



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 56, No. 1

WINTER 2014

Looking Back:

A Rich Memoir
Of Island Life from
Shirley W. Mayhew



Opening the Canal:
Just Another Working Day
For the 'Iron Man'

Book Reviews:
Historic Images and
The Chronicle of
A Landmark Hotel



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TO OUR READERS

IN THIS EDITION of the *Dukes County Intelligencer* we welcome back to these pages Thomas Goethals and Shirley Mayhew. Tom has been writing a biography of his grandfather, George W. Goethals, and has shared with us the chapter recounting the opening of the Panama Canal, one hundred years ago this past August. As we have often pointed out the connection of the Vineyard to world events, it should come as no surprise that the elder Goethals, who oversaw the building of this epic game-changing project, called Vineyard Haven his home. History is also home-grown, and Shirley Mayhew's absolutely wonderful new memoir, *Looking Back: My Long Life on Martha's Vineyard*, celebrates what's best about living on this island. It was this editor's most difficult task to select only three of Shirley's essays, and have done so with the intention of best illustrating the themes of family, community and devotion so gently portrayed in her book.

Finally, we celebrate two new history books, *Martha's Vineyard*, a pictorial history, by the Museum's Chief Curator, Bonnie Stacy, and *The Harbor View: The Hotel that Saved a Town*, by Nis Kildegaard. Nis is the long-time writer, editor and designer of several Museum publications including the *Messenger* and the *Intelligencer*.

We are indeed blessed on this island to be able to view world events and the quotidian through the eyes of four extremely capable writers.

— Susan Wilson, editor

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Looking Back

West Tisbury Author's Newly-Published Memoir Offers Rich Account of Everyday Island Life

by SHIRLEY W. MAYHEW

IT ALL BEGINS AT a college mixer, a tall, handsome young veteran of World War II and a Pembroke junior dragged to the event by a friend. Without any expectation of having a good time, Shirley Walling instead finds the man she will call her husband for over sixty years.

John Mayhew has one clear goal after the War, go home to Martha's Vineyard and stay there for the rest of his life. Shirley gamely agrees, and her life will be the richer for it. Told without sentimentality, and with a genuine New Englander's gift for pragmatism, *Looking Back* is much more than a sweet local memoir, it is a diligent and well written account of life on Martha's Vineyard from the late 1940s until today. It is history at its most basic level: home, hearth and family in a small community. It neatly illustrates the point that history has a human face. Big events take place every day, but it is the quotidian that defines a life. Oyster stew on Christmas Eve, friends and family gathered. Making music together over the course of decades.

As every schoolchild on the Vineyard knows, the Mayhew family has the distinction of having been the first European inhabitants on the island. Their well-documented settlement and founding of Edgartown to the east and Chilmark to the west; village-building and farmsteading; and, their success in the conversion to Christianity of the original inhabitants, fills volumes. Thomas Mayhew and his descendants flourished on Martha's Vineyard. In many ways, they continue, along with the other 'old' families, to leave their mark on these plains and ridges.

Johnny Mayhew wanted only to come home and stay put, burrow deeply into the ground of his forebears. Shirley was more than willing to endure some fairly primitive conditions, e.g. living in a remodeled chicken coop for the first few seasons of their marriage, but she also found ways to enlarge her life beyond the dictates of marriage, motherhood and island life. The stories in this volume are enhanced by Shirley's journey from homemaker to junior high school teacher, to world traveler and, best for us, writer.

— ed.

The Musicales, Then and Now

I remember the 1950s as a good decade — the war was over and I had gotten married shortly after World War II had ended. I had happily settled in West Tisbury on an island I had never heard of before I met and married Johnny Mayhew, who was a descendent of a long line of Vineyarders.

We were married in September, and winter was not the best time to start a life on the Vineyard, especially if you didn't know anyone except your new husband. But I was twenty-one, and life was an adventure.

In those days, the country was recovering from the war, and the population was generally optimistic about the future. There were big changes going on — veterans were returning to take up their lives, which had been interrupted by three and a half years of war, and women, who had taken over the jobs that the men used to have, in the fields and in the factories, were being eased back into their homes, with propaganda about how satisfying it was to wax your kitchen floors, and to get your clothes squeaky clean with the new bleach products. I don't know how I managed when we moved into a small house — well, a shack, really — a converted chicken coop on Everett Whiting's farm. I had no linoleum in my tiny kitchen, so I couldn't wax it, and I had no washing machine to try out the new bleach products. I kept busy ironing my new husband's boxer shorts.

Back then, on the day after Labor Day, most of the few restaurants, as well as the four movie theaters, closed for the winter. There was not much money to be made in the winter on an island seven miles out in the Atlantic Ocean. There were few activities — no facilities for seniors — or the younger set. There was a hospital in Oak Bluffs, but no emergency room or maternity ward. Five local doctors took care of all our needs, delivering babies, removing appendixes and tonsils, and dispensing what drugs were available. Civilians couldn't get penicillin until after the war was over.

In the 1950s there were no support groups or theatre productions or other means of entertainment between Labor Day and Memorial Day — so it was up to us to make our own fun. We fed each other at dinner parties after the husbands had had a successful duck or goose hunt, or a fishing trip, and we got together to play music. This was a male endeavor, as they were the ones who played guitar and banjo, violin and accordion — the wives were the audience, chatting about their babies or a new recipe that had turned out pretty well.

Sometimes we gathered at the Whitings' house or the Scannells', and once in awhile at our house. Everett Whiting and Johnny played guitar and Willy Huntington was good on the banjo as well as the guitar. Mike Athearn, a self-taught musician, was the only accordion player, though he also played violin in the Vineyard Sinfonietta and tuba in the Vineyard



Granddaughter Lucy and son Jack making music. Photo by Sarah Mayhew.

Haven Band. Jack Scannell, who had not grown up on the Vineyard, and had never gotten into playing music, tried hard to mix in with a kazoo. Ernest Corellus and Elmer Silva occasionally joined us. They all played and sang old favorites, some not fit for their children to hear, but it was our only entertainment and we enjoyed it. Some years later my three children confessed that they used to sit at the top of our stairs when we had a musical in the old church parsonage, into which we had moved after eight months in the chicken coop. And the Whiting and Scannell children hid behind the furniture in their homes so they could listen undetected. The music got into the Huntington boys, as well as into my family (though not from my side). My son Jack and my daughter Deborah play the guitar and Deborah has handed down her lovely voice to her daughter, Katie Ann. Jack's two grown-up daughters are both accomplished musicians.

I was reminded of those early days on the Vineyard recently when I was watching MTVV as they showed videos of the 2011 Fair — the 150th anniversary of the Martha's Vineyard Agricultural Society. The first fair I attended was in 1946, and I haven't missed one since, although it is increasingly difficult for me to get around. I went in 2011, with the help of my daughter Sarah, to listen to a performance of the Flying Elbows, because my granddaughter Caroline was joining them with her fiddle for a few songs. And again in 2012 when I met Johnny there — he was living at Windemere by then and they had brought a few residents in wheelchairs



The Martha's Vineyard Swing Orchestra in 1987. Photo by Sarah Mayhew.

to enjoy the music and food. In 2013 my daughter Deborah took me over and we set up our folding chairs in front of the stage to listen to The Stragglers and another group for two hours.

I was almost overwhelmed with nostalgia when I realized I was listening to the third generation of local musicians, and what a wonderful tradition had been started more than fifty years ago here in West Tisbury. There are several groups in town, who now play all over the island.

Peter Huntington was in the group called The Stragglers last summer at the Fair. His father, Willy Huntington, was a member of our informal musicals back in the fifties — and in those early days, when the Fair was held in the Grange Hall, with no carnival and no music coming out of amplifiers, Willy and his brother, Gale Huntington, along with Elmer Silva and Ernest Correlus, sat on the front porch of the Grange Hall with their banjos and guitars and provided music for the annual event. Peter's daughter, Shaelah, plays the violin today and used to enter the fiddlers' contest at the fair along with my granddaughters, Caroline, Lucy, and Katie Ann.

Danny Whiting, son of the late farmer and musician Everett Whiting, is also a member of the Stragglers. He was four years old when I first met him at that 1946 Fair, and I attended many musicals when his father was playing guitar.

