THOSE WERE THE DAYS

by Dan Towler

And greetings, dear readers!

You will notice the absence on these pages of the column known as "Endangered Species," by Joe Lazaro, "a Portuguese born in Provincetown a long time ago." Joe, for those of you who are wondering, is very much alive and well. Having regaled us for the past six years with his recollections of the Provincetown of his youth, he has moved on to different pastures.

My own reminiscences of Provincetown go back only about half as far as Joe's, but I am nevertheless pleased to share with you the results of my research into Provincetown's illustrious past, as well as some personal recollections of changes I have witnessed here over the years.

Though I am not a native--and, alas, never will be--my roots are as deep in Provincetown as they are any place else. My grandmother, a woman with an independent streak and an affinity for artistic types, first came here in 1919 with two small daughters in tow, her third one, my mother, not yet born. After spending a few summers, she moved here permanently in the mid-1920's, divorcing my mother's father and marrying a Provincetown native. Thus, my mother was raised here (a 1938 graduate of Provincetown High School), and is buried here alongside her mother and step-father and one of her sisters.

My mother's affection for Provincetown never left her. She would have lived here after my father came home from serving in Europe during World War II, had there been any opportunities here for an ambitious, college-educated young couple. But, they still came "down" every chance they could, bringing their young family. My brothers and I learned to swim here, and we learned that shoes and socks were irrelevant here. We rode uptown and back, and out to Race Point with my grandfather in his convertible, and ran errands for my grandmother to Tillie's or Bryant's Market. We roamed the sand flats to see what the tide had left, or up through the woods to the railroad bed (where an occasional train still ran) to pick blueberries, or out Snail Road through the dunes to Peaked Hill to climb the tower at the old Coast Guard station. We experienced our first death in the family here, I had my first serious crush on a girl here, and I lost my "innocence" here.

So, although I was not born here and have not lived here all my life, Provincetown has always been my home. And my fascination with Provincetown history is inseparable from my curiosity about my own history. Both are fueled by love, as well as by a need to understand and accept loss and change. I want to know how Provincetown got to be the place it is today; I want to know how I got to be who I am.

What qualities about Provincetown have remained constant through the years, and in what ways has it changed? How have I grown and how have I stayed the same? Are the changes that have happened good or bad? What further changes might be desirable, and what changes would we do well to resist? Of course, nostalgia about one's past tends to make such judgements difficult. All the same, judgements have to be made. (Speaking of which, you and I *have* seen each other at Town Meeting these last few nights, have we not?)

For me, "the good old days" in Provincetown were the 1950's. However, to folks in their 80's, the Provincetown they knew as children was already a distant memory by the 1950's. Likewise, for someone growing up now, these will come to be seen as "the good old days." As they say, the only thing constant, in one's own life or in the life of a town, is change.

In this column, I will attempt to shed some light on some of the changes that have occurred on this spit of sand "at the tip end of Cape Cod," as the old postcards used to say. I will illustrate many of my columns with postcards from my collection, most of them from the early years of this century. The above is what is known in the postcard trade as a "large-letter linen," because of the linen-like quality of the paper used to make them. These hand-colored cards were popular from the 1930's through the 1950's.

Next week: more about Provincetown's love affair with the postcard!

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

by Dan Towler

There are several good reasons to feature the accompanying postcard this week, despite the fact that Highland Light is *not* in Provincetown, and I said last week that this column would be about Provincetown history. The first reason is that, as the days lengthen and the air warms, my spirits are lifted and my pulse quickened by the arrival of crocuses, spring peepers--and baseball season. The other reasons are that Highland Light, besides being the oldest lighthouse and one of the earliest and most popular tourist destinations on the Cape, is very much in the news today, due to the fact that it is scheduled to be picked up and moved 450 feet inland sometime this summer. This project, the scope of which boggles the mind, has been in the planning stages for years and is designed to safeguard the historic lighthouse from the eroding 120 foot high cliffs next to it. The move itself should be something to see, perhaps even more exciting to watch than a ballgame.

In the early 1900's, when pleasures were simpler and recreational options fewer, ballgames like the one pictured here were even a more common occurrence on the fields of small-town America than they are today. This game was probably organized by Willard Small, the son of Isaac Morton Small, lighthouse keeper at Highland Light in those days. Willard, an avid sportsman, returned from college in the early 1890's and introduced numerous games to the menu of activities offered at his father's budding tourist colony. Together, they laid out the nine-hole golf course up there, which today is one of the oldest in the country and one of the most spectacular, and challenging, places to play golf.

The history of Highland Light is completely interwoven with the history of the Small family, as Park Service historian Larry Lowenthal describes in "Sentinel of the Highlands." Isaac Morton Small's grandfather, also named Isaac Small, sold to the federal government (which was not yet 10 years old) ten acres of his farm--most of which have since fallen into the sea--for the construction of a lighthouse in 1796. Built the folllowing year, the original light was replaced by the present brick tower and attached keeper's house in 1857. The Small family continued to farm the land at the Highlands, as well as serve as official lighthouse keepers.

Young Isaac had not yet inherited the keeper's job from his father when Henry David Thoreau made his first pilgrimage to the Outer Cape in 1849. On that trip and three later ones in the 1950's, Thoreau was a guest either at the Small farm or at the lighthouse itself. His observations and experiences are included in his book Cape Cod, which remains a fascinating and very readable glimpse of what this area was like nearly 150 years ago.

Isaac M. took over the family operations upon his father's death in the 1870's. Seeing (as Thoreau did) the potential of the area for tourism with the arrival of the railroad, he built a large wing onto the family farmhouse, named it the Highland House, and began taking in guests. He built other tourist cottages along the road to the light and a second Highland House in 1907, which is today the home of a fine museum run by the Truro Historical Society.

Isaac Small undoubtedly hoped that his two sons would carry on and expand his development of the Highlands as a resort, but he ended up outliving both of them. His first son died when he was only 20. His second son, Willard, died of a heart attack at the age of 38 while, of all things, playing baseball. Had your cholesterol checked lately?

In addition to looking after the lighthouse and his various business enterprises, "Mort" Small was also a newspaper correspondent who was very active in local and state politics. But, the responsibility which he held onto the longest was as marine reporting agent for the Boston Chamber of Commerce. He would telegraph to Boston the names and descriptions of all ship traffic visible through a telescope from his station atop the bluffs. He held this post from the Civil War era in the 1860's until his death in 1932, an incredible span of 70 years. Small became something of a tourist attraction himself in his later years, and published several small books of reminiscences. Unfortunately, none is still in print.

I'll look for you at the lighthouse moving--or else at Fenway Park!

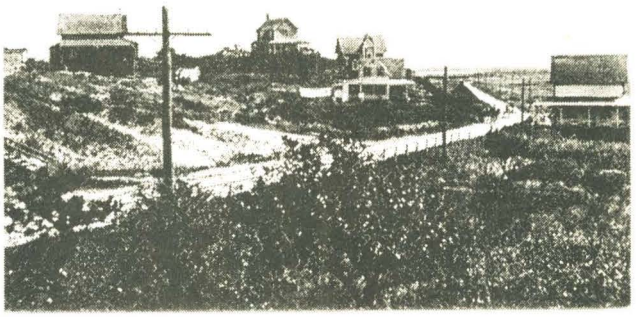
THOSE WERE THE DAYS

by Dan Towler

RECENT ARRIVALS

The local Provincetown weekly on April 13, 1950 reports, "Every day now seems to bring new faces into town and out-of-state cars to Commercial Street. There is even a slight sprinkling of the shaggy Greenwich Village crew, with hair not one whit longer or shorter than it was last summer."

A short announcement in the same issue heralds the arrival of a son, born the previous Sunday to a Provincetown woman in Connecticut--namely, this writer. There are advertisements for several new businesses. Clarence Nelson's new grocery store was due to open later that month at the corner of Bradford and Conwell Streets (now McNulty's 150 Marketplace). Arnold's furniture and appliance store (now a t-shirt and bike rental shop) was building a new home on the site of the historic building that had burned in a spectacular fire the year before. A new First National Bank (now devoted to shop space) was going up at the corner of Winthrop and Commercial Streets, replacing a Methodist Church that had been torn down. Joe Duarte was constructing a garage and auto dealership (now a t-shirt shop and parking lot) where the old railroad station had been at Bradford and Standish Streets.



A century ago, when the accompanying photo was taken, Provincetown was still primarily a seafaring town. But, this postcard and thousands of others like it were already being mass-produced for the burgeoning crowds of summer souvenir-seekers. A great many of these cards, including this one, were published by the Provincetown Advocate, which sold them in a shop opposite Town Hall (now Mario's Mediterraneo restaurant). Most of them were printed in Germany, which explains why the "golden age" of postcards came to an abrupt end in 1914, when World War I began.

This view shows the only road coming into Provincetown at the turn of the century, the present Route 6-A. These summer "cottages" at Mayflower Heights are all still there. The land in the foreground is now occupied by the Tides Motel.

When Henry David Thoreau made his first trip to Cape Cod in 1849. he rode down from Boston by way of Bridgewater and Middleboro on the Cape Cod Railroad, which then extended only as far as Sandwich. It would be another 24 years before the railroad would reach Provincetown. Thoreau took a stagecoach from Sandwich to Orleans and headed out on foot for the Cape tip. He says of the area pictured on this card, "A portion of Truro which has considerable taxable property on it has lately been added to Provincetown, and I was told by a Truro man that his townsmen talked of petitioning the legislature to set off the next mile of their territory also to Provincetown, in order that she might have her share of the lean as well as the fat, and take care of the road through it; for its whole value is literally to hold the Cape together, and even this it has not always done. But Provincetown strenuously declines the gift."

The "next mile" consisted mostly of East Harbor, which was then, and is now, rapidly filling up with sand blown off the dunes by the northwest winds. A bridge was built across the mouth of East Harbor in the 1850's, for the first time connecting Truro to Provincetown with a more or less passable road. The Beach Point area of North Truro was then uninhabited and considered a completely worthless piece of real estate. A dike was built to replace the bridge and to contain the drifting sand, which was filling in a little more of Provincetown Harbor with each outgoing tide. Thus, Beach Point became no longer a point, and East Harbor became Pilgrim Lake.

The railroad, when it arrived, ran along behind these cottages on Mayflower Heights. Passenger service to Provincetown was discontinued in 1940, and freight service in the late '50s. The tracks were removed shortly thereafter, regrettably bringing to a close the railroad era on the outer Cape. More on the railroad, and other forms of transportation to Provincetown, in future columns!

The present railroad bed, now owned by the town, makes a delightful walking path through the woods from Mayflower Heights, past the new Foss Woods Conservation Area, across Snail Road and on to Howland Street, where it becomes Harry Kemp Way.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

by Dan Towler

As another whale-watch season springs into gear, with hopes of a lucrative harvest of humpback sightings, perhaps it's time to reflect for a moment or two on the influence these great creatures have had on our town, and how our attitude towards them has changed--and how it hasn't.

The Pilgrims, in their journal *Mourt's Relation*, published in 1622, reported that, on their arrival in Provincetown Harbor, "every day we saw whales playing hard by us, of which in that place, if we had instruments and means to take them, we might have made a very rich return...." The first European settlers on Cape Cod learned the favored techniques of hunting the whale, as well as myriad other lessons about survival in this new land, from the local natives. Nantucket and New Bedford grew into the premier whaling ports of New England in the 1700's; while Provincetown was barely settled at all in 1700, and grew very slowly until after the Revolution.

By 1822, however, Timothy Dwight was able to write in his *Travels in New England and New York*, "Almost every day strangers visit Provincetown from different parts of the world, for there is hardly any spot, except great trading cities, which is more frequented by vessels of all descriptions, than this....While most of their countrymen have been chained to a small spot of earth...the inhabitant of Provincetown has coasted the shores of Greenland, swept the Brazilian seas, or crossed the Pacific Ocean, in chase of the whale." And, for a hundred years thereafter, Provincetown men and boys, and occasionally women, continued to go to sea a-whaling.

WHALE ASHORE ON BEACH AT PROVINCETOWN, MASS.

By the 1870's, thanks to cod fishing, whaling, and related industries, Provincetown had become the most populous town on the Cape and one of the richest per capita in the Commonwealth. One of the favored destinations of Provincetown whaling captains was the Azores, a group of islands about 800 miles west of Portugal, the country that had laid claim to them and settled them. Life aboard a whaling vessel was no picnic, and the young men of Provincetown by the mid-1800's had begun staying in school longer and dreaming of a less dangerous and rigorous way of life. The men of the Azores, hard-working and skilled seamen, were recruited to fill out the crews of these Provincetown whalers; and before long, some of them began settling here. Over the next several decades, the numbers of these Portuguese immigrants grew steadily, shaped the fishing industry here, and the fabric of the town in countless ways. Today, their descendants continue to form the native backbone of the town.

They also own the great majority of the whale-watch vessels that leave from MacMillan Pier here every day from late April until October. One of the most commonly seen species of whale on these trips is the finback, the second largest of all the great whales. Awesome in their size and their gracefulness, they are truly a sight to behold from up close on a whale-watch boat. Because of their great speed, they were relatively hard to catch, until modern technology began catching up with them. Unlike the right whale and the humpback, they have maintained sufficient numbers to keep them off the endangered list up to this point.

The postcard here shows a 65-foot whale which was killed and brought ashore at Provincetown by the steamer A.B. Nickerson, "one of the largest of the finback species ever taken here." The profits to be made from whaling began to fall off slowly but steadily with the discovery of oil in Pennsylvania in 1859 However, it wasn't until 1925 that the last successful whaling voyage out of New England was completed by a Provincetown schooner, the John R. Manta, owned and captained by Portuguese immigrants.

