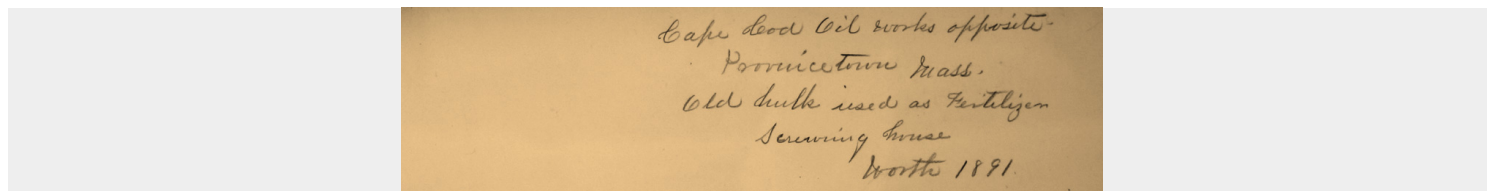


CAPE COD: THE ENVIRONMENT, THE ECONOMY AND THE PEOPLE OF A FRAGILE ECO-SYSTEM

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di **John Cumbler**

For almost 200 years the residents of Cape Cod, a sandy glacier deposited peninsula had mined the land and sea for a living. And a pretty comfortable living they made. Cape farmers harvested wheat, maize, hay, wood and vegetables and pastured sheep and cattle that they sent off Cape, while its fishermen took from the sea, whales, cod, mackerel, herring and shell fish which was also set to markets in Boston, New York, Salem, and the West Indies. Other Cape residents earned their living supporting these activities by building fishing and coasting – for until the middle of the nineteenth century Cape Cod was effectively an amphibious culture where people and goods moved across water rather than across land.

The Cape's acidic, sandy soil was well drained and easy to plow. The Cape also had extensive marshes of hay, plenty of rain, thick forests, and a long growing season. By the late 17th century Cape settlers pastured large number of animals on the grassy duns over the long summer and fall, brought in their cattle over the winter and early spring, feeding them on salt hay harvested from the vast salt marshes. In the late spring farmers spread the manure accumulated over the winter along with ground up shells, over their fields which they planted with grains and vegetables.

While their farmer neighbors were managing their livestock and harvesting their fields, other Cape Codders were extracting the rich resources of the sea. These activities proved profitable for those living on a fragile sand spit. Trees were cut down to build homes, barns, fences, ships, ship riggings, barrels and salt works. Forests were also cut to open pastures and for fuel to keep warm and cook food ((A typical late 17th and 18th century Cape home consumed between 30 and 40 cords of wood a year for fuel. This represented 2 to 4 acres of woodland a year.)). Although for a hundred and fifty years this activity put pressure on the land resources of the Cape, Cape Codders had managed to control their harvests of fish, wood, grass and meadow hay. Local towns as well as the colonial government aggressively worked to limit grazing, the cutting of trees and control fishing. Although there was continual pressure from individual farmers to let their cattle freely graze and from those needing wood to freely cut trees, the towns and colonial and early state governments continually pushed back against these pressures ((For a detailed description of the process by which local towns and the colonial and early state governments attempted to protect the natural resources of the Cape see Ruth Lynn Friedman's excellent PhD thesis, *Governing the Land: An Environmental History of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, 1600-1861*, Brandies University, 1992.)). Even with the pressure for cordwood and building wood, early nineteenth century visitors to the Cape were impressed by extensive woodlands. Although cord wood burning took a heavy toll on the Cape's trees most 16th and 17th century farmers keep enough acreage as woodlots to sustain their cutting. But the increased prosperity and the more close integration of the Cape's economy into the growing national economy strained these restraints on land use. The rising price of wool, cord wood, salt, and meat as well as

the substantial building projects of the 19th century increased the pressure to cut more trees, open more pastures and put more animals on the ground ((Timothy Dwight noted at the turn of the century that Cape citizens were sending boatloads of wood to markets off cape. Dwight's 1969.)). The expansionist ideology of the Jacksonian age encouraged growth and discouraged restrictions – local as well as state. The future of economic growth and expansion looked too good to hold back with restrictions and moderation of use. And indeed it certainly seemed so on the Cape.

