

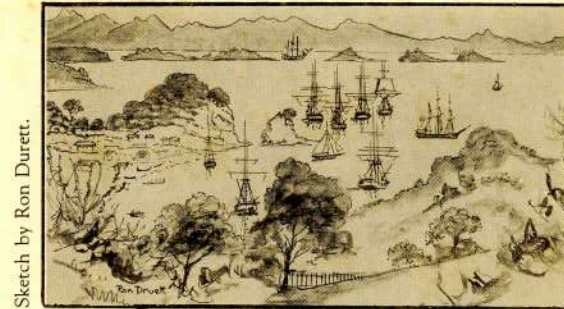
*Journal of History of Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands*



# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 33, NO. 2

NOVEMBER 1991



Sketch by Ron Durett.

*Bay of Islands in 1840.*

*Partners in History:*  
**The Bay of Islands  
And Martha's Vineyard**

by JOAN DRUETT

**Tisbury Deaths and Doctors  
During the 1860s**

by ANTHONY K. VAN RIPER

**A Puzzling Piracy  
Off Tarpaulin Cove**

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

**Documents: Pease Diary**

**Bits & Pieces**

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The Society maintains two historic house museums, one in Edgartown, the other in Vineyard Haven.

In Edgartown, the Thomas Cooke House, circa 1765, on the corner of School and Cooke Streets, is a museum of Island history, open during the summer. Also in Edgartown are the Francis Foster Museum, the Capt. Francis Pease House and the Gale Huntington Library of History. These are open year-round. The Museum has a permanent exhibition of the Vineyard's maritime heritage. The Captain Pease House features changing exhibitions. The Library contains logs, journals, genealogies and Island documents, photographs and books.

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*Partners in History:*

## The Bay of Islands And Martha's Vineyard

by JOAN DRUETT

THE ISLAND of Martha's Vineyard, south of Cape Cod, is not your usual Kiwi tourist's destination. Some New Zealanders associate the Island and its picturesque village-capital, Edgartown, with the Kennedy clan and the filming of *Jaws*, while others unblushingly confess that they've never even heard of the place. The same, no doubt, is true of Vineyarders and the Bay of Islands. Most have probably never heard of it. It is on the other side of the world.

Yet the histories of these two places, the Bay of Islands on New Zealand's North Island, and Martha's Vineyard in southern Massachusetts, are interwoven in a tale of ambition, greed, disappointment, intrigue and treasure. It's a story that covers nearly 100 years.

The key to the story is a girl called Lulu, whose paternal grandfather, Gilbert Mair, landed in the Bay of Islands in 1824, and became one of its earliest and most notable settlers. A Peterhead Scot, he was working as ship's carpenter on an English whaler when he decided to make the raw new colony his home — perhaps because he had fallen in love with Elizabeth Puckey, the daughter of Paihia missionaries.<sup>1</sup>

There is a lot of romance in the life of Gilbert Mair. He built a hull on a keel that missionary Henry Williams had laid, and so became the first shipbuilder in New Zealand. That first vessel, a schooner called *Herald*, was launched

<sup>1</sup> The story of Gilbert Mair is told in J.C.Anderson and G.C.Petersen, *The Mair Family*, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, N.Z., 1956, pp.11-27.

JOAN DRUETT, a well-known New Zealand writer, lives in Hamilton. On a Fulbright Fellowship in 1986 she researched whaling history in Hawaii and New England, including at this Society. Her latest book, *Petticoat Whalers*, has just been published and draws upon that research, as does this article, her third in this journal.



in 1826 amid a scene of confusion. The local Maoris had gathered in great numbers for the event, anticipating much largesse for hauling the craft down into the sea. To their loud chagrin, however, when Gilbert knocked away the chocks the schooner slid into the water of her own accord.

Mair worked at the mission until 1830, when he purchased a large block of land from the Maoris at Te Wahapu, near Kororareka — then known affectionately to the sailors as the “Whorehouse of the Pacific” — paying the chiefs with items such as muskets, powder, spades, tobacco and scissors. And there he set up shop, importing European goods and supplying the whalers.

His business flourished. The Bay of Islands was a free port then, as well as a roistering one, and the New England whalers arrived in large numbers, creating such a profitable market that American speculators soon arrived.

One of those enterprising Yankees was from Martha's Vineyard. He was Captain William Mayhew of Edgartown, who arrived in 1838, along with his adventurous wife, Caroline. Within a few short months, Caroline was one of the settlement's distinct “characters.” Not only did she have a neat turn of phrase — being famous for her dry comment, “We made twenty knots, ten straight ahead and ten up and down,” describing her voyage around Cape Horn — but she took her pet wallaby everywhere she went, no matter how grand the colonial venue.<sup>2</sup>

These Mayhews, it seems, did nothing by halves. Emulating Mair by going into the chandlery trade, William purchased Tahoramea Island near Cook Strait and outfitted it as a whaling station;<sup>3</sup> he was one of the eight

<sup>2</sup> Ms. by Ruby Holmes Martyn, Box 117B, DCHS. Also see Jack Lee, *I Have Named It the Bay of Islands*, Hodder & Stoughton, Auckland, N.Z., 1983, pp. 117-148, and *Whaling Wives*, Emma Mayhew Whiting and Henry Beetle Hough, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1953, pp. 10-20.

<sup>3</sup> Whaling stations served shore whalers. A gang of whalers was left on the island to chase whales with small boats, bring them ashore and try out the blubber. Mayhew would come twice a year, bringing fresh supplies and collecting the barrels of oil. This was the way most of the whaling was done in New Zealand during this period. L.S. Rickard, *The Whaling Trade in Old New Zealand*, Minerva, Auckland, 1965.



From *Whaling Wives*.

Caroline Mayhew, wife of Captain William Mayhew.

original directors of the New Zealand Banking Company, which commenced operations in September 1840 with its head office in Kororareka; on April 20, 1841, he was appointed American Vice-Consul there. He was a man of great energy and spunk.

But his timing did not match his energy. In a word, it was awful. In February 1840, only two years after he arrived, the British administration moved into New Zealand, along with a tax regime that favored British nationals. Worse, the British set up a schedule of duties to be levied at the ports. The waters of the Bay were suddenly empty, as the thrifty New England whaling skippers took their ships elsewhere to provision, and the stores, like the grog shops, languished for lack of trade.

Gilbert Mair had been shrewd enough to scent the coming storm and get away early. He leased his Te Wahapu property to Mayhew for 7000 pounds sterling, receiving a cash deposit of 900 pounds. Mayhew wrote out promissory bills for the rest, but most of these were never honored, for after two

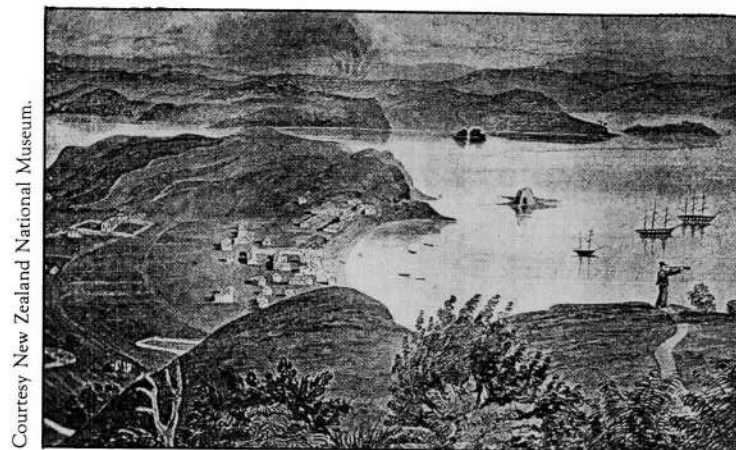
years of British rule the Mayhews were foundering in financial ruin.

This was because Mayhew, like all his fellow speculators, was forced by the government to hand over to the Crown any land he had bought from the Maori chiefs prior to 1840. This included most of his property. The land had been improved and brought into production at great expense; its value was thereby far greater than when it was bought. It was a vile injustice — but there was no way Mayhew could make the British Government see this. On February 21, 1842, he sent a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State, complaining that “H.B.M.’s Government here have passed laws which they decl’ to be now in force by which they assume to the Queen of Great Britain all lands purchased of Native chiefs prior to the Treaty.”

But the U.S. State Department could (or would) do nothing to help. In addition, Mayhew was accused of inciting rebellion among the chiefs, supplying them with arms to help the cause along. He had made the blunder of giving the dissident chief, Hone Heke, an American flag to fly at the head of his war canoe. The British were not pleased. The Stars and Stripes flew bravely, but William and Caroline were forced to give up their investments, their dreams of fortune hunting broken.

Not long after, angry and disappointed, they made their way home to Martha’s Vineyard. They soon returned to their old craft of whaling, making a voyage to New Zealand in the *Powhattan* in 1846, but their vile luck did not improve: William “cruised all over creation,” while the whales stayed out of the reach of his harpoons. So ill was their fortune that Captain Mayhew even came down with smallpox during an epidemic that disabled the crew. Caroline, the daughter of a doctor, became “the chief medical officer, navigator and *de facto* captain until her husband recovered. . . . When the crisis was past, the sailors overwhelmed her with gifts [of scrimshaw], the only things they had . . .”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Linda Grant DePauw, *Seafaring Women*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1982, p.160.



Courtesy New Zealand National Museum.

Old print of Kororareka and the Bay of Islands in 1840s.

Gilbert Mair, by contrast, had made enough from the sale of his land to set up in Whangarei. He and Elizabeth settled down to raising a large family, all solid citizens, except, that is, for their second son, Henry, the father of Lulu Mair.<sup>5</sup>

The best word to describe Lulu’s father is “adventurer.” The life of Henry Abbott Mair reads like something out of a swashbuckling novel. At the age of 20, Henry was trying his luck in the Australian goldfields; his thirtieth year found him back in New Zealand ambushing Ngatitama Hauhau warriors in the forests of the Bay of Plenty. In 1869, he was in a courtroom in Auckland, fighting a lawsuit. In the meantime, he married Jane Norwood Greenway, also of the Bay of Islands.<sup>6</sup>

Marriage did not settle him down. Despite the fact that she bore him two children — Lulu, christened Louise Blanche Norwood Mair, in 1872; and Jessie, in 1875 — Jane saw very little of her husband, for he was always off about the Pacific on various voyaging ventures.

The South Pacific was still a free-for-all paradise, pregnant with opportunity for adventurers. Henry, one of the best,

<sup>5</sup> *The Mair Family*, pp. 76-83.

<sup>6</sup> Lulu’s grandfather Greenway was also notable. George Greenway, the son of a wine merchant in Plymouth, Eng., bought a trading station at the Bay of Islands from the Maoris; his patron was the chief Kawaiti. (Dorothy MacGillivray reminiscence.)

fell in with a pair of compatible, free-booting souls, Handley Sterndale and his wife. The trio established some mysterious venture on a Cook Island atoll, Suvarrow. They called the business a "trading station," a highly suspect claim, for, apart from a coconut-planting gang the three entrepreneurs imported, the island was (and still is) uninhabited. The British administration was certainly suspicious, for in 1876 a government vessel, the *Kriemhilda*, was sent from Auckland to investigate. Henry was away, but the Sterndales, resenting this unseemly interference, fired on the ship from the wooden fort they had built to protect their territory.

When Henry Mair returned, as supercargo on the trader *Ryno*, the captain refused to let him land, but Mair slipped away in the middle of the night. He stripped naked, covered himself with coconut oil (which he fondly regarded as a shark repellent), dove overboard and struck out for shore.

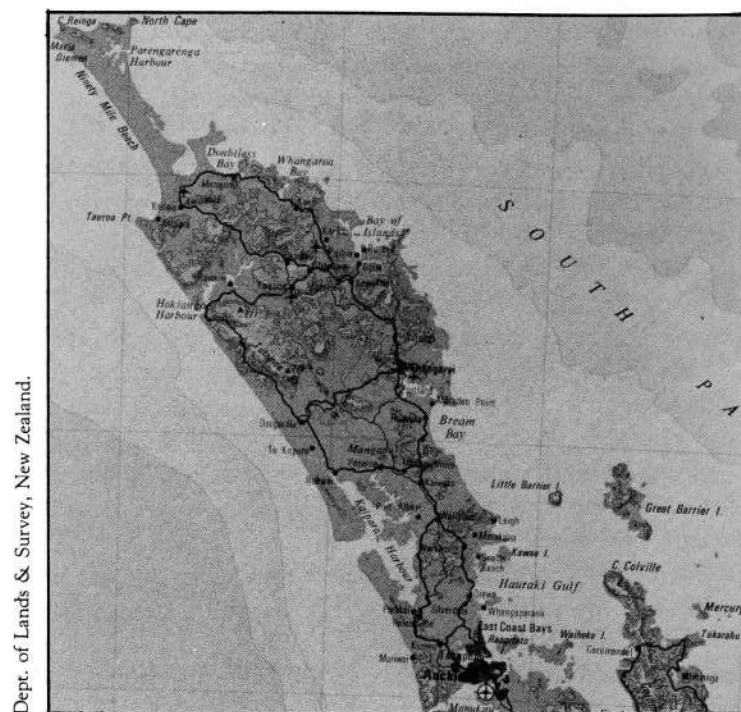
He almost didn't make it. When he did, he lay exhausted on the sand, listening with little interest to the turtles, which at that season were digging holes in which to lay their eggs. Then, dimly, he heard the scrape of flippers on metal. Somehow he found the strength to drag himself over to investigate. There, in the hole the turtle had dug, was treasure, a heap of gold doubloons, and an iron box full of jewels.

