

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



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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SUMMER 2013



West Chop Light: A History

The Early Mayhews: Exploding the Myths



H.K. Chadwick's Letters: A Gentle Correspondence

Plus: Remembering a Small Miracle

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TO OUR READERS

IN THIS ISSUE of the *Intelligencer* we are happy to welcome back two Mayhews. Kay, a devoted and longtime member of the Museum's volunteer staff and well known genealogist, has settled a number of questions plaguing the often mis-told history of the first island Mayhews. Shirley Mayhew has generously allowed us to reprint her most touching remembrance of a more recent Mayhew, her late husband John.

In all things lighthouse, there are few more knowledgeable than Wayne Wheeler, founder and president of the U.S. Lighthouse Society. Of the four lighthouses gracing the shores of the Vineyard, only the West Chop lighthouse has never before been written about in these pages. Mr. Wheeler has ably rectified that lack. Finally, we get a little insight into the charm and character of the island's best known decoy carver, H.K. Chadwick, in ten letters he penned to his friend S. Prescott Fay over the course of about eight years. Chadwick was one of the decoy carvers recently profiled in the Museum exhibit: *The Art of the Hunt*.

Susan Wilson, editor

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Two Locations, Three Towers: Lighthouses of West Chop

Being the History of West Chop Light from
Beginnings in 1817 to the Present Day

by WAYNE C. WHEELER

TODAY, VESSELS ARRIVING at Vineyard Haven on Martha's Vineyard see a tall lighthouse on the west bluff (West Chop) of the entrance to Vineyard Haven harbor. The tall classic shape seems as if it has always been there, in that location, greeting arriving vessels. However, it's the second location for the lighthouse and the third tower.

Vineyard Haven is located at the point of a V-shaped harbor that is a notch on the northern side of the island. Until the Cape Cod Canal was opened in 1914, all vessels traveling from Portland, Maine, Boston and ports north, to Providence, New York and areas south, passed the northern side of Martha's Vineyard, through Vineyard Sound. Most freight and passenger vessels arriving at the island called at Vineyard Haven, early on known as Holmes Hole.

The need for a lighthouse to assist vessels into Holmes Hole, as well as those passing the island, was first petitioned in 1816.

At the first Congress of the country, an Act was passed giving the federal government the right and responsibility to maintain aids to navigation systems: "...to facilitate commerce...." At the time there were only twelve lighthouses in the country, nine of which were in New England. By 1800, the country had 25 light stations, all on the East Coast. One, Gay Head, was established on the southwest point of Martha's Vineyard in 1799.

A former officer in the Coast Guard, Wayne Wheeler is founder and president of the U.S. Lighthouse Society and treasurer for the National Lighthouse Museum on Staten Island. An accomplished writer and lecturer on all things lighthouse, he appears frequently as a guest on national radio and television. For information on the U.S. Lighthouse Society contact info@uslhs.org.

With all the nooks and crannies of our vast coastline, all the harbors, estuaries, inlets, rivers, off-shore reefs and sand bars, a great many aids to navigation were required. However, our new nation lacked the necessary funds for a massive construction program. But certainly aids were needed to “facilitate commerce” as our country grew and, considering that 95% of all transportation was by water, they were necessary. It fell to congressmen to plead the case for a light station in their individual districts, to be the ‘squeaky wheel’ and win the appropriation for a new aid.



In 1816, Martha’s Vineyard resident, Thomas Dunham, wrote to Representative John Reed of Congress. It was apparently a follow up to an earlier request for a lighthouse at West Chop on the north side of Vineyard Haven harbor, and a response to Congressman Reed’s request for more information.

Holmes Hole Feb 7, 1816

To: Hon. John Reed - House of Representatives

Sir:

I received your obliging letter of the 15th Ultimo and duly noticed the contents. I have forward[ed] to you a chart of the Vineyard Sound drawn by Capt. Seth Daggett which has been submitted to the inspection of some of the best judges here and they pronounce it correct. I have likewise sent you a statement of the facts, the reason why a light-house ought to be built on the West Chop of Holmes Hole Harbor. The petitioners for a light-house on W. Chop do not desire a repeat of the Act of Congress because a light-house at Tarpaulin Cove would be any disadvantage to them as individuals, but because they act upon a principle of economy as they presume that a light-house will serve the citizens of the United States (who are ship owners and mariners) much better to be place[d] at Holmes Hole than it will at the cove they have no interest in the repeal of the Act of Congress to erect a light-house at the cove no more than the nation at large are interested in mis- appropriation of the public money as they feel confident that the public will be better served by having the light on the West Chop of H. Hole, Congress will see the necessity of erecting a light sooner or later on the West Chop. When a light-house was erected at Cape Pogue, many people were surprised that it was not erected on the W. Chop seeing two light-houses erected, or to be erected, one ten miles to the eastward of the right place and one twelve miles to the westward of the only place where a light-house can be brought to any certain point to clear the shoals, they could not refrain from stating to Congress their reasons and petitioning for an alteration.

I, remain Sir

Your humble servant

Thomas Dunham

P.S. You will excuse the incorrectness of the above letter as it was written in a hurry.



West Chop Lighthouse, circa 1847. *Photo courtesy U.S. Lighthouse Society*

What Dunham is referring to in the letter about the lighthouses to the east and west is that the locals felt that there was a greater need for the West Chop lighthouse than one on Cape Pogue (on the east side of Chappaquiddick and off the path of the majority of traffic in the area) and the one at Tarpaulin Cove, on one of the Elizabeth Islands, to the west.

Convinced of the need for a light station guarding the northern side of the entrance into Vineyard Haven harbor, Congress passed an Appropriation of \$5,000 on March 3, 1817: "...for building a light-house on the West Chop of Holmes Hole...and to furnish the same with all necessary supplies."

The next step was obtaining the necessary land for the station from the owner and approval from the state, or in this case Commonwealth, to allow federal jurisdiction. This was accomplished in 1817.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the year of our Lord one thousand eighteen hundred and seventeen.

An Act to cede to the United States the jurisdiction of a site for a light-house on the west chop of Holmes Hole.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in general court assembled and by the authority of the same that the United States may purchase any tract of land not exceeding four acres which shall be found necessary for the light-house, authorized by Congress to be built on the west chop of Holmes Hole on the island of Mar-

tha's Vineyard, and may hold the same on the continuance of the use and the appropriation afore said, provided that this commonwealth shall retain and does hereby retain concurrent jurisdiction with the United States,....

The Act went on to ensure that any state law broken on the land would still be answerable to the state. Early on the states were leery of the federal government taking control. It was "Approved by the Governor A. Bradford - June 11, 1817"

But before this approval was granted the government had already signed a contract for the construction of the station.

The contract consisted of, in part:

The light-house to be built of stone, the form round, the foundation to be sunk as deep as may be found necessary to render the fabric secure, laid in good lime mortar, the height to be 25 feet from the surface of the ground,* the diameter of the base eighteen feet, the thickness of the walls at the base three feet, uniformly graduated to twenty inches at the top, the outside to be faced with split undressed stone...the top of the tower to be arched, on which is to be laid a soap stone deck, twelve feet in diameter, four inches thick, on one side of which to be a scuttle to enter the lantern...there must be three windows in the tower each of twelve lights [panes] of ten by eight glass... the door five feet by three, the ground floor to be paved with brick or stone, a sufficient number of circular stairs to the top, guarded by a strong hand railing, one iron ladder from the top of the stairs to the entrance of the scuttle with steps two inches wide. An iron lantern of octagon form...in each of the octagon [sides] to contain twenty lights, twelve by ten

The instructions for the lantern went into great detail and included a crude vent topped by a copper vane, also a copper electrical conductor (lightning rod). The tower to be painted with two coats of white lead and the lantern black.

The house specifications stated:

A stone dwelling house thirty four feet by twenty, one story of eight feet high, divided into two rooms with an entry between the stairs to be in the entry to go into the chambers [bedrooms], which are to be lathed and plastered...a chimney near the middle of the house with a fireplace in each room, iron or stone mantle pieces, cellar under the whole of the house, with sufficient wall of stone laid in lime mortar. Twenty inches thick, six feet deep....

The specifications included three windows in each room, details about the doors (including hinge and lock details), and,

all inside work to be finished in a plain decent stile [sic], with good seasonable lumber....Attached to the dwelling house there must be a

* The height of the tower does not include the lantern.

porch fourteen by twelve feet...two windows, one door...a fireplace and sizable oven, with an iron door...crane, trammel and hooks in the fireplace, one side of the chimney a sink with a spout leading through the stone wall*....

The contract included: “an outhouse five feet by four shingled and painted....” Also, “A well sufficiently deep to procure good water, stoned or bricked up, with a good curb and windless, with an iron chain and a strong iron hoop bucket...the whole to be finished in a workmanlike manner by the first day of October next [1817].”

On May 1 Winslow Lewis submitted a proposal of \$6,050, which was \$1,050 more than the Congressional appropriation. The local Collector sent a letter to Superintendent Dearborn in Boston that said “I think the terms of Winslow Lewis are too high and the cost should not exceed the [appropriation].”

Winslow Lewis sold his patent for lighthouse lamps to the government in 1812 and then secured a contract to outfit and furnish supplies to all American lighthouses for seven years. He was such a presence in the lighthouse business that he often secured the contract to build new light stations. However, in this case he lost. Mr. Charles Cook bid \$5,740, but the Hingham, Massachusetts, firm of Beall & Thaxter won the day.

On May 16, 1817, a contract for \$4,850 was signed to construct a lighthouse and dwelling. “The lighthouse to be built of stone, 25 feet high and 60 feet above sea level.” The optic consisted of ten lamps with 13 ½ and 15 inch reflectors arranged in two tiers. A stone dwelling house to be 34 feet by 20 feet, plus a porch 14 feet by 12 feet. The contract was signed by contractors Benjamin Beall and Duncan Thaxter of Hingham, Massachusetts, and Henry A. S. Dearborn of Boston for the government. Dearborn served as Superintendent of Massachusetts lighthouses from 1812 to 1829. He was the son of Henry Dearborn, a hero in the Revolution and a General in the War of 1812.

On June 25, 1817, three months before the station was completed, Superintendent Dearborn wrote to local Collector Smith, “Recommend in favor of William Daggett as keeper of West Chop, Holmes Hole, lighthouse...on account of [his] services in the Revolutionary and last war and believed them well qualified for the station. Their salaries I recommend to be fixed at \$300 (per annum) each.” (Perhaps the “them” is Daggett and his son.) However, On July 19, 1817 Dearborn wrote, “Since I wrote you recommending William Daggett as keeper of the light...the enclosed reprobation (marked A) have been handed me which I am clearly of [the] opinion are sufficient to prevent his being appointed to any office under

* Most early light station dwelling designs called for the kitchen to be an addition or “porch” added to the main living section of the house.

the government. I therefore recommend James West who is well reported to me as you will observe by the enclosed documents marked B & C.”

