

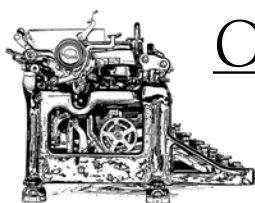
Journal of History of Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 53, No. 2

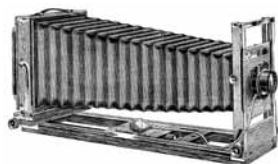
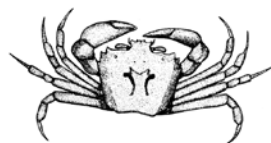
SPRING 2012



CHEEKY, NEWSY MR. CHICK
Adventures of an Early
Vineyard Newspaper Editor

HISTORY & GEOLOGY

Tracing Charles Lyell's Footsteps
At the Lucy Vincent Bluffs



A PHOTO MYSTERY SOLVED
Stereoscopic Whaling Views
Of Charles & Richard Shute

PLUS:

Revisiting the Tragic Wreck
of the City of Columbus

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TO OUR READERS

WITH THIS ISSUE we have four very different stories, encompassing a wide range of topic and style. One of the great pleasures of editing this venerable journal is the opportunity to bring you articles that introduce us to little known — or even unknown — figures. Chris Baer has a knack for ferreting out interesting characters and in Edson Chick, founder of the short-lived Chick's Vineyard Haven News, he has found a doozy.

Prof. Paul Boyer introduces us to Charles Lyell, once a preeminent British geologist and often called the “founder of modern geology.” Boyer follows in Lyell's footsteps as he explores the geology of the bluff at Lucy Vincent Beach. In this issue we also welcome back frequent contributor Tom Dresser who gives us a concise look at the infamous wreck of the *City of Columbus*.

Finally, Chief Curator Bonnie Stacy brings us in on the high tech special effects in Richard and Charles Shute's stereoscopic photographs in an article that first appeared in the *Martha's Vineyard Times*.

All in all, something for everyone.

— Susan Wilson, editor

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The *Dukes County Intelligencer* is published by the Martha’s Vineyard Museum. Subscription is a benefit of membership in the Museum. To join, or to renew your membership, please visit www.mvmuseum.org and click on the “Membership” button.

Back copies of the *Intelligencer* are available for sale in the Museum library.

Authors’ queries and manuscripts for this journal should be emailed to intelligencer@mvmuseum.org or addressed to the Editor, *Dukes County Intelligencer*, P.O. Box 1310, Edgartown, MA 02539.

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Incurable, But Not Dangerous: Edson Chick, Cheeky Editor of Tisbury's First Newspaper

by CHRIS BAER

WHEN EDSON CHICK arrived in Cottage City in the summer of 1887, Vineyarders found him to be charismatic, well-spoken, impeccably dressed, and extremely outgoing. A man of unusual intelligence, Chick had a strong personality which attracted attention and friends wherever he went. He was a wealthy and distinguished writer and journalist, a talented musician and showman, and he was about to publish Vineyard Haven's first newspaper.

What Vineyarders didn't know was that Edson Chick was also a committed maniac who had escaped from his last insane asylum by picking the lock with a tool he had made from his toothbrush.

Cottage City in 1887 — and, by extension, Martha's Vineyard — was at a peak of summertime popularity. Paddlewheel steamers disgorged large and enthusiastic crowds of summer visitors at their choice of wharves. Ocean bathing, croquet, "lawn" tennis, and yachting were the sports of choice for wealthy cityfolk who swarmed the cottages each summer. The Flying Horses had been imported from Coney Island only three years earlier, and the waterfront railroad made regular excursions to Katama. VIPs from Boston and New York recklessly raced tricycles — and tandem tricycles — down Circuit Avenue. The *Martha's Vineyard Herald* kept count of the new electric lights: there were precisely thirty-three in use when Chick arrived in town. Summertime in Cottage City of the 1880s not only meant outdoor sports and religious gatherings but also minstrel shows, lectures, and lots and lots of concerts.

Chick was a short, squarely-built, 44-year-old Civil War veteran who

CHRIS BAER teaches at the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School. This is his third article for the *Intelligencer*. Several members of his family have suffered from bipolar disorder.

was said to be “possessed of prodigious physical strength.” His bushy black hair sprinkled with gray, together with his full beard, gave him the illusion of having a “massive” head. Handsome and extremely well-dressed, Chick always wore a flower in his buttonhole. He was a New Englander by birth, named after the minister who would bury his mother when Chick was still a toddler. He had settled in Brooklyn, New York, as a writer and advertising-man after graduating from Brown University in 1864, and shortly after married Mary Alice Peirce, “a lady of refinement and education,” and a granddaughter of the wealthy and powerful Marland family of Andover, Mass.

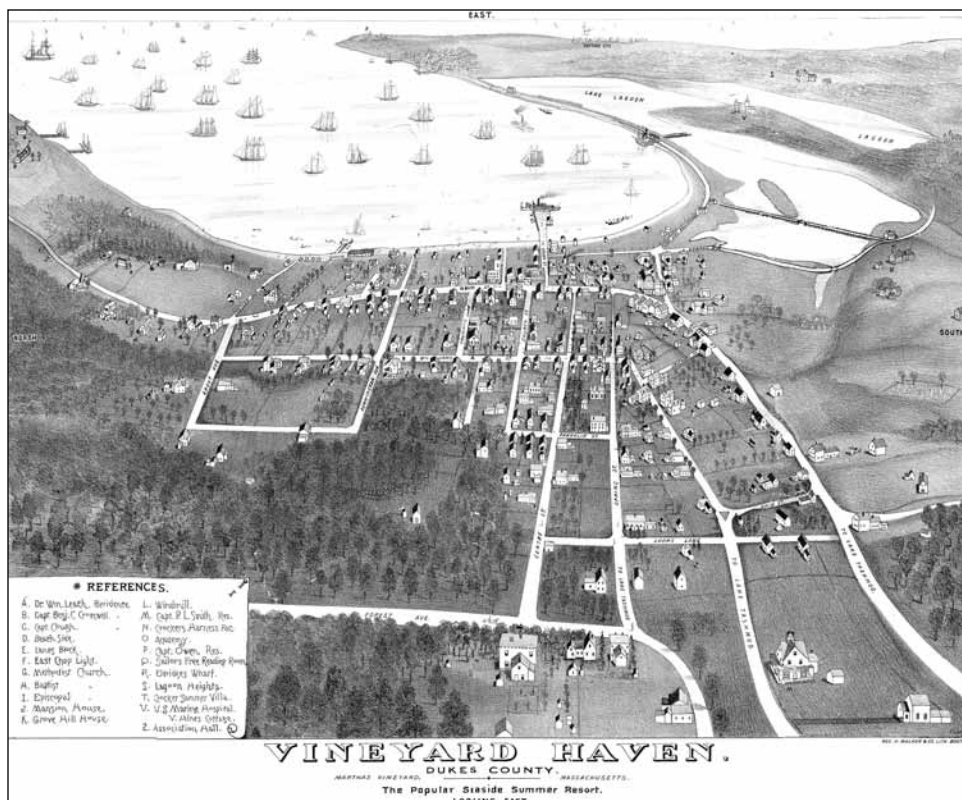
Chick came to Martha’s Vineyard in the shadow of the grandly-hyped “Great Pilgrimage” of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Society which arrived during the summer of 1887 to a Cottage City welcome of fireworks, flags, and “salvos of artillery.” The traveling Presbyterian spectacle was led by Rev. DeWitt Talmage, an international religious superstar, and flocked by nearly one thousand of his followers from Brooklyn, including the mayor. Talmage’s visit was hosted by Dr. Harrison Tucker, a wealthy Brooklyn doctor who maintained a summer office and home in Cottage City. Services at the Tabernacle drew several thousand spectators that Sunday, accompanied by the Fitchburg Military Band and the celebrated cornet player “Professor Ali,” and nearly five thousand spectators reportedly crowded into the massive Casino on Seaview avenue the following day to hear Talmage’s Fourth of July oration.

Chick’s Brooklyn Entertainments

Chick was no stranger to entertainments like Talmage’s, nor to Rev. Talmage himself. When work had been scarce in the New York publishing business, Chick had moonlighted as a musician and musical organizer. The son of a respected Baptist minister, and a talented organist and entertainer himself, Chick was magnetically drawn to venues in which religion and music overlapped. He was a showman, and he loved the spotlight.

He had first crossed paths with Talmage in 1872. While working week-ends as a Sunday School music teacher in Brooklyn, and with no notable experience organizing concerts of any size, Chick suddenly decided to put on a show. A big show. He gathered his talent, networked with his Brown alumni connections, turned on his charm, and put on a pair of highly unusual shows at the Brooklyn Academy of Music as a benefit for the Benevolent Society of the Helping Hand.

The talent was quite impressive. The first show, trumpeted as “Chick’s Combination” in the *Brooklyn Eagle*, featured future Secretary of State John Hay reading his poetry; speeches by some of the most important religious figures of the time, including Rev. Talmage and Rev. Dr. Henry Scudder, rising star of Chick’s Central Congregational Church; and padded with more



Birds-eye map of Vineyard Haven from 1887, the year Chick arrived in town.

vaudevillian acts, like the Humpty Dumpty Ballet Troupe's clown show. "The genius of Brother Chick is unbounded, as will be seen from the names of the artists engaged," gushed the *Eagle*. A few days later Chick followed his success with a second, day-long "Grand Jubilee Entertainment" which also featured magic feats, "readings," a brass band, together with "Prof. Blow-all-their-feathers-off-do" and his "one-stringed Australian Flute." The *Eagle* added in its announcement, "E.C. Chick will sing 'Down in a Coal Mine' with a chorus of 3,860 children's voices, in the afternoon."

But Chick wasn't through. A few weeks later, he left Brooklyn for a short visit to Boston, probably to visit his half-brother Isaac William Chick — who was actively making a fortune in the rug importing business — but also to see the 1872 World's Peace Jubilee and International Music Festival, honoring the end to the Franco-Prussian War. So impressed was Chick by the eighteen-day-long festival, that he returned to Brooklyn immediately afterward with the famous German prima donna Madame Peschka-Leutner and the German emperor's Cornet Quartette in tow, together with a leading contralto of Boston and a famous pianist, all for the

promise of four thousand dollars which Chick was personally putting up for a new show in Brooklyn. As a venue for his massive and practically impromptu performance (which also included a miscellany of other acts like “Tiny Joe, only five years old, with his tiny violin”) Chick hired Brooklyn’s 26,000-square-foot indoor skating rink. The show was promoted as a benefit for the Orphan Asylum, with half of the proceeds to be donated to a picnic for the poor children of Brooklyn. “Orphan Asylum children admitted free” read the advertisements.

More than six thousand spectators jammed into the rink on an oppressively hot July evening, and another three thousand crowded outside. “Never before in the history of musical events in this city has there been such a mass of society people gathered in one place,” crowed the *Brooklyn Eagle*. The thermometer rose to 102 degrees inside the gas lit building, as the Prussian band, dressed in stiff blue military uniforms with fiery red plumes, delayed for half an hour, refusing to play until Chick produced a certified check. “The place seemed like an immense oven arranged for the gradual stewing of a mass of humanity,” wrote the *Eagle*. The concert went on smoothly afterward, but a few days later serious questions were raised by the newspapers about the supposed charity donation, which turned out to be nothing but empty promises.

His reputation soured, Chick returned to his day job in the New York publishing world, and to Sunday School and YMCA musical direction. While he regularly performed on his organ during temperance rallies — and later managed a few modest shows upstate — he never again attempted to organize another concert in the city. In 1883 Chick finally lost his job as the YMCA music teacher when he ordered a dozen new pianos for the association — five of which were delivered — and “suspicion as to his mental regularity was aroused.”

Chick, like his father and grandfather, suffered from a disease which still afflicts more than five million Americans today: bipolar disorder, formerly known as “manic depression,” and which in Chick’s day was called “circular insanity.” The disease commonly manifests as regular cycles of depressive lows and manic highs “characterized by,” as one 1883 medical text describes, “lavish generosity, wild schemes, and unsystematized delusions.” Chick was reportedly recovering from a period of depression when he arrived on the Vineyard in 1887 — “melancholia” in the lingo of the day — but as the Cottage City summer crowds ebbed, his manic phase kicked in.

Chick’s Vineyard Entertainments

In a period of barely five weeks, only two months after arriving on Martha’s Vineyard, Chick organized no less than six Island concerts in the fall of 1887. His first, a successful Saturday night variety show at the Cot-

tage City Baptist Church, was advertised with what the *Martha's Vineyard Herald* reported as a "somewhat humorous and original handbill [which] ought to be retained as a souvenir." The lineup included sopranos from Boston and Fitchburg, a contralto from New Bedford, a Boston pianist, a tenor from Middleboro, an entertainer from Chicago, a "recitationist," and Oak Bluffs violinist Frank Vincent who performed "on his beautiful toned old violin." The *Herald* also noted:

The program was varied by some humorous songs and recitations by the beneficiary Mr. Chick, of Brooklyn. Mr. Chick has been an invalid for nearly a year before coming to Cottage City last July, and has fully recovered his health by drinking in the Vineyard ozone.

The *Vineyard Gazette's* review echoed that Chick was "somewhat out of health."

The second concert, at the Edgartown Town Hall, was also described as "a benefit concert to Mr. E.C. Chick." It included many of the same performers, including "Mr. E.C. Chick, of New York, baritone and humorist." The *Herald* added, "Mr. Chick recited several selections in his inimitable manner to the great amusement of all present." The *Gazette*, in a review titled "Mr. Chick's Concert," noted:

The original programme had attracted local curiosity, and Mr. Chick's prompt and forceful method of managing a concert was novel to our citizens. ...The entire concert was a noteworthy one, and reflects great credit on both the artists and the manager, when all the circumstances are considered. Much money was not poured into the coffers of the Chick treasury, but should the same artists appear again in our place, at the popular prices or even at the higher rates, there is no doubt the Town Hall would have to be stretched to hold the audience which would attend. ... Mr. Chick sang a duet with [New Bedford contralto] Miss [Addie G.] Baker, and interested the audience by diversifying the graver part of the programme with songs, dialect recitations, humorous ballads, and was on good terms with his house at once.

Norton's barge delivered Cottage City concertgoers to Chick's third show at the Association Hall in Vineyard Haven for 25 cents apiece. "The illustrious Chick gives another of his unique entertainments tonight," announced the *Herald*. The all-new, mostly local lineup included a "comic duett by Masters Dean and Barney Luce, two bright-eyed little sons of Capt. Bernard Luce," a solo by Henry Cleveland from the local minstrel troupe, a whistling solo, a harmonica number, and an encore featuring "several humorous songs and recitations by Mr. Chick."

