
A HISTORY OF
MERCANTILE WHARF AND CHEQUESSET INN
WELLFLEET, MASS.
1870 – 1905

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Summary

It is well established that the Chequesset Inn operated on the former Mercantile Wharf along Mayo Beach until winter ice in the harbor damaged the pier and the inn was razed in 1934. It is less clear, however, in what year the inn began operating. There are several references, including a plaque installed by the Wellfleet Historical Society at the site, which place the beginning of the inn at 1886. Other references peg the date as 1902. This study was an effort to cite primary source information to establish that date with more certainty.

The conclusion of this investigation is that the Chequesset Inn began operating on the former Mercantile Wharf in 1902. There is ample contemporaneous evidence to support this conclusion, as detailed below, while no primary source information was found supporting the 1886 date. In fact, much information about activity on the wharf between 1885 and 1902 speaks against the likelihood that a hotel or inn was operating there before 1902.

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1870: The beginnings

In January 1870 Richard R. Freeman purchased from husband and wife, Paulina M. and Justin Taylor, a plot of land in Wellfleet for \$600. The bounds of the property were described as;

“Beginning at the northeast corner [of the property]. Thence running S20°W to the high-water mark. Thence westerly by the shore 400 feet. Thence N20°W till the first mentioned bound bears E1°S. Thence E1°S for 400 feet to the first mentioned bound.”¹

On March 19, 1870 an act was passed by the General Court of Massachusetts granting a license "to Richard R. Freeman and others to build and maintain a wharf from their own land in the town of Wellfleet; said wharf not to exceed four hundred feet in width, and one thousand feet in length..."² The license contained a provision that it would expire in five years unless "valuable structures may have been actually and in good faith built under the same." Since the wharf was subsequently extended (see 1883), it is reasonable to conclude the original wharf was built between April 1870 and April 1875, as required.

Mercantile Wharf Company

The Mercantile Wharf Company of Wellfleet was formed as an unincorporated business with 60 shares at par value of \$500³, and healthy dividends were declared throughout its existence. The Mercantile Wharf **Corporation** of Boston was incorporated by an act of the Massachusetts legislature in 1826⁴ and had no apparent connection to the Wellfleet company.

1871 – 1882: Mackerel

It appears uncontested that the Mercantile Wharf Company was actively engaged in business on the wharf – mainly in support of the mackerel industry – from the time the wharf was built, through 1884.

1873 – By September, the schooner I. H. Horton had made four fishing trips in three months and landed at Mercantile Wharf, a total of 1684 barrels of mackerel worth \$18,425.⁵

1876 – The Mercantile Wharf Company paid \$480 in town tax.⁶

1878 – The Mercantile Wharf Company of Wellfleet declared a dividend of \$100.⁷

1880 – In May it was reported that in Wellfleet "four or five schooners were fitting last week at Mercantile Wharf."⁸

1881 – The Mercantile Wharf Company of Wellfleet paid a dividend of 40 percent (\$200). The Company's sales for 1881 amounted to \$30,000.⁹

1882 – In August the Mercantile Wharf Company had twenty-five hundred barrels of mackerel on the wharf to pack, plus a large amount still on ships waiting to be off-loaded.¹⁰ The company also paid town

taxes this year of \$529.92, which was the highest among all those listed who paid a tax of \$20 or greater.¹¹

1883 – 1884: Wharf expansion

The Massachusetts Board of Harbor and Land Commissioners granted a license in April 1883 to the Mercantile Wharf Company to “construct [an] extension to its wharf on piles by extending the L on the Westerly side of the present wharf Northerly for a distance of fifty (50) feet with a general width of sixty (60) feet as show on the accompanying plan.”¹² A plan¹³ accompanied the license showing the location and size of the extension. (Figure 1)

Work began almost immediately on the wharf extension. According to the *Barnstable Patriot*, April 24, 1883, “The pile driver and scow containing the building materials for the additions to Commercial and Mercantile wharves at Wellfleet have arrived from Boston.”¹⁴, and four weeks later; “The addition to Mercantile Wharf was completed on Saturday, and the steam tug Confidence arrived on Sunday and took the workmen and pile driver to Boston. The addition comprises 3060 square feet upon which a new building is shortly to be erected.”¹⁵