One wonders just what the ‘reprobation’ was that denied Daggett (an old Vineyard family) the position. James West was appointed as keeper of the West Chop Light Station and served many years. During his tenure he witnessed the relocation and rebuilding of his lighthouse.

By October 4 the station was certified by Holmes Hole Collector of Revenue Thomas Cooke as having been completed in conformity to the contract and payment in full paid shortly thereafter.

On February 17, 1818, just four months after assuming the position of keeper, James West wrote to Superintendent Dearborn:

Sir;

The scribe begs leave to state to you the advantages, and frequently relief that might be afforded to shipping by having a boat at the West Chop of Holmes Hole Harbor. Three vessels last winter went onto the shoal called Middle Ground lying about half a mile from the light-house on the West Chop, by having a boat here assistance might be afforded much sooner and with more certainty than from any other quarter. The scribe also begs leave to mention that a Vineyard built boat would be best on account of their being much safer and sail better than most others; one of 14 or 15 foot keel would be sufficiently large. Also to make a convenient landing here for a boat and also for the safe landing of the oil used in the light-house, it would be necessary to make a small slip by means of piles set in the ground. The expense would be trifling.

I am your most Obt. Servant, James West

Request denied.



On December 30, 1828, Dearborn received a petition from a dozen mariners requesting that larger reflectors be placed in the West Chop lantern. In January, Dearborn forwarded the letter to Stephen Pleasanton (5th Auditor of the Treasury),

...there are now in the lantern 9 lamps, placed with nine inch reflectors and lens. In the lighthouses recently built I have ten lamps with fourteen inch reflectors, placed in iron frames in two ranges [tiers], and one above the other as they give a vastly superior light to those...at Holmes Hole. I have no hesitation in recommending the change desired for the reasons stated by the petition. The expense will not be far from \$20 as the lamps must be of a different form for the iron frames; the whole must be new and ready to be put up in one day before the others are taken out.

In 1838, Congress authorized an investigation into the condition of the lighthouses and aids to navigation system. The investigation was spurred by numerous complaints from mariners stating that the American aids



West Chop Lighthouse, circa 1891. *Photo courtesy U.S. Lighthouse Society*

were far inferior to those of European countries. In fact, our aids were far behind the latest equipment and methods. Winslow Lewis, who was a retired sea captain, had been the sole person furnishing light stations with optics since 1812. His “invention” (a lamp with a reflector), already inferior to optics used in European lighthouses, became even more antiquated after the introduction of the Fresnel lens in 1822. As previously mentioned, Lewis also constructed many lighthouses after 1812.

The person Congress placed in charge of a special inspection of the light stations of the northeast was Lt. Edward W. Carpenter. Although he found many of the light stations in the northeast in deplorable condition, his comments on the West Chop Light Station were favorable. It was one of the few stations at the time that was in good order, although lacking a modern optic. He wrote on November 1, 1838:

I return to Martha's Vineyard, to the light on West Chop of Holmes Hole harbor...Though an exceeding useful light, six lamps, completely arranged in a single series, are abundance for it. I found the light in admirable order; reflectors bright, glass perfectly clean, lamps carefully trimmed, and everything justifying the high reputation it enjoys along the coast.

The sea is encroaching on the tower and dwelling, and, in the event

of it becoming necessary to remove them, I recommend that the light be placed about three hundred yards further to the southward, on a site much approved by the pilots, directly opposite a shoal which vessels are likely to strike, supposing that after they have passed the light, to enter the harbor, they are out of danger. No less than 127 vessels have been ashore [grounded] here during the twenty years this keeper has attended the light. It might be necessary to raise the tower a few feet, so that the light could be seen along the passage between the shoals called the Middle Ground and the western shore of the island.

Realizing the need to move or construct a new lighthouse further back from the shore, Collector Pease purchased an adjacent parcel of land as attested to below:

Sir:

Under date of Oct. 8, 1841, the Comptroller of the Treasury informed me that voucher IB in my lighthouse account for the 3rd quarter of 1846 amounting, with commission, to the sum of \$231.62 had been suspended from credit in order to await the opinion of the Attorney General of the United States as to the validity of the title to the land for which I represented I paid for it: and, on the adjustment of my account for the first quarter of the present year, the Comptroller informs me, under date of April 27, that said item still remained suspended.

The land referred to, and for which I paid this sum, is the new site for the light-house at Holmes Hole, which I purchased of Abner West and David P. West, in 1846. Before buying it I found that David was at sea, and that he owned one half of the premises, his father, James West, (light keeper), informed me that he was authorized, by power of attorney from David, to sell his son's interest in real estate. I wrote a deed, Abner West signed it for himself and James West executed it in behalf of David P. West by virtue of his power of attorney authorizing him to do so. The deed, as well as A. West's letter of attorney from David P. I caused to be recorded in the Registry of Deeds for the county and forwarded both to you. I believe the title to the land by the United States to be valid, but to put the matter beyond doubt, and both the owners of the land are now home, I have written a new deed and Abner West and David West have executed it anew. In as much as David P. has married since his return from sea, the signature of his wife is now attached to the deed. Abner is unmarried. I enclose the instrument having first caused it to be recorded.

I have taken it for granted that the only doubt as to the validity of the title, by the old deed, was the fact that it was executed in part by an attorney, if there is any other objection to the first deed, the same will probably apply to this.

You will therefore greatly oblige me by ascertaining whether the enclosed instrument is deemed sufficient and satisfactory as the parties are now here.

Most respectfully, sir, I have the Honor to be your obt. Servant.
J.T. Pease, Collector

On October 3, 1842, James West, the keeper of West Chop made the following statement:

I was appointed keeper of this light in 1817, upon a salary of \$350 per annum. The light-house and dwelling house are both built of rough stone laid in lime mortar. Both buildings are leaky in consequence of the mortar with which they were built being bad. The wood work of both buildings is rotten; in consequence of leaks in the walls, viz: the window frame, door frames and stairs of the tower, and window frames and floor timbers of the house, which are studded up to preserve the levels of the floors. The house is damp and cold. The inside of the tower is coated with ice in the winter. The lantern sweats badly at all times, and so much so in the winter as to cover glass with ice and frost. I have removed large quantities of ice from the lantern, having it cut up off the deck with an axe. The reflectors stand too far apart to give as good light as ought to be here. The bluff on which the tower stands has washed away to within 37 feet of the base, and I consider the buildings unsafe in their present position. I have known 30 feet of the bluff to wash away in one storm. There is a lot of land on the next bluff east of this, which is a better site for the light-house, and where there is now four acres of land belonging to government, ceded by the state of Massachusetts. I am not allowed a boat which prevents me often times from rendering assistance to many vessels that get ashore in this neighborhood. Last year my summer oil was good, winter oil bad. This year both good. James West, Keeper

Complaints about many of the nation's light stations continued to find their way to the various Collectors of Customs, Superintendents, Congressmen and newspapers.

In 1843, Congress authorized another inspection of the nation's light-houses. This time an Army Engineer, and graduate of West Point, by the name of I.W. P. Lewis was assigned the task. He was a nephew of Winslow Lewis and had, for a short time, worked for his uncle.

His report was scathing. Almost every light station he visited was in woeful condition; from construction, maintenance, keeper knowledge and equipment.

His uncle wrote that he [his nephew] really didn't understand the business and was not qualified to make judgment on him. Interestingly, a few years earlier Winslow Lewis had praised his nephew when he was working for him.

I.W.P. Lewis wrote of his visit to the West Chop light station* in 1843:

....Fixed light of ten lamps established in 1817 a 2nd class bay light.
Dwelling house of same material and condition as the tower. Tower was built of rubble masonry laid up in bad lime mortar, base rest-

* Which was not constructed by Winslow Lewis, although the optic, oil and supplies were furnished by him.

ing on gravel one foot below surface, walls cracked and leaking, roof [of the tower] soapstone, loose and leaky, woodwork rotten, whole structure out of repair. Windows, door frames and floor timbers are studded up to preserve level of floors. House damp and cold. Present keeper deserves great praise for great neatness of the establishment.

All this 25 years after the station was completed. Inspector Lewis also mentioned that the bluff upon which the tower and dwelling were located had eroded to within 37 feet of the buildings. Joining the earlier report of Carpenter, he recommended that the buildings be moved back to the next bluff.

His comments no doubt contributed to the government's decision to rebuild the station. Additionally, the earlier report of Lt. Carpenter had mentioned the erosion taking place which had advanced in the five years since his visit.

In 1846, Joseph Pease, local Collector of Customs, advertised in the *Vineyard Gazette* for proposals to take down, move and rebuild the tower and dwelling a distance of about a 1,000 feet. The ad ran three times in July and called for the job to be completed by October 10, 1846, a period of two and a half months.

Winslow Lewis attempted to get the contract to move the West Chop Lighthouse. On April 17, 1846 he wrote to Collector Pease.

Sir, ...I have made an estimate of the cost to take down the light-house and dwelling house at West Chop - remove the materials 70 rods [about 1,000 feet] and rebuild them in the same manner they now are. The estimate is made that nearly all the woodwork in the dwelling house, stairs and windows in the light-house must be new - they have been built 29 years. The cost will be seventeen hundred dollars.

He also stated that a new lantern [French] glass would be required at a cost of \$700, or \$2,400 total. But then he stated a new lantern should be constructed and, in lieu of rebuilding the dwelling with the old stone, a wooden dwelling could be constructed for \$1,400.

Pease apparently didn't understand the bid and asked for some clarification. Lewis wrote on April 28, 1846:

Sir: Your letter of 21st Inst. was duly received. I have not been able sooner to ascertain the cost of an iron light-house [lantern]. The \$700 named in my letter of the 17th, as a cost of a new lantern, did not include the lighting apparatus. A set of lighting apparatus as we now make them will cost \$560; say eleven lamps, 11 - 15 inch reflectors, with sliding chandeliers, etc. If there were no stone there a brick lighthouse could be built for less than stone, but as there is stone in the old building of a good quality, they can be taken down, removed and put up again for much less than brick would cost. As the new light-house, as you say, will be required to be ten feet higher, the new tower must be somewhat larger in diameter, This with the additional height will require about 50% more stone.



West Chop Lighthouse, circa 1899. *Photo from MVM collection*

I should think the most economical plan would be to take from the old dwelling house what additional stone may be required for the light-house and the cellar of the new dwelling house.

To take down the old light-house, remove the stone from the old buildings and rebuild it ten feet higher, say one foot more in diameter at the base, lay all the stone in cement, may be done for \$850.....Winslow Lewis.

Lewis's third letter was written on June 17 and it concerned the time frame allowed to complete the project. He thought that forty to forty-five days was ample and that ten days to respond to an advertised request for a proposal was enough time.

Pease contracted with Lewis to construct the new lantern for the new tower, but not for rebuilding the station.