The next two weeks brought three more shows. And then, three days before Halloween, Edson Chick abruptly quit the concert business and moved to Vineyard Haven to publish the town's first newspaper, *Chick's*



Dr. Lane's Block, on the corner of Main Street and Union Street (then known as Wharf Street) was home to many businesses and offices besides Chick's, including the post office, the selectmen's office, a clothing store, and Dr. Lane's drug store. The meat market was on the basement level, with an entrance on Wharf Street. Crocker's Harness Factory is visible in the background — it is the three-story building behind the wagons.

Vineyard Haven News. Curiously, the *Martha's Vineyard Herald* never mentioned him again.

Chick Storms Vineyard Haven

Cottage City's industrious neighbor across the harbor had — against many predictions — risen from the ashes of a catastrophic fire which had burned the entire commercial downtown of Vineyard Haven to the ground in 1883. An entirely brand-new village had been built in less than four years. Atop the ashes of ancient Holmes Hole rose new wooden buildings more at home to the western frontier than to a colonial New England seaport. And it was fast changing. Merchants were quickly replacing plank sidewalks with concrete, and Main Street and the lanes that fed it were becoming a patchwork of concrete, gravel, and dirt as store-owners chose to tame the dust in front of their property with pavement. Underneath, the town's first water mains were being laid in anticipation of the new waterworks being built at Tashmoo, and the first fire hydrants installed. Private telephone lines were starting to connect a handful of brand-new stores. Linden trees were planted along Main Street aside the blackened stumps of the ancient elms that once provided ample shade. It was an infrastructural boom to match Cottage City's society boom.

Three enormous new buildings had been recently erected on Main

Street. On one end, the popular Mansion House had reopened to board guests year-round; on the other, the Crocker Harness Factory once again served as the town's largest employer and publicly blew its factory whistle twice a day to mark shifts. Near the factory was a third new building: Lane's Block, a massive three-story landmark that Leslie's Drug Store occupies today, long since truncated to a single floor. Chick moved into Room 32 on the top floor of the Mansion House, leased a small office in Lane's Block, and got to work starting a newspaper.

Chick's new landlord, Dr. Charles Lane, was a popular physician and a legendary character every bit the match for Mr. Chick. Famous for his beaver top hat, swallowtail coat and uncensored mouth, Lane was one of the town's most powerful forces. Besides delivering many of the town's babies, he is said to have performed major surgery on more than one dining room table in town. His Block served as the town's business incubator. The late 1880s found everything from a barber shop to a candy store to a law office to the laundry business of Sam Lee — undoubtedly the Island's first Chinese-born resident — in Lane's Block. When Chick moved in he found his office sandwiched between the Post Office, the Selectmen's office, Manter's shoe store, Norton's clothing store, and Lane's drug store. Underneath him was the busy meat market of Look, Washburn & Co. Above him, Dr. Lane had built a runway from a third floor window to allow his five or six cats to come and go, and Lane himself threw barrels full of garbage out of the upper windows to the pigs and hens he kept on the corner lot across the lane to the wharf. In the evening, crowds would gather for the arrival of the 8 p.m. mail. Chick had found the busiest coop in town to roost in.

The *Gazette* announced on Oct. 28, 1887, in what was probably a paid plug by Chick:

The Vineyard Haven News, a one cent paper edited, owned and managed by Mr. E.C. Chick and printed by Manter, will be published to day. It will be original. It may be a permanency. It ought to grow.

Chick's printer was Ellis Manter, who owned the shoe shop next-door. In addition to shoes, he sold everything from stationery to children's games to newspapers to drawing slates. But Manter's lifelong hobby was printing, and he also maintained a large professional press in the back of his store.

Gratia Harrington wrote of her childhood memories of Mr. Manter in a 1967 *Gazette* article:

Mr. Manter was a rather chubby man, a bachelor, and quite deaf. He couldn't always immediately lay his hand on the shoes one asked for, but if one were patient he would eventually discover them. He was a very kindly person of excellent intelligence, which many persons discounted because of his deafness and his rather absent-minded and bumbling ways.

Manter's assistant in the print shop was William H. Luce, another life-long bachelor whose father, a Vineyard Haven merchant, had been violently murdered in his store when William was only eight years old in a crime which remains unsolved.

The Aldine

Chick had never run a newspaper before, but he was a talented writer and journalist with solid publishing credentials.

In New York, Chick had worked for the publisher James Sutton & Co., which produced architectural reports, history books, genealogies, travelogues, fiction ("The Birthday Gifts: A Story For Wives") as well as an abundance of insurance industry publications. The business was located in two back-to-back buildings spanning from Liberty Street to Maiden Lane in lower Manhattan, right where the Federal Reserve Bank today holds a quarter of the world's gold bullion.

In 1868, Sutton's company had begun publishing a large, glossy publication titled "The Aldine Press, A Typographic Art Journal," a graphic arts and literary magazine which was circulated free to their printing customers. It featured beautifully printed Gustav Doré illustrations made from imported French blocks, and insurance companies carried most of the advertising. It was well received. The following year, they doubled the size and began charging an annual subscription. By 1870, Chick had become managing editor, and original articles were written covering art, music, literature, and insurance.

Richard Henry Stoddard, an author, literary critic and poet whose work at *Vanity Fair* in the 1860s had solidly established his reputation in literary circles, was hired to serve as editor-in-chief. Under his leadership, *The Aldine* became one of the more successful New York magazines, reviewed favorably alongside *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and comparable magazines of its day. Sutton claimed a circulation of 25,000 in 1871. It featured a wide variety of American artists and writers, with articles on fine art, literature, gardening, travel, poetry, short fiction, and insurance industry matters, together with large numbers of large, high-quality illustrations. Despite Stoddard's and Chick's contributions the magazine never distinguished itself for its writing, but *The Aldine* is still considered important today for its exceptional illustrations and has even been credited for reviving typography as a fine art. Issues can still be found on eBay.

Chick even personally solicited an "autobiography" from Mark Twain for the April 1871 issue. It reads — in its entirety — "An Autobiography. Mark Twain. I was born November 30th 1835. I continue to live, just the same." (Twain then goes on to apologize for its length, concluding "I could easily have made it longer, but not without compromising myself. Perhaps

no apology for the brevity of this account of myself is necessary. And besides, why should I damage the rising popularity of *The Aldine*? Surely *The Aldine* has never done me any harm.”)

The Aldine may be known more today for its pictures and high-quality printing and paper stock than its writing, but Chick became a talented writer and humorist through his association with it. It was to be the high point in his career.

On June 24, 1875, a policeman noticed smoke erupting from the top floor of the Aldine Company’s five-story press room on Liberty Street. An alarm was sounded, and by the time the fireman managed to enter the building, fire had spread to the third and fourth floors, and across the roof to their second building on Maiden Lane. When the fire was finally brought under control, all twenty of *The Aldine*’s expensive printing presses had been badly damaged or destroyed, together with large amounts of paper, a number of woodcuts, and their collection of back editions, for a total loss which Sutton estimated at over \$200,000. Fortunately, they were fully insured.

Perhaps too insured. Shortly afterward, Sutton was arrested for making false statements under oath about the losses sustained in the fire. Experts sifted through the debris and sharply questioned his estimates. A former employee testified that he heard talk among the staff that the company was about to collapse and that the fire insurance was being renewed. Other witnesses claimed they had been hired by Sutton to damage the stock by throwing water on it. Chick’s name does not appear in any of the news accounts of the trial. Ultimately, the jury acquitted Sutton. But while *The Aldine* managed to publish a few more issues, it never regained its reputation and success.

Chick had lost both his job and \$30,000 of his own money he had invested in this once-prestigious magazine. (He later claimed Sutton had defrauded him.) Near penniless, he took off on a horse-drawn road trip and soon found himself in trouble. *The Brooklyn Eagle* reported:

Mr. E.C. Chick, of this city, who was the business manager of *The Aldine* some time ago, was erroneously arrested yesterday, in Bedford, Mass. Chick was driving around with such characteristic speed that the slow going authorities mistook him for an escaped lunatic named Dr. Chick. The Brooklyn Chick, however, had no great difficulty in proving both his identity and levelness of head.

Rather than a simple mix-up, this was more likely a telling hint of the real troubles that Chick was soon to face. Also during this time his daughter Lucia was born, joining her older brother, Edson Jr. in their growing family. Lucia was to become a highly eccentric character of her own; she is believed to have inherited Chick’s bipolar gene.

Chic

With *The Aldine* defunct, Chick went on to find work for a few years as a theatrical and art critic and advertising agent for the very successful *Frank Leslie's Weekly*. But in 1880, Chick became involved in a new magazine titled, curiously enough, *Chic*. It was a colorful, sophisticated, and satirical publication modeled in part after the more famous *Puck*, filled with extensive theater reviews, color illustrations, and barbed commentary about art, current events and societal excesses. ("In the name of all that men have hitherto held sacred in clothing," one column wrote about new bare-armed fashion, "let us ask where this thing is to end.") The column "Chic-Chat" offered regular theatrical gossip, and French actress Sarah Bernhardt was a favorite target of the anonymous writers' sharp satire. Few records remain from this high-quality but short-lived comic weekly, but we know that Chick served as advertising manager, and that respected political caricaturist Charles Kendrick was among its top management. It seems probable that Edson Chick was also centrally involved in its founding as well as its writing, not only because of the name, but also because of the writing style and its focus on the theater, one of Chick's passions.

One of the early issues offered a bit of helpful verse titled "What's in a Name" to clarify pronunciation:

Please do not? — when I say it I mean nary ill—
Employ the Anglo-Saxon short and slick,
And speak of me as *Prospero* of his *Ariel*,
Calling me "your dainty CHICK."

Chic unexpectedly ceased publication less than a year later, and Kendrick went on to fame in the founding of *Life* magazine, namesake of the modern magazine of that title.

But Chick began a slow slide downhill. For awhile he kept a relatively low profile, directing music for small YMCA and WCTU events. His older brother John died — his only full sibling — with whom he had marched in the same company in the war, and graduated with in the same class at Brown.

In early 1883 Chick began a public campaign to ban the practice of blocking the windows of Brooklyn's horse railroad cars with advertising cards. Describing himself as "a modest young Republican recently fledged," Chick wrote to the mayor, badgered the Board of Aldermen, and petitioned hundreds of commuters, complaining that the cards blocked light for reading passengers and obstructed air circulation. Ultimately the Aldermen passed a resolution and the Brooklyn City Railway Company stopped the practice.

There are a number of story fragments from this period indicative of Chick's mental health. In addition to the "dozen pianos" story, several reports relate that he had convinced a wealthy neighbor to invest \$1,000 in

a Swiss wool-making company, which was a complete loss. Another mentions a “wild scheme” of raising money for the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. There were stories of travels and of violent fights with one of his half-brothers. His wife, Mary Alice (née Peirce) and mother-in-law even chased him out of their Brooklyn home with an axe; Chick alleged that the two women were conspiring to “plot his destruction” and “frustrate all his business plans.”

To the Asylum

Chick had broken down. In the spring of 1883, with his two young children safely with their mother, Chick was committed to the Morris Plains Insane Asylum in New Jersey by his half-brother, who feared for his own safety. According to a *New York World* article, this was actually Chick’s fifth or sixth time committed.

An 1883 textbook describes Circular Insanity:

Such individuals are a constant source of anxiety to their relatives, and of danger to themselves. It requires but a slight circumstance to lead them to the wasting of their fortune, to other extravagant acts, or to develop an attack of furious frenzy, during the exalted period; while during the period of depression they may allow a flourishing business, undertaken in the exalted mood, to go to ruin from inertia, or even commit suicide.... We find these patients in [the lucid] periods of this disorder to intrigue against their surroundings merely for the love of intrigue and the delight which they experience at annoying others. Neither the true maniac nor the melancholic patient ever manifests this.

By Chick’s time, this diagnosis was relatively well understood, if dismissed as usually incurable. It had already been established that the disease often begins at puberty, and that it’s more common among women than men. It had also been established that bipolar disorder is often hereditary — and in fact we know Chick’s father suffered from deep depression (he died of “melancholia”) and that his daughter Lucia may also have been bipolar. Nineteenth-century treatment invariably called upon the “removal of the sufferer to fresh surroundings” — usually an insane asylum.



Chick’s half-brother and benefactor, carpet merchant Isaac William Chick of Boston, paid Edson a weekly allowance to stay out of trouble on remote Martha’s Vineyard. It didn’t quite work.

Asylums of the 1880s were not the chambers of horror many had been a few decades earlier, as the trend of “Moral Treatment” hospital-style asylums had become the professional norm. Nevertheless isolation, confinement, and patronizing attitudes toward the inmates were still not only prevalent, but recommended, and experts called upon a system of punishments and rewards (tobacco, snuff, wine, games, walks) over “stripes and chains.”

The State Lunatic Asylum at Morris Plains was already overcrowded when it opened in 1876, just a few years before Chick’s arrival. Its grand design was modeled in the new “Kirkbride Plan” style — a long and slender bat-wing shape, divided by gender, which emphasized fresh air — but also isolation.

Treatment of Circular Insanity was symptomatic. Bed-rest was the primary treatment, and large doses of narcotics were heavily relied upon — laudanum (opium) and morphine. These were usually injected secretly, so as to lessen the likelihood of addiction. Other sedatives were used as well, many psychoactive: Indian Hemp (*Cannabis Indica*); chloral hydrate (later the ingredient of a “mickey”); the infamous *Datura* plant; Belladonna (“Nightshade”) and Henbane (“Stinking Nightshade”) and their psychoactive extracts, hyoscine and hyoscyamine (the former later used as an experimental truth serum).

“Good and abundant food” was recommended, as ailments in digestion were commonly suspected as the causes of many mental illnesses. Beef tea was a favorite menu item, as were many alcoholic beverages: port wine, sherry, claret, even champagne, as well as recipes involving ale, rum, and brandy. Alcohol was also a common mixer with medicine: quinine dissolved in port wine was recommended in the later stages of the treatment of mania; as a sleep aid, chloral was mixed with whisky or served with a glass of sherry.

Purging, likewise, was commonly prescribed. Calomel (mercury) was administered, together with Hellebore extracts, antimonium tartrate and a lot of other nasty things. Some of the medicines which may have been administered to Chick were highly poisonous: Calabar beans (an Agatha Christie favorite — a single bean can kill you); Lily of the Valley extracts; ergot of rye (a fungi-based poison which often produces LSD-like effects); even cyanide.

Bleeding was still a common treatment for mania, although the modern method was “local” bleeding using leeches applied to the temples rather than a “general” bleeding using a lancet, which was considered primitively old-fashioned.

And while bed-rest was usually the initial treatment (sometimes forcibly), convalescing patients were often prescribed “prolonged exercise in the open air.” In the case of the newly-built Morris Plains asylum, located just outside of Morristown, New Jersey, this meant putting patients to

work clearing the grounds of building debris, excavating for roads, sodding and landscaping, working on the farms, raising food, maintaining the gardens, and participating in other, often strenuous, chores.

