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.

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

**Aftermath of the fire**

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.*
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.
- Martha's Vineyard Cold Storage and Ice Company, Tisbury. Ice only.
- Suesit 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 28,625,459 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.

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!

**Yarmouth Register, March 14, 1925**

**REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Acting on the Warrant For Dennis Annual Town Meeting March 16, 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 Seabird Fish Freezing Company's property at East Dennis, taken by the Town for unpaid taxes.

Article 17. 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
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)