

MVMUSEUM

Quarterly

Martha's Vineyard Museum's Journal of Island History

Formerly
The Dukes County
Intelligencer

AUGUST
2019

VOLUME 60
NO. 3

MVMUSEUM.ORG

Building the Tabernacle: The Birth of an Island Landmark

Owning the Captain William Martin House

The 1944 Hurricane in Pictures

From the Archives:
Bookplates from "Fish Hook"



MVMUSEUM

MVM MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Details at mvmuseum.org/membership

Basic	\$55
Partner	\$150
Sustainer	\$250
Patron.....	\$500
Benefactor.....	\$1,000

*Basic membership includes one adult;
higher levels include two adults. All levels
include children through age 18.*

*Full-time Island residents are eligible for
discounted membership rates. Contact
Sydney Torrence at 508-627-4441 x117.*

DISCOVERIES

Historians buff their narratives of the past to a mirror-like sheen, unblemished by missing facts or uncertain implications. “This,” they tell their readers with absolute confidence, “is how it happened.” If we were more honest, we would add one vital word: “probably.” Every working historian knows that there is no end to research, and no end to newly discovered facts. Some of those facts reinforce existing understandings of the past; others illuminate those understandings from new and unexpected angles; and some few overturn them altogether. Writing history is, more often than not, about rewriting history.

The three articles in this issue exemplify that reality. Harvey Garneau’s new history of the iron Tabernacle at the heart of the Campground in Oak Bluffs was set in motion by the discovery of two rare stereo view cards that captured it in mid-construction. Thomas Doyle’s deeply personal piece about the Captain William Martin House—once the home of an African American whaling master from Chappaquiddick—is rooted in his unraveling of the property’s tangled title history. Kate Logue’s visual essay on the 1944 Hurricane uses photographs, unseen for 75 years, to highlight the destruction wrought by the deadliest, yet least-remembered, hurricane to strike the Vineyard in modern times.

Fittingly, as this issue went to press, a routine inquiry led to a startling new discovery in the Museum archives: eight letters written by Captain Martin aboard the brig Eunice H. Adams in 1889, on what would be his final whaling voyage. These letters, the only ones by Martin known to exist, will become the basis of a *Quarterly* article in early 2020. The dance of research, discovery, and revision goes on.

— A. Bowdoin Van Riper

MARTHA'S VINEYARD MUSEUM QUARTERLY

VOL. 60, No. 3

© 2019

AUGUST 2019

Building the Tabernacle:

Newly Discovered Photographs and the Birth
Of an Island Landmark

by HARVEY GARNEAU JR. 3

Finding (and Losing) the Captain Martin House:

A Labor of Love Cut Short

by THOMAS J. DOYLE 20

The Hurricane of 1944:

A 75th Anniversary Photo Collection

image selection and text by KATE LOGUE 34

From the Archives:

Bookplates from "Fish Hook" 47

A Note from Phil Wallis, Executive Director 48

Founding Editor: Gale Huntington (1959-1961, 1964-1977)

Dorothy Scoville, Editor (1961-1963)

George Adams, Editor (1977-1979)

Arthur R. Railton, Editor (1979-2006)

John Walter, Editor (2007-2008)

Susan Wilson, Editor (2009-2014)

The Martha's Vineyard Museum Quarterly is published by the Martha's Vineyard Museum. Subscription is by membership in the Museum. Recent issues are available in the Museum gift shop or by emailing frontdesk@mvmmuseum.org. Back issues may be requested through the Museum library. Membership in the Museum is invited. Visit www.mvmmuseum.org and go to the "Support" tab.

Author queries and manuscripts for this journal should be submitted electronically to bvanriper@mvmmuseum.org, subject line "MVM Quarterly."

Articles in the *MVM Quarterly* do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Museum or its officers. Every effort is made to confirm dates, names and events in published articles, but we cannot guarantee total accuracy.

ISSN 0418 1379

MARTHA'S VINEYARD MUSEUM

Board of Directors

Stever Aubrey, *Chairman*
Barbara Alleyne, *Vice-Chairman*
Julie Flanders, *Secretary*
Dale Garth, *Treasurer*
Elizabeth Beim, Nat Benjamin, Robert Blacklow
Jeb Blatt, Marcia Mulford Cini, Meredith Degen
David R. Foster, Deirdre Frank, Peter Gearhart, David Grain
Fain Hackney, Fred Jackson, David Lewis
Calvin Linnemann, John E. McDonald Jr., June Manning
Christopher Morse, Chris Murphy, Jim Newman
Phil Regan, James B. Richardson III, Juliana Rogers
Paul Schneider, Alison Shaw, Shelley Stewart
Elizabeth Hawes Weinstock, Cathy Weiss
Lana Woods, Denys Wortman

Staff

Phil Wallis, *Executive Director*
Anna Barber, *Exhibits and Program Manager*
Savannah Berryman-Moore, *Marketing and Events Coordinator*
Leroy Blood, *Facilities Manager*
Carol Carroll, *Finance Director*
Ann DuCharme, *Museum Teacher*
Katy Fuller, *Operations and Business Development Director*
Khalid Jackson, *Visitor Services Coordinator*
Linsey Lee, *Oral History Curator*
Kate Logue, *Exhibits Associate*
Betsey Mayhew, *Finance Administrator*
Sam Morris, *Digital Services Manager*
Laura Noonan, *Oral History Assistant*
Beth Seabourne, *Education Director*
Heather Seger, *Advancement Director*
Bonnie Stacy, *Chief Curator*
Sydney Torrence, *Advancement Associate*
A. Bowdoin Van Riper, *Research Librarian &
Editor, MVM Quarterly*
Jeanne White, *Gift Shop Coordinator*

Building the Tabernacle:

Newly Discovered Photographs And the Birth of an Island Landmark

by HARVEY GARNEAU JR.

Prologue: An Amazing Discovery

Serendipity: the occurrence and development of events by chance ending in a happy or beneficial way. That was exactly the case concerning the recent discovery and bringing to light of an extremely rare and previously unknown photograph showing the historic Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association's iron Tabernacle under construction. This serendipitous journey was actually the result of a newly rekindled friendship, but the narrative of this story must really begin over thirty-five years ago when that friendship was first formed.

Back in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, I was avidly collecting and meticulously researching antique stereo views of Oak Bluffs. These historic stereopticon photographs were produced mainly during the 1860s through the 1880s and could be viewed in 3-D when placed in a stereoscope viewer. My hunting grounds consisted of stereo view conventions and other photo shows which I attended on a regular basis over the years. The average price of each view back then was only two or three dollars, unlike the exorbitant asking prices of today. This allowed me to eventually amass a collection of over twelve hundred different Oak Bluffs views quite inexpensively.

One day I noticed a want ad for Martha's Vineyard stereo views in the bi-monthly magazine of the National Stereoscopic Association, an organization of which I was a member. Someone named Arlen Westbrook had placed the ad. The address she listed as being in upstate New York aroused my curiosity so I decided to contact her. It turned out that Arlen owned a summer cottage on Ocean Park which explained her connection to Martha's Vineyard. She suggested we meet the next time she came to the Island. For many years thereafter, on her weekly summer visits, we would get together and spend time discussing new additions to our collections

Born and raised in Oak Bluffs, Harvey Garneau returned to Martha's Vineyard after earning a BA from Wesleyan University. He is a lifelong researcher of the history of Oak Bluffs, a subject on which he has given frequent talks.

and trading our duplicates. But, as things often go, we eventually lost touch and I hadn't seen or heard from Arlen in nearly 30 years.

In August of 2017 I was scheduled to give a 3-D slide show presentation with historical commentary at the Tabernacle entitled "Cottage City Through the Stereoscope." Since my lecture was to be illustrated using paired images from my stereo view collection, I remembered Arlen and thought how much she might enjoy this, so I took a chance and sent a letter to the last New York address I had for her. In it I did a little catching-up and then described my presentation inviting her to attend if by any chance she was still coming to the Island and might be here in August.

Arlen wrote back saying that she would only be coming up for a week in September but would love to get together again at that time. She added that she would also bring her stereo view collection along with her but mentioned that she hadn't looked at it in years. When she arrived, we spent a fun day reminiscing, looking randomly through each other's collections and trading a few duplicates just like old times. Then she graciously said that I could take her collection home for a few days to make scans of any cards I didn't have that might prove useful in my research.

There were about four hundred views in her box and when I was about halfway through them, I pulled out one that almost made my heart stop. I was absolutely stunned by what I was looking at. It was a stereo card showing the Tabernacle about halfway through its construction process. A few days later, when I went back to return the box to Arlen, I pulled it out, called it to her attention and, in a highly excited state, explained how rare and immensely important this particular view was, especially to the history of the Campground. I think I added that she should guard it with her life. In Arlen's trademark candidness she responded that she didn't even remember owning that particular view.

When I came back to say goodbye the day before she left, I was astonished when Arlen told me, that after giving it a lot of thought, she decided to pass this historically significant stereo view along to me so it would be in a collection on the Island where it belonged. She felt that I would be the best guardian for it now and knew that I, in turn, would pass it along to the proper Island institution when I did so with the rest of my own collection.

Astounding as this find was, there is a saying that when it rains it pours. A little over a year later, a second stereo view of the Tabernacle under construction came up for auction on eBay. One of my two close fellow collectors and researchers of Oak Bluffs images discovered it and, through our usual process of elimination, it was decided I would be the one to bid on it. After some tense moments, fortune smiled again, and this second image, which shows the structure a little further along in construction, also returned to its true home on the Island.



Fig. 1— North side of the Tabernacle within a few years of its construction. MVM Photo Collection.

Setting the Stage: Why the Iron Tabernacle Was Built

This year, 2019, marks the 140th anniversary of the construction and dedication of this massive iron structure situated directly in the heart of Oak Bluffs. Although the Tabernacle was built during the spring of 1879, the long chain of events that led to the necessity of its construction begins in 1835. That year a group of Methodists who had previously been meeting at various locations on Cape Cod decided to hold their annual camp meeting in what was then the northern wilderness of Edgartown. They came here at the recommendation of Jeremiah Pease, a zealous Edgartown Methodist who had found the perfect location in a secluded oak grove that was part of the large tract of land owned by William Butler.¹ This idyllic spot was bordered on the north by Squash Meadow Pond (now Oak Bluffs Harbor) and to the west by open fields heading to the bluffs at the ocean's edge.