July 27, 1846, Lewis wrote to Pease:

Sir, Your letter of 17th Inst. was duly received, accepting my proposal for putting a lantern on West Chop light-house, which will be made by the time the tower is ready to receive it. I take the liberty of naming an important item omitted in your advertisement in the [Boston] *Post*, which is a temporary light to be kept up during the progress of the work. To extinguish the light for one night would be extremely hazardous for vessels running the sound. The censure would fall on

Mr. Pleasonton, his opponents being ready to catch at anything. When I have rebuilt a light-house, or put on a new lantern, the same light has always been kept up during the process of the work.

A large wooden lantern must be made sufficient size to put in the same lighting apparatus now there, which is hoisted up on a gallows of two spars that for the West Chop would require to be 35 feet long. The lamps, reflectors and frame are taken out of the lighthouse and put into the wooden lantern....I hope Mr. Pleasonton may conclude to have a new set of our improved lamps, reflectors and chandeliers. Your light will then be complete.

Winslow Lewis

August 1, 1846, Lewis sent a proposal for the project.

Sir;

My proposal....agreeable to your proposal in the *Boston Post*, will be handed you by Mr. Calvin Knowlton. Mr. Knowlton has been with me in the light-house business eighteen years, and has recently been interested with me as relates to building. It is only within a few days I have made up my mind to propose for the work at West Chop. I have gone into minute calculations of the cost of everything described in your advertisement and am convinced that no one can do the work well for less than I have offered and leave a moderate compensation. As the proposals will have to go to Washington, we must calculate that it will be the 13th of the month before the contractor is known and the contract is signed, which will leave but fifty working days to collect materials and complete the work within the time named. With my resources and experienced workmen and my own experience, I think I could do it in the time named, but I doubt that it could be done within the time by any other person now in the business.

It would make a far better dwelling to have the cellar wall laid with stone as named, and the walls of the house of hard brick laid in cement one foot thick. It will look better, no dampness could penetrate, the walls will be as durable as rough stone, and you will have 16 inches more room in the house inside the walls, as stone walls cannot be laid less than twenty inches thick. Brick walls one foot thick laid in cement will cost about \$85 more than to get the extra stone which will be wanted. Should I be the contractor [to have the dwelling house built in the best manner] I think I should offer to build the walls of brick without any additional charge...As the time for receiving proposals closes at Monday at five o'clock...I thought it best for Mr. Knowlton to go to Edgartown.

Respectfully, Winslow Lewis

The contract was awarded to Marshall Lincoln of Hingham, MA.

Prior to signing the contract, Lincoln wrote to Pease from Boston on August 12, 1846.

Sir, I shall make arrangements to be in Holmes Hole on Monday next and it would accommodate me if you can have the site for the new buildings staked out at that time, as I intend to take men with



Postcard image of West Chop Lighthouse. *Photo courtesy U.S. Lighthouse Society*

me to commence digging for the foundations, and I will be in your office in the course of the week to sign the contract.

Marshall Lincoln

On August 20, 1846 Marshall Lincoln, of Hingham, MA, signed the contract. His winning bid was for \$2,339.

The specification ran to 1,000 words and covered everything from hardware, painting and woodwork in addition to all the necessary dimensions of the tower and dwelling. The contractor was given, "...the liberty to use all the suitable stone which may come out of the walls of the present tower in building the new one." The same was allowed for the dwelling, "...provided they may be deemed suitable thereafter." As in the specs for the first station even the privy was detailed . . . "to be finished in a decent style."

All this work, taking down the tower, dwelling and privy and moving them to rebuild some 300 yards further away from the shore, was to be completed within eight weeks of the signing of the contract. Contractor Lincoln and his crew finished the job on time in a "...workmanship like manner..." and to the satisfaction of Keeper James West.

Apparently Lewis's urging to have new lighting apparatus installed with the new lantern was not approved by Pease's boss, the Superintendent in Boston. He also received word that he had not been awarded the contract for the tower and dwelling. Although he was awarded the lantern project, he was concerned that the contractor would need it before it was finished. If Lewis had the contract he would have constructed the lantern after the

dwelling. If contractor Lincoln built the tower first, then the lantern would be needed earlier. Lewis wrote Pease: "...[I would have] built the dwelling before I disturbed the light-house...the contractor will do the same with your assent [direction], which you will no doubt give..." and, "...Should you write to Mr. Pleasonton and give him an extract from that part of my letter to you of the 11th, which relates to the state of the lighting apparatus now in the West Chop light-house, and the sum I named for new [apparatus]...I have no doubt he will agree to have new lamps reflectors, etc."

He considered the superintendent as only an official organ of communication in these matters. Apparently the superintendent thought that the old optics were good enough. Of course Lewis wants the business and he pretty much has 5th Auditor Pleasonton in his pocket. To cement the deal, he ends his letter with "I here enclose a letter to Mr. Pleasonton agreeable to your request."

But Lewis's attempt for new optics failed. On October 15, 1846, he wrote to Pease with a bill for the new lantern at West Chop in the amount of \$657.50

...which you will please remit me when in funds. In all the lanterns I have put on it has been Mr. Pleasonton's wish that I should leave spare glass at the light-house, as the plate glass can only be procured from one source.

I very much regret that the old lighting apparatus is to be put up again and continued in use, they have been in wear 23 years and ought to be replaced with new, but Mr. Pleasonton writes me that your opinion is, they will answer to be put up again, and that he must postpone having new ones for the present.

Respectfully, Winslow Lewis

A week later Lewis wrote Pease again.

Sir; In looking over my books I find you paid me one dollar fifty cents more than my bill per West Chop light-house lantern. I enclose one dollar and the next time I have the pleasure of meeting you, which I hope may be in Boston, I shall hand you the fifty cents.

Respectfully, Winslow Lewis



One year after the station was completed an unexplained affidavit was made by Keeper West stating the woodwork in both buildings was rotten, the walls leaked and the dwelling was cold and damp. At some point, during the following year, the leaking tower was enclosed in a wooden shell and shingled to keep out the rain. This was done at a few other towers in New England. Also, Collector Pease authorized a second chimney for the dwelling which wasn't in the contract during the initial construction. Apparently Pleasonton took a dim view of this non bid addition to the project, prompting the following from Collector Pease.

To Stephen Pleasonton, 5th Auditor of the Treasury - June 7, 1847
Sir,

At an interview which I had the honor to have with you in March last, I named the fact of your having previously informed me that the sum of \$50 and the commission thereon, would be deducted from my light-house account, for the 3rd quarter of 1846 that being the amount which I paid Marshall Lincoln for building an extra chimney in the keeper's dwelling house at Holmes Hole last season. At the interview before referred to, I believe I satisfied you the necessity of the chimney, had the proper means been adopted to obtain it. You at the time requested me to state to you the facts of this case on my return home.

This, sir, I proceeded to do. Soon after the walls of the house were up, and while the work on the inside was progressing, I visited Holmes Hole, I saw the necessity of another chimney that it could not well be dispensed with, it was also apparent that it could then be built for a much less sum than at any subsequent time.

I had learned from my predecessor that he was authorized by you to expend, at his discretion, a sum not exceeding \$100, without previously obtaining your approval thereof... That being the case and that the necessity was so apparent I agreed to give Mr. Lincoln \$50 to put up another chimney. I have since learned from personal conversations that this authority to expend \$100 was only to be exercised in extreme cases, such as where inroads were made by the sea.

I assure you, sir, I have no disposition to arrogate to myself the least unwarranted power or authority, and in this matter I acted in a manner which I believe the interest of the government required and in the full, although mistaken belief of my authority so to do, committing an unintentional error.

Under these circumstances I respectfully request that you will upon consideration, allow the charge.

Joseph T. Pease

Collector of Customs, Edgartown, Mass.

Also in 1847, Collector Pease wrote to Winslow Lewis, supplier of whale oil for the West Chop and other Vineyard lighthouses, that the lighthouses under his charge were burning more oil than usual. He apparently requested an inspection of the light station's lamps. Winslow Lewis responded:

Boston - October 9, 1847

Sir;

Your letter of the 5th Inst. has been received stating that the lights in your district consume more than the usual average quantity of oil, and wish me to visit them to ascertain the cause of it. My engagement with preparing lanterns and lightship apparatus for new light-houses will prevent my complying with your request. If otherwise it would answer no useful purpose for me to visit those light-houses... Every lamp and parts of lamps for the light-houses in your district I presume have been furnished by me. There can be no difference between these and those in other U.S. light-houses."

WEST CHOP LIGHT, VINEYARD HAVEN, MASS.



Postcard view of West Chop Lighthouse from the water. *From the MVM collection*

He also mentioned that because he has been furnishing longer glass tubes for the lamps, the lamps now burn more oil. And that,

... I have found that the allowance of thirty five gallons per year for a lamp has proved to be rather short in many of our light-houses. The only reason that I can give, why the light-houses in your district have consumed more than the usual quantity of oil last year is that the oil has been good and that the keepers have been more attentive in trimming their lamps often and keeping the blaze up to its full height during the whole night...you state that several of the lamps in the West Chop Lighthouse have given out, from the situation they were in when they were put into the new lantern, unless some repairs have been made I should suppose not one of the lamps, by this time were fit for use. Some of them must have been there for thirty years.

Of course part of Lewis's annual contract is to inspect all lighthouse lamps and make repairs or replace them. He went on to say, "...I understand last fall from Mr. Pleasonton that it was his intention to have a new set of lighting apparatus in that light-house last spring. I think he will have it done this fall if you inform him the state of the lighting apparatus now there. Respectfully, Winslow Lewis"



In early 1855, the brig, *George Washington*, was wrecked near the West Chop lighthouse. Keeper West assisted the shipwrecked sailors. In April he received a card from the 1st officer and the four crew members stating they "...hearby express their gratitude to Charles West, esq., keeper of the above light, for his generous hospitality in relieving their wants when

hungry, exhausted and nearly frozen; and trust he may live many years to occupy the station he so worthily fills. Andrew Pierce, 1st officer and crew.”



Excerpts from the Lighthouse Board's Annual reports -

Sept. 11, 1863 — Improvements are being made upon the West Chop Light - Holmes Hole...under supervision of Mr. Charles West. The masonry leaking badly they built a frame work around it [the tower] and have boarded and shingled it, making it much more comfortable and substantial. They have also erected a new lantern and improvements, while it may not be a great deal more brilliant, it is a much better light than the former which has been removed.

August 21, 1868 — Capt. Charles West of Holmes Hole, for many years the keeper of the West Chop Light died at his residence a few days ago at an advanced age. His son, Charles P. West, who had been serving as Assistant Keeper, was appointed keeper. Also in that year the wooden sink in the dwelling was replaced with one of iron, nearly worn out, roof patched and new privy constructed.

August 10, 1877 — The old lighthouse upon West Chop has been sold by Mr. J.R. Brett for the government to Cyrus Washburn of East Weymouth [MA]. The new one is in readiness for the lens to be put in and the new house, which has been built for the keeper, will be ready for occupancy in a few days. The purchaser of the old lighthouse is to move it away within 30 days after receiving his deed.