Escape

This immense, bat-shaped, monolithic asylum didn't hold Chick long. Less than a year into his stay he escaped by picking a "monstrous lock" on the door of his overcrowded ward using a pick-lock "of his own design" that he had made from his toothbrush. He "tramped it" back to the city, stopping only long enough for a shoeblack to brush him off, and returned to his home in Brooklyn.

Unsurprisingly, his wife wasn't happy to see him. She ordered him rearrested, and spared no expense to return him immediately. Chick appealed to a Brooklyn doctor he trusted, claiming that he was perfectly sane, and that "a malicious design on the part of an intriguing individual was the primal cause of his commitment." After examining him, however, Dr. Shaw agreed with his colleagues and recommended that he be recommitted and returned to the asylum.

Drawn on a piece of paper which he sent by the officer who took him back was a picture of a coop and a chicken going toward it. Beneath were the words, "Chick going to his coop at Morristown."

Early in the summer of 1887, Chick was discharged and labeled "incurable but not dangerous." Unwelcome at home, his half-brother agreed to pay him a weekly pension to go live in a quiet place "to be kept away from a big city": Martha's Vineyard.

Chick's Vineyard Haven News

Chick's newspaper was published in his Lane's Block office from October 1887 until March 1888. It was relatively small in format (as one contemporary described it, "Its size was that of a large sheet of writing paper") and eight pages in length. Chick claimed to print over one thousand cop-

CHICK'S VINEYARD HAVEN NEWS.

[Entered at the Post Office, Vineyard Haven, as Second Class Matter.]

GO WORK IN THE VINEYARD.

VOL. I, NO. 4. NOVEMBER 17, 1887. PRICE 2 CENTS.

EDITORIAL.

A SUCCESS.

Our edition of over 500 copies was exhausted in two days. We must reprint or you must go without copies of vol. I No. 3 of Chick's Vineyard News. Of this issue we print over 1000 copies and possibly 2000 copies which is about three times as many as the other island papers. In a few days we shall have a new office and some other new things. Reprint *Herald or Gazette* over two hours. We will give a bright, bigger, better paper. Moral. If you like us buy the paper all over the island at the places where papers are sold, at two cents of the boys and at the News temporary office opposite the store of Stephen C. Luce's Vineyard Haven. Moral No. 2. Advertise with us. Our advertisements are read, not hidden in a big blanket sheet. If you like us, sustain us, and if you don't we can get a living without you. We like this island, its climate, and many of its people. Some of them are sharks and mosquitoes. They would be dead long ago, only people live to be a century old here. So will this paper stick by.

The box for letters at the store of Swift Bros. opposite Masson House, is a great convenience. We use it. It brings people to the store as well and is a cheap advertisement. Wait till we become a city and have a box for letters on every corner and a mail carrier eight times a day as we used to have in New York, for then the loafing hour around the Post-office might be spent in reading or working, and every one might get wiser and richer. Wisdom is wealth and vice versa. Time spent in village gossip, if unkind, were better spent in the grave. Life is too, too, short to be spent that way. What this island wants is more live, earnest people. There are many of them in Vineyard Haven and Tisbury, and the bright boys are growing up. Teach them to be alive, to "have a move on" them as a jig dancing stable boy remarked to Mr. Ellis Master as the latter sauntered up street, thinking how he could make an honest penny or two. Yet Ellis can hurry and did to help us.

On election day Senator Norris in his slick Boston tall hat, and polite easy smile begged us for our buttonhole bouquet and gave us a fair cigar. We have no vote, not having been qualified, not having lived here long enough. We shall vote next year for the very best man, if, in a year's time, we can find him.

Our sole aim in life used to be to reestablish the beautiful *Aldine*, a monthly magazine finely illustrated, which sold for 50 cents a copy. Now it is to be the Gabriel blowing a trumpet long and loud enough to wake up America to the beauties of this island and the charms of Vineyard Haven. Stick to us. What we have done we can try to do, and we shall.

Why not have a cup at the well at the Sang harbor dock as there is at all the pumps in the Camp Ground at Cottage City? A walk from "up town" makes one thirsty, and a Unitarian ought to be as liberal in watering his flock as a Methodist or even a Baptist.

Mr. Wendell Crocker drops holy inspiration on us thus:
Mr. Chick,
He will stick!

A tall man in Cottage City told us to get out of his office, in a state of ill, hasty temper. We kept cool.

The hint to clean the selectmen's room hit. It was done. The News did it.

J. H. Lambert acts as a lawyer layman when he is not dry goulding. Miss Hurrell, clerk, has been ill.

No notice appeared in the *Herald* of the opera of Red Riding Hood at West Tisbury given by the Adams sisters, Miss Johnson and Mr. Flanders. It was the talk of the Tisbury for weeks. It was a large financial success, the chowder was fine, during the intermission, we ate much of it. Now, how happens it that the first opera on the island was not noticed by neighbor Strahan in the equanim of your big brotherly sheet?

The cover of Chick's fourth edition, which measured six by nine inches — this before he enlarged the format.



Manter's shoe store, shortly before Chick arrived, when his store was located slightly north in an annex to Lane's Block. Frank Vincent's livery stable next door was sold to Walter Renear; it was torn down about 1922 to make way for the brick building that today houses the Green Room.

ies per issue. In December he enlarged the format, writing in his *Things* column, "Mr. Mellen complained that the NEWS was not large enough to keep the flies off his face while he napped. Well, we have enlarged it..."

A New York reporter, in an article about Chick subtitled "His Queer Little Paper at Martha's Vineyard" later described the paper as

... village news, mainly personal squibs, editorial paragraphs about the beauty of Martha's Vineyard, the attractiveness of the young ladies, &c. But the most surprising feature of the paper was the large number of 'ads.' He got one from every business man in town, from new Bedford merchants and after awhile from not a few business men in Boston.

The appearance of his little sheet was eagerly awaited every Wednesday evening by the Martha's Vineyard people, and its publication was announced by the editor himself, who walked through the town crying: 'The News is out! The News is out!' as a means of advertising the paper and its editor. He also bought a wood cut of himself and reproduced it on the first page. He had great faith in the pictorial papers of the day and intended to publish a picture in every issue.

The *Brooklyn Eagle* later wrote of Chick and his eccentricities:

There was nothing the matter with him except a slight ailment which Philistines called 'rats in his garret.' Now and then one of these mental

'rats' would escape and run across the editorial page of his paper to the wonder of the rural readers whose respect for Mr. Chick's profundity prevented their suspecting that anything was wrong with him.

Chick was a dedicated journalist, carefully and accurately (if sometimes colorfully) following the stories of the day, including local politics and the celebrated installation of the town water system, as well as gossip and editorial commentary. Chick gushed over the Island, the town, and most of its industrious inhabitants, contrasting it with "the cold shores of distant America." He printed his motto, "Go Work in the Vineyard," in the masthead.

We will give a bright, bigger, better paper.... If you like us sustain us, and if you don't we can get a living without you. We like this island, its climate, and many of its people. Some of them are sharks and mossbacks. They would be dead long ago, only people live to be a century old here. So will this paper stick by.

Under a column called "Scratchings," a typical observation:

The neatly coiled bell rope in the vestibule of the Methodist church shows the 'yo, heave ho' of this Haven right out.

A champion for progress in this newly-resurrected town he had adopted, Chick became a cheerleader for growth and infrastructure, especially the new waterworks, and later rallied support for a telephone cable from Woods Hole. But he especially celebrated industrial spirit.

Wait till we become a city and have a box for letters on every corner and a mail carrier eight times a day as we used to have in New York, for then the loafing hour around the Post-office might be spent in reading or working, and every one might get wiser and richer. Wisdom is wealth and vice versa. Time spent in village gossip, if unkind, were better spent in the grave. Life is too, too short to be spent that way. What this island wants is more live, earnest people. There are many of them in Vineyard Haven and Tisbury, and the bright boys are growing up. Teach them to be alive, to 'have a move on' them...

Chick liked to drop hints about the improvements he felt ought to be made around town. "The town clock is twenty minutes to nine most of the week," he mentions in one column, and in another: "The hint to clean the selectmen's room hit. It was done. The *News* did it." In one of his *Scratchings* columns, he declares, "The dead flies are brushed out a shoe store window. Our hint again heeded."

Chick also had a knack for colorful descriptions of local people. In a story titled "That Vineyard Banquet" about a Sons of Martha's Vineyard club meeting in Boston, he wrote: "Of course, we were not born on Martha's Vineyard, but we wish we could be born again, just for the sake of becoming one of the sturdy, stocky, meaty manly men we saw around us at the table."

And in the local columns:

(Under “The News”): “Allen Look’s son, Dr. Frank Look, from Middletown, Conn. arrived Wednesday. His hat was shiny, his face was round, he looked rounded.”

(Under the Vineyard Haven column, “Points”): “A cyclone of fair clerks, crowds of customers and a beautiful array of tempting goods sweeps over Frank P. Norton’s store. One can’t help buying of Nobby-Tasty-Tidy-Fly-Brushed-Off-Frank.”

(Under “Shots”): “Mr. Benjamin Chase, of North Tisbury, passed through the town with a slow horse with some nice apples in bags, and treated the fresh and cheeky newsy editor of the *News* to a free ride. Thanks.”

In the “Shots” column, Chick praised Mr. Stanley of the Vineyard Haven Water Company:

Mr. Stanley says he has lived for years with only four hours of sleep. That was all Napoleon slept. Stanley is a Bonaparte here, and he is conquering his army of opposition easily. With a few more men like him and Dr. Tucker, Col. Leander Richardson, Joseph Spinney, and your humble servant, how this whole island would wake up. We mean to help get such men here. We know such men.

In a nod to his former career in New York, he wrote:

Our sole aim in life used to be to reestablish the beautiful *Aldine*, a monthly magazine finely illustrated, which sold for 50 cents a copy. Now it is to be the Gabriel blowing a trumpet long and loud enough to wake up America to the beauties of the island and the charms of Vineyard Haven. Stick to us. What we have done we can try to do, and we shall.

However, later events were to prove that he did indeed miss *The Aldine*. Chick also missed his estranged family, his “brood in their Brooklyn nest.”

(Under “Shots”): Our bright studio-sactum (sic) is at room 32 Mansion House, top floor. Any one who sends us a fresh bouquet or a new subscriber at \$1.00 a year can come and chat and see how it looks. If our room was as large as our heart, there would be crowds of friends there forever and aye. We hope the little Chicks we love in Brooklyn now, will come to our Vineyard Haven coop and grow up with the country and the *News* as we do.

In late November, Chick had a new bulletin board built outside the *News* office. The *Gazette* remarked, “Mr. Chick keeps his bulletin board well covered with chalk and talk, A young ‘chick’ — apparently on the move with wings extended — occupies a prominent corner of the bill board.” He hired a news clerk in early 1888, Vineyard Haven native Herbert Smith, a reporter’s son.

Editorial Warfare

Interestingly, while the *Vineyard Gazette* would regularly make references to Chick's paper, the *Martha's Vineyard Herald* was completely silent about his activities across the harbor. Probably Chick had done something to deserve the *Herald's* cold shoulder, but Chick regularly made known his displeasure over the situation, while praising the *Gazette* and its editor. In an ongoing reference to Charles Strahan, the 5' 10 1/2" *Herald* editor, Chick made ongoing remarks about the "tall man" or the "tall editor."

A tall man in Cottage City told us to get out of his office, in a state of ill, hasty temper. We kept cool.

(Under "Things"): Please notice that the *Herald* of Cottage City won't exchange with us, nor mention our NEWS, nor permit us to advertise for cash in its columns. When the tall editor has been journalizing for a quarter of a century he will discover that discourtesy to a rival sheet, even if shown through ignorance, is not profitable, sensible, manly nor square. It only compels us to work harder to popularize our two-cent paper, and our circulation and advertising patronage is steadily increasing. There is often room enough in one coop for two old hens and one young chick. The NEWS can't be entirely ignored.

In the story about the club meeting in Boston he had travelled to join, Chick added a subtle sting: "The tall editor of Cottage City and the other, the gentlemanly, lean, editor of Edgartown, were on the island that cold night, snug."

Chick's neighbor, harness-maker R. W. Crocker, occasionally joined Strahan as a target.

(Under "Town Topics"): The tall editor of Cottage City . . . would not take an advertisement from us last Thursday for cash, we would from him and the bill it settled too. Such spleen towards a rival is to petty to be noticed by a brisk and 'Chicky,' popular rising sheet at two cents. We won't give the name of the Editor. He has been too good a friend of ours. Both he and his harness making active pushing chum will stand up for us ere long, for we deserve to be stood by we work in the right field, and we work hard too.

Eyebrows began to be raised when Chick claimed that he had been offered to buy both the *Herald* and the *Gazette*.

We can't see why Mr. R. W. Crocker won't or don't want our paper to live. His harness shop competes with others, and the *News* competes with two other papers. The fitter will survive. Both the *Herald* and *Gazette* have been offered us recently at prices. We are too busy editing the *Vineyard Haven News* to buy any old papers. Watch our new, big Bulletin board made by Mr. Staples. Watch us as we trot actively to and fro. We can get along without any *one* man's help.

In late November, the *Herald* began advertising its new “Wise Plan” for advertising the attractions of Martha’s Vineyard: For one year, one thousand copies of the *Herald* would be mailed to one thousand public libraries across the country. In a long editorial, the *Gazette* publicly criticized the plan, to which the *Herald* responded with increasing vitriol, blasting “Our neighbor, the *Gazette*, ... ever since division times, it has labored to injure this fair resort, thus stabbing at the land of its birth...” Chick, unable to stay out of the fracas, added his own response in a column titled *Things*: “The NEWS is *not* sent to 1000 public libraries, to be hid. We can’t afford to go to roost in such places, just yet.”

Following a second round of increasingly nasty editorials between the *Gazette* and the *Herald*, the *Gazette* responded to Chick with a pair of friendly if slightly barbed comments in mid-December. The first, perhaps a play on Chick’s repeated use of the phrase “all alive” and “very much alive” in his description of hardworking Vineyard Haven residents, wrote:

Now, then, if Brother Chick will send a thousand copies of his paper to a thousand graveyards the development of his section is assured.

And the second:

The Vineyard Haven News having ceased to be an attenuated pamphlet, and blossomed out into a full-blown newspaper, we hasten to extend to it the right hand of fellowship and to wish it long life and as full a measure of prosperity as circumstances will permit. Of course there is only business enough in the country for one paper to get really rich — (thanks) — but if there is to be more than one there may as well be a dozen, and let the eleven starve each other out in concert. The Middletown ‘Messenger,’ the West Tisbury ‘Times,’ the Chilmark ‘Agriculturalist’ and the Gay Head ‘War-whoop’ should get to work as soon as possible.

