

1727-1927

# PROVINCETOWN

200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



PRICE

25 CTS.



THE  
TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY  
of  
P R O V I N C E T O W N  
1 7 2 7 . . . . . 1 9 2 7



In Commemoration of the Incorporation of Provincetown as a town,  
in Seventeen Hundred Twenty-Seven.

AUGUST 4-5-6-7, 1927



## A SKETCH OF TWO HUNDRED YEARS

BY NANCY W. PAINE SMITH



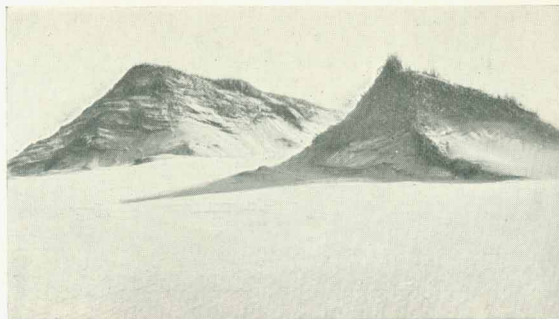
THE HARBOR MAKES THE TOWN. Since the days near a thousand years ago, when wild Norse rovers coasting along

our shore, hauled up their ship for repairs and probably buried their leader here, till now, when proud battleships come in for shelter, all sailors seek this harbor shut in by an almost perfect circle of land.

THE SAND MAKES THE HARBOR. The geological end of Cape Cod is High Head in Truro. All the rest, all the land from High Head around to Long Point is sand bars washed up from the ocean by tides and currents, and in the course of ages, covered with vegetation.

THE MAYFLOWER IN THE HARBOR. Because of the harbor, the Mayflower, bound for the Northern Parts of Virginia turned back from Peaked Hill Bars in a storm, and called her voyage ended here. Before they set foot on land, they drew up and signed A COMPACT to make their own laws and then to obey the laws they made. This was a new departure in the history of government, and the seed from which has grown the Republic of The United States.

PROVINCE LANDS. Because of the harbor and



THE DUNES

the fish in it, Plymouth Colony held the land as Province Land, protected the trees and leased the fishing. We are still Province Lands, owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Until 1893, only a quit-claim deed could be given to real estate. At that time, the Commonwealth ceded to the inhabitants the land on which houses had been built, set up granite

bound-stones and speeded the planting of trees, till now the State Commissioner is starting seedlings, thousands of them a year. Austrian pines from the State Nursery do well in the bare sand.

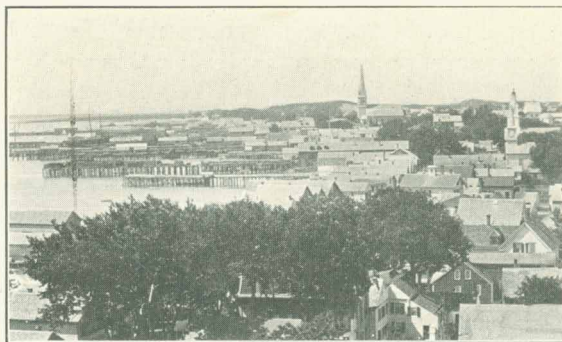
BEGINNINGS. Settlement was slow and fluctuating at first. Chance fishermen from many lands, adventurous and lawless, made this their headquarters, but not their home. Later, men from Truro, from Barnstable, from Plymouth came for a week's fishing or for a season, returning at the end of their catch. They built, close to the water's edge, huts for their own shelter, and sheds for the fish. After a while, they brought their families, erected substantial dwellings just up from the tide's way, and began to prosper. During the Colonial Wars and the Revolutionary War, the town was almost deserted, for the enemy's ships held the harbor, and the people were at the mercy of the enemy's guns. The inhabitants always returned, however, for the



harbor could not be despoiled. "IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR TRURO, PROVINCETOWN WOULD HAVE DIED." -- Old Song. After Eastham was incorporated in 1645, we were accounted a part of the Constablerick of Eastham. In 1714 we were a Precinct of Cape Cod in Truro. The next year, Truro petitioned the court that the Province Lands at Cape Cod be declared a part of Truro or not a part of

