margie III had to do was to nose in anywhere between Mayflower Heights and High Head and leave its load stacked up along the highway until the friendly truck designated to pick it up cruised by to distribute it further down the Cape, or on the mainland wherever it was needed the most. In return for their inattention, Beachpointers might find a bottle of something on the doorstep along with the morning's milk.

As better and faster rum chasers were put into service, the Margie III began to have a tougher time with it. While she was still the swiftest thing afloat when she was empty, she could be overtaken when she had a cargo. The only thing to do when she was being run down was to throw the booze overside. This was not only an expensive practice, but the crew of many a dragger was made happy when the surprise catch of a case of Golden Wedding, Gordons, or Bacardi, came up in the bag along with the cod and flounder. Provincetown was never short of liquor in those days.

It wasn't long before the crew of the Margie III came up with a way to cut their losses. They packed their cases of booze in sturdy burlap bags, to each of which was attached several fathoms of line and a brightly painted buoy. They also bought themselves a lobster boat. Now, when the Margie III found a hostile craft on her tail during the dark hours, the helmsman would take a rough sighting on two or more of the many lighthouses and flashing buoys that safeguard

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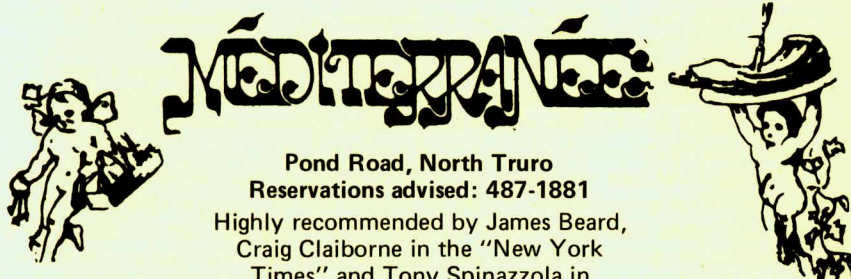
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Cape Cod Bay. The other two chaps would proceed to drop the sacks overside periodically and in more or less of a straight line, just as a lobsterman might do with his pots. Once the deck was cleared, the boat would dart away from her pursuers and vanish in the night like a fleck of foam. The only indication of her passing was an innocent-appearing string of buoys.

The next day one of the trio would put out around the Point in the lobster boat. He'd contact a regular lobsterman and buy, say, some half-dozen lobsters, make toward the string of buoys that had been dropped the night before and haul in the sacks of Calverts and Canadian Club that had been so hastily jettisoned the previous evening. Meanwhile, the Margie III would limp out of the harbor headed somewhat in the direction of the fishing grounds, but not too much so. When the chap in the lobsterboat had finished his chores, he'd rendezvous with the bigger boat and transfer his cargo. It might take two or even three trips to resurface the load and bring it back to the Margie. Some deserted sector of the Bay was selected for the operation. Then the two boats would hang around until dark, after which the Margie would complete the interrupted voyage while the lobsterboat sailed to Provincetown to sell the previously purchased lobster.

Eventually the rum chasers caught onto the trick, so when the rumrunner suddenly sped away, the bluenoses would drift around the area where she was last seen and wait till daylight. Then they'd spot the buoys and do a bit of pseudo-lobstering of their own.

So the crew of the Margie III dreamed up a new one. Each buoy was encrusted with a heavy layer of rock salt. Now when the Feds were on their tail and it became necessary to cast the cargo overboard, the buoys would go to the bottom along with the liquor. Two or three days later, the salt dissolved and the buoys re-surfaced. It wouldn't be till then that the lobster boat would put to sea to retrieve the loot, long after the rum chasers had gone elsewhere in search of other prey.

After Roosevelt had been elected President, and it became evident that the repeal of Prohibition was just a matter of time, the rum chasers lost a lot of their enthusiasm for the chase. The Margie III didn't have to be as stealthy as of yore. She would return from Rum Row so heavily laden that her gunwales were awash.

On one of her last trips before the repeal of the 18th amendment, she ran into difficulty that had nothing to do with the law. The truck that was supposed to pick up her cargo broke down somewhere in Dennis and a big storm was coming up. She was far too overloaded to put out to sea again, and ride out the tempest. Putting into Provincetown with a towering pile of booze would have been just too blatant, and besides, by now the crew of the Margie III had become rich men. They could afford to take a loss. So everything but a couple of cases was tossed overboard, littering the bottom between Pamet and Long Point. On their way to shelter they consoled themselves with what was in the two cases that had been saved out, and they consoled themselves considerably. Then they tied up to Railroad Wharf and reeled ashore and they talked.

The next day the view from Provincetown was really something. Not a single fishing boat put out for the grounds. They were all out making a sail-around like the Blessing of the Fleet, only this time they had their nets over, and they weren't after flounder. Their courses lay between the lighthouse out front and Gull Island. But that wasn't all. Besides the draggers could be found every other craft in the harbor: trapboats, motor dories, sailboats, rowboats; they used fishing lines, grappling lines, clam dredges, everything that could possibly

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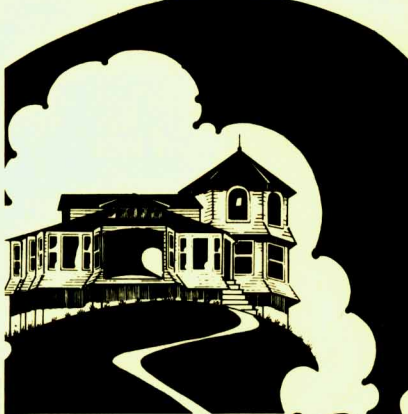
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engage itself with a burlap sack.

The Coast Guard tried to interfere but with no success. Whenever they boarded a boat, they'd find that its catch had already been jettisoned. The moment they cast off, the drag would be lowered and the boat would fish faster than ever to make up for lost time. As was said, everything that could float got manned and set out to search for booze. One fellow was found far out to sea paddling a kayak. When asked what he was doing so far from land in such a frail craft, he replied, "Fishing, you gawd-damned fool Coast Guard, what the hell do you think I'm doing?"

Never had Provincetown been so sopping wet. Kids were selling Golden Wedding at the curbside for 35 cents a pint. Out of that whole load the Coast Guard managed to retrieve ten cases and righteously put them out of circulation, conscientiously burying the shards of the bottles. The rest stayed and was consumed in Provincetown. Hardly a pint got even as far as Truro.

Soon afterwards, Prohibition went by the board. Provincetown, which had been dry for nearly half a century before the 18th amendment was ratified, went wet along with the rest of the country. Taverns, bars, and package stores were seen in Provincetown for the first time in living memory, and the Margie III was out of a job. It is not known for certain what finally became of her. Chances are she was sailed to a warmer clime like Florida and turned into a pleasure boat. Whoever bought her must have wondered what caused that rather pleasant smell that crept up from her bilges from time to time.



## TWO PROVINCETOWN ANECDOTES

by Jan Kelly

Jot Small used to have a restaurant where the Iota is in the East End, a small galley type restaurant specializing in clams. His sea clam chowder was a favorite despite the inevitable stray grain or two of sand. One irate customer looked up from his bowl one day and demanded, "Jot, don't you know how to make clam chowder without leaving sand in it?" Jot calmly replied, "Yep, leave the clams out."

\* \* \*

Years ago fish and clams were peddled in the streets of Provincetown rather than sold exclusively in fish markets. Willy Alley was the more prominent clam man with a cart and in his era, the twenties, clams sold for 35 cents a bucket. But Willy Alley never could get the hang of saying "35" so he hollered "Clams, 25 and 10."



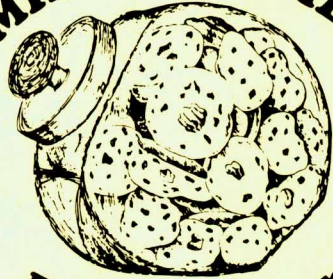
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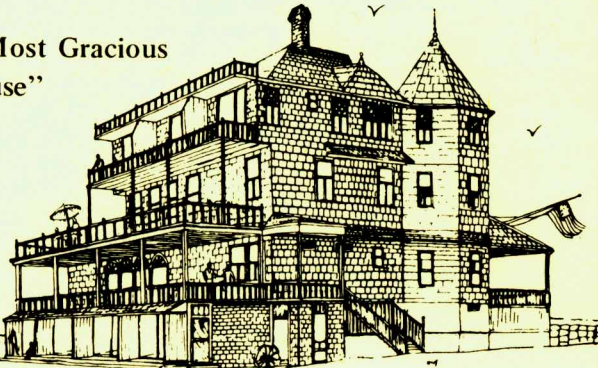
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## LIGHT OF INDIA

A Cape Verdean Story

(told by Lucinda Tavares Rose to Nell Husted)

Lucinda Rose sits crosswise on her bed at the Cape End Manor illustrating with crayons the prayers she writes to while away the idle hours. She is wearing a red woolen dress which she has had for forty years. She says her daughter Mary has thrown the dress away more than once but Lucinda has always managed to retrieve it, the same way she now retrieves, with such clarity of vision and precision of detail, the tattered bits and pieces of her past life.

Lucinda has lived in Provincetown for almost ninety years. She saw Teddy Roosevelt lay the cornerstone for the Pilgrim Monument in 1907. She was seventeen then. She hopes she still has the blue and white sailor hat she wore for the occasion. It is a monument of sorts too by now, she says, that lovely Creole lilt in her voice.

In 1890, the year of her birth, Provincetown was still sending vessels to the Grand Banks. The town was booming. From 1870 to 1900 it had the largest population of any town on Cape Cod. The Provincetown Resident Directory of 1890 states: “The present population is made up of three distinct elements: the descendents of the early settlers; people from the Western Islands who are numerous; and many from eastern Nova Scotia who are of Scottish descent.” Someone has pointed out that the population of Provincetown at that time exactly matched the crew make-up of her fishing vessels. According to the Boston Globe of August 1881, seventy-five percent of the fishing crews were aliens. The 1870’s and 80’s were a time of mass migration to these shores. The Statue of Liberty was erected in 1883 to welcome the great influx.

Among the new immigrants to Provincetown were people from the Portuguese islands of the Azores and from the Cape Verde Islands off the coast of Africa, colonized by Portugal. Lucinda’s parents were Cape Verdeans. These brown-skinned, fine-featured people have almost disappeared from Provincetown. Descended in part from African slaves—Arab, Negro, and Hamitic—imported by early Portuguese settlers to work their plantations, as well as from the Portuguese settlers themselves, and from visiting sailors of European extraction, their physical beauty is said to derive from a fortuitous blending of these diversified ethnic strains.

Their language, which they call Crioulo, is a Cape Verdean dialect of Portuguese, which varies from one of the ten islands and five islets to the other. Lying as they do almost 400 miles off the westernmost cape of Africa, the Cape Verdes, then uninhabited, were not discovered until the fifteenth century by Portuguese navigators. Divided into the Windward and Leeward Islands, they are all volcanic in origin, one of them Fogo, meaning Fire, being an active volcano.

The Cape Verdeans must have felt very much at home in Provincetown as their home islands are also highly eroded by sand carried by high winds, and the sand cliffs, like the dunes of the outer Cape, rise sheer from the sea. Though it rains very seldom, the sun is often blocked by a dense mist of fine sand brought by the trade winds from the Sahara. The slopes of these sand hills are almost bare of vegetation, and only the high hills, watered by the sea mist, and a few fertile valleys permit farming. Sea turtles, lizards, and giant skinks live in this strange land as well as wild goats, and flamingos from the African continent.



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The Cape Verdes became an important center for the slave trade. Africans from the mainland were gathered there before being shipped to the New World. With the abolition of the slave trade in 1876, combined with increasing drought and famine, the prosperity of the islands rapidly vanished. This fact, plus the Portuguese draft to which Cape Verdeans were subject, led many of them to leave home and try their chances in America.

Lucinda's father came to this country, like so many of his fellow islanders, aboard a New Bedford whaler. From the 1850's on, whaling captains were having more and more difficulty filling out their crews. Yankee seamen, enticed by the California Gold Rush and cognizant by now of the ghastly conditions prevailing on Yankee whalers, were less and less willing to sign on. Whaling ships left New Bedford with skeleton crews, with just enough hands to make the crossing, and put into Brava and other Cape Verdean islands to recruit, and when necessary shanghai, men who were to become the skilled boatsteerers and harpooners of the New England fleet. Their passage to America was paid for by two years before the mast, and while many of them stayed with whaling and went on to become the mates and captains of the resurgent New Bedford whaling fleet in the early years of this century, others left whaling once they reached America. Lucinda's father was one of these. Eager to settle down and bring his wife and child to his new homeland, he came down the Cape from New Bedford to Provincetown where he signed on with one of the sixty Grand Bankers in the Provincetown fleet at the time.

Fishing the Grand Banks of New Foundland in the 1880's was no easy life. Many vessels were swamped in "gales of wind" or collided with other vessels on the crowded fishing grounds, but it did offer the possibility of spending six months out of the year, at least, at home. Lucinda's father signed on as a cook, steward as he preferred to be called, according to Lucinda, a position in which he rightfully took pride. It was a position of responsibility: the cook and the captain on a Grand Banker were often the only crew members aboard when the dorymen went out to fish in their small crafts. When he was back in Provincetown, he lived, like the other men, in boarding houses, wrote letters home, saved his money, bought a small plot of land with a small house on it, and sent for his wife.

Lucinda's mother came from "fine people." As a child she attended church with her distinguished father, a Cape Verdean surgeon. She was not "proud" and would remove her shoes to pray barefoot with the poorer members of the parish, her hooped skirt lifting to reveal numerous lace petticoats. Lucinda was told this by an old Cape Verdean woman who worked with her in a New Bedford mill in the twenties. The same woman told her the story of the little girl and the heifer, a story she had already heard many times as a child. Whenever anyone from the islands came to the house, they always asked her mother to tell about the little girl whose life she had saved. Her mother would say with tears in her eyes, "But one would do anything to save a life."

