

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



# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 36, NO. 4

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Billy Wood,

Our

**Most Successful Son**

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

**The Avalon on Cuttyhunk:  
Summer Home of Billy Wood**

by JANET BOSWORTH

**Moments in History**

**Who Was Our First Missionary?  
Was It Roger Williams?**

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

**Documents: A Running Account of Matter & Things**

by HENRY BAYLIES

**Book Review: The Civil War:  
The Nantucket Experience**

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From *Mills, Mansions and Mergers*, by Edward G. Roddy.

Wood married into the Ayer family, made wealthy by "medicines" like Sarsaparilla.

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**Founding Editor: Gale Huntington (1902-1993)**

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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.

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## Billy Wood, Our Most Successful Son

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

TO STRIKERS in Lawrence in 1912, he was arrogant and ungrateful, called "the symbol of all the powerful moneybags."<sup>1</sup> To the residents of Shawsheen Village, he was an enlightened, well-meaning capitalist. To the fishermen on Cuttyhunk, he was one of those rich summer people, spending money as though it came in with the tide. But to folks in Edgartown, his birthplace, he was forgotten, the town's most successful son, forgotten. No native, before or since, ever became so rich and so powerful.

Who is this man, this forgotten son of Edgartown? He is William Madison Wood, born in 1858 in a cottage on Pease's Point Way. His arrival was not announced in the *Vineyard Gazette*. Why should it have been? He was just another "Portugee kid." His parents, fresh immigrants from the Azores, were newcomers. Their baby was seven months old before his birth was recorded by the town clerk and then the record was inaccurate.

It lists his father simply as "Mr. Wood, Mariner", with no first name. The mother's maiden name is given as "Grace A. Wood," which it was not. We don't know what her maiden name was, nor do we know what the father's family name was, but neither, it seems certain, was born with the name Wood. Not in the Azores.

The mother's name took various forms throughout her life. In a biography of her son after he had become rich and famous, her name had been "upgraded" to Amelia Christine (Madison) Wood; in an earlier account, she was Christiana E. Wood. In the 1860 Census, while they were

<sup>1</sup>Fred E. Beal, *Proletarian Journey*, DaCapo Press, NY, 1971, p.50.

ARTHUR R. RAILTON has a special interest in this subject. He grew up in Lawrence, where his father and uncles worked in the textile mills, as he also did for two years in the 1930s.

still in Edgartown, she is listed as "Emma Wood, 22"; her husband is "William Wood, 33, Mariner." Both were listed as born in Pico of the Azores. Grace A. Wood seems to have been used only on the birth record.

The newborn, William Wood, later became William Madison Wood. He took one of his mother's various maiden names for his middle name. His birth date was June 18, 1858, which we must assume is correct. No other record exists. Because it was not recorded until January 17, 1859, it could be off by a day or two. Late recording was not unusual in those days, especially if there was no doctor at the delivery, which surely was the case with baby William.

His parents probably were not fluent in English. Grace Wood, or Emma as she called herself in the 1860 census, may have been illiterate. A few years later, she signed a deed with her "mark." So they may have had difficulty understanding what Town Clerk Barnard C. Marchant was asking. He probably thought it really wasn't important enough to worry about. The newborn was just another little Portugee kid who probably wouldn't amount to much.

But he did amount to much, very much indeed. In wealth and in power, he became the most successful person ever born on the Vineyard. Yet you won't find his name in any Island history. Billy Wood, as he was called by his workers, became the founder and president of the world's largest textile enterprise, the American Woolen Company, which produced about 15 percent of all the woolen goods in the country. He merged over 50 textile mills into one company with its headquarters in Lawrence, Massachusetts. At the peak of his career, he was one of the highest paid executives in the nation, right behind Andrew Carnegie and Henry Ford. But his home town has forgotten him.

His life, which began in that tiny cottage on Pease's Point Way, was one of impressive accomplishments, great controversy and deep tragedy. He died, a suicide, on a lonely road near Flagler Beach, Florida, on February 2, 1926.

It was a classic Horatio Alger story, he being "of true



Photo by Daniel Sullivan. Mills, Mansions and Mergers.

Wood was born in 1858 in this Edgartown cottage (1980 photograph).

proletarian origin."<sup>2</sup> From the poorest of beginnings, he combined hard work, a keen mind, bold ambition and a few lucky breaks into wealth and power beyond the wildest dreams of any Vineyard son, especially a "Portugee kid" whose parents barely spoke English.

Although there is no written record to support it, William, the father, is thought to have landed in Edgartown aboard the whaling ship *Champion*, owned by Benjamin Worth and others in Edgartown. The ship arrived in Edgartown on May 20, 1856, under the command of Capt. Thomas M. Pease, after a 2 1/2-year voyage in the North Pacific. Despite a poor first year, the voyage turned out well. The *Champion* brought home more than 1900 barrels of whale oil and 17,000 pounds of whalebone.

One of the crew, it is thought, was a 26-year-old Azorean, who had signed on as cook when the outbound *Champion* stopped in the Azores in September 1853. New England whalers stopped there regularly to fill their crew list and, it was hoped, to harpoon a few sperm whales in the warm waters around the islands. We know the *Champion* stopped there because the *Vineyard Gazette* stated in its *Marine News*

<sup>2</sup> Beal, p. 50.

column February 10, 1853:

A ltr., received in New Bedford reports ship *Champion* of this port, as having touched at the Western Islands, no date, all well, clean — had seen whales twice, but it was a gale of wind both times.<sup>3</sup>

The newspaper report gave no date, but if the letter had been received in New Bedford early in February it would indicate that Captain Pease had sailed directly to the Azores after leaving Edgartown on September 9, 1853. It couldn't have been after November because on January 2, 1854, the *Champion* was awhaling in the grounds near Tristram da Cunha, southwest of Cape Town, South Africa. Captain Pease wrote home from there on that day, mentioning he had 150 barrels of oil in the hold.

The next word from the *Champion* was on April 18, 1854, when she was reported at Horn Island on the northeastern tip of Australia, carrying the same 150 barrels of oil. From there, she went north to the Ochotsk Sea, southwest of Bering Strait. Her first season was poor, but in 1855 things got better and she took on more than 1100 barrels of oil. In late December 1855, she left Honolulu to head home, planning to cruise in the southern waters for sperm whales on the way. She arrived in Edgartown May 20, 1856, and, if the story is correct, her Portuguese cook stepped ashore on Martha's Vineyard.

The story is probably accurate, despite some questions. If William did arrive in Edgartown late in May and decided he wanted Grace (or Emma) to join him, they both would have had to act quickly.<sup>4</sup> There would have been less than 18 months for her to receive word from him and to get to Edgartown. It would not have been easy for an 18-year-old girl who may have been illiterate.

There's a further mystery. The 1860 Federal Census lists three children in the family: John, one year old; William, two years old; and Maria M., 11 years old. Maria is listed

<sup>3</sup> Clean meant that no oil was on board. The Azores were called the Western Islands. It was the European mariners' name for them.

<sup>4</sup> She would have been only 15 when Wood left Pico. It isn't known if they married before he left or, for that matter, when or where they married.



Wood's birthplace is on the 1858 Walling map, top center: W.W. Wood

as having been born in Massachusetts. That would have been in 1849, four years before the *Champion* stopped at the Azores to pick up William. Who could she be? Certainly not Emma's daughter unless Emma was already living in Massachusetts before William joined the *Champion* in the Azores. Furthermore, Maria was only 11 years younger than her mother, Emma. An 11-year-mother seems unlikely. These facts make one wonder. It is possible that Emma was already in Massachusetts and William signed on so he could join her in America. But, if that was the case, he couldn't have been Maria's father. Maria might have been Emma's younger sister rather than her daughter. These are simply guesses, of course. The "official" story is that Maria was their daughter.

One historian who researched the matter thoroughly is sure that William came to Edgartown with Captain Pease, although he mistakenly identifies him as Capt. Henry Pease, another Edgartown whaling master. He also must be wrong when he states that the *Champion* was east-southeast of the Azores only seven days after leaving Edgartown. To have gone that far in one week seems impossible. There was another ship *Champion* (her master was Waterman) that had left New Bedford some time before the Edgartown *Champion* and the researcher may have confused the two.<sup>5</sup>

So we don't know with certainty how William and Emma (or Grace, etc.,) got to Edgartown. What we do know is that on July 16, 1857, fourteen months after the *Champion* arrived, William J. Wood, laborer, bought from William Bradley of Edgartown for \$325, a

. . . one story dwelling house . . . now occupied by said William J. Wood, said dwelling house stands on land belonging to John A. Baylies. . .

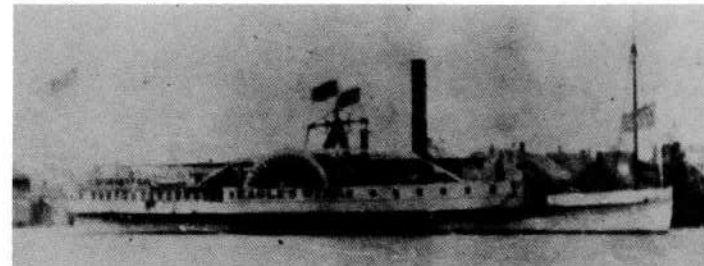
The Woods, with daughter Maria, were living in the house, which was on leased land, part of a tract off Pease's Point Way once owned by Rev. Frederick Baylies, the Indian missionary. The house is still there at the intersection of Morse Street and Pease's Point Way. Six months after buying the house, William I. Wood, Laborer, bought the land for \$75 from John A. Baylies. The lot was 52 feet wide, 107 feet deep and through it ran

. . . a right of way for cart and foot travel over the most northeasterly portion by Daniel Smith and John A. Baylies.

Thus, within two years of arriving in Edgartown, William (with either J. or I. as a middle initial) Wood owned his own home. It had cost him \$400, a substantial sum in the 1850s. How he had accumulated that much money is unknown. On June 18, 1858, six months after the land purchase, baby William was born. In the 1859 birth record, the father is listed as a Mariner, not as a Laborer as he had been in the deeds. He had apparently found a job on a boat. The following year, a second son, John, was born.

<sup>5</sup> Edward G. Roddy, *Mills, Mansions, and Mergers: The Life of William M. Wood*, Merrimack Valley Textile Museum, North Andover, Mass. 1982, p.23.

Peabody Museum photo from *The Island Steamers*.



Only one faded photograph of the *Eagle's Wing*, c. 1860, has survived.

Then on July 11, 1861, William I. Wood sold the property for \$600 to Manuel Lewis, Laborer, and moved to New Bedford. He had made a profit of \$200. On the deed, Mrs. Wood is listed as Christiana E. Wood, but without a signature. She signed it with her "mark."

Why they moved to New Bedford is not clear. Young William was then only three, his brother John was two. Later biographies of the textile millionaire state that his father had been hired as steward on the steamer, *Eagle's Wing*, running between New Bedford and Edgartown, with stops at Woods Hole and Holmes Hole. His listing as Mariner in the 1859 birth record would indicate that he had gone back to sea. The deeds, as we have seen, described him as a Laborer, but they were both before the *Eagle's Wing* began operating. Incidentally, Mrs. Wood, biographers say, was a cleaning woman on the vessel.