This presented a dilemma. Mair had nowhere about his person to hide all the goodies. Apparently, he did not trust his friends, the Sterndales, for he dug up all the treasure and re-buried it elsewhere. Or so the story goes.

The hoard has never been rediscovered, despite several modern treasure-hunting expeditions.<sup>7</sup> The Sterndales were driven out of the fort and off the island, despite Henry's belated arrival.

Henry Mair spent the few years that were left in his life

<sup>7</sup> Henry Abbott Mair did manage to carry a few jewels and coins to Auckland. The most recent expedition was mounted in 1938, when five hopeful prospectors left Auckland in the yacht *Ngataki* for the Cook Islands and Suvarrow. Although the tale sounds tall, serious studies by New Zealanders have authenticated it.



Bay of Islands is on the east coast, about 90 miles southeast of North Cape, the northern tip of New Zealand's North Island.

trying to get back to Suvarrow to recover the treasure. In 1877 he was supercargo on the schooner *Canterbury* and in 1878 he was first mate on the brig *Heather Bell*. In 1881 he was an "agent" on the Fiji schooner *Isabella*, "recruiting" labor for the sugar plantations.

His last venture as labor recruiter or "blackbirder" (Pacific slaver) cost him his life. On November 12, when the *Isabella*, called at the island of Espiritu Santo in Vanuatu, the unwelcome Henry Mair was clubbed to death on the beach, and so Lulu lost her father to a cannibal feast. Only his head and hands were recovered: rather gruesomely, his hands were found nailed to a rafter. The fingers, dried and twisted, formed handy hooks for bags and nets.

When the news reached Auckland, daughters Lulu and



Jessie were sent to live in Russell<sup>8</sup> in a house owned by their maternal uncle, Hamlyn Greenway. The large house, then called "Greenways," is now known as Pompallier House after its first owner, the Roman Catholic missionary, Bishop Pompallier. It was here that young Lulu began to make the acquaintance of many New Englanders, about whom, 64 years later, she wrote in her memoirs. These were years when the seasons were marked by the comings and goings of the whalers. Her memoirs, never published, tell us much about the life style of Yankee whalers in the South Pacific.<sup>9</sup>

"The ships called into the Bay on the way North to the whaling grounds," she remembered, "and again South in the season." The ships straggled in about February and September and "stayed some weeks — cleaning up and refitting, taking in water and firewood." Russell, in contrast to the notorious Kororareka that Caroline Mayhew had known forty years earlier, was small and quiet, so that the arrival of the ships created quite a bustle in the town.

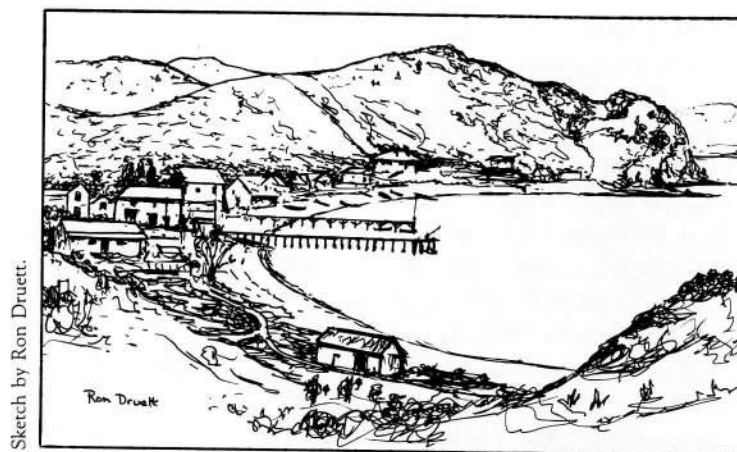
"When the time was approaching for the ships to come to port, it was quite exciting to get up one morning to find a ship at anchor," Lulu Mair reminisced. "Or we might hear the flapping of sails during the night; then the morning could not come quickly enough to see which one it was. We had our favourites — those which brought the biggest bunch of bananas and sacks of mixed Island fruits!"

One of those favorites was the bark *Alaska*, skippered by Charles William Fisher, who "used to tell us stories about his own home in New England," she wrote. "He came from the state of 'Martha's Vineyard' — his people had a farm."

Captain Fisher and the *Alaska* had been regular visitors at the Bay of Islands ever since his first voyage as her master. On that voyage in June 1875, it was his last stop before

<sup>8</sup> In March 1845, Kororareka, the "Whorehouse of the Pacific," was burned to the ground by dissident Maoris, led by Hone Heke (whom William Mayhew had befriended). In its place, a pretty little village arose. This is Russell, a quiet and demure town, most unlike its predecessor.

<sup>9</sup> Louisa Worsfold memoir, *A Social History of Russell*, Ms. 340, Library of the Auckland Institute and Museum.



Sketch by Ron Druett.

Russell, a proper town, replaced the "sin-filled" Kororareka after 1845.

returning to New Bedford with a full load of oil. He made at least four more voyages, visiting the Bay of Islands each time. He was a handsome Yankee mariner and well known to the inhabitants.

When the *Alaska* arrived, Captain Fisher would join the other Yankee captains on shore and they "would walk up and down talking — all dressed in their best broad-cloth — navy blue, 'squarecut', the style was called," Lulu remembered. "The clothes smelt of camphor, quite strong — much more pleasant than our mothballs — and the other smell was currie-powder, and they smoked lovely cigars — we loved all this."

Many of those skippers brought their wives with them, "sweet New England women we used to read about in their stories — American children's books were the first I had to read," Lulu wrote. Captain Fisher, however, was a widower, with a grown-up son who, he told Lulu's family, was "studying for a doctor and he was going to send him to Europe at the end of this voyage." This, as it happens, was a bit of parental hyperbole. Charles Elmer Fisher, born in Edgartown in 1866, had been a pre-medical student briefly, but by nature he was more suited to adventure than

to medicine.<sup>10</sup>

Prescott Jernegan, the son of another Edgartown whaling master and Charlie's boyhood friend, later reminisced that Charlie, who became his partner in crime, was a "typical soldier of fortune, ready for any fate that promised adventure and quick gain, a dashing, clever, bold and resourceful man. Withal, he had a gentle disarming manner, was successful with women, and was quick thinking and plausible to a degree." Prescott knew a "soldier of fortune" when he saw one, for he was of that mold himself.

When Charlie's father, Captain Fisher, got home to Martha's Vineyard he married again. Lulu reminisced that "he sent us a paper with the announcement in it, so that we should know when he came next time — Her name was given thus, Parnell S. Pease of Edgartown — Mass."

The year was 1885. Parnell (who may have been named after a suburb in Auckland, New Zealand) was 29, when Captain Fisher was in his fifties. No doubt the people of Russell awaited the next arrival of the *Alaska* with some lively curiosity — and perhaps Parnell (who was called "Nellie") was eager to meet them too. However, she had many seasick months to survive before the bark made port in the Bay of Islands.<sup>11</sup>

For more than a century, windjammer whalers from New England had cruised the gale-swept "Chatham grounds" to the east of New Zealand. Old Fred Hunt of Pitt Island (Rangiauria) wrote in his autobiography: "Occasionally a captain would arrive, bringing his wife with him. We have been favoured with the society of ladies for months at a time." Nellie Fisher was one of that society. The usual reason the wives were put ashore was seasickness and Mrs. Fisher was no exception. The windjammer whalers of the day were small and unsteady, and the weather about New Zealand notorious, for some reason worse than it is today.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur R. Railton, "Jared Jernegan's Second Family," and "Charlie Fisher, the Perfect Partner," *Intelligencer*, vol.28, no.2, pp. 51-94.

<sup>11</sup> *Whaling Wives*, pp.241-249. Also Arthur R. Railton, *Walking Tour of Historic Edgartown*, DCHS, 1986, p.23.



Parnell Fisher, known as Nellie. Right, Louise Mair was called Lulu.

From *Petticoat Whalers*, Collins, 1991.

Nellie, exhausted by the rough sea, was first dropped off on the Chatham Islands (Wharekauri) in January 1886. "I am to be left here 2 or 3 months to get well," she wrote in her journal. Husband Charles bought her a horse named Dickens before he sailed off, and she boarded with an English family named Ritchie. "Mr. Ritchie," she declared, "is a perfect gentleman." That is, when he was not overtaken with liquor. "Then, thank the Lord, he lives in a separate house and we are safe from his awful ways. It is so shocking! I hope the Capt. returns soon," she sighed.

Charles Fisher took fourteen weeks to return to take Nellie, now healthy, to sea again. But after three seasick weeks, Nellie found herself back on shore. "Here I am at Pitt's Island at Mr. Hunt's place," she wrote in April. "The sea was so bad the boat almost upset at the landing. This is a very rich place. Mr. Hunt has ten thousand sheep."

She was marooned with those sheep and the hospitable Hunt family until late in May, when her husband tacked inshore to take her back on board. Then they sailed for



Russell in the Bay of Islands, where all 150 citizens of that town were waiting, all agog to see the pretty young wife of one of their favorite Yankees.

The *Alaska* arrived in July, rather ignominiously for Captain Charles Fisher. He, it must be confessed, was a bit of a rogue himself. "There is more trouble with the whalers," reported the *New Zealand Herald* in unmistakeably weary tones on July 29, 1886. Rumors "were afloat that dutiable goods had been landed from the *Alaska* at the Chatham Islands and that the matter must be inquired into." The "goods" that had been smuggled ashore were, "two cases rum and six boxes tobacco" — which could not have been good for the sobriety of Nellie's previous host, Mr. Ritchie.

Being caught smuggling didn't do Captain Fisher's finances any good either. Lulu recorded that "he was fined £100 [pounds] — he had to go to Auckland and delay sailing, with the wind right too — I know I was aghast at the mention of the fine . . . Fancy what £100 would have meant to an inhabitant of Russell, and [to] have it taken that way!"

Nevertheless, fine or no fine, Parnell was glad to arrive. Life at sea was not to her liking. "This is a small place but very pretty," she penned on the 11th, "and after my six weeks on ship I enjoyed it very much." There were, as anticipated, "Lots of letters from home up to June." Russell was the headquarters for the whalers' mail. "We have had so many storms since we left Chatham, I am thankful for our safety," she sighed, no doubt recalling long days of nausea.

The children of Russell were delighted to meet young Mrs. Fisher. "Our elders with better manners and greater understanding," Lulu penned, "allowing the folk to read their letters and shake into place, would wait till afternoon at least, but we children could hardly wait until after breakfast, before taking [her] the best bunch of flowers we could find — Our Mothers' gardens had to pay tribute right away.

"She was a very pretty woman and became a great friend

of ours," Lulu (then 14) recalled — but she had expected nothing less. "The wives of these Captains were such pretty women," she mused in another part of her memoir, adding (somewhat engagingly), "The way of it was, that only the nice women were allowed, by the shipping authorities in New Bedford, to accompany their husbands on these long voyages."

Mrs. Fisher — like the other "nice" wives — was busy the first few days in port, "writing letters to catch the 'Frisco mail, which," according to Lulu, "left Auckland once in three weeks." After that, the American women "gave themselves up to receiving visitors and paying calls, with each other as well as with all of us residents — We had lots of parties." For best, the women wore black silk, Louise remembered: "Gowns, they called them, even if they were well fitting. . .

