



# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 40, NO. 2

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*Dog team pulls sledge on Rudolph Island, Franz Josef Archipelago, 1904.*

## Two Years on a Frozen Island

### Shipwrecked 525 Miles from North Pole With Captain Coffin of Edgartown

PART TWO

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

### When Martha's Vineyard Was A Gateway for International Mail

by DOUGLAS N. CLARK

### Documents: A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

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### CORRECTIONS

On page 42, in the introductory paragraph, the address of Everett White is incorrectly stated as White Cove, Maine. He lives in Hull's Cove, Maine, 04644.

Under the photograph of Capt. Edwin A. Coffin Jr., on page 13 of the August 1998 issue the caption incorrectly lists his birth year as 1860. It should have read 1850, as stated in the text on page 3. He died in 1917, as the caption states.

In the same article, another correction. On page 11, footnote 12 includes this statement in listing Edwin Coffin's children: "... then Mildred, (who married the well-known Chilmark storekeeper, E. Elliot Mayhew)." Mildred, who brought this error to the Editor's attention, was the stepdaughter of Carrie Louise Coffin and thus the step-granddaughter of Captain Coffin, not his daughter. She was born Mildred Cushman, daughter of Edgar Cushman, who married Carrie Louise Coffin in 1924. The statement that Mildred's husband, E. Elliot Mayhew, was the "well-known Chilmark storekeeper" is so out of step chronologically as to be humorous. Her husband was not the storekeeper, but his grandson. As Mrs. Mayhew, in good humor, told the Editor, "I'm old, but not old enough to have married my husband's grandfather!"

We are sorry for the errors and our thanks to Mrs. Mayhew.

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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 (see inside front cover for dues schedule). To join, write to the Society, Box 827, Edgartown, MA 02539. Membership will bring you this journal four times a year.



## Two Years on a Frozen Island

# Shipwrecked 525 Miles from North Pole With Captain Coffin of Edgartown

PART TWO

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

CAPTAIN Edwin Coffin was pleased with himself. And with good reason. In one of the Arctic's worst ice years, he had taken the steamer *America* to Teplitz Bay on Rudolph Island, the most northern island in Franz Joseph Land, only 525 miles from the North Pole. Before leaving New York, he had told William Ziegler, the millionaire backing the trip, that he would take her there and he had. Not only did he get to Teplitz Bay, but even beyond. In joyous exuberance, under the midnight sun of August 31, 1903, he steamed north at full throttle to 82 degrees 35 minutes North latitude -- a record.

As he told a reporter several years later:

I sailed the *America* as her captain and when I signed an agreement with the expedition in New York City I contracted to take the party to 82 degrees 35 minutes North. In carrying out that contract, I had the co-operation of a very good steamer, built especially for ice breaking.<sup>1</sup>

The steamer, her engine now shut down, was tied to shore ice a half-mile from the stony beach in Teplitz Bay. His job was done. For the first time in 24 hours, Captain Coffin went below to sleep -- a well-earned sleep. For six tiring weeks, he had bucked the worst ice in years, his ship loaded with humans, animals and supplies to make an attempt to "discover" the North Pole. It was the Ziegler Polar Expedition of 1903, named for William Ziegler, *America's* baking-powder king, who was eager to go down in history.<sup>2</sup>

Now it would be up to Commander Anthony Fiala to

<sup>1</sup> *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, undated clipping, probably in 1906.

<sup>2</sup> See *Intelligencer*, August 1998, for Part One of this article.

ARTHUR R. RAILTON is the Editor of this journal.

make the sledge trip across 500 miles of ice to the Pole. Coffin had done his part. During the long voyage through the ice, there had been moments of doubt. And criticism. Some in the expedition, the "Scientists," as Coffin sometimes called them, thought he was overly cautious in the way he pushed the steamer through the thick ice. Even Fiala had joined them at times. Now, Coffin thought, it was their turn to produce.

These scientists were the 15 men with job descriptions ranging from Chief Scientist to Assistant in Care of Dogs, who made up the expedition's Field Department under Fiala. Coffin headed the Deck Department, 24 mariners who ran the steamer. On Rudolph Island, the men in both departments, 39 altogether, would help in the "Dash to the Pole" planned for February, when daylight would return and before the polar ice pack broke up. It was now September. Soon, it would be dark 24 hours a day. There was no time to waste.