The *Eagle's Wing* (her agent was Andrew G. Pierce of New Bedford) began running to Edgartown in May 1858, making three round trips a week. Her captain was Benjamin Coffin Crowell of Holmes Hole. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, she left New Bedford at 11 a.m., remaining overnight in Edgartown. She left Edgartown on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 6:45 a.m., to return to New Bedford. On holidays and Sundays, she ran excursion trips. One was on July 5, 1858, when after arriving in Edgartown from New Bedford she made an excursion to Hyannis with a brass band and a quadrille band for dancing. Round trip: 50 cents. On July 20 and again on July 22, she made

excursions to Nantucket. She was doing well. Or so it seemed to the *Gazette* editor who wrote: "We rejoice in her evident prosperity."

There was no mention of William Wood as her steward, but it was obvious there was plenty of work for one. The *Eagle's Wing* had "a fine dining saloon, capable of accommodating 80 passengers."<sup>6</sup> However, it would seem that the steward would not be better off living in New Bedford. The *Eagle's Wing* spent four nights a week in Edgartown, including weekends. Edgartown would seem to be the better place for her steward to live.

The "prosperity" of the *Eagle's Wing* ended abruptly two weeks after Wood sold his Edgartown house. On July 24, 1861, she burned to the waterline while on an excursion from Providence to Block Island. Steward William Wood, one would assume, joined the unemployed.

The sale of the Edgartown house ended the Wood family's connection with Martha's Vineyard. Apparently, young William never returned. His biography published in *The National Cyclopaedia* while he was alive (and surely written with his approval) may provide a hint as to why he never went back. It boasts,

his ancestors were prominent in the colony of whalers and seamen who have made the coast of Massachusetts famous in nautical song and story. His father abandoned the sea on account of delicate health and retired to New Bedford, Mass., where the son was brought up.

Clearly, his father had not retired to New Bedford for reasons of health, nor had he been prominent in the colony of whalers that had made Massachusetts famous. Perhaps his son did not wish to revisit the place of his birth and be reminded of the truth. After his rise to wealth and power, William seemed anxious to avoid mentioning his Portuguese ancestry. At least one published account of his career described his mother as English. Whatever the reason, he never returned to Edgartown and always called New Bedford "my home." In 1910, he did come back to Dukes County

<sup>6</sup> Paul C. Morris and Joseph F. Morin, *The Island Steamers*, Nantucket Nautical Publisher, Nantucket, Mass., 1977, p.8.



Photo courtesy Old Dartmouth Historical Society.

*Billy Wood began his career on the second floor of this bank building.*

when he bought property on Cuttyhunk Island. He built two large summer houses there (See p. 177). From his porch facing Gay Head, he could sit and watch the sunset paint, in breathtaking color, the cliffs of his native Island. Perhaps that was close enough.

But that was many years later. In 1861, young William and his family were living in a small house in New Bedford. His father, after losing his job on *Eagle's Wing*, was struggling to support the family. Seven more children were born in New Bedford, bringing the total to ten. The house was crowded. For Billy, the eldest boy, the future did not look promising.

It soon was much bleaker. His father became ill with consumption and died. William, only 12 years old and a freshman in New Bedford High, was forced to drop out of school to help support the family. Fortunately, he got a job as office boy in the counting room of the Wamsutta Cotton Mills on the second floor of the Merchants National Bank Building in New Bedford. The man who hired him was Andrew G. Pierce, former agent of the ill-fated *Eagle's Wing*. Mr. Pierce, no doubt, was sympathetic with the widow and her numerous children.

By hiring young William, Mr. Pierce gave birth to a career that ended with the office boy becoming the most powerful man in the textile industry.<sup>7</sup>

After a few years, young Billy had impressed Pierce enough to be transferred into manufacturing, where he was trained in cost studies. When he became 18, he left New Bedford to go to Philadelphia, where the Centennial Exposition was celebrating the nation's 100th birthday. Thanks again to Mr. Pierce, he was hired by a Philadelphia brokerage office, where he learned about stocks and bonds, something of value to him later.

Tiring of Philadelphia, he returned to New Bedford and took a job in a bank. When a Fall River textile company went into bankruptcy, its new manager, Otis M. Pierce, son of Andrew, hired Wood as paymaster. In 1885, the Washington Mill in Lawrence went bankrupt. One of its major bond holders, Frederick Ayer of Lowell, bought it at auction. Ayer was a patent medicine millionaire with no experience in textiles. His new manager hired Wood as his assistant, putting the young man in charge of manufacturing. This turned out to be a big break for Billy.<sup>8</sup>

It didn't seem that way at first. Within a short time the manager fired him. It was a shock to Wood, who had never been fired before. He asked to be kept on as a travelling salesman. That was something textile mills had never done, depending instead upon commission houses to sell their goods. Wood's dogged salesmanship brought in considerable business and rescued the Washington Mill from an imminent second bankruptcy. Mr. Ayer was impressed and made him Treasurer. Four years later he promoted Wood to manager of the entire mill at \$25,000 a year, a magnificent salary at the time.

William Wood was impressing more than Mr. Ayer. Within three years, he had married Mr. Ayer's daughter,

<sup>7</sup> Wood in 1918, a rich man, remembered his first job and bought the bank building, "for sentimental reasons," planning to restore it. It was never done.

<sup>8</sup> While at the bank, Wood had tried to convince a number of investors to start a cotton mill in Fall River. One of the investors was the man hired by Ayer and he remembered Wood.

Ellen, providing tea-party talk among Boston's society ladies for months. The Ayers were long-time New Englanders, descendants of a Colonial family. The Woods, as we have seen, were immigrants from the Azores, of all places. Little was known about his family, except that his father had been a mariner and a former steward on a steamboat. Hardly high-society material.

The bridegroom was not even a high-school graduate, having dropped out as a freshman. Ellen, the bride, had attended an exclusive finishing school in Fontainebleau, France, and then Radcliffe College in Cambridge. Her brothers were all Harvard graduates. She loved music, dancing, the arts; he seemed to have no interests other than work. It was a marriage for society to gossip about.<sup>9</sup>

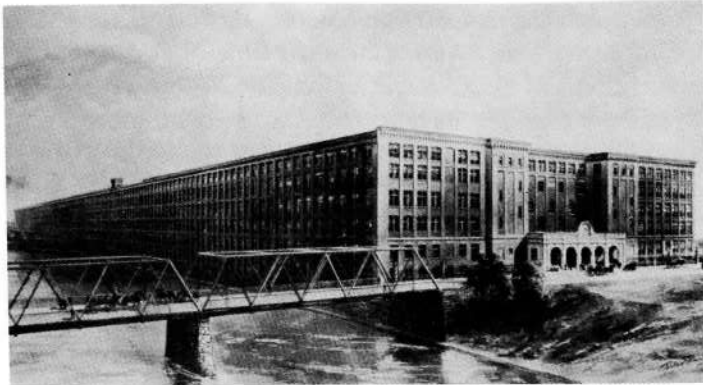
Billy Wood was determined to make Washington Mill a success for his father-in-law and, now, for himself, a member of the family. And he did. Once that was done, he set himself a much higher goal. He set out to merge some of the small, struggling mills of New England into one company, his own company. By 1899, he had convinced seven such mills to join what later was called "The Woolen Trust." In April of that year, the group was incorporated as the American Woolen Company. Frederick Ayer bought nearly half of its preferred stock and William Wood bought another large block, perhaps with his father-in-law's backing. Together, they controlled the company.

Wood, the "Portugee kid" from Edgartown, at 41 years of age, was a multi-millionaire.

The American Woolen Company expanded steadily for the next 20 years under his leadership. Wood never stopped increasing its capacity, not only by bringing in other small mills, but by building huge new ones. In Lawrence, across the Merrimac River from the Washington Mill, he built the largest woolen mill in the world and named it the Wood Mill. Soon, he built another giant mill just across the street;

<sup>9</sup> Gen. George S. Patton, famous in World War II, became Wood's brother-in-law when he married Ellen's step sister, Beatrice, in 1910.





*Built in 1905, Wood Mill, world's largest textile mill, employed 7000.*

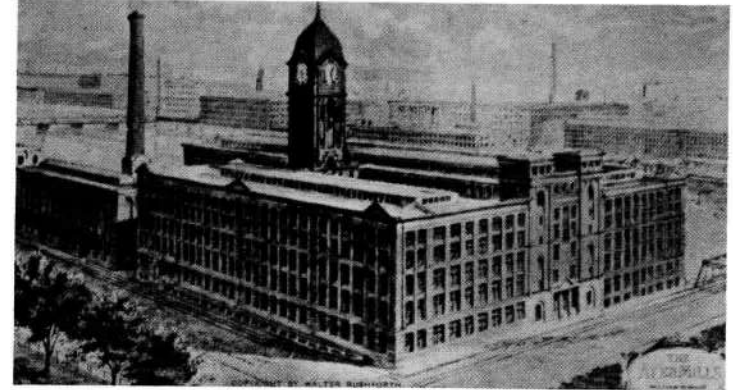
it was called the Ayer Mill. These two enormous structures, their names commemorating the two joined families, lined the south bank of the Merrimac River for nearly a mile.

Billy Wood had become the symbol of expansion and profit. He had brought more than fifty inefficient woolen mills into one mammoth money-making enterprise and, everyone agreed, had done it mostly by personal drive. The entire organization had been built by his skill and hard work. He had come a long way from his start as just another "Portugee kid" on Pease's Point Way.

But trouble was in the offing. For years, there had been demands for laws to protect the women and children who made up a large percentage of textile workers. Nearly half the labor force was female and one in eight, male and female, was under 18 years of age, some barely in their teens. The average weekly pay in Lawrence in 1912 was \$6.

The workers were supposed to support their families on \$6 a week, which was all the company could afford to pay. That was William Wood's position at a time when he was buying up much of Cuttyhunk island just so he could build two summer houses. His plan was to build a stone castle there at a cost of \$600,000, equal to the combined annual wages of 2000 mill workers. The castle was never built, but not because he couldn't afford it. His family objected to building it on such a remote island. Mrs. Wood, after one

Drawings courtesy Merrimack Valley Textile Museum.



*Ayer Mill, Lawrence, built in 1909, was the world's largest yarn mill.*

visit, had decided she didn't like Cuttyhunk.

The huge spread between the wages of the mill-workers and the wealth of the owners had become so obvious that there was talk of revolt. Radical workers began organizing unions. Some of them put pressure on Massachusetts legislators to limit the hours of work for women and children. The standard factory week was six days, 56 hours. A bill to cut the week for women and children to 54 hours was introduced. Not a major cut, but a start. The industry fought it, but it was passed, effective January 1, 1912.

Unable to operate without women and children, about half the work force, the mills reduced the work week to 54 hours for all workers. That was the good news; the bad news came on the first pay day in January. Wages had been cut by 30 cents, more than two hours' pay. Workers claimed that production was unchanged. Loom speed had been increased to make up the two hours' production. They felt they should be paid as before.

