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Nomans, The Navy, and National Security

**Beriah Norton
and the British**

**First-Person Vineyard:
I Remember Lucy Vincent**

PART 1



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CHANGES

In a year of changes for the Martha's Vineyard Museum, this journal is changing as well. Beginning with this issue, it returns to the quarterly publication schedule—February, May, August, November—that it followed for its first fifty years (1959-2009). It does so, moreover, under a new title designed to highlight its connection to the Museum and, by evoking the spirit of publications such as the *William & Mary Quarterly* and *New England Quarterly*, to highlight the mixture of scholarly content and accessible writing that have always been its hallmark.

Scholarly articles rooted in original research remain, as they have been for six decades, the backbone of this journal. The current issue presents two exceptional ones: one by a frequent contributor, and one by a new addition to the ranks of Vineyard historians. The return to four issues per year will, however, also give us the freedom to run additional features—some new, others familiar from decades past—that will provide a deeper, richer understanding of Vineyard history and culture. Some of these new features are showcased in the current issue: a first-person memoir of Chilmark a half-century ago, a look at a forgotten event that sheds light on larger historical themes, and an article spotlighting an extraordinary object from the Museum collections. Others—including oral histories and photo essays—will appear in issues to come.

This journal, like the institution it represents, will continue to evolve. We invite you—through your readership, your suggestions, and your contributions—to be part of that process, and to shape what the *MVM Quarterly* becomes.

— A. Bowdoin Van Riper

MARTHA'S VINEYARD MUSEUM QUARTERLY

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Nomans, the Navy, And National Security

Local Distrust and Resistance, 1943–2010

by JUSTIN GROSSMAN

THE BOMBS HAVE stopped falling, but the echoes of the United States Navy's use of Nomans Land Island as a practice range for aerial bombing and strafing have not faded. Nomans, lying three miles off the south coast of the Vineyard, was once used as a seasonal pasture for sheep farmers and a summer base for cod fishermen. It had become the privately owned abode of the Crane family before being leased by the Navy in the midst of World War II.¹ By the 1950s the war was over, but the lease was terminated in favor of outright expropriation and the Cranes never set foot back on Nomans. Over the next 40 years, thousands of tons of weaponry would be dropped on the 1.5 square mile island in the face of growing concerns expressed by year-round residents, summer tourists, and Wampanoag tribal members of Martha's Vineyard.

The Navy agreed, in 1970, to gradually relinquish control of Nomans to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) which established it as an uninhabited bird sanctuary—a process formally completed in 1998.² With this transfer, the Navy assumed that it could wash its hands of an island now riddled with unexploded ordnance (UXO) and other hazardous materials.³

Faced with the prospect of the Navy walking away from the island, indifferent to the health, safety, and cultural damage it left behind, Vineyarders protested. Led by members of the Wampanoag tribe of Gay Head

1 The history of Noman's Land is discussed in Bertrand T. Wood's self-published *Noman's Land: History and Legends* (1978), and in articles in the August 1975, November 1975, August 1985, and May 1996 issues of the *Dukes County Intelligencer*.

2 Michael Greenberg, "Power, Positionality, and conceptions of stewardship and ownership in the cleanup of Nomans Land Island, Massachusetts," (Honors Thesis, Colby College, 2004), 5.

3 Greenberg, "Power, Positionality, and Conceptions of Stewardship," 63.

Justin Grossman, a summer resident of Chilmark and 2016 graduate of Carleton College, is a social studies teacher. His thesis on the Navy and Nomans Land, from which this article is derived, is now part of the Nomans Land Collection (RU 264) in the Museum archives.

(Aquinnah), they demanded a more thorough (and thus more expensive) cleanup, leading to a prolonged debate over the past and future of Nomans. The Navy was forced to engage state agencies and the public, as part of a formal review of their use and relinquishment of the island. As part of this effort, Foster Wheeler, an environmental corporation that the Navy had contracted to oversee the cleanup of the island, collected interviews with locals who had observed and interacted with the Navy during its ownership of Nomans. The firm also solicited comments on the Navy's proposed cleanup from various government agencies, outside private contractors, and the local population at large. This wealth of information reveals another instance in a long list of relationships in which US military action provoked the fear and mistrust of a local population with whom they were supposedly partners and how the Navy's disregard of local concerns created a paradox where the pursuit of "national security" endangered the security of the very citizens whom the military was charged with protecting.

The assumption that the greater good of American national security trumps the concerns of any specific individual or group has brought distress to foreign allies and American citizens alike. The resulting culture of distrust in the US military has been well-documented in Southeast Asia and Latin America (where the US waged war against communist forces during the Cold War), in atomic testing areas and military bases in the South Pacific,⁴ and at the former US Navy weapons-testing areas on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques.⁵ Current scholarship contends that these larger trends of developing animosity have been far less pronounced in interactions between the military and civilians in the continental United States.⁶ The consequences of nuclear-weapons testing American Southwest were significant, but rarely led to questions about the necessity of such testing or the military's obligations to those affected.⁷

The case of Nomans Land is unique both because the island itself was unoccupied during the era of Navy ownership, and because of the diversity of the neighboring towns of Aquinnah and Chilmark. Thirty-seven percent of the year-round population of Aquinnah claims some Native American ancestry, while the year-round population of Chilmark (of which Nomans

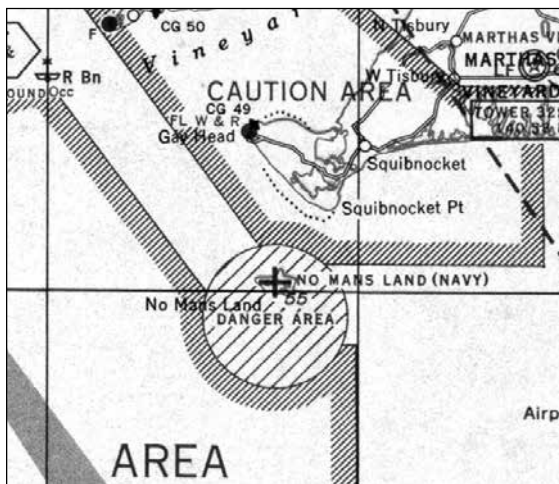
4 Constandina Titus, *Bombs in the Backyard: Atomic Testing and American Politics*. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1986), 52.

5 Katherine T. McCaffrey, "Social Struggle Against The U.S. Navy In Vieques, Puerto Rico: Two Movements In History," *Latin American Perspectives* 33, no. 1 (2006): 83-101.

6 Titus, *Bombs in the Backyard*; Linda Backiel, "The People of Vieques, Puerto Rico vs. the United States Navy," *Monthly Review* 54, no. 9 (2003): 1; Russell Baruffi, *Environmental Conflict and Cultural Solidarity: The Case of Vieques*. Providence, RI: Watson Institute for International Studies, 2002.

7 Titus, *Bombs in the Backyard*, 100.

is formally part) is over ninety-six percent white.⁸ Both towns have median household incomes in the bottom third of the range for Massachusetts,⁹ but both are seasonal vacation destinations that attract the rich and powerful to the island of Martha's Vineyard as a whole. As this article goes to press, the median home price is \$1.5 million in Chilmark and \$1.9 million in Aquinnah.¹⁰ The concerns of seasonal residents—including Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis in Aquinnah and Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz in Chilmark—had no more sway over the DoD, however, than those of the year-round populations, Native or white. The Navy still saw its dominance over Nomans as sacrosanct, to the consternation of many who considered the Vineyard home.



Nomans' isolation, shown by this 1943 US Geological Survey map, made it an attractive target.

You and What Army? Mistrust and Resentment Of Naval Supremacy

The complete minimization of the interests and concerns of the people living on and around Nomans Land may have been in line with overall US policy at the time,¹¹ but it only served to make the local population distrustful and fearful of naval activities. From the outset, the Navy was unconcerned with, and made no attempt to diminish, these attitudes. Initially, Nomans was to be used as a radar station with little impact on the landscape and preexisting developments. Secretly, however, the island was always intended for use as a target range by pilots from the naval air station at Quonset Point. A recently declassified internal memo from 1943 requests acquisition of the island “for certain purposes involving the use of secret equipment and training of personnel in such use.”¹² In the same internal memo, the Navy

8 United States Census Bureau, *American Fact Finder* https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml.

9 See, for example, “Median Household Income, Massachusetts Cities and Towns—1999,” <http://www.massbenchmarks.org/statedata/data/median99.pdf>

10 As listed on ColdwellBanker.com, February 10, 2018.

11 Vieques, Puerto Rico and nuclear weapons testing in the western United States provide similar examples of locally dangerous military land usage.

12 Commanding Officer, U.S. Naval Air Station Quonset Point, R.I., “No Man’s Land Island, Mass.—Acquisition of as a site for range and targets,” October 29, 1943. Chilmark Town Hall Records (hereafter CTHR).

describes choosing the island because it was the “only site suitable (in) this area (for use as a rocket projectile firing range, night bombing target, and strafing range),” and that it would be “Necessary for few local inhabitants to evacuate,” ignoring all the other potential consequences that bombing might bring upon the residents of Nomans and Martha’s Vineyard. The agreement with the Crane family was supposed to cease with the end of hostilities. The contract stated that the lease “may, at the option of the Government, be renewed from year to year...provided that no renewal thereof shall extend the period of occupancy of the premises beyond six months after the termination of the present states of war.”¹³ However, naval use of Nomans Land did not come to an end with the surrender of Germany or Japan, but instead was determined to be indefinitely necessary, and the island was purchased outright in 1954.

Military training and bombing practice, now a seemingly unending endeavor, came with a set of real and imagined consequences that deepened Vineyarders’ mistrust. They could no longer set foot on the island, but still desired to use the surrounding waters for fishing and recreation, and still were frightened by the unintended effects of Navy bombing and strafing on their health and safety. All of the fears associated with a local military presence are made clear in a series of interviews of local witnesses conducted in 2002 by Robert B. Beattie on behalf of Navy contractor Tetra Tech NUS, and in contemporary newspaper accounts of naval operations on Nomans.¹⁴ Members of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head were often the most critical, but their complaints were congruent with the views of the up-island population as a whole. Included in the record are cases of planes accidentally dropping material and causing fires near Lighthouse Road in Aquinnah, live bombs found on Chilmark beaches, and massive burns on Nomans sending billowing smoke over to the Vineyard.¹⁵

The local residents of Chilmark and Aquinnah who came forward with similar stories in these interviews make up a remarkably complete list of the historical landowners in the towns, and were not necessarily predisposed to quarrel with the military. Louis Larsen, Sr., whose family name graces the enormously successful Larsen’s Fish Market, stated that, “the Navy personnel were ‘always nice,’” and that he “joined the Merchant Marine during the war. He noted that during the war the Navy gave radios and carrier pigeons to ‘trustworthy’ fisherman so they could report submarine

13 Priscilla Crane and Alexander Crane, Trustees of the Crane Property Trust and The United States of America, “Lease of Noman’s Land,” November 22, 1943. CTHR.

14 Robert B. Beattie and Tetra Tech NUS, Inc., “Project Number 4096, Nomans Land Island Interview Summary Letter Report Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, March 15, 2002,” CTHR.

15 Beattie, “Project Number 4096.”



Nomans as it might have appeared to Cold-War-era pilots practicing attacks. (US Navy photograph)

activity if they saw any.”¹⁶ However, after the war, cooperation quickly turned into apprehension among those who called Martha’s Vineyard home. Robert Flanders, whose family has owned Flanders Up-Island Real Estate since 1927,¹⁷ and was a Navy Seabee (construction worker) during World War II,¹⁸ recalls that, “he was aware of planes shooting in the water...when they fired their machine guns to scare boaters out of the area. He said that he had heard of one boat from the Vineyard that had a 50-caliber shot ricochet off of his console onto the deck,” and another instance when “he was out in the area in a blue boat and the pilots mistook him for the other local (who had been giving the Navy a hard time) and they blew two holes in the water on either side of him.”¹⁹

Chilmark fisherman Sidney Harris recounted the fears brought up by his interaction with the Navy, saying that he had “observed large, four-engine bombers fly low over the water to bomb the island...around the time of the Korean War” and that misaimed bombs may have overshot Nomans and landed in Squibnocket Pond.²⁰ These safety concerns were not, however,

¹⁶ Beattie, “Project Number 4096.”

¹⁷ Flanders Up Island Real Estate, “All Island Listings,” flandersrealestate.net, January 24, 2016.