By the early 19th century the Cape entered its golden age. Whale oil, cod, mackerel, herring, salt, boats and agricultural goods were enriching communities. Wharves, warehouses and stores were built to capture the increased trade.

Visitors to the Cape marveled at its prosperity ((Dwight noted that Cape Codders were “as generally as in any other part of the United States in comfortable and even in thrifty circumstances”. Dwight's 1969.)). But this prosperity was short lived. By the 1860s years of mining resources of the land and sea, particularly the last fifty, took its toll. The thick forests were mostly gone. Dun grasses were over grazed. Good plow land was being destroyed by blowing sand no longer held back by trees and grass, and sand was also filling in harbors. Near shore fishing grounds were depleted and whales, once abundant off shore, now required trips of 3 or 4 years to return a profit. Indeed whaling boats began taking on salt and fishing hook and line before leaving Cape harbors for the whaling grounds of the North Atlantic in case they failed to find whales they could fish the banks instead ((In the 18th century whales were so common in Cape Cod Bay that significant amount of whaling involved either driving the whales to shore or killing them in the bay and hauling them to shore for trying (the process of extracting whale oil from the blubber.).)).

The Cape Cod of the second half of the nineteenth century was, in the words of Henry David Thoreau, a “weather beaten garment”, with “many holes and rents” (Thoreau 1987, 22). The Cape villages whose populations had grown steadily for 200 years began to shrink as more and more of their youth fled to the mainland in search of jobs and opportunity. The town of Wellfleet lost 57% of its population between 1860 and 1900 ((The Cape's population doubled between 1800 and 1860 when it reached 35,990 by 1920 it had dropped to 26,670. In 1884 Shebnah Rich wrote that “some of the Cape towns have been reduced to more than half [...]. Over one hundred families from Truro now reside in Somerville”. Quoted in Kittredge 1968, 263.)).

A little over a hundred years ago two Cape Codders who had been central participants in that older world realized that the Cape Cod of fishermen sailors and farmers was ending and a new era was being born. One of those people was Lorenzo Dow Baker from Wellfleet. The other was Ezra Perry who as a young man migrated to the mainland to make his life in the city.

Perry had a hard youth. His father died at sea. His mother managed to hold the family together by selling off bits of the family farm to other farmers while Perry's brother went to sea to help support the family. When Perry reached his sixteenth year he also packed his sea-bag and took his place

before the mast. Unlike his brother Perry did not see a future as a sailor. He traded in his sea legs for a job with the new street railroads in Boston, then as a jobber selling confectionary. Perry did well as a salesman, and was soon selling real estate, but he missed his home on the Cape. His experiences in Boston convinced him that money could still be made on the Cape, not from fishing and farming but from selling the Cape itself to the wealthy class of the city. Perry came back to his home town and began buying up property and developing it into lots to be sold to the urban rich for healthy seaside summer estates. Perry knew his audience and knew what they wanted. He produced glossy travel books of the Cape Cod. These books were a guide to the towns of the area, but they focused on the quaintness of the area, its healthy climate, its churches and libraries and its white Protestant, old stock Yankee residents. They also focused on how other persons of wealth, such as President Cleveland, were buying land along the coast of the Cape and building substantial summer estates and institutions to meet their cultural needs such as golf courses and yacht clubs ((Perry was the son of Captain Caleb Perry was raised in an old cape on Country Rd, Monument Beach in Bourne. Elizabeth, Ezra's mother, supported the large family by selling off family land. In 1900 Perry developed a large pasture bordering on Phinney's Harbor. He laid out streets and lots and began selling off the land. This enterprise was so successful he opened an office in Monument Beach and continued developing and selling land along Buzzards Bay. See Perry 1898.)).