On that first pay day in 1912, a revolt began in the Everett Mill at the foot of Essex Street, Lawrence's main thoroughfare. When the workers discovered their pay had been cut, they stormed out of the mill into a snowstorm, shouting "Not enough pay!" They marched across the Merrimac River bridge to the doors of the mammoth Wood Mill, calling on its workers to join them. Hundreds did and

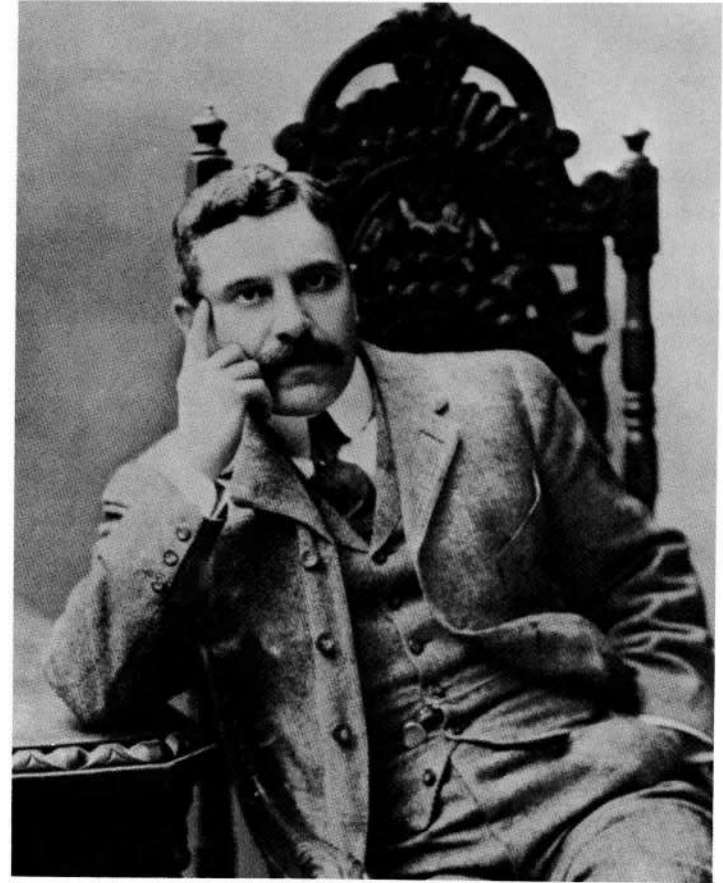
the enlarged mob paraded past the other mills along the Merrimac River. More workers joined them. That night the tenements of Lawrence buzzed with talk of strike.

The next day was the coldest in five years, the temperature dropping to 4 below zero, but 4000 strikers marched defiantly in protest. The leaders of the rebellion were all "foreigners," the press reported, members of a tiny local of the "communist" I.W.W. union. Most of the English-speaking workers refused to join the strike. There was in Lawrence a small AFL textile workers union made up mostly of English-speaking workers, the Irish, the Scottish and the English. Anglo-Saxons were not happy about the "foreign" invasion. Even the Irish-Catholic priests of Lawrence opposed the protest, condemning the strikers. But the "foreigners" were too numerous. The mills were forced to shut down. The Italians, Turks, Syrians, Portuguese and Polish had taken control. Within a few days, the protest became the largest, most violent strike in textile history. It is still famous in labor legend as "The Lawrence Strike of 1912."

The strikers, with no experience in strikes, asked the I.W.W., the International Workers of the World, or Wobblies, as they were called, to send help. This militant group, with strong communist tendencies, sent organizers to Lawrence. Among them were some who, in later years, became legends in the labor movement. When they arrived at the railroad station, a cheering crowd of more than 15,000 strikers greeted them. These were Arturo Giovannitti, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and William Haywood, names now renowned in labor history.

Arriving later was Joe Hill, the famous radical singer, who, at the end of the strike, wrote a victory song, "John Golden and the Lawrence Strike," to the tune of the hymn, "A Little Walk with Jesus." John Golden was president of the small, pro-company AFL Textile Workers Union. Joe Hill's words told of Golden and Wood "conspiring" against the I.W.W.:

In Lawrence, when the starving masses struck for more to eat  
And wooden-headed Wood tried the strikers to defeat.



Courtesy Merrimack Valley Textile Museum.

*William Madison Wood, Vineyard son, at the time of the 1912 strike.*

John Golden had with Mr. Wood a private interview.  
He told him how to bust up the I double double U.  
That's one time Golden did not make it right, all right;  
In spite of all his schemes, the strikers won the fight.

Billy Wood, head of the "Woolen Trust", was excoriated as a demon by the I.W.W. He became the villain who represented the industry and refused to rescind the pay cut. "To pay for 54 hours' work, the wages of 56," he told the press, "would be equivalent to an increase in wages and that the mills cannot afford." He vowed to break the strike,

because "a bloody whirlwind of violence [had] swept through the city and Wood announced this would be repeated until the strike was broken."<sup>10</sup>

Massachusetts Gov. Eugene Foss called out 50 militia companies to control the protesters. Pinkerton and Burns security men were hired by the mills. It was later claimed by the workers that the Pinkerton men smashed windows of street cars and blamed the strikers. The city was in turmoil. William M. Wood told the newspapermen, "There is no strike in Lawrence. Just mob rule."

On January 20, Lawrence police, acting on a tip, discovered caches of dynamite in three different locations, one a cobbler's shop. All were owned by Syrians. The owners were charged with conspiracy to blow up the mills. They denied any knowledge of the explosives. The "foreigners", as they were usually described, and the I.W.W. were causing all the violence, the companies charged. As the protests continued, Annie LaPizza, a striker taking part in a march, was shot and killed, apparently by a stray bullet fired by the nervous militia. A few days later, a 16-year-old boy, John Remi, was bayoneted for refusing "to move on." He died of the wound. Two of the I.W.W. organizers were arrested and charged with causing the deaths, although there was no evidence that they were in the area at the time.

To build national support for itself and the strike, the I.W.W. sent a group of workers' children to New York and Philadelphia to march through the streets. Mrs. Howard Taft, wife of the President, met with the children and spoke sympathetically. The city of Lawrence and the name of William Wood were filling the front pages of the nation. One of the labor leaders claimed,

This strike would be settled in 15 minutes if it wasn't for the haughty attitude of William M. Wood.

Then, on March 12, 1912, after 63 days of bitterness and violence, Wood agreed to the demands of the strikers. Lincoln Steffens, writing in the *New York Globe*, said, "Labor

<sup>10</sup> Beal, p.51. Among the radical cartoonists who spread the anti-Wood message was Boardman Robinson, who later became a regular vacationer at Chilmark's Barn House.



From *Mill Town* by Bill Cahn.

When police kept workers' children from going to other cities for food, Boardman Robinson, later a summer Chilmarker, published this.

has seldom, if ever, won so complete a victory."

The companies agreed to pay time and a quarter for overtime, unheard of before the strike. Piece-work employees were given a five percent increase (about 30 cents a week). Hourly workers received increases ranging from one to two cents an hour. Wages for most workers were between 10 and 12 cents an hour, with the most highly skilled getting up to 20 cents (\$10 a week).

The mills reopened, the workers returned to their jobs, their pay not much better than before the cut. A grand jury began to look into the dynamite plot. In August, before any indictments were presented, Ernest W. Pitman, a contractor who had worked for Wood when the new mills were being built, committed suicide. John J. Breen, an undertaker and son of the Lawrence mayor, confessed that Pitman had provided the dynamite and that he, Breen, had hidden it in the cobbler's shop and other places and then tipped off the police to discredit the strikers. He was fined \$500.

Indictments were handed down by the grand jury. One was served on President William M. Wood of the American Woolen Company, charging him with conspiracy in the dynamite planting and of approving payment of \$2600 to the conspirators.

The trial was held the following year, with huge headlines daily in New England papers. On June 6, 1913, the jury, initially deadlocked at 10 to 2, found Wood not guilty. It couldn't agree on one of the other defendants, but found the third defendant, Dennis J. Collins, guilty of two counts of conspiracy. There was evidence that Wood had, at the very least, authorized payment of money, but nothing came of it. He was acquitted on all counts.

Afterwards, Wood began to take more interest in the workers. His two sons persuaded him to do so, some said. When it was pointed out that the cost of living in Lawrence was higher than most cities in the east, he demanded that store owners cut prices, threatening to open mill stores in competition if they did not. He held "a big lawn party at his Andover estate to which he invited the workers," even giving them a half day off with pay, an unheard-of move. The workers didn't respond, only a few hundred attended.<sup>11</sup>

Although he seemed anxious to rebuild his reputation, Wood wasn't ready to provide additional wage increases, despite his promise during the strike that

When conditions of our business warrant raising your wages,  
I shall, without even a request, recommend such an advance.

<sup>11</sup> Beal, p.55.

But he did try to win back the workers' respect. The mill set up summer camps for children of employees, sports clubs for the men, sewing classes for the women, it even hired teachers of English for "foreigners." But Wood never was able to erase totally the bitterness that the famous Lawrence strike had engendered. The name Billy Wood always brought to mind the violent strike.

Perhaps seeking forgiveness is what inspired him to begin one of his major efforts: Shawsheen Village. This was a model community that the company built south of Lawrence, near his estate on the meandering Shawsheen River. It was laid out in the countryside along the main road between Lawrence and Boston. His plan was to create a modern community where his managers and overseers could live. However, the hourly and piece-work employees, 20,000 of them in the Lawrence mills, were not included. They still lived in the tenements of mill town.

Shawsheen became the pride, not only of the American Woolen Company, but of industrial Massachusetts. Its neo-Colonial public buildings were handsome. The village had none of the company-town look common in the coal and steel industry. There was a huge outdoor swimming pool, an enormous athletic field, an inn, a handsome postoffice and a spa. Everything was in good taste. The streets were wide and well maintained. Spreading out, as the village did, in front of his estate, it surely must have been a source of personal pride to William Madison Wood, son of Portuguese immigrants.

Arden, his Shawsheen estate, was only one of the Wood family mansions, but it was the one the family considered home. Others were in Boston, in Palm Beach, Florida, and at Manchester-by-the-Sea, north of Boston. In addition, there were two summer homes on Cuttyhunk island. There seemed no limit to his desire for possessions. Asked in a court case, how many automobiles he had, Wood replied: "I don't know. I haven't any time to count them."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Joyce L. Kornbluh, Editor, *Rebel Voices, An I.W.W. Anthology*, U of Mich. Press., 1964, p.166.



*Arden, Wood's house in Shawsheen Village, was one of several homes.*

His plan was to make Shawsheen Village the headquarters of the company, moving it out of Lawrence. An office building was built to house the administration. The entire project was completed in five years, from 1918 to 1923. Those years, with World War I as a stimulant, were the most profitable in company history. Army contracts kept the looms pounding, turning out miles and miles of woolen goods for uniforms. Production skyrocketed, as did profits. By 1924, the company had 60 mills in eight states, employing 40,000 workers.

The Edgartown boy had become one of America's richest men. In 1918, his salary and bonuses totalled \$978,725, after taxes. His federal income tax came to \$681,169 (it was a truly progressive tax then), all paid by the company, making his total income for the year, before taxes, well over \$1.5 million, not including his investment income. In 1918, with mill workers averaging about ten dollars a week, that was an enormous sum.

It seemed as though there was nothing Billy Wood couldn't do, if he set out to do it. But in 1924 the wind began to change. Some believe it had been triggered by his son's death in an automobile accident in 1922. William Junior was driving home in his Rolls Royce when he lost



*In Palm Beach, he had this home, the Towers. Another was in Boston.*

control of the car, ran off the road and was instantly killed. That same year, 1922, William Senior suffered a mild stroke, while in Florida and seemed to lose some of his vigor. He had planned to install William Junior as President and son Cornelius as Vice President when he stepped down. But the accident changed things. He began to liquidate his stock holdings in the company. A group of investors were demanding a complete management change. His luck was running out.