The Rev. Hebron Vincent published a remarkably detailed year-by-year chronicle of the Wesleyan Grove camp meetings from the earliest held in August of 1835 up through the year 1869, all of which he witnessed firsthand. Of that very first camp meeting he tells us that only a very small area of brush was cleared and that some crude board seats were constructed to accommodate those in attendance. More importantly he informs us that a

¹ Charles E. Banks, *History of Martha's Vineyard* (Edgartown: Dukes County Historical Society, 1966), vol. 2, Annals of Oak Bluffs, 22-23.

small rough shed had been erected which was called the “Preacher’s Tent.” This consisted of an elevated seat with a stand at the front to be used as a pulpit by the ministers. A railing for use as a temporary altar enclosed a small patch of ground directly in front of the shed.² This extremely small and rustic preaching stand along with the cleared area in front for the congregation can rightly be seen as the great-grandfather of the massive iron Tabernacle we know today.

With the exception of 1845, the camp meeting returned each August to this very same wooded grove. By 1856 attendance had grown from several hundred faithful at their first meeting to a congregation of between five and six thousand, with their numbers continuing to increase every year. These returning Methodists named the site Wesleyan Grove, and at their 1860 camp meeting had officially organized themselves into the Martha’s Vineyard Camp Meeting Association. For nearly 30 years they had been leasing this land, but by 1865 the Association had purchased the nearly 35 acres for the sum of about \$3,000.

By the start of the camp meeting in 1861 they had built themselves a substantial new preacher’s stand and had greatly enlarged the seating area in front of it. The old rough plank seats had been replaced with more comfortable backed wooden benches that now could accommodate over 3,000 people under the cooling shade of the oaks. This new preacher’s stand, designed by Perez Mason, had a long, straight wall at the back with five sides of an octagon projecting out towards the front. It was twenty feet wide, had arched open sides reaching upwards to an overhanging roof and was beautifully finished with fancy latticework.³

Describing the Camp Meeting of 1863 in history, Hebron Vincent remarks: “The greatest defect in this grove, then and since, has been, that some of those ancient oaks in the principal area have been losing their crowning foliage.”⁴ He goes on to say that they have attempted to address this loss of cover by planting out young trees in the more exposed places, but laments that this effort had not been very successful. There was, therefore, an urgent need to come up with a way to provide an alternative means of sheltering the congregation as they sat for long periods in front of the preacher’s stand.

Just in time for the 1870 camp meeting, to provide cover and shade for the faithful as all the oaks died out, a huge canvas tabernacle was constructed and raised over the seating area. This mammoth tent was made from 4,000

2 Hebron H. Vincent, *A History of the Wesleyan Grove, Martha’s Vineyard Camp Meeting, from the First Meeting Held there in 1835, to that of 1858*. (Boston: Rand & Avery, 1858), 17-18.

3 Hebron H. Vincent, *History of the Camp-Meeting and Grounds at Wesleyan Grove, Martha’s Vineyard, for the Eleven Years Ending with the Meeting of 1869*. (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1870), 63-64.

4 Vincent, *History* (1870), 106.

yards of sailcloth weighing nearly 2,000 pounds, sewn together in six sections like a circus tent. It took nearly 800 pounds of guy ropes and lines to raise the heavy canvas up three large central mast-like poles which were each fifty-four feet high and a little over a foot in diameter. The central ridge of the canvas was suspended about forty-five feet overhead with the lower edge of the tent being tied with ropes to a surrounding wooden framework nine feet off the ground.⁵

Remarkable as this canvas tabernacle was, it was plagued by problems from the very start. In the bright sun it heated up to an uncomfortable degree even with the addition of many ventilation flaps, and when subjected to storms and high winds it was prone to collapse. On top of this, there was the burden of storing this immense amount of canvas from year to year as well as the herculean effort needed to raise it. Within only a short time it became apparent that a more durable and permanent structure was needed to provide adequate shade and protection from the elements for the assembled congregation.

By the end of 1878, following through with an earlier building program set up specifically for this purpose, the association solicited proposals for a permanent tabernacle that would seat between three and four thousand. Three architects submitted competing designs for a large wooden tabernacle, some being highly ornate and fantastical in appearance. However, in March of 1879 the directors of the association were disheartened to find that construction bids for the winning design ranged in price from \$10,000 to \$15,000 and their budget for this project was only \$7,200.⁶

Their salvation came in the form of a Mr. John W. Hoyt, who was also a camp meeting attendee. He was a partner in the engineering and iron-building firm of Dwight and Hoyt of Springfield, Massachusetts



Fig. 2—Canvas Tabernacle showing Perez Mason's preacher's stand in the distance. MVM Photo Collection.

5 Henry Beetle Hough, *Martha's Vineyard: Summer Resort 1835 – 1935* (Rutland:Tuttle Publishing, 1936), 82-83.

6 Ellen Weiss, *City in the Woods, The Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 128-129.

and was convinced he could build an iron Tabernacle for only around \$6,200 and have it ready for July. A contract was duly signed with Hoyt on April 25, 1879 and only ninety-two days later, the amazing structure was complete. The first service was held in the new iron Tabernacle on July 26, 1879 and it was officially dedicated a little over a week later on August 6th with great fanfare. Though the final cost of \$7,147.84 was a bit higher than Hoyt's initial estimate, it still came in under the amount budgeted by the association and was an enormous savings over the estimated costs for a wooden structure.⁷

An Architectural Marvel: Exploring Its Intricate Design

At the time of its construction Hoyt's Tabernacle was touted as an engineering marvel and was among the largest completely covered outdoor gathering spaces of its time. At nearly 140 feet in diameter it provided about 25 percent more covered space for the preaching stage and seated congregation than the previous canvas tent. The skeletal framework of this wrought iron Tabernacle has often been compared to the intricate iron structures designed by Gustave Eiffel, and rightly so. Today we think of wrought iron as being used mostly for decorative metalwork, but in the Victorian era it was widely used in building construction, being seen as a less expensive alternative to steel. It also had the advantage of being strong, very malleable, corrosion-resistant and easily welded.

Hoyt's design for his iron Tabernacle is something beautiful to behold. Looking up from the inside you see three different levels of roofs separated by surrounding rows of colorful clerestory windows. This is all supported by a gossamer-like web of iron trusses so delicate in design as to make the entire canopy seem to simply float in the air. To help understand exactly what we are seeing in these two newly discovered images, it helps to know a bit about how the Tabernacle was actually constructed. In her extremely comprehensive book *City in the Woods*, examining the life and architecture of the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting, Ellen Weiss gives a very detailed description and analysis of the iron Tabernacle's architectural elements.⁸ For our purposes here, let's take a more simplified look at how the Tabernacle was pieced together based on her meticulous observations. The letters in parentheses refer to the cross-section diagram of the Tabernacle printed on the inside back cover of this issue.

The main reason the Tabernacle has such an airy feeling is that, in addition to being load-bearing vertical pillars, all of the interior supports serve as extremely strong but delicately designed trusses. There are four

7 Ellen Weiss, "The Iron Tabernacle at Wesleyan Grove," *Dukes County Intelligencer*, vol. 21 no. 1 (August 1979): 4-8.

8 Weiss, *City in the Woods*, 129-132.



Fig. 3—The interior of the Tabernacle taken shortly after it was constructed. Note the wooden purlins in place between the iron trusses to support the corrugated roofs. MVM Photo Collection.

main vertical supports heading skyward forming the square central core of the structure (A). These four supports are the highest, creating the square topmost section of the Tabernacle which contains the upper row of larger clerestory windows and the upper-most roof. The central columns are braced together at the very top directly behind the clerestory windows by a rigid horizontal truss binding them securely to one another (H). Rising from the feet of these central columns are four arched latticework trusses which meet at a point about seventy-five feet high in the center of the building (D). Sprouting from about the midpoint of each of the four central supports are five more arched trusses (E) fanning out to a ring of secondary supports (B). Encircling rows of hefty wooden purlins are connected laterally between this set of twenty trusses to hold up the middle roof. From these resulting twenty secondary supports, more arched trusses (F) head out to the twenty tertiary supports near the perimeter of the

structure (C) and, with their lateral wooden purlins, support the lower roof. Both at the inside and outside edges of the lower roof is a ring of single iron arches (G) acting as reinforcing brackets between the two rows of encircling supports.

Along with these key structural components, the Tabernacle contained one main front entrance and two smaller side entrances composed of gable roof projections with underlying arched openings. The front entrance was later modified into the box-like rectangular tower seen on the structure today. At the rear of the building opposite the front entrance is a gable-ended stage-wall which projects out from the lower roof and from the smaller row of clerestory windows. All three roofs were originally clad in sheets of corrugated iron which were later replaced by asbestos panels in the same corrugated style. The structure was surmounted by a tall decorative wooden octagonal cupola topped off with a single flagstaff which has now been replaced by a cross.

A Researcher's Dream: Why These Two Images Are So Special

Let's now turn our attention to the newly discovered stereo views showing the Tabernacle at two different stages of its construction. In over forty years of collecting historical images related to Martha's Vineyard, I have never come across any photographs like these nor did I ever expect to. You have to understand that the stereopticon cards produced by local photographers starting in the late 1860s were made to sell to the Camp Meeting attendees and summer visitors as souvenirs. They were the postcards of their day, and a picture of a partially built cottage or one showing any structure under construction would not have had any sales appeal. That is what makes these two stereo cards so rare and unique. However, one clue as to why these photographs were produced at all can be found in the elaborate label on the back of the view from Arlen Westbrook. This label, which bears its message using a number of ornate typefaces, proudly proclaims: "IRON TABERNACLE for Methodist Campmeeting Association, Martha's Vineyard. Designed and Erected by DWIGHT & HOYT, Springfield, Mass. 1879."