¹⁸ Beattie, “Project Number 4096.”

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.



Wayne Iacono in 2015. (US Coast Guard Auxiliary photograph)

limited only to fishing and boats that strayed too close to the restricted island and residents in the line of fire, but also to those locals working for the US Coast Guard, which occasionally supported naval missions on Nomans. Wayne Iacono, a commercial fisherman and former Coast Guardsman, remembered one such harrowing experience in the fall or early winter of 1967-68 after spotting flares over Nomans.²¹ He took a crew to the north side of Nomans in order to inspect the situation, fearing that there had been a plane crash.

[Iacono] remembers that he stayed on the boat and that Dennis Jason and the other crew member went onshore. He reported that there was a lot of confusion and gunfire. He said flares kept going off in the air over the island and that Mr. Jason and the other member of the crew were captured...He said he didn't think his crew made it very far up the island until he heard gunfire and saw people coming down the hillside toward his boat.²²

Pushing off from Nomans, Iacono returned to the US Coast Guard Station at Menemsha, where he gathered reinforcement, including members of the Chilmark police, who set out with loaded rifles to rescue the captured members of his crew. Thankfully, danger was averted when the Navy eventually contacted the Coast Guard. Iacono later stated that "he remembers being told that [Navy Seabees] were playing 'war games.'"²³

A similarly cavalier attitude on the part of the Navy was evident in the recollections of another ex-Coast Guardsman, John Armstrong. Recalling a mission for which he was told to pick up several Navy SEALs from Cape Cod and bring them to the waters off Nomans by boat, Armstrong remembered being alarmed when he found that they had brought a case of plastic explosives on board, and were—as the boat made its way to Nomans—busy working with fuses and wires as they rigged it to explode. The SEALs were anxious to evacuate the area after dropping the explosives, and Armstrong headed for Squibnocket at high speed, only to be told by the naval officer in

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

charge that they were “too far away” and that the explosion “wasn’t going to be that big.” When no explosion at all took place, and Armstrong asked the officer what he wanted to do, he was told: “nothing, let’s just go.” He repeated the question, and received the same answer: “don’t worry about it, just go.”²⁴ The incident reflected the Navy’s vision of the ocean as a barren wasteland into which munitions could be discarded, without thinking about what or who might have to deal with the them weaponry in the future.²⁵ The same attitude extended to Nomans Land.

Local residents of Martha’s Vineyard were both aware of these incidents and fearful of their ramifications. In a 1987 article that appeared in the *New York Times*, “summer resident David Danielson ... said he recently looked through a telescope on the Gay Head Cliffs, at the top of the Vineyard, and saw bombs falling everywhere, including forbidden points.”²⁶ Whether or not all of the above stories are one hundred percent accurate, the result of the high degree of secrecy with which the Navy operated did nothing to alleviate the fears and mistrust created by their supposed actions. As a result of this lack of transparency, the Navy became a boogeyman on which local residents could blame problems without obvious causes or solutions. For example, residents were quick to connect the dots between naval environmental contamination and consequences to their health, even before the Navy began their hand over of the island to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. One such theory concerned the staggering cancer rates in both Aquinnah and Chilmark, the highest in the state for overall cancer and breast cancer, respectively, in 1990-1995.²⁷

The widespread health concerns of local residents left the Navy official unmoved, as did the annual act of trespass committed by a “band of summer and year-round Vineyard residents” who “risked arrest and injury and set out in large fishing trawlers and tiny sailboats to the island where they (were) forbidden to go under Federal law.”²⁸ That official position of indifference, and the resentment it generated, surfaced in full force when the Navy attempted to abandon the island without fully addressing the contamination that it had left there.

24 Beattie, “Project Number 4096.”

25 This view of the ocean as a landfill for used-up naval equipment is supported by the acknowledgement by numerous boaters and fishermen of a well-marked area known as “The Pit” in between Block Island and Martha’s Vineyard, where the Navy would regularly scuttle unusable machinery and weaponry (Beattie, “Project Number 4096”).

26 “Navy Bomb Site Rattles The Vineyard,” *The New York Times*, May 24, 1987.

27 Cynthia McCormick, “State cites high cancer rates,” *Cape Cod Times*, December 9, 1999. <http://www.capecodtimes.com/article/19991209/news01/312099948>

28 “Navy Bomb Site Rattles The Vineyard.”



An F-111 adds its practice bombs to the hundreds of thousands dropped on Nomans.
(US Air Force photo)

Leave it For the Birds: The Conflict Over the Cleanup of Nomans

The eastern third of Nomans had been transferred to the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 1975, a year after Naval Air Station Quonset Point—which had overseen operations on Nomans for three decades—was decommissioned as part of a massive reorganization of the armed forces following the Vietnam War.²⁹ Two decades later, in 1996, the Navy’s decision to end bombing and gunnery practice on Nomans entirely left it with one last operation to carry out: finding the quickest and most cost-effective way to hand the remaining two-thirds of the island over to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Standing in the way of the Navy’s attempt to rid itself of Nomans, were the effects of its cavalier 40-year “stewardship” of the island. A September 1998 report produced by Foster Wheeler, a subcontractor working with the Navy, reported that 11,021 individual pieces of weaponry, including “4,047 items...containing [a] small smoke-charge or residual rocket fuel,” had been found on a surface sweep of the island.³⁰ The reference to a “surface sweep” means that the ordnance collected—over 550,000 pounds—was

29 George Schlossberg, “How Congress Cleared the Bases: A Legislative History of BRAC,” *Journal of Defense Communities*, no. 1 (2013), 1.

30 Inter-Link Group, Ltd., et. al., “Survey Report for the Radiological Screening Survey on Nomans Land Island,” September 2, 1998, CTHR [hereafter “Radiological Survey”].

found in just the top foot of earth on Nomans.³¹ How much more might be more deeply buried, remained a mystery. The collection of this debris, the scanning of the island's roads for unexploded ordnance (UXO), and the removal of three 5,000-gallon underground storage tanks represented a significant effort on the part of the Navy.³² It did little, however, to allay the fears of local residents, who still had reservations about the consequences of an incomplete cleanup for their health and safety.

The Navy, for which a more thorough cleanup represented an enormous investment of time and money from which they would not extract any additional benefit, remained unmoved by the health concerns of Vineyarders and opposed to further cleanup operations. It therefore sought a basis for claiming that Nomans was safe and environmentally sound *enough* that it could relinquish responsibility for the island for good. The original purpose envisioned for the island—its complete takeover by the Fish and Wildlife Service as an uninhabited bird sanctuary—provided just such a pretext. The Navy's official position—repeated like a mantra to local people, government agencies, outside research groups, and members of Congress—, the Navy clearly states that the ordnance sweep and removal performed in 1998, also known as the first Release Abatement Measure (RAM), was sufficient for the island's proposed use. If only birds, and not humans, would be using the island, the Navy argued, there was no need for a meticulous cleanup; safety hazards that came to light, piecemeal, in the future would be the responsibility of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Navy's use this rhetoric to stave off investigation by some of its more formidable critics began even before the commencement of the Release Abatement Measure. In January 1998, for example, Senator Edward Kennedy wrote to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy expressing concern that "the personal safety of [boaters, fishermen, and trespassers] is jeopardized by allowing this ordnance to remain" and expressing confidence that the Navy "will see that the removal of this unexploded ordnance is a necessity in order for this island to be included in the National Wildlife Refuge System."³³ The Navy's response, written by Principal Deputy Secretary Diana H. Josephson, promised to "carefully weigh the cleanup alternatives with input from all concerned," but acknowledging that "the island will continue to have signs placed to warn unauthorized visitors coming onto

31 Inter-Link Group, et. al. "Radiological Survey."

32 Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), in Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation, "Annotated Responses to Review Comments on Draft Phase II Comprehensive Assessment (CSA) Report Nomans Land Island, Chilmark, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts," March 8, 2001, CTHR [hereafter "Annotated Responses"].

33 Edward M. Kennedy, "Letter to The Honorable Robert B. Pirie, Jr. Assistant Secretary of the Navy," January 26, 1998. CTHR.

the island that they are trespassing on restricted federal lands that may be contaminated with ordnance.”³⁴ The Navy’s position changed little after the completion of the survey and the first RAM in 1998. Writing on its behalf, W.P. Fogarty, Commanding Officer of Northern Division Naval Facilities, stated: “I hereby find that, although the property may contain some level of contamination by hazardous substances or petroleum products, the property can be transferred for the proposed use with the specified use restrictions, with acceptable risk to human health.”³⁵

Due to an EPA requirement of a public comment review period before approving the permit sought by the Navy in order to complete the transfer to the Fish and Wildlife Service,³⁶ the community was in a position to air the grievances resulting from decades of developing mistrust of the military. About 30 of the 40 or so comments provided by the public, and dozens more provided by government agencies, outside contractors, and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), took issue with the Navy’s abandonment of the island in one way or another. Perhaps no group was more critical than the Tribe, which, at this point, had still not given up in its attempt to be able to use the island for cultural and religious ceremonies. They threw Defense Department rhetoric back against the Navy, writing, “It is DOD and USN policy that ‘every means possible shall be used to protect members of the general public from exposure to hazards from contaminated real property currently or formerly under DOD ownership or control.’ (DOD Ammunition and Explosives Safety Standards),”³⁷ and noted that “technology is available to scan for unexploded ordnance sub surface,” enabling the UXO to be precisely removed, “limiting impact to sensitive environments.” Like Kennedy’s earlier letter, they presented a more thorough cleanup as necessary to “insure the safety of the general public, trespassers, fisherman, and authorized guests and employees of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.”³⁸ The Tribe argued that the Navy was acting out of institutional self-interest, rather than responding to true technological limitations or the concerns of local citizens. They are also contended that the Navy’s plan for the island was inconsistent with ethical and legal precedent, stating:

34 Diana H. Josephson, “Letter to The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy, February 24, 1998. CTHR.

35 W.P. Fogarty, “Memorandum for the Record, Environmental Summary document to support proposed federal to federal conveyance of Nomans Land Island, MA,” March 13, 1998. CTHR.

36 Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation to Chilmark Board of Selectmen, “Notice of Site Investigation and Permit Application, Nomans Land Island, Chilmark, Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts,” September 28, 1998. CTHR.

37 Wampanoag Tribe of Aquinnah, in “Annotated Responses.”

38 Ibid.

The Tribe would request that the Navy continue its government-to-government consultation process with the Tribe based upon the existing Executive Orders and DOD Native American Policy... The Tribe feels that since the ultimate use of Nomans when considered in the context of the next seven generations of tribal members is still unclear that efforts should be made to assure that no negative health effects should be allowed.³⁹

The “government-to-government” language was a reference to the tribe’s hard-won (in 1987) status as a Federally Recognized Tribal Nation, and an effort to speak as a collective voice and force a discussion of their views.

Vineyarders from outside the Tribe also questioned the Navy’s plans. Aquinnah resident Steven Jackson, in one of his many prodding remarks to the Navy, questioned its claim that the island posed no future risk to its neighbors after the first RAM, writing: “Why would you state that there is no significant risk for all categories (Human, Health, Environmental, Safety, and Public Welfare) without clarifying your ‘condition’ of no one being on the island? This is very misleading to the general public and creates an increased level of mistrust.”⁴⁰ Jackie Grey, a Chilmark resident, also charged the Navy with evasion of responsibility, stating: “There is an apparent necessity to expand the designated use of Nomans Land Island in order to allow a more extensive cleanup of the island.” Expressing solidarity with her tribal neighbors, she asserted:

This is not only a regulatory issue but an ethical one...The cleanup of Nomans should remove all surface and subsurface toxins, opening the island up to all potential inhabitants and visitors, including human beings...I support the rights of the Wampanoag Tribe to have access to Nomans Land Island. It strikes me as ludicrous to argue over access issues with the Tribe, given the history of conquest of these islands in colonial times.⁴¹

Cheryl Andrews Maltais, also of Chilmark, in accord with Ms. Grey’s proclamation, commented, “I am concerned that because the greatest effect is on a tribal community, the U.S. Navy is not truly committed to a complete and thorough clean-up.”⁴²

Distrust of the military also made local residents more apt to challenge the Navy over whether or not it had used the island in a responsible way. Most of this concern was tied to rumors that depleted uranium (DU) munitions had been used on Nomans as they had in the highly publicized

39 Ibid.

40 Steven Jackson, in “Annotated Responses.” Jackson also made additional statements related to his concern with potential depleted-uranium use on Nomans, the unnecessarily bureaucratic nature of the Navy’s cleanup of the island, and his desire for more public engagement.