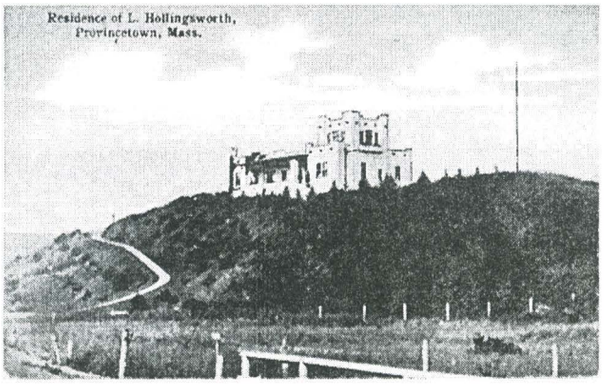
Whether we humans are any better off as a species since those days, or whether we're really any more benevolent towards each other or our fellow species, are questions open to debate. It would seem that the whales in the waters near here have it a little easier, being chased by people with cameras instead of people with harpoons. It's very doubtful, though, that their habitat is any better off than it was 75 years ago. These whales have much to teach us about the state of the oceans, about intelligence and communication, about life itself. We owe them a debt of gratitude for sticking around long enough to do that, and unlike the once mighty cod, for continuing to contribute to our economy despite our best efforts to eradicate them.

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

There were two major fires within a quarter-mile of each other in Provincetown 40 years ago this month. Each happened in the early morning hours of a Monday, and because of remoteness from other residents, burned for several hours before being reported. The two buildings were totally destroyed, and in spite of staggering losses, the families who owned them regrouped and began rebuilding almost immediately. Both did so spectacularly and, in fact, still own their places today. Despite all these similarities, the buildings and the families involved could not have been more different. Yet, both events say a lot about this town that we call home.

The Hollingsworth Castle, as it was known when these early postcards were produced (this one is post-marked 1916), was a grand residence built by an out-of-town couple atop a sand dune at the western end of Commercial Street. It eventually became the properly of a man named Dyer, who had been stationed on a ship that was anchored here during the Spanish-American War. Years later, he returned here to live, bought "the Castle," and became involved in the fisheries business. He sold the place to a business associate, Joshua *Paine, who added onto the house and also built the Provincetown Inn across the street.



The estate was bought in 1936 by Dr. Carl Murchison, a prominent psychologist who had just retired from the faculty at Clark University in Worcester. After buying the home which had sat empty for ten years, he completely renovated it and began furnishing it with his collection of antiques, Oriental rugs, and other treasures picked up in his travels around the world. Dr. Murchison had a huge library, which included many first and limited editions, and one of the finest libraries of psychology in the world. He also had records of his own work and the work of others in psychology and the social sciences, which he had meticulously assembled and organized. He was locally known as a generous patron of the arts, and in his twenty years here, had built a collection of paintings and sculpture that included some of the finest work of every artist who had ever worked in Provincetown. He and his wife were travelling in Ecuador when their 25 room home and the work of a lifetime went up in smoke early in the morning of April 30, 1956.

Though saddened by these irreplaceable losses, the Murchisons resolved to replace the old Spanish-style castle with a modern home that would be built entirely according to their own specifications, using the very latest in design and materials. They hired an internationally known architect, Walter Gropius, to supervise construction of the one-story, glass-walled home that occupies the site today. Thanks partly to the regrowth of trees in the area, it is much better hidden than its predecessor, and certainly better hidden than many of the other new houses that have popped up out of the skyline in the west end of town since then.

The Moors Restaurant and Bar was built by Maline and Naomi Costa, Provincetown natives, at the western end of Route 6-A. It was one of the first restaurants in town owned by descendants of Portuguese immigrants that offered authentic Portuguese cuisine. It was furnished with a distinctly nautical decor, with fishing and whaling relics collected by the Costas and others. After undergoing extensive renovations during the winter, it had just opened for the season on Friday night, May 25, 1956. Three days into the new season, the restaurant burned to the ground in a fire apparently caused by a defective floor furnace.

The Costas decided to rebuild immediately, resolving to be open again, in some fashion at least, by the Fourth of July--which in those days was really the beginning of "the season." Before the ashes of the fire were cold, offers of help began pouring in from builders and other tradespeople, money was raised, and marine relics were donated to replace those destroyed in the fire. The Moors was rebuilt beyond even the Costas' wildest expectations and reopened for business by July 1, a testament to the legendary generosity of Provincetown people towards their neighbors in time of crisis.

More about other historic fires, and about our heroic volunteer Fire Department, in future columns. And, look for a new exhibit about Provincetown fire-fighters opening Memorial Day weekend at the Heritage Museum.

*A woman came into the Heritage Museum on 6/19/96 who said she was the grand-daughter of Joshua Paine. She lived here until age 7, now resides in Calif. She says J.P. built Castle and Inn also helped start Cape Cod & Consolidated Cold Storages. According to her, Nancy W. Paine Smith was his sister. She lived on Tremont St, married William Smith. photographer, was a minister at Universalist Church.

Nancy Paine Smith (1859-1940) m. William May Smith (photographer)
Her father & brother were both named Joshua Paine
She also had a brother Edwin
Her brother Joshua b. 1865 d. 12/23/32 age 67
Her mother Martha Paine d. 1/10/13 age 82

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

The card shown here, with its original caption that said "Town Hall" crossed out, is a shining example of how many of these early postcards were mis-labelled. (Modern cards are no different.) Some of them were later reissued with the information on them corrected. This card in its second printing identified the building pictured as "The Town Home," or poorhouse, which it was. I'll tell you more about the building in a minute.

In my collection of Provincetown postcards, I have one that says "Town Crier on Bradford Street," when he's really on Commercial Street; several that show views of the waterfront "from Railroad Wharf" that are really from someplace else; cards that say "looking east" that are really looking west, etc. This goes to show that you can't necessarily trust the information on these old cards to be historically accurate. In fact, you can't really trust what you read anywhere.

One of the problems with being an amateur student of Provincetown's past is that a definitive history of the town has never been written. Bits and pieces of it appear in hundreds of different places. Unfortunately, most of these sources merely recycle information that may not have been accurate in the first place. We also know how a story, as it gets passed on from one person to the next, gets embellished and altered gradually to suit the purposes of the storyteller. The same thing has happened to Provincetown history. To make matters worse, many old records that should be in local libraries and museums have been lost in fires, discarded, taken out of town, or are squirreled away in private collections.

Old newspaper accounts are a terrific source of historical information. But what reporter, in haste to make a deadline, has not given some bit of "fact" without checking its accuracy, or worse, manipulated the "facts" to make a good story better? This humble columnist, of course, will be above such shenanigans. I will make every effort not to add to the glut of misinformation about Provincetown by tossing around supposed "facts" without knowing what I'm talking about. However, as the saying goes, to err is human. So, as my predecessor on these pages was fond of saying, don't trust what you read here as "the gospel truth!"

Let me take this opportunity to say that if any of you astute readers notices an error of fact in one of my columns, I want to hear from you about it! In fact, if you have something to add to a story, some insight that you feel is important, a comment or question about something I've written, or an idea for a future column, don't hesitate to write a note or pick up the phone. I know there are those of you out there who know more than I do, or who are old enough to have witnessed events that I have only read about. While I'm at it, if you have a shoebox of old postcards or other memorabilia that's just taking up precious space on a shelf or in a drawer, I'll be happy to relieve you of that problem! Write to me in care of the Magazine, 14 Center Street, or call and leave a message for me at 487-1000.

The card here shows the old "Town Infirmary," built around 1870 to house those who, for one reason or another, could not take care of themselves. Forty years ago this summer, after undergoing extensive renovations, it was reopened as the Cape End Manor, with 22 beds, a staff of about a dozen, and an annual budget just under $50,000. Within 20 years, state regulations made it impossible to continue in the old building, and a new Manor was built just down the road. The building pictured at 26 Alden Street was retained for town offices and renamed in honor of Grace Gouveia, who was a teacher in the Provincetown school system for 26 years, a noted chronicler of the town's Portuguese heritage, and an advocate for the town's senior citizens. She is a resident of the Manor herself today, while her "little" brother, "Cul," author of the "Endangered Species" column that used to appear here, continues her work of keeping alive the history of our hometown.

Do you have a friend in the Manor? Have you been to see him or her lately? Why not do it today?

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

Every year at this time, there is a week-long series of events coordinated by various groups to draw attention to the Cape's seafaring heritage. This year's Cape Cod Maritime Week runs from May 11 - May 19, and features a truly impressive array of activities. There are lighthouse tours, historic walking tours, boat tours, open houses at various museums and historic sites, lectures, slide shows, concerts--a real bonanza for the history buff.

By the time this column appears in print, the week will be more than half over, but you may still have time to catch a talk by local historian George Bryant up at the Provincetown Visitor center on Thursday the 16th at 7:30pm. George's subject will be "Provincetown, City in the Sand: Third Largest Fishing Port in 19th-Century New England." If you're interested in local history, you shouldn't miss this. There is no one I know who can speak with more authority about it than George Bryant.

On Saturday, May 18, from 10am-5pm, the Truro Historical Society will hold an open house at their museum in the old Highland House hotel and restaurant on the road to Highland Light. If you haven't yet been there, don't let another summer go by without stopping in to see this wonderful museum. History will be made on the bluffs at the Highlands this summer, as the venerable lighthouse is moved several hundred feet inland from the eroding cliffbank. Construction crews are already dodging golfballs as the groundwork is laid for the move, which could be completed by the Fourth of July, if all goes according to plan.

The only one of Provincetown's lighthouses that will be open to the public during Maritime Week is Race Point Light. Unfortunately, this event is scheduled for Sunday, May 12, so it will be history by the time you read this. If you missed it, look for the schedule ahead of time next year.

Race Point, at the fist of Cape Cod, was the first of the three lighthouses to be built in Provincetown and the third on the lower Cape. First constructed in 1816, it was replaced with the present structure in 1876. Long Point Light, at the tip end of the Cape, followed in 1822 and was also rebuilt in the 1870s. Wood End Light, across the West End breakwater from the Provincetown Inn, dates from the 1870s as well.

That same decade saw the formation of the U.S. Lifesaving Service and the construction of the first nine lifesaving stations on the outer Cape. One of those was at Race Point, a couple of miles eastward up the beach from the lighthouse. It was located right behind the large white building that's now a Park Service Ranger Station at Race Point Beach which was constructed by the U.S. Coast Guard around 1930 to replace the old lifesaving station. The Old Harbor Station out at Race Point Beach dates from the 1890's and was floated up from its original home in Chatam in 1977. It will be open to the public from 1-3pm this Sunday, if you want to learn more about the Lifesaving Service.

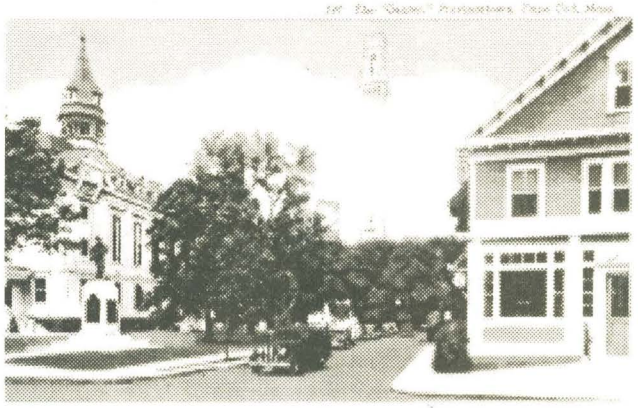
Race Point Light today is a lonely spot, though not as lonely as it must have been for the Lighthouse keepers in horse-and-buggy days, miles from town on bad roads. The lighthouse, like those at Wood End and Long Point, is now powered by solar panels. There were originally two keeper's houses, with room for three families. The two-family house shown in this postcard was torn down in the early 1960s. There is, however, hope for the remaining keeper's house, which has been boarded up for the past twenty years and is suffering from neglect. The New England Lighthouse Foundation has been negotiating a lease with the Coast Guard to maintain the buildings at Race Point, while the Coast Guard would continue to operate the light.

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

A holiday in most of America means a three-day weekend, an extra day off work, and perhaps, a chance to get away. Our town is one of those places people like to get away to, so a holiday here means more people on the streets and a boost in business. Instead of a chance to take off work, it means a chance to work extra. Whichever way you look at it, the original significance of the holiday itself tends to be forgotten.

At no time of the year is this more true than Memorial Day, the official beginning of our tourist season, for which we've spent months preparing. We'll see more people here than we've seen since Labor Day weekend nine months ago. The trickle of visitors that's been showing up here on warm spring weekends suddenly turns into a flood. It's a weekend that's greeted with relief by many of us, with dread by some, with a mixture of the two by perhaps most of us.



Memorial Day was set aside as a national holiday more than 125 years ago, to honor the memory of those who died in the Civil War. It was originally called Decoration Day, a day to decorate the graves of those who gave their lives in the service of their country. It was traditionally observed on May 30--no matter what day of the week it was.

In Provincetown, as in other towns, there was a big parade, with services at the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in the cemetery. These services included prayers by the local clergy, solemn remarks on the occasion by town officials, and patriotic music performed by the Provincetown Band. Dozens of graves were decorated by the V.F.W. and the American Legion, and flowers were strewn on the water at the Town Wharf "to honor the memory of those veterans who sleep beneath the ocean's waves that our Nation might live."

