Old Horseneck Beach before the 1938 Hurricane

Featuring newly discovered photos by Clarence Williston from c. 1906-1918

aerial photo source: Google Maps

David B. Jones

Dartmouth Historical and Arts Society
24 February 2019

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

East Beach Today

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

East Beach Today

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Horseneck landmarks

Remnants of the old beach still turn up

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

But the houses are long gone (aerial photo from 1972)

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

East Beach Road after the hurricane of 1938

image sources: Dartmouth Hist. Soc. upper left), Westport Hist. Soc. (lower right)

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The old community lives on in pictures

Lower left image source: Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Some of the best evidence comes from photo postcards

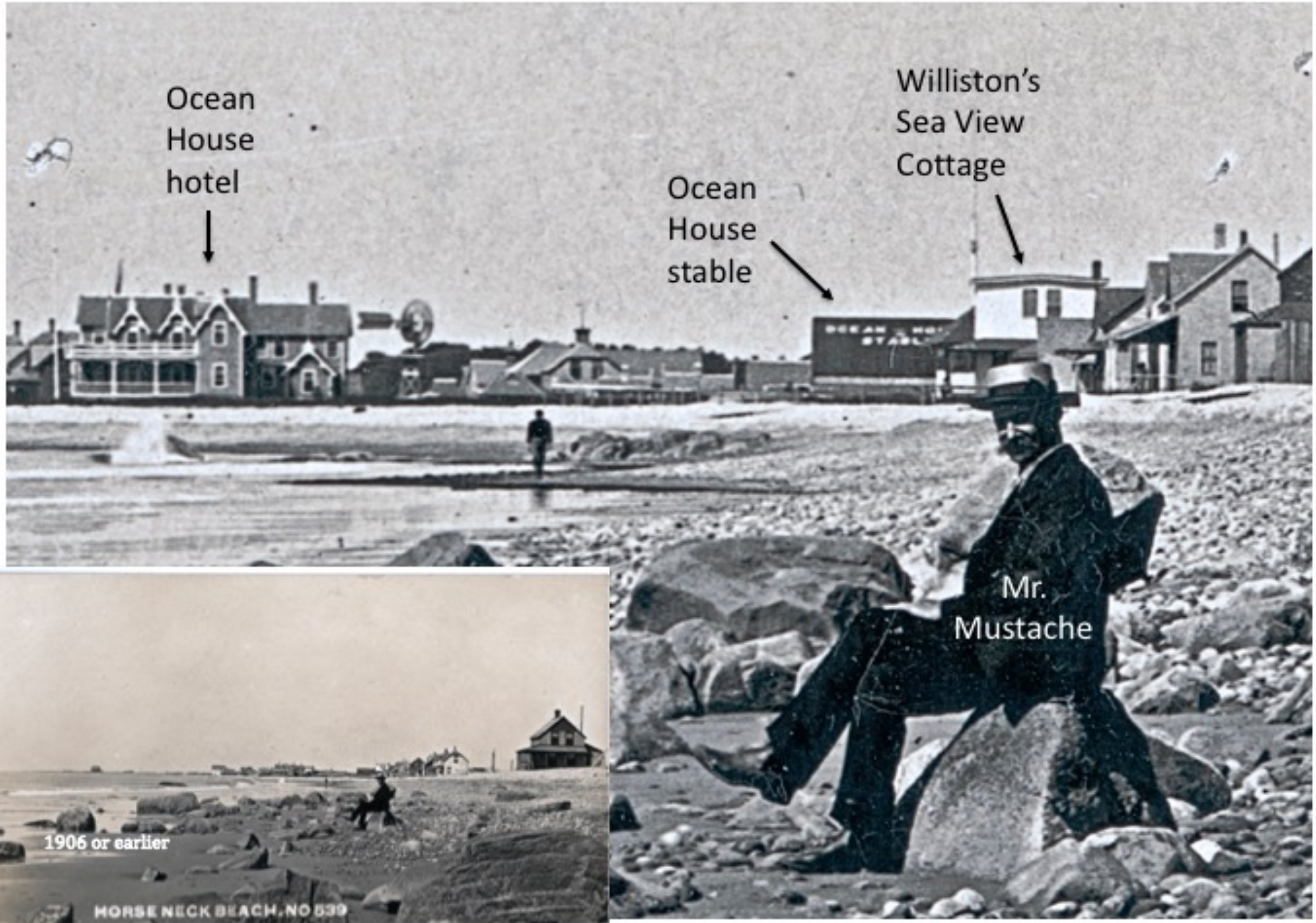
Popular around 1900-1918, they were made from large negatives and can be blown up to show a lot of detail

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Example: East Beach by O.E. DuBois, c. 1906

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Photo postcards have enough detail to ID buildings way down the beach



copyright 2019 clamflats photos

1. Important Photographers of Old East Beach:

DuBois, Eastern Illustrating, Williston

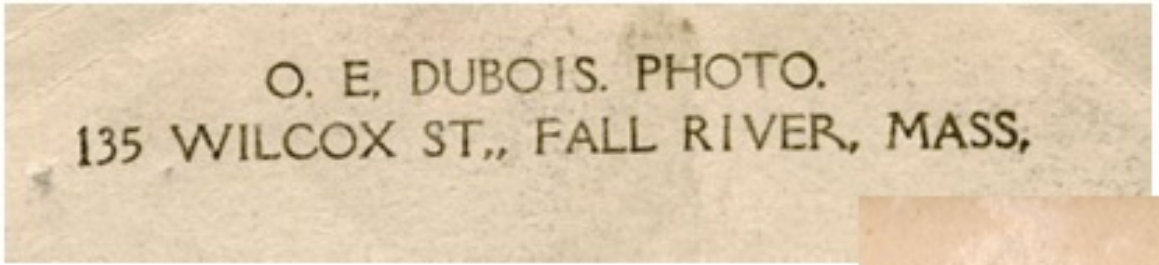
copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Important photographers of Old Horseneck: O.E. DuBois, Eastern Illustrating, and – we now know – Clarence Williston

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

DuBois and Eastern Illustrating made samples for stores:

And signed their work:



Top image source: Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Williston's postcard backs were blank - authorship was unknown until a batch came up for sale in 2018

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Some were samples for postcards, but some were personal photos printed on postcard paper

All from an old album originally belonging to Clarence Williston (1879-1932)

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Who was Clarence Williston? A music teacher who lived on Lester Street in Fall River…

Clarence married Ethel (Martin) Williston in 1909. Here they are in New York, some time before 1912

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

(Some great New York faces in this photo, by the way)

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The family pictures suggest Clarence took them himself; the proof is this photo of Clarence on Quansett Rocks, with his camera case

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

And this one, where he left his camera case (and a film box) on the beach

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Big box cameras are heavy! DuBois needed a buggy for his camera, and Eastern photographers had automobiles

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Clarence's camera was a lot more portable – and he took it to several favorite places around the beach

The difference between a

Folding Pocket Kodak

and a "pocket plate camera" is that one means pocket photography and the other doesn't.

This picture tells the story.

1 doz. 3¼ x 4¼ glass plates and holders for same. **Weight, 1 lb. 12 ozs.**

Kodak Cartridge containing 1 doz. 3¼ x 4¼ Films. **Weight, 2 ozs.**

Pocket photography was only made possible by the Kodak film cartridge. Not only does the Kodak go inside the pocket, but inside the Kodak goes the film—all becomes one compact, self-contained mechanism.

A No. 3 Folding Pocket Kodak, including its load of twelve exposures, weighs less and takes less room than an equivalent in glass plates and their holders—**to say nothing of the weight and bulk of the "pocket plate camera" itself.**

Kodaks load in daylight—plate cameras require a dark room.

Kodaks $5.00 to $75.00.

EASTMAN KODAK CO.

Rochester, N. Y

Catalogue free at the dealers or by mail.

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

2. The Willistons on East Beach:

Sea View and cottages at the bend in the road

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Clarence's home base in Westport: the Sea View Cottage on East Beach

image source: Westport Historical Society

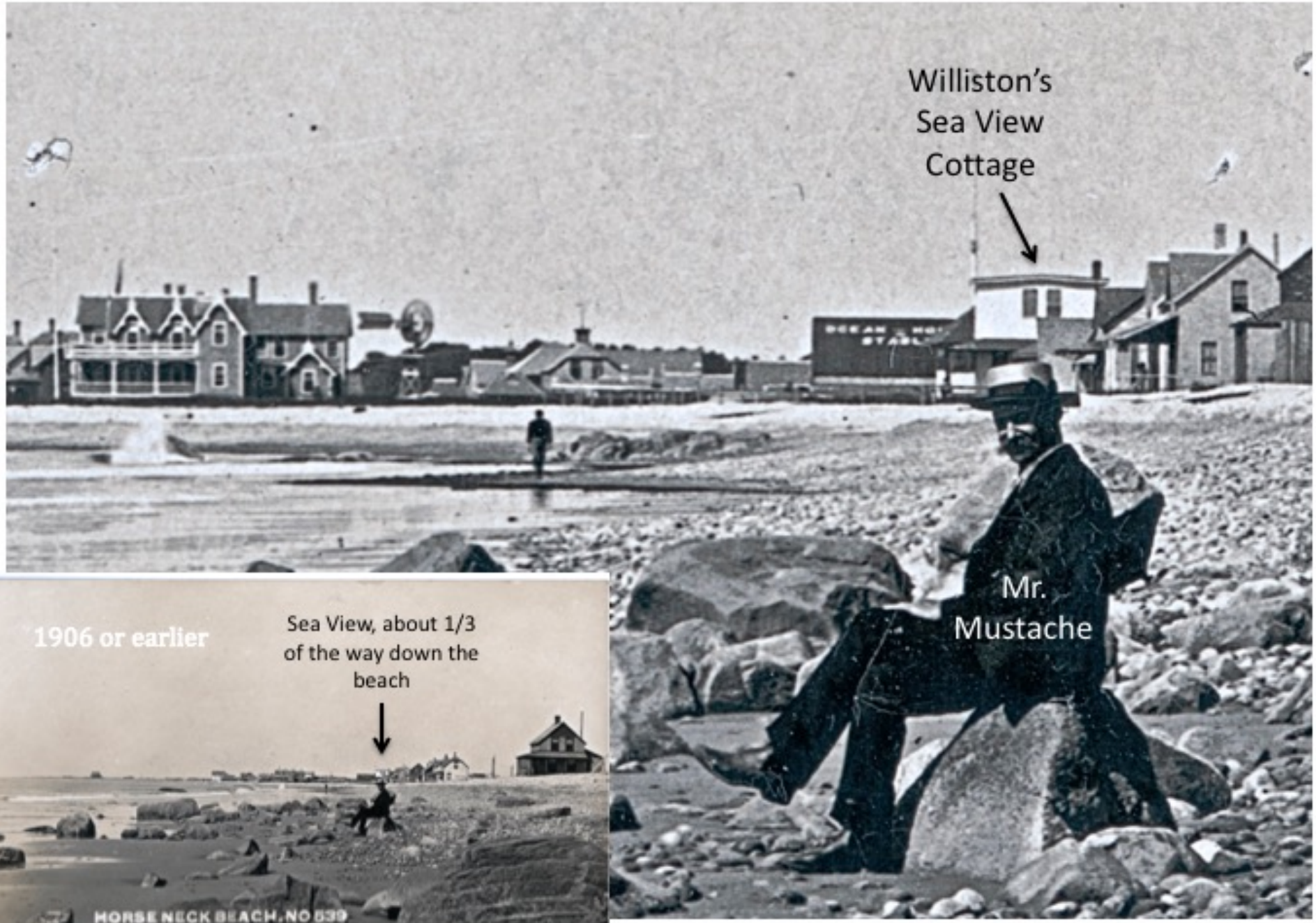
copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Here's the Sea View from the road, by DuBois:

1907 or earlier

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

And here it is in the Mr. Mustache DuBois postcard



copyright 2019 clamflats photos

At the Sea View you could hang out on the porch or the beach

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Repeating this one just for fun

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

take out a skiff, or go for a swim, or watch passing boats from the shore

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The side porch was good for photos

These may be the three oldest Williston kids:

Howard (1914-2003)
Robert (1916-1978) and
Marjorie (1912-1992)

Photo around 1918-19, maybe?

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Clarence also owned some cottages across the street…

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Clarence also owned some cottages across the street…

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

which took in guests…

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

and he had a sailboat he kept over on the Let.