Water front property was relatively cheap when Perry and other developers like him began buying up land ((In his book Perry stated, "Do you want to invest some money that will bring you big returns? There has been a great deal of money made in buying land on Cape Cod for the last 10 years and in the next few years to come there is still a greater chance to make money for the land is increasing in valuation very rapidly each year. I have some extra fine tracts of land for sale where in a few years money invested can be more than doubled. I have some very reasonable estates and some of the handsomest estates on cape cod for sale. I have them in nearly every location on the cape". Perry 1898, 399.)). The older economy of fishing, fish-drying, shipbuilding, and salt-making were in serious decline. The cost of wood had driven most large ship builders to relocate to other areas. The Salt-works collapsed in the 1850s partly because of the high cost of wood for building salt vats, and partly because of declining demand for local salt for fish drying. Fishing boats increasingly avoided local harbors and took their iced fish directly to markets in Boston and New York. Local wharves were collapsing in disrepair.

Perry envisioned a new Cape Cod one whose economy was driven by outside money and where Cape residents would provide local color, labor to maintain the estates and cook and clean during the summer months, and local produce for summer residents hungry from busy days of tennis, yachting, sport fishing and golf (Perry 1898).

Perry was not the only Cape Codder who realized the Cape could no longer depend upon harvesting the land and sea for its prosperity. In 1906 Lorenzo Dow Baker went before the Wellfleet town meeting and argued that they should spend tens of thousands of dollars dyking the tidal inlets

to the town's salt water marshes to cut down on mosquitoes and encourage tourism. This was a big request, but Baker was an important town leader (Morrow Wilson 1972, 111).

Baker knew the Cape and fishing (Morrow Wilson 1972, 60). His childhood friends were increasingly having difficulty surviving as fishermen or farmers. Children of his friends were leaving the Cape for opportunity elsewhere, and homes were in disrepair. The forests that had supplied the wood for boats, salt-works, barrels, and fuel were stripped from the land and sand now blew across abandoned fields. Seeing all this Lorenzo Dow Baker, like Perry, had a different vision for the Cape's future.

Baker's vision involved summer visitors to the Cape but was shaped by a different personal experience than Perry's. Baker was a Methodist and had in his youth attended the Methodist Camp Meetings on the Cape that drew thousands of enthusiasts each summer. By the late nineteenth century small cottages were built at the camp grounds and little villages emerged. The camp meetings became less focused on evangelicalism and more on community, fellowship and enjoyment of time by the sea. By the end of the nineteenth century campers were extending their stay for family time away from the crowds and pollution of the city. Even as early as the 1850s Henry David Thoreau noted that the path at the Eastham Camp meeting leading to the beach was as worn as the path to the prayer tent, "for they all stream over [to the ocean] in the course of their stay" (Thoreau 1987, 76. Thoreau claimed the meetings were combinations of "prayer meetings and picnics", 53.). Baker was a regular participant in the camp meetings and had his own cottage at the camp meeting village. He understood the appeal of a peaceful seaside retreat for ordinary folks like those who gathered each August.

Baker bought a wharf on a beach by the town harbor and in 1888 transformed it from a fishing wharf to the massive Chequessett Inn which stretched out over the harbor. The Chequessett Inn was a success, but it was only part of Baker's vision for a different Cape Cod. Baker also bought up land and built small summer cottages to rent out to middle class urban Americans looking to escape the dirt and grime of the city. Baker's conception of the cape's new economy was a place of tourists and vacationers spending money appreciating the sand, surf, and sea while vicariously partaking in the Cape's heritage of fishing, farming and folksiness.

Baker realized that much of the attraction of the Cape involved its natural beauty, but nature was not always a comfortable place. The bay and harbor were fed by shallow creeks and a river surrounded by acres of marsh grass. These streams sustained rich fish populations, spring fish runs and provided the fresh water which nourished the town's famous oyster beds, while the marsh grass provided fodder for the town's livestock. But the tidal water tended to flood and ebb and the marshes were rich in life including insect life. Baker understood that for his new vision of Cape Cod to prosper it required not only natural beauty, but nature controlled, particularly insects. It was those insects, mosquitoes and green-headed flies, which brought Baker to the Wellfleet town meeting.

