



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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*these sons I find after they arrived: and now that so near home
yet I cannot hear nor see any person that can give the least
account of you. I travel the streets and search diligently as
often as possible to see if possible I might find some one that has
come from the Vineyard yet no one can see Capt. Silas Daggett*

Poignant note by a mariner seeking news of his sick children: "yet no one can i se."

The Letters of Capt. Noah Pease

The Separated Lives In a Mariner's Family (1794 -- 1841)

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

Building a House in 1833: How Much Did It Cost?

Documents: A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

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CORRECTIONS

Two errors in the article on rumrunners in the August 1996 issue were spotted by Mildred Huntington, widow of the founding editor of this journal, Gale Huntington. Mrs. Huntington, for 19 years, was Gale's proofreader so her attention to detail has a long history.

On page 6, it should have stated that Chester Poole, not Chester Pease, was the "dedicated prohibitionist." On the same page, the footnote about Joseph Chase Allen incorrectly identified him as the father of Edward. Joe's son, as Mrs. Huntington points out, was Everett S. Allen, author of *The Black Ships*, cited on the preceding page.

Both errors were the fault of the editor, not the author, Edwin Arhearn.

Mrs. Huntington's interest in the article was heightened by the fact that her great uncle, Frank Butler, was the famous rumrunner described in the article. Thank you, Mildred.

THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

Vol. 38, No. 2 © 1996 M.V.H.S. November 1996

The Letters of Capt. Noah Pease

- The Separated Lives
In a Mariner's Family** 59
(1794 -- 1841)
by Arthur R. Railton

From the Society's Archives

- Building a House in 1833:
How Much Did It Cost?** 96

- Documents: A Running Account
Of Matters & Things** 100
by Henry Baylies

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

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Memberships are solicited. Applications should be sent to P. O. Box 827, Edgartown, MA, 02539. Telephone: 508 627 4441. Fax: 508 627 4436. Authors' queries and manuscripts for the journal should be addressed there also.

Articles in *The Intelligencer* do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society or its officers. Every effort is made to confirm dates, names and events in published articles, but we cannot guarantee total accuracy.

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The Martha's Vineyard Historical Society was founded in 1922 as the Dukes County Historical Society. The name was changed by vote of the members at the annual meeting in Edgartown, August 1996. A non-profit institution, it is supported entirely by membership dues, contributions and bequests. Its purpose is to preserve and publish the history of Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands.

The Society maintains the Thomas Cooke House, circa 1763, a house museum of Island history, open to the public from mid-June to mid-September. Open all year on the Society's grounds at Cooke and School Streets, Edgartown, are the Francis Foster Gallery, the Capt. Francis Pease House and the Gale Huntington Library of History, as are the Gay Head Lighthouse exhibit with its 1854 Fresnel lens and the Carriage Shed containing an 1854 Button fire engine and many 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 fee. Research assistance is provided at the Gale Huntington Library.

You are invited to join the Society. With membership you will receive this journal four times a year. For information, write to the Society, P. O. Box 827, Edgartown, MA 02539.

The Letters of Capt. Noah Pease

The Separated Lives In a Mariner's Family (1794 -- 1841)

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

IT'S NOT EASY to know what prompted a group of Boston "adventurers" to decide that December 1794 was a good time to begin trading with France. It was right in the middle of the French Revolution. Nonetheless, the optimistic speculators chartered the brig *Ceres*, master Capt. Abner Dunham, loaded her to the gunwhales with whale oil, soap, leather, rice, beef and pork and sent her off to France, confident of making a quick profit. It was winter, France was in turmoil, the north Atlantic unfriendly. Not a promising adventure, it would seem.

The brig was heavily laden. There never was, her first mate wrote, "a single Deck Vessel Ever Load'd deeper to go to Europe in the winter than ours." That first mate was Edgartown mariner Noah Pease, father of seven at the time. Among the seven were three sons who grew up to play important roles in the history of the Vineyard.

The details of that speculative trip to France in 1794, lost in history, are recounted by Noah in a series of letters written to his wife Hannah. At home in Edgartown, she was occupied with the care of their large family, while her mariner husband was at sea. She not only had seven children to care for, she was pregnant with their eighth.

In maritime villages such as Edgartown, single parenting, as it has come to be called, was the norm. Husbands, at sea most of the time, would come home at intervals of one, two or three years, usually staying long enough to impregnate their wives

The letters in the Noah Pease Collection were given to the Society by Julien Vose Weston of Boston, a descendant of Noah. We are grateful to Mr. Weston for his gift, which provides an intimate look at Vineyard life after the American Revolution.

before heading off again, leaving the problems of raising the family to the women. Communication was rare, mail service uncertain. Letters were more often delivered by other mariners than by the postoffice.

The letters of Noah Pease, oldest child of Seth and Sarah (Chase) Pease, provide details of this way of life right after the American Revolution. While his children grew to maturity, Noah was only an occasional visitor in his home, as were most of his contemporaries. Yet these single-parent, matriarchal homes raised children who became useful, well-adjusted adults. At least, those who survived to maturity did. Early deaths were common. It was the mother who cared for their sick children and buried them. Of the eight children born to the Peases, only four outlived Hannah, only three outlived Noah.

Unfortunately, we know virtually nothing about the early years of their marriage. Our letters don't begin until 1794, when Noah, 40 years old, father of seven, ranging from 2 to 17 years of age, is in Boston about to leave for France. Hannah is 38. It is not Noah's first international voyage as he mentions a previous trip to Brazil in the first letter, dated November 21, 1794.¹

The brig *Ceres*, chartered by the speculators, is nearly loaded and soon will sail for France on what the "adventurers" hope will be a quick, profitable trip. Noah doesn't discuss it, but France is in chaos. The French Revolution has torn the nation apart. Draconian measures have been taken. Wages and prices have been fixed. A paper currency, called Assignats, has been put into circulation, backed by the value of land the revolutionists repossessed. Land values have plummeted, causing confidence in the paper money to collapse. Inflation is rampant. Angered by the conditions, the people revolted again and a coup called 9 Thermidor (the name being the day and month of the new calendar of the Revolutionists), put a small group, called the Directory, in

¹Only minor changes in punctuation and spelling have been made in the original when it is thought necessary for understanding. The letters in the original handwriting may be read at the Society library.

power. The currency fell to new lows. Despite these negatives, the Boston adventurers sent the *Ceres* off, commanded by a Capt. Abner Donham. Hannah, whose maiden name was Dunham, had a brother named Abner, but it is unlikely he was the captain. There is no mention of that relationship in the letters. She must have raised questions about Noah going to France at such a chaotic moment even with "Great wages," but he reassured her: he had made a "strict inquiry":

Boston November 21, 1794

Dear wife,

... we are now almost loaded and Expect to sail next Tuesday. Expect to be at home sometime in April if nothing happens ... I go with as good a resolution as i did to the Brazils, but hope to have a much more agreeable & shorter one if we do well. I doubt not but it will be for the best. ... I have made strict inquiry Concerning European Voyages from different masters of Vessels and they tell of no difficulty. If i apprehended any, I am sure Great wages would not intice me. We Expect to have rugged weather of [off], But its Likely we shall have moderate [coming] home. ... you may reasonably Suppose I feel uneasy about you, how you will do under particular Circumstances² and, what adds to more difficulty, a cold house. Try to favour yourself as much as possible, make yr Self as comfortable as you can with what i send you ... take good care of my Little Jere'h Boy,³ tell Ruc [Ruhamah] to be a good Girl to her mammy & if i return well, she wont loos anything in so doing. If we should send Letters home by way Boston we shall order them Left with Mrs. Cunningham. ... this from yr Loving Husband, untill Death parts us,

Noah Pease

A few days later, just before sailing, Noah wrote to his two adolescent children: the eldest child, son Sprowel; and daughter Ruhamah. Sprowel was then 17 and his sister, familiarly called Rucy, was almost 16:

Boston Nov. 25, 1794

Dear Son,

I hope before you receive these you are arrived safe home⁴ where you will indeavour to make the utmost progress in yr. learning. With due Reflection, consider your father informs you that if you behave well it will be an honour to you, strive to do well and be a comfort to your mommy, be good natur'd to yr little Brothers & Sisters, strive to watch against Sin

²This sounds as though his is aware that Hannah is pregnant: "peculiar circumstances."

³"Little Jere'h Boy" is Jeremiah Pease, then age 2, a name familiar to all Society members.

⁴Sprowel had been at sea with Capt. Abner Dunham, Noah's master on the *Ceres*. See Account Book entry for November 20, 1794, "wages for Sprowel."

and Guard yourself against speaking Bad words, remember that the best time to seak and Serve your Creator is in the days of your youth. Chase the better part and you never will Repent it in your dying hour and tho the world dispise or reproach you, they cannot hurt you, dear Child. My hearts desire and prayers to Almighty God is that you pay a strict attention to the Spirit of this letter as you are now almost arrived to the Age of manhood and will, if God Continues you in life, soon come on the Stage to act for your Self.

I have sent you Cloth for a Jackett with Mr. Mayhew's things.⁵ Hoping you will at all suitable weather go to meting and not as young people generally do, more to se than hear. So dear Child I conclude after wishing you health Happiness in the world and Eternal Peace in the world to come.

Yr. father,

Noah Pease

Having written to Sprowel, Noah turned his attention to daughter Ruhamah. She was a teen-ager, approaching the vulnerable years with no father around to guide her. Do not allow yourself to be enticed "beyound modisty," he wrote:

Boston

25 Nov'r 1794

Dear daughter,

I Now take my pen to address you on a Subject i hope you will not dispise and tho' you are out of my sight, yet not of my mind. Consider though you are young, you are old Enough to die. I hope you will behave yourself Discreet, Chast and Prudent and Strictly adhear to the Good Council and poiious [pious] Instructions of your dear mummy. Let not her instructions prove as seed sown by the wayside but Strive to make a good improvement on your pricious moments. Chase the better part in the morning of life and you will never repent it in yr Last and dying hours. Suffer no Person to delude or intice you beyound modisty. Remember your Charactor must Intirely owe its rise or fall to your good or ill behavior. Dear child, my hearts desire & prayer to God is for you all to live so that you may be accept'd in the day of our Lord. So dear child, hoping to Se you all in due time after wishing you all Happiness in life I remain your Loving & affectionate father till death,

Noah Pease

Shortly after Noah wrote these letters, the *Ceres* sailed. The voyage was a rough one with, as Noah described it, "Boisterous weather." Then, on the day before Christmas, within two days of France, the wind swung to the east, a headwind that stopped her progress. For two weeks, she made

⁵Which Mr. Mayhew we don't know, but he must have been a mariner going on the voyage and sending his "things" home.

little headway. On January 7th, she was captured by a French privateer, apparently assuming she was going to England. The French, former allies of the United States, were upset by America's intention to sign a treaty with England, ending the Revolution. They had joined the war with the understanding that there would be no treaty without their approval.⁶

The privateers forced Captain Donham plus his 2nd Mate (a Frenchman) and crew to leave the *Ceres*. Only First Mate Noah and an armed Frenchman were left on board to sail her to Brest. Or so the privateers thought. But Noah had hidden his son Chase, 13, the ship's cook, below decks.

With considerable difficulty in stormy seas, Noah and Chase brought the brig into Brest twenty-five days later. Brest was a disappointment with no buyers for their cargo. They sailed to Lorient. On March 10th, Noah wrote to Hannah:

Lorient, France March 10, 1795

Dear Wife

I imbrace this oppertunity being the first since we arrived in france to write. Hopping these will find you and the Children as well as they Have [found] me and our Son . . . as yet we have not Landed 10 dollars worth of Cargo. I Expect we shall git some of it, such as they Like to buy, on shore tomorrow. We found marketts dull at Brest where we first arrived to, but as bad as they was, it would bean much better than hear or anywhere we can hear of. In short, its dull times in France on acc't. of there being no hard money Circulating and as to their paper money its now going out at the heals [heels] veary fast. It has Sunk one Quarter Since we arived. Capt. Donham is almost Like a mad man to think our Voyage is not like to turn out half so well as he Expect'd, for I assure you he wants to git home as much as any of us. We Left Brest the 15th of February intending to go to a port called Rochell, but meeting with heavy Gails of wind ahead was forced in hear, and it was Lucky for our second mate for now he is at home. He found his wife and child well. He is an Excellent good man, he takes of great part of my Duty. By his nowing [knowing] ye Coast was the reason we ventured in hear.

50 sail came out of Brest with us, and the gail that we Escaped by coming in hear Cast away and dismasted many of the fleet. But our Vessell is one of an hundred or we should never have Lived through so many Distressing gails of wind. As a sailor, she beats 9 out of ten. We have bear

⁶It wasn't until more than a year later that France declared it would seize vessels bound for England. Noah's cargo and ship weren't confiscated. The privateer simply made certain she went to France and that the cargo was sold by the revolutionists.

fore [four] frigates at different times. There never was a single Deck Vessel Ever Load'd deeper to go to Europe in the winter than ours. If we could have Got into france a month sooner it would have made our Voyage much shorter and better for our owners.

I Should be veary Easy⁷ if we did not git home untill next August if i did not fear and have good reason to think you would suffer Long before that time.

Cousin Thos. Dunham, the Bearer of these Letters, if you could see him, can Give you a more full account of our Voyage than what is hear wrote. He Likewise said he would Let you have some Money or Goods if you wanted. This he offered of his own will. I take it veary Kind. Pray don't suffer if any body is willing to Let you have anything. If i had thot our Voyage would have bean so Long i would have spoke to Mr. Jarvis to Send you some money.⁸

I have had my health as well as if i had bean at home or Better. As to hardship, I can stand the Deck untill most of the Crew are beat but now i hope the worst is past. We have plenty of men and all i do is to keep them to work. It is not the fashion hear for mates to do much.

Chase is almost as big as i am. When we come to haul into the Dock, Chase and three of our hands must immediately be inoculated, for the small pox is veary brief⁹ in this place. i don't Let him go ashore for fear of taking it ye natural way. I think it a chance if we sell and git out of france before near May, 60 days i allow to git home in after we sail for home and dont be scared if we dont git home within 4 or 5 months from this day. The French do business veary slow.

So my Dear, i must Conclude hoping sooner or Later to return again, god willing, and find you all well is the Earnest prayer and sincere wish of yr. Loving & Affectionate husband, untill Death,

Noah Pease

[added in margin] Some vessels has bean hear six months. We shall sell some of our cargo veary well hear. Rice, soap & candles is veary good. Our 6000 pounds of sole Leather wont hardly fetch the first cost, oyl is in poor Demand.¹⁰ We Expect'd to git Brandy but it is 12/ per Gallon hear. The Vessel must come home in a lot of Ballast. Good Voyage or poor, we have able owners so we must not cast too many reflections.