Then he had another stroke, somewhat more serious. In December 1924, his doctor advised him to retire. He was 66 years old. Within a month, with what his son Cornelius described as a signature that "bore but faint semblance to the once decisive 'William M. Wood' we were accustomed to seeing," he resigned. He named as his successor, Andrew G. Pierce Jr., the son of the man who had hired his father as steward on the *Eagle's Wing* and had hired himself as his office boy. Son Cornelius became First Vice President.

President Pierce shook up the company despite opposition from Cornelius. The big dream for Shawsheen Village was ended, its homes sold. The model village was suddenly described as "a fool's scheme." Failing in his efforts to oust President Pierce, Cornelius resigned.

In January 1926, William and Ellen Wood went to Florida. Mrs. Wood had become a semi-invalid, rich in her own right, having inherited millions from her father. No doubt they travelled in one of their private Pullman cars, along with his personal physician, valet, Mrs. Wood's nurse and maid. In Florida, they were met by their limousine and driven to the Hotel Ormond in Daytona Beach. They no longer owned the Palm Beach mansion. Wood had sold it shortly before, at a loss of \$300,000.

On the morning of February 2, 1926, William Madison Wood called for the limousine. He told his doctor, who usually went with him, he would not be needed. On a deserted road near Flagler Beach, he ordered the chauffeur to stop the car. His valet, who was attending him, was told he wanted to take a short walk alone. Limping slightly from the stroke, Billy Wood walked around a curve and out of view of the two men in the car. Placing the barrel of a revolver in his mouth, he pulled the trigger. Death was instantaneous.

Thus, the life of the textile magnate ended within a few hundred yards of the sea, as it had begun in Edgartown in 1858.

Again, he made national headlines. His suicide shocked the industry. One of the labor radicals of those years, Fred E. Beal, was surprisingly sympathetic. Years later, he wrote:

There were comrades of mine in the radical movement who said, at the time of Wood's suicide, that it served him right. . . Were not strikers shot to death in Lawrence? . . . I agreed, but somehow I did not feel that way about Billy Wood's suicide. . . I knew that Wood himself had been driven by the monster which he had helped rear. I could feel no bitterness towards the Portuguese proletarian who had become the textile king of America.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Beal, p.56



## The Avalon on Cuttyhunk: Summer Home of Billy Wood

by JANET BOSWORTH

*This article was published originally as a monograph by the Cuttyhunk Historical Society. Permission to reprint it was graciously given, for which the Editor is grateful.*

THE CUTTYHUNK Fishing Club was at the height of its popularity in 1904. In that year William Madison Wood, the wealthy and powerful head of the American Woolen Company, which was an amalgam of many woolen companies of New England, spent a few days at the club and fell in love with Cuttyhunk.

He returned for a second visit, tried to join the club and later tried to buy all the club's holdings, consisting of nearly the whole island, but his attempts were unsuccessful. He was not one to give up, however, and in 1907 he was able to buy a large piece of land across from the club house from Fred Allen, a descendant of one of Cuttyhunk's oldest families. In 1908 he bought another, from Jennie Jones, whose husband was a noted lifesaver, soon to be Mr. Wood's private captain.

In 1909, Mr. Wood tore the Jones house down to make room for a large house, now known as the Avalon, as a private home for himself and his family. Builders were brought from the mainland to construct it with the help of islanders, under the supervision of Walton Jenkins of Rochester, Massachusetts, the founder of the present Jenkins line on Cuttyhunk. Interestingly, only part of the house was on Mr. Wood's land; at least half spilled over onto club land, which he was not to buy until 1912.

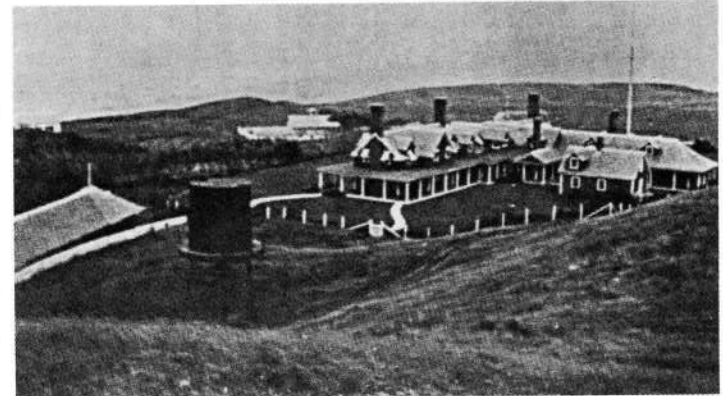
JANET BOSWORTH, a member of our Society for many years, was the driving force behind the formation of the Cuttyhunk Historical Society, of which she is presently its librarian. She is the widow of Lloyd Bosworth, a member of one of the tiny island's best known families.

Avalon was much the same in the early days as it is now. The present stone wall and wide porches shown in early photographs, and the wooden exterior were the same as today. It is a large sprawling building with a spacious entrance hall, now containing a bar, that was originally a poolroom. This opens into a large living room with a brick fireplace, a long dining room, and a staircase and hallway leading to bedrooms. There were eleven bedrooms in all, upstairs and down, with four bathrooms downstairs and five upstairs, each of those with a sitz as well as a full bath. Behind the dining room were the big kitchen, pantries, and bath. The cellar was huge and dark and mysterious, a wonderful place to hide and to mystify and frighten visiting children, reports the grown-up son of a tenant of the 1930s. A bowling alley and tennis court were added nearby, and all in all, Avalon was a large comfortable summer mansion for Mr. Wood, his wife, two sons and two daughters. It is reported, however, that Mrs. Wood did not like Cuttyhunk and visited the island only once.

Mr. Wood, unlike Ellen Wood, came frequently for long periods, employed a large staff, and entertained lavishly. He hired many local people, including Jennie Jones's husband, Tom, who soon became "General Marine Advisor to Head of Woolen Trust," according to a newspaper account; Granville Francis Jenkins, Walton's son, who later took care of all island property for his employer and became one of the most popular people ever to live on Cuttyhunk; and his wife Doris Tilton Jenkins and her sister, Florence Mackay.

In 1911, Mr. Wood bought the old Holder Allen homestead, and in 1916 he paid \$1750 at auction to the Allen estate for Fred Allen's house, barn and the land where Winter House now stands. After Winter House was built, the Wood family moved there, and in the last year of World War I he turned Avalon over to his younger daughter, Rosalind, as a convalescent hospital for wounded Allied officers. In the summer of 1993, a closet in the cellar at Winter House was found to contain the hospital's records,

Courtesy Cuttyhunk Historical Society.



*Wood owned much of Cuttyhunk, including his summer house, Avalon.*

correspondence and many bottles and containers of medicines and pills where they had been stored and forgotten for 73 years. Much of what we know now of the hospital was discovered there.

The hospital was opened under the auspices of the American Red Cross and no city hospital could have been better staffed and equipped. A physician was put in charge, and nurses, cooks, maids, and a gardener were hired. Letters were sent to all hospitals and commanding officers in the region, offering healthy surroundings, the finest of care, medical equipment, relaxation and amusements. The orders and the bills show that only the finest provisions and equipment were stocked. Everything was ready for what should have been a most successful operation.

Unhappily, however, red tape and rigid rules, plus regulations, prevented out-of-state hospitals from accepting and there were not many officers convalescing in Massachusetts. Only a few men were available to take advantage of a wonderful opportunity. At length, non-commissioned officers were invited also, but few could come. The hospital opened for a second summer in 1919 and a brochure describing its operation pictures groups of eight or nine men staying at Avalon. Unfortunately, 1919 was the end of an unselfish experiment. . . .

Everything came on the ferry, which made daily runs in

the summer, as now. Orders by letter were sent off one day and whatever was needed came over the next. Laundry was handled the same way, as were bills and payments. Complaints were made and sometimes unsatisfactory food or goods were returned on one day to be replaced the next.

...  
The convalescent home never opened for a third year. Avalon returned to being a private residence, used to house some of the Woods' staff and as a guesthouse for overflow. From 1920 until 1927 it was operated in this way by William Wood, and after his death in 1926, by his son Cornelius. After 1923, when William Wood bought all the rest of the [Cuttyhunk Fishing] club holdings, seven more houses as well as Avalon were available for friends and guests.

The availability of these houses and the fact that his children were growing up and needed companionship induced Cornelius Wood to invite friends to the island to spend their summer months there, renting houses from him. . . Although no one wanted to buy Avalon because it was too big, it was a wonderful place to spend the summer. Beside grownup affairs like the semi-formal dinner parties, tennis and the game of sardines, the teenagers had many activities and amusements, including flag raisings on the lawn and games that included tricks and pranks in the cellar. There were wonderful nooks to read and drowse in if one felt lazy. In addition, they all enjoyed swimming, fishing and sailing in the relaxed, easy atmosphere.

During the 1940s, Dora Waddington, an English woman, bought Avalon, which she ran as an inn. . . Thus Avalon joined a succession of other Cuttyhunk rooming and boarding houses: the Beatty, Bosworth, Allen, two Veeder Houses and the Poplars. . .

Mrs. Waddington stayed only two years. She sold Avalon to Arthur and Alice Thoresen, who had worked for her . . . [Alice] was a splendid cook who produced great meals for a distinguished clientele, and Mr. Thoresen was a genial host. The guests came to fish and stayed for longer periods than most summer visitors do now.

After five years . . . they sold Avalon to George Buchs, a bachelor from Cambridge. He was a sport fisherman and is said to have bought Avalon from hearsay, sight unseen. But he had no experience running an inn and after barely two years he sold it. . . In 1954 Ralph and Janet Stuart became the new owners of Avalon, which they called the Inn at Cuttyhunk. Ralph was a bandleader whose orchestras were famous up and down the Eastern shore. He and his wife were both boat people, enthusiastic sport fishermen and friends of island bass guide, Coot Hall. During their tenure, Avalon was again noted for its food and for social gatherings; liquor was never served there because the island was dry, but people were always allowed to bring their own. . . Although the Stuarts were successful, popular hosts, they found it required too much time [which they did not have] because of their travel with the orchestra. They sold it in 1957 to the Music Corporation of America, the head of which, David Baumgarten, still owns the house. He operated the Inn under the name of the Overseas Development Co., with the help of some of the Music Corporation's entertainers, directed by Marilyn Snow. . .

In 1959, it again became a private home where Marilyn lived until her death. Now Mr. Baumgarten spends vacations there, with no intention of reopening it as an inn. So Avalon returns to its original use. It has been repaired, reshingled and repainted through the years, but looks unchanged from its early days. . . [remaining] as a reminder of William Wood's years at Cuttyhunk and the beginnings of its summer colony.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

Within a few weeks, we will be mailing to members, as a Supplement to this issue, an author/title/subject index prepared by Tweed Roosevelt, covering every *Intelligencer* published since it began.



## Moments in History

# Who Was Our First Missionary? Was It Roger Williams?

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

HOW COULD historians have missed it? None mentions the fact that before the Mayhews came, Rev. Roger Williams, “that Baptist,” had already been on the Vineyard, maybe even converting the Indians! We know he was here because he mentions his visit in a book published in England at least a month before the Mayhew settlement. He gives no date for his visit, but it had to have been before June 1643, when he sailed for England. How long before, we don’t know. Here’s what Reverend Williams wrote:

The Indians of Martins vineyard, *at my late being amongst them*, report generally, and confidently of some Ilands, which lie off from them to Sea, from whence every morning early, certaine Fowles come and light amongst them, and returne at Night to Lodging, which Iland or Ilands are not yet discovered, though probably, by other Reasons they give, there is Land, etc.<sup>1</sup>

What Williams wrote about sea fowl is interesting, but of far greater interest is the fact that he was here. Williams, a great friend of the Indians, was at the time living in Providence as he had been since his 1635 banishment from Massachusetts. The book in which he mentions the Vineyard trip, went on sale in London on September 7, 1643, while Williams was there. It is believed that Thomas Mayhew Jr., landed at Great Harbour (now Edgartown) some time in late September, which would have been several weeks after the book came out. Williams had gone to London at the request of Rhode Island residents to obtain

<sup>1</sup> Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, Gregory Dexter, London, 1643, (reprinted Narragansett Club, Providence, R.I., 1866, p.117). Emphasis added.

