

The Cammock House

By Frank Hodgdon

Captain Thomas Libby 3rd, who established the first hotel at Prouts Neck known as the Prouts Neck or "Middle" House, did so more or less by default rather than by design. His residence had originally been built by Timothy Prout and had been modified and greatly enlarged by Alexander



Kirkwood prior to its acquisition by the Libby family. Originally a farmhouse, it became a place where local fishermen could have their fish dressed and cooked, and where they could secure lodging for a few days during the fishing season. Eventually its fame spread and it became the site of picnics and clambakes.

Captain Libby held his real estate closely and it was not until after his death in 1871 that much of his land went on the market for development. His eldest son, Silas, inherited the property to the southeast of the Middle House upon which he erected what would become, for nearly a hundred

years, the Cammock House. Cammock House was named in honor of Captain Thomas Cammock, nephew of the Earl of Warwick and a member of the Council of Plymouth in Massachusetts Bay. Cammock was the first legal proprietor in what is now the Town of Scarborough, having been granted in 1631 a tract of 1500 acres between the Black Point and Spurwink Rivers.

Silas Libby's younger brother, Benaiah, inherited land on the opposite side of his father's establishment and built what would become The Willows, set as it was among a beautiful stand of willow trees which had originally been planted with seedlings from Dunstan.

The Cammock House started as a modest enterprise, but like its neighbors, the Checkley, West Point, and Southgate, it grew over the years until the building occupied nearly its entire lot. Meanwhile, the vagaries of the country's economy, such as the Panic of 1897, exacted their toll and owners and managers came and went. Eventually, the Cammock House, like the former Southgate (later renamed the Black Point Inn), were acquired by the ubiquitous Sprague Corporation, which managed and operated them into the 1960s. I fondly remember riding my bicycle past the Cammock at an early evening hour along Black Point Road in the summertime in the early sixties. The Cammock was located but a few feet back from the pavement and I could hear the strains of a small combo entertaining the dinner crowd during happy hour, the guests spilling out onto the piazza in their summery frocks, ice cream trousers, and navy blue blazers. Alas, like passengers aboard the Titanic, this crowd little knew what lay just ahead.

The owners of the Cammock decided it would be far too costly to install a sprinkler system changing laws mandated in a business that operated only three or four months each year. A

tightening of the overboard disposal regulations also confronted them with an insurmountable obstacle. So a scant six or seven years short of its 100th birthday, the lovely old cream-colored structure went down in a cloud of dust as a crane and clamshell bit huge chunks out of its sturdy walls and roof a few days before the April first property tax doomsday.

The photo with this item dates from the early years of this century. The barn reminds us that horses provided the transportation common to the era, and cows still provided the milk, cream, and butter served in the dining room. Just down the way, you can see Seavey's Fishing Shack to the right where today the Yacht Club stands. A two-masted schooner lies at anchor in the cove beyond. The telephone poles suggest it was sometime after 1905 when telephone-telegraph communications reached Prouts Neck.

A portion of the Cammock complex survives; the late William P. Coues purchased what was known as "the annex" and moved it back along the adjacent lane and remodeled it into a year-round residence where his widow continues to reside.