



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter May 2022

Volume 45, No.05

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**Because of Town Elections on May 10th, the next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 17th, 2:00 pm at the
Dennis Memorial Library 1020 Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village**
Members Welcome

Please send information & stories for the newsletter to Dave Talbott at the DHS Website email address: info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

Industrial Dennis

A recent email request to DHS resulted in me searching for a particular postcard in the Digital Archive. Unfortunately, I came up empty handed looking for the postcard in question, but I was wowed by what an amazing history of Dennis our postcard collection provides! In particular, I was taken with the images of an industrial complex which existed on the shores of Cape Cod Bay, just east of the entrance to Sesuit Harbor. I certainly was familiar with *Cold Storage Beach*, but had no idea of why it was so named. Postcard 24, reproduced below in black and white, provided the answer. The original image was hand colored before it was printed as a postcard. The photograph was taken from the west side of Sesuit Harbor looking across the entrance.

An online search provided little information. What there was merely provided links back to the Digital Archive. Where does one go for Dennis' history? Where else but the source – *Dennis, Cape Cod!* Here is what is written in the definitive history of Dennis by Nancy Thacher Reid.

The traditional fishing industry had declined except to serve local markets. The few intrepid who remained at sea could hardly be called a fishing fleet. The industry had moved to deeper ports which could accommodate the large vessels now needed to make a voyage profitable.



DHS Digital Archive



DHS Digital Archive

Still, enough fish was brought into East Dennis to warrant the construction of a cold storage plant on land owned by the heirs of Prince S. Crowell. It was one of a number of Cape plants for the storage of fresh fish operated for the Puritan Cold Storage Company of Augusta, Maine and was managed and later owned outright by Louis A. Crowell (1878-1954) and Prince M. Crowell (1863-1929). That plant was built on the east side of Sesuit Harbor where the parking lot is today, and gave its name to the street and beach. The first structure was made of wood and had double walls with insulation between them, like ice houses. That plant burned in 1910, Ed. Note- March 10th, and a second plant was erected, built of concrete blocks and was cooled by refrigerant.



Overland Access to the Crowell Cold Storage Company

DHS
Digital Archive



Workers pose during their lunch break

This is the way the fire was written up in the *Yarmouth Register*, Saturday, March 19, 1910 –

Aftermath of the fire

EAST DENNIS. Cold Storage Plant Burned.

The cold storage plant, warehouse and wharf of the Crowell Cold Storage company were totally destroyed by fire Saturday night.

The fire started in the engine room and spread rapidly to the other parts of the plant, burning with an intensity that made it impossible to check it. It was consumed in about two hours, eating its way to the very water's edge.

The plant was at a somewhat isolated part of the water front and the blaze, although visible for miles along the coast, threatened no property except the buildings of the storage company.

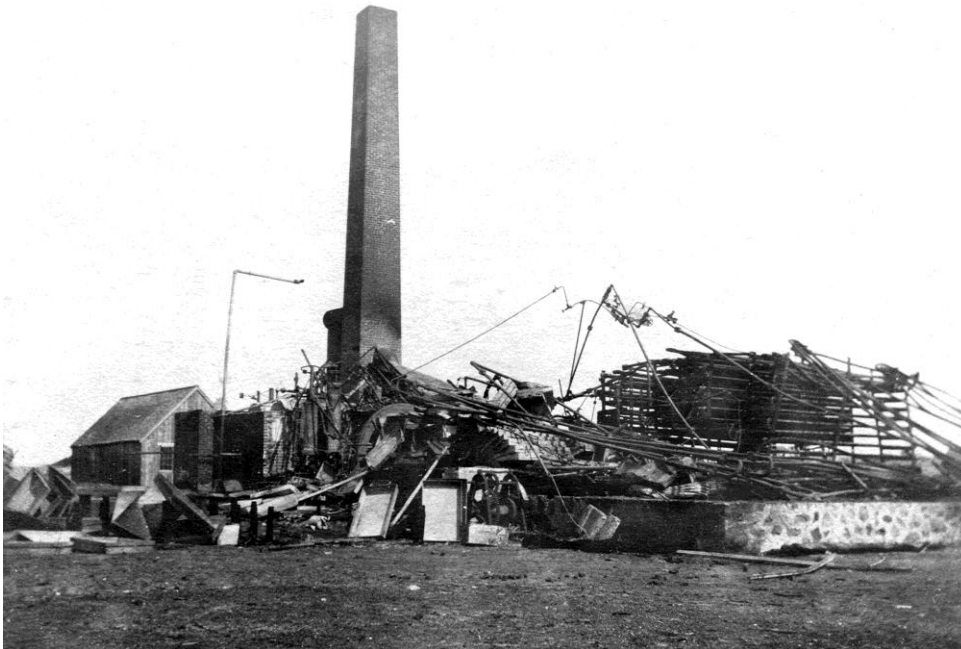
The loss is estimated at about \$25,000. Mr Prince M. Crowell is the manager and the largest stockholder in the company, the greater part of the stock being owned in the various branches of the Crowell family, except the Smalley interests.

