



# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 38, NO. 4

MAY 1997

Courtesy Artist Tom Waldron



*Dellie Mitchell and friends opening  
the barrier beach in the late 1930s*

## Tisbury Great Pond

by  
JOHN WESLEY  
MAYHEW  
WHITING

## In 1933 I Helped Open Tisbury Great Pond To the Sea

by PEG KNOWLES

Money Was a Problem,  
Even During Whaling's Boom Years

## What Did Islanders Worry About in the Mid-1800s?

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

## Documents: A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

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### CLARIFICATION

On page 66 of the November 1996 *Intelligencer*, we printed a letter from Capt. Noah Pease, then in France, to his wife. It was in 1795 and the Captain wrote: "I sold Mr. Leonard Jervis of Boston 84 lb. of dumb fish." The editor, unlettered in the arcane world of fishmongering, indicated with a question mark that he wasn't certain the Captain had written "dumb fish."

It seems that it was dumb fish -- or almost. Member Tom Hodgson of West Tisbury clarified the matter in a letter to the editor:

"What is meant by the writer [Noah Pease] is 'dumfish' which was a high-quality salt cod. Much was produced at the Isle of Shoals."

Many thanks to Mr. Hodgson, from

Dumb Fish

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Vol. 38, No. 4

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Editor: Arthur R. Railton

Founding Editor: Gale Huntington (1959--1977)

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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.



## Tisbury Great Pond

by JOHN WESLEY MAYHEW WHITING

Tisbury Great Pond was part of the outwash plain formed by the melting of the Wisconsin glacier about 10,000 years ago.<sup>1</sup> When the melting finally stopped and the glacier had receded, the south shore formed a bay that stretched from Squibnocket Point to Katama. This bay was eventually barred across by a barrier beach to form the ponds that lie along the south shore of the Vineyard.<sup>2</sup> When this barrier beach was formed is unknown, but the best evidence for estimating the date is provided by an archaeological research project carried out by K. M. Jones and George Manter.<sup>3</sup>

In the spring of 1965 when the ice was thick enough to hold heavy equipment Jones and Manter took a core sample of the bottom sediments on the west side of the pond, just off Clellan Ford's<sup>4</sup> camp on Zephaniah's Point. This site was chosen because bottom soundings indicated that it was probably over the valley made by the confluence of Mill Brook and Tiasquam River as they cut their way to the ocean at the end of the Ice Age. They bored through the bottom silt for 22 feet before they hit preglacial sediment. The bottom sections were sent off-Island to be analyzed. They were carbon dated as

<sup>1</sup>Clifford A. Kaye, "Outline of Pleistocene geology of Martha's Vineyard." Geological Survey professional paper 501C, Geological Survey Research, Washington, D.C. pp.134-139. Also see Kaye, "Illinoian and early Wisconsin moraines of Martha's Vineyard," *Ibid.*, pp. 140-143.

<sup>2</sup>Henry L. Whiting, "Report of changes in the shoreline and beaches of Martha's Vineyard as derived from comparisons of recent and former surveys," *U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Report* for 1886, App. 9, 1887, pp. 263-266.

<sup>3</sup>Unpublished reports and notes of K. M. Jones, 1965, 1967 and 1981.

<sup>4</sup>Clellan Ford, also an anthropologist, was the author's college roommate.

JOHN WESLEY MAYHEW WHITING was born in Quenames, a short walk from where he and his wife, Beatrice, now live. Both are anthropologists with degrees from Yale, where they met. When he retired from the Harvard faculty in the 1950s, they chose as home their favorite spot at Old Fields, overlooking Tisbury Great Pond. As a hunter, fisherman and sailor, Mr. Whiting has been partaking of the pleasures of his beloved pond for most of his 89 years.

having been laid down 10,000 years ago, which is the date of the end of the Ice Age.

If it is assumed that the silt was deposited at a constant rate, each one-foot section of the core would represent approximately 500 years of silt deposit. The core thus provides a calendar of changes in the sediments laid down since the Ice Age. Each one-foot section was therefore carefully analyzed for the presence of various species of shellfish and for types of sand. A major change in the amount and type of sand occurred between section 8 and 9, or 4500 BP (Before Present) by the core calendar. Jones and Manter argue that this change indicates the time when the beach was formed, shutting off the bay and creating Tisbury Great Pond.

Since several of the species of fish that inhabit the pond must have had access to the ocean, this barrier beach must have been periodically opened to the sea even before the Europeans arrived to open it with their dredges and shovels. Herring (alewives) and smelt are both anadromous. They need to cross the beach into fresh water to reproduce themselves. Although they live most of their lives in the ocean, they spawn in fresh-water streams. They come into the pond through the opening in the spring and make their way up Mill Brook or Tiasquam River where they spawn. Baby herring and smelt, called fingerlings, make their way out of the pond to the ocean where they live to maturity. Then they return to the pond to spawn.

Eels, by contrast, are catadromous. They spawn in the Sargasso Sea near Bermuda. The baby eels find their way to the pond where they live for five to twenty years. When they reach sexual maturity their skin turns white. Called silver eels, they leave the pond to make their way to their spawning area.<sup>5</sup> Blue-claw crabs also spawn in the ocean and the baby crabs return to live in the pond until maturity.

Thus, if Tisbury Great Pond had been separated from the ocean by a permanent barrier beach, neither the anadra-

mous herring and smelt nor the catadromous eels and crabs would be found in the pond.

Seed-sized salt-water shellfish were found throughout the core. These included mussels, snails, steamer clams, scallops and quahaugs. Oyster spat occurred sporadically. Since none of these species can live in fresh water, this is further evidence that the pond must have been open to the sea before the advent of the Europeans.

The beach is now regularly opened by humans. Although Native Americans were here before 4000 BP,<sup>6</sup> they lacked appropriate equipment, making it uncertain whether they opened the pond. If they did not, it must have opened itself until the Europeans arrived. This could happen by flooding over the beach and eroding a channel, as occurs after the pond is flooded by a hurricane surge. A hydrologic study of the pond by Fugro-McClelland (East)<sup>7</sup> reported that every day the net increase in the volume of water in the pond was ten-million gallons which indicates that even without hurricane flooding, self-opening is quite plausible.

When South Beach was formed, it was considerably south of its present location. Folklore has it that in the early part of the last century one could skate from Tisbury Pond to Edgartown when it was frozen.<sup>8</sup> This may be an exaggeration, but maps made in the middle of the last century show that there was open water from Long Point to upper Chilmark Pond. By the end of last century the beach had moved in so that Chilmark Pond and Quenames Cove and Long Cove were cut off from the main pond. It is estimated that South Beach moves northward between three and four feet a year. This estimate is based on a report by my grandfather, Henry L. Whiting.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> William A. Ritchie, *The Archaeology of Martha's Vineyard*: Natural History Press, Garden City, N.Y., 1969.

<sup>7</sup> Fugro-McClelland (East) Inc., "Water quality study of Tisbury Great Pond," 1992, prepared for the towns of West Tisbury and Chilmark.

<sup>8</sup> Barbara Blau Chamberlain, *These Fragile Outposts*, Natural History Press, Garden City, N.Y., 1964, p. 229.

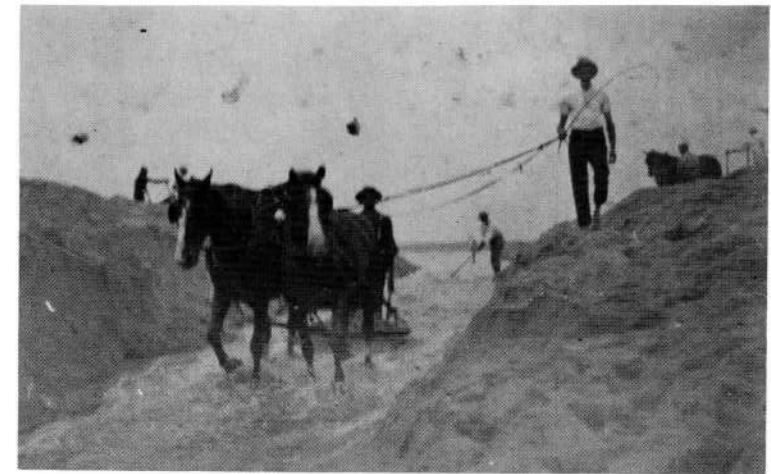
<sup>9</sup> Henry L. Whiting, Appendix 9, "Report of Changes in the Shoreline and Beaches of Martha's Vineyard," 1886. See also N. S. Shaler, "Geology of the Cape Cod District," *U.S. Geo-*

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent description of the life history of the eel see "The Eel Fishery of Martha's Vineyard" by Clyde MacKenzie Jr., in the *Intelligencer*, February 1995.

The Native Americans along the eastern seaboard of the United States established their settlements on the drainages of rivers and streams. Finfish, shellfish and game animals were all available in these drainages. The first settlers of Martha's Vineyard were no exception. One of the settlements that they established, called Takemmy, ran from Indian Hill to the South Beach and included the drainage of what are now known as Mill Brook and the Tiasquam River, both of which flowed into Town Cove of the Great Pond.<sup>10</sup> This drainage included all the lowlands and meadows surrounding the Great Pond and all its coves. It included Long Cove, Black Point and Little Black Point Ponds and Quenames Cove.

The ponds and various locations in the Takemmy drainage were later given place names by the Wampanoags. Quenames, the name for the area around Black Point Pond and Quenames Cove, is of particular interest. Quenames is an Algonquian term meaning "the place to catch eels." Thus, if the pond had been completely shut off from the sea, eels could not have reproduced themselves and hence there would have been none in the pond and Quenames would have been a meaningless place name.

When the Europeans arrived on the Vineyard, they also settled on the Takemmy drainage. The two brooks provided drinking water for themselves and their animals. They also made dams to power mills which were used to grind corn, saw lumber and weave cloth. Furthermore, the meadows and lowlands around the Great Pond were found to be excellent summer pasture for stock, particularly sheep. The Blue Grass that grew there when the pond level was at the proper height was thought to be especially good for fattening spring lambs. In fact, the French consider lambs raised near the sea (*pres de sale*) to be a delicacy. Black Grass, another type of hay that grows only on marshes, makes exceptionally good bedding for



Opening the barrier beach at Tisbury Great Pond in 1890s, looking north into the pond. On right, holding the reins, is Johnson Whiting, the author's father.

the winter stalls of the farm animals. Manure from this type of bedding was especially useful since it would not seed itself in the cornfield and gardens situated in the uplands.<sup>11</sup>

Assuming that our hypothesis that the pond opened itself before the coming of the Europeans is correct, the marshlands might often be so flooded that the sheep could not graze on the lowlands and marsh hay could not be harvested. The new settlers on the Tisbury Pond drainage must have then decided that they could not leave the opening of the pond to nature. An extant 1694 bill to the riparian owners to pay for laborers and horses used for opening the beach indicates that the riparian owners did decide to open the beach at an early date.

The beach was traditionally opened by a wooden dredge especially made for the purpose. This dredge was pulled by a pair of horses or a yoke of oxen, guided by a man. Several men with shovels and beach hoes also helped. This equipment was used to dig a small channel from the pond to the ocean. It was done when the pond was flooded to at least three feet

logical Survey Annual Report 18.2, 1886, pp. 497-593. More recent studies place the estimated annual erosion northward at 7 to 9 feet a year at Tisbury Great Pond.

<sup>10</sup> Charles E. Banks, *History of Martha's Vineyard*, Dukes County Historical Society, Edgartown, Mass., 1966.

<sup>11</sup> J. Hector St. John, *Letters from an American Farmer*, London, 1783, opp. p. 160 has a map with this legend describing the land between Chilmark Pond and Tisbury Great Pond: "The best mowing ground in the island, yielding four tons of black grass per acre."



above the level of the ocean so that the pond water would flow outward, cutting a larger channel as the pond drained down to sea level. The ocean tide would then flow in and out of the opening, flooding the pond with salt water at high tide and draining it when the tide fell. A heavy surf might close this channel or opening in a few days, but it usually remained open for a month or two.