This 1930's postcard view looking up Ryder Street towards the Monument shows the statue on Town Hall lawn that was dedicated to the Provincetowners who served in World War I, which was then thought to be "the war to end all wars." The Morris Light Post of the American Legion and the Lewis A. Young Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars were both named for local boys who died in World War I, as was Lopes Square. Unfortunately, there are no similar memorials to those who have served in subsequent wars.

During World War II, a young Provincetown artist named Charles Darby wrote a letter to the Board of Selectmen from the aviation school in South Dakota where he was stationed, suggesting that the statue in front of Town Hall be razed for scrap to be donated to the war effort. As incredible as this may seem, the suggestion was taken seriously and a committee was formed to look into the idea. All over the country, people were being urged to give up whatever metal goods they could spare, to be melted down and made into tanks and planes and bullets. At Adams Pharmacy, Norman Cook--who lost his father in World War I--and his wife, Dot, took part in a national drive to collect used toothpaste and shaving cream tubes for the tin they were made of. Mrs. Paul Smith, who with her husband started the Provincetown Bookshop, donated her hard-won ping pong trophies. Almost everyone made sacrifices of some kind.

Charles Darby was one of a half-dozen Provincetown boys who made the ultimate sacrifice and never came home from World War II. There is a small plaque with his name on it at the corner of Bangs Street and Commercial by the Art Association. A wooden cross was erected in his memory by fellow Beachcombers out by Long Point Light.

Next Thursday, after the season's first wave of tourists has subsided for another couple of weeks, take a moment to remember those who've served--and to pray for peace!

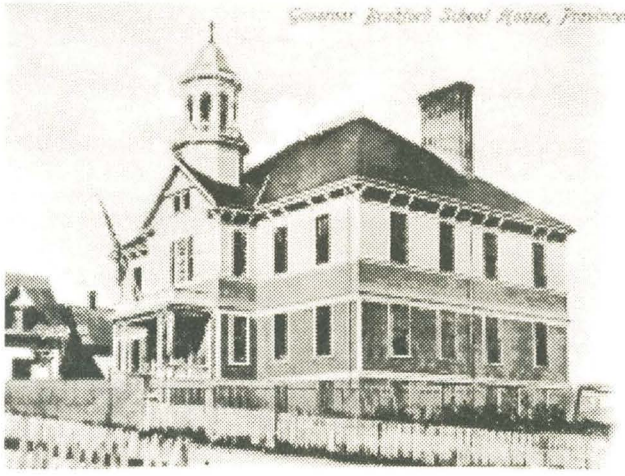
Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

In my last column, with the holiday weekend approaching, I wrote about how the significance of Memorial Day is obscured by the importance of the weekend as the beginning of the tourist season. Even though it's been three days since the holiday throngs disappeared over the bridge, today, May 30, is actually Memorial Day; so once again, I'd like to salute all the veterans in town and their families.

I'd also like to extend my heartfelt sympathies to all the kids in town--and their teachers--who have to sit through three more weeks of school, even though it feels as if summer is already here. Hang in there, kids!

When I was writing last week's column, I couldn't help noticing all the connections between the veterans' groups in town and the school system, so I thought I'd develop that theme and see where we end up.



Veterans' Memorial School, our present elementary school, was dedicated in May of 1955. At that event, Joseph Lawlor, who was the commander of the local American Legion post at the time, presented an album of photographs of the Western and Center Schools taken by John D. Bell, to serve as a permanent reminder of the structures that the new building was replacing. Photos of the two schools were featured on the front page of the Advocate of May 12, 1955, beneath the headline, "These Old Houses Once Knew Laughter, These Old Houses Now Must Go." The two sites, one at the corner of School Street and Tremont, and the other at Alden and Bradford Streets, were to be smoothed over and hardened for parking lots.

These days, realizing how many of our important buildings have been lost, we have a somewhat heightened awareness of the importance of historic preservation. However, we also have a greater than ever need for parking. One wonders, if this decision had to be made today, how it would go.

The Center and Western Schools were two of three that were built for Provincetown children in the 1840s. The third one, the Eastern School, was discontinued as a school before the other two, and it's the only one that still remains. At the corner of Howland and Commercial Streets across from the Ice House, it's now owned by the Morris Light Post of the American Legion.

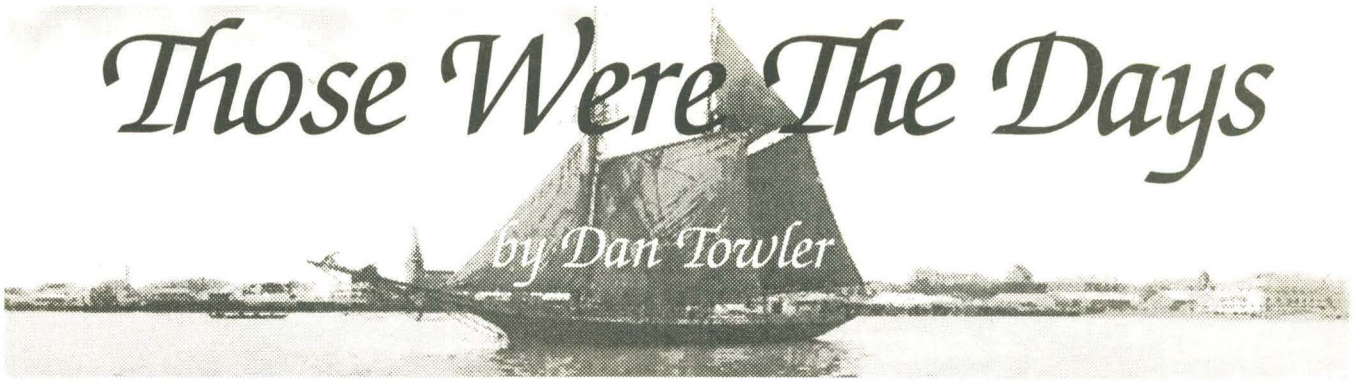
Another school that was rendered obsolete by the new Veterans Memorial was the Governor Bradford School, which was built on Bradford Street in 1935. A number of possible uses was considered for this building, including a headquarters for the American Legion before they bought the Eastern School. It was finally decided that it should be retained as a community recreation center, which purpose it still serves.

The original Governor Bradford School, shown here in an old postcard, preceded the later one at the same location. It burned down on the night of April 6, 1935, in a fire "of incendiary origin." In a later column, I'll talk about other Provincetown schools that have been lost to fires. Don't get any ideas, kids!

Getting back to the veterans, the Lewis A. Young pst of the V.F.W. had its headquarters at a former school before its present home on Jerome Smith Road was built in the late 1950s. That was the old Conant Street School. which was for kids with learning disabilities. It was torn down to make way for the Bonnie Doone Restaurant, which has now become the Mussel Beach Health Club.

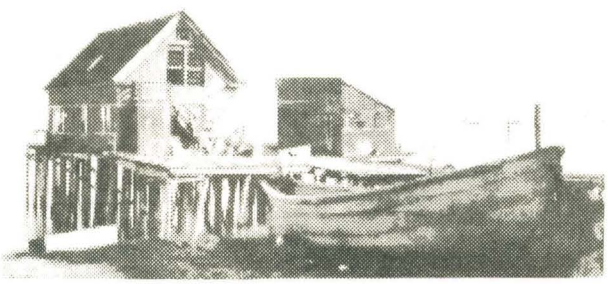
Finally, Motta Field, across Winslow Street from Veterans Memorial School, was named for Manuel V. Motta, Jr., a young Provincetown soldier who was killed in Korea in 1950. Today, it is the field of battle for Provincetown High School's illustrious softball and baseball teams. Go, Fishermen! For our youth, and for our veterans, we have much to be proud. A tip of the cap to both on this Memorial Day.

Those Were The Days



by Dan Towler

Thirty years have passed since Mary Heaton Vorse died in Provincetown at the age of 91, on June 14, 1966. She is best known locally for the last of her sixteen books, *Time and the Town: A Provincetown Chronicle*, published by The Dial Press of New York in 1942. Part memoir, part history, part social commentary, it remains one of the liveliest, most informative books about this town, to which, she, like many of us, "came for two weeks and remained a lifetime." Long out-of-print in its original hardcover version, it has been reprinted in two separate editions in recent years--one by the Cape Cod Pilgrim Memorial Association, and one by the Rutgers University Press--so it is now widely available in paperback. Anyone even remotely interested in local history and lore should begin their Provincetown bookshelf with this title.



Less well known is the fact that Mary Heaton Vorse was one of the most important journalists and social activists of her time, and certainly one of the great labor journalists in this country's history. In the early years of this century, she participated in and reported on the epic battles of American workers to gain a decent living. It was a disturbing chapter of our history about which the mass media--then and now--would just as soon that we remain ignorant. A correspondent abroad during both World Wars, she wrote more than 300 articles for various newspapers and magazines over a fifty year career. Though she was born into a wealthy family, she rebelled early against her upbringing and the conventions of her time. She remained a non-conformist and a champion of the downtrodden throughout her life.

Denied the financial support of her family--which disapproved of her views and her lifestyle--and twice widowed, she wrote novels to support herself while raising her three children largely alone. She exemplified and wrote about the struggles of women to gain respect, recognition, and equal rights in a male-dominated world. The competing desires to be a nurturing mother and maintain a functioning household, at the same time that she yearned to pursue a career and make a difference in the world, were a constant source of conflict for her, as they are for many women today.

This remarkable woman's life and writings finally received the treatment they deserved in an excellent biography written in 1989 by Rutgers University history professor Dee Garrison.

In *Time and the Town*, Vorse describes her arrival in Provincetown in 1906: "When we saw it first from the deck of a boat making the trip from Boston to the Cape, it seemed to rise out of the sea. It stretched out as we approached it, low-lying and gray, its skyline punctuated with a standpipe and the steeples of churches. Gray wharves ran out into the bay. It was a seafaring place that lived from the sea and by the sea and whose one crop was fish. 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 these thirty-five years, nor for one moment wished to live anywhere else, though I have been over half the globe."

The next year, she and her husband bought the Kibbe Cook house, two doors east of what would become the Art Association on Commercial Street. Already over a century old, it was built by the scion of a very successful whaling family, whose descendants developed a large chunk of the waterfront in that part of town. Her son, Heaton, an accomplished journalist in his own right*, continued to live there until his death six years ago.

Mary Heaton Vorse was responsible as much as anyone for the summer migration of writers to Provincetown, which culminated in the formation of the Provincetown Players in 1915. It was on her fish wharf in the east end of town that Eugene O'Neill's first plays were produced. Alas, that story will have to wait for another column.

* (He wrote a column for this magazine during the last three years of his life.)

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

Provincetown's history as an art colony is just about a century old. Although the fishing industry which built the town had reached its peak and begun to decline by the 1890's, this was still very much a working fishing village. By that time, much of the waterfront business was in the hands of Portuguese immigrants who had been picked up in the Azores by Provincetown and New Bedford whaling captains, and had settled in large numbers in both ports. These people, with their Mediterranean speech and customs, added to the mix of Irish, Cape Bretoners, and New England Yankees that were already here to give the place a cosmopolitan flavor and a tolerance for newcomers, which--although sorely tested--continues to this day.

The quaint and picturesque quality of the town began attracting increasing numbers of vacationers with the arrival of the railroad in 1873, as well as regular steamship passenger service to and from Boston. Among those who came seeking respite from the cities were artists, who were drawn to the famous quality of light here, as well as the natural beauty of the landscape and the old-world authenticity of the town and its people. Food and lodging were inexpensive, and studio space was readily available in many of the unused storage buildings that lined the shore.

Although he was only 27 when he arrived here in 1899, Charles Hawthorne was already an accomplished painter, and his Cape Cod School of Art drew many more artists to Provincetown to study with him. Before long, several more summer art schools were flourishing here. In many respects, Provincetown is a completely changed town from the one that these early artists came to paint, nor would much of the art that is done now be recognizable as such to Hawthorne and his contemporaries. Yet, despite the almost prohibitive cost of housing and studio space today, artists continue to come here to work and to study.

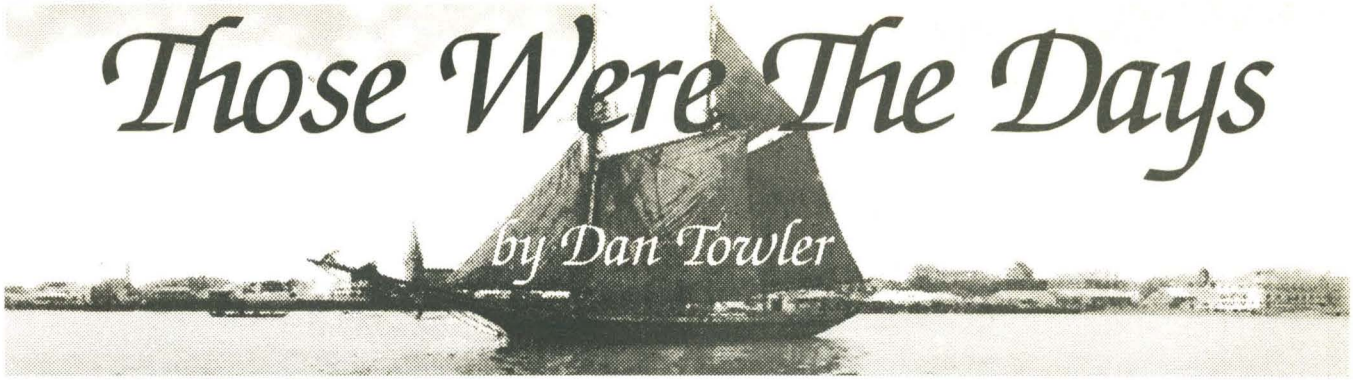
The barn on Miller Hill that Hawthorne used as his classroom (when he wasn't holding classes outside) survives today as the Hawthorne School of Art, run by Peter and Olga Gee. The Cape Cod School of Art was taken over by a student of Hawthorne's, Henry Hensche, who held classes in a barn at the upper end of Pearl Street--where it still exists today, run by a Hensche disciple, Lois Griffel.