Chick responded:

The editor of this News drove alone in a gale to solid Edgartown last week to thank editor Keniston for the warm notice of our enterprise in last week’s *Gazette*. That little black eyed midget of his, Maud and all Edgartown seemed glad to see us. Vineyard Haven will have to absorb Edgartown in a sort of Tashmoo and newspaper communion. Watch and wait, for things are moving among journalists on this fair isle, and the Gay Head “War Whoop” may yet combine with the Tall Editor’s paper and go to a thousand graveyards.

Nevertheless, as the one of the coldest winters in recorded history blockaded Vineyard Haven Harbor and put the Island in deep-freeze, relations began to chill between Chick and the *Gazette* as well. The *Gazette* only mentioned Chick or the *News* one more time:

Now then if Brother Chick will let up on his professed purchase of this paper, on the 'keenness' of its editor, and on the color of our wife's eyes, from this time on, all will be forgiven.

The Last News

The last issue of the *Chick's Vineyard Haven News* was printed shortly afterwards, in late March 1888, after a total run of fewer than twenty-five issues. Chick had run out of money, if not promises, and Manter refused to print the paper. Unable to pay his bill at the Mansion House either, he left for New Bedford and was forced to leave all of his clothes at the hotel for board. Chick had flown his "coop."

He was in another downward spiral, be he wasn't through yet. In New Bedford, barely a week after his Vineyard paper folded, he announced the start of a new penny daily called *The Evening News*. The paper was to be "Mugwump" in politics, reflecting the movement a few years earlier of Republicans who defected from their party to support Democrat Grover Cleveland in the 1884 election.

Chick claimed his new newspaper would expose New Bedford's "minotaurs" — a term for powerful men who preyed on child prostitutes — in the same way that London's *Pall Mall Gazette* famously did in England in 1885, indirectly helping raise the "age of consent" for Massachusetts girls from ten to thirteen in 1886. Chick's estranged daughter was about to turn twelve.

Chick bought a second-hand press, rented rooms, hired a typesetter, and began negotiations with the various press services, claiming that a prominent New Bedford capitalist was backing him financially. But his behavior became more erratic, as he began chalking the sidewalks with advertisements of his coming newspaper. A New Bedford correspondent later wrote that Chick "finally grew so wild that symptoms of a thorough breaking down became perceptible. He endeavored to keep the town posted with 'chalk talks' on the sidewalk." Just as he was making the final arrangements for his purported new paper, Chick was arrested and locked up in Central Station in New Bedford, then sent to the State Lunatic Hospital in Taunton, and then transferred to the Westborough Insane Hospital, where a Dr. Jelly finally pronounced him insane. The *Lowell Courier* noted, "He proposes to punish those who procured his confinement."

The *New York World* diagnosed him:

Though his peculiarities invariably suggest insanity to those who meet him for the first time, a longer acquaintance proves him to be at times perfectly rational and capable of conducting himself with absolute propriety. His weakness is what is known to insanity experts as hyper-exhilaration, a condition of extreme sensitiveness to his surroundings which makes him exaggerate everything. In his case this

condition is varied with melancholis and insomnia, great talkativeness and delusions. Since his recent visit to Boston, it is probable that he has slept on an average less than four hours in twenty-four. He has been a constant visitor to the theatres and hotels and has attracted attention by loud talking and conversation with persons unknown to him.

The 1894 Incident

Chick's Island adventures were over, but his most infamous chapter was about to be written.

After a few months at the Westborough Insane Hospital, Chick returned to Brooklyn where he worked briefly for *The New York Times* and sometimes used the nom de plume "Poulet." Then his father died, and he began to make regular visits to his hometown of Ayer Junction to visit his stepmother. The Fitchburg correspondent for the *Boston Globe* wrote:

He usually makes his presence in town known in a unique manner. Representations of a chicken are made upon the sidewalks, and the words 'Chick on time' he inscribes below his work of art.

He began to obsessively pursue Mayor David Boody of Brooklyn and two "bosses" in the Brooklyn political machine, Hugh McLaughlin and James Ridgeway, the latter of whom spent time in Chick's Sunday School music classes two decades earlier. By one report, his single purpose in returning to Brooklyn was to drive Boss McLaughlin out. In late 1893 the *Brooklyn Eagle* wrote a scathing front-page tongue-in-cheek article about Chick subtitled "A Terrible Little Man From Cottage City:"

Though so many people are afflicted with grip, the blues and hard times that sympathy is at a premium, and hard to get at that, the community will note with regret that Mayor Boody, Hugh McLaughlin, Almet F. Jenks and District Attorney Ridgway are suffering from a new and terrible affliction which is liable at any time to spread to other people.

They are being chicked.

To be chicked is to be pursued and talked to by E.C. Chick, late of Cottage City, and aforesaid of the *New York Times*... Mr. Chick's residence in Cottage City was viewed with great equanimity and contentment by all his numerous friends in New York and Brooklyn. Their feelings are different now that he has suddenly appeared among them. ...

The article goes on in a rather snide tone to report Chick's willingness to share his far-fetched political conspiracy theories with his fellow reporters as readily as he shared the medical papers he carried vouching for his sanity.

Two weeks later, Chick made headlines across the country.

On Jan. 4, 1894, completely broke, he sold his watch to a railroad employee in exchange for a fare on the afternoon train to Lakewood, N.J., summer home of railroad executive George Jay Gould, known as "Gray Gables."

Gould was newly heir to one of the biggest fortunes in American history — the estate of his father, infamous industrialist Jay Gould. Arriving at the Gould home in the middle of a teatime social and soon escorted out, he stalked Gould in Lakewood for several days, claiming that Gould had promised him \$100,000 to reestablish *The Aldine*. Chick attempted contact with Gould several times, loitered outside his home, and even followed him into a dinner party, but was repeatedly blocked from speaking with Gould. Penniless, he spent the night at the rail station and by the next day was singing improvised verse to amuse the commuters.

Determined to remain in Lakewood as long as necessary, Chick even issued a manuscript for the first edition of “The Chick Lakewood News.” Having unsuccessfully tried to deliver letters to Gould, he dedicated part of his new manuscript to Gould’s wife Edith to whom he offered a top position at his new *Aldine*. It read in part:

The companionship of minds like those of Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller, Byron and Longfellow will burst when you are editress of *Aldine*, the brightest and best magazine in the world. The rooms of the Queen, which are closed to some of the Four Hundred, will be open to you and your position in the world of intellect will be supreme.

A slew of colorful reports about Chick were wired out of Lakewood by a gang of bored reporters over the next forty-eight hours, appearing in newspapers across North America. From the *Waco Evening News* to the *Atlanta Constitution* to British Columbia’s *Victoria Daily Colonist*, dozens if not hundreds of articles were printed and reprinted that week about the “Lakewood lunatic” with titles like “A Crank Out Collecting,” “A Crank After George Gould,” “George Gould’s Latest Crank,” “Cannot Avoid Cranks,” “George Gould is Not Afraid,” “Chick Wants the \$100,000,” “Cheery Chick is After Gould,” “A Rich Man and A Crank.” Chick immediately sent a post card from Lakewood to his lawyer in Brooklyn to bring suit against one of the papers for \$250,000.

Even the *Vineyard Gazette* reprinted one of the wire stories which they titled “Chick Once More” and introduced with: “Our eccentric friend, Mr. E.C. Chick, remembered all over the Vineyard as the publisher some years ago of ‘Chick’s Vineyard News,’ has again come to the surface...”

Finally, with the people of Lakewood’s goodwill completely exhausted and the threat of arrest for vagrancy imminent, Chick’s son Edson Jr., now a young medical student, arrived to pick up his father. Pronounced insane by doctors in Brooklyn, he was committed to the Flatbush Insane Asylum, even though, as the Brooklyn Eagle reported, “Chick stated . . . that he preferred to be sent to St. Johnland, where he would have an opportunity, as he expressed it, ‘of exposing the colossal frauds existing in the management of that place.’”

GEORGE GOULD IS NOT AFRAID

Thinks Chick a Harmless Crank Who Would Injure Nobody.

He Spoke to the Insane Man at Lakewood This Morning.

ASKS GEORGE GOULD FOR \$100,000.

E. C. Chick at Lakewood with a Discharge from an Insane Asylum. Edson C. Chick, a writer for various publications under the non de plume of Edson C. Chick.

Another Crank After Gould. New York, Jan. 5.—Edson C. Chick, a writer for various publications under the non de plume of

CANNOT AVOID CRANKS.

Another One Following George Gould About.

CHICK SAYS HE WANTS \$100,000.

Maunts the Gould Cottage at Lakewood and Attends a Dinner Dance.—Says Mr. Gould Promised Him the Money to Re-establish a Magazine.

LAKEWOOD, N. J., Jan. 5.—When George Gould left New York to come here to live a winter, it is probable that it was a sense of relief that he would be away from cranks, who were continually bothering him with their demands for money. But now has met in an acquaintance at Lakewood, N. J., who calls himself a "journalist" and who promises to endeavor to get Mr. Gould to give him \$100,000, which he says Mr. Gould has promised him.

CHICK STILL REMAINS AT LAKEWOOD.

Mr. Gould Has Taken No Steps Against Him, but He May Be Arrested.

LAKEWOOD, N. J., Jan. 5.—E. C. Chick, who wants \$100,000 from George Gould, is still here and says he will stay a month, arrangements

WAITING TO SEE MR. GOULD.

CHICK HANGS ABOUT THE RAILWAY STATION. AT LAKEWOOD ALL DAY TODAY. LAKEWOOD, N. J., Jan. 5.—E. C. Chick, who asked George J. Gould for a check for \$100,000 is still in

CHICK'S CAREER DOWN EAST.

HIS ANTICS IN NEW-BEDFORD AND VINEYARD HAVEN—PLACED IN AN ASYLUM.

New-Bedford, Mass., Jan. 5.—Edson C. Chick, whose demand on George Gould created a sensation yesterday, is still in this city. In 1888 he came here and called "Chick's Vineyard News," who was handsome, well-dressed and was popular among the merchants. He secured quite an advertising patronage, and got out a bright little paper. In this Vineyard, I find reports appear that

CHICK GOES TO THE INSANE ASYLUM. Pronounced Unfit to be at Large by Two Physicians.

Edson C. Chick, who has been making his way for George Gould and his family at Lakewood, N. J., and elsewhere carrying premium business cards and politicians of this city as well as his own family, was removed from the insane asylum at Flatbush this afternoon. Chick returned from Lakewood yesterday with an son, Edson P. Chick, a young medical student from Lakewood, who is said to have been examined this morning by Dr. Turner and Dr. Corry. He was taken to the Flatbush and conversion office by Special Officer Moore, accompanied by his son and the also present, where he passed the night.

EDSON C. CHICK SENT TO AN ASYLUM.

Edson C. Chick, whose erratic actions at Lakewood and annoyance of George Gould and his family attracted much attention last month, has been committed to the County Insane Asylum at Flatbush.

CHICK AGAIN IN AN ASYLUM.

He is Debarred Insane and Sent to the Flatbush Institution.

Edson C. Chick will probably not bother George Gould or Hugh McLaughlin for some time.

PORT

A Crank Out Collecting. New York, Jan. 5.—A crank, named E. C. Chick, yesterday went to the Lakewood hotel, Lakewood, N. J., and wanted \$100,000 from George Gould.

A Crank After George Gould. New York, Jan. 5.—A crank of the name of E. C. Chick yesterday went to the Lakewood hotel, Lakewood, N. J., and wanted to see Mr. George Gould in order to collect \$100,000, which he says the latter had promised him. Chick was later released from an insane asylum.

CHICK WANTS THE \$100,000

WHICH HE SAYS GEORGE GOULD PROMISED TO GIVE HIM.

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CHICK GOES TO THE INSANE ASYLUM.

Pronounced Unfit to be at Large by Two Physicians.

Edson C. Chick, who has been making his way for George Gould and his family at Lakewood, N. J., and elsewhere carrying premium business cards and politicians of this city as well as his own family, was removed from the insane asylum at Flatbush this afternoon. Chick returned from Lakewood yesterday with an son, Edson P. Chick, a young medical student from Lakewood, who is said to have been examined this morning by Dr. Turner and Dr. Corry. He was taken to the Flatbush and conversion office by Special Officer Moore, accompanied by his son and the also present, where he passed the night.

EDSON C. CHICK SENT TO AN ASYLUM.

Edson C. Chick, whose erratic actions at Lakewood and annoyance of George Gould and his family attracted much attention last month, has been committed to the County Insane Asylum at Flatbush.

CHICK AGAIN IN AN ASYLUM.

He is Debarred Insane and Sent to the Flatbush Institution.

Edson C. Chick will probably not bother George Gould or Hugh McLaughlin for some time.

CHEERY CHICK IS AFTER GOULD.

Gushing Letter Addressed To the Wife of the Young Millionaire.

LABEL SUIT FOR A LARGE AMOUNT.

Newspapers, the Mild-Mannered Crank Says, Have Injured Him and His Financial Prospects.

E. C. Chick, the mild-mannered, gentle who wants George J. Gould to back his artistic enterprise, and John D. Rockefeller to aid him in riding New York and

A Rich Man and a Crank. Mr. Edson Chick, of Lakewood, N. Y., is under the delusion that Mr. George Gould owes him \$100,000.

It is proper to state right here that Mr. Chick is a crank. He spends his time writing notes to Mr. Gould, and in watching for a chance to dupe him. Millionaires are popularly supposed to be rather timid when anybody is after them with designs on their purses, but Mr. Gould is not easily intimidated. He says that he will take no steps to have the man arrested, and that he regards him as a harmless crank, and is really sorry for him.

Possibly, in this instance, it is known what he is about never safe to rely upon the news of a crank. Carter Harr this mistake in dealing with

The good citizens of Lakewood are

Newspapers across North America reported on Chick's encounter with millionaire George Gould in 1894, including the Vineyard Gazette (bottom right).

Chick's Last Days

Chick spent the rest of his life relatively quietly, in and out of asylums. The *Huntington Long Islander* reported on one of his releases in 1896, "He has been turned out of sixteen hospitals already for knowing too much, he says. He enjoys getting into and out of institutions." Chick spent the end of the century at his childhood home in Ayer, Massachusetts, caring for

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his ailing stepmother, bicycling, holding small “entertainments,” and occasionally threatening to start newspapers.