41 Jackie Grey, in “Annotated Responses.”

42 Cheryl Andrews Maltais, in “Annotated Responses.”

case of Vieques, Puerto Rico.⁴³ Lt. Col. Don W. Jordan of the United States Air Force Radiation Protection Division wrote in response that he could find “no record of any USAF use of Depleted Uranium containing munitions on the subject range.”⁴⁴ A study requested by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for radioactivity connected to the potential use of depleted uranium on the island drew a similar conclusion. “No unusual or elevated levels of gamma radiation that would be associated with DU were observed during the conduct of the Nomans Land Island radiological screening survey.”⁴⁵

These seemingly decisive findings did not, however, prevent comments such as that offered by Chilmark resident James R. Fuller, which revealed lingering concerns among a large section of the public. Connecting his concern about DU munitions with his mistrust of the military, he wrote:

The cleanup process reveals almost daily new and disastrous contamination from every imaginable source, including buried munitions, fuel and lubrication oils, batteries, indeed, whole vehicles. That these discoveries are taking place on a site which has been manned continually gives one pause what might be found at a site where we are relying largely on anecdotal evidence regarding what may or may not have been employed and now rests beneath your superficial surface examination.⁴⁶

Chilmark police chief Tim Rich echoed Fuller’s sentiment in an interview with the Naval contractor Tetra Tech, remarking that he and other Chilmarkers “had always had the perception that depleted uranium was used by the A-10s strafing Nomans Land.”⁴⁷ While the fear of depleted uranium use appears to have been unfounded, the belief that the Navy was being irresponsibly haphazard, or downright conniving, made it difficult to dispel. The same attitude slipped into many of the other points of contention brought up by the local residents and other interested parties—a reflection of their belief that military action was diminishing, not enhancing, their security.

The most commonly cited rationale for the need for a more thorough cleanup had to do with the unproven, but also undetermined, impact of the Navy’s use of the island on the health of the residents of Chilmark and Aquinnah, and the potential dangers of buried, unexploded ordnance. A

43 Bullets with a DU core have a higher density, higher kinetic energy, and thus greater penetrating power than those with steel core, making them more effective at penetrating armor. Spent DU bullets are (incidentally) radioactive and remain so for years, poisoning the soil of battlefields where they have been used.

44 Lt. Col. Don W. Jordan, “Statement Regarding USAF Use of DU at No-Mans Land Air to Ground Range,” April 7, 1998. CTHR.

45 Inter-link Group, et. al. “Radiological Survey,” p. 6.

46 James R. Fuller, in “Annotated Responses.”

47 Beattie, “Project Number 4096.”

group of local residents spoke to these fears in a petition, arguing that:

[We] still have concerns regarding the following activities regarding Nomans Island...Environmental Investigation: Human Health Effects of Environmental Contamination from Nomans Island...Possible Link of Elevated Cancer Rates on Martha's Vineyard to Nomans Contaminates...Food Chain Contamination [from ducks and geese, fish, and shellfish.]⁴⁸

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry affirmed the residents' desire for further inquiry, commenting, "The health of residents on Martha's Vineyard may have been or be impacted by contaminants coming from Nomans Land Island. Since there are data gaps in the pathways leading to human exposure, only an incomplete picture...currently exists." The Northeast Hazardous Substances Research Center (NHSRC) expressed similar concerns, stating that: "It appears that UXO screening was essentially performed without devices that cover subsurface. Subsurface clearance would appear warranted especially for any area planned for use for tribal activities."⁴⁹

The Navy justified these omissions with its familiar circular logic: The land needed to remain uninhabited because it was dangerous to visitors, and therefore, because it was to be uninhabited, it was no longer considered dangerous. The US Environmental Protection Agency, unimpressed, tartly commented that "limitation of public use of public lands and its associated resources due to hazardous material is considered a risk of harm to public welfare," contradicting the Navy's implied claim that no such risk existed.⁵⁰



A 30mm target-practice round like those fired at Nomans, with a .30 caliber rifle cartridge beside it for scale.

48 Richard Randolph, et al., in "Annotated Responses."

49 Both agencies' comments appear in in "Annotated Responses."

50 Environmental Protection Agency, in "Annotated Responses."

Our Way or the Highway: The Status of Nomans Today

Residents' concerns, though loudly spoken, did little to divert the Navy from its intended course. The Navy maintained that Nomans should remain uninhabited for the indefinite future, submitting to a requirement that it indefinitely search for and remove any unexploded ordnance material brought to the surface by erosion, but deeming the removal of unexploded ordnance material below the surface too costly. After the lengthy public review process that produced the comments and interviews cited above, the Wampanoag Tribe eventually relinquished its claims of access to the island for the immediate future, and the use of Nomans as a bird sanctuary under the control of the US Fish and Wildlife Service was formalized.⁵¹ The Fish and Wildlife Service agreed to protect any cultural sites and comply with section 106 of the National Historical Preservation Act, but visitation was strictly limited. The agency's 2010 conservation plan for the island states: "We will only approve [visitation] permit requests that provide a direct benefit to the Refuge, or for research that will strengthen our decisions on managing natural resources on the Refuge."⁵² The agreement allows for a review period, every fifteen years, during which the people of Chilmark and members of the Wampanoag Tribe can explore the possibility of further UXO removal in order to set the stage for greater human visitation. The funding for such a cleanup, however, would not come from the Department of Defense.⁵³

So what, if anything, did this drawn-out review process achieve for Vineyarders, and in what way did the results differ from the Navy's initial plans? If nothing else, it forced a dialogue that would otherwise never have taken place. The Navy's disdain for *any* discussion of the issues surrounding its abandonment of Nomans is evident in its insistence, from the beginning, that the process was complete and required no further review. The residents of Martha's Vineyard were, in the end, able to publicly air and investigate their worst fears about the effects of decades of naval action.⁵⁴ The Navy was forced to seriously examine the potential health risks associated with their

51Diana H Josephson, Principal Deputy of the Navy, "Letter to The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy, February 24, 1998. CTHR.

52 US Fish and Wildlife Service, *Nomans Land Island National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan*, September 2010, 4-7.

53 Nelson Sigelman, "FWS will Discuss Plan for Nomans Land," *Martha's Vineyard Times*, June 3, 2010.

54 The Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency tested all ordnance material for radiation levels, and many of the contamination pathway claims to explain higher cancer rates were disproven. For example, the watershed of Nomans and Aquinnah, which, if shared, could have been a source of human exposure to ordnance contaminants, were determined to be separate. Inter-link Group, et. al. "Radiological Survey," 6.

use of the island, and to allow outside investigators verify its claim that no depleted uranium munitions had been used on Nomans.

More philosophically, the battle over the cleanup of Nomans brought to the surface a longstanding paradox in military thinking. The stated mission of the Department of Defense—“to provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country”⁵⁵—fails to address what happens when actions taken to protect the security of the nation as a whole diminish the security of individual citizens. The Navy’s treatment of the residents of Martha’s Vineyard in the Nomans Land case makes clear the military’s position that defense priorities supersede the rights of individual citizen. The US military’s comparative indifference to the health, safety, and human rights of enemy noncombatants, and of the residents of outlying US territories such as Puerto Rico and the Marshall Islands, has been well-documented in the years since World War II. To those stories we can now add the tale of a cooperative group of US citizens—residents not of a barren western desert but of an East Coast resort frequented by the wealthy and powerful—who had clear legal standing and the backing of state and federal environmental agencies. That the military was able to ignore, neglect, and ultimately dictate policy to even this most broad-ranging of coalitions suggests that a dangerous tipping of the scales has taken place, where the checks and balances of America’s system of government are thrown by the wayside whenever national security is perceived to be at stake.

55 United States Department of Defense, “About the Department of Defense (DoD),” August 27, 2015. www.defense.gov/About-DoD.



A sign at the beach captures Nomans’ current, ambiguous state.

Between the Redcoats and The Deep Blue Sea

Beriah Norton and the Blurred Lines of Loyalty

by ELIZABETH W. TROTTER

WE ARE RAISED to think of the American Revolution as a conflict with clear-cut sides, but the reality is much more complicated. Between the liberty-loving Patriot willing to risk life and limb in armed rebellion and the staunch Loyalist who felt honor-bound to serve the King no matter how high the personal cost was a broad middle ground occupied by many (perhaps most) of the citizens of our soon-to-be nation. Their allegiance was shaped—and their character revealed—by a complex, shifting mixture of political principles and concern over their livelihoods, families, and communities. This is the story of one Islander who occupied that middle ground, and his journey through times that tried his and his fellow Vineyarders' souls.

Island histories portray Beriah Norton as a hero who spent the war and its aftermath in pursuit of compensation for losses suffered by the Island during Grey's Raid. Norton's papers, in the archives of the Martha's Vineyard Museum, suggest a more complicated story. Read with an eye toward the circumstances of the era, they reveal that Beriah Norton, who spent decades pressuring the Crown to make good its promises, was a staunch Loyalist and a devoted follower of King George III.

Loyalists and Neutrals

We all "know," from schoolbooks and patriotic speeches, that the Patriots of the American Revolution stood for freedom, liberty and the pursuit of justice in the face of royal tyranny. The motives of those who supported the Crown get less attention, but we do well to explore them here. By the 1760s industry, such as whaling, was dependent on trade with England. It was in their best interest to support the dependence Britain had on their product and to stay out of the tax fight, causing an immediate conflict for places like Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. As local merchants began to defy the stamp and sugar taxes others held on to their support of the King

Elizabeth Trotter, of Vineyard Haven, is an MVM Library volunteer and a frequent contributor to this journal.

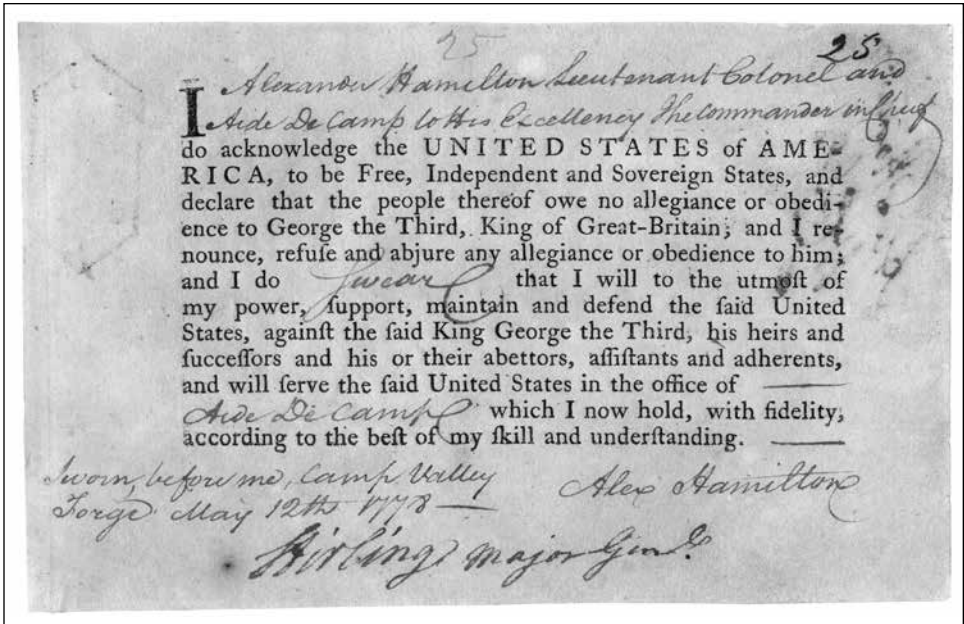
and thus the term “Loyalist” was born. It included many in local government positions, under direction and pay of the King, such as Governor Thomas Hutchinson. Loyalists held firmly to their identities as Englishmen. King first, country second was their motto, bred by generations of well...loyalty.

After independence was declared, states passed laws to reign in Loyalists and prevent them from undermining the rebellion by aiding the King and his representatives, “neutrality” became a form of camouflage for Loyalists seeking to hide their allegiance from Patriots ready to root them out as “enemies of the state.” Neutrality came to be seen by Patriots as loyalism by another name and many of those who identified as “neutral” were punished along with Loyalists. Often, those who claimed neutrality, supplied the enemy with much needed provisions. These “neutrals” would often try to affect government and uphold the King’s governing power where possible, and some would act as spies for British soldiers, offering information, leading troops through territories, piloting their naval ships through rough shoals. As the Patriot cause strengthened, winning over more of the populace, so did laws to undermine loyalty.