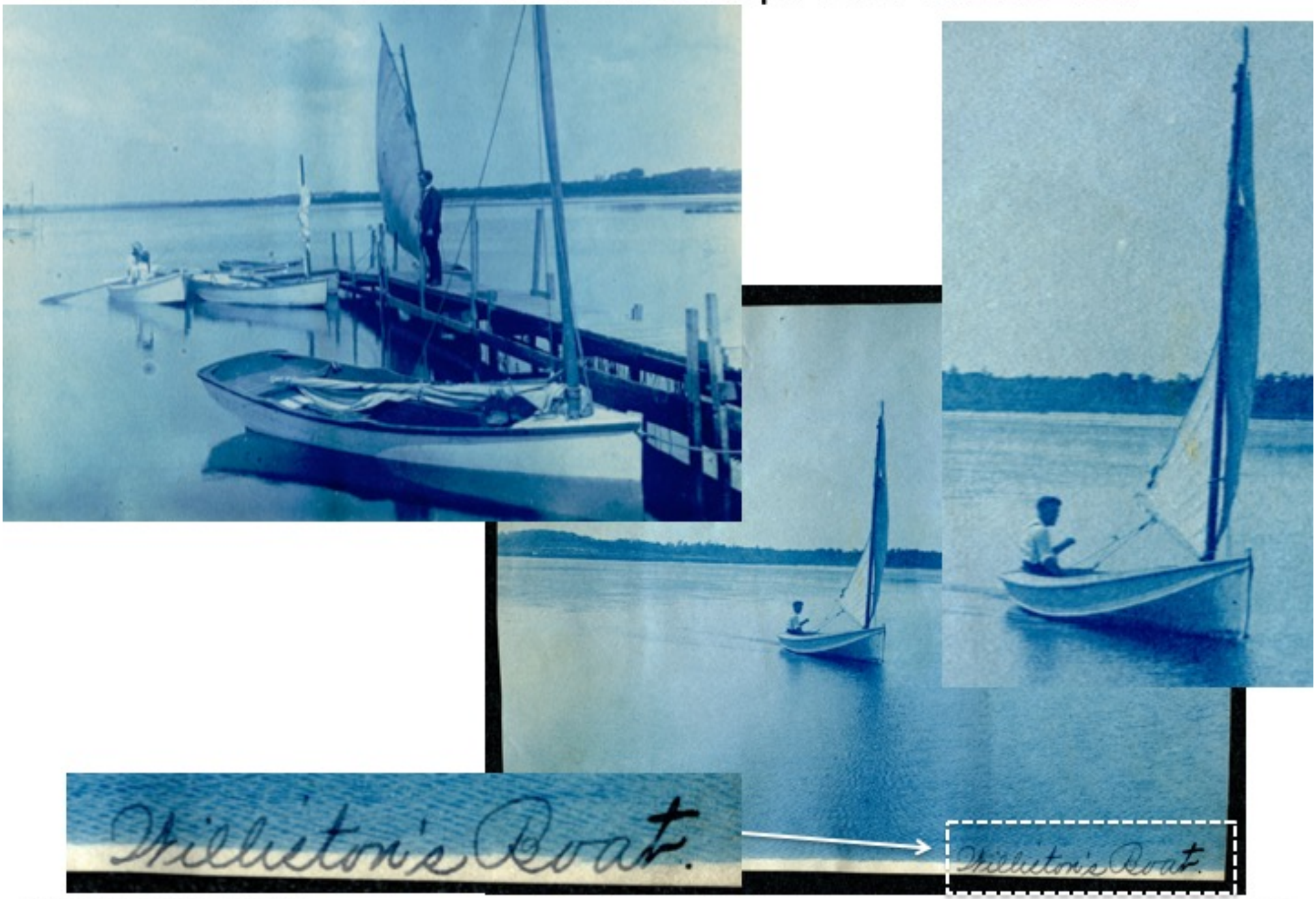


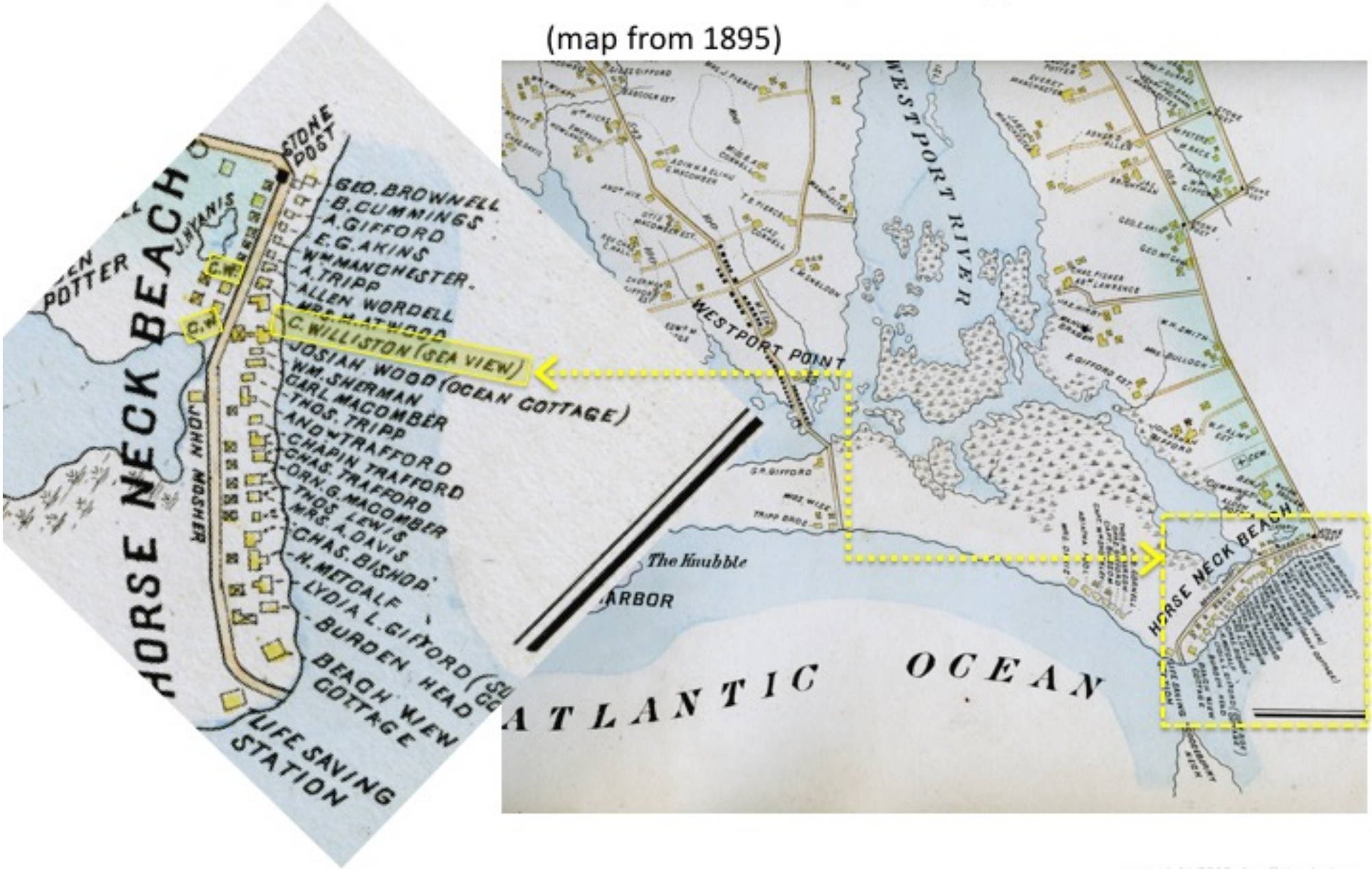
image source: Westport Historical Society
copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Clarence Williston with an early-1900s Instagram filter

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

His houses were partway down the beach from the east, at the bend in the road by Farley Lane

(map from 1895)



copyright 2019 clamflats photos

We can locate them based on this map of East Beach buildings in 1933

(there were about 70 houses on the ocean side back then)

aerial photo source: Google Maps

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

And we can map them to today's beach (though Sea View would be in the water, unfortunately)

aerial photo source: Google Maps

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

By the corner of East Beach Road and Farley Lane, at the west end of today's town beach

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

3. A trip up Farley Lane:

cattle

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Farley Lane leads back onto the marsh

aerial photo source: Google Earth

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

In the old days, a ford and stepping stones led across the marsh channel

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Farley Lane ford today

Old ford location at end of Farley Lane

aerial photo source: Google Earth

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Ethel at the Farley Lane ford – No Trespassing!

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Here's why: cattle grazed on the marsh in those days

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Pasture then and now

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Marsh pasture then and now

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

4. Views from Williston balconies:

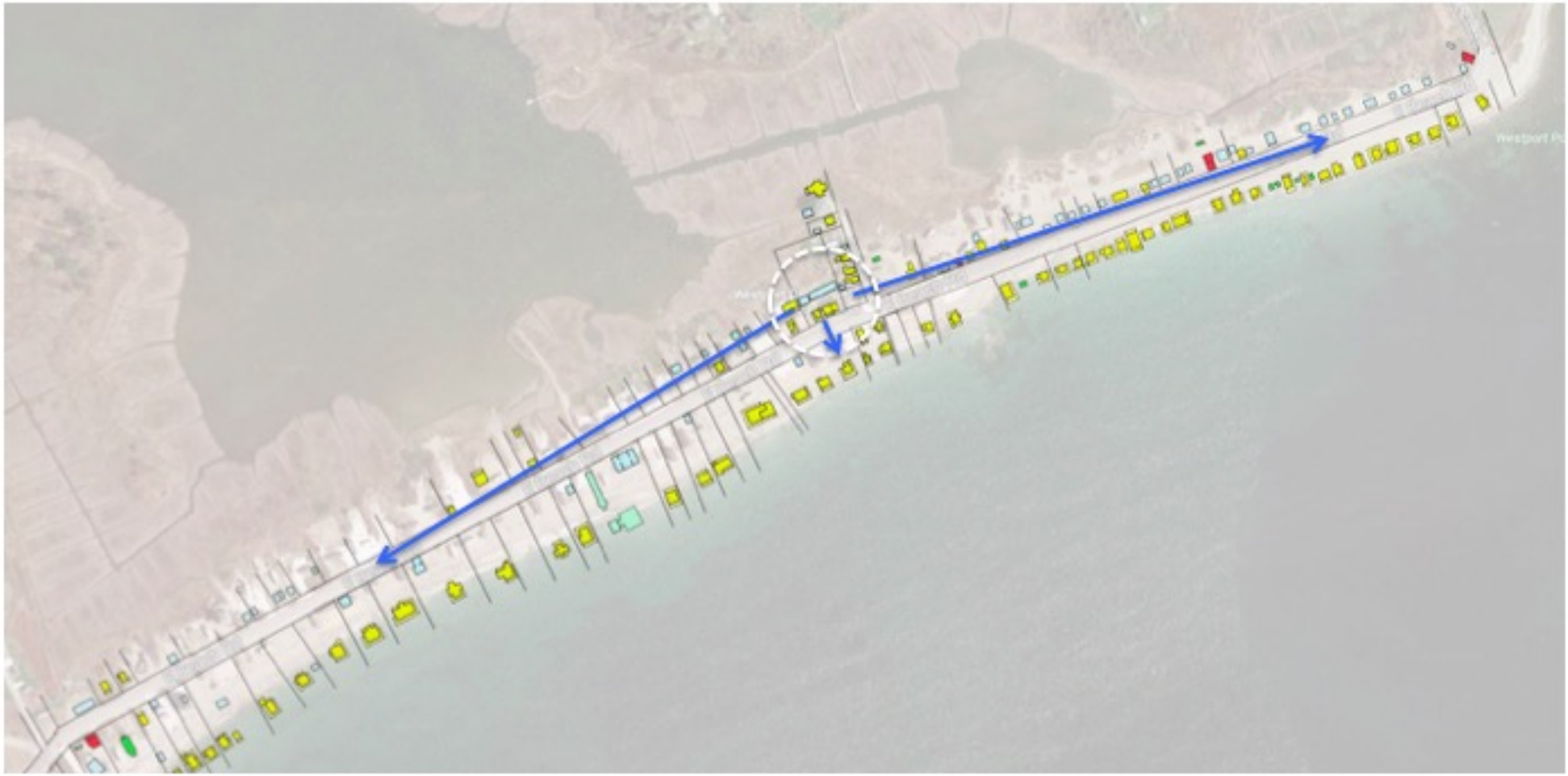
Places down the road

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Clarence's rear cottages had a good view down the road, and he liked to take pictures from there

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

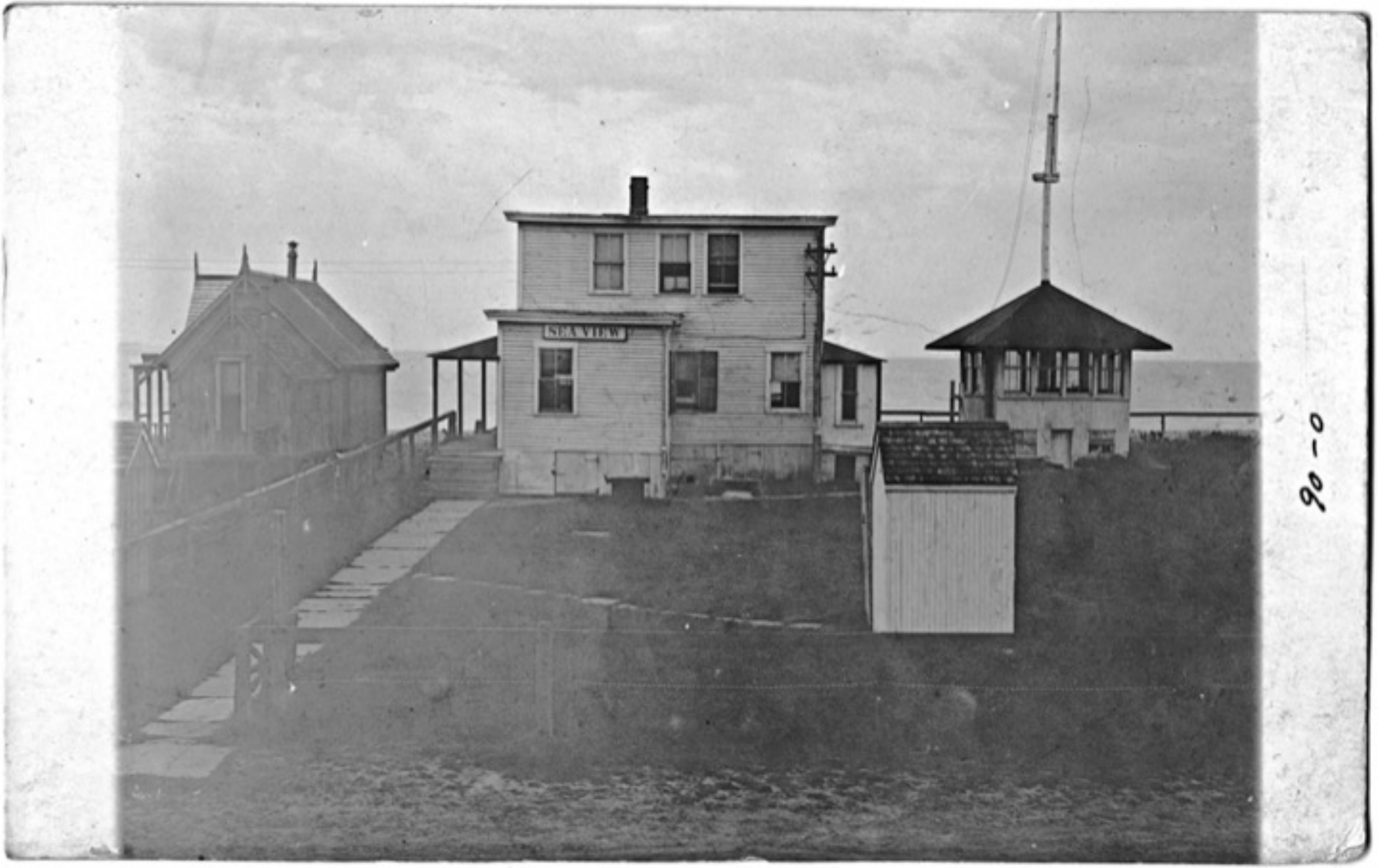
Good views in several directions from the bend in the road



aerial photo source: Google Maps

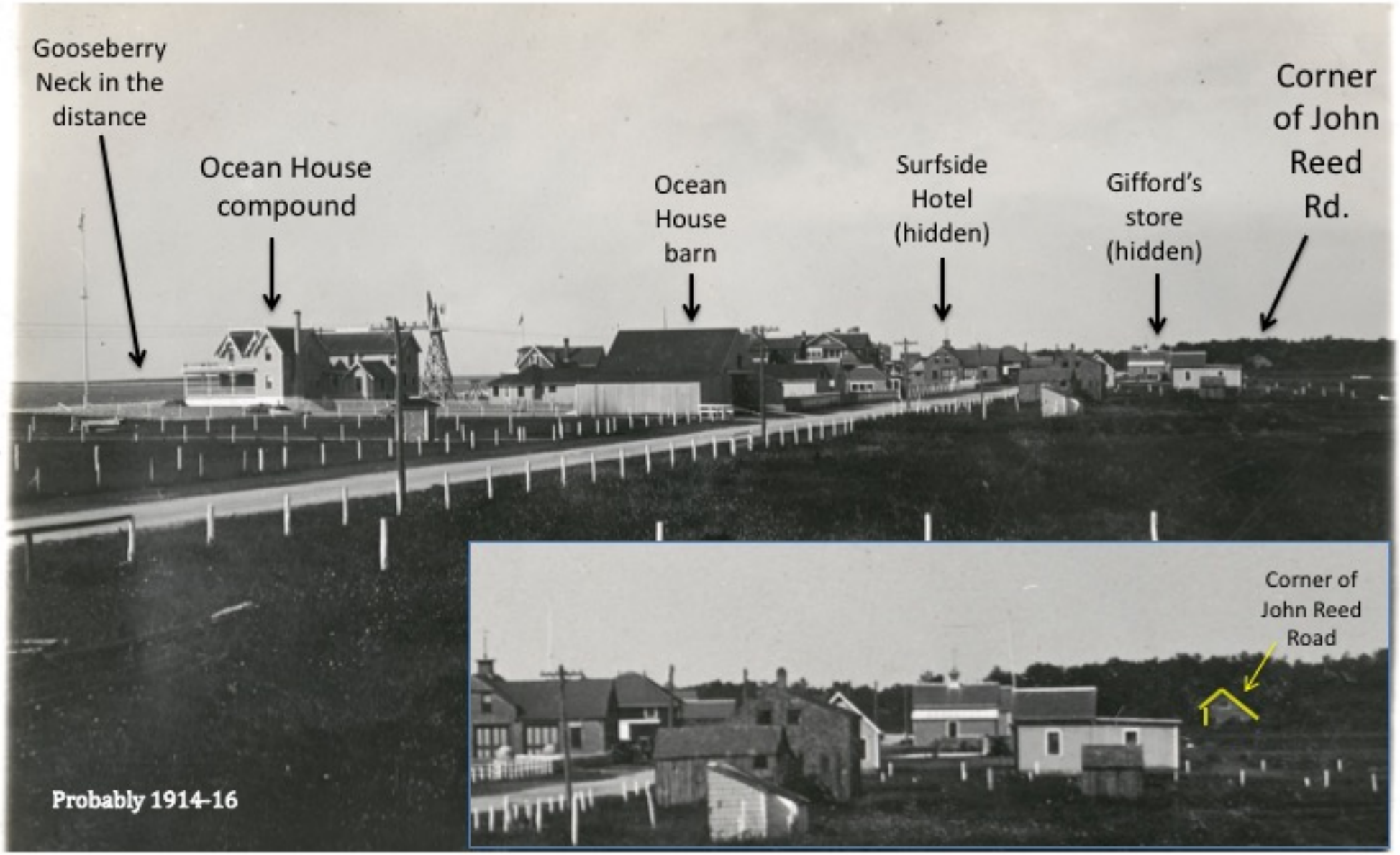
copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Looking south towards his own Sea View Cottage



copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Looking west towards John Reed Road and Gooseberry



copyright 2019 clamflats photos

and looking east towards the end of the beach

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

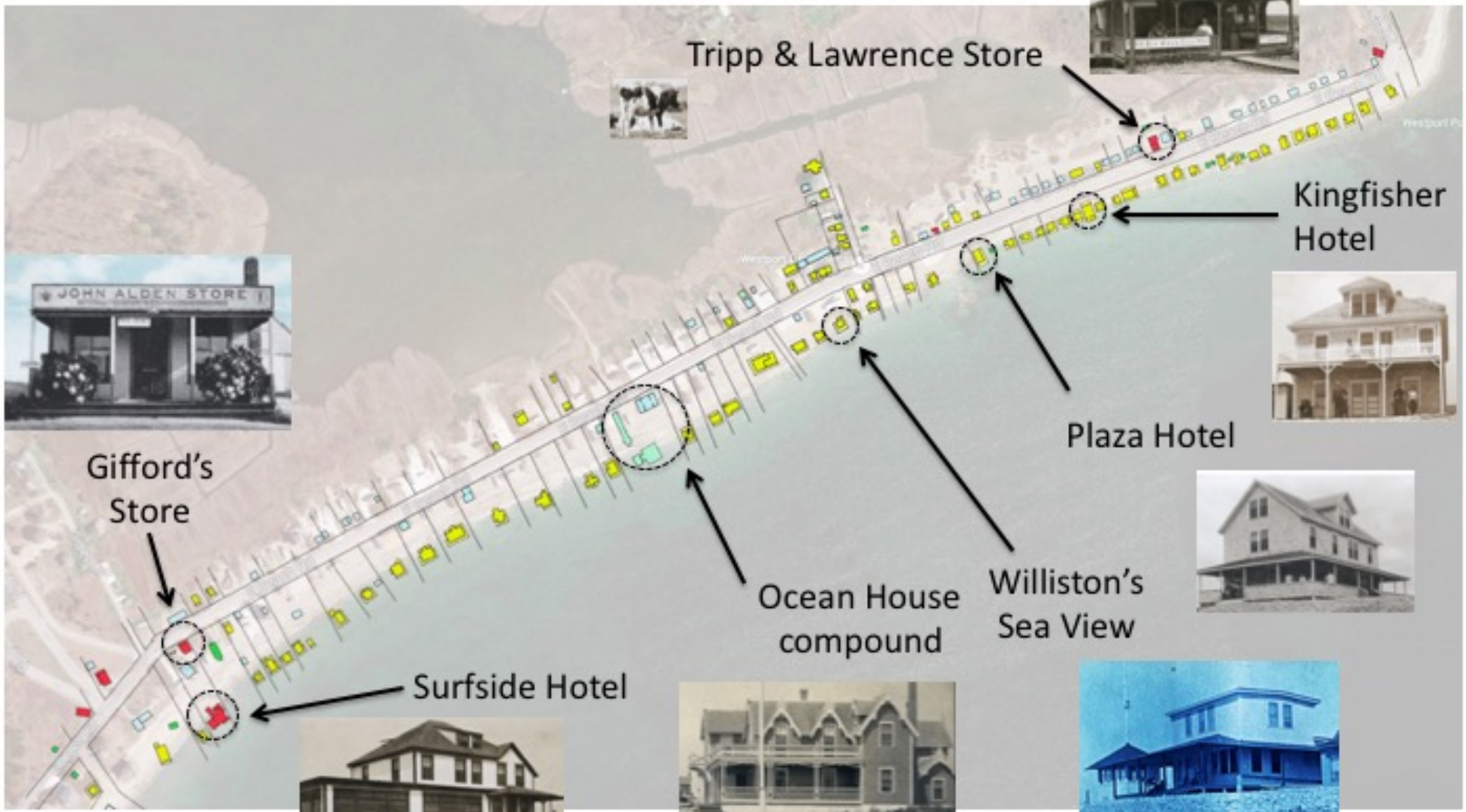
5. East down the road:

Plaza Hotel, views down the beach,
deep water, and “Breezy”

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

East Beach hot spots in Clarence's day

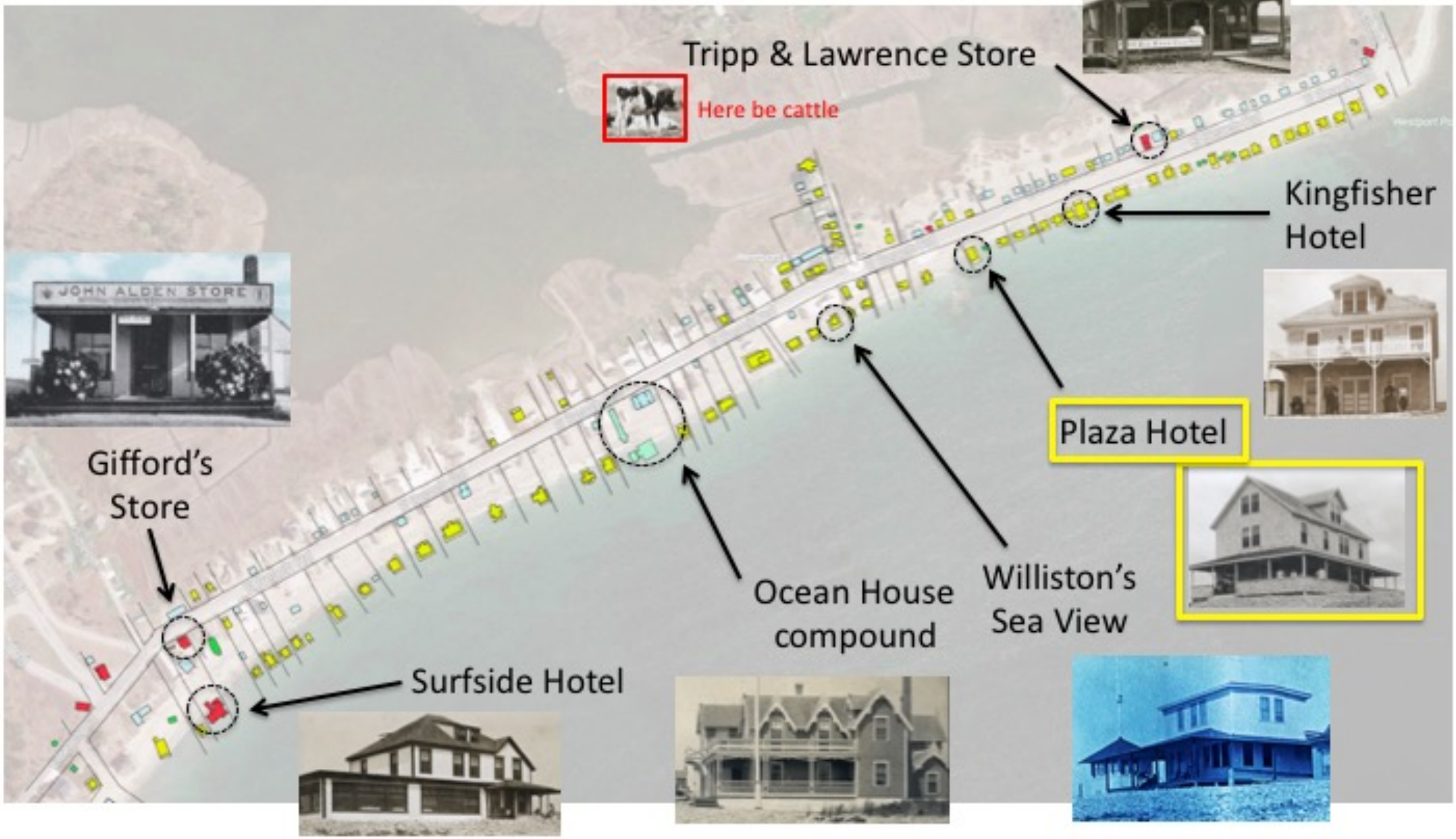
Hotels on the beach, stores by the road



aerial photo source: Google Maps. Cyanotype image: Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

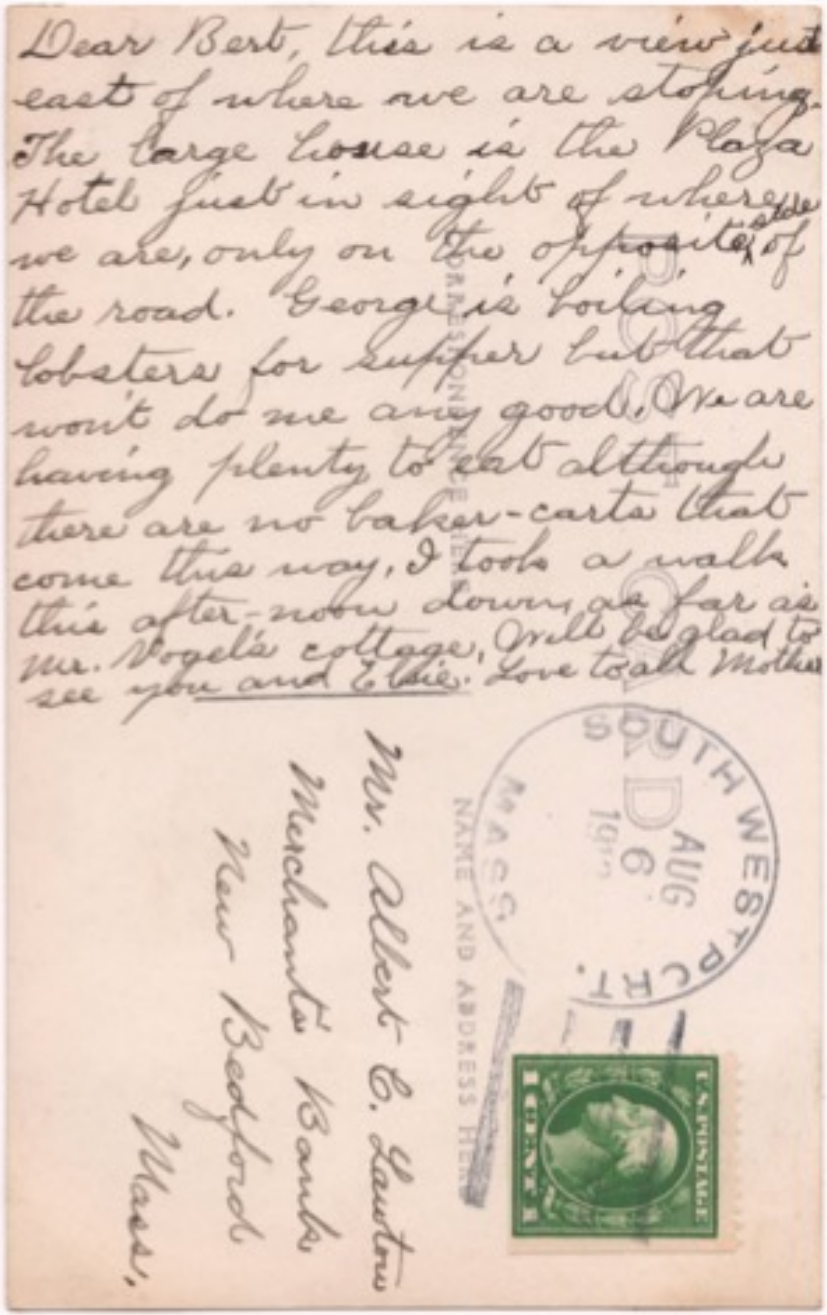
First stop: Plaza Hotel



aerial photo source: Google Maps. Cyanotype image: Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Plaza Hotel postcard (postmarked 1913)


Dear Bert, this is a view just east of where we are stoping. The large house is the Plaza Hotel just in sight of where we are, only on the opposite side of the road. George is boiling lobsters for supper but that won't do me any good. We are having plenty to eat although there are no baker-carts that come this way. I took a walk this after-noon down as far as Mr. Vogel's cottage. Will be glad to see you and Edie. Love to all Mother

Mr. Albert E. Lawton
Merchants Bank
New Bedford
Mass.

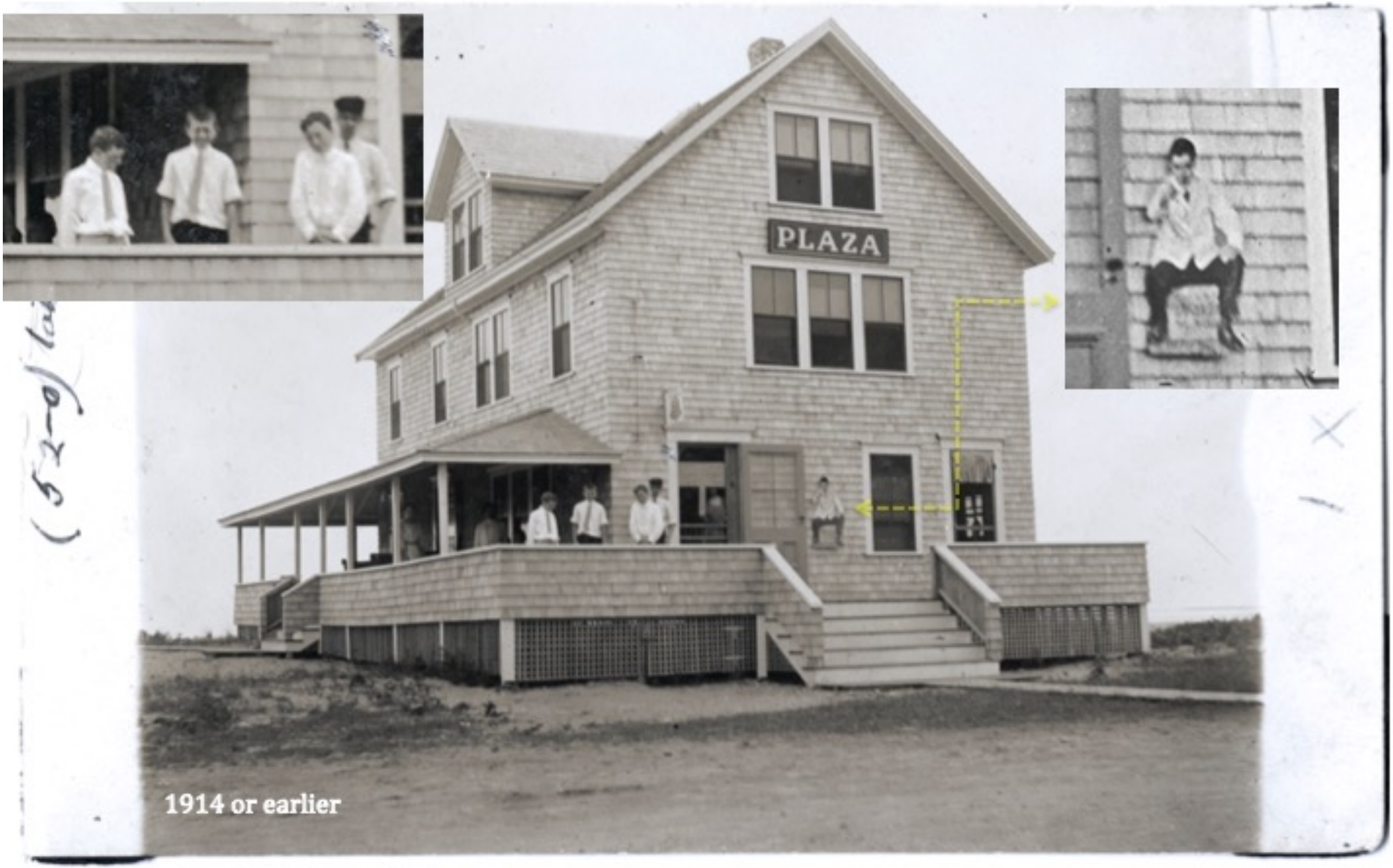
SOUTH WESTPORT MASS. AUG 6 1913

NAME AND ADDRESS HERE

"Dear Bert, this is a view just east of where we are staying. The large house is the Plaza Hotel just in sight of where we are, only on the opposite side of the road. George is boiling lobsters for supper but that won't do me any good. We are having plenty to eat although there are no baker-carts that come this way. […] Love to all Mother"

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Oldest view of the Plaza from the road –
Kids on the porch and Moxie ad by the door



copyright 2019 clamflats photos

A bit later: cold drinks, candy, tobacco, cigars

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Latest photo, no sign – now a private home, or rental?