If i had stay'd at home I am shure i should not Earn 7/ [shilling] per day. At the End i hope to have a Little money to receive.

Three days later, Noah wrote another letter. Cousin

⁷Easy had the meaning of "free from anxiety or worry." *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁸Mr. Jarvis is the owner of the *Ceres*.

⁹Brief had the meaning of prevalent, *Oxford English Dictionary*.

¹⁰Noah's account book lists the cargo. Total cost to investors was 3677 Pounds, a small fortune. The most expensive items were 153 casks of whale oil, valued at 720 Pounds, 350 barrels of beef, valued at 1050 Pounds, and sole leather valued at 575 Pounds.

Thomas Donham had not yet left, so Noah had time to tell her more. Many Donhams (Dunhams) lived on the Vineyard, but we don't think that Captain Abner and Cousin Thomas were among them. Hannah's father, Elijah Dunham, was a mariner and cooper; her mother was Sarah Vincent.

This second letter gives more details about the voyage to Europe and the capture as well as the economic conditions in France. Both Noah and Chase had invested in some items of the cargo. Chase had made a better choice than his father.

Lorient, France March 13, 1795

Dear wife

These Letters are sent you by our Kinsman Thomas Donham. I hope with Gods Blessing they will come safe to yr hands and find you and the children enjoying as good state of health as they Leave me and son.

I wrote you word in another letter [above] that it was bad Luck to us that we did not sell our Cargo in Brest, but Like the old saying, Go further and fare worse. The Capt. and owner when at Boston thot if the Vessell could only arrive in France safe there would be no doubt But we should find a Speedy and Ready markt for such a Cargo as ours; its bad for a man to git Greatly Disappointed that before flattered himself to great Success.

We where [were] unfortunate in our passage off, a great deal of Boisterous weather with much Rain. When in the Longitude of 13 d. West, that is only 2 days more with good wind we should got into France and Escaped the Easterly wind, for from the 24th of December to the 27th of January, they neaver veared four points from East in that time. We had fore [4] heavy Gails, three of them after Capt. Donham Left me [on January 7th, when they were captured]. When we got into Brest, it seem'd like a new world, tho the place was one of the dirtiest in all france.

This winter is Said to be the hardest that france has sean [seen] for many years past, yet the French was so Bold and interprizing as to Send out 25 sail of the Line about New Years day.¹¹ They were unlucky with two 74s [ships carrying 74 cannon] with a Leak, Sunk at Sea, most of peopel saved. One first Rate [vessel] Lost at the mouth of Brest. She got on a single and only Rock in ye harbour, but on the other hand they took rich prizes in such abundance that they hardly have room in Brest to anchor them, insomuch that Coffee is as Cheap hear for hard money as it is in Boston, also sugar & Cotton veary plenty etc etc.

All my fear after Capt Donham Left me [on January 7] was that if an English man [of] war Come athwart us that I should of Course be carried to England with the Vessel because the french had possession of the Brig. For me to be in England and the Capt. in france would took a Long time

¹¹War between England and France is near.

Before he might Known where to [have] gone for her, but it proved otherwise. After we was taken, we never saw, to our Knowledge, an English Cruiser but it Seemed as tho the ocion was covered with French frigates.

Tho. Donham admir'd veary much to se me in this part of the world and that it would not now surprize him to sea his Father.¹²

Bread is so scarce in this part of France that the whole town is at an allowance. I Expect it is by this time dear with you, for Since we got in, a Boston Capt. told us that when he Left it, that Flour was ten Dollars per Barrel at Boston December ye 14th. Mr. Donham will pay you for 8 lb Coffee I sold him at 18 p, viz 12/. I wish you had my 100 lb Coffee, i Brought out for my adventure, at home. Chase's half-Bot soap will Sell for good profit, three pound for a Crown Silver. We have 100 jerkins Butter, they wont Sell for more than the first cost. 350 bbl. Beef, dull at present. I sold Mr. Leonard Jervis of Boston 84 lb dumb [?] fish.

Last fall did not git my pay, if you sent an order to him [Mr. Jarvis, owner] he Doubtless would pay it, 22/6. I Cant tell whether we shall be ~~able~~ [crossed out] find a markett for all our Cargo hear or not. The Commissioners will talk one day of taking it all & the next day they's say they hant got hard money. We Expect soon to Know what they Intend. We think at present its most Likely that we shall try one port more, most Likely Nantz. I wish our Cargo had bean Rice flour.

I think its a Chance that Capt. Donham must stay and send the Vessell home. I hope that all things will finally turn more in our favour than what we Expect. The Charter of ye Vessell and mens wages is nearest 15 dollars per Day.¹³

Remember my Love to all inquiring friends, Especially our fathers & mothers, Brothers and Sisters. It Seems latterly to be the Natural Consequence that all Vessells that go to france make Long Voyages, so dont think it altogether so Strange that our Voyage is like to be Longer than we first Expected. So my Dear, I Conclude, hoping to Come and find you all well. Except of my sincear Love to you and our Children from your Loving husband untill Death. Noah Pease

[In the margin:] Tell little Jeremiah I hope his pappa will Come By and By.¹⁴

The cargo was selling very slowly. An entry on March 16th, three days after the above was written, in Noah's account book records the sale of 28 candles for one dollar, and an undisclosed amount of soap at two shillings per box. The purchasers were a "French Capt. & friend." Such incidental sales were hardly going to make the investors rich.

Two weeks later, Noah again wrote with more details

¹²This does not help us learn the relationship with Hannah's family.

¹³With all the delays at sea and ashore, it seems clear that the voyage will not be profitable.

¹⁴Jeremiah is now almost 3; Hannah is seven months pregnant. Noah makes no mention of it.

of the voyage into Brest with only Chase and the prizemaster as crew. The Ceres was only one of many prizes taken and the market was flooded with goods. Complicating matters was the fact that sellers did not want paper money, of no value except in France.

Penbeif on Nantz River March 27, 1795

Dear wife,
hoping these may come safe to yr hand and find you & our children well. I wrote you 2 Letters [printed above] by way of Philadel that we ware taken January 7th, that Capt and second mate, all the people taken, [were] carried into Brest, out the Vessell, only Chase and myself Left to work the Vessell for 25 days. One frenchman was all that I had to do anything during that times. Boisterous Gales wind, for want of wood out the hole [hold?] no fire for 7 days to cook anything, inexpressable was my task, up night and Day, Arrived at Brest the 29th January. After Laying some time, find our Cargo would not sell for any thing but paper mony, we sail for Rochell [to the south] 15th february, hard Gales of wind putt us into Lorient, sold some trifles. Sail from thence after Laying there more than a month. Arrived here Last night. We hear that our Cargo will do much Better at Nantz than any Where. We hope to find a Good & Speedy markett.

Dont be uneasy if we dont git home untill September, tho we Expect to be at home in July, Last part.

The Vessell [that will take this letter] is Gitting under way, that is Bound to Boston. We are all well & harty as Bucks tho we now begin to think hard about home. When at Brest, unhappy i Could never find any Vessell Bound to any part america during 18 Days we Lay there.

Capt. Donham has been veary unwell sometime past, took a bad Cold at Brest. It Rain'd 15 Days Sucessively. His illness was the most half owing to his finding poor marketts. He is now Veary well as is all the Crew. You would be Surprized to se how Chase has Grown. He behaved when I was Left alone, Capt. & all out the Vessell, more Like an officer than a Cook. It was happy i had him with me. i hid him ere they'd took him out too. We had 61 days passage from Boston to Brest. The prize master Lost the Day of the month at Sea. i had a hard task to make him own he was wrong. We had no observation for Eight Days before we got to Brest

In Great hast, I Remain your Loving and affectionate husband untill Death,

Noah Pease

My Love to all friends. i hope about 3 months to se you all. It Depends on Success in selling our Cargo. Capt. Donham is uneasy enough, wants to be home

[On reverse:] The two Letters wrote by way of Philadephia are inclosed in Mr. Jarvis, our owners, Letter. I shall write at all times.

On April 21st, Noah described how seaman Ansell Rickard was discharged and son Chase was promoted to take his place. The account book tells how the increase in Chase's wages will be handled:

April 21, 1795: This day discharged Ansell Rickard in Consequence of which it is agreed between Capt. Abner Donham and Noah Pease that Chase shall take Rickard's place and have 16 Dollars per month untill we arrive and are discharged at Boston and upon settlement the one half of Extra wages to Capt. Donham & the other to Chase or his father.¹⁵

An entry on May 3rd at Nantes lists the weight of the unsold boxes of candles and soap with this remark: "Last weight, weigh'd 3 May Nantes." It seems likely, then, that the *Ceres* left France for Boston early in May.

As Noah sailed, Hannah was giving birth to their eighth child, Abner. Born May 7, 1795, he apparently was named for Hannah's brother. We have no details on the return voyage. The first mention of Boston in Noah's account books is July 21, 1795, when Chase's wages were divided:

Capt. Abner Donham, To- half Chase's Extra wages which is at 8 Dollar per month, 3 months @ 4\$ -- \$12.00.

Noah bought two handkerchiefs on August 1st in Boston, perhaps to take home to Hannah or his daughters. He seems to have gone to Edgartown right away because in August he "delivered to Mr. Elijah Dunham, 8 lb. butter." Elijah was Hannah's father.

Shortly after that, Noah left the brig *Ceres*. She was chartered to another group and Noah was not signed on. On August 22nd, Noah recorded that son Sprowel received from owner Jarvis nearly two Pounds "on my acct at Boston." September 16th, he wrote: "Last time to go in ye Brig."¹⁶

By the middle of November, Noah was in Boston, receiving from Mr. Jarvis \$92.50 as "wages for crew" of his new vessel, the schooner *Angelica*, sailing between New York and St. Simons Island, Georgia. Noah is First Mate or Captain, we are not told which. St. Simons was a familiar port of call for Vineyard mariners.

Until now, there had been no indication of any serious

¹⁵It isn't clear why Captain Donham would get half of the increased wages. Kickback?

¹⁶In a later letter we learn that he sailed the brig back to New York before leaving her.

illness in the family. Then, March 18th, while the *Angelica* was at St. Simons, her cargo stowed, awaiting a fair wind to return to New York, an incoming vessel sailed past, announcing it carried news from Edgartown. Once the vessel anchored, Noah went aboard. He described the event to Hannah:

... Which you may Suppose most Greatly Suprized me when Capt. Norton pass'd us at St. Simons. I was Laying at anchor. Capt. Cleavland took the trumpett from Capt. Norton, asked me how i did etc. I ask'd him what news at old town [Edgartown], he answered me in a Gloom Like tone -- none veary Good for you, Cap't Pease. They came to anchor near us and i immediatly went on Board him.

Noah was handed a letter from Hannah. He described his reaction in this letter, written early in April, after he had arrived in New York, "so near home" yet without further news:

New York, April 1796 [no day given]

Dear wife,

I Rec'd your Letter at St. Simons by Capt. Cleavland on the 18th March which give the Malloncoly account of our Dear Daughter and son being Dangerously Sick and also about the unhappy accident of Jeremiah Cutting himself -- O my Dear I have pray'd to almighty God that their Sickness might not be unto Death. What more can an affectionate Father do when absent and at a Distance. Surely no one Knows but myself what Sorrowful heart aking [aching] fealing I have undergone Ever since I first saw Capt. Cleavland and, having but Little hope by his acc't, of Ever Seeing them again in this world. When they arrived at St. Simons, we were Loaded, Laying only for a wind to Come out. We Lay 10 Days there, wind Bound after they arrived and now, tho so near home, yet I cannot hear nor See any person that Can give the Least account of you. I travel the Streets and Search Diligently, as often as possible, to se if possible i might find some one that has Come from the Vineyard -- yet no one can i se.

[No more poignant lines appear in the collection than these describing this anxious Edgartown father, stuck in New York unloading his cargo, wandering the streets looking for someone from the Vineyard who might have news of his sick children. "Yet," he wrote to Hannah, "no one can i se."]

Capt. Silas Daggett Left this City the Day before i arrived.¹⁷ I have got out but Little part of my Disagreeable Cargo. Expect to git Rid of it all this week and what is to be done with the Vessell after her Cargo is out I Cannot tell. Murray & Mumford [charterers] says they must write to Mr. Jervis [owner] and git an answer from him before they can tell what is to be Done, that is Whether She's to be sold or Cartered [chartered] out or Return to Boston. I Expect it will be Known in the Course of ten Days.

If i Could hear that our Children ware all well then, if they Chose for

¹⁷Captain Daggett ran a packet between the Vineyard and New York.

me to go an agreeable Voyage, in that Case I should be Louth to Leave so Good a Vessell, as it is not Every Day that a man can git a Vessell, but Should i not hear nothing from home I shall, if the Vessell is not to Return to Boston, Come home soon as i am Discharged.

I am veary impatient and anciously waiting with hopes to se or hear some way or other from you and Greatly fear with all the nuse [news?] will one Day be heavy. I desire to prepare for what Ever Event God in his providence sees fit to call me unto.

Sprowel¹⁸ is well at present and gives his Love to you all. So my Dear I must Conclude hoping to se you before it be Long. This from your Loving husband untill Death. Noah Pease.

P.S. our Passage from York to St. Simons [will take] 17 Days, shall send you some money the first opportunity.

[On the reverse:] Capt Marchant is veary well.

Noah had no way of knowing it, but on April 9th, just about when he was writing that letter, his daughter Ruhamah, 17, died. Nine days later, April 18th, his son Harrison, 12, died. Hannah, home without her husband, buried two children aided only by friends and relatives.

Unknowingly, the anxious father wandered the streets of New York, wondering. He finally completed unloading what he called his "Disagreeable cargo." April 15th, he recorded these expenses:

| | |
|---|--------|
| Cash paid for Labour gitting out Timber | \$7.50 |
| 1 1/2 gallon Rum for unloading | 3.00 |
| Cash paid for Clearing out the hold | .50 |
| Cash paid the Wharfinger for one day | .50 |
| Cash paid Governer's Wharf, 3 Days and half | 1.90 |

The following day, still unaware of what had happened in Edgartown, he wrote to Hannah:

New York April 16, 1796

Dear wife,

I finish'd Discharging my Disagreeable Cargo on ye 14th I now wate to have an anser from my owners. What to do with the Vessell. If she is sold or Carter'd out, I shall soon Leave her and Come home on acc't of my Poor, sick Children. Otherwys, I should if I might Still keep in her, go another Voyage. If I am ordered for Boston then I shall not Leave her untill I Carry her their and Stop to See you by the way.

