

Rum Runners Use Boathouses of Little Harbor

During the Prohibition period Sagamore Creek was often used by rum runners. There were people who had fast boats and would bring cases of liquor to shore from Canadian vessels outside the three mile minute. The boats operated only in good weather and could make fast runs from ship to shore usually running up into little used creeks and coves to unload fast and then hurry back out to sea before daylight. Everyone owning a boathouse on Sagamore Creek had the experience of going to his boathouse in the morning or sometime and finding the boathouse chockfull of liquor. It was considered foolhardy to report the police or other authorities. Who wanted their place burned down? So the thing to do was keep quiet. The cases would be taken away very soon, except for a few left behind to pay for storage.

Sometimes a rum runner coming in on the night tide would run aground and wouldn't be floated off until the next day. Boats have been seen grounded out in Clay Cove and on the mud banks near the entrance to the creek. One large boat had a huge hole ripped in the bottom as it tried to pass over Sheafe's Ledge. It was hung up on the ledge for two days while carpenters patched up and re-caulked the damaged hull.

Meanwhile the authorities looked the other way.

When the Volstead Act was repealed by Congress ending Prohibition in 1933, Charlie Gouse put up a very small store near the south side of the Sagamore Bridge where much beer and small amount of groceries were sold. About the same time Ladd's Potato Chip Store was moved up from just over the Rye line to the south side of the bridge across the road from Gouses. Later Ladd's became the favorite "watering hole" for Rye people well into the 1970's and kept the Rye police busy after 1 PM.

– by Ralph Brown