The decision as to when to open the beach after it had closed turned out to be complex. The farmers were concerned about the marshes and the fishermen about letting the herring and smelt in and the eels out at the appropriate times. To settle these diverse interests, the riparian owners formed an association. They named it: "The Proprietors of the Low Lands and Meadows around Tisbury Great Pond."<sup>12</sup>

To make a successful opening, the water level of the pond must be high enough and the weather must be mild. It also depends on the phase of the moon, a full moon being best. To set the time of opening, using these variables, the Proprietors appointed a board of three "Sewers." Richard Miller, one of the current riparian owners, investigated the origin of the term "Sewers" and discovered that in 1708 Queen Anne of England appointed a Royal Commission of Sewers "who had the authority for the repair and maintenance of walls, ditches, banks, bridges, gutters, sewers, gates, causers, bridges and streams and any other defenses by the coast of the sea and marine ground lying and being with a specified district liable to inundation by the sea or rivers."<sup>13</sup> Perhaps drawing on this definition, and expanding it to cover barrier beaches, the Proprietors have their own Board of Sewers for Tisbury Great Pond. The board members, known as Sewers, were given official status in 1904 and are appointed annually by the Proprietors of the Low Lands and Meadows.

A document on file in the library of the Dukes County

<sup>12</sup> "An Act to Provide for the Drainage of the Lowlands and Meadows around Certain Great Ponds in the County of Dukes County," *Massachusetts Acts*, 1904, Chap. 203.

<sup>13</sup> *Oxford Dictionary*, vol.II, p.576. In an interesting coincidence, the *Oxford* quotes a Mayhew several times in its definition. Apparently he was a reporter for a periodical, *London Labour*, and had written about sewers in 1851. The land bordering Great Pond had been settled by Mayhews 200 years earlier.



*The latest word in earth-moving equipment in the 1890s was a simple homemade wooden drag, being held upright here by West Tisbury's Torrey Hancock.*

Historical Society, "Minutes of Deposition Relating to Oyster Pond, 1823," provides a historical view of the pond openings. Two members of the Tisbury Pond Board of Sewers, William Mayhew, Esq., and Capt. Samuel Hancock, were interviewed as to the feasibility of opening Oyster Pond. Hancock was asked to describe the method used in the opening of Tisbury Great Pond. He explained that

the beach was eight to fifteen rods wide and is opened by men with shovels and by oxen with drags. The opening is sometimes difficult and we are from one to six days in effecting an opening. Sometimes the opening is immediately shut up by a sudden shift of wind and the labor all lost by a bar across occasioned by the roll of the sea. . . . He thinks that the cost of opening Tisbury Pond to be about \$150 per annum. Thinks it is necessary to open Tisbury Great Pond for the benefit of the meadows and land adjoining about four times a year. Tisbury Pond is principally opened by Proprietors. . . principally in the fall when the fish are running and there is gunning we are assisted by fishermen and gunners from the different towns, but at other times the labor falls on the Proprietors exclusively.<sup>14</sup>

A study of the fish species to be found in the pond was carried out in the fall of 1906 by the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries Station at Woods Hole. The findings of this study were re-

<sup>14</sup> "Minutes of Deposition Relating to Oyster Pond, 1823," Document 76.8.2., Martha's Vineyard Historical Society.

ported by William Converse Kendall in a pamphlet published by the Bureau of Fisheries.<sup>15</sup> Eighty-five different species are listed, most of them salt-water species. Kendall also reported:

There is authentic history of the early importance of the fishery at this pond, particularly for striped bass, smelts and alewives. One record of the former abundance of striped bass is that in December 1848, 18,000 of those fish were taken by one set of a long shore seine in one of the inflowing streams. They were carted to Vineyard Haven and shipped by two schooners to New York.

Up until 1870, fish were taken from the pond by residents of Chilmark and West Tisbury, as well as by the Proprietors. No fish were cultivated until 1869, when one of the riparian owners, Allen Look, decided to see if perch, a species of fish that was not found in the pond, could be bred there. Look and his sons planted 1200 to 1400 breeding white perch in the pond. The experiment was successful.<sup>16</sup> Ten years later they began seining and harvested some 200 barrels. This experiment enabled the Riparian Owners Association, of which Look was a member, to obtain from the Massachusetts Board of Fisheries and Game a lease of Tisbury Great Pond for the purpose of cultivating useful fishes.<sup>17</sup>

The pond Proprietors thus became fish farmers. They called themselves "Lessees," and met annually and appointed supervisors to arrange seining and to see to it that sufficient alewives and smelt could get up the brooks to spawn so that they would reproduce themselves. Also, they required that the smaller perch be thrown back and they arranged for the beach to be opened at appropriate times so that the fish ready to spawn could get in the pond and the fingerlings could get out. The fish caught were barreled and sold. The net proceeds, after a fee was paid to the town and an amount set aside to cover the cost of opening the beach, was divided among the riparian owners according to the number of rods of shore front they owned. It was reported that the net proceeds for 1875 was

<sup>15</sup> William C. Kendall, *An Account of Tisbury Great Pond with a List of Fishes Collected in October and November 1906*, U.S. Bureau of Fisheries, 1906.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> "Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Lessees from 1875-1945,"



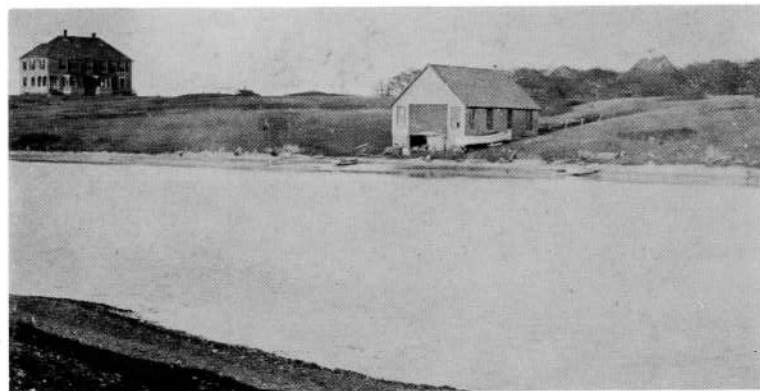
Success! Fresh water of the pond begins running south into the ocean. The men stand on bank admiring their work. Man on right is believed to be Jim Greene.

\$11015.31, of which the town's share was \$50.71.<sup>18</sup>

The minutes of the annual meetings of the Lessees from 1875 to 1945 indicate that the income from the herring catch was appreciable. As late as 1928, the riparian owners received a surplus of twenty cents for each rod of shore front they owned. The last recorded distribution of funds was on May 29, 1931. The lease from the Commission of Fisheries which had been in effect since 1873 was not renewed. Individual fishermen continued to seine herring and perch on a small scale.

It is not clear why this epoch of fish farming came to an end. One reason suggested is that the market for herring collapsed. They had been used as codfish bait, but a change in the methods of the cod-fishing industry made herring no longer useful. However, for over fifty years the cultivation of white perch and the seining of alewives had been a successful enterprise.

<sup>18</sup> Kendall.



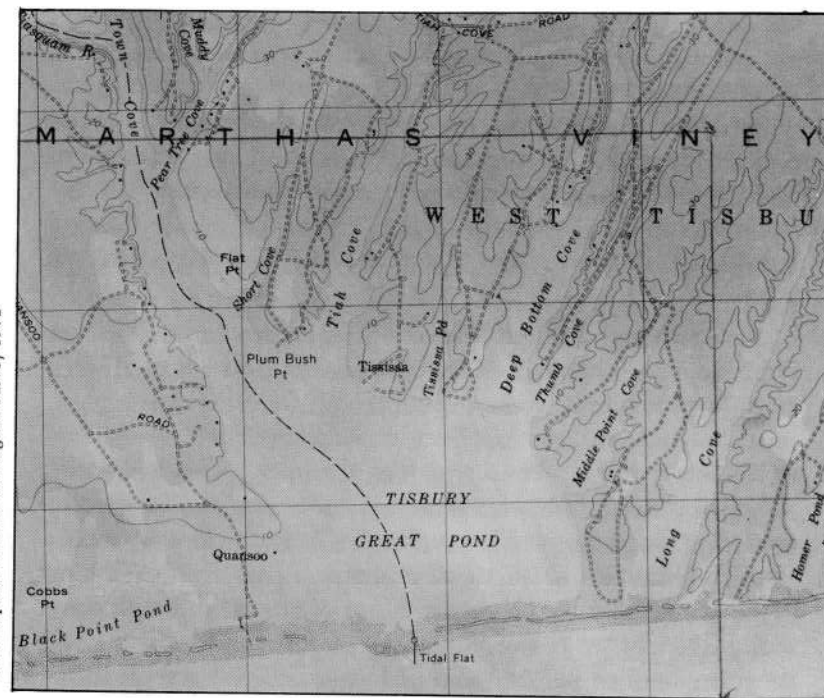
Boathouse on this postcard of Pear Tree Cove is said to have belonged to Jim Look, the manager of the gun club. Can anyone identify the large house at left?

The turn of the century marked another change in the human use of the pond. Since the Vineyard is on the eastern flyway for migrant waterfowl, large flocks of geese and ducks stop at the ponds in the fall on their trip south and again in the spring on their trip north. When I was a boy, flocks of white bellies (bald-pated widgeon) numbering in the thousands almost completely covered the surface of Black Point Pond. Huge flocks of bluebills fed on the clams and mussels around the shores of the Great Pond. Perhaps the most striking were the Canada geese which were the favorite game for the local gunners.

The Tisbury Great Pond Gunning Club was established about 1900 by a group of wealthy hunters from off-Island. They bought large tracts of land around the pond and built cabins where they lived during the gunning season. They hired James Look, who lived on the east shore of Pear Tree Cove, to be the club manager. The arrangements for the hunters were sumptuous, at least compared to most.<sup>19</sup> A small shack was built with a wood stove installed to keep the hunters warm while they waited for the Canada geese to arrive. A long wooden blind ran along the beach where tame geese were

<sup>19</sup> The author's wife recalls vividly her discomfort while gunning on Great Pond with her fiancé's father, Johnson Whiting. It was, she says, a test of her suitability to become his daughter-in-law.

U.S. Dept. of Interior Geological Survey 1972



Map of Tisbury Great Pond today. Opening in the beach is made at the narrow point to the left of Chilmark-West Tisbury line, that runs down the center of pond.

pegged as live decoys. When the manager heard a flock of wild geese approaching he opened a pen containing a half-dozen young geese who flew up to greet the wild flock. When they discovered that the flock were strangers, they wheeled and came back to the shore where their parents were pegged. The wild flock usually followed them in and were easy prey for the hunters who had set themselves up behind the blinds. Blinds were established both on Tisbury and Black Point Ponds. Unfortunately for the club (but not for the geese), the use of live decoys was prohibited by federal law in the 1930s and the hunting club ceased to exist. The live decoys, since they could no longer be used, were released and became what is now a large flock of year-round residents.

After World War II another attempt at commercial fish-farming was made. According to Kendall, oysters were said to abound in the pond up to 1825. That year the pond



remained closed throughout the season and in August the water became hot and stagnant, killing all the oysters. Mr. Look and sons have planted some in the last few years, but they have not done well.<sup>20</sup>

By 1945, however, mature oysters abounded all around the shores of the main pond. Perhaps the Look experiment had been successful after all. A different explanation, this one from my father, Johnson Whiting, is that a schooner-load of oysters was brought from the Cape and distributed in the pond.

Although the residents of Chilmark would often gather a family mess, oysters were not commercially harvested until after World War II when a group of us, Wilfred Huntington, John Mayhew, my brother Everett, and myself, decided to try to cultivate them. We set up the Quansoo Shellfish Farm. When we tried to obtain a lease for our operation, we discovered that, according to Massachusetts law, the towns, rather than the Bureau of Fisheries, had control over the harvesting of shellfish. We would have to get a grant from Chilmark if we wished to carry on our attempts to cultivate oysters. We therefore applied to the town and were given a grant for exclusive use of about ten acres of pond bottom, winning approval in a special town meeting by the narrowest of margins.

We found that the pond's wild oysters were so gnarled and twisted from setting and growing on one another that the off-Island markets would not take them and the Island market was limited. We also found that they were difficult to shuck and there were few skilled shuckers on the Island. We were, however, able to sell our wild oysters to an off-Island company that had professional oyster shuckers. We also found oyster growers on the Cape who would buy seed oysters from us to plant and grow on their beds.