Truro, that the town might know how to deal with some persons. So commissioners marked the bounds, from a whale's jaw-bone under a red oak stump on Comerant Hill, running to a cedar post set in a sand hill, and continuing on to the North Sea. This line, separating us from Truro, began at the western side of the present Eastern School-house. All east of that line was "Lots" by extending from shore to shore, owned by Proprietors. This land is still so owned. In 1727 we were incorporated as a township.

**ACT OF INCORPORATION.** Be it enacted, etc. that all the lands on said Cape (being Province Lands) be, and hereby are constituted a township by the name of Provincetown, [The word Herrington was crossed out and Provincetown written in] and that the inhabitants thereof be invested with the powers, privileges, and immunities that any of the inhabitants of any of the towns within the Prov-



FROM CENTER M. E. CHURCH, LOOKING WEST

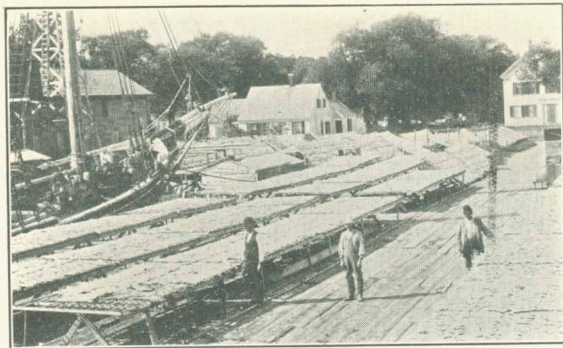
ince by law are, or ought to be invested with. Saving always the right of this Province to said land, which is to be in no wise prejudiced. And provided that no person or persons be hindered and obstructed in building such wharves, stages, workhouses, and flakes and other things as shall be necessary for the salting, keeping and packing their fish, or in cutting down and taking such trees and other materials, growing on such Province lands

as shall be needful for that purpose, or in any sort of fishing, whaling, or getting of bait at the said Cape: but that the same be held as common as heretofore, with all the privileges and advantages thereto in any wise belonging.

**OUR FOLKS.** In 1644, seven families from Plymouth, "the considerablist of church and town," moved to Eastham and made a new plantation. Had Eastham Plains been a little wider, the whole colony would have come. To the new settlement, went Thomas Prince (afterward, Governor of the Colony). Edward Bangs, Nicholas Snow, John Smalley, John Doane, Richard Higgins, Josias Cook. These were joined, soon after, by Joseph Collins, John Knowles, John Young, "the second comers." Before 1700, some of this group pressed on to Truro, where were already, Henry Atkins, Stephen Atwood, William Dyer, Isaac Gross, John Grozier, Isaac

Hatch, Joseph Harding, Thomas Lombard, Thomas Lewis, John Mayo, Andrew Newcomb, Thomas Paine, Richard Rick, Samuel Rider, and others. These are the families, together with the Freemans of Sandwich and the Nickersons of Chatham, whence most of the old stock sprung. After the Revolution, some who had fled from the Cape to Nova Scotia, returned. Fifty or sixty years ago, whalers homeward bound, brought Portuguese from the Azores, from Lisbon. They have since come in increasing numbers, attracted by the fishing and by the prosperity and hospitality of the town. Of late years, painters, writers, seekers after health, have also been welcomed to the harbor, to the dunes, to the bracing air, to the serenity and beauty of the land and sea. These artists have helped the natives and all the world to see the picturesque setting of the town. Teacher with classes painting on the shore, classes recruited from far and near enliven the summer: Professionals who seek a quiet place for work are buying homes and remaining through the winter.