I hope you will find soome friends to Supply you in your Distress and Difficulty, when Capt. J. [James] Coffin Comes¹⁹ I shall send some money

¹⁸Sprowel, their eldest son, is in New York looking for a berth on a vessel.

¹⁹Captain Coffin may be another packet master sailing regularly to N.Y. from the Island.

in a Chance if you git this Letter Before it gits to Boston. Sprowel is well. There's no Danger of his staying to sail out this port. He does not Like York well Enough. Capt. Coffin has been hear two Days, Capt. Marchant is well & some what offended that his Good wife did not write at St. Simons to him.

I must now turn my Thoughts towards my Dear Daughter, My Dear Child, I hope to see you before Long. You can best Determine your own mind and fealing Relative to your futer happenings. Cease not my Dearest Child to Strive to make your pease with your Creator and may God almighty Grant that your Sickness may not be unto Death but to the Glory of his power in your Recovery. This my Dear Child is the Earnest Desire and prayer of yr affectionate father whose moments wateing hear in this place is tedious to bear.

My Love to you, my Dear wife & Children and all friends, this from yr Loving husband,

Noah Pease

A week later, he seems to feel the need to explain to Hannah why he hasn't been able to travel to Edgartown. Of course, he still doesn't know that the children have died:

New York April 23, 1796

Dear wife,

I have wrote you two letters before this one by Boston Post, another by one of my hands Bound home, that the owner Mr. Jervis had not sent Murry & Mumford [charterers] any orders since I sail'd from York last winter [about] what to do with the Vessell When I should Return from Georgia. Therefore, you wont think it so Strange that I am laying here in Suspence. I am more affraid that it will be hard for me to Leave the Vessell and come off honorable, than I am of not being invited to go some other Voyage in her again.

The Custom of York is different from that of Boston for Chartering -- When any man in York Charters a Vessell they Chose for the former master to go again, unless he is a bad man. They further say its attended often with bad Consequences to Keep on Shifting Masters from one Vessell to another -- as to Boston you know something about it by the Brig Ceres that I got out of here by reason of her being Charter'd. I think at present there is not much Reason to Suppose that the *Angelica* will be. The Confusion in Congress about the treaty with England has turned the Course of Business this week Veary much.²⁰ Since I began to write, Mr. Jervis has come from Boston. Yesterday, when Capt. Coffin was about to come away [to return to Edgartown], Mr. Jervis told me he had agreed upon price for the Vessell and I Really Expect'd her to be sold to Day. But

²⁰At the moment, Congress was debating whether to approve funds to implement the treaty with England that officially ended the Revolution.

they ware Shuffling Sort of fellows after all. Coneluck [*prospective buyer?*] not to have her which is Greatly to my Disappointment. Had i nown it Should sent money by Capt. Coffin and many other things, but now Mr. Jervis says I must stay to, so if he Dont Sell hear then to Carry her to Boston. Impatiently i wate the Event, Shall Come home soon as possible. None But myself Knows how much I want to se you all. I am well & Sprowel also. Yours in hast

Noah Pease

[*On the reverse side, unaware that the children have died, he added:*]

I have many things to write but unexpected time fails. None knows how much i want to se Rusey [Ruhamah] in particular -- I hope you got my last Letter wrote a week ago. Pray Borrow money of some friend untill I Come, Which I hope wont be Long.

A week after writing, he learned his two children were dead. The news came in a letter from Hannah written April 26, 1796. Much of the letter seems to have been penned by someone other than Hannah. Its script is flowing, much more elegant than her signature. Furthermore, in the first paragraph space was left for Ruhamah's name, as though the penman was unsure of its spelling.²¹ The name was inserted later in a different hand, probably Hannah's. The wording is stilted, not like that of a grieving mother, more like a reassuring minister's.²² Their loss, the letter says, could have been much greater:

April 26, 1796.

My dear and affectionate Husband & Child,²³

As Striking and affecting as the Catestrophe which now offers itself to your View may appear, and truely it is affecting -- yet from a Sence that God has shewed mercy in the Midst of great affliction I hope you will not be inconsolable since it would not have been strange had you and I been called ere before this Moment to mourn and lalment [*sic*] the Loss of four, as we mourn the Loss of a loving and dutiful Daughter and an affectionate Son. Ruhamah [*name inserted in another hand*] & Harrison, whom you and I affectionatly and tenderly loved, are no more. She departed this life the 9th of, he the 18th of, the present Month, after a Mortal illness of some Weeks, which, or some such like Sickness, Chase & Abner at this Time Labour under. Isaiah has been under the same Infirmary But he is now fully recovered. They, it is expected, are in a hopeful Way.²⁴

²¹Ruhamah is a Donham family name. A Ruhamah Donham married Thomas Coffin, Jr.

²²Of course, we have few examples of Hannah's writing to compare to.

²³The child is Sprowel, who is in New York looking for a berth on a vessel.

²⁴She does not mention Jeremiah, who is now four years old.

Oh, the Awful hand of God in [*crossed out*] experienced in that Melancholly and Solemn Event of his High Providence. But oh the Mercy in the Meantime which Visibly discovered itself to me, the Bereaved Parent, & surviving Children thro' the reaching out the same hand that gave the Mortal Blow toward the raising up the remaining sick & the healing the wounds which would fain have depriv'd us of three more of our dearly beloved. . . . the Mercy of God has further appeared in his so disposing all our Friends & Neighbours -- that they have been attentive to me and us all thro' the Whole of our Troubles & Difficulties beyond my Power to relate. Their Kindness, their Humanity & Christian Spirit, I never can, I never shall forget.

The letter then addresses Hannah's finances. Noah has often told her to make herself as comfortable as she can, to take any assistance offered. The money he sent by Captain Coffin arrived:

I have made out Comfortably for Money & other Necessaries from the first -- Besides it has afforded me great Consolation, receiving the Am't. yesterday by Capt. James Coffin of your & our beloved Son Sprowel's safe arrival in N. York. Hope by the Blessing of God shall soon see you but I think I can patiently Wait his own Time. Rec'd from Capt. Coffin 1/2 Bu Flour, 1/2 goes to Capt. Marchant, whose Wife & Friends are Generally well -- our Friends & Relatives, except our own in Particular Family, are in as Good Health as is Usual for them & all of whom are happy in hearing of your wellfaire & condole with us the Loss of our deceased Children --

Time would fail me in recounting every Intervening Circumstance, [*beginning here the handwriting changes*] shall therefore conclude for this Time after having recommending ourselves to the keeping and Protection of him who is able to keep us & finally to present us happy in his holy Presence in the Regions of the Blessed saviour, which of his Infinite mercy in Christ I pray him mercifully to Grant --

Hannah Pease

To reassure Noah that she has everything under control and that there is no need for him not to sail to Georgia, if his orders are for that, she adds:

P.S. I have made out for a Comfortable Living as above & can, I trust, make out much Longer.

Her reassurances notwithstanding, Captain Noah did return to Edgartown. An account book entry May 4th reads, "Cash for permitt to sail for Boston at New York -- \$8.64." On another page: "Cash paid Cornelius for wages, May 23, 1796, at Edgarton." May 24, this entry: "Cash brought from

Boston -- \$150 and 100 Crowns -- [total] \$260." It seems he stopped briefly while sailing to Boston and then got off for a longer stay when the boat returned to New York.

On May 27th, he wrote from Edgartown to son Sprowel, who was now sailing out of Boston on the Brig *Eliza*, commanded by Noah's former master, Capt. Donham. Sprowel is now 20 years old.

Edgarton²⁵ May 27, 1796

Dear Son,

These Comes with our Sincere Love and good wishes for your welfare health & happiness & wishing you a Prosperous and a agreeable Voyage and Safe Return. Your Dear aunts, Serena and Rachel, are Both Dead and left your poor old Grand Dada and G. mamma to go Sorrowing the Remaining part of there Last Days.²⁶ Last tuesday I went to see them, an Effecting Sene Beyond measure, you can Better imagine than my pen can discribe to you. -- Alas, But a few months past, your Dear Sister & Brother, with your two aunts in the Bloom and Vigor of Life -- now mouldering in the Dust.

My Dear Child think on human frailty, consider yourself as Liable every Day as those just gone Before us. Your mother has been Veary Sick after we Left the Vinyard.²⁷ Under the Doctor's hands several Days. Upon my arrival, found her Getting Better. She is now so well as to be about house. Yr aunt Sally is a good Deal unwell. I hope Nothing more than a Great Cold. Pray take Good Care of yr Self Dont Sleep on Deck nor work in the Rain. In hast yr Loving and Affectionate father,

Noah Pease

On May 30, 1796, under the heading, "Cash paid for Sundry articles," Noah closed the sad story with this entry in his account book:

Cash paid Frank Meader for 2 Coffins: \$5.66.

Several months later, Captain Noah returned to sea on the brig *Eliza* with Captain Donham. He wrote Hannah from Baltimore that they had sailed from Tarpaulin Cove October 28, 1796.²⁸ Hannah is at home with four children: Isaiah, 10; Fanny, 7; Jeremiah, 4; and baby Abner, 18 months. The other sons, Sprowel and Chase, are at sea, Chase being with his father aboard the *Eliza*:

²⁵ Noah never learns to spell Edgartown correctly.

²⁶ Serena, 22, and Rachel, 28, Pease, Noah's unmarried sisters, died of "Nervous fever" within days of each other. The grandparents he mentions are Seth and Sarah (Chase) Dunham.

²⁷ This suggests that he had stopped briefly on the way to Boston and now has returned.

²⁸ Vessels regularly waited in Tarpaulin Cove for favorable wind and tide.

Baltimore, Novem'r 15th 1796

Dear wife

I imbrace this opportunity by Capt. Marchant to let you know that Chase and myself are well at present. We Sail'd from Turpulin [sic] Cove Friday 28th Oct. Had a pleasant Passage as to the weather untill ~~Saturday~~ [crossed out] Tuesday, Nov. first, off Cape Virginia having got a Pilot on Board before we made ye Land in ye afternoon. Calm. Came to anchor in 8 fathoms at sunsett. Suddenly gusty wind NW, immediately tryd to purchase our anchor, got a Stopper from ye topsail sheet Bits to sheet ye Cable, carried them over our heads and almost spoilt our windless. After much difficulty up'd the anchor, with another [anchor] of 5 or 6 cwt hanging to it. We arrivied at Baltimore on ye 7th Instant. Find Business veary dull. The Vessell is advertized for Sale, freight or Charter as is a great many. Only one man as yet has even talk'd of Buying and him unceertain. If ye Vessell is not sold we shall if Possible to git freight to Boston. Expect it will take some time to git full freight. If Capt. Hatch could [have] given us an incorugement that he would stop at Homes Hole i would have sent a barrel flour, worth from 9 1/2 to 10 dollars, Corn is not Brought to markett but little as yet. Many of the coasters from different parts tell us that this year has been the best almost ever known for Corn, but not so good for wheat and that the price talk'd is about 3/6 LM. Our proffes'd Cook Run off and left us yesterday. Capt. Denis Pease is hear, well at present. R. Bunker was hear 2 week ago. Shall write at oppertunity.

Give my respects to all friends. Capt. Donham is well but thinks he shall not write untill he knows what will be done with the Vessell.²⁹ I dont Expect she will sell hear. You must not Look for us much Short of 30 Days from this, if we come back in the Brig *Dolly*

I hope these will find you and our Children in better health than i left you. This From your Loving Husband untill Death

Noah Pease

P.S. As to a freight for Europe we see no prospect.

[On the reverse side:] As to Mr. Zep'h. Butler's Bread, etc., I Shew'd Capt. Donham the order from Mr. Butler. It Seems that young Zeph'h Carried out the 4 barrels Bread for a man to sell on Commission and Capt. Donham had Return'd it to the owner at Boston. Intend to told [sic] Mr. Butler when at our house how about the affair.³⁰

N. Pease

We don't know how much longer Noah continued going to sea, but we know he was in Edgartown in 1798. One account book entry that year lists items he bought for the sloop *Swallow* for which he seemed to be caretaker.

²⁹ The remark suggests that Captain Donham was an Edgartown man, but we don't know.

³⁰ Probably Zephaniah Butler of Edgartown, who had a son of same name.

The account books also show he has gone back to shoemaking.³¹ The Society's three account books are jammed with shoe and boot orders. In one, he uses two pages to list his customers and prices paid for shoes in the 22 months from July 1798 to April 1800. The list shows 301 pairs. The books run to 1818 and several entries that year state: "Acc't carried to new book." We don't have the new book, but clearly he stuck to his shoemaker's last for years, perhaps until he died.

Noah's next letter is dated July 8, 1806, and addressed only to "Dear Son." He doesn't identify the son. He tells about building a house, perhaps the one at the corner of Main and South Summer street in Edgartown. That house, often called the "Yellow House," is usually attributed to son Chase, but it seems likely it was built by Noah. Earlier that year, Noah had bought a lot from Chase, probably where he built this house, which was only one story originally. Twenty-four years later, in 1830, he sold the land and the house to son Isaiah, then Sheriff of Dukes County, "together with all the real and personal property" he owned. The letter also describes a total eclipse of the sun and, as usual, some local gossip:

Edgarton, July 8th, 1806

Dear Son,

These with our affections for you, hoping these may find you well as we all are at present thanks to our Great preserver for the same. Most of all remarkable occurrences since you left us are Stated in your Brother's Letter. We have had very little rain since you sail'd but only one considerable which was two days after the Total Eclipse of the Sun at which time it fell very fast for 15 or 20 minutes when it poured in under our sils & seem'd to threaten Danger for our Chimneys foundation tho none was sustained but i have taken Caution by Carrying in several Loads Sand round the foundation which consists of at Least 5 or 6 Tons of Stone. The Eclipse for some minutes was so Dark that Mr. Merry Could not See to lay his Brick surely it Carried a Gloomy Appearance.

Mr. Tho's Stuart's House is Greatly disturbed when they find their Daughter so fond of Ezra C: and Since Thomas Jnr. has got home you may Depend high words & hard Speeches. Mr. Stuart has gone so far as to forbid his Daughter Vinson Ever Entering his house again if She has him

³¹It was a family trade. Sons Jeremiah and Isaiah were also shoemakers. In a deed dated May 16, 1806, Noah is described as "cordwainer."