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Plaza beach view from the Williston place

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Plenty of beach at low tide

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Repeating this one for fun

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Rocks in front of Plaza – where are they now?

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The rocks are still there, but the beach is further away

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

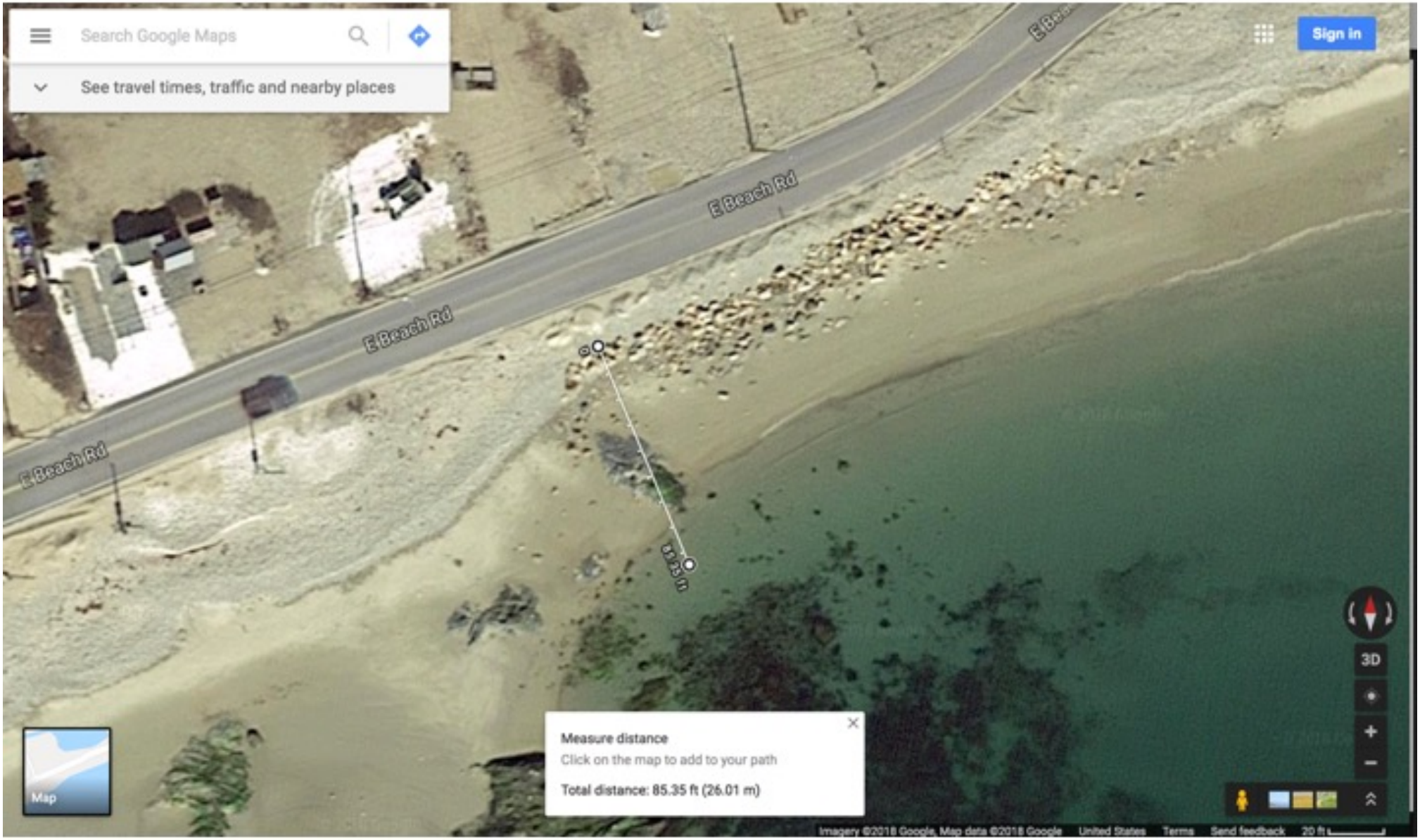
Plaza Hotel site Dec 2015

copyright 2019 claimants photos

The Plaza's porch was at the crest of the beach

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The map says the Plaza Hotel porch was 85 feet from the road – let's go see



aerial photo source: Google Maps

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Even at low tide, 81 feet was far enough for me

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Rocks were still in the beach in 1972 (though the Plaza site wasn't).

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

They’re in the water now

And they belong to Breezy, if you were wondering

6. East end of the road:

Kingfisher Hotel
and a unique two-chimney house to remember

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

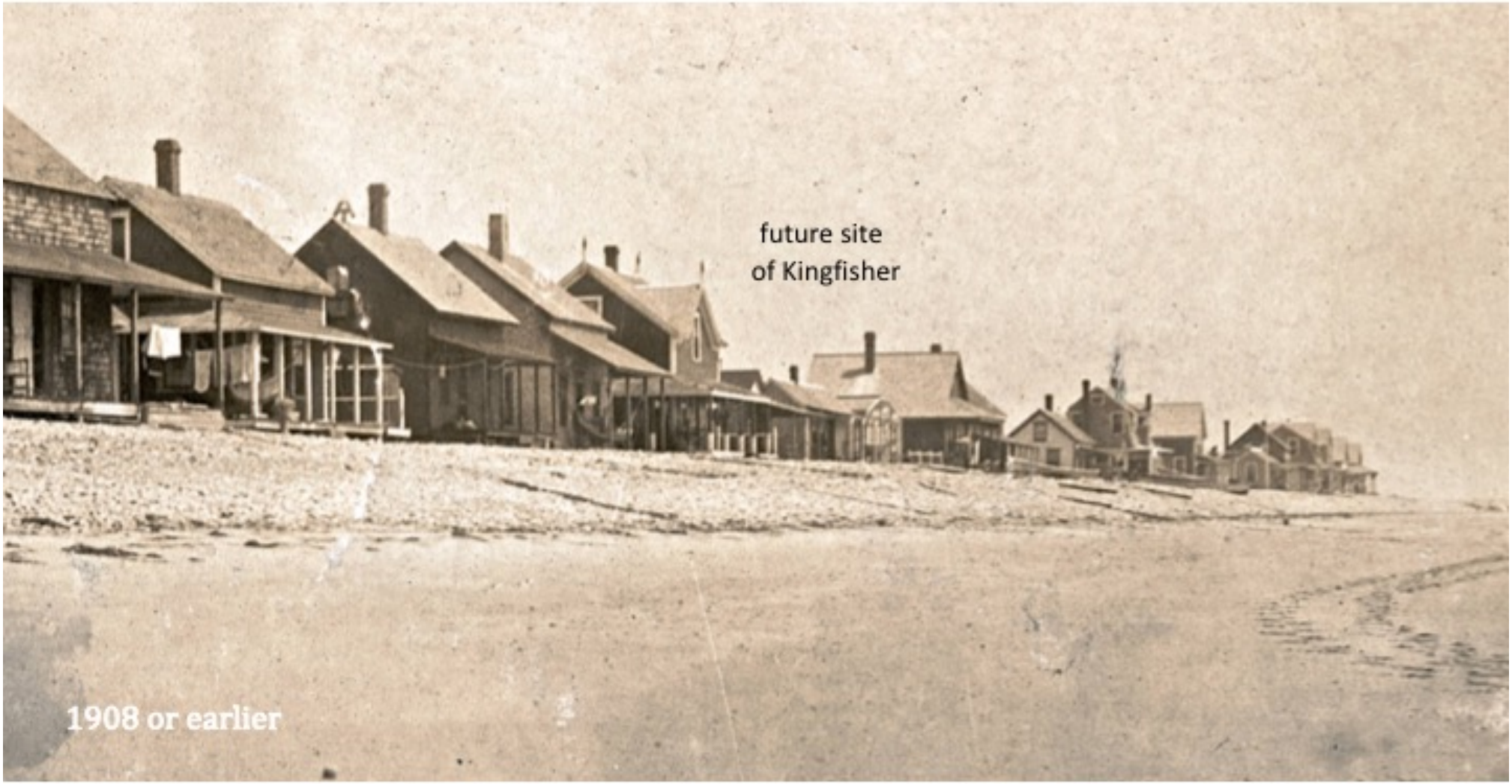
The rocks were a good place to stand and take a picture

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

View east from the rocks

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Same block a little earlier:
"Fine ball playing on this beach"



copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Kingfisher house appears by 1909

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

7. Beyond the end of the beach:

Quansett Rocks,
Little Beach
and a mystery solved

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Quansett Rocks and Little Beach

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Quansett Rocks were a favorite subject for commercial postcards

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

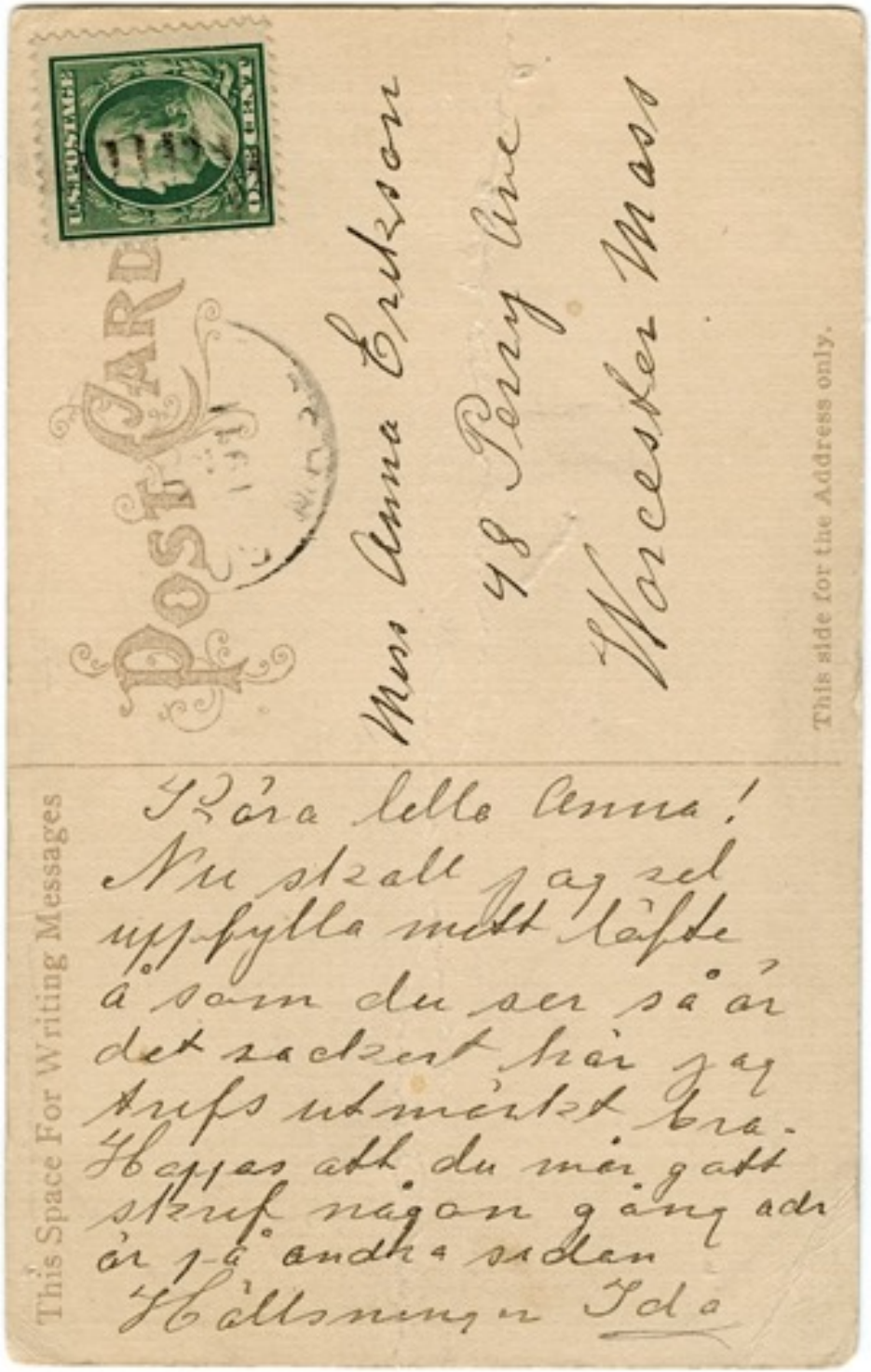
While Little Beach is usually just visible in the background

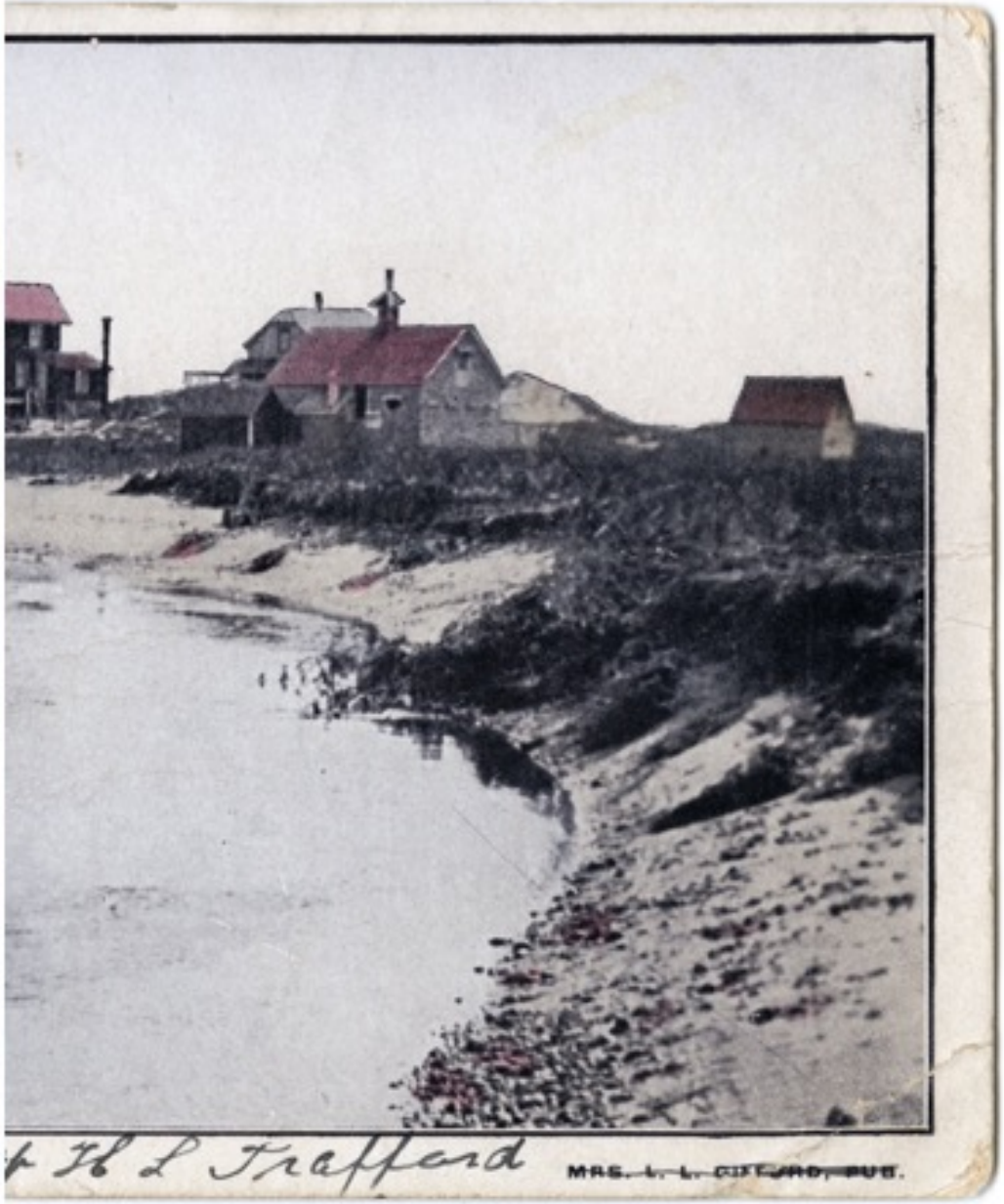
copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Mystery slide of "Little Harbor, Horseneck Beach" – Is this Little Beach? If so, where?