The first (Massachusetts) Provincial Congress met in the fall of 1774 to set up an alternative government under the leadership of Dr. Joseph Warren in response to General Thomas Gage’s takeover of Boston. It was the colony’s first formal break with British rule, and its actions were seen as illegal by the Tory Party, (the Loyalist faction). In July of 1775, with the colonies now in armed rebellion, it issued a proclamation that all Massachusetts government declarations be henceforth changed to end with “God save the people” instead of “God save the King.” This move forced a Loyalist’s hand, making it necessary to sign any document without mention of the King. A month later, another declaration effectively legalized the persecution of Loyalists: “Any person, ran their resolution, found guilty of supplying the ‘ministerial’ forces with information, should be punished by the city or county committee which made the discovering. For furnishing supplies the offender forfeited twice their value, and was disarmed and imprisoned.”¹ This promoted the work of “Committees of Safety,” whose job was to weed out Loyalists and confiscate the land and weapons of those it considered “detractors” to the Patriot cause.

When it met in 1776, the Continental Congress endorsed similar measures, recommending that “non-associators...should be disarmed.” A year later, in 1777, the “Test Laws” to regulate the swearing of oaths were instituted. Government officials, state representatives, attorneys, and those signing up for service in local militias were made to swear an oath of al-

1 Charles Halstead Van Tyne, *The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 121. <https://archive.org/details/loyalistsinamer00tynegoog>



A loyalty oath, used to flush out Loyalists (from the National Archives).

legiance, and put their signature on a document, in support of independence. The “test laws” served another purpose, to route out “neutrals” who had been thought to be aiding and abetting the enemy. The common sentiment that “the internal enemy in the guise of a neutral was felt to be quite as dangerous as an out-and-out traitor.”²

Acts of abuse toward Loyalists committed by angry mobs were commonplace, taking the form of tarring and feathering, destruction or confiscation of property, and even imprisonment. Many were forced into exile. Sir William Pepperell, of Kittery, Maine—a member of the Massachusetts legislature and one of the wealthiest men of his day—found himself “denounced by his neighbors” for his Loyalist views. The citizens of his county “passed a resolution that, as soon as leases of his land which many of them held had expired, they would withdraw all connection, commerce and dealings with him until he resigned his seat.” He fled to Britain with his family in 1778.

Loyalists and Patriots on the Vineyard

Dukes County, like the other counties in Massachusetts, sent representatives in support of the First Provincial Congress: Ranford Smith of Tisbury and Joseph Mayhew of Chilmark. After Lexington and Concord, Joseph Mayhew continued his representation of Dukes County during

2 Van Tyne, *Loyalists*, 144; Appendix B summarizes the passage of test laws in each state legislature.

the Second Provincial Congress. Town records show that the resolutions passed by both congresses and communicated to the citizens of Massachusetts received, at least initially, support from all three Island towns.

Beriah Norton was selected as Edgartown representative to the Third Provincial Congress, convened on May 31, 1775, in Watertown, where the seat of government had been moved after the British laid siege to Boston and where many Patriot leaders, such as Paul Revere and Joseph Warren, were residing. Beriah's time there, however, was short-lived. In the notes of the congress the following vote was recorded that "the question being put, whether Mr. Norton be regularly returned a member for said town, it passed in the negative."³ What happened? Why was this vote necessary? The votes taken on that day centered on preparations for the Battle of Bunker Hill; one wonders what Beriah said or did to garner such a succinct decision from the members of this newly formed government. Whatever happened, he continued to be a distinctive leader on the Island, holding the title of colonel throughout the war.

Vineyarders took direct action in support of the Patriot struggle, on both land and sea. Militia companies were expanded and, after 1776, designated the "Seacoast Defense." The citizens of Tisbury erected a "liberty pole" in Holmes Hole as a sign of solidarity with Boston's famed Liberty Tree. Those present when the pole was raised dumped tea into the hole dug for its base, in order to demonstrate support of the boycott provoked by the Crown's famously unpopular tax. When, in April 1778, the captain of HMS *Unicorn* demanded the pole as a replacement for a damaged spar, three young women of the village snuck out under cover of darkness and destroyed it with gunpowder. Young men engaged in small-scale raids on British ships, or signed onto privateers licensed by various state governments.

The Island also, without a doubt, harbored Loyalists. When a 1768 General Court (state legislature) resolution protesting the Townshend Acts had been denounced as "treasonous" by the governor, only 17 of 109 representatives had voted to withdraw it. This small minority, the so-called "loyal rescinders," had included both William Jernigan of Edgartown and Matthew Mayhew of Chilmark—two of the Island's three representatives in Boston.⁴ Their willingness to submit to the authority of the Crown, whether motivated by ideology or a desire to avoid official reprisals, spoke for a segment of the Island's population. As the stakes grew higher, the size (or conviction) of that segment probably increased.

3 *The Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in 1774 and 1775, and of the Committee of Safety* (Boston: Dutton & Wentworth, 1838), 363. <https://archive.org/details/journalsofeachprma00mass>

4 Arthur R. Railton, *The History of Martha's Vineyard* (Beverly, MA: Commonwealth Editions, 2006), 69-70; Charles E. Banks, *History of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts* (Boston: George H. Dean, 1911), vol. 1, 339.

Patriots and Loyalists alike witnessed increased coastal activity in the early years of the war. Along the New England coastline, coastal seafarers and pilots becoming embroiled in the fighting and played parts in actions that would give rise to America's first naval force. The position of the Island itself, however, grew steadily more precarious. In 1776 many of the troops stationed there were recalled to fight on the mainland. In January 1777 a group of Island men wrote a petition to the General Court pleading for protection. They noted that ships and other prizes "taken from the enemy during the present war have...safely arrived either in Dartmouth or Providence or at some other Place were they might be discharged of their Cargo"—a mark of pride for Patriots but also cause for the British to retaliate.⁵

The General Court, lacking reserves that could be sent to reinforce the Island, abandoned the idea of defending it. Instead of reinforcements, they sent advice: Remove excess livestock from the Island, for protection. It was a prescient idea. The Island was a popular stopping-off point for passing ships seeking supplies and refuge, and that included the patrolling warships of the Royal Navy. Giving them aid was, in the eyes of Massachusetts law, a treasonable offense. With the Island suffering from a lack of defense, however, Islanders agreed to such exchanges to keep the peace. It is reasonable to ask: In their mind, did they have any choice?

As colonel of the Vineyard militia, Beriah Norton was often the one who received requests from officers patrolling the sound. The first evidence of him in this go-between role comes in a March 9, 1777, letter to Captain McCartney of HMS *Ambuscade* agreeing to give the captain three sheep and a dozen or two fowl in exchange for no further demands on Islanders.⁶ McCartney left satisfied, but other ships, other captains, and other demands followed. In January 1778 Captain Ford of HMS *Unicorn* came ashore in Holmes Hole (now Vineyard Haven) with a requisition from General Howe for the services of six pilots. He would return a few months later in April to claim supplies, and—famously—the town's liberty pole, with which he intended to replace a damaged mast. It is worth remembering, though, that the local heroines who destroyed the pole acted in opposition to the leaders of the village, who—presented with Captain Ford's request for the pole and promise of payment—readily, if perhaps reluctantly, accepted. His shocked reaction to the pole's destruction, and his departure without retaliation, suggests that he (like other British officers) took Vineyarders' cooperation to be the norm.

The vulnerability of the Island to British demands was not lost on Beriah

5 Banks, *History*, vol. 1, 359.

6 Martha's Vineyard Museum, RU 120, Beriah Norton Collection [hereafter "Norton Collection"], Folder 22. The original spelling and punctuation have been preserved.



The instability of Continental paper money led many Americans to prefer gold.
(image from Wikimedia Commons)

Norton. On April 16, days before Ford's visit, he wrote to the Massachusetts House of Representatives asking what to do about "a Quantata of Powder Belonging to this State Lodged at Marthers Vinyard" that, he feared, "may Be taken By the enemy or lost." The Council on the same day ordered Joseph Mayhew to deliver the powder to the commanding officer of the fort at Dartmouth.⁷ Norton's letter, like his earlier response to Captain McCartney of the *Ambuscade*, suggests that he was thinking strategically, and doing his best to minimize British interest in, and possible threat to, the Island. Five months later, however, circumstances outside his control brought about just that.

Foraging Expedition

Feeding an army the size of Britain's was no easy task, and required provisions acquired locally as well as supplies shipped from Europe. Where possible, British officers enticed local suppliers to deal with them by paying in gold rather than colonial paper money of diminishing value. If cash was short, they issued receipts that, they explained, were backed by the Crown and could be redeemed by presenting them to British officials in New York.

⁷ Banks, *History*, vol. 1, 366.

The amount of food that had to be gathered was staggering: “On a daily basis, at the end of July 1778, for the army at Rhode Island and New York, the British fed 39,775 men, 4,032 women, 2,934 children, 162 wagoners and about 300 general officers and refugees.”⁸ The term “refugees” refers to Loyalists who braved enemy lines to seek the protection of British forces.

The expedition to Martha’s Vineyard led by General Charles Grey in the fall of 1778 was partly driven by that relentless need for supplies, but it was also punitive. British forces had been ordered to “attack enemy ports” in retaliation for Patriot attacks on British vessels, and Grey—who had acquired a reputation for ferocity at the Battle of Paoli a year earlier—was assigned responsibility for southern New England.⁹ Accompanied by Major John Andre, whose journal includes a key account of the campaign,¹⁰ his troops caused extensive destruction in Fairhaven and Bedford before arriving at the Vineyard.

On September 10 Grey’s fleet of twenty transports and over 4,300 men sailed into Holmes Hole harbor, guided by a loyalist named Tupper. Armed with an intelligence report from another Vineyard loyalist, Grey relaxed and waited.¹¹ He was met that evening by a delegation of three local officials—among them Beriah Norton—bearing a flag of truce and professing peaceful intent and readiness to comply with his request for supplies.

Grey’s intelligence claimed there were 600 oxen and 13,000 sheep available on the Island, and—mindful both of his need for supplies and his directive to punish the rebels—he “requested” a substantial fraction of that: 300 oxen and 10,000 sheep. A detachment of 450 troops, a tiny fraction of Grey’s force, but more than enough to outnumber the local militia, went ashore to maintain order and assure compliance. A procession of 10,574 sheep and 315 cattle were driven to, and corralled aboard, the waiting ships. Grey’s men also appropriated £1,000 in taxes collected by authority of the Congress and 388 firearms, while—with the order to retaliate in mind—destroying 23 whale boats, a schooner, a brig, and four other vessels as well as the salt works in Holmes Hole.

The letter from Grey’s chief-of-staff, Brigade Major Symes, ordered the Islanders to surrender their stock, while simultaneously promising reimbursement.¹² Norton, summarizing his involvement with Grey and his

8 Todd W. Braisted, *Grand Forage 1778: The Battleground Around New York City* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2016), 53.

9 At Paoli, Grey’s men had attacked General Anthony Wayne’s forces with bayonets, taking 400 prisoners and earning him the nickname “no-flint Grey.”

10 John Andre, *Andre’s Journal*, ed. Henry Cabot Lodge (Boston: Bibliophilia Society, 1903). Online at: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/005086552>

11 Arthur Railton, “Grey’s Raid: The Island’s Biggest Historical Event,” *Dukes County Intelligencer*, February 1997, 115.

12 Copy in Norton Collection, Folder 1.

men in a “statement of facts,” noted that another officer, Colonel Sterling “... informed me that General Grey had directed him to assure me” that “the whole of the Stock should be payed for” if the Islanders were to apply at New York for payment. Norton, took these assurances at face value, and asked Sterling “if we had Best Send a man in the fleet at that time for the payment.” They *might* do so if they wished, the colonel allowed, but it would be better “to wait a Little time before applycation was made.”¹³

Grey’s intention was to continue foraging on Nantucket, but high winds forced him to scrap those plans, and the fleet sailed for Falmouth instead. General Henry Clinton, commander-in-chief of British forces in North America, was nonetheless impressed with Grey’s diligence. He wrote to General Benjamin Carpenter that he “hoped it will serve to convince these poor deluded people that that sort of war, carried to a greater extent and with more devastation, will sooner or later reduce them.”¹⁴

Loyal Subjects

As devastated Island towns met and began the process of obtaining the promised payment, they sought to establish that they were *not* the kind of “poor deluded people” who took up arms against the Crown. Reimbursement, after all, was only promised to those who were “friends” of the British. An opportunity to do so quickly presented itself, however, and Beriah Norton took full advantage of it.