**A SURE-ENOUGH TOWN.** But before the Great and General Court declared us a township in 1727, all the essentials of a municipality were ours, a meeting-house, a school, a town clerk and taxes, houses and people living in them, and a graveyard for them



OLD METHOD OF DRYING FISH

when they died. The records prove it.

"Ezekiel Doane, son of Hezekiah and Hannah Doane, born April 1, 1696."

"An account with Mr. Samuel Winter for keeping school one half year, £22, 10s.

"Precinct of Cape Cod to John Traill, Dr. Cash paid Mr. Samuel Spear for his salary, 10s, Mr. Spear was the preacher.

In 1724, Desire Cowing, aged 24, was laid in her sandy bed in the old burying ground; her stone, the oldest.

To be sure we had no street till 1835. We walked along the shore, up-along-the-shore and down-along; burdens were carried in boats: the dead were borne on a bier. The county laid out the road as an extension of the King's Highway. The town regarded with indifference such luxury on the part of the County, but it vehemently opposed the extravagance of a sidewalk, and carried the scheme through only after a week's town meeting, and by one vote: and that with \$6000 in hand, our part of the division of the national surplus under Gen. Jackson. We had no street, and we had no jail and we had no almshouse, but we had the Atlantic Ocean for our own, and the harbor, a safe door to it.

**OUR WEALTH IS IN THE SEA.** While the Mayflower lay in the harbor, the Pilgrim passenger

(Continued on page 10)



# PROGRAM

THURSDAY, AUGUST 4.

<i>Event</i>	<i>Time</i>
BAND CONCERT . . . . .	2 P.M.
BALL GAME, EVAN'S FIELD . . . . .	4 P.M.
HISTORICAL EXERCISES . . . . .	7.30 P.M.
BAND CONCERT . . . . .	8 P.M.
ENTERTAINMENT OF OFFICERS OF U. S. S. ARKANSAS AT THE PROVINCETOWN INN . . . . .	8 P.M.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 5.

PARADE, FOLLOWED BY EXERCISES AT THE TOWN HALL . . . . .	2 P.M.
BASEBALL GAME AND ATHLETIC EVENTS, EVAN'S FIELD . . . . .	4 P.M.
BAND CONCERT . . . . .	8 P.M.

*U. S. S. Arkansas open to visitors daily, 1 to 5 P.M.*



# PROGRAM

SATURDAY, AUGUST 6.

<i>Event</i>	<i>Time</i>
BAND CONCERT . . . . .	2 P.M.
BASEBALL GAME, EVAN'S FIELD . . . . .	2 P.M.
WATER SPORTS . . . . .	4 P.M.
BAND CONCERT . . . . .	8 P.M.
FIREWORKS . . . . .	10 P.M.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 7.

BAND CONCERT	Afternoon and Evening
COMMUNITY SERVICES AT TOWN HALL	4 P.M.