Baker, like Perry, was born during the golden years of the Cape. Whaling ships brought home whale oil from the North Atlantic. Acres of flakes with drying fish stretched out behind the shore while windmills pumped salt water into dozens of drying vats. Coopers, ship wrights, boat repairers, sail-makers, caulkers, and merchants crowded about the busy wharfs. Farmers brought in milk, eggs, and vegetables to feed the busy harbor town. But the Cape Baker returned to was not the prosperous one in which he grew up. Of the hundred fishing schooners that sailed out of Wellfleet in 1850 only 20 remained in 1890 (Deyo 1890, 791). Wharfs from Provincetown to Falmouth were being abandoned, and ships were no longer being built on the Cape. Scavengers were tearing up the old salt-works for the wood and farmers were having trouble surviving from what they could wrestle from the land.

Baker argued before the town meetings that if the town dyked and drained the marshes more land would be available for sale as vacation homes that would appeal to off Cape residents once the mosquitoes had been eliminated. In response, the town began building dikes but balked at the largest one—the one to close off the Herring River which flowed into Wellfleet Bay. But Baker and his allies continued to argue the advantages of the new tourist economy. Baker brought in experts who argued that the money spent on the dyke would be quickly made up in the increased value of the property, as the land “would be at once in demand for sites for summer residents, where the mosquitoes reduced to a normal quantity and every homestead would have a greater selling value” ((Quoted in Sterling 1976, 12.)).

Not all the town's residents were convinced. Above the mouth of the Herring river where the dyke would be constructed were numerous oyster beds that were worked by local oystermen and where shore fishermen had their fishing shacks to keep their boats and equipment. The spring herring run up river had for almost two centuries supplied ample bait and food for the town's fishermen and residents. Residents argued the herring runs up the river were too important to the town and its history to be destroyed and the livelihood of those upstream should be considered.

Despite Baker's popularity in town resistance to the Herring River dyke held until 1908, the year of Baker's death. As Wellfleet was mourning its wealthiest resident, his supporters argued that the final dyke on the Herring River would be the best tribute to the town's famous sea captain. Twelve of those who opposed Baker's vision of their town as a tourist destination brought suit against the dyke arguing that its destruction of the herring runs violated common law protection of the rights of the citizens to fish. The town then promised to open the dyke's gates for fish, the case was dismissed, and the dyke was built. Yet despite the claim that the gates would be opened, few fish made it to their spawning ponds in 1910. The next year no fish made it past the dyke, and all the fishermen, oystermen, and clambers above the dyke had to look elsewhere for employment (Sterling 1976).

Perry's and Baker's vision of the Cape overwhelmed traditionally conservative Cape Codders because the two hundred year regime of resource extraction had driven the Cape, especially in the last fifty years, into an environmental crisis which engendered an economic crisis. The thick forests

were stripped from the land and no longer available to boat builders and craftsmen. Eroded soil and blowing sand plagued cape farmers. The sea's seemingly unending fecundity was increasingly in doubt as both mackerel and cod catches declined. Perry and Baker believed the key to the recovery of the Cape's economy and its environment lay in the new economy of tourism. Farms would become estates, while shore-lined salt-works, fish flakes and fish houses would become vacation cottages and bathing beaches. Pastures would become croquet fields and tennis courts. Fishing piers would become docks for pleasure boats and local farmers would produce food for vacationing visitors.

Although Perry and Baker shared the belief that the future of the Cape lay in the summer visitor, they had different visions of how that would play itself out. For Perry the summer visitors were the family and friends of the very wealthy. His new Cape Cod was a Cape Cod of summer estates, and grand hotels, lavish golf courses, yacht clubs, lawn parties and croquet. While Baker saw the new Cape as an extension of the Methodist Camp meeting; a place of community, fellowship, peaceful contemplation as well as vigorous wadding, rowing and fishing. It would be a place where people would spend money and others would make money, but it would be the money of the many, and the many being the emerging middle class. Both Perry's and Baker's vision of the Cape began to come into being in the early twentieth century. The shoreline of Buzzards Bay and the south shore from Falmouth to Hyannis began to fill up with large estates and grand hotels, while other areas saw a proliferation of small cottages and summer cottage villages.