The little girl was brought to Lucinda's grandfather, the surgeon, whose daughter, Lucinda's mother, assisted him in his medical practice. The child had been dragged over a cliff by a panicky heifer she was tending. Her legs and arms were broken but, worse yet, there was a gaping wound on her head where her skull had been fractured. The wound was full of sand from the beach onto which she had fallen. Lucinda's mother quickly attended to the wound. Dipping her tongue intermittently in a dish of clean water, she painstakingly licked the grains of sand off the child's exposed brain tissue, saving the child's life and reducing the chances of brain damage.

Though engaged to be married to a rich man, her mother, according to Lucinda, married her father in order to come to America, so great was her fear of the earthquakes on her native island. She had to overcome her fear of natural catastrophe to make the voyage to America. She crossed in a Brava packet, one of those small sailing ships that ferried so many Cape Verdean wives and children from Brava to New Bedford in the 1880's. The 3000-mile trip took sixty days. Lucinda says that her mother, who had left her first-born behind, was sick the whole way and terrified despite the presence of a traveling companion, whose passage Lucinda's father had also paid.

An account of a similar trip appears in the book **A Summer in the Azores** by C. Alice Baker published in 1882:

The ship scarcely moves—the sails are altered every half-hour in vain attempts to catch a breeze. A great steamer, brilliantly lighted, passes dangerously near us, outward bound. The end of the second day's voyage finds us, after two hundred and fifty miles of sailing, but fifty miles on our journey.

When land was finally sighted and her voyage almost over, Lucinda's mother caught her first glimpse of the shores of her new homeland. To her delight, the first thing she spotted on the beach was a cow.

Lucinda's childhood in Provincetown is full of "berrying and cherrying and gathering beach plums." She and her brothers played in the old whale oil factory now gone from the West End. They gathered whale bones which they decorated with ribbons and used for chairs in the front yard.

When her derby-hatted father was home from the Banks, her mother was not permitted to "lift a finger." The children then tended the swamp and kitchen gardens, fed the hogs and chickens, and bartered vegetables for bought goods at the A&P. Her mother's crochet work was sold for cash money. There was never "one penny bill" owing when her father came home.

Despite all this, Lucinda went to school and stayed till the seventh grade, when she quit to help her mother who was having another child. She says she learned more in seven years from "the two Annas," her teachers, than high school kids learn today in twelve.

At nineteen she fell in love with a first-generation Cape Verdean seaman but he was lost at sea after only three years of marriage. She still speaks of him wistfully. Her parents arranged her second marriage two years later to get her out of the house so that she would not disclose the "secrets" of married life to her innocent younger sisters. The second marriage, also to a Cape Verdean, "didn't stick; we were wrong-mated," she says. She left her only child with her parents and went to Boston to work in practical nursing jobs from which she earned the nine dollars a week she sent home for the child's support.

Lucinda never liked her name. She always preferred to be called "Cinny"—but nowadays as she lies on her bed at the Cape End Manor thinking over the past, she remembers the story of how she got her name. Once in his whaling days, her father's ship was lost at sea in a bad storm. Blown way off-course, they finally sighted land, only to discover that it was the coast of India. The Portuguese-speaking man of the sea named his daughter Lucinda, **Light of India**, in memory of the beautiful port into which they sailed.



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## FACTUAL FILLER

Written for the **Chicago Tribune**  
by a reporter who visited Provincetown  
around the turn of the century.

The people wear quaint and primeval garbs, and the whole town is begirt by flakeyards which "sweeten" the air for leagues around. The mighty power that gives life to everything and pushes the wheels of industry along is fish . . . .

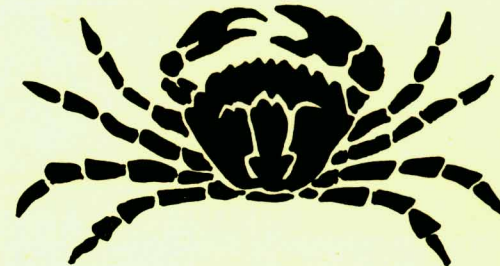
The main business street is paved with rock cod. The women use the hind fin of the giant halibut for brooms; they are secured to poles, and sweep as clean as the best corn brooms in the market. Awnings shading the store fronts are made from the skin of the sportive porpoise, skillfully tacked across light scantlings . . . .

Sunday I sought respite from the everlasting display of fish by going into the little gray church on the village sandlot. As I entered, I was struck by the peculiar appearance of the bellrope swinging in the entry. I examined it. It was made of eels, cunningly knotted by some old sailor. Over the altar was a picture of a whale, under which was the legend of Jonah's sea voyage . . . .

At the close of the session a collection was gathered, and the receptacle passed around was the top shell of a turtle, with a whalebone handle. After the choir had sung "Pull for the Shore," the church crew passed down the port aisle, into the street . . . .

Provincetown ladies trim their hats with the red gills of the mackerel, and confine their long tresses with small sculpins. Minims are used in place of clothespins. These dwarf fishes are smoked and cured like herring, and their mouths are snapped around the clothesline supporting the week's washing and secured in place by the sharp claw of a crab.

Flying fish are as plentiful around the village as English sparrows on Boston Common. They roost in the branches of trees and caw like crows. Dogfishes often lie around on the shore at low tide and bark and howl in a frightful manner . . . . Lobsters make intermittent incursions through the lanes of the town. Some of them are intelligent, and learn to follow children along the dusty roads to school . . . .



## FACTUAL FILLERS

Provincetown gardens in the old days were planted in loam which was removed from the vessels in which it had served as ballast. Without this nothing would have grown in the sandy soil.

\* \* \*

According to Ross Moffet's *Art in Narrow Streets*, to get to Provincetown in the early days – turn of the century – you boarded an ornate side-wheeler of the old Fall River Line at a pier on the Hudson River in New York City at 5:00 p.m. You dined for eighty cents and awakened early in the morning at Fall River where you boarded a train to Cape Cod. The train made endless stops, including four in Truro alone.

\* \* \*

The *Sixes and Sevens* was the precursor of the Provincetown nightclub – it was a coffee shop operated by art students on Lewis Wharf during the summers of 1920/21. It was filled every evening from 8 to 11 with artists and others. The waiters were artists who played various musical instruments and there was a small area for dancing. The cover charge was eleven cents.

\* \* \*

According to the Bulletin of the U.S. Fish Commission for 1881, after Provincetowners were forbidden to graze their cows on the dunes due to the depletion of the beach gasses, they trained them to eat fish by adding it to their fodder. The cows would flock down to the shore when the fishing boats came in and eat the entrails and sometimes even the fish heads while the fishermen cleaned their catch.

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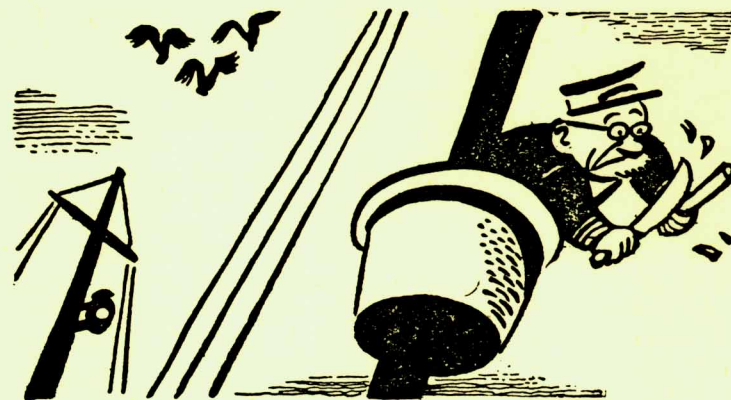
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## SCRIMSHAW

by Jeremiah Digges

(From the book *Bowleg Bill, The Sea-Going Cowboy*, copyright 1938 by Josef Berger; reprinted by permission of Curtis Brown, Ltd.)



Jeremiah Digges was the pen name of a W.P.A. writer who lived and wrote in Provincetown during the depression years on a subsistence grant from the Federal Writers' Project. Three books came out of this period: *Cape Cod Pilot*, *In Great Waters*, and *Bowleg Bill*, a collection of yarns told by fishermen on Liars' Benches up and down the coast of Massachusetts. *Bowleg Bill* is a Bunyonesque character ("eight foot four inches tall without them long-heeled boots!") who performs incredible feats of strength and daring on the high seas and manages to outwit a sea captain or two into the bargain.

\* \* \*

The Captain's bride is weeping, for the poor girl is far, far from home, and whaling is no diversion for a lady young or old.

We can hear her in the cabin while the skipper stands aloft and looks for a whale. Twenty weeks has passed and not a man among us has raised whale, and now the skipper vows to stay aloft himself and raise whale or rot in his boots. He eats aloft and sleeps aloft and rots in his boots, and there is no whale, and his beautiful young bride is in the cabin weeping all alone. It is a gawd-damn pity.

We are setting on deck, the whole of us, with nothing to do but scrimshaw—scrimshaw and listen to the poor girl weeping, and scrimshaw some more and think about her in the cabin all alone, and scrimshaw.

I am scrimshawing a pie-rimmer for my woman on Cape Cod and a set of fancy headgear for my woman in Owohyhee. Spike Marline is scrimshawing a pie-rimmer for his woman on Cape Cod and a set of fancy earrings for his woman on Tristan da Cunha. And all the boys is scrimshawing pie-rimmers for the noble women of Cape Cod, and one thing and another—all but Bowleg Bill, who



is setting alongside of me and scrimshawing Gawd knows what. I stops and I studies, but I cannot make out what Bowleg Bill is scrimshawing, and I tell him for Gawd sake make something out of that afore I get the narvous twitch.

"This here aims to be a knife-handle," Bowleg says, "and I'm a-whittlin' it down neat and dainty for a lady's hand." From out his long-heeled boots he hauls the knife for me to look at—a mean and murjerous snickersnee with a blade which will slit a gnat's ears edgewise.

"The safety of woman is a great comfort, Bowleg," I cautions him. "But so is having a neck. Me, I would take some edge off."

"Larboard," he says, "there's many a critter back on the range in old Wyoming that's behaving hisself gentle today on account of this little tool. I'm fixin' now to give it to the Captain's bride, and on land or sea I reckon the general principles works the same."

The boys is listening, and scrimshawing, and Spike Marline cautions him:

"It ain't the regular thing at sea, Bowleg, for a fo'mast hand to make presents to the Captain's bride."

"Reg'lar? Huh! Trouble with you, Marline, you hain't never ben West. Hain't none of you boys ever ben fur enough West to wipe your boots on a welcome mat, and none with a drop of good old Western fellership in yore hearts!"

"Bowleg," I says, "if there is anything of a furrin nature in our hearts, our skipper will pleasure the chance to meet it—with a cutting spade."

But he shakes his head and holds up a hand at us to hearken to the Captain's bride weeping in the cabin.

"Pore girl!" says Bowleg. "Setting downstairs all alone without no protection! Don't none of you fellers think of her?"

He stands there, waiting for an answer, and there is nothing to do but scrimshaw, and think of her and scrimshaw some more, and look at that murjerous snickersnee, and scrimshaw. And Bowleg paces the deck, and he finally comes to me and says:

"Look here, Larboard. It hain't like me to do nawthing underhand. I'd climb up there and tell the boss myself, but I hain't never got the hang of sashaying around on them flagpoles, and I'll give you a silver dollar to go up there and tell him Bowleg Bill would admire to make a present of this knife to the Missis, on account of her being all alone downstairs without no protection."

So I goes aloft. I apologizes to the skipper and I delivers Bowleg Bill's offer, and I explains how the knife has sarved as a handy tool on the range in Wyoming, and that Bowleg says the general principles works on land or sea the whole world over.

The skipper hears me out. He looks me up, he looks me down, he nods and says:

"Seaman Larboard, there is a thoughtful sailor, and I wish to give him his due reward. My compliments to Bowleg Bill, and tell him he is now third mate."

I comes high falling out of the rigging, but I goes down and delivers the Captain's orders.

"Wal, boys," says Bowleg, as he heaves the old third mate down the fo'c'sle hatch, "It goes to show, a drop of good old Western fellership in a man's heart will take him a long way in any part of the world. I'm a-goin' now to give this knife to the bride—and don't none of you forget, it's sharp as ever and doggone handy."

Bowleg goes below, leaving the rest of us to set and wait and scrimshaw.

And while we are at it, the weeping of the Captain's bride abates in the cabin. Then he comes back on deck and says:

"Larboard, I will pay you a silver dollar if you will sashay up through that washing again and tell the boss the bolt to his cabin door is loose-jointed and sway-backed, and there is nawthing to protect his Missis, barring only a pore little knife, and I would admire to hitch on a new bolt which is stout enough to hold agin any man in the outfit."

So I goes aloft, and I delivers Bowleg's message to the skipper. He eyes me to port, he eyes me to starboard, and he nods and says:

"Seaman Larboard, there is a man with uncommon knowledge of the ways of a sailor. My compliments to Bowleg Bill, and tell him he is now the second mate."

I comes nigh stepping through the ratlines, but I goes down and delivers the Captain's orders.

"Wa-al, now, Larboard," says Bowleg Bill while he is heaving the second mate down the fo'c'sle hatch, "there is jest one more errand. This here is a right rocky stretch of water we are fording, and the Captain's Missis don't rest easy when she rares and rolls. If you will sashay up them wires again, and tell the boss for me, I'll cinch up her bed on a swivel, so's she can ride easy when this thing gets a-buckin' and crow-hoppin'. And I will pay you a silver dollar."



