

# THE PASSING OF THE PICTURESQUE OLD CAPE CODDERS

## Destructive Spirit of Progress Fast Sweeping Away Many of the Famous Types--Automobiles Replace the Old Coaches and Mission Furniture Crowds Out Ancestral Mahogany.



A Game of Dominoes at the Village Store Is Rarely Seen Nowadays.

CAPE COD is leaving us! The progress of the work on the canal near Buzzard's Bay assures us that within a short space of time, what has been known as Cape Cod with all its quaint, picturesque scenery, its hospitable, liberal-minded people and its historic associations, will be known as Cod Island.

There has always been a whiff of home cooking and a memory of warm welcome in saying, "I am going to Cape Cod for the Summer," but as the sandy roads become hardened by macadam, the bluff of waving beach grass becomes the Summer colony of the cities' rich, and the ocean comes nearer encircling the shores, one can hear the future generations speak of "Summering at Cod Island."

To the boy or girl, born and raised on the Cape, who left some twenty years ago for business or social reasons, the little towns are fast becoming unrecognizable.

"The path where we met," as the old song has it, has become the site for a Summer cottage and it nestles among the pines a welcome stranger to the town, but a sort of sentimental regret to the girl or boy who trod the path to school, "long, long ago."

The change in Cape Cod has been the most marked within the last twenty years. Previous to that, the business, little by little, seems to have quietly died or stolen away, and the progress of other towns has slowly crept in with its progressive people.

In 1865 the fishing industry was at its height, the largest owner of the fishing schooners being Capt. Valentine Doane of Harwichport. This industry began to wane from a cause not wholly devoid of superstition and theory. The complaint arose that the net fishing frightened the fish away from the hook fishermen, and gradually the fish moved their submarine colony around the south shore of the cape to the coast of Gloucester, where the fishermen who wished to continue in the business moved also, and where they are to-day, carrying on a good trade.

The general interest in the fisheries can be best illustrated by an incident which actually occurred, on the coast of Eastham and Orleans.

The old blue laws did not affect the Sunday, as some of the many descendants of the Mayflower would have us believe, for during a church service in the late 60s a man appeared at the door and announced a school of blackfish in the bay, and the congregation, including the minister, rushed out and caught as many as possible, that they might realize a profit on the blackfish oil.

The cranberry culture also in '65 was most profitable, the berries selling that season in Boston as high as \$44 a barrel. That was the banner year for berries, as the never-reached that price again. An increase in acreage enlarged the crops, reduced the price, and nearly swamped the small grower. Gradually the acreage extended up the cape, the hand picking in the four-quart measure by the native giving place to the machine gathering in a six-quart measure by the rapid-growing colony of Portuguese.

The most extensively cultivated cranberry land is that of William Makepeace of West Barnstable, who owns from 1,000 to 1,200 acres, as much as is represented by the combination of smaller bogs further down the cape.

Another old-time institution that has almost passed into history is the old-fashioned stage coach, for twenty years ago the last branch road of the New York, New Haven & Hartford, known as the Old Colony Line, was extended from Harwich to Chatham, and thus the principal destination of the stage coach was placed within steam distance of Boston.

Those old coaches are almost forgotten, but the name and memory of the drivers receive a laugh in many a tourist of long ago, whose business, family, or curiosity took him to Cape Cod, especially in the Winter time.

Simeon Nickerson, Simeon Higgins, Rufus Smith, Barney Taylor, and Whit Jones were among the early drivers of the stage.

It was the spirit of the pioneer—sturdy, endurance, geniality, and patience. The storms along the coast not only blocked the trains with drifts of snow, but necessitated many times that the coach driver should get out and shovel the track in the obliterated road, the passengers often lending a hand also.

These rides were long and tiresome, extending from Yarmouth to the old Atlantic House in Harwichport, where horses were changed and the journey continued to Chatham. Many a passenger dropped out of the coach at his destination semi-conscious from fatigue or some spirit of cheer that he had imbibed in one manner or the other.

The drivers of the Cape coaches were rich in experience and jokes, as full of stories as a commercial traveler, and as fond of conversation as a barber. In the year 1870, when Gen. U. S. Grant visited Provincetown, Barney Taylor was chosen as the most careful, experienced driver, to take him up High Point Hill, where a slight celebration awaited him.

It was the first visit of the President to the Cape, and all along the line, as usual, crowds were waiting to shake his hand.

As the enthusiasm grew from town to town the responsibility of taking the President to the top of the highest hill at the Cape's extreme town grew also, and the driver and the four horses were literally prancing with excitement as the train rumbled in. "Barney," as every one lovingly called him, was waiting eagerly. The President and his escorts alighted and stepped into the coach as the band started to play "America."

