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THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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The Edgartown Engine Company And the Fires It Fought

1836 — 1906

by STEVE VANCOUR



Cottage City bathers, 1866,
by Harper's Weekly artist.

Bathing Suits
at Cottage City
In the
Late 1800s

Moments in History

The Vineyard's First Airplane Arrivals

Documents: Henry Baylies' Journal

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Thomas Cooke House, Fresnel lens and Huntington Library, with
Congregational steeple in background, available on postcards and note paper.

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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 by membership dues, contributions and bequests, which are tax deductible. Its annual meeting is held in August in Edgartown.

The Society operates The Vineyard Museum on its grounds at School and Cooke Street, Edgartown. The Museum includes the Thomas Cooke House, circa 1765, a house museum of Island history, open from mid-June to mid-September. Also on the grounds are the Francis Foster Gallery, the Capt. Francis Pease House and the Gale Huntington Library of History, open all year, as are the Gay Head Light exhibit with its 1854 Fresnel lens and the Carriage Shed containing boats, wagons, an 1854 Button hand-pumper fire engine and many other examples of Vineyard memorabilia, including the gravestones of Nancy Luce's favorite hens, circa 1860.

All buildings are open free to members. Non-members are charged a nominal entrance fee. Research assistance is provided in the Huntington Library.

You are invited to join the Society. You will receive this journal four times a year with your membership.

The Edgartown Engine Company And the Fires It Fought

1836 — 1906

(Part One)

by STEVE VANCOUR

THE fire department that serves the town of Edgartown is more than 150 years old, dating back to the 1830s, when it was formed as the Edgartown Engine Company, comprised of six companies: Engine No. 1, the "Fountain"; Engine No. 2, the "Torrent"; plus Hose Reel No. 1, Hose Reel No. 2, a Hook and Ladder Company, and a Salvage Company. Forty-four volunteers served these six companies. Today, the Edgartown Fire Department also has six companies and its members, still volunteers, now total 50.

Any history of the department must begin shortly before it was formed, on the night of February 3, 1836. That was the night of the Davis Academy fire, a major conflagration that so shocked the village a movement began to form a fire company. Within a few months, the company was organized and two engines purchased. The following article, consisting mostly of contemporaneous accounts, describes the formation of the company and the fires it fought between 1836 and 1906, when, with the installation of hydrants and water pressure, its name was changed to the Edgartown Fire Department.

The Davis Academy Fire, 1836

Edgartown's first major fire on record occurred in 1836 when the Davis Academy burned to the ground.¹ It was

¹ Charles E. Banks, *History of Martha's Vineyard*, DCHS, "Annals of Edgartown," v.2, p.194, 1966.

STEVE VANCOUR, a member of the Society, is well qualified to write this history. Lieutenant of Hook & Ladder Company No. 1, he became curious about the department history and started assembling fire-related stories from old newspaper files. In the process, he became addicted to historical research. Now, he has broadened his interest to other fields. This is, we hope, the first of many articles.

a cold night with a WNW wind. Ice was starting to form in the harbor. Shortly after midnight on February 3rd, the church bell started to ring when the alarm of "Fire!" was sounded.

The Davis Academy was in flames. The Academy, a preparatory school (the town had no high school) operated by David Davis Esq., had succeeded the Thaxter Academy two years earlier. Here's how Jeremiah Pease recorded the dramatic event in his diary:

... at about 1/2 past 12 o'clock, Fire was cried, the Church Bell rang, the People ran, it proved to be the Academy belonging D. Davis, situated in the centre of the Town. The fire could not be subdued when the people arrived. It burned to the ground. Capt. Jason Luce's house took fire on the end most exposed. By the Blessing of heaven, and the extraordinary exertions of the People, it was extinguished to the great Joy of all good Citizens.

Water was obtained from the Wells and a Pond near the fire, which was caused by the late remarkably heavy rains. The alarm was great, being the first fire ever known to burn a Building down in this village.

Much credit is due the Citizens & all present for their exertions and good deportment on the occasion. The Looss [sic] of Mr. Davis, about \$1000, Dammage of Capt. Luce's House abo't \$300. Capt. Luce's House was insured.²

Davis Academy was rebuilt with financial help from residents and families of students.³ The owner and headmaster, David Davis, was a Vineyarder, born in Eastville in 1802, the son of Sanford and Mary (Coffin) Davis. The family moved to Farmington, Maine, in his youth, but he returned to the Island in the 1830s, forming the Academy. About 1840, he gave up teaching (the school continued) to serve as a lawyer and was elected to the Massachusetts Council in 1855. He died in 1868 at 66 years.

The devastation resulting from the Academy fire convinced the people of Edgartown that a system for fighting fire was needed. On February 15th, less than two weeks after

² Jeremiah Pease Diary, DCHS, February 3, 1836.

³ The new building still stands at the corner of Davis Lane and School Street. The original school may have been on that same site, but it is not certain. Jeremiah Pease simply placed it "in the centre of the Town."

the fire, a special town meeting was called "to see if the Town will purchase one or more fire engines. . . Hooks, ladders and other apparatus necessary to extinguish fire and erect building or buildings for the preservation of Engines, etc."

The assembled citizens voted to buy two engines, hoses, fire hooks, ladders and other necessary apparatus and to borrow an amount not to exceed \$2500 to pay for the equipment. They also voted "the thanks of the Town to be presented to Col. A. Crane, Capt. C. P. Snow & Capt. Gould of Brig *Brutus* & to Mssrs., Stetson, Stowell, Bly, Briggs & Clark & all other strangers that was [sic] at the late fire of the academy, for their exertions in extinguishing the fire." A committee was named to select and purchase the equipment.

Opposition immediately developed to such a major expenditure. A petition, signed by 21 leading citizens, called for a special town meeting to reconsider the action. The meeting was held on March 3rd. The Court House was crowded. A Yes and No vote on reconsidering the earlier action was taken. The vote to reconsider (being against spending the money) totalled 66; the vote not to reconsider, 109. Thus, the earlier vote stood and the committee went ahead with the purchase.

Within one month, a number of bylaws were adopted and the Island's first fire department, the "Edgartown Engine Company," was established. The bylaws required that a roll call be taken at each monthly meeting and any member not responding was to be fined 25 cents, unless providing an adequate explanation. Fire-wards, as the fire officers were called, were to be elected. They were responsible for the management of the company, the enforcement of the bylaws and for deploying the men and engines at the fire. Each Fire-ward was given a speaking trumpet for shouting orders and a hat with a black band that had "Fire-Ward" painted on it in white letters.⁴

One of the new bylaws required all citizens to maintain in good repair leather buckets for fire fighting. Each house

⁴ Vineyard Gazette, Feb. 3, 1856; also Feb. 9, 1866.

was to have a bucket outside the front door, so that during a fire the buckets could be quickly collected by those running to the scene. To ensure their proper return, each bucket was labeled with the owner's name. In addition, many were decorated with a colorful patriotic scene.⁵

The two new engines arrived on July 6, 1836. Company No.1 named its, "Fountain" and Company No. 2, "Torrent." We know much more about the Torrent company because its record book is in the archives of the Society, having been presented to it by W. S. Osborn in 1924. Elected captain of Torrent company was Abraham Osborn, with David Davis (of the Academy) and Jeremiah Pease (the diarist) as Assistant Captains. Lloyd Daggett was elected Pipeman, Henry A. Coffin, Clerk and Treasurer.

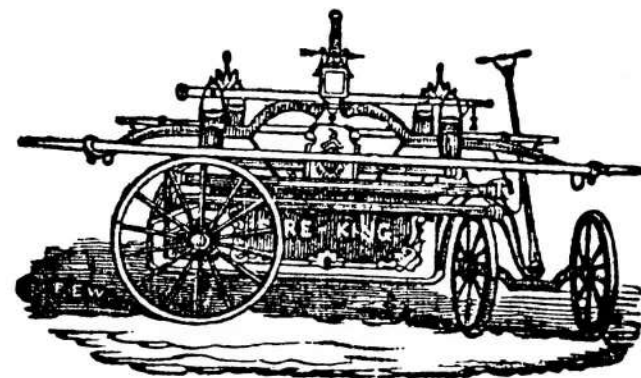
Torrent company met at once to "exercise the new engine" and soon was throwing "a body of water 110 feet on a level." After the workout, Henry A. Coffin was named foreman of the suction hose, with William Ripley and Samuel W. Fellows as crew. Joseph V. Kelley was chosen foreman of the leading hose, assisted by Sirson P. Coffin, Edgar M. Baylies, Jared Coffin and Lloyd Daggett.

Other equipment included hoses, hose carriages, ladders and hooks. Each hose carriage carried 400 feet of 1 1/2-inch riveted leather hose. This hose required frequent oiling to keep it workable and to prevent cracking and leaking. It was superior to canvas-covered hose and the newly developed rubber hose, but more expensive.

Although the record doesn't indicate it, the author believes the new engines were "Fire King" hand-operated pumpers, made by the Hunneman Company of Boston. Each engine company had its own hose-reel company. Both the engines and the hose reels were mounted on wheeled carriages and were pulled by the firemen as they ran to the fire. Water was supplied to the engines either by a bucket line, which dumped it into a tub, or was pumped directly from a nearby source.

⁵ The Society has buckets dated 1836, bearing names of Smith and Coffin. Apparently, engines carried buckets also, as we have one labelled "Torrent No.2."

ENGINE MEETING.



THE members of the Button Engine Company, are requested to meet at their hall, on Saturday evening next, at 7 o'clock. A full attendance is requested. Per order. ap26

Vineyard Gazette, April 27, 1860

Although the ad announces a Button Engine Company meeting, the drawing is of a "Fire King," the hand pumper that preceded the Button.

The two engines were identical. Most of the company were needed to man the brakes, an up-and-down action that worked the pump piston, providing water pressure. If a water source was available nearby, both engines would play their hoses directly onto the fire, fighting it from two directions. The water was pumped from cisterns, from the harbor or a pond, through ten-foot sections of rigid suction hose.

When no water supply was nearby, the first engine to arrive was designated the "tub" engine and was positioned as close to the fire as possible. The name "tub" came from the fact that it would draw water from an open tub which the other engine and the bucket line kept filled.

Sometimes, the "tub" engine would be connected directly by hose with the suction engine which served as a relay pumper, feeding water directly into the engine that actually fought the fire. When operated in this manner, the second engine, the second one to arrive, was known as the "suction" engine. Hose from the reels was attached to the suction engine's discharge port and rolled out to the tub engine.

The brakes, which powered the pump, were two wooden

bars running the full length of the engine, one on each side. Operated in up-and-down strokes, they pumped water only on down strokes.

Teamwork usually determined which task each engine was assigned. The engine that arrived first got to fight the fire and get the glory for saving the day! As a result, competition between the two companies was fierce. Each crew tried to be first, to be designated the “tub” engine, and enjoy the excitement of playing the water on the flames. The second company had the more onerous task of setting up at the water source and supplying the tub with water. Sometimes, the competition became so fierce that each company would insist on operating independently as tub engines, attacking the fire with water from tubs kept filled by buckets.

The reality of fire fighting in those days was such that when the flames broke through the walls or the roof, the building was likely to be a total loss. It was therefore imperative to save as much of the residents' belongings as possible. To accomplish this, a hook-and-ladder company and a salvage company were formed. It was their responsibility to provide access to second-story windows and to salvage belongings before they were destroyed. The wooden ladders and hooks had to be carried on the shoulders of the crews as they ran to the fire.