So I goes aloft, and I delivers Bowleg's offer to the skipper. He squints me an eye and he cocks me an ear, he nods and says:

"Seaman Larboard, rare is the sailor who thinks to provide in his small way for the happiness of a lady at sea. My compliments to Bowleg Bill, and tell him he is now the first mate. And though it is not my power to do better by him, let us hope that in time he will work into a captain's berth."

I misses footing and comes down astraddle of the upper tops'l yard, and I groans in my pain and limps my way to the deck to deliver the Captain's orders.

I staggers up to Bowleg Bill, and I presents the skipper's compliments. But before I can tell him he is now the first mate, Bowleg dashes below, leaving the whole of us to set and wait and scrimshaw.

And the gawd-damn sun goes down, and the gawd-damn moon comes up, but Bowleg Bill don't come up. And the only sound we hears is the Captain's bride, laughing in the cabin. The gawd-damn night comes in, and the gawd-damn stars come out, but Bowleg Bill don't come out. And four hours later we are still setting and waiting, and scrimshawing like the devil scratching heat-rash.

"There is a creaking and squeaking aboard this vessel," I says, "and, ship-mates, if it does not abate, it will run me afoul of the narvous twitch."

"It's only the bride's new swivel-bed," says Spike Marline, "swiveling."

The skipper is asleep and rotting in his boots at the masthead, for there is no whale. And there is nothing for us to do but scrimshaw, and hearken to the swivel-bed swiveling, and scrimshaw and think what a sailor may do in his small way for the happiness of a lady at sea, and scrimshaw.



## FLYING FISHERMEN

by Jeremiah Digges

(From the book, *In Great Waters*, copyright 1941 by Josef Berger;  
reprinted by permission of Curtis Brown, Ltd.)

In Great Waters tells the story of the Portuguese fishermen of Provincetown and Gloucester. Digges writes from personal experience having made trips to the banks with them in the 1930's. Much of his material is based on first-hand accounts of the incidents he describes. For this story about Captain Marion Perry of the Rose Dorothea, he interviewed members of the captain's family in Provincetown.

\* \* \*

Marion Perry disliked talk and despised frills. An old shoe was not plain enough for him if it still had a tongue in it. Parades, brass bands, salutes, greetings, birthday cakes, even neck-ties and custard pie—to all such things, he had an emotional allergy. Yet from the day when he had come into the world naked and had seen that situation quickly corrected with silk, lace, ribbons and rose-ettes, life was just one such annoyance after another. Fate had chiseled out an ascetic and handed him a bunch of balloons. His early years in Sao Miguel were a round of celebrations; and Boston, where the Perreiras became the Perrys, was not much better.

From this strange plight Marion Perry eventually found escape at sea. At sea a man could work as hard as he liked and talk as little. He could wear what he liked, eat good plain food, think straight thoughts, and slip into dreamless sleep on the honest planking of a ship's bunk. What fools those fellows were to grumble and talk of getting a job ashore!

But the escape was short-lived. Marion Perry did not have many of the collateral yearnings of ambition, but he did like to work. In him, the affection for hard work was so deep-seated that he never even mentioned it to himself. As a result, before he could worry much about it, he was "kicked to the front" and made skipper at the age of eighteen; and he very soon discovered that the captain's cabin was not the same hide-away from human folly that the fore-castle had been. There remained plenty of hard work, but life was no longer short-spoken nor free of frills.

For a couple of years as skipper of the little **W.B. Keene** of Provincetown he proved himself a big fisherman, working against older hands and better

vessels. Then he was given command of the larger **Mary Cabral**, and soon afterwards of the still larger **William A. Morse**, in which his record was sensational.

Meanwhile he married Rose Dorothea McGowan, a little Irish Rose who was not at all wild and who "liked nice things." At what stage of their romance the captain discovered this latter trait I cannot say; but he married her anyhow, and the fact that love is grand has seldom been better demonstrated to the people of Provincetown than in the skipper's grim and silent acceptance of the plan and furnishings of an \$8,000 house that went up in the west end of town under Rose Dorothea's direction.

Soon there were silk, lace, ribbons, and rosettes again; and after his infant daughter the skipper named his newest schooner the **Annie C. Perry**. In that vessel, which was built especially for him in 1903, he took his place among the big "killers" of the banks fishery, captains like Manuel Costa of the **Jessie Costa**; Johnny Bull Silva of the **Isaac Collins**; Joe Silva of the **I.J. Merritt**; and Manuel Crawley Santos, who in the **Philip P. Manta** was high-liner of all New England for the year 1903.

In the next two seasons Captain Perry made a fine showing with his new vessel, but he wasn't satisfied. Speed wasn't everything, but it counted. He wanted a craft that was even faster, such a schooner as would place him on an equal footing with the skipper of the **Jessie Costa**. And so, in 1905, while keeping his share of ownership in the **Annie C. Perry**, he had the big schooner **Rose Dorothea** built for his own command.

With Captain Perry at the helm, no one doubted that the **Rose Dorothea** would rank among the high-liners; and with lines like the **Jessie Costa's** own, she was sure to cut water with the fastest of the fleet.

When the skipper went to Gloucester to pick up his new craft, he took **Rose Dorothea** along because she begged him to. At the wharf he looked the new schooner over, humphed and decided to send her back to the Essex yards at once. She was perfect in her lines, but in her carpentry below deck she was impossible. All that gilt and fancywork! What the hell did those fellows in Essex think they were building—a summer boarder's yacht, a pleasure boat?

Back she would have gone, then and there, for a complete refit of cabin and fore-castle, but at this point **Rose Dorothea** herself stepped in to defend her namesake. **Rose Dorothea** loved nice things. And the **Rose Dorothea** was lovely, a little floating palace, a dream! As the Boston Herald described her:

The cabin is a roomy apartment, with polished panels and gilded moldings and walls of handsomely grained hard woods. Opening off this cabin one finds a snug stateroom, equipped with toilet and other essentials, lighted, of course, with bullseyes of thick glass, and provided with a locker, bunk and ample store of good bed clothing.

The fore-castle is as unlike the quarters provided for the old-time fishing crew as could be imagined. In fact, what was until recent years a "black hole"—greasy, pestilential and gloomy—is now a commodious cuddy, flooded with light, and bright with brass rods and flowered curtains that serve as screens to the rows of sleeping bunks.

Fore-castle walls are stained a warm and sunny tint. Connecting with the after end of this cuddy, of which, in fact, it forms a part, there is another spacious apartment, what was formerly termed the "forehold," extending the full width of the ship. This is the

stamping-ground of "cook." It is filled with all the conveniences of a modern hotel kitchen.

And so, to please Rose Dorothea, wouldn't the captain keep the **Rose Dorothea** as she was? And also, before he took her out fishing, it would be nice if they held a little ceremony, or if they sailed her just once against the **Annie C. Perry**—a little race, just to show how much faster she was! When you were captain, you had to do these things. People expected you to. Here the newspapers had sent men all the way from Boston, reporters and photographers, and—and it would be so nice! To please Rose Dorothea, wouldn't the captain—just this once?

The skipper ground his teeth, kissed Rose Dorothea and took the **Rose Dorothea** out on a trial race with the **Annie C. Perry**, back to Provincetown. He "beat his former vessel handsomely in a smashing breeze"—and smashed the foretopmast of his new one, which kept him ashore three more days before he could finally kiss Rose Dorothea good-by and get down to business with **Rose Dorothea**.

In the summer of 1907 there were big doings in Boston. It was "Old Home Week," and one of the diversions was to be a fishermen's race off the North Shore, with the half-dozen top-rank schooners of Gloucester and Provincetown sailing in the first class.

A thirty-nine mile course was laid from Thieves Ledge, off Boston Light, to Davis Ledge, off Minot's Light, to Eastern Point, Gloucester, and home. Although the race had no particular bearing on an "Old Home Week" celebration, such was the interest shown in it that in addition to the \$650 first prize, a huge loving cup was offered by Sir Thomas Lipton, at that time the most hopeful if not the greatest yachting enthusiast the world had ever known.

Captain Manuel Costa agreed readily enough to enter the **Jessie Costa**, and so did the skippers of the **James W. Parker** and three other big Gloucester craft. The cup alone, the newspapers said, "was valued at \$5,000."

But that summer of 1907 was also turning out to be an excellent season for the fresh-fishermen. And when the famed **Rose Dorothea** was asked to race, her skipper tersely replied that he didn't have time. That was a lot of silver for a cup to have in it—\$5,000 worth—but what the hell could a man do with a cup like that when he got it? It was too heavy to drink out of. And Captain Marion Perry didn't need a cup for anything else. No, the price of fresh fish was high, the skipper knew where to go for some big trips, and the **Rose Dorothea** would do all her racing between Boston and a certain stretch on Georges Bank.

That was what the skipper of the **Rose Dorothea** said, and probably he would have stuck to it, but again Rose Dorothea stepped in. She had seen a picture of the lovely cup Sir Thomas Lipton was offering. And she adored nice things.

Captain Perry explained to her that the other share owners in the schooner would be entitled to their shares in the cup, and so would the crew. But you couldn't cut up a thing like that cup, into shares! And he repeated that you could not drink out of it; and as for him, if he won that big useless thing, he wouldn't give it house room. Rose Dorothea said all right, now that he'd consented to race, he could give the cup to the town. It would be a beautiful gesture. Captain Perry said he had not consented to race, and as for the town, he had another gesture. Rose Dorothea said all right, that was a very good way to settle it—race without consenting. Captain Perry wrung his hands, kissed Rose Dorothea, and took **Rose Dorothea** to Boston to race.

At ten o'clock on the morning of August 1, while thousands lined the shore from Hull to Cohasset and from Lynn to Gloucester, schooners **Rose Dorothea**, **Jessie Costa**, and **James W. Parker** were jogging about off Boston Light. The three other schooners had not arrived from fishing trips, but informed spectators knew that, barring flukes, this was to be a race between the **Rose Dorothea** and the **Jessie Costa**, and that whether the others showed up or not wouldn't make any real difference. The **James W. Parker** "presented the most festive appearance, having a band along, which banged and tooted bravely until the sea came up a bit, when the musicians lost interest." But that vessel's crew had small hope of figuring prominently.

After being held up an hour for the possible arrival of other entries, the three schooners were given the starting gun, and the **Rose Dorothea** crossed the line a minute ahead of the **Jessie Costa**. Then, with sheets slightly started, they went bowling along under a land breeze, everything drawing and scuppers level with the water.

After they had rounded Minot's for the eighteen-mile run to Eastern Point, the two Provincetowners became involved in a fast and furious set-to at luffing. For the crowds it was a grand exhibition, with Captain Perry finding himself neatly luffed out in one bout and then promptly serving Captain Costa some of the same crow in the next. While they were engaged in this, the **James W. Parker** tried to come up and steal the race, but she couldn't get near enough to be dangerous.

The two Provincetowners were still close together on rounding for the return. Whitecaps were going on a fair little jump of sea, and the **Rose Dorothea**, had just flattened sheets when there was a rending crack aloft. Her foretopmast had snapped in the middle—just as it had done on her first run two years before!

For Captain Perry the race now ceased to exist. Race! What the hell was a race? That broken topmast meant three more whole days ashore, doing nothing, while the wholesale fish market was at the best level it had reached in years!

He was furious at those pirates, the spar makers, who had supplied him with a pipstem for topmast; furious at the freak puff that had snapped it off; and furious at himself for letting Rose Dorothea talk him into this piece of foolishness in the first place! In fact, he was so thoroughly disgusted that he wouldn't even bother to have the broken spar sent down. His one object now was to make T Wharf and get those swindlers, the spar makers, on the telephone.

The **Rose Dorothea** however, "appeared to be doing very well without her foretopmast, pointing higher than her rival, which continued to carry all her kites, and footing fully as fast." As a matter of fact, the **Rose Dorothea** was in better racing trim for the accident! While the broken stick hung at a crazy angle across the fore gaff, the schooner had lost the use of her fore gaff-topsail and her jib topsail, or "flying jib" as the fishermen call it. But this same sail—the big "flying jib"—on the **Jessie Costa** now began to pull that vessel's head to leeward. And because of it, with only a dozen lengths between them near the finish, the **Costa** snagged off and had to make a tack.

Captain Perry wasn't watching the **Jessie Costa**. He neither knew nor cared what that schooner was doing. All he wanted was to make T Wharf, and make it quickly. It was at this moment that the **Rose Dorothea**, "headed higher than ever under the marvelous handling by her skipper," pinched past the flag, winner over the **Jessie Costa**!

Somebody on board the victorious schooner produced a new broom, and as she was entering the harbor, a man went up her main-topmast to lash it to the truck, indicating a clean sweep.

When the **Rose Dorothea** arrived at T Wharf at 5:30 and was shoved into her berth by a tug, she was given a shrieking welcome by steam craft of all kinds. The salutes were begun by the Nova Scotia steamer **Yarmouth** and were taken up and repeated three times three all along the waterfront.

On T Wharf a crowd had collected which cheered the **Rose Dorothea** and her crew.

Under other circumstances Captain Perry might have locked himself into his stateroom while all this fuss over nothing was being made. But now he had business to transact.

With his derby hat jammed down close over his ears—he had stonily refused to wear a beautiful gold-braided white cap **Rose Dorothea** had bought him especially for the race, and had worn the derby throughout—he jumped ashore now, straight-armed his way through the crowd, and made for the nearest telephone. And while the whistles were shrieking their three times three, those pirates, the spar makers, cringed under a volley in which there was no repetition.

But the sound and furore raised in Boston over the **Rose Dorothea** were as a pinfall in the wild welcome which the home folks of Cape Cod insisted on giving her skipper! Provincetown took her hero into her embrace—by the collar. This is how, in part, the Boston Herald's reporter tried to do justice to the mingling of pleasure and pain on that memorable afternoon:

Now, this Captain Perry is a combination of daring and timorous—that is, he is all to the good when real dangers threaten and courage and brawn and brain are needed, but a veritable greyhound for the backwoods when men seek to haul him into the limelight of publicity. Then he shies like a terrified horse.