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The back is no help
(is that Swedish?)





copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Little Beach landmarks

aerial photo source: Google Earth

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Some other buildings were near the landward root of the beach

Quansett Rocks

end of East Beach

Google Earth

Tinted image source Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The mystery buildings were way out at the eastern end of the beach by the pond outlet

Upper image source: Penobscot Marine Museum

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Roofs and chimneys match up

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Someone dug a channel that has since filled in with sand

aerial photo source: Google Earth

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

One mystery solved – but there's still a lot to learn about Little Beach

Tinted image source Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

OK, back to East Beach

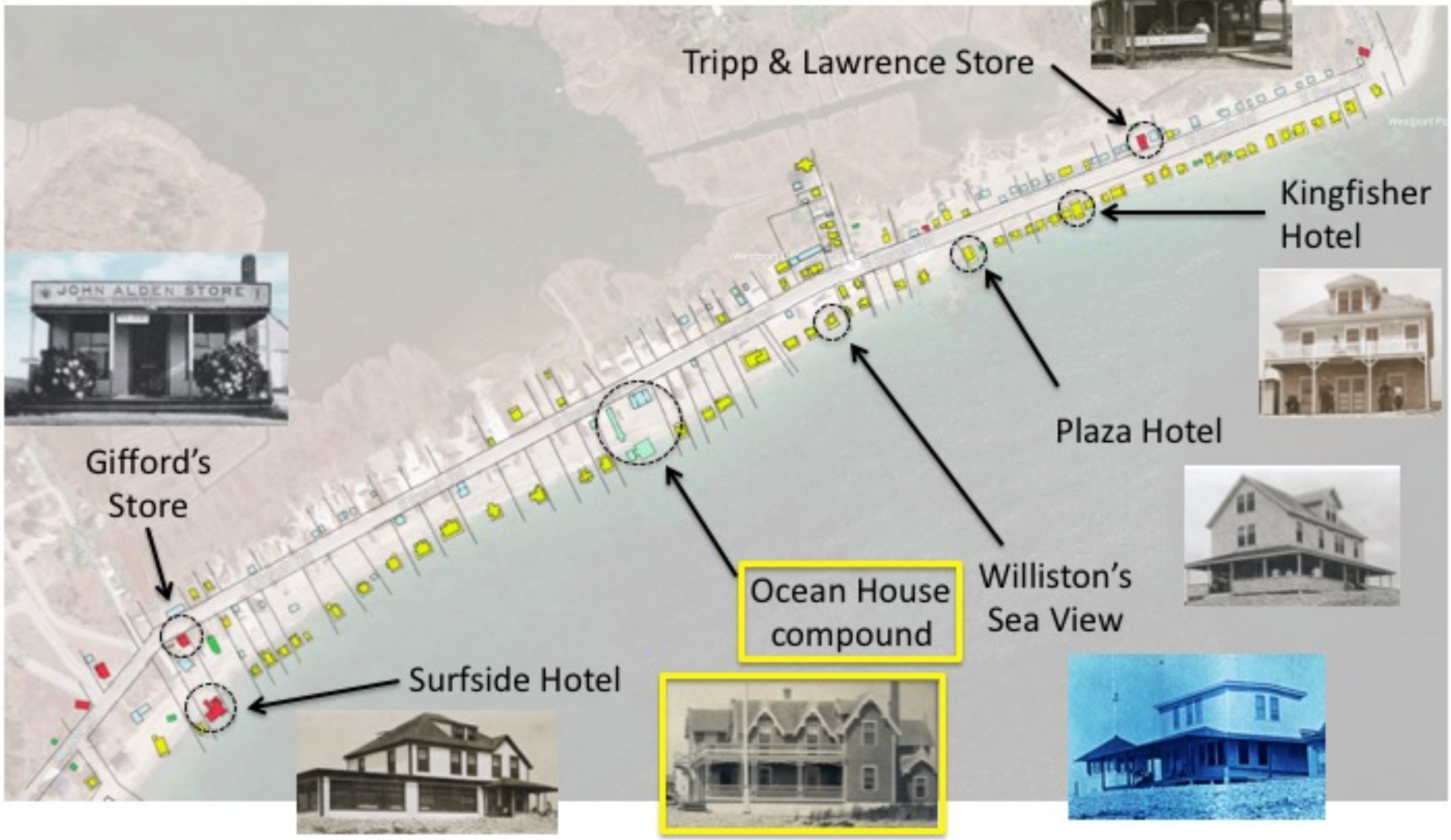
copyright 2019 clamflats photos

8. West up the beach from Sea View:

Ocean House's big compound

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

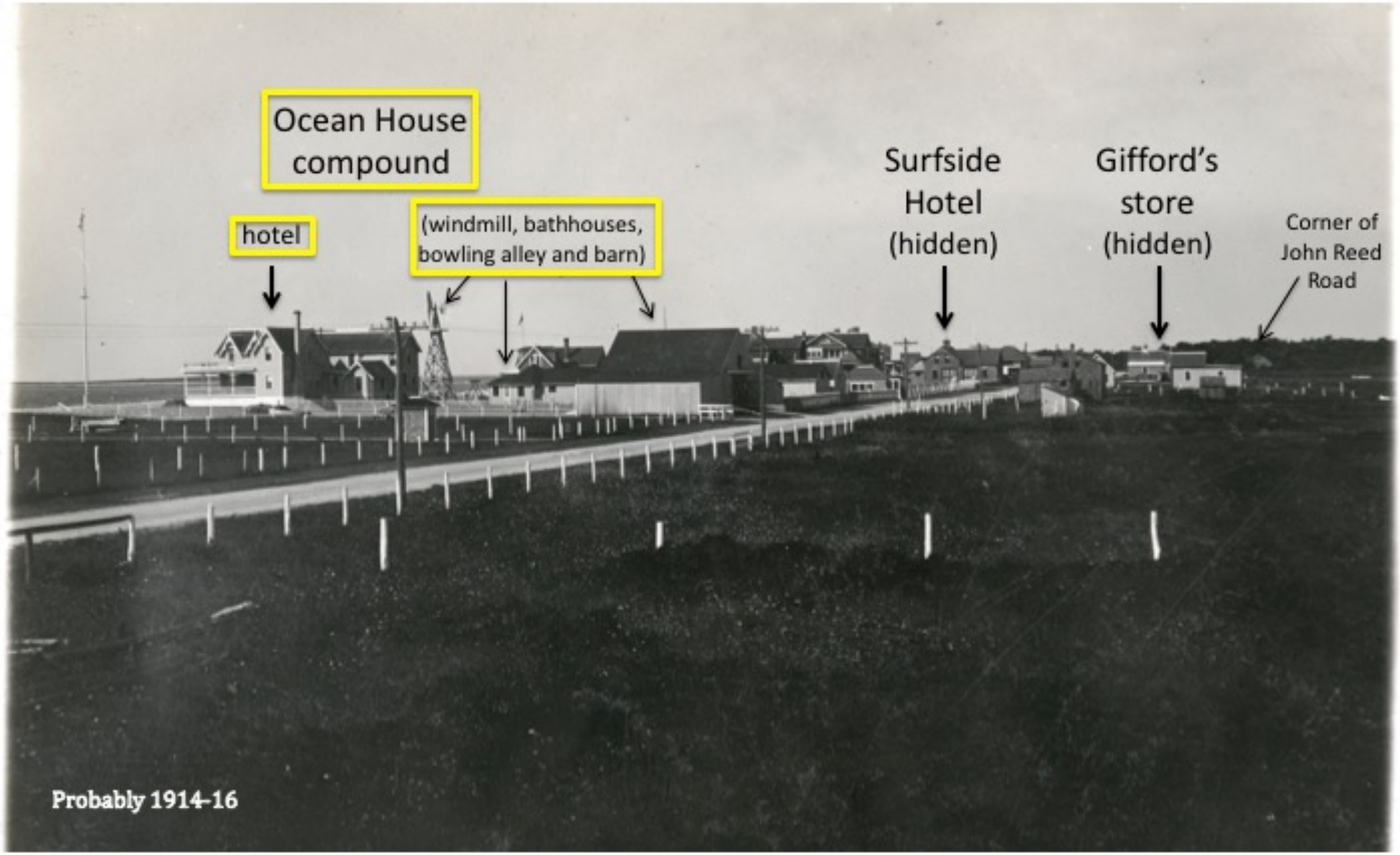
Next stop: Ocean House compound



aerial photo source: Google Maps. Cyanotype image: Westport Historical Society

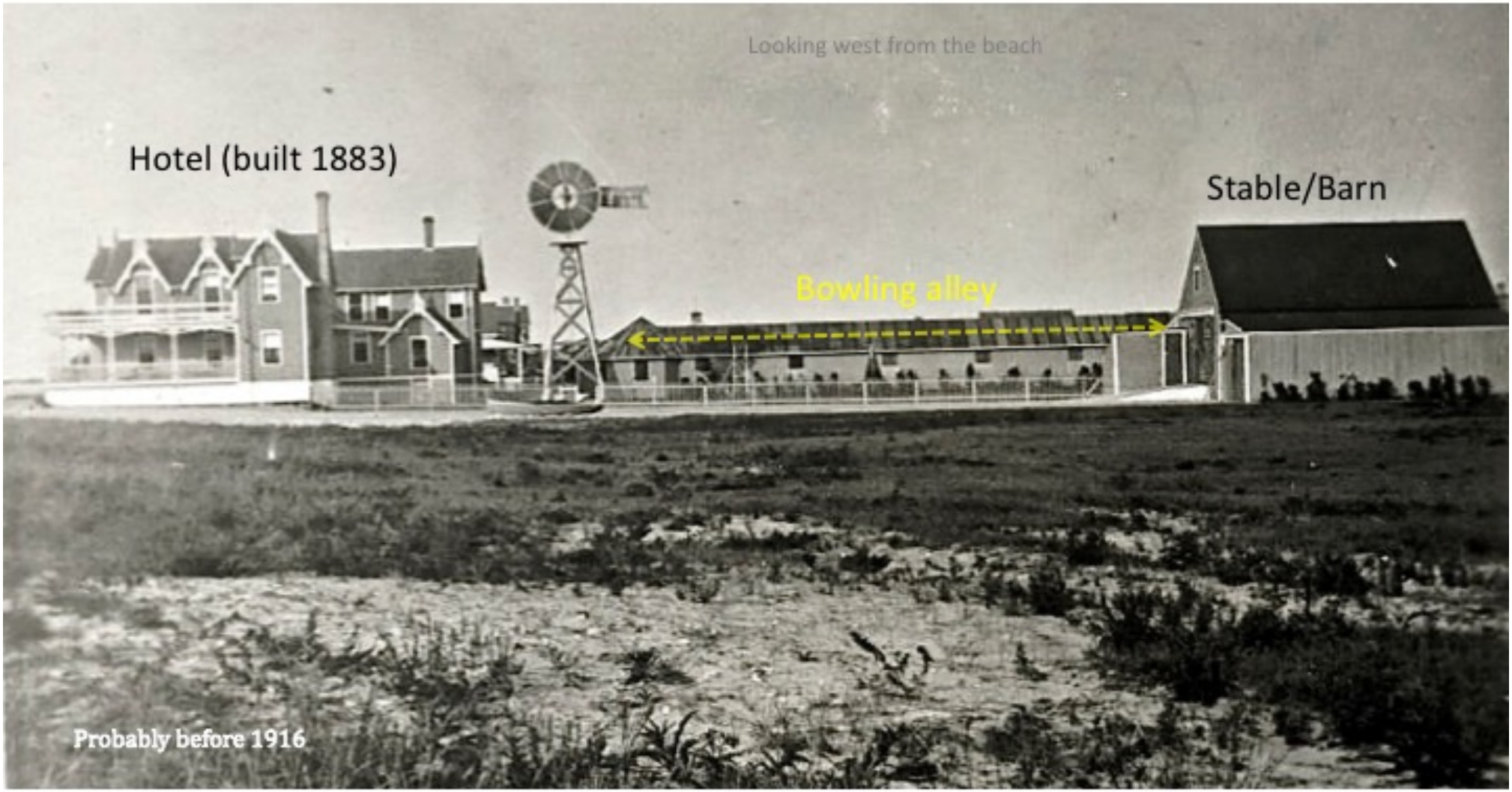
copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Repeat: View southwest from Clarence's back porch



copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Ocean House compound: "1 Hotel, 1 Barn, 2 Lodging Houses, 2 Bath Houses, 1 Bowling Alley, 1 Wind Mill" (plus dance hall added in 1926).