Buildings close to the fire and in danger of burning had their contents removed as well. Other volunteers, many of them women, would assist the Hook & Ladder and Salvage companies carrying items from the buildings.

An Engine House was built on South Water Street.⁶ All apparatus and equipment were stored there and in it the company held its meetings. Drills were held on an adjacent lot next to the harbor, an endless water supply, which made it an ideal spot to practice "drafting" (pumping) water. Forty-four men, each paid \$4.00 a year by the town, were assigned to the company.

To complete the town's new fire-protection system, cisterns were dug throughout the village to provide

⁶ The engine house was moved in the 1870s to Pease's Point Way, where it still stands.



Walling Map of 1858 shows the location of "Engine" house on So. Water St.

additional sources of water. Each rated at 50 barrels (2500 gallons), the cisterns were covered pits lined with stone, six feet in diameter and approximately six feet deep. The first three were at Main and Water Streets, at Main and Summer Streets, and near the Court House at the intersection of Main and Church Streets. Later, an additional cistern was placed off Davis Lane, near the newly built Davis Academy.

Other water sources included the harbor, a number of smaller cisterns near private homes, and two large wells owned by Dr. Daniel Fisher near today's Memorial Wharf that supplied water for whaleships. Water from these wells was pumped by a small steam engine to a tank on the Fisher wharf. With these sources, the engines could be placed close to most downtown fires and thereby reduce the length of hose needed for "drafting" and "leading." With the remaining hose, additional streams of water could be played on the fire.

Surprisingly, fires were rare. It was not until six months

after the company was formed that it heard its first alarm. That was on the night of December 23, 1836. The company proved itself: "In three minutes from the first alarm of fire, the engine & company were ready to meet the call & attend to any duties that might be thought necessary." Anticlimactically, the alarm turned out to be false.⁷

During the fire company's first two years, all fires were promptly responded to and easily controlled. The Record of the Torrent Engine No. 2 lists the following alarms during those years:

1. December 23, 1836: False alarm
2. February 13, 1837: Chimney fire at the home of Thomas Norton
3. July 8, 1837: Fire in Benjamin Kidder Jr.'s store, "damage was slight."
4. November 3, 1837: A second fire at Kidder's store. It "would have been totally destroyed but for the timely assistance of this engine company. Considerable damage done."
5. May 12, 1838: Fire at G. T. Cornell's Bakehouse.⁸

Cornell's Bakehouse Fire, 1838

As the above list shows, the first three fires were minor. The second Kidder fire was slightly more serious, but the first major test of the engine company occurred on May 12, 1838, at Cornell's Bakehouse on Dock Street near today's Mayhew Lane. Jeremiah Pease, the town's unofficial diarist and a founding member of Torrent company (but no longer active in it), wrote the following account:

May 12. SW. Mr. G. T. Cornell's Bake house takes fire. Seen at 1/2 past 3 o'clock a.m. Soon extinguished by the Engines. Dammaged the building about \$80. Loss of Bread &c. \$3 or \$400.⁹

Henry A. Coffin, clerk of the Torrent company, gave the damage as \$75 to the bakery and about \$300 "to bread, etc., in the building. The engine & company as usual were prompt & active."

Perhaps due to a lack of fires, membership in the company

⁷ Records of the Edgartown Fire Engine Torrent No. 2, DCHS, p.14.

⁸ Torrent, DCHS, frontispiece.

⁹ The bakehouse produced mostly hardtack, a non-spoiling bread carried aboard whalers.

kept declining and by 1838 only 26 men were on the roster. When, in June 1840, the Selectmen agreed to excuse firemen from payment of the poll tax, the membership quickly increased to 42. This was too much for the town's budget and it limited membership to 30, at \$4 a year each.

The bylaws were rewritten in 1843. One change authorized payment of \$3 a year to the company clerk, the money to come from the Fine fund. Those fines, which made up the fund's income, were then reduced to 12 1/2 cents, but no excuses would be accepted for absences. No fine was to be collected for absence from a special meeting, unless 48 hours notice of the meeting had been given. Any member who left his post at a fire would be fined 25 cents. All members except the foreman of the leading hose were required to pull on the drag ropes en route to a fire, subject to a 12 1/2 cent fine.

By 1844, absences were so frequent (the fines were deducted from the \$4 pay) the money collected had reached a point where the company appointed a committee to determine how it should be spent. The committee reported back that it could not decide such a matter, it was up to the membership. One member of the committee, Henry A. Coffin, submitted a dissenting report, proposing that a dinner be held on July 4th for members and invited guests.

The proposal, which began simply as a "dinner," quickly grew into a Fourth of July celebration, the first in the town's history. It began with the ringing of church bells and firing of cannon at 8 a.m., and the hoisting of flags aboard vessels in port. At one o'clock, the company, "dressed in uniform, consisting of white pants, red shirts, trimmed and glazed hats with appropriate badges," then paraded the Torrent around the village, ending up at the Congregational Church where Samuel Osborn Jr., gave the Oration of the Day. The choir, led by organist (and company clerk) Henry A. Coffin, sang "Hosannah to the Lord of Lords," a piece composed especially for the occasion by A. G. Pickens.

After the service, the company and guests, including Parade Marshal Leavitt Thaxter, marched to a tent on the

property of Thomas Cooke (now the Society grounds), where dinner was served by Archibald Mellen (also a member of the engine company). After the meal, they dragged the Torrent to the cistern near Davis Hall and demonstrated their pumping skills. They then paraded along North Water Street, stopping in front of John P. Norton's house,

to salute the persons on board the steamer *Massachusetts*. The Boat came in [from New Bedford] full of passengers and was saluted with three cheers, which was promptly returned by those on board. . . The company then proceeded to escort the Orator of the Day home. Three hearty cheers were given and the company were then discharged. A salute of 26 guns was fired at sunset, the bells rang merrily at 9 o'clock, and thus ended the celebration of our National Independance. . .

The four-page account of the events of the day in the Torrent record book written by Clerk Henry A. Coffin concludes:

I will end with the sentiments of the Orator, as expressed at the time the company escorted him home and were about to disperse: "Union forever to the members of Engine Company Number 2."¹⁰

The July 4th dinner and celebration brought such a warm feeling to the townspeople, the Selectmen approved the earlier request the company had made for a new suction hose. When the hose arrived, the company met and

The engine was taken to the cistern near the store of Samuel Osborn Jr., and the new suction hose worked better than our former suction hose ever did. The engine worked well & the suction hose was pronounced good.

But all did not work as well as the hose: "Daniel C. Pease did not take hold of the drag rope either in going to go returning from the cistern & did not assist in working the engine & was consequently fined Twenty Five cents by the Foreman."¹¹

¹⁰ *Torrent*, DCHS, p.89.

¹¹ *Torrent*, DCHS, p.90. Pease was not the only laggard. At the March meeting, "Samuel Osborn Jr., was fined 12 1/2 cents for neglecting to assist in dragging the engine to the cistern." In September, Jared W. Coffin, Daniel C. Pease and Ellis Lewis were fined "for not assisting in drawing the engine."

On August 31, 1844, hoping to take further advantage of the good feelings it now had with the town, the company voted that

. . . a committee of three persons be appointed to wait on the selectmen & request them to put into the cisterns that have been finished & any others that may hereafter be built, an iron tube leading from below the water to the upper part of the cistern, above the ground with a screw at the end that will fit our suction hose; said iron tube to be used instead of so much suction hose.¹²

During this period, fire activity was very slight. Only one building fire was reported between 1838 and 1845 and that was a minor one on March 8, 1845, in the corn house of M. Vincent. The company responded, but did not go to the fire:

There was an alarm of fire this evening [at 10 o'clock] occasioned by the burning of a corn-house belonging to Martin Vincent. The engine was taken out, but did not go to the fire, it being some distance out of town. In three minutes from the time the bell began to ring, 21 members of the company were on hand ready for duty. The members of No. 2 are always wide awake.¹³

The report concludes enthusiastically: "After giving three cheers, the company returned home."

Despite the company's good spirits, not all was well. Joseph V. Kelley, the elected foreman of the company, had not been attending the monthly meetings and was removed from his office. David Davis was chosen to "settle with the ex-foreman, Joseph V. Kelly," who was also company treasurer. At the April meeting, another piece of bad news was discussed:

There were some observations made in regard to a late vote of the town, whereby the Enginemen were only to be allowed their poll tax [but no longer their pay of \$4 a year].

Definite action was deferred for the present.

That year, 1845, Coffin listed 29 members, with pay to them ranging from a low of \$1.55 to a high of \$5.41. The differences were caused by fines for each absence from

¹² *Torrent*, DCHS, p.95.

¹³ *Torrent*, DCHS, p.98. Martin Vincent lived on the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven road about a half mile beyond the Triangle.

meetings. The fines were deducted from the \$4 yearly payment. Each member received an equal share of the fine money, regardless of attendance record. Here is how Coffin summarized the 1845 finances:

Total amount paid by town:	\$120.00	
Amount due members for attendance:	\$70.29	1/2
Amount of fines withheld:	49.70	1/2
Deductions from fine fund:		
Clerk's fee:	3.00	
Cost of this book:	4.58	
Amount of fine money to be divided:	\$45.12	1/2

Early in May, at a special meeting, Davis reported that ex-foreman Kelley had "given a satisfactory explanation for his absences" and was allowed to remain in the company, although "he has to pay his fines."¹⁴

The men were becoming impatient and again requested that the selectmen "attend to the iron tubes for each cistern." In addition, the company voted to inform the selectmen that they "will not serve as Enginemen for the amount of our poll tax only. . . [we must be paid] Four Dollars for one year's service, that being the only condition on which the members. . . will serve for the ensuing year."

A joint meeting was held with Engine Company No. 1, the Fountain company, and its members also stated they would not serve without pay. A special town meeting on the matter was held three weeks later. The town voted to pay the firemen \$4 a year, plus excusing them from the poll tax.

The infrequency of fires caused members again to lose interest. As the older men dropped out, new members were not forthcoming. Soon, they were down to two companies from the original six. In a reorganization, the two engine companies took over the duties of the hose companies, the salvage and ladder companies. Eventually, as manpower continued to decline, the department was reduced to one company; surviving was Engine Company No. 2, Torrent. We don't know exactly when Company No. 1 disbanded, but it was still active in 1846 at the Osborn store fire.

¹⁴ Kelley, however, did not attend any future meetings.

Osborn Store Fire, 1846

On March 26, 1846, a fire was fought in the clothing store of Samuel Osborn Jr., on lower Main Street. It broke out at 10:00 p.m., and caused extensive damage. The building was owned by the estate of Timothy Coffin. Because of the prompt action of both engine companies, it was saved, enabling Osborn to reopen in June.

This was the first fire involving the property of a member of the company. Samuel Osborn Jr., had been a member since May 1837, but attended the meetings infrequently. His fines, along with those of about eight other frequent absentees, kept the treasury in good shape. He was not with the engine company when it fought the fire in his store, being listed as "absent." He did attend the company meeting two days later, serving as Clerk *pro tem*, in the absence of Henry A. Coffin. Damage to the goods was \$1000, partly insured, and to the store, \$150, fully insured. The Torrent company performed well, throwing "water on the fire some time before the other engine Company."¹⁵

Fire aboard the Brig William Pitt, 1846.