& you may Depend She is fond of his Company for She takes walks out to that Quarter & so falls in with him for several Sundays. It has been Expected to see them published.³² Mr. [Thomas] Swift is published to Susan Mayhew. It is reported old Mr. Wm. Vinson's Children have fastened him out for Staying so Long or late in the night at the House of Kates & many think it true.³³

I have hither too made out to attend the mason & Carpenters with Jere's help but Like yourselves when in ye heith [?] fishing always weary when night. Two days after Mr. Randal & Jo Huxford came to work it was favourable for me that John Smith took away Charles, as less Boys answered for me. If i can Keep the Carpenters all this week, which is hard, as Dr. Wheldon is Constantly doging after Randal to work for T. Dagget on C-- [credit] to pay Capt. Daggett an old reareage [arrears?] I told Randle i Could as well pay in promises as Dr. Whelden.

Your aff'ate father Noah Pease

[on the reverse:] A Letter from Mr. Fallows states that Sally Has Lost her oldest & youngest Child within few days of each other. Freeman Norton's Girl is Veary ill, Cant Live many Days. Mrs. Arey is not much time for the world, fails, is worse since i began to write.³⁴

The following spring we learn from one of the account books that Noah's daughter, Fanny, is ill. In March 1807 there is this: "Medicine and attendance of Fanny \$1.75." The bill was paid by Noah making shoes for Dr. Samuel Wheldon. Fanny, 18, continues to be ill for months.

Most of the remaining letters were written to Isaiah. Whether that means that he was his father's favorite or simply that his letters are the ones that have survived, we cannot tell. We do know that Isaiah received all Noah's property, as mentioned above, when he bought the house. Of the four living sons, Jeremiah is still in Edgartown, as is Abner, so there would be no letters to them. Chase, like Isaiah, is at sea, and married to Hannah Coffin, but there are no letters to him. The surviving letters make it clear that the father was very fond of Isaiah.

The next letter was carried to Isaiah in Boston, home port of the sloop *Eleanor*, by Grafton Norton. Isaiah is fishing

³² Meaning, expected to see them engaged.

³³ Does any member know who Kate was?

³⁴ Mrs. Arey lived until January 1807. Reverend Thaxter wrote at her death: "Anna Arey, Widow of Elijah Arey. She had been confined to her bed for about 24 years in which Time She had Three Sons (not at one Birth) all of them large healthy and are now living. . ." Her son Heman married the widow of Thaxter's son Joseph, two years later.

on the sloop under Captain Osborn:

September 23, 1807 Favor Grafton Norton

Dear Son

We rec'd yours by Mr. Crosby on ye 19th of this month & find what I had apprehended came to pass, Viz that you had veary bad weather etc. I wrote by Capt. Ripley that yr Mother & Fanny were Sick. Since that Fanny has been worse for 10 Days, veary Sick so that ye Doc'r paid Constant attendance, some times twice a day. Your mamma is well almost now as common. Fanny is now to all appearance much better so that she walks about the room.

Jere & A D Pease are well.³⁵ Capt. Silas Butler's family have had much Sickness this summer. they are all much better -- on Sept. 16th at 7 AM, Simon Porrage at his house died & the same day at 4 PM Louisa Porrage or Vinson went away to Ama'h [Amaziah?] Fisher and other Houses in Queue of provisions for her Children. Soon after Sunset, a fire was Discovered. Soon found it to be Louisa's House. All of a Sudden every part was in a flame so that it was impossible for any one to git into the House to Even git the 4 Children who were all Burnt to Death. What seems a mistry is how the house should take fire, as she said [she] left only a Little [fire] with a Kittle Turned over it.³⁶

The Hors' [?], Capt. Hors of Bedford, are come on & Seem Determined to Disturb Capt. Kelley. They Lay Claim & say they will spend 30,000\$ or have their right in the Land where Kelly's House Stands from the shore to Pease point road. In that, Mr. Jo Holly & others may see Difficulty.

I am veary anxious for yr return from Boston Especially as we are all but standing still for want of sole Leather. If time, go see Mr. Canterbury, try to find if you can find good sole Leather. We wish for such as i had this summer.

If your money for ye fish is not payable in Boston then try Capt. Ripley & see if he cannot Help you to some, perhaps he might be your security to Mr. Canterbury or some one Else where you might find Sole Leather. As you know there is sometimes a great odds in Choseing for ones Self. It would be a pitty to come away without Leather, for you need not fear if you want work, there is a great many shoes lately call'd for & a Number of Boots. I tell them they must wait untill you come. Mrs. Luce is veary Low. Mr. Coffin & wife went up Last Sunday to see her. Richard stay'd at home several weeks on her acc't. In much hast I am your affect. father,

Noah Pease

A week later, Noah again wrote to Isaiah. His letter is filled with details of happenings. Another siege of poor health has taken over. Both Hannah and Jeremiah have been ill.

³⁵A strange, formal way to refer to a son: A. D. Pease.

³⁶There seems to be no mention of this tragedy in any town or church records. Can it be that this is the only surviving record?

"Our house has been a Hospittal," he writes. Fanny, the ailing daughter, has recovered enough to act as nurse to her mother and brother, but has now become seriously ill herself, requiring frequent visits by Dr. Wheldon. Gale winds bring problems to Chase, his other mariner son. The leather supply still needs attention and he continues to ask Isaiah to buy some:

October 3, 1807

Dear Son,

Hoping before you receive this you are Safe anchored at Boston. Our House has been a Hospittal for more than a month. All have been Sick Except Abner. Fanny, while her Mother & Jere were sick, did Exert her Self beyound her Strenght as she had so lately recovered from her first sick turn (for want of Help). For about 10 days we thought nothing more of her than a Bad Cold, finding it otherways immediately Call'd Dr. Wheldon who had given Constant Attendance two three times a day for more than 3 weeks on Fanny. At first, the Billerous feavour for 15 Days. When that ceased, Dr. Wheldon & yr Mother thought her in a fare way to git about soon, but soon our Hopes Vanished Like a Dreem. Another feavour took place, Call'd the intermitting Nervous feavour, that was worse than the first & soon produced such -----[?] appearances as Threatened a final Dissolution to her, ever dear & beloved to us all, Especially to your Broken hearted mother. 48 hours ago Dr. Wheldon Seemed to Labour under Extreme Anxiety for fear that all his Labour & attendance would prove in Vain but Thanks to Almighty God this Day there is much more favourable appearances. Her feavour has mostly left her. She has had veary Little Since, for 10 Days past, which made it require two or three to attend her all the time. 'Tis well that yr mother holds out as yet to attend her. All our friends, which are many more than we expected, have given us great releaf or Else we must have Sunk under our Burden. Especially Mrs. Jon'a Fisher's family at all Times Night & Day. --

Chase in the gale yesterday afternoon got to anchor under Nantuck't Clift, Mast Sprung, Jib split etc. At Sunrise today weigh'd & got to anchor of Cape Poge where he now rides, both anchors ahead. They are going to Come in to repair etc., all ye Crew are well.³⁷ Capt. Crosby arrived today -- Capt. Trott [?] not arrived hear yet as we know of. Resolution got in yesterday morning Some or nearly all sick. We were veary anxious for you when the Gale Came on, as we Knew you were nigh to Boston Bay, allways dreaded with an Easterly wind etc.

Noah Pease

[Reverse side:] I have wrote you one or two Letters to be Lodged with Capt. Ripley and stated how well it would be if you Could git money paid

³⁷We don't know much about Chase except that he's a mariner. Noah says little about him in his letters to Isaiah.

you in Boston as to Buy ye Leather while you are in Boston. In Sept'r I had 100 lbs sole Leather by Capt. Ephraim in B. but shoes not selling fast Enough & havy Expenses in this Sickness I had not the money on hand as I Would have sent for some Calf Skins, neath Leather may be had on reasonable Terms or Mr. Peleg Maccy (on C--) [Credit] who has much improved in that kind. There will be many Seaman Boots wanted, a Number already Engaged for you. See if Capt. Ripley Cannot Help you to money as you know how hard 'tis giting Leather from Boston. Should it be possible as above apply to Mr. Boslers timely, apply to J. Cantaberry for such of Leather as he Sent me this June. That was Excellent, good & seasoned, two Shoe ----- wilson's[?] Cast Steal, 1 Groos Good awls. Jere says these here are all Iron ones. Jere has got a machine for print false stiches which adds Greatly to Expedition etc.³⁸

Hoping this may find you well and that Fanny may recover is the desire of yr affectionate Father,

Noah Pease

[Added:] Sunday Morning Oct'r 4th. This morning Fanny rather better than yesterday. Dr. still Speaks favourable of her. Chase going off to Carry another Jibb & coming in to ye harbour. Mr. Fisher³⁹ & myself uneasy for fear ye did not make the Land timely before it Come on thick the Day the storm was.

yours, etc. N.P.

Three days after Noah wrote that letter, Fanny died. We have no letters describing the grief it must have brought, especially to Hannah. Her family now consists of only males: Chase, 26; Isaiah, 21; Jeremiah, 15; and Abner, 12. Both daughters have died. Only Chase is married.

Work continues on the new house. In April 1808, Noah wrote in his account book: "Three days work on my house, 5 bundles lath, etc." The workman was Joseph Randall, who was mentioned in a previous letter. Randall was paid in credits against what he owed Noah for shoes and boots.

Life in Edgartown was not without turmoil. In 1809, Noah wrote to Isaiah, then at the Straits of Belle Isle, Newfoundland, aboard the fishing schooner *Sally*. The letter details a series of events involving a schooner owned by Capt. Thomas Milton of Edgartown. Joseph Thaxter, son of Reverend Thaxter of the Congregational church, is mentioned. From this distance it is impossible to understand what provoked the

disagreement, which led to violence:

Edgarton June 5, 1809

Dear Son,

These serve to let you know we are all well & since you sail'd but few Vessells have been here for ye streights [Straits of Belle Isle]. Jere [Jeremiah] has sold all his Clambs[?]. Walter Butler is summon'd to Boston and Freeman Norton who we Suppose had sail'd before the Sumons Came, John Gray summon'd to give Evidence for ye English Schooner. About 25th May. [Capt. Thomas] Milton's Little Schooner arrived at Nantucket. They on their outter passage carried away main mt [mast] & booms so could not fetch St. Barts ----- [word illegible]. They were obliged to go to N. Providence. The Collector said they could not be Entered according to Law, tho it was provable [probable?] they might after the 10th June. They were advised to push out & keep out the way untill the time Expired.⁴⁰

They took out all but about 200 bls salt & run to Miskequett & Lay there, but some will always Troable Israel. Tim Pease, John Gray & Seth Donham went to Nantucket, saw the vessell & when at Nantucket they began in Threats to Talk & some high words ensued. Then Pease went to the Collector but he was at Boston & the Deputy was too near akin to Capt. Fisher. By this time near 50 men appeared with Drum & fife. Dick's house[?] surrounded. Wm Kelley Enterferred or they would been Broken heads. Then they came home & made a formal Complaint to our Coll'r who commissioned Dr. Whelden and the affores'd 3, together with Mors [?] & poor Cortney[?], & persued the schooner, who were apprized of it. They spent a Day in Looking & returned of course much Chagrined.⁴¹ Jo Thaxter with some others went Down to see what the News was etc. [from] Sheriff Cooke. They met at Jo Holleys Shop. Jo said he did not think much of them for going after a poor Little Schn'r -- high words sooner spoke than Blows followed. Cooke struck Jo & Jo returned the Compliment. Kelley came up & held Jo. It was with Difficulty that they got the Knott unclinch'd. By Kelley's holding Jo, Give Cooke a Chance to Strike & pound him more than otherwise. Jo said he would fight all Cook's party if they would come one at a time.

yours affect, my respects to you all,

Noah Pease

[on the reverse]: By a rotten plank in the Nancy's Deck under the Bowsprit, Leonard Lost his Deck Load. Mary Jernagan is veary Sick. They are in hopes she is better. 'Tis hard to persuade Jo T. from going to Law, such a fracas was very Disagreeable to his Father [Reverend Thaxter].

N. Pease

⁴⁰The two places mentioned are in the Lesser Antille and The Bahamas, a long trip for a "little schooner."

⁴¹This is a confused paragraph. If any member can suggest changes, please do.

³⁸Jeremiah, only 15, is obviously already a skilled cordwainer, as is Isaiah.

³⁹It is impossible to tell whether Noah is writing "Mr." Fisher or "Mrs." Fisher.

As yet they Cannot find the Little Schooner, if they do it would be bad on Milton's acct. Jere has got all his pay. Mrs. Fisher says they had not time to write. They are all well, as this was unexpected. They Landed Just at Sun rise and got immeidately underway, Viz. this scooner.⁴² Mrs. Osborn is well.

After this letter, there is a gap of nearly three years, during which Isaiah married Polly Luce of Tisbury. Chase and his wife now have a second child, Harrison, named after Chase's brother, who died in 1796. The next letter was to Isaiah, now aboard the sloop *Emily* at Charleston, South Carolina. Noah tells him about a very stormy winter and of several marine disasters, one involving some Irish immigrants, another with a dispute over payment for a burial:

January 29, 1812

Dear Son,

Hoping these through Divine mercy may find you well. Your mother for 20 Days past has been veary unwell, took a bad Cold & has had a bad Cough, but is now almost Recovered. Your Grandmother has been Sick for 15 Days. Lydia F. stayed with her a week, had a hard task with her & --
----- [two unclear words]. She still remains ill. For Several Days. G. [Grand] Dada Don'm [Donham] sick & is now too unwell to go out Doors. Abner & John Vinson (who is one the best Boys you Ever Saw) are Repeatedly attending them. In meanwhile it is Extreme Cold & that Repeatly. There has been 8 heavy Snows & 3 light ones Since the 14th of December. Many would have suffered for wood had it not been for Capt. Crocker who Bot & Stored about 30 Cord which he Sells for \$8.

On ye 13th Dece'b 1811 ye *Hiram* fell in off ye Reef with Capt. Hicks, ship *Alnomick* [probably *Almanac*] 90 Days from Sligo in Ireland, 79 passengers of Both Sexs, nothing to Eat on Board. They attempted with Levi F. [as] pilot to come through with a light south wind, night come on. Gitting aground on Hawe's prevented them having wind Enough to pass C. Poge. They anchored North of Tom Shoal at 10 pm, wind Sprang out NE. Next morning at 8 Cut & Run on Shore. By Great Exertions, the Fish's in Snow Storm got them all on shore, some Bare footed, & the town was obliged to provide for 'em, cost us near \$200, ship'd them off for New York the 22'd Dec'r.

