

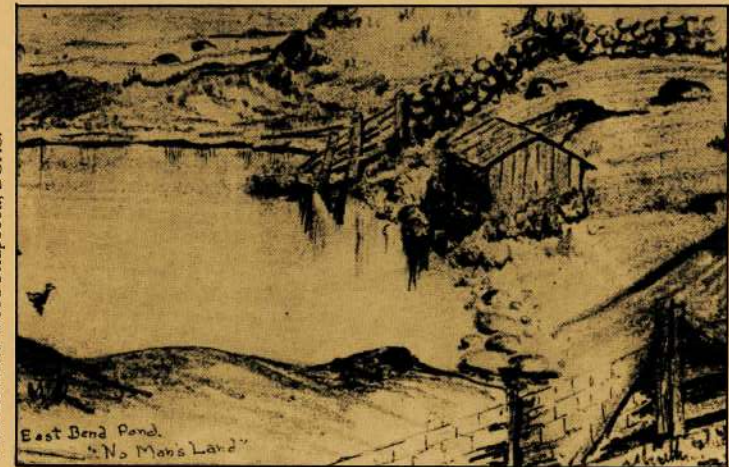


THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 37, NO. 4

MAY 1996

From Bertrand Wood Scrapbook, DCHS.



East Bend Pond and sheep shelter, Noman's Land, in the 1920s, unknown artist.

Noman's Land Island: So Near and Yet So Far

Moments in History

The Island Enjoys a Day of Ecstasy

Swordfishing in the 1860s

Documents: A Running Account
Of Matters & Things

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CORRECTION: IT'S SHIVELY

In politics, there is a saying, "I don't care what you say about me, just spell my name right."

In publishing, there's nothing more important than spelling names right; especially names of authors. And even more especially when the name is prominently displayed on the front cover!

On the cover of the February 1996 issue, because of a careless error by the Editor, the name of the author of the very interesting piece on the Civil War statue was misspelled. On the inside, her name was spelled correctly: Judith Shively. On the front cover, where it is most visible, it was misspelled: Judith Chively.

Our deepest apologies to her.

THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

Vol. 37, No. 4

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Editor: Arthur R. Railton
Founding Editor: Gale Huntington (1902-1993)

The Dukes County Intelligencer is published quarterly by the Dukes County Historical Society, Inc., Cooke and School Streets, Edgartown, Massachusetts. Subscription is by membership in the Society. Back issues are available at the Society.

Memberships are solicited. Send applications to the Society at Box 827, Edgartown, MA, 02539. Telephone: 508 627-4441. Manuscripts and authors' queries should be addressed there.

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ISSN 0418 1379

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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.



Noman's Land Island: So Near and Yet So Far

By ARTHUR R. RAILTON

WE ALL know it from a distance. Looking from Gay Head, we see it as a small island to the south, about six miles away. From Squibnocket it is closer, only three miles of open water separating the two islands. But those three miles might as well be 300 as far as Vineyarders are concerned.

It is Noman's Land, an island of 628 acres shaped like a baby's bootie. Its proper name is Noman's Land Island, but few call it that. More often it is called Noman's Land, but to most Vineyarders it is simply Noman's, pronounced No'-mun's. What kind of a place is it? What was it like to live there? (Nobody lives there now.) Through the years, much has been written about the island, but mostly of its tales and legends. The character of the place still remains a mystery. We know more about it now because of the recent gift of a scrapbook kept by the late Bertrand T. Wood, son of Ralph Waldo Wood, island caretaker for many years. Bert, as he was called, lived there with his family from 1924 to 1933. Although the scrapbook covers only a brief period in the long history of Noman's, it does help us understand a little more about the place.¹

The scrapbook contains many yellowed clippings from newspapers, but more revealing are its photographs and drawings. A selection of them is printed in this issue. They

1. See also Bertrand Wood, *Noman's Land Island: History and Legends*, Mini News, Jewett City, Conn., 1978; Annie M. Wood, *Noman's Land, Isle of Romance*, Reynolds Printing, New Bedford, Mass., 1931. Annie Wood was the wife of Cameron E. Wood, who became caretaker of the island after Bertrand's father, Ralph Wood, moved to Chilmark. The *Intelligencer* has published several articles on Noman's, the most complete being by Henry E. Scott Jr., August 1985. The same issue contains other Noman's material.

ARTHUR RAILTON is editor of this journal.

provide us with a view of life as it was lived on that isolated and little-known place years ago.

Bert's father worked for Joshua Crane of Boston and London, who bought the island for his private hunting and fishing preserve. Mr. Crane's occupation was unclear. In his obituary, he is described as a banker. But his daughter, Priscilla, called him a "professional sportsman." A star athlete at Harvard, he coached the school's football team in 1907 when it won seven of its ten games. He was national amateur tennis champion in 1902 and 1904 and a finalist at Wimbledon in 1914.

There were three Crane families in America, his son often remarked, all with the initial "P." Their family was not, son Alexander joked, the wealthy "Plumbing" Cranes, or the equally wealthy "Paper" Cranes, but the "Poor" Cranes. It is obvious that Mr. Crane was not poor, although perhaps in comparison to the other Cranes, he considered himself to be.²

While a thorough history of Noman's is yet to be published, Henry Scott, in an earlier issue of this journal, did much to document the island's ownership through the years and we urge interested members to re-read it.³

Mr. Crane bought almost all of Noman's in 1914 from Henry B. Davis of West Tisbury. Except for one small piece, the ownership of which remained in dispute, for all practical purposes, he owned the entire island. Henry Davis, the previous owner, had been living on Noman's with his family since 1904, one of the several families there year-round. Through the years, the other families moved away, leaving only the Davises. In 1908, the town of Chilmark closed the small school it had been maintaining there. Mr. Davis demanded that it be reopened (at the time, he had five children, but only one was of school age, another would soon become so). The court ruled that he had chosen to live there

2. Priscilla Wood, DCHS Oral History Collection.

3. Henry E. Scott Jr., "Noman's Land Island: Its History and Legends," *Intelligencer*, August 1985.



1890 painting of Henry Davis farmhouse. Building at far right was both school and church.

and, although he did pay taxes to Chilmark, the town was not required to provide a school in such an isolated place for one family. The town then agreed to pay transportation for the Davis child back and forth to Chilmark, but Davis decided to use the money (\$3 a week) to pay for the child to board on the Vineyard. Soon afterwards, Mr. Davis moved his family to West Tisbury, solving the problem.

Davis had bought his land on Noman's from the heirs of George H. Butler, who had died in 1898. The Butlers had lived there since about 1850, being almost totally self-sufficient, with vegetables from their garden, fish from the sea, milk and butter from their cows and eggs and meat from their hens. They also kept more than 200 sheep which provided meat and wool. The annual shearing of fleece was a major source of income (fish and lobsters were the others). During these years, there had been a school and a church on the island, sharing the same building, there being enough families living there to justify the expense.⁴ But by the mid-

4. One of the Butler children, Harriette (Hattie), married Welcome Tilton of Chilmark. She was the grandmother of Mildred Huntington, widow of the founding editor of this journal. Hattie was among the few persons born on Noman's, according to her son, Thomas (DCHS Oral History files). Tom was born in Chilmark but did attend school on Noman's in the 1890s when his family lived there.

1890s, the elder Butlers were the only ones left as all-year residents. The other families and also the Butler children had moved away, usually to the Vineyard. However, for much of the year, the Butlers were not alone, especially when the codfish were running.

Codfishing was a major source of income in the spring for Menemsha fishermen. The season ran from mid-April until the first of June and fishermen, mostly from Menemsha, built one-room shacks along the beach to live in. The trip back and forth to Menemsha took too much time in the days before power boats. When the codfishing ended, some of them stayed on to lobster and swordfish and in some cases, wives and children joined them in summer. It was a lively place with lots of activity. But during cod season, the weather being colder, most of the men lived alone, eating lots of fish and buying other provisions from the Butlers.

There being no protected harbor on the island at the time, the boats had to be hauled up on the beach each night. George Butler, the island's elder statesman, had become too old to go out fishing and he added to his income by hauling boats. He charged the fishermen \$5 a season to haul and launch their boats each day. Using his team of oxen and a wooden-roller device shaped like a ladder, he dragged the boats high up on the beach each evening. Every morning he would launch them so the men could go back to the fishing grounds. He launched the boats each morning in the order in which the owners had paid him the \$5, assuring prompt payment.