*U. S. S. Arkansas open to visitors daily, 1 to 5 P.M.*

COMMITTEE

JESSE D. ROGERS, *Chairman*, HERSEY D. TAYLOR, EDWIN D. PAINE

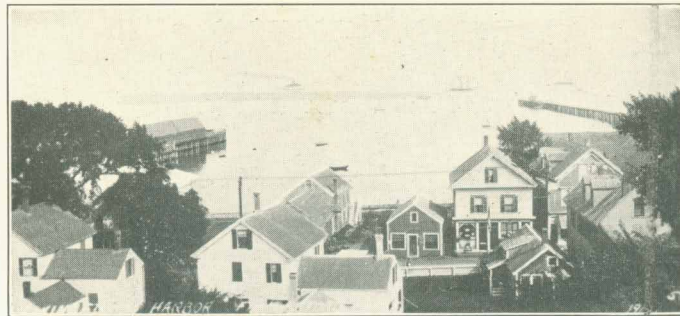




noted, and William Bradford records the great number of whales, playing about the ship, which, he says, "if we had had implements, we might have taken to our great advantage." Drift whales were in early times divided by the settlers with the Indians, then they were pursued in boats, over the shore, as early as 1690. Ichabod Paddock went to Nantucket to instruct the Nantucketers in his method of taking whales. In 1737 Provincetown fitted out twelve ships for whaling in Davis Strait, and from less to more, whalers in the Arctic, whalers in the South Atlantic, whalers on the west coast of Africa, sperm oil, head oil, whalebone ambergris at \$500 a pound, blackfish in schools of hundreds on the beach. To this day, though you could not sell other stocks in the town, it is no trouble to sell oil stock. Alas! Now, not a single whaler sails away, and the last of the whaling cap'ns have gone.

Whaling was good, but cod fishing was better. That too, had an evolution, from fishing with hook and line over the side of a vessel (hand-lining), to seining, to trawling, to trap fishing.

Once they went to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, sailing in the spring and returning in the fall. The fish were cleaned and salted the day they were caught, quintal on quintal in the hold till



THE HARBOR

barrels are recorded. All kinds of fish were ours, herring, bass, bluefish, halibut, haddock, hake, swordfish, clams, quahaugs, till in 1850, Provincetown was the richest town in the state per capita. Today, all boats are motor boats, and much of the fish is put into the refrigerating plants. Twenty million pounds annually, is a conservative estimate.

**THE VILLAGE ON LONG POINT.** As if our sixty miles out to sea were not enough, about the year 1820 when the lighthouse was built there, forty families moved across the harbor and made homes on The Point. It was handy to the fishing, they had five-handed boats for transportation back and forth, they had a school house and eighty children at school, one could walk across the flats at low tide (that is, long-legged ones at very low tide, could do it.) Those who still remember say that the friends and neighbors, many of the same family, had a good time together, but it was a lonely spot, and so about 1860, they put their houses on scows,

and floated them across the harbor to town. Many of these houses are now at the west end of the town, Way-up-along.

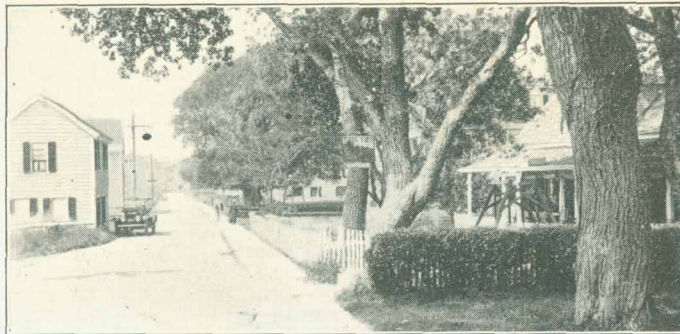
#### OUR CROWDED

ROOFS. There was also a school at Race Point, and a bridge where we now go dry-shod, but for the most part sons built on father's lot with a right of way to

the shore and to the salt-works on the hill. Our present narrow streets are these footpaths spread out a little. Many are still private ways.

**SPEAKING OF SALT-WORKS.** Once upon a time, every man owned a string of salt-works, with a wind mill to pump the sea water through hollow logs to the vats on the side of a hill. These vats were twenty feet square and eighteen inches deep, protected with a cover on rollers at night, or in case of a shower. The top most vat into which the water first flowed was called the water-room, the next lower was the bitter-water-room, and the lowest was the salt-room. The water was drained from room to room. Tending salt-works was done by a man past going to sea, with the help of a boy. When salt was made in a kettle over the fire, it cost eight dollars a bushel, made in salt-works by evaporation it cost a dollar a bushel.

Now 78 strings of salt-works producing 40,000 bushels of salt in 1837 made a snug income for the



COMMERCIAL STREET, EAST END

old men, while the sons were away on the Banks. Reduction of the duty, repeal of the bounty, discovery of salt in New York State ruined the salt industry here. Salt-works were demolished and houses and fish-stores built of the lumber. So they prospered on the sea and on the place where the sea laps the land.