While preparing for the polar trek, the Field Department would live on shore while the Deck Department remained aboard ship, keeping her ready to take the expedition back to Norway after they had made it to the Pole.

Captain Coffin planned to move the *America* to a safer harbor for the winter, one not exposed as Teplitz Bay was to crushing ice floes. In New York, he and Mr. Ziegler had discussed this. Both agreed, Coffin said, that Coburg Island, southeast of Rudolph, was the safest place. Coffin respected the enormous pressure of pack ice. His whaleship *Rosario* had been crushed in the Bering Sea a few years earlier. He was determined to keep *America* from a similar fate.

The day they tied up at Teplitz, the unloading began. First, 215 dogs and 29 ponies had to be taken ashore after their long confinement. Immediately, there were problems: The first landed were the dogs and they were soon running all over the ice investigating. Some of them not able to run around so 'twas evident we had got them landed none too soon. . . Next came the ponies, each one with a man leading him. Some of the men let the ponies follow and finally nearly all were loose -- 16 of them ran away. Mr. Fiala sent four men on horseback to bring them back.<sup>3</sup>

After nearly two months aboard ship, the ponies relished a chance to run free. Capturing them wasn't easy. In three days, only nine had been brought back. Four had fallen into deep crevasses in the ice and had to be shot. Dr. Colin Vaughn, the young medical student "in charge of the dogs," killed another pony that slipped and broke a leg. Two were never found -- no doubt they died deep in an icy crevasse. The search kept most of the Field Department busy for days, days they should have been setting up the camp. Unloading cargo was being done by Coffin's men, men who had been on duty aboard the steamer for weeks, while the Field Department was resting and criticizing. Now it was Coffin's chance to criticize: So many men detached to go after ponies makes the unloading of cargo go slowly now and every thing is left in heaps in all shapes and not as far away from the edge of the ice as I would wish<sup>4</sup>. . . Mr. Taffel is still out [after ponies]. He went on after the others turned back. Only the Ship's crew sledding [cargo] to camp now.

More delay was caused by a violent wind storm that snapped one of the lines holding the steamer to the ice. Coffin's men had to stop unloading to secure the ship. While they were doing this, a Field Department man came aboard and told Coffin he needed some sailors and a boat right away:

When I was making the steamer fast under full speed one of the Expedition<sup>5</sup> or Field Party came along and was quite indignant because I would not send down a boat with some of my crew to move it. I told him he could have a boat to man with some of the Field party. . . he did not care to try it. . . a boat could simply do nothing but go to leeward [in this wind] & I should had to go out after them with the steamer.

Coffin's criticism of the Field Department and of Fiala was frequent in the first weeks at Teplitz. Fiala had been on a previous expedition with some men in his Field Department and he favored them over the ship's crew. Or so Coffin thought. That unhappiness with Fiala was intensified on September 3rd when,

To my surprise Mr. Fiala handed me a communication that read that the safety of the ship was to be sacrificed for the benefit of the expedition by holding her at the edge of the ice where there is no shelter from the pack ice coming in of from WSWest to West NW winds. . . the ship [he said] was necessary to carry out all the plans he had formed for the sledge trip

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise cited, all quotations are taken from journals of Edwin Coffin in the Society library. Illustrations are from Anthony Fiala, *Fighting the Polar Ice*, Doubleday, N.Y., 1906.

<sup>4</sup> The captain, as we will see, is a worrier, especially regarding unpredictable ice.

<sup>5</sup> Coffin spells expedition this way throughout his journals. We will not correct him.



in the early spring. This is an entire change from the understanding at New York before leaving for Norway. I told him. . . that there was not shelter for the ship here. . . Fiala notified me in this missive that he would hold me responsible for the Expedition if I moved the ship away. Also informed me that Mr. Ziegler's representative in New York, Mr. Champ, told him to sacrifice the steamer should it be necessary to the success of getting farther North. All of which was new to me. . . So I was obliged against my judgment to hold the ship here.