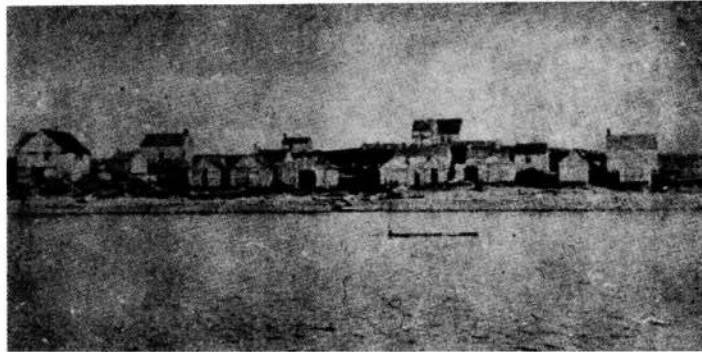
For a part of the years that the Butlers lived on the island, a sportfishing club was organized by wealthy sportsmen who came each year to fish for bass off the beaches.⁵ They purchased some land on which they built a clubhouse. When the club stopped operating about 1890, the

5. The Society has a catalog page from the Berry-Hill Galleries which reproduces in full color a handsome oil painting by Sanford Robinson Gifford, dated 1877. The work is titled "Clay Bluffs on No Man's Land" and shows a sports fisherman seated on a stand in the shallow water.



Joshua Crane's first caretaker was a Mr. Swenson, below, with his children. Above, Mrs. Swenson and daughter. It is not known how long Swenson held the job, later taken over by Ralph and Cameron Wood.





Noman's 1909 BC (before Crane); shacks belong to Menemsha fishermen.

building was bought by Mr. Butler for \$10 and it became the family home. For years, it continued to be called the Clubhouse by residents. It was a rambling building with a number of bedrooms off a corridor to accommodate the members. Mrs. Butler, and later her daughter, Mrs. Welcome Tilton, filled those bedrooms with paying guests, including sportsfishermen and vacationers, each summer for years after.

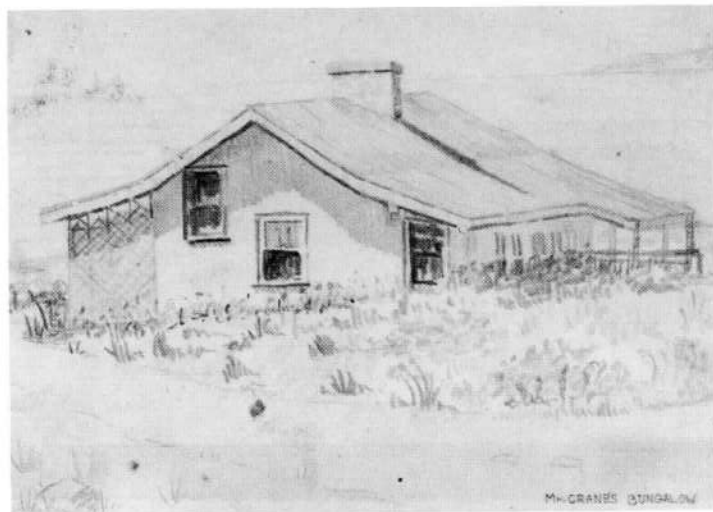
When Joshua Crane bought the island in 1914 there was, as one would expect, considerable opposition to his plan to make it his private preserve. Fishermen were no longer allowed to use the shacks they had built at Gull Town, as the fishing settlement on the beach was called. Some shacks were torn down, but a few of the more substantial ones were left standing. Mr. Crane built himself a shooting lodge of stucco, which had a handsome brick fireplace for those cool autumn nights. The old Butler house was rebuilt for his caretaker's family. A much older farmhouse where the Luce family lived even before the Butlers arrived was also rebuilt. To provide a protected anchorage for Mr. Crane's boat, a stone breakwater and wharf were constructed at Gull Town. The fresh-water ponds were stocked with fish and hundreds of pheasants and quail were brought in and released to provide wild game for Mr. Crane and his friends to hunt. The new caretaker, Ralph Wood, raised a flock of prize sheep, plus a few other livestock, and turned the island into



Ralph Wood and unidentified Gay Head Indian at the Wood home, 1928.

a working farm with the intention of making it self-supporting. The soil was fertile and raising food for his family was no problem. What was needed was cash flow and the sheep were expected to provide that. The fleece from the Noman's sheep was of premium, long staple grade, drawing top prices in the Boston market. The annual shearing became a major element of the island's economy.

About the time his father bought the island, young Joshua Crane Jr., became a pilot in the United States Navy in World War I. He served in Europe and married an English woman. After living in England for a few years after the war, he brought his wife back to New England in 1921 and began selling and piloting airplanes. He bought a flying boat and was one of the first pilots to operate out of New Bedford. He and his wife had two children, but after a divorce in 1934, the mother and children returned to England. The scrapbook includes photographs of his various planes at Noman's, where a crude landing strip had been cleared after Joshua



Joshua Crane's stucco hunting "lodge" on Noman's, built in the 1920s.

crashed his plane landing on a section of rough pasture. With him at the time was Miss Lurana Wood, daughter of the caretaker, Cameron Wood.⁶

The scrapbook clippings tell many stories of Noman's. One involves the steam yacht *Flit*, a supply ship for rumrunners in the years of Prohibition. In 1923, off Noman's, an armed battle took place between the crews of the *Flit* and a mysterious steamer, the *John Dwight*. The entire crew of the steamer was murdered, her sea valves opened. The ship and her dead crew went to the bottom. The *Flit* was beached on Noman's and those on board vanished into the night in a small boat. No one ever returned to salvage the *Flit*, a fine yacht, well furnished and with an excellent engine. It is a mystery that was never solved.

Other clippings in the scrapbook tell of the kidnapping of the son of Charles A. Lindbergh, the famed aviator

6 In 1935, the junior Crane was killed in a plane crash shortly after taking off from Hillsgrove Airfield (now Providence Airport). Earlier that year he had married Lurana Wood, the young woman who had crashed with him on Noman's in 1929. It was his second marriage, her first. The Cameron Woods also had two sons, Roland and Herbert. Lurana remarried and had four sons. The family lived in Florida.



Bags of wool from Noman's sheep on wagon, heading for boat to Boston.

who, in 1927, was the first person to fly solo and nonstop from the United States to Europe. Later, he married Anne Morrow and the couple was living in New Jersey in 1932 when their first child was kidnapped. A \$50,000 ransom was paid and it was reported that the youngster would be delivered to a Lindbergh representative by a boat off Noman's. For a few days, Noman's and Martha's Vineyard were very much in the news. The story turned out to be false and the boy was never returned by the kidnapper, his body being found on May 12.⁷

In November 1926, Mr. Crane, while supervising the construction of a stand for his bass fishing, discovered a huge boulder on the beach carved with an indecipherable legend. For a few years he did nothing about it, but its significance continued to interest him. He made a rubbing of the inscription and took it to Harvard College for identification. The curator described it as Runic, which led to renewed speculation that Leif Eriksson had visited the island about 1014 and that the Vineyard's claim to being Leif's Vinland was confirmed. This, like the Lindbergh story, turned out to be false when a fisherman admitted that he had chiselled the inscription in the rock as a practical joke.

7.Mr. and Mrs. Lindbergh spent some time on the Vineyard after the tragedy. Many thought they might build a home here.



Bert Wood wrote under this photo: "Our last home on Noman's Land, 1933."

The scrapbook contains stories of shipwrecks and of plane wrecks, of whales and of blackfish, of sickness and death. The first flight to the island was when Joshua Junior flew his father there in his Aeromarine flying boat shortly after World War I.

Another news article, the author of which was the donor of the scrapbook, relates the story of the 37-foot carcass of a humpback whale that was spotted off Noman's by caretaker Ralph Wood in December 1932. With the help of the Coast Guard, which designated it a hazard to navigation, the carcass was towed ashore. For nine months, the carcass rotted on the beach. Wood informed the Old Dartmouth Whaling Museum and it offered to help recover the skeleton and to place it on permanent display. Bertrand's article (he was voted First Mate of the operation) tells of the week-long adventure by himself and others on Noman's working with museum staff to cut out the bones from the rotting carcass. Once removed, the bones were buried in sand for six months (at a location that was kept secret to prevent looting) until they "cured." Once that was done, the bones were dug up and hauled to New Bedford where the skeleton was carefully reassembled and placed on display in the Whaling Museum.