Jimmy Athearn, that famed farmer who started Morning Glory Farm with his high school sweetheart, Debbie, took up the trombone in Tisbury School when he was in seventh grade. He went on after his schooling to discover a group of islanders who were putting together a swing band, music from the thirties and forties, but making a comeback in the mid-eighties. This band, a mixture of native Vineyarders and a few wash-a-shores,



The Bodes in 1966. Photo by Shirley Mayhew.

called The Martha's Vineyard Swing Orchestra, gradually began to play at weddings on the island. As a back-up they also had some rock-n-roll tunes to play in case the big band music was too foreign for the young wedding guests. During the nineties they might do 20-25 gigs a year, sometimes three a week during the high season. That was a busy time for Jimmy — sometimes, usually on a weekend, he would rise at dawn to spray the corn, then pick it from 8:30 am until 5 pm, and then rush to shower and change his clothes and step into his role as a musician and play his trombone until midnight.

Tom Hodgson has been a member of the well-known Vineyard group called The Flying Elbows for more than twenty years. He also plays guitar with the Woods Hole Folk Orchestra and sometimes joins with the Gospel Singalong Concert Series in Falmouth. His mother, the late Nancy Whiting, and I had known each other since we had met in a Connecticut summer camp when we were fifteen years old. Tom was in the Vineyard high school when he started playing the guitar, as was my son Jack, who was a member of a high school rock band named The Bodes. After forty years, three of the original four Bodes still have a gig every once in a while. They have been playing together for over forty years.

Mark Mazer's family moved to the Vineyard in the mid sixties when his father became the Vineyard's psychiatrist. His parents weren't musical,

but Mark began playing the guitar when he was in high school. Later he became a guitarist and lead singer with the Stragglers.

I didn't know Nancy Jephcote back in the fifties, but she sounds like she was born playing the violin. A member of The Flying Elbows, she is in several groups and can play classical as well as fiddle tunes. All three of my granddaughters took violin lessons in the Suzuki method from her when they were very small, and they all participated in the fiddle contests at the annual Fair. Nancy is very talented and now teaches music in the elementary schools of the island.

Merrily Fenner, wife of Frank Fenner and co-owner of the Menemsha Galley, is the daughter of Hamilton Benz who played in the Vineyard Haven band many years ago. Besides Nancy Jephcote, she is the other female member of the Stragglers. Though I never really knew Ham Benz, I would recognize him if he were still living — he was a well known musician on the Vineyard, and Merrily is carrying on the tradition. Peter Knight, playing drums for the Stragglers, is married to Merrily's daughter.

John Early is a guitar player for the Stragglers. He is a well-known builder and was a West Tisbury selectman for many years.

The concert I watched on local TV ended with a salute to the late Danny Prowten, who was a founding member of The Stragglers.

Music is a wonderful force in the world — it brings people together and makes them one. Country music, opera, rock, jazz, swing — one day I listened to The Stragglers on our local TV station. The next day I watched and listened to the Metropolitan Opera's TV production of *Carmen* — both wonderful. But my musical life really began when I sat on the floor of the Whitings' living room about sixty years ago, tuning out the women's babble about their babies and new recipes, and listening to Willy and Johnny and Everett and the others singing "Country Road" and "My Pretty Quadroon." The tradition goes on.

Oyster Stew

Oyster stew has got to be the easiest dish in the world to prepare. Aside from the oysters, you probably have the other ingredients at hand — light cream, butter, paprika, and a bit of dry sherry. That's all it takes.

I was introduced to oysters for the first time in the late forties, when I married Johnny Mayhew, a former navy fighter pilot who wanted nothing more than to settle on the Vineyard and do whatever he had to do, to stay here for the rest of his life. The timing was right — two of his cousins, John and Everett Whiting, and a friend, Willy Huntington, had just decided to attempt growing oysters in Tisbury Great Pond. They called their newly formed company Quansoo Shellfish Farm. John Whiting was a college professor, Everett was a farmer, and Willy was an artist — they needed



Grant McCarthy, Shaelah Huntington, Katie Ann Mayhew, 1994 – photo by Sarah Mayhew.

someone to do the actual work of dredging the oysters, finding a market for them, and generally overseeing the whole operation. Johnny, my newly acquired husband, was only too glad to spend his days on the peaceful pond, after growing up all over the world and then fighting in a war for three and a half years.

That first fall was like an extended honeymoon. We lived in John Whiting's camp on the pond until November, when we moved into a former chicken coop on Everett Whiting's farm. In 1948 we moved into a real house, the former West Tisbury Church parsonage, across the road from the Whiting farm. There we started producing children while we learned to produce tasty oysters that the Boston market would buy. At that time there were fewer than 5,000 year-round residents on the island, and even if they all ate oysters, it wasn't enough to sustain an oyster business.

In 1951 we formed the Vineyard Shellfish Company; Johnny was president and I became the secretary/treasurer of this tiny corporation. After leasing a small piece of land from Mildred Purdom, on the property which many years later became a vacation retreat for President Obama, Johnny built a shucking shed on the shore of Tisbury Great Pond, and I worked there washing the shucked oysters in a huge stainless steel tub that swirled them around like a giant washing machine. We had two or three employ-



Peter Huntington, John Mayhew, Jim Athearn, Tom Hodgson, and Chris Murphy at an oyster stew gathering in 2001 – photo by Sarah Mayhew.

ees who, after dredging the bivalves, would shuck them. Meanwhile, we were eating a lot of oysters, and at that time I considered them a meal for poor people. We couldn't afford steak and roast beef. I never served oysters to company. We struggled along and in 1955, when our third child was born, we began to realize that we would never be able to afford braces for our children's teeth, let alone college for their education by growing oysters. In 1958 we gave up and Johnny went back to school to earn his teaching certificate. In 1959 he began teaching math in the newly opened Regional High School. I followed him into teaching seven years later, joining the staff at the Edgartown school.

After several years of financial stability, and of eating steak and roast beef occasionally, I realized that I was yearning for an oyster meal. In the late sixties, as our children grew older, we started having friends in on Christmas afternoon. In 1972 I made a batch of oyster stew to feed the growing number of friends who dropped in. By this time we, and several other families, had switched our family dinner from Christmas Day to Christmas Eve, thus freeing all of us to enjoy the end of Christmas Day together.

In 1974 I began to keep track of how many people came and how many quarts of stew I would need to feed them. Bannie Sexton, Martha Sanford and the Rosenthals were our elders, and Prudy Athearn was the first baby to enjoy our open house, though not the oyster stew. She was five months

old, and our son Jack had built her a cradle and presented it to her that evening. Twelve years later, after use by two more Athearn babies, Jim and Debby had presented it back to Jack for his own first-born daughter, Caroline. It was Caroline's arrival, and Lucy's, 1 ½ years later, that prompted me to ban smoking within our house, which didn't go over very well with a few of our guests. But I was pleased a few years later when I realized that all our former smokers had given up the habit.

Pretty soon we were entertaining a number of small children, babies and toddlers, as well as their elders. They were underfoot, so I rented a video, a relatively new entertainment in those days. That first year it was "Dumbo," and the children all sat enthralled in the upstairs TV room, which left their parents free to slurp up the stew undisturbed. I continued the renting of videos until most of the children were too old for them or had seen them all.

By the early eighties we had fifty-one drop-ins, including children, and we have averaged between forty and fifty ever since. As we gained in children, we began to lose some of the adults. We miss Martha Sanford, Bannie Sexton, the Rosenthals, the Nevins, the Mazers, and the others, but as the babies continued to arrive, we often had three generations of a family present.

In 1992 four more babies were added — Katie Ann Mayhew, Deborah's daughter and our third granddaughter; Clarissa, daughter of Laura Murphy and third granddaughter of Polly and Stan Murphy; Shaelah, daughter of Peter and Susan Huntington, and Grant McCarthy, son of Joan and Dan McCarthy. The earlier babies are now grown up, some with babies of their own, and so the chain of life goes on, in our living room, on Christmas night.

But nothing lasts forever. In 1995 I flew to California to be with my younger daughter, Sarah, who was scheduled to have surgery on December 6th. I was to bring her home for Christmas and recuperation. But when I got out there, the operation was postponed for two weeks. Neither one of us arrived back on the Vineyard until January 6th, thus missing our family's celebration and our party, which was canceled. The tradition was not so easily dropped, however. Peter and Susan Huntington opened their home on that Christmas night for those who wanted to gather, although with no oyster stew.