The economic recovery that Perry and Baker envisioned would accompany this new vacation world did begin to occur especially by the 1920s. Although the railroad opened the Cape to vacationers, it was the automobile which truly transformed Cape Cod into a vacation land ((See O'Connell 2003 for a discussion of the impact of the automobile on Cape tourism.)). Automobile ownership meant that now moderately well off middle class Americans could load down the family car – or ship gear ahead by rail – then drive to the summer location, unload the car and settle in for the vacation ((Changing patterns of recreation also facilitated the opening up of the Cape to more visitors. The increased acceptance of leisure by the middle class as well as the development of outside recreation such as swimming, fishing, mini-golf, beach bathing, rowing and outside picnicking meant that now families could rent or own a much smaller cottage because most of their time would be spent outside.)).

By the 1920s the Cape's population began to increase and by the 1950s land values rose dramatically. Over time trees began to re-grow and beach grass held down blowing sand. But the new Cape economy was not an unqualified blessing. Nor was it without social and environmental problems. Some on the Cape did not prosper with the new tourist economy. It was developers like Perry with outside links to markets and capital who were able to buy land cheaply from local owners and develop it. Some farmers did prosper selling perishable agricultural goods to the visiting tourists, while some fishermen turned their talents to taking out sport fishermen. Others sold off

family goods as authentic cape antiques. For those who made the transition from the regime of resource extraction to the regime of tourism, by the 1920s the Cape appeared to be entering upon a new golden age. Land particularly near the south shore was filling up with cottages and estates ((The coming of the rail road in the 1870s ended the cape's amphibious age. The rail road also facilitated the building of large vacation hotels with the American Plan where meals, entertainment and room were all included. A family would take the train down from Boston or take the overnight ferry from New York to Fall River then the train on to the Cape, unload trunks at the station to be picked up by the hotel wagons, and be taken to the hotel by carriage for a week to a month of leisure without worry. Often times the husband would remain in the city to come down during the weekend. Wealthier families had their own estates which depended upon a similar but more private pattern. With the coming of the automobile the number of visitors to the cape jumped dramatically as did their pattern of recreation. Rather than stay at the grand hotels the new mobile visitors preferred the small rental cottages.)). In 1921 the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce was established and soon realized the cape's economic growth depended upon tourism. By 1930 over \$25,000,000 was being spent each year by the summer trade.

Tourism seemed to solve the economic crisis that had haunted the Cape for over fifty years. Even the farms seemed to have a new birth with the development of road side stands selling local produce. Fishermen found local markets and good prices for their catch while lobstermen, oystermen and clammers also took advantage of the demand by tourists for local seafood.

The switch to peat then coal and the abandonment of pasture land allowed the Cape's woods to recover. Large sections of land that previously had been farmed now lay fallow. From 1860 to 1930 over 58,000 acres of farmland were abandoned (("A History of Forests" 62.)). Trees, particularly pitch pine and scrub oak grew up on abandoned pastures and around vacation homes. Not only the economy but the land appeared to recover with the return of forests.

The reappearance of woods and trees on what had once been barren land encouraged the idea that tourism was not only good for the economy but also for the environment. Marshland that had once been valuable for salt hay for animal feed was now seen, as Lorenzo Dow Baker realized in 1900, as potential land for development. More and more Cape marshland was drained and filled for homes and marinas ((Sterling 1976. Although the reduction of marsh land began in earnest with the building of the Rail Road and the dyke and drainage programs of the early twentieth century, the road building programs of the 1930-1970s did most of the damage. Just between 1950 and 1970 the Cape lost 3,000 of its 16,142 acres of salt marshes.)). The replacement of marshlands with cottages and roads also seemed to many as improvements of the land. But despite these apparent "improvements", Cape Cod's new tourist economy took an environmental toll. Environmental problems such as water pollution, salt infusion, congestion, air pollution, destruction of habitat for land and water creatures, and different forms of soil erosion began to emerge within the tourist economy.