Cameron Wood's boat, Flit, at her mooring inside the Gull Town breakwater.

The island had no electricity nor did it have any means of fast communication. In March some years after the whale adventure, the engine of the power boat, the *Flit* (named after the rumrunner), owned by caretaker Cameron Wood refused to start. Cameron had by this time replaced his brother, Ralph. For a week, he and his son, Bertrand, tried to repair it without success. Food was running low and Bert was posted as a lookout to signal a passing vessel. Fortunately, a Coast Guard cutter came past, spotted Bert waving the distress signal, and picked up the pair, towing the disabled boat into Menemsha for repairs.

Following this, a primitive system of emergency communications was set up with the Coast Guard station at Gay Head, using bonfires or, in daylight, a flashing mirror. The system was useful for non-emergency messages also. One fall, when their usual supply boat had not stopped by, the Woods became concerned about making it through the winter. Captain Avila's schooner *Bethlehem*, which regularly brought their provisions, had not shown up as expected. It was a pleasant, calm day and Cameron decided to make a



Cameron and cod caught off Noman's. Right, his wife, Anne, and her prize sheep.

move. Boarding his 10-foot dory, he rowed to Gay Head in a little more than two hours. Once ashore, he climbed to the top of the cliffs to flash the news of his safe arrival to his anxious wife by means of a pocket mirror. She flashed back, confirming receipt of his message. He was driven to Vineyard Haven where he took the ferry to New Bedford to stock up for the winter, coming back on a fishing boat.

On June 15, 1939, Cameron had a heart attack. The island was fog-shrouded and Mrs. Wood was unable to flash her SOS until the fog cleared. Once the sun came out, she flashed and the Coast Guard sent a cutter to take Mr. Wood to a New Bedford hospital, leaving his wife there alone. Lying in the hospital bed, he suddenly realized that the island's only cow would need to be milked and that his wife didn't know how. The Coast Guard was notified and fortunately one crewman had grown up on a farm. He was taken to the island and the Woods' cow was milked. The cutter's log entry read: "Travelled to Noman's Land Island and successfully milked one cow."

That fall, Cameron Wood decided it was time to



Toolhouse for horseshoeing, butchering and repairs. Rocks are everywhere.

retire. He was 68 years old and had discussed his retirement with the Cranes some time earlier, but at their request had remained on the job. The heart attack made the decision more urgent. He left in 1939 and his caretaking job was taken over by Amherst Eaton of Connecticut, a graduate of the Storrs Agricultural School, who brought with him, as assistant and companion, Donald Woodstock.

By this time Noman's was owned by a trust set up by Mr. Crane, who was now living in Europe. Heading the trust were his son, Alexander, an artist and textile designer, and daughter, Priscilla, then working in New York. The new caretaker no longer operated the island as a fully functioning farm, concentrating instead on raising sheep because of its greater cash returns. The cow which the Coast Guardsman had milked died soon after Wood retired. The young men grew tired of condensed milk from cans and in April 1940 they requested a replacement cow. Their source of supplies was a plane from Falmouth that flew in once a month, landing on the beach at low tide. After pilot Joshua's death in 1935, the landing strip was little used and had quickly become overgrown and useless. Any plane small enough to

land and take off from a beach had no room for a cow, so on the next trip a goat was delivered. Fresh milk was assured.

There was still no communications with the outside world except by visual signals. A battery-operated radio received the news, but it had no transmitter. The caretakers refined the signalling system slightly: one bonfire signified an immediate need for assistance; two bonfires meant help was wanted, but tomorrow would be all right. In January 1941, Eaton was stricken with an attack of appendicitis and two fires were lit. The following morning the Coast Guard arrived and he was taken to Wood's Hole, leaving his assistant alone.

Two months later, in March, when the assessors for Chilmark made their annual visit to the island they were met by Richard Gustavson. He was the new assistant and had been alone on the island for some time, he said, as Eaton had gone off for a visit to Brockton and Connecticut. Whether this meant that the caretaker had not returned after his appendicitis attack is unclear. The news clipping is vague on how long he had been absent. Gustavson told the assessors that he had no calendar and had forgotten to wind the clock so was not certain of either the date or the time. The assessors set him straight.

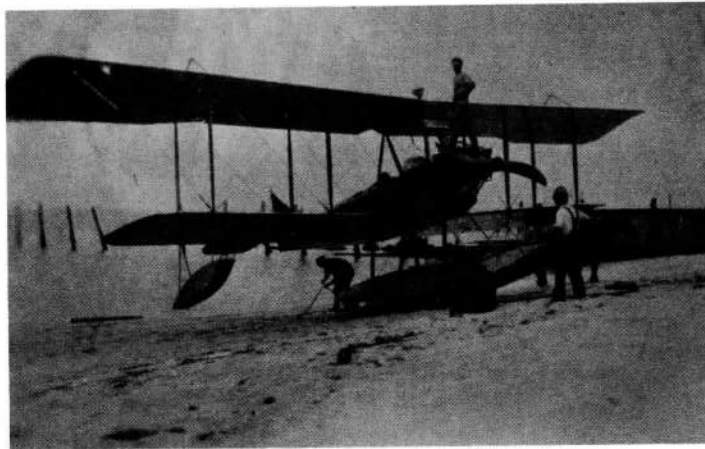
Sometime between then and December 1941, the island was abandoned by the caretakers. No details of their leaving in the fall of 1941 are in the scrapbook, but it seems to have been done without careful planning, probably without the approval of the Crane family. What is known from the scrapbook is that in December 1941 some hunters reported to the Animal Rescue League that they had been on Noman's (no doubt without permission) and had discovered it was uninhabited except by a flock of sheep, two horses and some hens, all in need of food. The Coast Guard made an emergency trip carrying bales of hay to the abandoned animals in January.⁸

⁸Miss Crane, in her oral history, does not mention this. She states that when the Navy took over the island in World War II, the Noman's sheep were taken to Naushon Island and turned over to the Forbes family.



Indian artifacts collected near East Bend Pond by Cameron Wood.

In 1943, during World War II, the U.S. Navy decided it needed the island and leased it from the trust for \$900 a year. Its purpose was not announced, it being declared a military secret. The lease required the Navy to return the island to the Crane family at the end of the war in the same condition it had been when taken over. After the war ended in 1945, the Cranes expected to get the property back soon. The island had been a working sheep farm, Priscilla Crane claimed, with well-maintained buildings and fenced fields. Although it had never paid its way, Miss Crane said it was close to breaking even. Expecting to get it back soon, Mr. Crane, apparently back from Europe, announced a bold plan. He would convert it into a private club for sportsmen. He published a prospectus describing his ambitious scheme that would be known as No Mans Colony (without apostrophe). A group, No Mans Land Associates, would form a stock company, selling shares to a maximum of 100 members for \$5000 each. Members would be given building sites of two or



Joshua Crane Jr.'s Aeromarine arrives from New Bedford, about 1922.

three acres, depending on location. Each member would be required to build a house costing not less than \$10,000 within five years and to occupy it for at least three months a year or pay a \$500 penalty. No member would be allowed to mortgage or borrow money on his house. Memberships and property could not be sold or transferred without the approval of the Governors of the Club.⁹

Prospective members were assured that the new landing strip built by the Navy would make possible quick and easy access. In addition, speed boats would be operated by the club to transport members from Woods Hole and New Bedford. Food and supplies would be stocked on the island and sold by the Club. All building plans required approval so as to keep the architecture homogeneous. It would be a carefully restricted and luxurious sport club at a location isolated and unsurpassed in its beauty.

An 18-hole golf course, with a total length of 6850 yards, would be constructed along the north side of the island, where "magnificent views [of Gay Head] alone would make it worth while playing. . . it is safe to predict that it will become the most famous and the best course in the

9. The Society is grateful to Edwin G. Tyra for allowing it to copy the Crane prospectus that is in his possession.



Bert, his wife, and father, Cameron Wood, in 1933, their last year there.

world. . .", Mr. Crane predicted.