Neither of the above enterprises was very profitable and we decided that we had to raise our own oysters. We therefore read up on the natural history of the oyster. We found out that a mature oyster may produce either eggs or sperm, younger oysters were more likely to be male and older

oysters female. We also discovered that an adult female produces a million eggs. Someone estimated that if all the eggs of one female oyster were fertilized and grew to maturity and this happened to all the offspring for eight generations, it would result in a mass the size of the earth growing at the speed of light. This was obviously not happening at our beds in Tisbury Great Pond.

Clearly, most of the millions of eggs that were released each year by the female oysters never reached maturity. They began as a microscopic free-swimming organism that would live for a few days and then die if it was not lucky enough to be found by an oyster sperm, which was also microscopic and free swimming. The chances of such a mating are very small, but the difficulties do not end here. A fertilized egg becomes what is called an oyster *spat*. It grows fins and swims about, searching for a clean, hard surface, called *cultch*, which it will attach itself to for the rest of its life. As soon as it has attached itself to the cultch, it loses its fins and starts growing its shell. Since shell grows faster in the summer than in the winter, this shows up on the shell as a ring which, like a tree ring, can be used to determine age. Oysters reach maturity in about four years and seldom live longer than eight or nine. The oldest one that I have seen had 14 rings and was nearly a foot long.

The natural cultch for oysters in Tisbury Great Pond consisted of the pebbles and rocks that have washed out of the banks and form a ring around the edge of the pond. Silt from the brooks covers much of the center of the pond and thus is not a suitable oyster habitat. Shells of older oysters also provide cultch and this results in crowding and the gnarled wild oysters that we found when we started.

With this information, we decided that to have a successful oyster farm we had to set out fresh cultch at the appropriate time. We experimented with various methods and found that baby oysters grew fastest and the meats of mature oysters were best if they grew at least a foot above the bottom. We tried hanging bags of oyster or scallop shells as cultch from rafts. Unfortunately, our rafts were all blown away by a hurri-

<sup>20</sup> Kendall.

cane. We finally settled on making slim bags from galvanized chicken wire and filling them with cultch and then leaning them against one another on the bottom of the pond.

Since fungus quickly grows on cultch after it is set out, the best time to do this is just after the oysters spawn, which is when the water temperature gets warm enough, usually by the middle of June. The Shellfish Farm therefore made weekly tows with a plankton net and examined the contents under a microscope. We learned to recognize oyster spat and could thus determine when to put down the cultch. We also found that if the beach was opened just after spawning when the oyster spat were free swimming, many of them would be lost by being washed out to sea. This information was made available to the Sewers who used it as one of the bases for deciding when to open the beach.

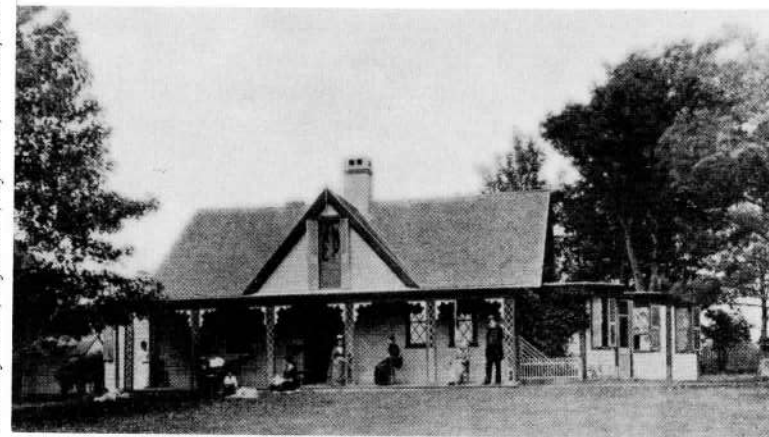
Since oysters depend on the salinity of the water in the pond, the Shellfish Farm decided to take the responsibility for opening the beach. One experiment that was not successful was an attempt to accomplish it with a sandsucker pump mounted on a Navy surplus DUKW.<sup>21</sup> We had thought that this device would enable us to open the pond when it was at any level and thus have better control of the salinity level of the water. We thought our dredging equipment would accomplish this, but it did not work efficiently and had to be abandoned. The Shellfish Farm then agreed to pay for the work of opening in return for having a say on when it should be made.

Not all our experiments failed. We developed an efficient method of harvesting oysters by developing a dredge that could be pulled behind a small boat powered by an outboard.

In addition to oysters, we harvested steamer clams which grew in abundance around the pond shores. They grew about eight to ten inches deep in the bottom of the shallow water near shore. Since the tidal movement in the pond was minimal, the clam beds were not exposed at low tide and therefore could not be easily dug with a clam hoe.

<sup>21</sup> An amphibious vehicle used in beach landings.

From My Father, My Mother, My Home, Newhall, 1920.



Built by Josias Standish, c.1675, this West Tisbury house was a parsonage from 1760 until 1852, when grandfather Henry L. Whiting bought and enlarged it.

When a group of us were having coffee at my house one morning, Willie Huntington said, "There ought to be a way to harvest the clams in the pond." We brainstormed the problem and came up with the idea that since steamer clams were lighter than sand, but heavier than water, if these three materials were mixed up and then allowed to settle, the clams should end up on top of the sand rather than ten inches underneath. We also thought that a jet of water from a pump powered by a gasoline engine would be a good way to mix up the clams, sand and water. Much to the distress of my wife, we unhitched the pump run by a gasoline engine that provided the water for our house, took it down to the pond, started it up and directed a jet from a garden hose into a clam hole. Sure enough, when things settled, a large steamer clam sat on the surface of the sand. It was then easy to construct a jet-rig clam digger consisting of six to eight jets that could be dragged along the bottom leaving a row of clams which could be picked up by a specially constructed rake. This rig is now widely used.<sup>22</sup> With this invention, clams turned out to be a more profitable crop than oysters.

In the mid-1950s, the shellfishing lease held by Quan-

<sup>22</sup> We discussed at length the question of patenting our invention, but decided it was so simple that every fisherman would build his own.

soo Shellfish Farm ran out and our application for renewal was voted down by the town. At a special town meeting, the voters decided that commercial oystering should be possible for all Chilmark citizens and therefore no private grants should be made. Oystering is now being carried on by individual shellfishermen, on both the Chilmark and West Tisbury sides of the pond. To fish commercially in the pond, a town permit is required. In 1984, according to the report of the Shellfish Constable, 18 commercial permits were granted; 15 for oysters; 1 for clams; and 2 for eels. All oysters less than 3.75 inches long must be thrown back and 10 bushels was the weekly limit.

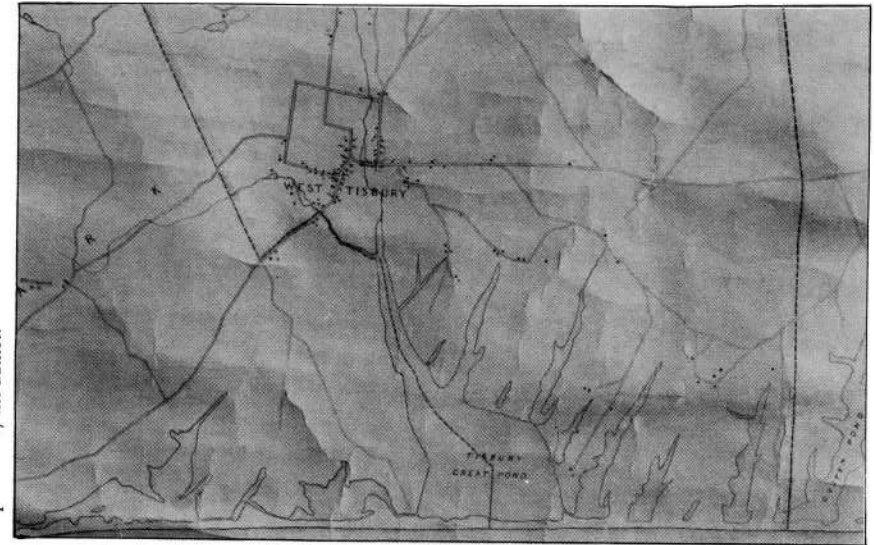
In the 1980s, the harvesting of shellfish in the pond was threatened by reports of such high fecal coliform counts that the Boards of Health of West Tisbury and Chilmark shut down the pond to shellfishing. The towns financed a number of studies on the degree of pollution in the pond and what may have caused it.<sup>23</sup> The studies agreed that pollution was worse in the upper reaches of the pond and greater in summer than in winter. They concluded that the coliform levels were not dangerously high south of Big Sandy and the towns' Boards of Health opened the pond for shellfishing in that area.

The studies did not agree on the sources of the pollution. One attributed the high levels of coliform to waterfowl and livestock. Others concluded that the high coliform counts found at the mouths of Mill Brook and Tiasquam River were the result of storm water runoff from roads. Whether road runoff, waterfowl or livestock is the culprit is still being debated. I favor the waterfowl hypothesis. The population of Canada geese that summer and breed on the Vineyard and frequent the pond is now up to 600. A flock of this size produces a lot of feces. It should also be noted that they breed in the brooks and raise their broods in Town Cove.

By 1950, swimming, sailing and lying on the beach had replaced harvesting marsh hay, raising white perch, seining herring and decoying geese as the major use of the pond. The

<sup>23</sup> A list of these studies is printed at the end of this article.

Map owned by the author.



Portion of original map, c. 1890, by Henry Whiting, U.S. cartographer and grandfather.

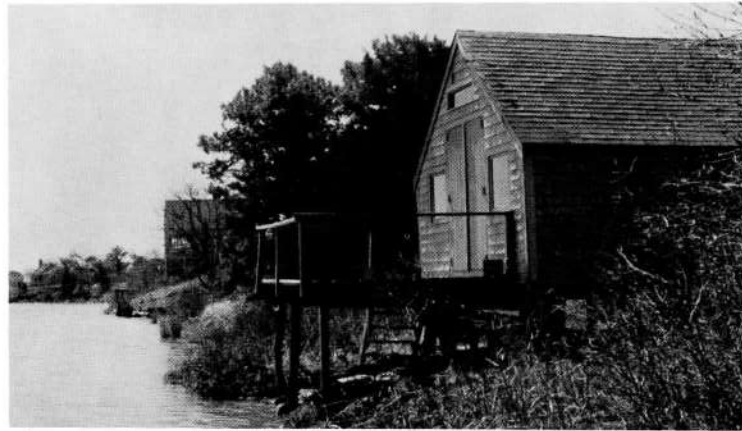
hunting shacks were bought and turned into summer camps, and the majority of the riparian owners were no longer farmers and fishermen.

The first sailboat on the pond was owned by my uncle, Judge Everett Allen Davis, who lived in West Tisbury. In 1897, he bought a plot of land on the west shore of the pond at Old Fields, where he built a boathouse and a horse stable.<sup>24</sup> He also bought a catboat which he named *Pilgrim*. During the summer, when the weather was favorable, he would hitch up his horse and buggy and, with his wife Georgiana, drive to Old Fields where he would rig up the *Pilgrim*, sail around the pond and then spend the night in the boathouse.

When Uncle Everett died in 1928, I inherited the boathouse and my brother Everett inherited the *Pilgrim*. Soon after this, some of the other riparian owners bought sailboats and by the 1940s there were enough boats on the pond to hold weekly races Sunday afternoons. There were sometimes as many as twenty boats, no two of which were the same size or type. The races started from Big Sandy, where a committee

<sup>24</sup> On the boathouse wall there is a calendar for the year 1898, the year it was built.





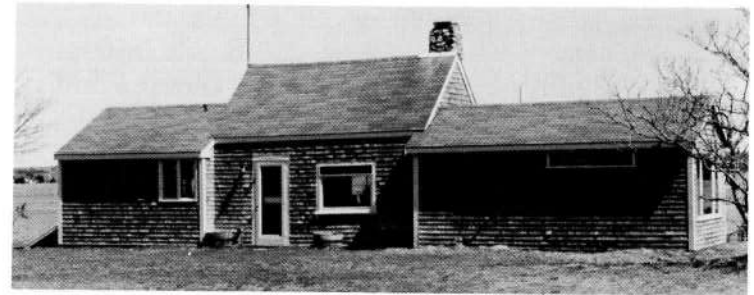
*Judge Davis's boathouse is now a summer camp on the west shore of Great Pond.*

would decide on the handicaps. The starter with a megaphone would then start the boats off at different times. They would race around a set of buoys and finish back at Big Sandy. At the end of the season there was a special final race. The first such race occurred during World War II when rum was the favorite drink around the pond and the prize for the winner was therefore a bottle of demerara rum.<sup>25</sup> This custom has continued down to the present. The final race is still called The Demerara. The number and types of boats racing have greatly decreased, however.