Like the early nineteenth century economy, the tourist economy without significant restraints is driven toward expansion. Vacation visitors to the Cape were drawn by the dramatic beauty of its fragile landscape. The visitors needed services, accommodations, food, and goods for leisure. Not only were more visitors drawn to the Cape, but after 1920 more and more people came to participate in providing those services and goods. The Cape stopped losing population and following W/WII, its population grew dramatically. People came to the Cape to find jobs in the tourist industry. And the industry did grow. Even in the midst of the depression the WPA estimated that 175,000 visitors came to the Cape in 1935.

The increased volume of residents and visitors put significant stresses on the Cape environment, but what most observers noted was the problem of traffic congestion. Traffic congestion was not only destroying the quaint village atmosphere the Cape boosters were trying to push, but also represented a real threat to air quality. In 1949 construction began on a limited access highway down the middle of the Cape. Within a year of its reaching mid-Barnstable it was already deemed inadequate. By the late 1960s it was estimated that between 250,000 and 400,000 cars travel the mid-Cape highway during summer weekends. More problematic for the Cape than traffic congestion was the solution to the problem. The more expanded the roads the more people flowed to the Cape both as visitors and as residents-summer or year round. More people stressed the Cape's fragile eco-system.

By 1963 the value of retail establishments was 8 times higher than in 1940. Over that period the numbers of hotels and motels doubled and the number of housing units tripled. At the major interchanges along the highways shopping centers, motels, parking lots and housing tracts filled in land previously left fallow. By the late 1950s it became clear that the beauty of the Cape, its fragile stark landscape that was drawing more and more visitors, second home owners, retirees, and those that came looking to work supporting the Cape's expanding tourist industry was itself threatened by those that came to appreciate it ((See O'Connell 2003 for an excellent discussion of the commercial and tourist development on the Cape.)).

Part of the problem was that those that came to the Cape brought to it an ambivalent attitude with them. On the one hand they wanted from the Cape an escape from the crowds and complications of modern urban society. At the same time they wanted many of the services and conveniences of modern urban society. Yet those things carried with them a large environmental footprint. Restaurants came to believe they had to have generous servings of water and ice, air conditioning, and fruits and vegetables exotic to the region. Motels and hotels needed pools and expansive fescue grass lawns, daily clean linens and limitless hot showers. Summer people not only expected beaches and landscapes, but the stores and conveniences of the city as well. People expected to have all the amenities they were escaping from in the city, dishwashing machines, garbage disposals, long hot showers, electric or gas clothes driers, air conditioning, heated enclosed garages and lush green well fertilized lawns. As in the case of the new hotels and restaurants these homes

left a significantly greater footprint on the Cape's fragile environment.

Problems of this new post-productive-industrial age began to haunt the Cape, and much of its modern history involves attempts to come to terms with those problems. Debate emerged in the 1950s over control and moderation of the Cape's growth.

While the Chamber of Commerce argued for regulated or sustainable development such a world proved to be more of a chimera than a reality. Once the Cape had eaten the economic fruit of tourism it was hard to maintain Eden. The economics of the industry drove it toward expansion ((In 1974 cape tourists spent over \$164,000,000 on the Cape. Sterling 1976, 26.)). As land valued rose it was ever harder to persuade land owners to hold land fallow or keep it in traditional use. An acre of land along the water that sold for \$500 in 1940 sold for \$50,000 in 1975 (Sterling 1976, 13). People who came to the Cape to take advantage of the booming growth in building needed more homes to build or faced unemployment. Real estate agents wanted more lots and homes to sell, restaurant owners wanted more parking and floor space to accommodate more customers ((By 1975 85% of the Cape's economy was based on summer payrolls as a result of travelers to the area. After trade and services construction of new homes and stores was the third heaviest source of employment. Army Corps of Engineers, New England Division "Cape Cod Easternly Shore V Beach Erosion Study", Vol. II April 1979. F-7.)). For many of these people restraints on development represented a threat to their vision of material betterment ((The Army Corp of Engineers noted in 1979 that although many towns on the Cape had become aware of the importance of preserving the environment, "but many residents are also very concerned that development continue in order to provide stimulus for the local economies". Appendix 1, F-8.)).