By 1910 he had moved permanently into his final home, a secluded private asylum in Queens called Breezehurst Terrace, where he spent his last years tending gardens and raising poultry alongside such troubled celebrities as “insane actor” and millionaire Hawley Chapman, who had worked with John Wilkes Booth’s brother; oilman William Ewbanks, the richest man in Flushing; lawyer Adolph Rubino, whose partner was dean of NYU’s School of Law; and Ellen Williams, who had famously threatened J. P. Morgan. The six-acre sanitarium held only two dozen patients in total. When not picking quinces in the orchards, Chick was probably subjected to the popular hydrotherapy treatments for manic depression which had come into vogue, including day-long baths and “Scottish douches” (powerful streams of alternating hot and cold water aimed at one’s spine from ten feet away.) He died quietly at this asylum in 1915.

Vineyard Epilogue

Although Chick never returned to Martha’s Vineyard, in 1894 his half-brother Isaac and his partners bought a large tract on Seaview avenue which included the fire-ravaged ruins of the massive Casino where Rev. Talmage had spoken the summer Chick had first arrived. It remained in the family for another quarter century before its sale to a Syrian rug dealer in 1921.

Vineyard Haven shoemaker and *News* printer Ellis Manter died a bachelor and left his substantial savings to the Town of Tisbury to provide shoes for poor children. The fund is still used today to pay for groceries, medications, and clothing for underprivileged Tisbury School students, provided the school also purchases at least one pair of shoes annually for a needy student.

Chick’s *News* was immediately succeeded by a second newspaper, managed from the same Lane’s Block office, only months after Chick left. *The Vineyard Haven Sentinel*, under the editorship of Arthur Deane, was a dry, generic, humorless, and rather forgettable newspaper by comparison.

Chick’s clerk Bert Smith joined the staff of the downstairs grocery and went on to become the first “S” of the SBS grocery store, which has since evolved into a grain and garden supply store.

Dr. Lane continued to host small businesses and other organizations in his Block. During the 1890s he began his own successful Island-wide telephone system, including his own poles and wires, in direct competition to Bell Telephone.

Edson Chick lived on our Island for barely nine months. Did he leave any lasting legacy? It could be argued that he helped speed the telephone

cable to the Island, or that he helped make Tisbury's new water system the immediate success it was. Or, stretching a little, that he might even have helped update the Commonwealth's "age of consent" laws, one of which was passed into law only a month after Chick brought attention to New Bedford's "minotaurs." In the end, however, he did leave two dozen issues of a funny, sarcastic, original, trouble-making, gossipy little paper that was cleverly written and journalistically adventurous. We can only hope that a few of Chick's escaped "mental rats" are running among us still.



References

Edson Chick spent most of his life haunting newspaper offices when he wasn't working in one, charming some of his fellow journalists and irritating others. As the *New York Daily Tribune* characterized his illness, "his particular weakness was in regard to newspapers."

This article was puzzled together almost entirely from hundreds of references in dozens of 19th-century newspapers, including *The Vineyard Gazette* and *The Martha's Vineyard Herald*, but also *The Brooklyn Eagle*, *The Brooklyn Evening World*, *The New York Times*, *The New York World*, *The New York Tribune*, *The New York Sun*, *The New York Herald*, *The Fitchburg Sentinel*, *The Hudson Evening Register*, *The Auburn Daily Bulletin*, *The Huntington Long Islander*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Lowell Courier*, *The Lowell Daily Sun*, *The Middletown Daily News*, *The Trenton Times*, *The Waco Evening News*, *The Amsterdam Daily Telegram*, *The Watertown Times*, *The Atlanta Constitution*, *The Victoria Daily Colonist*, *The Batavia Republican Advocate*, and of course from his own unique endeavor, *Chick's Vineyard Haven News*.

— All images courtesy of the author.



Viewers such as this were used to see the cards as “three-dimensional” pictures. (All photos from the collection of the Martha’s Vineyard Museum.)

A Tale of Two Photo Series

Stereoscopic Views Reveal Answer to an Old Mystery

by BONNIE STACY

THE MARTHA’S VINEYARD MUSEUM’S set of 12 glass-plate photo negatives showing a 19th-century whaling voyage has long been recognized as an unusual and fascinating example of the once-popular form of stereo photography. A 1988 article in the museum’s journal, the *Duke’s County Intelligencer*, describes how Charles and Richard Shute of Edgartown made the photos in 1868 and how their studio was destroyed in 1872, along with everything in it.¹ One question remained: how can we still have the original negatives if everything was destroyed? The answer is that we don’t. The Shutes recreated them, a difficult and painstaking effort. The Museum has the recreated negatives. The evidence is in the photos printed from them.

Charles H. Shute and Son, Photographers

Shortly after his medical discharge from the Civil War in 1863, 19-year-old Richard Shute joined his father’s photography business on Main Street

1 Alvin J. Goldwyn, “Stereoscopic Whaling: Charles H. Shute & Son,” *The Dukes County Intelligencer* 29, no. 3 (May 1988):139-151

BONNIE STACY is chief curator of the Martha’s Vineyard Museum. This article is ©2012 the *Martha’s Vineyard Times*, from which it is reprinted by permission.



Richard Shute as a young man. After his death in 1923, Richard's sister, Mrs. Charles S. Perry, gave the glass-plate negatives from his studio to the Museum in memory of her brother and her father.

in Edgartown. Their studio produced the standard photography of the day: portraits, comic vignettes, street views, and landscapes. Many were stereo photographs of Martha's Vineyard views, made for sale to tourists. Stereo photographs were popular from the mid-1800s through the early 1900s. Each card had two slightly different photographs printed side by side. When viewed through a stereoscope, a single three-dimensional picture appeared. People amassed large collections of these cards, and gathering to look at them was a popular parlor entertainment. The whaling series is just a small part of the hundreds of stereo views in the museum's collection, but its subject is unique to the Shutes.

Introduced in March 1868, the series of 12 pictures showed the drama of the hunt from spotting a school of whales to rendering blubber into oil on board ship. To make the photographs,

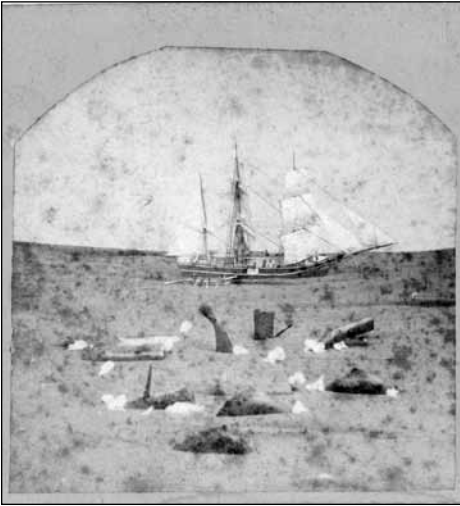
Charles Shute crafted a meticulous tabletop diorama and moved his model boats, whales, and sailors from place to place within it. Though these photos were never intended to be printed larger than three inches square, a ship model about five feet long was the centerpiece of every scene. The entire diorama was more than eight feet across. The sea looks like it was represented by cloth arranged to resemble waves. After the photos were printed, and probably for an extra charge, some of them had color added by hand.

The result was a set of pictures that, when viewed as originally intended, looked like remarkably realistic whaling scenes. One admirer wrote: "That these views are correct representations is attested by those who have followed the business for years." Sales were good. The Shutes even received an order from as far away as Le Havre, France.²

A devastating blaze and a new beginning

In May 1872, the Shutes lost their studio in a fire that probably started in

² The admirer was Charles Macreading Vincent, Richard Shute's childhood friend, fellow Civil War veteran, and sometime editor of the *Vineyard Gazette*, where this review of the stereo views appeared. *Ibid.* 141-142.



The photo on the left is from the first whaling series; the one on the right was made after the studio fire of 1872.

the darkroom. It destroyed their building and two others on Main Street. The newspaper described the scene as “awfully grand” with flames “shooting up into the air like fiery tongued demons.”³ Among the thousands of glass plate negatives that burned were the ones for the whaling series. Such a disaster could have ended the business, but instead the photographers set about replacing their stock by recreating their popular views.

For the most part, this was a straightforward process. On May 31, the paper reported that “R. G. Shute has been busily engaged in the past few days in taking new stereoscopic views of various portions of our village, and will soon have a full supply of local pictures. Richard has now gone to the Camp Ground and will stock up with new views as soon as possible. We are glad to see enterprise that fire cannot kill.”⁴

It was more complicated to recreate the whaling photos, and the fact that the Shutes made the effort attests to the value of these pictures to their business. It was also an opportunity to make them better. Charles Shute, who created the diorama, altered the scenes from their earlier versions. It is easy to miss the differences – the changes are only obvious when the pictures are viewed side by side. But the later version is bolder and clearer.

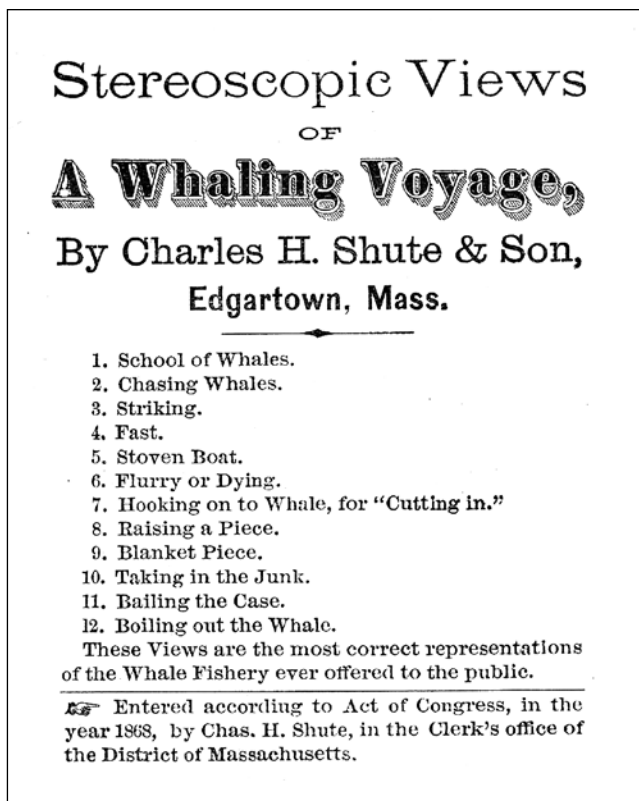
The ship model takes up more space in the new pictures and the “sea” is choppy. The photo that shows whale blubber being rendered into oil now has billowing black “smoke” made of wool. All of this is especially apparent in enlargements from the negatives. Examples from both the original and the recreated series are presented here, side by side, for the first time.

3 *Ibid.* 142-143.

4 *Ibid.* 144

The ship models look different, too. The model in the second series is the U. S. Grant (no actual whaleship ever bore this name). Charles Shute made it to exacting detail, along with whales and other carvings. This model has been in the Smithsonian's National Watercraft collection since 1875, proving that the Shutes recreated the whaling series less than three years after the fire.⁵

There is no evidence that the Shutes took out a new copyright for the replicated series. Instead, they went on selling their "Stereoscopic Views of a Whaling Voyage," never hinting that what customers bought after 1872 was different from the March 1868 original. But now we know.



The Shutes probably used this printed list with both sets of whaling pictures.

5 It is likely that Shute named his model in honor of President Grant's 1874 visit to Oak Bluffs. H. I. Chappelle purchased the model from Charles Shute for the Smithsonian in 1875. Personal communication from Paul F. Johnston, Curator of Maritime History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, March 21, 2012. http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/collection/TR_025726.html, accessed April 30, 2012.

The City of Columbus Sinking: The Vineyard's Worst Marine Disaster

by TOM DRESSER

THE WRECK of the *Costa Concordia* off the coast of Italy in January 2012 and the hundredth anniversary memorial of the sinking of the *Titanic* have launched shipwrecks onto the forefront of our national consciousness.¹

The *Mertie B. Crowley*, a 300-foot, six-masted schooner, ran aground off Wasque on Chappaquiddick in January, 1910, with a cargo of coal. All fifteen crew members were rescued. The *Port Hunter*, laden with war supplies, was rammed by a tugboat off East Chop in November, 1918. She sank, but, again, with no loss of life. Over the ensuing decades, the wreck of the *Port Hunter* has inspired many divers to investigate and confiscate the ship's cargo.



This Bible from the City of Columbus is stored in the vault of Chilmark Town Hall. Mrs. Nahum T. Norton salvaged the Bible on the north shore of Chilmark. Courtesy of Todd Christie; photograph by Joyce Dresser.

A shipwreck implies disaster. When an oceangoing vessel runs ashore during a storm (*Mertie B. Crowley*, *Portland*) or crashes into another vessel or an iceberg (*Port Hunter*, *Titanic*), we sense the helplessness of the crew. But when a ship on a rou-

1 In the fall of 2011, the Martha's Vineyard Museum mounted an exhibit of archival and three-dimensional artifacts associated with shipwrecks in Vineyard waters, demonstrating the frequency, drama and heavy tolls in life and property shipwrecks have wreaked over the past three centuries, including the *City of Columbus*.

TOM DRESSER, a frequent contributor to *The Dukes County Intelligencer*, is the author of several fiction and non-fiction books including his 2012 release, *Disaster Off Martha's Vineyard: The Sinking of the City of Columbus*. He lives in Oak Bluffs with his wife, Joyce. Visit Tom on www.thomasdresser.com.



This painting of the shipwreck by Edmund Russell (1851-1927) is the property of Peter McGhee, who had it cleaned and reframed. On loan to the Martha's Vineyard Museum; photograph by Joyce Dresser.

time journey runs afoul of a buoy marking dangerous underwater rocks, the only explanation is pilot error. The sinking of the *City of Columbus* in January, 1884, falls into the category of pilot error. At the time it was the worst shipwreck of the 19th century; and, to this day, the wreck of the *City of Columbus* is accounted to have had the most deaths caused by a shipwreck in Vineyard waters.

Inattention and Inexperience: Recipe for Disaster

The *City of Columbus* had a full complement of 45 able-bodied crew and 87 passengers when it set sail from Nickerson Wharf in Boston Harbor in the chilly mid-afternoon of January 17, 1884. Captain Wright, with fifteen years experience as a pilot, had navigated the Boston to Savannah, Georgia route dozens of times. The 275-foot steamship (twenty feet longer than the M/V *Island Home*, yet twenty-six feet narrower) was only six years old. She was equipped with six lifeboats, a life raft and enough life preservers for 200 passengers. Yet more than a hundred people drowned in the early morning hours of January 18, 1884, less than a half mile offshore from the Gay Head lighthouse.

What went wrong?