Determined to finish what General Grey had begun, Loyalist refugee George Leonard—aided by Lt. Col. Edward Winslow—organized a foraging expedition to Nantucket in April of 1779.¹⁵ Leonard used Martha’s Vineyard as a base of operations. A letter penned by Winslow makes his expectations clear:

It is the commandant’s positive order, That no individuals of the party under his command, presume to go on shore without permission first obtained from him. And it is Lt. Coll. Winslow’s particular request that all his officers will exert themselves to prevent every species of depredation from being committed upon any of the inhabitants of Martha’s Vineyard or the other Elizabeth Islands. It being his (as well as Mr. Leonard’s) determination to treat all those defenseless men, of their families, as persons to whom the faith of Government is pledged for protection as Friends, so long as they conduct with propriety.¹⁶

In October 1779, after the end of the Nantucket expedition, Leonard wrote specifically to Beriah Norton, William Jernigan, and John Pease asking for an accounting of the livestock he had “purchased” while on the Vineyard so

13 Norton Collection, Folder 1.

14 Braisted, *Grand Forage*, 60.

15 Edouard A. Stackpole, *Nantucket and the American Revolution* (Nantucket: Nantucket Historical Association, 1976), 68-80.

16 Norton Collection, Folder 3.

that he could obtain reimbursement from headquarters in New York.¹⁷

Together, these letters paint a clear picture of the British view of the Vineyard: compliant and cooperative, willing to supply the King's forces with provisions and stand by as they carried out their orders. The tone of Leonard's October letter to the Island's representatives suggests a Loyalist writing to fellow Loyalists—or, at the very least, to "friends" whose loyalty he had no cause to doubt. Beriah's use of the letter as evidence of the Vineyard's character merely reinforces the point.¹⁸

The Search for Restitution

Sir Henry Clinton had been authorized by London to use his discretion in aiding distressed Loyalists: giving, as circumstances dictated, either money or allotments of rebel lands.¹⁹ Memorials would be considered by the British Government and either forwarded to the Treasury in London, paid outright in New York or declined for lack of the evidence. In December 1779, in exchange for a £1,000 bond and a promise not to "carry any letters or papers nor carry on any Trade or Communicate anything to our Enemies," Beriah Norton was granted a flag of truce and headed to New York to request \$7,000 in payment for livestock taken the year before.

Clinton instructed him to take his case up with the British Treasury in London, and Beriah did so, arriving in the summer of 1780 and remaining until the spring of 1782. The world he moved in for those two years was far removed from the one he had left behind, where the war raged on and the Island struggled to deal with food shortages, smallpox outbreaks, and constant awareness of its vulnerability to further British incursions. He lived at #1 Hanover Square, a fashionable address where Lord Palmerston (at #12) was among his neighbors, mingling and networking with London's elite.²⁰

How much pleasure he found in this socializing, we do not know. What is clear is that he used it to assemble allies and advance his cause. When, after a year in London, the Treasury denied his claim in July 1781, he elected to stay and keep trying as the war at home raged on. John Robinson, who served time in the Treasury Chamber, made an appeal on Beriah's behalf in August 1781, urging his superiors to reexamine the case.²¹

Beriah rarely missed an opportunity to present Vineyarders as loyal

17 William Leonard to Beriah Norton, William Jernigan, and John Pease, October 20, 1779. *On-Line Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies* (<http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/rhist/loyaref/lareflet1.htm>)

18 Norton Collection, Folder 3.

19 Van Tyne, *Loyalists*, 255.

20 Edwin Beresford Chancellor, *The History of the Squares of London* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1907), 61-79. <https://archive.org/details/historyofsquaresl-00changoog>

21 Norton Collection, Folder 5.

friends of the Crown. A letter from George Germain to Henry Clinton, written in September 1781, quotes his [Beriah's] opinion that the Island is capable of "rendering much Service by furnishing Provisions for His Majesty's Forces at New York, if due protection for that purpose could be given." After explaining that he had given such assurances, Germain endorses Beriah in terms that suggest a face-to-face meeting, and perhaps a deal, between the two: "As he thinks he has considerable Influence among the Inhabitants of that Island, and expresses an earnest Desire to be made in any degree useful to the Public Service, I recommend him to your Countenance and Protection."²²

Beriah spent at least part of the winter of 1781-1782 in America, drawn home by the death of his seven-year-old daughter. He was back in London by April 1782, however, and in an undated letter to an unnamed contact lamented that the war continued while he was away. The letter reads as if he were an emissary from Britain, with the phrase "the rebellious colonies", rather than the other way around. He explains how he worked to persuade the General Court of "the very friendly & benign Disposition of the people of England in General," and of London's desire "to renew & establish the most Cordial Reconciliation and Friendship between the two Countries." Commenting on the Preliminary Articles of Peace drafted in Paris and forwarded to America for consideration, he explains that he has urged on his fellow Americans "the very great Importance of our Strictly complying with the Articles of the treaty to their fullest Extent and Meaning," and laments that—"far from embracing London's generous offer—they have declared their opposition to postwar reconciliation with Loyalists."²³

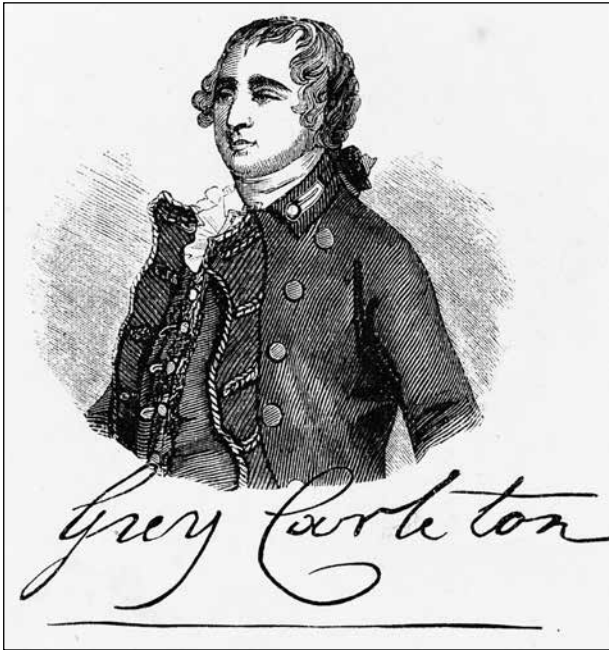
Soon after his return to London in April 1782, Beriah was invited to review papers with one General O'Hara at his quarters, but the Board of General Officers was dissolved (a casualty of the peace negotiations) before the meeting could take place. He headed home again, stopping in New York in June 1782 to deliver a new memorial to Henry Clinton's successor, Sir Guy Carleton. It took the approach that he had, by now, been employing for years: Insisting on the loyalty of Vineyarders.

Your memorialist positively denies that the inhabitants of that Island were at any period Since the Commencement of the war, active in the rebellion, or that they were concerned in fitting out privateers & row Boats, or that any hostile action has been Committed by them (unless in a Very few instances the turbulent conduct of transient Individuals, Can be deemed such) on the Contrary he declares that they have invariably & Studiously avoided the Least appearances of opposition to Government that they have Constantly refused raising

22 George Germain to Sir Henry Clinton, September 29, 1781. UK National Archives. Copy in the Martha's Vineyard Museum Archives.

23 Norton Collection, Folder 11.

their Quota of men or paying their proportion of taxes & that in all other Instances they have (as far as was possible) Conducted with the Strictest propriety and that on General Greys arrival there they did readily & Chearfully deliver up their arms & accoutrements and they supplied him with Every article which he required, these facts your memorialist Can prove by the testimonies of several honorble Gentlemen now within the Kings Lines.²⁴



Sir Guy Carleton, who granted Beriah Norton a partial victory (Portrait by an unknown 19th century artist, Prints and Photographs Collection, Library of Congress)

Blaming acts of resistance on “the turbulent conduct of transient individuals” was a bold attempt to keep such an act (which could have soured the deal) from being laid at the feet of Vineyarders themselves. Those who resisted before and during Grey’s Raid may have been a minority, but they were Vineyarders.²⁵ Did Beriah genuinely *not* know, did he choose not to “know,” or was he—like an attorney trying to skirt a client’s shaky alibi—taking refuge in audacity? His strategy, whatever its roots, bore fruit in July 1782. General Carleton, in New York, issued an order “by

His Excellency’s Command” to pay Beriah Norton the “Sume of Three Thousand pounds Sterling.”²⁶ It was a victory, but only a partial one: less than half the value of what Vineyarders claimed to have lost in Grey’s Raid.

After the War

The British Government did what it could, during the war, to aid Loyalists who had suffered for their allegiance to the King. Those efforts

24 Norton Collection, Folder 7.

25 For examples of such resistance, on Vineyard shores and beyond, see: Railton, *History*, 73-96; L. P. Selover, “A Grandmother’s Courage: A True Story of 1776,” *Dukes County Intelligencer*, November 1971, 56-59; Elizabeth W. Trotter, “The Liberty Pole: Shedding New Light on a Vineyard Legend,” *Dukes County Intelligencer*, Winter 2015, 3-18; and Elizabeth W. Trotter, “In Harm’s Way: Thomas Chase and the Rise of American Sea Power,” *Dukes County Intelligencer*, Winter 2016, 3-20.

26 Norton Collection, Folder 8.

were, by the fall of 1783, costing more than £40,000 annually.²⁷ Resettling embattled Loyalist families from New York in Nova Scotia required millions more, along with land grants of three million acres.²⁸ Insistence that the United States deal fairly with those who had remained loyal was part of Britain's position during the treaty negotiations, and with the war over, tensions began to ease. In March of 1784, for example, Massachusetts voted to let the Loyalists return to their lands, subject to approval by the governor and the House of Representatives.²⁹

In April 1784, two years after he had last departed London, Beriah Norton returned. Newly elected representative of Dukes County in the Massachusetts state senate,³⁰ he was determined to serve his constituents by lobbying for the balance of the money they had been promised.

Beriah focused his attention on a five-member commission appointed by Parliament, in July 1783, to "classify the losses and services of the Loyalists."³¹ Resuming the strategy that had brought him success before, he turned to his network of contacts among British officials and secured more letters establishing his Loyalist credentials. His papers include a note of a July 10, 1786 meeting with Lord Sydney—Secretary of War (1782), Secretary of State, and leader of the House of Commons until the end of the war—as well as an invitation to dine with Colonel Symes, who (as Grey's chief-of-staff) had handed him the requisition orders during the raid.³²

Among those who provided letters of reference was Admiral Robert Digby, who had commanded the Channel Fleet in 1779 and overseen the evacuation of Loyalists to Nova Scotia (where they named a town in his honor). He testified that Norton was "...known to me at N.York during my Command in North America that I always Looked upon him as well inclined to the Kings Cause and that he did direct a Considerable Quantity of Live Stock to be Supplied to a Convoy I sent to Nantucket for that purpose."³³ William Pepperell, a Loyalist who had gone into exile early in the war, went further, declaring that Beriah had been "an Enemy to the Independence of America," and "rendered an essential Services to Government during the war by supplying the army & navy with provisions when they stood in great need of them."³⁴

27 Van Tyne, *Loyalists*, 155.

28 Van Tyne, *Loyalists*, 300.

29 Van Beck Hall, *Politics without Parties: Massachusetts 1780-1791* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), 142

30 William S. Swift, ed., *Records of the Town of Tisbury, Massachusetts* (Boston: Swift & Potter, 1903), 250.

31 Van Tyne, *Loyalists*, 301.

32 Norton Collection, Folder 11.

33 Norton Collection, Folder 9; the "convoy" was presumably the Leonard and Winslow expedition.

34 Norton Collection, Folder 9.

Testimony from consequential British officials mattered less in the postwar world, however, than it did in wartime. By the fall of 1787, having made no further progress in obtaining compensation for the Islanders, Beriah returned to America and appealed to the Congressional Committee of Claims to fund yet another trip to London. John Jay—later the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, but then head of the Office of Foreign Affairs—turned him down.³⁵ Undaunted, Beriah returned to London anyway, but found himself at the end of a long line of suffering Loyalists and was again unsuccessful. His final appeal on behalf of the Islanders was to the US House of Representatives in 1800, again seeking funds for a trip to London to lobby the British Government. On March 13, 1800, Congress responded. They, too, turned him down.³⁶

The length and tenacity of Beriah Norton's quest for reparations leaves no doubt of his desire to secure compensation for his fellow Islanders' terrible losses. He used every contact he had and every bit of influence he could muster, and invested decades of his life and a substantial part of his own fortune in the campaign. At the same time, however, his arguments to the British and the letters they wrote on his behalf reveal a clear pattern not just of carefully maintained neutrality, but of cozy relations with senior British officials and active (even eager) collusion with the King's forces. His quest for reparations, though genuine, enabled him to ride out the war in a self-imposed "exile" in London, more comfortable (and more at ease) than someone of his political leanings might have been in America.