This serves as strong evidence that John Hoyt privately commissioned these stereo views for his ironworks company as a record showcasing the construction process of his intricately designed iron Tabernacle. If that is true, these views would have been produced in very limited quantities and would never have been made commercially available to the general public. There is one other stereo view we know of that bears this exact same label, in the collection of the Boston Public Library. It shows the Tabernacle totally completed. This raises the tantalizing possibility that there may be a

number of other views somewhere waiting to be discovered showing the Tabernacle in varying incremental stages of construction. Hoyt's motivation for creating this set of views could have been as a marketing tool

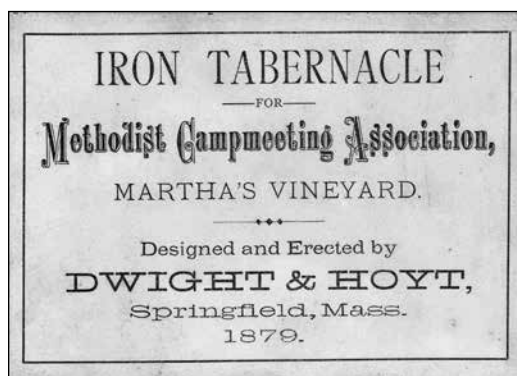


Fig. 4—Hoyt label pasted on the back of the first stereoview card that was discovered. Harvey Garneau Jr. Stereoview Collection.

to show prospective clients what his company was capable of.

In trying to determine which local photographer of that period might have taken these photographs, we found that the newly discovered second view confirmed our best guess. These particular stereo views of the Tabernacle in various stages of construction are produced on the deluxe larger format

cards that are a half-inch taller than standard stereo cards. Not many local photographers sold views in that format and the mounts of these Tabernacle cards most closely resembled the colors and outward appearance of those produced by Joseph W. Warren. The second card does indeed bear the imprint of Joseph W. Warren centered on the back instead of the pasted-on Hoyt label. It is a good assumption that Warren supplied the sets of cards to Hoyt mounted on card stock bearing his standard imprint, and that Hoyt then covered Warren's imprint using his specially printed labels.

Before these two views came to light, the only other image known showing the iron Tabernacle not completely finished was from the Andrew Patch collection of Woodward & Son glass plate negatives. This double-image stereo view plate shows the structure in its very last stages of construction. The photographer was standing at a point to the left of the main entrance, as is evidenced by the stage wall being seen towards the very back. Looking carefully at this image, it appears that all that remains to be done to complete the Tabernacle is to add the two tiers of clerestory windows that ring the upper and lower roofs and to install the louver panels on the sides of the octagonal cupola at the very top.

The Woodward & Son photo is an amazing image in its own right. It depicts what seems like the entire construction crew having just come down off the roofs and taking a well-deserved break from their labors to pose for the photographer. Andrew Patch points out that among those workers who have assembled for this photograph was one gentleman who appears considerably better dressed than the others, sporting an Indiana-Jones-style hat and dark vest and standing just to the right of center. Could this

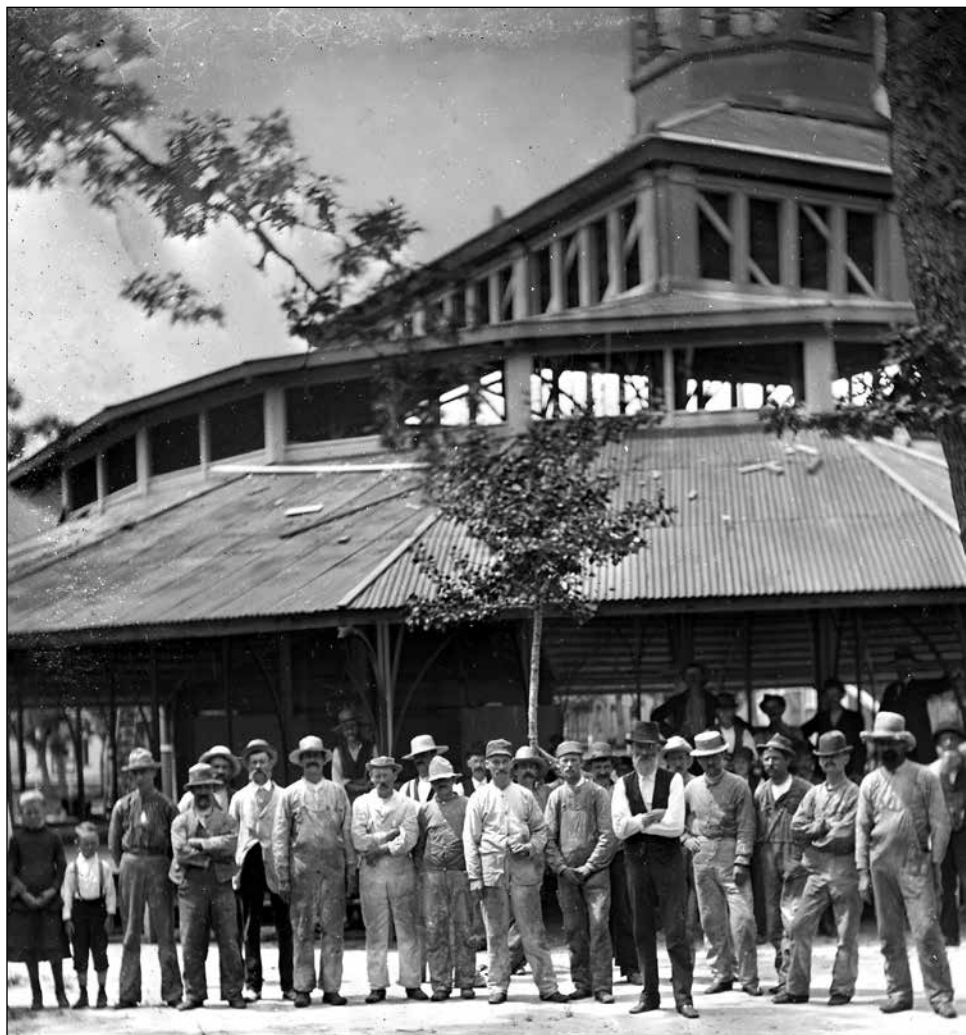


Fig. 5—The Tabernacle nearly completed with the construction crew assembled in front of the southeast side to pose for the photographer. Andrew Patch Collection of Woodward & Son Glass Plate Negatives.

possibly be John W. Hoyt himself? It is known that he supervised the entire construction project and was on-site just about every day. Not being able to currently locate any other contemporary photographs of Hoyt, for now this is just hopeful conjecture.

The Implications: What These New Images Reveal

In these two newly discovered stereo views we are seeing, for the very first time, the Tabernacle at a point a little over halfway through its construction. Photographs such as these give us invaluable and hitherto unavailable information that could help us unravel the construction process of this amazing

building and give us new insights into John Hoyt's structural design. From a strictly layman's standpoint, let me describe what can be seen in these images and also what they seem to reveal about the sequence in which the various structural pieces of the Tabernacle were assembled.

Before the new iron Tabernacle could be constructed, the area had to be cleared of all the collateral elements making up the old canvas Tabernacle and its preaching area. The rows of wooden benches were all moved out and stored so they could later be replaced in the new structure. Perez Mason's lattice-work preacher's stand, which proudly served for more than eighteen years, was moved to the edge of Lake Anthony opposite the entrance to Siloam Avenue to be used as a waiting room for passengers on the horse-drawn streetcars.⁹ Lastly, the three forty-five-foot high central mast-like poles that supported the heavy canvas tent were uprooted and removed.

The image shown in figure 6 is from the earlier of the two stereo cards. The square central sides of the Tabernacle were oriented almost precisely on the cardinal points of the compass: north, south, east and west. By minutely examining what can be seen looking through the structure to the buildings and trees in the background on the other side, it is easy to fix the perspective from which this image was taken. The photographer was standing approximately twenty-seven feet to the right (west) of Trinity Methodist Church which had been constructed a year earlier in the winter and spring of 1878. Therefore, we are looking directly at the north side of the building with the main entrance being 90° around to the left.

Again referring to the letters in the cross-section diagram appearing on the inside back cover, the four central supports (A) are in place and rising vertically to the lower edge of the upper square roof. Their attached lattice-like central trusses (D) can also be seen arching upwards to a point directly above the center of the building which is hidden from our view. The rigid horizontal trusses (H) with their diagonal crosspieces are in place connecting the four central supports to one another and strengthening the square central core. It can safely be assumed that these were the first structural elements to be erected on the site. The uppermost square roof with its internal support system and exterior cladding seems to be completely finished. The lower base of the topmost wooden cupola is complete and workmen can be seen standing on the staging planks putting the finishing touches on the cupola's upper octagonal roof. The midsection of the cupola is still unfinished and, though faint, the flagstaff at the very top can be made out telling us that this crowning piece was already in place at this early stage of construction.

Turning our attention now to the middle roof, the arched trusses (E) are clearly seen sprouting from the four central supports and fanning towards

9 "Cottage City Column," *The Cottage City Star*, vol. 1, no. 6 (June 26, 1879): 2.

