

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



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 39, NO. 3

FEBRUARY 1998

**When a Jail Was a Gaol,
Not a House of Corrections**
by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

**Our First Female Preacher:
Salome Lincoln in 1831**
by A. H. DAVIS

Brotherly Love
A Letter of Despair
From Daniel Coffin

**More About Henry's
"Sink of Sin" -- Five Points**

Documents:
**A Running Account
Of Matters & Things**
by HENRY BAYLIES

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Corrections and Emendations

Prof. Thomas J. Andrews, co-author of the article on freshwater fishes in the November 1998 issue, has called our attention to a number of errors and omissions. We regret this very much and list them below so members can correct their copies.

Page 60, line 4 in paragraph 3: "swarm darter" should be "swamp darter."

Page 64, line 9 in paragraph 1: "tessellated darter" should be "swamp darter."

line 12 in paragraph 1: "swamp darter" should be "tessellated darter."

Page 66, line 12 in paragraph 2: "O'Hare" should be "O'Hara."

Page 70, lines 4 and 5, in paragraph 3: "blue-fills" should be "bluegills."

Page 73, lines 3 and 5: "large-mouthed" should be "largemouth" and "small-mouthed" should be "smallmouth."

Page 76, line 5: "sheet" should be "Sheet."

line 6: "Goldwait" should be "Goldthwait"; and "pp. 37-44" should be "37-45."

line 29: "pp. 366ff" should be "366-381."

line 30: "Squibnocket Cliffs Peat" should be "Squibnocket Cliff Peat."

line 31: "pp. 344ff" should be "344-353."

line 40: "pp. 137-159" should be added.

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

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

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The Martha's Vineyard Historical Society was founded in 1922 as the Dukes County Historical Society. The name was changed by the members at the annual meeting in Edgartown, August 1996. A non-profit institution supported entirely by members' 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 1740, a house museum of Island history, open to the public from mid-June to mid-October. 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. To join, write to the Society, P. O. Box 827, Edgartown, MA 02539.

When a Jail Was a Gaol, Not a House of Correction

(PART TWO)

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

ON JUNE 19, 1822, Jeremiah Pease wrote in his diary: "This day my brother I.D. Pease receives his commission as sheriff of this county."

For the next 40 years, Brother Isaiah kept the job -- four decades of unrest, of religious upheaval, the Vineyard's most tumultuous period. Baptist and Methodist evangelists criss-crossed the Island, holding meetings far into the night, emotional hell-and-brimstone meetings. The staid, rational Congregationalists, accustomed to more dignified worship, were shocked by the passion of their neighbors who were engulfed in the tidal wave of salvation. Families were torn apart, friendships damaged.

Jeremiah, six years younger than Sheriff Isaiah, was among those who converted to Methodism. Isaiah and Chase, another brother, soon followed, all brought to glory by "Reformation" John Adams, the evangelist.

When he took office, the new sheriff was 36 years old, an Edgartown native, son of Capt. Noah Pease. A former onetime mariner like his father and brother Chase, he lived in a small house on South Summer Street, a few yards from the Methodists' first "chapel," a shed lent them by brother Chase, who lived next door.¹

Ten days after taking office, the sheriff appointed James Banning as his deputy; his job was to run the County

ARTHUR R. RAILTON is Editor of this journal.

¹ Chase's house, much enlarged, is now a bookstore on Edgartown's Main street. Isaiah's cottage was moved about 1920 out Planting Field Way. Sheriff Pease owned meadow land south-east of Planting Field Way. Much of it is now the conservation tract known as Sheriff's Meadow, from which Sheriff's Meadow Foundation took its name. For more about the Pease family see "The Separated Lives in a Mariner's Family," *Intelligencer*, November 1996.

Jail. Banning proudly recorded his appointment in the jail record:²

June 29, 1822 By Vertue of a Comision Given me I have taken Charge of the Goal in Edgartown in Dukes County, its Deputy Goal Keeper Under I. D. Pease Esquire, Sheriff of Dukes County.

Faintly visible on the top of the second page is a note, seemingly by Banning, suggesting he had assumed the duties some weeks before receiving the official appointment:

This Begun May 16, 1820. One prisoner in Joal.

That "one prisoner in Joal" was probably Rebecca Ann Michael, who had been locked up for theft that same day, May 16th.³

The Vineyard may have been in a religious turmoil, but there was little lawbreaking. It was nearly two months before Jailer Banning signed in his second prisoner, a transient seaman:

July 5, 1822: Thomas Colter, a tranceint man a Mariner, was Committed to Prison in Edgartown on Complaint of Abagail Manchester of Tisbury for breaking into the Dwelling house of Thomas Manter of sd. Tisbury.

Nov. 15, 1822: Said Thomas Colter was discharged from prison by order of Court.

There is no record of whether the court had declared Colter innocent or guilty, but he spent more than four months in jail before his case was heard. Such long waits were not unusual. Posting bond seemed rare. Court sessions were not frequent. The November session was the first since June when the new sheriff took office, as brother Jeremiah tells us:

November 12, 1822: Court sits. I. D. Pease acts in his official capacity for the first time in court.

Two weeks later, Jeremiah, who had been attending "Reformation" John Adams' revival meetings nightly, made what he described as the most important decision in his life:

² This entry appears in a record book given to the Society by Mrs. Barbara Nevin from the library of her husband, the late Dr. Robert Nevin. A second record book kept by the various sheriffs and covering almost identical years was given to the Society by Howes Norris, one of the sheriffs. To distinguish the two, the jailer's records will be called the Nevin book and the sheriff's record the Norris book. In both books, the word "jail" is variously spelled: goal, gaol, gale, jale, joal, as readers will see. However spelled, it is pronounced "jail."

³ See Part One of this article, *Intelligencer*, November 1997, for more about Miss Michael.

November 28, 1822: I became a member of the Methodist class.

From that day on, Jeremiah was totally immersed in his religion. He became a lay preacher and chorister at various Methodist meeting houses around the Island. But despite the totality of his commitment, Jeremiah found time to assist his brother, the sheriff:

December 11, 1822: I assisted the sheriff in committing seven men to prison who belonged to the ships, *Boston* and *Thomas* of Nantucket, who were visitors.

December 12: The above visitors were brought before Daniel Fellows, Esq., and three were condemned. The others were excused on account of their youth. The cost of the three who were condemned, \$34.51.⁴

The following spring, the jail business got more serious. A Gay Head man was arrested for murder and after two months in jail he was transferred to Barnstable for trial. Once again, Jeremiah served as Deputy Sheriff:

March 7, 1823: Richard Johnson, a man of Coular, was Committed to Prison on Suspicion of the Murder of Mary Cuffe, of Gayhead, who was found dead on said Gayhead.⁵

May 3, 1823: Said Richard Johnson was taken from my custody by Isaiah D. Pease, Esqr, Sheriff of Dukes County to the Supreme Judicial Court at Barnstable.

James Banning, Dep. Jailer.

Jeremiah, who was a surveyor among his many occupations, took five days off to accompany his brother and the prisoner to Barnstable:

May 3, 1823: Surveyed a piece of Land for Luduck Norton which he bot of Sam'l Osborn, and then went to Barnstable with I. D. P., Sheriff, to carry Richard Jonson who was committed to Jail on suspision of having murdered Mary Cuff of Gayhead. Arrived at Falmouth at 5 P.M. Remained there.

May 4th-5th: Set out for Barnstable and arrived at the Jail about 5 o'clock P.M. where Jonson was put in.

6th: Remained in B.

7th: Set out for home at 4 P.M.

8th: Arrived at H. Hole at 2 A.M.⁶

⁴ Strangely, these seven prisoners are not mentioned in the jail's record books, only in Jeremiah's diary. What he meant by "condemned" is hard to say. Both whalers were in Edgartown provisioning for Pacific voyages. Ship *Thomas* never returned; she was condemned in Hawaii on this voyage.

⁵ From Nevin record book; the Norris book did not describe Johnson as "a man of Coular."

⁶ *Jeremiah Pease Diary*, MVHS.

Johnson was the first Vineyarder booked in the record for murder (the only previous murder suspect was a transient man in 1806).⁷ In the 84 years for which we have records, 1789 to 1873, six men were imprisoned on murder charges, but only two for murders on the Island. The others were mariners charged with "murder on the high seas" and arrested on the Vineyard when their vessels made their first landings. All murder trials were held off-Island. Apparently, the county court was not authorized to try capital cases.

The second Island murder occurred six years later on the night before Christmas Eve of 1863. William Cook Luce, a well-respected Tisbury grocer and wharfinger, was brutally murdered in his store just at closing time. His body was discovered by his 18-year-old daughter, who went to the store at ten p.m., worried because her father had not yet come home. Screaming, she ran to the nearby house of her Uncle James, the victim's brother, who testified:

I called my father and went to the store and found the deceased lying on his back in a pool of blood. a hatchet buried in his head.

Dr. William Leach of Tisbury was notified at once and he arrived at the store about 10:30 p.m. His description of the scene was vivid and detailed:

I have known deceased about six years. . . saw the corpse about half-past ten p.m., lying on his back, a little inclined to the left -- head toward the door -- feet near together, left hand bloody; found the heart not acting, and the body cold; supposed he had been dead about two hours; the arteries, vertebrae, tracheae and muscles were all severed at the neck, with a hatchet in the side of the head, imbedded up to the handle. . . I sent for a coroner.

Coroner John Holmes Jr., testified there was evidence of robbery, that the leather wallet the victim habitually carried was missing. The following morning a boy, Gorham B. Smith, found the wallet near the harbor. He told his story:

I am ten years of age. I found a pocket book and carried it home to my mother, then carried it up to the store and gave it to Mr. Hursel.⁸ My grandfather, Thomas H. Smith, went with me. Lying near and around the

⁷ For details of this first alleged murder see *Intelligencer*, Nov. 1998, pp. 81-82.

⁸ Richard L. Hursell was Town Constable.

pocket book, I found silver pieces. The pocket book was open when I found it. Some of the pieces lay towards the water.

Another boy, Orrin F. Merry, found "ten cents back of the Manter House" and gave the money to his mother.

It seemed at first glance that Luce had been murdered by sailors. The harbor was crowded with visiting vessels that night and various residents testified that they had seen noisy, drunken sailors near the Luce store. One person even claimed to have seen three sailors enter the store while Mr. Luce was putting up the shutters to close it for the night. Several sailors were questioned, their vessels searched, but no evidence was found to warrant an arrest. The investigation was amateurish, as one would expect. Murder was not a frequent crime in Holmes Hole.

A week passed. No suspects had been found. More vessels were searched with no more success. A reward of \$500 was offered, more than a year's pay at the time. The residents, concerned that a murderer might be loose in the village, began acting as detectives. Every male in Holmes Hole was made to feel obligated to account for his whereabouts at the time of the murder. One of them, Capt. Gustavus D. Smith, a retired mariner, was frequently seen on the downtown streets evenings. His purpose was innocent enough. His wife was seriously ill and he was seeking someone to sit with her through the night ("to watch," it was called). He was so persistent, often unreasonable, in his pleadings that many women considered him a public nuisance. Unlike most other men, who were eager to explain exactly where they were at the time of the murder, he seemed unsure, at times even contradictory, about his whereabouts. Also, as was his style, he seemed rather flippant when asked for his alibi.

Rumor and speculation spread. When no suspect had been picked up after another week, a citizens' meeting was called to discuss what could be done. Captain Smith, by now a prime suspect, was asked by R.W. Crocker, who was to head the meeting, if he planned to attend. The captain replied that he could not, but "if you want me, send for me." Crocker seemed to take the light-hearted response as suspicious, per-

haps even an indication of guilt. Although there was no evidence against him, speculation kept growing. People began avoiding him and he sensed the increased hostility, even among friends. He began to doubt himself, becoming so uncertain about what he had been doing on that fateful hour that he asked a friend whom he visited often, "Do you recollect whether I was here on the night of the murder or not?" The man told him that he had not been there. Smith began to hide from scrutiny, staying at home with his ailing wife.

At the public hearing, the townspeople voted for an investigation to be headed by Crocker, who focused it on Captain Smith. William L. Mayhew, a special policeman assisting Crocker in the investigation, testified later:

I have observed the movements of Smith since the murder; have watched him and accompanied him in some of his rounds in pursuit of watchers. . . My object in accompanying Captain Smith was to do my duty as a policeman, to detect the rogue if I could.