"They had a good allowance of clothes for the four years' voyage, but said that when they got home they . . . would not appear in public, in clothes four years out of fashion, until they had a re-fit — they would take a cab and go home by back ways — then dress-makers would be called in, and an orgie of sewing would be mixed with a torrent of talk — friends would call and much excitement, you may imagine. They told us that they never bought material in the rash way we do here — the pattern desired was taken to the shop, and laid on the material on the counter, and bought accordingly."<sup>12</sup>

The children were not forgotten in the midst of the social round. "A great treat the ships gave to the shore children was a breakfast on board," Lulu remembered. "They told us it was an American breakfast. On an appointed morning, we would assemble on the wharf, a big whale-boat would come for us, and we were rowed by several sailors. The Captain and his wife went with us and showed us their living quarters . . . We had hot muffins, corn-meal porridge, buck-

<sup>12</sup> Somehow, this doesn't fit our picture of the Vineyard at that time, but perhaps Lulu was describing New Bedford. — Ed.

wheat cakes and maple-syrup, and Island fruits — the elders had pork and beans — We ate a strange mixture, but I never remember being sick!"

The good times, however, came to an end, as relentlessly as the passing of the seasons. "We left Russell Aug. 8th," wrote Nellie. The wind was a gale, and, "of course I am ill," she sighed. But despite the bad weather it is certain the children of Russell gathered to watch as the bark slipped away from her anchorage, sails full-bellied with the frisking wind, Old Glory flapping in farewell from the peak.

"So was the 'Stars and Stripes' the first flag I ever saw," Lulu reminisced, "so I still like it and hope to always — how it 'dipped' in good-bye, as it left port, and the ship in full sail — they waited for the right wind to take them away like that."

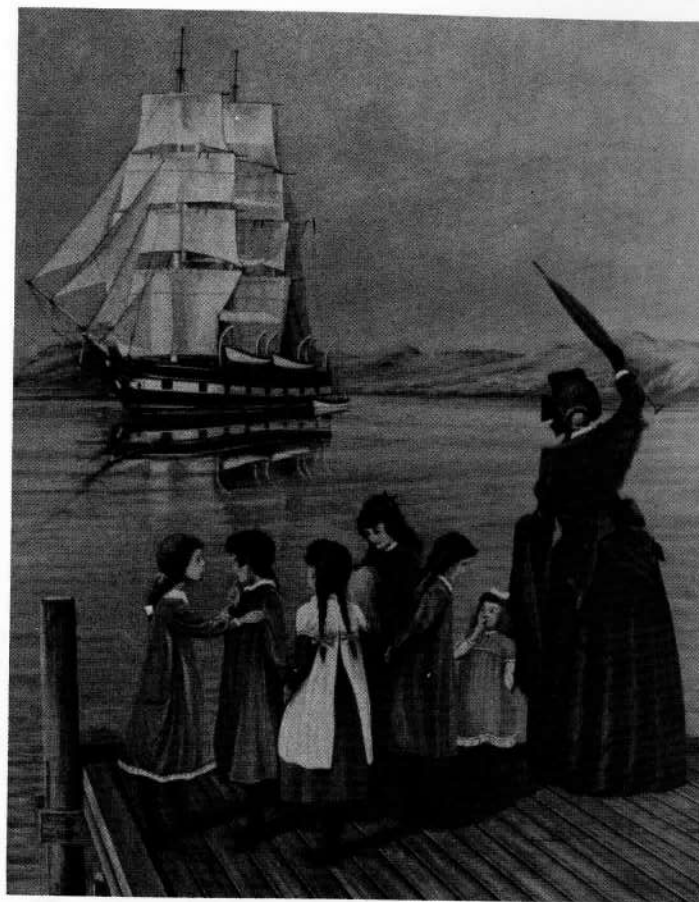
The *Alaska* may have sailed away, but Lulu Mair of the Bay of Islands did not lose touch with Captain and Mrs. Fisher of Martha's Vineyard. "I corresponded with them for years," she wrote.

Nellie Fisher faced a long nauseous voyage for she did not arrive home in Edgartown until November 1888. The captain wouldn't head for home until he had a full load. As Nellie wrote: "Do hope we get one more as Capt. has promised me if he gets one more he will go home. I am so tired of the sea & not well but I do not wish to complain."

Finally, the casks were all full and at last Nellie was home in Edgartown where her devoted Captain Charles built her a fine house with a view of the water. Nellie refused to move in; she preferred her old house, she said, because she couldn't see the ocean from it. She had seen enough of the sea.<sup>13</sup>

Back in the Bay of Islands, Louise (Lulu) Mair grew up into a good-looking and highly intelligent woman, an energetic correspondent with a lively interest in New Zealand history and women's affairs. "She wrote to people all over the world," remembers one of her surviving daughters,

<sup>13</sup> The new house still stands on North Water Street; the old house is thought to have been on Cooke Street.



Painting by Ron Druett.

*Children of Russell await boat to take them to breakfast aboard whaler.*

Dorothy MacGillivray of South Auckland. "Historians wrote for information and she answered all their questions, and more."

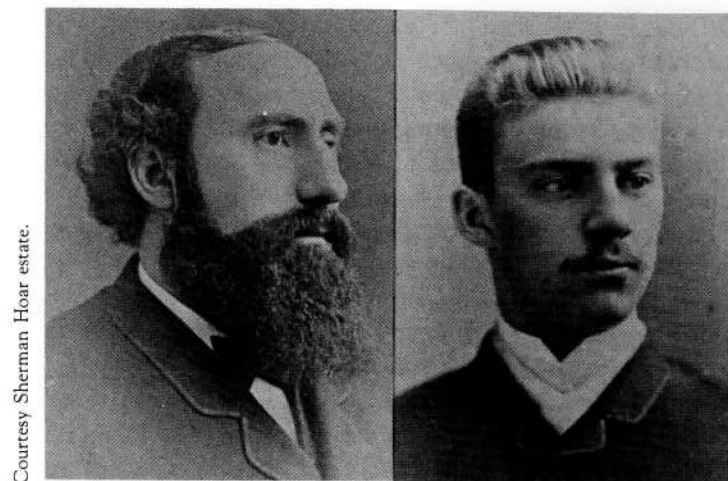
In 1894, at the age of 21, Louise married a local man, Richard Kelly. The next year, the Kellys had a son, whom they called Dick. In America, Nellie Fisher's swashbuckling stepson, young Charlie, meantime, had given up his father's plan for him to become a doctor, taking on a variety of adventurous occupations: cavalryman in both British and

American armies; private detective and then a floor walker in a large store in Brooklyn.

His father, Captain Fisher, went a-whaling again, this time as master of the *California*. Nellie, who had had enough of whaling, stayed home. Stepson Charlie, between jobs, had been home briefly, but soon left for Florida to join his boyhood friend, Prescott Jernegan. Prescott, a Baptist minister in Florida, was being forced to leave the pulpit because his wife had asked for a divorce.<sup>14</sup> He was not troubled. He had a crafty scheme to make both him and Charlie a great deal of money.

The scheme was a simple scam: the two adventurers claimed to be able to extract gold from sea water. Recent newspaper articles had told of European scientists who had discovered traces of gold in the ocean and Prescott saw his opportunity. Together, the crafty partners let the word out that they had developed a secret extraction process. Investors, eager to get rich, wanted to buy into the proposed company. To prove that the process worked, Prescott would lower boxes of sand into the ocean from a pier, leaving them underwater for 24 hours. The next day, he would haul them up, showing flakes of gold in the grit. The prospective stockholders were impressed. The gold flakes were Charlie's responsibility. He, in one of the ponderous diving suits of the time, would scatter them in the boxes during the night, unseen by any suspicious investors who stationed themselves on the dock to make sure the scheme was legitimate. The whole scam nearly came to grief when Charlie's suit leaked and he almost drowned. Fortunately, he was saved by Prescott, unseen by the guards. The charade attracted enough capital so that the two men could form the Electrolytic Marine Salts Company in a remote inlet in Maine. No further underwater work was required. They settled down to selling shares to gullible investors. Each week, an ingot of gold was taken to the company sales office

<sup>14</sup> Actually, the couple did not get a divorce until 1905, seven years later. When Prescott's wife saw how much money he was soon making, she asked his forgiveness and returned.



Courtesy Sherman Hoar estate.

Capt. Charles W. Fisher of Edgartown and his adventurous son, Charlie.

in Boston to prove that the process worked. The weekly ingot was the work of Charlie, who went around New England buying up old jewelry, which he melted down in Maine. The thousands of dollars from stock sales easily covered the cost of the jewelry, leaving a huge surplus for the two adventurers. The shares increased in value to the remarkable price (for those times) of \$1.45 each.

Back at the Bay of Islands Lulu Kelly was nursing a dying husband. In the Pacific meanwhile, Captain Fisher sailed about in the bark *Canton*, unaware that in America Prescott and son Charlie were raking in dollars by the hundreds of thousands. Then, in July 1898, not long before Lulu's husband, Richard, died of consumption, the American newspapers got wind of the con game. Hours before the scam became public knowledge, the two adventurers divided up the loot and fled. Prescott headed for Europe and Charlie sailed for New Zealand.

In September 1898 Captain Fisher arrived home to find that the scandal involving his son had been spread across the nation's newspapers: "THOUSANDS DUPED BY SEA WATER GOLD" blazed one headline, and "UNIQUE



SWINDLE EXPOSED," blared another. Prescott was reported to be in France, with a valise containing \$150,000. There the press caught up with him and he placed the blame squarely on Charlie, protesting that his "Partner Took Away All Records," and he "Couldn't Get Along Without Them," so he was forced to skip off to France.

Prescott's father, Captain Jared Jernegan, gave an interview to the *Boston Globe*. "My boy Prescott has gone wrong," he told the reporter, "Now he must take the consequences. I shall not worry about him." Jared died within months, a shamed man.

Capt Charles Fisher, by contrast, said nothing. Instead, he went a-whaling, this time as master of the *Alice Knowles*. Soon he purchased the whaling bark *Gay Head* and went off again, returning to Edgartown in December 1902. He was working off his shame chasing whales.

On the week of December 1902 that he got home, a notice of young Charlie Fisher's death appeared in the *Vineyard Gazette*. It read:

"News has been received by the family here of the death at Sydney, Australia, of Charles E. Fisher, son of Capt. Charles W. Fisher, of this town. He was 38 years of age and leaves a widow and one child. The cause of the death is said to be consumption."

Three years later, Lulu Kelly, unaware of all this, wrote to Nellie Fisher from Kerikeri, the Bay of Islands: "Dear Mrs. Fisher, To you and your Captain, the friends of my childhood, may I send you a New Year greeting? Much love for a coming year. For such a long long time I have been so constantly thinking of you that I have at last set to work in earnest to write and tell you all & ask for news of yourselves."<sup>15</sup>

She went prattling on, writing of domestic affairs that were very much more mundane than the headline news that Nellie could have told her. Her little boy, Dick, was "this day ten years old, how the time goes!" she exclaimed. Lulu

<sup>15</sup> Lulu Kelly's letter, DCHS, Archive box 118B.

Le Whararun  
Kerikeri  
Bay of Islands  
February 1905

My dear Mrs. Fisher  
To you and your Captain  
the friends of my childhood, may I  
send you a New Year greeting? Much  
love for the coming year. For  
such a long long time I have been  
so constantly thinking of you that

your boy Charlie - always called Fisher - is on one  
of the Union Company steamers going to Australia.  
He is working his way up he says - he is expected  
home soon for his holidays. He is a dear boy -  
lived at home till - He has not been back yet  
until lately. Gladys is the baby - is now 14. She  
is very dark, quite pretty. Dick sleeps here now -  
so much better health now - a day - you

mine & the big ones - and to you, the  
sweet potatoes I had the first time I had bread.  
- fast on board the "Alaska" - so now good night. My  
good friends & love to you all.

Yours affectionately  
Lulu Kelly

Lulu writes to Nellie in 1905 that Charlie, "a dear boy," is doing well. had an elderly mother and an aunt — Aunt Greenway — to care for, as well as a farm and a household. "It is somewhat hard to get on without a man," she confessed. However, she had "started a poultry run," money was tight, and "it remains yet to be seen how they will pay." And then, on the very last page of the letter to Nellie Fisher, Lulu Kelly dropped a bomb: "Your boy Charlie — always called Fisher," she innocently penned, "is on one of the Union Company steamers going

to Australia — he is working his way up, he says — he is expected home soon for his holiday — he's a dear boy."

It is impossible to tell whether Charlie knew that his father had declared him dead. Lulu was certainly not aware of this most peculiar circumstance. "With my kind regards," she added on a playful note, "you may tell your good Captain to remember that I was the last girl in New Zealand to sit on his knee!"

"Alas! I was a girl then," she went on, ruefully. "I am over thirty now — and how I hate to remember that it is so . . . give my love to the Captain & tell him whenever I eat a banana I think of him & the big bunches he used to give me, & the sweet potatoes I had the first time I had breakfast on board the *Alaska*. . . I will write again," she promised.