The following year I turned seventy and felt I could no longer cope with a big gathering in my house at the end of an already busy Christmas Day. I sent a note to everyone explaining how sorry I was and how much we had enjoyed hosting the party for some twenty-five years. Our daughter Deborah wouldn't give up this tradition, however, and added a note saying the party would go on at her house on Panhandle Road, just around the corner from our Music Street home.

And so it has. Until 2003, Johnny still harvested the oysters and shucked out two bushels of them, and I was still making the oyster stew, usually two to three gallons. From then on we had to buy the oysters. But at least, when we felt tired on Christmas night, we could go home to a quiet house and let the party go on in the hands of the younger generations. When there was left over stew, we took it to those who couldn't make it to the party. This wonderful tradition, of family and friends, is now in its fourth decade, and shows no signs of fading away.

But things do change. Johnny went to live at Windemere in 2008 and died in January 2012. I turned the making of the stew over to Deb's partner, Todd, but he died later in 2012 — so I am back to making the stew, which isn't really difficult. I have moved into an apartment I had built attached to Deborah's house, so I can cook it on her stove, and retreat to my own quarters when the party gets too much for me.

Oyster Stew

1 pint oysters 2-3 tbs. butter

1 ½ cups milk Dash of paprika

½ cup light cream Jigger of dry sherry

Put oysters, milk, and light cream into top of double boiler. Add butter and paprika and cook over medium heat until butter is melted and the oysters rise to the surface. Don't cook too hot or too fast, or stew will curdle. Add dry sherry to taste. Makes 4 cups.

The Martin Guitar

When my husband, Johnny Mayhew, was in his teens he received a guitar, and when he returned from fishing at Seth's Pond with his buddies, Giffy Keniston and Don Sexton, he and Giffy would relax by jamming together at Giffy's house.

Later, when he became more adept at playing, his parents bought him a Martin guitar, considered to this day to be a superior instrument. In his mid-teens he would get together regularly with some other West Tisbury young people and have a music session.

In 1939 he entered Brown University, and there is no record of where the guitar was between his college days and his WW2 years.

But having a Martin guitar was special as it has been ever since the first one was made in the eighteenth century in Germany by Christian Friedrich Martin, and John played his for many years.

Inside the body of each guitar is a serial number which indicates when it was built. Johnny's Martin was built in 1929-1930. So he was nine or ten years old when the guitar that he would own for almost fifty years was built.

He played this guitar on and off, for himself or with a small group of friends, until he went away to college, then WW2, and back to college. In the 1950s he joined his friends and neighbors for evenings of music — until



Jack Mayhew, John Mayhew (with guitar) and John Athearn — photo by Sarah Mayhew.

1962 when an accident with an ailing lawn mower cut the tips off two fingers of his left hand. That was the end of his guitar playing days, but he still treasured his Martin. He passed it on to our son Jack who was about to enter high school, and treated him to a few lessons with Davy Gude of Chilmark.

But these were the sixties, the decade of Rock and Roll and the rising popularity of electric guitars. Jack joined three friends when he was a sophomore and they formed a musical group called The Bodes. He needed an electric guitar — and the next year, when he received his driver's license, he wanted a motorcycle in the worst way. So he traded the Martin guitar to 14-year-old John Athearn for a Honda 160, a small motorcycle. Later, through another trade, he upgraded to a BMW R50. The Martin guitar was forgotten.

The years went by and the Martin joined an accordion and a violin owned by John Athearn's father, Mike, who had been one of the musicians in Johnny's group in the 1950s. John Athearn never joined a group, but strummed the Martin by himself, enjoying it when he felt like it.

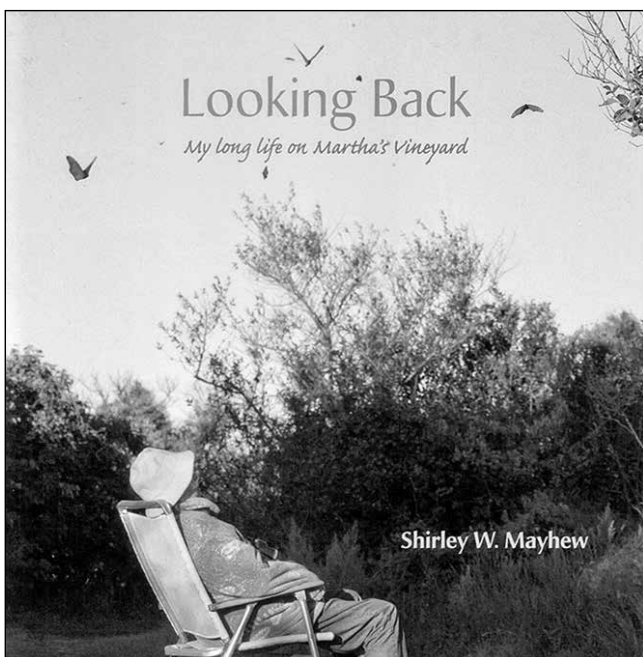
Sometime in the 1970s John remembers playing the guitar at the Davis House when Prudy Whiting was still living in it. The fire in the fireplace was getting low so John got up to put another log on it. He laid the guitar on his chair, answered the phone when it rang, and then having been distracted from the music, went back to sit in his chair — on top of the guitar. It was badly damaged. But John's father, who had several instruments, knew a professional musician on the Cape who repaired and built guitars.

When they took the Martin over to him, the guitar builder from Norway examined it carefully and then said, “Is good box — I will fix.” And he did.

In 2008, Johnny Mayhew, at age eighty-eight had to enter Windemere Nursing Home. He still loved music but hadn’t played a guitar in more than forty-five years. Shortly before Christmas of 2011, John Athearn called me and asked when our family would all be together for the holiday. Since we couldn’t get Johnny home for the holidays, we were planning a second Christmas celebration for him at Windemere. We invited John to join us when he said he had something for Johnny and wanted all of us to be there when he gave it to him.

At 5 pm on December 27 we all met in a conference room at the nursing home for a special dinner. In a grand gesture John Athearn then returned the Martin guitar to Johnny, forty-six years after he had gotten it from Jack, and forty-eight years since Johnny had laid hands on it. It was an unforgettable moment that brought tears to the eyes of a few of us present, and as we passed it around the table, two of Johnny’s three children and his three granddaughters all took a turn at strumming it.

Johnny died of a stroke two weeks later, and in July, at his memorial service, Johnny’s three granddaughters led the group in singing “Amazing Grace” — Katie Ann and Caroline singing, and Lucy playing Johnny’s Martin guitar.



ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO:

The Opening of the Panama Canal: August 15, 1914

by THOMAS GOETHALS

The opening of the Panama Canal ... symbolized the completion of the greatest engineering work in the history of mankind.

— Miles P. DuVal, Jr.
(1947)

A RECENT GRADUATE of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Lt. George W. Goethals, Core of Engineers, U.S.A., married Miss Effie Rodman of New Bedford in 1884. She was a descendant of the mercantile whaling families of Rotches and Rodmans who had made New Bedford the whaling capital of the world during the first half of the nineteenth century; he was the son of immigrants from Flanders in northern Europe. Effie first introduced her new husband to Martha's Vineyard in 1889.

Instantly enamored of the Island, a quiet, obscure farming and fishing community, he, now a Captain, bought a lot on Crocker Terrace (later Crocker Avenue) in the summer of 1893 and built his first and only summer home (to be moved in 1923 to West Chop) in time for the family to occupy it in the summer of 1894. Thereafter, until his death in 1928, he made the Town of Tisbury his legal residence and never voted anywhere else, and during the ten years he supervised the construction of the Canal he spent as much of his annual leaves as he could on the Vineyard. West Point may have been his youthful mind's home, his creed West Point's "Duty, Honor, Country," but his heart's home was the Vineyard.

Thomas Goethals is a retired professor of English, and founder, former executive director and president of The Nathan Mayhew Seminars of Martha's Vineyard (1974-1992). He is working on a biography of his grandfather, George W. Goethals, who oversaw the building of the Panama Canal (1907-1914) and was its first governor (1914-1916). This excerpt ©Thomas Goethals, 2010, is printed with permission.