One week after the fire at Osborn's store, the engine company was called to Osborn's wharf when fire broke out on the Boston brig, *William Pitt*. No alarm was sounded and no ringing of the church bells, but Capt. Abraham Osborn, agent for the insurance company, somehow called for help when he saw smoke coming from the vessel tied up at his dock. The Torrent record tells the story:

The Engine was taken out at 10 1/2 a.m. to a fire in the Brig *William Pitt* of Boston, Capt. Howes. It was caused by spontaneous combustion of Cotton, etc. The cargo, consisting of Cotton, Wool, Cloths, Glass, Books, Dry Goods of all kinds, etc., was much injured by the fire & the deck of the vessel was nearly burned through & but for the prompt exertions of this company might have been totally destroyed.

There was a very valuable painting on board, called Anelli's [?] grand painting of the end of the world, valued from \$15,000 to \$20,000. It was somewhat wet but not much

¹⁵ Torrent, DCHS. Also Pease Diary.

damaged.¹⁶ There was not a general alarm of fire, but the Engine was taken out at the request of Capt. Abraham Osborn, the Agent for the Insurance Co's., & he agreed to pay for the services rendered. The other Engine was not taken out. The Engine was taken on to Coffin & Osborn's wharf, & the water drawn by the suction hose from the ocean; worked well but very hard.

It being Fast day & no alarm of fire, many of the company were absent. [14 men are listed as having "worked the Engine," two of them, William Henry King and Watson S. Butler, were not members of the company but each worked "as though he was. . ."]

The Engine was returned to the House about 2 o'clock p.m., after having been taken to the cistern of fresh water, where it was played out, both as a suction & a tub engine, etc.¹⁷

A formal report was written up of the *William Pitt* fire and was accepted by the company at a meeting April 4, 1846:

. . . From the fact that the members of this engine company are always on hand, they were called upon by Capt. Abraham Osborn, the Agent for the Ins. Co's., to extinguish the fire in the hold of of [sic] the Brig *Wm. Pitt*; which service they rendered & thereby saved much valuable property & the Captain of the Brig said to one of your committee that we about "saved vessel & cargo & that without the aid of the company they would have been much more damaged, if not wholly destroyed."

The Captain & Agent have therefore awarded & presented to this company, as a testimonial of their approbation for the services rendered, the sum of Thirty Five Dollars . . .

Your Committee would recommend. . . that the money be appropriated as follows: viz., one half. . . divided among those ~~members~~ persons¹⁸ who worked the engine and assisted in extinguishing the fire & the other half to be divided among all the members of the company.

Beginning shortly after the fire on the brig, dissatisfaction

¹⁶ Does any reader know what painting this could have been? The valuation would suggest it was famous.

¹⁷ Salt water was rinsed out to protect engine from corrosion.

¹⁸ *Torrent*, DCHS, p.116. The word "members" was replaced with "persons" because two non-members, King and Butler, had helped man the pumper. Non-members got \$1.25; 12 members who were at the fire got \$1.87 1/2; 16 absent members got 62 cents. Total: \$35.

spread among the engine company. The town was not keeping its promise to pay them \$4 a year and, as a protest, the men stopped attending the monthly meetings. Out of the 30 members in the *Torrent* company, as many as 26 were regularly absent during the summer of 1846. In September, it was voted to notify the selectmen "that the members of the company do not attend & that they will not do so unless they are paid." Apparently, nothing was done and the absenteeism grew. There are no meetings on record during the entire year of 1847 and 1848. However, the two companies continued to serve the community. The company's mood was so bitter that nobody bothered to record the Norton fire, below, in the record book.

Norton Rooming House Fire, 1848

The *Vineyard Gazette*, founded a year earlier, had its first report of a fire in February 1848:

Tuesday morning, February 4, a fire was discovered in the house on Water Street owned by John P. Norton Esq., and occupied by Albert Morse and C. B. Marchant. The fire took in a bedroom, completely destroying the contents. Several citizens assisted the occupants in putting the fire out just as both fire companies arrived at the scene.¹⁹

By this time, because of the lack of maintenance due to absenteeism, the engines and hose carriages were in poor condition. The engines had always been hard to operate and inefficient in their output. At a fire, the enginemen would soon tire from the strenuous effort needed to man the brakes continuously and at times would have to be relieved on the brakes by bystanders. Of the two engines, the *Torrent* was the more serviceable, probably because its crew (prior to the wage dispute) trained regularly and maintained it in good working order. For short periods of time, they were able to pump a single stream of water through 200 feet of hose to a height of 100 feet. However, vertical streams of such heights could not be sustained for long periods without bringing in fresh "pumpers" to man the brakes.

The other engine, the *Fountain*, unattended for several

¹⁹ *Gazette*, Feb. 6, 1848. The Norton rooming house is now the Edgartown Inn.

years, had become quite useless. It had not been taken out of the engine house for some time and no maintenance had been done. It was doubtful if it could any longer pump water. Its pump leathers, essential to drawing water, were in need of re-placing and its leather hose had become dry and cracked and needed to be re-oiled.

The Fire-wards in 1848 were Chief Engineer Daniel Fisher, Daniel Fellows, Charles Pease, Abraham Osborn, Frederick Baylies Jr., S. G. Vincent and Win Vinson. These men, aware of the condition of the engines, realized they would not be able to control a major fire with such equipment.²⁰

In March 1849, the town voted to resume paying the firemen. That month, 30 men, the maximum number the town would pay, reenlisted as members of Torrent company. David Davis was elected company foreman, Francis Adlington, foreman leading hose, and Henry A. Coffin, foreman suction hose (he was also company clerk). Chase Pease Jr. was pipeman.

On March 31, 1849, the pay dispute resolved, the Torrent engine was given its first practice run in months:

. . . the Engine was taken to the cistern near W. P. Chadwick's shop & played out. At first, she threw water very well, but suddenly the leather to both boxes was broken and she would not throw water at all. She was then taken to the house in order to be put in good order.

The broken-down Torrent was not the only matter taken up by the Engine Company at the March meeting. The enginemen passed a resolution:

Whereas several individuals, who have been active members of the company for a number of years & some of whom have been officers of this company, are about to leave us & go to California, therefore —

Resolved, that the Foreman & Clerk be a committee to state to those individuals the regret of this company in parting. . . & to express to them the good feelings of this company toward them & our wishes for their prosperity & success.

The company also voted once again to meet with the selectmen and ask them to put an iron tube in each cistern,

²⁰ Gazette, July 26, 1849.

a request made initially in 1844, five years earlier.²¹

At the following meeting, the Torrent was again exercised to test the repairs:

Worked very well but extremely hard. The leading hose needed repairs in several places. We threw water on the store of Daniel Fellows Esq.

John Vinson Store Fire, 1849

One week later, April 13, the Torrent, with its new leather, responded to an alarm at 6 p.m. "The store of John Vinson took fire on the roof from a spark, probably from the blacksmith shop of William P. Chadwick. The company were on hand as usual & the engine was taken to the fire, but as our assistance was not needed, the engine was not wet."²²

One member, William A. Pease, had asked for an honorable discharge as he was soon leaving on the ship *Walter Scott* for the California gold mines. Joseph Kelley was elected to fill the vacancy his discharge created.

The members were becoming increasingly unhappy about the engines. Neither was in good condition and could not be depended upon. Henry A. Coffin, company clerk, wrote to the L. Button Company in Waterford, New York, requesting information about a new engine, owned by the town of Roxbury, that he had read about in the *Boston Herald*. Mr. Button responded:

The Engine alluded to . . . is rated at 44 men power & is warranted to throw 4 streams . . . 110 feet high. . . We can build one like it (or perhaps a little better) for One Thousand Dollars. We would not recommend such an Engine. . . If we might be allowed to offer an opinion, we would state that our Engine of 22 men power, which we sell at \$650, . . . [is] the best adapted to the wants of any fire department. [It] will throw two streams 110 feet high or one stream 130 feet high. . . 140 feet horizontally. . . through 500 feet of hose. We agree to do all that as here stated on delivery and trial or we will take the engine away without charge. . .

Button's letter was read to the company and a resolution

²¹ *Torrent*, DCHS, p.130.

²² The Vinson store, which had a second fire later, was on lower Main Street. The blacksmith shop was probably on Dock Street.

was passed urging the selectmen to "sell our two engines and purchase one that will throw two streams, each 110 feet high." To build public support, Henry Coffin, signing the letter "Fireman," wrote to the *Gazette*, incorporating much of what Mr. Button had written and urging that one of the engines be purchased by the town. The present engines were inadequate:

... I recollect, Mr. Editor, that with our utmost exertions, we once succeeded in throwing a stream (for one moment) nearly 100 feet high, but have never been able to do it since. But for \$650, we can get an engine that is warranted to throw two 3/4 inch streams 10 feet higher than the spire of the Orthodox [Congregational] Church; or one 7/8 inch stream 30 feet above the spire.

The engines we now have always worked very hard and with a company of 30 men it is very fatiguing. . . There is at present a good and efficient company to No. 2 [Torrent], but there is no company to No. 1. . . From present appearances, we shall be able to keep only one company (No. 2) full. The other engine has not had a company for some years and it has not been taken out of the house for a long time and in case of a fire would probably be nearly or quite useless. . . it is better to have one good engine. . . than to have two engines which are in the condition of our present ones.

Coffin's letter was published in the *Gazette* on July 26, 1849, but it apparently didn't inspire the firemen. At the August meeting, more than half the members were absent. Those who attended faithfully complained, not only about the absenteeism, but about the distribution of fine money. Absent members were fined 12 1/2 cents for each missed roll call. The accumulated fines were divided equally among all members each year. That meant that the absentees got the same amount as those who attended. The members, on September 29th, voted that the disbursement of the fine money be in proportion to attendance.²³

The record book of the Torrent Engine Company ends with its March 15, 1850, meeting. At it, members were paid for their year's work, each receiving \$4 from the town, minus

²³ *Torrent*, DCHS, pp.140-1.

any fines for absences, plus a proportionate share of the "fine fund" based on attendance. Twenty-eight firemen signed that they had "Received of Henry A. Coffin. . . the amount due us as Enginemen, in full to this date & also for our proportion of the fine money." Clerk Coffin's careful attendance records and his calculations to determine how much money each man received fill the last pages of the book. The total paid by the town was \$120, at \$4 per man for 30 men. The money was divided among 28 members. The smallest amount went to James Fish, 71 cents; the largest, to Henry A. Coffin, \$9.23, who was also paid \$3.00 more for serving as clerk.

With the end of Clerk Henry A. Coffin's record book of the Torrent engine company, we must rely on newspaper accounts and other sources, such as diaries, for the remaining history.

The "Bad Boy" Arsonist, 1851

In 1851, Edgartown discovered it had an incendiary among its 2000 inhabitants. In the evening of May 4, 1851, someone set a fire in the Coffin building, at Main and Water Streets; the first floor of which was occupied by William Monroe, a tailor, and Dr. J. R. Dillingham, the town dentist. The fire was set in a small unoccupied room on the second floor, "in which was a quantity of rubbish, which had been collecting there for several years. It was extinguished without any damage to the building. . ." The *Gazette* makes no mention of the engine company going to the fire.

The next morning, it was discovered that another arson attempt had been made that night:

Another attempt, which also happily proved abortive, was made on the Post Office, situated on Main Street, a few doors from the other building on the opposite side of the street. . . The cunning rogue. . . took a cotton rag and set it on fire and dropped it into the letter box in which there was a quantity of letters. One of these was burned through the envelope, when, probably due to a want of air, the fire went out. . .²⁴

Jeremiah Pease, whose son, Rodolphus, had sounded the

²⁴ *Gazette*, May 9, 1851.

alarm, described these events in his diary, also not mentioning any action by the engine company:

An alarm of fire was made about 8 p.m., at W. H. Munro's Store at the 4 Corners.