Captain Perry is not only modest, but silent. After winning the Lipton Cup, he was the recipient of an ovation such as had never before been given a denizen of the district, an ovation that continued from the moment of landing at the steamboat pier until he escaped within the portals of his home, more than a mile away.

What he suffered during his ride through streets decorated in his honor and packed with shouting admirers, the town officials seated beside him, a full brass band preceding, and a rousing big band of new broom carriers constituting the rear guard, may never be learned; but he certainly endured an ordeal more to be dreaded by a man of his bashful makeup than the perils of a lee shore in a winter's smother.

During all that triumphal march, Captain Perry sat mute.

Three weeks after the Boston celebration there were big doings in Provincetown. On August 20 the cornerstone was laid for the Pilgrim Monument, a two-hundred-fifty foot granite tower which, after eighteen years of campaigning, Cape Codders were now putting up to remind the nation that it was at Provincetown—not Plymouth—that the Mayflower people first landed. The ceremony was gone through with speeches expressing the usual sentiments and containing the usual distortions of historical fact, but the duty with the trowel was performed by President Theodore Roosevelt himself.

The President's staff had carefully timed out a full program for him during his one-day stay in Provincetown. This included an address that same evening to the Cape Cod fishermen, just before his departure; and at the suggestion of his

publicity expert, an hour was saved out of the afternoon schedule for a meeting and chat with the famous skipper who had recently won the fishermen's race at Boston.

That inspiration was not, as it turned out, a happy one. For this was Captain Marion Perry's busy day too. While Cape Codders and summer people alike were jammed on Town Hill to see a President of the United States, the skipper was down at the wharf, checking over some requirements of new gear and rigging for the **Rose Dorothea**.

A messenger who called that afternoon at the Perry home was told that the captain was still down at the wharf. And when he finally located the captain and recited the invitation from the President, it was while several complex problems in strain and draw and chafe were being worked over. The messenger waited, decided the captain hadn't heard him, and recited the whole thing again, a little louder. Suddenly the captain bit through the pencil he was chewing, and at the same time dropped a couple of sheets of paper, which were wafted lightly down in the space between the wharf and the side of the vessel. Then he turned upon his annoy.

"All right, all right! Tell the President if he wants to see me, he knows where he can find me!"

The story got around, of course, and that night the captain "got plenty hell" from **Rose Dorothea**. Did he realize what he'd done? Was that any way to treat the President of the United States? How would he like it if he were President, and a great sea captain had just won a big race and . . .

And on and on, during all of which the captain sat meekly enough, silent, abashed. He was too embarrassed to go to the Odd Fellows' Hall that night to hear the President's speech to the fishermen. No, he couldn't do that. But he kissed **Rose Dorothea** and told her he'd write a letter to try and make it up with President Roosevelt.

During the next two days, while riggers were at work on the **Rose Dorothea**, the captain knuckled down with pencil and paper, then had the following edited and typed out for him:

Provincetown, Mass.  
August 23, 1907

To Theodore Roosevelt  
President of the United States  
Washington, D.C.

Honored Sir:—

A report is current that you said to the fishermen assembled in Odd Fellows' Hall, at Provincetown, Tuesday, Aug. 20: "Mr. Connolly has said that it was a sacrifice to meet you. It is no sacrifice. On the other hand, I am glad of the opportunity of seeing you. I would like to go out on the Banks to have a chance to talk to you."

As master and part owner of the trawling schooner **Rose Dorothea** of Provincetown—the craft which won the Lipton Cup in the Fishermen's race, off Boston, Aug. 1st—I cordially invite you to be my guest on that schooner during a trip to the fishing banks, the date of departure from port to be of your own selecting.

Speaking for myself and crew, we shall be glad to have you with us; and we will do our level best to make your stay on board ship both pleasant and profitable.

Yours, with respect,  
Marion Augustine Perry

Mr. Roosevelt couldn't go. But for once, Rose Dorothea had guessed wrong. For when it got into the newspapers that Captain Perry had "stood up" the President of the United States, she read:

President Roosevelt was somewhat shocked but inwardly pleased when the messenger returned to inform him that the Provincetown sea captain had declared, "If he wants to see me he knows where he can find me."

\* \* \*



A half-scale model of the **Rose Dorothea** is now under construction at the Provincetown Heritage Museum.

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## THE PROVINCETOWN PLAYERS AND OTHER GROUPS

by Joel O'Brien

In the summer of 1915 Fate decreed that a small group of people which just happened to be in Provincetown would change the course of American theater. It would be taken out of its Victorian heritage and pointed down the road of realism.

The group was comprised of Susan Glaspell, already a well-known writer; her husband George Cram Cook, known to one and all as Jig; Hutch Hapgood and his wife Neith Boyce, both writers; short story writer Wilbur Daniel Steele and his wife; sculptor William Zorach looming large as his works; Bror Nordfelt the artist; designer Robert Edmond Jones; my father, Joe O'Brien, and my mother Mary Heaton Vorse, both writers. Among others were Teddy Ballantine, a professional actor, and his handsome wife, Stella.

In talking around a picnic fire on the beach one evening they discussed the possibility of putting on their own plays for their own amusement just to see how they looked. This casual start grew with the group's enthusiasm as each one became more and more immersed in the project.

Lewis' Wharf, which my mother and father had recently bought in Provincetown's east end, became the home of what they called the Provincetown Players. A large abandoned fish shed at the wharf's end, with a huge sliding door at the back was commandeered. Nets, old fish barrels, sails and a couple of old dories were moved out and the pioneers started the task of cleaning up and constructing a stage.

As my mother wrote in her book **Time and the Town**:

"The fishhouse was a hundred feet long and fifty feet wide. It had a dark, weathered look, and around the piles the waves always lapped except at extreme low tide. There was a huge door on rollers at the side and another at the end which made it possible to use the bay as a backdrop. The planks were wide and one could look through the cracks at the water. The color of the big beams and planks was rich with age.

"We dragged out the boats and nets which still stood there. We all made contributions to buy lumber for seats and fittings. We made the seats of planks put on sawhorses and kegs. We ransacked our houses for costumes and painted our own scenery. Our first curtain was a green curtain my mother had made for me for "theatricals" in our attic in Amherst. Out of these odds and ends we made a theater, which was to have such unsuspected and far-reaching effects beyond the borders of Provincetown.

"The night for the first performance came. Four people stood in the wings with lamps in their hands to light the stage. Lanterns with tin reflectors were placed before the stage like old footlights. Four people stood beside the lamp bearers with shovels and sand in case of fire, and with these lights the fishhouse took on depth and mystery."

"I sat in the audience on the hard bench, watching the performance, hardly believing what we had done. The theater was full of enthusiastic people—a creative audience. In spite of its raining in torrents, everyone had come down the dark wharf lighted here and there by a lantern. People had leaned their umbrellas against one of the big timbers which supported the roof. I noticed an umbrella stirred, then slowly slid down an enormous knothole to the sand

thirty feet below. With the stealth of eels, other umbrellas went down the knothole to join their fellows under the wharf.

"The dark interior, the laughing audience, the little stage with its spirited performance, and the absconding umbrellas are all part of the memory of the first night of the Provincetown Players."

It was a huge success and the group grew even more enthusiastic. And no one was more ecstatic about their maiden effort than Jig Cook, always a leading force in the group. Broad, handsome-faced Jig with his prematurely grey hair and shining energy, was always invoking the artistic glories that were Greece. "One man cannot possibly produce drama," he wrote after that first intoxicating season on the wharf. "True drama is born only of one feeling animating all members of the clan." And that had been largely true. For two seasons it turned out to be a time of true genesis, pure creativity. The Provincetown Players were wholly a community effort: members of the Players wrote the plays, directed them, produced them, designed and built the sets, and ultimately were the actors and the audience. Almost a reflection of Jig's dream and vision. It was Provincetown instead of Athens but it had an undeniable glory.

The second season, 1916, the Players grew in size as more talent was attracted to them. Among the newcomers were writer-poet Harry Kemp and his lovely red-haired wife Mary Pyne, journalist John Reed, whose enthusiasm almost matched that of Jig Cook, and actor Freddy Burt.

Always on the lookout for new material, Susan Glaspell one day saw an old friend who had just come off the Boston boat. It was Terry Carlin, an old anarchist. They talked, and she asked, "Terry, haven't you a play we can read?"

"No," said Terry, "I don't write. I just think and talk. But the young fella who came with me has a whole trunk full of plays."

It turned out the manuscripts referred to were in a box labelled "Magic Yeast" and the "young fella" was a slight, dark, handsome young man named Eugene O'Neill. At nine that night he turned up at the Cooks with the script of **Bound East for Cardiff**, and nervously left the room as it was read aloud. When the reading was over, the Players knew there was a presence among them.

**Bound East for Cardiff** was given its world premiere on Friday, July 28th. The big sliding door beyond the stage was open to the sea, and fog had rolled in from the harbor, just as the script had called for. And with the fog came the melancholy sound of the foghorns on Long Point and Wood End. The tide was in and washing against the pilings beneath the improvised theater. **Bound East for Cardiff** would never again be produced under such magical conditions.

Nineteen original plays were produced that summer, six of them by O'Neill.

After the 1916 season was over, the Players moved to New York into a renovated barn at 133 MacDougal Street in the Village. There was a ring for tying horses on one of the big double doors facing MacDougal Street, beside which Jack Reed etched, "Here Pegasus was hitched."

In 1921 large ice floes in the Harbor took away what was left of Lewis' Wharf. Fire the previous year had already destroyed the big fish shed which had given O'Neill to the world.

Although the Provincetown Players moved to New York after only two seasons in Provincetown, the Cape End was to be Eugene O'Neill's summer haunt for a number of years through most of the twenties. In 1919 he and his wife, Agnes Boulton, bought the abandoned Life Saving Station at Peaked Hill overlooking the Atlantic shores of North Truro and made it their home. O'Neill loved that long sweep of beach and had spent much time there, saying to Agnes,

"This is the house you and I should have. We would live here like seagulls."

Often during those summers my mother and I would walk over the dunes to visit the O'Neills. Sometimes while the adults were busy talking I would babysit Oona and on other occasions baby Sean. One time we arrived at the Peaked Hill Bar home to find that Gene had built himself a huge, floating chair with broad arms on which he could put his papers and write while he floated with the tide. He was a strong swimmer and the sight, sound, and feel of the sea nurtured this brooding man.

After chatting for half an hour or so, Mother looked around and said, "Where's Joe?" After a moment O'Neill pointed out to sea. Joe had launched the chair and was happily floating on the outgoing tide a quarter of a mile from shore.

The playwright was not amused at the unscheduled rescue he performed of both passenger and chair.

It wasn't until 1923 that Provincetown was to have another theater. In August of that year Mary Bicknell, actress and producer, started the Wharf Players in the west end of Town. The theater was well-constructed with a good stage and lights, a large scene shop and dressing rooms. Even a public relations director. The first bill was composed of four one-act plays (one by Harry Kemp) directed by Frank Shay. Shay, and later Kemp, were to open the Barnstormers Theater on Bradford Street for a few seasons in opposition to the Wharf Players. And they were a raucous group in contrast to the Wharf Players, who some felt were on the ascetic side.

After 1925 the Wharf Theater changed hands several times and in 1940 it was destroyed by a hurricane.

That same summer the gracious and lovely actress Catherine Huntington opened a new theater in a large studio on a wharf owned by artist Henry Pfeiffer. With her in the venture was Edwin Pettit and Virginia Thoms. They were to run the Provincetown Playhouse on the Wharf until 1973. And in that year it was taken over by Adele and Lester Heller. In the back of that year's program, Adele Heller wrote, "The Playhouse will continue to serve both as an artistic and community resource. Each season we will be presenting plays of an experimental nature, both old and new, with a long-range goal that emphasizes the production of new works of merit—a concept which follows directly in the Provincetown-O'Neill tradition."

That tradition was violently and sadly interrupted when, in the spring of 1977, the Playhouse on the Wharf was burned to the ground by vandals, engulfing too the Green Room filled with irreplaceable photographs and memorabilia of the original founders of the Provincetown Players. The Hellers, who had already contracted for their summer schedule, moved the activities into the Town Hall auditorium. In 1978 and '79, however, they suspended all summer theater activities while work and plans go forward on the new Playhouse on the Wharf. This will be a Cape-style building rising on the location of the old one, designed especially for all theater needs. The doors will open summer 1981.

One should not end this recital without mentioning the Provincetown Theater Group, a band of gifted amateurs who, while seeking a permanent location, produce plays during the winter months in various town locations, with great flair and gusto. And curiously, they are probably closer than any to the thrust of the original Provincetown Players. Because, here again, it is totally a community effort.



## FACTUAL FILLERS

It was the custom in many small towns throughout the country that every third house at least had a small chickenyard. In this respect, Provincetown was no different from any other community of similar size. As in every other community, the chickens sometimes got loose and strayed onto other properties. As a general rule, a stray hen was regarded as either a matter of fact or merely a minor annoyance. James Mayo, on the other hand, really hated chickens. He posted a sign on his front lawn which read, "HENS TAKE NOTICE! IF THEY ARE FOUND TRESPASSING THEIR OWNERS WILL BE PERSECUTED".

\* \* \*

Back in 1908 Frederick Francis, a barber by profession, kept several hives of bees in his back yard. It was his hobby. It also provided him with some extra pocket money as he sold the product of his bees in his barbershop. To that end he had a sign advertising his wares in the window. It always puzzled him that strangers passing by his shop would stop and read his sign and start to laugh. The sign read, "HONEY IN THE COMB".