Nellie Fisher's feelings, when she learned in this unexpected fashion that her "dead" stepson was not only alive but flourishing in New Zealand, can only be imagined. She kept the news to herself, carefully hiding the letter. Her husband was whaling in the Ochotsk Sea, north of Japan, as owner and master of the *Gay Head*. In late October, he arrived in San Francisco and boarded the train to come home for the winter. Nellie, as was her custom, travelled to New Bedford to meet him.

Perhaps she took the letter with her, and was set for a serious discussion — or perhaps she had decided to keep her counsel. It mattered not, as it turned out. There was no time for long conversation. Captain Charles William Fisher took a chill the day he arrived in New Bedford and that same day, November 10, 1905, he died in their hotel room. It isn't known if Nellie had told him that she knew the truth.

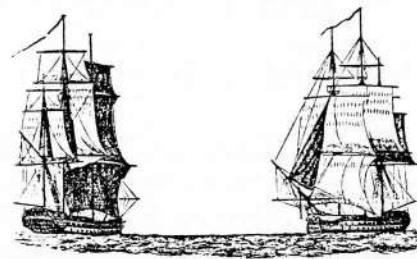
"She wrote a few times after that," Lulu, unaware of the secret, recorded in her memoir. "She went to live with her sister, Christine Pease — then the letters stopped — she sent me the tail feather of a 1,000-dollar rooster, because we were

'keeping poultry' at the time — she thought I might be interested."

That same year, 1905, also brought great changes for Lulu. She married a farmer, Frank Worsfold and life became busier than ever. "She raised a large family," Dorothy MacGillivray related, "eight of us, and we all loved our half-brother Dick — only we called him 'Kelly' — and as well as that my mother taught at 'native' school and talked to women's societies — then, much later, the poet A.R.D. Fairburn persuaded her to write her memoirs, and in the end she did, in 1946 — and had it typed, and we all got a copy — the original is in the [Auckland] museum."

Meantime, in Europe, Prescott Jernegan had repented and had returned some of the money to the people he and Charlie had bilked. Then he sallied Pacific-wards, to the Philippines and then Hawaii, becoming a respected educator. What happened to Charlie Fisher (not to mention the 100,000 greenbacks he was reputedly carrying) is lost to history: he does not exist in any New Zealand electoral rolls or seamen's lists. He could well have changed his name, of course: it is interesting that Lulu wrote, like her own son, who became "Kelly," that "dear boy" was "always called 'Fisher'."

What is certain, however, is that Martha's Vineyard breeds stubborn folks. Nellie kept the secret, now hers alone. Captain Charles William Fisher's obituary read, in part, "He leaves a widow, but no children."





## Tisbury Deaths and Doctors During the 1860s

by ANTHONY K. VAN RIPER

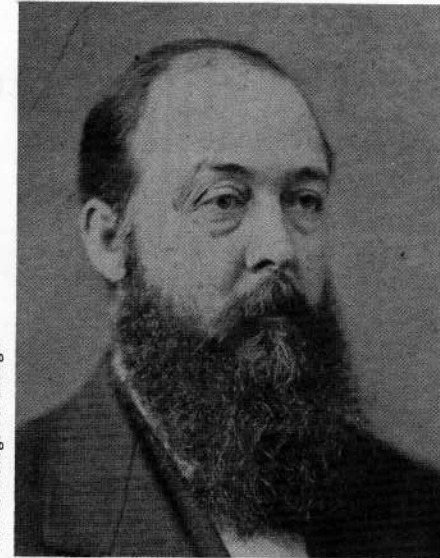
SEARCHING for the date of death of a Holmes Hole resident led me to look in the *Register of Deaths and Marriages, Town of Tisbury, 1860-1869*. That look showed me a very different picture of medicine and mortality from what I had imagined was the case on the Vineyard during those years.

The classic picture I had was of a single overworked country doctor, spending much of his life in his buggy or on horseback, making the rounds of village houses and farm houses, caring for the folk of the entire area. But that doesn't seem to have been the case in Tisbury in the 1860s. There was no doctor shortage. On the contrary. Especially if you include today's West Tisbury, then part of Tisbury.

Dr. George T. Hough began advertising in the *Vineyard Gazette*, January 6, 1860: "Having located permanently at Holmes' Hole, will be pleased to attend to all calls, day or night." His office was across the street from Peleg Barrows's store, a short walk from where he lived. He and his bride of two weeks, Maria Pressley Smith, had moved in with her parents, Capt. and Mrs. Nathan Skiffe Smith, at the corner of William and Center Streets. Doctor Hough, then 27 years old, was the newest member of the medical fraternity to settle in Tisbury.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hough was grandfather of the late Henry Beetle Hough, long-time editor of the *Vineyard Gazette* and member of the Society Council.

ANTHONY VAN RIPER, former president of the Society and now secretary, came to the Vineyard, in his words, as "a summer kid" in 1933. His father had just started the Van Ryper model-making company in Vineyard Haven. In 1940, the business had grown so much that the family left California to live here year-round. From 1954 to 1957, Tony taught at the Tisbury school, leaving to teach English at Emerson College in Boston. In 1981, he, with his wife, Janice, retired to the Island.



Gift of George A. Hough.

Dr. George T. Hough began his practice in 1860.

Maria died in 1863, only three years after their marriage. After her death, the doctor soon left the Island. He joined the Army during the Civil War, serving as an Acting Assistant Surgeon. Returning to civilian life, he settled in New Bedford where, according to the *Vineyard Gazette*, he enjoyed "a large and constantly increasing practise."<sup>2</sup>

Another Holmes Hole physician at the time was Dr. William Leach. Although Charles E. Banks wrote that Leach began his practice in Holmes Hole in 1863, the *Gazette* carried his advertisement ("Physician and Surgeon") regularly beginning in 1858.<sup>3</sup> Later, Doctor Leach also advertised as a dentist, doing cleaning, filling with gold or silver, and extractions, "with or without ether." His *Gazette* dental advertisement on August 3, 1866, was reassuring: "All operations warranted." Not one to neglect any facet of medicine, Doctor Leach's pharmacy at 115 Circuit Avenue,

<sup>2</sup> *Vineyard Gazette*, Nov. 19, 1869.

<sup>3</sup> Charles E. Banks, *History of Martha's Vineyard*, v. II, "Annals of Tisbury," p. 70. Dr. Leach was the father of Rev. Adoniram Judson Leach of the Edgartown Congregational Church from 1919 to 1925.



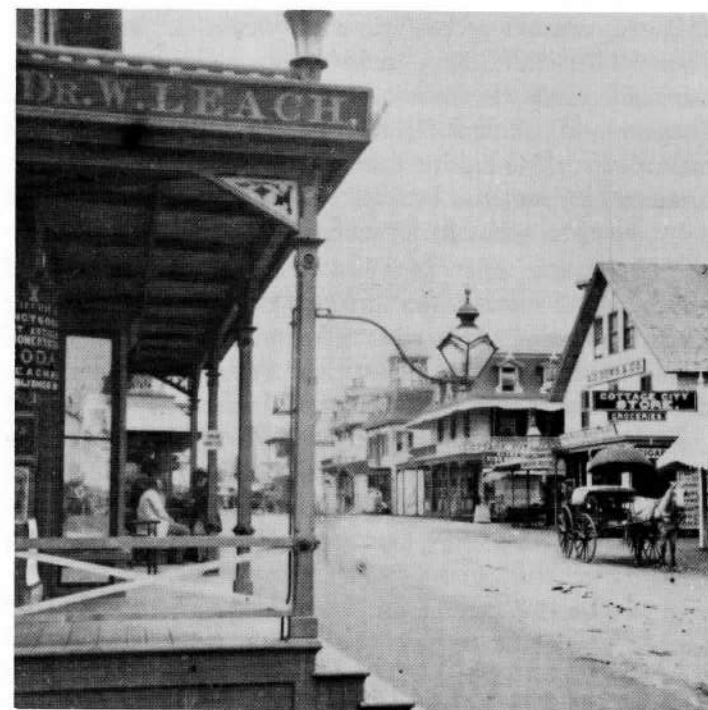
Cottage City, was the Vineyard agent for Dr. Warren's Bilious Bitters.

A third physician, Dr. Nathaniel Ruggles, had been practicing in Tisbury since 1850. He served on Tisbury's Health Committee; his last year on the committee was 1860. It would seem likely that he was winding down his active practice during the decade we are studying.

There was a fourth doctor, a mystery of sorts. He was Moses Brown, M.D., who seems to have come from Boston. The *Gazette* announced in 1862 that "Moses Brown, M.D., had opened a new drugstore in [Holmes Hole]." He signed his advertisements "Physician and Apothecary," but the ads are devoted entirely to the sale of patent medicines in his drug store. One promoted "Ironized Wine. Pure Sherry and Citrate of Iron"; another "Malt Tonic or Medicated Ale." He seems to have been a versatile person. In January 1860, before he came to the Vineyard, he began a monthly health magazine "for patients" called *How to Live and Breathe*, a copy of which is in the Society archives. In it, he stated that he gives "advice and treatment in Consumption and other Diseases of the Lungs" in his office at 22 Winter Street, Boston. We can find nothing about how long he practiced in Holmes Hole or, indeed, if he did any more than run a drug store there.

Before the growth of the maritime trade boosted Holmes Hole (Vineyard Haven) into dominance, what we now call West Tisbury was the center of the town of Tisbury. For a while, it even had a County Court House, every six months alternating the honor of shiretown with Edgartown. It also had its own physicians. Dr. Daniel A. Cleveland appears as attending physician in the *Tisbury Register of Deaths* as early as 1860, as does Dr. W. H. Luce, both of whom, according to Banks, practiced in West Tisbury. They, along with Doctors Hough and Leach, were members of the Tisbury Health Committee.

For a town whose population in 1860 was only 1631 persons, about evenly divided between up-Island (West



At left, Dr. Leach's pharmacy on Circuit Avenue, Oak Bluffs, about 1870.

Tisbury) and down-Island (Vineyard Haven), Tisbury was well-supplied with physicians. Certainly, as compared with the present. In 1989, for example, there were only nine physicians in general practice on the entire Vineyard.

If a lack of doctors was not the problem in those days, the lack of medical understanding was. In 1860, the cause and treatment of diseases were only beginning to be understood. As indicated in Doctor Leach's advertisement, anaesthesia was the new kid on the medical block. Some suspicious folk were convinced that the technique was sent by the Devil to tempt good Christians into sin. Asepsis was a generally untried idea and germ theory was slow out of the gate, despite the work of Semmelweis, Pasteur and Lister.

The state of medical knowledge may be inferred from the fact that when the author's great-grandfather, Aaron

Ordway, wanted to become a physician, he enrolled at Harvard Medical School in 1846. According to his course admission cards, he was a student of Anatomy and Surgery, Surgery and Clinical Surgery, and Theory and Practice of Midwifery. He did his year of training at Massachusetts General Hospital and by 1847 he had set up what became a successful practice in Lawrence, Massachusetts.

Today, eight years or more of study, internship and residency are not unusual before a doctor ever hangs out his shingle. And the burden of keeping abreast of medical advancements is vastly more time-consuming and complex than the doctors of the 1860s could ever have imagined.

Treatment of disease was slowly improving, but there were still many areas awaiting illumination. Regarding cholera, for instance, of which there were eight fatal cases in Tisbury between 1860 and 1869, the *Vineyard Gazette* for April 20, 1866, noted that

the *National Intelligencer* says Rev. Dr. Hamlin of Constantinople, saved hundreds of lives by the following simple preparation during the terrible raging of cholera in that city. . . In no case did the remedy fail when the disease could be reached in season. It is no less effective in cholera morbus and simple diarrhoea:

One part laudanum.

One part camphorated spirit.

Two parts tincture of ginger.

Two parts capsicum.

The recommended dosage was one teaspoonful in a wine glass of water. "Obstinate" cases required that the dose be repeated in three to four hours.

An advertisement in the *Gazette* of July 13, 1866, claimed that Cholera, Dysentery, Cough, Colds and Rheumatism are quickly cured by American Life Drops.

If disease did not necessarily yield to the nostrums of the day, people nevertheless were aware of its effects. Quarantine was common, and not only for humans. At a town meeting on June 1860, the Town of Tisbury voted to ban the importation of cattle from the mainland because of an

epidemic of "pleuro-pneumonia" among off-Island herds.<sup>4</sup>

Town Clerk Lot Luce kept the *Register of Deaths* in Tisbury during the years from 1860 to 1869. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the record is its inconsistencies. Although the decade included the years of the Civil War, there is only one recorded death of a Tisbury serviceman in that bloody struggle and his death occurred a year after the war ended. The absence of other war deaths was not because off-Island deaths were not recorded by Mr. Luce. Such deaths were often placed in the town record.