ARTHUR R. RAILTON is Editor of this journal.

a royal charter for the colony. Thus, it seems certain that he had met with the Island Indians before the Mayhew settlement.

The idea of a book on Indian language came to him shortly after he sailed from New Amsterdam (New York) in June 1643. He described how it began in its introduction:

I drew the *Materialls* [for this book] in a rude lump at Sea, as a private *helpe* to my owne memory, that I might not by my present absence *lightly lose* what I had so *dearly bought* in some few yeares *hardship*, and *charges* among the *Barbarians*. . . I resolved (by the assistance of the *most High*) to cast those *Materialls* into this *Key*. . .

The first thing he did after landing in London, even before petitioning for the charter, was to turn the “rude lump” into a manuscript for publication. The book, now known as the *Key*, was printed by Gregory Dexter. Its success made Roger somewhat of an instant celebrity, it being the first book of its kind. Londoners were eager to learn about the “Barbarians” in the colony and they bought it up quickly.

It is, even today, a valuable book on the life and language of native Americans. For the purposes of this article, however, it is of interest only for one phrase, “at my late being amongst them.” He is no more specific about the date than that. Can it be dated more precisely? It seems unlikely. His comings and goings from March 1641 until his departure for England in June 1643 have been lost in history. We know only that he was “occupied with earning a bare living” by trading with the Indians. Banished from Massachusetts, he could still travel to Martha’s Vineyard and the other islands south of the continent because they were then a part of New York.

His remark, “at my late being amongst them,” makes the visit seem routine, matter of fact. By it, he is making no claim to discovery, no claim that his meeting with them was unusual. He simply states that in a recent visit, perhaps not his first, he had learned some interesting things about sea fowl.

We know it was before May 1643. He had left Providence that month to go to New Amsterdam to await a Dutch ship

bound for London where he would seek the charter. A royal charter had become necessary, Rhode Islanders believed, because Massachusetts Bay in 1642 had taken Pawtuxet, just outside Providence, under its protection.<sup>2</sup> This illegal move by Massachusetts to spread beyond its chartered boundaries disturbed the Narragansett Bay settlers. Providence might be next, they thought, an idea not beyond the plans of Gov. John Winthrop of Massachusetts:

This [taking over of Pawtuxet] we did partly to rescue these men from unjust violence, and partly to draw in the rest in those parts, either under ourselves or Plimouth. . . the place was likely to be of use to us, especially if we should have occasion of sending out against any Indians of Naragansett and likewise for an outlet into the Naragansett Bay, and seeing it came without our seeking, and would be no charge to us, we thought it not wisdom to let it slip.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after the Massachusetts move, in September 1642, the Narragansett Bay settlers assembled in Newport and agreed to seek a royal charter to protect their sovereignty. Rev. Roger Williams was chosen as "the proper agent to get a charter for both colonies."<sup>4</sup>

Because of his banishment, Williams could not leave from Boston nor could he even sail on a Massachusetts vessel. So he went to New York, then New Amsterdam, to board a Dutch ship. The city was under seige. He witnessed a series of actions between the Mohawks and the Dutch and offered to attempt to negotiate a settlement. The Governor and Williams met and, Roger wrote, there was "some discourse with mee about the Natives." But the Dutch leader declared that any notion of negotiating with the Indians was "foolish and odious."

Awaiting a vessel, he witnessed continued destruction by the Mohawks. New Amsterdam was ablaze, "[its] bowries were flames," he wrote. When the attacking Mohawks were

<sup>2</sup> A request for Massachusetts to move in had been made by several Pawtuxet residents after some unrest had been inspired by Samuel Gorton, a trouble maker, not unlike Williams.

<sup>3</sup> John Winthrop, *The History of New England*, Wait & Son, Boston, 1826, v.II, pp.84-5.

<sup>4</sup> Emily Easton, *Roger Williams, Prophet and Pioneer*, AMS Press, N.Y., 1969 (reprint from 1930 edition), p.228. "Both colonies" being Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

joined by Indians from Long Island, the governor changed his mind and asked Williams to negotiate. His mediation brought a partial peace, but did not end the destruction completely. Williams wrote, "Mine eyes saw their flames at their towns, and the flights and hurries of men, women and children. . ." The conflict was still going on when he left, early in June 1643.

Once at sea, he began writing from memory the notes which became his book. In its introduction, he explained the title and his motives in writing it:

I Present you with a Key . . . This Key, respects the *Native Language* . . . and happily may unlocke some rarities concerning the *Natives* themselves. . . A little Key may open a Box, where lies a bunch of *Keys*. With this I have entered into the secrets of those *Countries*, where ever *English* dwell about two hundred miles, betweene the *French* and *Dutch* Plantations. . . For my selfe. . . (out of desire to attaine their Language) I have run through varieties of *Intercourses* with them Day and Night, Summer and Winter, by Land and Sea . . . Many solemne discourses I have had with all sorts of *Nations* of them, from one end of the Country to another. . .

From his "rude lumpe" of notes, he completed a fascinating book of 32 chapters on such subjects as "Of Salutation," "Of Fowle" (the chapter in which he mentions the Vineyard), "Of the Earth and Fruits thereof," and "Of their Religion, Soule, etc." Its 200 pages are filled with facts on the life style of Native Americans as well as a dictionary of their language. His work is authoritative, having been based on many visits, not only with Indians on the continent, but with those on the islands to the south.

As was the custom, the book has a long subtitle:

An help to the Language of the Natives in that part of AMERICA, called NEW-ENGLAND. Together, with briefe Observations of the Customes, Manners and Worships, etc., of the aforesaid Natives, in Peace and Warre, in Life and Death. On all which are added Spiritual Observations, Generall and Particular by the Authour, of chief and speciall use (upon all occasions,) to all the English Inhabiting those parts; yet pleasant and profitable to the view of all men:

The subtitle does not exaggerate. The book delivers what it promises. It is a pleasant and profitable key to communicating with Indians living between Canada and New York. Williams had been studying them for years. William Wood, writing in 1634, was no doubt referring to him when he told about, but did not name, "one of the English preachers . . . [who] hath spent much time in attaining [the Indian] language."<sup>5</sup>

Dropped casually in among those facts of Indian life is the very unremarkable mention that the writer had been "late amongst" the Indians on Martin's Vineyard.<sup>6</sup> Travelling to off-shore islands was commonplace to Williams. He was an accomplished boatsman, sailing among the many islands around Narragansett Bay regularly for his trading with the Indians. In 1638, he wrote to Massachusetts Bay Gov. John Winthrop (who remained his friend and business associate despite the banishment):

I have a lustie Canow and shall have occasion to runn downe often to the lland (neere 20 miles from us), both with mine owne, and. . . your worship's] swine. . .

That island, being only 20 miles from Providence, was not the Vineyard, nor was his "lustie Canoe" the only boat he used. He also sailed a shallop or sloop, large enough to hold him and two or three casks for his goods in trade.<sup>7</sup> He sailed regularly to Block Island. He was fond of islands; it was easier for him to get to them than to inland villages. His own settlement was an island, Rhode Island.<sup>8</sup>

He even owned two or three small islands in Narragansett Bay. In November 1637, he and Governor Winthrop had bought an island (later named Prudence) from the Indians. He wrote to the Governor, explaining how much he owed for his share:

I have bought and paid for the island . . . The ten fathom

<sup>5</sup> William Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 1634.

<sup>6</sup> Martin's Vineyard was, as Vineyard history buffs know, the New York name for Martha's Vineyard, in general use before the arrival of the Mayhews.

<sup>7</sup> The sloop, known as a Rhode Island Special, was open decked, according to Laura Samit of the Roger Williams National Memorial in Providence.

<sup>8</sup> Today, of course, Rhode Island includes much more than the single island for which it was named.

A KEY into the  
**LANGUAGE**  
O F  
**AMERICA:**

O R,  
An help to the *Language of the Natives*  
in that part of AMERICA, called  
*NEW-ENGLAND.*

Together, with briefe *Observations of the Customs, Manners and Worships, &c.* of the  
aforesaid *Natives*, in Peace and Warre,  
in Life and Death.

On all which are added *Spirituell Observations, Generall and Particular by the Authour, of chiefe and speciall use (upon all occasions,) to all the English Inhabiting those parts; yet pleafant and profitable to the view of all men:*

---

BY ROGER WILLIAMS  
of Providence in *New-England.*

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LONDON,  
Printed by *Gregory Dexter*, 1643.

*Title page of Key, published in 1643, the year the Mayhews arrived.*

of beads and one coat you may please at leisure to deliver to Mr. Throckmorton, who will also be serviceable in the conveyance of swine this way.

The island was used to pasture the swine that were jointly owned by Williams and Governor Winthrop. Because of his fondness for travelling by water, it is easy to believe that he did visit, perhaps more than once, the Vineyard.

Sailing from Narragansett Bay across Rhode Island Sound,

his first sighting of the Vineyard would have been Gay Head, the prominent and distinctive western end of the Island. It would seem likely that he would have gone ashore near the Head and met with the natives. When Williams landed there, sometime before May 1643, he would have been the first missionary to do so. His prime interest, of course, was trade. He had a family to support, but he never forgot his true occupation, which was the Lord's work. In one of his letters to Governor Winthrop in 1638, he wrote, "I have convinced hundreths [of Indians] at home and abroad that in point of religion, they are all wandring, etc."<sup>9</sup>

So, it would seem that on his visit or visits to Martin's Vineyard (as he called it) he probably discussed religion as well as sea fowl. Did he convert anyone? We are not told. Unlike the letters Thomas Mayhew Jr., wrote to London and the religious tracts by Matthew and Experience Mayhew, the Williams book does not discuss conversions.

Evidence, admittedly meager, of Williams having been at Gay Head may be found in the fact that the Indians there were (and still are) Baptists. As early as 1702, when Samuel Sewall visited the western end of the Island for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Gay Head Indians were strong Anabaptists, strong enough to worry Sewall and Experience Mayhew:

**April 8, 1702.** Japhet, Jonathan and Stephen come to me [from Gay Head]. I have much discourse with them, try to convince Stephen of his Anabaptistical Errors. Jonas and he have a Church of about 30, ten [of them] men. . . Mr. Exp. Mayhew proposes to me as a thing very expedient that some short Treatise be drawn up and translated into Indian to prevent the spreading of the Anabaptistical Notions.

Were these strong Anabaptistical beliefs evidence of Williams's visits sixty years earlier? Little is known on this subject and it deserves further research.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Perry Miller plays down Williams's role in mission work, citing his remark that it would be merely switching them "from one false worship to another." Perry Miller, *Roger Williams*, Atheneum, NY, 1962, p.50.

<sup>10</sup> M. Halsey Thomas, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, NY, 1973, v. I, p.465. Incidentally, neither Thomas Junior or Thomas Senior, both of them paid missionaries, ever mentioned visiting Gay Head.