A series of compounding circumstances caused the calamity. It was the middle of a cold January night. The *City of Columbus* had rounded Cape Cod and steamed into Vineyard Sound (this was 30 years before the Cape Cod Canal). Captain Wright had been on duty for twelve hours without relief and, after two o'clock in the morning, deemed it an appropriate time



The second lifeboat crew helped save men from the sunken ship. From left to right: Peter Johnson, Charles Grimes, Patrick Devine, Conrad Jeffers, Leonard Vanderhoop and James Mosher. From the collections of the Martha's Vineyard Museum.

to take a break. After assigning his second mate, Gus Harding, to be in charge of the ship, Wright retired to his stateroom. Harding was only 21 and not a licensed pilot. Captain Wright later claimed he never slept, and he was only a few feet away from the man at the wheel, but no one realized anything was wrong until it was too late.²

As the ship emerged from the lee (protection) of the Elizabeth Islands, the wind picked up with the longer fetch (expanse for wind to blow). Tide and current forced the ship closer in the direction of the western shore of Martha's Vineyard. Neither the man at the wheel, the look-out in the bow, nor the second mate ever noticed that the ship was off course. Far off course.

At three in the morning, another ship, the *Panther*, going north through the channel of Vineyard Sound, passed the *City of Columbus* heading south. That ship's captain noted the steamer was off course, but in the days before radio, in the middle of the night, there was no way to signal or warn the crew of the doomed steamship.

At 3:30 a.m. the *City of Columbus* crunched onto the Devil's Bridge, an underwater glacial boulder just off the Gay Head Light. When the ship struck, Wright dashed from his stateroom and ordered the ship into reverse,

² Captain Wright was born in 1831, in Wareham, and became a licensed pilot in 1869. When the Nickersons purchased the *City of Columbus* from its previous owner, in 1882, Captain Wright came with the ship. So he had fifteen years of experience as a licensed pilot and had worked with the Nickersons for about eighteen months when the shipwreck occurred.



The City of Columbus quarterboard, displayed on a shack at Gay Head, circa 1884. From the collections of the Martha's Vineyard Museum.

to disengage from the ledge. When he tried to back up, the ship became stuck on the boulder, the hull tore open and she began to take on water.

The wind picked up.

Now the ship was on the rocks, taking on water and broadside to the waves that pounded viciously over the top deck of the ship. Sea water was pouring in through the holes in the hull at the bottom of the ship. Captain Wright calmly went below decks to assist passengers with their life-preservers and inform them everyone would have to abandon ship.

Rescue Efforts

The crew tried to hoist a sail to draw the vessel off the rock. They tried to launch life boats, but because the ship listed so far to port, life boats could not be lowered. Passengers, alerted by the crew, rushed up on deck, but were immediately washed overboard by the massive waves which thundered over the stranded steamer. Water also poured in through the stern as the vessel settled backwards into deeper waters.

With no options left, many men—mostly crew and a few passengers—clambered up the masts and perched in the rigging above the sunken vessel. Women and children did not attempt this means of salvation, either because they were too weak, too frightened, or they were muscled out of the way. The wreck of the *City of Columbus* exemplified the opposite of the adages: “women and children first,” and “the captain goes down with his ship.”

Hours later, at first light, about seven that morning, the stranded souls were spotted by alert assistant lighthouse-keeper, Fred Poole, of the Gay Head lighthouse. Rescue was still hours off.

Poole alerted his boss, Horatio Pease, who immediately recognized the crisis off shore. Pease signaled the survivors by throwing a blanket over the light. He alerted nearby neighbors that there was a ship in distress. And he coordinated a rescue effort by volunteers of the Massachusetts Humane Society.

These Humane Society volunteers were all Wampanoag Native Americans who lived in Gay Head, not far from the lighthouse. The first six served as crew and boarded a lifeboat, which promptly capsized. They righted it, then braved powerful seas to row out to the shipwreck. This first boat plucked seven survivors from the ship's rigging.

Samuel Anthony, one of the rescuers, was quoted in the *Vineyard Gazette* on February 15, 1884, explaining that the lifeboat: "...was held up to within a safe distance of the wreck by the oarsmen and steersman, while intelligent direction was given to the survivors in rigging to jump, one at a time, whenever a sea receded from the ship." He said as soon as one man was pulled into the life boat, he was handed a coat from one of the rescuers. The row back to shore was treacherous as the wind and waves did not recede.

A second crew of Humane Society volunteers coordinated rescue efforts with the revenue cutter *Samuel Dexter*, which arrived, by chance, in late morning. By early afternoon, after nearly twelve hours aloft, some twenty-nine people had been rescued. The last man off the wreck was Captain Schuyler Wright.

Despite the valiant efforts of the Wampanoags, none of the thirty-five women and children were saved. Altogether one hundred and three people died. Only twelve of the 87 passengers were rescued.



Samuel Anthony considered this medal his most prized possession. It was presented to the Wampanoag rescuers by the Massachusetts Humane Society. Property of Beverly Wright; photograph by Joyce Dresser.

Cruelly Causeless

No storm caused the disaster, just inattentive navigation. Boat drills had not been held for months. The captain was within feet of the wheelman, but never realized danger lurked close by. The disaster was preventable.

When the *Samuel Dexter* docked that night in New Bedford with survivors and the dead aboard, news of the wreck quickly spread through the city. The *Morning Mercury* broke the story and shared it with the Associated Press. Within a day, news of the shipwreck was transmitted nationwide. Dramatic illustrations magnified the disaster in the tabloid press; daily papers focused on details of the rescue, while national magazines offered editorial opinion. “Cruelly causeless,” was the phrase used by *Harper’s* to define the disaster.

Steamship inspectors opened an investigation which found the captain negligent for not being on duty when disaster struck, then reversing engines once the ship grounded on the rocks rather than riding out the storm.³ Court cases were filed, yet there was little or no compensation for death, injury or personal property loss. Praise, however, was bestowed on the Wampanoag rescuers in the form of monetary awards and ceremonial medals for their courage as they rescued souls from the rigging of the ship.

The story of the disaster quickly became part of local lore: “Since the wreck of the *City of Columbus* New Bedford children have been frequently noticed playing “wreck” as they call it. Recently, as several little ones were so engaged, using a box to represent the wreck, a little girl got into the box and held up her hands to be saved, whereupon a little boy shouted, Go back, go back; not a woman or child was saved.” (*Worcester Spy*, February 20, 1884)

The following recipe for disaster was published in the *Vineyard Gazette* on February 29, 1884: “A prize problem in navigation. Given: One Devil’s bridge, one cold captain, one lookout who doesn’t look out, a mate who does not comprehend an order, and a warm state room; mix three light-houses, one steamship and one hundred twenty passengers; add a fresh gale and a supply of ignorance or stupidity, or both; sift out the intelligence supposed to exist in every pilot house, head for the nearest reef, and calculate the result.”



For more information about this historic wreck: George A. Hough, Jr., *Disaster on Devil’s Bridge* (1963), and Thomas Dresser, *Disaster Off Martha’s Vineyard: The Sinking of the City of Columbus*, (2012).

3 Following the inquiry by the Steamship inspectors, Captain Wright lost his pilot’s license; he was devastated by the wreck and worked odd jobs in the South. He died in the 1920s, a broken man.

The Chilmark Locality Of Charles Lyell

*At Lucy Vincent Bluff, Discovering a Site
Important to Early American Geology*

by PAUL S. BOYER, PH.D.

IN JUNE OF 1986, I was walking the beach along the south shore with my young son, Charlie. When we reached Lucy Vincent Beach, we came upon a rocky bluff, evidently undergoing rapid erosion. The cliff was steep, and large chunks of the constituent sediment had broken away, and were resting on the sand. Charlie's curiosity was aroused, and relying on my geological expertise as a professor, he asked me if there might be fossils in those rocks.

I began to explain that I did not think such a coarse conglomerate would be likely to preserve fossils very well, and that (as many textbooks relate) finer sediments ordinarily are more suitable, because ... then I paused uneasily.

Already I thought that I saw something interesting. We walked over and took a closer look. Within a few seconds, we found a shark tooth, and then another. I also noticed some pieces of spongy-looking, porous material: obviously fragments of bone. Fossil bone like that occurs at Gay Head, as I well knew. But what was it doing here?

Within a few days, I wrote to the Town of Chilmark for permission to have access to the bluff, and permission to take some surface samples. At that point, I did not even have a parking sticker which would allow me to visit that beach by car, and it was a long walk from our summer house! The town responded by assigning a long-time resident geologist, Maurice

PAUL S. BOYER graduated from Princeton University, and earned a Ph.D. in geology from Rice University. He retired from 38 years of college teaching, during which time he taught geology, paleontology, marine biology, meteorology, and a few other subjects, mainly at Fairleigh Dickinson University. He is at work on several projects which reflect an amateur's interest in history, which is very much like geology, for both subjects involve digging.

Since retirement, Boyer and his wife Marian have been living almost half the year in Nova Scotia. Boyer's interest in geology was greatly stimulated by summer vacations spent in Chilmark starting as a small child, and continuing for 50 years.

H. Pease, retired from the U. S. Geological Survey, to accompany me to the site, so that he could advise the town on my request.

The town approved my request, and I was allowed to enter the beach early in the morning, before the time of public admission, so as not to encourage unauthorized collecting and cliff-climbing. For several years, I visited the bluff soon after sunrise, and examined closely as much as I could reach. One never sees everything on the first look, and every visit was rewarding.

As my investigations progressed, I began to realize that the Lucy Vincent cliff was a site of interest for the history of early geology. I became convinced that this was very likely the Chilmark location visited and described by a British visitor who has been truly called the “founder of modern historical geology”: Charles Lyell. Born in Scotland at the close of the 18th Century, Lyell grew up in a large family with lively intellectual interests, reinforced by an admirable library. Like Darwin and Wallace, the young Charles Lyell was an amateur insect-collector. Like Darwin, Lyell initially was directed toward a legal career, but his interest in natural history eventually predominated. Loren Eiseley wrote that bad eyesight and a slight speech problem further impeded Lyell’s legal career, for which the ability to deliver stirring oratory was apparently an expected accomplishment. Gradually, his natural history interests prevailed. When in his twenties, Lyell was already publishing scientific articles in the prestigious *Quarterly Review*.¹

The accompanying portrait shows him with a magnifying glass which he carried by a ribbon. It would be useful in examining rocks, insects, and fossils. It also reminds us that Lyell had lifelong problems with his vision, and by old age was virtually blind. Nonetheless, nothing was wrong with his powers of observation, his curiosity, and his imagination. His friend Charles Darwin wrote to an acquaintance, “I really think my books come half out of Lyell’s brain. I see through his eyes.”²

Eventually, Lyell became the most influential geologist of his time. He promoted field observations, and brought into play a wide background knowledge unimpeded by disciplinary boundaries. Following James Hutton, Lyell taught uniformitarianism: the principle that the same natural laws and processes that operate in the universe now, have always operated in the past.

In 1841-42, Lyell visited Canada, Nova Scotia, and the United States. (In 1867, Nova Scotia became part of the Dominion of Canada, now known simply as Canada.) His trip was extensive, and he listened and observed

1 Eiseley, Loren C. 1959. Charles Lyell. *Scientific American*, vol. 201, no. 2, pp. 98-101 (Aug). Additional references pertaining to Lyell are listed with that article.

2 Letter from Darwin to Leonard Horner, 29 August 1844; in Darwin, Charles; Frederick Burkhardt and Sydney Smith (eds.), *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin 1844-1846* (1987), Vol. 3, 523 pp. Cambridge University Press; page 55.

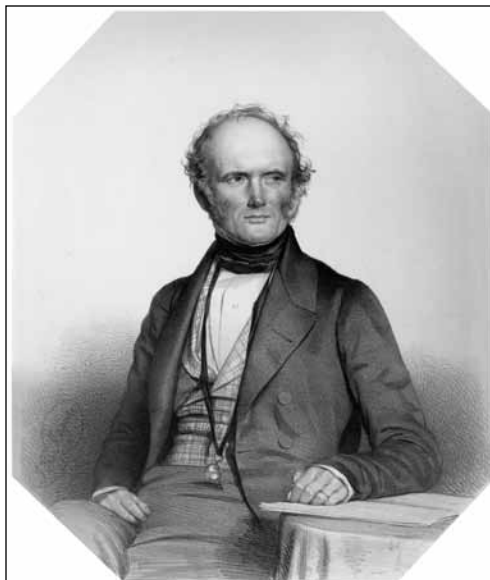
closely wherever he went. Among his side trips was a visit to Martha's Vineyard. He boarded a steamboat in New Bedford, and by late afternoon had reached Vineyard Haven. By carriage, probably moving swiftly, he reached Gay Head in the gathering darkness. It is not recorded exactly where he stayed, but by the next morning he was examining the cliffs: taking notes, collecting specimens, and accepting donated finds from some of the local people.

In his first report of the visit, Lyell wrote that the fossils at Gay Head represented the Tertiary times, specifically the Miocene, matching fossils of the same age which he had studied in England and the European mainland.³ Here he corrected the estimate of the Massachusetts geologist Edward Hitchcock (1824), but noted tactfully that Hitchcock had not had the advantage of knowledge which had become available since.⁴

Lyell also referred to a second island locality which he visited during his whirlwind tour. The beds there were "finely exposed near Chilmark on the southwest side of the island."⁵

The only likely place within Chilmark where the sediments are at all comparable to those of Gay Head are at what we now call the Lucy Vincent bluff. Lucy Vincent Beach is close to Chilmark center: I have made the walk in twenty minutes. Furthermore, the description by Lyell, though brief, is as perfect as one could desire, at least allowing for the erosion which must have taken place in the intervening century-and-a-half.

"In the section at Chilmark similar strata to those at Gay Head occur, but

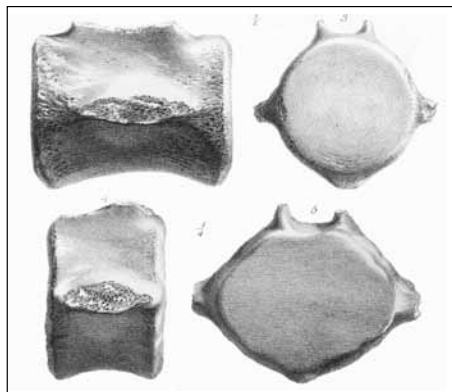


Charles Lyell. (All images in this article are from the author's collection.)

3 Lyell, Charles 1844. On the Tertiary strata of the island of Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts. *Proceedings of the Geological Society of London*, vol. 4, no. 92, pp. 31-33. "Read Feb 1." Partially reprinted in *American Journal of Science and Arts*, vol. 46, pp. 318-319 (1844).

4 Hitchcock, Edward 1824. Notices of the geology of Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands in 1823. *American Journal of Science and Arts*, vol. 7, pp. 240-248. Hitchcock had guessed that the Tertiary beds of Gay Head were Eocene. A version of Hitchcock's paper, edited and annotated by Paul S. Boyer, is found in *The Dukes County Intelligencer*, vol. 42, no. 4, May 2001, pp. 186-204.

