

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



# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 33, NO. 4

MAY 1992



*350th Anniversary of the Congregational Church*

## The First 30 Ministers Of the First Church (1642 to 1878)

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

## The 1828 Meetinghouse: It Was Almost Turned Down

Documents: Jeremiah Pease Diary

Special Issue

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Descendants of those families included in Charles E. Banks' *History of Martha's Vineyard*, Volume III, with information on errors or omissions in his genealogies are asked to inform Catherine Mayhew, Society Genealogist. She is working on a corrected and amended volume. Mrs. Mayhew is also eager for data that will bring the genealogies up to the present to add to the material in our files.

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*The Congregational Church was dedicated  
and the Edgartown Harbor Light was lit.*

Editor: Arthur R. Railton

Editor Emeritus: Gale Huntington

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The Dukes County Historical Society was founded in 1922 to preserve and publish the history of Dukes County for the public benefit. It is a non-profit institution, supported entirely by membership dues, contributions and bequests, which are tax deductible. Its annual meeting is held each August in Edgartown.

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.

Also in Edgartown are the Gay Head Lighthouse exhibit with the 1854 Fresnel lens and the Carriage Shed containing boats, wagons and an 1854 Button hand-pumper fire engine.

In Vineyard Haven, the Society maintains the Jirah Luce House, circa 1804. You are invited to support the Society by becoming a member. You will receive this journal four times a year and have free admission to our buildings.



350th Anniversary of the Congregational Church

## The First 30 Ministers Of the First Church (1642 to 1878)

by Arthur R. Railton

In Colonial America, the church and the town were partners, virtually interchangeable. This relationship was stronger and lasted longer on Martha's Vineyard where the political leaders, the Mayhews, were, for many years, also the religious leaders.

This year, 1992, is thus a double anniversary: the 350th birthday of the first settlement and of the first church, the Congregational.<sup>1</sup>

Because these institutions, secular and religious, were so intertwined, the history of one is, in large part, the history of the other.

Churches, like all institutions, reflect their leaders and in this issue we look at the Edgartown church through its ministers. There were many. During the years under review, 1642 to 1878, there were often periods with no minister; other periods, often lengthy, when the pulpit was filled by "Supply" ministers, temporary pastors, not "Settled," as the ordained ministers were called. Usually, the high points occurred during the years of settled ministers, or Pastors, who became leaders in the community as well. By far the most important of these was Rev. Joseph Thaxter, whose pastorate was so long and so important that it will be described in detail in the August issue.

Space limitations force us to stop at 1878, leaving the 124 years that follow to some future reporter, perhaps on the 400th anniversary.

Here, then, are the first 30 ministers of the first church of Martha's Vineyard.

### Thomas Mayhew Jr. (1642 to 1657)

The first mention of a minister in the *Edgartown Town Records* was on November 17, 1651, when it was "Ordered . . . that all particular grants is to give unto the Pastor." This meant that all those holding grants of land must contribute to support the pastor, whether by money or

<sup>1</sup> Now known as the Federated Church since its union with the Baptist Church in 1925.



goods is not stated. Thomas Mayhew Jr., was the pastor, although he isn't named.

We know it was Thomas Junior because earlier that year, he had been named in a pamphlet printed in London. It was written by Rev. Henry Whitefield, who "by reason of contrary winds," had made an unscheduled stop at the Island in 1650. He was en route from Guilford, Connecticut, to Boston, where he was to board a vessel for London to work for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the mission organization that soon became Thomas Mayhew Jr.'s employer.

Whitefield wrote,

we were faine to put in at an Iland called Martins Vineyard  
... where there is a small Plantation, and a Church gathered  
... Mr. Mahu ... is the Pastor of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

The church and the "Plantation" had no meetinghouse. The first mention of one was in the *Town Record*, February 6, 1654:

Ordered by the town that upon the first day of March the town is to come together to the Pastor's house to begin to build a meeting house. The Leader is to order the Company and Sett every man to his works.<sup>3</sup>

A month later, when a meadow was divided into 20 equal parts for the 20 families, the *Town Record* stated:

... only the pastor and Hannah Mayhew is to have that Meadow that lies upon the pastor's neck. So all the rest of the Meadow is to be divided into eighteen parts.<sup>4</sup>

These two items confirm Whitefield's earlier account. While there is no written record of when Thomas's ministry began, many place it and the Mayhew settlement in the year 1642. What is known, from Whitefield, is that in 1650 there was a pastor with a congregation in Great Harbour (Edgartown).

Experience Mayhew in his Prefatory Address at the

<sup>2</sup> Henry Whitefield, *A Light appearing* . . . , London, 1651.

<sup>3</sup> *Edgartown Town Records*, v.I, p.125. The "Leader" is the captain of the company of militia.

<sup>4</sup> *Records*, v.I, p.149. Hannah was a step-sister of Thomas Junior, born to the second Mrs. Thomas Mayhew Sr. Hannah later married Thomas Daggett. The family was filled with Thomases: the other two Mayhew daughters also married men named Thomas.

ordination of Rev. John Newman, July 29, 1747, nearly a century later, was indefinite about the church's beginning. He gave no date:

In the same Year that the first Inhabitants came to this Island, your Church was gathered, and a Reverend and worthy Person, (Mr. Thomas Mayhew) was ordained Pastor of it; but he being lost in a Voyage which he undertook for England, in the Year 1657, the whole Island suffered greatly by that Loss; Religion falling under great Decay among both English and Indians. — It was many Years before there was another Minister settled in the Place; the Reverend Mr. Jonathan Dunham, being the next. . .

Experience, of course, had not been alive during those first years. He was born in 1673. He used the term "ordained" loosely, as there is no record of Thomas Mayhew Jr., who was his grandfather, ever being ordained, in the present meaning of the word.

There is much in the record about Thomas Junior's work as missionary to the Indians, but very little, almost nothing, about his ministry to the English. When the pastor/missionary was lost at sea, his father, Thomas Senior, took his place on the payroll of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel as missionary. Some believe he also became minister to the English. But that is not certain. In fact, grandson Experience stated, as we have seen, that after Thomas Junior's death, "it was many years before there was another minister settled in the place."

*There were only a score of English families in Great Harbour, as Edgartown was called, at this time. The houses were scattered southward around the rim of the inner harbor starting at about today's Main Street and extending around beyond Tower Hill. Religious services were probably held in the home of the elder Mayhew, near today's Mayhew Parsonage. We know Thomas Junior conducted such services, whether they continued under the elder Mayhew is unknown. So much has been written about the life and work of Governor Mayhew that we will do little more than urge readers to read those other sources.*

#### Thomas Mayhew Sr. (1658 to 1682)

If we take Experience at his word ("Religion falling under



great Decay"), the elder Thomas Mayhew was not very successful as minister or missionary after his son's disappearance. However, local tradition and some historians state the opposite. He was paid as a missionary from the year after his son died until his own death in 1682. When he died, the Commissioners for the Society stated that the mission work would need someone "to have oversight there; the place being remote." They thought of him as a supervisor, not an active missionary. The Indian preachers were the missionaries.

Years later, while pastor of the church, Rev. Allen Gannett prepared a list of ministers from its beginning until his pastorate in 1842. He did not include the senior Mayhew among them. It is a difficult judgement to make from this distance, but for the purposes of this article we assume that Governor Mayhew did conduct services on occasion, although he could not properly be called a "settled minister." Reverend Gannett is not an authority, of course, he was wrong in other ways: he does not even mention Rev. John Cotton Jr., for example.

Rev. S. B. Goodenow, pastor from 1847 until 1851, also prepared a summary. He listed Thomas Mayhew Sr., as a "Supply" minister, not a "Pastor." So the question is one we must leave for the reader to answer.

*By 1664, the settlement had grown. The newcomers made their homesteads out to the south, towards the plains. Matthew, son of the lost Thomas Junior, had returned to the Island after six years in a Cambridge preparatory school, supported by the London missionary society. He became assistant to his grandfather. New York, which had been held briefly by the Dutch, was once again under the control of the English. Rhode Island was granted a charter guaranteeing religious liberty, something not yet the law in Massachusetts.*

#### John Cotton Jr. (1664 to 1667)

The town voted in February 1664 to tax all cattle, horses and land to raise £40 a year "for the ministry" and to call Rev. John Cotton Jr., to be its pastor. Young Cotton, a

Harvard graduate, was serving under Rev. Samuel Stone in Hartford, Connecticut.

With its first off-Island minister on the way, the town needed a parsonage. It voted "that John Smith's house shall be bought by us if possible and be continued for ministrey so long as we see fitt." There was one dissenting vote: Thomas Daggett, son-in-law to Governor Mayhew.<sup>5</sup>

Young Reverend Cotton was the son of famed Rev. John Cotton, pastor of the First Church of Boston. Only 23 years old, the young man had brought embarrassment to his wife and parents a few months earlier when he was excommunicated by his father's congregation for "lascivious, unclean practises" with three women. A month later, he made a public "penitential acknowledgement" of his sins and was forgiven. He moved to Connecticut to make a fresh start. No doubt, his father was pleased to have him become pastor on remote Martha's Vineyard, away from Boston's temptations.

With Cotton's arrival, the town decided it needed a meetinghouse. The one it had planned in 1654 must not have been built because now, only ten years later, it voted "that there shall be a meeting house built with all convenient speed."<sup>6</sup>

The new minister, after learning the Indian language, was employed by the London society as missionary, giving him another £30 a year in addition to the £40 from the town. His wife was paid occasionally by the Society for providing "Phisicke and Surgery to Indians."

On May 24, 1665, the town invited him to stay another year. He agreed:

I do accept of the call of the town so far as to continue preaching of the Gospel amongst them whilst God in his orderly Providence continues me here.

His famous nephew, Rev. Cotton Mather, was fond of

<sup>5</sup> He had married Hannah Mayhew. Apparently, John Smith's house on Tower Hill was never bought as it was included in his will, written in 1670. It may have been rented for Cotton to live in.

<sup>6</sup> It is believed to have been on Burying [Tower] Hill.

him and it is from Mather that we learn he was "a rather fat man with a handsome Ruddy yet grave Countenance." He could cite chapter and verse for almost any words of Scripture quoted to him. "Although regarded as a 'living index to the Bible,' something in him was quirky and unreliable," wrote one biographer.<sup>7</sup>

That quiriness may have led to his falling out with Governor Mayhew. No record exists of the details, but in 1667 he was called to Hartford by the Commissioners, agents for the mission society, and "seriously spoken too to compose those allianations between him and Mr. Mayhew . . ." If he did not, the Commissioners said, "hee was left to his libertie to dispose of himselfe as the Lord should Guid him."

It was a peculiar development. The Commissioners' control over him was limited to his pay as missionary to the Indians. Were his "allianations" with Governor Mayhew only about that? Mayhew was also paid as missionary. Was Mayhew unhappy with him as minister or as missionary? Whatever was behind it, Cotton took the "libertie to dispose of himselfe" by moving to Plymouth, where he became pastor of the church of the Pilgrims, a position he held for the next 30 years.<sup>8</sup>

The Vineyard was without a minister. Some believe that during these years, a few English may have occasionally attended services conducted by Edgartown's two Indian preachers. Margery Johnson, historian of the Mayhews, wrote that "during the years from 1667 to 1684 when the English church had no ordained clergyman, the ordained Indian pastors were the only regular clergy on the Island." She quotes Experience Mayhew as stating in *Indian Converts* that John Tackanash, the Indian preacher, was so highly thought of that during that period some English "very chearfely received the Lord's Supper administered by Him: and I suppose none would have scrupled it, had they

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Silverman, *The Life & Times of Cotton Mather*, Harper & Row, 1984, p.39.

<sup>8</sup> Rev. Experience Mayhew's listing of Vineyard ministers in 1747 doesn't even mention John Cotton Jr. A deliberate omission?

understood the Indian Language."<sup>9</sup>

*From 1675 to 1676, King Philip's War raged in the colony. The English and the Indians did great violence to each other, but it had little effect on the Island or the Cape. The Duke of York had bought the rights to all the islands from New York to Nantucket in 1663. In 1671 he set up a government and Thomas Mayhew and Matthew were called to New York for a meeting. At it, Thomas was named Governor for Life of the English and Indians. In 1673, the Dutch recaptured New York, ending the Duke's rule. Rebellious Vineyarders tried to get Governor Mayhew to give them a say in government, but were not successful. Governor Mayhew died in 1682, leaving the ruling of the Island to his grandson Matthew.*

#### Deodat Lawson (1681 to 1682)

Deodat Lawson arrived in the colony from Norfolk, England, in 1680. His father was a dissident minister there whose influence, it is said, got him the Edgartown pulpit. How, we don't know, but in 1681 he arrived. It was his first pastorate in the colony.

The town, on May 12, 1681, had voted "that Mr. Lawson hath a call to this town; and that the town will Bye him half Commendation Providing that he Lives and preaches for the Term of seven years." But he didn't stay seven years. Like John Cotton, his pastorate was brief, ending in 1682, probably after Governor Mayhew died in March. Whether there was any connection between the two events is not known. Leaving Edgartown, he went to Boston where he worked at secular occupations, resuming his ministry when the church in Salem Village (Danvers) invited him in 1684 to be its minister.

The Salem pastor before him was Rev. George Burroughs, the convicted "wizard" of the Salem witches and one of the 20 persons executed for witchcraft ten years later. At the time of the 1892 trial, Lawson was no longer the village minister, having left in 1688, although he was there briefly at the time of the trials, perhaps as a supply minister.

<sup>9</sup> Margery R. Johnson, *The Mayhew Mission to the Indians*, PhD dissertation, Clark U. 1966. Ms. Johnson is incorrect in one small detail: there was an English minister in Edgartown in the 1680s, as we shall see.

He testified in the trial of Reverend Burroughs. An "afflicted" young woman stated that the specter [evil spirit] of Reverend Burroughs had visited her and said that "he [the specter] had killed (besides others) Mrs. Lawson and her daughter Ann. . . these were the virtuous wife and daughter of one, at whom this [Burroughs] might have a prejudice." The possible prejudice was based on the fact that Lawson had taken over Burrough's pulpit. It was true that Mrs. Lawson and daughter had died while he was the minister at Salem Village under "some odd circumstance . . . which made some . . . suspect something of witchcraft. . ."

During a sermon by Reverend Dawson, two "afflicted" girls had interrupted him, causing much confusion among the congregation. One girl claimed she saw "a yellow bird [sit] on his hat as it hung on the pin in the pulpit." Yellow birds had been cited in previous testimony as specters of witches.<sup>10</sup> Lawson's testimony (which he later published in a pamphlet) corroborated some of the accusers' statements.

After the trial, he served for two years as minister in Scituate (Norwell). In 1704, he returned to England, where he took over a small church in London from which, in 1714, he wrote a begging letter to friends in the colony asking for £5 so he could publish one of his sermons. His family, he wrote, was hungry and three of his children had smallpox.

*The Duke of York, for whose son Edgar, the town had been named, was now King James II. Thomas Dongan was appointed Governor of New York, once again controlled by the English, and under whose authority the Vineyard came. Matthew and Governor Dongan met in New York and a year later, in 1685, Dongan bought Gay Head (and other land) from Matthew for £200. Governor Dongan fell out of favor with the King, who appointed Sir Edmund Andros Governor of the New England Dominion, which extended to the Delaware River. Andros, a strong anti-Puritan, ordered the Puritans to share the Old South Meeting House with the Anglicans. Life was becoming less*

<sup>10</sup> Samuel P. Fowler, *Salem Witchcraft*, William Veazie, Boston, 1865, pp.229f. and p.283. For more about Rev. Lawson and the trials see Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, Harvard U. Press, Cambridge 1974.

*tranquil for the Puritans in the colony.*

### Jonathan Dunham (1685 to 1717)

After Reverend Lawson left, there was a gap of several years without a minister. It is not surprising that the tiny village had difficulties attracting clergymen. It was too small to raise the necessary funds. While we don't know exactly how many English were living in Edgartown at the time, there probably weren't more than 300, in about 50 families. To support a settled minister, at the usual salaries in the colony, would require nearly double that population.<sup>11</sup>

Low salaries usually meant hiring men with no ministerial training. Jonathan Dunham was such a person. At 27, he had served as a missionary to the Indians in Maine in 1659. Later, he was lay teacher in Falmouth, Massachusetts. In 1684, Matthew Mayhew, as agent of the town, "secured Jonathan Dunham of Falmouth to become pastor of the Edgartown church. He was over 52 so was ripe with experience . . ."<sup>12</sup> There apparently had been some difficulty in hiring him because on October 27, 1684, the town voted,

... that if Mr. Mayhew cannot prevail with Mr. Donham, the town desires him to treat with some other man whom he shall think fitt; and is ordered to give thirty-five pounds a year.