The outbreak of World War I in Europe in 1914 made travel to that area impossible, and it forced American artists and intellectuals who had migrated there to return home. Many of these people found their way to Provincetown. This influx of new arrivals was largely responsible for the formation of the Provincetown Players, a group of writers who began staging their own plays and ended up changing the course of modern American theater.

The Provincetown Art association was formed in 1914 to promote the interests of the artists' community, and within its first three years, had attracted almost 300 members. Today there are about 700, and the Art Association and Museum continues to showcase the work of new artists, at the same time that it houses a permanent collection of some 1500 works created by Provincetown artists over the last hundred years.

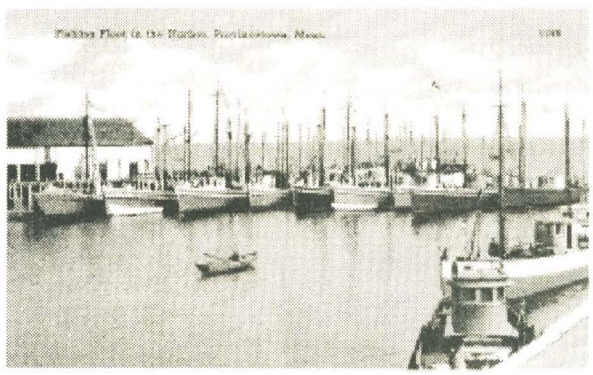
Just down the hill from the Cape Cod school of Art on Pearl Street is the Fine Arts Work Center, which since 1972 has occupied the former Days' Lumberyard studios, the history of which also goes back to 1914 and surely deserves a column all its own. The Work Center, which is just beginning its summer program of week-long classes in creative writing and the visual arts, offers seven-month fellowships during the off-season to 20 artists and writers at the beginning stages of their careers. Many of the Work Center Fellows, who come from all over the world, end up staying in Provincetown--if they can find a way to afford it--ensuring the continuing vitality of Provincetown as an art colony.

Those Were The Days



by Dan Towler

For almost 50 years, this last weekend in June has been the time of the Blessing of the Fleet, a tradition that was brought over from the Azores, the ancestral home of most of Provincetown's fishing families. Restarted in 1948, the weekend's activities revolved around the Blessing itself on Sunday, with the Bishop from Fall river sprinkling holy water on each of the boats as it passed by a reviewing stand out on the wharf. It was preceded by a special High Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Peter's Catholic Church, to thank the Lord for safe passage on the year's fishing trips, and to ask humbly for a good harvest from the sea in the year to come. A statue of St. Peter, the patron saint of fishermen, was carried from the church to the wharf in a parade which included marching bands, floats, and the whole works.



The fishing fleet, which still contained four dozen boats in the 1940's, was freshly painted and decorated to the hilt and jammed with family and friends for the occasion, as well as food and beverages for on-board picnics afterwards out at Long Point. The weekend developed into a three-day celebration, with all sorts of games and contests for the kids and some for their parents--a fishing derby, rowing dory race, greased pole climb, softball game, etc. There was various indoor entertainment for the grown-ups all weekend, culminating in a big dance on Saturday night. It was a time for Provincetown natives, the majority of whom whine the late 1800's have been of Portuguese descent, to celebrate their heritage, their means of livelihood, and their bonds with each other and with the ocean.

These are not flush times for those who still make their living fishing off Provincetown. In the waters of the northeastern U.S. and Canada, groundfish--cod, haddock, and flounder--which built this town and hundreds of others like it, have been fished almost to the brink of extinction. Modern technology and the sheer numbers and size of the boats have finally caught up with the supply of fish, which was once thought to be boundless. Provincetown's year'round fleet, now down to 22 boats, is just barely hanging on. Many boat-owners are still in it only because their life savings, along with years of sweat and blood, are tied up in their boats, and who else would want them? It's what their fathers and grandfathers did, and it's what they know ho to do. Many cannot afford to maintain their boats properly, or carry insurance, or pay for a crew to go out with them.

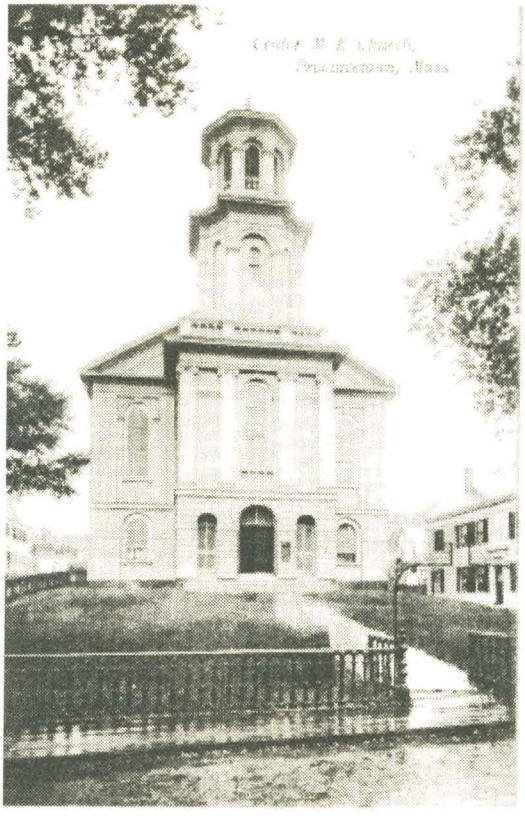
So this year, there will be no Blessing on the scale of years past. There will be no parade, and no colorful procession of boats past the Bishop at the end of the wharf. Many of the boat captains have had to take one or two jobs on shore in order to make ends meet. So, who has the time or money to spend decorating their boat or organizing a party? There will still be some games for the kids on Saturday, a dance for fishermen and their families Saturday night, and the priest will go down to the wharf after the Mass on Sunday and bless each of the boats.

The scene on the waterfront, like the scene on Commercial Street, like the shape of the land itself around here, is constantly changing. Where there used to be 50 working wharves along the shore, now there are three, none of them principally devoted to fishing. Where our beautiful natural harbor, one of the finest on the east coast, was once filled with two- and three-masted fishing schooners, it now floats everything from cruise ships to jet-skis. Many people have left commercial fishing to run whale watch boats, sport-fishing trips, dune tours, or restaurants. Still, the harbor remains very much central to the life of the town. And many people still find a way to make a living extracting food from the ocean for the rest of us to enjoy. Here's hoping those still in the business continue to find plenty to catch in the coming ear, and return safely to port every time out!

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

Today, the Fourth of July, is the 220th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, a document which set us apart as a nation from England. Though it had already been more than 150 years since the Pilgrims arrived here aboard the Mayflower, Provincetown in 1776 was still a very small settlement, with barely 200 residents. Once the Pilgrims left for Plymouth in 1620, there was very little activity here for most of the next century, except for some fishing on a transient basis. In fact, we weren't incorporated as a town until 1727, well after most of the other towns on the Cape. Until that time, the term "Cape Cod" was commonly used to refer to what is now Provincetown.



The earliest recorded birth here was in 1696, 300 years ago. A few years later, the settlement--which was then a precinct of Truro--was required by law to construct a meeting-house for the teaching of the Gospel. The Reverend Samuel Spear, a Harvard graduate who had already preached in a number of towns, was called here in 1722 to run the new church and to civilize the unruly inhabitants. By his own account, he had his work cut out for him. He wrote: "Cape Cod is a seaport place whereto there is a great resort by fishermen and others who frequently carry very disorderly amongst us by excessive drinking, quarreling, profanation of the Sabbath, etc."

Thank goodness that three centuries of steady church-going have eliminated all these barbaric practices! The Reverend Spear, were he alive today (lucky for him that he isn't), would be 300 years old this Saturday, July 6.

The first church buildings in town, like the oldest cemetery, were located near the site of the present-day St. Peter's Catholic Church which dates from about 1875. The first Catholics to meet here were Irish immigrants in the 1850's. St. Peter's was built by and for the Portuguese, who came to outnumber all the other ethnic groups and even the original Yankee settlers.

The oldest standing church building is the old Congregational Church, or Church of the Pilgrims, next to Town Hall. Built in 1843, its steeple was removed around 1950, and today is the site of the Euro Cafe. A couple of blocks west stands the oldest continuing church, the Unitarian-Universalist, built in 1847. Its lovely steeple vies for attention on the skyline with another former church, the Center Methodist, at the corner of Center Street.

The first people to declare themselves Methodists here were not a popular group. In fact, Town Meeting, which in earlier days seemed to have no qualms about taking up matters of religion (no doubt, there were fewer secular issues to deal with!), voted that no Methodist meeting-house should be built here. The first load of lumber that was brought from Maine for that purpose was burned by angry townspeople. Nevertheless, the Methodists grew in courage and numbers and eventually built the Center M.E. Church in 1860.

A rival congregation built an even bigger church in 1866, the Centenary Methodist, at the corner of Winthrop Street. It burned to the ground in a spectacular fire in 1908 and was replaced with a much more modest structure. That one was torn down in 1949 to make way for the new First National Bank building (which, though transformed, still occupies the site), and the two congregations joined together again in worship at the Center Church.

The Methodists decided that they couldn't afford to maintain their century-old building, and despite a storm of protest from church members and others, they sold it in 1958 to Walter Chrysler, Jr. (of the automobile family) who turned it into a prestigious art museum. Chrysler took his collection to Norfolk, Virginia in 1972; and three years later the town bought the building for a museum of its own, to preserve and interpret its varied and colorful history. The Provincetown Heritage Museum was dedicated twenty years ago today, July 4, 1976.

A happy and safe holiday to all!

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

It doesn't take a historian to figure out that Provincetown was not planned with the automobile in mind. Trying to navigate Commercial Street in a car at this time of year is enough to test the patience of the most even-tempered among us. It would be dangerous except that cars move slower than bicycles and pedestrians. For those people newly arrived in town whose only wish is to get out of the car, finding a place to park on a busy summer day is undoubtedly enough to make many wish they'd never come here.

As you might guess, this is not a new problem. Eighty-five years ago, in its edition of July 13, 1911, the Advocate offers the following observation: "That this is the automobile age is clearly demonstrated at the present time....The "honk" of the automobile horn is continual. More and more, the resident needs to walk circumspectly if he is to avoid disaster, for the procession of townward proceeding automobilists increases daily and our streets are narrow and, in some parts, congested at this season of the year."

Fifty years ago, July 11, 1946, the same paper editorializes, "Provincetown, this summer, will probably experience the worst traffic conditions and congestion in its long and congested history...As a town, we are under certain obligations to find places for our visitors' cars. There is the obligation of hospitality, and there is the necessity for such accommodation if we and our shopkeepers are to derive the maximum of business from those who come here to enjoy the town and spend their money. Nor is it good for Provincetown to have visitors leave it with nightmarish impressions of traffic confusion unrelieved by parking facilities."

Four years later, on July 6, 1950, another editorial begins, "It is easier to recall the fragrance of June's roses in March than to remember July's traffic at the annual Town Meeting in February. But, it must be done, somehow, sometime soon. Provincetown Chief of Police William N. Rogers estimates that many thousands of dollars were lost to the business people here because hordes of motorists could find no place to stop and were quickly prodded out of town to find less congested, more relaxing places."

That same year, in 1950, Joseph Duarte purchased the old New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad station and the land around it, creating the large parking lot that's still in business at Bradford and Standish Streets. A couple of years later, the Grace Hall estate was bought by the town and leveled to create the parking lot on Lothrop Hill behind the High School. In 1955, more parking resulted from the removal of the old Center School at Bradford and Alden Streets, and the Western School on School Street.

Also in 1955, construction was begun on the new MacMillan Pier, and thousands of cubic yards of dredged sand were dumped in the area between the two central piers, eventually creating our lovely municipal waterfront parking lot. A project that had been talked about for years, this was thought to be the ultimate solution to Provincetown's parking needs. Today, it is generally regarded as a major contributor to congestion in the downtown area, and many would like to see it phased out in favor of parking in more outlying areas.

Despite the thousands of new parking places that have been created since the 1950's, the congestion that people were so worked up about back then, now seems worse than ever. One gets the feeling that no matter how many more parking lots are built, and no matter how many consultants are brought in to study the problem, there will always be too much traffic in the summer, and never enough parking. As the newspaper said 50 years ago, it's simply a matter of "too many in too small a space."

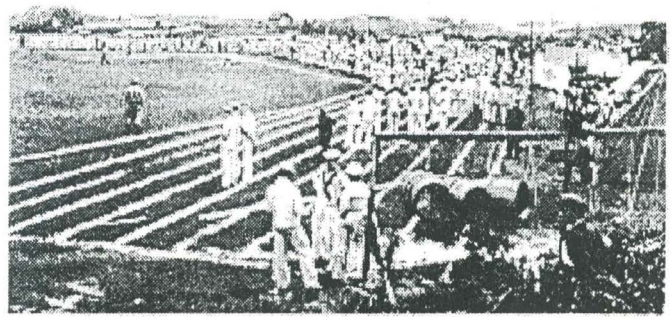
So, whether you're driving, walking, bike-riding or roller-blading, relax; take your time; be considerate; and don't forget to "look out for the other guy!"

