

From "United States Commercial Recorder" dated December 6, 1890 and reprinted in Provincetown Advocate, February 2, 1956

A. T. Williams

Dealer in Ship Chandlery, Cordage, Groceries, Flour, Coal, Wood, Paints, Oils, &c.

The bays, harbors and ocean that bound New England on the east which a few score of years ago were unvexed with anything of man's contrivance greater than the Indian's stealthy canoe, are now become the fishing grounds upon which the hardy fishermen freight their craft, and this industry has led to the establishment of others of no less importance—that of supplying and fitting out these vessels with all the necessary stores, such as ship chandlery, cordage, groceries, coal, wood, paints and oils; in fact, everything required for a trip to the fishing grounds. Actively engaged in this latter business we find Mr. A. T. Williams at the old stand of the Union Wharf Company, Provincetown, Mass., whose establishment dates back over half a century, and Mr. Williams has been right in this same place himself for over 37 years, carrying on the ship chandlery business.

His store is recognized as the headquarters for all these goods, and the stock from which to select comprises everything likely to be required by vessels on their voyages. An inspection of the stock in the store as seen by your writer, and the manner in which Mr. Williams conducts the extensive trade points at once to a system of order and simplicity that pervades the establishment, that must in the nature of things result in permanent advantages to patrons. Mr. Williams possesses a practical experience of the business which few in the trade have acquired, and by his energy and enterprise and liberal dealing has secured a large trade and established a reputation as a merchant second to no other dealer in Provincetown. Mr. Williams, besides the above is also an auctioneer, notary public and general commission merchant.

UNION WHARF LANDINGS:

June 21, 1884:—Schooner Alice, Captain Rich, landed 250 bbls. of codfish on Sunday.

June 22, 1884:—Schooner Hattie D. Linnell, Captain Linnell, arrived with 360 bbls. of codfish and both vessels unloaded their catches at Union Wharf as they belong to the Union Wharf Company fishing fleet.

August 22, 1968

UNION WHARF, or more accurately Union Marine Railway, suffered a mortal blow in the "Portland Gale" of 1898. The Advocate's series of historic Provincetown photos front-paged the old wharf recently in a photo taken the day after the storm. Now Capt. John M. (Nonnie) Fields comes up with a document salvaged from the town dump that reads like a ghostly voice from the past: It's a bill to "Schr. (schooner) Grace P. Littleton and Owner" from Atwood Mott, debtor, "Calker, Dealer in Tar, Pitch and Oakum, at Union Marine Railway." Dated June 7, 1888, it bills four hours labor for \$1.30 3 lbs. spun oakum for 51c and 5 lbs. putty for 35c. Sure, prices were low in those days, and the dollar was worth more at the corner grocery — but we wonder how the Gace P. Littleton made out in the Portland Gale ten years after her seams were caulked.

PROVINCETOWN, MASS.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 1968



The November Gale of 1898 that sank the steamer Portland also wrecked many of Provincetown's long wharves. Union Wharf, photographed the day after the gale, reached deep water to service the whaling ships. Drawn up on the railway beyond, their bowsprits extended through the notch in the rooftop shown here. So many masts were hewn from straight trees at this shipyard that the cuttings built "Chip Hill" at Tremont and Cottage Streets. Now the only remnant of Union Wharf is the short structure behind "Sal's Place" at 99 Commercial Street and one or two of the old buildings, one later occupied by a retired ship captain who christened it "A Home At Last." Photo by Wm. M. Smith.