Two Betsy Wests died off-Island in 1867 and both were registered. Betsy (Luce) West died of consumption, March 17, 1867, age 56; Betsy (Cleveland) West of old age, September 9, 1867, age 77. Both died in New Bedford, their bodies brought home for burial and their deaths duly recorded by Town Clerk Luce.

Nor does a Vineyard burial appear to be a determining factor in deaths chosen by Clerk Luce for his record. The Civil War veteran mentioned above was Acting Master Henry Clay Wade of the U.S. Navy steamer *Yucca*. He joined the Navy in October 1861 and served throughout the war. Still on active duty in Pensacola, Florida, he died of yellow fever September 12, 1867, and was buried there. Yet his death was recorded by Town Clerk Luce.

And some whose deaths are registered were not interred at all. The Luce brothers, Constant and William, were both lost in Buzzards Bay November 23, 1860. William was 31; Constant only 17. Their deaths are in the record.

Sometimes the *Gazette* reported deaths which do not appear in the Tisbury Register. Sophronia Ingerson, described by the *Gazette* as "formerly of Tisbury," died off-Island. Her body was brought back to the Vineyard for burial but no record was made by Town Clerk Luce. Nor was one made for Asa Johnson, who, the *Gazette* said, died in the lunatic asylum in Taunton. Unlike Sophronia, his body was not brought back to the Island.

<sup>4</sup> William S. Swift and Jennie Cleveland, Eds., *Records of the Town of Tisbury, Mass., 1669-1864*, Boston, 1903, p. 791ff.

In those 10 years, 1860-1869, there were 306 deaths recorded. Of these, 53 percent were male, 44 percent female; in 7 deaths, the sex was not recorded; 28 percent were between 20 and 40 years old; 25 percent were 70 or older; and 22 percent between 40 and 70. The other 25 percent were below age 20.

Of the men who died, more than one-third had been born off-Island, while nearly every woman was Island-born. In some cases, the men were seamen who died while their vessels were in Vineyard Haven and those, generally, were off-Islanders. Deaths of visiting seamen averaged between 8 and 9 a year. In 1866, 21 of the 24 males who died were recorded as mariners. Of the 21, only 4 had been born on the Vineyard.

So it would seem that the density of coastal shipping accounted for the higher percentage of males over females in the death records.<sup>5</sup>

Statistically, the causes of death in Tisbury during the period were unremarkable. Diseases of the lungs accounted for nearly one out of five, as did various unspecified fevers. Gastro-intestinal ailments caused one in ten deaths, as did trauma.

Cause of death, 1860-1869

Lung disease	58	19%
Fevers, various	54	18%
Gastro-intestinal	31	10%
Trauma	29	10%
Neurological	28	9%
Old age	26	9%
Heart	11	4%
Pregnancy related	9	3%
Other causes	36	12%
Unknown causes	13	4%
Record illegible	11	4%
Total deaths	306	

The annual death rate, averaged for the decade, was about 24 per 1000 residents. Although the winter months,

<sup>5</sup> *Gazette*, June 24, 1866: "290 vessels passed Falmouth going through Vineyard Sound. At one time, 127 were counted within three miles. . ."

November through April, had only slightly more than 50 percent of the decade's deaths, January, with 41 deaths, was twice as deadly as June or July. The second most mortal month was September, with 39 deaths; the third was April, with 29.

Most of the causes of death were common to all months: pneumonia and peritonitis, consumption and heart disease, childbirth and old age. Some reflected the life style of the 1860s: "Killed by a cart"; "Struck by fore boom"; and "Fall from aloft."

Perhaps the most unusual cause was that of five-year-old Amira Degress, who died in 1862. Her death, the record states, was caused by "smoking tobacco."

Although we know that childbirth a century ago was dangerous, there were only three stillbirths and only five mothers died in childbirth during the ten years. There were occasional epidemics. During October 1863, five died with typhoid fever.

Other noteworthy happenings were recorded by Lot Luce. In 1866, 13 transient sailors died while in Holmes Hole harbor, 12 from bilious fever, typhoid fever, cholera and ague. Today, that many deaths from such causes would bring national press coverage, but the *Gazette* at the time took little notice. However, on September 14, 1866, it did report that

. . . five men were removed from a vessel in Tisbury harbor, one day last week, to the Marine Hospital, all suffering from a malignant southern fever, taken at Wilmington, S.C. Three of them died. One died on board the vessel before reaching port. One of the bodies, the mate's, was forwarded to his friends at Wellfleet on Monday last.<sup>6</sup>

That newspaper item is the only record, except for Lot Luce's register, of what must have seemed to have been a small epidemic in Holmes Hole during that hot, dry summer. It was a fact of life in those days: if you lived and worked

<sup>6</sup> This was not the U.S. Marine Hospital, built in 1895, overlooking Vineyard Haven harbor, but an earlier private hospital built by Dr. Leach in 1866 on the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven road. See Banks, v.II, "Annals of Tisbury," p.63.



along the waterfront long enough, someone, or some ship, was going to bring you a nasty disease from somewhere.

The diseases were usually fevers of some sort. Besides southern fever, there were bilious, swamp, typhoid and yellow fevers, all of which could be deadly.

People of Tisbury, despite those off-Island invaders, lived long lives. Abigail Luce and Phebe Mayhew died at age 90; spinster Molly Look at 91. Thomas James, a black man, and Emmanuel Roberts, a native of the Azores and a Vineyard Sound pilot, died at 93. Hepsibah Lambert passed away in 1868 at the age of 94. And another Vineyard Sound pilot, Samuel Daggett, was 96 years old when he died of "Old age" in 1860.

Some whose deaths were recorded by Town Clerk Luce had died far from home. Often, the details took years to reach the Vineyard. When 18-year-old Asa Swift died at sea on January 19, 1869, it was recorded by Lot Luce with the "Place of Interment" being given as "At sea." Many years later, in another clerk's handwriting, a significant detail was added: the words "At sea" were overwritten with "Robinson Cruso Island."

Not every death was caused by accident or disease. Nathaniel McCallen, a sailor from Portland, Maine, committed suicide in port on March 29, 1869. Of all the entries he made during the decade, only one seemed to affect Town Clerk Luce emotionally. On December 23, 1863, he recorded the death at age 52 of William C. Luce, a Holmes Hole shopkeeper. His cause of death is the only word in the record of 10 years of human mortality that Lot Luce ever underlined.

The word was "Murdered."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The victim had been a shopkeeper for 20 years. He was brutally killed in his store by a hatchet blow to the head and two slashes of his throat. The murder was never solved. *Vineyard Gazette*, Jan.22,1864, and Sept.20,1935.



## A Puzzling Piracy Off Tarpaulin Cove

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

IT WAS a puzzling piracy. The pirates, seemingly more jolly Rogers than bloodthirsty criminals, cruised up and down Vineyard Sound for several months in 1689, boarding vessels and taking spoils at gunpoint. Before they were captured, seven men had been killed in a gun battle off Tarpaulin Cove.

The story begins a few years earlier, in 1685, when the Duke of York, proprietor of New York, was crowned King James II of England. The Duke, a strong Catholic, had a special relationship to the Vineyard. It was his son, Edgar, for whom the village of Edgartown was named. Thomas Mayhew, in 1671, chose the name, hoping to win favor with the Duke under whose authority he governed.

The Mayhew family control of the Vineyard was being threatened during these years. The ancient Governor Mayhew had died a few years before and grandson Matthew assumed control, backed by the family's friendly relationship with New York. His control was total. All governmental posts were held by Mayhews and their relatives. Other inhabitants were weary of this autocracy. As many as half of them petitioned to separate from New York and join Massachusetts, where citizens had more say in government.

Matthew successfully fought off the rebels and, in the process, became even more strongly aligned with the King's minions in New York. He had just sold most of Gay Head to Col. Thomas Dongan, the King's Irish Catholic Governor of New York, and was acting as his agent on the Island.<sup>1</sup>

With James on the throne, Mayhew's position seemed

<sup>1</sup> Dongan soon was made Earl of Limerick by the King.  
ARTHUR R. RAILTON is the Editor of this journal.

secure. The King strongly opposed the Puritan rule in Massachusetts, which banned the Church of England. He was certainly not going to transfer Dukes County to the Puritans.<sup>2</sup>

In 1686, James created the Dominion of New England, uniting Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine into one entity. Later, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey were added. He appointed its governor. Colonial self-government had ended. The legislatures were dissolved. To enforce this drastic move, King James dispatched several companies of Redcoats to Boston aboard the man-of-war *Rose*. On the frigate, in addition to the troops, were Joseph Dudley, the first President of the Dominion, and Rev. Robert Ratcliffe, the first Church of England minister in Massachusetts.

A few months later, Sir Edmund Andros, former governor of New York and a devout Anglican, arrived in Boston to be the Royal Governor (Dudley became Deputy Governor) of the Dominion of New England. Andros went right to work.

The Boston Puritans went into shock. The Governor instituted a series of royal decrees. Not only was the town-meeting form of government curtailed, but the inhabitants were ordered to share the newest of their three meeting houses, South Church, with the Anglicans, until a King's Chapel could be built. Three months later, Andros went a step further, ordering the South Church designated the Anglican church, with the Church of England services taking precedent over the Puritan worship.

When Governor Andros and other Anglicans celebrated Easter mass there on April 15, 1687, the Church of England service, which had started at 11 a.m., did not end until after 2 p.m., forcing the Puritans to wait outside in the street for their turn. It was blasphemy, they thought, to have that Anglican priest, with his vestments and ceremony, not to mention that papist Book of Common Prayer, despoiling

<sup>2</sup> Dukes County was incorporated by the Provincial Assembly of New York in November 1683.

their meeting house. The Puritans described the Anglican liturgy as having been "picked out of the Popish Dunghill," wrote Governor Cranfield of New Hampshire, himself an Anglican, in 1683.<sup>3</sup>

Even more shocking was Andros's assertion that the King still retained title to all land in the Colony. Indian deeds were worthless, he said, "their hand was no more worth than a scratch with a bear's paw."<sup>4</sup> This must have caused sleepless nights among the Mayhews when the news reached the Vineyard.

Fortunately for the Puritans, the rule of King James II was short-lived. His pro-Catholic views were as unpopular in England as in Massachusetts and, under pressure, he abdicated peacefully on December 23, 1688, to begin what was called the "Glorious Revolution." Replacing him was Protestant Prince William of Orange, a Dutchman, who had married Mary, sister of King James. The reign of William and Mary began.

But the colonists were not yet aware of the change. Rumors had been spreading about an impending abdication by King James, but it was not until April 4, 1689, that definite word arrived. On that day, John Winslow landed in Boston from England, "bringing copies of the proclamation issued by William [of Orange] at his landing" on English soil.<sup>5</sup> As the word spread, Puritans, their anger suppressed for years, were eager to take back the government. Very soon, on one momentous day, April 18, they did just that in the colony's own "Glorious Revolution."

By nightfall, Royal Governor Andros had surrendered and was placed under guard. The frigate *Rose*, Fort Hill in the South End and the fort on Castle Island were taken. The King's companies of Redcoats surrendered without a struggle. Andros and his appointees were imprisoned on

<sup>3</sup> *Memorial History of Boston*, Justin Winsor, editor, James R. Osgood, Boston, 1880, v.I, p.204. The Governor was urging the Crown to disband Harvard, the seed bed of Puritan clergy. It must be stated that there were hundreds of Anglicans in Boston who were pleased with the Andros action. Not all Bostonians were Puritans.

<sup>4</sup> William H. Whitmore, *Memorial History of Boston*, v.II, p.11.

<sup>5</sup> *Massachusetts Archives*, XXXV, 218.

Castle Island. To foil any escape plans that they might have, the colonists jailed the captain of the *Rose* and confiscated her sails, locking them up on shore.

Not a shot had been fired. Not a soul had been hurt. It was a peaceful revolution.<sup>6</sup>

By mid-summer the colony was back to near normal. Then, on August 3, Andros escaped from Castle Island and made his way to Newport in Rhode Island.

This seemed to have been a signal for the pirates to spring into action. Two men were the ringleaders: Capt. Thomas Pound, pilot of the *Rose*; and Thomas Hawkins, a Boston privateer and owner of "a Barmudas Boate," which the pirates used.<sup>7</sup> The crew was a mixed lot. Some had served with Hawkins in his privateering; others were British soldiers, who had deserted; a few were sailors from the *Rose*. Several other sailors, eager for adventure, joined later from vessels that the pirates plundered.