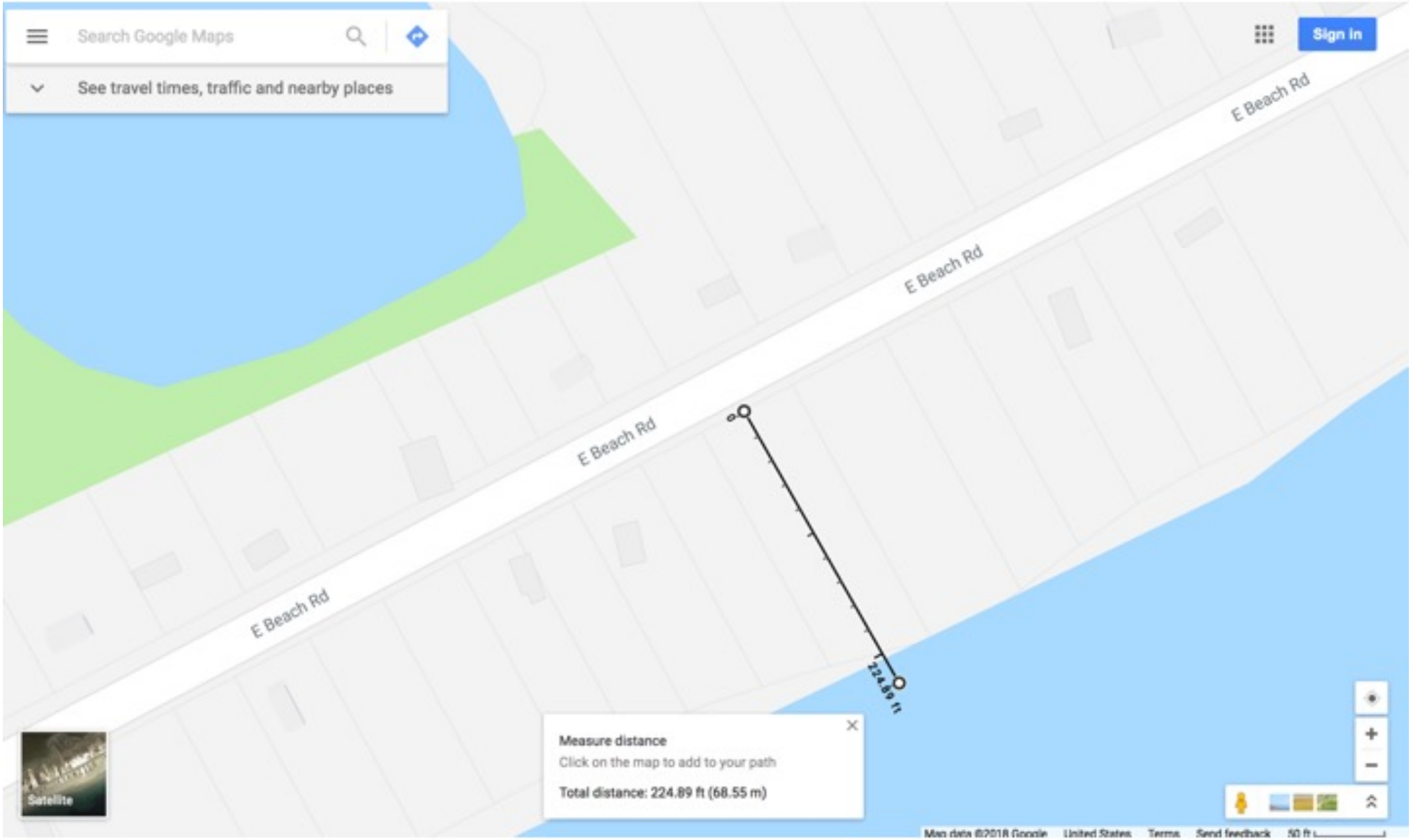


The Ocean House burned in 1933, in the off season.
(The bowling alley was saved.)

image source: Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

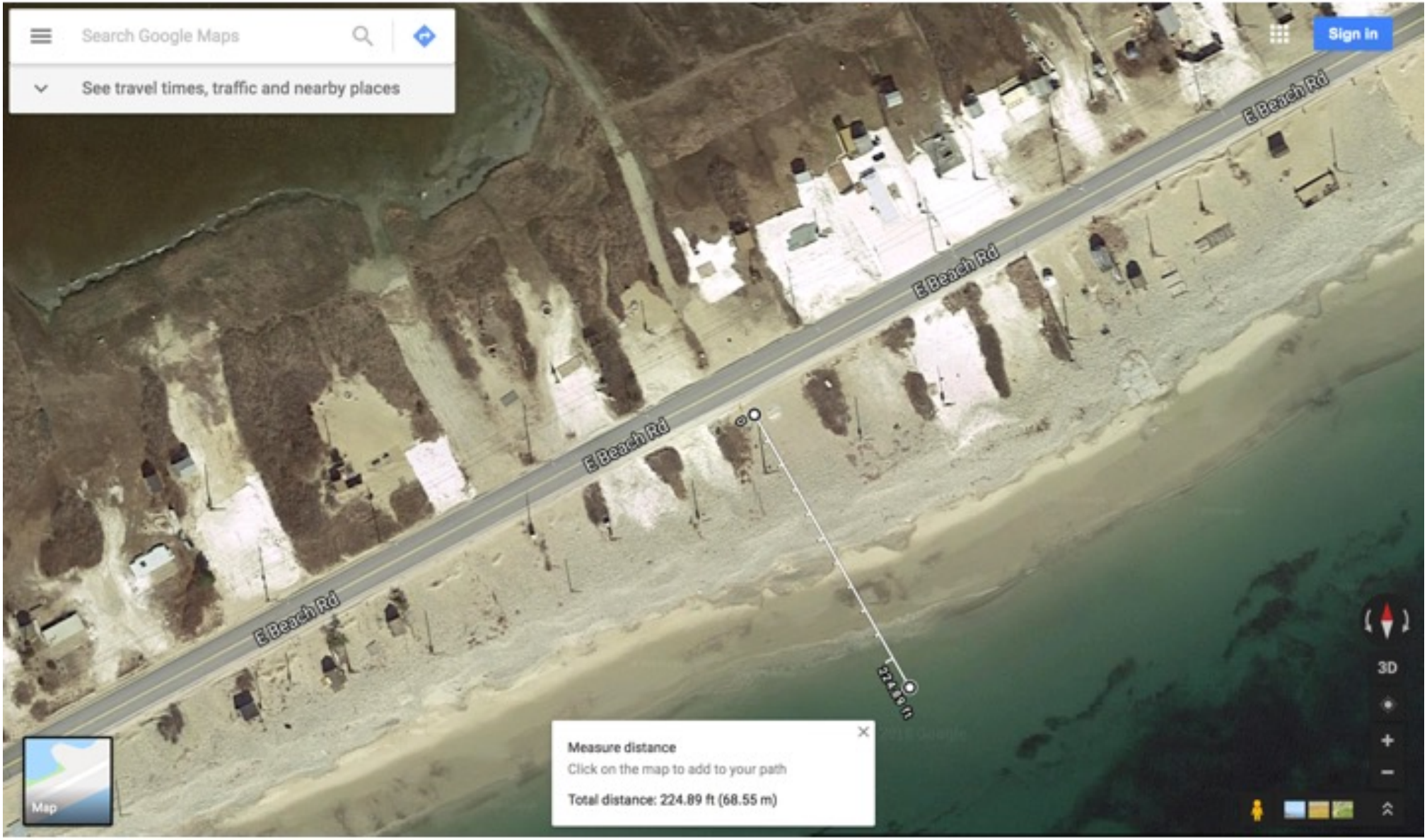
The Ocean House lot was 225 feet deep to make room for all that



map source: Google Maps

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Still a relatively wide stretch of beach –
But only about 100 feet to high tide line now



aerial photo source: Google Maps

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

9. West down the beach:

The landmark Surfside Hotel and Horseneck Point

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Next stop: Lydia L. Gifford's Surfside Hotel

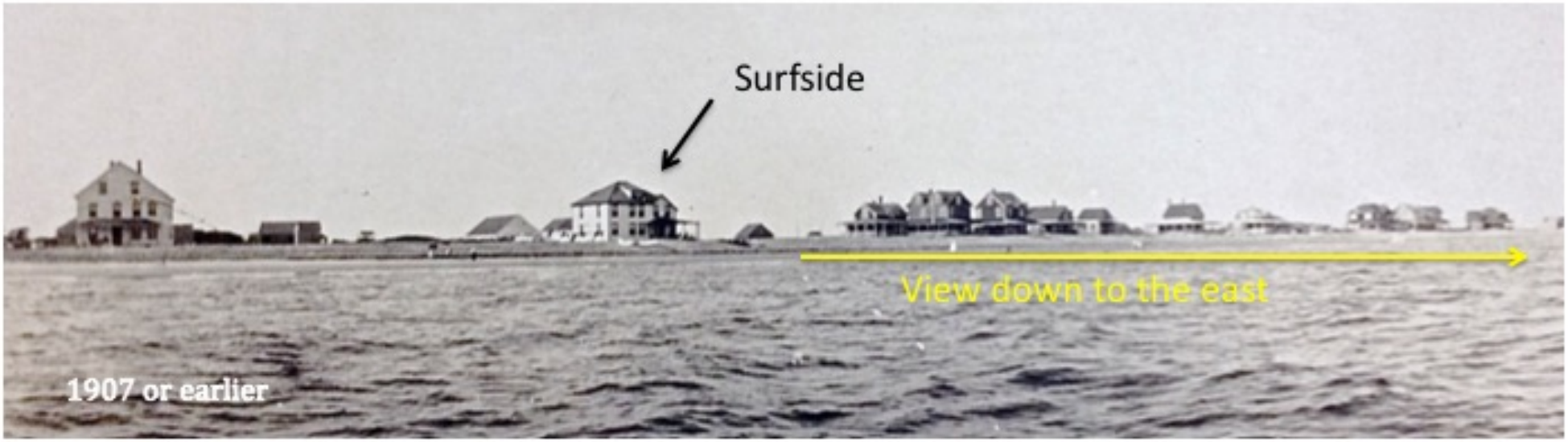
aerial photo source: Google Maps. Cyanotype image: Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The Surfside Hotel, with Clarence's camera case

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The Surfside was a popular spot for beach photos



Top image: Westport Public Library, bottom image: Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

A tinted version – for sale on Westport Point

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

We are almost to the end of East Beach now

aerial photo source: Google Maps

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Early view towards Gooseberry – by DuBois

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

This card is usually printed without the lady on the right

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Clarence took a photo of this end of the beach around 1910-12

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

He also captured (from a distance) a building going up at Horseneck Point in 1913

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The “Lookout” – later Allen’s, then Chandy’s – and the Maw-Nan-Tuck next door

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Some of the few buildings to survive the hurricane (though not intact)

These three homes were the only ones at Horseneck Beach to withstand the storm's fury. The occupants watched the storm sweep buildings into the sea and the swamps.

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

10. Back to the Surfside Hotel:

a look inside Lydia Gifford's domain

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Lots of cards and pictures from the Surfside

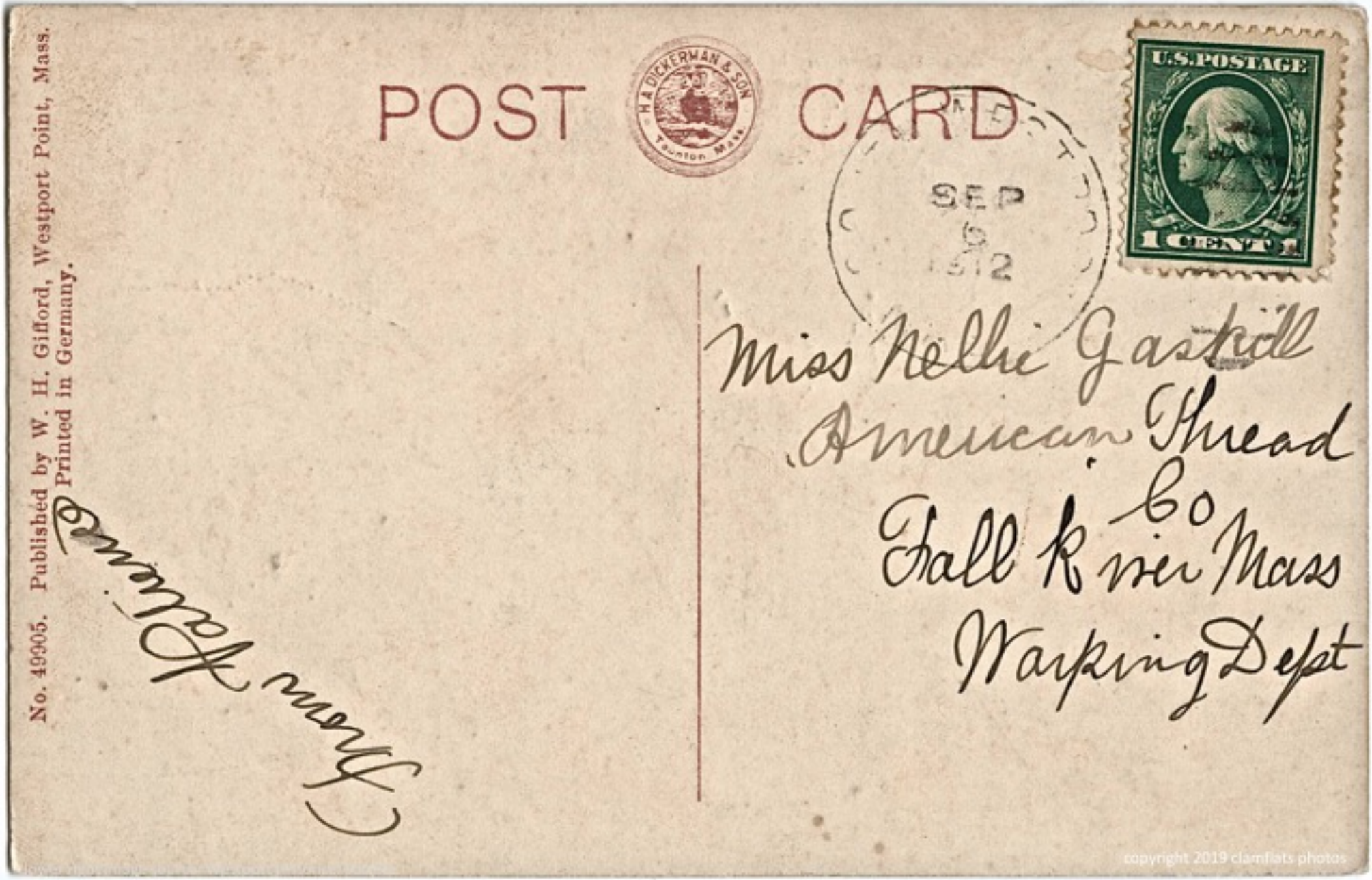
This card (like others) was sold at their store

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

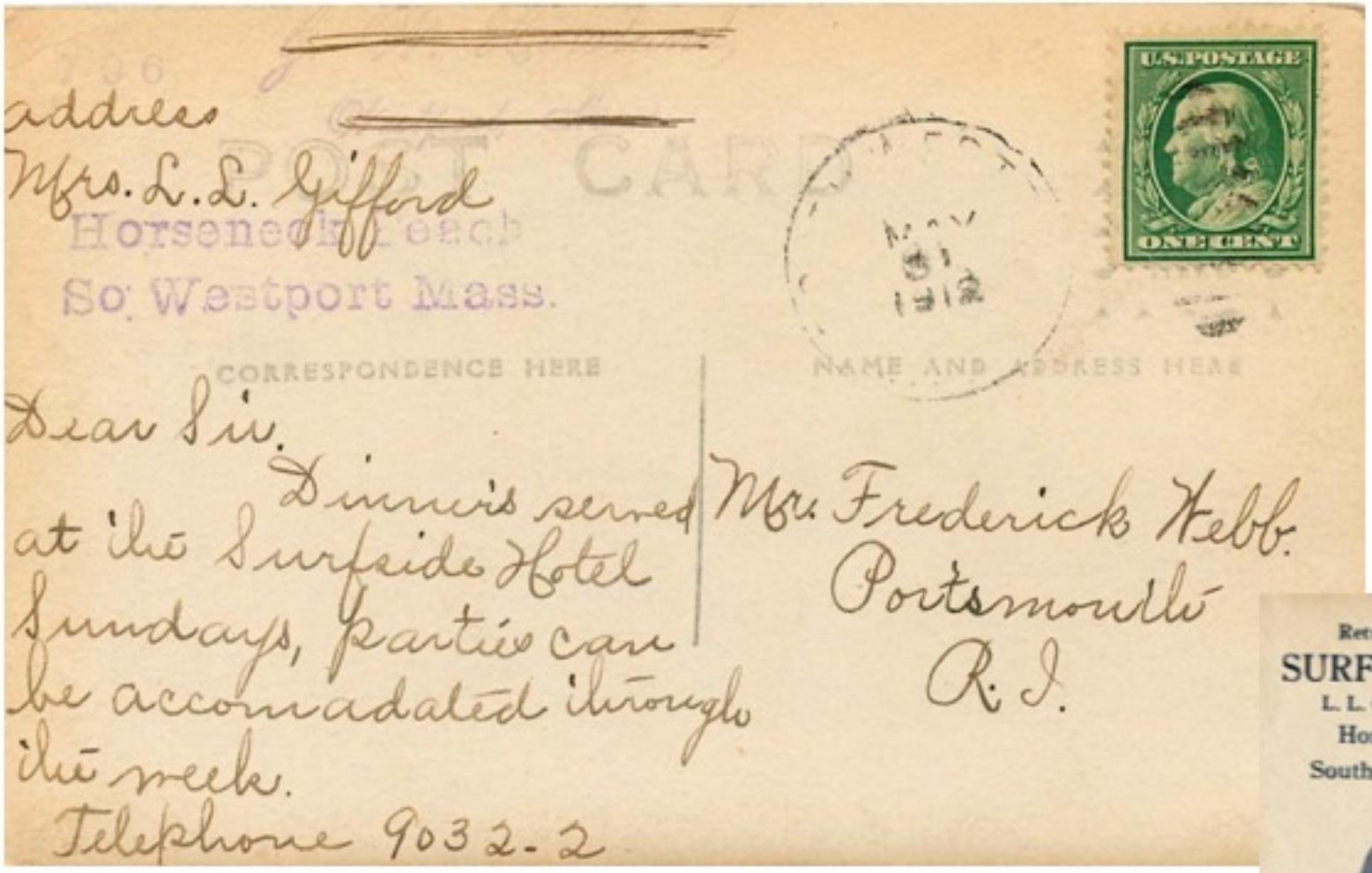
lower right image source: Westport Historical Society

Surfside Hotel - gents relaxing on the side porch

To Nellie, in American Thread Co's Warping Dept



Mrs. Gifford drumming up business, May 1912



Dear Sir.

