

ture. It is claimed by some writers that Truro was the first and most prominent town in the whaling business, but that after a few years Falmouth, Wellfleet and Provincetown excelled. The whalers of Truro were distinguished for their success and enterprise and as late as the beginning of the 19th century the town had nine large vessels in the business, one of which was the "Lydia and Sophia", built in Truro, on the Pamet river, and her timbers were cut from the land of the town. The town records of 1720 speak of Joshua Atwood's lance "that he had made on purpose to kill fin-backs," describing the peculiarities and mark. Captains David Smith and Gamaliel Collins are recorded as the first whalers from here who pursued the whale near the Falkland Islands. The Truro captains were also largely employed in the merchant service.

Great Blackfish Kill

The bay coast has been the scene of the slaughter of the blackfish in considerable schools, the largest being that of 1874, when 1,405 were driven ashore. They lay along the shore for a mile between Great Hollow and the Pond landing, and the school yielded 27,000 gallons of oil.

At a meeting of the town, December 11, 1711, it was agreed that if Thomas Paine would set up a grist mill within said town, he could take three quarts in toll for Indian corn and two for "English corn" and the town would give him sixty pounds toward the construction of the mill. The town subsequently had three other wind mills built.

The town in 1754 gave permission to Jonathan Paine to build the first wharf, on the shore of Indian neck, at the foot of the Thomas Paine lot.

A century ago the harborage here was good. The wharves were at the height of their usefulness, crowded with fishing vessels, 50 of which have been seen moored to the wharves during a single season. The stores, sheds and flakes gave this portion of the town a village-like appearance. All told, the town had 63 vessels in the cod and mackerel fishing, which yielded annually 20,000 quintals of cod and over 15,000 barrels of mackerel, giving employment to over 500 men. Here at the mouth of the river 15 brigs and schooners were built between the years 1837 and 1851. Henry Rogers was the master builder, assisted by Nathaniel Hopkins, the former a resident of Boston and the latter of Provincetown. The Malvina, built in 1837, was lost with all on board within one year. The names of the 14 others were: brigs, Eschol, John A. Paine, Odeon, E. Paine 2d, N. I. Night, David Lombard, Laurena, B. A. Baker, L. B. Snow, Tremont, E. M. Shaw, Mary Ellen, Modena and Allegany. The Modena, built in 1856, was framed from oaks cut within the town, and more or less of the timber used in the others was cut there. Standing now (the '90's) on the railroad bridge over the very site of the busy wharves, and where the 15 fishing and coasting vessels were built, and seeing the present sandy, desolate shores and choked harbor, it requires a stretch of the imagination to realize that so great a change could occur in a single half century.

Ship Reporting

Soon after the war of 1812 the packet lines to Boston were thought to be a wonderful advance of improvement in communication; but in 1858 the Cape Cod Telegraph Company was a greater

step, and soon after the Marine Telegraph Company was organized, which flashed to the Boston merchant the news of the safe return of vessels as soon as they were visible from the Highland.

In 1839 the Truro Breakwater Company was incorporated with an idea to benefit the harbor; but failing to secure aid from Congress, the undertaking was abandoned.

The Government provided a light for Pamet Harbor in 1849, which was discontinued in 1855; and during the latter year rebuilt the Highland lights. The life saving station near these lights was erected in 1872.

Salt was manufactured along the bay side of Truro, and was an extensive industry in its day. Among the first to manufacture was Dr. Jason Ayres, who erected works south of the pond at North Truro, which were subsequently owned by Samuel Coan. Colonel Joshua Small owned a plant which is said to have been the first in town. In 1837 Truro had 39 of these works.

Good profit came from the weir fishing off the bay shore in 1881. Some wonderful catches were made. From one of these traps, on a morning in the season of 1887, 40 tons of pollock were taken, and on another lucky occasion the same weir furnished in one day 330 barrels of mackerel.

Threat of the Sea

The ocean side of Truro is probably the most dangerous shore to mariners that the Cape presents, and into the history of Truro many shipwrecks of home and foreign vessels could be interwoven. There was the wreck of the British man-of-war, Somerset, in 1778. The hulk occasionally is unearthed by the action of the waves upon the sands; and canes and other relics are made from the oaken timbers. The 480 men captured from this unfortunate vessel were marched through Truro on their way to Boston. The Somerset had previously lay at anchor half way between the Pond landing and Provincetown for nearly two years, and the residents had been distressed by the exactions of the men, so that when the vessel was cast upon the shore, the opportunity for remuneration for past injuries was welcomed by the Truro people. General Otis said it was the occasion of riotous work at the wreck. The State took proper measures and the sheriff sold the effects, reserving the cannon.

The records say: "On the night of that memorable day, October 3, 57 of our brave seamen were swept from the shores of time, their remains sinking into one common watery grave." There were young and middle-aged fishermen, mostly engaged at the time of the storm on the George's bank. They undertook to sail to the Highland, but were carried to the southeast upon the Nantucket shoals.

Sometime prior to 1850 a society of Odd Fellows erected a hall and this was purchased by the town for Town purposes. The poorhouse was erected between 1840 and 1845 on the north side of Pamet river.

The first colonial census in 1765 gave 924 souls in Truro. That of 1776 showed an increase to 1,227. In 1850 the population was 2,051. The census of 1885 showed a decline to 972.

The oldest house of record was built in 1710 on the northerly side of Longnook by Lieutenant Jonathan Paine; later it was the