The captain was now the prime suspect. A Coroner's Jury was called. It found that "Mr. William C. Luce was murdered and suspicion pointed strongly to Gustavus D. Smith." The sheriff took quick action. On January 17, Sheriff Samuel Keniston, made this entry in the jail record:

Gustavus D. Smith of Holmes Hole was committed to jail Jan. 17, 1864, by order of Jeremiah Pease Esq., Trial justice, on a charge of murder, to await the action of the Grand jury at the May term of the Superior Court.

The following week, on January 22, prisoner Smith was given a hearing before Justice Jeremiah Pease. The account of the hearing in the *Vineyard Gazette* was by far the longest local news story the paper had ever printed. Covering four full columns, it was headlined "The Holmes Hole Murder" and was filled with testimony, often in lurid language.

Capt. Gustavus Dunham Smith, 49, now suspected of murdering his friend the grocer, was born in Tisbury. About a year earlier he had retired from the sea to take care of his seriously ill wife (she died three months after the murder). He had no source of income and many hinted that he needed money to pay for her medicine and care, a suspicion that provided a motive for the murder. Captain Gustavus knew

that the victim carried a lot of money in his wallet. The Smiths had two children: Gustavus Junior, age 21, and Henrietta, age 18. His habit of walking the streets looking for "watchers" had made him a well-known local figure. Every one had seen him that night, or so it seemed.

Joseph Thaxter Pease, Judge of Probate, took over Smith's defense. His brother, Jeremiah, was the justice who had called the hearing so Joseph, a lawyer himself, asked Thomas M. Stetson, a young New Bedford lawyer, to come to the Island to defend Gustavus, whom he deeply believed to be innocent, a victim of hysteria. The Pease family lived in Edgartown where most residents, unlike those in Tisbury, felt the evidence against Smith was totally circumstantial. There was nothing in his background or his character to explain such an act of brutality on a friend.

The hearing at Capawock Hall was crowded with people from all over the Island. Various witnesses were called and they repeated the rumors and speculation at length. No new evidence, no substantial evidence, was introduced. There was much testimony about the gruesome manner of the killing. The hatchet had been seen on display in the store. Several witnesses described the evening walks of Captain Smith. One woman testified that at about the time of the murder she saw Smith walking behind the store:

I saw a man in the lane coming out into the street. . . the man crossed the street. I stopped and he put his face near mine . . . I recognized Capt. Smith. We both went north. Going along, Smith said, "I want you to go to my house tonight." I answered, "I cannot." . . . When Capt. Smith came up with me he appeared somewhat unusual. I have always considered Capt. Smith a respectable man.

Dr. Moses Brown, who like most doctors ran a drug store, testified that the day after the murder,

[Smith] came in and opened a box containing tobacco and cigars. I noticed his hand trembled. He wanted cheap tobacco . . . gave me ten cents. I observed several bills and some currency in his pocketbook. . . I was surprised that he wanted cheap tobacco, having so much money.

Dr. George T. Hough, who was the physician taking care of Mrs. Smith, testified on behalf of the captain:

He is a very kind and human man -- always good to his wife who is sick and irritable. (Prisoner in tears.)

Other witnesses remembered that Captain Smith wore a hat like the hat being worn by an unidentified man seen in the lane behind Luce's grocery store at about the time of the killing. Others discussed the strange behavior of the captain in the days after the murder. It was a long hearing, filled with meandering, circumstantial evidence. The prosecutor, George Marston of Barnstable, in summarizing Smith's testimony before the Coroner's jury, said:

At his first examination he could not tell of his whereabouts and when called again told conflicting stories.

Justice Jeremiah Pease closed the hearing with a decision to hold the defendant Smith without bail pending a trial. The captain was returned to the County Jail under the custody of Jailer Samuel S. Daggett. That was in January. It wasn't until October that Smith was called up for trial in the Bristol County court house. For nearly ten months he was confined to the jail in Edgartown, during which time, as mentioned, his wife died. His New Bedford lawyer, Attorney Stetson, discussing his imprisonment years later, recalled,

... all was not dismal. The Edgartown people did not believe in his guilt as the Holmes Holers did. Nice things were sent in to him. People called on him, brought books and papers and old Daggett, the jailer, was very good to him. To crown it all, one day there arrived with his mail a great official envelope bearing a commission to Captain Smith to be a Justice of the Peace., signed by Governor Andrew, with the advice and consent of the Council.

This was splendid. Captain Smith would get it out and read it to his visitors and comment on those words, "Know ye that confiding in your integrity. . . etc." Now, Smith would say, "that is quite an endorsement for a man in my case."

After a spell the Governor found out that he had slopped over and sent two councillors down to get the commission back, but Smith refused to give it up. A few weeks later, he sent it back voluntarily.

In October 1864, Smith left the Island under guard to be tried before the Supreme Court in the Bristol County court house. Jailer Daggett was ordered to deliver him there. Defense Attorney Stetson, who was waiting for his client, de-

scribed the arrival of defendant Smith in Taunton:

The old jailer, Daggett, nearly 80 years old and almost blind, had a lot of trouble getting across the tracks and through the frisky locomotives at Taunton and never could have succeeded had not Captain Gustavus taken him by the shoulders and steered him as you would a wheelbarrow. There were hundreds at the depot to see "the Vineyard murderer" arrive. Naturally, the crowd thought Daggett was the criminal and that the hale, stout captain was the constable in charge of the criminal. One woman next to me sung out, "Oh, I know he is guilty from his hang-dog look." [Another said] "How could such an old man kill anybody?" [And a third,] "I hope the officer won't let him escape."

At last, Captain Smith piloted his custodian to the court house . . . The court made short work of the rest. I had [said] that the state would never bring the case to trial. Chief Justice Bigelow asked [the prosecutor] if this was so. He assented. The court ordered Smith discharged on his own recognizance, without sureties, to appear when wanted. He never was wanted.

Before the trial the *Vineyard Gazette* had commented that "evidence against Smith is so slight that the government hesitates about bringing the case to trial."

And no trial was ever called. In May 1865, the Supreme Court of Massachusetts dismissed the case for lack of evidence. Captain Smith, after more than a year of suspicion, was declared innocent. He continued living in Tisbury for 30 years before his death in 1896 at 81 years. The murderer of grocer Luce was never found. The *Gazette*, which had given so much space to the circumstantial charges and slanderous remarks about Captain Smith, never published a word on his behalf after the case was thrown out. No apologies, no editorials about the miscarriage of justice, nothing about his spending nearly a year in prison because of gossip and rumor. Nothing.

The murderer was never found.

Another murder, this one "on the high seas," occurred on June 29, 1858, aboard the schooner *Cameo*, bound for Portland from Cuba. The killer, it turned out, was the schooner's captain who was brought to Holmes Hole where a coroner's jury indicted him. The *Cameo* was about 30 miles south of Gay Head when Capt. Heskiah D. Esterbrooks murdered

First Mate Charles Smith and injured the helmsman and cook while hallucinating that they were planning a mutiny. After the attacks, he ordered the flag to be flown at half-mast which attracted a passing vessel. Her captain came aboard and on seeing the dead mate and the bleeding helmsman asked what had happened. The captain said only that he needed help sailing the vessel because he wanted "to land these cripples" as soon as possible. A tow line was attached and the *Cameo* hauled into Holmes Hole, where authorities were notified. A reporter from the *Vineyard Gazette*, Alexander Smith, went aboard with Dr. Edwin Mayberry, coroner, and interviewed Captain Esterbrooks, who said he was being poisoned by the crew and that he had attacked them when they threatened to kill him. He was taken to County Jail:

July 1, 1858: Heseckiah D. Esterbrooks was committed to prison on a complaint of Murder by Bartlett Allen Esq. Justice of the Peace to await his Tryal or examination before Jeremiah Pease, Justice to try criminal cases.

The next day Jeremiah Pease Jr., son of the late Methodist convert (who had died the year before), ordered him held for transfer to the U. S. District Court. A Federal Marshal came to the Island and on July 13th took the captain to Boston for trial.

The surviving helmsman testified:

... I saw the captain standing with the bowsprit in his hand, near the wheelhouse, just before he struck me. The first warning I got was the blow. ... I received another blow on the left arm which I held up to ward it off. My arm was broken ... A third blow split a finger on my right hand and cut my ear. Another blow missed me and hit the wheel, breaking a spoke. ... When I recovered I told him, "You have broken my arm and I cannot steer." The blood was all over me and he ordered me to go below and lie down. ... When I next saw Mr. Smith [the mate] he was dead on deck.

Dr. Daniel A. Cleaveland of Tisbury, who had examined the mate's body, testified that there was "the mark of a very severe blow on the back of the head and four upon the forehead." The following April, Captain Esterbrooks was acquitted on the grounds of insanity.

In 1872, another prisoner was held in County Jail for

murder on the high seas:

August 17, 1872: Manuel K. Sylva (Portuguese) committed to Jail by State Constable Jason L. Dexter on charge of Murder committed on the High Seas, January 5, 1872. Age about 19. Born at Flores W.I. Unmarried. Cannot read or write.

August 20: Taken to Boston for Trial by Levi Shaw, Deputy U.S. Marshall. Howes Norris, Sheriff⁹

In the 51 years of jail history being reviewed here, a total of 262 prisoners were imprisoned for crimes ranging from "stealing a ride" to murder, an average of fewer than five per year. In seven of those years, no more than one prisoner was ever in jail at one time. Crime, or at least arrests for crime, ran at such a low rate that in the 14 months between July 1848 and September 1849, the jail was empty. Not a single prisoner was committed for more than a year.

During the years we are studying, about 14 percent of the inmates were female, about the same percentage as in our previous period.¹⁰ There were some differences in the types of crime. During the earlier period studied, from 1789 to 1822, indebtedness was the most frequent "crime," accounting for 38 percent of the prisoners. Most stayed very briefly, often only overnight, but there were exceptions.

One such exception was in 1847 and involved a young, up-and-coming businessman, Samuel Osborn Jr., of Edgartown. He later became one of the wealthiest and most influential men on the Vineyard, but in 1847 he was a new shopkeeper, just married and 23 years old. His bride was Zoraida Coffin, daughter of one of the town's most prominent men, the late Timothy Coffin. The newlyweds were living in the handsome Coffin house on South Water Street along with nine others, including Zoraida's mother, owner of the house and now Mrs. Solomon Swift.¹¹ All living there were members of the Coffin family except the Irish maid.

Young Samuel was charged with failing to pay seven

⁹ Norris, incidentally, was the son-in-law of the murdered grocer, William Luce, having married his eldest daughter the year before his murder.

¹⁰ *Intelligencer*, November 1997, p. 82f.

¹¹ In 1865, by then a successful business man, Osborn built a huge house on South Summer St., now the principal building in the Charlotte Inn complex.

bills he owed Boston companies, perhaps for goods to stock his new store. The debt totalled \$10,000, a huge sum in 1847. Sheriff Isaiah Pease made the long and detailed entry in the record book when he booked Samuel:¹²

February 10, 1847. Samuel Osborn Junior¹³ was Committed to Jail on seven writs for want of bail by Isaiah D. Pease, Sheriff.

Writ No. 1, Lymon Nichols, W[illiam] P. Pearce & Jacob Peirce, all of Boston, writ dated at Boston Jan. 26, 1847 vs. S. O. Jr., Damages laid at \$1500.

No. 2, Samuel L. Curtis, John Preston & Company vs. S.O. Jr. dated at Boston, Damage laid at \$1000. [January 26, 1847]

No. 3, Eliab S. Mackintire, David B. Jewitt, Sam'l P. [R.] Taber, [all] of Boston, vs. S.O. Jr. Damages laid at \$2000. [Court First Tuesday of April next. January 30, 1847.]

No. 4, George D. Dutton, George C. Richardson & others, vs. S.O. Jr. Damage laid in sd. writ, \$3000. [Court First Tuesday of April next.]