In 1685, Dunham moved to Edgartown for £30 a year, saving the town £5 annually. His tombstone at Tower Hill states he did not come until 1687, but that seems to be in error because in February 1686 the record shows he was given twenty acres of land "adjoining to that he now liveth upon." One year later, his salary was increased to £42, paid by taxes upon "all tillable land and all meadows that is inclosed and all cattle within this Township of Edgartown." He was also given meadow land at Sengecontacket and a woodlot.

Although Matthew Mayhew described him as "minister

<sup>11</sup> Alison G. Olson, "The Question of Religious Diversity." *The New England Quarterly*, March 1992, p.93ff.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Franklin Norton's talk at the church's 300th anniversary in 1942, DCHS.



of the gospell in said Town," it is not clear what his title was. Some records call him a "teacher" of the scripture, a lesser title often used for assistant ministers. In 1694 the records of the church in Plymouth, his home town, describe letters he wrote while "teaching" in Edgartown, in which he asked for help in "gathering" a church:

Our Brother Jonathan Dunham sent letters to the chh desiring our advice about gathering a chh at Edgartowne upon Martha's Vineyard, where he was imployed in Teaching the word . . . The Pastor, having prepared an answer, read it to the chh, they approved of it and . . . voted it should be . . . sent in their name to Brother Dunham. Letters were sent to us from the bretheren of the vineyard and others who offered to joyne with them . . . to be present and asist them to gather a chh and setle a Teaching officer. . . The Pastor and Mr. Samuel Fuller went to the vineyard, the chh was gathered. Mr. Dunham was ordained Teacher, October, 11.<sup>13</sup>

The minister who went to Edgartown and delivered the ordination sermon was well known to the town. He was the former pastor, Rev. John Cotton Jr., now pastor at Plymouth. His son, Rowland, wrote to Nathaniel Saltonstall on October 8, 1694:

This day my father, Mr. Russell and others are bound to Martha's Vineyard to help them att their desire in the settlement of a church and to ordain one Jonathan Dunham as the pastour of itt.

Reverend Dunham held the pastorate for a long time, despite being "ripe with experience" when he arrived. The fact that he came three years after Governor Mayhew's death no doubt helped his longevity. It may have been less stressful under the young Matthew.

He was granted more land by the town in 1703. In 1706 he was given permission to graze ten head of cattle on Chappaquiddick in the town meadow. He continued as minister until he died in 1717. In his later years, he slowed down and in 1711 the town hired a younger man "to be helpful to Mr. Dunham in carrying on the work of the

<sup>13</sup> *Plymouth Church Records*, Colonial Society of Mass., v.22, p.175.

ministry." Two years later, that younger man, Rev. Samuel Wiswall, was promoted to minister, but Mr. Dunham continued to take part in the services.

As often occurred (not only during the early years), the town fell behind in its salary payments. In January 1714, it voted to raise 30 pounds "to pay [Dunham] for the year that this town hath been behind hand with him, which is the whole of his due." With two ministers on the payroll, the town was having trouble raising sufficient money.

In April 1714, Samuel Sewall visited the Island to look over the mission work among the Indians. He was Treasurer for the mission society and paid out its money. After attending church in Edgartown, he wrote in his diary that Reverend Dunham "made a short pithy prayer and then pronounced the Blessing. . . He seems to breathe a Spirit of Holiness."

There apparently was concern that Wiswall might not be willing to wait until Dunham died and might leave for another pulpit. Sewall's diary tells of that concern:

Mr. Wiswall eats with us between 4 and 5 p.m. . . Capt. Dogget expresses a great desire that Mr. Wiswall may continue, with fears lest he should be discouraged and remove. Would have me endeavor to persuade him to stay among them.

In February 1715, the town voted that,

Whereas Mr. Jonathan Dunham hath through age and other infirmity desisted preaching for the two years last past next April, the town . . . shall allow and pay him for his maintenance for the said two years . . . provided it be not above sixty pounds.

Then in June 1716, the support of Mr. Dunham was reduced to ten pounds. He died the following year at 85. At the time of his death, there were only 17 members in the church: seven men, ten women. This, of course, was not necessarily the number who attended services, but those who had been admitted as members, something not easy to have done in those years.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Rev. Smith B. Goodenow, pastor from 1847 to 1851, summarized the membership totals at the end of each pastorate. They will be quoted here. They may not be accurate.

In 1711, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Savages in New England, a London group, bought Gay Head from Thomas Dongan, now the Earl of Limerick, intending it to be a "reservation" for Praying Indians. Land not needed by them was to be rented to the English as pasture and the income spent on schools for the Indian children. Gay Head was part of Chilmark. There were now three villages on the Island: Edgartown, Tisbury and Chilmark. Holmes Hole, the port for Tisbury, was becoming the major entry for commerce. A packet ran from Woods Hole to Holmes Hole.

### Samuel Wiswall (1713 to 1746)

Rev. Samuel Wiswall, as mentioned, came in 1711 to help "the very pious and aged Mr. Jonathan Dunham." On March 10, 1713, the church and the town voted to promote him to pastor and to pay Thomas Butler nine pounds for having provided his room and board.

His ordination was attended by "ministers and other gentlemen" from off-Island and Joseph Norton and Benjamin Smith were reimbursed 53 shillings by the town for "serving and entertainment" during the occasion.

Reverend Wiswall was born in Dorchester in 1679 and graduated from Harvard College in 1701. After graduation, he served as chaplain on a ship "which was unhappily taken by the Spaniards and carried into Martineco, where he underwent a dangerous Fit of Sickness . . ." <sup>15</sup> The next record of him is in 1710 on Nantucket when he was paid by the missionary society for "having entred upon Learning the Indian Language." He seems to have been a missionary on that island from 1710 to 1712, being paid 20 pounds a year. <sup>16</sup>

When he came to Edgartown in 1713, his salary, paid by the town, was 50 pounds a year. In addition, he seems to have done some missionary work with the Vineyard Indians because in 1724 he received 25 pounds from the Society for

<sup>15</sup> *Prefatory Address*, Experience Mayhew, 1747, at ordination of Rev. John Newman. DCHS, box 141.1.

<sup>16</sup> Experience Mayhew, in 1747 *Prefatory Address*, said Wiswall only "preach'd about half a Year" at Nantucket. Samuel Sewall's Receipt Book shows him collecting pay from the Society for his mission work there from June 1, 1710, until July 12, 1712.

"his proficiency in the Indian Language and diligent preaching." He doesn't show up in the Society records as a regular missionary, however.

His memory was so good that notes were not needed in the delivery of his discourses, "even when he turned the hour-glass three or more times." <sup>17</sup>

Reverend Wiswall never married "that he might not be encumbered with too many of the Cares of this Life . . ." and willingly "took up with a very small Salary and gave considerable Part of it to his poor Neighbours." <sup>18</sup> He died in Edgartown at 68 years of age on December 23, 1746. That year, according to Reverend Goodenow, there were "about 49" members in the church.

A search committee of five men was named to procure someone "to preach the gospel in the town from time to time."

*Although he never had a church here, the Vineyard's most famous clergyman was Rev. Jonathan Mayhew, son of Experience Mayhew of Chilmark. He was ordained pastor of Boston's West Church in 1747. A non-traditionalist, he advocated free will, tolerance and the ability to provide for one's own salvation by good works. He was, it is said, the spiritual spark that led to the American Revolution. The Great Awakening, which had spread across New England, seemed not to have influenced the Vineyard. Edgartown's second meetinghouse was now near the Great Swamp, perhaps on Meeting House Way.*

### John Newman (1747 to 1758)

The search for a new minister didn't take long. One man on the committee, a prominent Edgartown businessman, had a brother-in-law who would do fine. He was John Newman of Gloucester, graduate of Harvard in 1740. He had served as Chaplain of His Majesty's garrison at Louisburg on Cape Bretton Island after the Siege of 1745. In May 1747, at the suggestion of brother-in-law John Sumner, he was hired at a salary of 250 pounds, old tenor,

<sup>17</sup> Henry Franklin Norton, 300th anniversary talk. They preached long sermons in those days!

<sup>18</sup> Experience Mayhew, *Prefatory Address*.

plus a settlement bonus of 300 pounds.<sup>19</sup> His ordination on July 29, 1747, was the most impressive event in the town's early history, 60 pounds were spent on the occasion. Rev. Experience Mayhew, missionary at Christiantown, delivered the Prefatory Address and the ordination sermon was by Rev. Thomas Balch, pastor of the church at Dedham.

Rev. John Newman was a colorful figure, bringing a new vigor to the pastorate. Rev. Adoniram Judson Leach, who was pastor of the church in the 1920s, described a portrait of Newman, owned by the church, this way:

In this picture the be-wigged countenance of Rev. John Newman shines out upon one in the costumed splendor of eight generations ago. It is a bag-wig, falling on the shoulders; the head-dress of George Whitefield, the courtly attire of the old parish parson. Mr. Newman was a person of substance, an honored graduate of Harvard College; possessor of a private fortune; and bore a King's commission as Chaplain to the garrison at the siege of Louisburg. . . [his] wardrobe included scarlet, buff, blue, green, crimson, white, sky-blue and other cloths belong to his class.

While he was minister, Reverend Newman baptized what may be the only slaves ever to join the church. In 1743, "London, a Negroe servant to Mr. Sumner" and, in 1754, "Violet, a Negroe Woman Servant to John Sumner" became members.<sup>20</sup>

Soon, Newman, while still minister, went into business with his prosperous brother-in-law, John Sumner. This commercial involvement caused controversy in the parish. It was not something establishment ministers did. He sensed the members' concern and asked to resign. On October 12, 1758, the church approved:

Although we are hartily sorey thare is any occasion to dissolve the pastoral relation betwene Mr. Numan and the Chh, yet considering all circomstances we do, agreeable to the advice of the counsel now asembled her, upon Mr.

<sup>19</sup> It is risky to make judgements about salary levels. There were various currencies with differing values. This was average for "frontier areas" at the time (Olson). In 1753, his salary was £36, sterling, about the same value.

<sup>20</sup> Although not described as a slave here, elsewhere it is suggested that Violet was owned by Mr. Sumner. Her daughter was baptized some years later.

newman's Request grant him a Dismission, voted unanammusly by the chh . . . in the presance of and at the motion of the council.

The disengagement was friendly. In fact, he helped select his successor. When he left the pastorate, there were "about 28" members in the church, according to Reverend Goodenow, down sharply from the Wiswall ministry.

After leaving the pulpit, he continued in business in Edgartown until his death. He became a Captain and later Colonel of the militia. When he died in 1763 he was buried in the old cemetery on Burying [Tower] Hill.

His widow gave a silver communion service to the church. She remarried in Boston and at her death in 1797, she left £100 to the church for a Poor Widows' Fund, the income from it to be divided among them each year. These payments were made every year from 1798 until 1850. The last mention of disbursement from the fund was in 1892.

After Newman's resignation, the town asked Rev. Zachariah Mayhew of Chilmark, son of Experience, to be its pastor. He had just taken the position of paid missionary to the Indians and was not interested in moving to Edgartown.

The church record tells of another Chilmark Mayhew being asked to preach:

At a Legal chh metin held by the chh of Christ in Edgartown at the hous of Cap. Joseph Jenkins . . . on the 2nd Day of March 1759, then voted that Mr. Joseph Mayhew be sent for to prch to this town and chh upon probation.

Joseph Mayhew, son of Simon Mayhew of Chilmark, was a Harvard graduate in 1730, his education financed by the mission society. He served as a minister on Block Island briefly after graduation, but was soon made a Harvard Fellow in Cambridge where he spent most of his life. In his later years, he returned to Chilmark where he served as minister. There is no record of him serving as pastor in Edgartown.

*The Seven Years War, also known as the French and Indian*



*War, began in 1756. This time, Island men were "drafted" by the English to fight the French and Indians. The grand plan to create a reservation for Praying Indians at Gay Head seemed forgotten. The best land had been rented to the English for sheep pasture, Indians being moved off it. Native Americans, who were supposed to benefit, received nothing from the rents, which often were not collected. Tisbury, today's West Tisbury, demanded it be made county seat, replacing Edgartown, as the Island population spread westward. Its central location made it a better site for the court house, it argued. A compromise was struck: court would be held alternately in the two towns.*

### Joshua Tufts (1759 to 1761)

Once again, the town was looking for a new minister. A year after Newman's resignation, it invited Rev. Joshua Tufts to be pastor. He had graduated from Harvard in 1740, in the same class as Newman, and served as pastor in Litchfield, N.H., from 1741 to 1744. In December 1759 he was hired by Edgartown at a salary of 47 pounds a year. The town agreed to rent a convenient house for him and his family until it could provide its own parsonage.

Mr. Tufts's stay was the briefest of all. In July 1760, the church voted to dismiss him. The record is mysterious:

... reports have been spread to the prejudice of the Rev'd. Mr. Joshua Tufts' character ... by which the affections of some of the people seem to be so far alienated from him ... yet we hereby declare we are in full charity with [him] and hope that in some other place he may ... [improve] his ministerial talents and [become more] useful in promoting the Kingdom and interests of our Common Lord.

It was voted to pay him eight pounds for the six times he had preached to the church.

*The French and Indian war ended in 1758. As many as 70 Vineyard men are believed to have taken part. The sparks of revolt were being struck in the colony. James Otis of Boston spoke out vehemently against the Writs of Assistance; passage of the Stamp Act fanned the embers. Rev. Experience Mayhew died in Chilmark in 1758 and his son Zachariah soon took over as missionary, being the last of the Missionary Mayhews. He lived until 1806.*

### Samuel Kingsbury (1761 to 1778)

Another year passed without a minister in Edgartown. On July 21, 1761, the town, concurring with an earlier vote by the church, invited Rev. Samuel Kingsbury of Dedham to be its pastor. He had recently graduated from Harvard.

The town voted him 133 pounds as a settlement bonus, to be paid in four annual installments. His salary was set at £67 pounds, but, in addition, he asked for 20 cords of wood annually or an extra £7. The town agreed to the wood. Merchant John Sumner, who seemed to have become the town's leading host, was reimbursed £7 to cover the expenses of Kingsbury's ordination.

In 1773, Kingsbury's salary was raised to £73 and later that year he married Jedidah Sumner, daughter of the wealthy Mr. Sumner. In 1775, he, along with John Worth and Enoch Coffin, were sent to Boston as delegates to inform the General Court of the "unhappy situation and circumstances of this much exposed town and the great danger ... of being destroyed by ... armed vessels, or drove from their habitations. . ."

Inflation was rampant and salaries were failing to keep up. The church voted Kingsbury an extra £100 "to enable him to carry on the work of the ministry on account of the high prices of the necessities of life."

An interesting sidelight on Reverend Kingsbury was told years later by Rev. Manasseh Cutler in his autobiography. At the time, Cutler was a young storekeeper in Edgartown getting ready to go into the ministry. In his book, he described how he and Reverend Kingsbury had viewed the transit of Venus over the sun's disk on June 3, 1769:

This rare phenomenon happened ... but twice before since the Creation ... 1639 and ... 1761. The Rev. Mr. Kingsbury and myself very carefully observed the beginning, both when it first touched the first part of the sun's limb and when it was totally immersed ... We were not certain that our watches were right as we could not set them by

a meridian for some days before . . . on account of its being cloudy.<sup>21</sup>

Rev. Joseph Thaxter, who was to be Kingsbury's successor, described him as "a very modest man, a man of first Rate abilities, catholick & Liberal in his Principles. He was a Unitarian." This theological characterization was hotly disputed by Thaxter's own successor, Rev. J. H. Martyn, as we shall see.

On Dec. 30, 1778, at the age of 42, Reverend Kingsbury died of smallpox, having contracted the disease from a family near Katama. Reverend Goodenow records that there were "about 31" members in the church at the time Kingsbury died.

His widow moved to Brookfield. In 1782, the town paid the £80 that it owed her late husband "by reason of the depreciation of paper money" during the war. He had left a few bills unpaid, one being owed to Timothy Coffin, an Edgartown merchant, who wrote to Mrs. Kingsbury in 1799, asking her to settle the account. She replied that she could not until she sold her house. Her son John had just died of consumption and she had no money.

The church, again without a minister, asked Reverend George Daman, the minister of the (West) Tisbury church, to preach to it until it could find a new pastor. The town of Tisbury voted to permit him to do so "for his own profit," but, a month later, the approval was reconsidered and voted down.