We believe that the “lighthouse” mentioned above was actually an old wooden dwelling at the West Chop Light Station. An article in the November 6, 1953, edition of the *Vineyard Gazette* stated: “The old house on Music Street in West Tisbury which belonged to Miss Frances A. Weeks has been sold to William J. Block of New York...The house is rather small and narrow, with a large porch on the back. It has seven rooms one of which contains a fireplace, which has been closed over...One part of the house was once part of the West Chop Lighthouse. It was moved from Vineyard Haven to West Tisbury more than 100 years ago...”

Like most stations occasional repairs were necessary; a new roof, house re-shingled, privy replaced and structure repainted.

The 1881 Annual Report stated that materials had been sent to the station to establish a steam fog signal. In 1882, the Annual report mentioned that and a frame engine house was erected, and a steam whistle was established as a fog signal. Additionally, a new one and a half story dwelling was erected. The addition of a fog signal required an additional keeper. One annual report noted that one year the signal sounded for 669 hours and used 47 tons of coal, or one ton every 16 hours—that’s a lot of shoveling.

The old stone house remained, but in 1888 the Annual Report stated: “The dilapidated stone dwelling built in 1817 was torn down and a frame house built on its foundation.”

In 1889, the report mentioned that, "A red sector was inserted [in the lantern room] to cover Squash Meadow (reef) and Norton Shoals...the tract of disused light-house land, the former site of the station, was sold for \$650 at public auction."

In 1889, land developers purchased a large private estate on West Chop and subdivided the property into lots ranging in price from \$200 to \$2,000. A water system was installed on West Chop (West Chop Village) and in Vineyard Haven, bringing water in from Tashmoo Lake (fresh water at the time). The area was advertised as a wonderful location for a summer cottage with fresh air and grand views. A steamer wharf was constructed at West Chop to accommodate a vessel from Woods Hole on Cape Cod that would meet trains from Boston.

The result was the construction of some large summer homes, and some of those 'cottages' blocked the view of the lighthouse from vessels in some areas of Vineyard Sound.

The 1891 Annual Report of the Lighthouse Board - "Some dwellings recently erected in the vicinity of this station obscured the light over a part of Vineyard Sound. To remedy this a lens lantern was provided and attached to an iron mast 17 feet high, erected on the lantern deck. The tower itself of rubble masonry, covered with shingles, is in poor condition and will be rebuilt during the ensuing fiscal year."

The next year the old rubble tower was torn down and the present brick tower constructed on the old foundation. The new tower is 45 feet high with a focal plane 84 feet above sea level.

The existing oil house was constructed in 1895. Until kerosene was introduced as an illuminate at light stations, lard oil was used (from the 1860s) and stored in the tower. However, kerosene is volatile and required a separate structure. With limited funds, it took the Lighthouse Service until circa 1916 to construct oil houses at all American light stations.

In 1896, the Vineyard Haven Water Company connected the station dwellings to their system and again, in 1899, connected the cistern of the fog signal building to the town supply. The tower was painted white in that year. The growth of trees and the construction of large summer estates made the brick tower difficult to see during daylight hours.

The first half of the 20th century saw the growth of West Chop as more and more beautiful summer homes were erected, a golf course and tennis club established. Today, the West Chop Light Station's modest dwellings are surrounded by impressive estates. Summer residents like novelist William Styron, Massachusetts Senator Edward Brooke, and columnist Art Buchwald, once called West Chop home during the summer, and Presidents Clinton and Obama have been frequent visitors.

The Coast Guard replaced the Lighthouse Service in 1939 and eventually assigned enlisted personnel to replace the civilian keepers.

In 1976, the station was automated and the personnel removed. The tower (with the 4th order Fresnel lens), two dwellings, fog signal building and oil house remain on the property in good condition. A powerful electronic sound (fog) signal has been installed near the water's edge. It's controlled by a fog detector located in the old fog signal building. The keeper's dwelling since automation is home to the Officer-in-Charge of the Menemsha Coast Guard Station. For several years the assistant's house was used as a vacation home for Coast Guard officers. Recently another family assigned to the Menemsha Coast Guard station have occupied the dwelling. Pretty nice duty for these low paid enlisted members of the Coast Guard, rubbing elbows with the multi-millionaire summer residents of West Chop in their large summer cottages which tower over the modest 19th century wood frame houses.



End note:

I wrote this article with information from the U. S. Lighthouse Society library and archives and with the help and material from the Martha's Vineyard Museum library. The library holds a folder of material on the West Chop Light Station compiled by the late Arthur Railton. Arthur was an outstanding journalist, writer and frequent contributor to the *Vineyard Gazette*. For many years he was the editor of the Museum's journal, *The Dukes County Intelligencer*, and as such, wrote many articles for that publication. Three comprehensive articles which appeared in *The Intelligencer* were about the Cape Pogue and Gay Head Lighthouses on Martha's Vineyard.

Several years ago I asked him if he was going to write the story of the West Chop station. He replied that he had gathered sufficient material for an article on the lighthouse. However, one fact that he had unearthed concerned one of the original dwellings of the stations being sold and moved to West Tisbury. He had a dear friend who doubted this fact. Arthur remarked that he didn't want to upset his friend and that he would publish the story when his friend died. That's the kind of man Arthur Railton was, a gentle soul who wrote with a touch of poetry, a love of nature and a kind heart.

Now Arthur is gone, and I presume, hope, that his friend too has 'crossed the bar.' And now, the story can be told with thanks to Arthur for his help with the research.

Wayne C. Wheeler
Asheville, NC

Selected Sources:

Annual Reports of the Lighthouse Board to Congress
Record Unit 212: Lighthouses Collection, Gale Huntington Research Library, Martha's Vineyard Museum

Postscript: The Life Of Capt. Charles A. Ellis

From the Vineyard Gazette of Sept. 30, 1946:

Was Light Keeper: Capt. Ellis Devoted His Life to Service - at West Chop 23 Years

Employed in the Lighthouse Service all his active years, and retiring only a year ago, Charles A. Ellis of Vineyard Haven died at the Marine Hospital Sunday morning, aged 63. For 23 years he had served at the West Chop Light, five years as light-keeper, eighteen as assistant, and previous to that he had been at Dumpling Rock, ... and Sankaty Head and Brant Point, Nantucket. He began his career in the Light House Service when he was 21.

Captain Ellis was the son of James B. and Ida Simmons Ellis and was born in Cambridge. His father was a stationary engineer, and during his high school days the son assisted him as a fireman, spending his spare time in small boats when he could. By the time he was through school he was sailing in yachts and later raced on some of the big craft in the Marblehead regattas.

He visited the island at times since his mother's family had been associated with Oak Bluffs as hotel keepers and during one of his visits here he met Miss Harriet Vanderhoop, their marriage following soon after. The fact that he married into a family of Coastguardsmen and light house keepers had no doubt much to do with his choice of a career.

He had his full share of hardship in the years he and his wife and young son spent on Dumpling Rock, where life was rugged in the extreme. His service at Sankaty Head he described as "the biggest snap of all," with the town only twenty minutes away. Brant Rock was a harder station, with a fog signal, two bells and two range lights to care for.

Although the West Chop station is known as a difficult station, it is also a popular one, and that is how Captain Ellis regarded it. He loved the water and could not be happy away from it, and performed his duties always in exemplary fashion, according to the ideals and traditions of the service...



The Early Mayhews: Exploding Some Myths

Somewhere Beyond ‘What Everyone Knows’ Lies the Truth of History

by CATHERINE M. MAYHEW

EVERYONE KNOWS that Thomas Mayhew bought Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket. Except—he did not. Everyone knows that Thomas Mayhew was a colonial governor. He was not. Everyone knows that Thomas Mayhew Junior married his stepsister. That’s not true either.

So, what is the truth of these matters? I want to know because Thomas Mayhew is my children’s several greats grandfather. Their father, Donald Gifford Mayhew, through both his parents, has 32 direct lines of descent from Thomas Mayhew.

In his *History of Martha’s Vineyard* Charles E. Banks says that Thomas Mayhew was called ‘governor.’ The fact is that the British Crown’s representative in New York gave him the title—but not until Mayhew was 80 years old.

Thomas Mayhew did not buy the Elizabeth Islands, Martha’s Vineyard, and Nantucket. He did, in the name of himself and his son, purchase the rights “to settle and plant” and to encourage settlement in these places. First he paid off the Earl of Stirling and then had to purchase the grant given Sir Fernando Gorges. All this with the understanding that he pay an annual rent to the Crown for this privilege and create trading opportuni-

Catherine Merwin Mayhew has been the genealogist for the Martha’s Vineyard Museum for about thirty years, enjoying her research for Art Railton, late editor of the *Intelligencer*. She served many years on the board and as an officer of the Museum. She is a member of numerous genealogical societies, registrar for the local DAR chapter, and has often lectured on subjects related to genealogy. She is also the Tisbury columnist for *The Martha’s Vineyard Times and Registrar* for the Town of Tisbury. She served two terms as president of the League of Women Voters of Martha’s Vineyard and as president of the women’s group of the West Tisbury Congregational Church, as well as a member of the church history committee.

ties for the men in London.

Neither the father Thomas Mayhew, nor Thomas Mayhew the son, came to the Islands as a missionary. Mayhew Senior was a business man, but one who disapproved of mistreating the natives. He disagreed that the New World was “land that no one owns.” He disdained “both sectarian bitterness and enthusiasm” and found it difficult to accept religious exclusion as true to beliefs of the Christian church.

In the 1600s a ‘step child’ was a ‘child in law’ and therefore a ‘step brother’ was a ‘brother in law.’ Some thought that if Thomas Paine was Junior’s brother in law, then Junior’s wife must have been sister to Paine. Wrong. He was simply a brother in the view of the law. Thomas Mayhew Junior did not marry his step sister. He did not even have a step sister.

Thomas Mayhew has been much maligned. He came to New England as an agent for a man who was appointed the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony but who never came to these shores. When the economy began to fail, that man accused Mayhew of costing him money.



Some things we do know *are* true. Thomas Mayhew was born and raised in southern Wiltshire in England. He was baptized in the local church at Tisbury, England, on April 1st 1593. He was the third son of Matthew Mayhew and Alice Barter. He was an educated man and married (perhaps to Martha Parkhurst) about 1619.¹ That next year his son, also called Thomas, was born. In 1621, he finished his apprenticeship in Southampton as a mercer, that is, a merchant who deals in textiles.

Thomas Mayhew late servant and apprntice unto Richard Masey of the Towne and countie of Southampton mrcer havinge well and truely served his apprntiship with his said master whoe beinge prsent testified to the same And he the said Thomas Mayhewe (desieringe to be admitted a free commoner of the said Towne to use his trade of a mercer in this said Towne and his said master likewise desiering the same) was therefore this present daie admitted ...