No. 5, Benjamin E. Bates, John N. Turner, Henry Thatcher & J. S.S. Bascom, all of Boston vs. Samuel Osborn Jr., writ dated Feb. 6, 1847, Damage \$6000. [\$600.]¹⁴

No. 6, Wm A. Brown Jr. & Horatio F. Brown of Boston vs S.O. Jr. Damage laid \$800. [Court in Boston April, first Tuesday 1847. Writ dated at Boston Feb. 6, 1847.]

No. 7, David N. Fales & Otis H. Davis of Boston vs. Samuel Osborn Jr. Court in Boston, First Tuesday of April next. Damage laid \$2000.

Whole ammount [sic] of Damages laid at \$10,900. [Damages laid in the seven writs, \$10,900]

For more than two months, young Osborn was held in County Jail, being unable to raise bail.

April 13, 1847 -- 1/2 past 7 o'clock A.M. Samuel Osborn Jr. was taken out of Prison by virtue of a writ issued out from the Municipal Court, holden at Boston, wherein an Inditement was found against the body of said Osborn. Said Samuel Osborn Jr. was taken from prison on board the Steam boat *Naushon* for New Bedford & Boston by Lucean B. Densy [Constable].

Expence of Board, etc.,

8 weeks five days & one meal @ 1.30 = \$13.12

¹² As we will see, in 1862 Samuel Osborn was appointed sheriff and he added his comments to these entries.

¹³ In the Nevin record book kept by the jailer "age 23, Complexion Light" is included after the name. The quoted log entries that follow are from the Norris record. Additional material taken from the Nevin book will be bracketed [--].

¹⁴ The sheriff wrote \$6000, but it appears that he had attempted to erase the last zero. The jailer's record lists the amount as \$600.

Wood = 8.25
Turn kee = .40
[Total] \$21.77

S. S. Daggett Dep. Jailer

Osborn's time in the County Jail was among the longest served by debtors. Usually after a day or two some arrangement at payment had been worked out. In many of the 26 cases, the prisoner was released by taking what was called the "Oath of Poverty," a provision in the law that was not, it seems, dissimilar to declaring bankruptcy. Samuel Osborn did not take that route as he certainly could not plead poverty.

In 1862, at the age of 76, Sheriff Isaiah D. Pease died, ending 40 years in the office.¹⁵ After his debtor case was dismissed (it was "nol prossed"), Samuel Osborn Jr., had returned to Edgartown to become a successful merchant and investor in whaling vessels as well as a well-liked public servant, holding several offices. A leader in the brand-new Republican party and Chairman of its Town Committee, he headed the local campaign to elect President Abraham Lincoln. When Sheriff Pease died, Governor Andrew, also a Republican, appointed Osborn to fill the position until the next election. He served less than a year, but it was long enough for him to set the record straight, something he had long wanted to do. With the jail records under his control, he added his own addendum to what Sheriff Pease had written 15 years earlier.¹⁶ In the margin next to Isaiah's lengthy list of writs served against him, he wrote boldly:

This committal was made by violating the laws and Constitution of the State, the Sheriff going contrary to the law in requiring excessive bail. The plaintiffs committed perjury in order to make the arrests.

The indictment was obtained by perjury of witnesses who never dared to enter open court and repeat it. A "Nol Pross" was entered by Plaintiffs af-

¹⁵ Isaiah was the last of Noah Pease's nine children to die. Jeremiah, Chase and the others had preceded him. His son, Richard Luce Pease, survived and is recognized as one of the Island's leading historians. He never finished his long-planned history of the Vineyard, but his notes were used by Charles E. Banks in writing his.

¹⁶ Osborn did not seek the sheriff's office in the election, instead ran successfully for representative in the state house. Elected sheriff was Samuel Keniston. Old Jailer Daggett seems to have left when Sheriff Pease died. The final entry in the Nevin book is April 14, 1862 and was written by him, leading us to speculate that he took it with him. He had moved into the jail as keeper Dec. 17, 1844, so he had written nearly 20 years of records.

ter great efforts by deft. [defendant] to have trial take place. S. Osborn, Jr., Sheriff, 1862.

The defendant was not guilty, Sheriff Samuel Osborn Jr., was saying. Let the record stand corrected.

There had been a change in the law and after 1855 nobody was imprisoned as a debtor. During the years from 1822 to 1855, twenty had been held on that charge, nine being released upon taking the Oath of Poverty. The longest term by a debtor was three months; second longest was that of Osborn, eight weeks. Only three of the 20 debtors were "of color," all imprisoned "for want of bail" on a complaint by the same creditor and held only one week before being released.¹⁷ Osborn was the only debtor taken to Boston for trial, it being where his creditors had filed the complaints.

The most frequent crime in these years was robbery, accounting for 20 percent, with 52 imprisoned on that charge. Next, with 13 percent, was desertion from a vessel or, as it was usually called, "denying duty." In most cases the vessel was a whaler, usually from Nantucket. In some, the prisoner had not deserted, but had threatened to and was imprisoned "for safe keeping" until the ship was ready to sail. These whalers were in Edgartown fitting out for their voyages.¹⁸ The prisoners, deserters as well as threateners, were confined only briefly, often overnight. Who knows what punishment was meted out once they were back on ship. None of the jailed seamen was a Vineyarder.¹⁹

Drunkenness was the charge against nearly 10 percent of the prisoners. Among them were several repeat offenders. Drunks were usually jailed only overnight. The two longest imprisonments for drunkenness, each for 40 days, were on the same offender, David Y. Taylor. The long terms were apparently due to the fact that they were his third and fourth arrests

¹⁷ In these records books, the terms "color" and "colored" are the ones used to identify those individuals who today would prefer to be identified as Blacks. Because that is the term in the records, we use it here although we know there are those, like the editor, who prefer another.

¹⁸ It seems strange that crewmen would desert at the very start of a long voyage. Perhaps the short trip from Nantucket was enough to reveal what lay ahead in the next three or four years.

¹⁹ One deserter was a Vineyarder, Joseph B. Mayhew of Chilmark, but he deserted from the army, the 41st Mass. Regt., in the Civil War. He was taken to Boston for trial, Jan. 26, 1863.



Some time between 1858, when court house was built, and 1873, when jail, left, was torn down, a girl, with a baby carriage, posed for this photo on Main St.

on the same charge. In the 1850 Census, he is shown as a teamster in Edgartown, 43, with a wife and 10-year-old son.

A high percentage of black females were among those imprisoned for drunkenness. Of 25 prisoners in jail for intoxication, ten were "colored" and eight of the ten were females, two being repeat offenders.

Arrests for drunkenness were most frequent in the early 1850s, a period when the temperance movement was strong. During the first three years of that decade 10 arrests were made, 40 percent of the total in the years in this history. During those three years only two were colored, both females.

Sheriff Isaiah Pease, a devote Methodist and no doubt a temperance advocate, recorded one success that took only a week of imprisonment. In 1844, he wrote (and in 1851 added his satisfied report):

July 29, 1844. Matthew Furlong was Committed to the House of Correc-

tion as a Common Drunkard, an Irishman aged thirty years -- could read & write.

August 5, 1844, this day said Furlong was discharged from the house of Correction by order of the County Commissioners. Said Matthew Furlong lived untill Oct. 1851 & was not known ever to drink any Spirituous Liquor after he came out of the house of Correction untill his death.²⁰

Isaiah D. Pease, Keeper of D.C. Jail.

Lunacy was considered a reason for imprisonment in those years with six percent of the prisoners booked as "Lunatics." While there were 16 such bookings, only 13 individuals were involved, as there were repeat "offenders." Ebenezer Smith of Edgartown was one, being locked up four times on the same charge. On the fourth arrest, he was transferred to Worcester to a state "Insane Asylum."

Another "lunatic" was Joseph Dunham Jr., of Edgartown who spent only one night in jail in 1841 before being transferred to an off-Island asylum. One year later he was back in Edgartown, his term apparently up. Shortly after his return, he married Jane Ann Stewart. She must have died about ten years later, as in 1858 he married Angeline Gifford. Not long after this marriage, he was returned to the asylum. In 1870, Angeline petitioned the court to be permitted to take over their property because "he is an insane person and incapable of taking care of himself. . . being now in the Insane Asylum at Taunton." In November 1871, she was granted permission to sell the family homestead consisting of about 80 acres, a house, barn and other buildings.

Joseph seems to have been in and out of the asylum over the succeeding years. In 1873, the *Gazette* reported:

Mr. Joseph Dunham. . . escaped from the Insane Asylum at Taunton where he has been confined . . . He has been at liberty some two or three weeks. He escaped once before. . .

He died in the asylum. The *Gazette* published his obituary:

DIED/DUNHAM-- In Taunton, Nov. 22nd, [1875] Mr. Joseph Dunham, aged 65 years 9 months. (His remains arrived in Town on Tuesday for interment.)

²⁰ One of the rare entries in which the term "House of Correction" is used to identify the County Jail. Usually the term refers to the jail in New Bedford, where serious offenders were sent. The sheriff must have added to this entry after Furlong's death.

1847 Feb 10	No 5 Benjamin E Bates John N Garner Henry Thacher & John J. L. Bosson all of Boston vs Samuel Osborn ga writ dated Feb 6 1847 Damages \$600
	No 6 Wm A Brown ga & Horatio F. Brown of Boston vs S. O. ga Damages laid \$800
	No 7 David N. Hales & Otis H. Oane of Boston vs Samuel Osborn ga Counts in Boston first Tuesday of April next Damages laid at \$2000 whole amount of Damages laid at \$11800
1847 April 11	It past 7 o'clock A.M. Samuel Osborn was taken out of Prison by virtue of a writ issued out from the Municipal Court holden at Boston wherein an indictment was found against the body of said Osborn, said Samuel Osborn was taken from prison on board the Steamboat Nippon for New Bedford & Boston by Lucius B. Dwyer Express of Board & 8 weeks five days & one meal \$7.50 // 13.12
	Wood \$2.25
	two Km \$1.40
	S. O. ga ga ga ga ga \$21.17
1847 June 8	Nancy Smith of Yisbury an Insane woman was Committed to House of Correction. was discharged by order of the Select men

Sheriff Samuel Osborn, Jr., took office in 1862, and made sure that history would show that he was not guilty of the charges made against him in 1847.

Considering that they made up a relatively small percentage of the population, a high number, 25 percent, of prisoners committed to the County Jail were "persons of color." This was probably due to what today is known as racial bias. Most were from Gay Head, where many Native Americans, Portuguese and Blacks lived, all combined in the category "colored."²¹ Of the charges against the 62 colored prisoners, robbery was the most frequent with 21 percent; drunkenness

²¹ In only 15 percent of the entries is the place of residence listed. In almost every case involving a Gay Head resident, the jailer would add "colored."

was next, 18 percent; then rioting or disturbing the peace, 5 percent. Among the 201 "white" prisoners, only 12 percent were in jail for robbery, 5 percent for drunkenness, 8 percent for lunacy (this compares with one percent colored), and less than 2 percent for "rioting." Only 11 percent of the white prisoners were female, while females made up 39 percent of the "colored."

There seems to have been a difference in the sentences meted out to whites and non-whites for similar crimes. Quickly it must be added that it is hard to prove, as length of sentence was not routinely recorded. In 1873, a colored man was arrested for vagrancy, the only vagrant arrested in the entire period although newspaper reports often mentioned "undesirable" individuals, no doubt vagrants, being returned to the mainland during these years. He was sentenced to a month in the state prison in New Bedford, seemingly a harsh penalty for the rather harmless "crime" of vagrancy:

August 8, 1873. Wm. H. Vantile (Colored) committed to Jail by State Constable J. L. Dexter. Charge Vagrancy. Age 32. Single. Can read and write.

August 9. Taken to House of Correction at New Bedford by Depty Shff to serve out a sentence of one month. Howes Norris, Sheriff.

Among all colored prisoners arrested for robbery, 13 percent were imprisoned a week or less, while 38 percent of the whites received this short sentence. More than half, 53 percent, of the colored prisoners served more than 30 days, while only 38 percent of the whites received the longer sentences. Colored females imprisoned for robbery were sentenced to more than 30 days in every case except one.

Two sentences of the colored women are worthy of notice. The first was on a Jane Lolen in 1829. She was sentenced to prison "for 10 days, to be kept on bread & water for stealing, then to be liberated." She is the only prisoner to be shown as being kept on bread and water. Why she was given such a severe treatment is not explained. In 1872, Caroline Tilghman, another colored woman, age 45, spent two days in jail for "stealing a ride" plus, the jailer added, "drunkenness."