It is not known what action the company will take towards re-building as the by-laws of the company provide for a week's notice in calling meetings of the corporation.

Some hope is expressed that the plant may be re-built.

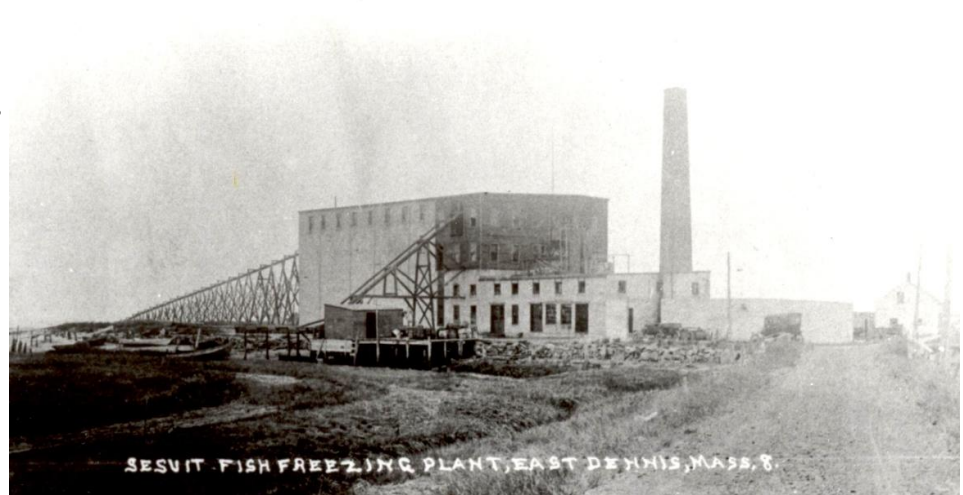
The weir property still remains as a basis of operations and this is no small an item in the consideration of the proposition.

There was \$7,500 insurance on the building and the machinery was also protected against fire loss.



DHS Digital Archive

The structure which replaced the Crowell Cold Storage Company was the Sesuit Fish Freezing Company. It was incorporated on March 3, 1917 by Zebina H. Small, President and H. H. Sears, treasurer, and built by the Bishop and Paulson Company of Boston. Nancy Reid continues – *A resurgence in the fishing industry in 1917 brought hope of increased business, but by the mid-1920s, it was more profitable for the fish to be brought directly to Boston by motor boat and the plant was closed. The property was taken by the Town and the plant was dismantled in 1927.*



DHS Digital Archive

Thanks to the incredible source which I have lauded in past newsletters—the *Newspaper Indexes* of the *Sturgis Library*, <https://www.sturgislibrary.org/research/notable-collections/newspaper-indexes/>, we have this additional information –

Barnstable Patriot, August 7, 1922

THE FISH FREEZING INDUSTRY

Massachusetts is losing its fish freezing industry. In 1919 there were 32 licensed cold storage warehouses which were freezing fish, today there are but 21. Of these, 11 warehouses are not now freezing fish, three are licensed to operate but do not carry fish, one is freezing ice but carrying no food and two small and five large warehouses are closed entirely.

The estimated capacity of these closed warehouses is 200,000 cubic feet. The six large freezers formerly, but not now, carrying fish, are:

Bay State Freezer, Inc., Yarmouth. Closed.

Cape Cod Fish Freezing and Packing Company, Barnstable. Closed.

Cape Fish Products Company, Provincetown. Closed.

Marthas Vineyard Cold Storage and Ice Company, Tisbury. Ice only.

Newburyport Fisheries Company. Newburyport. Closed.

Sesuit Fish Freezing Company, Dennis. Closed.

The annual business of freezing of fish in this state has dropped from the maximum of 61,480,658 pounds per annum for the year ending Aug. 30, 1918, to 23,623,435 pounds per annum for the year ending June 15, 1922. The season 1920-1921 was a poor time for the disposal of frozen fish, owing to a storm which blocked the railroads, thereby preventing the transportation of considerable of this fish, and fish was allowed to be carried over to the next season. Notwithstanding this carrying over, the 1921 fish holdings were below those of 1921, owing in part to a poor catch and so far the holdings of 1922 have been below those of 1921.

