

BIG JOE, POPULAR PROVINCETOWN - Aug. 1942 BLACKSMITH ILL, HIS ANVIL SILENT

By FRED BRADY
PROVINCETOWN, Aug. 22 (Wide World)—Big Joe's hammer no longer makes thunder in the village.

The days are much quieter than in the time when Big Joe Ramos pounded enough red iron to shoe 28 horses in a day.

Joe didn't call that a record because he said he'd done it lots of days, but he was as proud of it as Provincetown was of Joe—and his cornet which led his dance band up the years from "After the Ball is Over."

That's why the closing of the village's only blacksmith shop has slammed doors against half a century of hard work and the gossip which belongs to this seaport's history.

That's why every day villagers stop to ask about the health of Big Joe, still held to his bed by illness which he thought he could defeat without having to close his forge.

For 50 years Big Joe Ramos swung the hammer that drove seabirds away in terror from his blacksmith shop fronting the beach at the edge of Commercial street. And for most of those years his shop was almost as nosy with talk as with the sound of iron smashed down on an anvil or pulled hissing from the big watertub.

Teamsters, gentlemen riders and painters leaned against wagon wheels or sat on plows to talk about the doings of the world while they watched Joe's thick

arms shattering sparks against his leather apron.

Sooner or later Big Joe would thud his hammer down beside him, brush sweat across his forehead and say:

"I ever tell you about Max the junkman and his horse?"

Joe had told them about Max and his horse many times because it was his favorite story. But everybody would look surprised and one of the oldtimers would take over the honor of asking:

"What happened to Max, Joe?"

So Big Joe told about the day that Max brought his horse in for shoeing. Joe was bending over with one hoof braced between his legs, driving the shoe on when the horse dropped dead.

Joe would break into the grin that had been growing with the story. "You know what Max says when the horse fell? He just looked at me and his horse and he says, 'Well, he never did that before.'"

Joe's audience always laughed just as hard as they did the first time, and with everybody having fun the small boys would get up enough courage to push a nail onto Joe's anvil and ask him to make a ring for them.

Big Joe never was too busy for rings.

He wasn't much bigger than the boys when he learned his trade. Joe was only 14 when he left school to start his nine-hour days watching another master of sound and fury and sneaking trys at lifting the great hammers.

When he was big enough to

lift them, he had his own shop on Commercial street in back of a furniture store, where his fires looked out at the sea.

His hammer never missed the beat. Because at night the blacksmith was a band leader.

Big Joe played the cornet, the slide trombone and the bass horn and with his brothers he organized an orchestra years ago. Night after night, for miles around on the Cape, big Joe played at dances and parties.

So all the ladies knew him, too.

Even in the later years, when there wasn't much work, Big Joe kept busy making hinges and forging iron, and the men of the town kept on meeting at Joe's shop, some of them the same boys who once wore one of his nail rings.

Nobody thought a man as strong as Big Joe could get sick. But he did—about a year ago.

Still the shop stayed open because Big Joe hired a helper to run it while he was ill. A hundred times a day the helper would say, "Joe says don't worry about him. He says he'll be back in the shop any day now."

But Big Joe is still sick, still in bed.

And a little while ago he had to decide to close the shop.

Big Joe's helper picked up the leather apron with all the patches. He piled the hammers in the corner. The helper did all the last things and then latched the big door looking to the sea.

Big Joe didn't have to watch his fires turn cold.



The old Happy Home Furniture Store opposite Carver Street, in the rear of which Big Joe had his Blacksmith Shop. William Bangs' Tin & Stove Shop, next. The pointed cupola of the Anchor & Ark can be seen in center.

-- July 1948 --

- July 5, 1943 - Jos. E. Ramos Dies, Funeral Tomorrow

Was Cape End's Well
Known Blacksmith
For Quarter of Century

Funeral services will be held tomorrow morning at the Church of St. Peter the Apostle for Joseph Seth Ramos who died Monday night at the age of 65 at his home at 11 Tremont Street after more than a year of illness. Interment will be in St. Peter's Cemetery.

Joe Ramos, as so many people of the town knew him, was Provincetown's village blacksmith for half a century, and until illness began to take its toll, a big, robust man whose arms were equal to those of Longfellow's famed blacksmith. He had, too, those other qualities commonly associated with his honorable trade,

an unfailing good humor and a hearty laugh. His last shop, where in later years, after the passing of horses, he did much ship iron work, was in the rear of the Happy Home Furniture store.

Mr. Ramos was a native of Provincetown, a son of the late Louis and Ellen Kelley Ramos. In his early years he attended Provincetown schools but left at the age of 14 to learn the craft that was to be his lifelong occupation. For ten years he worked for Harry Herboutl and then started his own business as blacksmith and horseshoer, continuing until his forced retirement two years ago.

One activity which Mr. Ramos was fond of recalling was the orchestra consisting of himself and his brothers, and known as Ramos' Orchestra which played for most of the dances hereabouts for a number of years. The Ramos brothers also owned and operated a town bus for a long period.

He owned one or two of the accommodations similar to Paige Bros.

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO CAPE COD- 1956

Old-Time Blacksmiths On Cape Cod

FROM time immemorial, Cape Codders, at least until very recently, have had much use for blacksmiths and their art. But with the coming of the mechanized age, the smiths and smithies have dwindled in number, so that last year Manuel Carreiro of Falmouth could claim that he was the only blacksmith left on Cape Cod. Twenty years ago, six blacksmiths in Falmouth alone were busy with horseshoeing for the eighty horses that worked on the farms of Falmouth. Previously to that Herman W. Miller, who died in 1940, was believed to be the

last real old-time blacksmith on the Cape.

Cape Cod blacksmiths had plenty of work to do, not only at shoeing horses, but also making quahog rakes for shell fishermen, and repairing small iron equipment for farmers when it needed repairs. As the number of horses diminished, the demand for blacksmiths services diminished also, and the end of blacksmiths and blacksmithies on Cape Cod seemed at hand last summer in Falmouth. The scene so picturesquely described in Longfellow's *Village Blacksmith* is virtually a vanished one, but many still live who remember their own village smithy, and the lines: "The smith, a mighty man is he, with large and sinewy hands, and the muscles of his brawny arms are strong as iron bands."