The prospectus was fully detailed, giving a budget for capital expenses totalling \$443,500, an annual operating budget of \$40,500 and a staff of 15 persons. Projected was an annual income of \$42,100, from various sources such as docking berth rentals, profits on the sale of food, water and electricity, plus tennis and golf fees.

It is not easy to believe that Mr. Crane could have been serious about this. More likely, it would seem, that he was making clear to the Navy that his property had great value and that he should get it back quickly or, lacking that, the government should generously reimburse him for his lost opportunities. As things turned out, it was a futile effort.

The war, Crane soon learned, did not legally end in 1945, but not until seven years later when the treaties were signed. Consequently, the Navy retained possession until then. He hadn't seen his island during the war years and was unaware of the destruction that had gone on. There was no way that the land and buildings could be returned to him as they were when the Navy moved in without an enormous cost to the government. About 1954, with the war legally ended, the Cranes tried to get their land back, taking the

Noman's Land Was a Delightful Fishing and Farming Settlement in 1929



Looking west along the north shore, across Stony Point past the settlement called Gull Town. Sheep and other livestock kept down the underbrush. The farm was run, at various times, by

Ralph and Cameron Wood. Two arrows point to the houses where they lived. The larger one had been the farmhouse of William Butler before 1917 when Joshua Crane bought the island.



Pilot Joshua poses in front of Wood family, including future wife, Lurana.

government to court. But the Navy refused to give it up, and began action to take it over by eminent domain. No clear national purpose, either for defense or for conservation, was publicly given to justify the takeover, which was upheld by the court. The Navy asked Congress to appropriate \$100,000 to compensate the owners, which was a fraction of what it was then worth, according to the Crane family.¹⁰

In May 1956, the Navy, now the owner of the island, awarded a \$536,000 contract to convert it into a bombing target for its pilots. The contract called for the strengthening of the breakwater, for constructing a 200-foot pier (the

smaller pier that Crane had built was destroyed in the 1938 hurricane) plus a personnel building and garage. In addition, targets and approach markers were to be built. For months, workmen lived on the island, bulldozing new roads, destroying dams that Crane had built to create water "fences" to confine his sheep to certain areas. When the work was completed none of the farmhouses, barns and other buildings remained.

Joshua Crane, who died in Florida at the age of 95, was buried on the island in 1964 with the permission of the Navy. Daughter Priscilla was given rights by the Navy to go there to take care of the grave regularly, but on her last visit in the 1970s, she was unable to find it, so great had been the growth of underbrush. The airstrip had again become overgrown and the plane she came in had to land on the beach.¹¹

Today, the island is deserted except for some wild life and chest-high poison ivy. Occasionally, jets roar down, releasing bombs filled with paint to mark their landing. It has become, in the words of the donor of the scrapbook, who last visited it in 1977, "an island of sheer desolation."

I was unable to locate any of the familiar spots. The cellar holes had disappeared, bombed out and bulldozed into oblivion! In one or two instances I could discern the remains of our old home, now hidden in thick growths of waist-high poison ivy.

My heart was heavy. The visit which I had hoped would be a most pleasant one, had turned out to be a sad experience for me!

What had once been called "The Isle of Romance" could now well be called the isle of sheer desolation!¹²

10. When Joshua Crane died December 7, 1964, in the home of his grandson, Joshua, at 95 years of age, the obituary listed only three immediate survivors: Miss Priscilla Crane and Mrs. Catherine C. Trowbridge, both of Barnstable, and Mrs. Carl F. ter Weele of Brookfield, N.H. His two sons had pre-deceased him.

11. Wood, Oral History tape, DCHS.

12. Bertrand T. Wood, *Legends and Stories of Noman's Land Island*, Mini News, Jewett City, Connecticut, 1978, pp. 114-115. Priscilla Crane, daughter of Joshua Sr., made periodic visits to the island and was, like Bertrand, devastated by the destruction of what had been, to her, an island paradise (Oral History Tape, DCHS).



Moments in History

The Island Enjoys A Day of Ecstasy

ON FRIDAY, November 22, 1861, six months after the start of the Civil War, the United States frigate *San Jacinto* anchored in Holmes Hole on her voyage from Fortress Monroe, Virginia, to Fort Warren in Boston harbor. As was often the case, the harbor was crowded with nearly 150 vessels awaiting a favorable wind to negotiate the Sounds. The frigate's arrival brought a flurry of activity among the fleet.

The masters quickly organized a grand salute to the *San Jacinto*. Within an hour, all vessels began to "dress ship," displaying from their rigging all their flags and pennants to honor Captain Charles Wilkes, the frigate's skipper and the North's newest war hero. The Holmes Hole Light Artillery Company marched to the Neck between the Lagoon and the harbor and set up its cannon. With great ceremony, it fired a thirteen-gun salute, which was immediately followed by a less formal salute from handguns fired by many residents. The shore of the harbor was lined with spectators, enjoying the festive tributes. It was a gala occasion, totally spontaneous. When the firing was over, Captain Wilkes dipped the ensign of the *San Jacinto* in acknowledgement.

It was a day to remember. The entire assemblage of mariners aboard their vessels and Island residents on the beach gave a rousing three cheers when the flag on the *San Jacinto* was dipped. *Huzza! Huzza! Huzza!*

Why such an outburst on a Friday in November? Its cause now has been dimmed by time. Sparking the celebration was the "Trent Affair," an incident on the high

seas that fanned to white heat the flames of patriotism among Northerners, turning Captain Wilkes into an overnight national hero.

Aboard the *San Jacinto*, but certainly not enjoying the celebration, were John Slidell and James Mason, two Confederate diplomats who had been taken at gunpoint from the British mail packet *Trent* in the Bahamas Channel two weeks earlier, precipitating a crisis that almost brought England into the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy.

... the *Trent* was hailed by the United States frigate *San Jacinto*, Captain Wilkes, who directed a shot across her bow to bring her to. Then two officers and twenty men, more or less, put off from the *San Jacinto*, boarded the *Trent*, and after a search, took out Mr. Mason and Mr. Slidell and their two secretaries, and, by force, against the protest of the *Trent's* officers, bore them to their vessel.¹

The presence of these two rebel traitors was not ignored by Vineyard residents. A long unsigned letter in the *Vineyard Gazette* the following week described the feelings of the residents and the intensity of their anger:

Mr. Marchant: Yesterday we were honored by the presence of Commodore Wilkes and the "San Jacinto," but we were dishonored by the presence of Mason, Slidell & Co., on board the same vessel. As soon as the facts were known, our town and harbor were both in a hubbub. Every vessel in the harbor (and I think there were one hundred and fifty in all) soon had the Stars and Stripes aloft, with signals, and in fact everything in the shape of bunting that could be mustered. Our citizens rallied in hundreds to the Neck and assisted a detachment of the Vineyard Artillery in firing a thirteen-gun salute to Commodore Wilkes for his noble and determined conduct in capturing the arch traitors. The Commodore gracefully acknowledged the salute. We then gave three rousing cheers for the Union and three for Commodore Wilkes. Everyone seemed delighted to show their respect and admiration of an officer whose conduct and deeds prove him worthy of greater honors than he has yet received at the hands of the American people. We trust that it may not long

¹J.G. Holland, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, Gurdon Bill, Springfield, Mass., 1866, pp. 339-40.

be so and that he will receive adequate rewards for his energy, genius and bravery.²

Thoughtful persons on both sides of the Atlantic agreed that Captain Wilkes had acted illegally when he seized the men aboard an English vessel on the high seas.³ Southerners saw the illegal action as something that might bring a much-needed ally into the war. The British government sent a sharp note of protest to President Lincoln, demanding the release of the prisoners within seven days or the British government would recognize the Confederacy and declare war on the Union. The *Gazette*, joining in the jingoism of the moment, put down that threat as simply "great bluster."⁴

The jingoism was not limited to the Vineyard. The nation, in the north at least, was indulging itself in an orgy of patriotism. When the *San Jacinto* delivered the two captives to Fort Warren, Boston celebrated. Cheering crowds lined the streets around Faneuil Hall when Wilkes and his crew came ashore. In Washington, the House of Representatives voted the nation's thanks to the brave Captain. The whole nation was agog over its new hero:

To the American public the news of this capture was most grateful. . . they greeted the event with huzzas and made a hero of the impulsive Captain Wilkes, who, though a most loyal and excellent person, was possessed by a zeal that sometimes surpassed his discretion.⁵

There seemed to be no way to cool the patriotic fever, to bring reason to the discussion. War with England looked to be inevitable. The Union's hopes dimmed.