*The revolution against England began three years before Kingsbury's death. No mention of it is made in the church records. In September 1778, a British naval force, led by General Charles Grey, arrived in Holmes Hole and demanded 10,000 sheep and 300 cattle, plus tax money, lumber and arms. The Vineyard inhabitants complied, driving their animals to the port from the outlying towns. They were paid in part, but never did receive what they claimed was the full worth of the stock. It was the closest the citizenry came to the war and the only time British forces "invaded." No mention of the raid was made in the church*

<sup>21</sup> Manasseh Cutler, *The Life of Manasseh Cutler*, p.20. The young Cutler left in November that year to study theology in Dedham.

*record. At the time, American forces were in New Jersey after a dreadful winter at Valley Forge. Joseph Thaxter, the town's next minister, served as chaplain with the forces, being discharged in March 1777 from New Jersey. Edgartown was beginning to look like a village, rather than a settlement. In 1768, a new meetinghouse was erected in what is now Edgartown Cemetery, at Pease's Point Way and Cooke Street. Soon after he arrived, Reverend Thaxter built a house next to the church. It was torn down in the 1900s. The site is memorialized by a stone marker.*

#### Joseph Thaxter (1780 to 1827)

##### Charlie Brown (1794)

An article on Joseph Thaxter will be published in August.

When Reverend Thaxter was absent for three months in 1794 while serving as a missionary to the Indians in Maine, he "procured a Young gentleman, a Mr. Charlie Brown, to supply [the] pulpit." That is all that is known about Mr. Brown.

Reverend Thaxter baptized over 1000 children and adults and admitted 191 new members during his 47 years as pastor. He was the best-known religious leader on the Island. It is tragic that his role ended on the sad note it did.

That sad note came with the invasion of the community by the aggressive, evangelical Baptists and Methodists. In addition, a bitter conflict developed in the church over his Unitarianism.

At this time, the split among the Congregationalists was bitter throughout the nation. Every church of this faith was being torn apart by the dispute between Unitarians and Trinitarians:

. . . by 1820, the feeling between the two branches of the Congregational Church was bitterer than it ever was between the Congregational Churches and any other denomination — save perhaps the Quakers and Roman Church.<sup>22</sup>

Reverend Goodenow, who replaced Thaxter and was unsympathetic with his Unitarian views, claimed that only 22 members, five males and 17 females, were in the church at Thaxter's death. His numbers are suspect. When members

<sup>22</sup> Daniel L. Marsh, *The Story of Massachusetts*, v.III, p.312.

voted to move into the new church building a year after Thaxter died, there were 84 votes cast, nearly four times the membership that Reverend Goodenow claimed.

*Reverend Thaxter had led his flock through the most turbulent period in history. He saw the Revolution end, the Constitution adopted, the War of 1812, the "invasion" by the evangelicals, and the Unitarian-Trinitarian schism in his own church. When he died, his flock was split. The nation was trying to unite, as colonies were forced to act as cooperating states, not competing colonies. Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, former presidents, both died on July 4, 1826, fifty years to the day after they both signed the Declaration of Independence. It was seen as divine coincidence. John Quincy Adams was president, elected by the House of Representatives after failing to get a majority of the Electoral College.*

The church had just gone through its most traumatic period. The congregation had declined sharply with the loss of members to the Baptists and Methodists. It was sharply divided over the Unitarian-Trinitarian conflict. In a close vote, it decided to hire a Trinitarian to assist the ailing Reverend Thaxter.

A search committee was chosen and one of its three members was Leavitt Thaxter, the minister's son. The first Trinitarian to be invited was Rev. Nathaniel Wales who arrived on June 23, 1827, and the following day, Sunday, he delivered three sermons. At 5 o'clock on Tuesday, he delivered a fourth. All were highly regarded by the congregation, but when he was asked to become a candidate to replace Reverend Thaxter, he turned it down. No reason was given in the record.

#### **Job Henry Martyn (1827 to 1831)**

On July 13, 1827, a second candidate arrived. He was Rev. Job Henry Martyn and two days later, Sunday, July 15, he preached in the place of Reverend Thaxter, who was too ill to attend.

Three days after Reverend Martyn preached, Reverend

Joseph Thaxter, the religious leader for nearly 50 years, was dead. Whether the thought of a Trinitarian taking over his pulpit had hastened his demise, none can say. It certainly wouldn't have helped him feel better.

Accepting the church's call, Martyn was hired for six months. He lived with Mr. Daniel Fellows for a month before returning to Hanover, Massachusetts, to bring his wife here.

Reverend Martyn dutifully recorded the end of Thaxter's service in the church records: "The Rev. Joseph Thaxter died July 18th, 1827. His Funeral Sermon preached by the Rev. Mr. Swift, the Unitarian Minister of Nantucket." He couldn't resist the Unitarian mention.

Mr. Martyn was paid \$300 for his six-months' probationary period and then was hired for a full year, as he wrote when adding his name to the pastors' list:

I came to this Town July 13th, 1827. Was employed by a committee of the church and Congregation to preach to them Six months. At the expiration of which period, was again engaged for one year. Edgartown August 12, 1828.  
J.H. Martyn.

Reverend Martyn went through the church records, which had been started and maintained by Reverend Thaxter. When he read Thaxter's characterization of Reverend Kingsbury as a Liberal and a Unitarian, he bristled. Right beneath it, boldly written and even more boldly signed, he penned:

P.S. The Tow [sic] last lines were written, as it appears by the hand by the late Rev. Mr. Jos. Thaxter [a few words were written and lined out] The Phrase "Liberal in his Principles" means in the mouth of Unitarians, nothing more nor less than a Unitarian. A man who denies the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ & the personal existence of the Holy Ghost. The depravity of man by nature, the necessity of Regeneration by the Divine Spirit, etc., etc. Now, that Mr. Kingsbury was not a Unitarian but a Trinitarian and a Calvinist is evident from 3. facts. 1st. he taught the Westminster Catechism; 2nd. in his day there were no Unitarians in America; 3rd. a number of individuals now



members of this Church were each acquainted with Mr. Kingsbury and knew him to have been a Trinitarian. J.H.Martyn, Edgartown, Dec. 18.1827.

During his probationary period, Reverend Martyn, eager to quench Unitarianism, on Sept.16, 1827, got the church to adopt a "Confession of Faith and Covenant."<sup>23</sup> It stated that "God of the Universe has revealed himself to us as existing in three persons. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." The underlining is in the original. He seemed determined to destroy the doctrine of Joseph Thaxter.

Martyn brought new vigor to the church and rekindled the religious fire in some of the older members. Thomas Cooke Jr., wrote in his diary of one such case, this one involving the father of Jeremiah, Noah Pease, who had first joined the church in 1798, but the spirit had languished:

In Sept. 1827 [Mr. Noah Pease] experienced religion and hopefully passed from death unto life under the pastoral charge of the Rev'd. Mr. Martyn, this is according to his own statement made in my presence and in the presence of my Wife and my daughter Maria, given July 12, 1838.

On November 11, 1827, Reverend Martyn conducted his first communion service. Joseph Mayhew, storekeeper in Edgartown and a member, entered that in his account book when the new minister charged two gallons of wine.

The following spring, in a bold move, 14 men met in the office of Daniel Fellows Jr., on April 28, 1828, and agreed to finance a new meetinghouse. Several of the 14 Proprietors, as they were called, had left the church a few years before to join the Baptists in opposition to Thaxter's doctrines (none who had left to become Methodists were among the 14). With Reverend Martyn in the pulpit, they were returning. What motivated them to build a new meetinghouse is not clear, the old one was still usable. It stood for many more years, being used by the town for various ceremonies, including Fourth of July ceremonies.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Federated Church records (FEDC), Book 001, pp.95-101.

<sup>24</sup> Samuel Adams Devens, *Sketches of Martha's Vineyard and other Reminiscences*, James Munroe, Boston, 1838, pp.40ff.: "Not a broken pane of glass, nor a loose stone in the foundation." Devens attended the ceremony, July 4, 1831, in the old church.

Perhaps they were eager to make a clean break from Reverend Thaxter.

The new church was completed with amazing speed. On May 15, land was purchased from Obed Fisher; on July 15, the framing was up; on August 14, the steeple and weathervane were in place; in December, that same year, the church was dedicated and the first service held in it. The whole project from the initial planning meeting to the first service took eight months.

The designer and chief builder was the Edgartown carpenter and architect, Frederick Baylies Jr., son of Frederick Baylies, missionary to the Indians.

But the new building didn't end the discord in the parish. On December 12, 1828, with the new church virtually finished, the members assembled to vote on the motion:

Will the said Congregational Society hold their religious meetings for the future in the new Congregational Meetinghouse, lately erected in said Edgartown?

The members were sharply divided: 47 voted to move, 37 were opposed. The split in the membership lasted for years. Some who favored Thaxter suspected that meetings were being called secretly so only those agreeing with the new minister would attend. On November 2, 1830, two years later, it was voted that notices of meetings must be posted "in some publick place . . . four days at least before the time of said meeting."<sup>25</sup>

Martyn did seem determined to dim the Thaxter memory. He was confident the new meetinghouse would help. He went to New York to raise funds to buy out the Proprietors. It isn't known how much he raised, but September 17, 1829, the members . . .

authorized Deacon William Mayhew, Deacon Elijah Pease and Thomas Cooke to sign on behalf of the church for as many shares of the New Meeting House as the funds collected by Mr. Martyn will liquidate.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> FEDC Book 002, p.7.

<sup>26</sup> FEDC Book 001, p.83. For details on the dispute over the new church see another article that begins on page 223 of this issue.

There is nothing in the record to state that this was done or how much money was involved.

Money did not come easily. The church was even having trouble raising enough to pay Martyn's salary. In January 1831, the Proprietors voted to ask if he would agree to preach that year for whatever could be raised by renting the pews. If he would not, the committee should find out "what amount of salary will satisfy him."

Try though he did to unite the church, he was not a healer. Perhaps he was too intent on discrediting Thaxter, who was still fondly remembered by many. He proudly recorded the names of those members who, after having left the church because of "dissatisfaction with the doctrines preached" by Thaxter, were now returning. Each returnee was his personal victory.

He worked hard to get them back. In March 1831, he wrote in large and firm letters about a revival he had just finished:

About the first of this month, Chh. and Congregation were blessed with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Revival commenced in our Bible Class. Miss Harriet Ripley, and Misses Maria and Jane Cooke were then awakened to a deep anxiety for their souls' Salvation. These individuals were the first who indulged hopes of a saving change of heart. The work of grace spread with great rapidity. It soon extended through the Town. I have Seen eight or ten powerful revivals of Religion, but never witnessed one so powerful as this.

The revival spirit spread across the Island. Baptists, Methodists and Congregationalists were all swept up. Within four or five weeks, more than one hundred persons were "born again," one third of them Congregationalists.

Reverend Martyn's revival meetings were so uncommon in the orthodox church that they were mentioned by Rev. Samuel Adams Devens who wrote about the Island in 1832. After describing the revivals of the Baptists and Methodists, he added:

... strange as it may seem, the present Clergyman of the

Trinitarian Society in Edgartown, one year since, held a meeting of no less than six weeks duration. . . He told me he was pretty much run down; and well he might be. It is surprizing he ever got up again."<sup>27</sup>

The Congregationalists, under Martyn, had copied the revivalists, whose methods Reverend Thaxter scorned. Fortunately, the old parson lay quietly in his grave, unaware.

For all his revival work and fund raising, Reverend Martyn did not seem at ease. And the church didn't seem ready to accept him. His revival had brought 34 converts (some were re-converted, having left under Thaxter) into the church in two months. A few weeks later, on July 18, 1831, exhausted from his efforts as he had told Devens, he requested "a leave of absence for the Term of five or six weeks . . . to visit his Friends." The church approved, "provided he furnish a suitable minister for the pulpit during his absence at his expense."

There is no record of who filled the pulpit during his "visit with friends," perhaps nobody. The trip turned out to be more than a social visit. On October 10, 1831, six weeks after he returned, he wrote in the record:

Having a call to become the minister of another church and Congregation at Little Falls, N.Y., I resigned my pastoral charge and closed my ministerial labours with this pulpit Oct. 10, 1831.

The financial problems were getting worse and that may have caused him to leave. At the start of 1831, the Proprietors voted to employ Reverend Martyn for the coming year but not at "a greater amount of money . . . than will be obtained for the rents of the pews. . ." Since it moved into the new building, the church was having difficulty raising enough money to pay the minister.

Reverend Goodenow listed Reverend Martyn as "Supply," not "Pastor." After four years of his ministry, the membership stood at "about 74." That was 55 more than

<sup>27</sup> Devens, p.16. This is a most informative work, providing valuable first-hand observations of the Vineyard in 1831. It is four years after Thaxter's death and Devens states: "There are . . . a great many Unitarians in the place. . . some of the most respectable and influential people . . ." p.61.

when he took over. Of the 55 new members, 9 were men, 46 women. The revival had brought more members, but not much more money, which depended, in large part, on male members.

#### Reuben Porter (1832 to 1833)

For a year after Martyn left, there was no minister. Then, Rev. Reuben Porter began making entries in the church records, signing himself as "Officiating Pastor." He was hired on a probationary basis for six months, as was customary. This time, however, the members did not ask that he stay longer. On March 31, 1833, he wrote: "My Pastoral labours with this Church and People has this day closed."

Theodore G. Mayhew, church secretary, had written a few weeks before, that the church:

Voted to procure a faithful and efficient Minister to succeed the Rev. Mr. Porter after the first day of April next ensuing at which time the connexion now subsisting between the Congregational Society in Edgartown and the Rev. Mr. Porter will cease to exist.

Reverend Porter is listed as "Supply" by Goodenow, who stated that there were "about 79" members when he left, six of them newly admitted (two of the six were later excommunicated).

#### Ebenezer Poor (1833 to 1835)

On April 18, 1833, the "recommendations of the Reverend Ebenezer Poor" were read to the Society by the search committee and he was approved. It was ordered "that the Committee wait on the Rev. Mr. Poor and ascertain his lowest terms for preaching to said Society." Three weeks later, the Society committee reported "that the lowest terms of the Rev. Mr. Poor would be five hundred dollars per annum" and recommended that he be hired, "provided sufficient means can be obtained to compensate him and provided the Congregational Church in said Edgartown concur in employing him."

Mr. Poor arrived at a bad time. The state had just voted to allow residents to stop paying taxes to the established church.

On June 12, a Public Auction was held "on the premises" in order that

so many of the unsold Pews in the new Congregational Meetinghouse may be sold . . . to the highest bidder as shall be sufficient to raise the sum of Five hundred and fifty Dollars.

Whether this was for the minister's pay or not, is not stated. Usually, the sale of pews was for capital expenditures, the money being turned over to the Society. Rentals of pews, on the other hand, usually went for the support of the minister.

About a year later, in a meeting "at the Shop of Mr. Hervey Bailey," the Society voted to extend the employment of Rev. Ebenezer Poor for another year, "Provided sufficient means can be obtained by said Society to compensate him." After a few weeks, a committee was named "to wait on the Rev. Ebenezer Poor and report to him that the sum of five hundred dollars [had] been raised, they are authorized by said Society to hire him. . ."

But by the following year, Mr. Poor had fallen out of favor. In January 1835, the Society voted, this time by ballot,

Whether we should request the Rev'd Ebenezer Poor to stay with us another year or not and it was decided in the negative: viz. Nays 17 and Yeas 15.

Again a similar breakdown as in the vote on an assistant for Thaxter. Samuel Devens's account of the July 4th celebration in 1831 in the old Thaxter meetinghouse described one of the three ministers taking part as a Unitarian. This could have been Reverend Poor. That would explain the breakdown of the vote.<sup>28</sup>

Reverend Poor's separation seems not to have been friendly. On March 24, 1835, the members voted "that the Society do not pay the Rev'd. E. Poor for the sabbath he was absent on his Own Business."

Like Porter, Reverend Poor was listed as "Supply" by Goodenow, who stated that in Poor's two years as pastor, membership increased to "about 82," five of them being new

<sup>28</sup> Devens, p.42.



or re-newed. In the latter category was Allen Coffin, who had left to become a Baptist, then returned as a Proprietor of the new meetinghouse and now in 1833 reaffirmed his Congregationalism.