Preparations

On April 1, 1907, Lt. Col. George Goethals, U.S.A., succeeded John F. Stevens, Civil Engineer, as Chairman and Chief Engineer of the Isthmian Canal Commission of the Panama Canal amid a great deal of fanfare, of deep sorrow and loss by Canal workers for the departing railroad engineer. On April 1, 1914, seven years later, Col. Goethals succeeded — well, in a word, himself — as Chairman and Chief Engineer of the all-but completed Canal to become, by an “Executive Order of President Woodrow Wilson of January 27 last,” Governor of the Panama Canal — that is, to form a new government to be headed thereafter by a military engineer to serve as a civilian governor. This time, however, there was no fanfare, no expressions by workers of sorrow and loss, none whatsoever. It was to prove just another day of work in the rush to finish the constructive phase of the canal and to begin a permanent operational phase. And the year of 1914 was intended to become a year of joyful celebration for all nations of the world and, even more so by Col. George Goethals, to become, he hoped, after seven years of intensive labor, the year of his retirement and departure from the Canal Zone, at long last.

And to look ahead for a moment, once opened to the commercial maritime traffic of the world, the fifty-mile-long waterway, cut and dug through mountain and forest, to link two oceans and to divide two continents, would remain in American hands to operate and maintain not forever, as envisioned by its builders, but, as it turned out, only for the remainder of the twentieth century, a total of 86 years, before the United States transferred by treaty — and I believe my grandfather George Goethals would have approved such a treaty — signed in 1977 by Presidents Jimmy Carter and Omar Torrijos, transferring the Canal in the year 2000 from the United States to the Republic of Panama thereafter. One would have thought the creation and construction of a work of such quiet splendor, “the greatest liberty Man has taken with Nature,” would have earned the Chairman and Chief Engineer a seat among the immortals of the world.

The words: *The Land Divided — The World United*, are emblazoned on the great seal of the Canal Zone. Unfortunately, as historian Gerstle Mack noted as long ago as 1944, [the] “proud inscription on the great seal is still a dream of the future.” A dream delayed — World Wars I and II, Korea, Vietnam, Panama, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other conflicts have arisen over the past one hundred years.

For the Colonel, however, on the verge of success, April 1, 1914, was just another day, an important one, to be sure, from an historical perspective, because the Canal was so very close to completion — but, still, just another day of work. Consider what Goethals had accomplished with the aid of his

loyal assistants and workers during the first two months of 1914 after the President had appointed him Governor. Under his leadership, the first vessel, *Alexandre La Valley*, an old crane boat, had successfully made a trip through the Canal, from Colón to Balboa on January 7; the lock gates were completed, and the workers of the contracting firm of McClintic-Marshall were packing up for home at the end of January; Gatun Lake had reached its 85-foot height in early February; the huge dredges — the newest and largest of which could remove 10,000 tons a day — had opened a channel in May through the last of earlier slides¹; and work on the new, permanent Administration Building was proceeding satisfactorily, the projected date for occupancy planned for June 1914, and so too the progress of construction of the Toro Point, or west breakwater, at the rate of about 100 feet a day.

These had become, in Goethals' view, just irritatingly but highly necessary details in the course of his close supervision of the transition of the "big job," as it was frequently called, from a constructive force to an operating force, a process of laying off workers, mostly laborers — by December of 1914, a total of 17,879 since the exodus first began in July of 1913 — and retaining or recruiting new workers but in far fewer numbers from the other. No, at this last stage, Goethals' most pressing challenge as Governor was, significantly, the actual opening of the Canal to world-wide commerce. He had, as was his wont, never lost sight of a grand climax to ten years of hard labor; as early as the summer of 1911, he had confided to Major Frank Boggs, the Canal's purchasing agent now in Washington, some of his general ideas for that future triumphal celebration. He foresaw that there would have to be time enough set aside before

1 Landslides — commonly known as slides — are defined as the, usually, rapid downward movement of a mass of rock and earth, or, simply the mass that moves downward. There were 22 such slides during the construction of the Panama Canal in the nine-mile-long Culebra Cut (later renamed the Gaillard Cut) through the continental divide, the central range of mountains running like a giant spinal cord through Panama's Cordillera Mountains. The most dangerous and destructive of the several types of slides classified by geologists were those known as structural break or deformation slides. They were caused not by masses of mud sliding over slippery harder substances like rock, but by unstable formations of rock, the height and steepness of the banks, and the furious blasting to deepen the prism below.

"Hell's Gorge," the workers called it while they labored in heat as high as 120° in the prism to dig by brawn, steam shovel, and dredge the first man-made canyon or chasm, the banks of which rose in some sections of the Cut 300 to 450 feet above the prism. "Cutting the prism of the Canal through the continental divide," Goethals wrote in retrospect, "was the most formidable part of the Canal enterprise, due to its magnitude, the relatively contracted space within which the operation had to be conducted, the heavy rainfall, and the natural difficulties that were encountered and had to be overcome."

any official opening ceremonies for a new government (or the Panama Railroad Company) to inspect, and to try out, all machinery, all moving parts of whatever size; to repair all such defects uncovered during inspections and tests; and to train the operating force for their new duties. If such a program as this should be adopted by higher authority, he told Boggs, then the first merchant vessel through the Canal should be — he wanted it to be — a vessel from the Panama Railroad Steamship Company because that Company's fleet had done its share in the construction of the Canal, and he wanted one of its vessels to lead any parade of vessels from the U.S. Navy and from foreign nations, including a battleship, that might be selected to follow. He knew of course that such a general plan would not be his alone; it would necessarily include the ideas and plans of Secretary of War Garrison, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, and, obviously, President Wilson himself.

Two weeks later, August 15, 1911, Goethals wrote the then President, William Howard Taft, that the Canal would be ready for ships “early in the latter half of 1913” — “the little secret,” which Taft, while campaigning for a second term on October 9, 1911, revealed to his audience: that they might see the first ship going through the Canal on July 1, 1913. Then, two days later, having learned that Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts had suggested a date of October 5, 1913, the 400th anniversary of Balboa's discovery of the Pacific Ocean, Goethals wrote to Woodrow Wilson, then governor of New Jersey, urging him, if elected, please not to be too optimistic about predicting when the Canal might be ready for opening. He thought it would be risky to set a fixed time in advance for any opening ceremonies because if it were set in advance, it might well backfire if not met. He urged caution, in a word, for he too had “cherished the hope” for the past year and a half that the date of October 5 might be met.

Another hope soon came to light: on July 22, 1913, when the Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, expressed the wish that he might stand on the bridge of the USS *Oregon*.² Just a couple of months later, Daniels told the Secretary of War of his plan for the official opening of the Canal: He wanted the State Department to invite foreign governments to send their naval vessels to Hampton Roads in Virginia early in 1915 and from that port to send a convoy through the Canal. When Goethals learned of that proposal from Garrison, he continued to insist that, though it was

2 The *Oregon* was the famous battleship which, during the Spanish-American War, by making her historic run from San Francisco, rounding Cape Horn through stormy seas, and reaching Cuba, after a long voyage of 13,000 miles in 68 days reached Cuba in time to participate in an important naval victory over a Spanish fleet in the Battle of Santiago — and thereby dramatized for the American people the urgent need for an interoceanic canal.

likely — even probable — that the Canal would be ready before that date, January 1, 1915, was the earliest date he believed he could have a thoroughly trained operating force ready for the opening. And he questioned the Secretary of the Navy's plan to send a large international fleet en masse through the Canal on the grounds that it would take a long time, be very hard on his operating crew, if he had enough pilots ready by then, and prove tedious for all dignitaries assembled for the occasion; moreover, it would be extremely hard for an operating force to carry out, interfere with other planned events for the triumphal ceremony of which the fleet's passage through the Canal was to be only a feature, not the dominant one — and he doubted he could have enough



Col. George W. Goethals. Although depicted in uniform for this formal portrait, Goethals rarely wore anything but civilian dress.

trained pilots ready for so large a number of ships as the Secretary of the Navy proposed. No, no, no, Goethals informed his superior, Secretary Garrison; let one vessel from the U.S. Navy be selected and let the foreign representatives be invited aboard that U.S. vessel for the ceremonial passage through the completed Canal.