They just reached Rhode Island when in a Voilent [sic] Snow Squall, 24th, that took off all ye Top [of] Dea[con] Worth's mill and Carried, many say, 20 sail on shore on Long Island, several drifted out N. London, and the poor Distress'd Irishmen were Cast on Shore at Goat Island and then taken to the alms house and there has not been a time for them to

Reach New York as yet.⁴³

Dec'r 31st, a Guinia [?] man puts in Here for a harbour, C. Donham pilot. A man Dies on board. Some said he was whiped to Death, others said don't Bury him, he is warm. Then he is taken out to Sam'l Nortons, kept there about 24 days. In meanwhile Complaint to ye Coroner who Sumon'd an inquest. They Report he died in a fit. Coroner said ye Capt. Norton, Bring in your bill for the Dead man's being in your House. He goes to Sheriff Smith & orders him to Charge 100\$. He told him it is too high, Well, i'll take less sd, Norton, so Carries in to ye Capt 75\$. A Refinance gives him \$17.50. Next Day he Demands of ye Coronor Six Dollars more, Viz, for an old Sheet Charged in ye first bill & puting him into the Coffin and yet was not in the Room when it was done. He Keeps a Black Hottell most time or when an oppor'ty offers.

Noah Pease

[on facing page:] About 20 Days ago a Learge Ship from Lisbon made High land of this Island, Called it Montock & Runs, as he Supposed, for ye Sound. At 10 PM found himself aShore west side Miskequit. Next Day, the Iberian with Chase [Pease?] & some of the Smack men put out the Harbour [which was] then 2/3 froze and went to the Ship. Left 8 men, kept 4 to Bring back the *Hiram* [a pilot boat]. It Being veary Extreme Cold it was not without Great difficulty they got Back same night. Great preparation was made to git off the Ship called *Comodore Pribble*, but the Steep Shore got her heel'd of & since that, she is bilg'd and Run into the Ice. They spent 2 Days Cuting her into Safty. Some part ye time 60 men on Miskequit, all uncomfortable for want of wood.

2 Days ago a Brig from Norfolk Run aShore off Daniel Smith's in a moderate night. All the above are Barren wracks for want of Cargo. Veary Little has been done by our pilots or any other. Vineyard Do [ditto] this winter. But Disappation of acusers[?] Law Suits etc. etc. are worse than usual. Uriah Coffin has Sued Rufus Fish and R. F. has Sued U. Coffin 500\$.----- [word illegible].

Chase Seems to be uneasy with this kind of unhappy Life. I think he will not long be concerned with unsteady persons.⁴⁴ Unkle Joh'a [Pease] has taken Down his Sign but has Enlarged his Store 6 1/2 feet. He & the House of Barzillia Have had a Fracus and a Law Suit, for Barz'll knock'd him down etc. Mrs. Bulah Coffin & Christopher Vinson Have Both Died in 3 weeks past. Temple Cooke is Dead, Died at Petersburg Virginia.

Chase went about 3 weeks ago and stayed all night to Mrs. Luce's, Polly⁴⁵ was then veary well but her mother had a Cold, not veary bad. Since that time I Expect bad weather has prevented almost any passing. I have wrote to her & She to us. We Rec'd your Letter Dated 17th Nov'r. I

⁴³ The alms house, of course, is the poor house. Every town had one in those days.

⁴⁴ What can Chase be up to? He is married with two children, a third will be born next year.

⁴⁵ Polly Luce was married to Isaiah.

⁴² Apparently, the schooner is going to take the letter to the Straits of Belle Isle.

hope you will find Employ untill the winter is wore off. Joseph Vinson [is] Clerk of the Court.

John Cook Calls this the hard winter of his Days. The Themom'r sunk Some Days to only 2 degrees. When down to 14 tis call'd Extreme Cold. William Kelly is High Sheriff, Worth is Deposed on that acc't.⁴⁶

Mr. John fish Died Sudingly in Bed. Tim'o Butler Dead, John Crosby's wife Dead. Mrs. Jones is married to Boatswain Lawrence that was Castaway at Nomans Land. Capt. Thom. Worth has sold his house to Leonard Jernagan for 1375\$. Worth has only 300\$ Left to Carry him through Life.

Having wrote you a long Epistle tis time to Close after wishing you Health & prosperity and am your affectionate father untill Death.

Noah Pease

P.S. Since writing, Jesse's Letter of 27 Dec'r is brought into me and I perceive that Beachers drifters has left you. I hope you are not Robb'd again etc.⁴⁷ Give my Respects to Capt. Osborn.

[on the reverse:] Jere'h has been pritty well this winter, that is much Better than the last. He says he will not write yet a while for this being a Lengthy peice you will have Enough for a month. On New Year's Day, Matt Vinson's wife Bro't him two girls to town. It then lack'd some Days of 14 months from the time their first Child was born. However since, Both the twins are Dead.⁴⁸

Hannah's health worsened. On May 8, 1813, she died at the age of 57 years. We have no details of her final illness. Death records of the Congregational Church, written by Rev. Joseph Thaxter, list the cause of her death in an illegible scrawl. The most likely reading is "Dropsy," although the *Edgartown Vital Records* show it as "Schop" with a question mark.

In Noah's writings, the only reference to her death is indirect. And sad. In his account book, two months after she died, he entered a credit to Jonathan Vinson against what he owed for shoes:

July 1813, by digging grave, \$1.25.⁴⁹

Living without Hannah brought Noah problems. The next letter, dated August 31, 1813, describes some of them.⁵⁰ It is addressed to Isaiah now living in Holmes Hole. Noah ap-

parently has a housekeeper named Betsey and, like so many in Edgartown, she is ill. Noah would like her to go live with her mother or aunt until she recovers. His suggestion is not well received:

Tuesday afternoon Aug't 31 & Wednes morning [probably 1813]
Dear Son & Daughter, [Isaiah and Polly]

These by Divine goodness have all our broken family (if it may be Call'd a family) Still well. Yesterday afternoon was disagreeable far beyond my pen to Express. I mentioned that Betsey is perceivably growing worse, etc. It was truely alarming taking all things into Concideration. Hannah⁵¹ said it Ceartainly was no place at our house for her to have a fit of Sick-ness etc., that she Consid'd her aunt Crag's or Jerethma's the most proper place to do her Justice. Surly [surely] Hannah never Espoused our Cause better, for now in the meanwhile her mother had been sent for to hould a Council.

I well Enough knew what would be the Result etc. Viz. and She with a veary high tone, at once, as if were given powerfull Judgment that Betsey ought to stay where She was, that She had been to work for us & therefore our house was the most proper place. I told her Mother that She could not say that B. had caught any Distemper from our fam'y, that she had not Engaged to Stay any Term of time, that after [being] payd wages, she had no more demands, etc.

It is now sometime in the afternoon. Hannah urged again she ought to be moved without Delay. Her aunt Cragg said she ought to stay a week & by that time she Expect'd that She Should be better & then B. might come there. B.'s mother said She would take care of her at our house & Jere went over to ye Salt Works,⁵² Talk'd with L. Cook who at first Ref-use'd, then said if his wife Liked, he would say nothing. Then Jere march'd quick step to see C.'s wife who made no objection but shew'd herself willing. By ye time we got a Carrage was Late, however we got her there safe.

I was ignorant untill puting her in the Chaise that She was so ill. This morning LC [L. Cooke⁵³] said his wife had a bad night with her. Dr. had made her 2 or 3 Visits before She left us.

Little John does Exceeding well & takes good care of the pig.⁵⁴ Hannah is veary attentive. Even offered for all us to come there but we, if all well, can do well Enough if Hannah Bakes us Bread.⁵⁵ So wish'g to hear as often as possible & having wrote a long Epistole, the application must be ommitted. Yours truly affectionate, etc. Noah Pease.

⁵¹ Chase's wife, who is apparently helping Noah, is named Hannah.

⁵² Jeremiah worked at the Cooke saltworks for many years.

⁵³ We don't know who L. Cook is. There was a Littleton Cooke, but he died in 1896. The saltworks were owned by the Thomas Cooke family.

⁵⁴ We also don't know who "Little John" is.

⁵⁵ He writes: "all of us." Jeremiah and Abner must be living there with him.

⁴⁶ Isaiah himself became Sheriff in 1822, holding the position until 1862.

⁴⁷ The Beachers were mentioned earlier, also as though they were dishonest.

⁴⁸ Matthew Vincent married Sophia Tilton of Chilmark, perhaps that is what Noah means by "bro't two girls to town." They died at 4 and 5 days.

⁴⁹ A pair of work shoes cost \$1.25; "good" shoes, \$2.50.

⁵⁰ The year is not given. A check of day and date plus content indicates it is 1813.

[on reverse] The Biscuits are begining to go off veary fast shall if you dont come down soon send to the person you Bot the former of as they have proved veary Good

Willmott has Rode out Several Times, still not much better. Aaron Norton's wife Rather worse, still no nurse to be had nor has Jere's wife any.⁵⁶ I do not learn of Dr. Wheldon or Hannah Stuart that any one as yet have the appearance of Mortal Simtoms. Jo Ripley is much better, walks out to his barn. Mr. Beacher has Call'd several times to know when I Expected you down. Says it was his fault that you did not Settle.⁵⁷ Several are inquiring whether you owe him. I tell [them] you have accts open but how the Ballance is I cannot Tell. Yours, etc.

N. Pease.

Thursday: [Continuing] A. Fisher's wife something better. B. Titch[?] Jun. taken ill. L. Cook tho he give his consent for B [Betsey] to come their yet he is swearing she shall Depart & also yells about our sending her to his house. Poor Girl, her Case is pittypull. Last night a time worse than horrid. With Tut & his father knotted together, each accusing the other of being Drunk.⁵⁸

Last ----- [a portion torn away] I was sorry that Beachers powerfull importunities overcame Jeremiah that he should hand out five Dollars to him as, just before, I had given him a denial of advancing any untill you came. He profess'd in a way that he was going out to Buy pigs etc. Soon after, Chase said he had a Demand for 7\$, he intended you to hold on etc. I cannot state how many times he has come teasing to know when y were Coming Down. Do not be concerned saying, I do not know how dada [Noah] will do without a H'keeper. Since we are rid of Trouble by a narrow escape, all things will be smoth & easy should you stay a month.⁵⁹ Jeremiah will go to Bedford when an opportunity offers.

May Divine Goodness preserve you all through sickness, tumults & wars, yours, etc.

N. Pease

[in margin:] Jason's Craft Supriz'd [?] out all the Last Storm.

Allen Coffin and most of the Shuckers[?] are going after Swift fish & most of Swift's Crew have left him.

List of yankee Boys Capt. Milton has taken with him: Oliver Norton, Isaac Perry, Jo. Marchant, Rufus Fish'r's Boy. All gone toDay for Bristol.

There continues to be much sickness in Edgartown. In the next letter, written three days later, Noah says Dr. Samuel Whelden is attending to 62 patients (all of them housecalls, of course). Wilmot L., whoever he is, continues to occupy

⁵⁶ This is mysterious. Jeremiah doesn't get married until the end of September, a month later.

⁵⁷ The Beachers again. Isaiah soon gets invovled in a law suit. Is this the cause?

⁵⁸ Again we are at a loss to identify someone. Who is "Tut"?

⁵⁹ Doesn't Isaiah have a place to live in Holmes Hole with wife Polly?

Noah's interest. Abner has left "the Cape" and returned home. Noah seems displeased. He keeps stating that Jeremiah will go to New Bedford, but doesn't give details.

Friday Morning Sept. 3d [probably 1813]

Dear Son

I have all Ready wrote you a Statement on various Subjects & still I must write more this Morning. By what I hear per Sheriff Worth it appears that Willmott L is in a Dangerous State a Strange Relx follows him. What he Discharges is veeary Black the House or Room is to those who whated [waited?] a nusence. I am sorry that Abner Could not Content himself a little longer at the Cape, He has Quit as has all the fleet. Jere'h I think will go to Bedford & i shall Send for a Barrel of Buscuit. Pray do not think of Bringing Polly down untill Sickness abates though you may Reasonably Conclude that I long to see you all yet I can Content myself Best as present. All things Conidered that you are not at home.

I fear Every night When Jere or Abner will have a Call to watch with Willmott. I think as ill able as I am on acc't of my Stated Complaint I had rather watch myself than one of them.⁶⁰

Aaron fishers wife still veary Sick, her mother Better. Capt. Cooks wife Sick as any, ~~Except Willmott~~ worse than any. Tris's not out all Day yesterday, Eunice Tribble[?] near the Close of Life. Sam Huxford's family Sick, himself carries a poor Countinence. Hannah is veary attentive. Dea'n Worth's wife offered to Take us some Bread. Dr. Wheldon told to Day he had 62 besides his family to visit. There is not so much call for Coffee as many other articles.⁶¹

I am sorry that Mr. Morse makes so long a Delatory Cruze. After he had been gone 10 or 12 Days Jo Thaxter see him going into ye River. Since, a Letter is Rec'd states it is hard to git off his Cargo. Onions are often Call'd for. You will write whenever an opper'ty offers. I am this moment happy to say we are all well as common. In much hast Conclude your affectionate Father untill Death

Noah Pease

[P.S.] take good care of Little Hariott,⁶² my Respects to you all, etc.

This month, September 1813, Jeremiah married Eliza Worth. Abner, 18, is now the only unmarried child in the family. Since the death of his wife, Noah has become more social, visiting friends, many of them sick. It is a time of wide-spread illness in town. He writes of these visits in his next letter, addressed only to "Son & Daughter." The contents indicate it is to Isaiah and Polly. Dated only Sunday, October 3,

⁶⁰ Both sons must be living with him. Jeremiah gets married at the end of the month.

⁶¹ Is Noah selling coffee from his shop?

⁶² Harriet, born 1812, is Isaiah and Polly's first child.

with no year, it must have been written in 1813 as Noah tells of the death of Samuel Huxford's oldest boy. *Edgartown Vital Records* show that Thomas Huxford, son of Samuel, died in September 1813.