Dinner's served at the Surfside Hotel Sundays, parties can be accomadated through the week."

lower right image source: Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Mrs. Gifford was proud of her dining room

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Interior of the dining room

image source unknown

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

A higher-resolution dining room photo

Dining room detail

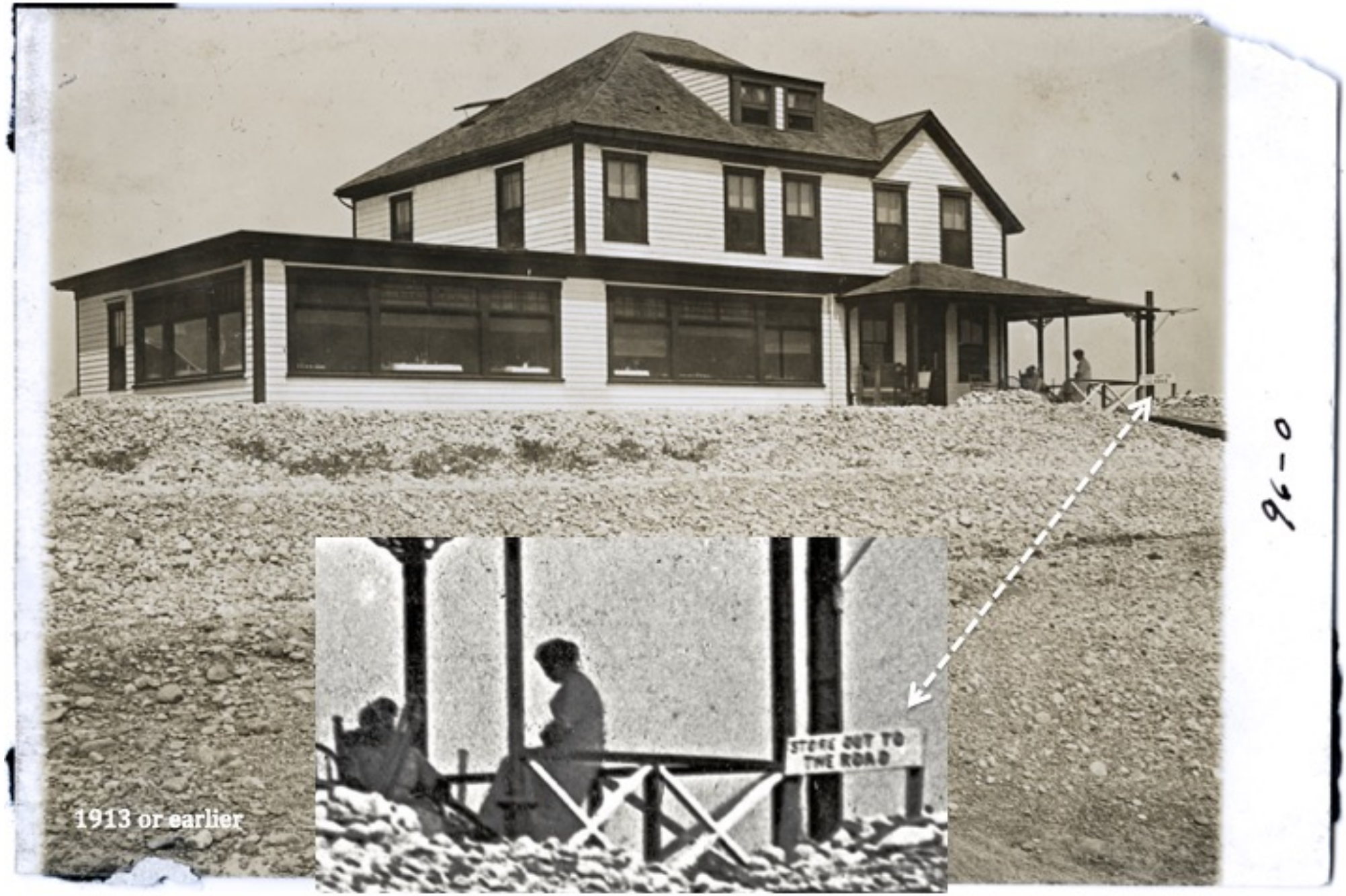
copyright 2019 stamilate photos

Needlework and mocha ware on display

1914 view from Eastern Illustrating

image source Penobscot Marine Museum
copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Sign says "Store out to the Road" – let's go around and see



copyright 2019 clamflats photos

11. Around back of the Surfside:

Doctor & Buff
Gifford's Store
and
the Little Brown Betty

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Flowers around the side, barn/garage and store in back

Lower right image: Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

John Gifford with Doctor and Buff & The two pet cats.

Horse Neck Beach – John Gifford.
Doctor and Buff
&
The two pet cats.

1907 or earlier

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The Surfside had a stable and garage as well as a store

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

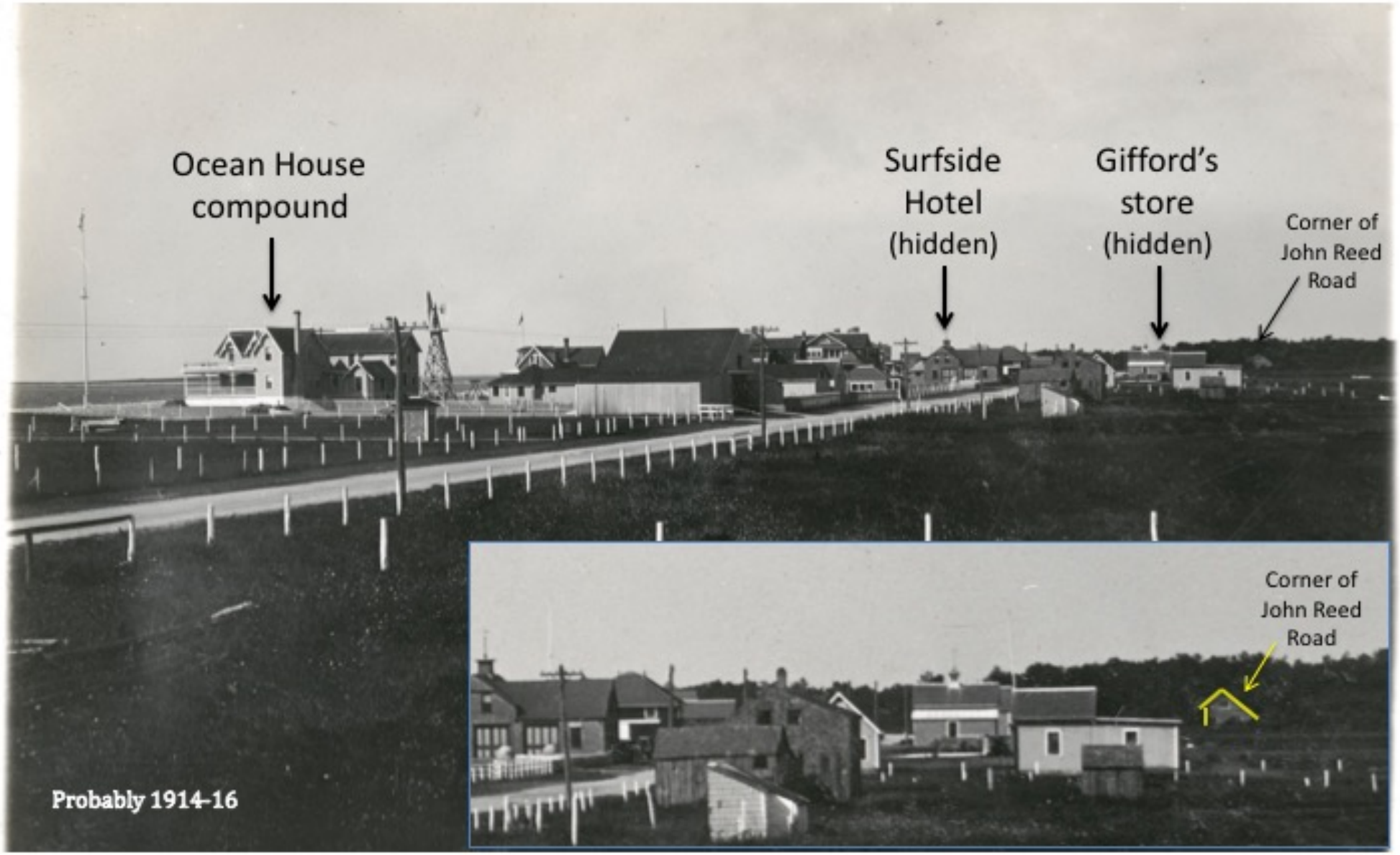
Probably 1911-12

John built the store around 1911

Probably 1913-4

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Location: right by the corner of John Reed Road



copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Location: right by the corner of John Reed Road

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Looking east from the intersection with John Reed Road

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

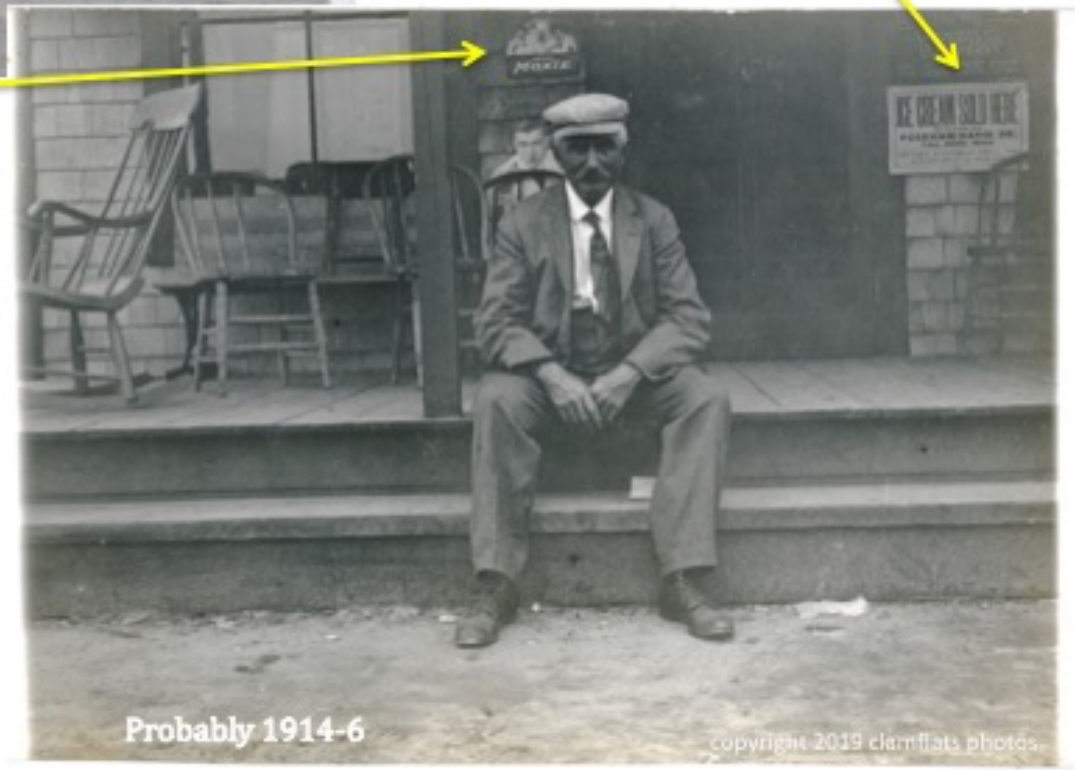
Refreshments next door at the Little Brown Betty

1915 Westport directory

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Good stuff for sale at Gifford's

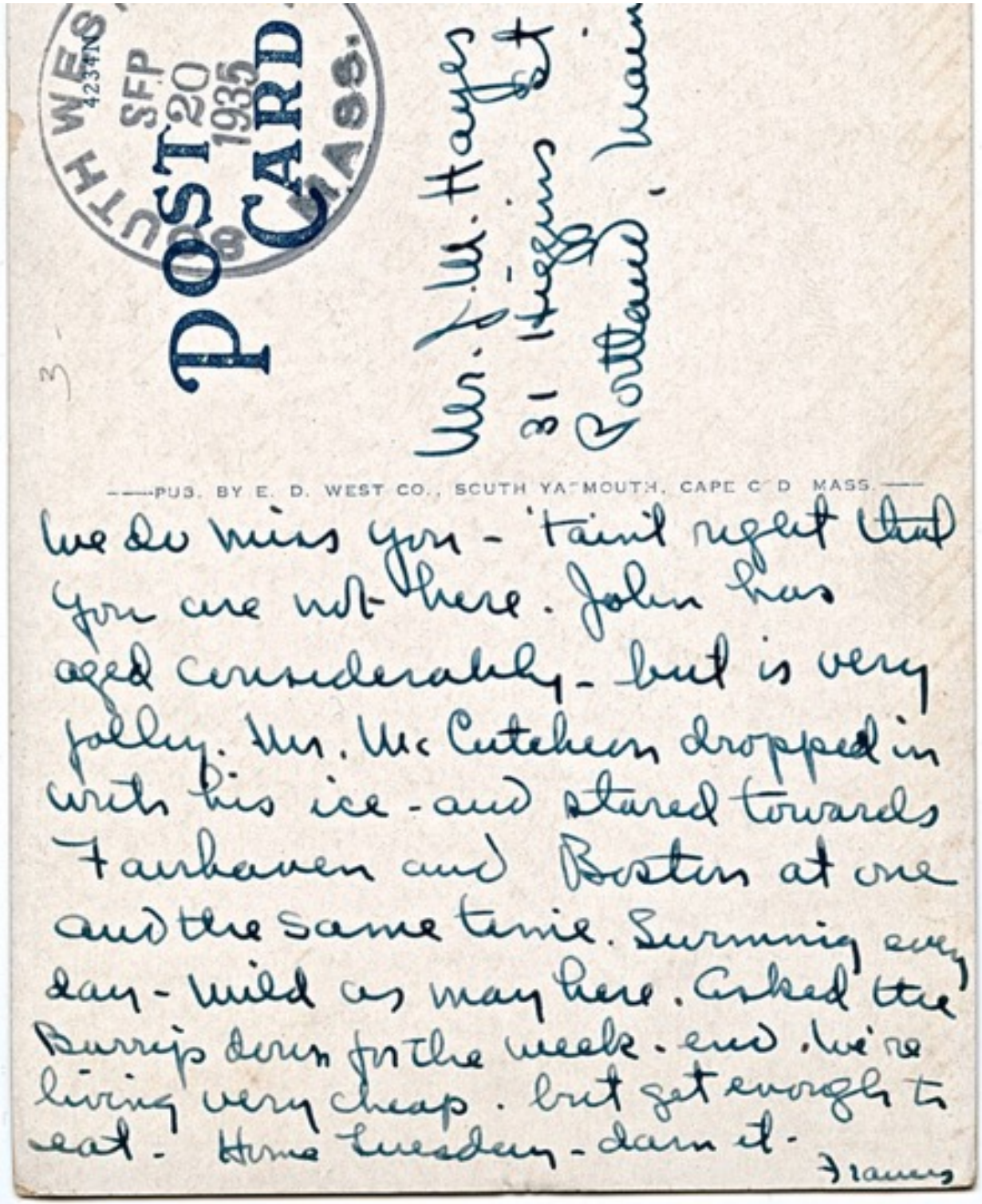
Peckham-Davis Ice Cream



And Moxie, of course

Gifford's Store became a John Alden Store (autos date to 1927-29)

copyright 2019 clamflats photos



Post card reverse, 1935

"John has aged considerably – but is very jolly."