How about the hills? Cranberries in the hollows and blueberries on the sides, everywhere beach plums and everywhere bayberries. Children gathered bayberries as they gathered drift wood, a part of their daily task. Mother boiled the bayberries, skimmed the waxy mass from the top and moulded candles, once the evening light, now a souvenir for tourists.

**"WAS YOUR FATHER A SEA CAPTAIN?"**

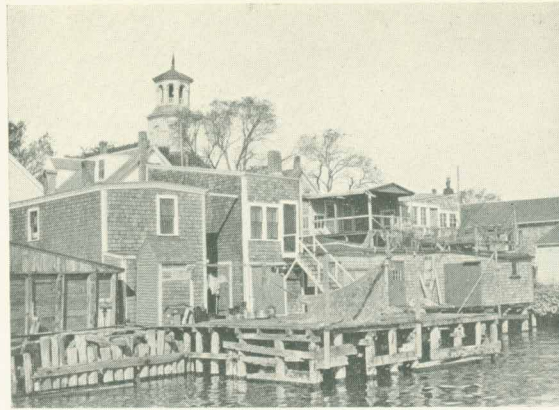
This is the constant question of strangers. Everybody's father went to sea. Every young man had a taste of salt water. Not all liked it, and these soon saved up money enough to buy parts of three or four old vessels and to stay at home as agent. They bought and sold provisions and gear for the "fleet," they provided for the families of the men away at sea; they carried at the little store everything anybody could ask for. They had no expense, and they made some money, unless a vessel was lost. Oh, then, the motto "Let the fleet insure each vessel" did not seem so charming. There was some jealousy of



"Them Boston Insurance Fellers," so we organized local, mutual, marine insurance companies. We needed a National Bank and we formed one in 1854, having saved up enough in the Seamen's Savings Bank in the four since 1850 to pay for the shares of the National.

We needed wharves and wharves were built, we wanted a marine railway for repairing vessels and a magic wand created three of them. Then with Sparyards, a ship building place, riggers lofts, block-makers, lathe, caulkers, painters, all kinds of skilled shipwrights multiplied.

WRECKS. Over all the pleasant life of the Cape, hangs always the shadow of disaster at sea. Every woman sends her men away with fear they may never return. Every winter brings wrecks on the "Back-side." The bones of thousands of gallant ships and of good sailors are scattered along the dreadful stretch of coast from Race Point to Nauset. It is not so dangerous now, for the coast is well charted, and lighted, the Coast Guard is quick and skillful to help, motors, suppliment sails and not so many vessels are afloat. The pride of the sea is fast fading. But we tell of the wreck of the Somerset, British man-of-war which Longfellow pictures in Paul Revere's Ride, of the Italian bark Giovanni, thirteen men lost, only one saved. The Giovanni carried a



STUDIOS ON THE WHARF

cargo of white grapes, nuts, raisins and wine. The ship was broken up and the cargo strewn along the beach. Have you ever heard of "Moon-cussing?" An awful memory is that of the steamer Portland bound from Boston to Maine, Nov. 1898 with two hundred passengers going home for Thanksgiving in 1898. Somewhere off in the bay, the storm overtook her and beat her to pieces and the wreckage and the dead bodies washed

up on our shore. No story of that night's disaster can ever be told, for none, neither passengers nor crew survived.

HONOR TO THE COAST GUARD! Not so lonely a life as strangers suppose, for somebody comes into town every day for the market and the mail. These are the days of the phone and the radio. Many a leisure hour and many a sunny day make men prefer the Coast Guard to life on board a vessel. But no winter passes without fearful storms with disaster and death. The Life Savers never hesitate, and are never afraid, they seldom are defeated in their rescue. This splendidly equipped service is the outgrowth of Rev. James Freeman's early attempt to place "Humane Stations" on the beach, a hut for shelter, a couch and covers, wood and matches (supported by private charity) has saved many a shipwrecked man cast upon our wintry beach in a storm.