While Andros was en route to Rhode Island, the adventurers sailed into Massachusetts Bay. On August 9, they spotted their first prize, the ketch *Mary*. Showing their weapons, they boarded her, taking goods and chattels worth 60 pounds. Later, it was learned that their guns and ammunition had come from the frigate *Rose*. A week later, off Cape Cod, they commandeered the *Good Speed*, owned by Peter Coffin, and forced her sailors to sail away on the smaller "Barmudas Boate." The pirates now had a vessel large enough for serious marauding.

By this time, the news of the pirates' highjinks had arrived in Boston. The sloop *Resolution*, with a crew of 40 under Capt. Joseph Thaxter, was fitted with guns and ammunition. Governor Simon Bradstreet ordered Thaxter to seize "all Pirates, Especially one Thomas Hawkins, Pounds and others confederated with them," while being careful to avoid bloodshed.

<sup>6</sup> G. B. Warden, *Boston 1689-1776*, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1970, p.11.

<sup>7</sup> A Bermuda boat, a two-master used for fishing and rigged with a jib and loose-footed sails, said to be the ancestor of the Marconi rig. Colonial Society of Massachusetts publication, *Seafaring in Colonial Massachusetts*, 1980, William Avery Baker, p.20.

Captain Thaxter never found the pirates. They had left Massachusetts Bay and sailed into Vineyard Sound, where on August 27, they pulled into Holmes Hole (now Vineyard Haven on Martha's Vineyard). Hoisting "their bloody flag" of piracy, they boarded the brigantine *Merrimack* at anchor there and took 20 half barrels of flour, 2 hogsheads of sugar, 1 hogshead of rum, 3 guns and 100 pounds of tobacco. They sailed off, leaving the *Merrimack* undamaged. Apparently, they had not intended to leave the area, but adverse weather forced them to Virginia, where they stayed until the winds became favorable. While waiting, they kidnapped a Negro slave.

When they returned to Vineyard Sound, they anchored in Tarpaulin Cove alongside a large bark from Salem. The bark was too formidable to tangle with, so they negotiated with her captain, buying an anchor for 400 pounds of sugar. In turn, the captain, William Lord, bought the Negro from them for 12 pounds.

The next day, Sunday, they chased a ketch into Edgartown harbor with the intention of stealing her cargo, but the citizens of the village thwarted them, as Matthew Mayhew reported to the Governor of Massachusetts on September 22:

I send the bearer post, to inform, that one Hawkins, hath lately taken William Lord in a Barque from Jamaica, this day, following a vesle into this port, being the Sabath gave advantage, to raise such force to deter them from Comeing so neer as to fetch out the vesle: of which wee thought meet to give Speedy advice, that, at least Such as are designed westward, might know the dainger. The said pirates are in a Sloop, belonging Mr. peeter Coffin. . .

Matt Mayhew<sup>8</sup>

Forced to leave Edgartown harbor by the aroused citizenry, who had sailed out in small boats, the pirates then headed across the Sound to Cape Cod, where for some reason Captain Hawkins deserted. He apparently had had

<sup>8</sup> John H. Edmunds, "Capt. Thomas Pound, Pilot, Pirate, Cartographer and Captain in the Royal Navy," Colonial Society of Massachusetts, *Transactions 1917-19*, v. XX, fn., p.35. Matthew Mayhew had just returned from New York.



enough. He was a privateer, not a pirate. But his desertion did not end the piracy. Thomas Pound took command.

Governor Bradstreet, alerted by Mayhew's message, ordered the sloop *Mary* fitted out with guns and ammunition and a crew of 20 and commissioned it under Capt. Samuel Pease<sup>9</sup> to find the pirates and bring them back to Boston. On September 30, the *Mary* left for Vineyard Sound.

The pirates continued to harass the shipping in the waters around the Vineyard. Returning to Holmes Hole, they boarded a New London sloop and, by force of arms, took 39 barrels of pork and beef, 7 firkins of butter, 13 of cheese, 3 barrels of Indian corn and 8 bushels of peas. Well-provisioned, they sailed to Tarpaulin Cove, their favorite hiding spot.

Thus far, their adventures seem to have been more of a lark than serious plundering. Not a shot had been fired, nobody had been hurt. The most serious crime was the commandeering of the sloop *Good Hope*. But violence was soon to begin.

The *Mary*, armed and ready for a fight, headed for Tarpaulin Cove. Here is an account as given by her crew:

On Friday following — being the fourth day of October — coming off of Wood's hole, a Canoo came off and told us . . . wee should goe no further, for there was a Pyrate at Tarpaulin Cove, upon which Wee presently gave a great shout, and the word was given to our men to make all ready which was accordingly done, and the wind being at SSE, and blew hard, quickly after we were all ready we espied a Sloop ahead of us. We made what Saile we could and quickly came so neere, that we put our Kings Jack, and our Sloop Sailing so very well we quickly came within Shot, and our Captain ordered a great Gun to be fired thwart her fore foot. On that a man of theirs presently carried up a Red flagg to the top of their maine mast and made it fast. Our Captain then ordered a musket to be fired thwart his fore foot, he not striking, we came up with him, and our Captain commanded us to fire on them which accordingly

<sup>9</sup> It is a coincidence that both captains sent out to capture the pirates had names with strong Vineyard connections: Joseph Thaxter and Samuel Pease. Their relationships to the Vineyard have not been determined.



1685 map, about the time of the piracy, gives no hint of Tarpaulin Cove.

we did, and also called to them to strike [surrender] to [the] King of England, Captain Pounds standing on the quarter deck with his naked sword in his hand flourishing, said, come aboard, you Doggs, and I will strike you presently or words to that purpose, his men standing by him with their Guns in their hands on the Deck, he taking up his Gun, they let fly a volley upon us, and we againe at him, at last wee came to Leeward of them, supposing it to be some Advantage to us because the wind blew so hard and so our weather side did us good, they perceiving this gave servall Shouts Supposing (as we did apprehend) that we would yield to them, wee still fired at them, and they at us as fast as they could loade & fire. After a little space we saw Pounds was shot, and gone off the deck . . . wee many times called to them, telling them, if they would yield to us we would give them good quarter. They utterly refusing to have it, saying ai yee dogs we will give you quarter. By and by, we

still continued our fight, having two of our men more wounded, at last our Captain was much wounded, so that he went off the deck. The Lieutenant quickly after ordered us to get all ready to board them, which was readily done, wee layd them on bord presently, and at our Entrance we found such of them that were not much wounded very resolute, but discharging our Guns at them, we forthwith went to club it with them and were forced to knock them downe with the but end of our muskets. At last we queld them, killing foure, and wounding twelve, two remaining pretty well.<sup>10</sup>

The badly beaten pirates surrendered and the two boats headed for Rhode Island to get medical attention for the wounded. Despite the care of doctors from Newport, Captain Pease soon died. He was buried there. The *Mary* then sailed back to Boston with her 14 prisoners, several gravely wounded. They were all placed in Boston's new stone jail where they were soon joined by Thomas Hawkins, the deserter, who had been captured on Cape Cod.

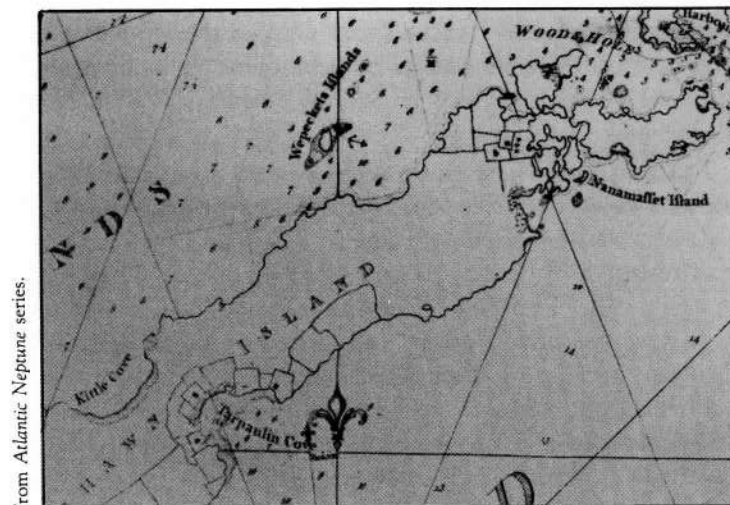
On January 9, 1690, the trial began. Hawkins was found guilty of piracy. The next week, the others were also found guilty of piracy plus of murdering Captain Pease. All, including Hawkins, were to be executed on January 27.<sup>11</sup>

On execution day, the pirates were visited by Judge Samuel Sewall and Rev. Cotton Mather. It isn't clear whether this was a factor, but pirate Hawkins was a brother-in-law of Wait Winthrop, a leading Boston citizen who, incidentally, had just bought Naushon Island, the location of Tarpaulin Cove. Sewall wrote this in his diary on that day:

Five were order'd to be executed, but, chiefly through Mr. Winthrop's earnestness in Reprieving, only Tho. Johnson dies. Had join'd in reprieving Pounds and Buck at the Governour's, and then got away; but Mr. Winthrop,

<sup>10</sup> Edmunds, pp. 35-37. Six pirates were killed in the firefight. Five were British soldiers; the sixth was a fisherman from the ketch *Mary*, who had joined in the adventure. Ten pirates were wounded, two of whom may have died in jail awaiting trial. The only non-pirate to die was Captain Pease. Amelia Forbes Emerson, *Early History of Naushon Island*, Thomas Todd, printers, Boston, 1935, pp.212-215.

<sup>11</sup> *Records of the Court of Assistants of the Massachusetts Bay, 1630-1692*, Suffolk County, Boston 1901, v.I, p.305ff.



From Atlantic Neptune series.

By 1776, Vineyard Sound and Tarpaulin Cove had been precisely charted.

Addington, Shrimpton followed me to my house with another Writing for Hawkins, which Winthrop and Shrimpton had signed, and got me to sign: He was ready to be turn'd off before it took effect, which gave great disgust to the People: I fear it was ill done. . . Some in the Council thought Hawkins, because he got out of the Combination before Pease was kill'd might live . . . ; so I rashly sign'd, hoping so great an inconvenience would not have followed. Let no God impute Sin.<sup>12</sup>

Thus the only pirate to be executed was Thomas Johnson (Johnston) of Boston, known as the "limping privateer," who had been shot in the jaw at Tarpaulin Cove. He was hanged the day the others were reprieved. It isn't clear why he was singled out. One writer believes he had committed similar crimes earlier.

Although he had been reprieved, all didn't end well for Thomas Hawkins, the pirate leader. He and Thomas Pound were placed on board the frigate *Rose* to be taken to England on April 20. En route, the *Rose* met up with a French man-of-war and a battle ensued. Several English were killed, including Hawkins, brother-in-law of Winthrop.

<sup>12</sup> Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, v.V, 5th series, 1878, "Diary of Samuel Sewall," v.I, pp.309-10.

The Governor of Massachusetts urged the ministers of the colony to take a special collection for the widow and children of the late Captain Samuel Pease and for the care of two wounded sailors.

Puzzling is the question: Why were Boston officials so lenient? Piracy was a serious crime. These pirates had killed a government agent, Capt. Samuel Pease, and their actions had resulted in the deaths of at least six others. They had stolen goods, plus a vessel from Peter Coffin. Yet, they were reprieved by such Puritan notables as Cotton Mather, Samuel Sewall and Wait Winthrop.

Puzzling too is this: Why did Thomas Pound and Thomas Hawkins embark on such a piracy? What was their motivation? Pound was a successful pilot and cartographer in the Royal Navy, certainly not a likely outlaw. Hawkins had married into a prominent Boston family, the Winthrops. These two men surely didn't need to turn to piracy.

One writer<sup>13</sup> suggests that it was a well-planned scheme to rescue Sir Edmund Andros and to take him to France to join King James. The plan was to work this way: They would do their petty pirating along the New England coast, enticing the Boston authorities to send out the frigate *Rose*, the only warship available, to capture them. Then, in an agreement with the captain of the *Rose* (a Roman Catholic, the Puritans noted), the pirates would rendezvous with the frigate off Rhode Island, after having picked up Andros. Then, abandoning Peter Coffin's boat, they all would head for France aboard the *Rose*.<sup>14</sup>

It is a logical explanation for a puzzling act of piracy. But is it a fact? No one can be sure. Whatever their motivation, the pirates, marauding up and down Vineyard Sound in September and October of 1689, must have terrified the inhabitants of Dukes County.

<sup>13</sup> John H. Edmunds, p.40.

<sup>14</sup> If this was the reason, it was unnecessary. Sir Edmund Andros was taken back to England where all charges against him were dropped. In 1692, he was appointed Governor of Virginia by King William, a post he held honorably for six years.