On Richard Macy’s recommendation Mayhew was admitted to do business in Southampton.



The Massachusetts Bay Company was created by several wealthy investors in London in order to make money off the materials that could be im-

1 Banks suggests Thomas Mayhew’s first wife was Abigail, a daughter of Parkhurst. I think it more likely that his wife was Parkhurst’s daughter Martha, giving reason for naming his daughter Martha. While we are on the topic of Martha, I believe that the adventurer Gosnold named the island Martha’s Vineyard after his mother-in-law, who financed his voyage. Banks thinks it was for Gosnold’s new baby Martha, not yet born when Gosnold left home. That baby was also named for her maternal grandmother.

ported from the new world. The men got a royal charter and appointed a London businessman as the first governor of the colony. He was Matthew Craddock. We know Mayhew was selling mattresses, bedding, and textiles to the Massachusetts Bay Company before 1628. In a few years he was hired as an agent for Craddock. Mayhew probably arrived in Massachusetts in 1631 because he appears in local records by January 1632. He likely sailed on one of Craddock's vessels. His first wife may have died by then. His young son, Thomas, about eleven, came with him, and they settled



From the Banks history, a sketch of the Craddock house.

on a farm in the town of Medford where Mayhew was elected to the General Court, as the Massachusetts legislature is still called.²

Mayhew married a second wife about 1634, probably in London. Mrs. Jane (Galland) Paine was the widow of a prosperous London merchant with valuable properties in Northamptonshire. Mayhew brought Jane and her very young son to Medford to live in a fine brick two-story home built for Craddock. Attorneys were hired to handle the income of properties in England for her young son, Thomas Paine. Thomas Mayhew now had two sons named Thomas; one about 14 years old and one aged three. I believe that the little one, Mayhew's stepson, was called Paine because, subsequently, that name was often passed down in the Mayhew family.

Thomas Mayhew was active in the life of the colony, on his own business and on behalf of Craddock. The Colonial Records show the court appointed Mayhew to various jobs. The problems were varied and curious. Sometimes issues arose because of the severe shortage of cash in the colony, creating debt problems. Land and goods were often bartered for other goods and other lands. Some of his neighbors were unhappy when he found favorably for the Indians in a livestock dispute. Mayhew was prominent in the colony records between 1631 and 1644, as a tax and tariff assessor and a Deputy of the General Court.

² He was reelected as Representative from Watertown in 1643 and in 1644. In those days he often was fined for his absence. He was replaced in 1645.

Native Americans were part of colonial life: Mayhew got permission from a lower court to give guns to some Native Americans for hunting, probably to get more furs for London. He was charged with “imploying Indians to shoot with [guns]....” Both he and the court were fined for this by the higher court. Nonetheless, Mayhew was assigned to investigate the harm done to Indians’ stores of corn that were ransacked by the settlers’ free-ranging pigs. Mayhew was active as a mercer, a politician, and bringing supplies to the colony, engaged in shipping ventures, and running his mill.

Thomas Mayhew’s first daughter, Hannah, was born in Medford in 1635 and the second daughter, Bethiah, by the end of the next year. The family was now composed of father and mother; two sons, ages sixteen and five; and, two small daughters.

About this time Craddock hired someone else to represent his interests.³ Mayhew had moved his family to Watertown, buying twelve acres on the Charles River and a half share in the mill he’d built for Craddock. Mayhew settled in Watertown and was elected a selectman. He called for a tax for “a fence for ye burying place ... and to feed ye poor.” Mayhew was elected again to the General Court. He used a small boat to cross the river to get to Boston. When the boat was stolen, he built the first bridge over the Charles River—and charged tolls. The colonial government later gave him extensive acreage in exchange for the bridge. Also, a third daughter, Mary, was born in 1639.

In 1640 the British Parliament swept away the power of the Catholic king, Charles the First. More important for the colonies was that religious persecution ended in England. So did the flow of new settlers, creating an economic depression. The change in the economy caused two men, who had royal grants for the “as yet uninhabited” islands off Massachusetts, to want to sell.⁴ That is when Mayhew bought the “rights to inhabit and plant” in 1641 and began to sell settlement rights to his neighbors in Watertown. Many of these settlers of Watertown appear in the early records of Martha’s Vineyard. Today our island economy is based on tourism and

3 Craddock’s previous agent spoke out against the church and the colonial government, for which he was banished, after having his ears cut off by the Puritans. As a point of interest, Roger Williams had a history with the elder Mayhew as well. In 1636 he short-changed Mayhew in a Craddock deal. He had no clear title to the property he sold Craddock, probably the reason Craddock fired Mayhew. Roger Williams was banished by 1636 for outspoken views in favor of separation of church and state. Williams, exiled from Massachusetts, went to the Wampanoag and Narragansett Indian territory in Rhode Island. Williams was an avid Baptist and by 1648 he reported several visits to the Wampanoag in Gay Head, sharing his Baptist beliefs. In 1643 Williams published the first dictionary of any Indian tongue in the English language.

4 Grants were made to Thomas Mayhew and his son Thomas Mayhew, Oct. 1641.

development. Some things haven't changed since the 1600s.

Years later Thomas Mayhew's great grandson Experience Mayhew wrote that:

In 1642 he [Thomas Mayhew Sr.] sends Mr Thomas Mayhew Junior his only Son, being then a young Scholer, about 21 years of Age with some other Persons to the Vineyard, where they settled at the East End...

That summer of 1642 was cold and wet, making the economic depression worse. The new Massachusetts Bay governor reported to London that all was not well in the colony. He complained that mice not only ate stored grain, but also gnawed the bark all around the bottoms of the trunks of fruit trees, causing severe damage to the orchards. The investors in London were so concerned that they sent ships filled with relief supplies to keep the colonists alive.

The Mayhews' fourth daughter, Martha, was born about 1641. By 1643 this family was settled on the island: Paine was now about 10 and the girls were aged seven, six, three, and one. As noted by Gov. Winthrop of Plymouth, "some of Watertown began a plantation at Martin's Vineyard beyond Cape Cod, divers families going thither." From what we can determine their home was a plain wooden building, probably one story with a loft.



The church and the town were one and the same in early Puritan settlements. The town voted to hire the minister and paid him. Within the year Mayhew's son Thomas Mayhew, at age 21, was asked to serve as the pastor of the church in the new settlement at Great Harbour, later called Edgartown. He probably held services in private homes until a church was built about ten years later.

Thomas Mayhew the younger was described as "a young Gentleman of liberal Education, having no small Degree of Knowledge" and was probably schooled with another boy who became a minister. As was then required of ministers, he had "good knowledge of Latin and Greek and passing knowledge of Hebrew." Years later he wrote a letter to London saying that since 1643 he "teacheth the word both to English and Indians on Martha's Vineyard."

In the first ten years there were probably less than three dozen English people in the settlement. There were three thousand Indians on the island. Within a few short years Rev. Thomas Mayhew began learning the Indian language and translating the Bible. His grandson Experience later reported that his grandfather had composed a large and excellent Catechism for the Indians of the Island. Ten years later there were 283 Indian converts, a school for Indian children, and two regular meetings held for Indian worship.

King Charles I was executed in 1649. The next year the Protestant Parliament established the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, chartered for the purpose of converting the New England Indians. It was called the New England Company. This society funded missionary work in New England for many years and paid John Eliot, the Mayhew missionaries, and some others an annual sum. I like to say that the Mayhews had the only cash crop on the island though most often they were paid in goods shipped from London, not cash.

Rev. Thomas Mayhew published his first work in the Indian language in 1650. When he was about 26 years old in 1647, he married a young woman named Jane. We don't know who her parents were. In 1651 he was "forced to labour with his own hands, having a wife and three small children ... having not halfe so much yeerly coming in . . . as an ordinary labourer..."

Rev. Mayhew was noted for his devout attendance to the Indians and in 1651 received payment not only for his annual report but also an additional £30 for books for his personal library. The agents for the New England Company were colonists in Plymouth and Boston and Rev. Mayhew soon convinced them that the Indians needed a proper school. In 1654 they doubled his annual fee to £40 and also gave £40 "for iron work, nails and glass" for a school building. (Note that the new Indian school was to have glass windows.) He was also given £10 to pay another schoolmaster so he hired Peter Folger from Watertown.

In the fall of 1657, Rev. Thomas Mayhew, accompanied by his step brother and a young Indian missionary, sailed for England. He was now only 36 years old. The trip was perhaps to seek more support for his Indian missions but also for the stated purpose of assisting his step brother Thomas Paine in settling his deceased father's estate. The younger Paine was about 26 and of an age to marry, perhaps part of his reason for taking action. After the ship sailed, it was never heard of again. The elder Mayhews and the young family kept hoping for news for nearly a year. Rev. Thomas Mayhew had six young children who survived him. His widow remarried about ten years later. The tragedy overshadowed the marriages of the young Thomas's sisters Hannah and Bethiah that year.

The young Reverend Mayhew had enjoyed such good relations with the Indians that he was credited with preventing local Indians from participating in the bloody King Phillip's War. His work was remembered a century later by Christian missionaries who established Indian missions across the country named in his honor, as far afield as Mayhew Mission, Mississippi. The Indians he served here created a memorial to him. After Rev. Mayhew sailed from the island, the Indians began leaving small white stones at the place where they gathered for his last sermon. For years, Indians passing by would bring another white pebble, in memory of a beloved

preacher and friend. This is an ancient tradition in other cultures, even now found in Europe. This pile of stones was replaced a hundred years ago by a large boulder at the 'place by the wayside' on the Edgartown-West Tisbury road.

The widow of Rev. Mayhew begged the New England Company to educate her sons in order to continue their father's work. The Company paid a small amount for educating the boys, especially the eldest, Matthew, (who was sent to school in Cambridge), but Matthew could not seem to learn the Indian language.



After his son was lost at sea, the elder Thomas Mayhew began to preach in the local church and to guide the Indians who had been trained by his son as pastors and teachers to the other Indians on the islands. The New England Company continued paying Mayhew for administration of the mission work. There were several Indians working as pastors and teachers at missions on Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, the Elizabeth Islands, and Chappaquiddick.

The grieving father, who was about 64 years old, took over his son's work for the next 25 years, learning the Algonquian language and priding himself on ensuring that the Indian residents were treated fairly. Reverend Experience Mayhew later said that his great grandfather Thomas Mayhew:

at 70 years . . . travelled on foot some 20 miles and more each week across the island to preach in the native camps . . . and lodged in the Wigwams...

In 1659 Thomas Mayhew sold rights to part of Nantucket to Tristram Coffin and Thomas Macy⁵, despite their Quaker leanings, using Peter Folger as an agent. Mayhew continued to administer the Indian missions there.