THE FIRST PARISH. After all, the history of any New England town is written in its churches. Our first parish, like many others in this section had its roots in that group of Pilgrims in Scrooby, England who prided themselves that they were Separatists, separate from worldliness, separate from priests and bishops, separate from other Congregations. For this they suffered exile. King James was far-sighted enough to see, and frank enough to say, "No bishop, no king."

The parish was the town; the meeting-house was the town-house; the minister was supported by a tax levied on real estate. Se we began. Even yet, ecclesiastical authorities who forget the prerogatives of Parishes are sometimes made sad. In late years there have grown up other churches not of the Congregational order.

THE CATHOLIC. The Catholic Church, by far the largest, with a building erected in 1875, now greatly enlarged and beautified.

THE EPISCOPALIAN CHURCH. Dear to many of the summer visitors is growing.

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST. Holds services the year round.

The first meeting-house was fathered by the Province for its own child the Province Lands. The Gen-



A CAPE COD HOUSE

eral Court appropriated, in 1715 - \$150 for a meeting-house to be thirty-two by twenty-eight feet, with galleries on three sides, the inhabitants to pay the remainder of the expense and to keep the premises in order. They built near the old cemetery, not far from Shank Painter Pond. They enlarged and built new till they had the "Old White Oak" built of timber cut from the hills. Some of this timber is in the frame of the

present Church of the Pilgrims.

The first "regularly settled" minister was Rev. Samuel Parker, a Harvard graduate, and pastor to the whole town for many years. His grave is in the old cemetery. In his day came the Methodists, the New Lights.

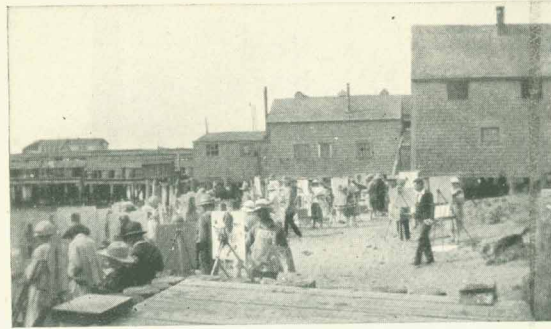
THE METHODISTS. A preacher of that persuasion came ashore from a vessel lying in the harbor and held a meeting in the fore-room of Thomas Rider's house. The house stood where is now Adams' drug store, then called North Meadow Gut, afterward Mud Alley, now known by the dignified name of Gosnold Street. Though the town voted in town meeting that no Methodist meeting-house should be built, the new converts sent to Maine for lumber in order to build. When the vessel arrived with the lumber the men threw it at high tide, on the shore. At night, the Orthodox came, sawed the wood



into short lengths, carried it to the top of High Pole Hill (where the monument now stands) made a bonfire of it and topped it with an effigy of Jesse Lee, a noted Methodist preacher. Undaunted they got another ship-load of lumber, and this time undisturbed, they built their meeting-house near the foot of Monument Hill. The present Center Methodist Church was built in 1860.

**CENTENARY CHURCH.** A break in the Center Church culminated in the building of the Centenary Methodist, 1866, with a steeple guaranteed to be one foot higher than that of the mother church. It was their undoing. Struck by lightning at the very tip-top, too high to be reached by a stream of water, the noble structure was burned to the ground. It was followed by the present modest, convenient, pleasing little chapel.

**THE SCHOOLS.** Since the Congregationalists were determined to be Independents, the members must have education. That seemed a self-evident proposition to them. Therefore their earliest revenues, raised by taxing the fisheries of Cape Cod, went for schools, and the necessity for a learned ministry planted Harvard College in 1636. The first item in the town treasurer's book is pay for the school-master. In early days the school-master boarded around and his scholars followed him, or they waited



ARTISTS AT WORK ON WHARVES

for their turn to come in their part of the town. As early as 1795, the school shared the Mason's House with King Hiram's Lodge and in 1828 six district school-houses were built. These were succeeded in 1844 by the three school-houses now in use. The schools were then graded and the equipment was of the latest and best.