When tractors took over from horses and oxen in the farms surrounding the pond, a bulldozer replaced the horse-drawn dredge and beach hoes as a means of opening the beach. Before the bulldozer, opening the beach was a festive occasion. All the riparian owners came, the men bringing beach hoes or shovels, the women with a picnic lunch and the children with screams of delight. The elders would stand watch, telling the children not to break down the banks and giving their opinions as to whether the water would run *out* or *in* when the job was done.

Now, rather than taking all day, the bulldozer completes the opening in only a few hours. Beach hoes are no

<sup>25</sup> Wilfred Huntington painted a watercolor of the sailboats lined up on Big Sandy. It hangs all year in the house of the winner of The Demerara race. (See page ??)



*The judge's stable (center of camp, less window and chimney) was moved here, far from the house, to provide quiet for author to learn German for doctorate.*

longer of any use and the event is not the occasion for a picnic. The cost of a bulldozer is much greater than for a team of horses or a yoke of oxen and there's no money from the sale of herring to pay for it. Usually, three openings are made each year, spring, summer and fall, but the amount of rainfall and the occurrence of hurricanes disrupt any standard schedule.

In sum, Tisbury Great Pond has served its surrounding residents in a variety of ways. In pre-Columbian times, it was where the Native Americans trapped eels and alewives and harvested oysters and clams. Then, the early British settlers, who brought domestic animals with them, found that the marshes provided pasturage for sheep and bedding for their horses and cows. They too seined alewives and trapped eels as the Indians had done before they arrived. Two attempts at fish farming were made. Perch and oysters were cultivated and steamer clams harvested. At the turn of the century, a gunning club was formed which lasted about 30 years. Today, the gunning camps have been converted into summer houses.<sup>26</sup> Oysters and clams are still harvested, but not cultivated.

No longer is it possible to paddle a canoe inside a barrier beach from Nashaquitsa Cliffs to Mattakeesett Bay, but the Vineyard's south shore still remains, as it has for centuries, a beautiful, unspoiled paradise.

<sup>26</sup> In World War II, the Navy placed a bombing target on the barrier beach between Long Point and the West Tisbury--Chilmark line. Planes came from Quonset Point, R. I., to drop their bombs and many landed in the pond, causing much displeasure to residents.

### Water Quality Studies of Tisbury Great Pond

In recent years, these studies have been made of Tisbury Great Pond:

Division of Water Pollution, DEQE, 1975 *Martha's Vineyard Water Quality Study*, published 1977.

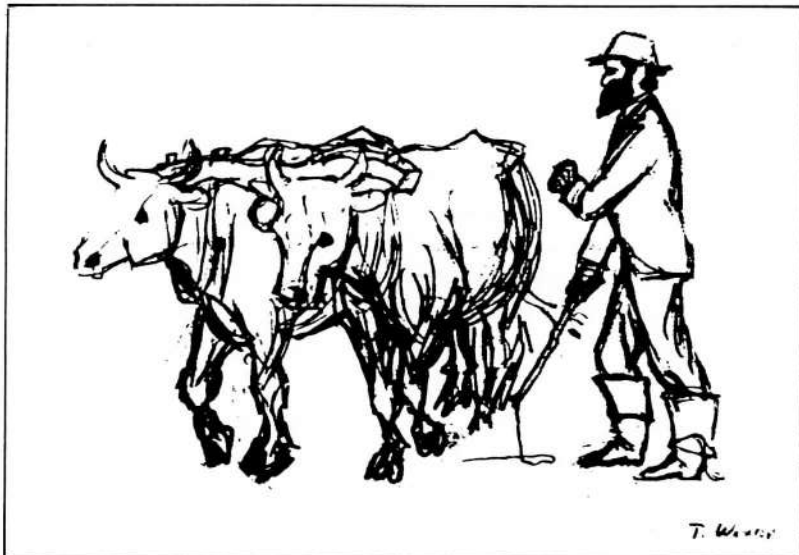
Fugro-McClelland (East), Inc. *Water Quality Study of Tisbury Great Pond*, Prepared for the Towns of West Tisbury and Chilmark, 1992.

Bruce M. Poole, *West Tisbury Microbial Investigation of Great Pond*, published by SP, Inc., Salem, Mass., 1986.

Saunders Associates, *Road Runoff Sampling of Tisbury Great Pond Tributaries*, prepared for Martha's Vineyard Shellfish Group and funded by Tisbury Great Pond Riparian Owners, 1990.

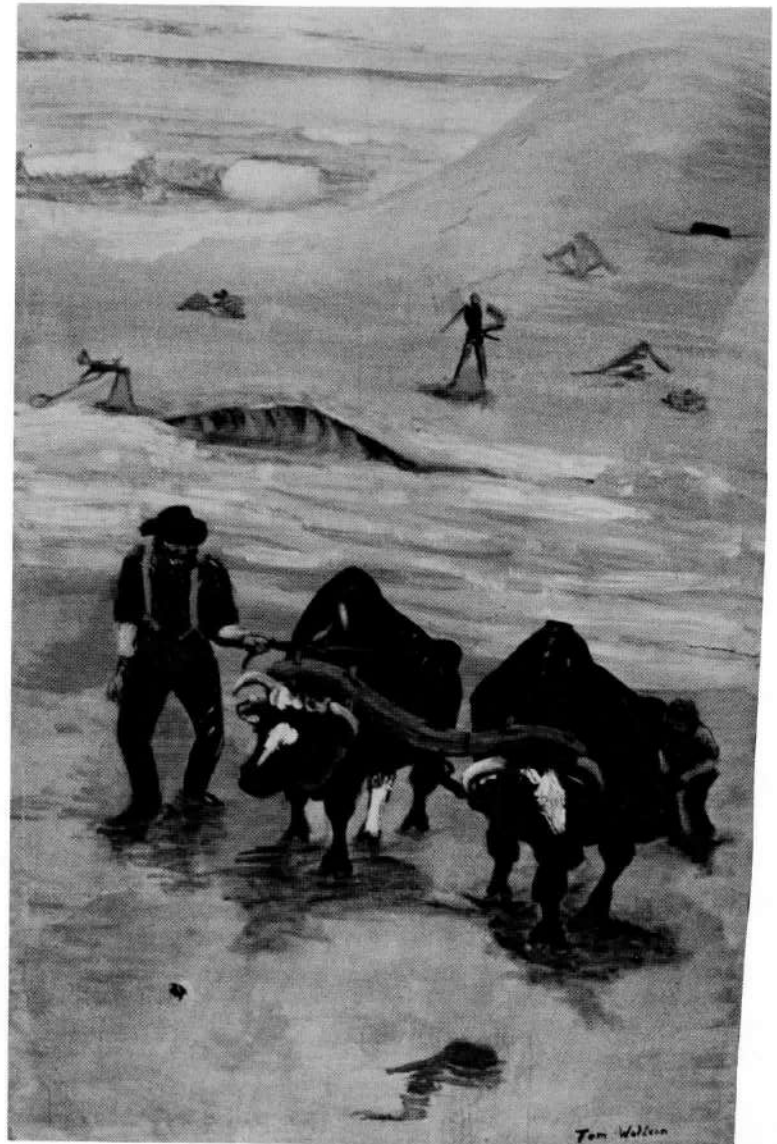
Lynn Sherwood, *Sanitary Survey Report of Tisbury Great Pond in the Towns of West Tisbury and Chilmark*, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, 1989.

R. H. Smith, *Results of Water Quality Monitoring Program*, prepared for the Martha's Vineyard Commission, 1984.



Commanding figures at openings of Tisbury Great Pond were Dellie Mitchell and oxen. Dellie lived nearby. Artist Tom Waldron worked for him as a boy.

### Opening the Beach Was a Festive Occasion Then



Tom Waldron, who took part often as a youngster, captured the festive spirit in his painting of Dellie and his oxen. Across the opening, it's a beach picnic.

## In 1933 I Helped Open Tisbury Great Pond to the Sea

By PEG KNOWLES

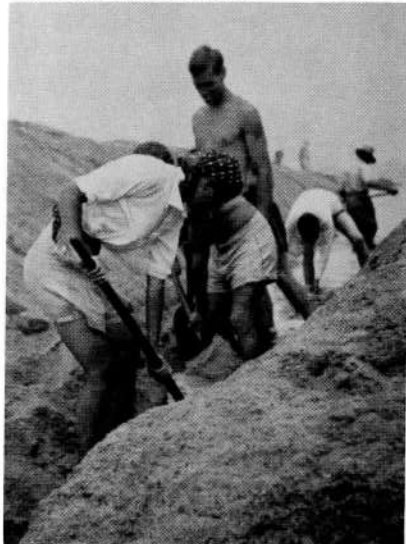
John Whiting's Yale classmate, Robert Anthony, married Elizabeth Sturgis of Providence in June 1933. Johnny let them have a cottage on Tisbury Great Pond for their honeymoon.

It was pond-opening time and I was invited up to help dig the channel to let the herring out. Among those on the beach were Mr. Whiting, John's father, and Jimmy Greene, who claimed he was the last to see the heath hen on the Island.

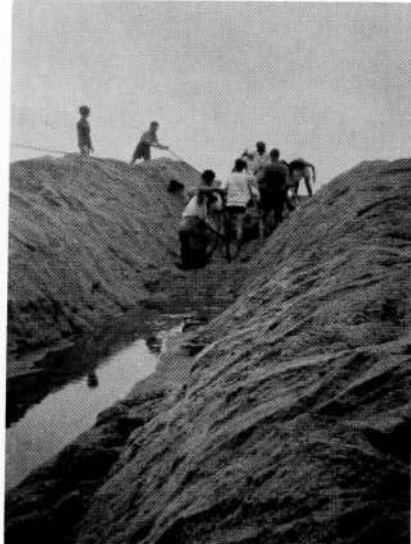
We all came armed with shovels and began digging at the pond's edge. As we progressed south toward the ocean, the channel had to be deeper and it was more laborious, heaving the sand up onto the bordering piles.\*

We could see the herring riffling the surface of the pond, waiting for us to let them into the salt water. We had begun digging at nine in the morning

\* John Whiting explains that there was an interregnum between the plow horse and the bulldozer when the hand shovel ruled.



After starting at 9, we were just digging a narrow trench to the ocean by noon.



Two boys drag buckets of sand to top of the pile as we near the ocean beach.

and it was mid-afternoon when we finally reached the ocean. The pond water raced down the channel and the herring came frantically swimming to salt water. Then, the ocean waves began washing sand into our channel and the herring became stranded in the shallows. They had to be stopped. A man stuck an oar into the sand at the pond end of the channel and tied a sweater to it. The waving sweater's shadow on the water frightened the fish away.

We dug the ocean end deeper to re-open the channel so the herring could resume their annual trip into salt water. Some that had made it into the ocean were washed back onto the beach by the waves and we tried to throw them back,

The beach opening was spirited, not unlike an old-fashioned barn-raising.



Everybody rests as pond water begins to flow to the sea. Still lots of sand to dig.



Photographs by Peg Knowles.

Ocean waves bring sand into the opening; herring are stranded in the shallows.



By mid-afternoon, the ditch is full depth and it's time to admire a job well done.