Although Jeremiah's wedding had taken place only a few days before, Noah makes no mention of it. He is concerned about Isaiah's wife, Polly, his favorite, who is ill in the home of someone else, perhaps her mother. Noah advises Isaiah on how to carry her home safely:

Sunday October 3 [probably 1813]

Dear Son & Daughter,

the arm of Divine mercy is still Lengthened out towards all our family here while you are abstant [sic] & when I Visit some Sick Houses and behold so many new Cases Since you left here, how ought I & others to Greatly fear and Tremble.⁶³

Last night for the first time in four years made Deacon Worth & family a visit, was veary politely Received. Returning went into see Jo Mayhew who is Extreme bad. i never saw one in so much pain, shocking Groans most the time while I stayed. His sister Rebeca veary Sick, Deacon himself not veary well. Doc. Wheldon's wife said to be Bad. Sam Huxford's oldest Boy Died Wednesday last. Capt. Cook after taking much phisick says he is better, his Daughter still veary Sick.

Our good old Samaritan [Dr. Wheldon?] has an arduous task, Continues to go the Rounds among the Distress'd yet i trust not weary in well doing. He told me he wish'd you at Home that he would willingly attend you. He says when you bring Polly home it would be better in a waggon than a Chaise, Viz, to sling a Kind of a Coot[?] & Lay a bed in it would not Shock her half so much in this way. He used to carry wounded men in the former Am. war.

Yesterday Thos Fish arr'd from Newport with the Black Scamp[?] & Kelly's Boat which had been sold at l'endue [auction] for 30\$. Courtney came, looks Like a goust [ghost]. Poor John Marchant Died in Serra Town [Sierra Leone, Africa]. If Chase Comes to see you dont fail sending your Keys. My anxiety to come & see you is veary Great & not to see you only, but all the Household.⁶⁴ Time fails.

Yours with Every sentiment of Respect & affection,

Noah Pease

Virtually all the letters in the collection are to or from family members, but there are a few others in the later years.

⁶³Fear of death is constantly in Noah's mind.

⁶⁴Someone has pencilled on the letter: "Isaiah D. Pease then at Tashmoo, Tisbury, the home of Polly, his wife."

One, from Bordeaux, dated December 17, 1815, indicates what a memorable man Noah Pease was. The letter writer had lived with ship owner William Jarvis (probably in Boston) as a boy. He sends some French brandy as a gift of friendship:

Fav'r of Capt. Marchant Bordeaux 17 Dec'r 1815

Mr. Noah Pease

Dr Sir,

I send you by Capt. Marchant two Gallons of Cognac Brandy as a token of my remembrance. You may possibly recollect the Whiteheaded boy that liv'd with William Jarvis when you was Mate with Captain Dunham and I hope you will take a drop to his health. I am yr old friend,

Rich'd Faxon Jr.

In an earlier letter to Isaiah, Noah makes a guarded reference to a debt that his son owes to a Mr. Beacher. We have no way of knowing what the debt was for, but it seems from Noah's comments, that Beacher had demanded more money that he was entitled to. Perhaps the following note to Isaiah from a Boston lawyer is about a potential lawsuit:

Boston, September 5th, AD 1818

Mr. Isaiah D. Pease,

Sir --

Your letter of the second of September I have received and in reply observe that I shall attend at the Supreme Court in Barnstable next term, and Assist you in the case you refer to in your letter, if you wish it. Shou'd the Plaintiff abandon his case, and not enter it at Court, I shall charge you only a retaining fee, according to our practice when we are retained as Counsel in any case.

With respect, I am your friend & Serv't

Benjamin Whitman

Noah is still busy making shoes and still having trouble buying leather. Friend Lot Norton of Edgartown⁶⁵ is in New York selling a load of fish. Noah has asked him to buy some leather. The next letter, from Norton, gives us insight into the complexity of buying leather and selling fish:

New York November 25th 1819

Capt. Noah Pease, Sir

in haste. I am Obliged to Leave of my work Weighing Fish to go to Mr. Gilpin's to try for your Leather, that is the one half of it. Mr. Gillpin's fourman, had not any by him, heavy A weight being out of stock, but expected to have sum in the Last of this weake. He had one side that would answer for A light side, & was Obliged to Go out for another. The two

⁶⁵Lot Norton became Keeper of Cape Poge Light in 1835.

sides I have put on board of the *Surprise*; now we expect rain, or we should had all our Fish out to Day but the Capt. that has purchas't our fish thinks it too Damp to Weigh; so we must weigt till fair Weather or we should been redy to sail on Next Day after to morrow. Capt. Fisher Delivered me your Letter for An Other side of Leather which I expect to get. We shall be home as soon as possible so I wish you prosperity.

Lot Norton,

P.S. Mr. Gillpin has been unwell Six months. I have carryed up the bits of Leather & related to him [the foreman] the peticulars & he informs me he shall speak to Mr. Gillpin about it.

We get additional insight into Captain Noah's personality in letters written by Capt. George Osborn from Hilton Head, South Carolina. The first is dated March 7, 1820. There were several Vineyard mariners sailing in and out of that place, among them Captain Osborn. He is ordering four pairs of shoes from Noah to be picked up when he comes to Edgartown about May first. Noah must have made shoes for him before because Osborn doesn't even mention the size:

Hilton Head March 7th 1820

Capt Noah Pease -- Worthy Friend

As I have at Present a little leisure time, think proper to employ it in writing you these lines, which hope will be acceptable.

We yankeys have anxiously been waiting the receipt of a letter from you, but disappointed. As I am often in want of Shoes while at Edgartown & Cannot get them ready made, must request that you will have the goodness to make for me 2 pair of thick Sea Shoes & 2 pair thin, by the last of April or 1st of May.

Our townsmen the most of them are doing well this Season. Joseph Whelden Sailed a few weeks Since from Liverpool, Master of a Ship. Capt. Sam'l Coffin was onboard last week, said his Vessel had been run down, crossing a place called Bull head. The vessel something injured & himself knocked overboard, but not hurt.

Capt. Milton has not been very Successfull, vessel Sails [sales?] dull, etc. Brother John as usual. Capt. B. Bunker arrived here too late to take Charge the Schooner. He finally went in, is now with me.

Having Received but few letters from you people of the world this winter past, must request that you will write me the news -- My postage has been quite reasonable I assure you.⁶⁶ Therefore hope if it does not intrude on your time or business that you will indulge me.

Should you wish anything from this quarter mention it. Please present

⁶⁶At this time, the receiver paid the postage when the letter was delivered. We have an account book of the Edgartown postoffice showing how individuals ran up accounts owed.

my report to your family & accept the best wishes of your Most Ob't Servant,

In haste.

George Osborn⁶⁷

Captain Osborn did pick up his shoes in Edgartown, but later than planned. He brought a letter from Vineyarder Samuel Coffin, who seems to be a Charleston storekeeper, selling shoes made by Noah:

Charleston April 18th 1820

Dear Sir

After making Sale of your Shoes at different prices I send you by Capt. Osborn one tirc[?] of rice, one half for myself and the other for you. Please to take care of mine till I return home, except my wife should want it. Yours, you can do as you please with and when I return I will settle with you. The cask will be marked in my name. I have given Capt. Osborn orders to deliver it to you. I cannot inform what the rice will come at per hundred, but not far from \$27/8'. My respects to your famaly,

yours respectfully,

Samuel Coffin

In October 1820, the remaining bachelor in the family, Abner Dunham Pease, 25, married his third cousin, once removed, Jedidah Pease. Six months after the wedding, on March 20, 1821, he sailed on the whaling ship *John* for the Pacific Ocean. When he returned two and a half years later, on October 15, 1823, he met for the first time his two-year-old son, Edward, born while he was in the Pacific.

Then, in June 1822, Isaiah was chosen Sheriff of Dukes County, a position which he held for forty years. It was a prestigious post and provided a good, steady income. It must have pleased Noah. But he certainly was not pleased with the doings of son Jeremiah. In 1823, under the spell of charismatic Rev. "Reformation" John Adams, Jeremiah joined the Methodist Society. This sect, with its noisy, emotional meetings running late into the night, was, to Congregationalists like Noah, fanatical. Jeremiah was the first of his sons to switch. Isaiah and Chase soon followed. It surely was a blow to Noah, a traditional Congregationalist.

Jeremiah always was somewhat distant from his father. At least so it seems in his diary. Although they lived in the

⁶⁷We can't find George Osborn in any Edgartown records. Is he a native?

same village, they did few things together. Jeremiah mentions Noah only three times in the 28 years from 1829 to 1857. Two of three were on the occasion of Noah's death.

The first, May 5, 1829, was terse, as was Jeremiah's style: "Engaged in moveing my things into Father's Shop." He had just sold his own shop to Thomas Cathcart. The other two mentions are more revealing, written when Noah died in 1841. Perhaps the separation (if, indeed, there was one) was Noah's doing. Maybe he was disappointed that Jeremiah, alone among his sons, never went to sea, like his father. Certainly, Jeremiah's total immersion in Methodism must have created a wall between them. Whatever the reason, they had little to do with each other after Jeremiah left his father's house.

Abner, the youngest son, returned from his whaling voyage in 1823. That year, he and brother Chase built the sloop *Thomas* and went into coastal shipping. The sloop made regular trips to Charleston, South Carolina.⁶⁸ The next year, 1824, was another sad year in the Pease family. In September, Abner's second child died, only six weeks old. The funeral was conducted by Rev. Joseph Thaxter of the Congregational church. Abner, unlike his three brothers, had apparently not switched to the Methodists. That must have pleased Noah.

We don't know for certain the date of the next letter. It is the only letter not written to or by Noah. Addressed to Mrs. Polly Pease, Isaiah's wife, it was from her sister, Mrs. Pamela Luce, in Holmes Hole. Pamela informs Polly that her brother, Silvanus (Pamela's husband) is well and sailing to Cuba from Argentina. Silvanus, from the tone of the letter, has not been the most reliable husband. Although there is no date on the letter, Pamela's reference to daughter Elizabeth suggests it was written about 1826.⁶⁹ She makes a puzzling remark about a Mr. Pease. Which Mr. Pease, we don't know.

⁶⁸In June 1825, she carried a load of Edgartown men to Boston for the cornerstone laying of the Bunker Hill monument. The Marquis de Lafayette attended. Edgartown's Reverend Thaxter gave the opening prayer. Jeremiah was present.

⁶⁹Elizabeth was born in 1824. If she is "talking," she is probably about two, dating the letter about 1826, when Polly had six children, so the words "love to her cousins" make sense.

Friday Morning [probably 1826]

Dear Sister,

I am happy to inform you that your brother Silvanus was well 90 days since and shiped on board the Ship *Corsair* Capt. Lewis of New York, he was first Officer. They sailed from Bounes Ayers for the Havannah and from ther was coming to New York.

Mr. Adams of Chillmark brings this news. He came to see me and tells me he boarded with Silvanus 3 weeks before he left, perceived nothing, but he was perfectly well.⁷⁰

Doubtless this will relieve your anxious mind as it does mine in some measure. Hope he will come home but make no dependance on it. Although Mr. Adams said it was his intention to come immediately home, I have bin to often disappointed to make dependance on anything in this Life.

Do come and see us. I long to see you. Mr. Pease has entirely forsaken us. I have Moved to Mr. Chase's, have the lower part of his house, find it quite Convenient.

Elizabeth is well sends her little Love to her Cousins. She talks incessantly, her language which her Mother understands.

Yours with esteem,

Pamela Luce

Noah continues to hear from Capt. George Osborn, who is now in Charleston, South Carolina. A number of Edgartown mariners sail out of there and Captain Osborn sends the news. He also informs Noah that son Abner, who has apparently gone there on the *Thomas*, has hurt his hand:

Charleston April 3'd, 1827

Capt. Noah Pease, Honored Sir --

Your Esteem'd favour dated 13th 14th & 16th March came duly to hand and, Notice This Epistle was very Cordialy received (particularly so) as the most of our Oldtown [Edgartown] fleet was here all, anxious to hear from home -- I will Inform you we are all well onboard the *Chancellor* & have been with the exception of your Son. Abner, some time ago, was afflicted with a sore hand. It was so bad I advised him to remain in Charleston Trip before the last, fearing he might loose the use of his fingers in the right hand, which would have been a sad accident to a young man. I am Happy to state he is now out of danger.

The Sloop *Thomas* has got through Cleaning there Bottom & Ready to Receive fre't [freight?] for Boston, & will leave for Home in a few days. We have experienced a heavy gale of wind from N.E. Commenced on the Evening 31st March & Continued until 2d. Inst. in the Morning. A considerable damage has been done, but fortunately none to any of our fleet of any great Consequence.

⁷⁰This sounds ominous. Did Sylvanus have some kind of illness or behavioral problem?

Schoner. *Celar* [?] parted her Chain Cable twice at the wharf, likewise Hemp Cable & Hossers [hausers?]. The *Chancellor* & *Thomas* were both lying on the land over on the N.E. side of the Harbour. Capt. Pease & myself went to the City on business, the gale increased so fast Could not get onboard. When the *T.* floated in the Evening Mr. Sprague got under weigh & dropped both anchors of [off] the Southernmost wharf called Dai-ley's. Next morning, dragged in near the Bottom and with a considerable exertion was saved from damage. Mr. Pease was wise enough to hold on to the weather shore with three anchors ahead and never parted a rope. . . . Money is very Scarce indeed here, produce low & dull sale. We anticipate but few failures this season as there are not many speculators.

I am Sorry to hear Parson Adams is so indisposed as I think him a very Pious man.⁷¹

I was just now thinking of whaling Ships, etc., [and] the great encouragement for our young men who follow that business. The Cost for sperm oil to light the streets of this City the last year amounted to 19,000\$, Exclusive of the lamp lighters fees, who employ 20 men. Taking this into Consideration, what must the indoors lights amount to where Sperm Oil & Candles are so fashionable? . . .⁷²

Sir with great respect I Have the Honor to be your most ob't & humble
George Osborn

P.S. Please make my respects to your family. I perceive our present Harbour Master is an acquaintance of yours, a Capt. Payn. I do not know if you will recollect him. He was cast away in the *Old Starks*, formerly from Rhode Island State. He is much respected here and has sons doing a considerable business. Says he knows you perfectly well. I had forgotten to mention that the *Thomas* stands as usual on the list and supports her former Credit. Capt. [Chase?] Pease is much liked by Shippers. [In margin:] P.S. your Son Abner's Fingers are rather Stiff to write with Ease therefore declines at present.

That letter from George Osborn is the final letter in the collection. We know little about the family after 1827 except from Jeremiah's diary. Apparently, Abner followed his brothers into Methodism. At least, that is what must be assumed by this entry in March 1827: "Meeting held at A. D. Pease's." Jeremiah mentioned only Methodist meetings. If Abner switched, Noah was the only Congregationalist left. That year, Chase sold the Methodist Society some land on which to

⁷¹ Reverend Adams, the Methodist who converted Jeremiah, had a serious breakdown at this time. He was hallucinating and had to be tied in bed for days. It's unlikely Noah was saddened.