In 1853, the High School, established according to the law of the Commonwealth merged

prosperous academies and seminaries. The High School building and Town Hall on Town Hill became a beacon for all shipping in the bay, as well as a light to lighten the minds of the youth. This building was burned in 1877. The town has always been generous to her schools.

**THE LIBRARY.** When the Sons of Temperance disbanded, they gave their treasury, of three hundred dollars to the town as a nucleus for a public library. The building was the gift of Nathan Freeman, and a legacy of five thousand dollars from the estate of Benjamin Small is a fund for buying books. The books were selected by Augustus Mitchell. The library has outgrown its building for we are a reading community.

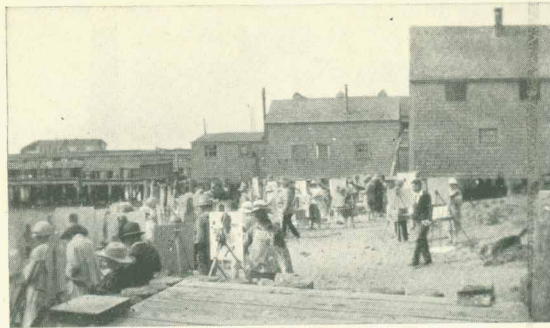
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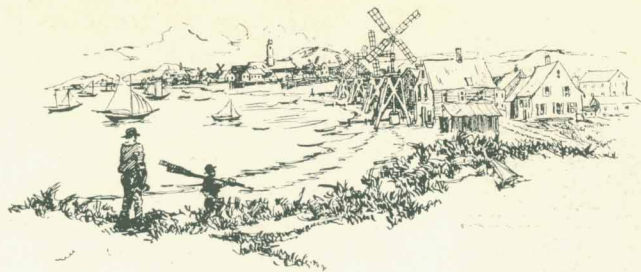
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they came. Two little girls on Long Point, were gathering driftwood when they saw in the midst just beyond their reach, a book. This they made haste to secure, for a book was a prize. That book was the life of John Murray, a field preacher in England with John Wesley. A long story of trouble and adventure drove him at last to Gloucester where he married well and established a prosperous society of those who believe in "The final Harmony of all Souls with God." This doctrine spread, for many were rebellious at the awful doctrines of endless damnation preached everywhere in those days. They formed the Christian Union Society. The record of what they did goes back to 1829 and the evidence of their prosperity is the present "Christopher Wren" tower, the crown of a beautiful church built in 1847, when they would show the Orthodox how to build a Meeting-house. They would build the handsomest south of Boston. The only attempt to modernize it has been recently removed and the mahogany pulpit of 1847 has been restored.

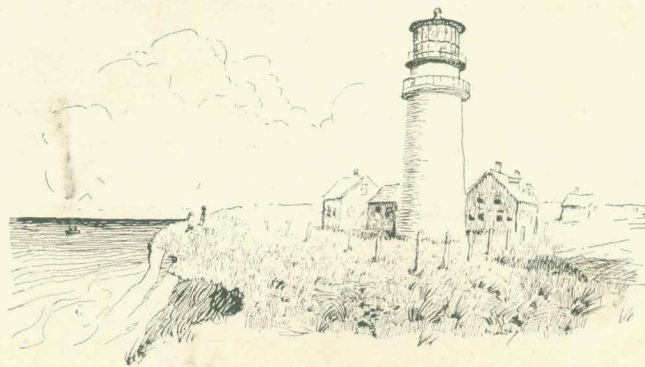
THE MONUMENT. The most conspicuous object in the town, nobody can overlook it, is the Pil-

grim Memorial Monument, erected by private donations, by the Commonwealth, by the National Government. Our greatest day was when the United States, England and Holland sent representatives to dedicate the monument in memory of those God-fearing men and women who three hundred years before left all, and came to these shores for conscience sake.