That winter the sachem of Takemmy set aside a square mile of land for four families of Praying Indians. There were 82 Indians living in Christiantown by 1698.⁶

The New England Company was dissolved when King Charles II came on the throne in 1660. Agents for the Company promptly sent the king a copy of the "New Testament in the Indian Language," partially prepared by the late Reverend Thomas Mayhew. It was published with a special dedication to His Majesty. The next year the New England Company was rechartered as the "Company for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England and the parts adjacent in America." The biggest difference now was that the local men appointed to run the New England Company were Anglicans and not Puritans. They still supported the Puritan missionaries, and Thomas May-

5 Macy was perhaps a cousin of Mayhew.

6 Christiantown had only forty residents in 1790.

hew the elder was kept on the payroll for another twenty years.

It is interesting to note that this society promoted a better design for churches in New England: painted white with tall steeples. The white church with steeple became associated with New England churches among all Protestant sects. The English missionary society by this name is still active.

In 1661 Folger became a Baptist and denounced the Puritan beliefs so he was obliged to leave. He was dropped from the Company payroll. He moved first to Rhode Island and later to Nantucket.

That year of 1661 the youngest Mayhew girl, Martha, married Capt. Thomas Tupper, Jr., of Sandwich. He was also a missionary to the Indians. Matthew Mayhew, now 17, returned from Cambridge and gained business experience working with his grandfather. The Company had refused to continue paying for Matthew's schooling.

In 1663 the Sachem of Gay Head was interested in becoming a Christian and Mayhew soon established a new mission there. A year later [1664] John Cotton, Jr., was hired as pastor and missionary but was soon fired by the Commissioners of the New England Company.

In 1666 there were seven praying towns so Mayhew set up the Indian church as a congregational church. At a ceremony attended by John Eliot and others, the Indian preacher Hiacoomes was ordained. Rev. Experience Mayhew later wrote: "When there was no English pastor on the Island some of our godly English people very chearfully received the Lord's Supper administered by [Hiacoomes]."

The Indians found the central church inconvenient so they went back to different meetings, as recounted by Thomas Mayhew:

My sellf the two pastoers and one of the elders doe usually spend most part of the laste day of the weeke together ... on this island there are two Church meeteing and three other .. in all which there are general Church Members ...beside this .. 15 families at Elizabethes Iles whereof 7 ... are praying families ... [with] some 14 Indian teachers here.

Mayhew was the only English minister on the Island.

In 1671 Thomas Mayhew and his grandson Matthew traveled to New York to pay homage to the representative of the Duke of York who was pleased with the number of settlers now on the Islands. Thomas and Matthew were named "lords of the manor of Tisbury, New England," which then included most of Chilmark. At this time the old man, nearly 80, was also named Governor over the English and Indians for life.⁷

⁷ After William and Mary came to the British throne that year of 1689, they combined the Colony of Massachusetts Bay and the islands with the Plymouth Colony into the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The longtime connection

There is no record but it is believed that Thomas Mayhew's second wife died around this time.⁸

Religious matters continued to improve across the island. The youngest son of Rev. Thomas Mayhew was John Mayhew. He had just turned 20 when hired by the town of Tisbury in 1672 to preach to the English settlers in the middle of the island. The services were probably held in the school house on the South Road, near today's boundary between West Tisbury and Chilmark.

Rev. John Mayhew married Elizabeth Hilliard about 1672. Elizabeth arrived on the Island with her mother and stepfather Joseph Merry a few years earlier. Her mother was, we believe, a sister of Thomas Mayhew's first wife.⁹ John and his young bride lived at Quansoo, adding to the building first created as an Indian school. Their house was recently sold to Sheriff's Meadow Foundation. Mayhew gave his grandson John additional land at Quansoo. John had a large family to feed and had to work hard to provide for them.

Rev. John Mayhew had learned the Indian language as a child and used it easily. It was said: "This young man ... more than any of his kindred resembled his gifted father ..."¹⁰

Rev. John Mayhew was described as:

having the Benefit of his Grandfather's wise Instructions and ... of his Father's Library ... and his Custom was to tarry some time with [the Indians] after the publick Exercise was over ... so well skilled in their Language, as to be able to discourse freely with them upon any kind of Subject, and to preach and pray in their Tongue ...

John and his grandfather were the only active preachers to the English and the Indians for much of the 1670s, though Matthew was sometimes asked to help. At the end of a letter written in 1675 Mayhew said: "I praise God two of my grandsons doe preach to English and Indians, Mathew sometimes and John the younger."

He was writing to Gov. John Winthrop, Jr., the man who was schooled with Thomas Mayhew the younger and later partnered in business with the senior Mayhew, and who was now the colonial governor of Connecti-

with New York was dissolved.

8 Gov. Mayhew's second wife was living May 15, 1666, but died before her husband. There is no record of her death and no stone found for her nor for Thomas Senior. A hundred and fifty years later someone wrote that their graves were in the yard of the homestead on South Water Street, marked by a large boulder.

9 Joseph Merry later purchased a mill belonging to D. William Mayhew, my husband's great grandfather.

10 Thomas Mayhew and Thomas Mayhew Jr., appear on the list of preachers serving the West Tisbury Church although John Mayhew was the first hired by the town of Tisbury.

cut, and a commissioner of the New England Company. Below his signature "Governor" Mayhew proudly listed the number of his living children and grandchildren, totaling thirty-two.

The Crown and the colonial governors were more concerned than ever about Indian uprisings, believing that conversion to Christian beliefs might keep the Indians from warlike behavior. At one point Capt. Richard Sarson of the militia was instructed to take firearms from the Indians, but he refused, saying that delivering their arms would expose them to the will of the Indians engaged in the present war. Young Sarson had married the widow of Rev. Thomas Mayhew.

Mayhew reported in another letter in 1678:

Be pleased to understand the work of God amongst the Indians ... seems to me to prosper ... now seven [schools] every Lord's daye ... witchcraft ... are now out of use ... [and] at Elizabeth's Island ... 40 families & a teacher...

In April 1682, Matthew Mayhew wrote to Gov. Hinckley of Plymouth that "my honourable grandfather died, just six days short of his 90th birthday." Thomas Mayhew had preached at the Edgartown church the last Sabbath before he died.



The New England Company now paid Matthew Mayhew £20 for administrative duties. They also began paying the second brother, Thomas, also a son of Rev. Thomas Mayhew, to keep peace with the Indians, numbering now about one thousand.¹¹

Rev. John Mayhew was the third son of Rev. Thomas Mayhew. He remembered that his father had taken him as a very young child to a service led by Hiacoomes. John Mayhew's salary was now increased by the New England Company, but he did not live long to enjoy his reward. He died in February 1689 only 37 years old. His gravestone reads:

That Worthy Laborious Minister of ye Gospel to ye Inhabitants of
Tisbury and Chilmark united and To ye Christian Indians.

Because he died only six years after his grandfather, the loss of these two preachers was deeply felt. John Mayhew left eight children, the eldest, named Experience, was sixteen.

Experience Mayhew, John Mayhew's eldest son, remembered visiting his dying great grandfather, who "blessed him in the name of the Lord." Experience had grown up with Indian playmates and was familiar with the Algonquian tongue. He was also well trained in theology by his father. In 1693, about five years after his father's death, Experience began to preach to the Indians who by this time had several churches. Rev. Experi-

11 This brother was a judge and was involved with the governing of Indian affairs. He lived in what is now Chilmark.

ence Mayhew was also invited to teach at the English church in Tisbury though he was only 21. The second Tisbury meeting house was built in what is now the West Tisbury cemetery, on a lot given by James Allen in 1701 for "a burying place and to set a meeting house on." There may have been a church here already because Rev. John Mayhew had been buried on this site thirteen years earlier.¹²

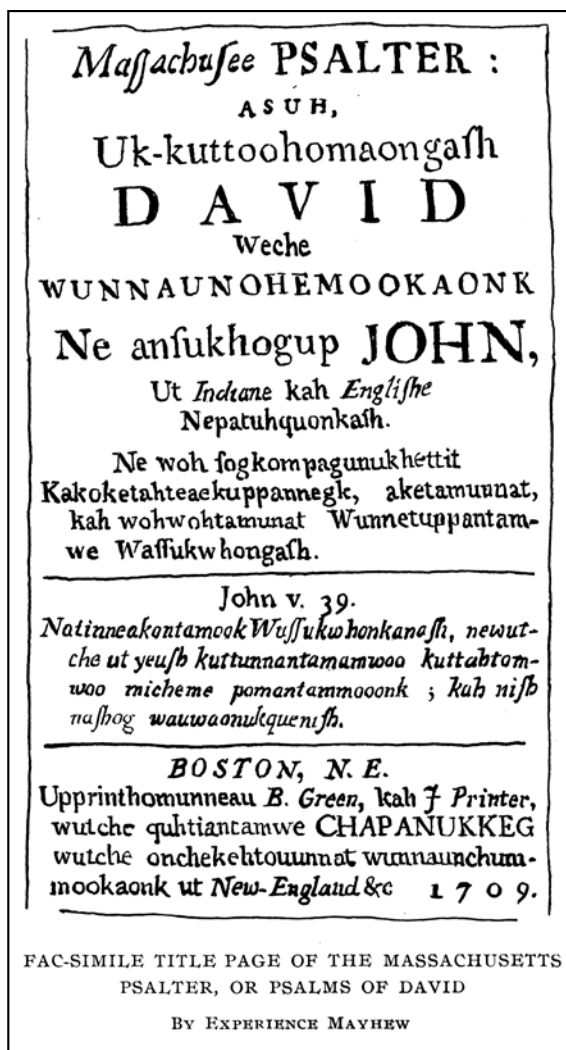
By the time Experience Mayhew was 25 years old [1698], the Reverend Cotton Mather wrote "that in the Evangelical Service among the Indians there is no Man that exceeds this Mr. Mayhew, if there be any that equals him."

Experience gained an international reputation. He published works in the native language and translated the Psalms of David, known as the Massachusetts Psalter. He revised the Indian primers of 1720 and 1747. One of his reports is better known as "Indian Converts" and makes interesting reading today. He was voted an honorary Master of Arts degree from Harvard which he declined several times.¹³

Experience Mayhew had two wives, Thankful Hinckley and Remem-

12 The first meeting house was voted to be repaired by Tisbury in Nov. 1699. This old one was sold in July 1702 at auction for five pounds six shillings to Robert Cathcart. The second meeting house was built in 1702 in the cemetery, an acre given by James Allen for 'a burying place and to set a meeting house on.' The 3rd meeting house replaced it in 1733 and was replaced on its site in the cemetery after 100 years. In 1834 the 4th meeting house was built in the cemetery and later moved to the current site in 1865.

13 He did finally accept it, the first of the Mayhew missionaries to get a degree from Harvard.



ber Bourne, and by them nine children. He died in his late 80s in 1758. This was one hundred years after the death of his grandfather, Reverend Thomas Mayhew.