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

The production of postcards for private use was first authorized by an act of Congress in 1898. Thus began a "golden age of postcards" that coincided with more rapid means of transportation and the spread of tourism to many places, including Provincetown. In the decade before the outbreak of World War I in Europe, literally thousands of different scenes here became the subject of postcard views. Together, they offer an invaluable portrait of the town as very few of us can still remember it.

Many of the early cards of the downtown area of Commercial Street show large numbers of sailors in uniform. The reason for this is that Provincetown was a favorite port of call for the battleships of the U.S. Navy's North Atlantic fleet. Hundreds of sailors were ferried in to Railroad Wharf (where MacMillan Pier is now, so named because the railroad tracks ran right out to the end of it), to roam the streets of Provincetown for a few hours.



While this flood of young men livened up the place considerably and was good for business, and, no doubt, provided some welcome excitement to the girls in town, there was plenty of opportunity for conflict with residents as well as the local constabulary--which, at the time, consisted of one man. The Navy decided to head off trouble by channelling the energies of the men into athletics. A delegation came ashore from the six battleships in the squadron on July 1, 1905, and obtained the permission of Joe Holmes to use his cranberry bog for a field. For the next two days, a party of sailors and townspeople worked feverishly to transform the bog into a quarter-mile track with a baseball diamond in the center. A straightaway was marked off for the 100-yard dash, and different areas prepared for the broad jump, high jump, pole vault, hammer throw, and shot put.

The field was named for the commander of the Atlantic Fleet, Rear Admiral Robley D. ("Fighting Bob") Evans. The first official track meet, pitting the athletes of each ship against each other, was held on the Fourth of July, 1905. Two thousand men were landed from the six battleships to take in the events, and before the day was over, were joined ~~by the team from the U.S.S. *Kentucky*, one of whose stand-outs,~~ ** interestingly enough, was a black "coal-passer" named Washington. Apparently, the Navy was integrated, to some degree, even back then. The team from the *Maine* came in second, followed by the *Alabama*, the *Missouri*, and the *Kearsarge*, and, last but not least, the *Massachusetts*.

The day was a great success, all in all, with only four reported cases of intoxication. According to the local newspaper account, "these were men who got the villainous Portuguese poison which was sold at a brush shack located between the hennery and the stand-pipe, over which the Navy had no control."

The following summer, Evans Field was the scene of a series of hard-fought baseball games between a team from the battleship *Louisiana* and a team of Provincetown locals. In the third game, after two defeats, the *Louisiana* team piled up a 9-0 lead after seven innings. In the eighth, however, the homeboys strung together a few hits, and "the paens [sic] of thanksgiving from the small boy chorus went echoing like rattles over the surrounding country, electrifying the inhabitants of the Holmes hennery afar and setting them a-cackling..." Alas, the *Louisiana* team prevailed in the end by a score of 21-4. The Advocate's write-up includes a full box score, remarkably identical in form to those in today's Boston papers.

While the nation's pastime has changed relatively little in 90 years, Joe Holmes' farm at the lower end of Winslow Street is today dotted with residences. Evans Field is still there, across Route 6 from Shankpainter Road, though neither road, of course, was there when the field was laid out in 1905. It is still the scene of athletic contests in late summer and fall, though the rest of the year it more closely resembles a duck pond.

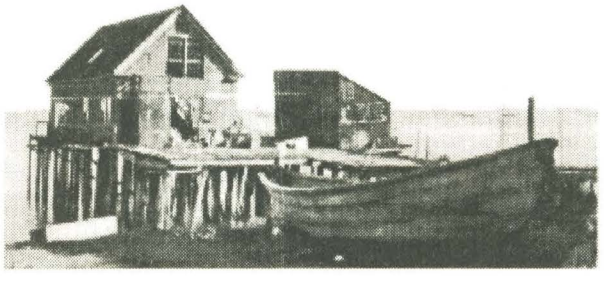
** Should read: were joined by an estimated 5,000 spectators. The meet was won by the team from the U.S.S.Kentucky, which dominated the running events. One of its stand-out athletes, interestingly enough,

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

This summer marks the 80th anniversary of the arrival in Provincetown of Eugene O'Neill. He came with a friend in June of 1916 from New York City by way of Boston aboard the steamer *Dorothy Bradford*. The son of a successful actor, he had been to Harvard, he had been to sea as a deckhand on a freighter, and, although a dedicated loner, he had been lurking around the edges of the bohemian crowd of writers and artists in Greenwich Village. Many of these people had begun to summer in Provincetown, and had formed a theater group to put on each other's plays in 1915. O'Neill had heard about this group, and had written a few plays himself. He came here hoping to find a stage and a company of actors willing to produce some of them.

This he did, and he would spend most of the next eight years living here. He married his second wife here, fathered a son, and bought a home (with his father's help). He also wrote several more plays, winning the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1920 for *Beyond the Horizon*, and in 1922 for *Anna Christie*. Like those of his contemporaries in Provincetown, O'Neill's plays dealt with gritty, real-life issues, unlike the comedic fluff being produced for Broadway at the time. Both the style of these plays and the size of the theater groups that produced them were new developments, and came to be seen as defining the course of American drama since then.



The first two one-act plays produced by the group in Provincetown in the summer of 1915 were staged at the cottage at 621 Commercial Street owned by the writers Hutchins Hapgood and Neith Boyce. Later that summer, a theater was created out of a converted fish shed at the end of Mary Heaton Vorse's wharf up the street. The second bill of plays for that season was produced in the new makeshift theater on Lewis Wharf in September.

The group returned the following summer from New York with renewed energy and a fresh batch of plays. The season opened on July 16, 1916 with works by Neith Boyce, Jack Reed, (whose short life was chronicled in the 1981 film, *Reds*), and George Cram Cook. Cook, known as "Jig," and his wife, the novelist Susan Glaspell, owned a home at 564 Commercial Street, right across from Lewis Wharf. It was there that the newcomer, O'Neill, was invited to a reading of one of his plays. The group in attendance recognized his talent immediately, and *Bound East for Cardiff*, with the playwright himself in a minor role, was chosen to run on the season's second bill at the wharf theater on July 28, 1916.

A dozen other one-act plays were staged that summer, including one more by O'Neill, entitled *Thirst*. The Provincetown Players took their act back to Greenwich Village in the fall and soon moved on to bigger stages in the New York area, never returning to the fish shack on Lewis Wharf. They disbanded in 1922, at about the same time that the wharf theater in Provincetown finally succumbed to the elements. Nothing remains of it today, except for a granite marker on Commercial Street which was placed there to commemorate the site on O'Neill's 100th birthday in 1988.

Just to confuse historians and theater buffs, another group was organized as the Wharf Theater in the West End of town in the 1920's. This group, which also debuted some of O'Neill's work, performed plays at Frank Shay's barn at 27 Bradford Street--which is still there. A splinter group later built its own theater on a wharf--which is long gone--near the current location of the West End Racing Club. Yet another group, calling itself the Provincetown Playhouse-on-the-Wharf, formed in 1940 and began putting on plays in a small building at the foot of the wharf at the Town landing at Gosnold Street. This group, with at least one production of an O'Neill play each summer season, was very successful and lasted until 1977, when the building was torched by arsonists.

There is a dizzying array of staged readings, plays, exhibits. and other events going on this summer in memory of the history-making 1916 theater season in Provincetown. Look elsewhere in this publication to find a listing of them. And be sure to take in as many as you can!

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

One of the most heroic and exciting chapters in the history of this area is the story of the U.S. Life Saving Service, the forerunner of today's Coast Guard. Before the Cape Cod Canal was completed in 1914, all coastal shipping had to traverse the outer Cape. In the days of sail--before modern forms of navigation, radio, or weather forecasting--vessels routinely foundered on these shores, resulting in horrific loss of life.

Congress established the Life Saving Service in 1872, and nine stations were built that year on the Cape, approximately five miles apart, from Race Point in the north to Monomoy in the south. Each was manned with a full-time "keeper" and six or seven "surfmen" who were expected to be on duty around the clock, except for one 12-hour leave each week, from August 1 to June 1--ten months of the year. Every night, and during the day in bad weather, the life savers patrolled the beaches on the lookout for vessels in distress, meeting with the men from adjoining stations in "halfway houses," huts which were situated between each of the stations. When they were not on patrol, the crew spent their days in drills practicing the launch of life boats and the use of other lifesaving apparatus and techniques.

The stations were manned with seasoned fishermen and whalers, men who were skilled in the use of boats and undaunted by the terrors of the sea. They had to be less than 45 years-old and pass a rigorous physical examination each year. Many had wives and children at home. Several times a year, their work called upon them to risk their own lives trying to save the lives of others, charging into the angry surf in small boats in the worst imaginable weather. "You have to go out, but you don't have to come back" was their unofficial motto. Thanks to them, hundreds of people who would otherwise have surely drowned were rescued from stranded vessels.

There were two lifesaving stations located in Provincetown, with a third one added in 1896 at Wood End, near the site of the present Wood End Light, across the breakwater from the Provincetown Inn. There was one at Race Point near the present beach parking lot, which was replaced around 1930 by the large white building that's now a Park Service Ranger Station. It was the Race Point Coast Guard Station until the late 1970s, when the Coast Guard relocated to its present site on the waterfront in the West End.

One of the busiest stations on the Cape was the one at Peaked Hill Bars pictured in this early 1900s postcard. Peaked Hill was a name once given to a high, brush-covered hill in the dunes about even with Snail Road. Since the dunes are constantly changing shape, the original hill is long gone, but the name for that area remains. Offshore are two submerged sand bars created by wave action, running for several miles parallel to the beach. These shallow bars, the closer of which is about 500 yards out and can easily be seen from shore, spelled death for innumerable sailing ships which were caught rounding the Cape in stormy weather.

By 1914, the Peaked Hill station was threatened by the gradual erosion of the shoreline, and a new station was built about a quarter-mile south. After a few years, it, too, was in danger for the same reason and it was moved a few hundred feet inland. It was de-activated after World War II and burned to the ground in August, 1958, leaving only the concrete foundation, which still remains. Meanwhile, the original station was sold into private hands in 1915 and renovated into a palatial summer home, complete with fireplaces, indoor plumbing and a telephone--amenities unheard of in the dunes even today! In 1919, it was purchased by James O'Neill, who gave it to his son Eugene for a wedding present. For the next five years there, away from the distractions of town, O'Neill wrote many of his most famous plays and established himself as an important literary figure. The building itself finally toppled onto the beach in the winter of 1931, where it was soon swallowed up by the sea.

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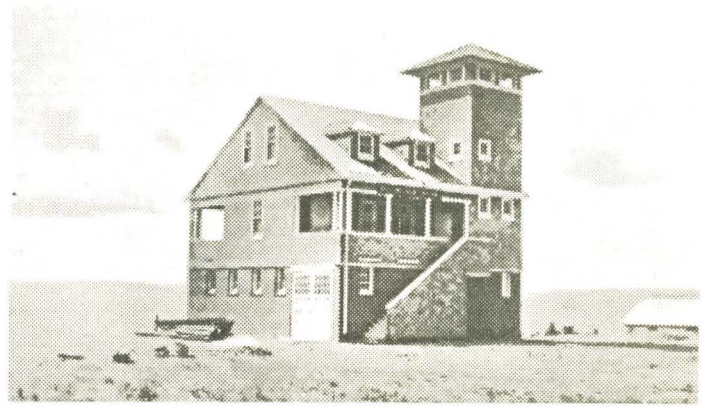
The gold medal for the history-making event of the summer, if I were judging, would have to go to the moving of Highland Light. The venerable beacon in North Truro was inched along a series of steel beams over the course of 19 days to a point 450 feet inland from where it was built in 1857. The restless Atlantic had slowly chewed off about six acres of the ten-acre site that the government bought for a lighthouse 200 years ago this month. Until a few days ago, only a little over 100 feet remained between the cliff edge and the light, 400 feet less than when it was built. At that rate, those of us younger than middle age would have lived to see the 66-foot high tower topple into the sea.

When the brave souls of the Truro Historical Society began alarming people a few years ago about the urgency of the situation and drumming up support for moving the lighthouse, I remember thinking, with my usual optimism, "It'll never happen!" Move a 140 year-old brick structure of that size? Raise the kind of money that such a project would require, just to move a lighthouse that's no longer needed? I wouldn't have bet on it. But, the volunteers finally bent the right ears, galvanized all the necessary government agencies, got them to cooperate, even raised a good portion of the money themselves, and got the job done. My hat's off to them!

Although Highland Light is an exceptional case, moving large buildings around has been a fairly frequent occurrence in these parts for a long time. Last week, I wrote about the old Peaked Hill Bars Life Saving Station, one of nine built on the outer Cape in 1872. Threatened by the eroding shoreline, it was sold by the government and replaced with the building pictured here in 1914. The original station was remodeled into a home by Mabel Dodge and frequented by a steady stream of artists and writers over the next 15 years, including Eugene O'Neill, who occupied the building from 1919 to 1924 and wrote many of his most famous plays there. Despite all this history, the Peaked Hill station was abandoned to the will of the sea, which finally claimed it during a storm in January, 1931.



