



# UNTOLD TALES OF FALMOUTH

From the Archives of Museums on the Green



"THE ELLSWORTH," MENAUAHANT. ANDREW J. LOVELL, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

## Revenge on the Half Shell

by Hollis Lovell (1900 -1993)

*This story is excerpted from an essay that Hollis Lovell submitted for inclusion in "The Book of Falmouth" circa 1985. It didn't make the final cut. Lovell's typescript is in the archives at Museums on the Green. See Lovell's [article in Sprintsail](#) about Ten Acre Farm, his family's grocery store, in the 1920s.*

Mr. Cook's house was a nice house and everyone admired it – even those who always maintained that so-called "West Menauhant" would never amount to anything. But he simply could not or would not get along with the workmen around here. The story I am going to tell you happened around 1920. Nobody mentioned in it is still alive today.

Men like Joe Davis and Bert Baker did excellent work but you could not in any way rush them. They worked always at their own pace – often times an exasperating one, but there was not much you could do about it. If one of them decided this was a nice day to go fishing or clamming or whatever, he simply just went. Job or no job. People had for years threatened to bring in outside labor but it seldom worked.

Mr. Cook was the type who wanted everything done now – at once. There was trouble, of course. Nothing worked out the way Mr. Cook had scheduled it. My father kept telling him he simply had to change his tactics or he never would get the job done.

My father recommended Joe Davis to Mr. Cook as an excellent painter. But from the way it was told to me, Joe didn't last very long.

Mr. Cook had no intention of using white paint. He detested white paint, also dark green shutters, etc. Didn't anyone on Cape Cod have any imagination at all? Why was every house painted the same way – white with that hideous dark green. He wanted grey. He had his own color scheme worked out.

**Top: Hollis Lovell's grandfather, Andrew J. Lovell Sr., was a member of the land trust that established a summer colony in Menauhant.**



**Above: Road through the pines on way to Menauhant By-The-Sea Mass. Postcard, c1915.**



But that was as far as he got with Joe Davis. Joe was committed to good white lead, linseed oil, and turpentine and damn it, if you want me to paint your damn house that is the way I work.

That ended Joe. Mr. Cook eventually hired another painter who was more amenable and he got his grey paint on his house, which everyone said looked different but very nice.

Shortly after Mr. Cook's house was completed, he wanted to go ahead with other plans. First he wanted to buy a boat and then put out a little dock. The boat had to be small on account of the Menauhant bridge. This low slung bridge had always been a nuisance to many people who needed considerably more clearance. Mr. Cook thought he might do something about it – others had the same idea for years. But nothing ever came of



**Above: The Menauhant Hotel, 1875-1918, Central Avenue & Menauhant Road. Destroyed by fire in 1918. Postcard, c1915.**

**Left: Cottages of, Menauhant, Mass. Postcard, c1915.**

it. Even when a couple of hurricanes completely washed it off its foundation, the same old bridge was dragged back and put right where it always had been.

Another new idea was to grow oysters out in Bournes Pond. Mr. Cook had friends at Cotuit, where oysters were famous. After considerable study, he could see no reason why an oyster would not do well in front of his place on the pond. At that time there was an ample flow of good clean salt water moving in and out of Bournes Pond continuously. There was a good sandy hard bottom right off his place where he had put his small dock. Everything was going nicely. That is, until one day early in the spring when Mr. Cook came down from Boston to look his place over.

Now what I am going to write is only the way it was told to me. I was not there. Neither was my father. Joe Davis and his friend Bert Baker were out eeling – poling around slowly all over Bournes Pond. They were coasting along fairly near the shore, catching a few eels now and then. They arrived near the Cook place just as Mr. Cook walked out to see how his beach looked. He was concerned about his oysters too, which of course at that time he could not see.

Mr. Cook had no idea what Joe and Bert were doing. In his opinion, they were trespassing on his property, which they were not. They had a perfect right to be there. He watched them, with their long poles and spears, until they were drifting or poling directly over his oyster bed. That was just too much. So he yelled at them to get the hell off his property and do it damn quickly.



**Green Pond Bridge, Falmouth, Mass. Postcard, c1915.**



**Elms family, boating at Menauhant, c1926. Print in Museums' archives.**

with his white overalls and painter's cap, looked entirely different from the man in the boat, in his fishing gear and rough clothing.

This bothered Mr. Cook a great deal. Lawyers weren't supposed to forget a face so easily.

Sometime after that he met up again with my father and told him what had happened. It didn't make my father happy at all. He liked both Joe and Mr. Cook. He did advise Mr. Cook to try and make some kind of amends.

"Just send Mr. Davis a little present, like a new fishing rod or a new crab net – anything – also with a nice note attached."

"To Hell with that," was all my father got in response.

During further conversation, Mr. Cook said, "I told those two characters I had an oyster bed out there and I didn't want them messing around with it." My father just groaned. He didn't say one thing.

A short time after that, Mr. Cook noticed something unusual had happened to his boat. It had drifted off but had, fortunately, been recognized by some people who got in touch with him and told him his boat was drifting down their way with no one in it. Then something happened to the dock – it collapsed. The little dock collapsed. What was going on?

The season went on – little nuisances kept occurring. Finally it was Fall. The summer people had left. It was time now for oysters, and Mr. Cook came down with a group of friends to dig his own private bed of oysters. There was just one trouble. There were no oysters there. It was unbelievable but true, Mr. Cook told my father.

My father knew – just like he knew why the boat drifted off – why the dock was cut – why some dry grass got burned . . . . My father knew.

Now Joe and Bert were pretty easy-going fellows but no one was going to talk to them like that. I don't know exactly what they said to him, but I am pretty sure it would not be allowed in this story. Whatever they said made Mr. Cook madder than ever. He was a lawyer, and he threatened to get them into court.

I guess Joe told him they didn't care who he was, lawyer or not. They had no intention of going off until they got ready. Towards the end of their vigorous conversation, Mr. Cook pointed right at Joe and said, "I've seen you before – where was it – and I didn't like you then." He was absolutely right. But for the life of him Mr. Cook couldn't place that terrible character he was trying to drive off his beach. Joe, the painter



**Eel Pond, Menauhant, Falmouth, Mass. Postcard, c1915**