Black males were also given longer terms than whites.



Former Sheriff Samuel Osborn, Jr., at age of 70, two years before he died in 1895.

One colored man, John Coududy from Chappaquiddick, was imprisoned for 20 months for stealing, with 18 of the months in the House of Correction at New Bedford. Whites made up 67 percent of the robbery prisoners and 45 percent of them were given sentences of more than 30 days. Among the colored prisoners for stealing, 33 percent of all robbery cases, 64 percent were sentenced to more than 30 days, much higher than among whites.

Although jail breaking dropped drastically after a new jail was built some time in the early 1800s, there were a total of nine escapes, eight by robbery prisoners. James Diamond, a colored prisoner from Gay Head, twice escaped from jail in 1859 after he and Peter E. Johnson, also colored from Gay Head, were convicted of breaking and entering William Manter's store in Chilmark. It was Johnson's second jail term, having served 30 days in 1858 for "stoving a boat," but Diamond's first. He broke out "by taking the bricks out of the fireplace." In two weeks, he was returned to prison and after

one month in jail he escaped again, "by means of a fals Key," according to Sheriff Isaiah Pease. This time, he eluded capture for four years. Once back in prison he was sentenced to six months in the House of Correction in New Bedford.²² Johnson meanwhile had served six months at hard labor in the New Bedford jail.

Another robbery prisoner escaped in 1869. Peter A. Esau of Edgartown, 19 years old, broke out by "knocking away the chimney in the fireplace," just as Diamond had done years earlier.²³ He crawled through the opening in the chimney into the adjacent vacant cell which was unlocked and disappeared. The jailer must have been a sound sleeper! In 1873, two robbery prisoners, husband and wife, escaped from the jail. They were Amasa and Clara Alexander, described as of "dark complexion." After one month in prison, they escaped when the "door was opened by Sam'l Eastman and an unknown person." Recaptured after a few days, they were transferred to the House of Correction in New Bedford.²⁴

The most publicized case of robbery during these years occurred in 1862. The prisoner, a white minor, spent five weeks in prison awaiting trial, and although he admitted guilt at the trial he was released:

April 14, 1862, David C. Brush was committed to Prison for Larceny and on the 27th day of May was discharged by order of the Superior Court. Said David was born in Tisbury, can read & write, and is sixteen years of age. Sam'l S. Daggett, Jailer.²⁵

That entry is matter-of-fact, as are all the entries, but

²² Diamond, an American Indian from New York state, was released from prison when he agreed to enlist in the Civil War. See Richard Miller, "Two Vineyard 'Men of Color' Who Fought in the Civil War," *Intelligencer*, August 1994.

²³ An interesting sidelight is that Peter's brother was named Samuel Daggett Esau, after the former jailer, Samuel S. Daggett. His family must have been mortified that one of their sons was twice imprisoned on the charge of robbery (the first time was in 1869).

²⁴ The *Gazette* describes what happened. Apparently the unknown person who assisted was a man named Dyer Norton who passed "up a saw and a stick of wood to William Eastman's cell on the second floor. . . Eastman escaped through the window after sawing the bars. Alexander was able to unhook the outer door by the aid of a spliced pole . . . the two men broke the locks, paid some unnamed person two dollars, were told "my blessings to you" and ran off into the night. Norton was arrested and twice the jury came back without a verdict. The two prisoners were later captured and sentenced to five years in State Prison after confessing to four Edgartown robberies.

²⁵ This entry, although signed by him, seems to have been written by another. It is his last entry.

David's hearing before the Grand Jury was not, as the *Vineyard Gazette* reported:

. . . Richard Flanders [was]. . . foreman. After a short absence, they returned two indictments against -----²⁶ of Tisbury, for larceny. . . he pleaded guilty to both. . . This case had excited an unusual interest throughout the County, both on account of the social standing of the prisoner and the rarity of such an occurrence in this community. He is a young man of about 17 summers, an only son of respectable parents, has been an apprentice to the carpenter's trade and hitherto has borne an irreproachable character. . . The Court-room was crowded to its utmost capacity . . . The sympathy of the public was evidently very strong in favor of the accused.

Mr. Stetson²⁷ in behalf of the prisoner. . . alluded to his youthful appearance; said that to punish the prisoner would not only punish him but also his friends perhaps even more severely. He then produced a petition to the Court, very numerous signed by the citizens of Tisbury in favor of the prisoner. . . he alluded to the prayer made at the opening of the Court, and joined his own to the preacher's prayer that justice might be tempered with mercy. . .

Mr. Marston, District Attorney, . . . wished the Court to be informed of all the facts. It would be seen that the crime was a very heinous one. Three burglaries had been committed and these were but a part of a series of crimes . . . perpetrated for a long time . . . he agreed with the eloquent and learned counsel for the prisoner that it might partake of the nature of a monomaniac or diseased mind. . .

Judge Vose in giving his decision alluded to the reputation of this County in regard to crime. . . [no other] community could be found in the world that could show such a parallel. No one had ever been sent from this County to the State Prison.²⁸ The Jurors of the Court here seldom had any business. The Traverse Jury at this Term had not had a single case before them, either civil or criminal. It was an extraordinary state of things, and this was an extraordinary people. . . peaceable, law-abiding and moral. . . in view of all the circumstance he would not pass any sentence at this term, but let the case be continued . . . with a recognizance in the sum of five hundred dollars. And in case he reformed. . . nothing further will ever be done in the matter. . .

Tears of gratitude were freely shed on the announcement. . . the parents left the Court-room weeping with joy. . .²⁹

Nearly 11 percent of all prisoners were arrested for as-

²⁶ His name was omitted, out of sympathy for him and his family apparently.

²⁷ He was the lawyer who had represented Capt. Gustavus Smith, alleged murderer.

²⁸ This seems odd. Wasn't the New Bedford House of Correction a state prison?

²⁹ In the 1907 Directory of Tisbury, 35 years later, a Capt. David C. Brush, probably the young thief, is living on Spring Street.

sault. Here too there seems to be a difference in the sentences of whites and coloreds. Among the colored prisoners, only 28 percent were imprisoned for a week or less; among the white prisoners, nearly twice as many, 52 percent received the short sentence. Of the colored prisoners, 28 percent served more than a month, while only 19 percent of the whites did. Of course, the prison records do not describe the details of the crime so we cannot determine its seriousness, probably making our comparison of length of sentences invalid.

The expression "riot in the streets" was used, it seems, to describe a higher degree of "disturbing the peace." It, or some similar expression, was used in the commitment of eight prisoners. Two of the riotous prisoners were females, both colored. One was locked up twice on the same charge. She was Rebecca Ann Martin whose mother, Nancy Michael, had had her arrested twice for theft in 1818.³⁰

December 19, 1845. Rebecca Ann Martin was committed to Jail for being Found in the Street in a state of intoxication & for riotous Conduct. And the next day [was] liberated by me, Isaiah D. Pease, Sheriff.

February 5, 1850. Rebecca Ann Martin was Committed to Jail for tumultuous Conduct in the Streets & discharged the same day. Expences, 54 cents.

The other "riotous" woman, who had been arrested 12 years earlier, also spent only a brief time in jail:

July 3, 1834. Bulah Ochooch was Committed to Jail for Riot in the Streets & the next day taken by Justice Mayhew & Sentenced to 24 hour imprisonment & on the 5th was liberated by the Sheriff.

Three men, none of them colored, were imprisoned as riotous. One may have been a transient, as he was not recorded in the 1850 Census the year before:

March 19, 1851. William H. Rogers was Committed to Jail as a riotous person and very unruly in the Streets, a single man, aged 19 years. Could read & write, born in State of Connecticut & was discharged by order of Theodore G. Mayhew Esq., Trial Justice, by paying Fine and Costs.

S. S. Daggett Dep. Jailer

Selling liquor without a license was the crime committed by about 3 percent of those imprisoned. All but one were off-Island men who apparently came to the Island carrying a

³⁰ See *Intelligencer*, November 1997, p. 84.

suitcase of liquor for sale on the streets. Two spent a month in jail, one of them serving two separate month-long sentences. Two others, after trial, were transferred to the New Bedford jail for sentences of unrecorded lengths; another was released after one day on payment of a fine. Two examples:

October 3, 1857. John Silvia alias John Portugee otherwise John Jose was Committed to prison or house of Correction for selling Rum contrary to law, by Richard L. Pease, Justice of the Peace.

October 15: Was discharged by order of the County Commissioners. Isaiah D. Pease, Jailer.

June 21, 1872. Antone C. Rocker, committed to Jail by Deputy Sheriff. Charge selling Liquor. Age 37. Born at Gibraltar. Lives at Edgartown. Married. Can read and write. Been in Jail before.

June 22: Taken to House of Correction, New Bedford, by Deputy Sheriff Jason L. Dexter, by order of Trial Justice Jeremiah Pease.

Howes Norris, Sheriff.

Among the out-of-the-ordinary crimes was this one that was committed in 1864, the only such case in the years under study:

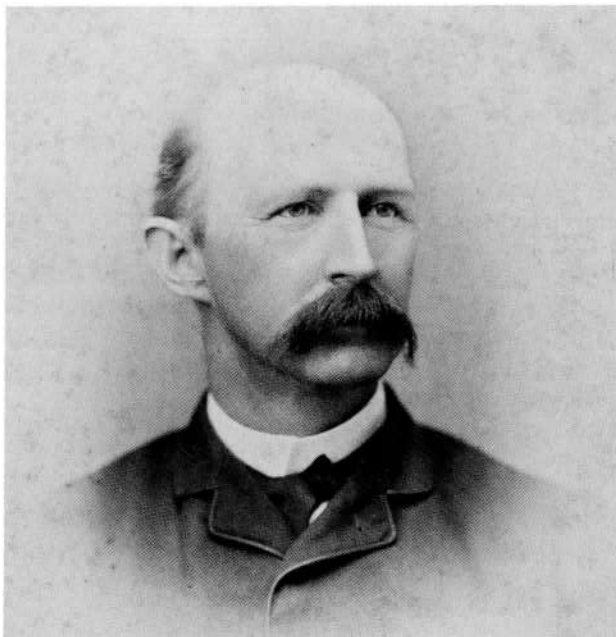
April 19, 1864. Hervey Miller of Boston was committed to jail Apr. 19 by order of Jeremiah Pease, Trial Justice, on a charge of passing counterfeit money and was discharged May 12, on bail.

Sam'l Keniston, Sheriff

But none can surpass in interest two entries written in 1873, among the last in our records. One of the "criminals," Thomas N. Hillman, was a 63-year-old resident of Tisbury. He was sentenced to three years in the New Bedford jail for a "crime" that in today's society might be an item for gossip, but would not bring time in prison. His partner in the "crime," Mehitable Norton, 35 years old, was released after posting bail. The record doesn't show if she was ever brought to trial.

Hillman, a prosperous former Tisbury merchant,³¹ is listed in the 1870 Census as a "Trial Justice." He is living with his wife, Betsey, and their four children, two of them adult sons, 33 and 23 years old, and two younger daughters, Rebecca, 16, and Charlotte, 1. Also living with them for some years during this period were three adult children from her

³¹ In the 1870 Census, William Hillman is shown as owning \$6000 in real estate, \$5000 in personal property, a substantial amount at the time.



Howes Norris, sheriff and newspaper editor, also led the long effort to separate Cottage City [Oak Bluffs] from Edgartown.

first marriage to the late William West of Chilmark. In the 1850 Census, there were eleven persons living in their house, all related. Their two young daughters, Rebecca and Charlotte, were born after the 1850 Census.

Both Hillman and his friend Mehitable pleaded guilty to the "crime." Sheriff Howes Norris did not record her age, which was 35, when he booked her, but he did list her as a widow. The 1870 Census, three years before, shows her as "keeping house" in Tisbury, with two daughters, aged 8 and 6. The judge delayed her sentencing. We don't know what sentence, if any, she later received. They both were in the County Jail on the night of May 28th, whether they were allowed to see each other is not known. Hillman had been there since the 23rd. On the day after Mehitable was booked, the 29th, he was taken to New Bedford to begin his sentence of three years in the House of Correction:

May 23, 1873. Thomas N. Hillman committed to Jail by State Constable

Jason L. Dexter for Adultery. Age 64. Born and lives at Tisbury. Married. Can read and write.