By the late 1950s most of the southern inner Cape was already heavily developed while the outer cape was under pressure. In 1956 a preliminary federal report recommended acquiring land on the Outer Cape for a public seashore. In the end the National Seashore Park was created and in 1966 the new National Seashore was dedicated and a significant area of the outer Cape was protected from uncontrolled development. But even with the National Seashore building went on at a feverous rate through the 1970s and 1980s ((The Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Program's "Final Environmental Impact Statement, 1978" noted that the "very resources which attract so many interests to the coastal zone and support myriad activities and uses are endangered", 3. The Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management plan of 1977 noted that the increased use of the Cape's resources had engendered problems with transportation, parking, and environmental quality. It also noted that the Cape could not continue indefinitely meeting the demand for coastal recreation in Massachusetts. MCZM, "Cape Cod Easternly Shore Beach Erosion Study", appendix 1 F-40. Between 1970 and 1974 the Cape increased the number of dwelling units 31.4%.)).

The environmental costs of development became ever more evident. The Cape's ground water – the canary in the mine – for environmental problems on this fragile sand spit-was severely compromised by the late 1970s with pollution and salt infusion ((With the Cape's geology it takes 1.3

square miles of recharge area for each 1 million gallons of water. Increased water use on the Cape puts pressure on recharge areas. Army Corps of Engineers, New England Division "Cape Cod Easternly Shore V Beach Erosion Study", Vol.II April 1979. Masterson 2004.). Bays and ponds registered significant levels of fecal coli. Nitrates seeping out of antiquated and over burdened septic systems and flowing off of over fertilized lawns, golf courses and gardens, depleted oxygen from the region's waters (The Army Corps of Engineers study particularly focused on the problem of non-point source pollution. It noted that most Cape towns got their water from the single groundwater aquifer that underlies the cape and that "once an aquifer becomes contaminated, it is virtually impossible to reverse the situation", Appendix I,F-19. It also noted that most Cape towns had a high water table so that heavy rains often led to sewage pollution flowing into harbors, ponds and streams.).

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' environmental crisis was partially resolved by the shift from extractive economic activity to tourism. Tourism thrived on the Cape's fragile beauty, but as Aldo Leopold said about wilderness, we destroy what we love in the process of loving it. The Cape's dramatic beauty draws to it hundreds of thousands of visitors every year, but with "every step we made an impression on the Cape" as Henry David Thoreau reminded us over a hundred and fifty years ago.

The Cape's second major environmental crisis emerged in the middle of the twentieth century and although Cape Codders and those who love the Cape seem more ready than ever to tackle this environmental crisis we still have a long and difficult way to go (Cape towns established Conservation Commissions and some towns began buying up conservation land. Dennis in 1967 appropriated \$625,000 to buy 1,400 acres of land for protection. Sterling 1976, 26. In 1968 concerned Cape Codders founded the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod which worked on preservation of natural resources and limits to uncontrolled development.). Today's Cape Codders face difficult choices. In our attempt to resolve this crisis we should be sympathetic to those with the fewest options. At the same time we must be most sensitive to protecting the Cape for future generations. In doing so we should be careful not protect it only for those who have the greatest wealth. We should not forget that although dozens of small cottages scattered across the Cape's sandy shores can mar open vistas and their problematic septic systems threaten water systems, they leave behind a smaller footprint and probably less polluting nitrates than one large mega-mansion with an expansive watered and fertilized lawn and all the amenities of modern suburban living. And, as Lorenzo Dow Baker understood, the small cottages open the Cape's fragile beauty to far more of our citizens. But neither Baker's nor Perry's vision of the new Cape can survive if we are not willing to make hard choices to carefully manage this fragile spit of land. Certainly we have models of that management in the behavior of our colonial ancestors who understood regulation and control for the public good was in the long term interests of the community.

The Cape has held an important place in our national imagination for almost 200 years. The Cape

has indeed become the nation's vacation wonderland. But the Cape's iconic place in our culture should not divert us from the important historical lessons it has to tell us about our environmental past and present. The world that Cape Codders have struggled and are struggling with is a world they share with peoples along much of the coasts of the globe.

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