Experience Mayhew sent his eldest son, Nathan, to Harvard to train as a missionary, but Nathan died two years after graduation. The youngest son, Jonathan, also schooled at Harvard, and became well known in Revolutionary circles; he was a minister in Boston. The next youngest son of Experience Mayhew was named Zachariah. Zachariah became the last of the Mayhew missionaries and had not received any schooling for this. In 1767 at the age of 40, nine years after his father's death, he was ordained. He was asked to serve both the Tisbury and Edgartown churches. There were barely 300 Indians now living on the Island.

Zachariah's brother Jonathan had married a wealthy woman and was preaching in a wealthy church in Boston. He worked for the demise of the New England Company, which soon ceased contributions to the local missionaries and diverted their attention to Canada. As a result, in 1776 Reverend Zachariah Mayhew petitioned the General Court for relief from taxation, as he had no income. After 39 years as a missionary and in the 88th year of his age, the last of the Mayhew missionaries died in 1806. He was the only one of the missionaries who is not an ancestor of my children.



Author's Postscript

Judge Sewall was one of the commissioners of the New England Company by 1711, and he had convinced the Company to purchase the lands at Gay Head from Lord Limerick for an Indian reservation. He saw a need to preserve land for the Indians. "In only a generation the Indians had lost their culture and their language, their lives being greatly changed from illnesses and from gaining material possessions such as guns and metal tools."

For further reading, I recommend *The Dukes County Intelligencer*, specifically Arthur R. Railton's series on the Indians and the English which was published May 1990, November 1990, August 1991, February 1992, as well as his article on "The First Forty Years (1602-1642)," August/November 1999. Also see in May 1990, Gale Huntington's "The Character and Life Style of the Indians."



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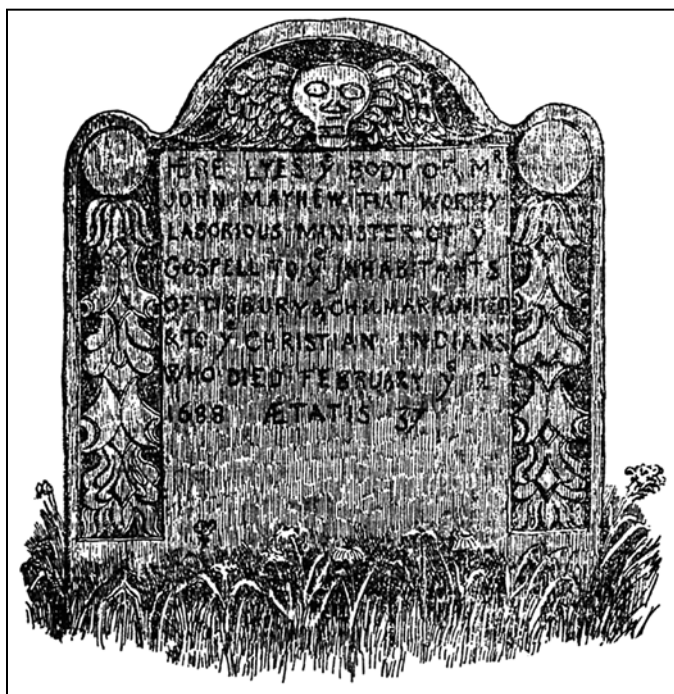
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Tombstone of Rev. John Mayhew, the son of Rev. Thomas Mayhew, from Banks. MVM Collection

A Small Miracle

Nature's Salute to Johnny Mayhew



John Mayhew, circa 1944. *Courtesy of the family*

by SHIRLEY W. MAYHEW

IT SEEMED LIKE a miracle. Well, maybe it was a miracle, but miracles are tricky and can be defined in many ways. Sometimes a miracle is described as astonishment at a thing we see as an effect without knowing the cause. Long ago people considered it a miracle when the sun disappeared during an eclipse – now that we know the cause of an eclipse, we understand that it is not a miracle.

My miracle was a small one, as miracles go. But it gained stature because a crowd of about seventy-five people witnessed it. It took place at the end of last month in, of all places, a cemetery. If one considers a miracle in a cemetery, one imagines a dark and stormy night when bodies rise out of their graves. I don't believe that kind of miracle will ever happen.

But my small miracle did take place in a cemetery, in broad daylight, at around four in the afternoon. My husband, Johnny, died in early January of 2012. We decided to wait until summer to bury his ashes so that his granddaughters could all be here, as well as some summer friends who might not have been able to make it in winter. It wasn't meant to be a fu-

neral, a sad affair, but a celebration of his life – all ninety-one years of it.

Johnny had led a rich and full life. After he spent his childhood and youth halfway around the world in Asia, and then spent three and a half years as a Navy fighter pilot in the South Pacific during World War Two, he wanted nothing more than to live quietly on Martha's Vineyard, the land of his forebears, for the rest of his life. I married him in 1947 and we celebrated sixty-four years together. We had a son and two daughters, and three granddaughters, and lived in a small town, in the same house for fifty-five of those years. He was sixty before I was able to get him off Martha's Vineyard to another small island in the Caribbean for a winter week.

In the 1950s he worked for almost ten years trying to grow oysters commercially in Tisbury Great Pond. Then, unable to see ahead to oysters paying for years of college expenses, he taught math in our Regional High School for twenty-seven years. During that time he served as a selectman in West Tisbury as well as on a number of town committees. Then he enjoyed more than twenty years of retirement.

During all these years he found relaxation and joy in being outdoors, fishing, hunting, scalloping, lobstering, oystering, clamming – and even chopping wood for our fireplace.

Our home bordered a small pond, and each spring and fall it was our great pleasure to hear the Canada geese approaching the water, cupping their wings and landing, with loud honking, on the smooth surface of the limpid pond. Although he enjoyed hunting ducks and geese with one of our resident Golden Retrievers, and we enjoyed many duck and goose dinners, the whole family revered the birds that chose our pond to feed or rest upon. There was no hunting around Look's Pond. Several geese wintered over one year as they recovered from wounds suffered during the hunting season.

Back to my miracle. The Navy provided full military honors at Johnny's graveside service. An honor guard stood at attention holding their flags high, there was a three gun salute, and a bugler stood on a rise and played Taps. We had requested a flyover as Johnny had been a Navy fighter pilot, but found out that one got a flyover only if killed in action. But the Navy also supplied a Chaplain, and a large crowd of family and friends surrounded the gravesite.

As the Chaplain prepared to say the first word, I heard honking coming from the direction of our pond and home. I looked up, and then everyone looked up as a perfect "v" formation of loudly honking Canada geese flew directly over us. A lone duck, flying with them, peeled off directly above us, and went off in another direction, as one of the flyover planes would have done, indicating the fallen serviceman. Everyone was silent, watching the geese above us, and then, unexpectedly, spontaneous applause

erupted. It was astonishing. When the clapping was over, the Chaplain began the service as we all marveled at this miraculous event.

Was it a miraculous event? I don't know, but my belief system was seriously stirred up on that Saturday afternoon.

Shirley W. Mayhew

August 2012

A self-defined “wash-a-shore,” Shirley arrived in 1947 when she married John W. Mayhew, who died in January 2012 after 64 years of marriage. Together they raised three children, a son and two daughters, and she has three granddaughters, all in their twenties now. Shirley has led a wonderful life in West Tisbury, dabbling in watercolor painting, writing, photography, and world travel. After being a “stay-at-home Mom” for almost 20 years, she returned to college, received her degree, and then had a 20-year career as a junior high Language Arts teacher at the Edgartown School. She retired from that 27 years ago.



John Mayhew. Photograph by Linsey Lee, MVM collection

A Gentle Correspondence

Letters of Henry Keyes Chadwick
(1865 — 1958)

THE DECOY-CARVING CAREER of Henry Keyes Chadwick spanned 70 years. As Martha's Vineyard's only professional carver of his generation, Chadwick made many more duck decoys than the other Vineyarders, perhaps as many as 2,000. Island artist Stan Murphy called them "smoothly finished, graceful, and sometimes even stately birds." As was the case with the other decoy makers on the Island, Chadwick was a man of more than one trade. He also worked as a carpenter, lettered diplomas for Harvard in beautiful script, and raised fancy poultry at Owen's Farm in Tisbury. — Chris Murphy, from *The Art of the Hunt*

What follows are transcriptions of letters from the Museum archives that famed island duck decoy carver, H. K. Chadwick, wrote to Mr. S. Prescott Fay over the course of five or six years. Although he is ever addressed as "Mr. Fay," clearly the Fays were friends of Chadwick and his wife, and this correspondence chronicles the last years of Chadwick's life in often tender observation and devotion to his ailing wife and brother. —*Ed.*

Aug 24, 1947

Mr. S. Prescott Fay,

Edgartown.

Dear Mr. Fay:

Yours at hand a few days ago and I thank you very much for same together with praise of my decoys. No, I hadn't forgotten you and Mr Nash, far from it, as I think of you both very often and your calls to see and talk with me. Mr. L.C. Wimpenny was the first man I ever saw working on duck decoys, long before I ever made one. He worked in a shop on North Water Street and made decoys for Wm. Reed & Son, Boston, at 9.00 per dozen, all painted. Mr. Wimpenny, a fine man as was also his son, named for his uncle. I spent much time with these men and considered them among my very best friends. They passed on only too early in life.

At this time I have quite a lot of decoys, about all of which are unpainted, but among which are some I would like you to see as they look good to me on account of having no paint on them as I spoil my work with paint. I

wouldn't even pass as a house painter, let alone an artist as is Mr. Crowell.

Hoping to see you again some day if you pass this way, I am
Yours very truly,
H.K. Chadwick.



Dec. 25, '48
Mr. S.P. Fay,
Boston,
Dear Mr. Fay:

Please accept my hearty thanks for the nice present you sent, received a few days ago, together with the compliments paid me by Mark North [?], Martin Bovey [?] and yourself, which mean a lot to me and the those who may open the covers of "Whistling Wings" in time to come. Rest assured I shall spend many pleasant hours reading its contents and studying the pictures of birds at rest and in flight, very interesting to me. Well, the duck season opens again on Tuesday next perhaps you and Mr. Nash will again visit the good old Vineyard and try your luck again. Not so nice in a blind as earlier in the season, especially in a morning like this, 14° above.