Thomas Mayhew Jr., credited with being the Island's first missionary, did not begin his missionary work with the Indians until some months (perhaps a year) after his arrival on the Island.<sup>11</sup> The exact date of the Mayhew settlement at Great Harbour (now Edgartown), like that of Roger Williams's visit, is unknown. The only contemporaneous evidence we have is an entry by Governor John Winthrop in his journal on October 3, 1643:

Some of Watertown began a plantation at Martin's Vineyard beyond Cape Cod, and divers families going thither, they procured a young man, one Mr. Green, a scholar, to be their minister, in hopes soon to gather a church there. He went not.<sup>12</sup>

The colony being small and intimate at the time, it must be assumed that the Governor was describing something recent, not something that had happened a year or so before. This would place the Mayhew settlement four months after Roger Williams sailed for London, writing paper in hand, jotting down notes of "late being amongst" the Indians of Martin's Vineyard. In fact, by the time the Mayhew settlers arrived on the Vineyard, Williams's book, telling of his visit, was being sold in London.

Why hasn't his visit been included in Vineyard histories? Perhaps the writers had not read the *Key*. But there may be more to it than that. Williams was no hero to the establishment and any missionary work he might have done on the Island was not something that the Mayhews, our only source of early history, would have reported. Williams was no stranger to the Mayhews. Before his banishment he had been involved with the elder Mayhew financially.<sup>13</sup>

There were great philosophical differences between Williams and the Mayhews. Roger believed that the King "had no right to give away lands in America that belong

<sup>11</sup> Some say Thomas Jr., was the first missionary in all New England, even preceding John Elliot. Williams's letters to Governor Winthrop dating back to 1638 make it apparent that Williams was New England's first Protestant missionary. Our question is, was he the Vineyard's first?

<sup>12</sup> *Winthrop Journal*, p.152.

<sup>13</sup> See *Intelligencer*, May 1991, "Did Radical Roger Williams Outwit Businessman Mayhew," by the present author.

not to him but to the Indians," something Governor Mayhew would likely have trouble accepting. Williams also believed that "magistrates should not have authority over the religious beliefs a man held," a thought unlikely to be supported by Mayhew. So there may have been reasons, even if the earlier visit by Williams had been known to them, why the Mayhews would have preferred not to publish it.

Evidence does seem to indicate that Williams was on the Island first. Fluent in the language of the natives and an ordained minister devoted to the Indians, Roger Williams very likely was the Vineyard's first missionary.

His message would have been Anabaptist, not Congregationalist. The only church in Gay Head formed and operated without financial support from the London missionary society was Baptist. Even today, many years later, it is the only church at Gay Head. Draw your own conclusion. Was Roger the Island's first missionary?



AN  
Helpe to the native Language  
of that part of *America* called  
NEW-ENGLAND.

CHAP. I.  
Of *Salutation*.

Observation.

**T**He Natives are of two sorts, (as the English are.) Some more Rude and Clownish, who are not so apt to Salute, but upon *Salutation* resalute lovingly. Others, and the generall, are *sober* and *grave*,

*Decorative opening page of the book's first chapter.*

## Documents

### A Running Account Of Matter & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

*This is surely one of the most interesting installments in the diary of Rev. Henry Baylies (1822-1893) of Edgartown. An ordained Methodist minister, he has given up his parish because of a throat ailment which makes it impossible for him to preach the long sermons expected of Methodist ministers.*

*He is now Principal of the Dukes County Academy in West Tisbury, a private school which is in great financial difficulties, due to its small enrollment. He and his ailing wife, Harriette, live in a rooming house operated by Asa Johnson in the center of West Tisbury, next to today's Alley's Store. The Academy is only a two-minute walk from there.*

*Ailing Harriette does not seem to improve and he calls on doctors to "bleed" her to lessen her discomfort. We are not told what is wrong with her, but shortly we will learn of a surprising development, one totally unexpected to the Editor of the journal. Perhaps, not to you.*

*They will only be in West Tisbury for a short time longer, as you will read. The opening day's entry is continued from the previous installment. They are in Edgartown visiting his parents. His mother is ill also. Brother Titus, the Methodist minister there, invited him to take part in the services on Sunday.*

**Wednesday, May 8, 1850.** (continued) Sabbath was rather an unpleasant day so that church attendance was very small. Bro. Titus preached two very respectable sermons.

He is exceeding popular with the people — all speak well of him. I assisted in the administration of the Lord's Supper & in the even[ing] spoke 32 minutes on the missionary subject. I supposed I spoke perhaps 10 minutes & was astonished when told I spoke 32 minutes. By keeping my throat moist with flag root, I was enabled to speak with little suffering.

Dear wife was prevented, by the inclemency of the weather, attending church. She was very anxious to attend. During Sab. she was quite unwell, feeling languid & in some pain about chest & head. After tea, called in Dr. Pierce, who at our request, bled her from the arm. This relieved her lungs & head.<sup>1</sup>

Monday morning at 7 o'clock we were on our way back to West Tisbury. Having gone little more than half way we were overtaken in a rain which wet me a little — the others were sheltered by the carriage. The storm was so violent that none of my pupils save one came to the Academy & of course had no school. A second Monday at leisure.<sup>2</sup>

School on Tuesday & meeting at the close of school. Harriette came in to our meeting & spoke very affectionately & earnestly to the young ladies present. Her remarks were characteristic of the person. She took a walk with me to the P. Office & back with comparative ease. Mrs. B. has numerous callers now since her return so that I get little time for reading.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. John Pierce and wife, Chloe, lived on Planting Field Way, just beyond North School (now Carroll Apartments).

<sup>2</sup> The "good old days" legend that schools never closed in bad weather may be true, the school was open, but the pupils didn't show up!

Today school as usual. Rev. Mr. Minor, Bap. minister, called on me this PM with the "History of the World," wishing my subscription. I gave him my name with the condition I should take or refuse the book when delivered to me as I then chose. He gave me a certificate to this purport. The whole end of such doings is to get the approval of Clergymen so as to sell the book.<sup>3</sup>

This evening, Lecture & prayer meeting at the school house. Mr. Chase preached. This morning was delightful — summerlike — evening cool, chilly & appearance of storm.

**Saturday, May 11, 1850.** The three days past have ~~past~~ [crossed out] gone without anything particularly to mark their history. Thursday was a very rainy day so that the attendance at the Academy was very small. Notwithstanding my school is usually so small, the thirteen recitations I hear afford ample labor.<sup>4</sup> Friday was delightful in the morning but cold, windy towards evening. The mail was brought up from H.H. [Holmes Hole] as the California mail ~~was of~~ [crossed out] rendered it of more than normal importance.<sup>5</sup>

Rec'd. the *Herald* which I highly prize as a weekly visitor.<sup>6</sup> Dearest Hattie rec'd a short note from Sister Addie. Heard from Edgartown that ~~Parents~~ [crossed out] Mother had been very

<sup>3</sup> He did not subscribe as an educator, but as a clergyman. That was how to sell books, listing clergy who had bought it.

<sup>4</sup> It would seem that he taught only 13 of the pupils. We don't know the total enrollment, but it seems to have been about 24.

<sup>5</sup> Many Vineyard men had gone to the California Gold Rush, which is what is being referred to.

<sup>6</sup> Again, *Zion's Herald*, the Methodist journal.

sick since our return but was better. The Lord protect her & restore her. She has been a good mother to me to whom I shall ever owe unfeigned gratitude, for her Religious instructions especially. Wrote a short note to parents by Dr. Fisher who chanced to stop to call on some gentlemen stopping here from Boston. These gentlemen are ~~Messrs.~~ [crossed out] Curtiss, Bartlett & Dorr, Surveyors, etc., of Boston.<sup>7</sup>

This Saturday morning was one of the warmest, loveliest mornings of the season. After applying at five places, at the sixth I procured a horse & took a "drive" over to the Roaring Brook. The Roaring Brook is on the "Sound" side of the island about four miles from the Academy, where is a paint mill & brick yard & wharf & two dwellings. A small brook at this point falls about 60 feet in the space of about 1/4 mile & enters into the Sound. The scenery from this place is delightful, commanding a view of the Elizabeth Islands, Gay Head, Woods Hole & I believe in clear weather N. Bedford.

Before we arrived at the Brook, the weather was perceptibly [*sic*] changed — cloudy & chilly so that the prospect lost much of its loveliness. Together with hunting for a horse, driving four miles — 1 1/4 through swamps over rough roads, taking down & putting up Seven pairs of Bars each way, *i.e.*,

<sup>7</sup> At about this time, Dr. Daniel Fisher of Edgartown bought 600 acres along Mill River with the plan of raising wheat. He installed five stone dams in the river and at the lower one, in 1860, he built a grist mill to grind the wheat into flour. The plan was never profitable, but the mill is still there. He had hired surveyors from Boston to lay out his purchase and they were staying at Asa Johnson's.

in the distance of 1 1/4 miles, I feel very tired. We were very fortunate in returning just before a smart rain which continued all the P.M. Am reading Mr. Lincoln's *Botany* & Lee's *Physiology*.<sup>8</sup>

Saturday evening again. Tomorrow the Sabbath. Since Harriett's return we have been more regular in our devotions than last Term, partly because of the longer mornings & partly because of a more determined purpose on my part to observe family worship. I have always found daily prayer & reading the Scriptures with my dear wife most beneficial to my spirituality.

Hattie's health seems much better for a few days past. Her appetite is good & she sleeps well & suffers little pain, so that I have some encouragement for hope that she may be well.

**Sabbath, May 12, 1850.** This has been a very pleasant day though a little cool for the season. We enjoyed a very pleasant session of prayer around our family altar this morning. I found additional consolation while singing some of the excellent hymns of our collection. At about 9 1/2 o'clock I started on foot for the M.E. Church, Chilmark, about 3 miles distant. Enjoyed a delightful walk & arrived in season for service, but through the want of a watch, the preacher had begun before time.<sup>9</sup>

The new preacher sent by the P.E.

<sup>8</sup> Charles A. Lee (1801-1872) was editor of the *N.Y. Journal of Medicine*, author of textbooks, including *Human Physiology*. The other author was probably Benjamin Lincoln (1733-1810), a Revolutionary War general who later wrote many papers about trees and wildlife.

<sup>9</sup> Those were simpler days. The preacher didn't have a watch! No wonder the sermons were long.

to supply the place of Bro. C.C. Munger, who refused to token [?] the app't. of the Bishops, is an Englishman named Slater — an old man, who arrived from Eng., during the week of Conf. His discourse, considering the probable advantages he has enjoyed, was quite tolerable. I however hardly think it probable I shall walk up so far again to hear him.

Bro. Johnson brought me back in his waggon. Just before Tea, Bro. J. called into my room to inquire relative to our Bishops, etc., in behalf of the gentlemen stopping here from Boston. I soon followed him into the Parlor with my parchment containing the autograph of Bp. Morris. I passed it to Bro. J. & was about retiring when all the gentlemen requested me by name to sit down. Conversation turned on some points in our church polity in which I spoke of the late division of North & South on question of Slavery.<sup>10</sup>

This opened the Subject of slavery generally. Esq. Curtis (Hon. Benj. R. Curtis), he who welcomed Daniel Webster on his late arrival at Boston, thought the pending questions should be so disposed of as to secure the peace of the country. I took the ground that the right should be pursued & that as Christians we should have confidence that though for a season it might involve the nation in some difficulties, yet the right would finally triumph & the greatest good of the country be achieved. Mr. C. remarked that the running away of slaves from the S. was

<sup>10</sup> There had been a split in the church over whether Bishops in the South who owned slaves could continue in office. The Methodists were, after the Quakers, the most anti-slavery of the religions.

then looked upon as an honorable act — A master might follow & claim his runaway slave but should he hire any person to pursue him he was considered mean & the person hired was considered of the lowest class — even below the slave. He said Henry Clay once lost a slave. Mr. C. called at a friend's (in a free state I suppose) & the door was opened by this slave. Mr. C. did not appear to recognize the slave. At dinner the waiter behind Mr. C.'s chair whispered "Massy Harry, no betray me." 'Twas the slave. Mr. Clay said No! He would as soon have cut his hand off as to have betrayed the slave.