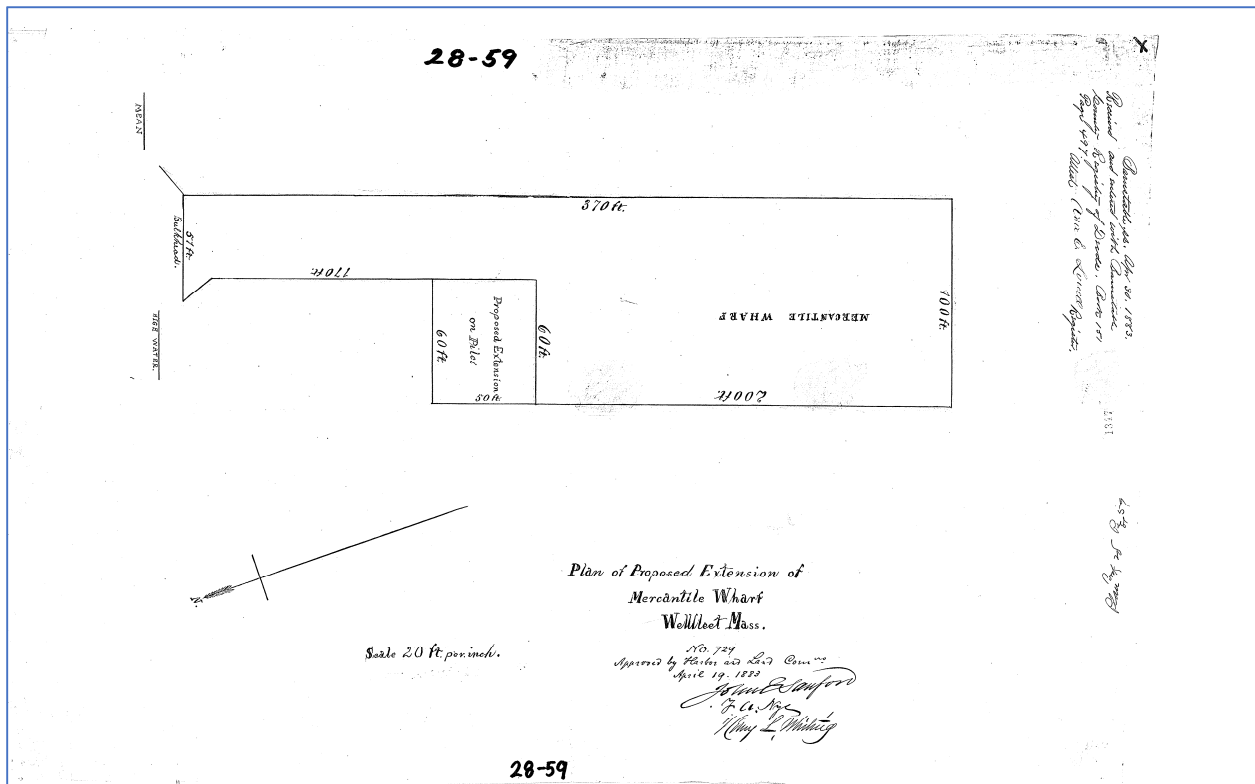


Figure 1 - Plan of Proposed Extension of Mercantile Wharf (1883)

The report of the January 1884 annual meeting of stockholders of the Mercantile Wharf Company affirmed that “this company has done a very lucrative business the past year [1883], and a large dividend was declared.”¹⁶

Simeon Deyo in his 1890 *History of Barnstable County Massachusetts* also includes mention of Mercantile Wharf being enlarged in 1883 “to accommodate its large business.”¹⁷ But more importantly, the Deyo history which was published in 1890 includes a history of Mercantile Wharf Company officers through 1887 and no mention is made of a hotel constructed on the pier, nor of any use or ownership outside the Mercantile Wharf Company. It is unlikely the construction of the inn in 1886 would have escaped mention by Deyo.

“The Mercantile Wharf, erected in 1870, is the last along the north shore of the bay. Sixty shares comprised the stock for its erection. The store is controlled by the company. The first president was Richard R. Freeman, succeeded in 1886 by J. H. Freeman, who in turn was succeeded in 1887 by R. R. Freeman, jr. [sic], the present incumbent. J. H. Freeman acted as agent and clerk until 1885, when Samuel W. Kemp was appointed to succeed him. The acting president is a director, and with him R. R. Higgins, David Y. Pierce and Charles W. Swett were last elected.”¹⁸

1885: A plaque

It is unclear what the original source is for references to Mercantile Wharf becoming Chequesset Inn in 1886. Evidently, it was strong enough for the Wellfleet Historical Society to erect a plaque commemorating the events (Figure 2).



Figure 2 - Plaque at the site of the former Mercantile Wharf and Chequesset Inn

The Historical Society is not alone in promulgating the 1885-1886 dates. Although until the source for these dates can be determined, it cannot be dismissed that all such references are based on a single reference.

For instance, the Massachusetts Historical Commission's *Reconnaissance Survey Town Report on Wellfleet* included in its description of the settlement pattern in the town during 1870-1915; "Baker subsequently built the Chequessett [sic] Inn on Mercantile Wharf in 1885, and promoted the Wellfleet Yacht Club."¹⁹ The sources cited in the MHC report included three which were published before 1869 and thus not relevant to the period under discussion here. The report also listed Deyo's 1890 history as a source, but as discussed above, his accounting supports the conclusion that the wharf company was still operating past 1885. The other two sources were Judy Stetson's "*Wellfleet A Pictorial History*" published by The Wellfleet Historical Society in 1963, and reminiscences of Earle Rich in his "*More Cape Code Echoes*", published in 1978.

Rich recounted many details of the Chequesset Inn from this postcard²⁰ reproduced in his book:



Figure 3 - Postcard of image described in detail by Earle Rich in "*More Cape Cod Echoes*" (@WHSM)

Although Rich doesn't cite any specific dates related to Chequesset Inn, he does provide corroboration as to the existence of a bowling alley at the Inn²¹, which is discussed later.

Stetson appears to be the source of the 1885 date in the MHC report when, talking about Capt. Baker's experience with the Titchfield Hotel in Jamaica and the potential to bring tourism to Wellfleet, wrote (without reference):

"...so in 1885 he purchased Mercantile Wharf with this in mind. \$100,000 was spent converting the old wharf buildings into the elegant Chequessett [sic] Inn, open only in the summer and staffed by the Jamaican crew of the Titchfield Hotel, which operated only in the winter."²²

In 1885 there was indication that the company was engaging in some business outside the wharf as provided by this local Wellfleet brief in the *Barnstable Patriot*:

"Capt. Benjamin Brown is having his residence newly painted, the job being done by the Mercantile Wharf Co., who are doing an extensive business in this line."²³

However, contemporaneous accounts from the *Barnstable Patriot* and *Yarmouth Register* newspapers beyond 1885 continued to provide evidence supporting the view that it was business as usual at the wharf. At the annual meeting of the stockholders, held at the company's office on January 19, 1885, officers were elected and Jesse H. Freeman, who was one of the original investors in the company, resigned²⁴ to become general manager of the Boston Fruit Company²⁵. He sold his interest back to the company for \$600.²⁶ The stockholders also affirmed the store will continue under the management "of the former popular clerk, Mr. Zenas H. Jones, Jr." And further, that although the past year "has been a very unfavorable one the company having met with losses that at other times might not have occurred the usual dividend was declared."²⁷ No indication was made in the newspaper's report of the company ceasing operation, or of any significant changes taking place at the wharf. This supporting evidence would continue for many years ahead, as discussed below.

In June 1885 a cargo of salt from New York was delivered to the Mercantile and Central Wharf companies in Wellfleet.²⁸ This is salt which would be used to preserve mackerel in barrels onboard the vessels which caught them. The fact that salt was delivered to both Wellfleet wharves supports the conclusion that the Mercantile Wharf was still engaged in the mackerel trade and that salt delivery was used for that business, and not simply off-loaded there to be used for fishing fleets operating from other wharves.