There was found in the letter box of the Post Office next morning a cotton rag which had been set on fire and dropped into the box and burned the rag and several letters a little, and went out. No doubt the intention was to set the office on fire.

The alarm [the night before] was first given by Rodolphus who was passing the store of Wm. H. Munro on the corner of Main and Water Streets. This we conclude was also set on fire, but extinguished in a few minutes. The fire was kindled in some papers in the chamber entry. Supposed to have been done by a bad Boy.

The townspeople were shocked and the Selectmen voted a \$400 reward for information leading to the conviction of the arsonist. It was not reported whether or not the guilty person was ever caught.

The next week's *Gazette* disclosed that there had been two more attempts at arson that night:

The villains who endeavored to burn the town of Sunday night, week, attempted to set fire to the following [additional] buildings:— the Congregational vestry and No. 1 engine house. . . A report that an attempt had been made to burn the new town school house, proved incorrect.²⁵

Vinson's Dry Goods Store Fire, 1854

It was nearly three years before another alarm was sounded. The *Gazette* described it with brevity:

FIRE:— On Monday night last [March 21, 1854], at about 9 o'clock, fire was discovered in the dry-goods store on Main Street owned by Mr. John N. Vinson. It was soon subdued. The damage to the building was slight. . . but [Mr. Vinson suffered] a loss of some two thousand dollars — nearly his whole stock being damaged either by fire or water. He had just filled his store with an assortment of new goods for the spring business.²⁶

In the same issue in which the Vinson fire was reported,

²⁵ *Gazette*, May 16, 1851. The new school was the High School, built the year before on Pease's Point Way.

²⁶ *Gazette*, March 27, 1854.

the following anonymous letter appeared:

ENGINES:— The engines belonging to the town are much out of repair, and one of them is believed to be nearly or quite useless. In case of fire, but little advantage would accrue from their use. Under these circumstances, it is very desirable that one or two new engines, combining all the latest improvements, should be purchased by the Town; and we hope the people, who are to assemble in town meeting on the 3d of April, will take the matter in hand, and vote a sum sufficient to procure one or more of these most important instruments, before our village is completely destroyed by fire.

A Tax Payer²⁷

The Button Engine Arrives, 1855

The townspeople seemed to agree with "Taxpayer." At the 1854 annual town meeting in April, after voting \$120 to pay the firemen, the citizens voted another "\$650 be raised and assessed, for the purpose of purchasing a new fire engine. . . one that will throw two streams of water." Five men were appointed to a committee to select the engine that would be "best for the interests of the town." It was also voted to "put in each cistern in town. . . an iron tube, leading from below the water. . . to above ground, with a screw on the upper end that will fit the suction hose of the engine."

As mentioned above, Clerk Henry Coffin, in 1849, had urged the citizenry to buy the new engine for \$650, but the request had been ignored for five years. It took the town twice as long, ten years, to respond to the engine company's request that an iron suction tube be placed in each cistern. The citizens also voted to sell or trade in one of the two old engines.²⁸ A few weeks later, it was voted "to raise \$150, in addition, to purchase an engine — said sum to be used if in the opinion of the Committee, it should be required."

In early 1855, after several months of study, the town committee recommended the purchase of the engine made by the Lysander Button Company of Waterford, New York. It was slightly larger than the one Coffin had recommended.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Gazette*, April 7, 1854.

The new engine was a side-stroke, single air chamber, "squirrel-tail" hand pumper, so called because of the manner in which the suction hose was carried. One end of the hose was attached to the pump and the other end curved up and over the rig suggesting a "squirrel-like appearance."²⁹

The engine, which cost \$1000, arrived on October 13, 1855, and was accompanied by Mr. Lysander Button himself. As part of the purchase arrangement, Button agreed to demonstrate the operation and output of his engine upon delivery. The engine was warranted to throw a single stream of water 150 feet, two streams 125 feet and three streams 100 feet each. If necessary, four streams could be discharged simultaneously, twice the amount of water Engine No.1 and Engine No.2 combined could pump! In the trials held that day, the Button handily met all those discharge specifications, giving it a rating of ten barrels of water discharged per minute. Furthermore, the engine worked much easier than the older models and could be changed to seven different capacities, depending upon the length and number of hoses attached to it.

The *Gazette* reported, through its "Correspondent,"³⁰ that the new engine "has been accepted by the unanimous vote of the Committee and they have paid the sum of \$1000 to Mr. L. Button, who left here on Tuesday last. . . It has thrown 1, 2, 3 and 4 streams very beautifully & to a great height; has drafted water 15 feet perpendicularly & played through 400 feet of hose. . . [sent] a horizontal stream 175 feet. . . It can throw more than 10 barrels in one minute. . . We now need about 500 feet of leading hose as a greater part of the old hose has been burst in the recent trials. . ."³¹

Engine Company No. 2, formerly Torrent company, took on the responsibility for the Button and from then on was known as the Button engine company. On December 7, the town voted to buy 500 feet of hose for the new engine, but voted down a request for a new hose reel.

²⁹ *Gazette*, September 28, 1855.

³⁰ Probably Henry Coffin, Clerk of Torrent Company.

³¹ *Gazette*, October 26, 1855.



In 1984, the old Button hand pumper, shown here with firemen manning one of the brakes, was rebuilt by the Edgartown Fire Department.

The New Fire Station, 1859

With the arrival of the new engine, storage space for all the equipment became a problem. In addition to the three engines (the old engines were not disposed of until years later), there were two hose carriages, ladders and other fire gear to be kept ready for immediate use. The old engine house just wasn't suitable so a second building was built for the Button. Even that didn't solve the space problem. Clearly, the company had outgrown its quarters. The Firewards began looking for more space and discovered a large unused area within the foundation of the Town Hall. There wasn't enough height, but that could be solved by raising the building a few feet. They asked the town to authorize the work. In 1859, over the strenuous objection of the Board of Selectmen, the town voted to raise the Town Hall to provide space for the engine company. The enginemen were delighted and demonstrated their joy immediately:

After the decision of the people was made known, the firemen attached to the Button appeared in the streets with their machine, and were welcomed right heartily by their fellow-citizens. They proceeded to the Methodist Church, where the Engine was put in operation, and performed admirably. A large stream of water was thrown some 40 or 50 feet above the tower.

When their rooms are completed, we learn that the hall

will be nicely carpeted and furnished, and supplied with the newspapers and periodicals of the day.³²

The building was raised three feet and the basement renovated for the fire department.

Over the next several years, the new engine had very few calls for its services. Regularly at meetings, the enginemen took the Button out and exercised it and themselves, but as the older firemen, veterans who had served on the Torrent, began retiring, many of the skills were being lost. There was little real experience with fire. During the first ten years of the Button's life, there was but one house fire and the engine wasn't needed on that one. It was on May 19, 1865, and involved the home of Captain John H. Pease on North Water Street.

The fire had started in the box chimney but was extinguished by the family before the Button engine arrived. With so few fires, the volunteer firemen began to lose interest and the townspeople began to wonder if they had really needed that \$1000 engine after all.

Then, after 12 quiet years, the Button engine was at last put to the test.

The Dr. Lucas Fire, 1867

The headline in the *Gazette* proclaimed its severity:

Fire! Fire!! Fire!!!

The Whole Town Endangered but Miraculously Saved!

On the night of Wednesday, March 6, 1867, the lower Main Street building owned and occupied by Dr. J. H. Lucas was destroyed by fire. A sailor, Daniel Smith, aboard the sloop *George Rogers*, docked nearby, spotted the fire at 12:30 a.m. "Forked tongues of fire [were] licking the outside of the Lucas building," he said later. Smith spread the alarm along Main Street as he raced to the Town Hall where the Button was stored.

The Button engine was brought to the scene "with all despatch," but it was 1 a.m. before it could get into action. "It was placed at a good reservoir — the harbor, the only really useful one we have — and the brakes kept constantly

in motion," the *Gazette* reported. But by the time its hose was in action, the Lucas building was lost. Flames quickly spread to the adjacent dry goods store owned by J. L. Barrows and to an unoccupied building belonging to Captain John A. Baylies. "The intense heat threatened. . . to consume every building to the water's edge."

Sailor Smith and his crewmates joined the Button firemen, working through the night. A large number of townspeople had quickly gathered. Many women joined the men on the bucket lines. The *Gazette* reported that the women carried more water than the men, many of whom, instead of helping, "stood gazing upon the disastrous conflagration, which seemed to bewilder and excite them." The women also helped to remove articles of value from the threatened buildings.

As the fire spread, the *Gazette* building at the Four Corners seemed likely to be its next victim. Editor Cooms, "in full faith of its destruction. . . took one last look at the 'machine' which [he] had run as an apprentice and to the type which had marked the days of Vineyard life for near a score of years. . ." Fortunately, his pessimism was unwarranted. The *Gazette* building was saved.

By this time, a second stream was being pumped by the Button crew and many buckets of water were being thrown onto the heated walls and roofs. At one point the engine had to be stopped and repositioned when the falling tide left the suction hose out of the water. Years later, old timers would refer to this as "the night the Button pumped the harbor dry."³³

Men and women worked feverishly, removing the contents of the stores of J.D. Coffin and T.R. Holley and from the newly furnished Masonic Hall. Editor Cooms had high praise for the sailors: "We found them in every spot and our citizens feel unbounded gratitude for their services." He also noted the work of Rev. W. W. Ashley, who had "done more good, won more hearts, than he has in the delivery of some discourses."

³² *Gazette*, June 17, 1859.

³³ This story is usually told about the 1872 fire. It is probably apocryphal.

As the fire raged, the brakes of the Button were kept constantly in motion. More adjacent buildings, including the U.S. Customs office at Four Corners, were threatened, prompting shopkeepers along North Water Street to remove their valuables. But after several hours, with two streams of water from the Button and the continuous bucket brigade, the fire was under control.

With daylight, the damage could be assessed. The stores of Dr. J. H. Lucas, H. A. Coffin and Capt. John A. Baylies, along with virtually all their contents, were destroyed. Stores belonging to James L. Barrows and Captain Thomas Milton were also destroyed, but most of their contents had been saved.

The store of I.D. Coffin and the tailor shop of J. H. Monroe were damaged, but a major portion of their stock was saved. The U.S. Customs Office was only slightly damaged and the official documents were preserved. Osborn's shop on the first floor of the Custom House building was also damaged, but its contents saved.

The fire was believed to have started in Doctor Lucas's office, most likely caused by the "misarrangement of a stove pipe and a chimney . . . soot caught fire, igniting the board on which the pipe rested." The total loss was estimated at \$8,000, of which insurance covered only \$3,800.³⁴

The *Gazette* stated that the possibility of such fires was always present and that after such a loss "no one of our citizens will declaim against the Button Engine and its valiant company." Instead, the editor wrote, the town needs a second engine. But despite his support, there was criticism. A letter to the *Gazette*, several weeks later, pointed out that the Button was capable of pumping four streams at once, "if there had been sufficient hose." The writer criticized the men responsible, urging that "some of the old members [should] have the charge of that excellent engine, and the Fire-wards see to it that, in case of fire, you have the largest quantity of water possible, instead of about one-half the

³⁴ *Gazette*, March 8, 1867.

quantity."³⁵

Despite the plea by Editor Cooms for a second engine, nothing was done about it at the Town Meeting, a few weeks later. The town voted only to pay the Engine men the same amount it had for years, \$4 annually.