\* \* \*

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## STEAMING TO PROVINCETOWN

by Craig Little

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This story is generally credited to Katharine Crosby, who included a version of it in her book, *Blue-Water Men and Other Cape Codders*. She herself had her first automobile ride in a Stanley Steamer, small bicycle-tired cars usually painted red, and had first-hand knowledge of the discomfort suffered by Ayling on his more than 100-mile round trip.

Years ago Cape Cod had some of the worst roads in New England, roads that consisted of little more than sandy ruts tracing old Indian trails, detouring natural obstacles like rocks and stumps. If a hill was steep, then the road climbing it was steep as well. Not long after the turn of the century, the summer of 1901, Charles L. Ayling decided to brave those roads with his Stanley Steamer in order to be the driver of the first automobile to enter Provincetown. A road in name may not be the same thing as a road in fact, as Ayling learned.

Ayling had already driven his Steamer from his home in Centerville as far as Eastham, and decided to keep going as far as the end of the Cape. He and the friend accompanying him had brought along their lunch and an extra can of gasoline, since there were no gas stations then on the King's Highway, nor for that matter, was there much of a King's Highway . . .

Ayling's car was capable, under ideal conditions, of making 35 miles per hour, although conditions on this trip were hardly ideal. His actual speed was not greater than 15 mph. The Steamer usually had power for a short spurt on a hill, although the car had a tendency to tire easily.

Word spread ahead of Ayling, and crowds turned out to watch for the car, which had to stop in almost every village to replenish its water supply from horse watering troughs. People all cautioned Ayling that he'd never make it and said that if his car didn't blow up then surely it would bog down. They had a point. The ruts in the roads were geared to wide-axled Cape carts, buggies and wagons that had to labor themselves to make any headway on the sandy paths. All of the Cape's rolling stock had a wider spread than mainland vehicles, and the wheels were also wider. The Steamer's fragile tires were often scrabbling in and out of deep ruts, one side several inches higher than the other.

Only in the villages was there anything resembling a packed surface road. In between there were long stretches of what Ayling referred to as "dead sand, without any bottom to it." The Steamer's tires were smooth-treaded, thin, almost like bicycle wheels. Punctures and blow-outs occurred with annoying frequency, and the operator had to do his own repair work en route. Often, in order to get past horses, Ayling's friend had to get out of the Steamer and hold the horse's head until Ayling could steer the car by him.

It was getting stuck in the sand that slowed the trip most. They averaged about a stop per mile on the trip, more past Eastham, to free the car from sand. They had to go into the brush and cut branches of scrub pine to place under the wheels in order to get some traction. It was better to cut a fresh supply each time it was necessary, since collecting the already-used branches would have meant making another stop to pick them up.

In Truro they finally encountered hills of some size and it took more than branches to keep them going. They had to climb down to push, then do some quick footwork to get aboard again once the car picked up speed. Ayling and his fellow traveler had to struggle with the steering all the way, since one side of the car was usually higher than the other, up out of the rut.

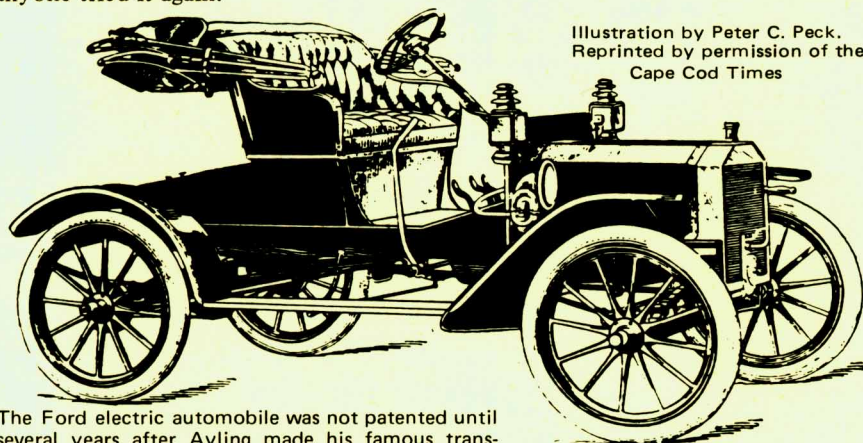
They finally arrived in Provincetown at dusk, having started from Centerville at dawn that morning. The two men were more winded than the Stanley Steamer and they decided to find a place to spend the night. As in the other towns, news of their approach had spread ahead of them, and the town crier met them with bell clanging. He preceded them into town, calling for people to witness the strange sight and also keep the street clear of horses and teams to minimize the possibility of damage. A crowd collected and followed the car at a respectful distance.

Ayling and his friend headed for the old Gifford House Hotel at the head of Carver Street next to the town's upper road. The Steamer chugged along Commercial Street until it reached the foot of Carver Street, as steep today as it was then, and Ayling had some second thoughts about the success of his trip.

The crowd that had followed pushed nearer to the automobile and told Ayling and his friend that they wouldn't make it, that they would do better to hire a couple of horses to tow them up the steep incline. But the Steamer was good for one last spurt and dashed up the hill in a cloud of sandy dust. The hotel owner, however, refused to let them park the car near his establishment, fearing it might explode during the night, taking the hotel with it. The owners of neighboring barns felt the same way. Finally, Ayling located an old barn in a field behind the town and parked his car there for the night.

The next morning Ayling and his passenger scoured the town in search of gasoline. They still had a little left, but not enough to get them back to Centerville. At the pharmacy they managed to buy all the druggist had, one gallon. At the paint store they bought the entire supply, three gallons. They were told they now had all there was in town.

The return trip was the same as the trip down, only in reverse. There were the same stops, the same crowds, the same occurrences with one exception: nobody told them it couldn't be done, but it was to be more than a year before anyone tried it again.



The Ford electric automobile was not patented until several years after Ayling made his famous trans-Cape tour. This model dates from 1907 and bears structural similarities to the Stanley Steamer.

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## THE LONG POINT SETTLEMENT

by Claude Jensen

In the early 1800's fish were abundant in Provincetown Harbor and Cape Cod Bay. Since the people lived primarily by fishing, the nearness to the fishing grounds induced many of the fishermen to build their homes on Long Point, the narrow sandy spit of land at the extreme tip of Cape Cod.

The first house was constructed and occupied in November 1818. Others soon followed so that within the next thirty years, a good-sized colony grew up there with a population of approximately 200 inhabitants.

There was a total of thirty-eight dwellings each with its trap shed or "store" as it was called. There were two salt works with windmills for pumping the sea water into evaporating troughs. There was also one wharf which had facilities for trying out whale oil. All provisions, such as food and fuel, had to be brought over from Provincetown by boat or wagon. Rain water was collected in barrels. Long Point light was built in 1826 and was used for a school until a building was erected in 1846.

Around 1850 the fish migrated to other regions so that the fishermen had to travel greater distances to obtain their catches. Their homes on Long Point now offered little advantage and, one by one, the houses were put on scows and rafted across the harbor to Provincetown. The last one was moved in 1867 making the life span of the settlement about fifty years. Most of the houses are located in the west end of Provincetown. Each has been marked with a blue and white plaque. There is little similarity between the houses that were floated over to Provincetown and the "mansions" today, as they have been remodeled, rebuilt and added to. The identity of most of the houses that came over from the Point has been confirmed. There are a few cases where the original ownership is uncertain but the origin is definite.

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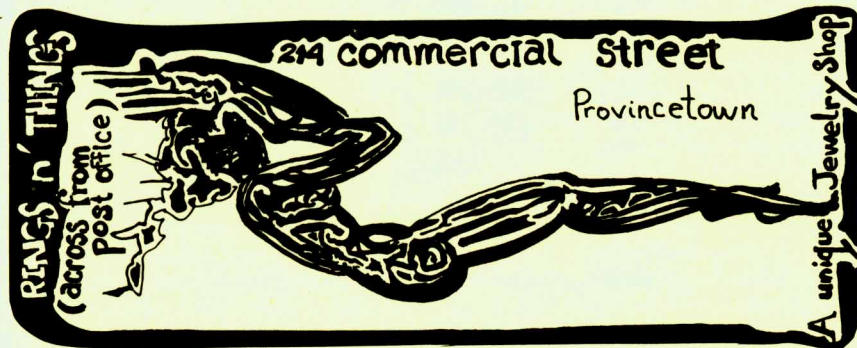
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## NANCY

by Heaton Vorse

Elsewhere this volume contains the story told by George Washington Reddie of the frightful sea serpent that chased him up a tree. The tale is of doubtful authenticity. This is the story of a very real monster named Nancy. Nancy was a dappled gray mare that served at the Peaked Hill Bars Life Saving Station between the years of 1895 and 1910.

Before the Cape Cod Canal was cut there was a line of Life Saving Stations strung all along the seaward side of the Cape from Wood End to Monomoy. Each of them stabled a horse whose duty it was to pull the surf boat in its wheeled cradle from the building in which it was housed across the beach and to the edge of the sea every time there was a wreck. Such was Nancy's job. She came to the Bars when she was five years of age, was in service for fifteen years, and lived out her life on a government pension for an additional seven. So Nancy, as a horse, was amazing on the basis of longevity alone.

But the length of Nancy's life was among the least remarkable things about her. Nancy was huge. The stable provided for her at the Station was ample for even a large draft horse. Nancy couldn't stoop down far enough to get in the door. So Nancy roamed the dunes between High Head and Herring Cove and lay down on the sands wherever she might find herself to be at sun down.

She browsed on the grasses and shrubs that grew in the semi-cultivated cranberry bogs that were scattered at random among the sand hills (many of them are still to be found there) often munching on the berries themselves. Once a day she would check in at the Station to be counted and get a bucket of bran and a quart of oats.

Since she was not required to travel on a paved road she was never shod. And because she walked and worked on the dunes and the beaches, her hooves splayed out until each was the size of a tea tray. Anyone new to the dunes and who didn't know about the big mare would gaze at her tracks in the sand utterly confused, thinking, perhaps, that a saurus of some kind had strayed from the Jurassic era and come to live on the sand hills back of Provincetown. If the person were lucky enough to see Nancy herself, confusion would be compounded by delight. Nancy was a merry horse. She loved the dunes and found fun there. She'd climb a beachgrass-covered mound to its highest point. Then she'd squat on her backside and skid down the slope in a cloud of sand, using her front hooves to steer with. It was a beautiful thing to watch. At the foot of the hill she would roll over once and then rise majestically to her feet, sublime in the dignity of sheer size. Were it not for the broad slash in the sand down the side of the dune, it was hard to believe at such times that what one had just seen was not some sort of hallucination.

As a boy I found in the trackless dunes an area of fanciful adventure. (They are no longer quite so trackless but I know and remember them so well that I still have a few hideouts. But that's another story.) Here I could have long discussions with all my other schizophrenic selves without the intrusion of reality. On these travels to Nepenthe I often came across Nancy coasting down one or another slope. I would wait until she saw me and came in my direction. It wasn't fear exactly, but my heart always beat quite a bit faster when her huge, box-shaped head towered over mine. I would then present her with the apple



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and the two lumps of sugar I carried in my pocket for just such an occasion. She would honor my gift by accepting it and then saunter regally away.

Nancy at play was astounding and almost unbelievable. Nancy at work was magnificent and totally unbelievable.

At the turn of the century, as I said before, there was a Life Saving Station every three or four miles all along the back side of the Cape. Each Station had a kitchen, a large living-dining room, accommodations for from six to ten men and a boat room. The twenty foot double-ended surf boat was stored in a cradle built onto a four-wheeled frame. Each wheel was a yard and a half in diameter and had a rim four inches wide so that it wouldn't sink too far into the sand. Most of the stations were well inland. A carriage track of sorts led down to the beach to provide passage for the boat and its cradle. Nearby to the station was a stable that sheltered the horse whose only duty was to pull the boat from the station to the beach in case of a ship-wreck. Here the life savers manhandled the boat out of the cradle and launched it through the surf generally getting drenched to the skin in the process. Then, sopping wet, they would row up to a mile through the storm in often sub-freezing weather to wherever some unfortunate vessel had become stranded on one of the bars that rim the shore from the Race to Monomoy.

At Peaked Hill Bars Station where Nancy worked, the situation was somewhat different. The building was in a slight depression between two of the hills that gave the location its name. Because of those same hills the station was built close to the beach so that a clear view of the sea could be had from its look-out atop the Station. The road from the boat room to the beach was forty to seventy feet long depending on whether the last storm had been an easterly or had blown up from the west. The track ended at the edge of a bluff twenty feet above mean high tide. Since each passing wind altered the face of the bluff, no sort of permanent roadway could be built adown it.

As was previously mentioned, Nancy roamed the dunes at will. No one but Nancy herself knew where she might be at any given time. However, the mare had a built-in barometer and when it started dropping she headed for home. These being the years before long-range weather forecasting, the look-out at Peaked Hill got his first inkling that a gale was in the making when he saw the big horse plodding across the dune in the direction of the Station. From then on she'd wander around within a couple of hundred yards of the building until the storm was over.

Should a ship come ashore or if the Captain called a drill, one of the surfmen would go to the landside door and ring a dinner bell. Nancy would come galloping-galloping, mind you, just try running fifty feet along a sand dune-to the North boat room opening. Here she would back into the sheaves of the wagon. One of the crew men had contrived a system of lines that suspended her harness from the roof. It fell upon her back when a down-haul was uncleaned. Two men secured her collar. Two others laced the traces to the wagon. She carried no bridle. In less than twenty seconds the captain would shout, "Go." Nancy would charge out the door, her big hooves throwing a cloud of sand as she gained as much momentum as she could before reaching the edge of the bluff. Now she would make a quarter turn, then half falling, half sliding, flailing her big feet and pulling hard all the way, she drew the wagon so swiftly to the beach it had no chance to turn over. Nancy, boat and cradle would reach the comparative level of the shore right side up.

That was Act One!