The two secretaries of War and the Navy continued to differ in their views about the opening of the Panama Canal to commercial traffic: As late as October 31, 1913, Daniels formally announced that the *Oregon* would lead the international fleet when the Canal was formally opened in 1915; but the next month, Garrison predicted — shortly after he had returned from his illuminating and instructive inspection of the Canal on November 10 — that the waterway would be open to traffic in the spring of 1914, quite possibly as early as the month of February. And Goethals, still awaiting a final decision on the matter and still insisting that completing the construction should precede setting the date was dismayed by Garrison's announcement, which seemed to him to say that no ships would be allowed to transit the Canal until "the first official trip" by a Panama Railroad steamer stuffed with dignitaries, including President Wilson,

had done so. It had been his understanding that as soon as ships could safely make the trip through the Canal it would be open for business and any “official celebration” postponed until the Canal was in perfect working order. Nothing, he told a correspondent, could be predicted about the passing through of foreign ships “until something has been definitely decided,” for he was closer to the action and understood it better than any official or legislator. While the debate continued in Washington, he was supervising, as we noted above, the first self-propelled vessel through the Canal, the *Alexandre LaValley* — a feat that few on the Isthmus recognized for its significance and Washington simply ignored. Then, on May 19, 1914 — three months before the actual opening — the tugboat *Mariner* towing several empty barges successfully made the trip from Cristóbal to Balboa in twelve hours and then made it a round trip by returning several days later, again towing the barges, but this time the barges were no longer empty but laden with a cargo of sugar transferred from a ship of the American-Hawaiian line. But once again the transit evoked little interest from Washington authorities.

Finally, on June 13, 1914, Secretary Daniels announced the official plans for the opening of the Panama Canal. The foreign navies that had accepted the invitation to participate in the ceremonies were Argentina, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Portugal, and Russia, and these eight navies were to start gathering at Hampton Roads not in 1914 but on January 1, 1915, the “traditional” date for completion of the Canal since John Stevens’ time. In the following March, President Wilson would lead the international fleet to Colón to take part in a formal ceremony opening the Canal; and Wilson and his cabinet would pass through the Canal in the *Oregon* along with retired Admiral Charles Clark who had captained the *Oregon* during its celebrated voyage in 1898. After its transit, the dignitaries on board, including President Wilson, would head north to San Francisco to take part in the Panama-Pacific Exposition.

Even though George Goethals had been granted most of his recommendations, he had long disliked ostentatious displays and celebrations of any kind, but, as he told a reporter, he hoped he wouldn’t have to be there; and he told Boggs as well that such ornate preparations as Daniels had announced would be very hard on the operating workers, but he supposed that “there is nothing to do but attempt it...”

On July 23 — that is, after the dredges had, in the preceding month of May, finally opened a channel through the blockage left in the wake of the slides of January and February of 1913 and deep enough for ocean-going vessels safely to cross — Secretary Garrison announced that although the formal opening of the Panama Canal would still take place during March of 1915 as planned, the Canal would be opened on August 15, 1914, to the

commerce of the world and that the first official trip would be made by the steamship *Ancon* of the Panama Railroad line. To George Goethals, the Secretary's announcement meant that there would be no international gala of any kind, only the simple act of finally opening the waterway to the commerce of the world. He would not have to face, maybe, the pageantry and pomposity of a formal opening, maybe, because he would have retired by then. Maybe.

August 15, 1914

It is possible that the Secretary's announcement of July 23 —less than a month before August 15—prompted Goethals, despite his exhausted state, and no matter how gratified he may have felt that so many of this recommendations had apparently been accepted by higher authority (he knew, of course, that Secretary Garrison was on his side), to redouble his efforts to make sure that everything would be ready for the 15th. He scheduled a final trial run through the Canal of the *Cristóbal*, sister ship of the *Ancon*, on August 3, and, in his letter to Boggs of August 7, he reported the results:

We passed the *Cristóbal* through the slide and without difficulty of any kind, and the vessel was through the Cut in a most masterful manner. An unexpected weakness developed in the lock-operating force. [I had been assured] at Gatun that two locomotives at either end [of the vessel, that is, four] would be sufficient to do the work. The whole strain of the ship moving into the lower lock burnt out a motor on one of the towing locomotives and caused considerable delay. At Pedro Miguel one of the cables of the towing locomotives parted, but another locomotive took its place. When the vessel was brought into the locks, things looked rather squally, and I feared damage to the gates, but they succeeded in stopping her in time. At the upper lock at Miraflores, a similar condition obtained, but I telephoned down and they were using three locomotives on either side and the ship was halted much more easily. It has made me rather skeptical on the towing proposition ... and I have directed that the pilots take charge of towing and handling ships, as they will be the best judges of the speed and the advisability of using the ships should the necessity therefore arise. I am having the pilots drill with the locomotives so as to develop team-work and in order that they have actual experience before the *Ancon* is put through....

Goethals, however, was not yet satisfied: On August 9th, he had the steamship *Advance* sent from Cristóbal to and through the Miraflores locks and returned the same day. Two days later, the *Panama* made the same round trip, and in both instances, at the Governor's invitation, as on the *Cristóbal*, old employees and their families were also on board. And the two "successive voyages ... resulted in greater smoothness of handling through the locks and a reduced time of transit."

"By an extraordinary coincidence ..." Philippe Bunau-Varilla wrote six

years later, “I was on that steamer, the *Cristóbal*, on the 3rd of August, 1914. The acclamations of those who saluted the conclusion of the greatest marvel of the Old and of the New World seemed to me as the distant echo of the roar of the guns defending the holy soil of France against her vile invader.”

Goethals had invited the former chief engineer during Ferdinand de Lessep’s failed attempts to build a canal across the Isthmus to join a selected group of civilians and engineers who had long worked on the Canal. One of them apparently handed him a newspaper announcing the outbreak of war in Europe — during which in August 1914 alone 14 sovereign nations declared war against one another. Whereupon, as the *Cristóbal* slowly gained speed, Bunau-Varilla read the headline on Germany’s declaration of war on France, then told a group of his shipmates, “Gentlemen, the two great and consuming ambitions of my life are realized in the same day: the first, to sail through the Panama Canal on the first ocean liner; the second, to see France at war with Germany.”

It was, once again, to become just another day of work, that day of August 15, 1914, for George Goethals, simply because he had devised a way for himself to avoid any ceremonious ballyhoo the powers-that-be might have planned for the occasion, for the conclusion of his years of hard work on the construction of the Panama Canal and his recent success in training a force — a permanent and responsible force — for operating and maintaining the completed Canal in the future. Of course the very recent outbreak of war in Europe had already begun to limit the grandiose plans for the opening by Washington officials. Yes, just one more day, because Col. Goethals was *not*, to his relief, one of the dignitaries aboard the *Ancon*; he was by choice ashore, watching the ship, moored at Corózal at the Atlantic end, pull out at 7 a.m. while the bands of the Panama National Band and the U.S. Tenth Infantry Regimental Band played “The Star Spangled Banner” and the flags of all nations fluttered above.

On board for the first transit were “about 200 people, as guests of the Secretary of War, President Porros of Panama, his cabinet and other government officials, the members of the diplomatic corps and resident consuls-general, officers of the Tenth Infantry and Coast Artillery, and officials of the Panama Canal, and a few others.” Those “few others,” many identified or added by later authors as a result of their research, included Dr. William J. Price, Minister of the United States to Panama and Dean of the Corps; John Barrett, Director General of the Pan American Union; and Claude Mallet, undoubtedly the only man who had been present at the de Lesseps’ inauguration of his new project [the Panama Canal] from a boat in the Bay of Panama 20 years before. George Goethals was not, however, on board; he remained on shore. It was to be just another day,



The steamer *Ancon* makes its historic transit through the Canal.

as I said; he was to do what he had always done for the past seven years, what he was about to do again, continuing his daily inspections of the work in progress — only this time, this special day of August 15, he was not inspecting various sectors of the 50-mile Canal without notice, but inspecting the progress of the S.S. *Ancon* of the Panama Railroad Line, the symbol of the completed Canal, as it made its transit of nine hours and 40 minutes from Cristóbal to “the end of the dredged channel in Panama Bay, five miles beyond the Pacific shore, then turned back and tied up at the Balboa pier.” In a sense, I should add, my grandfather also made the transit aboard the *Ancon* — although in actuality he followed the ship on the ground, traveling by railroad, most likely in his private railroad car, nicknamed Yellow Peril, from point to point: through the Gatun locks, across Gatun Lake, through the Culebra Cut (recently renamed the Gailard Cut) to the Pedro Miguel locks, then the Miraflores lock, to the Balboa docks and reach the end of the dredged channel at 4:30 p.m., thus completing the official trip. Whereupon the *Ancon* returned to Balboa, anchoring in the channel about 5:10 p.m., to be greeted by a crowd, including George Goethals, estimated at 2,000 people.