By 1871, membership in the Engine Company had increased to thirty nine. This was actually a reduction over the early years when there were two companies of 30 men each. The equipment now consisted of the Button Engine, Hose Carriage No.1, with 500 feet of leather hose in excellent condition, five ladders, four hooks and other miscellaneous gear. Richard E. Norton was Foreman of the Engine Company (Chief Engineer) and Frank Norton was foreman of the Hose Carriage.

In April 1871 at the Town Meeting, the Selectmen were authorized to dig additional cisterns if thought to be necessary. Apparently nothing was done as the Sanborn insurance map of 1894 shows no additional cisterns. It was also voted to dispose "of the old engines as to [the Selectmen] may seem best."

At the next Town Meeting, the citizens voted \$600 for the purchase of "chemical [fire] engines." Chemical engines were cheaper and were excellent when limited water was available. Shubael L. Norton and Watson C. Clark were appointed as a committee to "purchase chemical engines if, in their opinion, the interests of the town require it." Six weeks later, the town's interests did require it, but it was too soon for there to be a chemical engine in town to assist the Button.

To be concluded.

³⁵ *Ibid.*



Bathing Suits at Cottage City In the Late 1800s



One shameless male bather wears a sleeveless striped suit in 1888.

THERE were no Swim Suit Issues of magazines in 1878, but there was a lot of interest in what was being worn at the beach. And a lot was being worn, no doubt about that. Suits revealed as little as possible, but even that was too much for some critics.

Rows of bathhouses lined the beach at Cottage City. In them, bathers changed, not into swim suits, but into bathing suits. Adults did not go swimming. That was left to reckless young boys. Nonetheless, the daily ritual of the 11 o'clock "swim" was a fixture in life at the resort. The swim involved walking down wooden steps from the bathhouse into the water. The most daring immersed themselves chest-deep, providing, no doubt, the only bath they got that day.

Leaning against the railing on shore were the critics, taking a dim view. One such dim-viewer was the Martha's Vineyard editor of the *Island Review*, a seasonal newspaper covering Nantucket and the Vineyard. In the August 17, 1878, issue, Editor S. Heath Rich wrote:

A bathing house is a great disenchanter, and in a moment



Sun bathers on the beach at Cottage City had little need for sunblock.

or two, can scatter most thoroughly the fondest dream of beauty and remove the mask from face and form, making, perhaps, startling and not always pleasing disclosures. The beauty who has captivated the hearts of unmarried swains at the evening hop is by no means certain to prove a Venus as she rises from the merciless waves.

The stately matron of goodly proportions, whose majestic carriage and dignified mien are universally admired, proves to be very like what is irreverently called "a porpoise," as she waddles down to the water. While, on the other hand, your genteel, thin persons — your belle who is very fine when fitted out by the tailor — are anything but perfection when robed in the average bathing suit.

Why the popular bathing suit should be as unnecessarily ugly as it is, we leave to those who use them.

The editor had his own opinion of why no gentlelady would wear a stylish bathing suit. It would attract attention, something no lady of the 1870s would ever want at the beach:

There might be a dress devised for dipping into the sea which should be both pretty and graceful. But many a woman of taste, who would put on a becoming dress for the surf, is deterred from so doing by the knowledge that



By 1890, some men were sleeveless, but not women. Note the matron, left.

she would thereby become the observed of all observers.

Nobody feels particularly comfortable or well at ease when going down the beach in a bathing suit, and nothing could be more disagreeable to a sensitive person than to be stared at by the idle loungers who are always congregated upon the strand for the sole purpose of making remarks upon the bathers.

To come up from the sea dripping with salt water, with dishevelled locks and feet covered with the deep sand you are obliged to struggle through to reach the bath-house, with the same remorseless eyes bent pitilessly upon you, is not at all an agreeable sensation, especially to the novice at the seaside.

Editor Rich wasn't the only critic of bathing fashions in Cottage City that August. The *Boston Traveller* of the same week described the resort and its bathers. Writing under the penname "X.L.X.S.," the reporter was even more of a dim-viewer than Editor Rich:

The bathing season must be at its height just now. Yesterday, I counted four hundred who were frolicking in the water as so many porpoises, each seeming to enjoy themselves fully.

But the bathing costumes are most of them hideous. Really, so large a number as were in yesterday, between 10 and 12 o'clock, could really make the sight more enjoyable



This rare action photograph of the period shows a boy in mid-dive.

to the spectator, and none the less to themselves, by a choice and some taste in their bathing suits.

One lady, who was particularly noticeable from her suit, led me to watch for her as she came to her room [in the bath-house]. It was composed of dark blue serge, pants of the same, trimmed with white. The sleeves came half-way between the shoulder and the elbow, and were scalloped and bound with white. The tunic, for that was the shape, reached just below the knee, also bound and scalloped, belt round, with white pink stockings and sandal slippers. A neat straw hat completed the costume. Even in the water, this suit was particularly noticeable. . .

The Boston reporter was not impressed by the male costumes. Neither were the lady critics, who had a few things to say on the subject:

The gentlemen are no less wicked in their suits than the ladies. Those bearing the palm yesterday were in color, French blue tights and very pretty in the water. But it was pronounced by the ladies who sat near me that the gentleman's suit ought to be composed of two pieces.

One poor man got cast away yesterday and stood far out as he could, holding up one arm as a signal of distress and shouting. Good for him. He once felt his entire helplessness and dependence upon a pin. Having made necessary repairs, he ventured ashore, and the next time will look out for buttons.

Editor Rich advised people to stay out of the water,



Lying in the sand, about 1900, is a bold, bare-armed female. The men are all sleeveless. Women, even the bold one, still wear stockings.

although that would seem something not in his business interest. After all, the beaches were what many of his readers had come to enjoy. Clearly, he was no water bug. For him, sun bathing was best, provided you kept protected:

Sun baths and sand baths are preferred by many persons to actual bathing in the sea; they are thought to be especially beneficial to those afflicted with rheumatism and other diseases; everywhere upon the beach you may see little groups of people sitting complacently for hours half buried in the sand, and protected from the glaring light of the sun by huge umbrellas.

Small-town newspapers in those days didn't print photographs so they had no Swimsuit Issues. Photographers were taking pictures however and some have survived. Here, then, after more than a century's delay, is what Editor Rich might have printed if his *Island Review* had published a Swim Suit Issue.

Moments in History

The Vineyard's First Airplane Arrivals

It was a historic day: Tuesday, July 15, 1919. In midafternoon, two hydroplanes, probably Curtiss Seagulls, from Chatham landed near the jetties at Oak Bluffs. One taxied to the steamboat wharf, the other to the beach.

These were the first airplanes to land at Martha's Vineyard.

One might have expected such an event would have made frontpage news, but it didn't. *The Vineyard News*, a weekly paper published in Vineyard Haven, devoted one paragraph in its Oak Bluffs news column to the history-making arrival:

"A great crowd gathered Tuesday afternoon on the beach about the wharf when two hydroplanes from Chatham [Navy air base] alighted in the water and one came to the wharf, the other to the shore. After staying for about an hour and a half they returned to Chatham."

That was the extent of the report. We have been unable to find a copy of the *Vineyard Gazette* of that week (the issue of July 17, 1919, is not on microfilm), so we don't know how much it said about the historic event. It may have been more detailed.

Another historic happening that same day got the front-page headlines in the Vineyard Haven paper: the arrival of the U. S. Navy submarine, the *D2*. She "poked her nose in

between the Chops in the twilight. . . and headed for the Standard Oil Pier. The crowd waiting for the steamer caught sight of the underseas boat and watched her glide alongside the oil landing. . . to tie up for the night." That was, without doubt, the first submarine ever to land on the Island, although the reporter doesn't say it was.

Two historic events on a single July day: one by water, one by air. A moment in history.

The restrained coverage of the airplanes was not repeated ten days later when another flying boat landed at Oak Bluffs. This time, the flight was thoroughly reported in the press, on-Island and off. It was even given advance publicity. The hydroplane, also a Curtiss, was to bring to the Island, the *Boston Globe* stated, "the first aerial commuters in New England." It was the start of something big.

Those first flying commuters were two East Chop summer residents, both Wall Street men: Melvin B. Fuller and his friend, Myron J. Brown. The trip was Fuller's idea. He was tired of the hours it took him each weekend on the long train ride from Manhattan to Woods Hole and the ferry crossing.

"If the plan proves successful and feasible," Fuller told the *Globe*, "we plan to purchase the plane and make



The "Fuller Flyer" in Oak Bluffs harbor after its historic flight from New York.

all our week-end trips. . . to and from Martha's Vineyard by the air route." He was an amateur pilot and "plans to pilot the machine himself in the flights to follow."¹

The promised flight came off as touted. The hydroplane, temporarily named the "Fuller Flyer," landed off Oak Bluffs at about 6 p.m. "As the seaplane crept into the harbor, escorted by a powerboat. . . hundreds on shore cheered and waved their handkerchiefs. . . [for] this first flight to the Island. . ." [It was not the first, as mentioned above.] The plane docked at the Wesley House pier and "the trio [Fuller, Brown and Pilot Griffin] were welcomed with shouts and general applause. Mr. Chase [proprietor of the Wesley House] informing the commuters that a formal reception awaited them in the

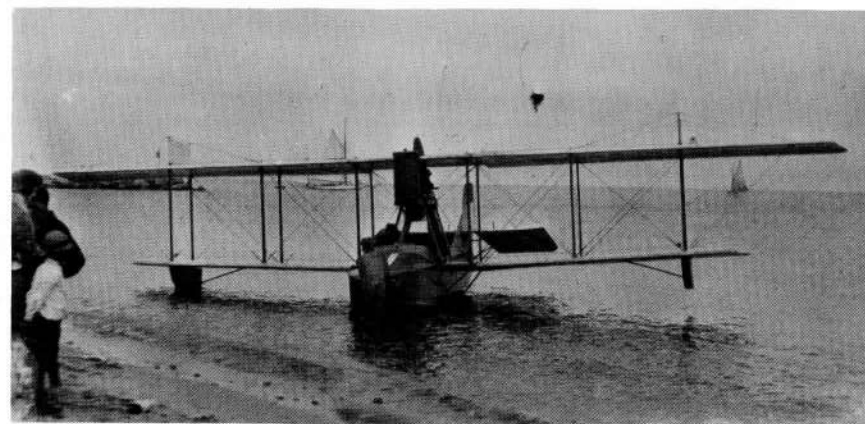
¹ There were no more flights. At least no mention of any subsequent commuting by Fuller was found in the newspapers.

Tabernacle."

That evening, Mr. Chase put on a celebratory supper at his hotel. Mr. Fuller spoke of the trip (see page 38) as did Pilot Griffin. It was a glorious day in the history of Oak Bluffs and the Vineyard.

But Friday's flight was only a beginning. The next morning, the plane took passengers on sightseeing flights over the Vineyard for \$10 each. Scores lined up to make the trip, two at a time in the open cockpit behind a small windshield. The pilot sat in back of them in a separate cockpit.