The conversation was of quite an agreeable cast. The question of American Slavery is the question of the age & Nation. The Nation is shaken from centre to circumference by the agitation of this subject. God ruleth!

Was disappointed in not knowing of a 5 o'clock religious exercise at the school house. During a portion of the afternoon & occasionally during the last few days, my feelings have been somewhat ruffled by certain proceedings connected with meals & the table. I dislike, especially on Harriett's account, to have meat brought on to the table hacked [?] & cold, as [if] it came from another table of gentry. I wish no second table form while I pay present prices. I am not a gourmand but I feel such proceedings as have lately occurred. The Devil has strongly tempted me & I have been obliged to pray for grace to overcome these feelings, but they overcome me.

Have this even been looking over some of Hannah's letters with Harriette. "Thus far," etc.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> "Thus far and no farther," one must wonder what he is telling us.

**Tuesday, May 14, 1850.** Ringing of Academy bell — recitations, etc., seem to be the regular business of each day, while what else of interest is recorded on the score (credit side) of profit & loss acc't. With my dear wife, time passes off very pleasantly. Otherwise situated, I could hardly content myself to remain in this place — pleasant as it is.

I read some, walk some, talk some, & sleep some. All with my dear wife. I seek no society out of doors & an occasional visitor, & an occasional call on a neighbor make up the changes of the day. The want of accustomed religious privileges is the most serious disadvantage we here experience.<sup>12</sup>

Yesterday Bro. Isaiah D. Pease Sen., from Edgartown called on Harriette at Bro. J's & on me at the Academy.<sup>13</sup> I learned from him that Dear Mother has again been very sick. Poor mother, she suffers a great deal here, but I trust she will make sure passage to that blessed world where sickness & sorrow, pain & death, are felt & found no more — I am happy to learn she ~~is~~ [crossed out] was much better.

The weather yesterday was rather cool & quite too bracing for Hattie's delicate lungs. Toward evening being milder, H & myself took a very pleasant walk down to the mill pond. She had some cough last evening & slept rather poorly last night, but feels quite well this P.M. & evening. It has been very warm & summer-like today.

<sup>12</sup> There was, of course, a church only a short walk from the Asa Johnson house, but it was Congregational and Henry was Methodist. There was no Methodist church in West Tisbury.

<sup>13</sup> Isaiah was then county sheriff and lived on South Summer St., on the site of today's town parking lot. He was Jeremiah Pease's uncle.

H. & self walked to the P.O. after school & called on Rev. Mr. & Mrs. Van Houghton.<sup>14</sup> Several of the young ladies called this evening. The matter on which the Devil so strongly tempted me ~~yesterday~~ [crossed out] Sabbath I then gave up to the Lord. I have had no occasion to complain in the least since. I considered this in answer to prayer. Although so trifling an affair, yet the Devil has not tempted me so severely about or with anything before for a long time. I did wrong in yielding to such wrong feelings. I should have gone to my Father at once & committed the whole affair to his disposal. As soon as I gave it all up to God, Satan forsook me & fled. I bless God for the grace he bestows.

**Thursday, May 16, 1850.** Yesterday & today have been quite wet & unpleasant days. Nothing of incident has occurred except a report relative to the immediate closing of my school. Yesterday Harriette & self were speaking of the advantages of teaching at Edgartown over teaching here & we concluded all things considered it would [be] preferable to be at E., whereupon I determined to see Esq., Wm. A. Mayhew this eve & ascertain the course the Trustees will take at the close of the present term.

This day, noon, Velma [?] came to me inquiring if the school would close when the term shall be half out? I was quite surprised at the inquiry as this was the first intimation of such a scheme. I saw Wm. A. Mayhew Esq. from whom I learned that at a meeting of the Trustees it was suggested, as the no. of pupils is so small & will be

<sup>14</sup> Rev. Henry Van Houton, West Tisbury Congregational minister, 1849-1850.

diminished, the term half out, that it would be inexpedient to keep the Academy open & that it would be better to compromise with me & close. No action was taken on the subject — 'twas mere suggestion & this solely because of the small attendance consequent upon the opening of public schools & the seed time & farming season.

What the result of all will be I know not, but there is one above who careth for me.

A religious meeting with my school after the P.M. session. Was enabled to speak to them with much freedom. May the Lord bless the servants to their good.

Dearest Hattie has been feeling quite unwell today, partly perhaps because of the peculiar state of the Paresthesia. This eve, a few moments ago, she fainted just as I got her from my arms upon the bed. I hope a change of weather will revive her. She is very feeble yet. I think she has injured herself by too much sewing the week past. She seems quite restless & is cold, so I must hasten to bed at this early hour in order that she may get refreshing sleep. She is a precious treasure. The Lord bless. us both, Amen. Hattie.<sup>15</sup>

**Monday, May 20, 1850.** On Friday eve last, Wife & self visited parents at Edgartown. Found Mother in improving health & other friends usually well. In evening called on Rev. H[ebon] Vincent, one of the School Committee, to enquire relative to the

<sup>15</sup> The words "us both, Amen, Hattie," were pencilled in, very faintly, at the bottom of the page, obviously by the sainted Hattie some time later. It indicates that she reads his journal, which might explain some of his remarks.

High School. Learned that no Teacher was engaged and the probability was I could have the School. On Sat. eve. the Committee held a meeting & voted to engage me provided I could be released from my engagement here [at West Tisbury]. This evening (Monday) the Trustees of D.C. Academy met, myself present, & after various consultations & suggestions agreed to continue the school during the term. I made a statement to them relative to the position [that] such a vote would place me in, with respect to the Edgartown School, when they made the proposition to close the school now & allow me \$10 additional to my salary for trouble, disappointment or continue till the close of the term. I entertained the proposition & am to answer tomorrow.

Took a cold some way unknown & have been about sick today — Dr. Ruggles called to dine & by invitation saw Hattie — advised Blue Pill — she objects — I must take one & retire.<sup>16</sup>

**Wednesday, May 22, 1850.** Since my last entry (May 20) what changes have taken place in my relations & circumstances! When I retired that evening I was quite undetermined what course to pursue but during the night, in answer to prayer, I trust, my mind was determined by remarks of dearest wife while asleep. On Tuesday 21, I reported to the Trustees my determination to close the school & so likewise reported by letter to the School Committee of Edgartown my readiness to be communerated [?] on the following Monday.

<sup>16</sup> The "Blue pill" is frequently mentioned. Apparently, pills were prescribed by colors.

On Wednesday, P.M., I closed the second term of my connection with Dukes County Academy. My closing remarks to the students were of a practical character affecting their moral, religious & intellectual character. There appeared great emotion during much of the time while I was speaking. May the Lord in mercy, bless those dear pupils with his grace.

On Thursday I procured a waggon & carted my goods, packed the day before, to Edgartown. There were strong indications of rain but carefully covering my goods, I ventured on & had a very favorable day. My load was heavy & my horse ~~heavy~~ [crossed out] suffered so much from heaves that I was obliged to go slowly & was three hours on the road. Returned in the P.M. to Tisbury, very much fatigued. Settled this evening with the trustees & with Bro. Johnson for my board. Settled with Bro. J. by an order from the D.C.A. upon him.

**Friday, May 24.** In forenoon I was by the brook gathering sweet flag root of which I procured a large quantity. This is the only thing I have found to give relief for my throat. My throat has been quite well since taking a "Blue pill" some days since. Friday P.M., with Hattie, I bade farewell to our late home & took carriage for Edgartown. By the time of our arrival at Edgartown we were both exceedingly fatigued, especially dearest H.

Saturday felt excessively exhausted & although I attempted much I accomplished scarcely anything. In the evening appeared before the School Committee, Rev. Hebron Vincent, D[avid] Davis & J[oseph] T. Pease,

Esqs. Their examination of me was all a farce (the only question asked me was "What is the Shape of the Earth?" To which, I replied "Square.")<sup>17</sup>

**Monday, May 27.** At 8 ½ A.M. I opened the Higher Grammar School in the new School house, as Principal with Miss Harriette R. Fisher, assistant. That said coat was on back.<sup>18</sup>

On taking the names, 64 appeared — 42 misses & 22 masters. I am very well pleased with the school & although I had expected trouble in government yet to this time (Wed. eve.) I have not had any reason for complaint. I commenced with decisive measures & think I shall succeed. The text books for the higher studies are not yet received so that my time lays heavily on my hands.

The weather since our coming to Edgartown has been very bad — wet & chilly. Harriette dear has been quite unwell, although about. She has raised blood several times, for two or three days she has breathed as through a sponge. This Wednesday afternoon she has been quite sick — a rush of blood to her head & lungs (left). I soaked her feet after tea, applied mustard draughts & by what is called mesmer put her to

<sup>17</sup> It is amazing how casual the town was about its new high school, which was to open in a few days. No principal had been chosen and if Henry hadn't decided to come, it would have opened without one. As we will see, it didn't have textbooks when it opened.

<sup>18</sup> "That said coat" was the one in which he graduated from college, was twice married, and ordained into the Methodist ministry. It had a long history. His assistant, Miss Fisher, 20, was daughter of Capt. Hiram and Margaret Fisher, but lived with the Richard B. Marchant family. Her father, Captain Hiram, had been lost aboard the whaler *Meridian* in 1836. Her mother, Margaret, seems to have left Edgartown.

sleep.<sup>19</sup> Since 6 1/2 o'clock, except great weakness, she has felt very well, so she says.

Thus it happened or was directed by Providence that within one week my relation as Principal of D.C. Academy was dissolved & that of Principal of the Higher Grammar School (the Highest school in the place) established. My salary is not so much, but my expenses are less & religious & social privileges are all greater. "Thus far, etc."

**Friday, June 7, 1850.** Since my last entry (May 29) little of incident unlike what frequently occurs has taken place. My school is organized & in successful operation. My course of government is extremely severe yet extremely mild. On Wed. p.m. last, the day for declamation & composition, I had similar difficulty to that at Tisbury. Some of the masters had concluded not to speak. I oblidged [*sic*] them all to declaim before closing school, except Jn. H. Pease, who thought himself excused, & Benj. Pease, whom I sent home for continued disobedience to my requirement. In this I am sustained by the School Committee & I think by public opinion so far as I know.<sup>20</sup>

**Monday, P.M., June 10, 1850.** Just as I had written the above Friday even. I was obliged to desist in consequence of wife's sickness. Harriette has not been feeling at all well for some weeks

<sup>19</sup> A form of hypnotism, then in vogue. Named for a German, Dr. F.A. Mesmer, who developed it. The word mesmerize comes from the same root.