5 Lyell, 1844, *op. cit.*, page 32.



Vertebrae collected by Lyell at Martha's Vineyard, and illustrated in his book, *Travels in North America with Geological Observations in the United States, and Nova Scotia*.

the general dip is south-west. Some of the folds, however, give anticlinal dips to the north-east as well as the south-west, and there are many irregularities, the beds being sometimes vertical and twisted in every direction. Several faults are seen and veins of ironsand,⁶ which intersect the strata like narrow dykes,⁷ as if there had been cracks filled from above. One bed of osseous conglomerate⁸ at Chilmark, four yards in thickness, is vertical, and its strike is well seen to be north 25° east, so that the disturbances have evidently been so great that it would be difficult without more sections to determine positively the prevailing strike of these beds.”⁹

The coastline at the Lucy Vincent Beach is near the Wequobsque Cliffs,¹⁰ where cliff retreat from erosion was estimated at 5.5 feet per year by Whiting (reported by Shaler¹¹). A more recent estimate for approximately the same stretch of beach is almost the same as the earlier estimate, at 5.6 feet per year.¹² If this rate has operated from Lyell’s time until today, it has caused a loss of approximately 280 m of the bluff, changing its aspect substantially. (When I review old maps and aerial photos of the bluff, however, I conclude that these estimates, which may, indeed, describe the retreat of the Wequobsque Cliffs, are greater than the rate of retreat for the bluff, even though it is certainly fragile, and falling apart year by year.)

In spite of this loss since Lyell’s day, the remaining parts of the bluff conform very well to Lyell’s description of his Chilmark locality. The beds vary in dip greatly, and there is a large, almost vertical surface, the rem-

6 ironsand: probably here refers to iron-cemented sandy sediment.

7 dyke: American spelling is dike. What Lyell described here is indeed what today would be called a *sedimentary dike*, and Lyell’s explanation of its origin is accepted today (Bates & Jackson, 1987, *Glossary of Geology*, page 598).

8 osseus (or boney) conglomerate. The same term was used by Lyell for a fossiliferous bed at Gay Head: in both places it contains numerous shark teeth and fragments of whale bones. It was latter named the Aquinnah Conglomerate.

9 Lyell, 1844, *op. cit.*, page 32.

10 Wequobsque Cliffs: called by Shaler (1888) the Weyquosque or Chilmark cliffs, and in some early maps labeled the Nashaquitsa Cliffs.

11 Shaler, Nathaniel Southgate, 1888. Report on the Geology of Martha’s Vineyard. U. S. Geological Survey, *7th Annual Report*, pp. 297-363, pl. 19-29; 9 text-fig.; 2 maps.

12 Kaye, Clifford A. 1973. Map showing changes in the shoreline of Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, during the past 200 years. U. S. Geological Survey, Miscellaneous Field Studies Map MF-534.

nant of something similar to the very thick the sedimentary dike Lyell describes, and also containing a rich selection of fossils.

The more pebbly beds in this bluff look like very large cross-beds.¹³ They could also be looked at as foreset beds, which are characteristic of a delta front. It is even conceivable that some of those beds could represent talus slopes of outwash. The puzzling thing is that they all indicate sediment movement toward the northwest, which is toward the direction of the last glacier, which presumably shoved this material to its present position. So how can one make sense of this?

Glacial Geology

First, it should be explained that the surface of Martha's Vineyard is mostly covered by glacially transported material, either dumped by melting glacial ice as till (unstratified glacial material); or washed into cracks in the ice, eventually to form kame hills (which are stratified, or layered). Then in the central part of the Vineyard, in the State Forest area, including the region around the airport and farther south, the land is glacial outwash (stratified material washed out from the glacier by streams of meltwater).

It took many years of investigation, but at length geologists realized that at Martha's Vineyard and similar places, the glaciers also distorted pre-existing sediments by dragging and shoving.¹⁴ In this way the main beds at Gay Head, deposited in pre-glacial times, were distorted into extreme folds, and broken into imbricated slices. The whole mess makes it a challenge for geologists to make sense of it all.

Clifford A. Kaye, a long-time student of glacial geology, including that of Martha's Vineyard geology, described well these problems:

"Glacial transportation of intact plates of older sediment is particularly bothersome because these may have survived glaciation in such a natural manner that one readily misreads them as being in their place of origin. A pile-up of several plates of sediment, as in ... the Gay Head moraine of Martha's Vineyard ... can easily result in a stratigraphic interpretation where relative ages of sediments are assigned on the basis of superposition, when, in fact, they may be like a well shuffled deck of cards, where the oldest need not be on the bottom."¹⁵

13 Cross-beds are layers inclined at an angle to the main plains of stratification. The dip of the cross-beds is in the direction of flow of the currents which deposited them.

14 See Oldale, Robert N, and C.J. O'Hara 1984. Glaciotectonic origin of the Massachusetts coastal end moraines and a fluctuating Wisconsinan ice margin. Geological Society of America *Bulletin* vol. 95, no. 1, pp. 61-74, 13 text-fig.

15 Kaye, Clifford A. 1976. Outline of Pleistocene geology of Boston Basin, in New England Intercollegiate Geological Conference 68th Annual Meeting, *Geology of Southeastern Massachusetts*, ed. Barry Cameron; pp. 46-63.

The most recent glaciation treated the deposits of the preceding glacier with no due respect: to a glacier, it is all just more material to be picked up, moved with the flow of the ice, or shoved forward by the glacial front. Thus the glacial deposits from one glacial advance are treated as any other transportable material, and they are accordingly eroded and redeposited in a new glacial deposit.

Sediments and Fossils of the Bluff

In the early period of my study of the bluff, there was clearly exposed at the base of the cliff a layer of blue-gray clay, rather uniform and almost horizontal, and not deformed in any way that I could see. It was unfossiliferous. This clay is the Gardiners Clay, described at length by Edward Wigglesworth, which (as he noted) is in some areas called the “blue clay.” It is an interglacial deposit, representing the return of the sea before the latest (Wisconsinan) glaciation.¹⁶ By 1998, at the Lucy Vincent bluff, this clay was covered by beach sand, and by talus derived from the eroding cliff face.

The sediments of the main bluff are varied. There is much coarse, gravelly material that has been sorted by stream or current action. Most of the clay-size material has been removed. The finer sand layers are rich in shark teeth, especially teeth of small size (a centimeter or less). The more osseous part, apparently a sedimentary dike like that seen by Lyell, is not so well sorted, and is rich in a variety of sedimentary materials, and also a variety of fossils. In that portion of the cliff we find several characteristic sediment constituents matching different layers at Gay Head.

The organic remains tell the same story, only with more specificity, depending on the particular fossil. There are rather large shark teeth, as found in the Aquinnah conglomerate of Gay Head; but shark teeth are notably poor imprecise indicators of geologic age.

But here are also phosphatic nodules, like those from the Miocene greensand layers at Gay Head. They are worn, and very weather beaten in appearance. In fact, they are sometimes difficult to recognize. To this end, I decided to contrive some chemical test which would enable me to identify the phosphate nodules in the field. I mixed up the standard reagent mixture used to identify phosphate in a qualitative-analysis chemistry course. I carried it to the bluff in a small bottle with a medicine-dropper in the top, just as we geologists frequently carry around a small bottle of dilute hydrochloric acid as a test for carbonate rocks such as limestone. I tried my phosphate test by placing a drop of reagent on a phosphate nodule, waiting for the tell-tale yellow color — and nothing happened. Somewhat disappointed, I took from my pocket a piece of paper towel to clean

16 Pages 167-174 in Woodworth & Wigglesworth, 1934. *Geography and geology of the region including Cape Cod, the Elizabeth Islands, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, No Mans Land and Block Island*. Cambridge, Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, *Memoir*, vol. 52, i-xvi+322 pp., 38 pl., 23 text-fig.

the reagent from the nodule, and suddenly noticed that the towel showed a bright yellow color! The problem is that the color did not show up on a dark sample, but the solution itself had turned yellow, and could be seen easily on the white towel. With this technique, I found that I could locate and recognize a large number of phosphate nodules. By examining them closely, and breaking some open, I found that (just as in the Gay Head Miocene beds) many nodules contained the remains of a fossil crab. The best remains I could find clearly matched the crab found in the Gay Head Miocene greensand, *Archaeoplax signifera* Stimpson, 1863.¹⁷

The Gay Head Crab (as it is sometimes called informally) is found nowhere else except at Gay Head, and now also at Lucy Vincent bluff. Its closest living relatives today enjoy the subtropical, warm waters off the coast of China. Fossil plants from Gay Head also suggest that the Miocene was warm relative to today's climate in Massachusetts.¹⁸

A rare find at the Lucy Vincent bluff was a specimen of the internal mold of the bivalve *Macoma lyelli* Dall, 1894.¹⁹ It occurs in one layer at Gay Head: in past years, I have seen these at only one place in those cliffs.

Relatively uncommon were a very few pieces of lignite,²⁰ which is quite remarkable, because lignite is not very resistant to abrasion, and might not be expected easily to survive sedimentary transport; but evidently, a few pieces, encased perhaps in ice and then washed in water, did survive. They are significant because they represent yet another stratum in Gay Head, part of the Cretaceous section there.

Throughout the beds at Lucy Vincent bluff are pieces of the bones of cetaceans.²¹ All show signs of abrasion, from being tumbled around on the sea floor, and then from being transported by the glacier. Most are in poor

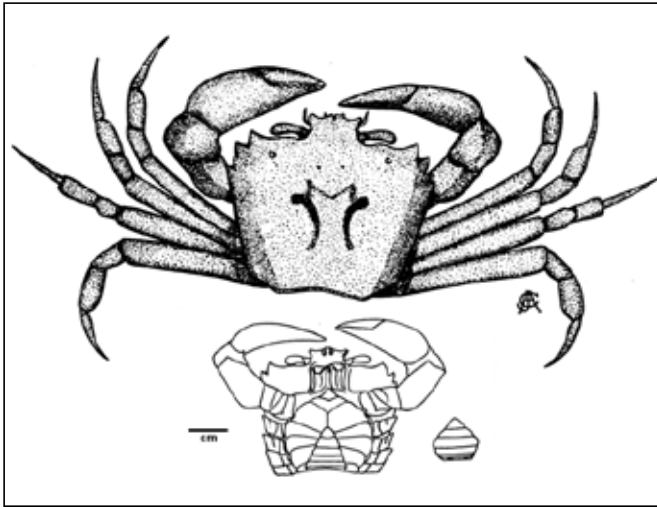
17 Stimpson, William 1863. On the fossil crab of Gay Head. *Boston Journal of Natural History*, vol. 7, pp. 583-589.

18 Fredericksen, Norman O. 1984. Stratigraphic, paleoclimatic, and paleobiogeographic significance of Tertiary sporomorphs from Massachusetts. U. S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 1308, 25 pp., 4 pl.

19 Dall, William Healy, 1894. Notes on the Miocene and Pliocene of Gay Head, Martha's Vineyard, Mass., and on the "land phosphate" of the Ashley River district, S. C. *American Journal of Science*, 3rd ser., vol. 48, pp. 296-301. *Macoma lyelli* is a small clam, about the size of a cherrystone, but much flatter. An internal mold forms from the solidified sediment from inside the valves of the clam. When the shell perchance dissolves away, the internal mold remains, often in good condition. In this case the intern molds survived reworking from the original deposit, transportation by a glacier, and eventually became part of the infilling of a fissure which formed a sedimentary dike.

20 lignite: a low-grade form of coal, falling between peat and bituminous coal. In Europe, it is called *Braunkohl* (brown coal); but the specimens from Gay Head's Cretaceous beds are predominantly black, looking much like charred wood.

21 cetaceans: whales, porpoises, and their relatives.



The Gay Head Crab, *Archaeoplax signifera* Stimpson, 1863, as reconstructed by Joseph A. Cushman.

From: Cushman, Joseph A[ugustin]. 1905. Fossil crabs of the Gay Head Miocene. *American Naturalist*, vol. 39, no. 462, pp. 381-387, pl. 1, 2. (June). This was one of the earliest papers by Cushman, published when he was 24. Cushman went on to specialize in fossil foraminifera, which were used extensively for stratigraphic purposes, particularly in the petroleum industry.

By the 1930s, he was earning more from consulting than the annual salary of the President of the United States

(H. G. Stenzel, *personal communication*). This, in addition to his scientific accomplishments, should make him a hero within the paleontological trade.

condition, and because they are scattered, it is impossible to reconstruct any one individual. Some of the vertebrae I have seen in the bluff are large — some 20 cm in diameter. In Gay Head, these cetacean bones come predominately from the Miocene beds.

The conclusion we reach is that this part of the sediments of the Lucy Vincent bluff is a mixed deposit, derived from erosion and redeposition of different layers similar to those found at Gay Head. Although Gay Head stratigraphy may be very complex, Lucy Vincent is a real stew, and the fossils clearly demonstrate this heterogeneity.

Glacial Setting

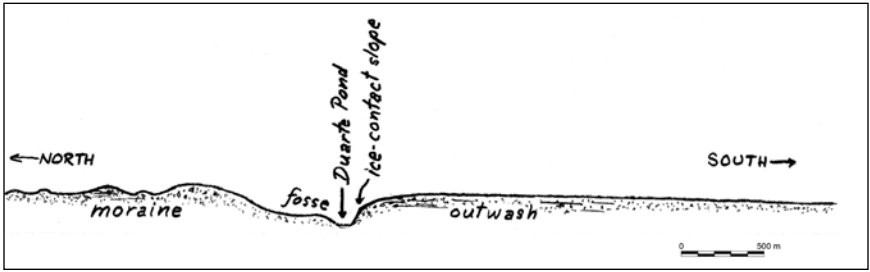
But what sort of glacial deposit is this? The answer is suggested by the nature of the topography of the bluff and the area around it. The bluff is high: the hill from which it is cut is just over 15 m (50 feet) above sea level. It is bordered to the north by the west arm of Chilmark Pond; and beyond to the north is a more gradual rise into a moraine region.