Other indications that the Mercantile Wharf Company was actively engaged in in business during 1885 include mention that "the Mercantile Wharf Co. have had their delivery wagons painted in a very artistic manner"²⁹ and a delivery of barrels from Bangor in August.³⁰

If the Chequesset Inn had been built in 1885, or 1886, it is unlikely it would have co-existed on the same wharf with an active mackerel operation, or that neither Deyo nor the *Barnstable Patriot* would have made no mention of that fact.

1886 – 1898: More mackerel & wharf business

There is abundant evidence to show the Mercantile Wharf Company was in operation at least through 1898 and none of it suggesting a change in the nature or location of the business.

1886 – A dividend of ten per cent, on the capital stock or fifty dollars on a share, was declared, besides carrying a large amount to the surplus.³¹ On November 9th the schooner Asa H. Pervere arrived from Philadelphia with coal for Mercantile Wharf Co.³²

1887 – At the annual meeting in January it was voted to pass the “usual dividend, but had it not been for the loss of the schr. Highland Light the company would have done a fair year's work.”³³

1888 – From the January annual meeting; “The company has done the largest business of any in town, having handled over forty-two thousand dollars worth of mackerel the past year. ... A dividend of ten per cent, or fifty-dollars to a share was declared.”³⁴ August 24th, the schooner Freddie A. Higgins arrived from New York with coal for Mercantile Wharf Co.³⁵

1889 – The Mercantile Wharf Company of Wellfleet pays a dividend of \$50 on a share—10 percent.³⁶

1890 – Report from the annual meeting in January; “This Company, like all others, has done a small amount of business in comparison with former years, but a dividend of fifteen per cent, or seventy-five dollars per share was declared.”³⁷

1891 – A dividend of \$100 (20%) was declared based on business through 1890.³⁸

The schooner Oliver Cromwell arrived May 26th from Boston with a load of planks to repair Mercantile wharf.³⁹

The schooner Lacy M. Jenkins arrived from New York June 4th with a load of coal for Mercantile Wharf Co.⁴⁰

The schooner Nannie E. Waterman landed 100 barrels of mackerel at Mercantile wharf the week of July 11th.⁴¹

The schooner Mary F. Cushman arrived August 1st from Boston with salt, to Mercantile Wharf Company⁴². (The salt would have been used to preserve mackerel in barrels at sea as it was caught.⁴³ The salted fish would be returned to port – in this case to Mercantile Wharf – where it would be sorted by size and sold to seafood wholesalers in New York, Boston and Philadelphia.⁴⁴)

1892 – The schooner Olive Branch arrived from South Amboy April 6th with a load of “fine Franklin coal” for the Mercantile Wharf Co.⁴⁵

May 17th, the schooner Benjamin Oliver sailed from Mercantile wharf with load of sand “for some Maine port.”⁴⁶

August 21st the schooner James P. Foster arrived with a cargo of salt.⁴⁷

1893 – A dividend of \$10 was declared at the annual meeting in January.⁴⁸

The schooners Nannie E. Waterman and Alice P. Biggins arrived May 7th from South Amboy, with

coal.⁴⁹

The schooner Nannie E. Waterman arrived at Mercantile wharf August 24th with 220 barrels mackerel.⁵⁰

1894 – At the annual meeting of Mercantile Wharf Company held on January 16, officers were chosen for the ensuing year and they voted, to pay a dividend of \$20 per share."⁵¹

The schooner J. P. Foster arrived May 28th with a load of salt.⁵²

1895 – At the annual meeting of Mercantile Wharf Company, held Tuesday, January 8, officers were elected and a dividend of \$20 per share was declared.⁵³

The schooner H. W. Pierce arrived in April with a cargo of coal.⁵⁴

In November, the schooner Minneola, from Bangor, was in at Mercantile wharf with a load of lumber for Thos. A. Higgins.⁵⁵

1896 – The schooner Pleiades arrived May 10th with a load of coal for Mercantile Wharf Co.⁵⁶

1897 – A dividend of \$15 was declared at the annual meeting in January.⁵⁷

1898 – A dividend of \$10 was declared at the annual meeting in January.⁵⁸

A severe winter storm November 26-28, known as the "Portland Gale", brought wind, rain and snow which caused much damage in Wellfleet. According to a contemporaneous report in the *Barnstable Patriot*, "At the wharves the damage is inestimable. The road leading to the Mercantile Wharf is overflowed and washed away in several places."⁵⁹ Note the reference is to "Mercantile Wharf", and not to "Chequesset", or an inn.

No primary sources were found that would indicate the presence of a hotel or inn on the wharf through 1898.

1899 – 1901: Transition

At the annual meeting of the Mercantile Wharf Co. in January 1899, officers were re-elected, but the storekeeper, Mr. A. L. Wiley, “who has faithfully served the company for fifteen year”, declined to accept the position for another year and the company decided to close the business in March.⁶⁰

In May 1899, the *Barnstable Patriot* reported;

"Capt. L. D. Baker is having built a number of bath-houses near the lighthouse on Mayo's Beach. Capt. Baker is also having built for rental a fine new cottage on the bluff between Murdock Berrio's and the Mercantile Wharf."^{61 1}

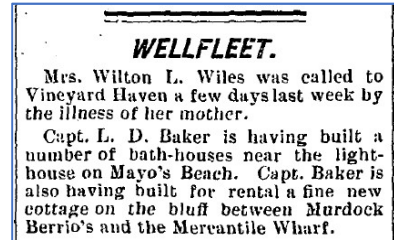


Figure 4 - *Barnstable Patriot*, May 15, 1899

It is significant that the location mentioned for the bath houses is relative to the lighthouse. If there were an inn on the pier at this time, it is likely the bath houses would have had a strong connection to it, and the note would not omit mention of the inn.