The crew scrambled aboard the wagon and at a shout from the captain the

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horse turned in the direction of the wreck. The horse might surge up around her up to her belly, but Nancy trotted right along pulling the two and a half tons of cradle, surf boat, and seven-man crew along the beach until they reached the point on the shore closest to the stricken vessel.

That was Act Two!

At another call from the Captain, Nancy would turn and charge right into the rolling, roaring breakers hauling the cradle after her, swimming, crawling, plunging, getting forward in any fashion until the surf boat floated clear. The bowman would yank a lanyard that released her from the harness. A comparatively dry and rested crew would row some few hundred yards on their life saving mission and a weary Nancy would loll out on the beach and rest awhile till she was needed to pull the boat, cradle, crew, and often the survivors of the wreck, back to the Station.

Curtain! But this drama deserves an epilogue.

There is no telling of how many people Nancy helped to rescue by her mad scramble down the side of a dune and trot along a stormy beach. The best of records were not kept in those times. But on an occasion where a single wave can reduce a ship to a disorderly mass of drifting timbers, every second is of value. Those that were saved by Nancy's exploits were considerable.

Nancy was already twenty years old when the Cape Cod Canal was built. With fewer sailing boats in service and a short-cut up the coast, there weren't as many wrecks along the backside as in previous years.

There was some talk of putting Nancy out to pasture on a government-owned farm in the Kentucky blue-grass country. It was where old cavalry horses spent their last years.

But the Life Savers shook their heads at the idea. Nancy wouldn't be happy in a grassy field inland. She loved the dunes and the ocean. So with a bit of connivance in high and low places, a fictitious James Smith, Surfman 1st class, retired, received a government check at the post office every month. An active surfman collected the check, cashed it at the feed store and saw to it that the big horse got her bucket of bran and quart of oats regularly. Then, one day, Nancy didn't show up for her grain. A search party was sent out and found her.

She was buried in the dunes where she fell. The Captain of the Peaked Hill Bar Station read a simple eulogy to the two score off-duty Life Savers from all over Cape Cod who had come for the funeral.

That was a long time ago. There are only a few of us left that knew and can remember Nancy. But now, when we look out over the ocean and see a cloud that looks something like a dappled gray mare at full gallop we smile and think, "There's Nancy taking care of her fishermen."



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## RHYME OF PROVINCETOWN NICKNAMES

by Harry Kemp

Printed in 1954 in celebration of the First American Channel Swim.  
Each copy signed by Harry Kemp, with a seagull's feather.  
(Reprinted by permission of Sonny Tasha.)

The Poet of the Dunes, as Harry Kemp called himself, wasn't spending much time in his dune shack in the 1950's when he wrote the "Rhyme of Provincetown Nicknames." He would go there for the summer but would move back into town come fall, wintering over in a room in the East End lent to him by a friend. He was as hard-up as ever, stuffing his pockets with food at parties to add to the soup he always kept simmering on the back of the stove. One early summer visitor describes Kemp dishing out the soup and finding in it, much to his delight, a leather glove he'd been looking for all winter.

Though physically debilitated, he was as much of a "drunken old cuss" as ever and would put aside the bottle only for brief periods and only at the urging of friends when his legs were giving him too much trouble. "God damn it," he would say, "while I'm alive, I'm going to live!" He had ruined his legs in the late 40's when he marched to Washington to protest the atom bomb tests taking place at that time. The fall-out from those tests allegedly prevented eggs from hatching on the Cape, and people were beginning to be concerned about other possible effects.

Always a sun worshipper, he would spend most of the day in the center of town, sitting on the Liars' Bench, swapping stories with anyone who came along and admonishing the younger generation against their overuse of foul language. He dressed as eccentrically as ever, always wore a sweater or jacket with a tie, even though he'd usually slept in them, but no shoes. He said they hurt him and he didn't wear his false teeth either for the same reason, except for photographs.

He was still as much of a publicity hound as ever, staging his re-enactment of the Pilgrim's first landing every November. The ceremony, commemorating the first washday, always started at noon "come Hell or high water" so people would know when to gather, and gather they did around the Provincetown Inn to watch the scraggly band cross the mud flats from below Carpenter's fence, dressed in ragged costumes and burlap leggings, the creation of Sonny Tasha, Kemp's close friend and supporter during his last years.

There were those at Town Hall who would have preferred buckle shoes and Pilgrim hats, and there was always a lot of laughter as the group marched through town, the poet out in front, but then people had always laughed at Harry Kemp. Why a man born and bred in Ohio should have had such strong feelings about the early English settlers and their first landing is open to conjecture. There were Kemps in Provincetown in the early days but whether the poet was related to them is not known. It was probably just his love of his adopted hometown and his desire to set the record straight where Plymouth was concerned.

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What Kemp was living on during this period couldn't have been much, a few royalties from his books. He had no real family either, and no children though he'd been married twice. He did have good friends though, ones who looked after him to the end. When he lost his room in town and was headed back out to the dune shack late in the fall, one of these friends, Sonny Tasha, built him a little house on her land. It's still there today. She built it facing east and west so he could enjoy the sunrises and sunsets he loved so much, and there was a bench out back for sunbathing in the nude.

He became close to Father Duart, Pastor of St. Peter's, during this period and even went so far as to get himself baptised, though he had always been very independent when it came to religion. The baptism resulted in quite a controversy after his death in August 1960. The hearse carrying his body to Boston to be cremated was called back unsuccessfully by those who wanted him buried in St. Peter's cemetery.

He left all of his possessions, his books and copyrights, and the shack on the dune, to Sonny Tasha. Mrs. Tasha has built a replica of the dune shack, using the sand-blasted shingles from the original, which is on permanent exhibit at the Provincetown Heritage Museum.



Provincetown inherited from its people of Portuguese descent the droll custom of attaching nicknames to their neighbors, odd nicknames which replaced surnames, and were then used forever after until the real name was all but forgotten. Whole families went by a nickname, and the name was even passed down from one generation to the next. Many of these nicknames were familiar to Harry Kemp.

There's a Town on the Cape like a fish-head in shape  
Whose people don't deck out their feelings with crape:  
They laugh, they cavort, they drink beer, they rejoice;  
And the day has its sounds, and the night has its voice  
Filled with murmur of waves as the sky is with stars;  
While New Englanders, Portuguese, Summerers, Tars  
Go up and go down, in and out of its bars;  
And the winds and the tides and the changes of weather  
Bring them all in the meshes- living-together;  
There's excitement and discord that merges in concord;  
The moods of their hearts don't strike always on one chord:  
Quite unlike the angels of whom Milton sings,  
The Provincetown people don't only have wings!—

Here the Pilgrims first landed and hung out their wash  
(Though they went further up, for the winter to hole-in),  
And that famed Rock at Plymouth is History's bosh:  
And Provincetown's glory by Plymouth was stolen! . . .



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And here the Contention itself is the Prize,  
And Song is its own reward, bright in the heart,  
Sitting close to the life, not a-far and apart!—  
The richest Reward is his Dream, to the Dreamer;  
New continents open to him; but the Schemer  
With poor, selfish motives of ill-conceived gain  
Inherits a darkness that grows on his brain,—  
Over-reaching no one in the world but himself;  
Like sand from his hand slips his ill-gotten pelf!

O, the sight, as you come to this notable Town,  
Stands forth, of itself, as a thing of renown:  
First, the Harbour's fine sweep takes the rapture-filled eye;  
There the Monument stands with its height in the sky;  
There the fisher-fleet dances, so brave and so gay,  
Through the crescent-shaped waters of Provincetown Bay:  
There goes KAKKI'S boat plowing, and ZORA THE FOX  
OF THE SEA, packs his haddock in box upon box . . .

With the sun shining bright and the birds at their tunes  
BUSHY BILL hitched his team and brought home to the dunes  
RUBBER LEGS, the lone Poet, who was glad to be back  
To this fine Fisher-Town and his oceanside shack,  
Where, when failure impends and all things run a-wry,  
He still has his ocean, his dunes, and his sky;  
Steak, a seldom-filled wish, quite content with a fish  
That he gets at the wharves for his sole evening dish . . .

Now, with more friendly feeling than any good reason  
Townsmen say of their Poet he "brings in the Season,"  
As he wanders the streets, greeting friends, right and left,  
So pleased to be back half of wits he's bereft:  
Each woman seems sister, each man seems a brother  
As he roams from one end of the Town to the other,  
Up-Along, Down-Along; low of heart or with fun,—  
Each girl like a daughter, each lad like a son;  
O, whether there's sunshine, or fog, or it rains,  
This warm human kinship enkindles his veins;  
His welcome from all sides prolonged and profuse is,—  
And half of the names are nicknames that he uses,  
Strange names that have never been put in a book,  
From PEECEE and JIGGSUM to bland FRIDAY COOK.  
Here in Provincetown nicknames are frequent and rife:  
If you have an odd way or you fight with your wife  
You'll be nicked with a name that will dent you for life!—  
BOOZY doesn't touch liquor; WINE DROP, once begin it,  
Can gulp down a quart on the tick of the minute . . .

I don't think there's anything small-time or mean  
In these nicknames, though one or two touch the obscene:  
Then, hurray, for each nickname!—not a dead, but a quick name

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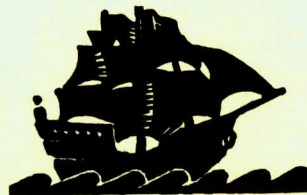
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That nicks with the character everyone named;  
Not mine the invention, nor ill my intention,—  
If any blame falls, the whole Town is to blame;  
So deep roots each nickname, so wide spreads its fame,  
There are many but known to their friends by the same:  
When it comes to the point, I would have the world know it,  
At hitting off nicknames the Town is the Poet . . .

As I said, there are nicknames I must not retail  
For dread of a lawsuit or session in jail  
Because they are ribald, though wholesome and hale:  
Which when spoken bring grins and no Jot of alarm,  
But in plain-witnessed print might breed malice or harm.

Once all names were nicknames: ADAM, formed without birth  
From a woman, in Eden,— was really RED EARTH;  
and EVE who was given to RED EARTH for wife,—  
EVE is CHAVAH, in Hebrew, which means, simply, "LIFE."  
So when men, to this day, say "MY LIFE," to their wives,  
That will show you how long ancient usage survives.  
SMITH once meant THE BLACKSMITH; FLETCHER feathered the arrow,  
And BARROW pushed hard at the loaded wheelbarrow . . .  
Nicknames trace a lineage beyond accolades:  
Before them the boast of nobility fades . . .

For a lover of names none surpassed the Old Roman;  
He had praenomen, nomen, cognomen, agnomen:  
The first was his personal name; the second,  
The name of his gens or his house; the third reckoned  
His immediate family; and sometimes a fourth,  
The agnomen, was added, for some deed of worth.  
In his family name oft a nickname was hidden  
Like a pearl in an oyster, lost gem in a midden:  
In Marcus Tullius Cicero we see,  
Interpreted rightly, Mark Tully SMALL PEA,  
While Ovid THE NOSEY, was Ovidius NASO,—  
At least all the Latin Lexicons say so . . .

William Shakespeare once asked what there was in a name:  
SHAIKS couldn't say "Shakespeare," whence came his nickname;  
FLINKS couldn't learn "Sphinx" when they had him in school,—  
Yet he learned how to live by good-fellowship's rule . . .  
HOWDY, HOT TIME, SWEET KEES! Hello COLONEL KORN!

Now some of these nicknames are family-borne,  
Where children inherit each nickname in turn.  
the GOD-DAMNS, JAZZ-GARTERS, and TIN-DRAWERS inherit,  
Through the dash of their nicknames, a keen, jolly spirit . . .

Does GLOBE equal FATS with the meat on his slats,  
or HOTEL MAN BOSSY found eating at Pat's?  
Or BARTENDER-PAINTER who comes riding high  
With his heavily braceleted arms in the sky? . . .

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No, that is not thunder a-bumbling and rumbling:  
That is WILD HUNTER Frank whose shots send the ducks tumbling:  
CAPTAIN HARRY and he, if the weather be harsh,  
Or sunny, go gunning on dune, over marsh . . .

Brave SAM CENTER-BOARD, when he reached T’other Shore,  
Was disgusted to find CHARON sculled with an oar.  
(In the Greek, by the way, CHARON means “BURNING-EYED,”  
From the way that he glared at the ones who had died,—  
Souls who thronged by the Styx for that grim ferry-ride.)

Now, I might as well write here, not keeping till later,  
For the using of nicknames the chief raison d’etre:  
Given thirty-odd Jameses whose last name is Doane,  
How then can one James from the other be shown,  
With both names in common?—to the accurate force  
And distinction of nicknames our tongues find recourse . . .  
We have Manuels here, we have Manuels there,  
And Dutras and Silvas as thick as the air  
When SNOW wavers down from the sky everywhere:  
Hence are nicknames employed to point out Which is WHO . . .  
When fishermen, like-named, work on the same crew,  
The employment of nicknames is practical, too . . .

Frank DOC BLANEY Flores has a great voice to call  
The Selectmen to time, when they meet in Town Hall . . .  
ROW-DOWN was the Captain—JOE THE SPANIARD tells me  
Who, when out with his fishing crew, bounced on the sea,  
Called, gruff, down the forec’stle, “how many men there?”  
An echo lagged up, in response,—“Cap’n, THREE!”  
“Cap’n” shifted his quid, spitting out through the air,  
(Quick at hauling in fish, at arithmetic slow)  
“Then let HALF come on deck,—and’ the rest stop below!”

Well, who THE BLACK FLASH is who frightens the ladies  
Peeking in through windows, when not drawn the shade is,—  
If the cops ever catch him, he’ll catch more than Hades! . . .  
MARY FATS, she who never spills liquor from glasses,  
In this respect leads all the Provincetown lasses;  
SAM THE GREEK, that vociferous son-of-a-gun,  
Flips up fried potatoes and never spills one . . .