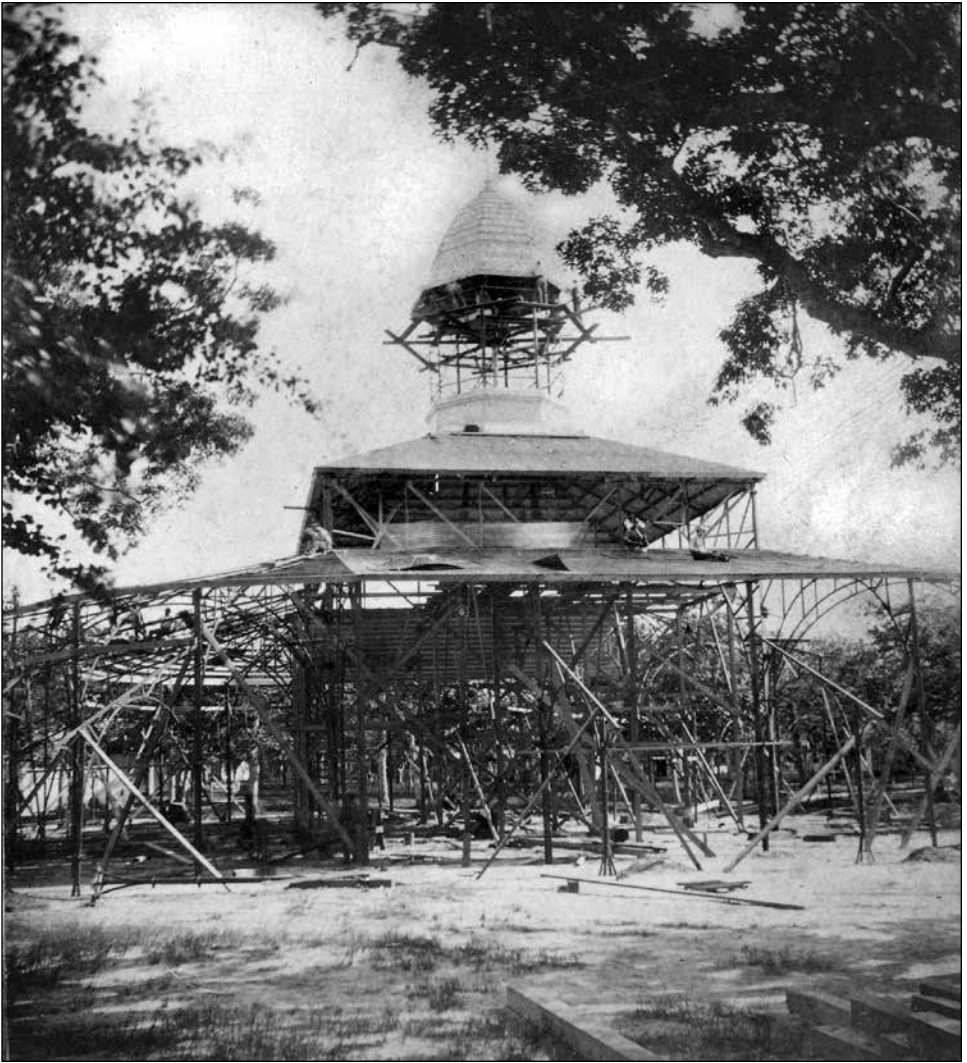


Fig. 6—Photo from the first stereoview card showing the north side of the Tabernacle at about halfway through its construction process. Harvey Garneau Jr. Stereoview Collection.

an outer circle of secondary upright supports (B). These are nearly all in place except for on the west side of the structure to the right, which is curiously still mostly open space. In this photograph we find that the middle roof itself is still in various stages of completion. On the north side directly in front of us and on the south side to the very rear, all of the lateral wooden purlins are installed and those portions of the roof have already been clad in corrugated iron. Just under the two workmen seated at the left corner of the square central section, rows of wooden purlins have been installed on that curved section and are ready for cladding. On the far side

of the eastern section to the left, the wooden purlins are also in place and awaiting their iron cladding as well. The gap between these two sections will eventually contain the framing for the gable-ended main entrance. Looking to the west on the right we see that no secondary trusses or secondary supports have been put in place to support the middle roof. In fact there are no signs of construction at all in what will become the entire western portion of the Tabernacle. The void of this unfinished section becomes more apparent when the card is placed in a stereoscope and viewed in three dimensions. From this we now learn that the structure was not pieced together in a totally symmetrical manner, finishing one outlying ring at a time starting from the center, as one might have expected.

At the time this photo was taken, no portion of the lower roof was as yet in place. Here, on the north-facing side only three of the eventual twenty tertiary arched trusses (F) have been put in place. These head out from about three-quarters of the way up the secondary supports (B) and slope downward towards their tertiary upright supports (C) at the perimeter. These are being held in place for the time being by angled wooded braces on each side of the tertiary upright. It can be noted that none of the arched braces (G) that will eventually span the bays between the rings of the secondary supports have thus far been attached.

In addition to showing the structural components of the Tabernacle that are in place at this stage of its construction, the photo reveals a number of other interesting things. Judging from the fact that one of the corrugated iron panels on the middle roof is bending upwards and others are curved in an undulating manner where they have been stacked, we discover that this original iron cladding appears to have been very thin and quite flexible. Also notice at the bottom left of the photograph one of the tertiary supports lies on the ground, recognizable by its prominently splayed foot. This will most likely assume its place in the gap between the first and second of the three perimeter supports already in place on this side. Seeing where the workers are located also provides a clue as to where their energies were being focused at this particular phase in the construction. Three workmen can be seen busying themselves up on the scaffolding of the cupola, six men are visible working on the cladding and lateral purlin framing for the middle roof, and two men are currently on the ground.

In the image taken from the second stereo card shown in figure 7, it can be seen that the construction of the Tabernacle has progressed considerably from its state in the previous image. For this view, the photographer has shifted his position about 45 feet to the left of where he was situated when he took the first view and is now standing about 10 feet in front of Trinity Methodist Church's right window. From this perspective we are looking directly at the northeast corner of the Tabernacle with the square



Fig. 7—Photo from the second stereoview card showing the Tabernacle a little further along in construction as seen looking towards its northeast corner. Harvey Garneau Jr. Stereoview Collection.

north-facing side to the right and the square east-facing side, which contains the main entrance, to the left.

Starting at the top of the image we notice that the wooden cupola has now been entirely framed and trimmed out, with only the louvers remaining to be installed. Referring back to the Woodward view in figure 5 showing the Tabernacle nearly completed, we find that for some reason these side louvers of the cupola were actually among the very last things to be installed. It is interesting to note that the precarious-looking planks serving as scaffolding in place around the cupola are in nearly the same positions as in the previous

view. Also, a dark rectangular toolbox of some sort, sitting astride a plank on the upper roof near the base of the cupola, can be seen in both views. The continuity of these two details may be an indication that possibly less than a week or so has elapsed between the two photographs, suggesting that the work was indeed progressing quite rapidly.

The top and bottom wood framing for the upper row of clerestory window has now been put in place but the vertical framing which will be between each window still needs to be installed. From what can be seen of this portion of the building, it appears that the middle roof is now totally clad with corrugated panels all the way around to the back. However, the roof-cladding stops just past the southwest corner at the right rear as is indicated by the light shining through a gap. This seems to suggest that the western section of the Tabernacle may still be devoid of any construction as was seen in the previous view. Since that portion of the building contained the larger stage wall which was made up of some differing structural elements, this could be the reason it was left until a later time.

Just under the middle roof we see that the wood framing for the lower row of surrounding clerestory windows has been started, with the top and bottom trim already finished. A few of the vertical window framing members are also in place but only at the juncture of the secondary supports. Interestingly, it is evident from this photograph, that the lower row of clerestory windows was being framed out before the lower roof was even in place. At the outward perimeter of the structure are three tertiary arched trusses (F) starting at their secondary supports (B) just below the clerestory window framing and heading out to their perimeter upright supports (C). Until the lateral wooden purlins that will support the lower roof are put in place between them, these trusses need to be held in place by angled wooden props supporting each side. Starting at the left and continuing around the entire back, we see that in that section all the wooden purlins between the tertiary arches are in place, but as yet no corrugated cladding for the lower roof has been installed.

A new feature in this photograph is the iron framing for the main entrance, now seen on the left. Long iron bars leading straight out from the middle roof will form the roof of the high gable end of the entrance opening. On each of the side walls of this projecting entrance gable we find that support arches have also been put in place. As mentioned earlier, today this front entrance contains a rectangular tower, but it was originally just a tall gable with a decorative entrance archway below. Even in this slightly later view we again see that none of the arched braces (G) that will span the bays between the rings of the secondary and tertiary supports have been put in place.

Curiously only three workmen can be seen in this particular photograph. One is sitting astride a crossbeam in what will be the lower row of clerestory windows while another is standing by the corner of the opening for the upper clerestory windows. The third is at the left working on the cladding for the rear section of the lower roof. To account for the lack of a large number of workers swarming over the structure, we could speculate that this photo may have been taken during a lunch break. There is one last extremely interesting feature to point out in this photograph. Lying in the foreground is the bottom end of one of the three 45-foot-high central masts that once supported the canvas Tabernacle showing one of the cleats around which the supporting ropes were tied: a comingling of the old and the new, captured together in one fantastic image.

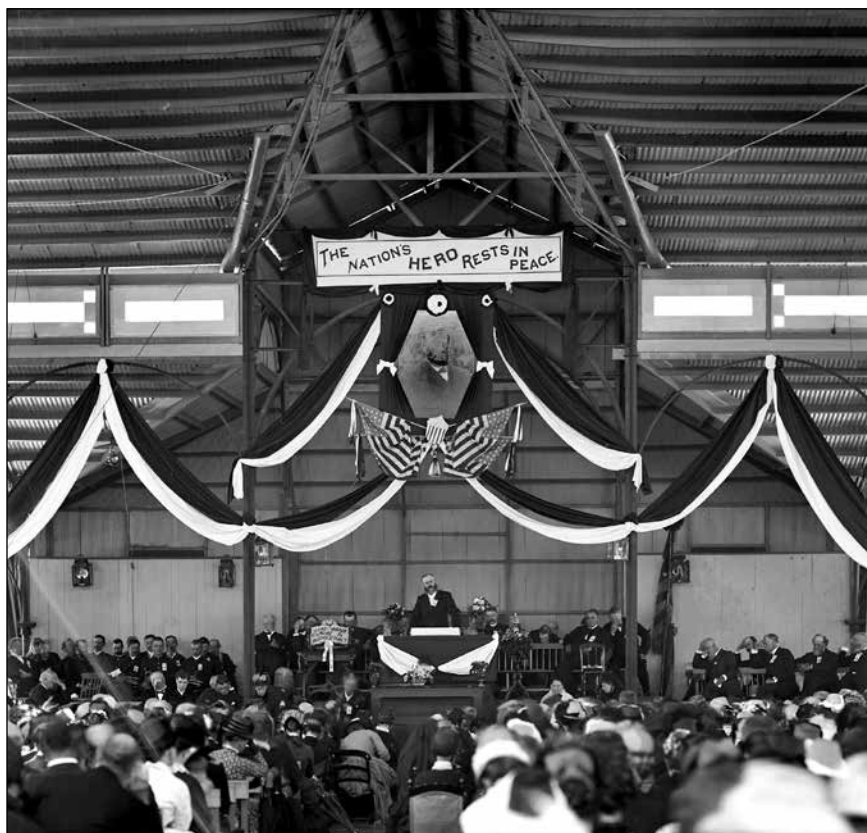
Pinpointing the exact date each of these two photographs were taken would be nearly impossible, but we can approximate a timeframe. Based on regular mentions of the Tabernacle's construction in the issues of the *Cottage City Star* and the *Vineyard Gazette*, we know the site was in the process of being cleared on June 5th and the first iron parts arrived on June 9th. By June 19th construction was in full swing and by the beginning of July some of the roofing was being installed. The benches were being moved back in a few days before the first service was held there on July 26th even though it was reported that the Tabernacle was "not quite completed." From this rough timeline it may be safe to assume that these photographs were taken sometime during the first weeks of July 1879.