In September 1899 we see the apparent beginning of the transformation of Mercantile Wharf to the Chequesset Inn. Richard Freeman, as Trustee for Mercantile Wharf Company, sold to Lorenzo D. Baker the same parcel as described in the deed from the Taylors to Richard R. Freeman in 1870 upon which Mercantile Wharf was built, and the company operated.⁶² The deed was signed September 27, 1899 and recorded with the Barnstable County clerk on October 9, 1899. (Figure 5)

At the 1901 Wellfleet Annual Town Meeting, Article 16 was presented “To see what action the town will take in regards to improving the road between Mercantile Wharf Co. and Simeon Atwood's store ...” The article was evidently discussed in some detail and was amended by changing “Simeon Atwood's store” to “Post Office Square” and approved.^{63 64} Note that after that discussion, reference remained to “Mercantile Wharf Co.”. It was not changed to “Chequesset Inn”, “Chequesset Pier”, or any other reference that the wharf had undergone any significant change in identity. The *Barnstable Patriot* then reported in June 1901 that work had begun at both ends to improve the road “which is to extend from Post Office Square to Mercantile Wharf”⁶⁵, again not indicating a change in name for the wharf.

¹ Subsequently, a July 1899 note in the *Patriot* reported that a Vermont family was staying for the summer at *Morningside*, “the cottage recently erected by Capt. L. D. Baker and situated on one of the bluffs at the beach overlooking Wellfleet Bay.” (ref. *Barnstable Patriot*, Monday, July 10, 1899; p. 4.)

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Know all Men by these Presents
 that I, Richard R. Freeman, of Quincy, in the County of Norfolk,
 and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Trustee of the Mercantile Wharf
 Co. of Wellfleet, in the County of Barnstable and Commonwealth aforesaid,
 and in place of Richard R. Freeman, deceased, in consideration
 of one dollar and other valuable considerations paid by Lorenzo D. Baker of said Wellfleet the receipt whereof is hereby
 acknowledged, do hereby give, grant, bargain, sell and convey
 unto the said Lorenzo D. Baker and his heirs and assigns
 forever a certain tract of land situated in said Wellfleet,
 bounded and described as follows: - Beginning at the northeast
 corner thereof at a stake and stone, thence running south
 twenty degrees west to high water mark; thence westerly, by the
 shore four hundred feet to a stake and stone thence north
 twenty degrees east till the first bound bears east one degree
 south, thence east one degree south four hundred feet to the
 first bound, with a right of cartway through the land of
 Paulina M. Taylor, lying east of the above described land, and
 reserving also to Paulina M. Taylor her heirs and assigns, a
 right of way and easement from my land lying west of this lot to
 her other land lying east of the same, together with the build-
 ings and wharf thereon. To have and to hold the above
 granted premises, with all the privileges and appurtenances thereto
 belonging to the said Grantor, his heirs and assigns, to their
 own use and behoof forever. And I the said Grantor do
 hereby for myself and my heirs, executors, and administrators,
 covenant with the said grantee and his heirs and assigns
 that I am lawfully seized in fee simple of the granted
 premises, that they are free from all incumbrances, that I
 have good right to sell and convey the same to the said
 Grantee as aforesaid, and that I will and my heirs, executors
 and administrators shall warrant and defend the same to the
 said grantee and his heirs and assigns forever against the
 lawful claims and demands of all persons. In witness
 whereof I the said Richard R. Freeman Trustee as aforesaid
 and Mary M. Freeman his wife in token of her release of all
 right of dower in the granted premises, hereunto set our
 hands and seals this twenty-seventh day of September in the
 year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine.

2 in
Freeman
Grant
Bounded

Plan filed - Plan Book 6, Page 125

Signed, sealed and delivered
 in presence of
 Harry D. Perkins }
 Richard R. Freeman }
 Trustee Mercantile Wharf Co. }
 Mary M. Freeman }
 Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Suffolk, ss. Sept 27th 1899. Then personally appeared the above-
 named Richard R. Freeman Trustee, and acknowledged the
 foregoing instrument to be his free act and deed, before me.
 Harry D. Perkins, Justice of the Peace.
 Wellfleet July 5th 1899.

At a special meeting of the Mercantile Wharf Company held
 this day, said meeting being called in accordance with the
 Constitution and By Laws of said Company. It was voted that

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Richard R. Freeman Trustee of said Company, be and is hereby
 authorized to execute a deed conveying to the purchaser, the Real
 Estate Wharf and buildings now belonging to the Mercantile Wharf
 Co. of Wellfleet Mass.
 A true Copy
 Attest: R. R. Freeman, Clerk.

Barnstable ss. Received Oct 9, 1899 & is recorded.
 Attest: Andrew S. Sherman Register.

Figure 5 - Deed of wharf property from Mercantile Wharf Co. to L. D. Baker - 1899

We do, however, begin to see evidence of the developing tourist trade in this advertisement from *The Minneapolis Journal*, May 13, 1901⁶⁶ (Figure 6). The ad is offering summer rentals of three new, large cottages (eight to ten bedrooms) located on Chequesset Bluffs. These would be the famous Wellfleet Cottages built on the bluff west of Mercantile Wharf overlooking the harbor. Capt. L. D. Baker purchased the property from France B. Hiller in November 1898.⁶⁷ The ad mentions the cottages are located “near a large pier”, as well as the possibility of “other smaller cottages”, but again, no mention is made of an inn or hotel.



Figure 6 - Box ad from *The Minneapolis Journal*, May 13, 1901

1902: The Inn is built

It is now evident that 1902 is when a hotel or inn first comes to Mercantile Wharf, which begins to be known a “Chequesset Pier”. While the 1902 annual report from the Town of Wellfleet does not contain mention of the inn directly, it does provide a couple of clues that change was happening at the wharf. The most direct reference is in Article 21 of the Warrant for 1903 included in the 1902 annual town report. The article is proposed “To see if the town will appropriate money for the protection of Mayo's Beach between the Lighthouse and Chequesset Pier.”⁶⁸ Here is the first time the town report mentions the location of Mercantile Wharf by another name.