By this time, its successor was also in danger from erosion and was moved several hundred feet back from the shoreline, in what must have been quite a project for its time. Although safe from the encroaching ocean, the long-abandoned Coast Guard Station (the Life Saving Service had been reorganized into the Coast Guard in 1915) burned down in a fire in 1958. Art Costa's dune tours, celebrating their 50th year in business this summer, will be happy to take you right by--in fact, right through--the concrete foundation of the building, which is all that is left of it today. If you want to reach it on foot, head into the dunes from Snail Road and bear to the right after topping the highest hill.

The only one of the original life-saving stations from 1872 that still exists is the one that stood at the head of the Pamet River in Truro at present-day Ballston Beach. It was replaced with a building farther back from the ocean in the 1930's (which is still there), sold into private hands, and eventually moved across town and made into a home.

The Old Harbor Life Saving Station in Chatham, like the one out at Wood End in Provincetown, was built in the late 1890's. It was rescued from the advancing surf by the National Park Service, cut in half, and floated on a barge up to Provincetown in 1977. You can visit it at its new home out at Race Point Beach and learn about the early days of the Life Saving Service.

Private homes in Provincetown were routinely moved from one place to another. One house up on Brewster Street was moved over here from Truro on the train! Dozens of houses were floated across the harbor from Long Point when the settlement there was abandoned in the 1850's. If you're walking around town, look for the little blue plaques that designate the houses so moved, most of which are located in the west end.

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There was a wonderful feature article in *The Cape Codder* last month about the tradition of kids diving for coins thrown by tourists off the pier. This postcard proves that this activity has been popular for at least 75 years or so. When this picture was taken, the Boston boat was still the means by which most summer visitors came to Provincetown, and the arrival of the boat was a daily event, regularly bringing over 1,000 people into town. There are dozens of different postcards showing the arrival of the steamer *Dorothy Bradford*, which is shown in this view, and the *Cape Cod*, which preceded it.

My favorite Boston boat story concerns the wooden steamer *Longfellow*, which carried on regular service between Boston and Provincetown from 1883 until 1902. After that, she became a freighter and a couple of years later was carrying a load of explosives to the Portsmouth Navy Yard when she started leaking about four miles off Highland Light. The crew abandoned ship, and with some difficulty, made it to shore on the two lifeboats--the U.S. Life Saving Service coming to their rescue. As Bill Quinn of Orleans relates in his book *Shipwrecks Around Cape Cod*: "There were some feeble attempts at salvage, but the potential nature of the cargo discouraged many from going anywhere near the sunken hull. Two months later, on November 13, 1904, a severe gale started blowing and the hull began pounding on the bottom. Two gigantic explosions shook the lower Cape, the first at 7:45 P.M. and the second at 8 P.M." The beach was littered with dead fish killed by the blasts, and later with pieces of the doomed steamer.

The *Longfellow* was replaced in 1902 by the steamer *Cape Cod*, which also shows up in a lot of the early postcards. The *Dorothy Bradford* made her first run in June, 1911. The advertised schedule called for a 9 A.M. departure from Boston, arriving in Provincetown at 1:00 and leaving again at 2:30. (The number of shops catering to tourists back then could all be visited quite easily in an hour and a half.) A one-way ticket was 75 cents, $1.00 for a round trip.

On the afternoon of the *Dorothy Bradford*'s first trip to Provincetown, according to the *Advocate* at that time, the band from the battleship *Nebraska* was playing on Town Hall lawn. A "daylight social dance" was going on inside the building, and a large number of "blue-jackets" visited the "Sailor's Reading Room" there. On the lawn in front of the Church of the Pilgrims (next to Town Hall), the Nautilus Club was holding a "liberally patronized" cake and candy sale, while the Ladies Aid Society of Centenary Church (the Methodist Church at the corner of Winthrop and Commercial, now gone) was holding a similar sale at the Burch restaurant nearby. The write-up continues, "even following the withdrawal of the steamer folks, the street in the vicinity of Town Hall was densely packed with people, and it seemed as if all the horse-drawn vehicles owned in Provincetown and a large part of the Bay State's automobiles had business in that section all through the afternoon." And, so it seems today!

Railroad Wharf, shown here, was used as a staging when MacMillan Wharf was built directly to the east of it in the mid-1950's. The building at the end of Railroad Wharf, which was a fish-packing plant, was retained and attached to the new pier, but was sold by the town into private hands. Owned by George Colley until about 10 years ago, it's now the new home of the *Whydah* Sea Lab and Learning Center, displaying artifacts from the pirate ship which sank off Wellfleet in 1717 and was discovered in 1984. When it was still Colley's Wharf, before liability was such an overriding concern, the local coin-divers used to climb to the building's roof and dive off, much to the delight of the tourists.

The building to the right in this postcard, where many a fish that was brought in here was off-loaded, was known as Skarloff's for its owner in its later years. It burned down in 1962, the same year that the parking lot between the two piers was completed.

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Long Point, forming the very tip end of Cape Cod, is today a lonely spit of sand with barely a trace of any human presence save for the lighthouse itself. The square brick tower, with the fixed green beacon atop, has been there since 1875. As this turn-of-the-century postcard shows, there was once a keeper's house attached to it and a fog bell tower next to it. The lighthouse was automated in 1952, and like the two others in Provincetown, was fitted out with solar panels about 15 years ago, so it is now completely solar-powered.

The first lighthouse on the point was built in 1827. Provincetown was officially a century old then, but its "boom" years as a fishing port were still ahead and its population was only about 1500. Nevertheless, the new Long Point Lighthouse was actually less remote from "civilization" when it was built than it is today. A bustling settlement was taking shape nearby that would grow to some 60 buildings and 200 inhabitants by the 1850's. Within a decade after that, it would be completely gone. Though scant evidence remains of the little community where it once was, most of the homes that comprised it are still among us.

John Atwood is credited with being the first to settle on the point in 1818, followed soon after by others. There was no wood over there for fuel, and no fresh water; cisterns were built to catch rainwater (when it rained). The distance to go for supplies was formidable, and the winter storms must have been frightful--but the fishing was grand. People used sweep seines from shore to catch shad, mackerel, and bass; went out in dories after codfish; and set lobster traps to good effect on the bayside.

As in the town proper, the making of salt became a principal industry. A map of town in the 1830's shows acres of saltworks from one end of town to the other. These consisted of windmills to pump seawater up from the shore into shallow wooden vats. The water was evaporated in stages, eventually leaving the salt behind. It took 350 gallons of water to produce an 80-pound bushel of salt, which brought a dollar a bushel. By one account, Provincetown in 1837 had 78 saltworks that produced close to 50,000 bushels of salt. By the 1850's, several factors--mainly the discovery of rich salt deposits in upstate New York--took the profit out of salt-making by evaporation. Lumber from the dismantled saltworks was used to build many of the older homes in town.

A map of the Long Point settlement in 1857 shows 35 houses, spread over a mile between the point and Wood End, about half of them belonging to Atwoods, Freemans, Nickersons, and Smiths. There were several storage buildings, a general store for supplies, a schoolhouse with 60 students attending, three saltworks, and a wharf. Not long after that, fishing off the point went into a decline, and people began to move into town. One by one, the houses were lifted off their foundations, rolled onto barges, and floated across the harbor.

One of the first houses to be built on the point, and possibly the last to leave in 1867, belonged to Eldridge Smith. It now sits at 301 Bradford, near Allerton Street, the only documented Long Point house in the East End. Smith's grandson, Capt. "Ed Walter" Smith, was the last surviving town resident to have been born on Long Point. In 1934, he compiled a list for the Research Club of all the houses in the settlement with the names of their original owners, and the locations in town to which most of them had been moved. Others have also researched the subject before and since, including, in recent years, Claude Jensen. He designed and produced the little blue plaques that today adorn houses that have been positively identified as having been moved from Long Point. About half of them are on the west end of Commercial Street, with most of the rest on Point (so named for obvious reasons), Atwood, Soper, and Nickerson Streets. The old schoolhouse, built in 1846, became Matheson's drygoods store in the center of town, later Arnold's. Sadly, it was lost to fire in 1949.

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by Dan Towler

As August draws to a close and Labor Day weekend bears down upon us, the theme of loss seems to be crying out for a column's worth of space, for a half-dozen reasons all of which I will try to touch upon briefly.

The end of the summer season in any tourist town brings with it a host of partings, as friendships and romantic entanglements that have formed over the last few months are rudely interrupted by people having to go off in different directions to pursue their lives. I can remember vividly the sadness I felt as a kid upon crossing the bridge at the end of the summer, to return to school and "real life" elsewhere. Now that my "real life" is here, I have spared myself the necessity of that particular heart-wrenching ritual, but my life is hardly insulated from loss.

It was five years ago last week that Hurricane Bob roared through our lives, ripping off roofs, knocking down trees, and leaving us without power for days. It also left me and scores of others without one of our best friends, Arne Manos. One of the sweetest guys one could ever hope to know, Arne collapsed and died of a sudden heart attack at 50-years old, while photographing the damage to the Surfside Inn at Kendall Lane.

It was on another August 27 years earlier that my grandmother, who lived just a few feet from where Arne fell, died just as suddenly. A resident of Kendall Lane since the 1930's, she and others in that neighborhood had waged an unsuccessful court battle to block the construction of the Surfside Arms, as it was then called. The four-story motel which lost its roof in Hurricane Bob, also caused quite a stir when it was built. Perhaps I'll rehash that story in a future column.

While human life by its very nature is a fragile and fleeting affair, it has always seemed more so in Provincetown. In recent years, the unfairness of it all has been brought home to us with depressing frequency by the epidemic of AIDS, which has robbed us of dozens of our friends and loved ones while still in the prime of their lives.

In past years, our town's proximity to the sea and the reliance of its people upon the sea for their livelihood brought regular reminders of the tenuousness of life and the danger in it, and the power and unpredictability of nature. There is hardly a native family in Provincetown that hasn't had a family member or an ancestor lost at sea. The *Cap'n Bill* and the *Patricia Marie* are still fresh in people's minds, as if they just happened last month. The *Cap'n Bill* was lost with four Provincetown men while dragging for cod off Highland Light in February, 1978. Only two years earlier, 20 years ago this October, the scalloper *Patricia Marie* went down in heavy seas and rain off Nauset Light, all seven hands lost.

The worst disaster involving Provincetown vessels in this century happened on an August day in 1917. One would think that the seas would be relatively safe on a summer day, but a sudden gale came up while the trawling schooners *Mary C. Santos* and *Natalie Nelson* were out on the banks southeast of Cape Cod. While the schooners barely weathered the storm, their men who were out fishing from dories were helpless. Of the 38 men who were out fishing (two to a dory) from the two vessels, exactly half were lost, 13 from the *Mary C. Santos* and six from the *Nelson*, leaving 10 widows and 53 fatherless children.

One person who did as much as anyone to see that Provincetown's maritime heritage as well as its artistic and literary contributions are not forgotten was Reggie Cabral, who died last week. Whatever else you thought of him, Reggie was *excited* about the history of Provincetown, and he wanted everyone else to be excited about it, too. I'll miss him.

If you're one of those headed over the bridge in the next week, my condolences! The good Lord willing, and the ocean don't rise, we'll be here when you get back.

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

This is one of my favorite postcard views of Commercial Street in the center of Provincetown. At the corner on the left is Taylor's ice cream stand and confectionery, advertising soda, cigars, and salt water taffy. It looks like a popcorn machine on the front step next to the man in white. On the right in the foreground is a mailbox not unlike the one that's there now. It's in front of the building (not in the picture) that was for over 50 years The New York Store, one of many places in town you could go for the kids' back-to-school clothing and any number of other things.

The alley next to the mailbox is called Small's Court, for "Dan Frank" Small, who owned a lot of property in that area, including the building on the waterfront at Lopes Square that he donated to the Board of Trade, an organization of business people that later became the Chamber of Commerce. Small also built the first fish-freezing plant in town, Provincetown Cold Storage, in 1893, where the Johnson Street parking lot is now. Eventually, there would be seven cold storage plants in town, the last of which closed down for good in the early 1970's. The story of those plants and the trap-fishing business which supported them will have to wait until a later column.

The first building shown on the right, with postcards visible in the window, is Patrick's News Stand. A sign above the door of the soda and cigar stand at left points the way to the Boston boat, which conveyed the majority of the tourists to Provincetown in those days. In fact, the message on the back of this card, which is postmarked August 7, 1930, says, "Came by boat here with Jennie & Fannie. The streets are so narrow. Only here for a couple hours. Took 4 hours one way on boat."

There's also a sign on the same building for the "Hooked Rug Shop" at 72 Commercial Street in the west end, which was a favorite destination for tourists. At that time, it was owned by Coulton Waugh, who had a ship model shop in the house, and his wife, Elizabeth, who sold hooked rugs there. In the 1940's, it became the home of John and Adelaide Gregory and remained so until recently. It is known as the oldest house in town, dating from 1746, and I am delighted to hear, is in the process of being carefully restored to its original condition by its new owners.

The next building on the left is "Jack Peter" Silva's Fish Market, which was later the original home of Land's End Marine Supply. Still later, in the 1950's, it was a somewhat infamous dive called The Wreck Club. It's now the Post Office Cafe, though it's never been a post office, as far as I know.

A little further down the block, where the Town House mall is now, can be seen The Pilgrim Theater, which showed silent movies. Just past that was Pierce & Cutler Pharmacy, which was run by two women. Across the street was another theater, The Star, in the building that later housed The Bowl-a-Way upstairs and now contains the shops Market Square and Cheap Thrills. Adjacent to that was Wippich the Jeweler where, besides jewelry, you could buy postcards, two for a nickel.