Reporting the historic event for *The Vineyard News* was a visiting playwright from Provincetown, Eugene O'Neill. Little known at the time, he was on the verge of fame. The following year, 1920, his first full-length play, *Beyond the Horizon*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. A quick succession of outstanding works followed and he soon was recognized as America's



Sightseeing flights ended when a pontoon was damaged. The seaplane was pulled up on the beach and repaired. Flights were resumed the next day.

greatest playwright. In 1936, he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Surely, O'Neill was the most talented writer ever to report the news for a Vineyard newspaper although the article provides little evidence of his future greatness.

He was, it seems, the weekend guest of Miss Priscilla Hand, daughter of Mrs. Henry Hand of East Chop. He and Miss Hand shared the forward cockpit on the third sightseeing flight to take off Saturday morning and "enjoyed every minute spent in the air." In his story, Reporter O'Neill wrote that "Mr. Fuller was generous with the trips in time duration," hardly a sentence worthy of a Pulitzer.

"Everything went splendidly," his report continues, "until, late in the afternoon, a slight hole was punched in the pontoon; Mr. Griffin thought this little mishap was a benefit, as a wind was stirring and it was time to stop the flights. Chester Robinson fixed the damage after the craft was drawn up on the beach, and on Sunday the flights were resumed."

But there were no flights on Sunday morning "so that they did not interfere with [church] services. One clergyman informed his congregation. . . that though it cost you \$10 to go about 1000 feet into the air, one could [in church] go far higher for much less money."²

During the two days, a total of 74 persons took flights, including Margaret White, ten years old, the youngest to make the trip. She was a niece of Mr. Fuller.

The excitement of flying didn't end when the "Fuller Flyer" returned to New York on Monday. Three hydroplanes from the Navy base at Chatham landed off Oak Bluffs the following day, July 29. They were, the *Gazette* stated, "on the double duty of spurring recruiting for the service and of letting the people see how the airplane funds have been spent." The planes were unable to return to their base that afternoon because two of them punctured their pontoons while landing. They remained overnight while repairs were made and left the

² *The Vineyard News*, July 31, 1919.

Report of the First Airplane Commuter in New England

After his commuting flight from Manhattan in 1919, Melvin B. Fuller, at a supper in his honor at the Wesley house, described the historic event:

About 25 years ago I left New York in my sloop with my wife, the captain and cook and boy before the mast, on the 15th of August, and was four days in making the trip to the Vineyard. You can well imagine my pleasure today to be able to close my desk in New York, about noon, have lunch with my friend, Myron Brown, at the club there and be with my wife here this evening on Martha's Vineyard Island.

Unlike our trip 25 years ago we were only 2 hours and 30 minutes actually flying time from New York to the Island.

The first part of the trip was rough, the air being rather bumpy and full of air pockets. We arose to above 1000 feet, but we found it no better there, so we dropped down until we were about 400 feet above the water, where we found the air very smooth and traveling most enjoyable.

We landed at Cosey Beach, near New Haven, for gasoline. After stretching out a little, we again ascended and had perfect flying with a fine wind. When we were flying along the Cape, my good friend, Mr. Brown, who was at my side, suggested that we call on a friend on the Cape. But reading the gas gauge to be what I thought was one gallon (in reality it read one-tenth of capacity or about five gallons), so I wrote in my notebook:

"Gas low, we had better beat it for Oak Bluffs."

Which we did, though the pilot was not at all worried about my gas shortage. [From *The Vineyard News*, July 31, 1919]

next day.

The following Sunday afternoon, a hydroplane from the New England Airplane Company in Hull landed at Oak Bluffs, planning to sell sightseeing rides, but again a pontoon was damaged and the trips were postponed until a later date. That later date must have been during the week of August 17 because the Oak Bluffs correspondent of the *Gazette* wrote on

August 21:

"The Hydro airplane with a base off the jetties attracts a good deal of attention. . . it looks like a bird soaring above us and yet when down on the water it looks so simple. What would the people of the past generation think of the sight?"

Indeed. And what would the writer of that paragraph think of the Island's airplane traffic today?

THE VINEYARD NEWS

VOL. 2 NO. 1

VINEYARD HAVEN, MASS., THURSDAY, JULY 31, 1919

PRICE FIVE CENTS

HYDROPLANING BRINGS 2 DAYS OF THRILLS; VINEYARDERS ENJOY SPORT TO UTMOST

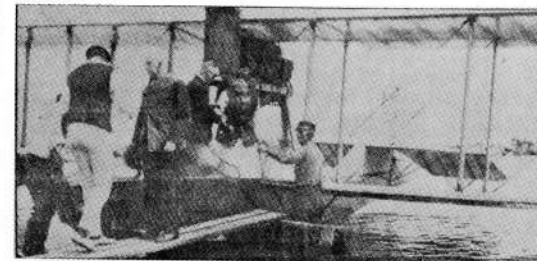


Photo by Rodgers

The "Fuller Flyer" showing Mr. and Mrs. H.O. Phillips getting ready for flight. Left to right are seen: Tony Andrews, M. B. Fuller, Mr. Phillips (in leather vest), Mr. Brown, Mrs. Phillips, and Captain Leroy Lair.

'SENSATION' IN WRECK HINTED

Sensational developments are rumored with a revival of the story of the "million dollar Port Hunter" mystery.

Some time ago there were rumors, denied, repeated and denied again, to the effect that at least 3,000 bales of goods were missing when the inventory of the Port Hunter army goods was balanced up. The story was to the effect that efforts were being made to discover the whereabouts or fate of these supposedly missing bales which were estimated, according to the report which was broadcast, to be worth a million dollars at least.

What the sensation in the matter may be is not told, nor is announcement made as to whether the story is true or false.

The rumor, now received, apparently becomes more and more persistent.

(Continued on Page 2)

NAMES LISTED OF ALL FLYERS

Those who made flights in order of ascent were:

FORENOON ASCENTS

Mr. and Mrs. Howard Chadwick
Mr. and Miss Meyer and Mr. Nuairoe
Miss Priscilla Hand, Eugene O'Neill
W. Tierney and Mr. Plunkett
Grace Brown and Mr. Brown
Sheriff Renear, Kenneth Dowley
Rockwood and Violet Ferris, Whiting Evans
Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Phillips
Mr. and Mrs. M. J. Brown, Frank Ferris
Pay Barker, Archie Elius, H. B. Fuller
Mrs. E. F. Percy, Miss Forshee, R. Hart
Hamilton Day, Nelson Hooe, E. B. Treat
George McNeally, William Emerson
Mr. Hart, John Gunnison
Mrs. Dolan, Mrs. Amisty

AFTERNOON ASCENTS

Captain Roy Lair, Ervin White, Margaret White
Mr. and Mrs. M. B. Fuller
W. Cellers, Mrs. W. L. Besse, W. C. Poe
Willis M. Hughes, Miss Amy Briggs, Fred Smith
Howard Wall, Joseph Smith, Miss Jones
M. S. DeBettencourt, Miss Charlotte Horton, Mr. Higgins

(Continued on page 11)



MRS. HOWARD CHADWICK

By Eugene O'Neill

The whole Island still rings with the thrills and excitement of last week's hydroplaning.

It was a period of intense interest and enjoyment for those who made ascents, and also for those who took part purely as spectators—and there were some thousands of them.

As the plane soared over the Island upon its arrival, Friday, many persons and autos rushed madly toward the Wesley Pier.

Continued on page 11

SUBSCRIBE TO THE VINEYARD NEWS NOW

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The front page of *The Vineyard News* with the exciting story of hydroplaning, as told by a sometime reporter and struggling playwright, Eugene O'Neill of Provincetown, who was at Cottage City on a visit. He and friend Priscilla Hand went on one of the first flights, as listed in the center column.

Documents

A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by REV. HENRY BAYLIES

In the first installment of Henry Baylies's diary (*Intelligencer*, May 1993), we learned of the serious illness of his wife, Harriette. Although he is only 27, Harriette is his second wife. His first wife, Hannah, died in their second year of marriage. As we read last time, he fears that he will "be left a second time before 30 years of age a Widower."

Henry is not healthy himself. He is on leave from his pulpit in Connecticut for that reason. To support himself and Harriette, he has taken the position of headmaster at the Dukes County Academy in West Tisbury, now in its 16th year. He is its seventh headmaster. The school building is new, built the year before. A small, one-story building, it is not the three-story, mansard-roof structure that is now the West Tisbury town office. That was not built until 1879.

His family was beset by health problems. He was the second of seven children of Frederick and Velina (Worth) Baylies Jr., of Edgartown and the only one to live more than 10 months. Being a Methodist minister and the grandson of a missionary to the Indians, he must have wondered why God laid such a burden on his family.

At the time of this installment, the Island is in the midst of a fervent religious revival. Some of his girl pupils are being "born again," a fact he finds satisfying. Much to his unhappiness, he is unable to attend many prayer meetings because of Harriette.

To enable him to keep up his duties as headmaster and teacher, his mother comes from Edgartown to care for Harriette. Fortunately, their rented rooms are only a few steps from the academy. Perhaps because of his frequent absences, a few pupils are creating disciplinary problems and he feels the need to resort to corporal punishment, something he is loath to do.

It is 1850 and in the nation big things are happening. Henry David Thoreau has published his essay, "Civil Disobedience," Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster urges compromise with the South on slavery. Chilmark summer resident Elizabeth Blackwell receives a medical degree from Geneva College, N.Y., the nation's first female doctor. Her sister, Emily, follows her shortly after and together, in 1857, they will found the New York Infirmary for Indigent Women, the first such hospital in the nation.

But on Martha's Vineyard, such events are unrecorded. At least, in Henry Baylies's journal.

Wednesday, Feb. 20/50. Very much rejoiced this morning to learn that God is powerfully reviving his work in the place. At the social prayer meeting last evening eight young ladies arose requesting the prayers of Christians. Of those eight, at least four were members of my school — Misses Caroline M. Smith, Abby M. Luce, Melvina Mayhew & _____.¹ For this I heartily praise God & take courage. I have felt exceedingly anxious on this

¹ Caroline M. Smith, 15, daughter of Josiah H. and Isabella Smith of Edgartown; Abby M. Luce, 12, daughter of Ulysses Priam and Mary A. Luce of Tisbury; Melvina Mayhew is not known, but she could be Amanda M. Mayhew, 13, daughter of William A. and Eliza L. Mayhew of Tisbury. The fourth name is illegible.

subject ever since I commenced school & my morning prayers in school have been burdened with this petition more than any other, that the Lord would convert the pupils — that before the close of the Term every scholar might be converted. The work has begun powerfully I pray & I pray it may extend.

There has been evident seriousness in the mind of Miss Smith for a day or two. If I may be instrumental in forwarding this work I shall feel that my coming to this place is not without benefit & not without the guidance of a superintending Providence.

For several days past the (government) deportment² of the school has not been so good as I desire, not so good indeed as it has been formerly. I resolved to begin this morning anew to turn over a new leaf if need be. Observing a stricter government, more offences have been noted, rendering this rather an unpleasant day. I very much dislike to inflict punishment & have so far avoided entirely corporal punishment. An act however occurred today — a boy's striking another in class — which demands severe punishment & rather than to inflict corporal punishment hastily I adjourned the case over till tomorrow morning.

My health today has somewhat improved. Enjoyed a very refreshing night's sleep so that my strength is returning. Harriette feels somewhat better — she thinks my treatment was decidedly beneficial. She is today again, quite to her disappointment, attacked with [?]³ She appears in very good

² He crossed out government, adding deportment.