### Moments in History

## Money Was a Problem, Even During Whaling's Boom Years

*IF ever there was a time when "poor as a church mouse" did not apply, it would seem to have been among the Vineyard Methodists in the middle 1800s. Whaling was at a peak with voyages bringing huge profits for ship owners and masters. Religion was experiencing an extraordinary revival and Methodism was leading the way. In less than two decades, the Edgartown Methodist Society had outgrown two church buildings. Converts from the established Congregationalist church were joining the new denomination in such large numbers that the Methodist congregation overflowed into the balcony, disconcerting the choir, who considered it to be its territory.*

*The Methodists needed a new house of worship, their third. In 1843, the towering meeting house on Main Street in Edgartown, now known as the Old Whaling Church was built (the name, a recent acquisition, is based on the belief, unproved it seems, that most whalemens were Methodists).*

*With the new building almost ready to be occupied, the choir, tired of being jammed into a corner by the overflow, wanted it understood that in the new church the balcony was to be for them exclusively. They wrote to the Building Committee on August 1, 1843:<sup>1</sup>*

*To the Building Committee of the New Methodist Meeting-house.*

*Gentlemen:--*

*The undersigned, a committee on behalf of the Methodist Choir, beg leave, most respectfully, to represent that the choir have long suffered much personal inconvenience from the crowded condition of the gallery arising from*

*its occupation by many persons not connected with them.*

*This they have -- as far as possible -- borne without complaint, being aware of the impossibility of obtaining seats below, and not wishing that any should be deprived of the privileges of the sanctuary, when by the sacrifice of their own comfort, they could be accommodated.*

*These sentiments are still entertained by the Choir. They are willing to suffer some inconvenience, -- whenever circumstances require and the interests of the church demand -- but, in their opinion, this will cease to be the case when we occupy the new meeting house in which there will be ample room below to accommodate all the congregation, and they, therefore, respectfully request that the gallery may be reserved peculiarly for the use of the Choir.*

*All of which is respectfully submitted,*

*Edgartown,  
Aug. 1, 1843*

*Wm. H. Munroe,  
Richard L. Pease,  
John R. Norton,  
Silvanus L. Pease.*

*Six weeks later, they had another reason to write to the committee. They had visited the new building and were disappointed with the choir loft. As splendid as the main sanctuary was, the balcony was poorly finished. Being underprivileged was not a new experience for the choir members. They had to finance most of their activities. There was no organ so one choir member had rented, at his own expense, a bass viol to accompany the singing. Now, more cause for aggravation: the floor of the balcony in the impressive new church was made of poor-grade boards.*

*Signing the petition to the Building Committee were five choir members, all distinguished men in the village. No female member was on the committee. It was a man's world, even in the choir loft.*

*To the Building Committee of the  
New Methodist Meeting House*

*Gentlemen:*

*The undersigned, a committee of the Methodist Choir, respectfully represent that, in addition to an equal share of the*

<sup>1</sup> The building they had outgrown is, much enlarged, today's Edgartown Town Hall.

ordinary expenses of the Society,<sup>2</sup> the Choir have, at considerable expense, furnished their own music, etc; one of our members having paid some thirty dollars for the use of the double bass viol, an instrument which has been of signal service to the singing. This instrument, the original cost of which was sixty dollars, can now be bought for thirty-two dollars, and is well worth that sum.<sup>3</sup>

We deem its purchase of such importance that we particularly request that it be obtained for the use of the Society.

We also respectfully request that the carpet now in the [old] church be assigned for the gallery of the new house, for which purpose it will well answer and is much needed as the floor is made of the very poorest materials.<sup>4</sup>

Were the Choir exempted from all other charges for the support of the ministry, etc., they would themselves furnish the gallery, provide themselves with music, hire their teacher, and support the singing; but, at present, they do not feel themselves able to bear these charges, in addition to those in which they participate equally with others.

With the confident expectation that this communication will receive the attention it merits, it is respectfully submitted.

Edgartown,	Rich. L. Pease	Edwd. Munro
Sept. 19, 1843	John R. Norton	Wm. C. Munroe
	Silvanus L. Pease	

*On the bottom of the letter, which is dated September 22nd, is this note:*

The Building Committee not feeling authorized to act, the communication was laid before the proprietors.

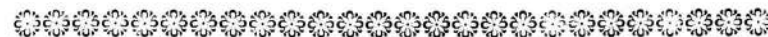
*There is no record of whether the choir's request was met.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> It would seem that contributions by members to the support of the church were not an individual choice, but all were expected to give equally.

<sup>3</sup> A dollar, at the time, was a day's wages (10 hours) for a laborer. Skilled workers earned \$1.25. The price of the viol, \$32, was a month's pay.

<sup>4</sup> The old church must have been carpeted, which may come as a surprise to some, who prefer to believe that such luxurious touches were absent in Methodist meeting houses. It is also a surprise to learn that "the very poorest materials" had been used in the construction of the impressive new meeting house.

<sup>5</sup> Copies of these letters are in the Richard Luce Pease Collection of the Society.



## The Edgartown Lyceum

### What Did Islanders Worry About in the Mid-1800s?

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

In December 1836, six Edgartown men, most of them in their twenties and thirties, assembled in Davis Hall and voted to form a Lyceum. At the time, Lyceums were popular as debating societies, usually for men only. The movement had been started in Millbury, Massachusetts, by Josiah Holbrook in 1826. By 1831, there were so many such organizations in the country that the National American Lyceum was formed. Its stated purpose was to further the "instruction of adults by lectures, concerts and other methods."

Five years later, the Edgartown Lyceum came into being, remaining active for twenty years. More than 300 meetings were held, during which members and guests heard more than 200 debates and 100 lectures. The subjects for debate that were chosen and the votes of approval or disapproval after each, provide an interesting insight into public concerns in the middle of the 19th century. Although not at all scientific, the balloting could be considered a primitive public-opinion poll.

The Society owns the Edgartown Lyceum's record book, covering the years 1836 to 1854. Between its impressive leather-bound covers are 327 pages of minutes of meetings.

At the first meeting, in December 1836, six men signed up as founders: David Davis, Frederic P. Fellows, D. W. Baylies, Edward D. Linton, William Vinson and Richard L. Pease. Three weeks later, Henry Arey added his name. Two of them, Davis and Pease, were school teachers.

During the next year, 1837, sixteen more men joined and in 1838 another eighteen. In addition, fifteen men, mostly doctors and ministers, were voted in as honorary mem-

bers. They were not assessed dues nor expected to attend each meeting or to vote on each debate. At the end of 1838, the Lyceum had 56 members, which included most of the village's leading citizens.<sup>1</sup>

There were a limited number of scholars on the Island who were prepared to deliver an "intellectual" lecture. Occasionally, a visiting "scholar" was invited. Most often, it was a minister. In all, there were 78 lectures and 122 debates held during the sixteen years of the Lyceum's existence.

For years, no woman took part in any program. Then in 1852, sixteen years after it began, Mrs. E. Oakes Smith<sup>2</sup> was invited to deliver four lectures, the only female ever to address the group. Her lectures were entitled, "Manhood," "Womanhood," "Humanity," and finally "Dress and Beauty."

On January 12, 1852, after her third lecture, a resolution was passed by the membership, praising her performances. The final resolve stated,

That the great question particularly, contained in the lecture of "Womanhood," in regard to the right and necessity of the moral influence of woman in the Legislature, Judicial and Civil codes of nations, is one which the crying wrongs of mankind, and the enlightened judgment of all christians and phylanthropists alike, demand.<sup>3</sup>

The lecturer holding the record for most lectures on a single subject was Rev. George Bradburn. In 1838, the first year of the Lyceum, he delivered nine lectures on Phrenology.<sup>4</sup> At the end of his long series, a debate was held by members on the question: "Are the principles of Phrenology in opposition to those of pure Christianity?" The debaters originally assigned to argue the question, Thomas Beetle and E. P. Mayhew, both withdrew prior to the debate and were replaced by Henry Baylies and William Pease, two very young men: Baylies was 16; Pease, 19. No vote was taken at the end of the debate so we don't know which side the members favored. Bay-

lies, who became one of Edgartown's most successful sons, was the youngest member. He also lectured in 1844, this time on the subject "Astronomy, with diagrams."<sup>5</sup>

Almost as long as the phrenology series was one given by Rev. William Stow in 1851. The subject must have been a complex one; it took eight lectures to cover. Its subject is not given in the record. Perhaps the secretary wasn't sure what it was, even after eight lectures. After the last, a request to pay Reverend Stow \$30 for his expenses was tabled, no action being taken. The vote led to a long discussion about the method used by the Lecture Committee to select speakers.

Ministers were the most frequent lecturers. There was a regular turnover of pastors on the Island, especially among the Methodists and Baptists, and it brought fresh faces and fresh ideas. Their lectures were not always about religion. On Christmas day in 1843, for example, Rev. John Storrs lectured on "Process of Thinking."<sup>6</sup> Another minister, Rev. LeRoy Sunderland, spoke on "Pathetism" for about an hour, during which time he "put a number in a magnetic state without leaving the desk," the Lyceum record shows.<sup>7</sup>

Magnetism was in vogue at the time. That same year, Edgartown storekeeper Edward Munro lectured on the subject "Animal Magnetism," whatever that is.

Physicians were often asked to lecture. One of them, Dr. Samuel Wheldon, a fervent Edgartown Baptist, spoke on "Non-Naturals" in 1840. He was a popular speaker, the record showing that the "House was crowded." After he finished, the members elected him an Honorary Member. There is nothing in the record to show what "Non-Naturals" he had talked about. Another local physician, Dr. Clement Shiverick, lectured "On Conchology," the study of mollusks, in 1849.

As would be expected, doctors usually lectured on medical subjects, including "Neurology," and "The Human Eye." In 1851, Dr. Alcott (no first name given) spoke on "The

<sup>1</sup> In 1850 there were 380 families in Edgartown. In 1838 the number wouldn't have been much different, meaning that one family in seven had a man in the Lyceum.

<sup>2</sup> Her name is given as Mrs. E. Oakes Smith several times. In the flowery resolution thanking her, the name is listed as Mrs. E. Oakes Smith. Does any reader know who she was?

<sup>3</sup> A somewhat obtuse resolution, it would seem.

<sup>4</sup> The study of the skull's shape to determine character traits and mental faculties, a "science" popular at the time and now considered to be quackery. *The New Columbia Encyclopedia*.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Baylies for most of his life kept a diary entitled "A Running Account of Matter & Things," parts of which are being published serially in this journal.

<sup>6</sup> There was no celebration of Christmas at this time by Protestants. To do so was thought to be papistry.

<sup>7</sup> Could it be that the secretary was being sarcastic? Was he that boring?



Laws of Health." He was one of the few paid an honorarium: "Voted to give Dr. Alcott the proceeds of ticket sales for this evening."<sup>8</sup>

Social attitudes were sometimes the subject. Rev. Bartholomew Otheman lectured the group on the "Influence of Prejudice" in 1843 (what specific prejudice is not mentioned); the following week, schoolmaster Leavitt Thaxter's subject was "Influence of Woman." Eleven years later, Thaxter gave another lecture on the same subject. It would be interesting to know if his opinion had changed. The record never summarizes the lecture. Only the titles are given. Two more teachers, Hebron Vincent and Richard Luce Pease, lectured their colleagues on "Behavior in public assemblies," referring perhaps to how they behaved at the Lyceum. Samuel Osborn Jr., a young man at the time, chose as his topic, "Attention to the Ladies."

Hebron Vincent, who later became a Methodist minister, was still a young teacher in 1841 when he lectured on "Vindication of the African Race." Reverend Talbot of Holmes Hole in 1851 chose as his topic, "Social and political character of the Aztec race." Reverend Hatch chose a similar subject, "Aborigines of America," in 1850.

Lectures were important to the Lyceum, but the major activity were the debates. A Committee on Subjects would propose topics for members to approve and assign members to debate. The member who most frequently took part in debates was David Davis, former master of a private school on Davis Lane, in the main room of which the Lyceum held its weekly meetings. Davis was a debater 49 times, far outnumbering all other members. Second place was a virtual tie: Abraham Marchant 26 and Dr. John Pierce 27. Leavitt Thaxter debated 24 times; Archibald Mellen, 14.

Altogether, 122 debates were held. The most frequent category was politics or national affairs. Second most popular was individual and social behavior. Although the burning question of the day was slavery, only eight debates were held on the subject, none of which argued about its morality.

<sup>8</sup> Tickets of admission in 1851 cost 12 1/2 cents each, about an hour's pay.

Twice, members debated the treatment of Indians, but only one of the debates involved an ethical or moral judgment. Surprisingly, sexual equality was debated five times and, although this was a time of great evangelical fervor, religion was debated only five times. None of the debates was on the subject of camp meetings, then at their peak on the Island.