May 29: Taken by John N. Vinson, Deputy Sheriff, to serve out a sentence of 3 years in the House of Correction, New Bedford, by order of Superior Court.

May 28, 1873. Mehitable Norton committed by State Constable Jason L. Dexter, charge Fornication. Age _____. Can read and write. Widow. Liberated by order of Court upon giving bail for appearance.

In today's world, it's comforting to know that this 64-year-old man and 35-year-old woman were the only persons in Dukes County guilty of this "crime" in all the years from 1789 to 1873. At least, these two were the only ones who went to jail for it.³²

³² Thomas N. Hillman died in 1866 in Vineyard Haven. The *Gazette* carried only a brief death notice. Mehitable S. Norton lived until 1935, also in Vineyard Haven, at the age of 99. She was the Island's oldest resident when she died and the *Gazette's* front-page obituary said she "had retained her faculties until the last and her memory was keen and alert."

Where Was the Jail in the Early Years?

Nobody has ever determined where the County Jail was in the first years of the English settlement on the Vineyard. We assume that the county has had a jail, gaol, goal, jayl, however spelled, ever since 1699 when the Colonial government ordered that one be built. But where was that first jail? And where have the County Jails been ever since? From about 1800, we know where they were, but before that lies uncertainty.

Two members of the Society, April and Hap Hamel of Edgartown, have been researching jail locations for us for two months. They still have some digging to do before they are ready to go public. Given a reasonable amount of luck, their report will be ready in time for the next issue of *The Intelligencer*.



Our First Female Preacher: Salome Lincoln in 1831

by A. H. DAVIS

A WOMAN in the pulpit? In 1831? Absolutely not! Women were expected to worship, to praise the Lord, to follow his teachings, but the Bible says, "Let your women keep silence in the churches. . ."¹ Even though it was a time of rapid changes in religion, women were still not allowed in the pulpit. That was a sacred place, reserved for ordained ministers -- and heaven forbid that a woman would ever become pastor. So it was thought in 1831.

There were, in those early years of the 19th century, a few women who felt called by God to preach. And they sought out meetings where they could. Perhaps not from the pulpit, but at least to preach. One was Miss Salome Lincoln, who became known in New England as the "female preacher." So popular was she that after she died in 1841, she was the subject of a biography with that title: *The Female Preacher*. A copy of this small book (measuring four by six inches and consisting of 162 pages) is in our Gale Huntington Library. In it are descriptions of her visits to the Vineyard. She was fond of this Island and of its people. And they were fond of her.

Despite the wealth of material published about Vineyard camp meetings and the Methodists, which she was, little has been written about this woman. Because of her visits here, we are reprinting passages from the biography. First, a summary of the life of Salome Lincoln, the first female preacher on Martha's Vineyard.

A. H. DAVIS is author of *The Female Preacher*, published in 1843 in Boston, from which book this article has been excerpted. We assume Davis is a man, but have no proof of it. The book has no title page and no publisher is listed.

¹ I Corinthians, xiv., 34.

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Born in September 1807 in Raynham, about five miles north of the Taunton Green, into a Baptist family, Salome first "experienced religion" when she was 15 years old. It was a time of widespread reformation and like many young women she was swept up by the tide and in 1823 joined the Free Will Baptist church of Taunton, along with nine others. At the time, she was employed in the weaving room of a textile mill in Hopewell, a village in Taunton.

Her spiritual awakening was brief. It lasted only a year or so. As the excitement of the reformation waned, so did her convictions. She wrote, "The church began to decline, and I with the rest." Some time in 1825, there was "a powerful revival of religion in Raynham," and she was reclaimed. In 1826, she joined the class at the Reformed Methodist church.

Then, in 1827, she discovered her call to preach. Along with a number of young people, she had gone to a meeting about two miles from her home "expecting to hear Elder Brett preach." But the elder failed to arrive, disappointing the gathering. Salome, after some minutes of solitary prayer, walked in front of the assembly and began to preach from the heart. "Her voice was deep-toned and heavy, well suited to a public speaker," we are told. In private, she was retiring, but in front of an assembly she was "bold and attracting." Encouraged by her first effort, she continued to preach to small evening meetings of Methodists around Taunton, gaining confidence and knowledge.

In 1829 the Hopewell mill cut the wages of the women in the weaving room. "The girls, indignant at this, bound themselves . . . not to go back into the mill until the former prices were restored. . . [they] marched through the streets to the Green in front of the Courthouse. . . Salome was selected as the orator . . . and in her own peculiar style, eloquently [spoke] on the subject of their wrongs."

Despite her eloquence, the wage cut was not rescinded. Salome never went back to the Hopewell mill, standing by the pledge made when they went on strike. She found work in another mill in a neighboring village, continuing to preach on Sabbaths, by now confident of herself and her ability to speak

in public -- something done by few females.

Her commitment and her increasing success at attracting large congregations led her to quit working in 1831 to devote all her time and energies to preaching. She travelled around New England. One place at which she preached was a camp meeting in Wayquoit, or East Falmouth. It was there in July 1831 that she met Mr. and Mrs. Hiram Chase of Holmes Hole. After a Sabbath afternoon service during which Salome preached, "Mrs. Chase proposed that she should accompany them to the Vineyard. . . ." Salome was pleased and

having had strong impressions that God had something for her to do there, she cheerfully accepted . . . The first place she preached on the Vineyard was at the old meeting house belonging to the Calvinist Baptist in Holmes Hole. . . . On this occasion she spoke to a crowded house and a listening congregation; and many who heard her were *melted to tears*.²

After this she frequently preached there, but not much in the meeting houses . . . [they] were too sacred for any proclamation . . . from the lips of one of God's Female Servants. . . . While she remained in Holmes Hole she had her meetings principally in private houses. . . . [One woman told author Davis] her preaching here was powerful. . . .

On the 25th of July she left Holmes Hole and went to North Shore. . . . about four miles [away]. . . . Having heard of her preaching at Holmes Hole, several individuals from there came down to attend the meetings; and after meeting, being urgently requested to visit that place, she consented to go. . . . [p. 83]

The remaining part of the year 1831 and a portion of 1832 and 1833, she spent in preaching and holding meetings at the North Shore. . . . she generally preached at the school house, but sometimes at a grove near by, in order to accommodate the large number who came to hear.

The grove, she wrote a friend, is a delightful spot, fitted up with seats, for the purpose of holding meetings during the summer months. . . . She preached all day at the grove³ . . . [One who was there said] "I seldom ever listened to a discourse with so profound attention as on this occasion. I should not hesitate in pronouncing it, EVANGELICAL, *beautiful* and sublime!"⁴ [pp. 85-5]

[Another in attendance was] Emily Look, now the wife of Mr. Leonard Luce. She was the first individual that was converted at the North Shore

² A.H. Davis, *The Female Preacher*, 1843, pp. 7-7. Emphasis by Author Davis. From here on, material in smaller type is being quoted directly from his book, page number will be given in brackets [].

³ This was several years before the camp meeting in today's Oak Bluffs.

⁴ The person quoted was Anthony Luce, a blind man.

under Sister Lincoln's preaching.⁵ The meeting where she was awakened was held at Mr. Edmund Luce's some time in September 1831. . . . [Emily] was so powerfully impressed that she lost her self-control and fell from her seat. Sister Lincoln stopped preaching and went to her and commenced praying. . . .

The next evening another meeting was held at the residence of Br. David Butler. Miss Look was still in great distress, but before the meeting closed, her burden left her and soon she was singing praises and thanksgiving. . . . [pp. 88-9]

While at the North Shore, [Salome] formed a Female Enquiring Meeting. These meetings have been continued until the present time [1843] and have resulted in good. . . .

Her labors were not confined to the North Shore nor exclusively to any particular denomination. . . . In September 1831, she preached [as a "Teacher"] in the *Congregationalist Meeting-house* of Tisbury. . . . she [also] preached . . . in Edgartown and Chilmark. . . . in Edgartown some time between the first and middle of December. . . . countenanced by the collector of the port. . . .⁶ [pp. 92-3]

With the close of this year [1831], Salome left the Vineyard. . . . When they started from the wharf, Mr. Ray, the ferry man, observed that he had not had so good a prospect of a pleasant voyage for more than two months. . . . They had not proceeded far, however, before the prospect entirely changed -- the wind commenced blowing severely -- the sea was boisterous, and the prospect anything but encouraging. The waves dashed so high and beat against the boat with such violence that they found it exceedingly difficult to keep their seats. They arrived at Falmouth about sunset, having been tossed about on the briny deep for the most part of the afternoon. . . . [pp. 95-6]

. . . by the fourth of February [1832], she was [again] mingling her prayers with the prayers of her friends on Martha's Vineyard. The year 1832 is one that will long be remembered in this country on account of the cholera . . . spreading terror through the land. However, it was not so severely felt in New England. . . . About the eighteenth of March, 1832, Sister Salome was the happy witness of another hopeful conversion to God. . . . Mary C. Cottell,⁷ wife of Capt. Charles Cottell [Cottle] at the *North Shore*, [who] relates the circumstance as follows: "When I first heard this child of God . . . I was in a state of sin and unbelief; but as she set forth the love of God to

⁵ Emily was daughter of Seth and Remember Look of Tisbury. Leonard Luce was son of Daniel of Chilmark, a mariner.

⁶ Jeremiah Pease, founding father of the Oak Bluffs campground, was Deputy Collector of Customs in Edgartown and had been converted to Methodism in 1822. Perhaps Salome had been "countenanced" by him and "promoted" him to Collector.

⁷ Mary Holmes Norton married Charles Cottle, mariner, in 1830. The initial "C." in the book must be an error. They had eleven children before moving to Scituate.

man . . . I was led to the Savior as my only hope. . . [and] was converted. . . [In] April 18, 1832, we learn that Sister Lincoln was at Edgartown, waiting for an opportunity to go to Nantucket. . . While waiting, she spent her time in holding meetings. . . [pp. 100-102]

In the spring of 1833 she was [again] at Tisbury, where she had been through the winter months . . . Her labors on Martha's Vineyard were appreciated, especially at the North Shore. She was respected in every second of the Island and beloved by a large circle of friend.

Miss Lincoln then turned her attention to preaching in Boston, where the congregations were very large. It was still an unusual happening when a woman preached from the pulpit of a church, especially in Boston. She had become so well known that she was invited to preach in Maine.

One of two evenings before she embarked for the State of Maine, the city was thrown into commotion on account of the burning of the Ursuline Convent at Charlestown. . . about two miles west of the Bunker Hill Monument. The ruins are still [1843] to be seen and it is said the Pope intends to let them remain as a witness against the Protestants and to *whet the sword of vengeance* when he shall have gained the ascendancy over this country. . . catholicism is rapidly spreading -- the power of the Pope is daily increasing and we have just reason to fear that shortly . . . we shall have to *bow our necks* in humble subjection to his HOLINESS, the ROMAN PONTIFF. [pp. 112-3]

Salome described this riotous action, the burning of the convent, in a letter to her father. The action came about as a result of a rumor that spread through Boston that a young woman from New York was being held there against her will. The Boston officials demanded that she be set free and after much delay she was brought forward and stated that, while she was free to leave, she chose to remain.

Her appearance was such as led to the belief that she had been confined in the cell and severely tortured and that she did not speak the truth [Salome wrote to her father]. Last night (August 11) a mob of about 1000 men [in a footnote the author adds: "Probably several thousand."] from this city went over at midnight, in disguise, and with lighted torches searched every cell and at the same time set fire to the building. The alarm was immediately given and the engine companies turned out, but when they found what it was they refused to play [their hoses] and together with the mob, stood and looked on till it was completely demolished.⁸ [pp. 114-5]

⁸ The charge that firemen merely looked on was "not sustained" upon investigation. *The Memorial History of Boston*, Editor Justin Winsor, James R. Osgood & Co., 1881, v. III, p. 239.