The local notes and reports of Wellfleet in the local newspapers are a good primary source for learning of incremental changes in the town. While the Sturgis Library’s (Barnstable) on-line archive of the *Patriot* is missing the editions from August 1901 through 1902, in December 2018 archived copies of the *Yarmouth Register* became available through the Sturgis Library.

In March 1902, the *Yarmouth Register* reported that a new twenty-room hotel was being built on Mercantile wharf, utilizing the building known as the “Monitor”.⁶⁹ Descriptions of the inn in later years indicate it eventually contained more than twenty rooms, but as discussed in the “Chequesset Inn Development” section of this report this is consistent with the inn having been built out in at least two phases.

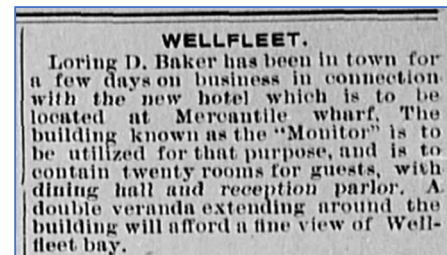


Figure 7 - Wellfleet note from the *Yarmouth Register*, March 29, 1902

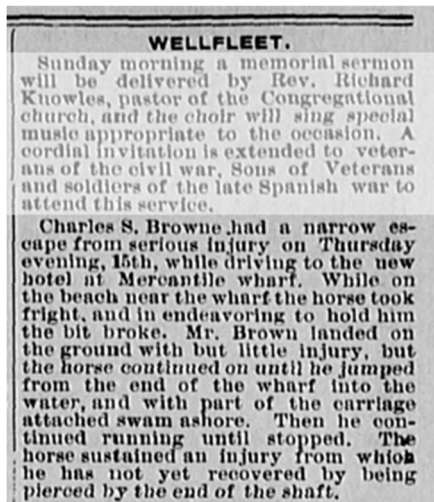


Figure 8 - Accident report, *Yarmouth Register*, May 24, 1902

An accident report in the May 24, 1902 edition of the *Yarmouth Register* provides connections to two Chequesset Inn related items. From the report we learn that Charles S. Browne (and his horse and carriage) were involved in this incident “while driving to the new hotel at Mercantile wharf.”⁷⁰ This not only repeats mention of a “new” hotel on the wharf, but also ties Mr. Browne to work on the hotel. His involvement in the 1902 construction activities of the inn is mentioned as “foreman” in the report on the opening of the inn, and is discussed further in a subsequent section, “Bowling Alley”.

Construction of the new hotel continued and a local note for Wellfleet on June 28, 1902 simply mentions; "The new Chequesset Inn is expected to be completed by the 1st of July."⁷¹

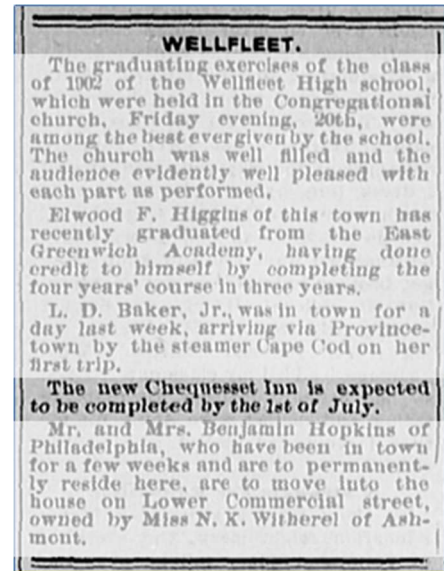


Figure 9 - Wellfleet note from the *Yarmouth Register*, June 28, 1902

1902: Chequesset Inn Opening

The following report in the *Yarmouth Register* on July 26, 1902 provides details of the opening of the new Chequesset Inn.

NEW CHEQUESSET INN

Chequesset, Inn, on Chequesset pier, formerly known as Mercantile wharf, commands one of the finest views on the Massachusetts coast. It is 112 by 62 ft. in dimensions and has a veranda 10 ft. wide on three sides, the outside rooms opening on the veranda. The pier extends about 400 ft. from the beach, and the building is situated at the end of the pier, directly over the water. It has 27 rooms for guests, with eight additional in the annex situated near. The building is thoroughly lighted by electricity and has telephone connection with the main line. Each room is furnished with electric bell. Around the inside hall on second story extends a balcony four feet wide, making an enjoyable promenade. The new propeller Cultivator has been arranged for the accommodation of guests and will be used to take pleasure parties to any points of interest, on fishing excursions or to the neighboring ports of Barnstable, Provincetown and Plymouth. The Cultivator will also be available to passengers desiring its use in connection with the steamer Cape Cod in commission between Provincetown and Boston. Capt. L. D. Baker is the proprietor of this new inn, and it is through his enterprise and interest in Wellfleet that it has been built. The work has been done through his agent, Mr. Isaiah Snow of Truro, with Mr. Chas. S. Browne as foreman.

WELLFLEET.
NEW CHEQUESSET INN.
Chequesset Inn, on Chequesset pier, formerly known as Mercantile wharf, commands one of the finest views on the Massachusetts coast. It is 112 by 62 ft. in dimensions and has a veranda 10 ft. wide on three sides, the outside rooms opening on the veranda. The pier extends about 400 ft. from the beach, and the building is situated at the end of the pier, directly over the water. It has 27 rooms for guests, with eight additional in the annex situated near. The building is thoroughly lighted by electricity and has telephone connection with the main line. Each room is furnished with electric bell. Around the inside hall on second story extends a balcony four feet wide, making an enjoyable promenade. The new propeller Cultivator has been arranged for the accommodation of guests and will be used to take pleasure parties to any points of interest, on fishing excursions or to the neighboring ports of Barnstable, Provincetown and Plymouth. The Cultivator will also be available to passengers desiring its use in connection with the steamer Cape Cod in commission between Provincetown and Boston. Capt. L. D. Baker is the proprietor of this new inn, and it is through his enterprise and interest in Wellfleet that it has been built. The work has been done through his agent, Mr. Isaiah Snow of Truro, with Mr. Chas. S. Browne as foreman.