The debates provide an insight into the concerns of the day. Today, crime and drugs seem to be society's major concerns. Not so in 1840. Then, they worried about other forms of behavior, as the following listing of debate questions shows. After each debate, members voted on how they would answer the question, yes or no. The votes are given in italics:

"Are amusements pernicious to the morals of an enlightened community?" (*Yeas 7, Nays 7*)

"Are novels pernicious to morals?" (*Yeas 11, Nays 5*)

"Is the amusement of dancing injurious to the morals of the community?" (*Yeas 6, Nays 5*)

That was in 1840. By 1851, eleven years later, their attitude had changed. Dancing was a good thing. Morality was not involved. The debated question was, "Is the practice of dancing conducive to health, manners and refinement?" (*Yeas 7, Nays 1*)

"Is man the only animal that reasons?" (*Yeas 1, Nays 7*)

"Ought flogging on board whale ships be made a penal offense?" (*Yeas 6, Nays 1*)

"Are bachelors the wisest and most beneficial class of the community?" (*Yeas 4, Nays 7*)<sup>9</sup>

"Is the cultivation of music more beneficial to the community than poetry?" (*Yeas 3, Nays 7*)

"Is intellectual enlightenment a source of happiness?" (*Yeas 6, Nays 4*)

"Is revenge ever justifiable?" (*Yeas 4, Nays 1*)

"Are men influenced more by ambition than by women?" (*Yeas 0, Nays 7*)<sup>10</sup>

"Is matrimony essential to human happiness?" (*Yeas 4, Nays 1*)

<sup>9</sup> The record doesn't show how many members were unmarried.

<sup>10</sup> Men may have been considered "superior," but they didn't run things!

"Is it for the personal well being of a woman to marry?" (Yeas 8, Nays 2)

"Are sewing circles, as they are usually conducted in this place, beneficial?" (Yeas 8, Nays 2)<sup>11</sup>

The question of capital punishment was debated three times, always with the same question and the same results: "Ought capital punishment be abolished?" Three times the affirmative won: In 1838, Yeas 8, Nays 1; in 1839, the same; in 1846, Yeas 5, Nays 2.

National affairs and politics were the second most popular subjects. This, of course, was early in the history of the nation. The American Revolution had ended less than fifty years before and the approval of revolt still survived. In 1839, the debate was, "Is resistance to government ever justifiable?" The vote: Yeas 8, Nays 3.

They also were not turned off by party politics, if the voting on this question can be believed: "Is party spirit beneficial?" The vote: Yeas 14, Nays 5. A dispute broke out after the debate. Under the rules of the Lyceum, every member present was required to vote (except of course the debaters). Richard L. Pease, then 25 years old and a school teacher, refused to cast his vote. Sometimes party spirit was beneficial, sometimes not, he argued. But the rules called for a Yea or Nay vote, nothing else was acceptable. He was required to vote (the record doesn't say which way he voted).

At the next meeting, Pease, a principled young man, handed the President a letter announcing his withdrawal from the Lyceum. After considerable discussion, the members agreed to allow him to rescind his vote on the earlier debate. The argument continued in the next meeting. It was clear that Pease was upset by the rigidity of some of the members. For the next two meetings, no debates were held. Whether the Pease dispute was the reason or not is unknown.

Here are some other political questions they debated:

"Is it expedient for this town to send two representatives to the General Court this season?" (Yeas 9, Nays 3)<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> This question and the one before it are matters men would seem to know little about.

<sup>12</sup> The other Vineyard towns sent only one to the state house, but Edgartown, the county seat, was entitled to two. Apparently, the members decided it was worth the extra cost.

"Ought a Representative be bound by the will of his constituents?" (Yeas 4, Nays 1) Two members were excused from casting a vote, one was trouble-maker Richard L. Pease.

"Ought public officers to adopt popular opinion as their rule of action?" (Yeas 2, Nays 7) Today's politics-by-polling would be shocking to the members.

"Ought the rich man who pays a large tax to enjoy privileges at the ballot box which are denied the poor man?" (Yeas 0, Nays 11) A strong endorsement of one-man, one vote. But remember, only men could vote. This was in 1841, only twenty-one years after property ownership stopped being a requirement for voting in Massachusetts.

"Are the measures of the Suffrage Party in Rhode Island justifiable?" (Yeas 8, Nays 5) That state was far behind Massachusetts in voting rights. Although Massachusetts ended the property ownership requirement in 1820, Rhode Island did not do so until 1888. At the time of this debate, it was involved in Dorr's Rebellion, an illegal state government that demanded, and got, a new constitution, which was somewhat less restrictive on voting.

"Have differences of opinion in politics caused more bloodshed than differences of opinion in religion?" (Yeas 1, Nays 11). A surprising outcome. In the middle of the great religious revival of the Methodists and Baptists, it is surprising to see such a judgment about religion.

"Would it be advisable to increase and limit the term of the Presidential office?" It was decided that two votes were needed: one on an increased term length (Yeas 16, Nays 8); another on limiting the number of terms (Yeas 12, Nays 2) In both, the Lyceum was urging change.

"Would it be politic for the U.S. to annex Texas?" (Yeas 4, Nays 14) This was in 1838, seven years before Texas became a state, over objections of abolitionists. Was this an anti-slavery position?

"Would a direct tax for the support of the national government be more equitable than a tariff of duties on importations?" (Yeas 5, Nays 5) A tie vote in 1844 on levying a direct tax on individuals, probably an income tax. In the early

years, the federal government depended upon tariffs for revenue. Income taxes came much later.

The members were confident in their federal government and optimistic about its future, as the vote after this 1849 debate indicates:

"Judging from the history of past Republics and the present condition of our own, is it probable that the U.S. will continue to flourish as a nation?" (*Yeas 7, Nays 0*)

Living on an island and experienced in international trade, it is not surprising that Lyceum members were interested in foreign affairs. Altogether, there were a total of 15 debates and lectures related to that subject. Here are some:

"Ought the U.S. to recognize the independence of Hayti [Haiti]?" (*Yeas 7, Nays 4*) Haiti was the first nation in the hemisphere after the U.S. to become independent (1804), doing so with the help of the U.S. When this debate was held, 1842, it was, as it is today, facing financial ruin. A year later, its ruler was exiled. Haiti became a republic in 1859.

From today's viewpoint, this 1841 debate asked an astonishing question: "Are the resources of this country sufficient to render it independent of all foreign aid?" (*Yeas 6, Nays 5*). It would seem that "foreign aid" didn't mean then what it means today. More likely it meant self-sufficiency in natural resources.

In 1853, members debated: "Ought the U.S. to afford material aid to Turkey in her present difficulties with Russia?" (*Yeas 6, Nays 2*)

As far back as 1838, Lyceum members, many of them mariners, knew how far it was around Cape Horn. Long before Teddy Roosevelt's big dig, they were overwhelmingly in agreement with the question, "Would it be beneficial to our country were a canal cut across the Isthmus of Panama?" (*Yeas 8, Nays 0*)

Slavery issues were debated a surprisingly few times, although it was tearing the nation apart. In 1837, Elijah Lovejoy, editor of an abolitionist newspaper in Alton, Illinois, was killed by a pro-slavery mob. That same year, Wendell Phillips made his first abolitionist speech, arousing the people of Mass-

achusetts. The State Supreme Court ruled that any slave brought into the state by his owner must be freed. Anti-slavery sentiment was growing. The nation was beginning to split apart. In 1838, the Lyceum first debated a question involving slavery: "Was Congress warranted. . . to adopt the resolution by Mr. Patton, on the subject of slavery, slaves, slave trade, etc.?"<sup>13</sup> The vote: *Yeas 0; Nays 9*. The record does not tell us anything to indicate which side that put the Lyceum on and later debates about slavery tell us little:

"Is the influence of the Free States given to the support of slavery?" (*Yeas 6, Nays 3*)

"Ought the transportation of slaves, by sea, from one state to another, to be prohibited in like manner as the African slave trade?" (*No vote*) This debate had not been scheduled. The subject was chosen spontaneously at the meeting when, because of low attendance, the announced debate was postponed.

"Ought the fugitives from slavery to receive the sympathy and aid of Northern freemen?" (*Yeas 5, Nays 2* -- Dr. Pierce and Sam Osborn excused from voting) This was the year, 1850, when the federal Fugitive Slave Act was passed, requiring that escaped slaves be returned to their owners, even from free states.

That same year, the Act was debated: "Should the fugitive slave law be repealed?" The members voted to table any vote on the question. Apparently, opinions were too intense or, perhaps, confused.

Two years earlier, they had debated, "Ought slavery be interdicted in the territories of the United States?" (*Yeas 4, Nays 3*). This, of course, did not mean in the *states*, but in the *territories*. At the time, 1848, Texas was a problem in this regard.

"Ought every Whig Abolitionist to vote for Henry Clay<sup>14</sup> for the next presidency?" (*Yeas 1, Nays 3*)

<sup>13</sup> The Editor has been unable to find out what side Mr. Patton's resolution took: pro-slavery or anti. Does any reader know?

<sup>14</sup> Henry Clay, a Southerner, was perceived by Northern Whigs to be an abolitionist and, in 1840, he had not been nominated. In 1844, the year of this debate, he did become the Whig nominee, but lost in the election to James K. Polk, a poor choice given the times.



Of considerable interest to the Lyceum was the subject of education. The issue of compulsory education for grades higher than elementary was dividing the state. Horace Mann, the Commonwealth's first secretary of education, urged more years of schooling. Several Lyceum members were, or had been, teachers, so there was much local experience to draw upon. Debates involving education included:

"Has Genius given to the world more great men than Education?" (*Yeas 11, Nays 1*)

"Would it be for the best interest of education and the general welfare, if public were to supersede private schools?" (*Yeas 12, Nays 1*)

"Would the intellectual education of the females of our country be conducive to domestic happiness?" (*Yeas 5, Nays 0*) This was another subject chosen at the meeting because of small attendance.

"Ought the town admit into our public schools scholars over 16 years of age?" (*No vote taken*)

"Is the right education of children obligatory on parents and philanthropists?" (*Vote not taken*)

"The community being compelled by law to furnish the means of education for all, is it not proper that the parents and others should be compelled to make use of the means?" (*Vote tabled at first meeting, at second, the vote was Yeas 11, Nays 4*)

"Is it expedient that Physiology be introduced into our common schools as a branch of education?" (*Yeas 8, Nays 2*)<sup>15</sup>

Children were apparently not so well behaved as we like to think they were back in the good old days. At least that is suggested by this 1849 debate question: "Are parents responsible for the conduct of their children?" The vote, like several in the education debate, was postponed until the next meeting. (*Yeas 8, Nays 2*).<sup>16</sup>

The reason members were concerned about youthful behavior is that there had been disruptions of the meetings by

<sup>15</sup> Physiology, the study of living organisms, was apparently not being taught. This was 1850, eight years before Darwin's theory was published so it was not a religious question.

<sup>16</sup> It is never explained why a vote is delayed. Was it because the question was one in which opinions were overheated? Surely, here there could be no doubt about responsibility..

troublesome youngsters. The meetings, held from 6:15 p.m. to 9 p.m., were tempting targets for young boys wandering the streets. Boys will be boys and early in the life of the Lyceum, 1838, members were offered this resolution:

Whereas the Lyceum, on several meetings, has been disturbed by persons, whom we suppose were boys, and

Whereas, we wish it to be understood that we do not intend to be imposed upon,

Therefore, Resolved, that although others, and religious societies, may be disposed to submit to it, we are determined not to, but should it be repeated, will use measures that will be effectual in bringing them to justice.<sup>17</sup>

Before the final vote, a motion was made and agreed upon to postpone action on the resolution. The matter seems to have been forgotten. Perhaps the threat of passage was enough. In 1849, there was a long discussion, but no action taken, on allowing boys or girls under 12 to attend the meetings. Some years later, in 1851, the behavior problem surfaced once more. This time a more specific resolution passed unanimously:

Whereas the meetings of the Lyceum have heretofore frequently been disturbed by the rude and disorderly behavior of several young persons, it is ordered,

1. That measures be promptly taken to bring to legal punishment all such as willfully disturb this Lyceum, either in their place of meeting, or out of it.

2. That while we welcome the young as well as the old to our weekly meetings, it is only so long as they shall show by propriety of demeanor a proper self respect and a due regard for the rights of others.