## Documents

### Jeremiah Pease Diary

*This installment of the Pease Diary is a busy one. He reports a considerable amount of shipping, including some that was illegal. There was even a murder, with a whaling master brought home in chains.*

*He mentions several voyages to and from South Carolina. A good guess would be that these vessels, usually locally-owned sloops, went there to pick up cotton for the rapidly growing textile industry of Massachusetts, which began in Waltham and later expanded to such cities as Lowell, Lawrence, Fall River and New Bedford.*

*In what must have been an exciting action (although the somber Jeremiah doesn't describe it that way) he, as Customs Officer, was ordered to take eight men, probably armed, and to commandeer an English ship in the name of the United States government. There was no struggle, at least none reported by the terse diarist.*

*He went up-Island to unload the cargo of a vessel wrecked off Squibnocket. Later, he recorded the arrival of the ship John Jay, her master in chains, accused of murder.*

*The Methodists, dear to Jeremiah's soul, began building a new church on Main Street in Edgartown. Designed by Frederick Baylies Jr., it is now the Edgartown Town Hall. Baylies, later designed and built three more Edgartown churches. Incidentally, Jeremiah took brush in hand and spent several days painting the new church. Not a lazy bone in the Pease body.*

• • •

### October 1827 (continued)

25th. NNW. Mr. Benjamin Smith dies of a consumption at about 1/4 past 3 o'clock PM.<sup>1</sup>

26th. NNW. Funeral of Mr. Smith. Service by Rev'd Jotham Horton & Rev'd Mr. Martin.

27th. NNW. Engaged in surveying land for Chas. Look at West Chop, Tisbury. Quarterly Meeting appointed & not attended on acc't. of the detention of the Presiding Elder at Nantucket.<sup>2</sup>

28th. SW. Br.Horton goes to Boston to visit his Friends there.

29th. SW. Sloop *Pacific* arrives on the 27th, discharges today. Elder John Lindsey arrives from Nantucket. Quarterly meeting Conference this evening.

30th. SW. Br.Lindsey Preaches.

31st. NE. Sloop *Thomas*, Brother Abner D.Pease master, sails for Charleston, S.C.<sup>3</sup>

### November 1827

3rd. WNW. Engaged in surveying the lot which Bot of E.P. & H. Norton.

4th. SSW. Sloop *Wm. & Mary*, Alfred Fisher master, sails for Charleston.

6th. N. Sloop *Pacific*, B.C. Marchant, sails for Georgetown, S.C. Mr. Joseph Holley Jr., married to Miss Lucy Ripley by Br. Wm. Barsto.

7th. SE to E, gail. Elijah Stewart Esq. dies A.E. \_\_\_\_ years.<sup>4</sup>

8th. SW, rains a little, a very heavy Gale last night, one small schooner on

<sup>1</sup> He is Benjamin Jr., son of Benjamin and Love Smith. He married Mrs. Grace Sprague, who died in 1841.

<sup>2</sup> The northwest wind kept him there.

<sup>3</sup> In this case, it is his blood brother, not a Methodist brother. Abner's wife is living at Jeremiah's.

<sup>4</sup> He was 73. Jeremiah often leaves such blanks.



shore in Chapaquidic Bay.<sup>5</sup>

9th. NNW, fresh breeze. Funeral of E. Stewart Esq. Service by Revd. Mr. Martin.

10th. NNW, high wind. Br. Horton arrives from Boston.

11th. WSW, SSW. Br. Horton preaches in the Courthouse.<sup>6</sup>

12th. SSW to SSE. Engaged in measuring Land, etc., for Love Norton and others.

13th. SSE, NE rain storm. Delivered 21 1/3 bushels of salt to Capt. \_\_\_\_\_. A very heavy gail with snow and rain, wind N to NW at night. Brig on shore near the E.Chop.

15th. NNW. Brig above mentioned arrives, having got off without damage.

17th. WNW. Dr. D. Fisher cuts out a Wen in my head. Ship *Franklin* arrives.<sup>7</sup>

19th. WNW. Assisted Dr. D.Fisher in cuttin out a Wen in Mrs. Sally Smith's face. Ship *Loan* came to the Wharf, having been refitd [refitted].

21st. WNW. Ship *Ganges* which ran on Capoge last evening gits off and comes into the harbour.

23rd. NNW to WNW. Ship *N. America* arrives from Pacific Ocean.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Would this have been Cape Poge Pond or Edgartown outer harbor?

<sup>6</sup> The Methodist Church on Winter Street had been taken to Chilmark. The new church on Main Street was being built. Nobody worried about separation of church and state in 1827.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Daniel Fisher had recently moved to the Island from Dedham. He was living in Tisbury. In 1829, he married Grace C. Coffin and moved to Edgartown. Shortly, he went into the whale-oil business and became the Island's richest man.

<sup>8</sup> She is a Nantucket whaler. On her previous voyage, her master, Captain Obed Wyer, died at sea. On this one, Capt. Franklin Chase, died while outward bound.

24th. WNW. Ship *Baltic* from N.York arrives.

28th. ESE to E. Some of the Vessels sail, from Boston & east.

29th. SSE. The fleet of vessels which have long been waiting a wind, all sail.<sup>9</sup>

30th. SE, Gail with rain. This has been the most stormy or sever month of any that I have known for a number of years, at this season.

### December 1827

2nd. W to NNW, pleasant. Ship *Gen'l. Hamilton* from Canton & Manilla arrives with the loss of her bowsprit, foretopmast head, etc. Brig \_\_\_\_\_ from Cape Hilty [Hilton?] arrives. Rec'd. the Manifest of the Brig.

3rd. NE. Rec'd. the Manifest of the above ment'd. Ship. This evening at about 10 o'clock I seized two bags of Coffee supposed to come from the Brig *Ellen* of Portsmouth, N.H., put the above ment'd. Coffee into my Store.<sup>10</sup>

4th. SSE to SSW, pleasant. Searched the Brig *Ellen* with the assistance of 3 Men, found nothing a miss.

9th. S to SSW, light, some rain, foggy. Sch'r. *Virginia* of Salem arrives.

11th. W to SW, flattning [flattering?]. Brig *Aurora* wreck'd at sea, arrives from India.

13th. S to ESE, light. Ship *George* arrives.

15th. W, foggy, rains. Engaged surveying land for Thos. Stewart & D. Vincent.

16th. NE, rainy. Mrs. Eliza Ann Worth, wife of Capt. C. B. Worth, dies of a consumpsin. She was for a number

<sup>9</sup> He means a fair wind, an easterly.

<sup>10</sup> Apparently the coffee had been brought ashore without customs clearance.

of years a Member of the Methodist Church & died in the triumphs of Faith, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, at a little past 5 o'clock P.M. 18th. NE, rainy. Funeral of Mrs. Worth. Service by Rev'd. Jotham Horton, Rev'd I. H. Martin. "Farewell Bright Soul."

20th. NNW to N. Ship *Peruvian* arrives.<sup>11</sup>

24th. SSW to S. Fleet sail for Boston & eastern Ports.

25th. NNW. Engaged surveying land for E. P. Norton.<sup>12</sup>

27th. NNE. Ship *Loan*, Capt. George R. Marchant, sails for the Pacific Ocean. Snow storm. SSE at night.<sup>13</sup>

29th. NNE, light. Brig *Cadmus* wreck'd. Arrives having been left at sea and taken possession of by Capt. Web [?] of Schooner *Boston*, Packet of Boston from Bath for Providence.

30th. NNW. Capt. Seth M. Tripe, Master of the Brig *Cadmus* and Crew arrive from Gayhead where they landed in their longboat.<sup>14</sup>

### January 1828

1st. E to SSE, light. Discharged the Cargo of Brig *Cadmus* consisting of 574 Bags Coffee. Mr. George W. Arey dies of a consumption.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Another Nantucket whaler. First Mate Paul Bunker was lost on this voyage.

<sup>12</sup> Elihew P. Norton was a doctor. His wife was Julia Butler.

<sup>13</sup> The *Loan* was an Edgartown whaler. She returned three years later with 1430 barrels of sperm, a good voyage.

<sup>14</sup> We can't find out anything about this incident. Her crew abandoned her off Gay Head and she was boarded by the packet's crew. The story continues.

<sup>15</sup> George Washington Arey was married to Mary Marchant. They lived on Chappaquiddick and had five daughters.

3rd. SW, light. Funeral of Mr. Arey. Service by Rev'd. I. H. Martin.

9th. SSE, light & calm. E at night, snows. Mr. Horatio Bass, Depy. Marshal, arrives & libels the Brig *Cadmus*, and appoints me a Special Bailiff. See Commission.<sup>16</sup>

10th. NE, rains dissolves all the snow that fell last night.

12th. SSW, foggy. Miss Abiah Fisher dies (of the dropsy) in hope of the glory of God.

14th. NE to SE, pleasant. Funeral of Miss Fisher, service by Rev'ds. J. Horton & I.H.Martin.<sup>17</sup>

17th. N to NNW. Went to H.Hole. Mr. Joseph Ripley's Wife dies suddenly.

18th. W to SW, pleasant. Funeral of Mrs. Ripley. Service by Rev'd. I. H. Martin.

22nd. WNW, fresh, cold. Set out for Boston as an Evidence in the Case of Libel of Brig *Cadmus*. Arrived the 23rd. Arrived here [Edgartown] the 29th. Wind WNW, via Bedford. The Court allowed the Libellants one half of the Brig & Cargo.<sup>18</sup>

31st. SSW, pleasant. Delivered Brig *Cadmus* & Cargo to Capt. S. M. Tripe agreeably to order from the Marshal of the District & Permit from the Collector of the Customs. The Capt. takes the Cargo (being 575 Bags of Coffe) onboard.

<sup>16</sup> In Admiralty Law, libel is an initial pleading, a written statement of wrongs suffered. We don't have the "Commission."

<sup>17</sup> We can't find any record of her. The funeral is typical of the times. Two ministers officiated. Probably the young woman had become a Methodist, her parents remaining Congregationalist.

<sup>18</sup> This was their reward for saving the abandoned vessel.

## February 1828

1st. NE, light, snows a little. Engaged in settling the Accounts of the Ship *Loan* with the Agent.

2nd. ESE, pleasant. Engaged as above mentioned.

3rd. SSW, foggy. Mr. Joseph Holley dies of the jaundice.

5th. WSW, variable, rains. Engaged in surveying land at H.Hole.

6th. SW, variable, rains. Ditto.

7th. SW. Ditto. Returned home.

8th. NE to E. Surveyed land of P.M.Coffin & others.

11th. NNW. Rec'd. orders from the Collector to Seize the Ship *Caledonia* of Bristol, England, commanded by William Atkinson. Took a smack & 8 men & took possession of the Ship then at anchor of Cape Poge. Got her under way and came up near to the upper Buoy & came to anchor. Remained on board until the 14th, the wind blowing a gail to Westward. Then came to the wharf with the Ship, wind NE.

18th. ESE. Unhung the Rudder of Ship *Caledonia* and hawled it on shore. Took out the spare Sails and Colours of the Ship. Put them in my Store, according to orders from the Collector.<sup>19</sup>

19th. WSW. Engage surveying land for F. Smith & E. Pease. Set out for Squipnocket, arrived there about 10 o'clock, found the Sch *Union* of St. Andrews, N.B., on shore with a cargo of 20 cases Gin, 14 ditto Honey, 14 Box of Segars & 1100 bushels Salt. Saved the Cargo except the Salt which was all lost except about 300 bushels.

<sup>19</sup> Clearly, the Collector was concerned that the ship would try to escape.

Remained there until the 23rd at night when I returned.

29th. SSW to SW. Set out for Boston via N.Bedford. Arrived at N.B.

## March 1828

1st. Set out from N.B. for Boston on business relative to the Ship *Caledonia*. Remained in Boston from the 1st to the 10th. Arrived in N.B. on the 10th. Arrived home on the 12th.<sup>20</sup>

15th. NE, snowstorm. More snow falls today than in any one day during the winter. About 3 1/2 inches.

18th. SW. Went to Squipnocket to attend the selling the Cargo of British Sch'r. *Union*. Returned [the] 20th at 10 at night.

21st. WNW. Ships *Planter*, *Atlantic* & *John Jay* arrive from the Pacific ocean. The former Capt. [Alexander] Drew of the Ship *J.A. [Jay]* arrives in her in Irons to take [?] for the murder of Charles L. Clark of Chilmark, which took place on her voyage in the Pacific.<sup>21</sup>

22nd. WSW. Engaged in surveying land for I. Dunham & Jona. Vincent & I.D. & myself. Capt. Drew committed to Jail.