⁷² The remainder of the long letter details the various religious groups in the Charleston area. The fact that Captain Osborn knows so much about the subject and believes Noah would be interested indicates the importance of the church during this period.

build a larger church. The building, much altered, is now the Edgartown Town Hall.

Abner and Chase were still sailing the *Thomas* between Charleston and Boston, stopping in Edgartown. Jeremiah's diary frequently mentions their voyages. On July 23, 1830, an intriguing item in Jeremiah's diary: "A. D. Pease moves into my chambers." Had Abner and his wife separated? Many families split up over religious matters at the time. Abner's family with three small children may have been one of them.

On October 9, 1832, the *Thomas* sailed for South Carolina, Captain Abner in command. On the 22nd, she ran into a tremendous storm and was never heard from again. Hope was held out for months, but on April 7, 1833, Jeremiah wrote in his diary:

This day Br. Bliss preaches a funeral sermon on account of the loss of the crew of the Sloop *Thomas* which brother A. D. Pease commanded.

The Congregational Church death records state:

Capt. Abner Pease, master of sloop *Thomas*, was lost at sea Nov. 1832 on his way to Charleston. Marshal Luce, his Mate, was also lost at the same time. And a Brother of Br. John Vinson, named James., [and] a young man at sea, lost with 7 others, named Francis W. Whimpany. Total: 11 lives.

Only three of Noah's children were still living. Eight years later, on April 18, 1841, Jeremiah wrote:

At 1/2 past 9 o'clock this evening my Father dies, aged 87 years and 4 days, he was esteemed an honest man and a Christian. He was an affectionate and kind Father. May God grant to sanctify his death to his Children, Grand Children and all connections and acquaintances.

On April 20th, Jeremiah entered a somber tribute to his father, Edgartown mariner Noah Pease:

At 1/2 past 1 o'clock this day the Funeral of my Father commences at his late dwelling House by Prayer offered by Rev'd Mr. Gannet of the Congregational Church, of which he was a member. The corpse was Carried to the Congregational Church. Prayer by Rev'd Thos. Ely of the Methodist Church. Sermon and concluding prayer by Rev'd Mr. Gannet. The connections and friends walked to the Church Yard and there deposited his remains with a good hope of a happy resurrection at the last day.

To view the Graves of my Dear Mother, Brothers and Sisters and the last look at my Dear Father's coffin was affecting. Oh Death, Death, Death, what a change.

From the Society Archives

Building a House in 1833: How Much Did It Cost?

TWO EDGARTOWN MEN, Samuel G. Vincent and Ellis Lewis, were partners in a carpentry business beginning about 1830. The Society has one of their account books and it is filled with information about building costs.

One house they built in 1833-1834 was for Tristram D. Pease, an Edgartown tradesman. At the time, he was 28 years old and married to Mary Wass, 26, with a three-year-old child. The house was built (it is still there, much enlarged) on the northwest corner of Morse and North Water Streets in Edgartown.

Builders Vincent and Ellis were just about the same age as Pease. Vincent was 30 and Ellis was 27. Both were married, both had young children.¹

When you compare the following costs with those of today remember that the average working man was earning \$1 a day, some listed in the book were paid \$4.50 for a six-day

¹Both had famous sons: Charles Macreading Vincent, editor of the *Vineyard Gazette*; and LaRoy Lewis, who lived with the Pitcairn Islanders. See *Intelligencer*, November 1984 and May 1993.

week. Skilled carpenters and masons were paid \$1.25 a day. Remember that houses were very simple: they had no plumbing, no heat except fireplaces, no electricity. The kitchen had a sink and a hand pump, nothing more, except a few shelves. There was no bathroom or toilet; a privy was in the back yard.²

Unlike some buildings listed in the account book, this one was paid for totally in cash. In many cases, bills were paid, partially at least, with such items as "Two Pigs \$1.50 each," "200 Herrings, \$1.50," "220 lbs. Beef, \$12.10," and "8 lbs. Butter, \$2.00." Sometimes bills were partially paid by providing services: "Carting lumber" or "Ploughing & Carting Manure, \$2.00."

Account books carry many familiar Vineyard names and tell us much about occupations and incomes. The Society has a number of them and members are invited to study their contents. The rewards are sure to be serendipitous.

²To pay for a house like this, a skilled worker would have had to work 880 days in 1830, the equivalent of about \$85,000 today.



The house at the right was built for Tristram D. Pease by Vincent & Lewis in 1833. Photograph, taken about 50 years later, is of No. Water St., looking towards Main.

Materials for Building Tristram D. Pease House

1833

| | | |
|---------|--|----------|
| June 14 | Paid Ezekiel Waterhouse for Lumber, per Bill | \$388.42 |
| | Paid Freight on Lumber | 109.94 |
| | Paid Daniel Simmons for Bricks, per bill | 133.00 |
| | Paid I. D. Pease for Board & Carting | 0.62 |
| | Paid Charles Butler for use of Ground | 0.50 |
| | Paid Boys, Labour on Lumber | 0.62 |
| | Paid Postage of 2 Letters from Gardiner | 0.37 |
| | Paid Warren Vincent for Carting Lumber | 8.25 |
| | Paid S. G. Vincent [for labor] | 50.00 |
| | Paid Ellis Lewis [for labor] | 50.00 |
| | Paid Coffin & Darrow for Plank | 7.16 |
| | Paid Thos. L. Baylies for Broom & Chalk | 0.17 |
| | Paid Sam'l Vincent for Carting Bricks | 0.17 |
| July | Paid Holmes Smith for Lime, \$5.94, Carting 12 cts. | 6.06 |
| | Paid Thos. L. Baylies for Glass, Paint, Hard Ware | 114.70 |
| | Paid Rodolphus W. Coffin for Stones | 12.00 |
| | Paid for Wrought Nails & Horse Hire | 2.00 |
| | Paid for Lime, Truckage & Freight on Lime | 26.69 |
| | Paid I.P. for Timber 31 cts., Articles for Raising 50 cts. | 0.81 |
| | Paid for Pinewood | 0.27 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------------|
| August | Paid Stephen Morse for Stones | 2.50 |
| | Paid E. G. Pease for Paint Brushes | 0.60 |
| | Paid T. L. Baylies for Hoe | 0.75 |
| | Paid Freeman Butler for Mason Work as per Bill | 5.50 |
| | Paid Thomas Coffin for Mason Work | 25.00 |
| | Paid Timo' Coffin for Lead, \$1.85 & Bradley per bill, \$1.57 | 3.42 |
| | Paid for Thresholds & Chalk | 0.22 |
| | Paid Edward Smith for Painting & Glazing | 10.15 |
| | Paid Sam'l Pent for Tending Mason | 8.50 |
| | Paid Leavitt Thaxter for Carting Sand | 1.17 |
| | Paid Bradley for Shace [?] Paper, 10 cts. | 0.10 |
| | Paid S. G. Vin[cent] for Threshhold, 15 cts | 0.15 |
| | Paid T. L. Baylies for Finishing Nails | 0.40 |
| September | Paid for Chalk | 0.12 |
| | Paid S. W. Lewis for Painting | 1.50 |
| October | Paid Leavitt Thaxter for Team | 1.00 |
| | Paid E. G. Pease for Oil & Verdegreae | 2.43 |
| | Paid Freeman Coffin for Tending Mason | 7.00 |
| | Paid T. L. Baylies for Cask 10 d. Nails | 6.00 |
| | Paid Wm. P. Chadwick for Iron work | 11.20 |
| | Paid R. W. Coffin for Hard Ware | 0.22 |
| | Paid Ellis Lewis for Boards (1222 ft.) \$22, Carting, 62cts. | 22.62 |
| November | Paid Frederick Baylies Jr. for Lath, Nails & Joist | 2.75 |
| December | Paid Holmes W. Smith for Lime | 4.12 |
| | Paid for Carting Lime | 0.13 |
| | Paid Edmund Lewis for Painting, Paints & Sand | 26.25 |
| | Paid Holmes W. Smith for Posts | 2.27 |
| | Paid Leavitt Thaxter for Team | 0.87 |
| | Paid E. Bradley for White Lead | 6.00 |
| | Paid E. G. Pease for Varnish | 0.75 |
| | Paid Wm. P. Chadwick for Gate Trimmings | 0.83 |
| 1834 | | |
| February | Paid Tho's. L. Baylies for Sundries. | 3.65 |
| | Paid Thomas Coffin for Mason Work | 0.29 |
| March | Paid Henry Pease for Turning Columns | 2.50 |
| | Paid Timothy Coffin for Bolt & Screws | 0.15 |
| | Paid Thomas Coffin for Mason Work | 28.00 |
| | Total | \$1100.86 |

November 1996

BUILDING COST 99

Payments received for Tristram D. Pease house

1833

| | | |
|---------|--|----------|
| June 14 | Received of Tristram D. Pease | \$290.00 |
| | Rec'd of Mary W. his Wife | 195.00 |
| | Rec'd by Timothy Coffin | 200.00 |
| | Rec'd by Thos. L. Baylies | 90.00 |
| | Rec'd by Timothy Coffin | 203.74 |
| | Received by Thos. L. Baylies | 115.00 |
| | Money paid back by T. L. Baylies for Nails | 0.25 |
| | Received for Lumber Sold to F. Baylies Jr. | 11.09 |
| | Rec'd for Shingles sold to Charles Butler | 3.37 |
| | Rec'd for ditto to Seth Vincent | 1.12 |
| | Rec'd for Shingles sold to Charles Butler | 1.12 |
| | Rec'd for Shingles sold to Dennis Ripley | 1.12 |
| | Rec'd for Shingles sold to T. W. Norton | 4.00 |

Total \$1115.81

1834

| | | |
|---------|---|------------------|
| April 8 | Settled all accounts between us relating to the Building of Tristram D. Pease House and after all outstanding Bills are paid, the Ballance due us will be | \$457.38 |
| | Lewis's part of the Ballance will be | 233.69 |
| | Vincent's part of the Ballance will be | 223.69 |
| | Signed by us | Ellis Lewis |
| | | Sam'l G. Vincent |

1835

| | |
|---------|--|
| April 2 | Rec'd paym't of Tristram D. Pease & Settled all Accounts up to this date between us, |
| | Sam'l G. Vincent |
| | Ellis Lewis |

Not All Payments Were as Prompt as the Above

| | | | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|----|----|
| 1836 | Jeremiah Pease | \$ | C |
| August 1836 | by services rendered Gleasing Camp | 3 | 00 |
| Sept 20 1836 | Surveying District Land | 1 | 50 |
| Jan 1841 | by Cash | 20 | 00 |
| April 1845 | Recording Deed of Pease | 33 | |
| July 1st | Surveying Land for Capt Wimpenny | 50 | |

Jeremiah Pease in 1835 owed Samuel Vincent \$24.96 for material and labor. He finally paid it all off ten years later (with interest apparently) with cash and services totalling \$25.33.

A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

It is tempting to believe that "dear Harriette" is a hypochondriac, but surely that is not the case. Her symptoms are many, but the diagnosis is inconclusive. Two Edgartown doctors (plus two up-Island doctors earlier) have examined her and no cure has been forthcoming.

Henry believes it is the climate, especially the east wind, that causes her illness and he begins to make definite plans to move inland, away from the ocean and the "bracing air" from it.

He learns that he will not get the teaching position he had applied for in Newark, N. J.. Now, he begins serious planning for the future. He has decided, it seems, on Indiana, based on the favorable comments of a colleague he had talked to while in Providence at the Methodist Conference.

For readers who are impatient to learn the outcome of all this misery, we will state that Hattie lives long enough to travel to the midwest and to return to Edgartown. Henry's health, despite his worries, is good: he will die in Malden, Mass., in 1893, outliving all five of his wives. That's giving away enough!

We have been publishing this journal since May 1993 and will, when a suitable time comes in its narrative, interrupt the publication, going on to other documents (unless, that is, there is a demand from members to continue).

Wednesday, Aug. 14, 1850. [Continued from previous issue]. I placed my

hand on her head when she fell asleep magnetically, slept quietly till 9 AM. She has been under magnetic influences most of the day, which has had the very grateful effect to keep her nervous system quiet.¹ She has slept most of the day waking at intervals of one, two & three hours when the Brandy, Cholormine & Salt, ~~half a spoonful~~ [crossed out], relieves her stomach & she again sleeps. Poor girl! She suffers greatly. I do not yet consider her out of danger, yet I am encouraged to hope.

Rec'd a letter yesterday PM from Bro. Sewall to H. It is quite different from the former one -- more definite, more cordial. He expects Hattie in Prov. tomorrow or by first boat next week. How uncertain is everything.²

Rec'd this PM a letter from Rev. D. P. Kidder stating that a Gentleman whose name was before that Board of Trustees previous to mine has been elected. Well. "Nihil disperandum, Christi Duci[?]." I should be hardly able to commence Teaching at Newark with my present health as soon as the 1st September. It is all right. Some way will open in the distance. To the natural eye, the present is all overcast & the future is frowning. But no! All things work together for good, etc.

Today was appointed for Camp Meeting at Wesleyan Grove, but the very severe storm of rain & wind, par-

¹ He continues to mention magnetism, but provides no details. Is it hypnotism? Does any reader have information on this treatment?

²In the previous installment, we learned that there is a strained relationship between Henry and Hattie's family and her brother Sewall had seemed not to welcome their visit, now canceled because of her relapse.

ticularly of wind, has prevented all water conveyance. This will doubtless prove a great disappointment to the Prov. people & those in that vicinity as they expected to come in the steamer today. My Tent probably stands as I placed it on Sat. last. I wrote this eve to S. P. Coffin Esq., to tender the use of it to Rev. Bro. Upham gratuitously & if he should not be there to let it at a fair compensation.³

This probably ends my Camp Meeting time. Well, it is all right. Cleared off this evening bright & cold.

Thursday, Aug. 15. This day like the preceding of this week has been passed in the sick room, in the office of Physician, nurse, etc. H. has been a great sufferer, yet her symptoms are more favorable & she may be up in a few days. Wrote this PM a letter to Bro. Sewall stating the case of dear wife. I took occasion in this letter (a most favorable opportunity) to express my high regard for H. & to speak of her superior social & intellectual endowments, etc., etc. May this letter prove, through the blessing of God, an olive branch of peace & reconciliation.