Thousands watched, generally in silence, as the *Ancon* passed quietly and without incident below those on the locks or those on the banks of the

waterway. Canal workers were among those who watched the *Ancon* pass by, for they had all been granted a day off, a holiday, to celebrate the completion of their years of hard labor, years and years, all embodied in that one ocean liner, the *Ancon*, steaming slowly from sea to shining sea for the very first time in 400 years. In its summary of this historic event, the *Canal Record* wrote, “There were no unscheduled delays and the handling of the vessel in the locks and through the channel sections characterized the whole operation as one of the smoothest up to that time.” And one of the passengers, John Barrett, wrote Goethals:

Congratulations do not mean much to you, but if I were to make any particular comment upon what impressed me most about the opening of the Canal, it would be the ease and system with which everything worked — as if the Canal had been completed and in operation for many years.

True enough: Congratulations meant very little to my grandfather; he had not, for instance, travelled on the *Ancon* in the company of other dignitaries — a “local” group, to be sure, hardly the international group expected before the outbreak of war in Europe — because his mind, his critical eye, was fixed on the Canal, on the Canal from idea to realization, on the Canal in the guise of a 700-ton ocean liner, the *Ancon*, proceeding slowly, calmly, steadily through a waterway of fifty miles, through locks and across lakes, to realize, to fulfill mankind’s dream of 400 years.

Yes, George Goethals was there every step of the way, from beginning to end not only from 1907 to 1914, but from this climactic voyage of fifty miles, Cristóbal to Balboa, traveling slowly but steadily alongside the *Ancon*, just one man in his railroad car. Yes, he moved along with it from point to point in his railroad car, to stop and stand atop a moving lock gate as the ship was raised and lowered to the next level, or on a bank of the waterway below, as the ship resumed its calm, unhurried voyage across the Isthmus of Panama. So intense his concentration upon the *Ancon* that when other onlookers now and then recognized him by his usual attire of white shirt, dark pants, and straw hat, the invariable umbrella in his hand — and quite probably a lighted cigarette in the other — he responded to the small cheers they raised simply with a nod of his head.

If, however, this “man of iron,” so described by one reporter, showed no emotion during his triumph of August 15, others did. Robert E. Wood, Goethals’ former student at West Point and now his able Chief Quartermaster during construction, later wrote that “When we reached the Continental Divide in the cut ...” — he must have been aboard the *Ancon* — “most of the men — and a great many of them hard rock men were tough babies — were in tears....It was a great day.”

The official commendation came from the Secretary of War:

On behalf of the government and the people of the United States I express to you and through you to all concerned in the achievement, the intense gratification and pride experienced today. By the successful passage of vessels through the Canal the dream of centuries has become a reality. Its stupendous undertaking has been finally accomplished and a perpetual memorial to the genius and enterprise of our people has been created. The fully earned and deserved congratulations of a grateful people go out to you and your collaborators.

It was one of many. *The New York Times*, for instance, was as matter-of-fact as the Secretary in its coverage of the opening: "The Panama Canal is open to the commerce of the world. Henceforth ships may pass to and fro through that great waterway." It did not mention that the opening would save coastwise shipping as many as 8,000 miles if it did not have to round Cape Horn, as the celebrated *Oregon* would have had to do in 1898; and the *Time's* story, moreover, was buried, because of the outbreak of world war in Europe, as far back as page 14 in its edition of August 16, the day after. Perhaps the description of the day's activities that would have most accurately reflected George Goethals' view of the proceedings appeared in the *Philadelphia Record*, the "Unostentatious dedicatory act [was] a more appropriate celebration of the triumphs of the arts of peace than if it had been associated with martial pomp and an army of destroyers and battleships." But the one letter Goethals undoubtedly valued the most, dated August 20, came from his younger son, my father finishing his junior year of medical school in Boston. It was, to me, surprisingly matter-of-fact too, and it ended with a reminder that another tuition payment was soon due.

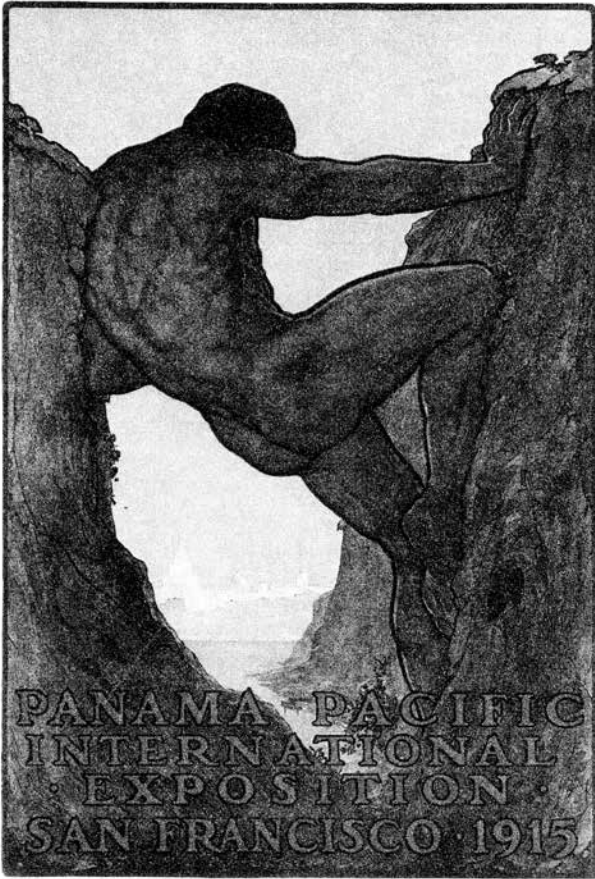
Dear Dad,

Your letter of the 8th enclosing the checks arrived here safely day before yesterday and for both letter and check I'm very much obliged. I was very glad to get your account of the trip of the "Cristóbal," as we had only seen the affair mentioned in the papers here. Last Sunday's papers spoke also of the trip of the "Ancon" through the Canal, and I'm glad to know that the unofficial opening has been so auspicious. We now hear that the total toll receipts in the first three days amounted to \$100,000; quite a good business...

How quickly the Panama Canal was put to use — as quickly as the day after its opening to commercial traffic — may be judged by the number of vessels all of American registry which passed through on Sunday, April 16: northward, three ships; southward, another three; and on August 17 and 18, two more — and due shortly at Balboa from the Pacific still another three. Six of those ships on August 16 must have anxiously been waiting for that day to come. As for the number of commercial ships and both tonnage and tolls, 1,258 passed through the Canal in the first 12 months, carrying 5,075,261 tons of cargo, the tolls for which

"The Greatest, Most Beautiful and Most Important in History"

February 20 to December 4



The Thirteenth Labor of Hercules

Perham W. Nash (1869-1935)

*Collection of The National Museum
City of Columbia
Gift by Eugene Nash*

*City and County of San Francisco
William C. Kelly, publisher
1915*

amounted to \$4,909,150.96. And by the time Goethals left the Canal in late 1916 traffic through the Canal had grown slowly, but it had not, because of frequent slides, reached its full potential: 357 in 1914, 1,170 in 1915, and 1,953 in 1916, carrying 11,652,405 tons of cargo — coal, crude oil, iron ore, lumber, manufactured goods from iron and steel, nitrates, railroad material, refined petroleum, as well as barley, canned goods, copper, and sugar, among other goods and products.