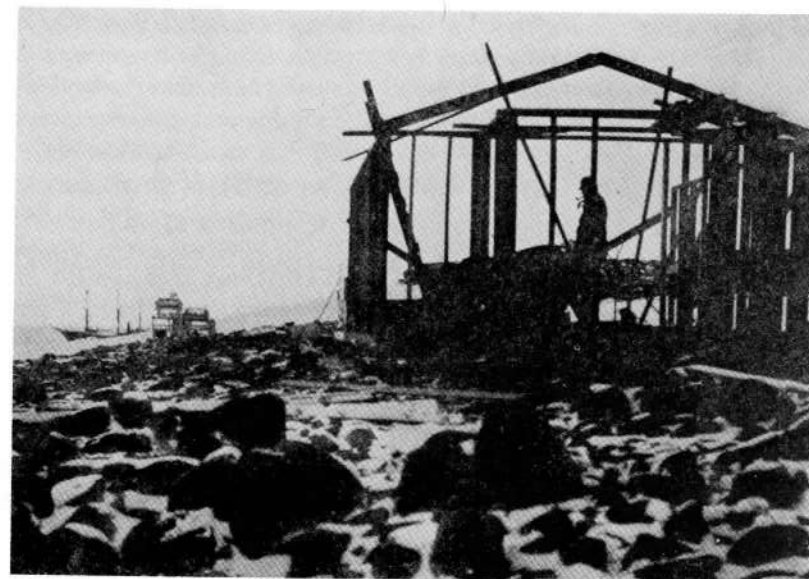
Fiala's position had merit. Even Coffin soon agreed that the ship's electricity, machine and carpenter's shops would expedite the work. But that had not been discussed in New York when he and Ziegler had agreed on a winter berth. The steamer was his responsibility and he wanted her secure. She would be needed to get them back to Norway. Shortly, he changed his mind. Without the steamer and crew at Teplitz, the expedition could not be ready to head for the Pole on time. And that is what they had come for -- to get to the Pole. It did look to me that without any help from the crew it would cripple the work of fitting out the North Pole sledge party. . . So I have concluded to stay here to help out the expedition if this will insure the success of it and will not be sorry if the *America* does get crushed.

But if the ship was crushed how would they get back to civilization? And if the ice was heavy enough to destroy the *America*, it would likely block a relief ship from arriving:

if the ship is lost I am very uncertain about any relief ship getting in to us at Cape Flora. . . to winter there [until the next summer] would not be pleasant, cooped up in small houses and no fuel to speak of to burn & a limited supply of food. We will have to shoot Bears, Walrus and get what birds we can.

Only Coffin seemed to worry about that. The others focused on building a camp. With lumber brought from Norway, they put up a house, a magnetic observatory (built entirely without iron<sup>6</sup>), a weather station, a tent for the animals and a storage tent. The Field Department soon moved into the house. It had a large dining room, a kitchen, a cook's room, several bunk rooms and a separate room for Fiala.

Gradually, as the two groups worked together, Coffin's criticism of the scientists lessened. All knew that they had to



*The house for Fiala's Field Department being built on the rocky beach. The steamer, tied to the ice some distance from shore, is seen at the extreme left.*

get along to survive. Coffin's main worry was the *America* and her crew. The men had signed on as mariners under his command. He was still their boss, he felt. But as the weeks passed, Fiala began assigning work to the sailors without discussing it with him. Furthermore, Coffin thought, he usually gave them the hardest work. In Coffin's mind, Fiala saw the sailors as less educated, not equal to his specialists. Perhaps so, but Fiala soon learned that the sailors had more practical skills and were more useful in preparing for the trek than his scientists. The doctors, weather observers, veterinarians and scientists were more educated but lacked the practical skills needed now.

It seems that this had not been thought of in the planning. Nowhere does Coffin state that he was to look for tent makers, tailors and harness makers among his sailors. But such skills were essential, more needed than the ability to study the weather and magnetic forces.

Perhaps it was known that men who had been whalers, an occupation requiring practical skills, would have them. Coffin was annoyed that his men were not appreciated, as when his First Mate Haven was ordered to make wire halters for the sled dogs:

<sup>6</sup> *Scientific Results The Ziegler Polar Expedition 1903-1905*, William J. Peters, National Geographic Society, Brass and copper were the only metals used and very little of them: copper stove, chimney and lamps, brass hooks for garments.

no [new] Orders coming in from the knowing ones. Mr. Haven had a quantity of wire halters spliced in a neat manner. This morning one of the Dog Doctors (who never saw a wire spliced) found fault, that the work was not done right. Hard to satisfy. . . Constant altering of dog harnesses. Too many bosses.

