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-1921-
PROVINCETOWN

Second Paper of Research Club.

Provincetown of Long Ago.

Grandmother was born during the War of 1812 and from her I often heard interesting stories of that period. Stories that had been told her by her parents. At that time of turmoil and war our harbor was used as a place of assembly for British war ships, and once at least the town was fired upon. The cannon ball not only striking but making a hole in a house situated on Pearl St. This cannon ball is still in existence and owned by a resident of the same street, it being picked up shortly after the firing by her ancestor.

The naval battle between the Chesapeake and the Shannon took place off our back shore. The citizens of the town were very frightened at the loud report of firing and many took refuge in house cellars.

My great-grandparents took their children and went over to "Uncle David's" so grandmother said, "because 'Uncle David' had shutters on his house."

The heads of families took their solid silver and hid it in sand hills. In the great fright and confusion some of them forgot to mark the hiding places and so when peace was finally restored were unable to locate their family treasures. Years afterwards, so it is said, in rolling down sand hills to make streets, some of the silver was found.

This period of war was also the period of witches, and between the roar of cannon and the fear of witches the town was certainly in a state of unrest. One lady hurrying by coach to Boston as a safer place to reside, was accosted by an old woman who asked for alms. But the lady passenger feeling that the beggar was a witch, insisted that the driver keep right on and not stop. Directly after her order to the driver, so she told her friends when she came home, she fell out the coach and rolled on the ground like a ball. Thus she knew her surmising was correct, the beggar was certainly a witch, who for revenge cast a spell over her which of course, caused the fall.

This same old lady, who by the way was "Polly Rock" kept a parlor shop. The half pennies of those days caused her much annoyance and rather than be termed avaricious she always, when the articles sold by her called for the extra half penny threw in a sewing needle to balance the account.

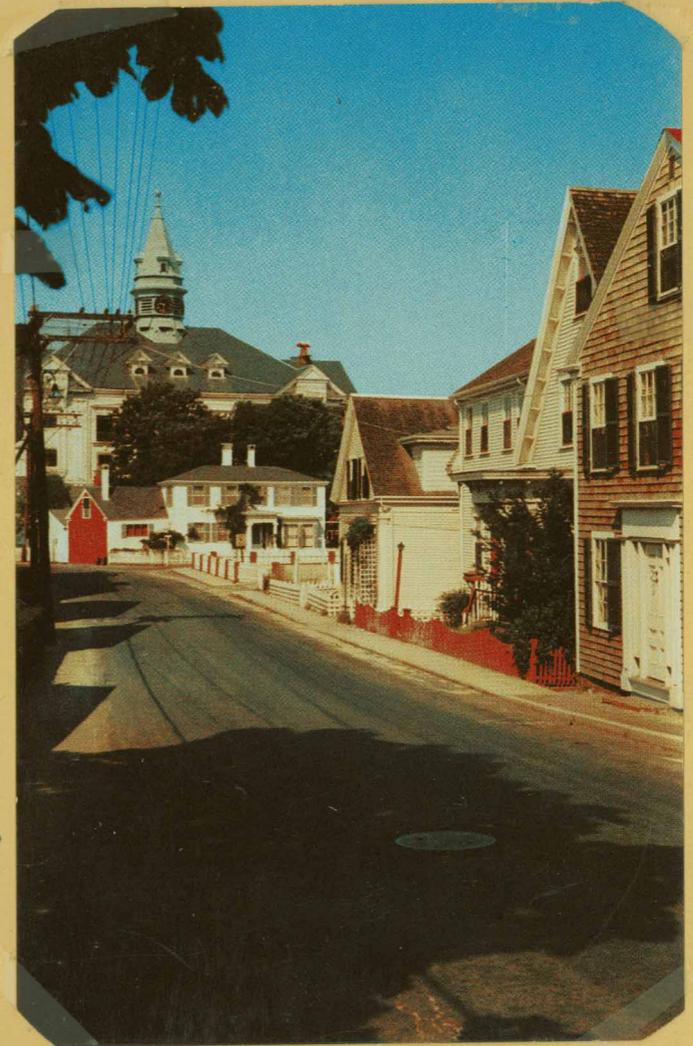
It was in the year 1836 that David Fairbanks built the house situated at the foot of Lothrop's hill. There he brought his family to live and in the same house established the first savings bank of Provincetown which was a branch of a larger banking house of Boston.