Aftermath

As for the formal official opening of the Panama Canal by the President of the United States, which had been scheduled for the following year, March of 1915 — well, it never took place, primarily because of the growing threat of American involvement in the world war in Europe and the recurrence of landslides in the Panama Canal. On November 15, 1914, three

Canal is hailed as an engineering Wonder of the World.

months after the successful opening of the Canal, the President's plan for the formal ceremony, modifying the earlier plan of June 13, were announced by a spokesman: In February 1915, 27 foreign ships would arrive in Hampton Roads, Virginia, to join a U.S. fleet of 17 vessels. At the end of February, after a review of the 44 vessels, by the President as they left for Panama, he would board the U.S.S. *New York*, the largest and newest battleship, to sail for Colón. Upon arrival, the President would

transfer to the *Oregon* to lead the international fleet through the Canal, accompanied by Secretary Daniels and Admirals Clark and George Dewey, for the formal ceremony in Balboa opening the Panama Canal. But in a conference with Wilson in early January of 1915, Secretary Garrison insisted on additional modifications: Goethals warned the President that the slides that had again recurred in October 1914, only two months after the original opening, might well pose a serious problem (as they soon did), and Garrison thought it dangerous for the President and his Cabinet to be away from Washington for such a long period while world war in Europe threatened to involve the United States. Garrison even recommended that Wilson abandon any formal ceremony, but the President's plans for a gala naval display prevailed. For the President simply decided — even after another White House conference in which Goethals again argued that he could not guarantee his dredges could by March dig a channel through the slides blocking the passage of ships, much less a fleet, deep enough for warships — that he would postpone the formal opening until July. Finally, however — after Congressman William Adamson of Georgia had informed Wilson on February 27, 1915, that many of his colleagues in the House of Representatives favored, as did Col. Goethals, abandoning plans for a formal opening until the European war had ended, Wilson immediately responded:

My present judgment is that it would be better to abandon it [i.e. plans for a formal celebration] altogether on the ground that in the present state of war in Europe it is impossible for us to realize our one-time hope that it could be a general celebration of the nations of the world, for whose use the Canal is intended, than to postpone it to a time the circumstances of which we cannot foresee and when the whole celebration would seem belated and would have lost its point and zest.

It was, to his great relief, George Goethals' "present judgment" too.



The creation of the water passage across Panama was one of the supreme human achievements of all time, the culmination of a heroic dream of four hundred years and of more than twenty years of phenomenal effort and sacrifice. The fifty miles between oceans were among the hardest ever won by human effort and ingenuity, and no statistics on tonnage or tolls can begin to convey the grandeur of what was accomplished.... It is a work of civilization.

— David McCullough
(1977)

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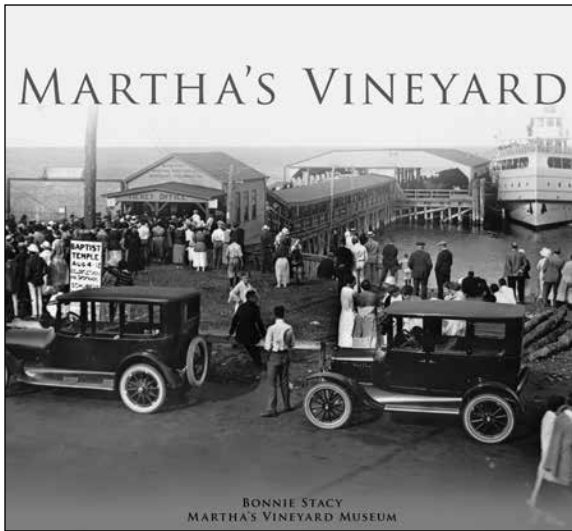
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BOOK REVIEWS:

Images from the Museum Archives,
And a History of the Harbor View

by SUSAN WILSON



Martha's Vineyard. Bonnie Stacy, Martha's Vineyard Museum.
Arcadia Publishing, South Carolina, 2014.

THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD MUSEUM has the obvious and distinct advantage when it comes to telling the history of Martha's Vineyard. The library archives contain thousands of images, reams of documents. The trick is in getting someone with an eye for detail and the skill to do the heavy lifting of sorting, choosing, and discerning the important facts from the merely interesting. Bonnie Stacy, Chief Curator of the Museum, took on this Herculean task and the result is a pictorial history of the Vineyard told in a cogent, compelling fashion through carefully curated images, all, with a few exceptions, from the archives of the Museum.

With the selections divided into four sections: "The Sea Supports Us," "Land and Community," "Enchanted Isle," and "Nature and Climate," Sta-



From the book: "In this obviously posed and beautifully composed photograph taken from a nearby dory, the crew stands atop the mast of swordfishing schooner, Hazel M. Jackson. Based in Edgartown, the Hazel M. Jackson was skippered by Bob Jackson. For many years, he went out to the abundant fishing grounds of Georges Bank between Cape Cod and Nova Scotia on trips that lasted two weeks." (Photograph by Audrey M. Richard.)

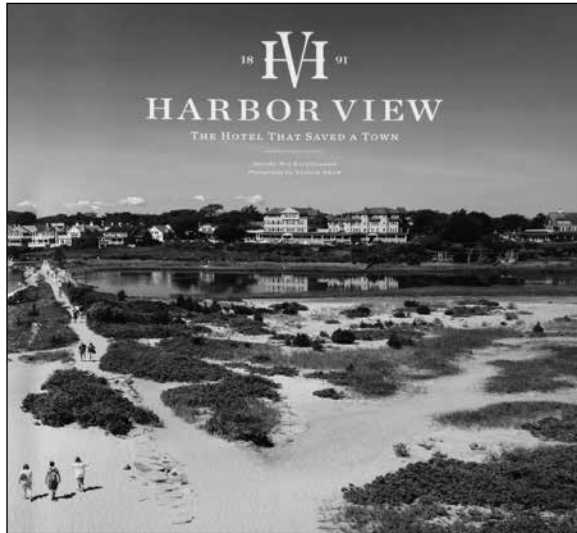


From the book: "Abraham Chase built the "Great House" in Holmes Hole (Vineyard Haven) around 1720. It stood on a site between the current Stop & Shop and the Tisbury police station for 200 years, surviving the fire of 1883, before it was moved to West Chop. Chase probably operated a tavern in the building."

cy's choices tell the complete story of Martha's Vineyard insofar as there are images to illustrate it. It is a familiar story, to be sure, and it's like looking at pictures from a long forgotten family album. In them you can see the origins of our most beloved landmarks — Circuit Avenue, Alley's Store; the unchanged shape of the landscape — places familiar, yet different, the bones of what we know revealed in sepia and black and white.

Stacy's forte is in describing these images within the contextual framework of the book. Each caption is a story unto itself. It takes a tremendous amount of honing to write sparsely. One is reminded of the Mark Twain quote, "I didn't have time to write a short letter so I wrote a long one instead." It's infernally hard to tell history in epigrams, but Stacy has more than ably done so in *Martha's Vineyard*.

The chief benefit of this volume is in bringing these archived images into the light. With the publication of *Martha's Vineyard*, these images, most never before exhibited, are available to be enjoyed, and they will continue to tell the story of this island for many years to come.



Harbor View: The Hotel That Saved a Town.

Nis Kildegaard.

Photographs by Alison Shaw.

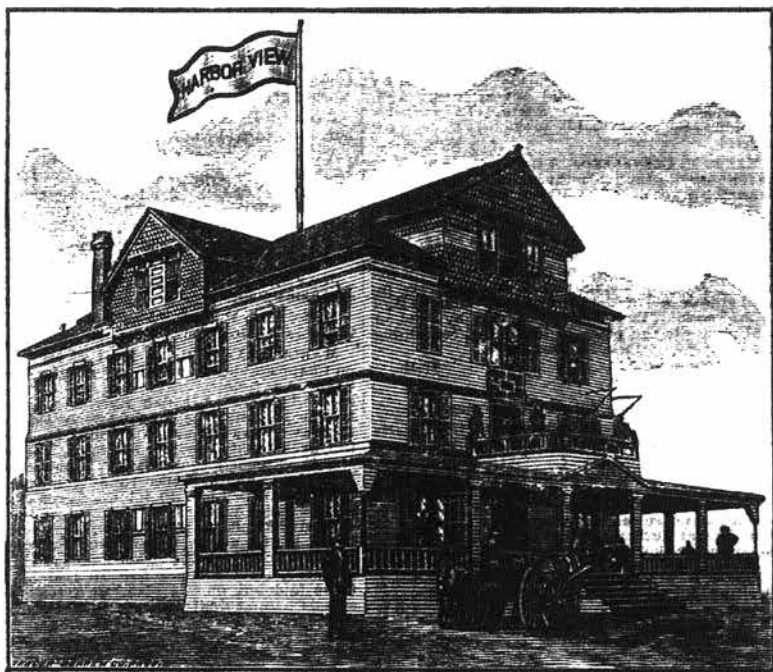
Vineyard Stories, West Tisbury, 2014.

FORTY YEARS AGO, my husband and I spent our honeymoon night in the Harbor View Hotel. It was an extravagance for two kids just starting out, \$50 per night for a room in the 1960s era motel-style section. We were such innocents, we didn't even realize that the hotel served breakfast.