3. That those who may be denied the privilege of attending the Lyceum in consequence of misbehavior, shall not again be admitted except by special action of the Lyceum.

4. That David Davis, R. L. Pease and Leavitt Thaxter be a committee specially authorized by this institution to see that the foregoing orders be carried out.<sup>18</sup>

Only three times were Native Americans the subject of debate. The first, in 1838, took up the question: "Are the Indians of Martha's Vineyard benefited by the existing laws of

<sup>17</sup> It is interesting that "religious societies" were "disposed to submit" to such behavior. This was during the popularity of evening revival meetings, which boys often disrupted.

<sup>18</sup> The three men were all school teachers, Davis and Thaxter having operated their own private schools. Two months later, the three resigned from the committee. No reason was given.

guardianship?" (*Yeas 7, Nays 8*) A close vote, hardly a ringing endorsement of guardianship.<sup>19</sup>

In 1845, it was proposed that a debate be held on the question: "Was the conduct of our fathers towards the aborigines of this country justifiable?" The debate was never held. The subject was perhaps too sensitive for certain members and seems to have been forgotten.

Easier to discuss was the 1849 question, "Is there sufficient evidence to warrant the belief that America was peopled by a race prior to the Indians?" Voting was tabled until the next meeting, but no vote was ever recorded.

In the mid-1800s, equality of men and women was hardly a popular issue. It was a man's world. Women didn't vote, they rarely owned property, some widows who had taken over family businesses were entrepreneurs, but few women held jobs other than school teaching and midwifery. But, it seems, a few Edgartown men felt the situation needed changing. Women, of course, were not allowed to join the Lyceum, but members voted early in the life of the organization that "Ladies may have the privilege of the Library by paying in advance, 50 cents per annum or 3 cents per week." (It was the first library in town.) Women were allowed, even invited, to attend the meetings, but not to vote or to speak. That was for males only. The discrimination seemed to trouble some members. In 1840, a debate was held on the question: "Ought the Ladies be allowed to vote in the Lyceum?" (*Yeas 5, Nays 4*). After that favorable vote, a point of order was made by one of the members and another vote was taken, rescinding the favorable vote. The question then was tabled.

Eight years later, the matter of admitting women to membership was debated. The vote was close: "Ought the Ladies be admitted to the same privileges of the Lyceum as the Gentlemen?" (*Yeas 3, Nays 4*).

Twice there were debates about sexual equality. The first was in 1838: "Would the condition of Society and woman

<sup>19</sup> We don't know who was Guardian of the Indians at this time, but in 1847, Leavitt Thaxter, a Lyceum member, held the post, a state-appointed officer responsible, among other things, for allocating state money for the subsistence of destitute Indians. Richard L. Pease, also a member, served as Guardian at one time. The job was political.

be improved by placing the two sexes on an equality in respect to rights and duties?" (*Yeas 6, Nays 13*) No doubt about where the men stood on that!

In 1841, another question about women's rights was debated: "Are those countries where the fair sex are held in the highest estimation, the most advanced in civilization?" (*Yeas 10, Nays 1*) Overwhelmingly positive, but then sexual equality was not involved. The "fair sex" was held in "highest estimation" right here in the U.S.A. An easy vote!

Four years later, another women's rights question was debated: "Would the intellectual education of the females of our country be conducive to domestic happiness?" (*Yeas 5, Nays 0*) This was another one of those spontaneous debates occurring when small attendance caused the scheduled question to be postponed and a substitute question was chosen. Another easy vote. After all, women needed, the men agreed, some "intellectual education" to be able to talk to them, the intellectuals.

As one might expect, the subject of alcohol came up in debates. The temperance movement was growing in the country. However, the question was less about the "sins of drink" than about the laws related to selling. An 1838 debate was, "Are the license laws which prohibit a free traffic in ardent spirits consistent with a republican form of government?" (*Yeas 4, Nays 10*). Hardly a condemnation of alcohol, but more an affirmation of free enterprise. That same year in another debate, the opinion seemed different: "Is the present license law, or any license law, constitutional?" (*Yeas 8, Nays 2*) Originally, that debate question had included these words: ". . . constitutional or necessary to promote the cause of temperance?" Members voted to confine it to constitutionality. Temperance was something else.

The use of tobacco was debated in 1845: "Has tobacco ever been, or is it now, beneficial to the community?" The vote was postponed until the next meeting when, with only two members voting (apparently both tobacco users), the result was: *Yeas 2, Nays 0*.

Six years before, in 1839, a debate on chewing tobacco

had been held: "The practice of chewing tobacco in the Lyceum Hall and in houses of public worship is gentlemanly and ought not to be abolished." (Yeas 13, Nays 10). So much for taking spittoons out of the churches!

A large number of Vineyard men went to California in the Gold Rush of 1849. Several whaleships were chartered by local gold-mining companies to carry them west to Eldorado to make their fortunes. In 1852, after most of the men had returned empty-handed, the Lyceum debated: "Was the California emigration from the Vineyard beneficial to the whole community?" (Yeas 1, Nays 7) Hardly an affirmation.

Lyceum members, living on a small island, may have been isolated from much of the world's big problems, but in one debate, they proved themselves to be omniscient. In 1849, nearly 150 years ago, the question was, "Is it probable that the Jews, as a people, will again occupy the land of Palestine?" The vote was tabled. Two weeks later, it was taken: Yeas 4, Nays 3. No doubt, they would be most interested in today's reports from Palestine.

It's hard to believe that corporations haven't been with us forever, but it was not until 1837 that corporations were legalized in any state. Connecticut was the first. Lyceum members, many of them businessmen, heard the question debated in 1845: "Are Corporations injurious to individuals?" (Yeas 1, Nays 7) They welcomed the new concept.

Of all the debates held in the Lyceum, there are two that intrigue me most. The first was in 1838, early in the Lyceum's life. Its subject and response were, it seems to me, surprisingly open-minded for the time. The question: "Ought an Atheist be allowed his oath in a Court of Justice?" The vote: 13 Yeas, 1 Nay.

The second, in 1841, was less celebratory: "Are carpenters entitled to the chips?" The vote was close: Yeas 7, Nays 9.

I would have loved to have been there listening to the arguments in both.

## Documents

### A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

*Major changes are coming up for Henry and Harriette Baylies. In this installment, they leave the Vineyard, stopping for a while in Providence at the home of her parents, the Budlongs, en route to Ohio, a kinder climate, they believe.*

*Henry has become impatient with his life as a nurse and is anxious to make a change. He, perhaps not entirely in jest, suggests this journal should be renamed "Hospittal Diary" (sic), as it is so much about dear Harriette's ailments.*

*It is now September 1850 and they are still in Edgartown. Early in November, they will start westward, a high-stakes gamble given Harriette's health. In Providence, Henry will have help with his nursing duties and uses the time to get away from his in-laws, the Budlongs, with whom he seems to be somewhat uncomfortable. He and his own parents, who have stopped off en route to Boston, tour Providence and later he enjoys a steamboat excursion to Fort Adams.*

**Tuesday, Sept. 3, 1850.** Yesterday (Monday) Mother Budlong [his mother-in-law] returned to Providence. When she left, Hattie was in quite a stupefied state from the effects of medicine ~~taken~~ administered without my Knowledge (Request of H.). In the P.M. she roused up & inquired after her mother, why she did not sit with

her. She seemed entirely ignorant of parting with her. Mother Budlong thought it necessary for her to return home & promised to return should H. be worse.

About 4 P.M. she was violently seized with short & difficult breathing which continued till after midnight. Dr. Shiverick was in twice & priv'tly said to [my] mother, she (H.) might not live till morning. About 10 o'clock I took a light & looked at her, when so altered was she, I exclaimed, "Is this you, Hattie? Hattie, is this you?"<sup>1</sup>

Her suffering was excruciating. Tr. Castor, Sulph. Ether Chloroform & Ether (inhaled) Morphine & a preparation of the Dr.'s were all tried with apparently no benefit. She wished flagroot, [some] of which I was chewing, & eating, [I] thought she was relieved: she ate more & was more relieved so that she soon became quite easy. Probably the sweet flagroot did some good, perhaps the good, yet more probably all these other medicines were having their effect at the same time.

She soon asked me to kneel down beside her & thank the Lord for the relief granted. So strong were our suspicions of the results of this attack that none of us laid our clothes aside.

Today, Hattie has been more comfortable apparently than for two weeks. She has considerable appetite for nourishing drinks. What will the end of these things be?

<sup>1</sup> Imagine the scene: Henry, holding a whale-oil lamp, peering at the motionless form of his "dying" wife, shocked at her unfamiliar appearance. A dramatic moment.



My health is poor yet I do considerable in my line of business -- watching & nursing. My "Running account of matters & things" is becoming an account of sickness -- a sort of Hospital diary (sic). Well, if Hattie & myself ever enjoy health we shall know how to prize it.

This evening, wrote & mailed a letter to Parents Budlong, Providence. **Thursday, Sept. 12.** More than a week has passed since my last note.<sup>2</sup> During that period my dear wife has lain upon her bed sick & helpless. She has suffered at times greatly &, all the time, perhaps some. For a week nearly, she slept not more than 8 hours, all the hours of night or day included. Morphine has relieved her greatly of much of her distress when nothing else could -----[?]. I do not see that she is today any better than she was one week ago. She is unable to raise herself in bed & often to turn over in bed without assistance.

For several days we have been talking of removing Hattie to Providence by vessel. I have engaged & chartered a vessel, the small sloop *Helta*, Capt. Rufus Pease, to take myself & wife direct to Providence.<sup>3</sup> I have about completed packing my trunks & arranging other affairs so that I am ready to leave at the first change of wind, favorably. Drs. Shiverick & Lewis advised this course, Dr. S. saying her case is one totally unmanage-

able on the Island. I am advised it is a desperate move & yet it must be taken or, to all human appearances, Harriette will die before Autumn is half completed. May the Lord direct & prosper our steps.

Have written Prov. & rec'd a letter from them. Wrote to E. S. Sippert, Cincinnati, making inquiries, etc.<sup>4</sup>

**Wednesday, Sept. 18, 1850. (Providence.)** Harriette & myself are at length in Providence, R. I. We had been waiting nearly a week for a favorable wind to waft us to this place. On Saturday, there were very favorable indications of fair wind. On Sabbath, the wind was very fair & withall it was a delightful day, but as it was Sabbath I would not leave, although Capt. Pease was quite urgent.<sup>5</sup>

The health of dear wife however if nothing else, settled the question. Sat. P.M. towards evening, the wind, having been at every point of the compass, set in strong at the west & very cold. Towards midnight it was at the North & still very cold. The consequence of all this was that Hattie had a severe ill turn -- cold hands & feet & stomach, nervous, cramps, severe headache with delirium, etc. At 9 eve, she assured me she should not live till 12 midnight. From 9 to 11 were to me very unhappy hours. H. wished one pledge from me, as she was so soon to die. It was that I should burn all her writings without looking at them. She said she had al-

ready, before her sickness when a little delirious, burnt most of her papers --- even her autobiography, some of her manuscripts, books, etc. I found it difficult to comply with such a request for it is a fact I am ashamed here even to record that though we have been married more than ten months I have seen scarcely one of the productions of her pen. All these she has sedulously kept from me as if my touch or glance were poison. Although she has attempted to excuse her course of concealment yet I have been & still am unable to discover the least possible reason why a wife, who has had free access to all (however little that all may be) her husband has written, should pursue such a course.<sup>6</sup>

I consented to burn her writings with two or three exceptions provided she would give me the names of the books she has written which have been published & the names of the publishers. This she promised to do but was immediately seized with forgetfulness so that I was left as ignorant as before. This fault of concealment is the only one I think that Harriette has & it is a, to me, great & inexcusable fault.<sup>7</sup>

But to her health -- towards midnight by aid of two morphines, hot baths, mustard poultices & etc., she was quite relieved & slept towards

morning. All day Sabbath she appeared dull & slept Sabbath night more comfortable.