In connection with this bank is the story of a bank robbery. One morning Mr. Fairbanks awoke to find that a large sum of money from his brick vault gone as well as the clerk of the bank who lived in the family. Acting quickly, he called, for consultation and advice, some of his neighbors, who by the way, were seafaring men. They knowing that the only way for the criminal to make his escape was by boat, took spy-glasses and going on Town Hill carefully scanned the harbor and discovered one dory with a lone figure rowing steadily toward a neighboring shore. There was no doubt that this was the culprit about to seek a safe hiding place for his stolen treasure. To the shore they went and there waited the return of the thief, and then at the point of gun made him return to the hiding place and deliver to the banker the stolen money. The hiding place proved to be in a cemetery close to a grave stone, and lest he should forget the exact place he had a copy of the inscription of the grave stone in his pocket.

An interesting feature of the house built by Mr. Fairbanks is the brick wall of the eastern and western sides. These walls are three bricks deep and afford very wide window seats within. Of course there were many wide fireplaces, brick oven and interesting old wainscoting in the house, which, we have to record with a sigh, were all pulled out years ago when it was then considered the correct thing to do.

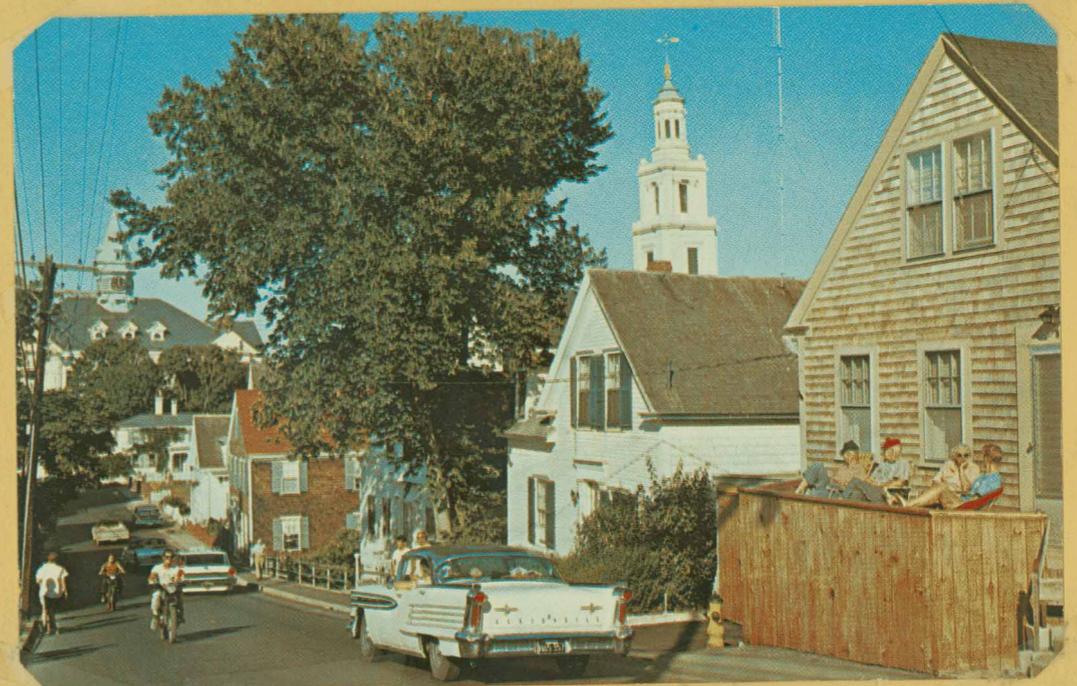
The Fairbanks family after marrying and removing to remote parts never forgot their old home, but rather, showed their affection for the old homestead by often returning to it. It was only ten years ago that "Dolly Fairbanks" a sweet faced old lady, and the last of her generation came from her home in California bringing with her a grand-daughter that she might see the old homestead where her grandfather started his banking house.

It is worthy of mention, that many of the shrubs planted by that family so long ago still live and bloom profusely every spring. Among these are the prairie rose, red peonies, lilacs, purple and white, as well as a snow ball bush.



Facing East to
Town Hall

- 1963 -



Same in 1960, Universalist Church, right