Wisely, after receiving the note from London with its seven-day ultimatum, the British Ambassador decided to hold up its delivery to the United States government until late in December. By then, the super-patriotic fire

had subsided and cooler heads prevailed. Early in January 1862, the two Confederate diplomats and their secretaries were, in the words of Secretary of State William H. Steward, "cheerfully liberated" from Fort Warren and allowed to resume their voyage to Europe where they hoped to persuade England and France to recognize the Confederacy as a legitimate government and accept them as its diplomatic representatives. Their hopes were not realized, neither nation ever recognized them or their government. They became, undeservedly many now think, men without a country. The *Vineyard Gazette* described their situation this way:

Alas, how fallen are these persons! . . . Mean intriguers and base plotters against country and freedom -- who can respect them? What noble-minded man or woman, entertaining them as guests, but must shrink from a very close embrace and in their hearts feel disgust at their presence?⁶

By thoughtful diplomacy, what could have been a disastrous turn of events for the North had been averted. The British public, aroused by an act of "piracy" on the high seas against one of its mail packets, was demanding that the nation go to war against the North. Had diplomats on both sides of the Atlantic not reacted with calm reasonableness, the English might have joined forces with the Confederacy, making a Union victory doubtful.

The Vineyard's celebration of Captain Wilkes's visit may have been exuberant and ill-advised, but it was as close to the war as most Islanders ever came and for years, no doubt, many who had lined the shores of Holmes Hole treasured its memory.

² *Vineyard Gazette*, November 23, 1861.

³ Captain Wilkes had a history of impetuous behavior and had twice been court-martialled for such actions.

⁴ *Vineyard Gazette*, December 20, 1861.

⁵ Holland, p.340.

⁶ *Gazette*, February 7, 1862. After the war ended, Slidell remained in France, where he lived throughout the war. We have not learned what happened to Mason.



Swordfishing In the 1860s

by "Y"

Commercial swordfishing on the Vineyard began in the mid-1800s. Little was written about it at the time. One of the few early accounts was published in the Boston Evening Transcript, August 12, 1861, describing a day of fishing. The reporter was visiting Edgartown, the home port of the swordfishing boat. Although he had planned to write about swordfishing, as you will see, little of it was done. The fishermen were attracted by a much larger catch: a killer whale. The reporter, identified only by the initial "Y" at the end of the article, datelined his story: "Edgartown, August 8th." It is printed here in full.¹

KEROSENE and kindred improvements having made whale oil "pale its ineffectual fires," many of the whalemens, finding their occupation gone, engage in hunting such "small deer" as swordfish and sharks, which abound in these waters.² It was with one of these ancient mariners that I ventured forth the day after my arrival here, on a swordfish expedition. My exploits as an angler having been chiefly confined to sculpins and hornpouts (the latter caught in the frog pond in my school-boy days with a pin hook), it was with considerable elation that I looked forward to capturing old Neptune's most potent dignitaries.

Of these, the swordfish are most sought for here, being

1. This *Boston Transcript* article is in E. B. Davis Scrapbook, DCHS. For a history of swordfishing on the Island, see Clyde MacKenzie's article, *Intelligencer*, February 1994.

2 Oil wells in Pennsylvania were proliferating. A few months earlier, *The Whalemens Shipping List* reported that 1067 barrels of oil from wells near Franklin had been landed in Pittsburgh by three steamers in one day. "The oil business is destined to become one of the greatest trades of Western Pennsylvania."

considered excellent eating. They vary from twelve to fourteen feet in length, including the sword, which is about four feet long, and weigh from 150 to 500 pounds. The sword is well adapted for the purpose of killing their prey, and the whale is not infrequently despatched by this formidable weapon, which can be impelled with such force as to go through a ship's planking.

One week earlier, the Vineyard Gazette reported that "not less than forty swordfish had been taken in our waters. One boat took seven. The sport and excitement attending the capture of these fish is unequalled." Swordfishing had clearly become a summer occupation for Vineyarders. These were sailboats, of course. Power had not yet come into common use for small craft.

The craft used in sword-fishing are about twenty-five feet long by eight wide, sharp at both ends, and are fast sailers and excellent sea-boats. An outrigger extends several feet in front of the boat on which the harpooner stands, while another man is stationed on a ladder attached to the foremast to keep a lookout for the fish, whose back fin, projecting from the water, can be discerned by one of these keen observers at a distance of half a mile.

The weapon used in spearing them consists of a long pole with an iron shank, attached to an arrow-headed dart, from which the pole is detached as soon as the fish is struck, so that he is held by the line fastened to the dart. The other end of the line is fastened to a keg, which is thrown overboard, so that the fish may plunge about at a safe distance from the boat, and when nearly exhausted he is hauled alongside and despatched by a "spade." If he not only persists in keeping alive beyond his time, but ventures to retaliate by attacking the boat, the sport becomes still more exciting. Quite a fleet leaves Edgartown daily for the swordfish ground about twelve miles from the town, and four or five fish are considered a good day's work for a boat.

Starting at about seven o'clock in the morning we cruised for about two hours without taking any fish, though

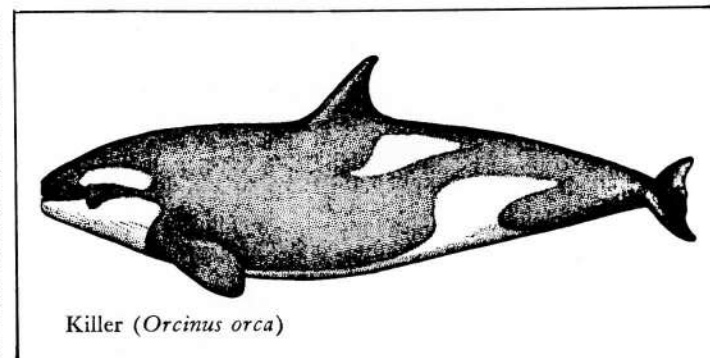
we saw one with his back fin torn off, under convoy of several sharks. While sailing leisurely along we noticed a boat made fast to a "whale-killer," a species of whale which, on a principle of "unnatural selection" that Darwin has not explained, preys on its weaker brethren. This was a small specimen about twelve feet long, and was easily captured.

*Killer whales are not so docile as the writer makes them seem to be. They are a dolphin species, known as Orca. "These animals are barrel-shaped and very bulky and, with their speed and very large jaws armed with huge knife-edged, recurved, interlocking teeth, they are the most terrible flesh-eating creatures on our planet, far surpassing even the great white shark in boldness and acumen. Everything in the sea flees from them, even the largest whales." As we will see, the killer whale is not easy to capture.*³

Soon we saw a large one, thirty feet long, which the men in one of the boats had struck, but which had become unmanageable and was pulling them along at lightning speed. Our skipper offered to assist in capturing him, and watching a favorable opportunity when he rose to breathe, sent an iron into him to the depth of six inches. As soon as the "killer" felt the "cruel steel," he started for the bottom, so that our line was whirled off with great velocity and our boat quickly followed it.

"Look out for your legs!" shouted the skipper to the harpooner, as the rope was jerked off, and in truth the caution was a timely one; for if the line had become entangled about his legs, it would have cut them off with the precision of an experienced surgeon. As soon as the whale had reached bottom, we began to haul in the line, so as to be as near to him as possible when he came to the surface, and finally succeeded in putting another iron into him. The poor fellow now had three darts in his body, two of them being attached to lines from the boats and the other fastened to a keg floating on the water. The chase now became extremely exciting, as the monster had become so wary that he would come up to "spout," at a

From *Follow the Whale*, by Ivan T. Sanderson.



Killer (*Orcinus orca*)

Reporter had planned to go swordfishing, but chased a killer whale instead.

great distance from where we expected him, so that even the men in the rowboat were unable to get near enough to him to finish him with the lance.⁴

"By Heaven! There he blows!" was the ejaculation of the disappointed skipper, as he heard the roar of the "whale killer," and saw the huge creature spouting beyond the reach of his deadly lance.

Several hours had now passed away, and the whale seemed so little exhausted that the chance of capturing him appeared very doubtful, though our skipper felt confident that if our lines held we should at last be able to give him a death-blow with the lance.