Through lean years and fat years, through storm and calm this precious legacy has been passed from father to son. It is a noble heritage.

Time fails to tell of the men and women whose lives and deeds have blessed the town, or to record the many slow changes from the day of our incorporation to this OUR BICENTENARY.

*By permission of Billy May, many of his pictures are reproduced in this book. They originally appeared in "A Book about the Artists." The Committee very much appreciates this favor.*



# POINTS OF INTEREST

The Universalist Church, with "Christopher Wren" tower and old fresco.

Museum of the Historical Society (The Research Club) with the Donald B. Macmillan gifts.

Exhibition of Pictures by the Provincetown Artists. At the Art Museum.

Cup presented the Rose Dorothea, by Sir Thomas Lipton, for the Winner in the Fisherman's Race. In Town Hall.

Paintings by Mr. Halsall, Mr. Hawthorn, and others. In Town Hall.

Old fire-engine, made expressly for this town, in 1836, with very wide wheels. In the basement of the Town Hall.

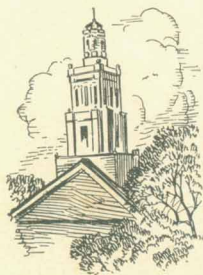
Picture, "Launching the Life-boat." Made in 1880 to mark the heroism of three men drowned in attempting to save a wreck. In the Public Library.

Pilgrim Spring, in Truro, where the Mayflower Passengers drank their first water in the New World.

Corn Hill. Where Mayflower Passengers found the Indian Corn. In Truro. A magnificent view of the bay.

Fishing traps and weirs. If you are very canny, you can go to see the men draw the nets, at 3.30 A. M.

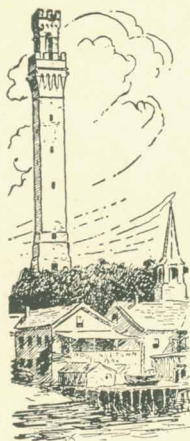
Dancing almost every night.



Tablet, marking the spot first trod by Pilgrim feet. At the West End. (Way-up-along).

Tablet in memory of the Mayflower Passengers who died here, Dec. 1620. At the Eastern Approach to the Monument. Erected by Society of Mayflower Descendants. Pilgrim Memorial Monument.

Governor Prince's Doorstone, at the Entrance to the Monument.



Lighthouse and Fog Bell at Long Point. A good trip in a rowboat.

Lighthouse and Coast Guard Station at Wood End. A pleasant walk over the Breakwater. (At low tide).

Lighthouse, Fog Horn, Coast Guard Station, and a "Rum-runner" ashore at Race Point, near the end of the State Road. A three-mile walk, through the dunes, over a good road. Coast Guard drill every Thursday morning.

Coast Guard Station at Peaked Hill Bars, "The Graveyard of Ships" at the end of Snail Road, and near the home of Eugene O' Neil, through three miles of soft sand. The worst road in the world.

Highland Light, one of the largest on the coast, standing on the unusual formation called Clay Pounds. Six-mile drive, over good roads, Conveyance daily.

Whaling Gear, Blackfish Head Oil, Ambergris, at the office of late David Stull, "The Ambergris King." The little lanes and by-paths leading to the ponds are delightful.

The Wharf-Players give a good show every evening. The Movies, of course.

Don't fail to see the Harbor with the Moon rising from the Water, and to see the Sun set in the Ocean.

Bas-relief, "Signing of the Compact," A beautiful sculpture. At the Base of the Monument Hill.

Tablet commemorating the landing of the Pilgrims, with text of the Compact. Erected by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Near Town Hall.

The Pilgrim Church, with old records, etc.

