

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

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This is a work of fiction that rests lightly upon the historical record, which is spotty at best when it comes to the village of Dogtown.

There was once such a hamlet, set on the high ground at the heart of Cape Ann. You can find signs directing you to its ruins on that rocky fist of coastland, the northernmost boundary of Massachusetts Bay. A local pamphlet, *Dogtown: A Village Lost in Time*, may still be available for purchase in the bookshops of Gloucester and Rockport, which was known as Sandy Bay until 1840. This little publication contains a not wholly accurate walking map of the area and some tales about the more vivid characters said to live there long ago.

Most accounts of Dogtown's last citizens rely heavily upon a volume of thirty-one pages, published in 1906, called *In the Heart of Cape Ann or the Story of Dogtown*. Illustrated by Catherine M. Follansbee, who had a fondness for drawing witches astride their brooms, it was written by Charles E. Mann. In his prefatory note, Mr. Mann revealed that nearly all his material was gleaned from "the memories of Cape Ann's aged people . . . sweet-faced old ladies, often with sweeter voices, or men with whitened locks and time-

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furrowed cheeks, recalling the stories told them by the fireside by other dear old women and noble old men of a past century.” In other words: ancient gossip and hearsay.

I tell you this so that you will not make the mistake of confusing my fancies for facts. And yet, the death of a village, even one as poor and small as Dogtown, is not an altogether trivial thing. Surely there was value in the quiet lives lived among those imposing boulders, under that bright sky. Why not imagine their stories as real, if not true. For the space of this entertainment, where's the harm?