Beriah Norton freely admitted, and repeatedly demonstrated, his loyalty to the King, yet just as freely used that loyalty (and the access it gave him to senior British officials) to serve the interests of all the Vineyarders—Loyalists and Patriots alike—who had suffered from Grey's Raid. His story, and the Island's, reflects the complexities of political allegiance in the Revolutionary Era, and reminds us that reality is rarely as clear-cut as memory would lead us to believe.

35 *Archives of the Continental Congress*, vol. III, no. 81, cited in Banks, *History*, vol. 1, 401-402.

36 Norton Collection, Folder 10.

I Remember Lucy Vincent

Part I

by DAVID SEWARD

LUCINDA POOLE MOSHER VINCENT was first and foremost a Chilmarker. She was born in 1882 to Elihu E. Mosher and Marinda J. Mayhew Mosher in their home on the South Road. The house still exists and is located heading down island, the first house on the left after the Barn House complex. She had no siblings. While in her 20s she married Myron Vincent, a fisherman and farmer in Chilmark. Myron was 19 years older than Lucy, having been born in 1863. At the time of their marriage she and Myron moved to the home of her maternal grandfather, Ephraim Mayhew on the South Road. The structure had once been known as Ephraim Mayhew's Tavern. The house had undergone several additions over the years and served as Lucy's home her entire adult life. Myron died in 1930 leaving Lucy childless.

Lucy served as Chilmark librarian for a total of 38 years, having served two separate times. She retired in 1962. She still holds the record for the longest service in that position. As librarian she was able to surround herself with one of her great loves . . . books. For all those years every child in town came to know Lucy, who did not like to be addressed as Mrs. Vincent. She always preferred to be addressed by her first name, even by children. She ran the library with the kind of New England work ethic that required competency and organization, but also with a keen sense of community.

Before and after her retirement Lucy rented rooms in her spacious home to summer visitors whom she knew well. Attending to her farm with its numerous gardens, both flower and vegetable, tending her chickens and last but certainly not least, feeding her beloved birds. She was well known as a very knowledgeable birder. She would take the children from Menemsha School on bird-watching field trips and spend hours on her own performing bird counts. She had two feeding stations for her feathered friends. The southeast corner of her barn was one, and her kitchen window the other.

A native Chilmarker, born and raised in Menemsha, David Seward is the creator (with his twin brother Douglas) of award-winning historical exhibits displayed at the Agricultural Fair. This is his first contribution to this journal.



Lucy Vincent (seated) at work at the Chilmark Library, around 1960. All photos in this article courtesy of the author.

Both locations were kept well stocked with bird seed, thistle, sunflower seed, corn, peanut butter and suet. Except for her summer tenants, she lived alone.

In 1964 Lucy's health began to fail. Her acute glaucoma forced her to apply for legally blind status. Her spine had begun to fuse and she developed a bent over posture that could not be corrected. Due to her deteriorating health she found it necessary to hire someone to help her with the daily chores.

Paul Mayhew, a native Chilmarker, who lived on the Menemsha Cross-road, had once been James Cagney's caretaker on his farm on the North Road. He farmed the place, butchered steers from Cagney's herd and generally kept an eye on things for the famous actor. Being a widow, and having no children or close relatives, Lucy asked Paul if he would help her with the chores. He agreed and now she could breathe a sigh of relief knowing someone would be there every day. Paul's duties included feeding the birds twice a day. In winter to trim the kerosene stoves that heated her large home and on Thursdays to take her into Vineyard Haven to shop and visit her friends at the local rest homes.

In the spring of 1967 Paul came down with cancer. He carried on for Lucy as long as he could, but finally succumbed to the disease in early February of 1968. Several people in town assisted Lucy during that time. Ozzie Fischer of the Keith Farm was a huge help to her as were other townspeople. Then one

day my mother called me and said, "I just want to warn you. Lucy is going to be calling you to ask if you would take Paul's position." And I said, "Well, I'm kind of young for that." I was 21. I was married and had a child, but I still felt that perhaps I wasn't mature enough to take on that responsibility.

Well, sure enough Lucy called me that evening. After some awkward amenities she got right down to "brass tacks" as we used to say. She explained the duties, all the while speaking in a tone that hardly concealed her very real concern about her situation. I was very hesitant, not wanting to commit without having more time to think it over. I was definitely leaning towards "no" when suddenly she dropped the phone on the floor. I kept calling her name but all I could hear was her muffled voice and her groping for the phone. It seemed like an eternity when she finally spoke into the mouth piece and apologized for dropping it. At that point I just couldn't say no. Then she said, "Just try it out for a couple of weeks. I said "Ok, when do I start?" She replied, "Tomorrow, you can take me to Paul's funeral." She also told me that for my services I would receive the sum of \$2.00 an hour. I never gave it a mind to ask for more than that.

The funeral was to be held at the Chilmark Methodist Church at 1:00 pm so I arrived at Lucy's home at noon. I backed her 1950 Ford sedan out of the barn and parked it close to the kitchen door so she would have a minimum of effort getting in. Upon returning to her home she asked me if I would like a cup of coffee. I said certainly and helped her into the kitchen. It was apparent that she was capable of using instant coffee and adding hot water from a kettle that remained on her kerosene stove at all times. She insisted I sit and let her prepare the coffee. She asked me what I wanted in mine and I replied one sugar and no milk. When she had done that she sat on her stool by the window and we started to chat. I took a sip of my coffee and immediately started to look for the sink to spit it out. Not wanting to alarm Lucy I swallowed the horrendous liquid. She had mistaken salt for the sugar. I realized then just how impaired her vision really was. So began our journey together, Lucy and me, into a future that most certainly would end for her sooner than later, but would affect me in ways I could never have imagined.

My duties encompassed a twice a day, seven days a week, three hundred sixty-five days a year proposition. I would arrive at Lucy's around 7:00 AM and begin by feeding the birds. I would always find her sitting at the small counter by the kitchen window. She loved to hear the birds singing at the feeders. Though she could not see them well, she could identify them by their song. On numerous occasions she would tell me that the grackles were raiding the feeders. She called them stomach birds for their voracious appetites and their hogging of the feeding stations. However, there was always plenty for all the birds.

Lucy's glaucoma was serious so my second duty of the morning was the application of special eye drops. She would sit in her wicker chair in the dining room by the kitchen entrance and hold her lids open so I could administer the drops. She would sit for awhile until the tearing stopped. If it was wintertime I would check the kerosene stoves to make sure the wicks were burning optimally. I asked her to never touch the stoves since she could not see what she was doing. Once I knew she had everything she needed I would leave and go to work.

The afternoon routine was the same with some added duties. I would pick up the mail on my way to her home. After feeding the birds and administering eye drops I would read her the mail. When the *Gazette* came on Fridays I would read some of the front page stories to her. My wife Terry and my mother would sometimes do this for her also. Occasionally I would write letters and thank you notes from her dictation. After checking the stoves, the final task was setting up her record player with one of the "Talking Book" records she would have sent to her from the Perkins School for the Blind. Once that was done I would very often walk through the house to make sure nothing was amiss and then head for home.

I settled into the daily routine fairly quickly. Getting up early was not one of my strong points at the start. After arriving after 8:00 AM on a few mornings, Lucy let me know of her displeasure in her own inimitable way. She never scolded me for being late but her demeanor gave away her feelings about it. She was used to Paul coming to the house very early every day. She was an early riser and was happy to have Paul at the door when she came into the kitchen. I finally decided I needed to talk with her about this. I told her I was not Paul, that I had a baby at home with another on the way. Also, I was running my trash pickup business and serving as a part-time police officer in town. In short, I had a full plate and I was doing the best I could to get to her home *early*. After explaining my situation Lucy never mentioned it again. She and I had established an open and trusting dialogue between ourselves which became the bedrock of our relationship.

Our journey to Vineyard Haven every Thursday became a highlight in her week. She looked forward to getting dressed up in anticipation of the trip. I would pull the Ford out of the barn around noontime and back it close to the kitchen door. I can still see her standing in the doorway with her nice dress and matching hat waiting for me to take her arm and guide her into the front seat. I was always a little concerned about driving her because her car didn't have seat belts and she could easily be pitched forward if I had to brake suddenly. This happened a couple of times and I had to quickly move my right arm over to prevent her from sliding off the seat onto the floor. I did toy with the idea of making a make-shift seat belt, but decided her comfort was more important.



Lucy Vincent's 1950 Ford sedan.

Our first stop in town was the Martha's Vineyard National Bank. Leslie Flanders, another of my relatives, was Vice President of the bank and Lucy's conservator. I would leave her in the car and head into the bank to get \$50 in cash from one of the tellers. All of them had been told by Leslie to give me the money if I appeared at their window. No ID was required back then. We all knew each other. They would always ask how Mrs. Vincent was doing.

Our next stop was Cronig's Market across the street. I would take Lucy into the store with me because she enjoyed shopping for herself. Of course I had to direct her around the store because of her blindness. She always wanted two cans of hulled corn. I couldn't imagine eating the stuff since the picture on the can was very unappetizing. She thought of it as ambrosia.

While there I would visit the butcher, Kitzel Gordon, and request ten pounds of suet for the birds. Also I would collect several large jars of peanut butter. These tasks became so routine that Kitzel would have the suet and peanut butter ready when I arrived.

It was on to the rest home on upper Main Street (now the Thorncroft Inn) to visit Agnes Flanders, a relative of mine. Agnes had lived in Chilmark on the Middle Road across from the home of Eldon Keith, owner of the Keith Farm. Agnes had been a teacher and was a contemporary of Lucy's. Our visits to the two rest homes in Vineyard Haven were always important for Lucy. I figured out fairly quickly that because she was being escorted by such a young man, it was a bit of a feather in her cap. The residents would always surround me when we arrived and I would sit in

the common room with them while Lucy visited her friend. I had many interesting conversations with the old-timers. They provided a veritable history of Martha's Vineyard with their stories and remembrances. It was fascinating listening to them.

Our final stop was the rest home on Edgartown Road where Alice Weeks lived. Alice and her husband Rex had owned the Chilmark Store where. Rex was also Chilmark postmaster until the mid-1950s. Alice was afflicted with Parkinson's disease and was bedridden. Her smiling face was the only normal feature on her horribly twisted and ravaged body. Lucy was so sweet with her I think in a way it was a blessing she couldn't see Alice that well. She was a heartbreaking sight.

One Thursday a month I would take Lucy to Edgartown to visit Doctor Robert Nevin. On a few of those visits West Tisbury police chief George Manter would bring Ruth Brown to Nevin's office. Ruthie was also. Lucy's contemporary. She lived alone on Music Street in West Tisbury. Ruth was a hoarder and her home was packed with all manner of junk including stacked newspapers. She suffered from ulcerations on her legs and would have to be treated from time to time to prevent infection. George and I would sit in the waiting room having our conversation while Lucy and Ruth would have theirs. On these occasions I would always feel a sense of community because townspeople looked after one another and paid attention to the needs of their elders.

Lucy was at the doctor's to procure pills she needed in order to eat clams. They prevented her from having an allergic reaction. On one visit Dr. Nevin asked me to come into his office after he had seen Lucy. He told me that her visits were more about her need to see him than for his need to see her. He went on to say that she was failing due to old age and our goal was to try and maintain the best quality of life for her so as to allow her to remain in her home. I was grateful Dr. Nevin shared this with me, and I told him so.

Invariably after a visit to the doctor, Lucy would announce that she was taking me to lunch at the Art Cliff Diner in Vineyard Haven. She had her clam pills in hand and was raring to use them. So, there we were sitting at a table at the diner ordering fried clams and all the fixings. All the other patrons would glance at us with smiles on their faces. Flo King, the short order cook, would come over and take our order personally. She wanted to say hello to Lucy and chat for a moment. We would have our lunch and then head on back to Chilmark.