There are elsewhere on the island comparable landforms, pointed out originally by Edward Wigglesworth,²² which show ice-contact slopes formed where the advanced margin of the glacier has shoved older sediments. With the retreat of the ice margin, there remained a relatively steep slope at the margin between moraine and outwash. The elongate trough beneath that slope is called a glacial fosse. A very good example of a fosse can be traced from Duarte's Pond (in Oak Bluffs) westward along Stoney

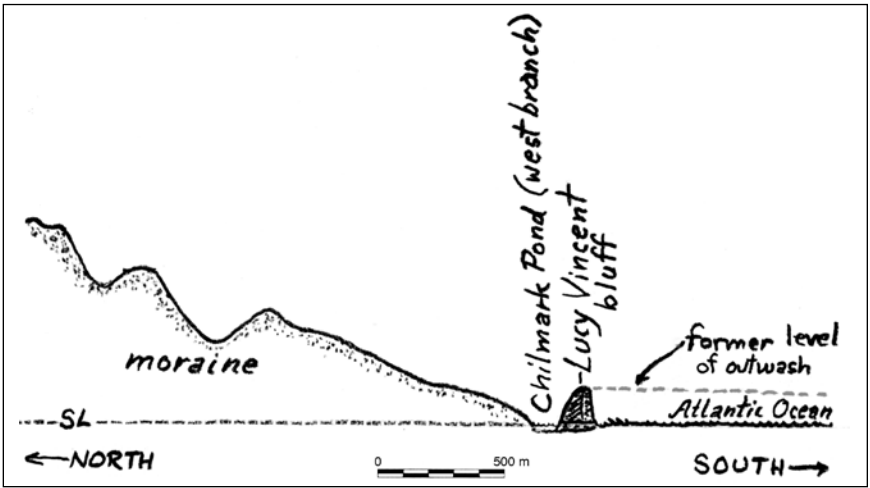
²² in Woodworth & Wigglesworth, *op. cit.*, page 130. Edward Wigglesworth (born 3 Nov 1885; died 6 May 1945).

Hill Road (in West Tisbury).

A north-south cross-section (below) shows distinctly the difference between the topography of the moraine on the north side of the fosse, and the outwash plain to the south.²³



By comparison, a similar cross-section through the bluff at Lucy Vincent Beach looks similar, with a few differences.



The outwash is entirely missing, because of marine erosion. On the north side of the bluff is a relatively steep decline to the west branch of Chilmark Pond, which marks what is analogous to the location of Duarte's Pond and the fosse in the first example. Also matching is a more hilly landscape to the north, which is also mapped as a moraine area.

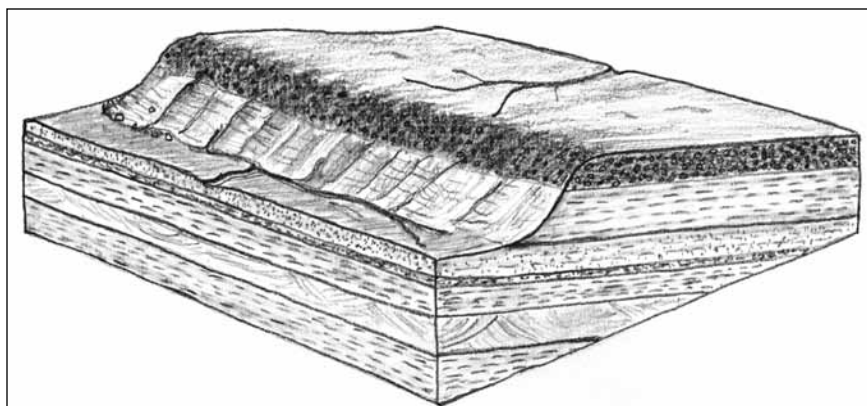
On geologic maps, the location of the bluff fits precisely where one would expect according to this interpretation: that is, at the boundary of

²³ The cross-section was constructed from the U. S. Geological Survey 7.5-minute Vineyard Haven quadrangle. The vertical dimension is exaggerated x10 for clarity. It should be noted that Duarte's Pond is at the center of an enclosed depression, and appears to be a typical kettle pond: that is, it lies in a depression caused by the melting of a large piece of glacial ice.

an older moraine, and younger glacial debris. This is true even though the best geological map ever made of this region, has the bluff indicated by the color standing for “beach deposits.”²⁴

The two cross-sections differ in the degree of relief, the second involving much higher elevations in the moraine side of the fosse. There is a reason for this. The moraine adjacent to Lucy Vincent bluff is part of the up-island highlands, and is related to the Buzzard’s Bay Lobe of the last glaciation. The profile involving Duarte’s Pond, on the other hand, involves the Cape Cod Bay Lobe.

The Buzzard’s Bay Lobe reach the area of Martha’s Vineyard from the northwest, running into topography which had survived from the pre-glacial landscape of the coastal plane. The preglacial land was made of unconsolidated sediments of very slight seaward dip, and with a few ridges where layers were slightly more resistant than others to weathering. The schematic drawing below illustrates the sort of ridge which results, known in this country as a *cuesta*.²⁵

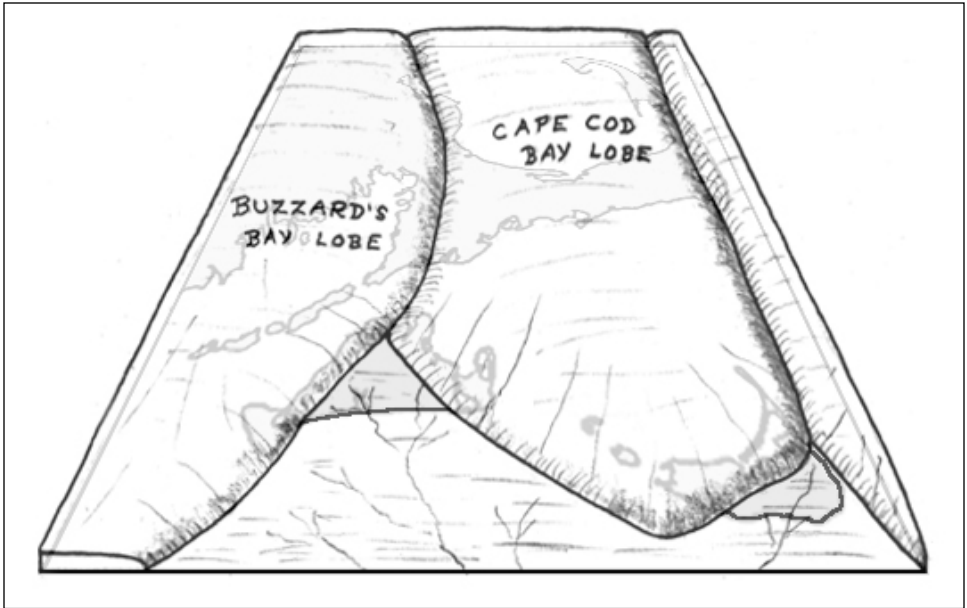


The dark layer is relatively resistant to erosion. The side of the ridge to the right in the drawing is called the *dip slope*, because it follows the dip of the resistant layer. The slope facing left is called the *inface* (or sometimes the *scarp slope*): it is the steeper slope, cutting across the beds, and sloping opposite the dip.

The original landscape of the preglacial coastal plain included *cuestas* roughly trending southwest to northeast. The Buzzard’s Bay Lobe of the glacial ice sheet encountering *cuestas* in line with the Elizabeth Islands and what is now the part of Martha’s Vineyard adjacent to Vineyard Sound. (See diagram below.) That lobe caused much distortion, faulting and folding the preglacial sediments of Cretaceous, Miocene, and Pliocene.

24 Oldale, Robert N., & Roger A. Barlow, 1986. Geologic map of Cape Cod and the Islands, Massachusetts. U. S. Geological Survey Miscellaneous Investigations Map I-1763, 1:100,000.

25 In England, such a ridge is known as a *wold*.



cene age. The up-island highlands are high because they are underlain by the preglacial cuestas. Much of the glacial debris transported by the early glaciations was derived from the older, preglacial sediments, which we see most clearly today at Gay Head. Those Gay Head preglacial sediments had themselves been part of the Coastal Plain Province, derived predominantly from the erosion and redeposition of debris from the more interior part of the continent.

Another part of the ice sheet was the Cape Cod Bay Lobe, which moved in from the north. Because it did not run over the cuestas as directly, it did not transport as much preglacial debris, and built much lower moraine deposits, as we see in the first cross-section, north of Duarte's Pond.

Future of the Lucy Vincent Site

Recent aerial photographs (from 2001 and 2005) show coastal erosion at the Lucy Vincent bluff, but no general coastal erosion along the adjacent coastline that is easily noticeable in that four-year span (certainly not approximating 1 or 2 m per year). The cliffs, though, show a sizable collapse in one area during the four-year interval, demonstrating the poor cementation of the sandy and gravelly sediment.

Such beach erosion is unstoppable. Already the sea has occasionally washed over the beach on either side of the bluff: at the walk leading from the parking area to the west, and also on the east side of the bluff (as seen in aerial photographs). Sediment from these washovers has been shrinking the west arm or branch of Chilmark Pond, which is

destined ultimately to disappear.²⁶

All we can do is watch. And while we are so doing, we should be reminded of the importance of gradual, continuous (though frequently episodic), inexorable geological processes. In this understanding, we will be rehearsing the geological lessons of Charles Lyell, whose footprints, perhaps for a few days, marked a path to this same locality.

Acknowledgements

I thank Maurice H. Pease for visiting the site with me in 1986. My thanks also to the Town of Chilmark for permission to make early-morning visits to Lucy Vincent.

Paula B. Entin, Administrative Assistant to the Head of the Science and Technical Librarian at Princeton University, helped me locate several early publications.

Bruce Wallace of the U. S. Geological Survey library in Reston, Virginia, located an original copy of Lyell's 1844 paper, and sent me pictures of the delicate text taken using an associate's iPhone.

Robert N. Oldale, now Geologist Emeritus of the U. S. Geological Survey referred me to some useful sources, and sent me copies of some of his papers on Cape Cod. He is the author of an attractive and useful book *Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket: the Geologic Story*. It is quite accessible to beginning enthusiasts in geology. After the book went out of print (after two editions), he posted it on his website on the Internet, where it may be downloaded free.

26 We can see this by reference to old maps, such as the 1887 U. S. Geological Survey 15-minute quadrangle for Gay Head, which covers the Lucy Vincent site.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THIS ISSUE of the *Intelligencer* is a perfect example of why it is so well loved by our members. Four very different stories, some long and some short, some serious and some with a sense of humor — but all indicative of the rich variety of the Martha's Vineyard Museum collections.

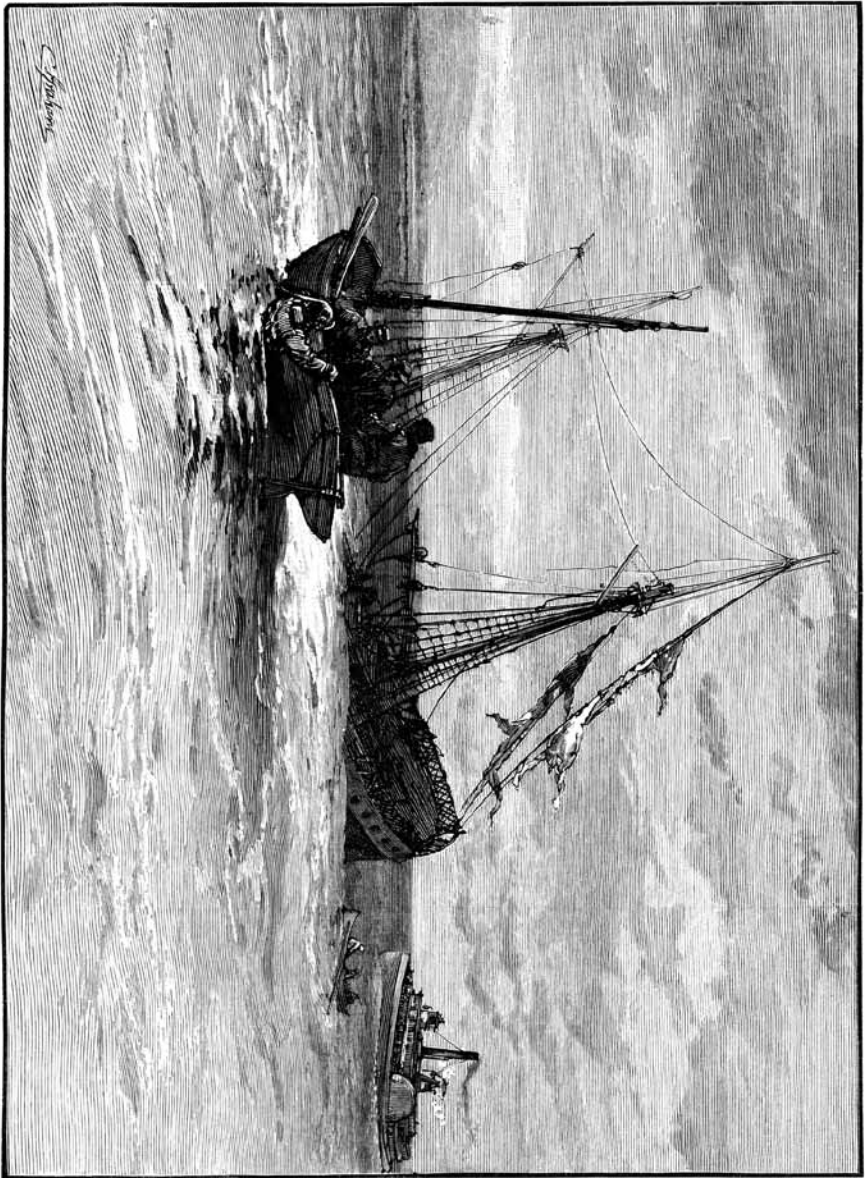
We want you to experience history and art with all your senses, through direct experience of the collections. When you visit the Museum you will see material related to these articles and discover *new* stories. The current *Out of the Depths: MV Shipwrecks* show (on exhibit until August 11) puts before you primary sources illustrated in Tom Dresser's article on the *City of Columbus* tragedy in the form of articles salvaged from the wreck. This connection of primary research in the *Intelligencer* to first-hand experience with objects from the Museum's collections or on loan for the exhibition is what makes your visit a multi-dimensional educational experience. Our exhibitions and events will enhance your appreciation of the scholarship you read in the *Intelligencer* and in the books on Vineyard subjects in the Museum shop. An in-person trip to the Museum lets your eyes get a better sense of color and scale for a painting or for a ship's quarterboard. Listening to an oral history allows you to hear the excitement or fear when words are spoken in the first person as memory. When our hands-on history room opens on June 15, your options for an up-close understanding of Vineyard life in olden days will be tactile. Think of a visit to the Museum as the extended edition of the *Intelligencer*: the gateway to the Vineyard's enthralling past and culture.

Please take advantage of your member-only benefits to experience all that your Museum has to offer. As the summer season nears, we encourage you to bring your family and friends; walk through our various exhibitions or visit the Gay Head, Edgartown, or East Chop Lighthouses. Attend one or more of the lectures taking place weekly at the Museum. For most members all of this is free or discounted. The staff and volunteers associated with the Museum work on your behalf to make it priceless!

I always want to know what you think, so write, email or call me (dnathans@mvmuseum.org or 508-627-4441, ext 122).



David Nathans
Executive Director



On Feb. 2, 1884, Harpers Magazine featured this illustration with the caption: "The wreck of the City of Columbus — Divers at work — Drawn by Charles Graham from a sketch by Gustave Ciani."