After circuit riding in Maine for more than two months, Salome Lincoln again visited the Vineyard, this time to attend the first Methodist camp meeting in what today is called the Campground. The biography contains a number of quotations taken from letters she wrote at the time. These are of interest because there are only a few contemporaneous accounts of that 1835 camp meeting, the first.⁹ Biographer Davis sets the stage: "They had a pleasant voyage and arrived on the Island a little after sunset and just as the services for the evening were commencing." He then switches to Salome's words:

The place where the meetings were held was a delightful spot, shaded with large oaks and inclosed with a circle of tents, upwards of twenty in number.¹⁰ The scenery was beautiful; and everything around seemed to breathe the spirit of devotion . . . [p. 132]

Davis now describes her visit to the first camp meeting in detail after talking to Vineyarders who were there:

Having now been absent from Martha's Vineyard for nearly two years, she met with a hearty welcome from many of her former associates and friends; and although she did not preach, yet she was very far from being idle, as she was actively engaged in the tents in holding circles of prayer. While engaged in these duties, a lady by the name of Lewis, now the wife of Edward Luce, was struck under powerful convictions.¹¹ She went into the tent where they were praying, but she was in so great distress of mind, that she entirely broke up the meeting. She was afterwards converted and attributes her awakening to the labors of Sister Lincoln . . .

Salome writes more about that camp meeting in Oak Bluffs, often called the Island's first, and of her trip home:¹²

The meetings were interesting. . . We had preaching four times a day, with prayer meetings at every interval; and about seventy professed to have submitted to Christ . . . About nine o'clock Saturday morning, we left the Island, but the wind was against us, and after beating about all day, came to anchor in Tarpaulin Cove. Some of the brethren went on shore and after obtaining a place for a meeting sent word to the other vessels laying there so that in a short time we had a large congregation; and before the

⁹ Among the eyewitness accounts are those by Jeremiah Pease and Hebron Vincent.

¹⁰ Other accounts give the number of tents as only nine.

¹¹ Edward Luce married Rhoda Lewis in 1833, both were from Tisbury.

¹² This was not, of course, the first Vineyard camp meeting. Nor was it in Oak Bluffs, which had not yet been separated from Edgartown. There were earlier camp meetings on the Island. Salome had attended one, as we have seen, on the North Shore and "Reformation" John Adams had held one on West Chop, some years before this one.

meeting closed six were on their knees begging for mercy. One of them was the mate of a brig from New York. At sunrise the next morning, we again started for home and landed at four o'clock in the afternoon of the same day -- I was exceedingly sick all day and so were many other passengers, but I had the peace of God reigning in my soul. [p. 133]

In November of that year, 1835, Salome was married to Elder Junia S. Mowry, a Baptist preacher in Tiverton, Rhode Island. The courtship had started while Salome was preaching on the Vineyard in the fall of 1831. It began with a letter. Elder Mowry was making a pastoral visit with her parents in Raynham. Her cousin, who was visiting, was writing to Salome and she asked him, as another preacher, to add a few sentences. Salome responded to his note. In 1835, they both were preaching in Tiverton for a brief time and got acquainted in person. On day when she was leaving to go home for a visit, Elder Mowry proposed marriage. As Salome seemed not enthused with his proposal, he asked her to think it over and to write after getting home. She answered, as requested, from her parents' house:

... were I to consult the feelings of my heart, and then be honest, I suppose I should answer the question in the *affirmative*; but fearing that my affections were too easily gained and that you were prompted by pity for my lonely condition more than any other sentiment, I had determined to be guarded in my expressions and keep them locked up in the secret chambers of my own heart -- a least for the present. . . whether we spend our days *together* or *apart*, we may spend them to the *glory of God* and be useful to our fellow creatures. [pp. 130-31]

In the weeks that followed, he persuaded her. On December 2, 1835, they were married in her father's house in Raynham. They had two children, the first dying in infancy. After their second child was born in 1841, Salome was never well. On July 21, 1841, she died of consumption at only 33 years. Her body was placed on a sloop to be taken to Tiverton for burial, alongside the grave of their first child.

That was at 10 o'clock Friday morning. The wind was calm and the sloop could make little progress. It was past sunset when they arrived at Stone Bridge, seven miles from the burial site. The tide then turned against them and the frustrated mourners went ashore. Carriages were frantically

rounded up and hired to carry the body and the mourners to the cemetery. It was after 1 a.m., Saturday morning when the somber cortege finally arrived at the grave site. Her burial took place at 2 a.m., in the stillness of the summer's night.

The female preacher, "who spent more than five years as a public laborer," was at rest.¹³

¹³ Quotation is from the stone on her grave in Tiverton, R. I.

Brotherly Love

THE GALE HUNTINGTON Library of History contains thousands of documents. Some are puzzling, raising the question: why were such documents preserved for so many years? One such puzzle is a copy of a letter written by Daniel Coffin (1748-1830) to his brother, unnamed. The only clue to its date is that he mentions Chase Pease. We know that Daniel's only daughter, Hannah, married Capt. Chase Pease in 1803, suggesting that the letter was written after that year and before Daniel died in 1830.

Daniel wrote the letter because he has not been allowed to visit his "onely" brother, who, it would seem, must be ill, house-bound. His sister-in-law refuses to let him in. Her attitude seems to have been brought on by a dispute over money or property, but that's just a guess.

Dear Brother,

after My Kind Respects to God, I inform you that I Want to See You Very Much, to Converse With You But as the Late Conducket [conduct] of Your Wife has Shoot [shut] her Doars So fast that I cannot open them. But I hope and trust She Will Never ofer to Come to My House or Chase Pease's as her Compeny Will Not Be Welcom to any House for We Do Not Want any More of her Falls [false] Deceitfull Friendship of Making an Tistrement [testament] of me to Make a Price for John Coffin.

But O Brother What is Wors then Fals Friendship? I think it Very unsertain whither I Ever See you any More While We Remain Belo the Sun unless I should find Some time When Your Wife should be Gone from Home. But O Brother that you Trust in that God that is able to Suppoart us Both in all the Disapointments in this Life and Should God in his Providence So order that We Should Not See Each others Faces While on the Shoars of time May God Grant that it May Be Each of our happy Portion to Met in a Blest Eternity and Find a Seet at God's Right Hand.

From Your Ever Well Wishing Friend in time and in Eternity,
Your onely Brother,
Daniel Coffin

More About Henry's "Sink of Sin"-- Five Points

IN THE November *Intelligencer*, diarist Henry Baylies wrote of his brief stay in New York City in 1850, while he and his wife Hattie were awaiting a packet to sail to Mobile, Alabama.¹ Henry, a former Methodist minister and now an educator, was possessed of a strong social conscience -- and intellectual curiosity. He described his visit to Five Points on Saturday, November 9, 1850:

Feeling a strong interest in the mission at Five Points established by Rev. Bro. Pease, under the auspices of the Ladies Missionary Society of the M. E. Ch. in N. York City, I went up this forenoon. On reaching the Points, my ears were delighted with the singing of children, to me an unusual sound in that wicked place.

At the Mission House or Parsonage I enjoyed a very pleasant call. Bro. Pease is a very efficient man & is making thorough reformation of this worst sink of Sin in the world. He has established a Meeting, Sabbath School, Day School, Work Shop, Hospital, Temperance Grocery, etc. He has hired four of the largest houses on Little Water St., which he occupies & tenants to pious or respectable families. 300 Prostitutes have been sent to the House of Correction & 150 others have been scattered to different parts of the city & to other places. Thus the work of reformation is most thorough. The Lord bless him & his enterprizes.

The editor, an innocent lad unfamiliar with such places as "the worst sink of sin in the world," asked in a footnote: "Does anyone know more about Five Points? Is the Bro. Pease mentioned from the Vineyard?"

He didn't have to wait long for an answer. Two members, Frank McKay of Needham, and Stephen McGhee of New York City, responded. They informed the grateful editor that Five Points was the name given to a section of Manhattan roughly between the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges and about eight blocks west of the East River. For more than 150 years, it has been an area inhabited by the least fortunate.

When Henry Baylies was there in 1850, it was said to be "exceeding in degradation, criminality, and horror any like area in the world."

¹ See pp. 144ff, this issue, to learn of what happened to Henry and Hattie when the packet arrived at Mobile.

Named for the intersection of five streets, Mulberry, Anthony (now Worth), Cross (now Park), Orange (now Baxter) and Little Water street (no longer existing), it was such a deplorable area that, according to one encyclopedia,² it even attracted the attention of famed English author Charles Dickens who visited it in 1842 (eight years before Henry Baylies). In his book, *American Notes* (1842), Dickens wrote of "alleys filled with mud, knee deep, free-roaming pigs, rotting houses, women sleeping on the floor."

Disease was everywhere. In a cholera epidemic in 1832 one-third of all cases in New York City were at Five Points. It had been built early in the 1800s on a swampy area that had been filled as a public works project. About 1820, the fill began to sink, causing buildings to crumble and streets to turn into quagmire. The area became desolate. "Decaying houses, taverns catering to sailors, and shacks remained along the narrow, unpaved streets."³

Abraham Lincoln, campaigning for president, visited it in 1860. Despite the attention called to it by visits by such famous personages, little was done until about 1890 when the city bought and condemned most of the tenements.

The Five Points Mission, which Henry visited, had been established in 1848, two years before, by the Ladies Home Missionary Society of the Methodist church with some financial support by businessmen. It occupied a former saloon at Cross and Little Water streets, plus other buildings, as Henry tells us. At about this time, the mission purchased and demolished an old brewery (famous for its Coulter beer), which had been cut up into squalid tenements, and replaced it with a chapel, a parsonage, school and bath house.

Mr. McKay, who lived in Manhattan before World War II, tells us:

There have always been Missions of one sort or another in the area, hopeless though the task seemed to be. When I knew it in the late 1930s, the place was derelict, winos sleeping on the streets and in doorways and al-

²The Encyclopedia of New York City, Editor Kenneth T. Jackson, Yale U. Press, 1995, (our thanks to Stephen McGhee).

³Ibid.

The Encyclopedia of New York City



Five Points, New York, in 1820s, just before its decline into crime and poverty.

leys, and with no businesses operating. The inhabitants slipped furtively in and out of their caves.

I have heard that after World War II, the area was rehabbed with public housing, which probably means it has sunk back into a more modern decay. Unless, that is, it has been absorbed by the expanding Chinatown.

The encyclopedia referred to states that Brother Lewis Pease, its guiding force, left the mission in 1854 to form The Five Points House of Industry on Worth street. Both it and the mission moved away in the 1890s when much of the area's housing was condemned by the city, reducing the population to be served.

As for Brother Pease's ancestry, we have learned little. We can find no record of him being connected with the Vineyard Peases, of which there were many. Years later, Edgartown did have a well-known Louis Pease, ice man and owner of a fish market at Four Corners in Edgartown (now the site of the Compass Bank). He was born in 1850 the year Henry visited Five Points so clearly he wasn't Brother Lewis.

The editor is grateful to the two members for their answers to his question.

A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

IT IS NOT EASY, in today's world of comfortable transportation and long-distance communications, to appreciate what our diarist, Henry Baylies (1822-1893), and his sick wife, Harriette, are going through. They are, at the moment, aboard a crowded pilot boat in the Gulf of Mexico off Mobile Bay. The day before, the brig that had carried them from New York foundered on a reef, a total loss. All on board were saved and are now jammed in the small pilot boat, unable to go ashore due to the weather.

After three weeks at sea, it is not until Saturday noon, three days later, that they set foot on land, grateful survivors of that shipwreck. No ambulance awaits them, no doctor examines them, no reporters interview them, no spectators offer help. No one seems interested in them or in any of the other survivors. Such a lack of interest in survivors seems shocking to us today.

Henry and Hattie left the Island without job prospects, without even an idea of where they would end up. Alone in a strange city in a "foreign" part of the country, the Deep South, they know nobody. Surely, they must have started having misgivings about the decision to leave Edgartown. But Henry is not one to waste time in regrets.

Henry, an ordained Methodist minister turned school teacher, rushes ashore to the home of the local Methodist minister, whose name he was given in Providence. The reverend is not at home. His wife tells Henry she is sorry that she has no empty

room in their house. Anxious to help, she directs him to a boarding house run by another Methodist. Henry hurries over there and soon he and his invalid wife, along with their waterlogged trunks, have moved into a room, thanking God for their survival. Henry, on Sunday, the following day, assists the minister in the church services. Despite wrinkled clothing and physical exhaustion, he is, within hours, doing the Lord's work.