Both of these newly discovered images provide a much-wanted glimpse into how the marvelous Tabernacle was constructed. Under a more scholarly examination, these photographs may reveal subtle nuances not only of Hoyt's design, but of the particular sequence in which he instructed his iron structure to be pieced together. Assuming that Hoyt commissioned a whole series of construction photographs, we can only hope that some of the other intervening stereo views will eventually be found. If so, it would not be the first-time serendipity had a hand in great discoveries like these.

Free-Viewing: Give It a Try

These two stereo view cards of the Tabernacle were meant to be seen in three dimensions, but of course it is not possible to include a stereoscope with each issue of this journal. However, there is another technique known as free-viewing that, with a little practice, will allow you to see both images in 3-D. Try this method using the images of the complete stereo cards printed on the back cover. Start by holding this issue in your hands about 8" in front of your eyes with the image of one of the cards completely level

and not tilting up or down. Staring at the image, let your eyes relax and go a bit blurry. The goal is to get your eyes to look straight ahead instead of trying to focus on a point in the middle. Eventually you will start seeing three images with the one in the middle a sort of double image struggling to resolve itself. You should eventually be able to keep your eyes relaxed and bring the center image into focus in full 3-D while ignoring the two blurry side images. Sometimes it helps to move the image closer to your eyes and then gradually bring it back to where you can converge the center image and bring it in focus. With practice, the center image will pop into 3-D without any effort. Good luck!



The death of President Ulysses S. Grant on July 23, 1885 was felt especially hard by the residents of Cottage City, where he spent several days in August of 1874 during his second term. A memorial service for the former president, with many tributes and eulogies, was held at the Tabernacle on August 8, 1885. MV Museum Photo Collection.

Finding (and Losing) The Captain Martin House: A Labor of Love Cut Short

by THOMAS J. DOYLE

IN REAL ESTATE, every sale, or “closing,” tells a story, and each closing has a beginning and an end. The names for the participants might be conventional: buyer and seller, grantor and grantee. Or they might be different.

Alive and Dead.

Starter and Finisher.

Prepared and Unprepared.

Lucky and Unlucky.

Sane and Kind of Crazy.

In this story, I was a buyer and seller and many other terms above. I was a starter, and I thought I was prepared and lucky. Mostly I was sane. But, in the end, I was unprepared, unlucky and definitely kind of crazy.

How crazy?

Real Estate Crazy. Crazy for a house. A house with a past; a house whose restoration offered a chance to connect with Martha’s Vineyard’s history and community.

It can happen.

Turn on Home & Garden TV or look at the real estate magazines for your local market and it’s clear that renovation stories are big business. Most TV shows and magazine articles feature ecstatic owners breathlessly describing the restoration of their dream house. Any talk of price tag is typically absent, and mentions of the epic tales of conflicts and heartbreak that can accompany renovations are rare.

Which brings me to how I found, and then lost, the Captain Martin House, a three-bedroom Greek revival farmhouse on Chappaquiddick Island.

Thomas Doyle is a doctor, sport fisherman, and long-time summer visitor to the Island. This is his first contribution to the *Quarterly*.

A House on an Island

When my wife Amy and I bought the Martin House “as is” in 2006, the house had been uninhabited for more than ten years. It had no well, a failed septic system, and no power. But that didn’t matter. We had fallen in love with the house and with its history and the promise of a vacation spot for our growing family.

I am speaking in the first person but I will often use “we” because my wife Amy supported me through this journey and shared my dreams for the house. But for reasons that will become clear (and painful to describe) my single-minded obsession with the purchase and rehab of the Martin House caused us to incur a considerable financial and emotional price for which the blame rests solely on me. But I’m getting ahead of myself.

Block Island

As a kid growing up in the suburbs of Rochester, New York, I didn’t see much of the ocean. That changed when a friend of my parents told them about Block Island, the island 13 miles off Rhode Island’s coast. Every August from 1973 onward my family packed into our Chevrolet Malibu wagon and hit the New York State Thruway to spend part of each summer in a converted barn near Sandy Point, the northern tip of Block Island.

As the youngest, I spent the eight-hour trip wedged in the middle of the back seat between my older sisters, and even today I can recall the joy of stepping out of car at the ferry dock in Galilee, Rhode Island, taking in the sight and smell of the ocean and the cacophony of gulls. I loved everything about the ferries, knew all their names (*Manitou*, *Manissee*, *Carol Jean*...) and wandered every deck. I was enchanted with Block Island and roamed everywhere on foot and by bike; its entire land area is only about one-third larger than Chappaquiddick Island.

At a young age I also loved to work with my hands, liked carpentry, and sometimes in those summer evenings on Block Island I would ride my bike to cottages under construction and explore their partial foundations or climb half-completed staircases to check out the view.

By the time I was in my late teens the lure of a place to escape to—a sanctuary to explore and feel unburdened in—had taken on a life of its own. For years I lobbied my parents to consider buying a vacation house on Block Island.

They never did. My extended family still travels to Block Island each summer to the same rental house, and my now-elderly parents occasionally look through the Block Island paper and notice the astronomical prices of farmhouses they considered buying for peanuts back in the 1970s. There is the occasional wistful conversation about opportunities lost. I didn’t want that to happen to me.



Wasque—the remote southeastern corner of Chappaquiddick, where ocean currents collide just offshore—is a favorite destination of Vineyard sport fishermen. MV Museum Photo Collection.

“Way-Sqwee”

I learned to surf cast for bluefish and striped bass as a twelve-year-old standing waist-deep in the half-mile rip on Block Island’s North Point, and, fast-forward about twenty years, sought similar fishing spots during my first trips to Martha’s Vineyard in the 1990s with my girlfriend (now wife) Amy. One day in 1996 I stopped into Larry’s Tackle Shop in Edgartown and asked the best place to catch bluefish.

“Wasque” was the simple answer, although it took some time for me to learn the correct pronunciation of the Wampanoag-derived name: “*Way-sqwee*.”

“Where’s *Way-sqwee*?” I said.

The man pointed east, to Chappaquiddick.

Soon I was driving off the Chappaquiddick ferry, headed to Wasque Point. At that time, the point was easily accessible by wooden stairs and a walkway across the marsh toward the dunes to the dramatic crosscurrents of Wasque, rich with baitfish.

Chappaquiddick reminded me of the Block Island I knew as a kid in the 1970s and 1980s: few cars, 25 mph speed limit, beautiful scenery, great fishing, and the expanse of ocean.

My wife and I married on the Vineyard in 2001. We felt extremely lucky

that my wife's grandfather had purchased a small cottage on the Vineyard decades before, and we visited often. My wife is the youngest of seven children in an extended family, and when our two daughters were born the house seemed to shrink with each passing summer. We scrimped together some savings and started to look around for our own small vacation house.

Chappaquiddick was at the top of our list for a place to get away to, and for years, even as we were busy with careers in medicine on the mainland and starting a family, when we were on the island we looked for something within reach. "Within reach" soon became a euphemism for "way-too-expensive-but-probably-worth-it-in-the-long-run."

That's when I found the Captain Martin House: "Sea Captain's House, 'as is,' on 7.9 acres on Chappaquiddick Island," read the listing in the paper. The price was out of reach but we figured we would take a look. Soon we were driving off the Chappaquiddick Ferry onto Chappaquiddick Road. About a mile down the road, just past the Chappaquiddick Store on the left, we almost missed it—a small gray shingled house on the right with white trim and a green front door, sited on a gentle rise of land thirty feet from the edge of the road.



Chappaquiddick

6 rooms, 1 bath, partial basement.
905 square feet of living space.
Lot is 8,129 square feet, wooded.
Needs renovation, sold "as is!"
\$325,000

Newspaper advertisement for the Captain William Martin House, 2004. Author's Collection.

When we first looked, the house and the surrounding 7.9 acres were offered as a single property. Through dogged research, I came to discover that the house actually sits on a postage stamp-sized 8,129 square foot lot; its three bedrooms on such a tiny parcel would be unobtainable under Edgartown's current zoning laws regulating Chappaquiddick Island. The back ell has framing differing from that of the front structure. Likely, as was common at the time, the house is in fact two buildings stuck together sometime in the mid-1800s. Someone told me that the front structure was once one of the Chappaquiddick schoolhouses.

On a clear day, the upstairs bedroom gives you a peek of Cape Pogue

Bay. The waters of the Bay are accessible by walking five minutes down Jeffers Lane, the dirt road opposite the house, to Martha's Vineyard Land Bank beachfront.

When I first walked around the Martin House with its fading shingles and decaying windowsills, I didn't recoil at all the work that would be required to bring the house back to life. I noted how perfectly sited the house is in relation to the road; my wife noticed how the northern end of the land near the house was carpeted by lily-of-the-valley. And of course,

Wasque Point was much more accessible from the driveway of the Martin House. It was as though my twelve-year self spoke up, and a dreamy and callow conviction about the entire project overtook me: "I can do this."