³ The word looks like "pesloes."

spirits. Poor girl, her ill health deprives her of many privileges she might enjoy — She can now read or write or work but little, can walk or ride out but occasionally. She raised considerable blood, probably from her lungs, night before last & yesterday morning.

My mind is often burdened with fears. She often speaks of my burden, as she calls it, in having to take care of two sick wives. In this respect she does not understand me. I never think of it as a burden. It is a pleasure to afford the least assistance to those I love so dearly. 'Tis true I have had, for one of my age, great care & anxiety in this respect, but as it is necessary it always affords me pleasure.

Thus has passed another day, perhaps the most trying in my Experience as a Governing Pedagogue.

Friday, Feb. 22, 1850. Yesterday & today mild for the season. Concluded it necessary to inflict corporal punishment in school & so yesterday morning employed the ferrule for the first time.⁴ The effect has been decidedly good. Together with this, having adopted more stringent rules relative to whispering, etc., I have maintained yesterday & today better government than at any time before.

Compositions & Declamations today were forthcoming without any difficulty — quite different from the first & second weeks.

Harriette's health is very changeable. On the whole tonight she is quite as comfortable as might be expected. I have about recovered from the fatigue of last Sabbath & today feel again quite

⁴ He apparently is referring to caning, striking with a cane, evidently one with a metal ferrule on the tip.

like myself. Several [pupils] are still serious & inquiring for Salvation.

This eve wrote to Mr. Geo. E. Evans & Lady, Plymouth. Mrs. E, "Anne," was a choice & Kind friend of Dear Hannah. Reading this eve, Nosheim.⁵

Saturday, Feb. 23. A delightful day. Harriette feeling quite comfortable this morning, we concluded to ride over to Holmes Hole, 6 or 7 miles, thinking the ride might benefit her. We dined with Rev. Bro. M. J. Talbot & wife with whom we enjoyed a very pleasant visit. The ride to H.H., through what is lately called Middletown, is delightful.⁶ This is by far the pleasantest portion of the Island. My love for my native Island, which for years past has been rapidly diminishing, has during the three months past greatly increased. It's a delightful section of New England.

Made sundry purchases of medicine, saw Uncle John A.⁷ & sent word to parents & at about 5 o'clock, having supped & prayed with Bro. T.'s [Talbot's] family, returned to W. Tisbury. On our return my attention was attracted by the swarming of crows, which had assembled in large numbers on the plain to East. I could make no estimate of the numbers but they extended on a strip of woods I should judge 3/4 of a mile. There were hundreds if not thousands.⁸

We returned in season for prayer

⁵ He is reading theological materials, apparently required by the Methodist Convention.

⁶ Micah J. Talbot is Methodist minister in Tisbury. His comment about North Tisbury gives us a date as to when it was first called Middletown.

⁷ Uncle John was probably John Worth, his mother's stepbrother, but the record shows no middle initial for him.

⁸ An interesting ornithological comment.

meeting at Mrs. Hannah Look's, which I attended. The interest lately awakened, called together a large congregation, more than could any way be accommodated. There was evidently a very good feeling during the first part of the meeting.

One Mrs. Hancock, a thorough going Antinomian Hopkinsian,⁹ spoke several times to a great length, very much to the destruction of the interest of the meeting. On invitation several, perhaps 6, arose for prayers of whom four or five were members of my school. Meeting closed at 9 1/2.

On returning find Harriette has raised today more blood than at any other time for a long period. This is rather discouraging, but the case is not mine but the Lord's & I'll try to trust Him. I do everything in my power to benefit her & to provide remedies.

Rec'd a letter from Brother Sewall at Boston by which I learn Father Budlong has been very sick. Thomas is heard from & is doing poorly at gold hunting. Sewall is about giving up his business in Boston & knows not what to do. Addie is in quite good health, father is improving, etc. This is the first letter (a very well written one) I have rec'd. from my new Brother-in-law. It is in answer to my first to him.¹⁰

It is very late & I must retire.

Sabbath, Feb. 24, 1850. This the last Sabbath of winter has been a delightful day.¹¹ I have been desiring, since I

⁹ Rev. Samuel Hopkins, a Congregationalist, called for less concern about personal salvation and more about saving the "heathen," both here and abroad.

¹⁰ These are Harriette's family.

¹¹ It must be the highly optimistic custom to consider the arrival of March as the end of winter.

came here to hear Father Bates at Chilmark & as this was so auspicious a morning I walked up — distance perhaps 2 1/2 miles.¹² I enjoyed the walk very much.

As I was early for meeting, I called at Father B.'s residence. The old Itinerant met me at the door with his accustomed welcome (especially the tobacco juices) & I soon accompanied him to church.

The congregation, forenoon and afternoon, was larger than I expected to see & certainly a very respectable appearing company. The proportion of females to males is very large, especially of young ladies — for the men have all gone to California.¹³ I have seldom seen such a company of young ladies whose appearance indicates so much intelligence.

Father B. requested me to preach part of the day, but excused me on the plea of inability. It would be very pleasing for me to preach occasionally, more pleasing could I preach constantly & endure the labors of all the work.

Father B. has now been preaching 49 years & yet he remarked he never was tired in the work nor tired of the work! Well, the Lord knows best whom to strengthen & whom to make weak. His text, morning was "Christ the Power of God," which he treated in a systematic & to me interesting manner; afternoon text, "Blessed is he that heareth my word & keepeth it, etc." This, too, was very well treated, not however with quite the interest of the morning's discourse.

¹² The Chilmark Methodist church was on Middle Road, just west of Tea Lane. Rev. Lewis Bates was the minister.

¹³ These were the years of the Gold Rush.

I have heard the old gent only once or twice before but from reports had formed rather a poor idea of him as a sermonizer. If the discourses today are fair samples, this idea is wrong. I am much pleased & hope profited.

Bro. Obed Nickerson brought me back in his waggon. After eating, read several of Watson's *Sermons*. Feeling very much fatigued with the walk & the part I took in the pulpit exercises & sermon, Harriette being quite unwell, I have thought it prudent to remain at home this evening.

H. doubtless took some cold yesterday & today has suffered much from aching in all parts of her body. By the kind aid of Mrs. Smith, our landlady, we have got H. in bed & quite relieved in her limbs by the burnt sugar.¹⁴ Harriette is a severely afflicted girl — the Lord bless her & give her a cheerful courage to endure her sickness. I thank my merciful Heavenly Father for the grace he has given me in days & years past to suffer bodily afflictions, bereavement & the thousand so-called ills to which I have been subjected. Why murmur or repine? This is but our probation & what would probation be without such things to try & prove us?

I thank God that the Gospel of His dear Son unites the sorrows, afflictions & labors of this world with the joys, the bliss & the rest & rewards of a better world. This light affliction which is but for a season (moment) worketh out for us a far more exceeding & eternal weight of Glory.¹⁵ Courage, my

¹⁴ As we shall see later, sugar was burned in a pan to provide heat to the body and the bed.

¹⁵ The word "moment" was written above "season," as though he was unsure of which he preferred.

Soul! "The clouds [?] ye so much dread are big with mercy & shall break in blessings on your head."

I learn that Mr. Van Houton¹⁶ has appointed preaching every evening this week. If I mistake not, this is a very wrong move. O, Lord, take this work in thy own hand & conduct all things so that thy greatest glory shall be secured. Amen.

Monday, 25, 1850. I little thought when I penned the above that such a severe trial was so near at hand. About the time I closed this journal last eve, Harriette, my dear wife, was becoming distressed for breath & by a deathly sinking faintness at the pit of the stomach. Such was her distress she slept none during the night & I was up & ministering to her most of the night. The distress seemed to be caused by the smoke & steam from the sugar burnt in warming her bed, but such was not the cause as is now fully proved.

During the night she was occasionally, if not most the time, delirious. This morning I had considerable difficulty in keeping her in bed & she said many things which exceedingly tried me. I however soon found it was not Harriette, but a poor delirious girl. My skill all exhausted (& as it is now proved nearly all I did was only to aggravate some difficulties), I determined to send for Dr. Ruggles from Holmes Hole, although strongly opposed by H. I felt it a critical case.

I procured James A. Johnson as a messenger who hastened at 9 o'clock a.m. for the Dr. & at the same time took a note to my parents.¹⁷ I was

¹⁶ Rev. Henry Van Houton was Congregational minister in West Tisbury from 1859-60.

¹⁷ James A. Johnson, 18, was son of Asa and Prudence Johnson.

necessarily in school a part of the day while kind friends were doing all could be done for H.

At 12 1/2 Dr. R. came, examined her case, pronounced the difficulty on the lung's left lobe, which he said had become attached to the side. I informed him of her previous health —the humor¹⁸ on her chest, blood raising, etc. He seemed at once to understand her case & prescribed.

During the P.M., her case seemed to become more desperate. Father & Mother arrived at 4 1/4 to our great joy. Hot hops (cloths wrung out of) were applied to a blister which however did not draw till midnight. At about seven o'clock eve, H. requested me to raise & hold her in bed when she fainted as she had two or three times in the night while I was alone with her.

Soon after, she became very much distressed for breath by a filling up with phlegm. Such was her distress, the phlegm rising so high & choking, her breath left her & we gave her up as dead, while I held her in my arms. That was a trying hour when my dearest Harriette seemed choked to death in my arms.

Father hastened of Dr. Luce¹⁹ if by any means she might be brought to. He returned without the Dr., he being 2 miles distant. It was as well, for dear H. had revived through the infinite mercy of our kind Father. Though encouraged, all from this time gave her up. I indeed had given up hope of her recovery from the early morning. She was delirious during the night & a part of the day, was frequently picking the clothes which the Dr. pronounced an

¹⁸ "Humor" is a body fluid, like blood or phlegm.

¹⁹ Dr. W. H. Luce on the other side of Mill Pond, a half mile away.

alarming symptom.

The state of H.'s mind was most happy. She saw her danger & was perfectly composed. She readily, aided by divine grace, gave up me, gave up all to the Lord. She sent messages & love to many friends. "Tell Father, Mother, sister & brother to meet me in Heaven. I have never once repented giving my heart to the Lord, etc." "Tell Hannah's Parents, Sisters, Brothers, I love Hannah & am gone to see her in Heaven."²⁰ Sent her love to Bro. Upham, Aunt Emily & many others.

'Twas cheering! 'Twas glorious! to see the grace of our Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ triumph thus in her.

After she revived from what we thought death, she remarked to me she thought when breath left her she was gone. I asked her how she felt. All ready, she replied. No doubt, no fears, a desire to go. She since expressed to me in part her feelings at the time. Ministering spirits were around her at that trying scene, among whom was dear Hannah. When she saw she might again come to, she felt a reluctance, but when Hannah spoke to her & said, "Go back & suffer for a little while & then you shall come up higher, much higher, many degrees higher," she felt resigned to return. She said Hannah looked upon me as Mother & Father. She caught a glimpse of heaven which ravished her soul with delight. Such calmness, such composure, such happiness, the Religion of Christ alone can afford.²¹

Father, Mrs. Smith & Mrs. Luce watched with H. & as she was more

²⁰ Hannah, of course, was Henry's first wife. Harriette must have been envious, perhaps jealous, of his earlier relationship.

²¹ An interesting view of heaven's plan.

comfortable & from effects of medicine inclined to sleep I thought it prudent for me to lay down. I had had no sleep, or little, since Friday night.