In *Harbor View: The Hotel That Saved a Town*, Nis Kildegaard tells the story of the venerable institution's genesis, its deep ties to the community, and its continued relevance to the island and to the world.

By the end of the 19th century, Edgartown's year-round population had slipped to under 2,000 souls and its economy slumped behind that of its renegade sister town, Oak Bluffs. In an attempt to capitalize on the tourist economy now booming northward, three committed citizens banded together and financed an ambitious hail Mary — the Harbor View Hotel. It wasn't easy, and it was very nearly sunk even before its first season, but the partners wheeled and dealt and kept the hotel from going under.

“On the morning of Wednesday, July 1, a large flag with a white background, blue border, and the words “Harbor View” in crimson letters is run up the flagpole of a new enterprise at the very edge of Edgartown. Inside, at a handsome wood counter, manager J.V. Drew welcomes the hotel's first guests, Mr. and Mrs. George B. Elliott of Boston. For \$2.50 or \$3.50 per day, the Elliots will get three meals a day and a room with the latest in comforts and conveniences, including gas lighting, mattresses of horsehair and woven wire springs, and baths and toilets on each of the three floors.... That quiet transaction



The "Harbor View," **Edgartown, Mass.**

**One of the Most Superbly Located Summer Hotels on the
New England Coast.**

NOW OPEN FOR THE SEASON.

It is situated on elevated ground, and commands a magnificent view of Edgartown Harbor, Vineyard Sound, Cape Pogue, Chappaquiddic Island and Katama Bay. The house is built on a generous scale, has broad piazzas, wide halls and stairways, airy dining-rooms, ample parlors and open fireplaces. All the sleeping apartments have fine water views and are neatly furnished. All hair mattresses, woven wire springs, electric bells, and lighted with gas throughout. The drainage is good, and the sanitary arrangements are of the latest improved patterns. Boating and yachting on the bay and sound is both safe and delightful, while the bathing is perfect. Edgartown is the centre for bluefishing, and that gamey fish is often captured from the beach. The hotel will be under the management of Mr. J. V. Drew, for years identified with some of the leading hotels North and South. The manager will spare no efforts to make the cuisine one of the principal attractions of the house. Rates \$2.50 to \$3.50 by the day. Special rates by the week or season. Lowest terms for June and September. Edgartown is reached by the Old Colony railroad and steamers to Cottage City, connecting with four daily trains to Edgartown.

J. V. DREW, Edgartown, Mass.

This two-column display ad in the Vineyard Gazette announced the Harbor View's opening in the summer of 1891. Rates of \$2.50 to \$3.50 per day included all meals.

in the summer of 1891, and the welcoming and hosting of guests at a resort hotel, is a moment Edgartown had been awaiting for decades."

Through financial ups and downs that included near and actual bankruptcies, massive additions and ambitious renovations, ownership chang-

es and creative financial thinking that have taken the hotel from local ownership and management to that of high stakes corporate control, in the end, the Harbor View has endured.

Using primary resources, copious newspaper reports from the *Gazette*, and interviews with those whose lives have been intertwined with that of the hotel, Kildegaard's narrative strength lies in humanizing the original entrepreneurs and explaining the complicated financial machinations that have been a part of the hotel's history — past and present. Kildegaard draws the reader into caring about a building, turning pages toward the end with a beating heart, what will happen? Can this hotel be saved?

Alison Shaw's magnificent photographs of the hotel and its environs are complemented by vintage photographs, along with sidebars featuring personal recollections adding to the historical narrative.

Originally conceived to provide a season's respite for the weary, the Harbor View has played host to the rich and famous, and the not so famous; and, has become a vital resource to the year-round community. In *Harbor View: The Hotel That Saved a Town* we are reminded that this, the grandest of *grande dames*, continues to play a major part in the lives of so many of us; visitors and islanders alike. From weddings to Scottish Society banquets, Minnesinger auctions and office Christmas parties, fancy dress balls, dining with special friends; a quiet dinner a deux, the Harbor View offers a very special place in island life — the elegant venue. She remains unique among the various hotels on the island, in size, certainly. But, more than that, the Harbor View is a survivor.



This image used in the book, from the Museum collections, depicts the Harbor View in 1896 as seen from the empty fields to the north, with tennis courts in the foreground.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Education Is at Our Core

IT HAS BEEN only a little over a decade that the Museum has employed an educator on staff, and only full-time for the last five years. With great support from the Beagary Charitable Trust beginning in 2010 and direction from former Education Director Nancy Cole, the Museum's programs in Vineyard schools grew nearly threefold in just a few years.

Recently Education Director Ann DuCharme and staff provided 143 classes in Museum-based education in the 2013-14 academic year. In addition, the Museum collaborates with the local chapter of Head Start to promote school readiness of young children from low-income families on the Island. Museum Conversations, which reaches elders at the various senior gathering centers, is having a successful first year with support from the Permanent Endowment for Martha's Vineyard and from the Martha's Vineyard Savings Bank Charitable Fund.

This increasing emphasis on education and outreach is also demonstrated in the nearly 50 events we present each year. They are life-long learning experiences, and many are lots of fun. All combined, these initiatives are, by design, a big part of how we are continuing to grow into our new name of "museum," a place that brings people, objects and stories together to share values. And recently this was recognized in a major way.

The Martha's Vineyard Museum learned in early December that it is the recipient of a \$500,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The grant, issued by the NEH Office of Challenge Grants, must be matched by \$1.5 million in private contributions and will endow the Education Department, including the position of Education Director. Income from the endowment will support the operation, growth and development of the museum's humanities-based interpretive programs.

This wonderful news couldn't come at a better time. Our Museum is at a moment of transformation. We are building our future around education. This NEH grant will act as both an endorsement and an incentive. It announces to potential matching funders that we are in the education business to stay. It is



Fostering historical literacy: Education Director Ann DuCharme leads a class in the Museum library.

the largest grant that NEH awards. We couldn't have asked for more.

Why did the NEH give us this grant? In announcing the award, Andrea Anderson, Acting Director of the NEH Office of Challenge Grants, said: "Evaluators believed that the Museum will increase public understanding of the humanities for residents and visitors alike. All agreed that the biggest beneficiaries will be the Island's more than 2,100 public school children who will show gains in improved historical literacy and critical thinking skills. The Museum is an important cultural entity for the Island, and it has an opportunity to reach beyond its local audience to serve the many international visitors who come to Martha's Vineyard each year."

It helped that we had a long and successful history with NEH. In previous years, the Museum has received NEH support for cataloguing, for our "Enchanted Isle" permanent exhibit, and for the Laura Jernegan website. It also helped that we knew some people. Sheldon Hackney, our recent Board Chair who passed away in September 2013, was a former Chairman of NEH. Representative Bill Keating was in our corner when he said: "They are doing outstanding work with the children and students in our district and their contribution to enriching local education and history is invaluable. I congratulate the entire staff and board. This grant is an acknowledgement of what everyone on the Island already knows: the Martha's Vineyard Museum seeks to build a world-class facility with forward-thinking programs."

With the purchase of the 1895 Vineyard Haven Marine Hospital, the Museum embarked on an ambitious project to enlarge its facilities, enhance its programs, and forge a more vital role in the Island's educational and cultural life. One of the Museum's goals in this project is to establish a substantial endowment whose investment income can support fundamental mission-based programs. The entire project will be funded primarily by private contributions, and this NEH grant will encourage that generosity.

I will close by adding one more voice. Elizabeth Beim, the Museum's current Chair, said: "The NEH Challenge Grant is an important recognition that this institution has the capability to meet its educational goals as well as the ability to raise the funds necessary to meet their challenge. It is a welcomed tribute to a talented staff and board, working together as a team."

As members you too are a part of this team. Your support and advocacy is critically important. We all have reason to celebrate the season and look forward to 2015.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D 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.

OVERLOOKING STARBUCK'S BLUFF: THE HARBOR VIEW HOTEL



Made in Germany for Thomas J. Walker, Edgartown, Mass.

"Harbor View Bl.," Edgartown, Mass.

This early view of the hotel was taken by Myra Walker, the wife of hotel owner Dr. Thomas Walker, who was also the town's physician and pharmacist. Printed in a panoramic "double-wide" postcard format, this image and many others by Mrs. Walker were printed in Germany and sold in Dr. Walker's pharmacy (then located in the building which is home to Murdick's Fudge today).