Hyannis Patriot, February 4, 1924

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

SHERIFF'S SALE

Barnstable, ss. Jan. 17th, 1924

Taken on execution and will be sold by public auction on Saturday, the twenty-third day of February, A. D. 1924, at 11 o'clock A. M., on the premises, Quivet Neck, town of Dennis, in said County, all the rights, title and interest that the Sesuit Fish Freezing Company, a corporation duly established by law, and having its usual place of business in Dennis, in said County, had (not exempt by law from attachment or levy on execution) on the tenth day of February, A. D. 1923, (being the time the same was attached on mense process), in and to the following described real estate, viz:—A certain parcel of beach land situated in that part of Dennis called Quivet Neck on the Northerly side of Island Creek, so called bounded and described as follows: Beginning at the Southwesterly corner of said parcel of land at a stake on the northerly side of the County Road, so called, thence running along the northerly side of said County Road, North 48½ degrees West twelve rods and twelve links to a stake; thence North 2½ degrees East along land formerly of Kelley and Sears five rods eighteen links to a stake; thence South 76½ degrees East along land of the heirs of Nathan Sears eight rods ten links to a stake; thence South 9½ degrees West along land of Ezra F. Sears two rods five links to a stake; thence South 7¼ degrees East along land of Ezra F. Sears, nine rods nineteen links to the point of beginning. Containing seventy two rods more or less, with the buildings thereon.

Also a certain other parcel of land situated in that part of said Dennis called Quivet Neck, on the Northerly side of and adjoining the above land, bounded and described as follows:—Beginning at the Southwesterly corner of said land at a stake and running North 2½ degrees East three rods eleven links to a stake; thence running South 76½ degrees East eight rods sixteen links along land now or formerly of estate of Nathan Sears to a stake; thence South 9½ degrees West three rods eleven links to a stake which is the Southeasterly corner of the lot described and is the Northeasterly corner of the lot first above described; thence following the Northerly bound of said lot first above described eight rods ten links to the point of beginning. Containing thirty rods more or less with the buildings thereon.

JONATHAN ELDREDGE,
Deputy Sheriff.

Yarmouth Register, March 14, 1925

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Acting on the Warrant For Dennis Annual Town Meeting
March 16-17, 1925

Article 16. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$150.00 to get a clear title to the Sesuit Fish Freezing Company's property at East Dennis, taken by the Town for unpaid taxes.

Article 16. Recommend to raise and appropriate \$150.00.

There is probably much more to the story in this peek into *Industrial Dennis*. Additional information about the goings on in the early 20th century at what is now *Cold Storage Beach* may be tucked away in a bookcase, desk or bureau. If anyone has family notebooks, diaries or scrapbooks which might add to our knowledge, please share them with us. Email me at info@dennishistoricalsociety.org. *Thank you!*

Miramar Park Pinpointed

After the March issue, a number of readers inquired as to the exact location of Miramar Park. The map which was reproduced from the brochure was small and not sufficiently detailed. A drive to Lower County Road in Dennis Port and a query of *Google Maps* provided the images below. Ed. Note – the sign says *Private*.



Looking west, back toward the Swan Pond River Bridge. Photo by Editor

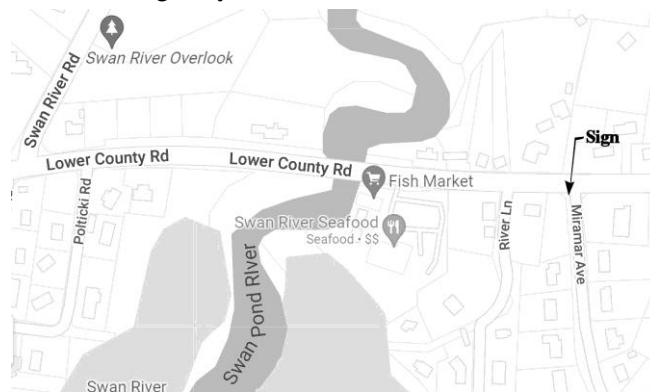


Image courtesy of Google Map

Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02660-0607

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South Yarmouth, MA
02664

**West
Dennis
Village
Cemetery
Walk**

**Friday,
June 17th,
at 10am**

Rain date:
Sunday, June 19, at 2pm



FREE ADMISSION
WEST DENNIS CEMETERY
AT THE INTERSECTION OF POND AND FISK STREETS

(Note: No parking in the cemetery itself)

Join the Dennis Historical Society June 25
from 1 - 4 pm at Josiah Dennis Manse for



THE UNVEILING

Mistress Dennis' costumed mannequin
is revealed... as her work cupboard opens

1736 JOSIAH DENNIS MANSE MUSEUM
61 Whig Street in Dennis Village

FREE ADMISSION
(Donations gladly accepted)