Imagine our situation! Fastened to an enormous creature who was rushing off with our boats at twenty-five knots an hour, and who, if he had come up under one of them, would have shivered it to splinters and sent its hapless occupants to their long account. It was certainly a grand sight to watch the majestic animal as he lay like Milton's leviathan, "floating many a rood" on the broad ocean,⁵ now lashing the sea to foam in his throes of mortal agony and now plunging far below the

⁴ The writer is not too generous with details, but it would seem that three boats are involved: the sailboat he is on; a second sailboat that had first "ironed" the killer whale; and a rowboat, apparently from that second sailboat.

⁵ From *Paradise Lost*, bk. VII: "There Leviathan, hugest of living creatures. . ."

³ Ivan T. Sanderson, *Follow the Whale*, Bramhall House, New York, 1956, p. 155.

surface to escape from the deadly dart of the harpooner.

But the spectacle was not one of unmixed enjoyment, for there was no small amount of hard labor in pulling toward him when he rose, and of vainly attempting to check his progress when he plunged to the bottom, the rope drawing blood as it went through our hands. Our skipper said if he had a whaleboat instead of our unwieldy craft, he could kill the "whale-killer" in fifteen minutes.

Suddenly, while I was momentarily pondering the chances of being carried out to sea, provisioned with only a few ship biscuits and doughnuts for the unexpected voyage, and thinking of friends far away who little thought what a race I was running, -- suddenly the whale-killer gave one tremendous plunge, snapped all the lines as if they had been threads of gossamer, and started off to sea, and that was the last I ever saw of him.

"He has got iron enough in him to set up in the whaling business on his own account," naively remarked our skipper as he cast one longing, lingering look behind, and prepared to leave for home. It was hard to have "His Whaleship" depart so unceremoniously after having spent so much time and labor in trying to secure him, but in truth I was not altogether sorry to see the ocean monarch burst his bonds and bid defiance to his tormenters. I regretted the loss, however, on account of the fishermen, as he would have been worth a large sum to them, the oil being next in value to sperm. But they seemed contented, and indeed such risk and dangers form part of the daily experience of these hardy fellows, and I certainly enjoyed the sport exceedingly, though I never expect to go behind such an unruly steed again.

The small "whale-killer" [caught by another boat] was towed ashore, and was visited by a great many persons, being regarded as a great curiosity. The "killer" is distinguished from other whales by a white mark on each side of his body, and he is armed with a row of formidable teeth. He kills the sperm whale by jumping on his spout-holes, so that the whale becomes

frightened and drops his lower jaw, when another "killer" darts into his immense mouth and seizes his tongue, and thus the whale is soon despatched. Some idea of the size of a sperm whale may be found from the fact that his mouth is large enough to take in a whale-boat and crew, and his tongue contains no less than fifteen barrels of oil. So much for a "land-lubber's" first experience in whaling!

Having tried whaling and swordfishing I felt bound not to neglect the shark, and accordingly started on a sharking trip several days ago. While trailing for blue fish on our way to the shark ground we saw a great many shovel-nosed sharks, and succeeded in capturing one of them with the lance. This kind of shark swims near the surface of the water and is seldom caught on the hook. He has an immense shovel-shaped nose which projects in what the fishermen call a wing on each side of his head; and his eyes are placed on the end of these wings, which give him a very peculiar appearance. The speckled shark which frequents these waters, ranges from twelve to fifteen feet in length, and is by no means a pleasant companion for a man in the water, while the "bone shark" (so called from a lining resembling whale bone in his mouth) being thirty feet long and armed with three rows of teeth, is a very dangerous customer.

The latter shark is seldom seen in these parts, though one was killed off Gay Head some time ago, whose liver yielded seven barrels of oil. Two of my friends, who are scientific students at Cambridge, caught three sharks here about a week ago, one of which they enclosed in a barrel of alcohol and sent to Professor Agassiz for the Zoological Museum.⁶

The wind blew very freshly as we anchored off Cape Poge, the northern point of Chappaquiddick Island, and after

⁶ Louis Agassiz, professor of natural history at Harvard College, was considered the nation's authority on marine life. A few years after this, a wealthy New York man gave him Penikese Island, off Cuttyhunk, plus \$50,000, to establish a school of marine zoology there. It opened in 1873, the year Agassiz died. The New Yorker withdrew his financial support and the school closed after only one year. About a decade later, the Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute named its principal building, Agassiz Hall.

catching one blue shark, we thought it advisable to return to Edgartown. As we had to beat up against a head wind and tide with the "whitecaps" running high, and being drenched through by the tossing spray, you may suppose that our sensations were more peculiar than agreeable. In entering Edgartown harbor, we passed Lieutenant James Gordon Bennett Jr.'s, beautiful yacht *Henrietta*, now in the Government service, flying the Revenue flag, and on the look-out for privateers.⁷

Tomorrow we intend to try the sharks once more, if the weather is favorable; and on Saturday we shall pay our parting respects to the swordfish.

No visitor to Martha's Vineyard should fail to visit Gay Head, which is at the western extremity of the Island, about twenty miles from Edgartown. The cliffs there may well be classed among the "wonders of geology," and are a perfect storehouse of petrifications and other curiosities. They range from 140 to 150 feet in height, and being composed of variegated clays of the most vivid colors, present a very picturesque appearance. Geologists entertain different views in regard to the origin of these cliffs; some attributing their formation to volcanic agency, though the correctness of this theory is doubted by many eminent savans. They seem to have been thrown up by some convulsion of nature, the different strata being blended together in hopeless confusion.

The remains of gigantic antediluvian monsters imbedded in the clay resemble those of the immense saurians of which Hugh Miller has given such an interesting account, and Professor Hitchcock remarks that the teeth of the crocodile at Gay Head show that when this animal swam in the waters of our continent, the climate must have been tropical. The race of aborigines known as the Gay Head Indians has disappeared from the Island, the swarthy individuals who now bear the name being a mixture of Indian and Negro. I met

⁷ The Civil War had started three months earlier, with the attack on Fort Sumter. Confederate privateers were cruising the coastal waters. By mid-summer, stories of Confederate privateers cruising in northern waters were common.

Baldwin Coolidge Photo.



Gay Head's Fresnel lens was a scientific wonder and tourists flocked to it. Photo 1887.

several of these half-breeds whose appearance reminded me of the "bois brulees" of the Upper Mississippi.

The splendid light at Gay Head, which is a "Fresnel" of the first order, consisting of 1008 lenses, took the first premium at the World's Fair in Paris, and cost sixteen thousand dollars. The diameter of the compound lens is seven feet, so that seven persons can stand within its glass walls, and in ordinary weather the light is visible at a distance of forty-five miles. The keeper of the light is himself as great a curiosity as any he exhibits, and with his thirteen children will not easily be forgotten by those who have listened to his unique conversations and been favored by his untiring obligingness.⁸

[signed] Y.

⁸ Samuel Flanders, along with Nancy Luce, were the Island's first celebrities. At this time, the Gay Head Fresnel lens was a scientific wonder of the age and tourists came in large numbers to see it and to listen to Sam's stories. The lens is now owned by the Society and is mounted in a truncated tower on our grounds and is lighted every night. For more about Keeper Flanders and his family see *Intelligencer*, May 1982.

Documents

A Running Account of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

In the previous installment, our diarist Henry Baylies, principal of the brand-new Edgartown High School, suspended Benjamin Pease and two other boys for shouting and taunting him outside the school. The unpleasantness began when Benjamin refused to give his declamation or submit an acceptable composition on that "day of sorrows to teachers," as Henry described the day when pupils are required to give reports.

This installment begins with the continuation of the entry with which the previous installment ended. The discipline problem is before the School Committee.

This period is a trying one for him and his wife, Harriet, virtually newlyweds, both in their mid-twenties. She continues to suffer with her undiagnosed illness, convinced that death is near. She recently had a miscarriage, adding to her worries about her health.

Henry's life gets no easier. He writes of how uncertain his future seems to be. Will he return to the ministry or continue teaching? If so, where? There seems little likelihood that they will stay on the Vineyard, where he was born. Yet, this uncertainty seems not to rest heavily on him, who is, as always, very confident that God controls his destiny.