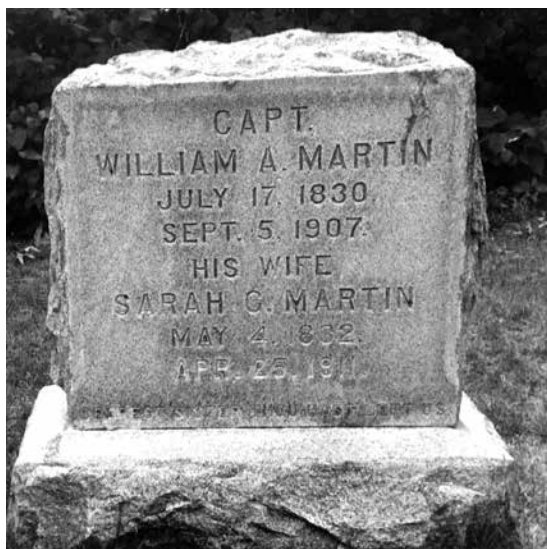
The sea captain described in the listing was William Martin, one of the only African American whaling captains to sail out of Edgartown in the nineteenth century. William and his wife Sarah (Brown) Martin are buried in the Chappaquiddick cemetery at the end of Jeffers Lane. They had no children. William Martin died in 1907 (perhaps in the house, according to some records) and his

wife Sarah Martin, who was descended from the Chappaquiddick Wampanoag, died in 1911.

I have looked at probate records for both of them; Sarah apparently died intestate (without a will), and she had a large extended family. In 1911 the court stenographer made a listing, in the tightly curled script of a fountain pen, of Sarah Martin's land and possessions, which included the house. The names of her heirs are also listed; so many names that allotted space on the form was exceeded and the names are scrunched vertically in the cramped space of the margin.

"So what?" you might say. Well, among other factors, Sarah Martin's multiple heirs one hundred years hence led to the house being taken off the market soon after we looked at it with our real estate agent, because it was revealed in the course of title research that the land and home had a very "cloudy title." And a cloudy title can be a kiss of death to a real estate deal.

The house dropped out of sight for a while, and we continued to look



Gravestone of William and Sarah Martin on Chappaquiddick. Author's Collection.

at other properties. I would peek at the Martin House as I passed it while driving to Wasque to fish, and I kept wondering how we could buy it.

Unprepared, Unlucky and Definitely Kind of Crazy

There were a handful of transfers of the Martin House in the years following Sarah Martin's death in 1911, but the house and its small "homestead lot" was in the possession of one family by 1914. In subsequent years, adjacent parcels of land were purchased by the same family, creating the 7.9-acre parcel that was listed in the Edgartown Plat Map and initially listed for sale. (For the uninitiated, a "plat map" is a living document comprising every lot line, parcel and significant feature of a town's real estate.)

Further title searches revealed that some portion of the acreage surrounding the Martin House was possibly not even owned by the family at all; perhaps fifty percent of the ownership share was held by descendants of other Vineyard families through a complex web of inherited and fractional interests.

A year later, in 2002, I took a stab at finding out more about the property, writing a letter to the off-Island address of the owner listed on the deed. To my surprise, I soon got a call from a man named G. B. who very cordially explained that he was one of the owners and the family's representative in the sale of the Martin House.

G. B. (since deceased) and I talked every few months, and much of our time was taken up with his description of similar negotiations with another person or persons (it was never clear) who were also very interested in buying the Martin House. The family wanted to sell the property, but G. B. didn't always seem very forthcoming about the problems of the title and the surrounding acreage. Emboldened by the fear that a competitor would scoop our dream out from under us, I made another leap of faith, hiring a Vineyard attorney to look into the title independently.

The title researcher was convinced that the ownership of the house and land was so hopelessly complicated that the only way to convey clear title would be to advance a case in the Land Court of the State of Massachusetts for a "Petition for Partition," clearing the title.

Massachusetts law does not have a statute of limitations for forfeiture of an inherited ownership share in a piece of land, so descendants of the owners of a property (e.g. the Martin House) from many years ago might emerge, at any time, to claim a fractional interest in the property.

The legal procedure of a Petition for Partition is Dickensian, and involves a lengthy process where the putative owner pays for public announcements in the local newspaper about a "Partition Action" and then attempts to contact all possible heirs to alert them to the planned sale of the property. After the partition has been shepherded through the Massachusetts Land Court, on a certain day and time, the property is sold to

the highest bidder, who might be the current owner, or might be any other owner of a fractional interest in the property who bids the most money.

The action of such a purchase, analogous to a foreclosure auction, essentially buys out and extinguishes prior historical interests in the property. Years can pass during this process, legal fees adding up.

G. B., who it turned out was an attorney himself, seemed unwilling to hire a land use attorney or take other action to look into a partition or even the more nominal legal requirement of property transfer in Massachusetts, a Title 5 septic inspection. In retrospect, why would he? As he and I talked it likely was clear to him that I was so enthralled with the idea of a refuge on Chappaquiddick Island and the Martin House in particular, that I was methodically assembling what was necessary to clear the Martin House title—essentially, I was doing the title work for him.

In a prolonged act of hubris, I decided that I could sort out the entire problem of the title issue myself. My wife Amy, with only occasional hints at skepticism, sensed how personal the project had become for me, and didn't try to divert me. There was also the lure of a mystery that needed to be solved.

I spent odd hours during our vacations to the Vineyard at the courthouse in Edgartown, poring over judicial, land, and title records at the Registry of Deeds. Those hours of time away from my wife and young daughter came at a high cost—we were in the midst of medical fellowship and residency training, and weekends together on the Vineyard were uncommon. So when I was away trying to figure out the Martin House my wife was sometimes alone with our young daughter during our very brief vacations.

What emerged during those hours of single-minded investigation was that in fact the title of the Martin House and its surrounding 8,129 feet of land was well-documented as separate and distinct from the 7+ surrounding acres, even though the two parcels had been listed for decades as one parcel on the Edgartown plat map.

By this time, I had found a new attorney skilled in title law. He was based off-island but had lived on the Vineyard for many years before. To enlist him in my journey I distilled my months of title research into a detailed four-page letter with extensive references to the Edgartown land records. He reviewed it and concurred.

In yet another obsessive leap of faith which still astounds (and bothers) me, I paid several thousand dollars upfront for a land survey to be performed on the 8,129-foot parcel and for a Title 5 septic inspection and plan to be completed and recorded.

Remember, we didn't own the house—I did all of this before we even had an accepted offer. A logical person would say that the seller should do those things and pay for them; that person would be right.



The Dukes County Courthouse was built in 1858, five years after William Martin shipped out on his first whaling voyage, and a year after he married Sarah Brown. MV Museum Photo Collection.

So, after what amounted to many hours over two years of research, coordination with my attorney, missed walks on the beach with my wife and two-year-old daughter, and ongoing conversations with G. B., in approximately 2004 I was able to show the Town of Edgartown Board of Assessors my attorney-vetted title search in conjunction with the new property survey. A new Title 5 septic plan was approved during a brief meeting before the Edgartown Board of Health.

On the force of the legal opinion, within a few months the Edgartown plat map was revised to show the larger parcel was in fact two pieces of land, with the 8,129 square foot Martin House parcel carved out as a pre-existing nonconforming lot of record. The way was clear for us to purchase the house.

Because of the length of time for all of the pieces to fall into place, the actual purchase didn't happen for close to two more years: June of 2006.

The door handle on the front door of the house was broken and there was no key to the house, so at the closing we received the four-number combination to the padlock securing the front door: "1914."

The padlock code 'transfer' was ironic because for years anyone who wandered into the yard of the Martin House (and many did, including us) could pull open the unlocked *back* door and have a look around without bothering with the front door combination.

The Cart Before the Horse

And here we get to one of the cruxes of this story. Why did I put the cart, if you will, of my fascination with owning a real piece of Vineyard history so firmly, and at such a growing financial cost, before the horse of reality of the decrepit state of the house and the specter of the very high costs of construction on Chappaquiddick? I think a partial answer can be found in the reflection on the way that dream might grab any one of us—and not let go.

I had plans to put the house on the National Historic Register, and paid for an expert architectural historian at the consulting firm Public Archeological Labs (PAL) based in Pawtucket, Rhode Island to evaluate the Martin House's history and create a preliminary Register application. The historians at PAL were just as fascinated by the history of the house as I was, and said that its placement on the Register would be a slam-dunk.

Here is an excerpt from PAL's meticulous ten-page report about the house:

The Captain William Martin House... possesses important historical associations with the Native American and African-American communities on Martha's Vineyard in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The house and property it sits on was originally built on land reserved for the Chappaquiddick (Wampanoag) Indians. The house is also associated with a locally significant whaling ship captain in Martha's Vineyard...The House is a simplified, rural version of the Greek Revival style on Martha's Vineyard. It starkly contrasts the high style Greek revival houses of wealthy Caucasian whaling captains located along North Water St. in Edgartown, and is representative of the wood-framed, wood shingled houses typical on Chappaquiddick during the nineteenth century. The building retains a high degree of material and design integrity, but many of the structural members are in need of repair.

I paid for a Vineyard architectural firm to draw up scaled, "as-is" drawings of the house, and put those drawings together with photos of the house and information about its history as sort of prospectus to guide conversations with island architects and builders about rehabbing the house.

Sometimes, these conversations included visits to Chappaquiddick. A builder who has worked on many projects on Chappaquiddick walked around the house, inspected the rotting trim and sill beams, and pronounced that the "skin" of the house was dead. It sounded like the 'bones' of the house might be dead as well. He wasn't interested.

"Do you think you might want to try to do it yourself?" I remember him saying, trying to be helpful, and sensing my interest in carpentry. He was curious to know if I had purchased the surrounding seven acres, and when I told him I hadn't, I detected a hint of surprise on his part at the price we paid for the house and its tiny parcel.



An architect's rendering of what the house might have become, circa 2005. Author's Collection.

I also remember the words of a builder from a well-known Vineyard design/build firm. He told us in 2006 that we should expect to pay \$750,000 to complete our proposed project, taking into account the cost and logistics of renovation on Chappaquiddick as \$500 per square foot for an energy efficient, historically accurate, labor-intensive renovation of the 1500-square-foot structure from new foundation to a final coat of paint.

I recall thinking to myself as we walked out of his office: "We don't have \$750,000."

Another day soon after we purchased the house we were clearing out junk left behind by the sellers, helped by a Chappaquiddicker who, in addition to being a trash hauler, was a jack-of-all-trades. Chewing on a toothpick, he looked at our house with its peeling paint and holes in the roof and opined that he could take the entire thing down and take it to the dump for twenty-five grand. That way, he suggested, we could put up a three-bedroom modular home. At the time I was somehow horrified at this practical suggestion, thinking instead about the potential fate of the house's original glass windows, hundred-and-fifty-year-old hand-made bricks, and vintage wide-board pine floors.