In July, a letter from a Rev'd. Mr. Tappen was read to the members and the members voted to "ascertain whether he, if invited, will become a Minister for the Society and also his terms." A few weeks later, at another meeting, it "was made known to the Society that the Rev'd. Mr. Tappen could not become their Minister." In September, a new candidate was found. Rev. David Tilton was hired at a salary of \$450, which was to be raised by renting pews in an auction October 5, 1835. His ordination would be held October 8 and the church would borrow \$50 to assist Reverend Tilton in moving to the Vineyard.

*The year 1835 was the first year for the Wesleyan Grove Campground in today's Oak Bluffs. Diarist Jeremiah Pease, a born-again Methodist who formerly had been a stalwart Congregationalist and friend of Reverend Thaxter, was the moving force behind it. Camp meetings became a magnet for thousands of off-Islanders, who came for spiritual, and later recreational, purposes. The Methodists moved into the dominating position throughout the Island. Oak Bluffs was slowly becoming the center of Island business. Abolitionist sentiment was building on the mainland, with anti-slavery riots occurring in northern cities. Unitarian William Ellery Channing urged all states to abolish slavery, northern and southern. As the deep split was beginning, the Island seemed uninvolved.*

#### David Tilton (1835 to 1838)

Rev. David Tilton, a graduate of Yale in 1833, arrived at a time when the church's financial problems were desperate. It tried to raise enough to pay his salary by renting pews, but that failed. It then appointed a committee to determine whether members would agree to a special tax. The committee, on October 10, 1836, reported back "that it was inexpedient to raise the Minister's Salary by tax this

present year." So the members voted to collect the money

by Rent of the Pews and Subscription. . . Cornelius B. Marchant (was named be be] a Committee to Call on the Proprietors and ascertain what they will give the Present year for the Support of the Minister.

On December 25, 1837, the Proprietors met and voted that all unsold pews were to be "sold at public Auction, without reserve . . . and that said Pews be sold at 6 months Credit for good Notes with sufficient Surety, with three per cent Discount for Cash down."<sup>29</sup>

The phrase "without reserve" meant that they would be sold at any price, with no minimum. The Proprietors were excluded from bidding below reserve, however. They would have to offer "at least the whole Appraisal" of the pews.

Reverend Tilton served until March 14, 1838, so we must assume the money to pay him was raised. During his pastorate, the church took a step toward women's rights. On April 12, 1836, it was

Voted that our next delegate to the Old Colony Association bring forward a motion before that Association to reconsider the vote passed at a former meeting to exclude ministers who countenance women's speaking in meetings, etc.

This brings back memories of Reverend Thaxter, who was very critical of the "experimental religions" which encouraged females to take part in the services.

Reverend Goodenow described Tilton as "Pastor" after a series of three "Supply" ministers, and stated that when he left, there were 108 members, 22 men and 86 women, representing 30 new members, six of whom were Mayhews, transfers from the Chilmark church, who had moved to Edgartown.

#### James H. Thomas (1838 to 1840)

Beginning in March 1839, a new name appears in the records. It is signed simply "James H. Thomas, S.S." without the title of pastor. However, the records of the Baptist Church suggest that he must have come late in 1838. On

<sup>29</sup> This was Christmas Day, totally ignored by Congregationalists (and other Protestants). Celebrating it was papist.

November 20, 1838, when the Baptists raised their new meeting house on Maple Street (now School Street), they held a special service. Their records show the "closing Prayer by the Congregational Minister J. Thomas." He also gave the closing prayer at the dedication of the new church on September 6, 1839. These were unusual acts of ecumenism during a period of great rivalry.

Reverend Thomas continued to sign the Congregational Church records until July 1840. Reverend Goodenow listed him as a "Supply" minister for three years, but his signature appears in the record only for a little over one year. When he left there were "about 116" members of the church, according to Rev. S. B. Goodenow. Among these were 23 new members, 13 of them professing religion during one month, May 1840.

#### Allen Gannett (1841 to 1843)

In July 1841, another name appears in the church records. It is Allen Gannett, again without a title.

A year later, a serious allegation was brought before the membership. The case involved a female member who, it was charged, was "guilty of unchristian conduct." Two weeks later, the investigating committee reported it was unable to resolve the matter because the woman had not responded adequately to their inquiries. Then, in the middle of the meeting, a dramatic event occurred:

While the Church were deliberating what course to pursue, a letter from [the accused woman] was handed in and was read.

Whereupon, in consideration that she had become connected in marriage with an excommunicated member of the church; in such circumstances as justly to occasion public scandal & the loss of reputation, for which, when remonstrated with, she had failed to give Christian satisfaction, it was

Voted that this Church can no longer acknowledge [her] as a member; and that she is hereby excluded from their fellowship until by her life she shall manifest repentance.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The woman's name is given, of course, but we have omitted it. FEDC book 004, p.186.

This vote to exclude occurred on July 22, 1842, and was signed by A. Gannett.

It isn't clear exactly when Mr. Gannett left, but beginning in August 1843, the record is kept in a different handwriting. Reverend Gannett did return many years later to deliver an address to the Edgartown Library Association. The *Vineyard Gazette* reported in December 1867 that

The Fourth Lecture of the Library Association Course was delivered by Rev. Allen Gannett of Boston. But few persons were present to listen. We understand that it was interesting.

After he retired, Gannett must have moved back to Edgartown because in 1878 he was reported as living there. A later minister recalled that he regularly attended his services, as we shall see. Thirteen new members joined during Gannett's pastorate, six of them in May 1842.

#### John S. Storrs (1843 to 1844)

Reverend Gannett was followed by John S. Storrs. We know that because at the end of 1843, the Poor Widows' Fund report was signed "John Storrs, Pastor." The church was having more problems, this time not financial. In October 1843, it voted,

to raise a Committee to inquire into the state of the Church, to see if anything can be done to remove its disorders and dissensions. John Vinson, Jared Coffin and Heman Arey was appointed on that Committee.

One week later, the church met to hear from the committee. Its report was not a happy one:

The Committee have visited several of the Church where they supposed difficulties existed and are sorry to say they find many of a serious nature which are calculated, if not speedily removed, to destroy the spiritual interest of the Church.

Therefore, Resolved, that we individually, and as a Church enter upon a course of discipline agreeable to the rule given us in the Gospel.

The Congregational church was not alone. The other denominations were suffering as well. The Baptist Church in Edgartown was at this time planning to invite an off-Island

evangelist to come and awaken its members. Its pastor, Rev. Abner Webb, wrote on April 9, 1844, ". . . it is rather a low time in religious feeling in all the churches in the town."<sup>31</sup>

Reverend Storrs ended his ministry in Edgartown during the summer of 1844. Reverend Goodenow noted that when he left there were "about 115" members. The record does not show that anything was done to remove the difficulties which threatened "to destroy the spiritual interest of the Church." Only two new members joined during his brief pastorate.

#### Charles C. Beaman (1844 to 1846)

At a meeting on September 12, 1844, it was "voted that the Rev. C. C. Beaman be invited to become the Minister of the Church and Society for one Year commencing July 1st, 1844." He accepted.

The unpleasant matter of the exclusion of the woman came up again during Reverend Beaman's pastorate. She still was not showing repentance and serious action had to be taken. On December 3, 1845,

at a regular Church Meeting [it was] voted that [the woman], for unchristian and scandalous conduct, coming to the Church by common fame, be excommunicated from the Church.

Her sin, you will recall, was marrying an excommunicated member of the church. He had been excommunicated in 1837, eight years earlier. Reverend Goodenow's summary lists seven persons as being excommunicated between 1836 and 1847, three men and four women. This latest was the fifth in the record.<sup>32</sup>

The Congregational churches of Dukes County had recently formed a conference and the Edgartown church was asked to join. In March, after some discussion, it did so and adopted the Constitution of the organization.

<sup>31</sup> Webb wrote to off-Island ministers for advice about bringing in an itinerant evangelist to awaken his flock. He was advised not to and the church voted against it. Reverend Webb left soon after.

<sup>32</sup> Reverend Goodenow's record of the excommunications is in Book 004, pp.48-51.

On April 5, 1846, the church voted "to recommend to the Society not to employ Rev. Chas. C. Beaman another year." During his two years in the pulpit, three new members joined.

#### William M. Thayer (1846 to 1847)

In the church records there is an fairly regular accounting of the money distributed from the fund created by Mrs. John Newman, widow of Reverend Newman. The report was usually signed by the pastor and the deacons at the end of the year. For the year 1846, six widows received sums totalling \$20. The minister signing the report was a new one: Rev. William M. Thayer.

By his signature on the Poor Widows' Fund, we know that Reverend Thayer was serving the church at the close of 1846. It is not recorded when he came. Or, for that matter, when he left. He, too, was a supply minister and his stay was for about a year. During that year, the only items in the record concerned meetings of the newly formed Dukes County Conference of Congregational Churches. There no listing of new members during his term.

*In the 20 years after the death of Reverend Thaxter, pastor for 47 years, the church had nine different ministers. No longer was there the continuity, the constancy that it had once enjoyed. Different, also, was its importance to the community. The Methodists were now the leading denomination and had already outgrown the meetinghouse on Main Street that it had built only 20 years before. In 1843, it moved into the handsome, columned structure now known as the Whaling Church. It, too, was designed by Frederick Baylies Jr. The Island got its first newspaper, The Vineyard Gazette, founded and edited by Edgar Marchant in 1847. Whaling was bringing money into the community and new streets were being laid out to accommodate the many houses that were going up. The Congregational Church, which once had an unobstructed field between it and Main Street was now being hemmed in by buildings. Among them was the huge mansion built by Samuel Osborn Jr., a wealthy whaleship owner and businessman (it is now the Charlotte Inn). The town was far behind Cottage City in resort business. Daniel Webster, who had been denied the Whig nomination for president, came*



August 1<sup>st</sup> 1841.

Plan of the Pews in the new Congregational Meeting-house. Appraised Value of each.

Elizah Pease. \$120. 50.	W. B. Marchant. \$140. 51.	S. C. Swift. \$170. 52.	G. Lawrence. \$150. 53.	Parson. 54.
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Pulpit.

Joseph Mayhew. \$100. 1.	Jos. Mayhew. \$150. 2.	John Osborn. \$170. 3.	Oliver Fisher. \$140. 4.	Thomas Cooke. \$120. 5.
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Samuel Osborn. \$100. 48.	Sared Coffin. \$120. 46.	Daniel Follows. \$120. 44.	Thomas Cooke. \$115. 42.	John Osborn. heir. \$110. 40.	Sam <sup>l</sup> Osborn. \$105. 38.	Daniel Follows. \$90. 36.	Edward North. \$70. 34.	Allen Coffin. \$50. 32.	John Osborn. heir. \$40. 30.	28.	29.	30.
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Samuel Osborn. \$110. 45.	Allen Coffin. \$140. 44.	Abraham Osborn. \$200. 45.	Edward Mayhew. \$200. 43.	Timothy Coffin. heir. \$170. 41.	G. A. Baylies. \$150. 39.	Timothy Coffin. heir. \$110. 37.	Abraham Osborn. \$90. 35.	Allen Coffin. \$60. 33.	31.
Herman Ascy. \$110. 47.	Allen Coffin. \$170. 49.	Thomas Milton. \$200. 41.	Thomas Cooke. \$200. 39.	John Osborn. heir. \$170. 35.	S. C. Swift. \$140. 37.	Allen Coffin. \$110. 39.	Allen Coffin. \$90. 41.	Thomas Cooke. \$60. 43.	25.
									21.

Joseph Mayhew. \$100. 9.	John Osborn. heir. \$120. 8.	A. H. Fisher. \$120. 01.	John Osborn. heir. \$115. 18.	Thomas Cooke. \$110. 47.	John Osborn. heir. \$105. 91.	Allen Coffin. \$90. 81.	Joseph Mayhew. \$70. 07.	Joseph Mayhew. \$50. 06.	Joseph Mayhew. \$40. 47.	48.	49.	50.
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By August 1841 the church had recovered enough of its "lost" members so that most pews had been sold, although often at lower prices than the appraised

values. Shaded pews had been bought by Proprietors at the first sale in 1830. By 1841, rentals seem to have ended. The four back pews continue "Free."

*to Edgartown in 1849 to go fishing with Dr. Daniel Fisher, another man made wealthy by the whale business. The boom in textiles was bringing riches to Lowell and Lawrence. Manufacturing was becoming big business.*

### Smith B. Goodenow (1847 to 1851)

Forty years after he left Edgartown, Rev. Smith B. Goodenow described his as "the first installed ministry after 20 or more years of supplies. We had a glorious revival."<sup>33</sup>

His ministry is the most thoroughly documented in the church records. He was a well-disciplined, methodical person and his entries show that. Goodenow described a sharp increase in activity, with new committees, added lectures and meetings, special reports, and other items that fill pages. He compiled and recorded tables of statistics, including his report on the achievements of each minister. He divided members into groups by age, marital status and gender.

Counting the pages used earlier with those filled by Goodenow illustrates the drastic change. The entire year 1841 under Rev. Allen Gannett took less than one-half page. The year 1843 under Rev. John Storrs filled one page, as did 1844. The year 1846, with Rev. William M. Thayer, required a single page, one-third of which was filled by the report on the Poor Widows' Fund.

With the arrival of Reverend Goodenow, pages and pages were filled with his fine, graceful script. He clearly was in love with documentation. The half-year 1847 (he arrived in June), covered five pages; the year 1848, six and one-half pages; 1849, seven and one-half pages; 1850, eight pages. The first three weeks of January 1851 filled three pages. He reported on what seemed like an endless series of meetings and discussions.

And, as he wrote later, he held a revival. In 1848, the "awakening," as he called it, resulted

in the conversion of about twenty, the re-engagement of two previous converts. . . the reclaiming of two wanderers from the church, the bringing in of three strangers to the church, in all about 27. No minister [he wrote] has been

<sup>33</sup> Vineyard Gazette, Aug. 4, 1892, on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the church.

upon the ground except the pastor and the greatest order and solemnity have prevailed.

The last, of course, was to differentiate his revival from those of the itinerant Methodists and Baptists.

Attendance records were maintained and if a member was absent without an excuse it brought a questioning visitation by a committee member. Continued absence made one subject to excommunication. Early in 1849, there was so much objection to this procedure that certain exceptions were voted "for members fully or partially disabled." Ten members were given "Full privilege or Exemption," twelve were given "Partial privilege."

Even the distribution of money to the Poor Widows was re-organized by Goodenow into four grades:

1. those who were friendless; 2. those with few helpers; 3. those with poor helpers; and 4. those with poor helpers in the church.

The annual payments ranged from \$3.50 to those in the first grade down to \$2. to those in grade four, in 50-cent increments.

Reverend Goodenow boldly proposed a change in the name of the church. He delivered a sermon in February 1849 entitled: "The Pilgrim Fathers of the Vineyard, or the Life and Mission of the Mayhews." Immediately after the sermon, he introduced a resolution that "this Congregational church of their establishment is properly known and written as the 'Mayhew Church.'" The members delayed the vote, asking that it be postponed for a week to give time to consider the change.

The following week the resolution was voted upon. It was decided that it should be "left entirely to individual choice and discretion to use such appellation as each may think best."

One member, Mary J. Mayhew, opposed the requirement that she attend every meeting or be excommunicated. The members agreed, voting that,

so long as she leads a virtuous, christian life, and does the best she can to worship Christ among his people and at his

table, she must necessarily be considered an honorable member of the Christian church.

At a special meeting in March 1849, after remarks from the pastor, it was resolved

to fix upon a proportionate standard or minimum rate of contribution for all church expenditures, below which no member or communicant may fall . . . without becoming liable for covetousness . . . at the same time every member should be encouraged to give as much above this minimum rate as possible.

A committee was chosen to set the minimum rate. One week later, it reported that the annual rate would be:

One cent for every dollar of taxable property . . . no man and family [will pay] . . . less than six dollars, nor a female or youth from a wealthy family less than four dollars, nor one from any family at less than two dollars . . .

This quickly caused problems. Some members said they couldn't pay what was required. They had valuable property, but they didn't have money. It was voted that certain members, and they were named, would pay only half the regular rate; others would pay two-thirds; others six-elevenths; others five-sixths and one would pay one-third. All were named by category. This would bring the total amount to be paid by the 89 members to \$295 a year.

Meetings about such matters were held at least once a week, with special meetings added as needed. Typical was the special meeting on July 5, 1850, when "the brethren discussed the pecuniary embarrassments of the church and Society. Without taking any action, the matter was postponed . . ."

On October 4, 1850, Mrs. Sally Coffin made a motion which was adopted. It seemed simple enough: "... that the standing committee . . . ascertain the cause of [Mrs. Catharine Baylies] absence and alienation from the church."