On other occasions we would visit Gabriella Campbell on the Edgartown Road in Vineyard Haven. She was a seamstress and did all of Lucy's mending. The visits always became fairly, long chats and I would often go do some chore in town while the two of them caught up on current

events. Lucy was very social and really enjoyed getting together with her contemporaries. Their conversations were always interesting and were punctuated with lots of laughter. I never tired of hearing the discussions. I guess my innate love of Vineyard history, delivered in the distinctive New England parlance was like theater to me. Since most elderly people enjoy having young people around, I was never excluded from participating if I chose to. I really preferred to listen and learn from them.

Edna Robinson lived down on the South Road in Chilmark and was married to Onslow Robinson, a Chilmarker who farmed a little. He was a very learned man who had gone off to college and became a civil engineer. His main line of work was home building and he was probably the first builder to introduce prefabricated homes on the island. He was also civic minded and served as Chilmark selectman for a time.

Edna was a hard-working woman who “did” for other people. Lucy had hired her to take care of household duties that she could no longer handle herself. Edna would prepare meals in advance and store them in the refrigerator so Lucy could heat them up at mealtime. She also did the laundry and kept the house dean and vacuumed. Edna was usually in the house on Wednesdays and she and I got to know each other quite well. I enjoyed her Yankee can-do attitude and no nonsense approach to her work. She also had an interesting sense of humor and also provided Lucy with some welcome companionship. I also knew that on Wednesday Lucy would require my presence less and this gave me a break of sorts.

Springtime was an important season for Lucy. Her flower gardens were beautiful and she couldn't wait to get outside and work in them. Because of her declining health she was not able to tend them as much. One day when I arrived in the morning she asked me if I could help her get out to the flower garden by the picket fence. I told her that I didn't have time to stay and help her do that. She replied that Paul had set her up by attaching the water hose to the spigot by the left hand entrance door at the front of the house and laid the hose on the ground leading into the garden. When she was done she could follow the hose back to the house and get inside. At first I balked at the idea and told her I wouldn't be back until late in the afternoon and what would she do if she ran into trouble in the garden. She assured me she would be fine so I reluctantly agreed.

I took Lucy out to the garden after setting up the hose to the house. As I left her I asked her to get back in the house before she became too tired. She said she would and off to work I went. I spent much of the day fretting about her and wondering if she was back in the house. Since cell phones hadn't been invented yet, I had no way of communicating with her. I finished up work a little earlier than usual and arrived at Lucy's around 4:30 PM. I immediately went in the house and did not find her there. I ran to



Lucy Vincent's house, with her beloved roses.

the garden and found her all tangled up in her peonies. At first I thought she had died, but once she heard my voice she responded with a wave of her arm. She had been yelling for help for a very long time and her voice was just about gone. I untangled her and told her I wanted to pick her up to get her into the house and to the bathroom where she needed to go. She refused saying she was afraid I might break her fragile spine if I did. I then suggested the two of us crawl back to the house along the hose. She agreed and we inched our way along the hose, finally getting to the door. I got her on her feet and to the bathroom.

I was shaken by the incident and sat on the kitchen step waiting for her to come out of the bathroom. I knew I was going to have to talk with her about losing a little bit more of her independence. I wasn't looking forward to the discussion. When she came out of the bathroom she came into the dining room and sat down to get her eye drops. When I was done she looked at me and said that she was not going to do that again. That it was unfair to me and too dangerous for her. She had saved me from bringing up the issue. It was a somber and sad moment between us. Both of us knew her independent spirit had taken another blow. The significance of the event was not lost on either of us.

Several weeks later I was doing my chores on a Saturday morning. It was a beautiful day and I could tell Lucy wanted to be outside. As I was finishing up she asked me if I could help her with the roses on the stone wall. She said she knew I did not like gardening but perhaps I could just help her for a little while. I decided to do it. I brought a chair out to the rose

bed for Lucy to sit on while she directed me in pruning the roses. At first I asked her how could she show me how to prune if she couldn't see. She replied that she didn't have to see, that she would describe it to me. And she did just that. As I pruned we talked about all sorts of things. I found myself really enjoying our time together out there in the sunshine. Part of the enjoyment was knowing I was making her happy. It gave her a sense of freedom and a chance to be close to nature and her beautiful climbing roses. Her pleasure was simple but very profound. When we were finished she told me that her roses would reward me with vibrant blooms. And a few weeks later they did. I was so proud of my pruning job. I pointed out the roses to anyone who passed by the house.

I performed another ritual for Lucy that spring. Her hillside on the east side of the house was awash with daffodils. She asked me if I would cut many of them and place them in a wash tub full of water in the basement. Similar to the rose pruning, she sat in a chair in the cool basement instructing me how long to keep the stems and how many bunches to make up, with rubber bands. Once this task was done we would drive to Abel's Hill Cemetery and she would direct me along the roads to the resting places of her husband, Myron, and her mother and father and other relatives. I would place a bunch of flowers at each gravesite. This ritual was very important to her and I treated it as such. I can still smell the fragrance of all those flowers.



The conclusion of "I Remember Lucy Vincent" will appear in the August issue of this journal.



David Seward, in a photograph from 1969-70.

The Tailor and the Yachtsman

MORE THAN NINE MILLION immigrants came to the United States in the first decade of the twentieth century—seventy percent of them from eastern and southern Europe. A significant number were Russian and Polish Jews, determined to escaping the poverty and persecution that clouded life in the tottering empire of the tsars. They made new lives for themselves in Boston and New York, in the booming factory towns of southern New England . . . and on Main Street, Vineyard Haven, where they established five of the village’s most successful twentieth-century businesses. Lithuanian-born Sam Cronig and three of his brothers opened their grocery store in 1917; a fifth brother, Henry, opened a real estate office next door the same year. At the other end of the street, Judal Brickman’s cobbler shop grew into a shoe store and then a full-service clothing store. In between was Vineyard Dry Goods, run by Judal’s sister Ida and her husband David Levine, and—at the corner of Main and Union—the establishment of Israel Issokson . . . Issokson the tailor.

Born in Russia in the late 1880s, Israel Issokson lived and worked in Sweden before coming to America, and opened his Vineyard Haven shop (“E. Issokson, Custom Tailors”) in 1914. An undated directory advertisement, likely from his first years in business, offers customers “Cleaning, Dyeing, Pressing & Repairing” of both men’s and women’s clothing, and “Suits Made to Order” with “Good Fit Guaranteed.” He also made house calls, offering both pickup and delivery of the clothes he worked on. When the British freighter *Port Hunter* sank on Hedge Fence shoal in November 1918, he bought bales of salvaged US-Army-issue clothing from the fishermen who had pulled them from her hold. The sleeves from a heavy wool shirt, grafted onto a fleece-lined leather vest, made a “Haven Coat,” and the late Stan Lair remembers Issokson turning pairs of vests into a full-leather jackets that he sold for \$5.00.

Issokson threw himself into the civic life of his adopted home. He joined the Loyal Order of Moose and the Improved Order of Red Men, and was a founding member of the Martha’s Vineyard Hebrew Center. “His personality,” the *Vineyard Gazette* declared in a story mourning his death, “partook both of the old country mannerisms and trend of thought, and those of modern America, which combination made him an agreeable companion for men of all ages and backgrounds.” His shop, the *Gazette* continued, “was

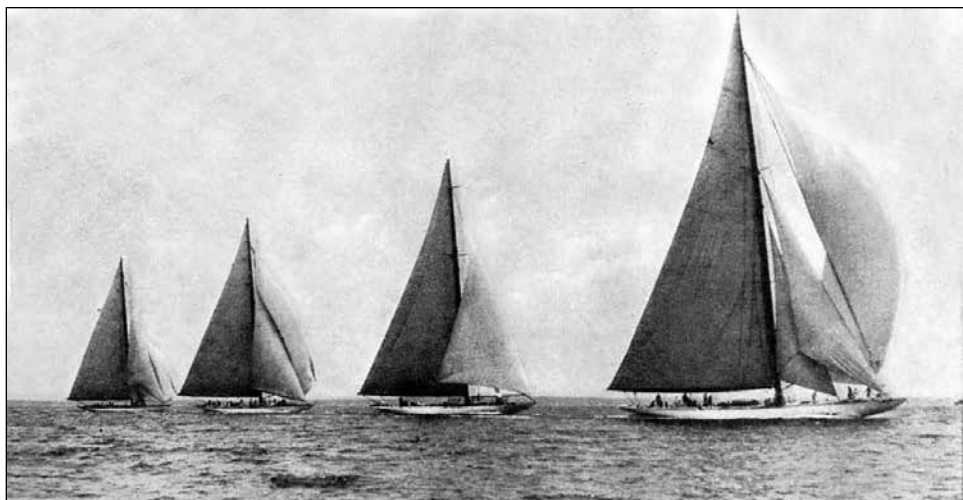


Issokson's shop at the corner of Main and Union Streets, later occupied by Shirley's Hardware and currently by C. B. Stark (Basil Welch Photo Collection)

a gathering place for the townspeople, and because of his knowledge of agriculture as well as his profession, he spoke the language of his associates.” Israel’s sister Eudice married Judal Brickman early in the century, and in time his daughter Alice would clerk for the Levines at Vineyard Dry Goods, deepening the ties that bound the Island’s pioneer Jewish families.

A decade-and-a-half after Issokson opened the doors to his shop, he received his most famous—and, perhaps, least expected—order. The job in question involved neither a suit nor a dress but a massive triangle of sailcloth: a torn sail from an immense racing yacht that, like countless vessels before her, had pulled into Vineyard Haven Harbor for a night’s rest and a chance to make repairs.

The yacht’s name was *Weetamoe*, and she had been built for a single purpose: to defend the America’s Cup. Named for the schooner *America*, which had won it by beating the cream of the British yachting fleet in an 1851 race around the Isle of Wight, the cup had been in the possession of the New York Yacht Club ever since. The British and Canadians had challenged for the cup 13 times since 1851, losing every time. A new challenge—the first in a decade, and the last to be bankrolled by Irish tea magnate Sir Thomas Lipton—was on the table in 1930. *Weetamoe*, along with her near-sisters *Enterprise*, *Whirlwind*, and *Yankee*, was the answer. A series of summer races in the waters between New York and Marblehead would determine the fastest of the quartet, which would then—as the New York Yacht Club’s official “cup defender”—race head-



Weetamoe (right) and three other prospective defenders of the America's Cup, 1930. (Scientific American photo)

to-head against Lipton's *Shamrock V* off Newport, RI.

Weetamoe, like the other prospective defenders, was immense: 125 feet long and 20 wide, displacing 143 tons and carrying over 7,500 square feet of sail on her single, towering mast. She was racing from Mattapoisett to Vineyard Haven on the afternoon of August 6 when, unexpectedly, she split her Genoa jib: a then-experimental extra-large sail designed to be flown forward of the mast in light winds. Scheduled to race from the Vineyard to Newport the next day, *Weetamoe* needed her Genoa made whole again if he was to be competitive. The crew bundled the sail (over a thousand square feet of cotton cloth) into the yacht's tender, and headed for shore, likely tying up at the steamer wharf that stood (then as now) at the foot of Union Street. Decades earlier, when Vineyard Haven Harbor was regularly filled with schooners, they might have found a sail-maker ready to accommodate them. By 1930, however, the schooners were long since gone—wind power replaced by steam and diesel—and the sail-makers gone with them. A block away at the head of Union Street, however, stood Issokson's tailor shop.

Recounting the story in an editorial the following week, the *Providence Journal* described Issokson working until 2:00 AM to finish the job. It imagined the shop filled with billows and folds of *Weetamoe's* crew "standing in a half circle manipulating the folds of the great sail" while Issokson, "the stoop-shouldered craftsman" worked on it, "his intent expression revealed by reflected light from the white fabric passing through his hands, and finally the bright pot on which all eyes were focused—the glittering needle dancing up and down." How much of that description is eyewitness reality, and how much journalistic license, we do not know. What we *do* know is that *Weetamoe* started the next morning's race with

a repaired sail that remained intact until Newport. She lost her bid to become cup defender—it was *Enterprise* that went on to defeat *Shamrock V*—but not for want of a functional Genoa.