* * *

Tuesday, July 23, 1850 (continued).
At a meeting of the Comm., they urged me long & urgently to severely

punish Benj. Pease. The others, I requested they should leave at my disposal as I had reason to believe from the testimony of Mrs. Marchant, they were not engaged in the shouting. I refused to punish him & urged for the sake of the school, his expulsion. They finally determined to suspend him till such time as his father should have suitably punished him & reported the same to the Comm., procured [written over, hard to read] a certificate of admission to the school before which he (Benj.) should make that acknowledgement as might be required. Furthermore, his father should promise that the boy should behave with propriety in the school. Mr. Pease has, I am informed, agreed to do so.

This morning at the opening of the school I called all who were present at the shouting yesterday P.M., forward. Rev. H. [Hebron] Vincent present. Those who shouted & acknowledged it were John Cleveland, Geo. E. Lewis, Thomas C. Worth & Holmes W. Smith.¹ Cleveland & Lewis are denied recess for a week. Worth & Smith denied repeatedly any knowledge of the occasion of the shouting or of my conversations, remarks or words on the subject till the evidence that I brought from Mrs. Marchant²

¹Benjamin Pease, 10, the youngest of the group, was the son of Daniel and Charlotte Pease; Holmes Smith, 16, son of Mrs. Holmes (Sophia) Smith, apparently soon dropped out of school as he was listed as a laborer one month later; Thomas C. Worth, 16, son of Capt. Benjamin and Louisa Worth, was also a laborer one month later.

²Mrs. George R. Marchant lived on Main St., and was visiting her sister-in-law, Mrs. Peter Marchant, on So. Summer St., when the incident took place and had witnessed it.

brought them to confession. Their appearance was somewhat insolent & their perjury so repeated I was perfectly astounded.

After various remarks, Mr. Vincent advised them to confess the crime & sorrow & be received immediately into the school. I replied to Mr. V., I could receive no confession then as an honest confession, after the frequent falsities & that I was unwilling to receive them to recitations in the school till such time as I had notified their parents & they had called ~~with their sons~~ [crossed out] & settled the matter, after which the boys should make suitable confession & be received back & requested him to notify the Committee of the course I had taken.

He concurred & I pronounced sentence accordingly. I addressed notes, approved by Messrs. [David] Davis & Vincent of the Comm., to Capt. Benj. Worth & Mrs. Sophia ~~Worth~~ [crossed out] Smith, requesting attention to the subject and likewise showed to these gentlemen of the Comm., the draught of a confession I should require the boys to sign & read before the school, which they likewise approved.

Mrs. Smith called this eve to see me. It appears Holmes does not acknowledge to her that he shouted but only laughed. Mrs. S. appeared well in the case, but, poor woman, I pity her for she has little if any control over her son who is of an exceedingly unpleasant disposition.

There, I have spent more time in these statements than the dirty affair is worthy of, yet I may wish these rough scrawls to refresh my memory. I

have almost decided today I will teach school no more. I have felt so unpleasantly about these things. But "Began dull care & gloom" [?!], I am conscious of perfect rectitude in all the premises & shall abide by my decisions in all which the Comm., profess themselves ready to sustain me.

Dear Harriette's health for the week past has been fluctuating, on the whole slightly improving. Last Sabbath eve she attended prayer meeting in vestry. The meeting was long & she became exceedingly fatigued -- with difficulty reached home & fainted immediately on entering the house. This evening walked over to Uncle Edgar's to call on Mrs. Marchant of Nantucket, likewise at I. D. Pease Esq.³ Very soon after returning H. fainted & with difficulty reached the bed. She is very weak.

My own health is not very good -- considerable headache, but will wear off soon.

Monday, July 29, 1850. My time has been so employed since my last entry that this so-called journal is neglected -- sadly neglected. Well, there are a small variety of incidents which should be recorded. Referring first to the incident of the last record. Mrs. Smith called upon me the next morning, stating her son's objection to signing the confession since he did not shout (as he said), but I by cross questioning him, etc., compelled him ~~to say~~ [crossed out], at length, to confess he shouted. Now this is all falsehood -- his prompt answer to the first

³Isaiah Dunham Pease, sheriff from 1822 to 1862, was father of Richard Luce Pease, a major Island historian.

question: "Did you shout?" was, as I and many others are positive, "Yes, Sir." Well then, the case rests, aside from sundry recriminations.

Capt. [Benj.] Worth has not called upon me & nothing more has passed between us. I today heard through one of the committee indirectly that Capt. W. said to him, ~~I am going to send my~~ [crossed out] I told Thomas to go up & get his books & if I refused to let him have them to Knock me down & he would pay the bills. What will such advice from father to son result in?

Otherwise the school has prospered as usual. In consideration of the various unpleasant circumstances, I have this week spoken rather freely of the probability of my leaving this place & school on acc't of health, etc. I find among the young ladies of the school entire dissatisfaction with such a proposition of leaving. I shall endeavor to consult duty and the leading[?] of Providence. Oh, Lord, will thou direct my steps aright for thy Son's sake.

Last Friday eve, dearest Hattie was attacked violently, quite with very like cholera morbus. By pursuing attention & the blessing of God I succeeded in checking the disease. She was really very sick for 24 hours & effect on her strength is very apparent. I may not doubt but that these occasional attacks are designed to lead me & us -- no, one -- to a constant consideration of the source of all our blessings -- the God of all grace & consolation. I do not think all sickness Providentially inflicted but often self inflicted. We often curse ourselves & charge blame upon God. I

believe God may & will overrule self-inflicted calamities to the spiritual good of such as will call upon Him.

Rec'd this last week (Thursday) letter from Rev. J.B. Gould enclosing \$10 I lent him at Conf. Bro. G. is prospering I judge very well. Rec'd a letter on Thursday from David B. Wilcox informing me of the death of Cousin Rebecca in the previous night. This brought fresh to mind the scenes of former days. The Lord bless this affliction to the good, the spiritual good of that Religion-neglecting family.⁴

Thus a few things glanced at, many omitted. I must close, "retire & go to bed" as dearest Hattie sometimes says.

Monday August 5, 1850. At the suggestion of Hattie I change my style of Penmanship from back hand or Secretary hand to running hand & yet I fear it will not appear any more regular than the other, especially if I run so fast as at present.⁵

The last week has not been unmarked with incident & yet of such a cast as almost to prevent anything like a full or accurate sketch in the short time I have to devote. Delay makes duty burdensome.

On Tuesday Hattie had so far recovered from her severe attack of Cholera Morbus as to go out with me after tea & call on Sisters Linton & Gorham. Thence we started to call on Harriette R. Fisher & Uncle John Baylies but H. was taken suddenly unwell so that we were obliged to return immediately home. Hattie took to her bed & was not dressed again

⁴This is his first wife Hannah's family.

⁵His switch to "running" penmanship makes it even more difficult to decipher!

till Friday. Whether this is a miss or a master I do not know -- whether a loss or only a usual recurrence is to us uncertain.⁶ She so far recovered that on Sat. Evening we called over to Uncle John Baylies & H. R. Fisher. She seems now quite comfortable. Her lungs are evidently very much better than formerly for her arm is gaining strength. She has no pain in lungs or side. Her feet do not perspire so much. She raises no blood, is fine aside from weakness consequent upon so much sickness & the warm weather. She feels very well, better than for many months. I think the shower-bath has proved a great benefit to her.

My own health is rather poor. For some weeks past my health has been running down quite fast. The cause or causes I think have been acting for some time. When I removed from Tisbury I was obliged to labor very severely in packing, teaming, etc., together with unpacking, etc., here which quite reduced me. Then some anxiety connected with assuming the charge of a bigger school in my native place. Afterward, Harriet's severe sicknesses of which she has had three or four very severe attacks, excited me greatly & required great labor, care & anxiety. For a few weeks past the troubles in school have somewhat affected my nervous system.

All these things have so far reduced my nervous system that I think the bracing Island air affects me very unfavorably. I have suffered considerably during the three or four weeks past with headache, nervous headache. Since Friday I have been for me quite

unwell. I have had many of the symptoms which I suffered just a year ago yesterday counting Sabbaths [?].

I was yesterday at home employing some of the same remedies I then used & with poor success. I think I shall get along without suffering more.