Bowling Alley

Aside from the contemporaneous newspaper accounts, the 1902 Wellfleet annual town report provides another item which helps paint a picture of what was occurring at the pier – a bowling alley. The Treasurer’s report in the 1902 annual town report includes revenue of \$2.00 from Charles S. Browne for a bowling alley license.⁷² Neither the 1900 nor 1901 annual Treasurer’s Report contains revenue from a bowling alley license. Nor do those years include an article which may have introduce a new license fee on new or existing bowling alleys. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that Mr. Browne was involved in provisioning a new bowling alley in Wellfleet.

The following year, the 1903 Treasurer’s report included the following revenue line:

"Chequesset Inn, bowling alley license --- \$2.00"⁷³

With this entry it can be firmly established that the Chequesset Inn was operating a bowling alley at least by 1903. And since this is the only bowling alley license fee reported in 1903, it is reasonable to conclude this was the same bowling alley licensed in 1902 to Mr. Browne, and not a new bowling alley in 1903.

Earle Rich corroborates the existence of a bowling alley at the inn, although without a reference to dates, when describing the Inn as shown in Figure 3:

"Not shown in the picture because of the angle of focus necessary to get the entire Inn complex showing, is the bowling alley that was located at the foot of the cliff."⁷⁴

Charles Browne’s connection to working on the inn likely came through his father-in-law, Capt. Thomas C. Kennedy. A 1910 social note in the *Sandwich Observer* provides the familial connection:

"Mrs. Charles S. Browne with sons Paul and Kurmit of Roslindale are spending two weeks with her parents, Capt. and Mrs. Thomas Kennedy. Mr. Browne, who arrived here on Saturday, returned home the following day."⁷⁵

And in 1903, as described below, Capt. Kennedy, was employed on work connected with the enlargement of the inn on Chequesset Pier.

Although somewhat inferential, the facts concerning the bowling alley in Wellfleet during 1902 & 1903 can be used to further support the conclusion that the Chequesset Inn was opened in 1902.

1903: More Chequesset Inn

There are many other facts from early 1903, besides bowling alley license fees, which corroborate the conclusion that “Chequesset Pier” and the Inn came into existence in 1902.

Perhaps the most definitive indication that the Inn was operating in 1902 is this January 1903 advertisement⁷⁶ in the *Barnstable Patriot* for souvenir postcards which includes “#31. Chequesset Inn, Wellfleet” (Figure 10). It is hard to conclude that such a souvenir would be offered in January if the Inn did not yet exist, and there weren’t visitors from the previous summer who might want a way to remember their visit.

In February, the *Barnstable Patriot* included an accident report which referenced current work of enlarging the inn on Chequesset Pier, and Capt. Kennedy, linked above to the bowling alley work.

“Last week was a chapter of accidents but the one most serious in results was on Saturday morning [January 30, 1903] when Mr. L. A. Newcomb and Capt. Thos. C. Kennedy, while on the way to Chequessett [sic] Pier where they are employed on work connected with the enlargement of the Inn, were thrown from the carriage by the horse taking fright while going down the steep hill which leads from G. W. Holbrook's store to Lower Commercial street near the foot bridge. Mr. Newcomb and Capt. Kennedy were thrown violently to the frozen ground and taken up unconscious. Mr. Newcomb was severely cut about the head and face, and otherwise injured, and Capt. Kennedy was cut about the head and received injuries to his back. Both are comfortable at present writing and their many friends hope for a full recovery from what was at first feared to be a very serious accident.”⁷⁷

The 1903 Wellfleet annual town meeting, held February 8, 1903, also included a pair of articles which referred to “Chequesset” where “Mercantile” was used only two years earlier.

- Article 16 concerned street lamps in the town, and it was voted that “five new street lights are to be placed on the road to Chequesset Inn.”⁷⁸ In the annual town reports for 1900, 1901 and 1902 the articles concerning street lamps made no mention of any along the road to Mercantile Wharf or Chequesset Pier.
- Article 21 appropriated funds “for the protection of Mayo's Beach between the Light-house and Chequesset Pier.”⁷⁹

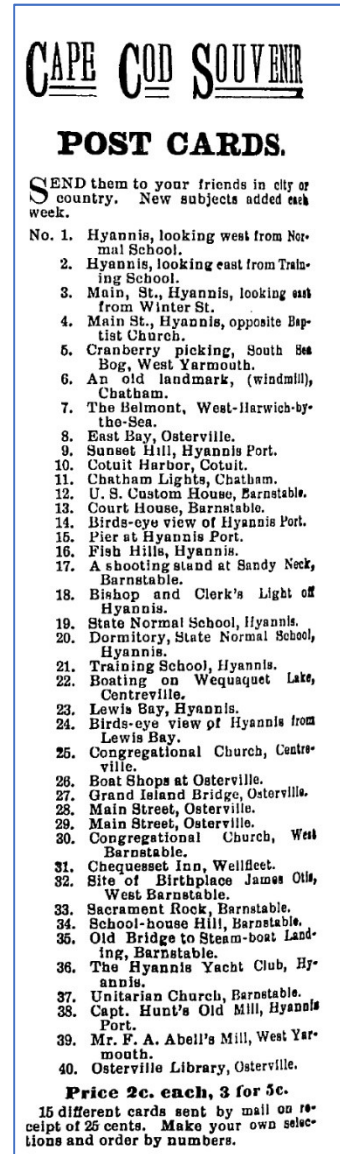


Figure 10 - Chequesset Inn postcard offer (1903)

In March 1903 the *Barnstable Patriot* reported: "Mr. L. D. Baker, Jr., was in town for a short time last week on business connected with Chequesset Inn."⁸⁰ And in July an advertisement⁸¹ appeared for Chequesset Inn and Cottages (Figure 11). This is the earliest search result of Sturgis Library's digital newspaper archive for ads containing "Chequesset".

Altogether, the sources from early 1903 indicate the Chequesset Inn was in operation in 1902 and was expanded in 1903. Photographic evidence, while not contributing facts to the specific timeline of the inn's development, do show the inn operating with two distinct levels of development which likely coincide with the Inn configured as it opened, and subsequently expanded.

