

# There's a new fish store in town

## Ebb & Flow

Peter K. Prybot

The Turner family of Gloucester and Melrose takes pride in three generations' worth of working in the seafood industry and adding to its infrastructure. And the family has built a reputation in the process.

The Turners have just opened a new local seafood market for the public and the fishing industry.

"There are three separate businesses in the family," Jimmy Turner of Gloucester said. He and his wife, Kathi, and brothers John Jr., Joe and Chris, help run, in dif-

ferent combinations, Turner Seafood Inc. of Gloucester, Turner's Seafood Grill & Market of Melrose and the recently opened Turner's Seafood Market & Fish Fry on Smith Street at the former Smith Street Fish Market site.

Health problems forced John Turner Sr. to reluctantly retire in 2004. One look at him shows he's handled some fish over the years.

"I miss the hard work," the elder Turner said.

But his grandsons — Jimmy's sons James Jr., 8, and Mark, 7 — are ready to carry on the family tradition.

"They love coming to the Gloucester market and helping set

up the fish case," their father said.

The family employs about 85 full- and part-time employees.

"I cut fish for the Turners for about 11 years," Wayne Smith of Beverly said. "Working for both John Sr. and later Jimmy was great."

### In the beginning

James Turner, a Newfoundlander, emigrated to Boston in 1920 and co-founded Turner Fisheries, a seafood buyer, processor and wholesale distributor that, 34 years later, occupied two large buildings at One Fish Pier Road in Boston.

"My father worked for him all

through high school and college," Jimmy Turner said. "My father was also a great athlete in high school and college, especially in hockey."

He added, "When my grandfather passed away, Bill Stride Sr. (who summered in Gloucester) was appointed president, and my dad, who was still in college, vice president."

By the late 1960s Turner Fisheries became one of the pioneers in the industry. Conveniently located near Logan International Airport, it "captured the ability to fly seafood anywhere in the country,"

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PETER K. PRYBOT photo

Three generations of Turners, from left, John Sr., son Jimmy and his son, James Jr., pose behind the counter at the recently opened Turner's Seafood Market & Fish Fry in Gloucester.

## TURNERS: Melrose customers may flock to Gloucester

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greatly expanding the market for northeast seafood.

Ten years later the new Westin Hotel in Boston liked Turner's products and reputation so much that it turned to the company to supply seafood to its restaurant and those of other hotels in the chain and also named its restaurant in Boston after Turner Fisheries.

The downsizing of the Boston Fish Pier in the 1980s saw the closing of Turner Fisheries there and its relocation to Gloucester.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Turner and Stride's son, Billy Stride II, took over the late Slug Ryan's Atlantic Seafoods at the old Gloucester Fish Pier's stalls building and renamed the company Good Harbor Fillet.

Eventually, the Strides and Turners went separate ways, and Jimmy and his father operated the newly named Turner Seafood Inc., which moved to the current Smith Street location eight years ago.

The company cuts fish for its own

needs as well as those of its wholesale and retail customers.

"We are pretty much a full (seafood) line distributor," said Jimmy Turner, who runs the plant with his retired father as overseer.

### The Melrose operation

Jimmy Turner and his brothers started Turner's Seafood Grill & Market on Main Street in Melrose in 1994.

"We needed to create a new wholesale customer for the plant in Gloucester; plus, this was something that we all wanted to do," Turner explained.

He added, "We grew up in Melrose; my parents and Chris still live there. That's why the restaurant is where it is."

Joe, Chris, John Jr. and Kathi Turner work the Melrose business.

The Melrose operation combines a fish market and a 140-seat full-service restaurant, complete with a turn-of-the-century raw oyster bar.

Scott Spinney of Melrose, a former fisherman and current truck

driver for a Gloucester processing plant, knows seafood. He regularly takes his wife to dine at Turner's.

"They run a good restaurant," he said. "It's clean; the people are friendly, and the food is great. There's always a line out front," he said.

"We've expanded the Melrose building twice," Jimmy Turner said.

### Jimmy's idea

Turner's Seafood Market & Fish Fry, which opened in August, was "my idea," said Jimmy Turner, who is also its manager.

Many Melrose customers who knew the Turners had a plant in Gloucester kept asking, "Why don't you sell fish there?" he said.

"The industry has shrunk so much around here that I also felt Cape Ann could use another high-quality fish market," he said.

Besides a large selection of warm- and cold-water fresh fish fillets and steaks and fresh and frozen shellfish, the new enterprise offers specialty sauces and compound but-

ters, chowders, bisques, side dishes and fried and broiled seafoods, including Jonah crab cakes, oysters Rockefeller, fish and chips, and calamari.

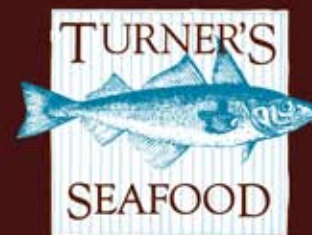
"We bring some of the prepared items up from the Melrose restaurant," Jimmy Turner said.

The ever-changing seafood industry "is forcing us to keep re-inventing ourselves," he said. "Complicating matters today, the pricing and supply (of raw materials, especially groundfish in the northeast) are often all over the place."

Challenges or not, Turner's mission statement remains the same: "To serve you the best seafood you have eaten."

"That's the only reason we do what we do; otherwise, we'd rather not serve it," Jimmy Turner said.

"We take pride in the name and reputation that my grandfather went out and got. When it comes to seafood, you have to first earn that reputation for quality and then you have to protect it; otherwise, you will lose it."



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