<sup>20</sup> John H. Pease, 16, was son of a merchant of the same name. They lived on No. Water St., just past Cottage. Benjamin Pease, 16, son of Henry Pease, cabinet maker. They lived on the corner of Main St., and No. Summer, now a T-shirt shop.



past — rather failing. For nearly two weeks she has been quite costive. She used every remedy without benefit. Friday evening she was quite sick from severe pains in bowels, fainting, etc. Saturday, she was quite comfortable but confined to her bed.

Friday & Sat. P.M. & evening she was very much distressed for breath in her left lung & by much urging I persuaded her to have Dr. Pierce called. A medium bleeding [*sic*] partially relieved her distress in breathing but no[t] so much as formerly. The former part of the night she was much distressed & fainting. She slept some during the night. Sabbath quite comfortable & apparently improving. She was very desirous to go below & see mother, who is so feeble as to be unable to come above stairs. She appeared quite delirious about noon, but I persuaded her to lie down with me & she got some sleep — a sound nap. On waking she was hungry for food & I gave her some beef steak & tea. I supposed she was perfectly rational at the time & when I came down to tea. She wished to be left alone but would not promise me she would not come down, although I thought a promise unnecessary by reason of her extreme weakness. We were scarcely seated at the table when a rap & in came Harriette. She said she sat down upon the stairs 4 times in coming down. She appeared rational & I think was so (??).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The question marks are Henry's and seem to have been inserted later. As is obvious, they are living with his parents in a large house on Main St., near the Town Hall. It is the first house listed in the 1850 Census. There were two families in the house, nine persons in total.

After resting a while on mother's bed, I got her up stairs. The blood rushed to her head & she was quite delirious all the evening & night at intervals. Dr. Pierce was present during evening & did all that could be done. I spent my Sabbath with her & was permitted somewhat to recruit myself from the fatigue of watching, tending, nursing & anxiety.

Saturday I was about sick, indeed was hardly able to sit up during the day. Taking care of the sick is exceedingly wearing, especially when the dearest affections of the heart are put to the torture. None but he who has experienced knows the agony of spirit of one watching the rude torturings of disease in a loved one. My Heavenly Father knows what is best for me & mine & it is this feeling of confidence which sustains me in our many afflictions.

But to return to my dearest Harriette. Today (Monday) she has been very much distressed, chiefly with bearing down pains in lower part of abdomen. She has been laboring under the strong impression she shall lose her child & die herself. I think much of this suffering is occasioned by her indiscreet coming down stairs last night. She is under the influence of opiates to still the pain but when she arouses she is delirious (called away to attend to H.)<sup>22</sup> On returning from school at noon I found her in intense suffering — spasms, cramps, etc. I immediately wrote to Miss Harriette Fisher, my assistant, that it is impossible for me to attend school this P.M. The sick must

<sup>22</sup> Surprise! Now we learn that Harriet, sick as she is with undiagnosed ailments, is also pregnant. What a shock!

be attended to. Mother is so unwell that it is not expedient for her to go upstairs.

**Friday, June 14, 1850.** The last week has been one continued scene of intense anxiety, severe labor. Monday night (June 10) dearest Harriette remained in great distress. I watched with her while Sister Ann S. Smith waited below.<sup>23</sup> Tuesday H. remained in great, severe spasm. The medicine prescribed by the attending Physician did not seem to relieve her spasms. The severity of them I could in part relieve by mesmeric manipulations. Brandy & Landanum was the only medicine which relieved her from the acuteness of her sufferings & this I (perhaps indiscreetly & perhaps not) persisted in administering for I could not see her suffer so many deaths & not relieve her. As has eventuated I think the medicine did not injure her.

About noon on Tues. I put her into the mesmeric state & that I might produce sound sleep, placed my thumb & finger over her eyes when much to my surprise she began to speak of my health & commenced an examination of my body. She remarked my lungs are not diseased, the bleeding at my lungs a year since was from the rupture of a small blood vessel in the top of my left lungs, rather a "leakage" than otherwise. That is now healed up but appears quite tender. The bronchial tubes of the left lungs & the throat appear rather scrofulous or inclined to scrofula as likewise my liver. The top of my liver is covered with bright yellow spots of the size of a half dram

<sup>23</sup> Sister Smith was Mrs. Kilborn Smith. Could she have been a midwife? Why would she be "waiting below" otherwise?

[?], which are bile. The Blue Pill I have taken has been beneficial & I better take one more. My Stomach is excessively nervous & the spasmodic action of these nerves is cause of my prostration by preaching or other exerting or fatiguing labor. People think you ought to walk much, said she, but you ought not, for walking irritates & excites the nerves & prostrates you. The great difficulty with you is nervous irritability & the climate here is rather too bracing. Your spine, she continued, is diseased in one of the cartillages. The cartilage is contracted. I am not confident whether she said, one third of its original size or to one third its original size. This causes a pain in your back often. Your head suffers from an imperfect circulation of the blood through some of the small veins & this is the reason why cold applications so readily relieve the suffering.

Now whatever of truth or falsehood there may be about somnambulism I'll not discuss, but this is very certain that the above solution of my protracted ill health is as far as I can judge strictly rational. Of my difficulties in general she was apprised but I never knew her before to attempt an explanation of the causes. Of my pain in the hollow of my back, she knew nothing for I had never told her & she had never heard me complain. She spoke of examining herself but desisted from stating the results, they being so lothesome [*sic*]. Fearing the results of such abnormal mental action I waked her, when she was unconscious of having examined my body but said she must have dreamed about me —<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> A remarkable happening! Who can explain it?

## Books

### The Civil War: The Nantucket Experience

By Richard F. Miller  
and Robert F. Mooney

Wesco Publishing, Nantucket, 1994

Nantucket, for many Vineyarders, could be on the dark side of the moon. We are sister islands, but family ties seem broken. The sisters have little to do with each other. But back in the Civil War era, they were speaking. Both were in a depressed economy, caused by the decline in whaling. Both voted for Lincoln in 1860, although the Vineyard did so only by 59% (Nantucket, by 70%) Much wider was the spread for Democrat Stephen Douglas, who favored appeasing the South. Nantucket gave him a tiny 5%; the Vineyard 20%.

As soon as war broke out, both islands were wholeheartedly with the Union and Lincoln. Island men were recruited into the same regiments. Company H of the 45th Massachusetts Regiment, for example, was made up of both Nantucket and Vineyard volunteers. To demonstrate their shared island heritage, they raised "a banner showing a whale impaled upon

a harpoon." These men went to war together, all islanders and proud of it.

This book, co-authored by Richard F. Miller, who has written about the Civil War in this journal, tells of Nantucket's reaction to the rebellion. It could not have been greatly different from the Vineyard's. Conditions on both islands were similar.

Nantucket's differed mostly because of the influence of its Quakers, torn by revulsion against war and opposition to slavery. Their abolitionist tradition won out. The tiny island exceeded all its troop quotas, proudly calling itself the state's banner town in enlistments. There was little, if any, of the distrust of the system shown on the Vineyard. Nantucket did not join the Boston protest convention organized by the Vineyard's Richard L. Pease in 1864.

In addition to a brief history of the Civil War, the book contains a moving memoir by Nantucket soldier, Sgt. Josiah Fitch Murphey. Written some years after the war, it gives readers a realistic view of war, tempered by the soldier's "unflagging sense of humor."

These authors have combined Nantucket's story with that of one soldier most successfully. Vineyarders should not let the Nantucket connection turn them away from this work.

## Letters

Dear Editor:

The summer teen-ager's diary of 1906 (*Intelligencer*, Nov. 1994) was a great read.

Perhaps the Irving "Chatmen" that Louise described was really Chapman. He could have been a young teen-ager then.

We think the North Beach which Louise mentioned was the "Bend in the Road" beach just past Cow Bay. Since they walked and rode so much, the distance would not have bothered them.

Mrs. Landon (Pete) Peters  
Princeton, N.J.

## In Memoriam Keith M. Urmey 1906 — 1995

Nearly ten years ago, in the summer of 1985, the Society's President called on Keith Urmey to ask him to take the job of Treasurer. The office had just become vacant. Keith invited the President to join him on a lovely screened porch at the rear of his North Tisbury home. The setting was idyllic and the President found it difficult to get to the point of the meeting. Somehow, keeping books, especially books with sad numbers, seemed out of place in such a setting.

Keith had retired years before as an executive vice president of New York's Chemical Bank, so there was no need to discuss qualifications. Taking a deep breath, the President got to the point, accompanied by a chorus of birds just outside the screening.

"You know," Keith responded, with a chuckle, "I'm nearly 80 years old. You don't want such an old man keeping the books do you?"

Assured that there was no age discrimination at the Society, he agreed to sign on for three years and the Society was richer for it. His skill in explaining numbers gave the Council a fresh look at its finances during the years he served.

It was not that the numbers became happy — even Keith couldn't perform that miracle. As members know, the financial picture was, and is, not something to bring smiles. But Keith never gave up, always presenting the facts realistically, but hopefully.

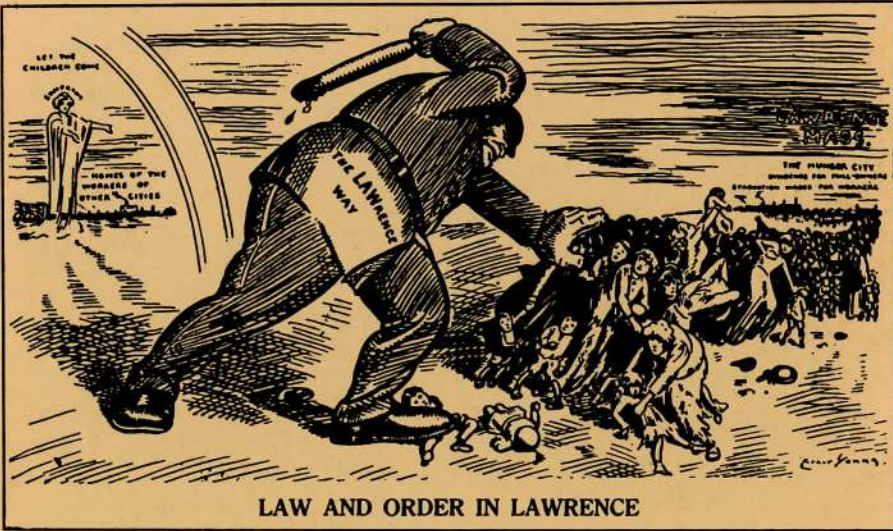
He was a strong supporter of the Society, not only with his time and talent, but financially. He saw the organization as an under-recognized community resource and worked hard as a fund raiser. Not one to ask others to do something he wouldn't do himself, he was generous with his own contributions.

Council members remember him as a warm, caring man with a genuine chuckle. Those chuckles were contagious. Many a dull Council meeting was brought to life by Chief Chuckler Keith Urmey.

He and his wife, actress Mildred Dunnock, celebrated 58 years of marriage, years made happier, without doubt, by many a chuckle. Mrs. Urmey, who died in 1991, always used her stage name. Keith would chuckle as he told of how he had to get used to being introduced as "Mr. Dunnock." Together, they loved the theater, the Vineyard, and their home in North Tisbury.

We extend sympathy to their daughter and grandchildren. We are sure that they will agree that Keith enjoyed his long and satisfying life thoroughly. No cranky old age for him. Right to the end, he loved his fellow humans and the birds singing outside his back porch.

## Two Views by Labor of the 1912 Lawrence Textile Strike



*Industrial Worker*, March 21, 1912.



*The Lumberjack*, September 15, 1912.