My school has progressed with usual success & we are now entered on the last week of the term & probably the last of my remaining here as teacher. There was one very unpleasant occurrence on Friday P.M. I punished Master Chas. F. Chase by striking his hand four times when he withdrew it. I required him to extend it again when he replied, looking directly in my face: "I won't. God damn you!"⁷

I never received so severe a shock to my moral or physical sensibilities. I didn't think I would punish him severely but on instant reflection I dismissed him to his seat with some appropriate remarks & advice & after school accompanied him to state the case to Mrs. Coffin & Rev. H. Vincent. On Sat., Mr. V. & the boy called upon me to settle the affair. Chase humbly confessed his fault & I forgave him. I stated his confession, etc., to the school this morning. Influenced by the many petty difficulties which have occurred during the term & their effect on my health I have more than hinted to the Committee during the past week the possibility -- if not probability -- of my leaving at the close of this term.

I spoke some weeks ago to Rev. H. Vincent of the possibilities of my leaving on account of wife's health.

⁷Back then, school was not the blissful place some claim it to have been.

⁶Is he suggesting another miscarriage?

This was previous to any of the existing difficulties. At present, I think my health another plea. Health is a question of duty which stands first & yet I confess these many embarrassing affairs have not a little influenced my mind to an almost fixed determination not to remain. These difficulties have occurred only in faithful discharge of duty which is commanded by the better portion. Had I health none of these things would move me. But with a quite nervous system they do affect me considerably. I'm not spleeny or anything like it. The nervous action appears to be through the gastric nerves & thus upon my general health. I do not wish to decide hastily as to any course, especially as to one which involves so much interest. I would know the right & pursue it, the best end & the best way to secure it. If I remain in charge of this school I can not by any means commence another term till after a vacation of three or four weeks. May the Lord direct & then my ways shall be in safety.

Friday Eve, August 9th. The day of closing the present session of school has been & past. More than twenty parents & friends, including the Committee, visited the school & listened to the examination which passed off in excellent style except the Misses did not speak with sufficient loudness. The Gentlemen present: Messrs Vincent, Pease & Davis of Comm[ittee], R. L. Pease, E. G. Adlington, Rev. Mr. Goodnow, all made some remarks to the school generally of an approving character.

Well, thus I have concluded my first term as Principal in the High School in Edgartown. What my reflections are at this time I have not time now to record. Be it so. I have done & when or whether I shall commence another term of this school I know not. The Lord knows. This has been a day of very severe labor of body & mind.

Wrote a letter to Mother B. I --- for Hattie in her ----.⁸

⁸Mother B. (Budlong) is Hattie's mother. He is using a new ink that is faint and less legible.

Public Schools in Edgartown, during the year 1850--51.

Names of the several Schools.	Names of the Teachers.	No. of Mos.	Wages of Teachers.	Amount of Wages.	Whole No. Scholars.	Average Attendance.	Per cent of attendance.
TOWN DISTRICT.							
East Primary School,	Emily Worth, Eliza W. Pease,	7	1st Term \$15 9 2nd Term 10	Each Teacher \$100 67 Each School \$175	67 1-2*	56 3-8	83.58
West Primary do,	Eunice R. Lambert, Hannah M. Davis,	7	16 9 16 10	119 67 179	82 1-3*	73 3-8	88.93
Intermediate Grammar do,	Joseph B. Gow, Eliza F. Pease,	7	22 14 25 14	229 98 327	67 1-2*	55	80.59
Higher Grammar, 1st term,	Rev. H. Baylies, Harriet R. Fisher,	9 1-2	40 15	100 37 1-2 361.50	66*	50 1-2	75.59
" " 2nd "	Rev. S. B. Goodnow, Harriet R. Fisher,	4	40 16	160 54 Whole am't T'n Dis't, \$1050.50			
South District,	Caroline M. Smith,	7 1-2	11	\$22.50	10	7 1-2	75
Middle "	Jophanus H. Smith,	3 1-4	25	61.25	27	30 3-4	76.85
North "	Archibald Mellen,	3 1-2	25	61.25	28	29 1-2	80
Chopquiddic District,	Eliza E. Sawyer,	5 1-4	15	75.75	37	28 3-4	77.70
Plain District, Summer term,	Maria L. Norton,	9 1-2	11	\$27 1-2	16	11 1-2	75.92
" " Winter "	Damon Y. Norton,	2 9-10	20	50	22	19 1-2*	86.36
Total--\$1460.50					Of the whole town-- 79.45		

*Mean attendance of the two terms of the school. The largest number attending in all the districts, 415.

||Mean average attendance.

Some of these fractions are not absolutely correct, although they are sufficiently so. They are given in the simple forms for the sake of convenience. For example, 25 is called 2-4.

Henry was paid \$40 a month for 2 1/2 months; Harriet Fisher only \$15.

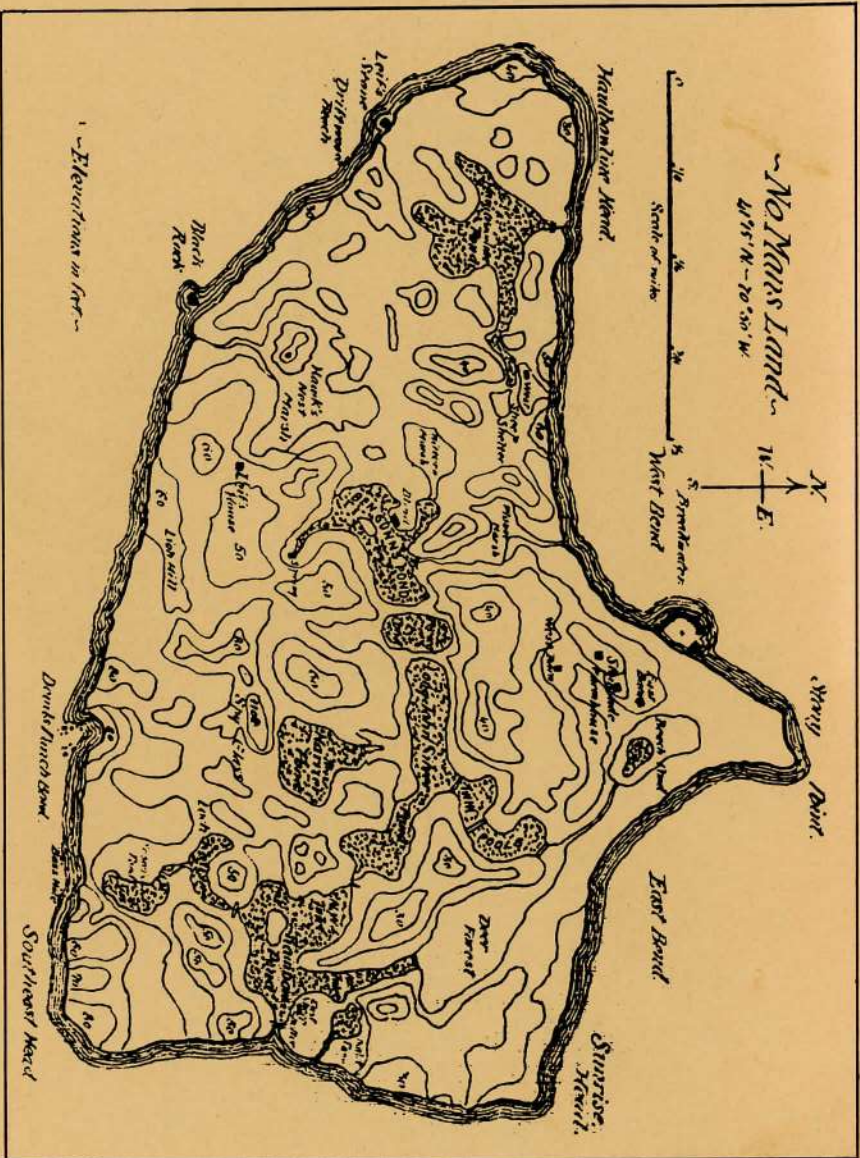
NOMAN'S LAND -- SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR



From Noman's Land Island by Bertrand Wood.

Closest spot to launch a boat for Noman's is Squibnocket Beach, but of course that is not a protected harbor like Menemsha, a long way around Gay Head.

Joshua Crane's Paradise for Sportsmen (Golf Course to Come)



Map in 1946 Noman's sportsmen's club prospectus shows island's ponds, many made by Joshua Crane for stocking fish and attracting waterfowl. He gave them imaginative names such as Pieces of Eight Pond; Long John Silver's Pond.