



You read, of course, the flyer distributed this week to all voters describing the Old King's Highway Regional Historic District proposed for Route 6A from Bourne to Eastham?

For the last thirty years, Cape Codders have bewailed the "progress" that came creeping into our villages and now rampages across the Cape.

We've watched the residences of Main Street, Hyannis, come tumbling down before the bulldozer blade and be replaced by cinderblock motels, solid lines of stores and shops.

We've seen green lawns and shade trees torn up and chopped down to make way for concrete slab and macadam. The picket fences, trimmed hedges, and flower gardens once surrounding homes were Hyannis's business district now attracts thousands of tourists each summer's day, are gone.

Wouldn't it be great if those tourists could enjoy Hyannis Village as it was fifty years ago, before every house was either destroyed entirely or converted to business use?

Who'd want to live on Main Street now?

The same thing happened in Osterville. I recall walking along board sidewalks from house to house in Osterville's Center.

The homes that stood where the Pattison block is now -- from the bank to the drug store -- were first moved back into the field; then torn down.

The Braley house stood on the corner filled now by the Mulberry Corner block. The Daniel house was moved back to make room for the Wianno block. The Lagergren house is part of the House and Garden. The Crocker house was rolled across the fields to a new foundation, and what's now our library was constructed.

The post office replaced the old Methodist Parsonage and its surrounding lawn. Ed Crocker's house was razed.

Houses, with people living in them, mowing their grass, weeding their gardens, growing their vegetables, painting their fences, raising their families, stood -- in my memory -- on most of the ground now occupied by Osterville businesses.

Centerville Village fared better by locating a commercial zone on Route 28 and at Craigville.

Cotuit's business district is actually smaller now than fifty years ago. Santuit's business-zoned property stretches all along Route 28 and, while it's still small, what's to stop someone buying up a stretch of highway, tearing down the old houses, and building motels, business blocks and a bowling alley? Nothing.

Take a look at the zoning map and by-laws.

Then take a ride across the Cape to Route 6A. Drive it from Sagamore to Orleans, if you will. Spend an hour or so. Look at it. See what's happening over there?

See what's beginning to creep in, between the homes, in the barns, on empty lots? Here a shop, everywhere a shop-shop... Old MacDonald had a farm... E-I-E-I-O.

Where Old MacDonald used to have a farm, now everywhere you look -- a shop-shop. E-I-E-I-O begins to sound like a donkey's bray!

Not all the South Shore is ruined. Some villages, in spite of bumbling, remain attractive. Some of our villages, in spite of the exodus of residents from Main Street, retain a certain charm, typical of the Cape.

How long will they stay that way?

What's going to happen to Route 28 between Santuit and Hyannis? Cotuit. Marstons Mills, Osterville and Centerville should be aware and

forewarned. The possibilities are real probabilities.

To get the picture, return from your trip to Orleans via route 28. The closer you get to Hyannis, the uglier it all becomes.

'Twasn't ever thus! There are still a few of the old houses left standing along Route 28 in West Yarmouth and the Dennises. I remember not one single motel, ice cream stand, restaurant or gift shop between the Barnstable Town Line and Bass River Bridge.

(Well, there was the Mill Hill Club, the roller skating rink, Carl's sandwich shop across the way, and further along, Cooper's Cottages. Have to be honest about that.)

Lot's of us remember. Anyone who drove that road prior to 1945 remembers -- yearningly -- because it was such a pretty trip.

What the Old King's Highway Regional Historic District will do, if we vote for it, is prevent Route 6A, from Bourne to Eastham, becoming another Route 28.

Yes, it'll impose restrictions on what some people can do with their own property. That's the point. This still lovely part of Cape Cod can remain lovely.

There can be one place where our Cape Cod is still charming and still beautiful and still attractive to the appreciative tourist. There can be one place where that cannot be eroded.

The old houses won't be torn down to make way for garish motels, neon signs, plastic junk. People living along the King's Highway won't sell out and move into the woods to escape.

Gardens will bloom with roses in June, gladioli in July, phlox in August and chrysanthemums in fall. Trees and lawns and hedges and fences will continue providing shade, cool green shadows, spacious expansive views of the flashing bay and quiet sand dunes sparkling beyond the highway's bounds.

Stately old homes will still receive their annual sprucing up, instead of being razed or boarded up to keep the vandals from smashing out their windows -- or the weather out, once their panes are broken.

Let's all do what's necessary to join with other Cape towns to preserve what's left and keep it so future generations can know and understand and love it as we do.

We've an opportunity, now, to prevent the destruction of one of the few remaining stretches of our heritage and our rural seaside. Let's not let it slip away from us.

This is one more reason to VOTE on November 5. It takes so little time to prevent what's already happened on Route 28, happening again on Route 6A.

Instead of weeping and wailing and wringing our hands about damage already done, vote to preserve what's left -- what's left worth preserving -- of Old Cape Cod.

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