A few months after purchase, a friend and I spent three days on the Island wrestling with and tacking down an enormous tarp onto the roof



Annie Doyle in front of the Captain Martin House, circa 2006. Author's Collection.

to secure it and cover up its holes. For peace of mind, I paid a monthly “caretaking” fee to a nice Chappaquiddicker who checked on the empty house to make sure it hadn’t been vandalized or blown over in a storm. It was likely the easiest house-watch gig ever.

During that first year of ownership, my wife and I made trips to the house for picnics on the lawn, and I had an electrician set up a sub-panel in the house. My wife loves to cook, and we planned out a simple country kitchen adjacent to an open dining room. I could imagine bringing home bluefish that Amy would whip up in the renovated kitchen.

During one of those day trips, house dreams met reality when our three-year-old daughter suddenly had to go to

the bathroom. There was no working bathroom. Rather, my wife helped our daughter go behind some bushes on the back of the property, taking care to avoid poison ivy.

Soon after we bought the house, my final residency training was completed, and I was thrown into a busy medical practice. My wife’s position as a pediatrician was similarly demanding, and our schedules left hardly any time for more consideration of the logistics of trying to get a very complex and expensive wholesale renovation project off the ground. Our second daughter was born. Each day on the mainland was a balancing act of work and family, with little more for anything else.

The Martin House sat empty, although it made a good spot for storage of my surfcasting rods and tackle. Then a couple of years into ownership of the Martin House, our older daughter started at a private school and our cash flow tightened substantially. The drag of time and money, high childcare expenses, tuition, two mortgages, and many other expenses became too much.

What to do? After so many years of planning, of hours researching the

house's history and clarifying its title, all the upfront cash I had paid to make the property viable for transfer...was I going to throw in the towel?

“Attachment Is Suffering”

During a summer in college I was fortunate to spend two months in Thailand working for an English language newspaper *The Nation*, based in Bangkok. I was twenty-one and I had an amazing summer, traveled all over Thailand, published many articles, and along the way learned a lot about Buddhism as practiced in Thailand. One day, in the midst of my internal angst about what to do about the Martin House, a particular Buddhist teaching, the general idea that ‘attachment causes suffering,’ bubbled up out of nowhere into my consciousness. As I understand it, a central teaching in Buddhism highlights the impermanence of the physical world and our human tendency to covet or attach to certain possessions or experiences. Taken to an extreme, this “attachment” can be a cause of suffering and unhappiness. Conversely, when we free ourselves from such attachments we feel liberation and happiness.

Slowly, unconsciously, I now realized, my extreme attachment and pursuit of the Martin House, to the idea of refuge that it represented, to the potential for a hands-on restoration, had created a form of attachment which in turn was causing a form of suffering. I slowly adjusted to the fact that it was time to let my dream go, and see if it could become someone else's. Amy agreed.

Unfortunately, our timing for potential profit or even a break-even on the sale was poor, since we listed in 2009 when the real estate market nationwide was cratering, even on the Vineyard. Finally, after many months on the market, we received a reasonable cash offer, which, while below our asking price, came with no contingencies. We decided to cut our losses and sell.

The Ghost of Captain Martin

On Chappaquiddick there is a tradition whereby neighbors leave a gift for new homeowners to welcome them to the small community. I didn't know about this tradition until one day in July 2006, a month after we had purchased the house. We had driven over to Chappaquiddick for a picnic at the home and on walking into the kitchen we found two small boxes sitting on the kitchen table. They were tied with a bow and on the front of the boxes in neat script was written: “To the new owners of the Martin House.”

Inside one box was a framed color photograph of the home taken many years prior, in better days, with the shingles fresh and clean, white trim bright and shiny, and an American flag flying in the yard. The second box contained a hand-written poem, apparently written by summer renters of the house back in the 1980s. The poem described in affectionate terms the family's experience of arriving at the Martin House each summer, explor-

ing the land around the house, wondering if misplaced tools or other items had been “moved by the ghost of Captain Martin.” It was a paean to the joy and happiness the house gave visitors back in its day.

In the winter of 2009, as we were preparing to pass real estate papers with the new owners via mail, I put the framed poem and photograph, given anonymously to us just three years before, into a thick yellow envelope so that our real estate agent could give them to the new owners. I also stuffed a few other items into the envelope: the fully paid-for and now in-limbo National Historic Register draft application, many pages detailing my title research related to the surrounding 7.8 acres, and a personal note to the new owners. I can’t remember exactly what I wrote, but it was more or less a ‘good-bye’ to the Martin House. I wish them well.

Lessons Learned

If you have stuck with me through this tale, I’m guessing that a voice is nagging at you. It’s the same one that nags at me, in a tone that has fortunately become less strident over the years: “What were you thinking! Your timing was horrible! Think of all the time and money you lost! Why did you drag your wife along on this obsessive pursuit?”

My glass-half-full explanation—that sometimes the journey itself is the destination—is trite but helps me when I get depressed about how our ownership of the house turned out. Only in retrospect have I realized that a lot about the journey, over those several years, had value by fostering a connection to the Vineyard.

In other words, everything we learned about Captain William Martin, Sarah Brown Martin, Chappaquiddick Wampanoag history, Edgartown, title law, wells, septic systems, old house renovation, architecture, Elaine Weintraub and her work in creating the Martha’s Vineyard African-American Heritage Trail (which includes the Martin House), all we learned from many creative islanders in the architecture, design and building trades, has brought us closer to the Vineyard. And the Vineyard is a place that my wife and I love, love to visit, and someday will call home.

A few years ago, my wife Amy and I started looking again for a vacation house on the island. It will likely become our full-time house someday. We even went out to Chappaquiddick a couple of times, but we are now looking on other areas of the Island and trying to stay within the right price-point for what is, after all, a luxury.

This time, I do a lot more listening to Amy and less talking—and I’m staying out of the Registry of Deeds.

Someday, we’ll find the right house.



W. A. Martin Master.

9

Nov 9th

Light breeze from the S.E.
Schooner E. B. Conwell in sight. Watch
employed at doing ships duty
At 5:30 P.M. took in sail and lay
to on the port tack so ended this day
Lat 31° 58' N
Long 76° 20' W

Nov 10th

Begins with a strong breeze from
the S.E. and veered gradually
to the West and increased to
a gale. One Bark and one
Schooner in sight. Watch
employed at doing ships duty
At 6 P.M. Brig laying to on
the starboard tack under
short sail. So ended this day
Lat 31° 41' N
Long 75° 45' W

Nov 11th

Begins with a strong breeze from
the W.W. which moderated
gradually during the day.
Course S By W. One sail
in sight. Watch employed
doing ships duty. So ended
this day
Lat 31° 08' N.
Long 75° 45' W.

The Hurricane of 1944

image selection and text by KATE LOGUE

Editor's Note: *The Hurricane of 1944, though less remembered than the Hurricane of 1938 or the double hurricanes—Carol and Edna—of 1954, was just as consequential. The Museum commemorated the 75th anniversary of the storm with a photo exhibit in the Cox Gallery from August 20 to Oct. 27, 2019. The images and text from that exhibit are reproduced here as they appeared in the gallery.*



Seventy-five years ago, Vineyarders' minds were on the war, not the weather, when the second major hurricane in a decade struck the Island in mid-September 1944. The "Great Atlantic Hurricane," as it was called by the press, impacted the entire Atlantic seaboard. After first being detected near Puerto Rico on September 9th, it swept up the coast and made land-fall in New England on the night of September 14th. It sank five ships and flooding inland caused severe damage. All told, the storm caused over \$100 million in damage (\$1.2 billion, adjusted for inflation) and killed 390 people.

Menemsha, newly rebuilt after the devastating 1938 hurricane, suffered only moderate damage. Down-Island, however, the effects of the storm were catastrophic. In Vineyard Haven, the storm's 100-mph winds shredded the shipyard's corrugated-metal storage sheds and blocked Main Street with a dozen toppled trees. In Oak Bluffs, waves smashed the bath-houses along Sea View Avenue into kindling and heaped the wreckage atop the ferry wharf. In Edgartown, the storm surge flooded the waterfront and plucked yachts and fishing boats alike from their moorings.

Vineyard Lightship #73 — a 124-foot vessel anchored, like a floating lighthouse, three miles west of Cuttyhunk — sank with all hands at the height of the storm. The loss of her 12-member crew made the 1944 hurricane the deadliest in Vineyard history: a wartime reminder that the sea, too, could be a potent enemy.

A graduate of Brown University and the University of the Arts, Kate Logue is Exhibitions Assistant at the Museum. Along with Anna Barber, Manager of Programs and Exhibitions, she is responsible for the content and design of the Museum's changing exhibits. This is her first contribution to the *Quarterly*.



Wrecks of the *Manxman* and *Priscilla V.* in Edgartown harbor.



Wreckage between North Water Street and the harbor north of Memorial Wharf in Edgartown.



Wreckage along the docks in Edgartown.



Boats washed ashore by the storm in Edgartown.



Edgartown harbor, wrecks of the *Manxman* and *Priscilla V* at center, ruin of the coal shed on Chadwick's Wharf (now the site of the Seafood Shanty) at right.



Wreck of the *Manxman*, a gigantic steel-hulled sailing yacht.



Toppled telephone poles along the East Chop shoreline, near Crystal Lake.



Damage to the shipyard in Vineyard Haven.



Hurricane damage to Menemsha Harbor.



Edgartown Inner Harbor, with the Reading Room visible in the distance.



Memorial Wharf at far left; the old Cape Pogue lifeboat at left center.



Dinghies washed into the streets of Edgartown.



Flooding in lower Main Street, Edgartown.