The horses reared and plunged, but no one feared, for Barney held the reins.

"I tell you," he afterward said, "with a brass band ahead and one on both sides of us, it was some noise. I didn't mind it much along the road, but when we went to climb that hill with the crowd a-cheering and the bands a-playing 'The Star-Spangled Banner,' and the horses a-rearing on their hind legs, I was glad I had left my wife to home. There was one time there, when the fellow with the bass drum got too near my off horse, and we danced a spell before I could pull him in. In that minute, as plain as could be, I could see the Boston papers coming out in big, black head lines, 'Barney Taylor Killed the President,' and I sweat as I never will again, but we made it as everybody knows, and got him to the train again safe, and he give me a cigar as he stepped aboard."

The means of travel through the Cape to-day is excellent, three trains a day connecting the Cape towns with Boston. The carriage roads—miles of macadam, have become, during the Summer months, the speedway for the hundreds of automobiles, and the trains are met by the open buggies and canopy-topped carriages that do not suggest the past by even a faint gleam.

There has been a tendency among the authors, playwrights, and poets to idealize rather than eulogize the Cape Coddler. His character has been exaggerated that the imagination of the reader might not be misled.

As men they are not nor ever have been

the "hardy sea salts," with a never-ending store of sailor's yarns; neither, as women, are they weather beaten shrews and gossips, with faces hardened by the Atlantic breeze. They are an honest, progressive people, with an intensely literal mind and utterly unacquainted with evasive expression. Like the man who could not appreciate the poetry or sense in "Sermons in stone, books in the running brooks," so they find more reason in reading it "Sermons in books and stones in the running brooks."

The aptitude of the city-bred person to evade the truth was never taught him in his early training on Cape Cod. It is his freely expressed opinion that has stamped

the native as peculiar, and his character laughable as in the excuse of the master of ceremonies at a church concert.

"I shall have to apologize for one of our bass singers," he said. "He was called to Hyannis with a load of furniture and telephoned back that he had had a breakdown and could not reach here before midnight, so we will be a little weak in the bass."

Upon analyzing the above remarks there is nothing peculiar about them, only one is accustomed to covering up the truth and rather expects to hear, "One of our bass singers has been unavoidably detained in an adjoining town."

There have been too many instances in

story of the town freak and exception being made the town representative and rule, and because of this misrepresentation the genuine Cape Cod native has suffered.

If the business men and women of the world whose ancestors lived their lives among the pines of Capt Cod were to compare their intellect with those who criticize them, they would suffer nothing in comparison.

The country grocery store and Post Office was once the meeting place of the crack domino player and news monger. To-day, the delivery wagons stand being loaded hourly for the extra trade of the Summer residents and the long line of

Summer cottagers waiting for their mail make the native appear as the stranger. There are no more covered wagons and horse carts outside of the country Post Office at the sorting of the mail; instead are the electric runabouts, the bicycle, and touring car.

One looks in vain also for the old-fashioned house with its small window panes, its square chimneys, and its low front stoop and gabled roof, and, upon searching the bluff of the woodland nooks, he finds it transformed into a bungalow with wide veranda and grilled arches at the door spaces.

Instead of the flowered paper and the "set figure" for the front hall there is

a wall decoration of dark green cartridge or burlap. Instead of the warm Brussels carpet, there is the hardwood floor and the rug; the sideboard and buffet in place of the old-fashioned secretary and settle and the low brass bed with its down quilt instead of the high four poster with a covering of a Virginia fence pattern.

On the parlor walls, in place of the funeral wreath, in a deep glass frame, there are the rectangular etchings and sepals of the New York artists. A few college flags float the spirit that effected the sale of the house, for in some instances the grandparents have remodeled the barn and moved in, that the proceeds

of the sale of their home might help their grandson through his college course.

It is not unusual to see the lines of an old-fashioned home shine from under the fancy gables and verandas of a Summer cottage, as many of the Summer residents have preferred to keep as much as possible of the old style of architecture, as in the case of the Reed homestead of South Dennis, moved to the distance of eight miles, remodeled on the Wychmere bluff, and occupied each year by Mrs. Charles Patten and family of New York.

The greater part of Wychmere twenty years ago was owned by Capt. Braddock Phillips, Theophilus Burgess, and Jeremiah Walker. It was then the site of three or four old-fashioned houses overlooking what was known as Salt Water Pond. Around this pond was a race track, and above it, to the north, the old Sea View Hotel.