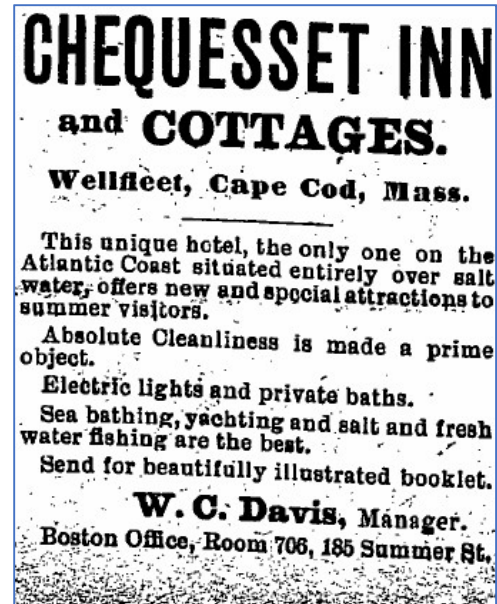


Figure 11 - *Barnstable Patriot* ad for Chequesset Inn and Cottages (1903)

Chequesset Inn Development

It appears the Inn was built out over time while it was in operation, with significant changes occurring perhaps in the first two years. Photographs from the Wellfleet Historical Society & Museum's photography collection were invaluable in documenting this. The changes in architecture can be used as benchmarks to track the development of the property from the wharf operation to the Inn.

After the wharf was extended in 1883 the Mercantile Wharf Company operated with three main buildings on the wharf, as seen in Figure 12⁸². The building with the shed roof at the shore end of the wharf was built on the 1883 extension. We can conclude it sits on the extension since all photographs of the Inn show this building at the end of the L portion of the pier, as seen here, and thus no evidence that extension was built after this building was constructed.

Take note of the six open bays on the wharf-level of the middle building.



Figure 12 - Mercantile Wharf Company

Figure 13⁸³ appears to show conversion to the Inn in progress and the six bays in Figure 12 are visible and still open; we can see clear through towards Indian Neck. The 2nd floor veranda is built out, but the railing is not yet installed, and scaffolding is still supporting work on the north end of the main building. It is also significant that the roof of the north two-thirds of the building is clean, with no dormers. This contrasts with most other images of the Inn which show a much more built-out upper story.

The shed-roof building has been renovated and windows added. Also note that the building in Figure 12 that was oriented across the wharf at the south (harbor) end has been replaced by a three-story addition, which we continue to see throughout the history of the Inn.

And we don't yet see the "ship's rail" fence along the edges of the pier installed to ensure visitors' safety.



Figure 13 - Chequesset Inn under construction 1902 (© WHSM)

Another fine photograph⁸⁴ (Figure 14) shows what appears to be the newly constructed Inn ready for operation. Note the bright, unweathered shingles on the buildings.



Figure 14 - Early Chequesset Inn (©WHSM)

The souvenir photograph⁸⁵ shown in Figure 15, dated 1902 but unverified, shows the Inn in operation with the construction shown in Figure 13 completed. The quarterboard near the top of the (south) end of the building is not legible, but when magnified it is not hard to detect it has one long and one short word; “Chequesset Inn”. In other photographs of the inn we can clearly see such signs.



Figure 15 - Chequesset Inn looking northwest from Wellfleet harbor (c.1902)

The Inn opened with this simplified architecture in 1902, and the 1903 account mentioned above of Capt. Kennedy's accident and his engagement in enlarging the Inn, fits with its further expansion.

And indeed, this March 1903 report in the *Yarmouth Register* detailed the renovations made to the inn after it opened in 1902.⁸⁶

WELLFLEET
Chequesset Inn

Extensive additions and Improvements have been made to Chequesset Inn preparatory tor another summer. Seventeen new guest rooms have been added, most of them fitted with baths and running water. The reception room and dining room have been enlarged and a new office fitted near the main entrance down stairs. A new telephone booth has been placed near-by. A gentlemen's smoking room has been added near the office. The kitchen has been moved to new and more commodious quarters down stairs. A nurses' hall has been added, and new servants' quarters in the building in the rear. An electric steam laundry, with electrical dryer, has been erected near the Inn. A pool and billiard room for the use of the guests has been fitted. Three new general bath rooms have been added to the Inn and a new electric shower bath furnished and fitted. Perhaps the most noticeable improvement, aside from the enlargement of the Inn, and one that would attract the most general attention, is the new Illuminated sign which bears the name of the Chequesset Inn. Three brilliant arc lights are also to be placed on or near the pier. Capt. Baker and his son, Mr. L. D. Baker, Jr., are doing, and will continue to do, all that can be done to make the Inn attractive and. all that guests can desire.

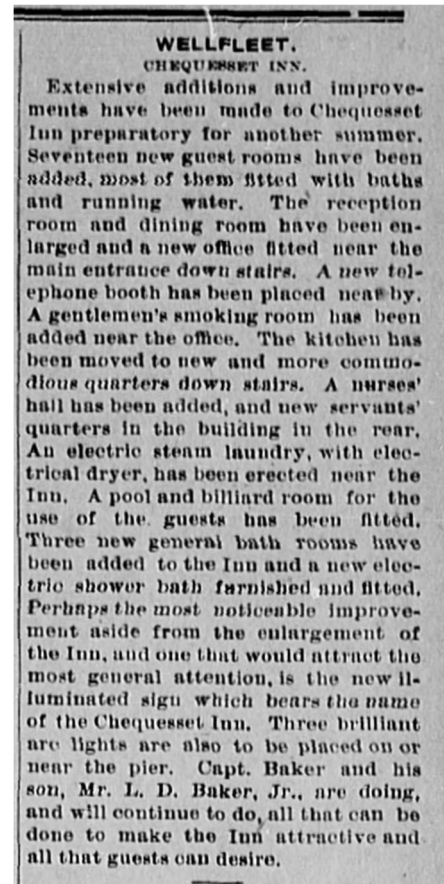


Figure 16 - March 1903 report in the *Yarmouth Register* detailing renovations made to the inn

In this photograph⁸⁷ (Figure 17) we see the more typical version of the Inn with a set-back dormer added at the water side (south) end of the building, and six dormers added in the roof of the north end.