The editor is filled with admiration.

As this installment begins, they are still on the pilot boat off Mobile Bay.

Thursday, Nov. 28, 1850. On Thursday morning at an early hour our vessel was under way for the scene of our disaster to render what assistance she might. The rain fell at times in torrents otherwise we should have been landed at the Pilots' houses.¹ We found the *Alabama* bilged, her cargo beneath the water.

The line was run from the Brig as on the previous day. The Launch was being filled with goods from the Brig when the stern fast² being drawn too tight, the whole stern of that large stout boat was pulled out & hung at the side of the vessel. It was not till afternoon that anything was effected & then not till our Capt. had given up his brig & cargo to the wreckers. What strange stuff human, fallen human nature, is made of! They at once began to

¹ Mobile is a considerable distance up the bay, but it would seem that somehow these survivors, obviously broken in body and spirit, could have been taken ashore off the cramped and uncomfortable pilot boat.

² The stern fast is a line running from the stern of a vessel to a pier or in this case probably to the pilot boat. The stern of the sunken *Alabama* had been weakened by the pounding seas.

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work vigorously & by aid of another launch procured, loaded our little boat before dark. When loaded, we again proceeded to Navy Bay for the night. Thus passes a day of wrecking.³

Friday, Nov. 29th. We started for a start [*sic*] early this morning. The trunks, goods, etc., landed on Wednesday night at Navy Bay were partly on board when it rained so vehemently that Pilots were obliged to suspend operations. Finding some of my trunks on deck in the rain I secured them as well as I could beneath canvass but not without getting myself pretty thoroughly soaked. During the forenoon we got under way & proceeded out into Mobile Bay, but the wind & the Sea were so high that we were in danger of losing our deck load & consequently put back. In the afternoon we again made the attempt. The sky had cleared up. The sun shone happily forth & we were successful in finding the winds & the waves subdued. With head winds but very strong favorable tide we sailed up the Bay & between 2 & 10 P.M. had advanced to within a few miles of Mobile where we dropped anchor for the night as the navigation of the river is very dangerous & difficult. Thus gloomily passed another day.

I did however write over two leaves, cut from an account book I found in the cabin, as a letter to my Parents. As for reading, there was nothing to read save two or three miserable novels & some old political newspapers.

³ Navy Bay must be the outer bay of Mobile harbor, just inside the barrier beach. "Wrecking" is the term used to describe the salvaging of the vessel and her cargo -- it is not destroying, as one might suppose.

Saturday Nov. 30. This was the last day of the month & the last day of our abode on the waters. We were early under sail for the city which appeared in sight. The narrow & difficult river with head wind & scant tide compelled us to strive more than two hours to make but a short distance. At length, however, we were along side the wharf & with quick step I leaped on shore, happy to stand on terra firma once again. Like Columbus, I wanted to kneel down & Kiss the earth & might have done so had it not been quite so muddy. I did lift my heart in thanksgiving to the God of all the Earth for our safe deliverance.⁴

I immediately proceeded, unshaven & undressed, to the Rev. Dr. Jefferson Hamilton's to whom I had a letter from Rev. Bros. Patterson, D. Felman, Tely & Upham.⁵ But the letter was in the trunk & the trunk freshly soaked & among the goods stowed on deck, so I had to introduce myself. I met Sister H. on the steps, from whom I learned her husband was not in. I said to her, when I am at home I am Henry Baylies of the Prov. Conf.,⁶ but now I am what you see me, a shipwrecked man. She invited me to walk in. I did so & with the comfort of a cheerful fire I laid open before her the series of my calamities. She would receive us to her family were not her rooms all occu-

⁴ Again, we must comment on the seemingly total lack of interest by people on shore in these shipwreck survivors. Were such events so commonplace as to be ignored?

⁵ These were Methodist ministers he had met in Providence who had signed a letter of introduction for him. The names are virtually illegible.

⁶ Providence Conference of the Methodist church, to which, as an ordained minister, Henry belongs.

pied. I called to get direction to a quiet private Methodist family and in the absence of the Dr., she directed me to Sister Yager's next door to St. Francis M. E. Church. I here engaged board for a week for \$10. Engaged a hack & took Hattie from the Pilot Boat to the house. For the hack I paid \$2, the lowest price charged.⁷ Well, at 12 o'clock we found ourselves very comfortably situated at Sister Yager's. Dear Hattie appeared like a child, she was so happy again to get on solid foundation. The mud, the brick walls, all all [sic] charmed her for she was on terra firma.

Dr. Hamilton's son called on us. I find him quite a pleasant and sociable man yet there is a something in his appearance not likable.⁸

During the P.M. (or evening as the Southerners call the time from 12 M till tea time) I was engaged in overhauling our trunks. I found quite a number of clothes damp & wet yet I hope little damaged. We feel grateful that we escaped so little injuries in person or estate. Late in the afternoon I called on Dr. H. with whom I spent some time in answering questions relative to his former friends in the North. Accepted invitation to be with him in the morning & assist in Sacrament.

After getting on shore & the excitement of our sea life over, I sensibly felt my strength fail. I felt in less than two hours as frail & weak as a child.⁹

Mailed a letter for Parents immediately on arriving.

⁷ Hacks were expensive, two dollars. Room and board for Hattie and Henry is only \$10 a week.

⁸ At times, Henry can be so tantalizing!

⁹ With reason, but he recovers quickly and takes part in two church services the next day.

Sabbath, Dec. 1st, 1850. Was an unpleasant, rainy day. In morning before service, attended the monthly meeting of the Sabbath School Missionary Society. This Society last year raised more than \$300. for missions. There was some speechifying, very dry & uninteresting. At 11 o'clock "church went in." The Congregation was very thin because of the rain. The appearance of the congregation was far from prepossessing. The Dr. preached three good Sermons in one within the space of an hour. Text was [the rest of sentence illegible].

After sermon I assisted in administering the Lord's Supper. At 3 P.M., by request I accompanied Dr. H. to the Color'd Zion's Church & assisted in administering the Lord's Supper to 300 or 400 Negroes. Probably 500 were present, 12/13 of whom were Slaves.¹⁰ Dr. H. read a hymn & then made some remarks. When in singing they came to the last verse, all turned round, back to the altar & immediately on conclusion fell on their Knees. The whole congregation Knelt.

I observed the Sabbath School in the morning, all Knelt. This was a very pleasing appearance. The Negroes were very excitable & their extravagance quite ridiculous. There was however every appearance of deep & fervent piety. Tears flowed profusely while the lips quivered in supplication to the Savior of Sinners. It was a good season, long to be remembered.

An old preacher sat in the altar & partook with us at the table. He be-

¹⁰ Does he mean "12 or 13"? Or 12/13ths? The latter is a strange fraction. Would only 12 or 13 of such a large congregation be slaves?

longs to the Governor yet has had his time¹¹ for about 10 years. His head was very white & bushy. A collection was taken for the poor, amounting to near fifteen dollars. One good thing about collections is there are no coppers used.¹² The idea of slaves taking a collection for their poor appeared to me perfectly ridiculous, but it was finally explained as being taken for the free poor.¹³ Bro. Hamilton appealed to them in behalf of one of their members who the other [day] broke both his legs & had one amputated & is in charge at one of their brethren's. This was a free negro who had just paid for his freedom & consequently had no master to provide for him, so Br. H. stated.

After meeting we tarried on the Parsonage steps near the Zion's Church looking at the cloud of humanity passing. A girl spoke to Dr. H. over the fence. I learned from their conversation & what the Dr. afterward said, she is a slave who designs marrying a free man. Such union, he says, is permitted, yet he (the negro) is very foolish in marrying a slave.

At 7 o'clock attended St. Francis, Bro. Milburn's church. Bro. M. was formerly Chaplain in Congress. His text was Feling's [?] address to Paul. He is a very pretty orator & some of his passages were of finished elegance yet there was a palpable want of unction. He spread his table with beautiful dishes & what he placed in them was beautiful, but it did not satisfy the famishing soul. However, I have no right

¹¹ "Had his time." Could he be a freeman now if he wished? Is that what is meant?

¹² By coppers, does he mean pennies?

¹³ This seems to indicate that earlier he had meant 12/13 of the congregation were slaves.

to judge from first appearances or first sermons.

Hattie has felt very well today -- improved. She has good appetite & sleeps very well. I feel encouraged for such good.

Monday, Dec. 2nd. We rise at 7. Breakfast at 8. Lunch at 12 1/2. Dine at 2. Sup at 6 & go to bed when we choose.¹⁴ Mailed another letter enclosing extracts from my Journal for Parents Baylies.

Dr. Hamilton called on me at 9 o'clock & took me to Rev. Bro. Milburn's. I met with Bro. M's Father & Mother. I found Bro. M quite agreeable & companionable. Together we went to the P.O. where I obtained a letter from Father & Mother Baylies. I was introduced to three Book Stores Kept by Methodist brethren -- very respectable establishments.

This being the day for Municipal Elections, the City is in a perfect ferment of excitement. The parties, as I understand from Dr. H., are arranged as Unionists & Disunionists or Concessionists & Southern Rights. The Whigs as a body are for Union, the Dem[oc]rat[s] for Southern Rights & disunion. There is I hear a great deal of vote buying & betting on Elections. This morning I hear there has been a street fight between the contending parties.¹⁵

Bro. Milburn is not, as I supposed, totally blind but can see a little from his right eye by holding the object within 3 or 4 inches of the eye. He ap-

¹⁴ The 2 o'clock meal seems strange. The word, "Dine" is a scrawl, but it definitely is not "Tea."

¹⁵ This is the first time Henry has discussed the growing crisis that led to the Civil War.

pears to see much more than he does. At conversational distance he assured me he could not see me & yet he walked the street as understandingly as anyone, leaning on my arm. He can not see to read in the pulpit as a very strong light is necessary to his seeing. More on the brethren when I have enjoyed further acquaintance.

Went out this P.M. to look at the city. Passed down Dauphin St., to the apothecary store in which Bro. Pierce, one of our boarders, is clerk. By his direction I went along to Government St., down to the river by the market & up again beyond Barton Academy. The market is a unique affair. It is a kind of long, low, wooden shanty in the middle of the street with projecting roof on each side to shelter from rain & sun. I saw abundance of venison exposed for sale. The dwellings on Government St., are said to be among the most elegant in the City. Many of them are very good buildings -- none superior. Orange trees were growing in front of some together with century plants & other beautiful plants with which I am unacquainted.

Barton Academy is a very large building of rather costly structure. One Barton left a sum of money to erect a building to be occupied as a College. This is the building & this its use, for it is said to be impossible to sustain a College here in consequence of the long vacation necessary in Summer.

Mobile would be a very passable city if the back yards could be cleared of their Kitchens which perfectly disfigure all that is beautiful. The yard plots too are permitted to spring up with very rank & unsightly weeds. Rough &

unpainted close board fences are seen on every hand. The "China berry" trees which are very abundant as shade trees have mostly been cut down & are just shooting out from the ugly stumps, presenting a very uncouth appearance. Wherever they are left entire, they are covered with small rusty berries which look dreary enough. Allowance is to be made for my impressions of the city from the fact that it has been almost constantly raining for a week.

Hattie had a very uncomfortable night last night & today has been very languid. The atmosphere has been very close & sultry. Very warm. This evening was introduced to Bro. "Somebody" -- M. D., who says "Mobile is the most healthy city in the U.S." On stating to him the health of my wife he proposed Tc. Aconite as a remedy for Neuralgia. This, he said, is found here to be almost a Specific.¹⁶ I accompanied him to the Apothecaries & purchased some of the article.

This evening attended Missionary Prayer Meeting with Dr. H's church. By request, I led the exercises & made a speech in which I had some enlargement.¹⁷ I observed Dr. H called by name those he wished to take part in the exercises. This is rather too formal.

Have had some conversation with Bros. H & M., about situations as teacher in the city. I am a month too late. Bro. M. mentioned two bare chances -- one as teacher of the free school & the other as private tutor of a few boys in the college course of study.

¹⁶ Aconite: "A drug made from the dried roots of monkshood," used, it seems, for neuralgia.