At the next meeting, "The Pastor presented a written request for an investigation of certain public imputations connecting him with Capt. John A. Baylies . . . [referring] to the . . . alienation and absence of Mrs. Baylies."

There is nothing specific in the record, but the discussion continued for 12 meetings. At one, Captain Baylies was present, "in company with two other citizens." Later, at another meeting, this question was put to a vote: "Does it appear plain to the church from the facts presented before them, that Capt. Baylies's charge of interest, as it stands, is a proper and correct charge?" Six members voted yes; four declined to vote, "answering as 'unprepared.'"

The "charge of interest" by Baylies is puzzling. Did Mrs. Baylies stop coming to church because her husband charged the church interest? Or is there more to it? It is puzzling, but it took nearly a score of meetings before it ended.

At the annual meeting, January 2, 1851, it was voted to strike from the record "(and leave only on file), the names of persons excused from assessments on account of poverty." Other changes were made in some of the minutes of the previous year's meetings. Then a request was made for "a general expression as to the continuance of the pastoral relations, in view of the pecuniary embarrassments of the church and Society."

The members did vote to rescind an earlier vote concerning some money that Deacon Mayhew had advanced to the minister. At the next week's meeting, it was "voted not to record the protest which the pastor made against the rescinding vote of last meeting as interfering with a contract and so illegal." Deacon Mayhew, who handed in his resignation soon after, offered a motion on another subject, which was ruled out of order. No action was taken on the pastor's protest. The minutes are so terse, so uninformative (despite Goodenow's record keeping), that it is impossible to determine what was behind the dissension. But the presence of conflict is clear.

A strong rebellion against Reverend Goodenow was building; its exact cause is lost in history. Three meetings were held in two weeks in January 1851. At the third, a letter from the pastor was read. It dealt with the failure of the church to pay his salary. His unhappiness was only



financial, it seemed to be saying.

Such has been the tardy nature of my receipts since residing here that I have labored under much embarrassments. I have thus been forced to resort to other means of sustenance. . . to favor the Society in their pecuniary embarrassments . . . I do therefore hereby request of the Church and Society to vote me a leave of absence for six months beginning Feb. 1, 1851. If . . . granted, the salary will cease upon that day. . . And if, within the time specified, the obligations of the Society to the pastor shall be all fulfilled and paid, and the church is found in such a state of kindness, courtesy and untied action as to make the measure safe, I shall then ask the favor of a full and final dismissal.

The church voted him a six-months leave of absence, during which, it seems, no services were held.

On June 27, 1851, Reverend Goodenow, from off-Island, wrote to the church requesting a dismissal from his pastoral relationship. He was leaving, he said, "owing to want of support as your minister" and had accepted a position as head of the Presbyterian City Missions of Newark, New Jersey, a "more promising and remunerative appointment."

At a meeting on July 5, 1851, the church voted, that the request of Rev. S. B. Goodenow be granted (*viz.*, that he be discharged from his pastoral relations with this church).

Like Reverend Martyn, Goodenow had gone through the records kept by Rev. Joseph Thaxter. He criticized Thaxter's inclusion of personal opinions. He also criticized the lack of chronology, the absence of the orderliness that was his forte.

It was he who compiled the inventory of members that has been frequently cited in this article. When he left, according to his reckoning, there were "just" (meaning exactly) 125 members, although at the meetings where votes were taken the number in attendance was usually fewer than 20. During his four years, 31 new members joined the church, twelve by transfer from other parishes.

Goodenow's pastorate had brought an abundance of meetings and similar activities, but to outsiders the church

seemed to be in decline. On July 4, 1851, the *Gazette* reported,

There is lacking, very much, at the present time, in this church and society, the vitality which is so strongly manifest in the sister churches. There is energy and wealth enough, however, in the body and we hope our orthodox friends will see the necessity of exerting the one and expending the other.

Reverend Goodenow, a dedicated, disciplined and inflexible man, had misjudged the mood of his flock and had tried to reorganize it in his image. The church was not ready for that. This was not a settled time. Edgartown men were heading off to California to pan for gold. The membership was now only 24 men and 76 women. Twenty six were over 60 years old and eight were under 21. Income was low. Measures demanded by Reverend Goodenow were harsh. Some examples of his heavy-handed efforts will illustrate.

In September 1847, a few months after his arrival, a female member, who had not been attending regularly, asked for an honorable dismissal from the church. This was denied by the pastor because she persisted "in this course without any indications of repentance." She had absented herself for years from the Lord's Supper, Public Worship and other church privileges. . . and still persists in this course . . . [it is] therefore, Voted that [she] be hereby excommunicated . . . as having shown herself unworthy of connexion with the people of God.

With this action, the church had made its seventh excommunication. Two months later, the pastor read from the pulpit "a public admonition" to another female member for "desertion of the church," urging her repentance "to avoid the painful duty of excommunication." Deacon A. Coffin promptly resigned for reasons unrecorded.

Because of the financial difficulties, the pastor proposed an annual assessment of members: "67 cents for each male and 33 cents for each female." It was agreed, as requested by the pastor, that members would remain "standing instead

of sitting in time of prayer in the meeting-house." Prayers, like sermons, were long.

These were some of the harsh measures that Reverend Goodenow had insisted upon. It was too much for the membership who, it seems likely, were pleased that he had found a new post in New Jersey, a position where his orderliness and statistical mind would be more appreciated.

After he left, a more relaxed feeling returned to the record. Deacon Mayhew withdrew his resignation. Many of Goodenow's restrictions were rescinded. On January 26, 1852, the fund to the poor widows returned to its usual distribution. It was signed by a new minister: John E. Cory.

*The major secular event of the previous few years had been the California Gold Rush, which attracted scores of Vineyarders. Three mining companies were formed on the Island. Members bought or chartered whaling vessels to take them around Cape Horn to the land where, they thought, gold nuggets could be picked up like pebbles. For most, it turned out to be heartbreak. They returned with little to show for their adventure except poor health. Some died there of disease; others started businesses and prospered. Slavery continued as a potential bomb. Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, was published. Within a year, 300,000 copies were sold, a record number. Daniel Webster, the darling of the Whigs, died in his home in Marshfield as his party continued to decline. Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, a Democrat, was elected president.*

#### John E. Cory (1852)

Reverend John E. Cory was the minister on January 26, 1852, although it isn't clear exactly when he began. In March, the members voted that

we feel satisfied with the Rev. John Cory as our minister and recommend that the society employ him for further time, after the time for which he is now engaged shall expire.

His continued employment was brief, it did not last a full year. On November 26, 1852, the *Gazette* reported, "The church is, at the present time, without a minister, but we believe efforts are now making to procure one." On December 9, "the voluntary committee was called upon to report the amount of subscriptions obtained by them for

the purpose of obtaining a minister."

At about this time, the vestry of the church was being used as a private school. Harriet Pease, famed Island genealogist, attended and wrote about it later:

When I was a little girl I went to a private school kept in the vestry or chapel of the Congregational Church. At recess, in the winter time, the scholars used to seize their sleds and skates and rush up to the Slough pond. We crossed it and climbed the hill beyond . . . and would then coast down and across the pond.<sup>34</sup>

#### William J. Breed (1853 to 1855)

In the middle of December 1852, the church, then without a pastor, invited Rev. William J. Breed, who earlier had been pastor on Nantucket, to preach a few sermons in January with the hope of coming to a permanent agreement.

This was not a good time for the church to have been without a pastor. An intense revival was enveloping the village with Baptists and Methodists holding meetings day and night. The revival fever was so widespread that, for the first time in memory, stores were closed during the evening hours as there were no customers, everyone was attending meetings, the *Gazette* reported.

As soon as he arrived, Reverend Breed began a revival of his own. During his first month, 24 persons were "examined by Reverend Wm. J. Breed and the church, prior to their admissions. . ." The membership roster was growing once again and after the usual six months probation, Reverend Breed was invited to become the settled minister. He accepted.

During his ministry, the Standing Committee reported on an "unpleasant occurrence which has transpired . . ." One evening, a male church member,

while in the stage [coach], passing from Holmes Hole to Edgartown, did grossly insult a female of this congregation against her own earnest remonstrances and resistance. [The man confessed] and asked the forgiveness of the church.

<sup>34</sup> Slough Pond was tidal water, extending from the harbor to South Summer Street, just above High Street. Years later, part of it was filled to create a hotel parking lot. The portion at Dunham Road and Water Street survived.

Another committee was named in May "to revise the Articles of Faith and Covenants of this church preparatory to printing." In September 1853, the church, now calling itself the "First Orthodox Congregational Church," printed a 15-page pamphlet entitled *Articles of Faith and Covenant*. The second article of the constitution declared it to be a "Paedobaptist Congregational Church . . . [that] acknowledges no head or superior but Christ alone."

Article VII of the By-Laws declared:

Theatrical and circus performances, balls and dancing parties, are considered of evil and demoralizing tendency . . . and must be treated accordingly. [Another article] banned travel on the Sabbath for purposes of business or pleasure . . . when cases of mercy or necessity arise. . . some other means should be chosen than those of public convenances . . . as the use of them would sanction this public and constant desecration.

Then on October 26, 1855, the *Vineyard Gazette* reported:

The connection which has existed between the Congregational Church and Society of this town and Rev. Wm. J. Breed, has been dissolved and the church is now destitute of a preacher.

#### **Nathaniel B. Blanchard (1856 to 1857)**

At the end of 1856, the distribution of funds to the Poor Widows was signed by N. B. Blanchard, Minister. We find no record in the church book of when he came or of when he left. Again we must rely on the *Gazette*. It reported on February 27, 1857:

Rev. Nathaniel B. Blanchard . . . closed his labors with the Congregational Church and Society of this place, on Sunday, Feb. 15. Mr. Blanchard is a young man of talent, energy and discretion. . . his sermons were of a very high order, evincing deep research, a refined and cultivated imagination and a well stored and a well balanced mind.

Although there is nothing in the record to show it, his ministry must have been a happy one. He left on a most friendly note. His wife presented to the ladies of the church a beautiful silver goblet, lined with gold and enscribed: "As a token of respect, January 1, 1857."

In November 1857, while the church was pastorless, Frederick Douglas, famed black orator, filled it to capacity one Sunday evening, lecturing on the evils of slavery. "He is entitled to great respect," the *Gazette* editorialized.

#### **Nelson Scott (1858 to 1859)**

With the departure of Reverend Blanchard, the church asked Rev. Mr. Coggsall to supply the pulpit for two Sabbaths. After that, Reverend Breed came back briefly as a supply minister.

In June, a candidate, Rev. Nelson Scott, conducted the evening service after which he left the room and a vote was taken to see if the church wished to hire him for the coming year. There were 25 members voting: Yeas 4; Nays 21. A week later, another vote was taken. This time the record shows a breakdown by male and female votes: Male, Yeas 4, Nays 10; Female, Yeas 1, Nays 8.

Somehow, the vote was ignored. There is nothing to explain why, but on July 9, 1858, the *Gazette* reported that Rev. Nelson Scott was asked "to continue his labors with the Church and the Society another year." He accepted. On September 7, 1858, a committee was appointed "to solicit subscriptions towards paying Mr. Scott."

By May 1859, Reverend Scott was gone and a unanimous vote (27 members) agreed "to call Rev. Mr. Strong to supply the pulpit."

#### **Stephen C. Strong (1859 to 1860)**

After Reverend Strong's probationary term, the members voted unanimously that "we are satisfied with the ministerial services of Rev. Mr. Strong and that we give him a call to remain a longer time with us when his present engagement shall have expired."

Again, there is a little in the record. Nothing was written about Reverend Strong's pastorate except the routine matter of the Poor Widows' Fund distribution. The minister didn't even sign that, only the signatures of B. C. Marchant, Clerk, H. P. Mayhew, Peter R. Marchant and Charles Mayhew, Deacons, are recorded.

The north-south split was widening. Disaster lay ahead. The Island seemed uninvolved in the great debate that was leading to civil war. The financial panic of 1857 seemed to have little effect on the Vineyard, as whaling continued to boom. Lincoln and Douglas held a series of debates in Illinois, with Lincoln emerging as the leading spokesman for the anti-slavery forces. By now, Edgartown's waterfront was becoming crowded with Captains' houses, each trying to outdo its neighbor. Main Street now had curbstones. The Island got its first bank, the Martha's Vineyard National, housed in the Edgartown's first brick building. A state commission ran the boundary between Gay Head and Chilmark in 1856. In 1862, it created the District of Gay Head, the first step towards incorporation as a town in 1870. The Indians, virtually ignored in all this, were mining and selling clay from the cliffs. Roaring Brook brickyard was flourishing, but the bricks used in Edgartown came from off-Island. The Agricultural Hall in (West) Tisbury held its first fair in 1859.

#### Edwin Nevin (1860 to 1862)

Early in 1860, Rev. Edwin H. Nevin of Chelsea came to Edgartown as a supply minister "for three months, and possibly for a year." In April of that year, the church unanimously asked him to become its settled pastor at a salary of \$1000 a year. The *Gazette* wrote:

Dr. Nevin is one of the ablest preachers of the day and it would be a sad disappointment to his friends here should he decline the invitation thus extended.

Nobody was disappointed. Reverend Nevin quickly accepted . . . and will commence his labors here next Saturday . . . a most thorough and accurate scholar, having been for several years President of Franklin College, Ohio, . . . [he is] an ornament intellectually and morally to any community in which he may live.<sup>35</sup>

During Reverend Nevin's pastorate, another unpleasant matter was brought before the members. On July 10, 1861, they assembled "for the purpose of considering the conduct of [a female member] and after mature consultation it was voted that she be excommunicated."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Vineyard Gazette*, April 13, 1860.

<sup>36</sup> Her name is in the record, but again it is omitted here. She was the eighth to be excommunicated. There are no further details in the record.

Reverend Nevin seems to have left the pastor's position in 1862. The *Gazette* published two letters from him in May and July of that year, written while on a trip through Ohio and Pennsylvania. In July the record shows the appointment of "Mrs. Sally Coffin . . . to solicit subscriptions towards paying the amount due Mr. Nevin (for the removal of his furniture to this place)." It would seem that it must have been due for some time.

*In February 1861, Abraham Lincoln became president of a nation soon to be torn asunder. In April, the Civil War began with the firing on Fort Sumter. The Gazette was now getting telegraphic reports of battles. "Down with the Traitors" it cried editorially. Home Guard units were organized in the Island towns. The army sent an officer here to recruit volunteers. Three young men enlisted, all from Holmes Hole. Later, many Vineyard men went to war, encouraged in part by bonus payments and draft calls.*

#### Hartford P. Leonard (1862 to 1865)

It isn't recorded exactly when Reverend H. P. Leonard took over the ministry, but he is first mentioned in the record on April 2, 1863. A week later, members voted "to invite him to remain with us six months longer after his present term (of six months) expires."

In June, Reverend Leonard requested "the church to call a council that he might be ordained an Evangelist." It was agreed and he was so ordained on Tuesday, June 23, 1863.

Prices climbed sharply during the war and ministers' salaries didn't keep pace. In January 1865, the *Gazette* published an item signed by Reverend Leonard and his wife, thanking the members of the church for the "money, clothing and provisions" brought to the couple on December 30, 1864. "The gifts are truly appreciated at this time of high prices," they added.

In May 1865, the Leonards were "dismissed from this church and recommended to the Cong'l. Church in Scotland, Mass."

#### Benjamin Frank Jackson (1865 to 1867)

Reverend Jackson wrote this in the church records some



months after assuming the ministry:

I first preached to the Cong'l. Church of this place Sabbath Oct. 1st, 1865. The next Friday the Church and Society extended to me a unanimous invitation to become their minister, which I afterwards accepted, and removed my family here from New York City, where for the past two years I had been preaching to Seamen. My labors there were mostly in Connection with the N.York Port Society.

This is my first pastoral charge. I entered upon the duties of it the first Sabbath in Nov. 1865.

The state of religion here, as elsewhere, is very low. The Slaveholder's Rebellion which has been engaging the thoughts and energies of the nation for the last four years has doubtless had great influence upon the spiritual state of the Church. But Christians now seem to be returning. We look for better days soon.

A day of National Thanksgiving was observed December 17, 1865, "For the triumph of the national cause and the return of peace to our land . . . the three Societies of this place united at the M.E. church. The Congregational minister preaching the sermon."

The *Gazette* reported Reverend Jackson's ordination as occurring on March 13, 1866, after his six months' probation. The sermon was preached by Rev. J. P. Cleveland of Mattapoisett and was given considerable mention in the newspaper.