27th. ESE. Mr. Bass, the Depy. Marshal come from Boston. Takes Capt. Drew from Jail to Bost. for his trial. Launched the Revenue Boat, engaged in fitting her.

28th. SW, pleasant. Thomas Coffin 2nd. commences laying the foundation

<sup>20</sup> Jeremiah spends 10 days in Boston and not a word about his impressions, etc. He is most frustrating.

<sup>21</sup> Starbuck writes: "Lost mate; second mate died of injuries received from the captain." She is a Nantucket whaler, Capt. Alexander Drew. We can find nothing about Charles L. Clark of Chilmark or about how this case was resolved.

of the Methodist Meeting house or the underpinning.<sup>22</sup>

29th. SSE. Opened saltworks.

30th. SSW. Br. Wm. Barsto preaches. Boarded Ship *Rose* of Nan't.

31st. S & variable. Received orders from the Marshal to deliver up the Ship *Caledonia* of Bristol, Eng'd. to the British Consul or his order. Delivered the Ship & her appertinances to Capt. William Atkinson per order from George Manners, Esq., Br. Con'l.

## April 1828

1st. NNW, variable. Sloop *Pacific* arrives from Charleston, S.C.

2nd. SW. Ship *Caledonia* sails for St. Andrews, N.B., having been restored by Government. Measured Schr. *Amizon* of Holmeshole for the purpose of ascertaining her Tonage & taking out papers at the Customhouse.

3rd. NE. U.S. Cutter *Vigilant*, Capt. Cahoon, arrives.

4th. ENE. Joseph Mayhew's children (Twins) buried. Funeral service by Rev'd. J. Horton.<sup>23</sup>

5th. SW. Cutter sails. Sold 2 bags Coffee per order of the Marshal, pr. I.D.P. [Sheriff].

8th. WSW. Another Year of My short life has fled.<sup>24</sup>

10th. W. Engaged in Papering my house.

11th. NNW to SW. Ditto & painting.

13th. NE. Joseph Huxford's wife dies.<sup>25</sup>

14th. NE. John Hancock comes from

<sup>22</sup> This building is now the Edgartown Town Hall.

<sup>23</sup> The mother was Nancy Worth Mayhew. The twins, both girls, died soon after birth; one at 6 hours, the other at 24 hours.

<sup>24</sup> His 36th birthday.

<sup>25</sup> "Molly" (Mary Arey) Huxford, age 81, of Chappaquiddick.

Chilmark on business of the Indians, etc.

16th. NE, gail. Commenced business relative to the Indians & People of Colour at Chabaquiddic in company with J. Hancock of Chilmark & Thomas Fish of Falmouth, Esqs., being (with myself) appointed Commissioners to divide the Indian land at Chabaquidic & Christian Town. The Methodist Meeting House Raised today. God bless the undertaking.

17th. SSW. Attended to Business of the Indians.<sup>26</sup>

18th. SSE. Attended business of the Indians etc. at Chabaquidic.

19th. SSE. Ditto.

21st. NE. Attended the business of the Indians & people of colour at Christian Town with J. Hancock and Thomas Fish of Falmouth, returned at evening.

22nd. SW to WSW. Attended Indian business at Chabaquiddick. At evening setout for Tarpolin Cove to attend the Brig *Union* of Boston, Capt. Thos. Morrison, from Guadaloupe, being on shore. Remained there one week during which time I Guaged her Cargo of Molasses. The Vessel gits off & I return on the 29th in the Sloop *Thomas*, Capt. A.D. Pease.<sup>27</sup>

30th. NE. Sloop Wm. & Mary, Capt. Alfred Fisher, returns from Charleston, S.C. Wm. Cooke & Capt. Sam'l. Coffin arrives in her. News of the Death of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ Allen arrives.

<sup>26</sup> He means the business of the commission, one of several appointed through the years to resolve the land disputes between Indians and whites, usually in favor of the latter. Jeremiah was the surveyor.

<sup>27</sup> His younger brother Abner.



## Bits & Pieces

IT'S not easy to think of something today comparable to a Pacific whaling voyage in the 1800s. Even more difficult: what is today's equivalent of a woman going whaling 150 years ago?

Whalers went to the Pacific, sailing around the Horn, to the other side of the world. New Zealand wasn't, as today, only hours away by airplane. It was months away over a rough ocean. It was not pleasant. Whalers visited South Sea Islands, inhabited by naked natives, howling cannibals, brandishing spears. No place for a lady!

But Vineyard women did go and did experience much. But when they came home to the Island they were not treated as celebrities, or even as someone with an interesting story to tell.

Take Parnell Fisher, heroine of Joan Druett's article in this issue. After being away for years on her husband's whaler, she came home. Edgartown was uninterested. The *Gazette* did not even mention it.

Similarly, when Helen Jerneagan came back after several years in the Pacific, nobody wrote a word. Not even about her two small children who had gone with her. Two kids who crossed the continent on the new transcontinental railroad! Their experiences must have been mind-boggling. And no word seems to have been published at the time.

Can you imagine what would happen today? There would be long articles about them. The women would give talks at every club on the Vineyard. But at that time there was no forum for them, no place for a woman to speak.

Oh, there was the Lyceum, an

intellectual, all-male debating club in Edgartown that specialized in uplifting discussions. At one meeting, the following was argued: "Resolved that the practice of chewing tobacco in the Lyceum Hall and in places of public worship is gentlemanly and ought not to be abolished." The resolution was narrowly voted down, 13 to 10. I wonder how women would have voted? It isn't recorded whether or not the chewing stopped.

This question was proposed for future debate: "Was Xenophon a taller man than Julius Caesar?"

It wasn't until 1893 that the women had their own platform, the Want to Know Club, which still prospers. Had it existed when Nellie and Helen got home, would they have been invited to speak? Let's hope so. They had much to tell.

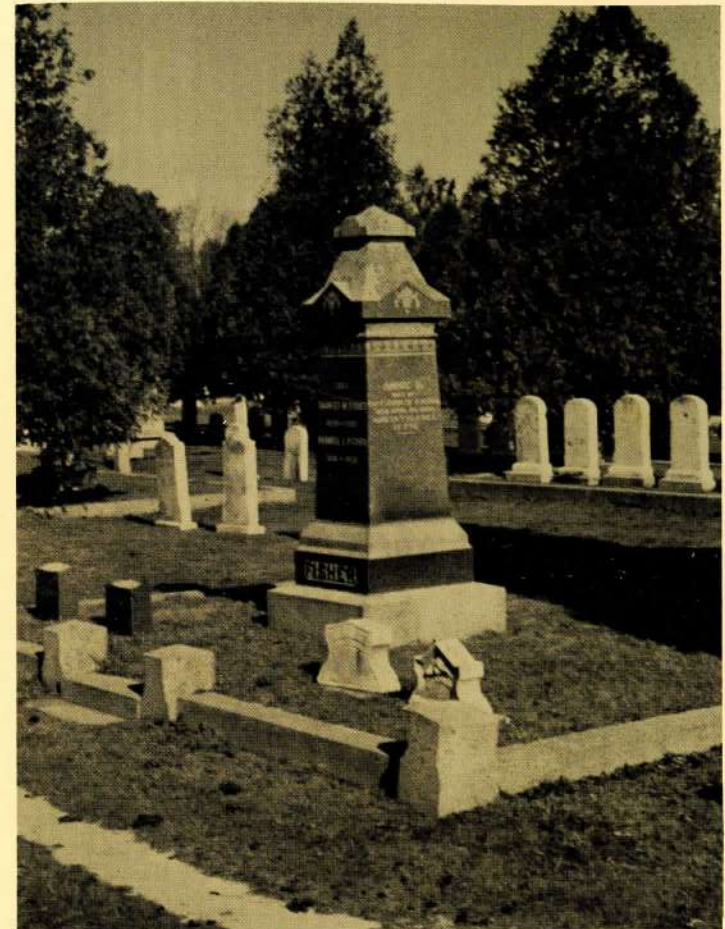
Joan Druett also writes about Charlie Fisher, errant son of Capt. Charles W. Fisher, whaler. Charlie, an adventurous youth, wasn't about to spend his life, as his father did, aboard a whaling ship. The world beckoned, not just its oceans.

Charlie lived a full life. He even "died" twice. He died the first time of consumption in Australia in 1902. The obelisk in Edgartown's Westside Cemetery that marks the family plot states that he did. Five years later, though, he was alive in New Zealand where, at some unknown date, he died again.

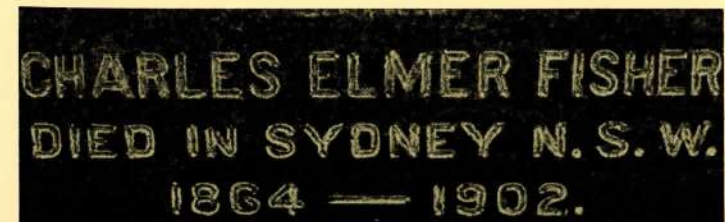
A fascinating tale. Two islands on opposite sides of the world, and an adventurer from Edgartown with tombstones in both.

A.R.R.

## The Capt. Charles W. Fisher Family Grave

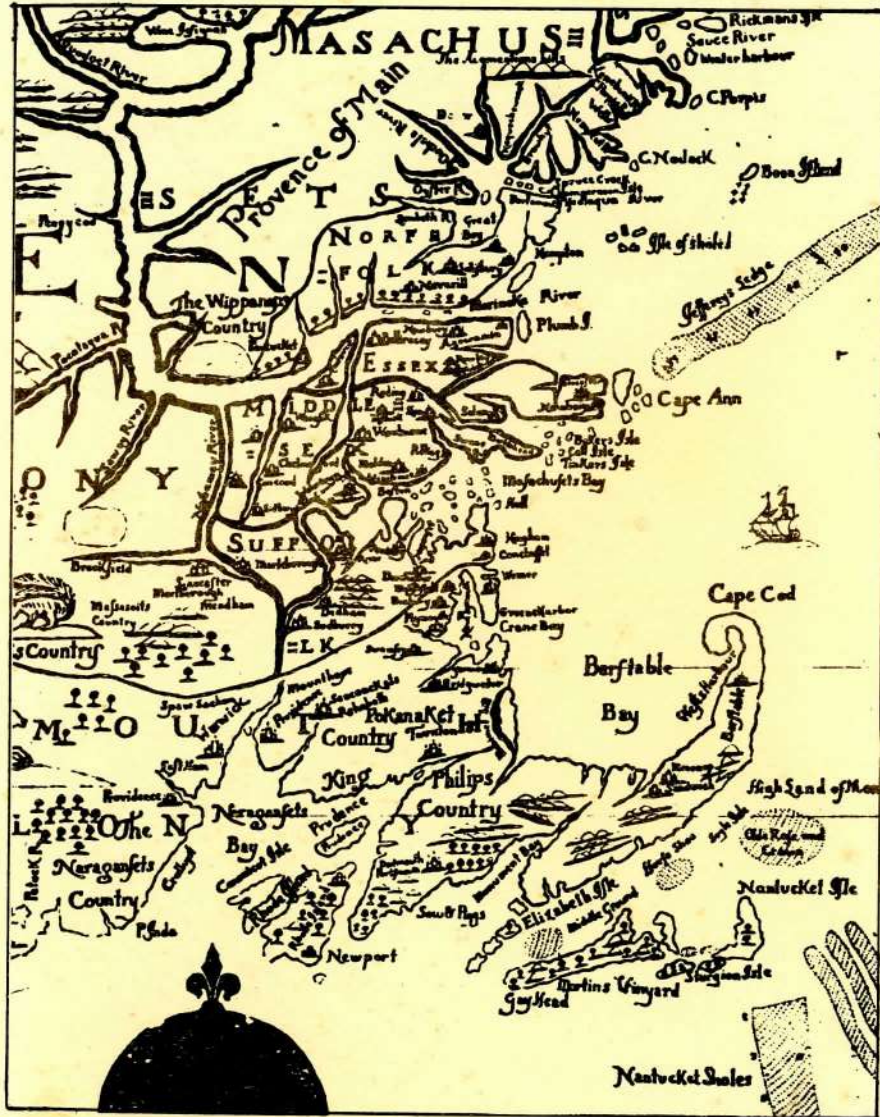


Polished granite gravestone of the Fisher family records Charlie's 1902 "death" in Australia on the back, below.





From Early History of Naushon Island.



A portion of William Hack's map of New England, drawn about 1663, only 35 years before the Tarpaulin piracy (see p. 95). There's no hint of Tarpaulin Cove. Local knowledge of terrain was essential in those days.