Both banks in town were on that block. Seaman's was on the corner of Ryder Street where Cabot's Candy is now. Louise Baumgartner ran the Dunes Restaurant upstairs from the bank during the '20s and '30s. Another restaurant, Harbor Lunch, was across the street where The Penney Patch is now. The building that's now Pier Cargo was for many years The First National Bank, the town's oldest, before it moved to the new brick building on the corner of Winthrop Street in 1950. Across the alley to the east of the bank was the Surfside Restaurant, which is advertised in a banner over the street in this postcard. Another banner beckons the hungry to "Eat at Aunt Polly's."

Since this column describes an era that I'm too young to remember, I'm counting on my more mature readers to set me straight! Don't hesitate to call me (487-3315).

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

For almost 100 years, postcards have been a popular way to drop a line to the folks back home, as well as inexpensive souvenirs of the places one has been. They've become a conspicuous presence in the shops and a significant part of the retail trade in tourist towns like ours.

It was in 1898 that Congress first authorized the commercial production and sale of picture postcards. That event dovetailed handily with the growing popularity of Provincetown as a tourist destination. Between about 1905 and 1914, hundreds of different local scenes found their way onto postcards. Black and white cards dominated at first, but many black and white photos were hand-colored and printed as color postcards, the colors varying greatly in their faithfulness to reality. For the first few years, any message on a card had to be in the margins on the picture side, with only the address on the reverse. World War I interrupted the postcard trade temporarily, since most cards up to that time were printed in Germany.

The Provincetown Advocate was a major publisher and seller of early postcards here. They had two storefronts right across from Town Hall that were devoted principally to the sale of postcards. They were priced at two for five cents. The newspaper ran a large ad each week listing all the cards they'd gotten in recently. By the 1930s, when the card pictured here was produced, The Provincetown Advocate Post Card Shop had changed hands to become the Town Crier Gift Shop. Though they sold many other items besides postcards, they continued to publish cards, including this one.

An *Advocate* article from 1938 about the popularity of postcards here and their importance to the local economy begins, "How many hundreds of thousands of whiting, herring and mackerel are shipped annually out of Provincetown would be difficult to estimate, but certain it is that postcards run them a close second....Guy C. Holliday of the Town Crier Shop, the 'Postcard King' of Provincetown, estimates that more than half a million are sold during the year. His shop alone hands 150,000 annually. According to Mr. Holliday, boat passengers are the principal card buyers. Here for just a few hours, they are unusually keen to make as great an impression as possible with their long sea voyage from Boston and their arrival in far-famed Provincetown."

Cards of the Pilgrim Monument and "the oldest house" at 72 Commercial Street are named as the biggest sellers. Several postcard merchants admit to deriving great amusement at the end of the day from reading the messages on the backs of the cards left to be mailed. The Provincetown Post Office reports the daily sale of 10,000 one-cent stamps (the cost of mailing a postcard) during the summer months.

The custom for which the Town Crier Shop was named is an old one in Provincetown, and, presumably, in other towns in New England. His job, for which he was paid a nominal fee by the town, was to walk the streets clanging a bell and shouting the day's news and gossip to anyone within earshot. He was a walking bulletin board for public notices and important information, as well as, in more recent times, a one-man Chamber of Commerce and information bureau for the crowds getting off the Boston boat.

Two men who held the post for a long time in the early 1900s were George Washington Ready and Walter Smith, both of whom have been immortalized in dozens of old Provincetown postcards from that period. "Professor" Ready, who claimed to have been all over the world and a good many other places besides, died in 1920 at the age of 88. Walter Smith retired from his duties in 1930. The job changed hands quite a few times in the 1930s and '40s. During this time, the Town Crier began dressing up in a Pilgrim costume (of dubious authenticity). The gentleman pictured here is Dinsmore Walton. You know the Town Crier Shop as Mario's Restaurant.

Anyone wanting to begin a collection or add to their collection of vintage Provincetown postcards should know about the Cape Cod Postcard Collectors Club's annual show at the Cape Codder Hotel in Hyannis this Saturday, September 14, from 9AM to 4PM.

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

Donald Baxter MacMillan, the man for whom the town wharf is named, is arguably Provincetown's most famous native son. He was also a true American hero. He came from humble beginnings, overcame tragedy, and filled his long life with notable accomplishments. As one of the last great terrestrial explorers, he travelled farther under the harshest of conditions and contributed more to our understanding of the lands and peoples of the Arctic than any other single person. His life story is chock-full of heroic deeds of a humanitarian nature as well as rare courage and physical stamina. He was deservedly a legend in his own time, and even to this jaded observer, his life makes an inspiring and thrilling study.

MacMillan was born on November 10, 1874, in a house at 524 Commercial Street. The Research Club of Provincetown placed a bronze tablet, which is still there, next to the door commemorating this fact in 1926. MacMillan's father, a native of Cape Breton in Nova Scotia, never returned from a fishing trip to the west coast of Newfoundland in 1883, lost with his schooner in a gale at sea. He left a widow and five children at home to fend for themselves. Young "Dan," as he was called, took jobs skinning codfish, picking and selling cranberries, hawking souvenirs to the tourists, and diving for pennies from Railroad Wharf when the Boston boat arrived. His mother, exhausted from the effort of caring for her family alone, died in 1886 when Dan was eleven.

He was first taken in by friends of his father's who lived at 473 Commercial Street, in a house that MacMillan would later make his own. Eventually, he went to live with his older sister in Freeport, Maine. He excelled in school and was encouraged to go to college at nearby Bowdoin, where he worked his way through and graduated in 1898. He worked as a high school principal at a small town in Maine for two years, then was hired to teach Latin and physical education at a prep school in Pennsylvania. During the summers, he returned to the coast of Maine and helped establish a boys' summer camp, teaching seamanship, navigation, and survival skills.

His camp attracted the attention of a nearby summer resident, Navy Commander Robert E. Peary, who decided to send his son there. Peary had already spent twenty years exploring the Arctic, and had been farther north than anyone up to that time. In 1905, he asked MacMillan to join him in his quest to reach the North Pole. MacMillan had just signed a contract to teach another year, and ever a man of his word, he was forced to decline the offer. Three years later, Peary asked again, and this time MacMillan accepted and was granted a leave of absence from his teaching job at Worcester Academy, to which he never returned. On this, his final trip of 1908-1909, Peary reached the Pole, with MacMillan in charge of one of his support parties. This postcard from the Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum at Bowdoin College in Maine shows the two of them, with Peary on the left.

It was to be the first of 30 trips to the Arctic over the next 50 years for MacMillan. The summer after his return from the Pole, he canoed far into the interior of Labrador with three companions, and the following year took a three-month solo canoe trip along the Labrador coast. The year after that, he continued his study of that coastline with a five-month trip in a 21-foot motor boat, accompanied by an old friend from Provincetown, "Jot" Small, a boat-builder and former surfman at Wood End Life-Saving Station.

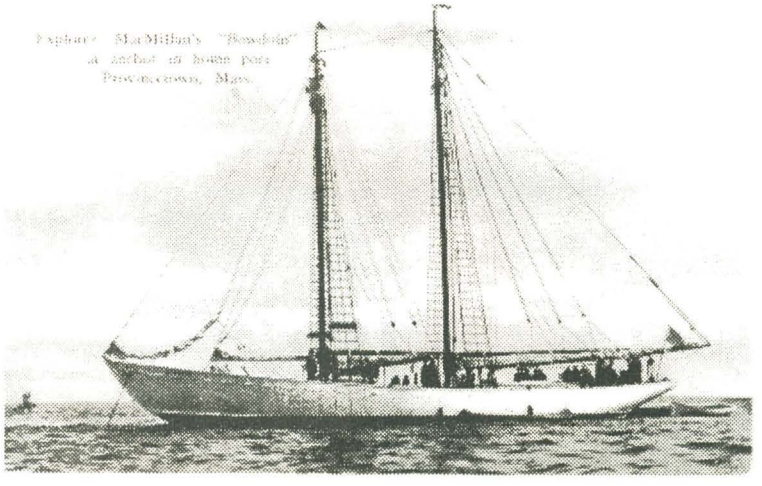
TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Stop by the Provincetown Heritage Museum tonight, September 19 at 7:30pm, for a rare showing of slides about the early days of the Life-Saving Service from MacMillan's personal collection. The show will be moderated by Dan Towler and accompanied by a taped narrative recorded by MacMillan in 1965. For more information, telephone the Museum at 487-7098.

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

If you're among our legions of loyal readers, you know that last week's column was about the early life of Donald B. MacMillan, a Provincetown native who was with the party of Admiral Peary when he became the first man to reach the North Pole in 1909. While that trip was the culmination of Peary's career in Arctic exploration, it was the beginning of MacMillan's. He spent the summers of 1910, '11, and '12 exploring the coast and interior of Labrador, gathering information on the geology, and plant and animal life of this bleak and little-known area, as well as acquainting himself with the Eskimos and missionaries whose villages dotted the coastline.



In 1913, MacMillan was hired to lead an expedition sponsored by the Museum of Natural History, the American Geographical Society, and the University of Illinois. One of his half-dozen assistants on this trip was Jonathan Cook ("Jot") Small, a boat-builder and boyhood friend from Provincetown. (It was his house next to the Patrician that was accidently demolished and rebuilt recently as the Foley House.) The group was dropped off at Etah, a tiny settlement in northwest Greenland, from which they were to spend two years mapping and studying the islands of the Arctic Sea. Though some of his men returned home when the two years were up, MacMillan, who was as much at home in the Arctic as anywhere else, stayed for four. During this time, he travelled over 10,000 miles by dogsled, lived with the Eskimos and compiled a dictionary of their language, and took over 5,000 pictures and 10,000 feet of movie film.

When he returned to the States, MacMillan published the first of many books about his adventures, "Four Years in the White North," In 1921, he ordered his own vessel specially constructed to carry on his career of Arctic exploration. Purchased with $100 shares bought by supporters from all over the country, the 88-foot schooner was built in East Boothbay, Maine, and named for MacMillan's (and Peary's) alma mater, Bowdoin College.

"Captain Mac" sailed the *Bowdoin* north on 19 trips over the next 33 years, sponsored by numerous universities and museums, the National Geographic Society, and the U.S. Navy. Three of his trips in the 1920's lasted a year or more, the *Bowdoin* frozen in the ice for the winter. He took with him geologists, anthropologists, zoologists, and botanists, whose work added volumes to our knowledge and understanding of the Arctic. He also took several other Provincetown men, including later Selectman Frank Henderson and the artist William Boogar, who designed the bronze plaque at the foot of MacMillan Wharf when it was dedicated in 1957. He established clinics and schools, which he would continue to fund over the next several decades, in the Eskimo villages. His respect and admiration for the native peoples of the north--which was matched by theirs for him--was, of course, by no means universal among white people of the time.

During the 1930's, MacMillan, whose first career and lifelong love was teaching, began taking college students on summer-long trips to the Arctic on the *Bowdoin*. They would learn about seamanship, navigation, and survival in the north, while furthering the various scientific purposes of the expeditions. Many would later credit Captain Mac with starting them on notable careers of their own.

In 1935, he married Miriam Look, the daughter of an old friend and 30 years his junior. Realizing that MacMillan, who was then 60, was not about to slow down, she soon persuaded him to let her accompany him on his trips north. This she did for the *Bowdoin*'s last nine voyages, writing several books and articles about their travels together. Finally, in the late 1950's, they retired to their home at 473 Commercial Street, from where MacMillan continued to lecture and catalog his photographs, writings, and artifacts. Many of these can be seen in a permanent exhibit now at the museum at the Pilgrim Monument.

Much of the information for these two columns came from MacMillan's biography, written by Everett S. Allen, a reporter for the old Cape Cod Standard-Times of New Bedford. Published in 1962 by Dodd, Mead & Company, it is unfortunately long out of print.

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

A few weeks ago, I featured an old postcard looking west from Lopes Square. In the interest of symmetry, I will now show you my favorite postcard view looking in the opposite direction from the same spot. This is the intersection of Standish and Commercial Streets, historically the dividing line between the east and west ends of town. The line was not the street, but the railroad tracks, which can be seen running from left to right in the foreground in this photo. This card was copyrighted in 1905 by the Rotograph Company of New York, publisher of many early Provincetown views, and printed in Germany, as were virtually all the cards of this era.

On the right can be seen the end of a freight car, just under a sign with the first letters of the works "Mayflower Bowling." Upstairs in the same building is the office of E.A. DeWager, Dentist. On the end of the building, just over the heads of the two dark-suited gentlemen, is a sign that reads, "Parcels and Baggage Checked Here." This building, of course, is still there, now a clothing store, formerly an A&P supermarket. Just to the left of the freight car is the pole holding the Railroad Crossing sign, just like the one on the other side of the tracks on the left side of the photo. The angled cross-piece warns travellers in the roadway to "Look Out for the Engine." To the left of this sign is a vertical arm that swings down to block traffic in the road when the train goes by.

The Old Colony Railroad finally made its way to Provincetown in 1873, having arrived at Sandwich at the other end of the Cape 25 years earlier. The tracks entered Provincetown just north of the present Route 6-A, crossing Snail Road, which led to the "backside" and the Peaked Hill Bars Life-Saving Station. They followed a route which, after the tracks were removed, was paved over and named Harry Kemp Way, a distinction which probably has the "poet of the dunes" spinning in his grave. A depot and sidings were built on the present site of Duarte's Parking Lot. The late Joseph Duarte bought the land from the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad in the late 1940s, and ran a Chevrolet dealership there for over 30 years.