On Oct. 10, 1867, Reverend Jackson asked to resign. The matter was turned over to the Society for approval after the church members concurred. But a week later, the church and the Society reconsidered and agreed to give Reverend Jackson a one year's leave of absence instead. This resolution was then passed:

Resolved, that the Congregational Church in this town tender to Rev. Benjamin F. Jackson, our beloved Pastor, during his leave of absence, our sincere Christian sympathy and prayers for his future prosperity and hope that God will bless him and his family at whatever part of the Lord's Vineyard he may be laboring.

It isn't clear why the resignation was changed to a leave.

Reverend Jackson, the *Gazette* stated, was leaving to accept the pastorate of the church in Charleston, S.C.

*When the Civil War ended, a boom began at Cottage City under the promotion of the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company. Heading it were four Edgartown men, plus two from off-Island. The new village was laid out by Robert Morris Copeland, noted Boston landscape architect. It advertised: "The Company is now building a wharf located within three minutes walk from any of the 1000 lots in the grove. . . cottages can be purchased from \$300 to \$1000." The proposed Vineyard Sound Railroad would soon connect with Boston, bringing trains directly to the dock at Wood's Hole. Edgartown continued to decline. Thousands visited only Cottage City, later called Oak Bluffs. But any Edgartown man "capable of driving a nail had steady employment ten months a year" at Cottage City, the *Gazette* proclaimed. The ladies of the Congregational Church put on an Entertainment, featuring "interesting dialogues, acting charades and tableaux, in addition to other pleasing features." The nation had a new coin, the "nickel."*

#### **Luther H. Angier (1868 to 1869)**

In less than four months after Reverend Jackson left on his leave of absence, the church had a new pastor. On February 19, 1868, it was "voted that the church recommend to the Society the Rev. Mr. Angier, who has been laboring with us the past week, for our minister for the coming year."

Nothing is recorded about the removal of Reverend Angier, but in February 1871, the Poor Widows' distribution was signed by E. J. Moore, who probably came in 1870, although there is no record of it.

#### **Eason J. Moore (1870 to 1873)**

Reverend Eason J. Moore served as pastor for about three years. There are almost no entries in the record signed by him other than the annual Poor Widows' distribution. On April 3, 1873, at the request of Mrs. Joshua Snow, widow, her husband's will was challenged by the church, which hired Richard L. Pease to represent it. The pastor and two other men were on the committee that made the challenge.

The record tells us no more about the suit.<sup>37</sup>

On July 25, 1873, the *Gazette* reported that "Rev. E. J. Moore leaves after about 3 1/2 years to take the pulpit at Harwich Port."

#### Ephraim A. Hidden (1874)

There is another gap in the record from July 1873 until Reverend Hidden came early in 1874. When he left in October 1874, the church passed unanimously a resolution which stated, among other things,

... we deeply deplore the necessity which deprives us of his presence and good offices. . . he has proven himself an eloquent and earnest preacher, a faithful friend, and a christian gentleman.

There is no explanation for the brevity of his pastorate except that the *Gazette* wrote:

We learn that Mr. Hidden intends to spend the winter months at the South, for the benefit of his wife's health.<sup>38</sup>

#### Thos. Franklin Waters (1875 to 1878)

Again a gap in the record. On August 8, 1875, Rev. T. F. Waters began his ministry, recording the event himself in the church records: "Mr. T. F. Waters, having engaged to supply the pulpit until March 1876, began his work." By November, he had instituted a bold change:

*Dr. Hatfield's Church Hymn Book*, with Tunes, used for the first time, in place of Watts & Select. Congregational singing fairly started.

The youthful Mr. Waters ministered beyond his initial commitment. On October 23, 1876, an ecclesiastical council was convened to ordain him as an Evangelist:

The usual papers concerning the call were presented and the approbation for the gospel ministry by the Andover association were read . . . The council then proceed to the examination of the Candidate . . . [which] was regarded as satisfactory.

<sup>37</sup> It may be sheer coincidence, but attorney Richard L. Pease later bought the Joshua Snow house. It is a lovely building on the northwest corner of Main Street and Pease's Point Way, Edgartown.

<sup>38</sup> *Gazette*, October 16, 1874.

Taking part were ministers from Salem, Wareham, Nantucket and West Tisbury. "The services were held in the evening in the presence of a large congregation and were listened to with deep interest by all present. . ."

Reverend Waters ended his ministry in March 1878. Tucked in one of the church record books is a letter he wrote on the occasion of the church's 275th anniversary. It is dated August 8, 1917, and describes his memories of his ministry:

... mine was a humble service. I came to you fresh from my Seminary studies . . . But my remembrance of the Edgartown church of those days is one of the choicest of my life. . . My youthful indiscretions, as I now regard them, were borne with ready patience . . . My boyish sermons were counted worthy of a regular hearing . . . The congregation, upon which I looked, is before me as I write.

In the wing seats on my left, Elijah Smith, lame and crippled, and his vigorous wife and family, with whom I found my first home; Capt. Fordham and Capt. Jared Fisher. Under the left gallery, John Baylies and Deacon Charles Mayhew, whose pew was always full of smiling faces.

In the pews in the body of the house sat Capt. Charles Smith, Cornelius B. Marchant, the Collector of the Port, . . . dear to me still as the kindest and most thoughtful of friends, John Vinson, and Capt. Tristram Ripley, who carried his religion to sea and was able by God's grace to sit in his cabin on Sunday with his open Bible while the whales spouted and the crew clamored for the lowering of the boats, and refused his permission. Happily, he always filled his ship.

In the other aisle were the pews of the editor [of the *Gazette*], Edgar Marchant; Samuel Osborne, whose whale ships discharged and refitted at the wharf to my intense gratification; Capt. Henry Pease, the skilful navigator, Rev. Allen Gannett, a former pastor, and in summer Frederick Warren in the family pew of Mrs. Polly Osborne.

Under the right gallery sat Jared Coffin, the beloved Postmaster, Barnard C. Marchant, his hair white as the driven snow and George B. Orswell, into whose family I was graciously admitted as a son-in-law; Tristram Butler, Captain Theodore Wimpenny and son Theodore; and in the right wing pews, Capt. Thomas Nuns Fisher, and Dr. Mayberry with his three bright sons.

The venerable organ was played acceptably by Miss Lizzie Cleaveland and Samuel Keniston was helpful with the singing.

Were there ever nobler men! A choicer, more devoted circle of good women could not be. Margaret Pent, Beulah Blanchard, Abby B. Smith and her sisters, Harriet Orswell, Phoebe Ann Pease, Charlotte Coffin and all the rest. Sweet Gracie Pease was the first to go, when she was just entering her sixteenth year. Were she still with us she would be fifty six. . . .

Still the old church stands. . . .

Seventy-five years later, the church still stands. These early pastors would be pleased. Despite its internal disputes, its struggles against evangelism, and its near financial disaster, it has survived. And it has flourished. We end this summary of its first 30 pastors, trusting that those who followed will be described by another writer on the 400th anniversary of this, the first church on Martha's Vineyard.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The years immediately following these brought their problems, too. In November 1884, a Congregational journal, *The Old Colonist*, reported: "The church at Edgartown is still without a settled pastor and is being supplied largely by Andover students. . . [it] maintains public worship but a few months of the year by the employment of transient supplies. . . Of the four churches of our order which once flourished on Martha's Vineyard, only one can now be said to manifest a hopeful activity, the one located at West Tisbury."

**Coming in the August issue:  
The Tribulations of Reverend Thaxter**



350th Anniversary of the Congregational Church

## The 1828 Meetinghouse: It Was Almost Turned Down

THERE it stood — the Island's first church with a steeple, its graceful spire reaching high into the heavens. The tallest structure in the village, visible for miles, its gilded weathervane was the focus of everybody's gaze.

Built at the intersection of two narrow cartways, it was surrounded by open land. It faced Main Street with no buildings intervening. Except for two houses to its left, the church stood on open ground. Strange as it seems today, it appeared to stand, in traditional fashion, on the town common.

Dedication ceremonies had been set for the day before Christmas in 1828. Clergy from the mainland and the other Island towns had been invited. It was going to be a special day the village.

But that was still two weeks away. First, there was important business to be done. The members of the church still must vote to move in, to accept the new building as their house of worship. On December 12, they gathered in their old meetinghouse in today's Edgartown cemetery to decide if they, the Congregational Society, would agree to move.

Eighty-four male members were present (only men could vote). It was the largest gathering of Congregationalists since the Baptists and Methodists had decimated their flock. Men who rarely attended services had come to vote. The members were deeply divided. The vote was about more than moving into a handsome new building. It was a vote fraught with emotion.

Capt. Timothy Daggett was chosen Moderator. He read the article to be voted on:

Will the Said Congregational Society hold their religious meetings for the future in the new Congregational Meetinghouse lately erected in said Edgartown?

There was much discussion. No doubt, it was not always polite. Moderator Daggett managed to keep order. Finally, he called for the vote. All those in favor of accepting the new church would move to one side of the room, those opposed to the other. The secretary counted the members:

. . . when . . . the votes [were] counted, there were forty seven in favor of the motion and thirty seven against it.

The Moderator declaring it to be a vote to remove. The meeting then adjourned.

Only two weeks before the new church was to be dedicated, nearly half of the members had voted against moving into it.<sup>1</sup>

How could this have happened? It is a story of turmoil inside Congregationalism, not only in Edgartown, but in the colony. It is a story complicated by the invasion of evangelical preachers, Baptist and Methodist. It is a story influenced by the death, a year before, of the long-time minister, Rev. Joseph Thaxter, and the arrival of Rev. Job H. Martyn, who seemed determined to diminish the old pastor's memory.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, there were the finances. The flock had shrunken drastically. Only a few years earlier, the state had ended tax support of religion and the church members now had to pay the bills. The Proprietors, who had financed the new building, would soon be wanting their money back. Pew rental had fallen off, it didn't even bring in enough to pay the minister, never mind the cost of a new building.

But the biggest split was over doctrine: Unitarianism

<sup>1</sup> Several days later, the "congregation", as opposed to the Society, voted unanimously to move into the new church. It isn't clear what was meant by "congregation." Probably those who had opposed the move, upset by the earlier vote, were not present. In any case, the issue had already been decided.

<sup>2</sup> An article on Reverend Thaxter will be published in August.

versus Trinitarianism; Reverend Thaxter versus Reverend Martyn.

For these reasons, and perhaps others, the members almost voted down the handsome new church.

It had been built, not by the Congregational Society, but by fourteen men, Proprietors, they were called. They put up the money, borrowing some of it from the Falmouth bank; they hired the architect and builder, Frederick Baylies Jr. of Edgartown; they approved the plan. It was the Proprietors' church.

The plan had been conceived on Monday, April 28, 1828, in an office on South Water Street. The Congregational minister was not there:

At a meeting of Sundry Individuals of the Congregational Society . . . holden in the Office of Daniel Fellows Jr., to consult and agree upon . . . the building of a new Meeting House . . . at some convenient place to be procured for that purpose. . . Committee to procure the site: William Coffin, Heman Arey, Theodore G. Mayhew, Henry Pease & Thomas Cooke. Samuel G. Vincent to be an Agent of said proprietors to obtain materials, etc. Chairman to be William Coffin, [who is] authorized to borrow . . . not exceeding one thousand dollars to defray the expense of materials for building said house. . .<sup>3</sup>

Only a few years earlier, three of the Proprietors, Thomas Cooke, Allen Coffin and William Coffin, had left the Congregational church to join the Baptists. After Reverend Joseph Thaxter's death, they had come back.

With amazing dispatch, the work began. On May 15, Obed Fisher sold them a building lot in front of his house on today's South Summer Street for \$100, plus a pew in the proposed meetinghouse. They now had the site. They needed a plan and a builder.

<sup>3</sup> Three Coffins were among the Proprietors: Timothy, Allen and William. The last named, William Coffin, is a mystery. He was a Deacon and chairman of the building committee, authorized to borrow the necessary money. At an unknown date between May 1840 and May 1841, he moved to Utica, N.Y. During that period, in February 1841, he was excommunicated, apparently in absentia. No reason is given in the record, but years later, in August 1860, the *Gazette* reported: "The man who ran off with the church's funds was in town last week." Could that have been Mr. Coffin? The silence on his excommunication is frustrating.



No church records detail the designing and building of the meetinghouse. It was apparently done without input by the congregation or the minister. It was done quickly, with confidence and faith in the future, at a time when the future looked dark.

On July 15 and 16, 1828, less than three months after the Proprietors first met, Jeremiah Pease wrote in his diary:

July 15th. S. rainy. The new Congregational Meeting house raised.

July 16th. Ditto. Ditto.

In those few months, from late April to mid-July, a builder was hired, plans were approved, materials were shipped in, and the huge structure, the largest on the Island, was completely framed (minus the steeple). A remarkable accomplishment, rain or no rain.

On August 14, Jeremiah again informs us of the progress:

14th. SW. . . The Spire & Fane set on the Steple of the Congr'l. Meetinghouse.<sup>4</sup>

Now the building had taken its final configuration, its tall, slender steeple, topped by a weathervane. It must have impressed even the Methodists. Steeples were still rare in New England, as historian Clifton Olmstead makes clear:

At the center of Puritan community life stood the meetinghouse; the early Puritans would not call it church since it was used for town meetings and other secular purposes as well as public worship. At first it was usually a plain rectangular building without steeple or tower, placed at the center of town. . . Later edifices were patterned after English styles, especially those of Sir Christopher Wren.

This new meetinghouse was very much in style. It made the new Methodist meetinghouse look dowdy.

The speed of its construction was possible, of course, because of the relative simplicity, compared with today. There were no permits required, no codes to comply with. There was no plumbing to install, no wiring to be run, no

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah, on whom we depend, had left the church a few years earlier to become a Methodist. He had selected the site of the just finished Methodist church on Main Street. The steeple was apparently built on the ground and hoisted aloft.

septic system. A simple chimney and a stove was its heating plant. But, even so, it was a great accomplishment.

The speed of construction supports the belief that Frederick Baylies Jr., the architect and builder, relied heavily on a pattern book for the plans. One such book had been published in 1810 and contained a variety of houses, churches and courthouses. Asher Benjamin of Boston, architect and carpenter, was its author. The title is *The American Builder's Companion* and in it are 51 engravings. One shows a church which, except for its flat roof and a few decorative differences, is identical to the Congregational meetinghouse.

The book was available to Baylies. A copy had been bought by Jared Coffin of Edgartown in 1820. Jared was a master carpenter and had married Baylies' sister, Sally. Jared and Heman Arey, one of the Proprietors, were the town's two finest craftsmen. No doubt, Coffin was the head carpenter under his brother-in-law, Frederick Baylies.<sup>5</sup>

This was the second church Baylies designed, the first having been the less handsome Methodist Church (now the Town Hall) which had been dedicated August 9, 1828, a week before the steeple went up on the Congregational meetinghouse.

It was fortunate that the meetinghouse was framed and closed in quickly. The fall months that year were extremely stormy. Jeremiah Pease's diary listed three gales in October and in November 10 days with gale winds, most accompanied by heavy rain. Inside the weathertight building, no doubt, the carpenters were finishing the interior during those stormy days.

Two days before the dedication ceremony, December 24, the Proprietors met to discuss money. They voted to rent all unsold pews, of which there were many, to the highest bidders for one year, the money to be paid quarterly. Daniel Fellows was appointed auctioneer.

In addition, they voted to pay Heman Arey and John

<sup>5</sup> *Vineyard Gazette* clipping, date unknown, tells of the pattern book.

Vinson \$12 a year to "take care and charge of said meetinghouse, attend the fires and the lights therein, sweep out said house, etc., for the current year."<sup>6</sup>

Finally, a committee was chosen to draft a statement, to be voted on the following day, that would describe:

the manner of the government of said house, the leasing or renting out of the pews therein and the appropriation of the avails [income] thereof, as contemplated and agreed upon by the proprietors of said Meeting-house.

The next day, the statement was presented and approved. No copy of it seems to have survived.

December 24, 1828, the meetinghouse was ready to hold its first service, one of dedication. The weather was splendid. It was an inspiring day for all the people in Edgartown, Baptists, Methodists and Congregationalists, many of whom were in attendance. Once again we rely on Jeremiah Pease for details:

Dec. 24th. SW, pleasant. This day the new Calvinist Congragational Meetinghouse was dedicated to the service of Almighty God. Rev'd. Doct. Codman of Dorchester, Rev'ds. J. H. Martin [minister of the church], Mr. Pason of Chilmark & Mr. Woodbury of Falmouth officiated on the occasion. The congregation was large. May the Lord bless the People that worship there.<sup>7</sup>

The new meetinghouse was now the Congregational church, but the financial problems were only beginning. One week after the dedication, the proprietors met and voted again to try to rent out pews "to the best advantage of the proprietors." On January 6, 1829, at another meeting it was voted:

to settle with Rev. J. H. Martyn respecting the money he obtained in New York and elsewhere, as a donation towards building said new Congregational Meetinghouse, to adjust & settle the amount of his expenses on said journey and to ascertain the time said Society ought to lose while on the tour aforesaid . . .