Issokson went back to dresses and suits, but the shop remained, informally, in the sail-repair business. Three years later, *Weetamoe* returned with a jib that had split while she raced *Vanitie* up Vineyard Sound, and he came to her rescue a second time. In August 1937, the *Gazette* described him working on a sail from an unnamed yacht: “seven acres of canvas,” so heavy that it “has to be cut with an axe.” Later news stories describe him repairing the mainsail of John Carter Brown’s big yacht *Coruscant* (not at his shop, but at Red Men’s Hall), and the much smaller sail of a boat owned by the future president John F. Kennedy. His son Samuel, who took over the business after his father’s death, continued the tradition. By the mid-1950s, newspaper ads for the store listed “sail repair” among the services it offered customers.

High-level yacht racing in the 1930s was a rich man’s game. The boats were ruinously expensive to build, and corporate sponsorship (even if it had been available) would have been an unthinkable violation of the sport’s “amateur” ethos. The members of the syndicate that funded *Weetamoe* had names like Rockefeller and Vanderbilt. John Carter Brown’s family had been among the wealthiest in Rhode Island since before the Revolution. The anti-Semitism of the era—unspoken, yet pervasive, among the American elite—allowed men like Israel Issokson no place in that world. He would not have been welcome, even as a guest, at the New York Yacht Club’s shore station in Eastville, let alone on the afterdeck of a cup defender. Even as they rejected his company, however, the New York yachtsmen needed his services, and—in the way that necessity does—that temporarily leveled the playing field between them. Business, after all, is business, and there is satisfaction in seeing a difficult challenge quickly, skillfully met.

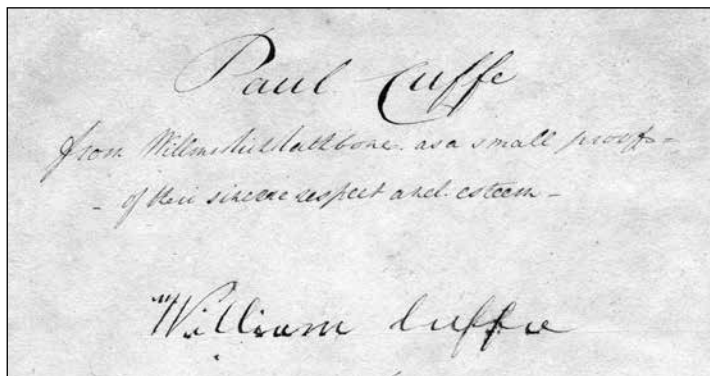
— A. Bowdoin Van Riper

This article is based on newspaper clippings donated to the Museum by the Estate of Alice Issokson Shapiro and now housed in its Vertical Files Collection (VREF 1218 & 1219). Information on Weetamoe was drawn from Herbert L. Stone and William H. Taylor’s The America’s Cup Races (1957).

Found in Collection

*A recurring feature highlighting lesser-known treasures
from the Museum's diverse holdings*

Four Pages from Dr. Johnson's Dictionary



Context is everything.

The slim sheaf of papers—four leaves from the two-volume eighth edition of Samuel Johnson's famous *Dictionary of the English Language*—seemed, at first, to have nothing to do with the Vineyard. When they emerged from the bottom of a file box tucked into a back corner of the archives, the only interesting thing about them seemed to be their sheer incongruity with everything else in the collection. Why would anybody have (neatly and precisely) taken a knife to a large and expensive book? Why did they remove, and group together, the half-title and title pages, the author's portrait, and the last page of volume I (A-K)? Above all, who thought that the results of that eccentric act belonged in the Martha's Vineyard Museum, and why?

The answers are on the cover sheet protecting the four sliced-out pages. A dedication—written in faded 200-year-old ink, but in a bold and confident script—marks the pages as a gift to Paul Cuffe, “from William and Richard Rathbone, as a small proof of their sincere respect and esteem.” Those names, and that dedication, reveal a remarkable story.

Paul Cuffe was a free man of color. His father, Kofi, had been

enslaved in West Africa at the age of 10 and sold to the Slocum family of Dartmouth: Quakers who, when their Meeting followed that of Nantucket in denouncing slavery, first freed him and then (by hiring him as a servant and paying him wages) facilitated his economic independence. Paul's mother was a Wampanoag woman, Ruth Moses, who married Kofi in Dartmouth and later moved with him and their 10 children to the hardscrabble world of Cuttyhunk Island. Kofi Slocum (who had taken his owner's surname) died in 1772, and 13-year-old Paul (who took a form of his father's African name as his own surname) was left, as he later put it, to "shift for himself." He went to sea on whalers and trading ships, soon became a whaling and merchant captain in his own right, forging ties with merchants like the Rotch family of New Bedford, who shared his Quaker faith, hatred of slavery, and determination to improve the lives of people of color.

In the early nineteenth century, Cuffe used his wealth, maritime experience, and reputation to promote a three-legged trade route that would link the United States, Britain, and the British colony of Sierra Leone in West Africa. Seeking to lay the bureaucratic and commercial groundwork, he sailed for England in the summer of 1811, visiting Liverpool, Manchester, and London. He was received enthusiastically by British abolitionists, who saw him not only as a valuable transatlantic ally but as a living refutation of the noxious stereotypes that, in the minds of many of their countrymen, defined anyone of African ancestry. Among those he dined and discussed the matters of the day with were abolitionist leader William Wilberforce, future prime minister Lord John Russell, and a pair of Liverpool merchants: William and Richard Rathbone.

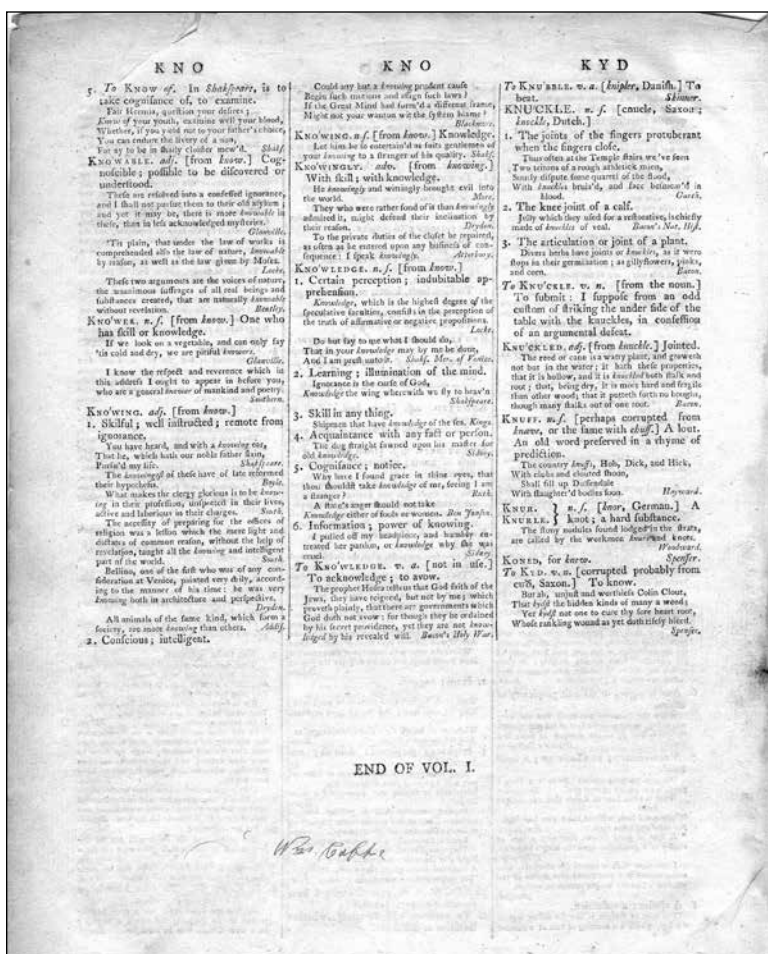
The Rathbones were brothers as well as business partners, sons of a wealthy and powerful Quaker family that had made Liverpool one of the premier trading ports on the North Atlantic coast. William was formally William Rathbone V; their grandfather (William III) had founded the Liverpool Anti-Slavery Society and their father (William IV) had been a leading member. William was 24 and Richard 23 in the summer of 1811, and—raised in a world defined by the Quaker faith, maritime commerce, and abolitionism—they likely found Cuffe (then 54 and at the peak of his success and influence) a dazzling figure. Read with the Rathbones' ages in mind, the inscription comes across as the eager—even breathless—excitement of rookies in the presence of a living legend. The specific dictionary pages that the Rathbones chose to present to Cuffe underscore that feeling: They encompass the words "to know" . . . "knowing" . . . and "knowledgeable."

Paul Cuffe was evidently touched enough by the gesture to pack the pages carefully for the return voyage to America. Two centuries later, they

show no traces of stains, water damage, or even folding. In time he passed the gift to his second son, coincidentally also named William, who added his name to the back cover and, just below the inscription, the front one as well—a symbolic claiming, perhaps, of his father's legacy. The steps by which they passed from William Cuffe's hands to ours remain a mystery, but this much is certain: We're gratified (and honored) that they did.

— A. Bowdoin Van Riper

The Rathbones' gift to Paul Cuffe is part of the African Americans on Martha's Vineyard archival collection (RU 340). The story of Paul Cuffe's life is told briefly in George Salvador, The Black Yankee (1969) and at length in Lamont D. Thomas' Rise to Be a People (1986), both in the Museum library.



New York Yacht Station No. 7



The New York Yacht Club's annual summer cruise along the southern coast of New England was, at the turn of the last century, a highlight of the yachting season. A small fleet of sloops, cutters, and schooners would skirt the Middleground or (given a fair tide) sweep through Woods Hole and drop anchor for two or three days in Vineyard Haven before moving on. The building shown here was one of a series of fourteen "shore stations" built by the Club to give members (whether they visited as part of the cruise or on their own) a suitably comfortable place to tie up their tenders and step ashore. As its name suggests, it was part of a network that, at its height, stretched from New Jersey to Nantucket. Built in 1892 atop a pier that served the passenger steamers on the Portland-Boston-New York run, Station No. 7 was equidistant from Oak Bluffs and Vineyard Haven and convenient to the trolley line that connected them beginning in 1897. Disestablished in 1917 and later relocated further up the beach, it is now a bed-and-breakfast. The pier, rendered superfluous when improved intercity rail service ended the coastal steamer trade, was dismantled after World War II. It lives on only in the name of New York Avenue, which once carried steamer passengers and visiting yachtsmen to and from Oak Bluffs.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Untold Stories

The Museum has committed itself to enlarging its mission by finding and then telling the Vineyard's "untold stories." This issue of the newly retitled journal is testament to that journey.

"Everyone" knows that Nomans Land was once a Navy bombing and gunnery range and then (partially from the mid-1970s on, wholly from the late 1990s) a US Fish & Wildlife Service bird sanctuary. Few outside Chilmark and Aquinnah, however, know how fraught that curious transition actually was. Justin Grossman (a member of the rising generation of historians) traces the tensions between local residents, summer visitors, the Tribe, and the US Navy after the bombs stopped falling.

Frequent contributor and Revolutionary War expert Liz Trotter digs deep into the papers of Beriah Norton, the man who pressed the British for compensation for the livestock taken during Grey's Raid in 1778, to reveal an unsuspected side of the familiar story. Norton, she argues, was a Loyalist—eager for reconciliation between the colonies and the mother country—who sought to advance the interests of his fellow Islanders by cooperating, and cultivating personal connections, with British officials.

Lucy Vincent is just a name on a beach today, but the long-serving Chilmark librarian was a vibrant, active woman who remained deeply involved in the community until just weeks before her death in 1970. David Seward's first-person reminiscence brings to life not only Lucy herself, but the small-town world of Chilmark in the late 1960s.

The two shorter pieces that round out the issue use materials from the archives to reveal glimpses of extraordinary lives lived more than a century apart. There are countless other stories from Vineyard history waiting to be told . . . and we aim, in these pages, in the new Museum complex, and in the community, to keep telling them. Join us.



Phil Wallis
Executive Director



Two postcards published around 1910 show the Museum's future home—the 1895 U. S. Marine Hospital—when it was new. Behind and to the left of the main building is an isolation ward for patients with contagious diseases, known to locals as the “pest house.” The history of the Marine Hospital will be the subject of an article in the November issue of the MVM Quarterly, and an exhibit in the new Museum.



59 School Street
Box 1310
Edgartown MA 02539



Nomans Before The War



Life on Nomans Land in the 1930s, captured in photographs from a scrapbook kept by Bertrand Wood (son of the caretaker), now in the Museum archives.