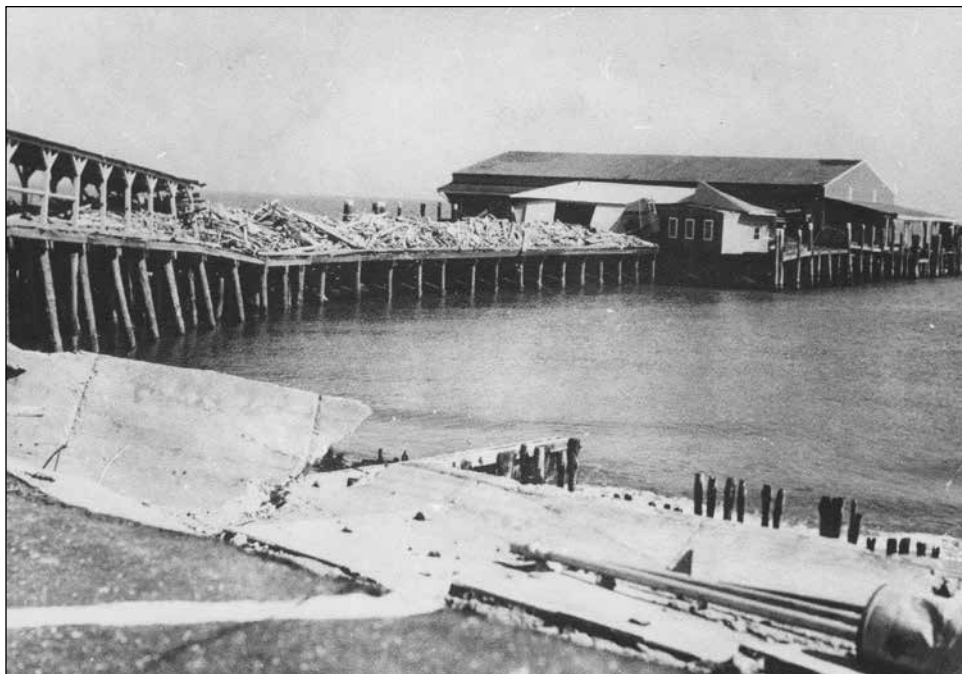
Fallen trees on the streets of Edgartown.



Boats washed ashore off Mayhew Lane in Edgartown.



Tree blown over at the intersection of School Street and Cooke Street in Edgartown.



Ruins of the ferry wharf in Oak Bluffs.



Collapsed portions of Seaview Avenue in Oak Bluffs, the New Seaview Hotel is visible at left, and the ferry wharf in the background at right.



Fallen tree in Edgartown.



Damage to Vineyard Haven, ruins of the Shipyard sheds in the lower left.



Ruins of the bridge to the Edgartown Light (in its current location, but before Lighthouse Beach existed).



Damage to buildings near Dock Street in Edgartown.



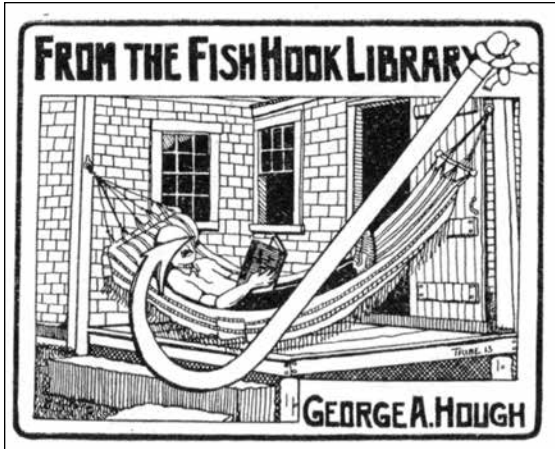
Damage to Hariph's Creek Bridge in Chilmark.



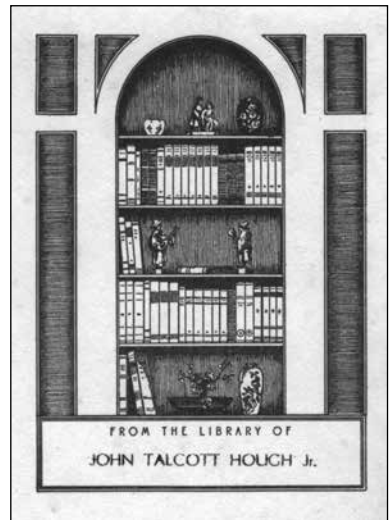
Boat washed ashore on Starbuck's Neck in Edgartown, with the Harbor View Hotel in the background.

From the Museum Archives

Bookplates from “Fish Hook”



Early in the twentieth century, when his sons were young, *New Bedford Standard* managing editor George A. Hough bought a rustic summer cottage on the then-remote north shore of West Tisbury. “Fish Hook,” named after a visiting friend commented that it was “at the end of the line,” became a summer playground for four generations of the family. The volumes that made up its extensive library—some of which were donated to the Museum when the house was sold in 2018—bore custom bookplates indicating their owners. The three shown here identified the elder Hough, his son George, Jr. (editor of the *Falmouth Enterprise* and brother of longtime *Vineyard Gazette* editor Henry Beetle Hough), and George, Jr.’s grandson: *Enterprise* columnist and novelist John T. Hough, Jr. (*The Conduct of the Game*; *Seen the Glory*).



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Building for the Future

Since 1835, there had been camp meetings at Wesleyan Grove. . . meeting first in the open air under the trees, and then under a gigantic canvas tabernacle that was put up and taken down each season.

The building of the Tabernacle transformed that space: It was big, modern (made of wrought iron), and permanent. At a time when the conversion from individual tents to cottages was well underway, it declared: “We have staked our claim here, and are building for the future.” And so they did: The Tabernacle, now 140 years old and beautifully refurbished, remains the vibrant heart of the Campground.

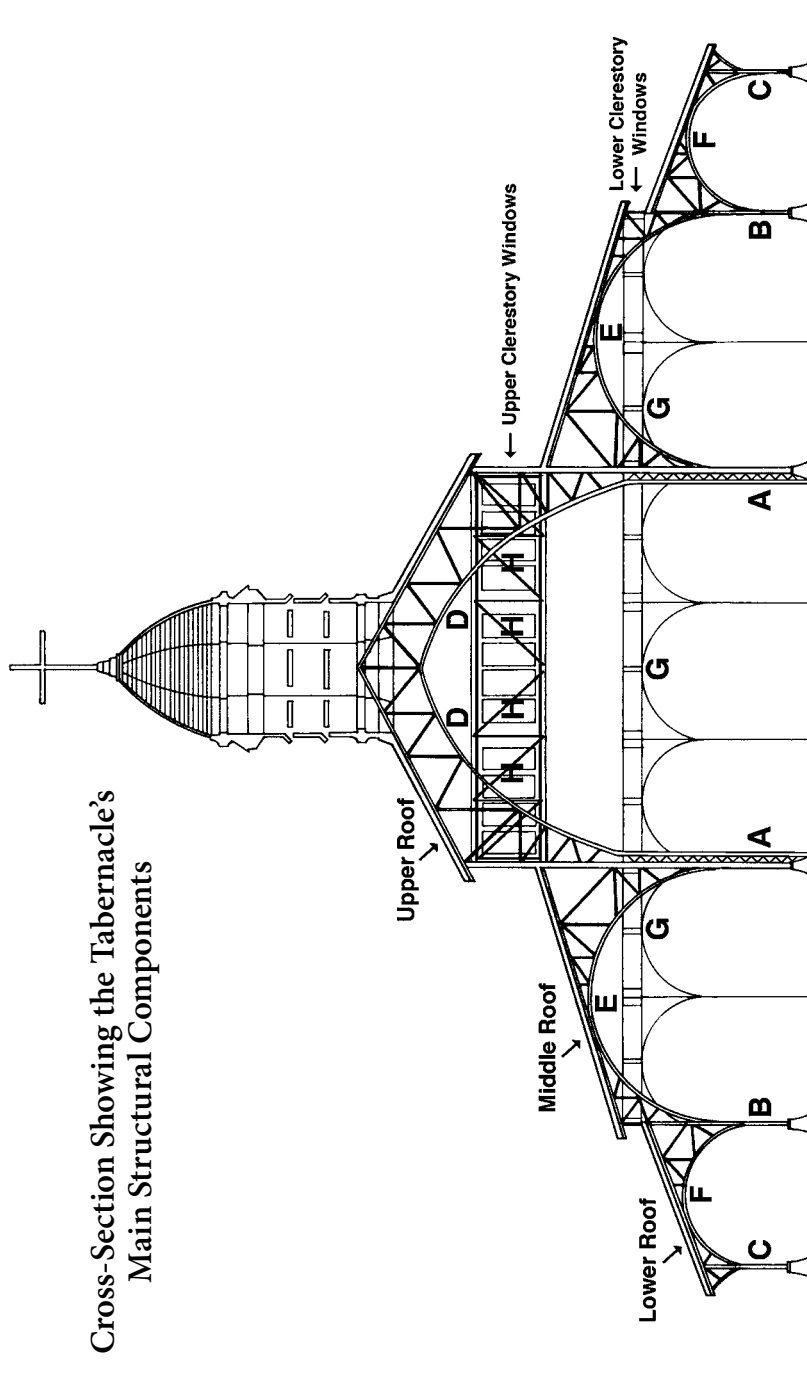
So, too, with the Museum. It began in 1922 as the Dukes County Historical Society, meeting in rented rooms . . . then (from 1932) in an ever expanding Edgartown campus centered on the Cooke House property. Now, with the move to the Marine Hospital in Vineyard Haven, we (like the Campground in 1879) have entered a new era. We have staked our claim on a hilltop in Vineyard Haven and indeed have also re-invested also in our Edgartown campus with a continued presence in Edgartown restoring the Cooke House and creating historical Legacy Gardens...reflective of what the Campground did among the oaks of Wesleyan Grove.

Even as we embrace the past—collecting, preserving, and sharing it—we are building for the future.



Phil Wallis
Executive Director

Cross-Section Showing the Tabernacle's Main Structural Components



This cross-section is based on one originally redrawn by Harold Raymond which first appeared in City in the Woods by Ellen Weiss. It has been significantly revised by Harvey Garneau, Jr. and is used with permission.



For the first time, thanks to these recently discovered stereo cards, we get a glimpse of the Tabernacle as it was being constructed. See article inside. *Harvey Garneau Jr. Stereoview Collection.*