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William Matherson

Dealer in Dry and Pickled Cod Fish and Oil.

The basis of commerce and trade depends upon the wants of the people for a substantial existence; in fact each branch of industry flourishes and increases at the will of the multitudes. Let a merchant be ever so ambitious, if he possesses not the happy faculty of drawing customers, securing sales and retaining buyers he will never succeed. In order to cater successfully to the wants of the people, satisfactory figures, first-class goods and obliging attendants are indispensable; so in glancing at our most extensive establishments we find that a firm footing has been brought about by the existence of the above qualifications, and we were more than ordinarily convinced of these facts upon a recent visit to the large wholesale fish establishment of Mr. William Matherson, Provincetown, Mass.

The enterprise was started 12 years ago and has shown a marked and steady growth to the present time. Mr. Matherson has been engaged in the fishing industry all his life, and it is not surprising therefore that he should make the success of the business which he has achieved. The premises utilized in the industry comprise the longest wharf in Provincetown

which is 1717 feet, or a little over a quarter of a mile, accommodates a dozen vessels at a time; a large curing establishment back of the wharf with a capacity of 500 quintals of fish daily; numerous storage sheds, located about a quarter of a mile back, and flake yards; seven vessels are employed in both the fresh and salt fishing business, and the fish is marketed to Boston, New York, Baltimore and Philadelphia, and quantities to the West, Chicago being a large consumer. A large business is also done in fish oils brought in his own vessels.

At my visit several vessels were being fitted for their voyages, and the wharves presented an appearance of activity good to witness. In a brief sketch, such as this must of necessity be, we can give but a faint idea of the extensive business, but to those interested and who may as yet be

unacquainted with the advantages here offered, we may say that the business is conducted upon the broadest basis of equity and fair dealing, and those forming business relations with Mr. Matherson will find their interests greatly advanced.

ALONGSHORE

By John Bell

For years I've wanted to tell the story of the steamer *Longfellow*, a popular excursion boat that ran between Provincetown and Boston before 1900, but I hoped I'd find a picture of the vessel first. Last week, in a friend's scrapbook, I found her. The photo is too faded to reprint, but it shows that the *Longfellow* was sharp fore and aft, was broad-beamed to carry passengers on two decks and had twin smokestacks rising high to keep smoke and ashes from falling on people. She was about 90 feet long, 25 feet wide and drew perhaps eight feet of water.

Much too fine a boat to deserve the unique fate that "killed" her twice in two months.

Steamer *Longfellow* retired from carrying "summer excursionists" after a decade of running across Cape Cod Bay and was converted to freighting between various Atlantic ports. In September, 1904, she was bound from Philadelphia to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, when she began to leak uncontrollably. There was time to beach her at Truro Highlands, but her captain feared that his cargo of dynamite would explode when she hit the beach. He anchored her offshore and the crew of sixteen took to two lifeboats.

This was at night. They could see the friendly lights of Pamet Life Saving Station, but not the boiling surf that could have capsized their boats. On the beach, Surfman Ephraim Dyer saw them in time; he waved them off with flares. The two boats stayed outside the breakers until dawn.

As the sky lightened, Capt. Edwin P. Worthen of the Highland station and Capt. Charles Kelley of High Head mustered their crews and put off through the surf. Together they escorted one boatload of survivors to shore at Peaked Hill.

The other boatload from the steamer attempted to land near the Highland station. Surfmen Hatch and Morris, seeing the boat would surely capsize, waded into the surf and pulled the men to safety as their boat rolled over.

By full daylight the old steamer had sunk. Much of her wooden superstructure later broke free and floated ashore, where beachcombers picked it up for firewood.

North Truro correspondent Isaac Morton Small reported in the Oct. 20 Advocate, "The remains of steamer *Longfellow* washed ashore on the outer beach last week. Among the wreckage were numerous boxes which had contained dynamite. They were empty, and so far we have not heard of any of the explosive being found on the beach."

So that was that. A wreck without loss of life was soon forgotten by people accustomed to worse accidents. In that same October week, for

example, a northeast gale destroyed the schooner *Elwood Burton* and schooner *Wentworth* with the loss of 15 seamen the Life Savers couldn't help.

November Hurricane

The storm two months later on Nov. 13 was an odd one, if Ike Small reported it correctly. He says the northeaster blew furiously between 3 and 8:30 p.m. with pouring rain, then ceased entirely. The sky cleared, the moon and stars shone brightly. If this was the "eye of the storm" passing over, the next wind should have come from the opposite direction. But Small reported that the gale returned out of the northeast and blew 70 miles an hour before subsiding Monday morning.

Both Ike Small at North and John B. Dyer, reporting from Truro, said that during the lull an earthquake shock rattled their windows and crockery. Dyer wrote, "...it was particularly heavy at the head of the Pamet and the lifesaving station. The newspapers have mentioned no earthquake, and the weather conditions were not favorable for thunder. The inference hereabout is that the noise was the result of an explosion from the sunken *Longfellow* off Pamet River Station. The surf raged furiously and possibly pounded the old hull on the bottom until some of the high explosives were touched off. Who has a better solution?"

Dyer's guess appeared good, for he reports the following week, "The day following the 'earthquake' the beach was strewn with broken wreckage. Hard pine timbers of large dimensions broken in short lengths, deck planking in foot-long pieces, (and) a short piece of mast not far from the steps at Ballston Heights has one end splintered and splintered like a broom. No action of the sea could have fashioned wood into such shapes and forms. Another evidence of the explosion is...that the quake was not heard in our neighboring towns except along the coast (near) where the *Longfellow* was sunk." The *Longfellow* had died again.

During the closing weeks of 1904, Life Savers had their hands full as one storm followed another. During a "souther" that caught dory fishermen by surprise off Herring Cove, Life Savers from Wood End and Race Point stations rescued a number of boats and fishermen.

For one pair of frightened dorymen, however, the sight of the Lyle gun being readied to shoot the line over them was too much. "Fearing the surf less than the missile, (they) abandoned their anchorage outside the breakers and hazarded the landing. By the aid of the life savers on the beach, the men escaped with nothing worse than a thorough drenching."