Tuesday, Feb. 26, 1850. How Merciful is the Lord, my Heavenly Father. Dear Harriette is this morning quite comfortable, quite free from pain or distress for breathing. The blister put on before night did not draw well but after it was removed & a greased cloth applied it filled fully twice & afforded great relief to her side. The powder acted well, opperating [sic] before morning — the discharges very dark — black.²² How good the Lord is. Harriette is to me as one raised from the dead. I can consider it in no different light.

As H. was so comfortable, Father returned & as the Dr. wished to hear from her, he went via H. Hole. Although I rejoice yet I rejoice with trembling. This afternoon & evening the blood has a strong tendency towards the head, producing a most violent distracting headache. H. has been quite delirious in consequence. The pain has been so severe this evening she was quite urgent to be bled. I knew not what course to take — it was a critical moment I thought. I asked H. if I better not pray with her & kneeling by her bedside implored Heaven's interposition & guidance, if she should be bled, so to direct, if not, so to direct, if possible to rebuke the disease & give her rest & sleep during the night.

I felt perfectly resigned to the will of God yet with strong urgent faith. God answered prayer & before I arose from

²² A laxative?

my knees the pain began to be relieved.²³

Sister Patience Holley watches with H. tonight. I sleep in an adjoining room where I may be called any moment.

I have heard most of the recitations today by hurrying them. In this way I get some considerable time to be with H. Miss L. P. Smith, my Assistant, taking charge meantime.²⁴ I think this course preferable to dismissing the school if I can possibly follow it, even at the loss of half or the whole of the recitations of my classes. Were I half a mile from the Academy, I should be obliged to close. God seeth the end from the beginning & God is my Father.²⁵

Wednesday, Feb. 27/50. I was in to see Harriette three times during the night & found her very comfortable & refreshed with quiet sleep. The pain in her head had ceased except a very slight pulsation in the right temple. This was in answer to prayer. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick."

This I proved true a few weeks ago while we were at Edgartown. Dear H. was distressed very much as now when first taken now & all our remed. . . prescriptions failed. We prayed for direction & almost immediately Mother suggested a drink which immediately relieved her & so that we were enabled to return to W. Tisbury.

Harriette has been very comfortable

during the day. This morning however at little after 4, Mrs. Holley called me & I found H. on the "chamber" faint. With some difficulty we got her on the bed & brought to. For sometime after she was distressed for breath, say an hour, but since that, was not distressed during the day.

Dr. Ruggles came at 10 o'clock & appeared much gratified to know the medicines had done so well. He said he sees no reason why, unless something new should take place, she may not get up soon. Certainly I see nothing to prevent. She has taken some nourishment & feels free from pain or distress.

Bro. Upham & Aunt Emily came up this forenoon to see Hattie.²⁶ How kind are him & her thus to come up so far to see us in our distress. Bro. Upham has ever shown himself very much interested in us.

I have been able to attend to most of the recitations of the school today. My poor health suffers a little from fatigue, sympathy, want of sleep, etc., yet no more than I might expect. My love for my dear wife was never so ardent & strong as now. The loveliness of her disposition never shone forth so purely & Religion throws its hallowed charms around her every expression of countenance & thought.

Thursday Feb. 28, 1850. Last evening after I gave Harriette a dose of Castor oil she vomited with great difficulty a large portion of phlegm. This distressed her so much she fainted. We thought her so comfortable & likely to sleep quietly that I undressed myself & got

²⁶ Rev. Frederic Upham was the Methodist minister in Edgartown. Perhaps "Aunt" Emily was his wife.

in bed with her. But I had not long been in bed before I was obliged to arise as above & dress myself.

Mrs. Geo. Luce came in about 10 o'clock & we procured her services as a watcher.²⁷ Many kind friends had offered everything, but we thought their services unnecessary. Harriette was quiet & easy about 11 o'clock when I was called to go to a neighbor's, Mrs. Holmes Allen's, & pray with Miss Ann F. Hancock, a pupil of my school who was deeply distressed for sin. Harriette was urgent I should go & being so comfortable I consented. I found Miss H. in great distress sobbing aloud. I prayed with her & gave such instruction as appeared necessary. I tarried till 1/4 of 12, but she was unwilling to believe — to take God at his word — unless she had the evidence she was saved first.²⁸

When I returned I found Harriette quite comfortable & retired. At about 2 o'clock this morning I was called as H. was faint. At little after 3, I was called again. She was faint & greatly distressed for breath by reason of the phlegm. In her great distress she pointed with her finger & said Hannah. As she has since told me she saw Hannah & pointed that I might see too.

At 5 1/2 I cum [*sic*] in & found H. very comfortable & at her request lay down on the bed with her & we both slept. She remained very comfortable till 11 o'clock when she became very much disturbed by a little apple in

²⁷ She may be Mrs. Sophia Luce of Edgartown, age 30.

²⁸ Ann F. Hancock, 22, the daughter of Samuel T. Hancock, farmer, of Tisbury, was apparently living with Mrs. Holmes Allen while attending the Academy.

which some divers powder was administered. This set heavily on her stomach & immediately threw her into a violent fever. She was however relieved by 12 o'clock & remained during P.M., even remarkably comfortable — better she says than she was a week since. She is very happy in her religion all the while. This is overcoming, as seeing the Invisible!

The meeting last evening I am told was very powerful. A large number were anxiously seeking the Lord & three of them were converted. Miss Lucy Mayhew, a pupil of mine, I am told was converted during the night.²⁹ At prayers this morning in the Academy there were two or three in tears — The Lord is here — the grace of God that bringeth Salvation has appeared to his people. Especially is my school sharing gloriously in these holy influences.

Joseph T. Pease Esq., called at the Academy this forenoon & spent a few moments with us — called likewise at the house & saw Mother. Some words were exchanged between us about my taking the proposed public High School at Edgartown. It will probably be better if I teach to remain here. The Lord will order that matter as shall be for his glory.³⁰

Rev. Father Bates from Chilmark called this P.M., conversed very appropriately with & prayed for Harriette. He is a man of excellent spirit & deep experience.

I have not been feeling very well

²⁹ Lucy Mayhew, 17, daughter of Bartlett Mayhew of Chilmark.

³⁰ Joseph Thaxter Pease, son of diarist Jeremiah Pease, is Moderator of Edgartown, then planning to build its first high school.

²³ Apparently he had been planning to "bleed" her himself.

²⁴ Miss Love P. Smith, 20, a teacher at the academy, was daughter of Gilbert Smith, farmer, of Edgartown.

²⁵ The boarding house where he lives is next door to the Academy.

today — have suffered from a rather severe headache — my appetite is too rather failing me. This I trust will all be corrected by a little more rest & sleep. Mother's being with us relieves me greatly. I know not what I should do without her at this time.

I have not yet informed Harriette's parents of her state as [her] father has just risen from a bed of sickness to which he has been confined for three weeks & as [sister] Addie is not well so that Mother Budlong could not come on. The word I should have sent would be equivalent to announcing her death. I am now thankful I did not write.

The Lord has brought her up from the gates of the dead. Praise the Lord all my Soul & all that is within me, bless & praise his holy name! This is the Lord's doings & it is marvelous in our eyes!

Harriette has eaten & swallowed the juice of beef steak & has eaten an egg, beside toast & treacle, all of which taste to her unusually good. With care & the blessing of God we may expect she will be up & quite well very soon.

One little incident is rather remarkable. More than two months

ago, Harriette in her sleep repeated several verses of Poetry of the highest order. I mentioned the sentiment of the Poetry to her when awake but she knew nothing about it. Some nights after, while I was writing in my Journal, she having retired, she repeated the same verses again & I took down the first two lines that I might recall the poetry to her mind. These lines were:

*I bless thee I praise thee,
my King & my God
For the good & the evil
thy hand hath bestowed.*

When awake she said she never heard the lines & knew nothing about repeating them. Last night while asleep she repeated some poetry which Mother pronounced most beautiful & she was dictating it to me line by line to write down. The first two lines were the above, as Mother says & when she came to the word "evil" she stopped & said "No! There is no evil, I'll blot that out."

By what mother tells me it was precisely the same she repeated to me perhaps eleven & then 9 weeks ago & yet Harriette knows nothing about it. How may this be accounted for?

To be continued.

Corrections

The yearly totals given in the article, "When the Island's Biggest Employer Was a London Missionary Society," published in the May 1993 *Intelligencer*, contained many errors, indicating why the Editor long ago turned over the task of balancing the check book to his wife.

The individual payments are all correct, it is only the boldface totals for each year that are in error. Incidentally, some readers wondered if it was Sewall who was the poor mathematician. It was not. He did no annual totalling. The errors were all by the Editor, not only in adding, but in transcribing.

A number of members pointed out the mistakes. The first two (by postmark) were Ralph E. Hillman of Beulah, Michigan, and R. A. Lovell Jr., of Sandwich, Massachusetts. The Editor thanks all who called his attention to these errors.

Here are the correct amounts by year:

Total paid in 1708: £20 (Page 185)

Total paid in 1709: £250 19sh 4p. (Page 186)

Total paid in 1710: £193 12sh 0p. (Page 187)

Total paid in 1711: £297 15sh 8p. (Page 188)

Total paid in 1712: £86 0sh 0p. (Page 189)

Total paid in 1713: £140 9sh 0p. (Page 190)

Total paid in 1714: £190 10sh 0p. (Page 190)

Total paid in 1715: £179 5sh 0p. (Page 191)

Total paid in 1716: £126 15sh 0p. (Page 192)

Total paid in 1717: £348 9sh 0p. (Page 194)

Total paid in 1718: £233 5sh 0p. (Page 195)

Total paid in 1719: £102 14sh 0p. (Page 196)

Grand total for 13 years: £2169 13sh 12 p. (Page 196)

Footnote on p.196 should begin: £2169 was a lot of money. . .

The Editor is sorry (and embarrassed) about this, as you can imagine.

[illegible]

	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Archibald Mullen													2.75
David Davis	12	12	12		25					X			.875
Wm H. Munn		25	12	25			25	25	25				1.625
John H. Munn		25											.25
Spencer Pease	X	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	discharged	4.00
Chas Pease Jr								25					.25
Wm A. Pease											25		.50
Richard McCoffin									25	25	25	25	1.25
Saml. Osborn Jr	12	12	25	25				25					1.50
John A. Norton				25	25	25			25	25	25		1.50
Amos Mullen			25			25	25	75			25		1.50
Thomas Mayhew	12	discharged	discharged										
Robert B. Nudd								25	25	25			1.50
Benj B. Huxford													.25
Samuel Cummings				25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	discharged	6.00
Jos. W. Mayhew			25	25		25				25	25		1.375
Jared McCoffin				12									.50
John L. Hardy	25			25		discharged	discharged						.50
Joseph V. Kelly	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	3.00
Wm P. Chadwick			25					25					1.00
L. D. Smith	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25		2.75
Clement Pease	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	3.25
Daniel C. Pease			12	25	12		25	25	Y				1.125
John A. Mayhew	25	25			12	25		25	25		25		2.125
Richard W. Vincent	25	25	discharged	discharged									
W. Adlington					25								.25
Charles Huntington													
Edw. Jennings	25	25	12			25	25	25		25	25	25	2.125
John Pease	25			25	25	25		25		25		25	1.575
Henry A. Coffin	25	25					25	25			25		.75
Charles Mayhew						25	25	25			25		1.25
Ellis Lewis							25	25				11	.75
J. T. Cornell						25	25	25	25	25	25	25	1.75
Cyrus Jennings										25			.25