I thought DOCTOR SMILES a particular friend  
When he took me to ride with him, soon to perpend  
It was not for mere friendship’s, companionship’s sake:  
When he has any lengthier visit to make  
With some one to talk to, it keeps him awake,  
As from patient to patient he speeds, day and night . . .  
He rests when he can, but dare not sleep upright . . .  
Now to work is THE THREE BULLFROG BROTHERS’ delight,  
But JIMMY THE WORKER, he works day and night—  
And he thinks poets lazy who just sit and write . . .



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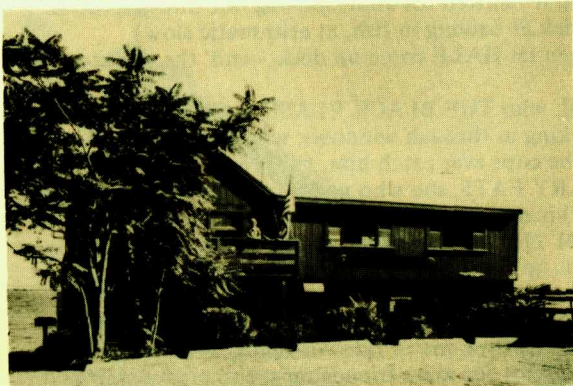
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Provincetown

So opinions are passed from one mouth to another:  
Few are critics of self, lamming into each other;  
Poets satirize landlords who won't give rent free,  
And find fault with tradesmen who show industry;  
Are themselves, in return, called "the long-haired breed,"  
And considered but fools for their rhymes and their need:  
But how dull would life be, with no one to upbraid!  
Thus the-give-and-take of existence is made;  
We would none of us care for a world without strife,  
As a fight often proves a man's love for his wife . . .  
If writers had no one to damn and indite  
Where would writers find subjects on which for to write?  
How else could the poets with rhyming proceed?—  
Why, we wouldn't have Bibles that Christians don't read.

As I saunter and visit about Provincetown  
Receiving and writing these odd nicknames down  
I find matter enough to embarrass the brain  
Of an Aesop, or Phaedrus, or sage la Fontaine . . .  
As a canvas is painted, stroke for stroke I put down,  
Like that picture of Breughel's industrious town,  
Grocer, Butcher, and Bayberry-Candle-Maker,  
Banker and Fisherman, **THREE-FINGERED BAKER**,  
The men on the wharves and the women in stores,  
As thick as the sand-fleas that hop on our shores . . .

The marriage procedures in due order met,  
New nicknames as well as new beings beget:  
When **BIG HE** went courting and wedded **BIG SHE**  
The first of their offspring was called **LITTLE HE** . . .

Now line after line I will rapidly number  
Of names most unique, **JOE DUCKS**, **BUCKET**, **CUCUMBER**,  
**FISH-FOR-FRIDAY**, **LITTLE JESUS**, **THE SAVER**, **BROOMHANDLE**,  
**HONKA** and **KONK**, **SHORKERS GLORY**, and **BLUE**,  
**DRY POD**, **WHITE MOLASSES**, **JOE CRABBY**, **CRAPOO**,  
**SPEED**, **JOCKO**, **KOBOBBLES**, **JOHNNY LIMBS**, **DR. FOO**,  
**PUMP CART**, **FANCY GARTERS**, **LITTLE HOUSE**, **MADAME WHALE**,  
**SIDE WHEELER**, **FOUR MASTER**, and **FLYING TOPSAILS**;  
**BIG BERTHA** with keen-witted eyes on the job;  
And that wonderful nickname of **UNCLE DOOR KNOB**;  
**HYSTEROCKS**, hilarious whe. sipping his beer;  
**MICKY MOUSE**, **DING DONG**, **SUNNY**, that girl of good cheer;  
**BENNY REGULAR**, **BELO**, **CAT**, **TISS**, **PIGGIE WEE**;  
**RUBE**, **JUNE**, and **WEEJUM**; **RED**, **SNONYA**, **WHOOPEE**:  
Next I swing into sight on my astrolabe  
**BLACK**, **LIGHT-FINGER**, **FOUR FINGERS**, **PEANUTS**, **BABE**;  
And, a few more to tie up the tongue of the Tripper,  
**CUSTA-NALA**, **CUSTA-RICA**, **GAR-RUPA**, **JACK-THE-RIPPER**;  
And **TUT**, for his silence so dubbed by the boys  
(King Tut lay two thousand years making no noise);  
**CUP-CAKE**, and **FLITTERS**, **JOE CRAB**, and **BUBOY**;



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Hear the children all running and shouting at play;  
See the joy on the street and the life on the bay,  
While here comes PIE-ALLEY, the bringer of mail,  
Whose steady good-humor and feet never fail . . .

There once was a chap who was brought into Court  
Whose belief in Democracy cut his case short:  
Are you guilty or not?—the Judge he demands:  
When the Prisoner asked for a showing of hands  
From the loungers there: having them vote on his case!—  
The Judge let him go, with a smile on his face,  
While from floor up to rafter exploded the laughter,  
And the man was dubbed HANDS-UP on leaving the place;  
A name which his fam'ly went by ever after,  
This fell in the days when Si Young drove his jigger:  
Despite planes and bombers I think those days bigger;  
There must have been something in that bootleg likker,  
Though the pace went far slower, it moved the wits quicker!

As full as the harbour, when storm threats, of ships,  
With nickname on nickname my Muse comes to grips:  
SOUTH WEST HARBOUR, SOUTH EAST HARBOUR, RAT,  
SHEENY and SCHANZ;

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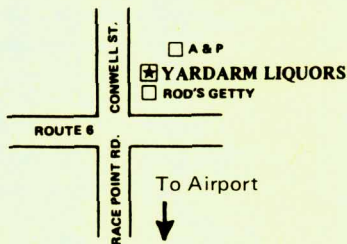
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POOPA, CHRISTMAS, DR. DALEY, PAJAMAS, and SHIEKIE.

The telephone girls, our fair Town's oral Fates,  
Will connect you by nicknames, at just the same rates:  
Ask for someone by nickname, the voice will come through  
As quick as a burst of the sun from the Blue . . .  
Now, anent the Above, I have heard a rare story  
That covers our telephone lasses with glory:  
Some one had complained their attention was lax;  
An Inspector came down to check up on the facts;  
He took over a stool; with a voice trained and low  
Like an expert who meant to efficiency show  
How to make deft connectons—snatched those ear-clasps off soon—  
Leaned back as if struck by a fist from the moon—  
“Someone on the wire just ripped out—a bad word!—  
“Someone else used a name which was really absurd!  
“It could hardly be so,—and yet certain I am!”  
“What words did they use?” “Well (pause), the first said ‘GOD DAMN,’  
“And one asked for—JAZZ GARTERS!” he rose in despair—  
“You take it up, girls, while I come up for air!”

Explanations were made. The man's face was a sight;  
For now it went red; and again it went white;  
Then he left, to report that “these girls are all right!”  
Had it been a trick rigged such as jokesters arrange?  
Anyhow, the Main Office O.K.'d our Exchange,  
Vowed our girls were right smart, handling such a melange! . . .

Here are beaches surpassing Dieppe and the Lido,  
Strands excelling the Midi since France has gone seedy;  
Here you don't have to go in full dress or tuxedo;  
Mohammedan, Bahaist, Christian, or Buddist,  
Go in slacks if you will, on “the Backside” go nudist;  
(Once some Summerers asked where the nudists resorted  
To take their sun-baths,—their landlady retorted  
With an innocent mind, “On ‘The Backside,’ of course!”  
When the dubious meaning gave laughter full force!—  
The dolts didn't know “Backside” meant where the sea,  
Far over the dunes, washes in, full and free,  
And has nothing to do with ANATOMY!)  
Wear your panties and scanties, your brief brazziere:  
If you mind your own business nobody will care.  
So enjoy both these nicknames and each day's sunny use—  
Which we set forth in rhyme to amuse not abuse;  
Till Labour Day comes, don't sit twiddling your thumbs;  
Pluck the fruit of each day as to ripeness it comes;  
Go out with our fishermen, swim in the Bay;  
See the dunes, sail the sea, drink your cocktails, be gay;  
But abjure that aloof and superior mood,—



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You will have to keep jumping to be half as good  
As the "natives" who serve you and rent you their houses  
For your holiday pastimes, flirtations, carouses;  
For our folks, they will silently measure your size—  
Who, just like their nicknames, are racy and wise!—  
To the Portuguese most of these nicknames are given . . .  
Though the Sons of New England have manfully striven,  
They sometimes forget God has music in Heaven.  
From Portugal there has come Song and Romance  
Teaching Puritan rigour and primness to dance,  
And "The Islands" have added a glow to the day  
Which else might appear too forbidding and grey:  
Here the Portuguese mingle their good, bouncing blood  
With the English Descent that forgets Robin Hood . . .

SQUASH, JUPITER, SASHWEIGHT, still the rife nicknames come:  
HARMONAKA, THE GUINEA, BUBS, BEAVER, and BUM  
WILLY ALLEY, MAX, BOOBA, BUNNY,—nothing can stop;  
HALLELUIA from hastening each day to his shop;  
KALLIFORNA, TRAM, BLOCKIE, and HAIR DRESSER FREDDIE;  
OUT-RIDER, JIMMY SHIPWRECK, and JOHNNY READY;  
VARDI, DORY PLUG, BRONK, help to swell the roll-call;  
SAND PAPER, NORTH HARWICH, DRAW BUCKET, SNOW BALL.  
Next I weave on my versicles' difficult loom  
SWEDE, SWIFTY, ROCKY, and TITTI-BOOM  
BALLERINA, whose books dance with genius replete;  
Lithe PSIWI who passes on bare, lovely feet . . .

As bicycles sometimes are built double-seated,  
As my rhythms grow heated, I've sometimes repeated,  
With a rush and a surge like to waves coming in;  
Repetition sticks close, like Original Sin;  
Yet adding up joys takes the sting out of sorrow;  
Flies biting today will be dead by tomorrow;  
But Time makes us pay when the future we borrow—  
These are catch-as-can rhymes like jiu-jitsu or judo:  
If I can't catch their meaning at times, I hope you do:  
Here's a fresh scatteration of nicknames for you:  
SCAREY JACK, ROLL-DOWN-CHALKLINE, TIMBER-LEGS,  
COCKALOO,  
JACKET, FOUL-BALL, CHINK, PSIGA: and, a-float on the Blue  
Of our sky-brimming waters, of boats not a few  
Bearing Monikers,—such as TINFLAG, RUBBER BOAT,  
That lapse through the fog to the buoys' eerie note . . .  
But to go on with Humans,—we have WBZ,  
SHERLOCK, BABY SNOOKS, BUNGO, then HARMONY,  
FROSTY, BLINIE, CHAMAKA, JOE BOBBY, BALONEY,  
HALF-A-DOLLAR, MACAQUE, CACA; there goes SMALL TONY;  
TOUGH, SPINACH: some nicknames I never may give  
Since I'm friends to their owners,—and still want to live! . . .  
While my heart still jiggs to this rocketing tune  
Let me add LUCKY, KNOCKS and CUDDY-MOON.

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### PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM



460 Commercial Street

Provincetown, Massachusetts

1914

1979

The theme not exhausted, I lay down my pen  
Having done with the nicknames of the women and men  
Who work on the wharves, in the shop and the store,  
And, living and striving, add up their lives' score,  
Till, one day or other, they sleep 'neath the sod,  
Resigning their souls to the Mercy of God! . . .

Writing rhymes turns to nothing all other delight:  
I started with daylight: I've written all night:  
The stars stand all pale in the change-waiting sky;  
The world's still asleep; one bird wakes with a cry—  
Another bird answers in drowsy reply;  
The power of the Muse for a while has foregone me.

Like laughter in Heaven the dawn breaks upon me!  
well, we had wooden sidewalks. And kerosene street lamps on  
a lamplighter who went through the town every evening lighting each  
of the shops and grocery stores opened at seven in the morning. And

### FACTUAL FILLERS

The Beachcombers, an exclusive men's club next to the Flagship Restaurant, where Provincetown men of note repair for Saturday night dinners, had a rival club back in the twenties called the Sailloft, where women artists, writers, and musicians gathered for their own exclusive activities.

\* \* \*

Reading the markers on the graves in Provincetown's oldest cemetery, one concludes, if you could survive infancy, childbirth, and the "old Devil sea", you could live to a ripe old age. Some of the stones tell poignant stories: "Sacred to the memory of Mrs. Phebe (wife of Capt. Elisha) Nickerson who died Sept. 22 1809 in her 25th year. Their infant child died Nov. 26 1809 aged 2 mos. 13 days." What a homecoming for the captain! Another marks the grave of "Sarah, wife of Simeon C. Nickerson who died July 5 1839 aged 28. Also her husband who was lost at sea in 1837 aged 28".

\* \* \*

David Stull, who lived at 472 Commercial Street in the East End during the latter half of the 19th century, was the ambergris expert of America. Whalers and fishermen brought Stull the precious chunks which they found in the whales' intestines, supposedly the indigestible residue of squids' beaks — the whales' favorite food. He would then send them off to Paris to be used in the manufacture of perfume, paying the lucky finder large sums for those days. One Nantucket sea captain reportedly received \$125,000 for a 900-pound chunk back in the 1870's. Specimens of ambergris are on display at the Cape Cod Pilgrim Memorial Museum.

\* \* \*

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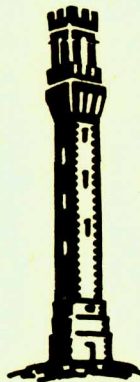
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Continued from Page 11

JOB: Do I recall correctly that there was damage to every ship in the fishing fleet?