Saturday, Aug. 17. On retiring to rest last night, dear H. appeared more comfortable than during her sickness. She was so very comfortable that I returned to lay off my clothes, which I have done but once since last Satur-

day night.⁴ She slept quite comfortably till about midnight when in great distress in head, throat & face she waked me. The cause of all this distress was a great change in the weather -- the wind having come round to the North East & blowing a gale. The effect of this wind is severe tension of the nervous system.⁵ These pains are in the nerves & of the most severe type. I was up with her several times during the night.

In the morning she became severely cramped in the stomach & in pain throughout the whole system. I administered Morphine -- an ordinary dose -- & it had no effect. I doubled the dose & it appeared to have no more effect than a drop of water. The spasms continued most of the day, yielding only to so-called mind magnetism. I have never before witnessed such excruciating suffering. About dusk there were dreadful spasms about the left lung -- this yielded to magnetism. More quiet during evening. Very cold & tedious [?] today.

Have succeeded this week in reading more than for a length of time. For some time past, out of school I have been engaged in sundry useful mechanical scrimshawings,⁶ repairs, etc., partly for the sake of having things convenient & partly for health, so as to divert my mind from books at this warm season. To return to reading is quite a luxury.

⁴It is amazing that Henry has the will to keep up this journal. He has been sleeping in his clothes virtually all week!

⁵How primitive was diagnosis back then. Hattie rarely goes outdoors, but the wind is causing her illness. Just the sound of it!

⁶As noted earlier, scrimshawing is a term that describes activities to fill one's time.

Sabbath, August 18. A very quiet Sabbath in the village after the leaving of the carriages early in the morning for the Camp Ground.⁷ In consequence of the high, cold north east wind, many who designed to go by packet are disappointed.

I spent this Sabbath quite differently from what I expected to. Dear Hattie too. She expected with me to be on the Camp Ground, enjoying the familiar privileges & benefits of that sacred place but, poor girl! There she lies prostrate on her bed beneath the scourging hand of disease. How uncertain all the plans of this time of execution! I retired to rest last evening about 9, dear H. being quite quiet. She appeared quite cheerful & playful though very weak -- so weak indeed during a part of the evening she could not raise her head from her pillow.

We both slept very pleasantly till 12 o'clock when the effect of the medicine taken at bedtime, Cholorum, Brandy & Holman's [?], seemed to have lost its power & the nerves yielded to the excessive irritability of the North Easter.

I was up with her an hour or two during which she vomited violently & suffered somewhat from Spasms. Being exhausted by vomiting, etc., she at length got quiet & by aid of another dose of C. B. & H. slept quite well till waking this morning. She awakened in great distress & I nearly despaired of her life. The wind continues still N.E. Great distress in

stomach & bowels. Troubled cruelly with -----[?] Spasms, vomiting, delirium. After taking administering an injection she became more quiet with passage.

Today has been quite free from Spasms. Has had periodical vomiting at intervals of about 1 1/2 hours, of bile, phlegm, etc., the most nauseous. C. B. & H. is the only medicine that seems to relieve her. This seems to quiet her so that she sleeps for a little space quite comfortably.

My faith has been exceedingly tried today in consideration of the protracted sickness of dearest Hattie. I have at times found it very difficult to pray & again have found some victory. My faith has been unwavering during all her protracted sickness, but now my nervous system is considerably effected, what with watching night & day & the long spell of easterly wind. I have always found that great grace is requisite to nervous people. With me, it must be not only an ordinary bestowal of grace but a triumph of faith else I cannot live. Oh, for faith! Triumphant faith. My faith easily reaches the trust that God can relieve dear H., that He can change the wind or bless the means used, but it has been a struggle to trust when this is not the case. But I should not complain -- no, I will not complain, for all things work together for good to them who love the Lord. The Lord grant me patience to take all care of dearest wife whom I love as I do my own life -- patience not only during the hours when her mind is clear, calm & cheerful, but when disease shatters her reason, ruffles her disposition & requires constant, protracted & careful attention. I love my wife &

do not think any care or labor too burdensome. It is only when my nerves are weak or prostrated that I feel labor or care. The Lord strengthen me, Soul & body.

Monday, August 19. Noon. Wind still Easterly, veering towards the South. Hope there will be a favorable change in the weather by tomorrow. If there should not be I scarcely know what will become of Hattie's or mine nervous system. I lay down last night with my clothes on & was awake, it seemed, most of the night although I suppose that between 8 last night & 7 this morning I got several hours sleep.

Dear H. was very restless -- vomited but little. Had a profuse stool. This morning appeared better although very weak & deathly. Some distress in stomach & generally over the body of a nervous character. At about 10, taken with violent cramps throughout the body so severe as to dethrone reason. Got some relief at 11 & 4 A.M. Still remains rather quiet.

I have felt no little anxiety about my pecuniary affairs in consideration of the probability of being obliged to move west or to some other more equal climate than this. Father very kindly & unexpectedly said to me this forenoon, "You need not give yourself any trouble about your board or the other things. You have had rather a hard time this last term & I will make no account of them." In addition to board there is an account of goods, etc., taken up at sundry times of late. These too he remits. The value of this remittance is at least, probably (\$40 or \$45), forty-five dollars. Thus I am called upon to thank my Heavenly & my earthly Fathers for so unexpected yet opportune favors. This will leave

me about \$200 to commence the work with, that is, to seek a home in the West or elsewhere where I & my dear wife may enjoy better health & thus better prospects of doing good.

From conversation with Prof. Larabee of Indiana. I learn that at the West they have perfect freedom from all these nervous complaints & consumption, to the first of which Hattie & myself are both victims & to the second of which we are both strongly disposed.⁸ Were my nervous system healthy I know no reason why I might not now, with my brethren in the ministry, be engaged in the glorious work of calling sinners to repentance, strengthening the weak & building up the Church in our most holy faith.⁹

It is true, people sicken & die at the West. It seems equally true of us that we shall always be sick & die not living out half our days if we remain in New England. From present appearances if I go, I go forth not knowing whither I go. Oh God direct thou my steps! The future of this world to me is all dark, but there is a God in Heaven & that God is my Father. I have entered my name in the Intelligence Offices of Deity to take such a place as He may find me & do such work as He shall direct. I have likewise got Insured in the Insurance Office of Deity. My Policy reads, "All things work together for good to them that love the Lord."

This is the fifth day of Camp Meeting & yet I have heard scarcely a word about it. It is said that a larger number of persons are encamped than ever before. Bro. Upham occu-

⁸ Indiana, the place where good health is king!

⁹ It is obvious that Henry would prefer to be in the ministry than in education.

⁷A sidelight on how the opening of Camp Meeting affected Edgartown village. Residents preferred to sail there by packet. Despite the weather, 3000 persons were in attendance this day. Most, of course, came from off-island, principally from Providence by steamer.

pies my Tent. I am glad of the privilege of making so slight a return for all his kindnesses to us both in our afflictions. The Lord bless the good old Man!

Friday, August 23. Morning. Friday again & dearest Hattie still lies upon her bed, a great & constant sufferer. To detail the course of her disease or rather diseases each day I cannot, for day has so run into night & night into day that I am at entire loss & could not swear whether yesterday was Thursday or Tuesday. Poor Girl! Her spasms, cramps & vomiting have been almost increasing -- only ceasing when under the influence of medicine.

During the week, the Menses set in, in addition to all else, but is now mainly done.¹⁰ This, of course, has helped reduce her. At its commencing I called in Dr. Pierce. He simply prescribed Morphia. This I administered but without the least apparent effect & such was her suffering from cramps & spasms that I gave her a dose of the former prescription of Cholormine, Brandy & Holman's by which she was immediately eased, so that she slept delightfully. On return of those spasms I have usually administered this remedy not finding anything else to benefit her.

There appears to be a disarrangement of the secretions of the liver, etc. -- large collection of wind in the stomach, all tending to produce spasms & in turn are produced by spasms. I have tried to remove wind from the stomach, [with] Red Laven-

der, Pep't, Re't & Magnesium, Spearmint, Annison, etc., without producing the least favorable effect. Yesterday she was distressed most of the day yet without severe cramps or spasms. Just in the evening she had quite a severe cramp in her stomach. As she had had considerable fever -- from pulse -- for a few days & yesterday somewhat increased with at times slight appearance of inflammation in the stomach I did not feel willing to continue the C. B. & H., so I called in Dr. Shiverick, the partner of Dr. Pierce. There are many drawbacks in Dr. S's appearance,¹¹ yet I have long been disposed to believe him a more skillful physician than Dr. P.

I had, a few hours before Dr. S. came in, administered a dose of Calomel & Opium, prepared by Dr. P. Dr. S., examined her case, pronounced no settled fever, no inflammation of the stomach. I told him the course I had pursued with her case from the first, together with all her symptoms, etc., as far as I knew them & requested him freely & frankly to express his opinion of the treatment. He said that now looking back from the results, he in the first instance should do a little administer a dose of Calomel, but yet taking the case as it was without these results before him he should do just as I did. He advised the continued use of the Cholorum & Brandy to relieve the spasms -- indeed to do just as I am doing. He thought the Calomel would have a very beneficial effect & advised a repetition in the course of a few days.

(To be continued.)

¹¹ What does he mean? Does any reader know why this comment about Dr. Shiverick?

Aids to Navigation from St. Nazaire to Belle Isle in 1795

at St. Nazaire Coming out Nantes River
Keep the North shore close. There's not much dependence
untill you come down toward the Rocks ^{in y^e compass} put to be seen at
high water) call y^e sharp point then steer more South
before you pass y^e Rocks you must bring the
Little town ^{call it name} having a Steeple in it over the outer point on y^e
North side the River after passing the affore sd Ledge you
may know near the Range of y^e Ledge by some high Rock in shore
always out of water When it raises be aware of y^e mentioned
you must run about S.W. about a Quarter of a mile to pass y^e
Sharp point then head in for the North shore ^{which} which
will carry you clear of a body of Rocks and Shoals and you
you may pass Croisic point near near continuing the last
Course untill you bring the Steeple of Bourdeba (a Little Village
just to y^e East of Croisic) to Range with a Little Guard house on
Croisic point then steer W. and look to go over for a small
Island nearly in Range with Bellisle leading a further
Ledge to be seen at ^{low} high water on y^e Larboard hand half mile Dist
call'd Lafourt in y^e french term
after you pass y^e Ledge give some Rocks to be seen any time day
South of haddock a small Birth and Run for Bellisle the first
West side Ebbs & flows 12 feet at high tide

First Mate Noah Pease recorded instructions in his journal in 1795 for passage from St. Nazaire, France, on the Loire River (he called it the Nantes) to Belle Isle in the Atlantic. Here are excerpts: "You must bring the Little town called St. Naizar having a Steeple in it over the outer point on ye north side the River after passing the affore sd Ledge you may Know near the Rang of ye Ledge by some high Rock in shore always out of water. . . Continuing the Last Course untill you Bring the Steeple of Bourdeba (a Little Villag Just to ye East of Croisic) to Range with a Little Guard house on Crosic point then Steer W . . . Leaving a Sunken Ledge to be sean at high low water on ye Larboard hand half mile Dist Call'd Lafourt in ye french term. After you pass sd Ledge give some Rocks to be sean anytime Laying South of haddock [Hoedic] a small Birth and Run for Bellisle."

¹⁰ Dear Hattie would be shaken if she knew that total strangers, like us, were reading about such a personal matter. Even today, it is rarely discussed. The poor woman has no privacy at all.

Eight Days at Nine Shillings a Day Equalled \$12 in 1835

| De Leavitt Thaxter Esq | | 1835 | |
|------------------------|--|-------------|--|
| Oct 31 | 8 days work at his House @ 3/ per day | 1 8 00 | |
| | 1/2 day work Do @ 3/ per day | 8 44 | |
| | 1/2 day work on lumber in Sept by 2 Men - | 1 31 | |
| Nov 7 | 1 day work @ 3/ per day work @ 3/ per day | 2 62 1/2 | |
| Nov 14 | 5 days work @ 3/ 5 days work @ 3/ per day | 1 3 12 1/2 | |
| Nov 21 | 5 1/2 days work @ 3/ - | 8 85 | |
| Nov 28 | 5 days work @ 3/ 9 | 5 62 1/2 | |
| Nov 28 | 8 days work @ 3/ 6 days @ 3/ per day | 6 5 7 1/2 | |
| Dec 5 | 6 days work @ 3/ 6 days @ 3/ per day | 1 5 7 1/2 | |
| Dec 12 | 4 days work @ 3/ 4 days @ 3/ per day | 1 0 50 | |
| Dec 19 | 6 days @ 3/ 6 days @ 3/ per day | 1 5 25 | |
| Dec 26 | 6 days @ 3/ 6 days @ 3/ per day | 1 5 7 1/2 | |
| Dec 31 | 6 days @ 3/ 6 days @ 3/ per day | 1 5 7 1/2 | |
| Jan 9 | 4 days @ 3/ 4 days @ 3/ per day | 1 0 50 | |
| Feb 16 | 5 days @ 3/ 5 days @ 3/ per day | 1 3 12 1/2 | |
| | 1 day work @ 3/ 1 day @ 3/ per day | 16 4 18 1/2 | |
| | deduct from this account for short days &c | 3 4 10 | |
| | | 13 0 12 1/2 | |

Wages were figured in shillings and pence per day as late as 1835 on the Thaxter house. Payment was made in U. S. dollars and cents, but the rate was still set in English currency.

| By Contra | | 1835 | |
|-----------|--|---------|--|
| Oct 31 | By Fresh Pork 1.00 Salt Pork 1.00 | 2 08 | |
| Nov 21 | 17 lbs Fresh Pork @ 9c 6 Cabbage @ 9c | 2 07 | |
| Nov 28 | 1/2 bushel Corn @ \$1.10 | 55 | |
| Dec 30 | 6 qts white Beans @ 9c 1 bush Turneps @ 5c | 5 7 1/2 | |
| 1836 | by Cash | 30 00 | |
| Feb 25 | by 1 bushel Apples | 7 1/2 | |
| Mar 9 | by Ploughing Garden | 7 1/2 | |
| Mar 12 | by Cash | 20 00 | |
| Mar 14 | by Cash | 10 00 | |
| Mar 16 | 12 bush Corn @ \$1.12 1/2 | 13 50 | |
| Mar 20 | by Cash - | 6 00 | |
| | | 130 00 | |

Leavitt Thaxter paid the bill partly in cash, but also in pork, corn and "ploughing garden."