<sup>6</sup> There was a large wood stove in the church.

<sup>7</sup> One who worshipped there was his father, Noah Pease. In September 1827, "Noah Pease experienced religion under Rev. J. H. Martyn." Thomas Cooke diary, p.28, DCHS. This entry and much more appears in the Pease Diary in this issue.

Reverend Martyn had gone to New York to solicit money to help pay for the new building. No record survives of who gave or, in fact, of how much he collected.

In the middle of April 1829, the proprietors voted to solicit subscriptions to pay Reverend Martyn's salary for 1828, now four months in arrears. By December, the proprietors still had not received from Reverend Martyn the money he had raised in New York. Pew rentals were discussed over and over. There was not enough money coming in to pay the minister, let alone to pay back the Proprietors.<sup>8</sup>

There was enough money to buy a bell, the Island's first. On October 29, 1829, the bell in the steeple rang for the first time, according to Thomas Cooke's diary. Eight years later, December 29, 1837, the Proprietors voted:

that the Bell in the new Congregational Meeting-house shall not be tolled or rung for the purpose of announcing the Death of any Individual.<sup>9</sup>

In the year 1830, finances were such a problem that 13 meetings were held by the Proprietors on the subject. In the initial sale, only Proprietors had bought pews: 22 of the 50 available (4 others were free and 1 was the Parson's). The prices ranged from \$40 to \$200. The pews had been appraised at \$5440, but only \$3040 was raised. It was then decided to rent unsold pews to pay the minister. This brought in \$413.50.

With the pew-sale funds, the Proprietors reduced the debt to the Falmouth bank by \$1600 and paid off other overdue bills. The immediate problem seemed to have been solved, but the rental income was not enough to cover annual expenses.<sup>10</sup>

The next year, it was voted to ask Reverend Martyn if

<sup>8</sup> The relationship between the Society and the Proprietors is confusing. Did the Proprietors also pay the minister? What part did the Society members play? The Proprietors had been self-selected. Did they run the church?

<sup>9</sup> Federated Church Book 002, p.20, DCHS. It isn't known what brought this about. Jeremiah Pease's diary has a gap of several months at this time, so we don't know who might have died, prompting this ruling. Help from members is sought.

<sup>10</sup> The Congregationalists must have been envious of the Methodists who had sold all their pews on the afternoon of the dedication service. It took the Congregationalists more than two years. Jeremiah Pease diary, *Intelligencer*, Nov. 1991, p.166.

he would stay another year for whatever amount was collected from pew rentals. If he would not, then "what is the lowest sum?" he would require. The record doesn't show how it was resolved. In any case, Mr. Martyn left before the year ended.

Nor does the record list the contributions by individuals in New York towards building the church. Mr. Martyn had gone there to raise money (the Methodist minister had done the same). The record only states that, members voted to accept from

... the Rev. J. H. Martyn the money collected by him .  
 . . for defraying a part of the expense of erecting a Meeting House . . . [the money to buy] as many Shares of the New Meeting House as the funds collected by Mr. Martyn will liquidate.

Even after that liquidation, it was not until May 1840, more than twelve years after the dedication, that the Proprietors were reimbursed for the money they had advanced. It was also not until then that all bills owed for labor and materials were settled. On that date, May 14, Chairman William Coffin, head of the building committee, received \$452.03, to be used to settle all outstanding bills:

Received of the proprietors of the New Congregational Meeting House four hundred fifty two dollars & 3/100 in full of all Debts, Dues & Demands to this date. [Signed] William Coffin in the presence of Daniel Fellows.

Today, taking twelve years to pay for a new church wouldn't seem long. But in those days, things were different. Churches were cheaper. Religion was a major part of a person's life and families were expected to pay a greater percentage of their income. But it is no wonder that it took 12 years. The town had only 250 families. With the formation of the Baptist and Methodist Societies, it was supporting three meetinghouses and three ministers. The revivals had been a boon for the evangelists, but when they left, there were three times as many bills to be paid.

The Congregational Church had the greatest financial

*Valuation of the Pews in the new Congregational Meetinghouse, Appraised October 28, 1830.*  
*22 Pews sold at Auction this day.*

No. Pew	Appraisal	To whom sold	No. Pew	Appraisal	Sold
1	120.00		30	40.00	
2	150.00	J. Mayhew	31	40.00	
3	150.00	John Osborn	32	50.00	
4	140.00	Obed Fisher (not added)	33	60.00	
5	120.00	Thos. Coffin	34	70.00	
6	100.00	J. Mayhew	35	90.00	
7	110.00		36	90.00	
8	120.00	J. Osborn	37	110.00	
9	150.00	T. Milton	38	105.00	T. Milton
10	120.00	T. G. Mayhew	39	140.00	
11	200.00		40	110.00	J. Osborn
12	115.00	J. Osborn	41	150.00	
13	90.00	T. G. Mayhew	42	110.00	
14	110.00		43	200.00	W. Coffin
15	150.00		44	120.00	D. Fellows
16	105.00	J. Osborn	45	200.00	A. Osborn
17	140.00		46	180.00	
18	90.00		47	170.00	A. Coffin
19	110.00		48	100.00	S. Osborn
20	70.00		49	110.00	S. Osborn
21	90.00		50	120.00	Elijah Pease
22	50.00		51	120.00	
23	60.00		52	170.00	Eng. Coffin
24	40.00		53	150.00	El. May
25	40.00		54	Free	
26	Free				
27					
28					
29					
30					
	2650.		Total	2650.	

Only 22 pews were sold October 28, 1830, the first day of sale, all to Proprietors. Prices: \$40 to \$200. Obed Fisher, who sold the lot, got Pew 4 for nothing.

problems of the three. Its membership was declining, not increasing as were the others. Its membership was aging, with many widows. The young people had been attracted by the evangelicals.

The church had other problems. On May 16, 1851, an arsonist tried unsuccessfully to burn down the church (on the same night he tried to burn the fire-engine house on South Water Street a block away). Fortunately, the burning rags went out before the building caught fire.

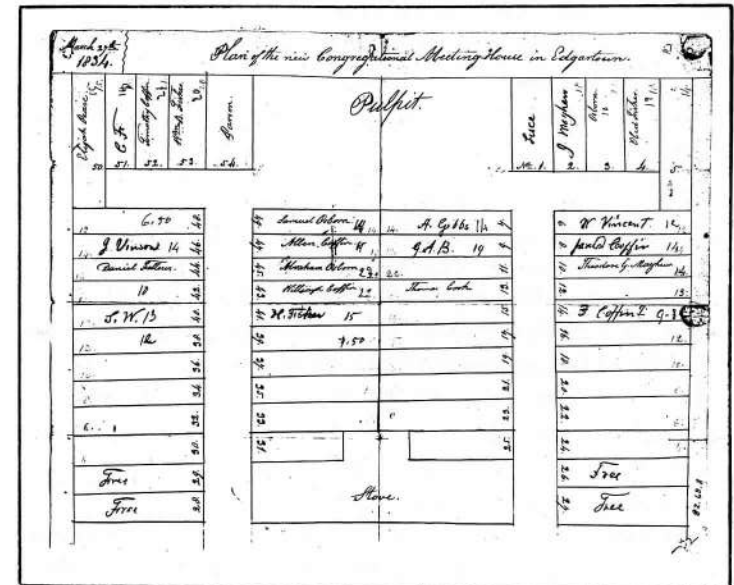
Maintenance of the building was neglected because of the money shortage. A month after the arson attempt, the *Gazette* had this to say:

The Congregational house is a well built substantial edifice, now, however, very much in need of a coat or two of good paint. There is lacking very much at the present time in the church and society, the vitality which is so strongly manifest in the sister churches. There is energy and wealth enough, however, in the body and we hope our orthodox friends will see the necessity of exerting the one and expending the other . . .

Within two months, perhaps out of embarrassment, the members voted to paint and repair the meetinghouse. The Committee of Ladies of the Church was authorized, in addition, to make such Repair and Alterations to the interior as they deem necessary, "provided they do not subject the Proprietors to any Expense whatever."

A year later, as if to demonstrate there were "energy and wealth enough," extensive changes were made in the sanctuary. The *Gazette* reported it this way on November 26, 1852:

The Congregational Meeting House in this town has been of late undergoing some alterations in the interior. The seats have been modernized to some extent and will be far more comfortable than before. The pulpit has been lowered, and other alterations made to correspond with the same, and the whole is now receiving the finishing touch of the painter. We are informed that a new stove has also been procured. The Church is, at the present time, without a minister, but we believe efforts are now making to procure one.



Pew sales were still slow in 1834, as this diagram shows. Four pews, marked Free, were for ordinary folk who couldn't afford to buy or rent a pew.

The church may have been without a minister, but the ladies of the church were keeping active. The following week, the *Gazette* reported that they were "making preparations for a Grand Levee at the Union House on Christmas Eve."

It was a big success, according to the *Gazette*:

The Levee, at the Union House on Christmas Eve, was attended by some three hundred persons, of both sexes. The arrangements for the occasion were of the most pleasing and appropriate description. About 175 partook of the supper, which was of a substantial character, and the utmost propriety and good feeling marked the whole occasion. The music, by the Brass Band, was very fine and elicited much praise.

Christmas Eve "services" were different back in 1852.

There was a major breakthrough in 1853. Clocks came to church. The Methodists had installed a "fine time-piece" a few months earlier and the "Congregational brethren are about following their example." The *Gazette* headline over



the item read: "NO EXCUSE FOR LONG SERMONS."

Competition was keen among the three denominations, not only for souls. The clocks were only one example. A few issues later, the *Gazette* reported another, this time with the Baptists:

It may be of interest to some of our friends abroad to learn that the Ladies of the Congregational Church and Society have recently purchased a beautiful chandelier for their house of worship. Our Baptist friends have also recently furnished their church with a very handsome chandelier.

In 1863 more violence. The Proprietors were authorized to take all lawful means to bring to justice the perpetrators of the act of breaking into the meetinghouse and committing depredations therein.

By 1868, the building needed painting again. Members were asked to subscribe to a fund to pay for the work but, "provided they are accustomed to painting," they could work off their pledges by helping with the work. Surprisingly, it took two separate ballots before it was agreed to paint the building white (the record doesn't indicate the alternative color). Zinc paint was used and the ingredients were purchased in New York, where the prices were lower.

It was decided shingling the roof could no longer be postponed. For years they had been patching leaks, rather than reshingling. In the spring of 1879, it was totally reshingled and the steeple painted (it had not been painted in 1851). The total bill for painting the steeple (two coats), taking down and gilding the weathervane, painting the wooden balls on it yellow, was \$35.

The weathervane had badly needed maintenance:

The vane on the spire . . . has not answered to the wind since 1868, but has remained steadily fixed pointing about E.N.E. during the [11 year] period.

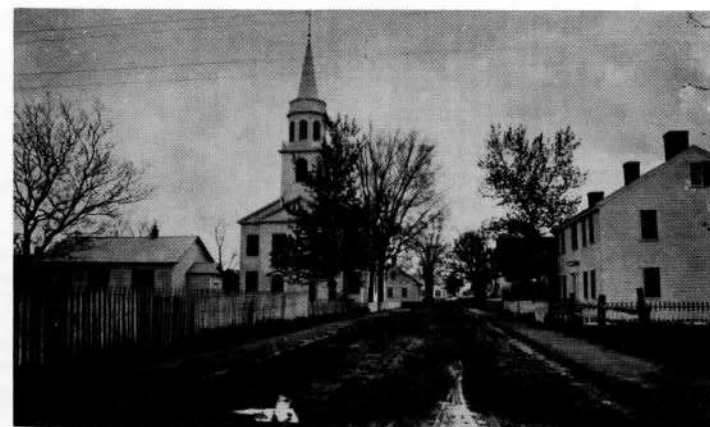
In 1884, on December 2nd, some one wrote in the church record:

Frederick Baylies, Architect and Master builder of the Congregational meeting house now standing in this town died this morning. Aged about 88 years.

For 56 years, he had watched his inspiring structure weather the storms, some natural and others man-made. He must have died content, knowing his work had survived. Four of his meetinghouses were still in use, three as churches and one as the Town Hall. He needed no other memorial.

He surely had forgotten the disappointment he must have felt in 1828 when nearly half the members of the Congregational Society voted not to move into the meetinghouse he had built. Today, in 1992, he would be pleased to know that despite such a tentative start, his building is still filling the task it had been built to do: it is still a house of worship, the only one of his four meetinghouses exclusively so.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The former Edgartown Methodist Church, now called the Whaling Church, is still used for services, but its sanctuary has been converted into a performing arts center. The earlier Methodist Church is the Town Hall; the Baptist Church, a private dwelling. All were designed and built by Baylies.



Looking up Summer Street at the Congregational church about 1880.

## Documents

## Jeremiah Pease Diary

By a fortunate coincidence, the installment of Jeremiah Pease's diary for this issue describes the months around the dedication of the new Congregational meetinghouse. He provides the only outside view of the event.

As regular readers know, he had been an ardent Congregationalist, even a protege of Reverend Joseph Thaxter, until he was "born again" during the revival of Rev. John Adams, Methodist. Jeremiah's family were all Congregationalists, his father-in-law having been a deacon for many years.

The completion of the new church building and its dedication were the principal events of this period. For him, however, the main event was his appointment as lighthouse keeper of the new harbor light off Starbuck's Neck.

His diary gives us a first-hand account of some of the start-up difficulties of the new light. The weather doesn't help, as you will see.

## October 1828 (Continued)

10th. Wind East. This day the kindness of the Lord is again manifest to me in being appointed keeper of the Lighthouse at the mouth of this harbour, every day I am under renewed obligations to Love, serve, & honour my God.<sup>1</sup>

11th. E, flattering. Launched the Revenue Boat.<sup>2</sup>

13th. SSE to S, Gail. Engaged in painting floor of the L-house

<sup>1</sup> His appointment may have resulted from Jeremiah's trips to Boston earlier.

<sup>2</sup> Flattering means promising, encouraging hope.

[lighthouse]. Two of the lower planks washed off the pier in the Gail.

15th. WNW. Received the Oil, etc., for the lighthouse per Sloop Henry of N.Bedford, Capt. Akin. Lighted the lamps for the first time.<sup>3</sup>

16th. NNE & calm. Sold my Shop (2nd) to Capt. Emund Bradley.

17th. NNE & calm. Schr. Hiram arrives from the Straights of B. Isle, having lost Mr. Thaddius Butler on her passage home. He fell from the bowsprit.

19th. ENE. Capt. Silas Butler dies, being an aged man.<sup>4</sup>

20th. ENE, light. Funeral of Capt. Butler. Service by Rev'd \_\_\_\_\_.

21st. NNW. This day 5 of our most approved Pilots are engaged in taking the bairing of the Lights and ascertaining Sailing Directions for this Harbour. Sent off Copy to Gen'l. H.A.S. Dearborn, superintendent for Lighthouses, Boston. Mrs. Depsey [Deborah] Norton, Widow of Lot Norton, dies suddenly.

23rd. Wind SW. Funeral of Widow Norton. Service by Rev'd Wm. Bowlin & Rev'd T.C. Peirce.

24th. NNE. Sloop Chancellor sails for Charlston, S.C.

25th. SW. Schr. Coret sails for Philadelphia.

27th. ENE to SW. S at night. Night SSE to S, Gail, with a little rain, one square of Glass blows out of the Lantern, but does not brake, put in again.

## November 1828

2nd. ENE, rains at night. Quarterly

<sup>3</sup> This is official: Edgartown Harbor Light began operation on October 15, 1828.

<sup>4</sup> Captain Silas was the father of Thaddius [Thadeus] Butler, who had just been lost from the Schooner Hiram.

Meeting at Chilmark. Br. Linsy preaches.

3rd. E to SSE, Gail with rain. Town Meeting for the Choise of Electors for a President, Vice President and a Representative to Congress.<sup>5</sup>

4th. SSE, Gail with rain. Attend Probate Court on business of the Estate of Thos. Fisher Jr. Ship Meridian, Capt. Abrm. Osborn, returns second time from sea, on ac't. of the Capt. Ill health, obtains 25 bbls S. Oil.