BICKERS: I don't know about every ship but there was a lot of damage done with many of them washed up on the beach. Three vessels sought refuge by anchoring in the Cove in the west end of the Harbor and ten men who had tied themselves to the rigging froze to death. One of the ships sank and for years you could see the hulk at low tide.

JOB: Did bodies from the **Portland** come ashore on our beaches?

BICKERS: All I heard of was one woman. They either went down with the ship or were washed out to the Atlantic. There has always been a question of exactly where the **Portland** went down.

JOB: Was this considered by the Governor at the time as a disaster area?

BICKERS: I don't think they had disaster areas in those days.

JOB: Arthur, what was Provincetown like at the turn of the century?

BICKERS: Well, we had wooden sidewalks. And kerosene street lamps on poles. And a lamplighter who went through the town every evening lighting each one. Most of the shops and grocery stores opened at seven in the morning. And I remember the Union Store, where Sal's Place is now, kept open till nine o'clock in the evening.

JOB: Was Matheson's Department Store open at that time?

BICKERS: It sure was. That used to be the old school house at Long Point and was floated across the Harbor around 1860. That was the first big store Provincetown ever had.

It is recorded that even at the turn of the century Provincetown still had a fleet of 261 ships, which included bankers, coasters, and whalers. Twenty of our wharves had been lost, due mainly to the Portland Gale and the number was down to 34.

However, my mother recalls great sails in the Harbor as late as 1915. ". . . if you looked out of the window at sunrise or just before, you would see a sight of glory. The one-hundred-twenty-five-foot schooners would be getting under way. No more beautiful boats have ever been built than the great fresh fishermen. One after another would make sail until as many as twenty-five of these beauties rounded the point. They restored one's faith in man that he could conceive of anything so beautiful and so adapted to its purpose. Some authorities claim that for speed and safety they outclassed the famous clipper ships of the early days when American vessels were the wonder of the seas. Down the ages man had been striving for a vessel like this of perfect beauty and seaworthiness.

"These fine vessels bred great captains. When you think of the great captains of the fresh fishermen, Captain Marion Perry, who won the Lipton Cup, springs to one's mind. Wilbur Steele went fishing in his vessel. Men were baiting trawls by flares and a young fisherman and an old fisherman began to quarrel about whether the world was round or not. The old man shouted, 'You're uneducated and you're a son of a bitch,' and they drew knives on each other.

"Marion Perry was a big-barreled man with a short neck. He walked with a springy catlike tread and stood over the two men and shot his head at them. He didn't speak a word. The quarrel died like a lamp turned out.

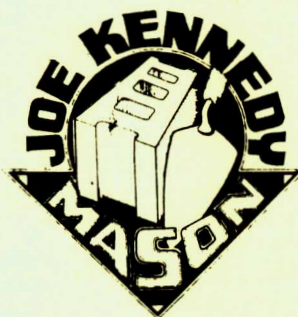
"'God,' he said to Wilbur, as he walked away, 'what'll a captain do when he can't hire nothing no more but sons of bitches and bastards! Fish to the nor'ard,' he growled, 'and them quarreling about whether the world is round or not!' He said the last in a high falsetto.

---

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"When they draw knives like that, aren't they dangerous?" asked Wilbur, who came from Colorado. 'I should think you would need a gun.'

"Marion Perry looked at him with amazement. 'Gun?' he said. 'Hell, ain't I got hands?' and he raised his two hamlike hands slowly above his head. 'At that,' he mused, 'I've a mind to chuck one of them bastards overboard anyhow.'"

Writers have come and gone in Provincetown but there has always been a solid nucleus of artists and sculptors living and working here during my lifetime and before. Most of the older group here today such as Bruce McKain, Reeves Euler and Phil Malicoat studied under Charles Hawthorne and others under Hans Hofmann, Ambrose Webster and George Elmer Browne. The list of good artists who have partaken of Provincetown's visual bounty could go on for pages. And most of them, like Richard Miller, over the years have been members of the Beachcomber Club, a male chauvinist organization which was set up long before women were given the right to vote. It was worth one's while, regardless of who was cooking the meal, to attend the Saturday meetings just to hear Miller deliver himself of his trenchant thought in the endless debate between the old school of painters and the growing contemporary group. Again I quote from **Time and the Town**.

"Perhaps the most effective voice of the old movement was that of Richard Miller. For those who liked colorful and expressive language, it was a treat to hear him. His words flowed like a river in spate, hurling to destruction the whole modern school. It was probably at that time that he earned the title of Tiger. Cubism and the abstractionists generally 'goaded him like a goblin bee that will not sate its sting.' Their indecencies haunted him even to his subconsciousness.

"Richard Miller was among the elite of the old school. A museum without a Richard Miller is hardly a museum. Burly, vigorous, impatient, with a brilliant gift of invective and a manner of speech that has the restraint of a sledge hammer, he paints delicate and beautiful pictures; lovely girls sewing, mirrored in a looking glass. While he paints loveliness he bellows like a bull walrus on the subject of the surrealists and the abstractionists."

And so it went. I think one of the highlights of Miller's career was when he painted an abstract, reportedly hung it in the Art Association upside down under an assumed name and got second prize!

The Beachcomber Club is much quieter since Richard Miller left the scene. It's also less interesting.

Provincetown is one of those chosen places in the world which is constantly being revitalized by its own surround and by the fact of its discovery year after year by people from all walks of life. And Provincetown, in turn, daily revitalizes us who would live in no other place on the face of the globe.

In her book on Provincetown my mother wrote, "When I drove around the Town in a horse-drawn accommodation, I knew that here was home, that I wanted to live here always. Nor have I changed my mind in all these years, nor for one moment wished to live anywhere else, though I have been over half the globe. I had also the sense of completion that a hither-to homeless person has on discovering home.

"If Provincetown were wiped out—my house and my Town gone—I would be as vulnerable as a hermit crab without its shell. Wherever I go I carry Provincetown around with me invisibly. And as I am, so are most of those who live here."

And to that we can only say, Amen, Mary Heaton.

# Dairy Queen

of Provincetown

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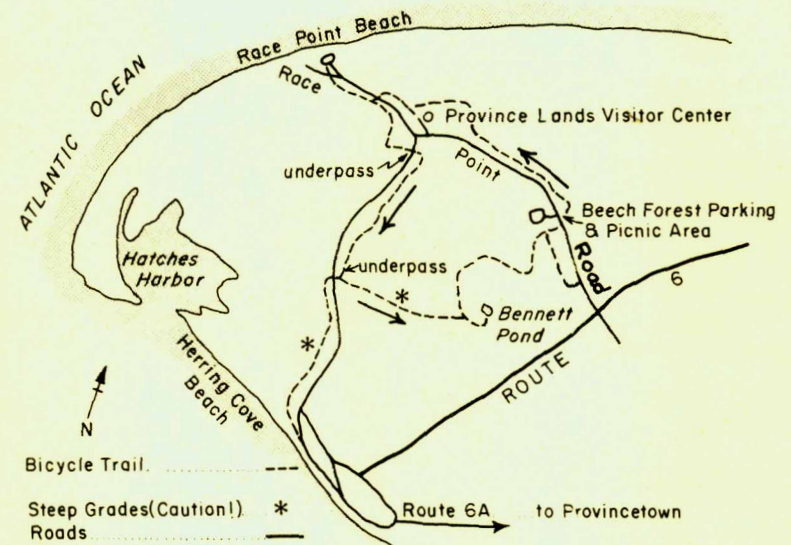
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### PROVINCE LANDS TRAIL - NEAR PROVINCETOWN 8 MILES

[Difficult sections with steep grades and sharp curves]

The Province Lands Bicycle Trail consists of a 6 mile loop trail, with spur trails of 1 mile to Herring Cove Beach, 1/2 mile to Race Point Beach and 1/4 mile to Bennett Pond. Convenient access points are Herring Cove and Race Point swimming beaches, the Beech Forest Parking Area off Race Point Road, and the Province Lands Visitor Center. Arrows shown on map below designate the safest direction of travel. The paved trail passes through forests, ponds, bogs, and some of the most spectacular sand dunes along the Atlantic Coast. This historic area, the "backyard" of Provincetown, summer home of many artists and playwrights, was set aside as early as 1670 by the "Plimoth Colony" in pioneering conservation action.



Courtesy of  
Eastern National Park and Monument  
Association



## FACTUAL FILLERS

Louise Holbrook, in a letter to the Provincetown Advocate on November 6th, 1975, bewails the fate of her ancestral home, the Lancy Mansion in the center of town, which has been so disfigured by commercialism. The house is a fake brownstone built by the shipowner Benjamin Lancy for his mother, Nabby (Cook) Lancy. According to Ms. Holbrook, after the old lady's death in February, 1896, she lay in state in the house for three months till the cemetery thawed, her beloved relatives being unwilling to part with her. They visited her daily to comb her hair and clip her nails till the neighbors began to complain in the spring.

\* \* \*

Thoreau writes, "about Long Point in the summer you commonly see them catching lobsters for the New York market from small boats just off shore, or rather, the lobsters catch themselves, for they cling to the netting on which the bait is placed of their own accord, and thus are drawn up. They sell them for two cents apiece."

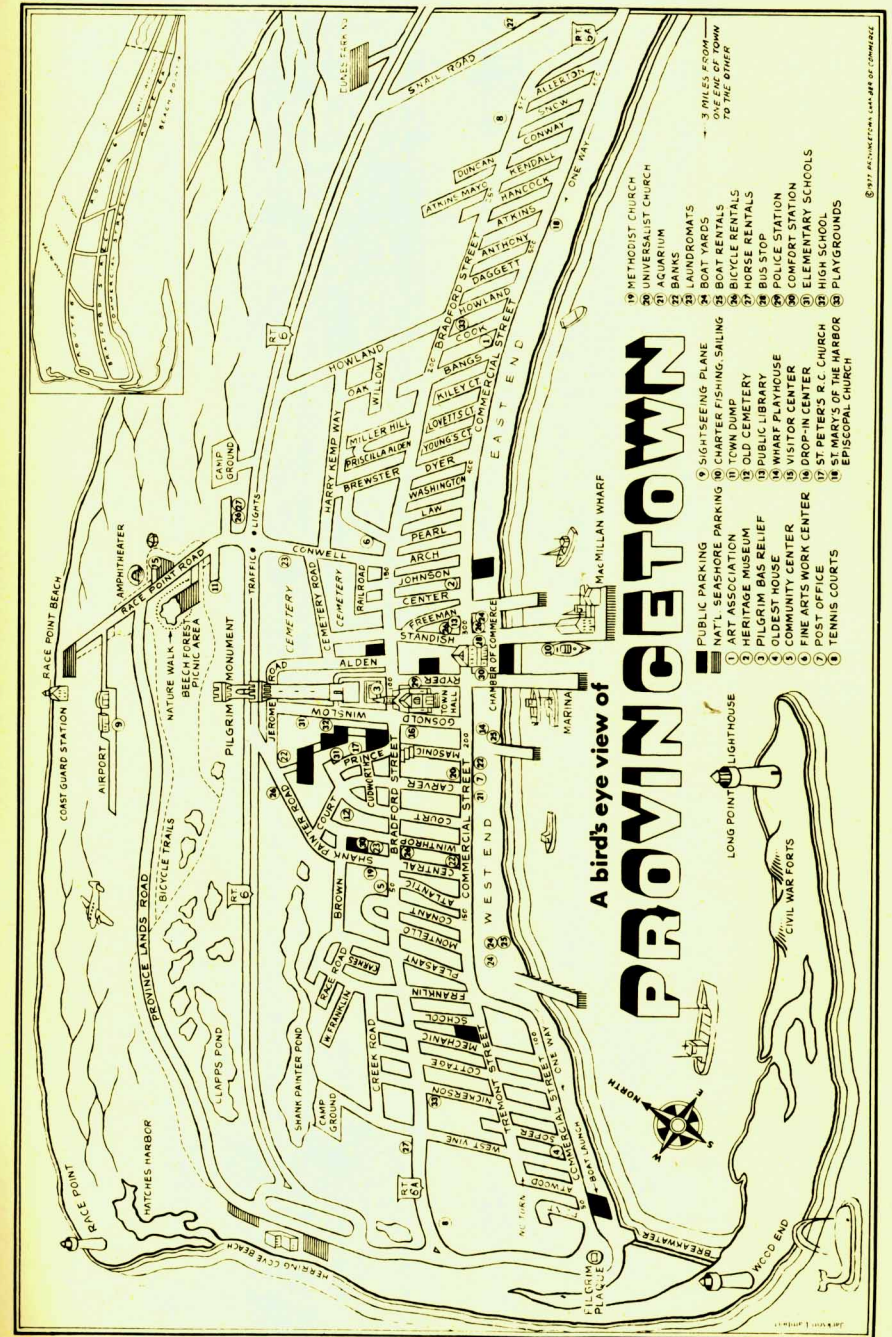
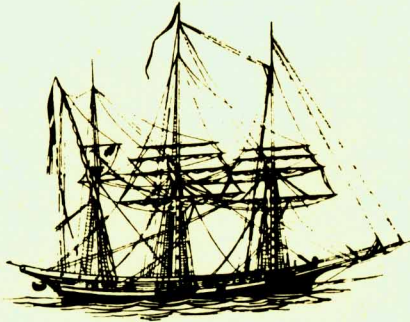
\* \* \*

In April 1867, the whaler A.L. Putnam sighted a woman floating in the Indian Ocean. On closer look, she turned out to be an enormous full-length figurehead dressed in flowing robes holding a wreath. Due to her size, the captain was able to take only half of her aboard, her lower half being cast back into the sea. This charming though truncated lady now adorns the canopy over the front door of the Figurehead House at 476 Commercial Street, once the home of the ship's owner, Captain Henry Cook.

\* \* \*

Painting eyes on the dories so they could find their way back to the mother ship was an old world custom brought to Provincetown by the Portuguese.

\* \* \*



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