Ulysses S. Grant rode the train down here the summer after the tracks were completed to celebrate the event, becoming the first President to visit Provincetown. The tracks crossed Commercial Street and went right down to the end of Railroad Wharf--rebuilt 40 years ago as MacMillan Wharf--where fish were loaded up for market. There were five passenger trains a day between Boston and Provincetown in the summertime, three in the off-season. Due to the increasing popularity of auto travel--even though the four-lane Route 6 wasn't finished here until 1955--passenger train service was discontinued around 1940. (If only we could bring it back!) Freight service was maintained with decreasing frequency for another 20 years, finally ending entirely in 1960--the same year that Harry Kemp died.

Going back to Commercial Street, one can see on the left the four-plank board sidewalk which was built from one end of town to the other in 1838, three years after the street was laid out. The cupola atop the old schoolhouse that was floated over from the Long Point settlement, which later became Arnold's, can be seen peeking over the top of the building that's now the Old Colony Tap. On the left, the building that's now the Governor Bradford Bar has not yet been extended out to the street. The building with the dormers is now the Governor Bradford Restaurant, formerly Marshall's Cafe. Just beyond it is a little building with a striped barbershop sign, which sits just in front of what became Dr. Hiebert's officer where Pilgrim Variety is now. That was John Francis' barbershop (no relation to the east end realtor and storekeeper). He kept bees and sold the honey in his barbershop, advertising "honey in the comb!"

I'd like to dedicate this column to Francis and "Minnie" Alves of Young's Court, who have been generous with me in sharing their memories and have added immeasurably to my knowledge of the town, my interest in its history, and my appreciation for its people.

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

Before we put the Magazine and this column to bed for the winter, I thought I'd take you on a nostalgic tour of the neighborhood that's most familiar to me. This is where I "washed ashore," where my parents brought me as a baby, the point from which my own discovery of Provincetown originated, and where my attachment for the town--that mysterious force that brought me back here time and again and now keeps me here--first took root.

In this view, we are looking up Kendall Lane towards Bradford Street from Commercial. Of the 35 narrow lanes that connect our "front street" and our "back street," Kendall is the fourth from the east end. Early postcard photographers loved this view. The Advocate published several different versions of it, including this one, probably around 1905. Others were published by H.A. Wippich, the Jeweler, a postcard merchant who had a store downtown on Commercial Street; and Walter G. Stiff, a photographer whose black-and-white scenes of Provincetown are highly collectible today.

Kendall Lane, Provincetown, Mass.

Sailors were a common sight in town in those days. Hundreds of them at a time came ashore from ships of the Navy's Atlantic fleet, which often anchored in the harbor. The streets were still unpaved when this photo was taken, and the board sidewalk which ran the length of Commercial Street can be seen in the foreground.

The view on the east side of Kendall Lane, to the right in this photo, has scarcely changed since that time. The large house on the corner of Commercial Street, which has been impeccably kept up and boasts one of the more impressively landscaped yards in town, belonged for decades to the family of Myrick Young, who had grand-kids my age that came to spend the summers with him. My brother Bill and I used to take turns hitting fly balls to each other from Mr. Young's driveway (when he wasn't home) out towards Commercial Street. Across the street on the waterfront was a vacant lot, next to which was the summer home of the Broadway playwright, Abe Burrows.

The second house on the right in this photo, on the corner of Bradford Street and Kendall Lane, is where my grandparents lived from the late 1930s until my grandmother died in 1964. Directly across Commercial Street from Kendall Lane is a right-of-way to the beach where I first learned to swim. My brothers and I spent untold hours playing on that beach, climbing on the bulkheads and the jetties, and exploring the flats at low tide. We'd collect returnable bottles on the beach and cash them in for the 2-cent deposits at Tillie's Store, and spend the proceeds on penny candy. Johnny and Tillie Jason's store was a fixture in the east end for 40 years, and always a favorite stop for neighborhood kids.

On the west side of Kendall Lane can be seen one end of the Kendall Cottage, which had a porch across the front and a wooden swing in the yard. Next to it was the Mayo Cottage, a three-story house with a mansard roof. Both were early versions of today's guest houses and became part of a complex of buildings that was operated in my time as the Seascape House. Across from the Kendall Cottage on the water was a vacant lot which became the site of Provincetown's first swimming pool. It was built out of wood by local carpenter Jimmy Thomas--who also built the house I live in now--and his partner in construction, John Alexander and Tom Somes. The Seascape was sold in 1963 to a developer who either moved or demolished all the buildings on the site and put up the four-story motel now known as the Surfside Inn.

Across Kendall Lane from my grandparents' house, where the Surfside parking lot is now, lived the dwarf sisters, Jennie and Rosa Lee. I was mystified and captivated as a child, of course, by these adults who were even smaller than I was, and I loved to go visit them. Rosa Lee ran a summer school of portrait painting out of their home. The house across from them on Bradford Street, which is believed to be one of those floated over from the settlement on Long Point in the 1850s, was the summer home of the artist Herman Maril and his family. Next to it is Atkins-Mayo Road, which pre-dates Commercial Street and leads out through the woods and the dunes to the "back shore." Lots more stories to tell, but, alas, they'll have to wait!

Have a great winter!

Those Were The Days

by Dan Towler

One of the greatest "natural" wonders of this strange peninsula, one which thrilled me as a child and still does, is the dunes, a mini-mountain range of wind-sculpted sand hills of fantastic shapes looming up behind the town, forming a barren corridor between the bustle of the harborfront and the pounding surf on the empty ocean beach.

As a small child, I used to walk up Atkins-Mayo Road in the East end with my brothers and my father to play on a little dune by the railroad siding there. The occasional freight train rumbled by there until 1960 or so. At some point, we discovered that Atkins-Mayo picks up on the other side of Route 6, meandering through the woods for three-quarters of a mile before running into a wall of sand at the dunes. Atkins-Mayo Road was laid out as a wagon road to the back shore almost 200 years ago. It's sometimes called "Tin-Pan Alley," because two rows of inverted fish pans were laid end-to-end along it to keep the wagon wheels from bogging down in the soft sand.

Hazel Hawthorne Werner at Euphoria, 1987. Photo: Marian Roth.

We used to walk out Snail Road and climb up the metal signal tower at the old Peaked Hill Bars Coast Guard Station, once one of three such stations in Provincetown and 13 on the Outer Cape. The concrete foundation that remains in the dunes today is from the second Peaked Hill station, built in 1914. The original, which Eugene O'Neill and others lived in after the government gave it up, fell into the sea in 1931. The second one, which was abandoned after World War II, burned down in 1958.

Scattered along a four-mile stretch of the back beach are 18 squatters' shacks, all but one built on public land, what was the Provincelands State Reservation before it became the Cape Cod National Seashore. Some are barely big enough for a bed and a table, and look like they were thrown up in a day; others are fairly substantial-looking cottages. None have electricity or anything but the most rudimentary indoor plumbing. All were built to get away from one thing or another.

Eight of the 18 remaining shacks are within a quarter-mile of the old Coast Guard station at Peaked Hill. Some of those were built by surfmen at the station who wanted a little more privacy than the station afforded when their wives or girlfriends came to visit. There used to be a collection of shacks out by Race Point Beach, where there was also a Coast Guard station, all of which have disappeared. My mother and her family used to spend summers in one them in the 1930s, out of economic necessity--they could sublet their apartment in town and save on the rent!

In the spring of 1970, as a college student living in Boston, I camped with a friend in the rain underneath a shack that was built up on pilings. It had a sign over the door that said, "Euphoria"--aptly named, I thought at the time! Three years later, out of college, I was living here and heard that the owner of that very shack, a woman in her 70's named Hazel Hawthorne Werner, was looking for someone to rent it for the summer. I was already camping out illegally in the National Seashore woods, trying to avoid paying summer rents which I thought were outrageous--$500 and up for the season! The thought of an entire summer in a dune shack, though, was intimidating to me. I was afraid I'd find out more about myself than I wanted to know!

In 1990, it was my great privilege finally to meet and get to know this Hazel Hawthorne Werner. I even got to stay in the shack called "Euphoria" (though only for a week), through my membership in a group called the Peaked Hill Trust. This group, with her permission, now manages Hazel's shacks--she owns two of them--enabling scores of people to experience dunes living. In fact, as I write this, I am enjoying a week's stay in her other shack, called "Thalassa," bought by Hazel in the 1920s from a Coast Guardsman.

Hazel, a writer who raised five children and summered here most of her life until moving here full-time 15 years ago, is now a resident of the Cape End Manor. She turned 95 on October 24. Happy Birthday, dear Hazel!

There are an almost infinite number of things about Provincetown that are absolutely captivating to a child's imagination, and that help a lot of us who live here to recall the children we once were. There are the beaches, of course -- all that sand to play in, and the fact that all that sand lends itself so well to going barefoot, a child's dream! There are shells to collect, stones to skip, jetties and breakwaters to climb on, the "flats" at low tide to explore. The water's fine for swimming, if you don't mind all those weird-looking "critters" in it! There are whales as big as submarines just offshore. There are the wharves and the boats, the lighthouses, the Monument. There are neighborhoods to explore, narrow lanes with the houses all squeezed up together. There is the incredible and fascinating mix of people here, which alone sets this town apart from any other place on earth!

One of the greatest "natural" wonders of this strange peninsula, one which thrilled me as a child and still does, is the dunes, a mini-mountain range of wind-sculpted sand hills of fantastic shapes looming up behind the town, forming a barren corridor between the bustle of the harborfront and the pounding surf on the empty ocean beach.

While they seem as much a timeless part of the geography of this place as the ocean itself, the dunes as we know them did not exist when the Pilgrims came ashore here in 1620. The woods that covered the Cape tip were levelled for fuel by the first generation or two of European settlers. The thin layer of topsoil, with nothing to hold it in place, soon obligingly gave way, and the sand which forms the "bedrock" of our town was was set loose to wander before the winds. No one knows how long it took the dunes to occupy their present area. What is certain is that the sands of the outer Cape are constantly being shifted from one place to another by the action of wind and water, geologic processes speeded up right before our eyes.

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shacks out by Race Point Beach, where there was also a Coast Guard station, all of which have disappeared. My mother and her family used to spend summers in one of them in the 1930's, out of economic necessity -- they could sub-let their apartment in town and save on the rent!

In more recent years, the shacks have come to be valued as a respite from the noise and hustle of civilization, a place to commune with Nature and restore the soul. They've been an inspirational setting and an ideal workplace for scores of writers and artists, too numerous to mention here.

In the spring of 1970, as a college student living in Boston, I camped with a friend in the rain underneath a shack that was built up on pilings. It had a sign over the door that said, "Euphoria" -- aptly named, I thought at the time! Three years later, out of college, I was living here and heard that the owner of that very shack, a woman in her 70's named Hazel Hawthorne Werner, was looking for someone to rent it for the summer. I was already camping out illegally in the National Seashore woods, trying to avoid paying summer rents which I thought were outrageous -- $500 and up for the season! The thought of an entire summer in a dune shack, though, was intimidating to me. I was afraid I'd find out more about myself than I wanted to know!

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Hazel, a writer who raised five children and summered here most of her life until moving here full-time 15 years ago, is now a resident of the Cape End Manor. She turned 95 on October 24. Happy birthday, dear Hazel!

15 Glendon Rd
Dennisport, MA
April, 24, 1996

Mr. Dan Towler

Dear Dan:-

My friend, "Cal" Gouveia, use to send to me, the P'town Mag, when he wrote his "Endagered Species" as Joe Lazaro.

Since you have taken over with "Those Were the Days", he has been sending, your essays, to me.

I must admit, the last one, the week of the 13rd of April, really struck a chord!

My grandparents, lived on Franklin St., the name being Tarvers, although, they moved to East Boston in the 1900s. My mother and Dad, used to visit Provincetown, taking me along for the ride, and then in 1950's, my husband and I, the same thing.

The road you described, in your article, was the one, my Dad + mother drove to get to P'town and even today, when, I go, its the same road!

You may not be, Joe Lazaro ("Cal" Gouveia) but you do sound, like a young, version of him.

May I wish you the best of luck!

Keep on writing, about P'town.

there are many of us, who love it!

Sincerely, Bobbie Finnerty

MANUEL J. GOVEIA
31 PLEASANT ST.
PROVINCETOWN, MA. 02657
TEL. 487-0380

Fri. Apr. 12th, 1996

Mr. Dan Towler:

Just to let you know that I am so pleased to have someone like you taking my place at the P.Town Mag.

I'm thinking I should know you, but if not, I should know your mother. You say she graduated P.Town High in 1938? Well I graduated in 1937. (there). She can probably recall me as the guy who was married to Agnes Rego - a class behind her. A scandalous time!!!

Would like to hear from you if you can find the time - at least to give me your mother's maiden name!

Another reason that I am happy is that someone is picking up where I left off - with a more broad approach. Once I was "found out" my friends assailed me with questions, corrections, etc. I tried to install in them the idea of writing something down in a sort of a log & reflect back to the good times & get a kick out of rehashing stories heretofore never heard. That's what the old timers is used to do around the old pot bellied stove. Just think of the stories never told. Of course a little "ping ging" now & then would give the stories some color. Dan - God Bless. Keep up the good work! VIVAT COM DEUS...

"Cul" Goveia