Shall be pleased to see you both if you come this way.
Yours very truly,
H.K. Chadwick



Oak Bluffs, May 15, '49
Dear Mr Fay:

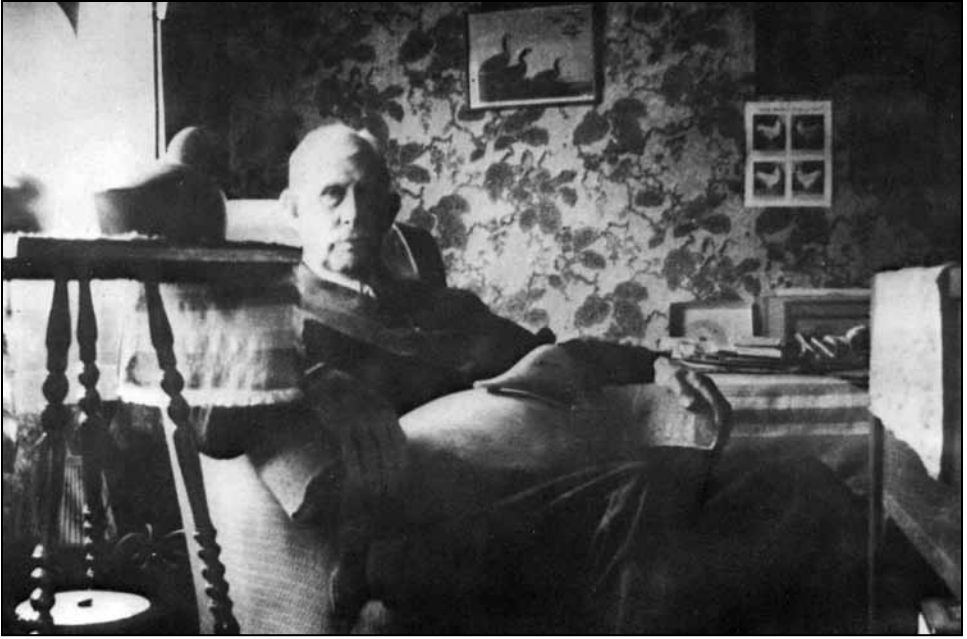
Many thanks for your letter and well wishes received on my birthday, of which I have seemed to celebrate many. I had a pleasant day and lots of gifts. My brother was 81 on Tuesday last and I 84 on Saturday, so you see we are "getting along." He can't work on account of a heart condition but I can, although I get tired easily and do a lot of sitting down. I don't like it, as I always wanted to be doing something, although my efforts didn't seem to amount to much as you known, I wasn't a "specialist" so anything else don't count. Trying to have a little garden but is very hard for me on account of trees, birds, etc. and all hand work. Kindly remember me to Mr Nash and rest assured I shall be much pleased to see you both when next you come to the good old Vineyard.

Yours very truly,
H.K. Chadwick



Dec. 14 '50
Dear Mr. Fay:

Please accept our hearty thanks for a beautiful plant filled with blossoms. My wife is much pleased, not only with the plant but the idea you



H.K. Chadwick. *Photo from the book, Martha's Vineyard Decoys, Stanley Murphy, 1978.*

wanted to send it to her. She is, as you know very feeble but we still have her with us. On Jan 4th we will have been married 58 years.

Thanks again and best of luck to you and yours, I am,

Yours very truly,

H.K. Chadwick

P.S. Kindly remember me to Mr. Nash when you see him



May 11, '51

Dear Mr. Fay:

Many thanks for a beautiful birthday present received yesterday. As I turn the leaves it is a fine piece of work and will give me many hours of pleasant and interesting reading.

Well, I am still here alone and of course always will be as long as I can get about.

My good wife is now at the Rest Home in Vineyard Haven after having a second shock while a short time at home and this has left her speechless and needless to say makes the going hard, all around.

We have had our try at life during a period of 58 years together so of course it can't last forever, but the parting will be hard to say the least. Again a big "thank you" and hoping to see you when you come this way, I am,

Yours very truly,

H.K. Chadwick

P.S. Your plant is still a thing of beauty.

Oak Bluffs, Oct 26, '51

To Mr. and Mrs. Fay

Dear Friends:

Please accept my hearty thanks for plant sent my good wife at the Rest Home.

I was there on Tuesday last and the first thing wanted me to see what you had sent her. I still have the one you sent a year ago and it has been a wonderful bloomer.

Again thanks an hope to see you some day, not far off.

Your resp-

H.K. Chadwick



Oak Bluffs, Dec 24, '52

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Fay:

Just a line to thank you for a nice potted plant sent to my good wife at Vineyard Rest Home. She was much pleased because when I first saw her on Monday she got the nurse to show it to me. Very nice of you to think of her at this time and so far away from your winter home. Hoping Mr Fay is gaining in health and will enjoy many season of the good old Vineyard, I am,

Yours resp-

H.K. Chadwick



Oak Bluffs, May 15 '53

Dear Mr. Fay:

Well, I couldn't blame you if you thought I was not "at home" for I have failed to do any writing or answering letters for quite some time. The fact is I am quite upset much of the time due to condition of my good wife, my brother and not feeling too good myself it paints a rather black picture. After a long time we planned to give my wife a ride home yesterday for only a short stay of not much over an hour and she was much pleased and never a word of complaint when nurse again puts her coat on for return to Rest Home. Born with a wonderful disposition the equal of which few women are blessed with. My brother is at point of death following an infection beginning with a sore on middle toe which was removed about three weeks ago. He was 85 on May 10 and still holds position of Fire Chief of Tisbury. As for myself, I have tried to plant a little garden but each time I try to work I realize I am not able to work and do a lot of sitting down and say I should have known better as I go three times in afternoon to see my wife, the rest of time here alone and it sure is a lonesome job with nothing better ahead to look forward to.



Oak Bluffs, June 22, '53

Dear Mr. Fay,

Well, it is a long time since you wrote me and I know I should have written you long ago, but the truth of the matter was I really got mistaken as I gained from your letter I was to see you soon but it has been a month now. I hope you have not been sick again. As for myself, I had a "slump" weak, loss of appetite, but feel better now although can't seem to work much and the place looks as if no one lives here. Have been to see my good wife this afternoon and she seems no different from day to day, but to say the least she is weak and as you know cannot read, write or talk, so it makes the going hard. She does well to bear up under it still holding her wonderful disposition.

We are having some awful hot dry weather and vegetation is suffering. About making more decoys – haven't made even a head in three years so I guess we will let the other fellow try his luck at it. I did several things but amounted to nothing at any of them unless the compliment Mr. Owen [?] paid me. Hoping you get along during this hot weather and on your visit to the island get a chance for a call, at least.

Yours resp-

H.K. Chadwick



Dear Mr. Fay

1954

In looking over "Duck Hunting" article I saw some decoys and told my brother-in-law (here at the time) I believed I made them, but never having sold Mr. MacKenty any wondered where they came from, so said I will find out if I can/ I thought perhaps Mr. Litchfield might have let him have some from the lot of 191 I sold Mr. Foote. After a lot of work trying to get Mr. MacKenty by phone I finally got him in the house last Monday morning during a very heavy storm. After making my wants known he told me those decoys belonged to Lee Colter [?] and he had them for about ten years, said Colter had shot quite a lot with him. Then I said I had found out what I wanted to know because a few years back I sold Colter and Dugan 300 decoys and they divided them, if dividing is what it might be termed, Dugan got the best of them, to be lost when the cement building on beach was broken up during a heavy storm. And to change the subject I wonder if Mrs. Fay left a scarf here the day you and she called. I haven't been able to find the owner as yet. If hers I could mail it to her.

I am ashamed of my writing, but can't help it, can't do anything, the fact is I don't feel good. Had a bad time yesterday, but feeling a little better today.

Yours,

H. Keyes Chadwick

A Note from the Director

The *Intelligencer* has always been one of the best-loved benefits of membership. We often hear from both longtime and new members that, in and of itself, it is worth the cost of joining.

There is another great value to membership in the Martha's Vineyard Museum. At the Sustaining level (\$125 and above), Museum members are automatically enrolled in the North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) Association, which comes with free admission to nearly 600 museums across North America.

My own recent experience speaks to this first hand. One rainy day while on vacation in the "Sunshine State," I went to the Ringling Museum in Sarasota. With the gold NARM sticker on my Museum membership card, the \$25 admission fees were waived. My guest and I were able to spend the day seeing two circus museums, an incredible art museum, the historic house called Ca'd'Zan and, with the weather clearing, the extensive gardens. On the way out, we received some additional discounts on a few items purchased in the museum shop (and took advantage of the end of season sales!).

Closer to home, the NARM program is recognized at the New Bedford Whaling Museum and the Peabody Essex in Salem. Heading south, this reciprocal program includes the museum at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, the Yale University Art Gallery and the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, as well as the Frick in New York. As you can see, NARM is another great reason to be a Martha's Vineyard Museum member.



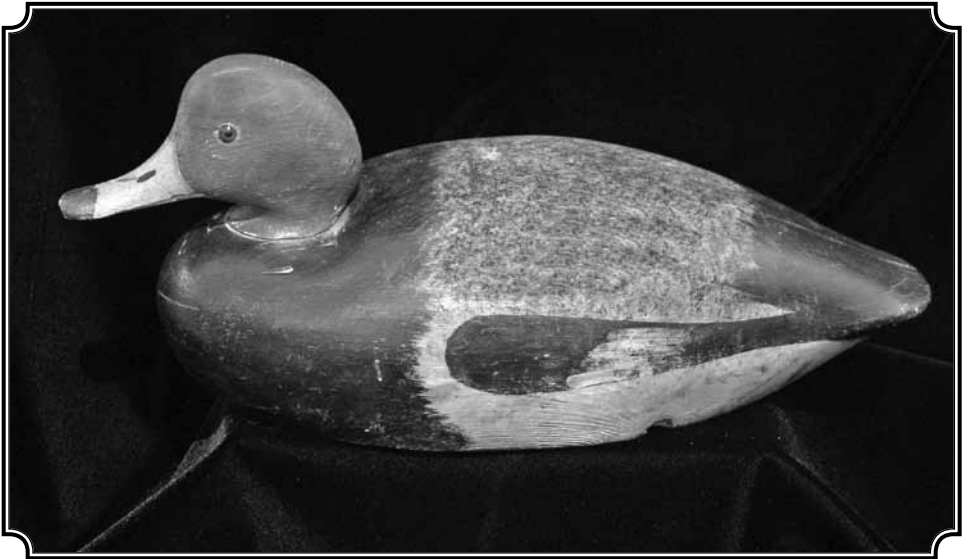
Sadly, I must report on the recent loss of several dear friends of the Museum. Dorothy Bangs, Edward Belisle and Barbara St. Pierre were all very supportive and I was pleased to have felt their enthusiasm. We were also saddened to hear that honorary director John A. Howland had passed away in early May. He was a Board member for many years and a frequent contributor to this publication in the late 1980s. The Museum is fortunate to have had and is grateful for their service.

Always available for questions and observations at 508-627-4441, ext. 122, or via email at dnathans@mvmuseum.org.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "DP Nathans".

David Nathans
Executive Director

SUPPORT for the *Dukes County Intelligencer* is always welcome. Please make your tax deductible contribution to the Martha's Vineyard Museum. If you enjoy receiving the *Intelligencer*, consider making a gift of membership to a family member or friend so that they too can enjoy the journal of the Martha's Vineyard Museum, as well as all the other benefits of membership. See our website, www.mvmuseum.org, for more information about how you can support our work.



Redhead drake decoy, one of the estimated 2,000 duck decoys carved by Henry Keyes Chadwick of Oak Bluffs (story on Page 39). *MVM collection*