In the good old days the natives held full sway on the occasion of the horse race. It was native entertainment and native stock, and, best of all, a local hard and home-made candy and popcorn. Capt. T. B. Baker's Juno, Chester Snow's Don, and some blooded stock from the stables of Will Stetson of Hyannis and Luther Fisk of West Dennis made the fun and the betting an exciting day. There was usually an accident, but there was always another race, until a New York syndicate appeared and bought the bluff and the land about the pond and called it Wychmere.

Through its efforts a channel opened the pond into the ocean; later a breakwater was built, protecting the pond harbor, and now the grazing land that surrounded the few old houses is marked off into tennis courts and golf links, backed by cottages peeping out from the pines or boldly facing the ocean. The race track has become the rim of a blue wheel with spoke-like piers extending toward its centre. All over the pond are sailboats, motor boats, and dories, moored calm and silent, with never a memory of the bell at the grand stand or the shout as the winner came under the rope.

The customs of the Church also are passing away. It may be the same Gospel, but it is clothed in a new dress. The prayer and testimony meeting has become a conference upon some chosen subject.

In the olden days there would be silence for a moment, when a brother or sister would wait for the spirit to move him before he rose to speak or sing. They allowed no thought to escape without an attempt, at least, to make it audible, as in the case of an old gentleman who was famed for much speaking, who rose for the third time at one service and said: "I was thinking while sitting here of the words of the poet. I just can't remember the words, and the name of the poet has gone from me."

In the present day the thought is suggested by the pastor, and the individual is called upon to speak concerning it.

Those dear old saints, in their full skirts and poke bonnets! Those willing slaves to the happiness of the home and the good of the Church; those simple yet strong people, whose sober wishes never learned to stray, would feel like strangers in the Cape Cod of to-day, and would scarcely recognize their own homes or descendants.

Twenty years ago was the age of cookies and the cookie jar, of many jars of jam and jelly, of piccalilly, fruit cake, and mince pies, and the appetizing odor of frying pork for the fish cakes and chowder.

Long before the stagecoach stopped these savory odors greeted the nostrils and whetted the appetite, but to-day almost countless bakers' carts supply in part the larder of the few remaining homes. The long rows of homemade pies in the cellar and the cake wrapped in linen are luscious memories of the past. The remnant of Cape Cod hospitality is still there, and what remains is of the same fine quality as of old, but there are so few to extend it—so few with the native expressions of warmth and cordiality waiting at the front door to say, "My life and my heart if it isn't Mary!" So few to suggest "hearty" for breakfast, and say "I guess so," with emphasis of the word, as only a Cape Coddler can emphasize it.

It is no little wonder how the remaining families eke out a livelihood, with the fishing industry dead and the cranberry culture diverted to the large grower, but many have learned the art of catering to the Summer folk for the year's maintenance. They first have sold their homes and built smaller quarters or remodeled sheds and barns into places of abode.

They have rented their boats, grown and sold vegetables and berries, and opened ice cream booths and fruit stands all along the main streets of the separate towns. The small dry goods stores have quadrupled their stock of goods suits, caps, and shoes, and the grocer has multiplied his stock and used the shed as storeroom. As the Summer wanes the cranberry season begins, and a few realize a profit from picking and screening berries.

During the Winter men are employed in weeding the swamps or clearing the land for a bit more cultivation, and thus the Cape Cod native resident who is in "ordinary circumstances" passes his remaining days.

The storms are not as severe in Winter as in years past, and the Summers seem never so cheerful and bright. There is a difference in everything. While the Summer guest is more than welcome and profitable financially, while the macadam roads make easier travel and the telephone and railroad communication bring the Cape into close connection with the world, there is not the same "sweet peace of mind, dearer than all," as in the years gone by.

Is the spirit of progress that sweeps up and down the Cape a sufficient recompense for the spirit of love, welcome, sacrifice, and charity that has been pushed aside, almost lost, in the effort to keep up with the times?

Cape Cod gallantry was once Cape Cod generosity. It offered all without removing the hat. To-day it offers little at a rather high figure, with the hat in one hand and the palm of the other extended for remuneration.

Those who were born on the Cape from twenty-five to fifty years ago are glad to see its progress, but only to the whispering pines and the countless pulse of the waves dare they speak of the change. One walks upon the beach and writes the name of some friend of long ago, only to turn and find it washed to smooth and illegible whiteness again.

He looks toward the bluffs dotted with Summer cottages along the shore and asks for the old wooded paths, the swimming pool, the old houses, dogs and horses, and most of all the dear old folks.

In answer a crowd of Summer girls in their bathing suits motor down near the beach, a thoroughbred dog jumps out and races down to the waves, and he realizes that their laughter is the laughter of strangers.