¹⁷ "Enlargement" seems to mean that he felt he was spiritually assisted, that God was helping him.

Sister Yager mentioned a place 3 miles out where I may possible get footing. Time must be taken.

Tuesday, Dec. 3rd. Wrote a letter this morning to Bro. Sewall.¹⁸ In passing to P.O. met Dr. Hamilton. In conversation with him I learned there is a vacancy at Summerfield Academy, the crack Academy of the South, as it is styled, occasioned by the resignation of Mr. Armstrong in the assistants' department. The salary is small, only \$600 for the session of 10 months. I called with him to see a Brother Baker, one of the Trustees, but gained little information.

As we were passing up the stairs to Bro. B's counting room, Dr. H remarked to me "there is at present a strong feeling against Northern men which requires especial caution in speaking." I replied, "I presume you have seen no want of caution in me," & we passed into the room. On coming out, I referred him to his remark & added, "I was aware of course of the feeling before leaving the North & should consider it very foolish in a northern man to ~~express his~~ rant his opinions South inasmuch as so doing he could effect no good but only injure himself. I had thought, I continued to the Dr., you felt some embarrassment on this subject.

He did not seem to understand my remarks & I remarked [that] I had felt some delicacy in asking introduction or assistance from him, knowing the position in which it placed him in, the introducing a Northern man.

He replied, "No, I felt no particular embarrassment on that subject. They

¹⁸ As regular readers know, he is Hattie's brother.

are looking at me (Dr. H) pretty hard I see, from the fact I voted alone against our whole conference delegation (on some occasion, I did not enquire when). I see this in resolutions of quarterly Conferences around squinting towards me."¹⁹ Here the Dr. remarked generally on the present agitation South & North on the Slavery question. The antagonism between the parties [of the] South, he says, will cease at once should Congress repeal the Fugitive Slave Law, etc. He just heard a very venerable land holder say on the corner, who had voted the union ticket, "If the Fugitive Slave Bill is repealed I am with you for disunion." This is the universal pledge given by the present "Unionists."

Dr. H called at my boarding house & I showed him my credentials, etc., & in conclusion he proposed to write to Summerfield relative to my taking that place.

I remained at home till after 12 M, waiting an interview with Sister Crawford, who owns the interest in the school at Johnanville, one of the City suburbs about 3 miles distant. Sister C however did not come & I called a few moments at Bro. Milburn's. Bro. M received me very cordially & we chatted in company with his wife & a young lady some time.

Conversation turned on the health, temperature, etc., of Mobile. It is a matter of surprize with me that so erroneous an impression prevails at the North concerning the health of this city. With a resident population during last Summer of 12,000, there were not more than 7 or 8 interments a week.

¹⁹ It's clear what is meant, but the sentence is a bit confusing in its wording.

The Thermometer ranges from 80 to 90 degrees in the warmest months. Southerners complain of our hot summers at the North.

I spoke with Bro. M relative to the situation at Summerfield, at Johnanville & as Tutor of the young men spoken of yesterday. He thought the situation at Johnanville a very pleasant one for location & society, provided I can get the interest into my own hands. He proposed to write to the committee at Summerfield on my behalf. He and Bro. Hamilton are trustees, yet the selection of teacher is left with a Committee of the Faculty.

I mentioned to him Bro. H's remark about Northern men. He replied the feeling is increasing that if a Northern man comes South to reside permanently the hostility ceases & yet there is a lurking jealousy of him; that himself & Dr. Hamilton are both Northern men & know all about these feelings; that if a Northerner comes South only temporarily he may obtain a situation, but there is little mercy for him.

Towards evening walked about town. Many of the dwellings are very comfortable & pleasant abodes. Probably in the proper season the garden spots in connection with the dwellings are very beautiful, but now they present anything but a pleasing aspect.

My attention was arrested by a building of peculiar structure on which was exhibited a notable sign: "Negroes for Sale Here." The yard is enclosed by a high, close brick wall.

I was on the wharf when a large boat loaded with cotton came down country. These boats are singular looking things from three to five stories high.

They are however very like the most Southern boats fitted for cotton carriage. This boat was loaded to the water's edge with cotton. The large quantity of cotton landing & lying on wharfs, together with the vast amount stored, gives employment & support to this city. Each bale of Cotton nets the city -- viz. those employed in the business -- about \$2.50. This includes freight, wharfage, cartage & re-pressing or "compressing."

I saw at one of the docks a barge load of goods from the Brig *Alabama* in a ruined state.

Purchased a dime's worth of Bananas. No trader has in less quantities than a picayune's (half dime's) worth & many will not sell less than a dime's worth. Spanish quarters pass for 20C & 12 1/2 pieces for 10C.

A Sister Sheets from Johnanville called this eve with her daughter to see me. She speaks very encouragingly of the prospects at J. for a school.

Wednesday, Dec. 4: The weather since our arrival in Mobile has been very unsettled. Some sunshine & considerable rain, which kept up a very sultry, close, languid unpleasant atmosphere. This morning the sun shone more brightly & uninterruptedly producing a very balmy, pleasant atmosphere. The effect on Hattie is very favourable. She is this morning feeling very comfortable & we hope for a cure.

I have considerably recruited from the excitement & exhaustion of the sea voyage & shipwreck. I am feeling considerably the languor of the climate & today some nervous headache.

Called at Bro. Milburn's by request when he wrote to Summerfield on my

behalf. Conversation turned on Politics, Religion, the Status of Society in the South, etc. Bro. & Sister M. both called on us at 12 o'clock.

In conversation, Bro. M. said the Society at the South is more polished than anywhere in the country. That there are here ladies & gentlemen who would shine in any society in America or Europe; that the English language is spoken more eloquently & purely than elsewhere; that attention is especially paid to the cultivation of conversational powers; that instead of exhibiting their literature in books, they bring it forth in conversation; that, though perhaps not social in their habits as Northern people, they are better prepared for Society. This is among a certain class of the elite.

Bro. M. has no doubt the Union will be dissolved in less than fifteen years unless prevented by some marked providence of God. The South are preparing for secession by establishing manufactories, etc. He says he has had close conversation with a gentleman in high standing who is a political leader, an intimate friend of Calhoun, although he differs from him somewhat in the views, & the man who is making the public opinion of this state & the South. This gentleman is endeavoring, though with great caution at the present time of excitement, to introduce several important changes in the Statutes on the subject of Slavery: that slaves shall not be sold on Execution within certain limits -- a law like the homestead law; that the bringing of slaves from other states into this shall be prohibited; also the selling of slaves to go out of this state; that husband & wife shall not be separated by sale, nor

parents & children. Bro. M. says all the slaves in the city can purchase their freedom if they will. The most intelligent & enterprising do hire their time & pay their masters from \$20 to \$40 per month, while they make from \$40 to \$80. In this way they are able to furnish themselves & wives & children with all the luxuries they desire. Many of them live better than their Masters.²⁰

Last spring, I am told, an order was issued to all or many free colored people to leave the city in 30 days. The reason for the order was apprehension that they rendered the slaves very uneasy. Many were obliged to remove at great pecuniary sacrifice. Some were wealthy.

The law forbidding teaching slaves to read is an old Colonial law which exists on the statutes but is not enforced. This is the case with most of the offensive slave laws, which are quoted at the North as in full force.

Mr. Crawford from Johnanville called in my absence. Mrs. C. will be in tomorrow as she is today unwell. He says there is an opening at J. as the teacher. Miss Hall has requested they should engage another teacher. This seems to be my opening, yet will know better tomorrow. It is now 2 P.M., dinner time.

Thursday & Friday, Dec. 5 & 6. These days passed very unpleasantly . . . Advised with Physician Dr. Hicklin Thursday evening & Friday morn he called to see her. I had dressed her & carried her below for comfort & change. When he came H. lay in spasms like those from which she suf-

²⁰ Can this be an accurate description?

ferred on the Island. He recommended Chloroform which temporarily relieved her but created an insatiable appetite, only satisfied by renewed doses. I utterly detest the use of Chloroform. Its effects on H. were temporarily to relieve the distress; to create a demand for more; to produce a dislike for any other medicine; to produce extreme petulance if denied.

Perhaps I judged wrongly but I am of opinion H. several times feigned rigidity & pain for the sake of inducing me to give her more of the Chloroform & if I denied it her, as I did through fear of injuring her, she would cry and tease [sic] till I acceded to her demand. This disposition is not natural but induced by the medicine. It is a regular intoxication of the worst type.

Under the influence of this medicine Hattie became to me the greatest trial of my life. There is a limit says one to faith, hope, patience & courage & I have been quite inclined to believe that limit has in my case been reached. In view of the increasing afflictions of the past, present situation & future prospects, I feel almost overwhelmed. I feel that I am an outcast from God's Paternal care & regard -- that I am given up to Satan to be ruined soul & body -- estate, I have none. I have felt little desire to live & fear to die; little love or regard for anybody or thing & that scarcely anybody has any regard or love for me.

My prayers seem to rise no higher than my head & all grace seems denied me. I feel at times that I am damned for this world & the world to come & that the sooner I might be permitted to lay down in my grave the less would be

my torment in Hell. Why I am doomed to such a life of affliction, sorrow & deprivation of grace I cannot see. It seems all mystery involved in Stygian smoke. Oh, would I had died as soon as I was born or that I had never been born. With Job, I may complain: "He hath cast me into the fire & I am become like dust & ashes. I cry out to thee & thou doth not hear me & thou regardest me not. Thou art become cruel unto me. . . . When I looked for good then evil came unto me and when I waited for light, there came darkness. . . ." ²¹

Without divine grace -- & this seems totally denied me -- life is Hell on Earth.

Hattie too is a great sufferer -- poor girl. Her lot is hard & she seems required to suffer before her time, almost unaided by grace. Life has no charms -- no, not one bright spot. My health is insufficient for preaching [even] if I was fit for it. My constitution is frail & every day becoming impaired by care, anxiety & watching, etc., etc. I will not say the rest.

(To be continued)

Publication of Henry Baylies's diary
is made possible by the generosity of
Joanne Coffin Clark.

²¹ We have omitted some text. He is bereft, absorbed in self-pity -- and with reason. Like Job (whom he cites), he is without hope, at a new low, emotionally, physically and even spiritually.

Sheriff Pease's Present to His Son on His 16th Birthday

*A present from Isaiah D. Pease
to his Son Richard L. Pease, and
may God Grant you grace to
Square your life by this his
precious word, & may it be
our happy lot to live to his
Glory here, and rejoice eternally
together hereafter -- yours
I. D. Pease*

In 1830, Sheriff Isaiah D. Pease gave a gold-embossed leather-bound Bible to his son, Richard Luce Pease, on the occasion of his 16th birthday. He inscribed it on the inside cover.

In 1862, Sheriff Sam Osborn Corrected the 1847 Record

1866
May 26

S. S. Osborn Jr. Jan

George David of Gayhead Coloured man
was committed to jail, for pretty Loren
Married can read & write aged 28
June 1st 1846 said David was discharged of
jail by paying fine & costs

S. S. Osborn Jr.

1866
July 3

Edward Worth was committed to jail
Debt & discharged the same day by or
of Leavitt Thayer and Theodore G. F.
his Esquire and Justices of the Peace
Union

1866
Nov 10

Rebecca Ann Martin was committed
to jail by Seniah C. Pease Sheriff for
breaking the peace, and was discharged
by order of J. W. Davis Justice of the Peace
the same day

1847
Feb 10

Samuel Osborn junior was committed to
jail on seven writs for want of bail by
Seniah C. Pease Sheriff writ No 2, Lyman Kins
P. Pease & Jacob Pease all of Boston writ dated a
Boston Jan 26 1847 vs S. O. Jr - Damages laid at \$1
No 2 Samuel S. Curtis John Prentiss & Company vs
dated at Boston, Damages laid at \$1000, No
Eliab S. Markum vs David B. Jewett Sars the
of Boston vs S. O. Jr - Damages laid at \$2000,
George D. Dutton George C. Richardson & others vs
Damages laid in sd writ

Continued

This is corrected and made by correcting
the laws and constitution of the State
the Sheriff going contrary to law in re-
giving excessive bail. The plaintiff
committed paying in order to make
the arrest
S. Osborn Jr.
Sheriff Feb 10 1847