5th. SW, fresh breese. Elder Lindsey goes to Nantucket to attend Quarterly meeting there.

11th. SSW to WSW. Bo't. Brother Barstow's Horse.

13th. WNW, cool. Commenced using Winter Oil in the lantern.<sup>6</sup>

21st. SW, pleasant. Ship Rambler arrives & brings news of the Death of James Smith 2nd, who was killed by a Whale.<sup>7</sup>

22nd. ESE, severe Gail. One square of glass blew out of the Lantern.

23rd. WSW, Gail to WNW. Another square of glass blows out of Lant.

25th. N. Sloop Pacific returns from the Cove, etc., etc.<sup>8</sup>

26th. WNW. Set Mr. G. Smith's Son's arm.

## December 1828

4th. WSW, fresh flow. Set 3 new squares of Glass in Lantern.

<sup>5</sup> Democrat Andrew Jackson was elected.

<sup>6</sup> Winter oil was more expensive, less likely to congeal in the cold. Cheaper whale oil often became solid in extreme cold and had to be heated before it could be used.

<sup>7</sup> He was 27 years old, son of Benjamin and Grace Smith of Edgartown. Benjamin was Sheriff, also Town Clerk of Edgartown.

<sup>8</sup> This entry was heavily underlined. Why?

5th. Ditto. Tubeglass broke.<sup>9</sup>

10th. WNW. Took off the Saltworks Vains, etc.<sup>10</sup>

12th. WNW. Went to Tisbury on business of the Estate of John Holley.

15th. WSW. Town Meeting.

20th. SW. Samuel Smith Jr. Child dies, 3 mo. old.<sup>11</sup>

21st. WNW. Boarded Schr. from W. Indias. Funeral of the above ment. Child. Service by Rev'd T.C. Peirce.

23rd. NE to SW. Sent J.T.P. to Holmeshole on business.<sup>12</sup>

24th. SW, pleasant. This day the new Calvinist Congragational Meeting-house was dedicated to the service of Almighty God. Rev'd. Doct. Codman of Dorchester, Rev'ds. J.T. Martin, Mr. Pason of Chilmark & Mr. Woodbury of Falmouth officiated on the occasion. The congregation was large. May the Lord bless the People that worship there.<sup>13</sup>

25th. WNW, fresh. Brig Adaline of Pittston arrives from Martinico with part of the cargo of Ship Independance of Nantucket. Made out my Quarterly accounts for the Lighthouse.

<sup>9</sup> It's a brand-new lantern (the glassed-in structure inside which is the lamp), but the panes keep breaking or being blown out. Everything wasn't perfect in the good old days, especially when built by Capt. Winslow Lewis. The tube glass is the lamp chimney.

<sup>10</sup> A windmill pumped the salt water into the vats of the saltworks. He was removing its vanes for the winter, when the sun isn't strong enough to evaporate water.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Jr., was married to Nancy Jones of Tisbury.

<sup>12</sup> J.T.P. is Jeremiah's eldest son, Joseph Thaxter Pease, named for Reverend Thaxter, whose flock Jeremiah had left.

<sup>13</sup> Edgartown's Federated Church (see articles this issue).

27th. NW to ENE. Contracted for a part of Starbock's Neck so called of Mr. Tisdale Smith & his Wife.<sup>14</sup>

28th. SSW. Brig *Paul Jones*, Jones Master, arrives.

29th. SSW & calm. Attended the discharging of the Brig *Adaline*.

30th. SW, A.M., P.M. Gail. NW. Attended the discharging the Brig *Paul Jones* of Portland & the Brig *Adaline* above ment'd.

31st. NW, fresh breeze. Attended the above. Brig *Paul Jones* finished discharging. Rec'd. a Letter from Gen'l. Dearborn.<sup>15</sup> This night a Watch Meeting is held in the Methodist Meetinghouse. Brs. Pierce & Br. Wm. Bowin, Baptist Minister of this place attends.<sup>16</sup>

## January 1829

1st. Wind SW, rainy. Capt. Peter Pease dies aged 94. Mr. John P. Worth and Mrs. Hannah K. Worth are married this evening. My Wife & myself attended the Wedding. Ceremony by Rev'd T.C. Peirce. Finished discharging Brig *Adaline*.<sup>17</sup>

2nd. NNE. Funeral of Capt. Pease. Service by Rev'd T.C. Peirce. A severe storm, snow & cold.

3rd. NNW, very cold. Difficult to make the lamps burn on acc't. of the cold, the oil being hard.<sup>18</sup> The

<sup>14</sup> He is to build a house there later.

<sup>15</sup> The Superintendent of Lighthouses in Boston.

<sup>16</sup> New Year's Eve prayer meeting. Christmas was ignored.

<sup>17</sup> Mrs. Hannah Worth was the widow of Capt. Thomas Worth, killed during the infamous mutiny on his ship, the *Globe*, in 1824. This wedding was in the Methodist church.

<sup>18</sup> Jeremiah was learning that the oil sold as "winter" oil (fine sperm oil) was often adulterated with cheaper whale oil.

Harbour freezes mostly over in the upper part, the Ice extends from the flats nearly to Chappaquiddic, blows fresh.

5th. N, moderates, light wind. The Ice come against the Pier, carries away several of the fender Piles, find 5 of them on the Point.<sup>19</sup>

7th. SW, moderate, thaws. Weighed the Coffee from the Brig *Paul Jones*. Widow Molty Vincent dies. Mr. Tisdale Smith and his Wife signs the Deed of the land which I contracted with them for on the 27th of Dec. 1828 (see the other Page).<sup>20</sup>

8th. E. to SSW, foggy & rainy. Funeral of Widow Vincent. Service by Rev'd J. H. Martin.

10th. NW, cold. Ship *Loper* [?] of Nantucket arrives from the Pacific.

11th. N, very cold. Makes Ice all day in the harbour.

12th. W to SSW, moderate. Engaged in business of the Estate of T. Fisher Jr.<sup>21</sup>

14th. ESE, SE & calm, thick fog and rains a little. One of the Lamps being out of order (the wire being broken) put in a spare & take the other out.<sup>22</sup>

16th. Calm, very pleasant. Divided the land between Jethro Norton's wife & myself.<sup>23</sup>

22nd. NE to N. Engaged in surveying

<sup>19</sup> The pilings had just been driven a few months before.

<sup>20</sup> The parentheses refers to another page in diary. On this land Jeremiah later built a large house, opposite the lighthouse of which he was keeper.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Fisher of Chappaquiddick, mariner. He had died Jan. 8, 1827, leaving 10 children.

<sup>22</sup> Can any reader tell us what wire was broken?

<sup>23</sup> His meaning is unclear. What was being divided?

land for Thos. Stewart.

29th. WNW, light, cold. Edmund Norton, son of Oliver & Harriet Norton, dies of a Dropsy. Very happy in his mind. Aged 14 Years 8 or 9 months.<sup>24</sup>

30th. NNW. Funeral of the above named Person. Attended in the Methodist Meetinghouse. Service by Rev'd T.C. Peirce.

31st NNE, light, cold. Surveyed Land for Capt. Wal't. Pease \$1.

## February 1829

1st. Wind NNW, pleasant for the season (a pleasant Sabbath).

2nd. ESE to NNE, storm of snow. Went to Sam'l. Smith Esq.'s.

3rd. NNW, cold. Snow about 6 inches deep.

4th. NNW, cold. Went to Chappaquiddic, the wreck of a vessel being on the Reef. Return immediately.<sup>25</sup>

10th. E, calm. AM, PM NNE, snows a little. Bo't. a Cart.

19th. NNW. Capt. James Stewart's Wife dies, leaving 7 children, the Youngest about 3 months old.

20th. ENE, severe snow storm. Funeral of Mrs. Stewart. Service by the Rev'ds. T.C. Peirce & Wm. Bowing.<sup>26</sup> A solemn scene. The affliction of a family under such circumstances is inconceivable by any except those who pass thro the

<sup>24</sup> "Very happy in his mind," meant that he died in the Lord.

<sup>25</sup> It is regrettable that he doesn't tell us the vessel's name.

<sup>26</sup> She was Sally Waldron of Tisbury, 41 years old. Capt. Stewart remarried five months later. Rev. Thomas C. Pierce was the Methodist minister; Wm. Bowen (Bowing) was Baptist.

same. Heavy Gail at night. Capt. Henry Fisher dies.

21st. Wind WNW, fresh breeze, cold. More snow on the ground than there has been for several years at one time. A child of Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ dies at Chappaquiddic.

25th. E to SE, went to Brig *Diamond* of N.York, castaway on the Is'd. of Peskaneice [Penikese?] from Calk [Cork?] with a cargo of Sea Coal, Harde Ware & Irish Passengers. A Severe Gail at night. The vessel in which I went from Holmeshole to T. Cove was castaway on a Ledge of Rocks in the Cove. The Tide was high and the sea broke in upon the Pier of the Lighthouse and the Sea beat against the house, rains and the Ice which had enclosed the Harbour breaks up several of the fender Piles drift away.<sup>27</sup>

26th. I arrived at the Brig. *Gail* at the NNW at night. Remained at the Brig or Is'd. until the 5th day of March when I set out for home in the *Schr. Hiram*. Went into T. Cove. A severe Gail at night from the ESE & NNE.

## March 1829

6th. Wind WSW. Returned home.

7th. WNW. Engaged in discharging Harde Ware from *Schr. Hiram*.<sup>28</sup> Ship *Enterprise* of Nantucket from the Pacific arrives with one of the Missionaries.

<sup>27</sup> Some adventure! Jeremiah goes to investigate a castaway vessel and is cast away himself at Tarpaulin Cove. In the meantime, the lighthouse, which he is supposed to be keeping, has more piles smashed by ice.

<sup>28</sup> Schooner *Hiram* must have been the vessel which took him to Penikese. Apparently, she wasn't damaged on the rock ledge. The hardware would have been part of the castaway vessel's cargo.



## 240 INTELLIGENCER

and his family from the Sandwich Isds. passengers.<sup>29</sup>

8th. Wind WSW to SSW. Ship *Pacific* arrives.<sup>30</sup>

10th. SW. Set out for Quixeshole to Brig *Diamond*. Got to T. Cove.

11th. SW. Arrived to the Brig. The crew of the Sloop (*Sarah*) get about 80 or 100 bushels of Coal upon deck. The weather proves unfavourable & the men give up the attempt of saving any & leave the coal & Brig on the 13th.<sup>31</sup>

12th. SE. Storm.

13th. WSW to W. Gail.

14th. WNW. Gail. Came to the Cove by land.

15th. WNW. Came to H.Hole in sloop \_\_\_\_\_, Capt. Spencer, returned home by land.<sup>32</sup>

16th. E. Went to H.Hole to see if the sloop *Sarah* was going to the Brig again. Return home same day.<sup>33</sup>

17th. ENE, snows at evening 4 inches deep.

18th. WNW. Gail, very cold. Ship *Japan* of Nantucket fr. Pac. Arr.<sup>34</sup>

20th. WNW. Mr. Reuben Vincent dies.

21st. WNW. Funeral of Mr. V. Service by Rev'd. Wm. Bowing. Capt. Edy

<sup>29</sup> Did the missionaries settle on the Vineyard? This was the second voyage of *Enterprise*. She had left in 1826, Capt. Obed Swain, bringing back 2900 barrels sperm, a successful voyage.

<sup>30</sup> The *Pacific*, also from Nantucket, brought 2182 barrels sperm.

<sup>31</sup> Another adventure. Being customs inspector was not a desk job.

<sup>32</sup> He must have walked across Pasque, crossed Robinson's Hole and then walked to Tarpaulin, sailed to Holmes Hole and perhaps by carriage to Edgartown.

<sup>33</sup> This makes one appreciate the telephone. An entire day spent.

<sup>34</sup> The *Japan* had left in December 1825; returned with 2134 barrels sperm.

Coffin dies, aged 29.<sup>35</sup>

22nd. ENE to NNE. Gail & snow. The most severe storm for many years at this season.

23rd. WNW. Gail. Funeral of Capt. Coffin. Service by Rev'ds. Mr. Peirce & Martin. Brig *Planter*, Capt. I.H. Pease, arrives with 400 bbls. s. [sperm] oil from the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>36</sup>

### April 1829

9th. E by E [?], rain with some thunder & lightning. Went to Brig *Diamond* [on Penikese].

14th. WSW. Mr. William Stewart dies, he having being sick some time.

16th. SSW. Funeral of Mr. Stewart. The Corpse was carried to the Methodist Meetinghouse. Service by the Rev'ds. Pierce, Martin & Bowen. The Congregation was very large.<sup>37</sup>

19th. SW, fresh breeze. Returned from Brig *Diamond*.

24th. SW. Sold My Shop (2nd) to Thomas Cithcart [Cathcart].

27th. WSW. Went to H.Hole on Business relative to running the lines between Edgartown & Tisbury. Returned at evening.

29th. NNW. Returned from H. Hole. Ship *Congress*, Capt. Benjamin Worth Master, arrives in H.Hole with a full cargo of sperm Oil.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> The young captain was the son of Peter and Lois Coffin.

<sup>36</sup> *Planter* had been gone less than two years. A small brig, the 400 barrels was a full load, according to Starbuck.

<sup>37</sup> William Stewart, 61, was a Chilmark mariner, who had moved to Edgartown. His wife was Bathsheba Tilton. All three denominations took part in the service. Jeremiah was not present, he was still at Penikese Island.

<sup>38</sup> Another Nantucket whaler. She brought 2507 barrels sperm.

## 1992 Regional High School Historical Essay Contest

The number of entries increased markedly this year, as did the quality of both the research and the writing. Essays must discuss Dukes County history with the research being done at the Historical Society. We are pleased to announce the winners:

### First Prize: \$50

Stephanie Robin daRosa

Mary Sulfouc Araujo & Mary Viera Campos:

An Essay on Oral Histories

### Second Prize: \$30

Daniel Hagerty

Martha's Vineyard Had a Railroad?

### Third Prize: \$20

Dana Costanza

Whalers of the Northern Arctic

### Honorable Mentions:

(In alphabetical order)

Brian Abbott

The Gold Rush

Karin Averill and Roberta DeBettencourt

Oral History

Samantha Look

The Martha's Vineyard Railroad

Chris Melrose

The City of Columbus Disaster

Akeyah Nunes

The History of Naushon Island

James Walton

Two Votes for 22 Years of Prosperity

The Society congratulates the winners and is grateful to all students who submitted essays. It is our hope that the research has heightened their interest in Island history.

All receive a one-year membership in the Society.

The Essay Committee is appreciative of the efforts of Mrs. Marjorie Harris, head of the Social Studies department at the High School. Special thanks go to Ann Coleman Allen, Society Librarian/Archivist, for her generous commitment of time and energy and to Melissa Tinker Howland, who contributed the prizes in honor of her father, Harold L. Tinker.



The following persons <sup>19</sup> have withdrawn  
from the Congregational Society agreeably  
to law by leaving with me certificates  
of being members of the First Baptist Society  
in Edgartown.

April 29 1824

Thomas Cook Esq  
Abigail Cook  
Allen Coffin  
West-Lane  
Samuel G. Vinson  
Thomas Coffin 2  
Harrison Vinson  
Charles Brunker  
Margaret Strong  
Samuel Daggett  
Hortlaw Crosby  
Sally Dunham  
Richard Brunker  
Samuel Whelden  
Isaiah Pease  
William B. Fisher  
Elijah Norton  
Radlock Norton  
Constant Norton  
Samuel Vinson  
James Bunting  
May 25 William Coffin  
June 25 Benjamin Dunham

Attest  
Isaiah D. Pease  
Society's Clerk  
April 29, 1824

Largest defection from Thaxter's church went to the Baptists in April 1824.  
Among the prominent citizens was William Coffin, see fn, p. 225.

April 17, 23, 25, 29, 30, 1824 the following persons  
have withdrawn from the Congregational Society  
agreeable to law by leaving with me certificates  
that they were members of the Methodist  
Society in Edgartown

Richard W. Severy, Birdale Smith, Henry  
Wipley, Joseph Vincent, Isaiah D. Pease, Joseph  
Thompson & Joseph T. Kelley  
Isaiah Pease  
George W. Lane William Severy or  
Isaiah D. Pease Sec. Clerk  
Thomas Severy, Arnold Butler.

In the same month, those listed above joined the Methodists, among them  
Jeremiah Pease and Isaiah D. Pease, Congregational secretary.