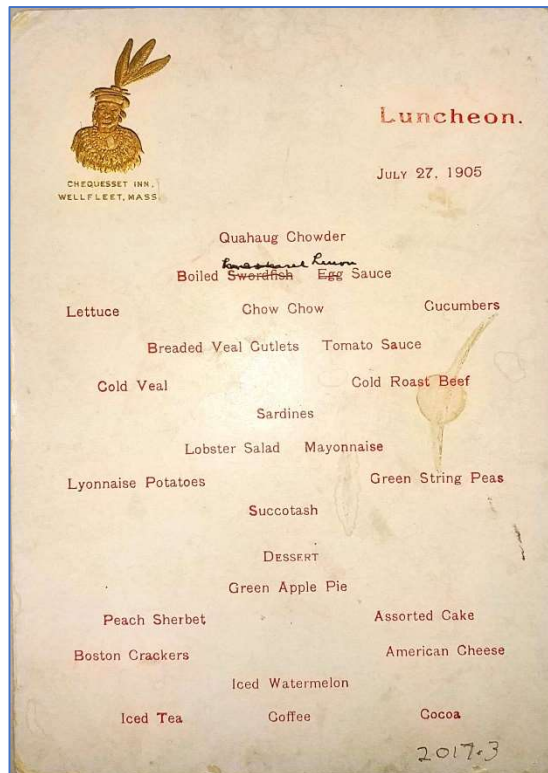


Figure 17 - Inn after the addition of more dormers (©WHSM)

The addition of these dormers evidently was completed by the 1905 season since they are shown in the following photograph that is on the back of a July 1905 menu from the Inn⁸⁸ (Figure 18).



Figure 18 - Photograph on the back of a 1905 menu from the Chequesset Inn



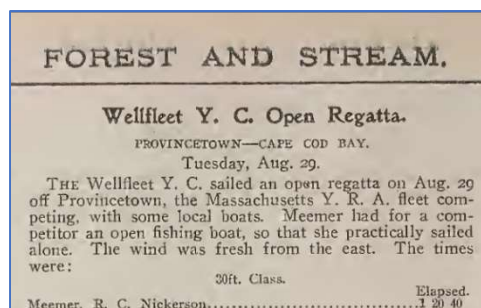
Wellfleet YC Regattas

Many photographs of the Inn (dated and undated) include activity which appears to be a sailing regatta. To help relate those to when they may have been held from the Chequesset Pier, here is a summary of references to the annual Wellfleet Yacht Club regattas found in *Forest and Stream* magazine and *The Barnstable Patriot*.

1895 – *Yarmouth Register*: Mention is made that spectators watched from Central and Commercial wharves, but no mention of Mercantile wharf.

*"WEDNESDAY'S RACES. The third and final race of the Wellfleet Yacht Club regatta was sailed Wednesday in the midst of a smashing whole-sail wind, that made the score or more of contestants heel at an acute angle and severely tested their weatherly qualities. It was a fine race between fast and able boats, each and all of which were right in trim and eager for the contest. It was an ideal racing day, opening with a cloudless sky and a sea whose calm and polished surface augured ill for the hopes of those who had hoped for a brisk wind, but long before the hour set for the start a pioneer zephyr blazed the way for a legion of its kindred that ere the race had been completed tumbled over each other in their haste to get into Wellfleet harbor, where fun alive was in progress. A gallant fleet of home craft, with a generous sprinkling of visiting cup hunters, flitted back and forth off Central wharf, where the judge stand had been roped off, a good quarter of an hour before the starting gun barked. Central and Commercial wharves, once scenes of business activity, were alive with spectators, citizens and visitors, while the shores were dotted with other expectant groups. ..."*⁸⁹

1899 – *Forest and Stream*: "The Wellfleet Y. C. sailed an open regatta on Aug. 29 off Provincetown ..."⁹⁰



1900 – No mention of Wellfleet Y.C. regatta

1901 – No location mentioned.

Forest and Stream: "The annual Y. R. A. open race of the Wellfleet Y. C. was sailed in Cape Cod Bay, off Wellfleet, Monday, Sept. 2 ..."⁹¹

*Yarmouth Register: "The annual regatta of the Wellfleet Yacht Club will take place on Labor day."*⁹²

1902 – *Boston Globe:*

"The regatta committee of the Wellfleet yacht club has announced the program for its two days' series of Y. R. A. open races to be sailed off Chequesset pier on Monday and Tuesday, Aug. 25 and 26 ..."⁹³

1902 – *Yarmouth Register:*

"The Wellfleet Yacht Club will hold open regattas, to be sailed under the racing rules of the Y. R. A. of M., and counts for association percentage for classes D, S and I, on Monday and Tuesday Aug. 25 and 20, off Chequesset pier, Wellfleet, starting Monday at 1.30 p.m. and Tuesday at 2 p.m. ..."⁹⁴

1903 – *Forest and Stream: "The first Y. R. A. open race of the Wellfleet Y. C., was sailed off Wellfleet on Monday, Aug. 23."*⁹⁵

1904 – *Forest and Stream: "On Monday, Aug. 29, Cape Cod's annual series of Y. R. A. open yacht races was opened by the Wellfleet Y. C."*⁹⁶

1904 – *Barnstable Patriot:*

"The second Open Regatta of the Wellfleet Yacht Club was sailed Saturday afternoon off Chequesset Inn Pier in a light southeasterly wind, the boats being sent only once around a three mile triangular course. In view of the accident last week, this was the first time the yachts "Areyto" and "Arawark" had had an opportunity-to compare their sailing qualities, and much interest was manifested in the contest by the hundreds of towns people and summer visitors, who took advantage of the exceptional facilities afforded by the Inn and pier for witnessing the race."⁹⁷

1905 – *Forest and Stream: "The first of the series of Y. R. A. open races given by the Wellfleet Y. C., was sailed off the Chequesset Inn on Monday, Aug. 28 ..."*⁹⁸

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