John Gifford passed away in 1935. His wife Lydia died in 1936, closing the Surfside before the hurricane.

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

12. Back to the east end, to the Horseneck Store:

What are the Wild Waves Saying?

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Last stop: Tripp & Lawrence's Horseneck Store

aerial photo source: Google Maps. Cyanotype image: Westport Historical Society

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Not much info on the Horseneck Store before Clarence's photos appeared

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

We knew they sold Simpson Spring soda and had a phone - but not their location

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Clarence gave us a lot more to see

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Including these two guys – Tripp & Lawrence (and dog)

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Lawrence was a few years younger, so I bet that's him on the left

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Lawrence did the heavy chopping

Lawrence also grew the better whiskers

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Simpson Spring ad over Tripp's shoulder, by the way

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Lots of room on the porch at the Horseneck Store
(not sure who these people are yet, though)

copyright 201 clamflats photos

Looks like Edwardian dress was in order for the ladies

1912 or earlier

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Things to do: You could hire a car at H.W. Lewis of Horseneck Beach

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

And go for a spin on the beach at low tide

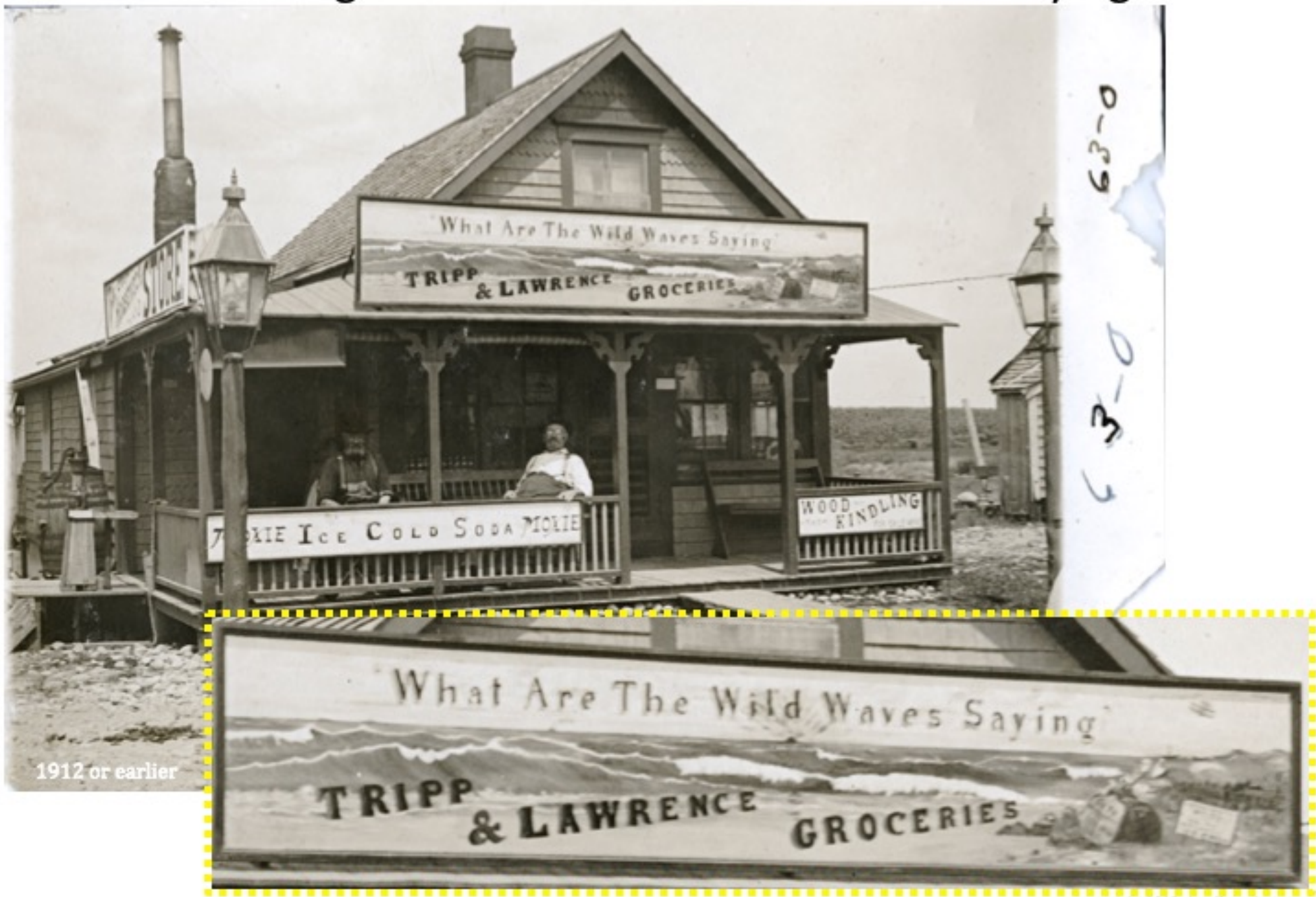
probably 1912-6

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Or just walk over to the store with a friend

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

A new sign – "What are the Wild Waves Saying"



copyright 2019 clamflats photos

“What are the Wild Waves Saying” -- one of the Greatest Hits of 1850

The Voice of the great Creator/ Dwells in that Mighty Tone!

Romantic Painting by Charles Wynne Nichols

Image source unknown

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Soon became a catchphrase for satire and advertising

"WHAT ARE THE WILD WAVES SAYING, SISTER?"

Left image: source unknown. Right image: Alamy stock photos

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

2019 equivalent – something by the Beach Boys?

1912 or earlier

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

After Tripp died in early 1914, the wild waves said "E.L. Fish" instead.

Probably 1914-16

144-A

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

13. The End:

Where are they now?

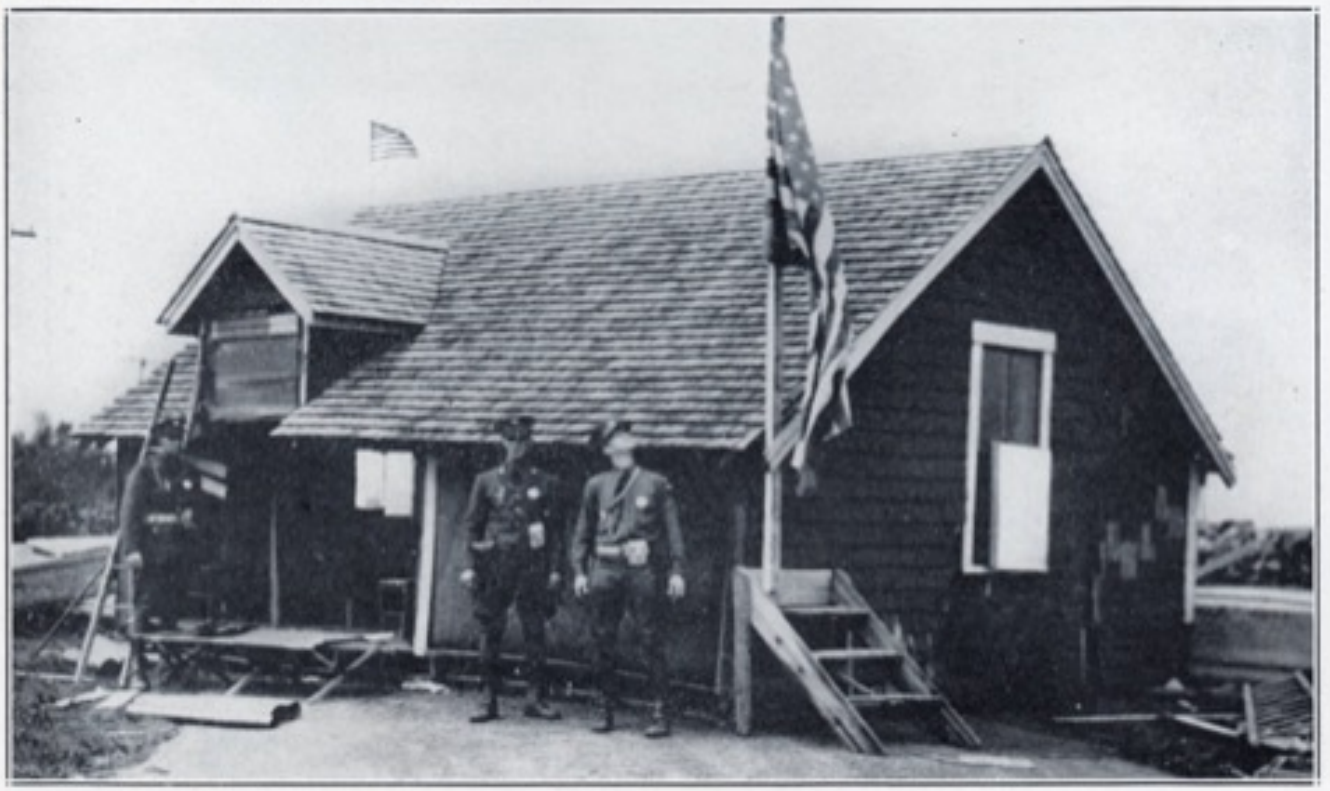
copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Buildings at the east end washed up near today's Bayside in 1938

This picture was taken one-quarter of a mile inland from East Horseneck Beach. The buildings were carried there from the beach.

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

The easternmost house on the beach washed up on Horseneck Road and became temporary police headquarters



The top of Joseph Heywood's Horseneck Beach home was blown to a point at the entrance to the East Beach. It became headquarters for the military police.

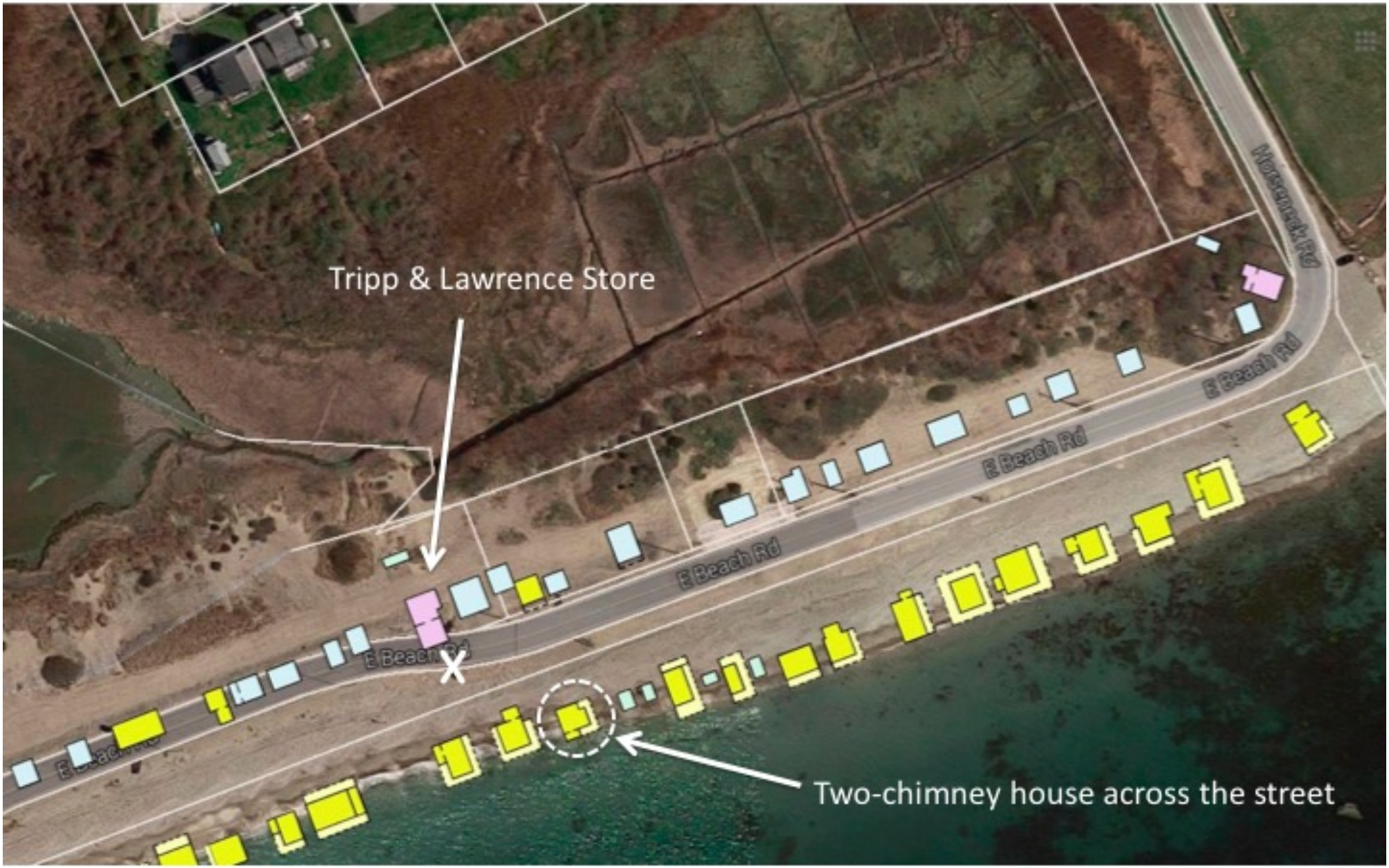
Upper image source: Dartmouth Historical & Arts Society

copyright 2016 clamflats photos

Here's the two-chimney house with the girls again

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Girls are standing at the white X, by the new jog in the road



aerial photo source: Google Maps

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Remember this pipe? Found December 2018.

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

GPS puts it right in the basement of the two-chimney house

map source: Google Maps

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Imagine this scene the next time you pass the jog in the road

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

14. Appendix:

Mysteries solved and abiding

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Appendix – mystery photos

Help! I can't figure out where these are or were.

Appendix – mystery photos

Help! I can't figure out where these are or were.

Location unknown – Sea-Ward, Horseneck Beach 1921

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Location unknown – The A&P near Horseneck Point

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Contact me with questions or information

David Jones
clamflats@earthlink.net

Westport photos at
www.PBase.com/clamflats

or Google “clamflats Westport”

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Notes on the materials

- Photos and postcards are from my collection unless otherwise noted. Also from the Westport Historical Society, the Westport Public Library, the Penobscot Marine Museum, the Dartmouth Historical and Arts Society, and online free providers.
- House locations are plotted from Sanborn insurance maps, merged with online data from Google Earth and Google Maps.
- Dates are my estimates based on verifiable dates for some images (postmarks, eg) plus interpolations based on changes in buildings and other beach features over time.

unless otherwise specified, all images are from hard copies in my collection.

copyright 2019 clamflats photos

Google “clamflats Westport” for more

copyright 2019 clamflats photos