

Schools

August 21, 1969



MY PAMET

by Towa Father



"In considering the material prosperity of Truro, I stated that the education received a marked impulse. The direct cause of this new departure, which gave a new impetus to education, was the Truro Academy, built in 1840, incorporated in 1841. Horace Mann then at the head of the School System of Massachusetts, delivered the dedicatory address. Joshua H. Davis, now (1883) superintendent of the public schools of Somerville, Mass., was the projector of the school, and the architect of the academy building, which was a model of symmetry and convenience. It stood on the south side of the river, about a half mile southwest of the bridge, on a pleasant knoll well up on the hillside, fairly overlooking the town northerly. Mr. Davis opened his school August 31, 1840, and continued forty-seven weeks every year, till April, 1854, when his health required a change. In a note referring to the school he remarks:—

"Those were years of severe but joyous labor. My school was liberally patronized from its beginning to its close. In the winter season, especially, it was filled to its utmost capacity. I was always treated by the young gentlemen and ladies whom I instructed with great kindness and courtesy. The remembrance of their affectionate regard is very dear to my heart."

The influence of the academy greatly improved the public schools, and was recognized not only in society at home, but in many, if not all, of the Cape towns. A traveler who visited the Cape at this time wrote of Truro: "The schools were noticeable. No haggard faces, no ragged dresses — all neat — faces beaming with health and intelligence, and the tout ensemble indicating happy homes."

Folks may be interested to know that the present Downs apartment building, located next to Nickerson Lumber Company in Wellfleet, is actually the old Truro Academy, long since flaked and moved to the neighboring town.

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By Tom Kane

As we were studying the plans down at Truro Central School during the recent primary voting day, we came to the multi-purpose room which will house the cafeteria, gymnasium and assembly services. It will be as big as an airplane hangar, with sliding partitions to divide the space and built-in equipment, no doubt, to build bodies and aid in teaching every sport from shuffle board to alligator wrestling. If we sound green with envy, its probably because we are just that. Now you take the old Wilder Grammar School back when we went there, mid to late twenties. Indoor sports? None, unless you count scrawling graffiti on the walls of the privy or an occasional game of musical chairs on days when the weather was so foul you couldn't possibly play outdoors. The playground was a tiny, uneven patch of red sand just south of the building where the kids set up a boulder for games of duck on the road, or the briar-filled punch bowl across Depot Road that served as a baseball diamond. Equipment you fetched to school yourself, tape wrapped nickle brick baseball, splintered Louisville slugger wrapped tightly with fish cord, perhaps a leaky football and a hand me down glove, minus much of its padding. No one knew the rules for the games we played and disputes usually ended up with the toughest kid making his point. Baseball games were endless affairs, cut off at the end of recess or lunch hour by the pealing of the teachers hand bell. They were continued daily until cold weather lured us down to the ice at Arrowsmith's Pond. If you had a dollar for every case of wet feet or every ripped jacket that came from playing snap the whip at Arrowsmith's Swamp, or for building it

every kid tardy in returning to the classroom from that sizeable distance, you'd be able to take a nice vacation, even at today's inflated price.

But we'd be derelict in our duty if we didn't tell about the big, massive see-saw that the late C.W. Snow built with his own hands for the kids at Wilder. Started out with a stout hard pine plank he salvaged from shipwreck on the backshore years before. The old gentleman chamfered the corners, rounded the ends, and everlastingly smoothed 'er down with a drawknife and sanded 'er "So's the scholars (C.W. always referred to schoolkids as scholars) wouldn't get splinters in their sterns" (another nautical touch missing from today's vocabulary). Then he built an elaborate form, like some early obelisk, panelled on the sides, with neat lettering tacked backward on the plywood, and he filled it with cement. When the stuff cured, he carefully stripped the wood away and there was the huge block of concrete bearing the message, "DONATED TO THE SCHOLARS OF TRURO BY C.W. SNOW 1930." Then he had his work gang skid the pedestal into a truck and fetch it up to Wilder to the south playground. They buried it in the ground, popped the big pin in place to act as fulcrum and bolted the plank in place. For years the kids used the Snow teeter board with gusto and pleasure. When Truro Central School was built in 1934, the beloved seesaw was uprooted and relocated at Whitmanville. At some subsequent date we have to guess that the pine plank finally rotted away and the cement pedestal was retired. Wouldn't it be a fine idea if the venerable block of concrete could be located and tucked away in the cornerstone of the new