Monday morning, Sept. 16, the wind was still blowing very fair & we resolved the attempt to move Hattie by vessel to Prov. Our goods all on board, we made a bed in a spring Calash (or horse cart) & laid H. upon it & drove to the vessel. Oh! what anxious thoughts & fears tortured my mind just at that moment.<sup>8</sup>

Mother proposed going herself with us & of getting another to go. Father likewise proposed going. But I thought it would be better that I should accompany her alone.<sup>9</sup>

At 20 minutes past 9 o'clock A.M. we were underway & off from the wharf on our way. I knelt beside the berth where my dear wife lay & committed ourselves to the God of the winds & the waves. At sunset we were near the light below Newport, the wind blowing as fair as possible yet rather light. At times there was considerable ocean swell which tossed our little vessel cradle-like. Hattie seemed to improve all day & enjoyed the voyage very much. On entering the Narraganset, the wind & tide headed us all the way up. The moon shown out brightly & the cool north west wind chilled her bright beams, reminding us strongly of a winter midnight.

<sup>2</sup> It is obvious that his constant nursing duties have exhausted him.. He rarely misses a day in his writing, yet here it has been more than a week.

<sup>3</sup> Capt. Rufus F. Pease (1809-1893) was the son of Josiah and lived on So. Water St., near today's High St.

<sup>4</sup> This must be the Methodist brother who convinced Henry that Ohio, with its mild climate, was the place to take Harriet.

<sup>5</sup> In today's world, this seems like a strange decision to make.

<sup>6</sup> Further evidence that Henry wrote with the expectation that Harriette would read it. All his entries must be read with that fact in mind.

<sup>7</sup> Surely, Harriette had not published any book. What can she be worried about? Or has she just been hallucinating? It certainly has upset Henry, who seems, for the first time, most unforgiving of his otherwise faultless wife.

<sup>8</sup> It would be interesting to know what the neighbors were thinking of all this. The house they lived in was on Main Street, across from the Town Hall. The move must have been talk of the town.

<sup>9</sup> This seems to be the first time that his parents have offered major assistance. Was there a lack of affection for Harriette on their part?

I turned in, as the sailor of a single day must say or be thrown overboard, just before 9 o'clock, but was up several times during the night. The Sound steamers, *Bay State* & the *Perry* passed us during the evening, throwing the waters into horrible confusion & tossing us about like a thing of naught.<sup>10</sup>

Hattie slept the night more comfortably than for five weeks. At 3 Tuesday Morn, we were in hearing of the clocks at Providence, but because of slight & head wind & head tide & loss of the way, we (i.e., the Capt.) were obliged to drop anchor & wait for daylight. We again weighed anchor, but the wind failing us again, dropped anchor within 15 minutes sail of the wharf. At length we reached the place on the East side of the River whence [we] were to cross over to the West side & tacked over, when to our great disappointment we grounded mid-river. All attempts to get her off failed & thus we were.

I went ashore & engaged a hack to take us up. Went aboard & sent ashore the trunks, etc., & then laying a bed on some sails in the small boat placed Hattie thereon & carried her ashore, took her into the hack reclining & at about 10 o'clock had her safely laid on the lounge in her father's house at 6 Chestnut St., Providence. We struck [went aground] about 9 o'clock.<sup>11</sup> I returned with the

bedding to the vessel, greatly relieved of excessive anxiety. The voyage I had so much dreaded was safely & beneficially made & Hattie was at home.

I paid the Capt. \$10 (cheap enough) & left the vessel tendering him & Capt. Francis Smith a thousand thanks for their greatful attentions.<sup>12</sup>

Harriette ~~look~~ appeared better ~~to day~~ yesterday than for a long time. I am encouraged but must wait.

Saw Rev. D. Fillmore with whom I had a short interview. Learned from him that Bro. Pattin's wife is away & very sick, her recovery doubtful, that Rev'd. Bro. Carver is sick & away, thinks he has consumption. Bro. F. suggested that Bro. C. was not very successful as a Methodist Preacher, especially with reference to Pastoral visiting. I suspected there would before long be a consumption of some sort. My acquaintance with Bro. C. has been quite intimate.

This (Wednesday) H. begins to feel her moving journey very much & yet she appears better than for a long time. She slept last night more naturally than for two months & without the aid of morphine. Yesterday P. M., she ate a baked pear & apple & a peach without injury. Her appetite appears very much better. I hope it will continue.

I took quite a severe cold on Sabbath which effects my throat & head. I have a violent headache. Thus I will stop writing for the present, for writ-

ing does not benefit my head, I imagine.

**Thursday, Sept. 26.** On the afternoon of Wednesday last [Sept. 18th], Hattie, probably overcome by the journey, the excitement of meeting friends & overloading the stomach, became delirious & has remained so till the present time. At first she appeared entirely "lost." She asked me, I presumed a thousand times at least, "Who am I?" "Where am I?" "Am I sick?" "Have I been sick long?" "Have I been very sick?" "What am I?" "Who are you?" etc.

No sooner had I answered these questions than I must answer again & again. She has had a voracious appetite & it has been with the greatest difficulty we could in the least subdue this. I called in Dr. Fabegrin, who has taken the case. Her delirium has for some days assumed a different phase & she has been quite Keen. Notwithstanding her delirium, she has not appeared to suffer at all. It is really quite a relief to find her passing day after day without spasms, cramps or convulsions.<sup>13</sup>

My own health is very poor. I have not been so well since I came to Providence. I have suffered considerably from pain & strictures in both sides & breast, probably from lifting Hattie in & out of bed, etc.

During the week I have spent most of the time with Hattie in the sick Chamber. I have met with several of the brothers in the city & have been to Pawtucket twice: the first time

with Dr. Fabegrin<sup>14</sup> for an hour only & the second time, yesterday, when I spent the day. I found most of the good folks in sound health. The churches are enjoying a refreshing revival & there have been quite a number of conversions.

**Monday, Sept. 30.**<sup>15</sup> First, a record of the past. On Saturday 28, thinking a change would be for my benefit, I impressed[?] an excursion ticket to Newport & back, all for twenty-five cents. The early morning was quite cloudy & threatening rain, but at the time of starting, 8 1/2 o'clock, the Sun was shining out brightly & the clear west wind breathed new vigor into our lungs.

The company on board our little Steamer *Argo* was not large, numbering perhaps 100, not very respectable, being mostly composed of Irish & Negroes. In Bro. Sewall, I found a companion *au voyage* quite to my mind.<sup>16</sup>

The view of Providence & adjacent scenery as we glided down the river into the Narraganset is most delightful. We passed in sight of Pawtuxet, Warwick, Warren & Bristol. According to advertisement, the boat touches at Rocky Point to land such as wished to enjoy whatever sport may be manufactured at that beautiful place. Only four however stopped,

<sup>14</sup> This is a guess at the spelling of Harriet's doctor's name. As mentioned earlier, Henry's handwriting is getting harder to decipher.

<sup>15</sup> Another gap of several days in his diary.

<sup>16</sup> The steamer *Argo* ran between Newport and Providence (see inside back cover). Rocky Point was a major summer attraction. Henry's remark about Irish and Negroes is revealing. "Not very respectable," he wrote. There's a bit of the snob in our friend. Irish immigration was growing.

<sup>10</sup> Both steamers were built in 1846. The larger *Bay State*, 300 feet long, ran between N.Y. and Fall River, where it connected with the train for Boston. The *Perry* ran between Newport and Fall River, a much smaller vessel, 149 feet long.

<sup>11</sup> Quite an accomplishment in only one hour, after being aground in mid-river.

<sup>12</sup> Capt. Francis C. Smith, the mate, lived on Main St., in what is now Point Way Inn.

<sup>13</sup> Maybe it was the Island's "bracing" air that was causing Hattie's misery!



the attractions of such places being about over. Last week, I was told, 1500 persons were landed at that point by this boat. Capt. Winslow of the *Argo* owns the place having purchased it for the purpose to have somewhere to run his boat profitably.

We arrived at Newport at 11 1/2, stopping just time enough for such as wished to land. Then according to advertisement we were taken over to Fort Adams & permitted to view the terrific grandeur of that magnificent & costly structure. I cannot conceive of any force or artifice, other than betrayal, by which this fortification might be reduced. In time of peace, prepare for war, seems to be the motto & in the construction of this Fort I should judge they expected a long peace in which they might build such a structure & then a terrible war in which its whole force & strength might be evinced.

By inquiry I found the quarters of the Flying Artillery of Capt. Sherman who were so serviceable in the Mexican War & whose evolutions are so perfectly astonishing.<sup>17</sup>

We tarried at the fort an hour nearly & then were taken back to N[ewport] where we remained till 2 1/2 P.M. Having before visited it, I saw nothing new of interest or worthy of note. We had a good passage back, arriving at Prov. at about 1/4 to 6,

perfectly satisfied to have the boat seek home & take a good cup of tea.

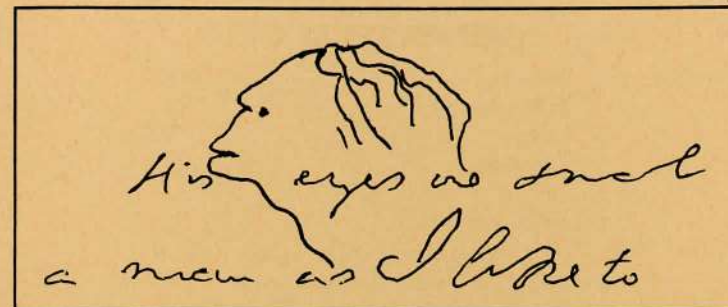
I found Harriette on my return about as I left her. I could hardly reconcile myself to leave her so long but duty to myself required a change & release from the confinement of the sick room. Moreover, such is H.'s present state that others can do for [her] as well as I can.

Yesterday, Sabbath, I attended church day & evening. This afforded me great pleasure for I have not been able to attend meeting before for seven weeks. In the morning I went over to St. John's, expecting to hear Dr. Crocker. A young man appeared in the reading desk & I left. This is the second time I have been to hear the Dr. and as it is so long since I heard a sermon I thought myself justified in seeking another church.

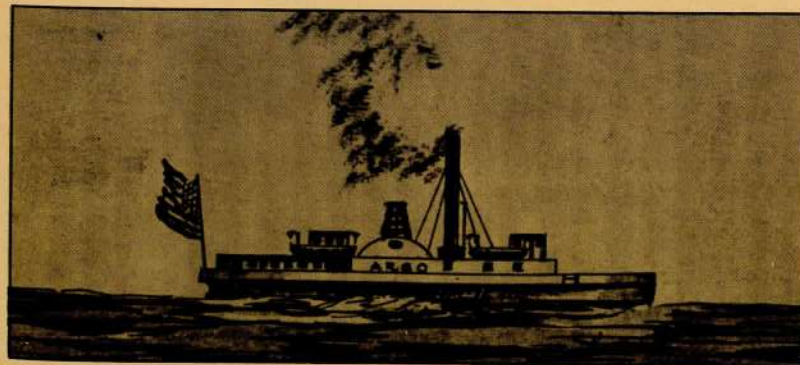
Accordingly, I went to the 1st Baptist, that being nearest at hand. Here I heard a very good discourse on the recognition of friends in Heaven from Rev. Mr. Granger, the pastor. My seat was very near Pres. Wayland. I have seen the Dr. several times before but never so closely as to observe, particularly his features. The Dr. has a large head but of peculiar shape. His forehead recedes immediately from his eyebrows, which are quite projecting something like this: [see opp. page for his crude sketch]. It is said he is in part of aboriginal descent. His eyes are small but keen. He is by no means such a man as I like to look upon for I judge them in the heart[?]. He is a great man but without finish.

[Entry will be continued in next issue]

## President of Brown University (1827--1855): Two Views



Henry Baylies's unflattering sketch of President Francis Wayland of Brown University (see p. 200). Wayland was president for 28 years. Below, the portrait of Dr. Wayland published in Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography, 1889.



Steamboat Argo was the excursion boat Henry took to Newport. Typical of scores of general-purpose steamers built around 1850, she was 125 feet long, based in Bristol.

<sup>17</sup> Capt. Thomas West Sherman, native of Newport, was promoted for gallantry in action at Buena Vista in the Mexican War. What was the Flying Artillery?



Race Day  
at  
Big  
Sandy,  
Tisbury  
Great  
Pond  
c. 1947

Courtesy Tisbury Great Pond Sailing Association.



Watercolor  
by  
Wilfred  
Huntington

Artist Wilfred Huntington, a racer himself, painted this watercolor of the boats on Big Sandy as a race trophy (see p. 171f.)