Haven, chosen for his years as an Arctic whaleman, soon became the expedition's tent designer and maker. Although he had never used a sewing machine before, he quickly learned how. Coffin credited the sailor's life:

Mr. Haven and I tried our hands running a hand sewing Machine (Singer's) and we did very well for green hands. We old salts do not expect to become experts at once. That we have to leave for others.

Fiala kept assigning work to the ship's crew without telling Coffin. He moved his Commissary Officer aboard the *America* with orders that the ship's Carpenter and First Officer work for him, plus as many crewmen as he wanted:

Rilliett moves into the room that was Mr. Peters' [Chief Scientist and deputy commander of the expedition, now living on shore]. Will supervise the sled work. "He is to have as many of the steamer's crew as needed to work on these sleds. All will be competent men." Also my ship's carpenter. . . under personal supervision of the Chief Mate, Mr. Haven. All finished work on the sleds must be passed by the Expedition man Rilliette before leaving the steamer. The steamer now has two of her crew on shore as night watchmen as there was too much work attached to the watching for one man.

Without telling Coffin, Fiala ordered the ship's Chief Engineer Hartt to run electric lights into camp. The power would have to come from the ship, but the captain was not consulted. Hartt strung wires from the steamer, a distance of more than a half mile.<sup>7</sup> Later, outside lights were put up:

We have two electric lights connected on the shore line equal distances apart towards the camp. They look fine. One thinks of civilization when looking at them. The lights are on bamboo poles (stayed) eight feet high. Mr. Hartt connected them. The lamps are bulbs same as we use on ship. Out on the ice they show equal to any large electric lights.

Strangers coming upon the scene would have been amazed: two arc lights shining in the darkness 500 miles from the North Pole! Of course, no humans, except themselves, would ever see these beacons in the dark Arctic wasteland.

Fiala's demands on the crew continued. It wasn't as

<sup>7</sup> It is amazing how much materiel they had brought with them aboard the ship.

though they didn't have work of their own. Coffin listed some: Got ice from the pile close to for daily use this forenoon. Commenced to cut propeller hole. . . ice 30 inches thick against the side of the ship. . . The men working around the propeller hole are using a lantern where they are working under the overhang of the stern. . . Mr. Haven & Mr. Nichols both in the cabin working for the land party on the same work. Mr. Fiala will need twelve two-man tents size 7 feet 6 inches on the bottom with cloth bottoms and one pole going through the center of the tent. All weighing from 8 1/2 lbs to 18 lbs each. . . The material is same material as balloons are made of. . . [Mr Hartt] was shoring the singletrees with a band of iron (quite a job) for the horses. The singletrees [we brought] proving themselves too frail for hard usage. The making of Eskimo boots by the [ship's] fireman has stopped. Why I do not know.

The crew also worked as night watchmen, both aboard ship and at the camp. Fiala realized that was too much: This morning Fiala informed me his party would take the night watch at the Camp. So my two sailors will have a change, having been doing night watching so long at camp. A good move on Fiala's part and much needed.

There was a carpenter with the shore party, but that didn't stop Weather Observer Long from expecting help from the carpenter on board the *America*:

Mr. Long came off<sup>8</sup> to get a long Barometer box made for the swinging Bar[ometer]. The ship's carpenter will have to make it as the Expedition carpenter has commissary work to do at Camp. Chips has only sixty sledges to set up -- about one month's work ahead. . . Carpenter getting a little work done for Long. Not exactly on the program.

Much of the work involved changing the equipment brought from America, such as this:

Mr. Hartt is now shortening up the axles of the registering wheels which go on the sleds to measure the distance traveled. . .

So many trivial demands were being made by the "land party," as he now called them, that Captain Coffin couldn't resist this comment:

Mr. Haven wrestling with the sewing machine, sewing a tent bottom together. . . Steward [here] with a baking [tin] for the Chief to cut down smaller. Peters getting a sounding lead for his tide gauge molded. Long [came] after the Barometer box. . . So it does seem as if tin sailors could do something.<sup>9</sup>

Coffin, finding himself cut out of the chain of com-

<sup>8</sup> The expression "came off" means that the person came off the land onto the ship. "Chips," later in this entry, is the nickname given a carpenter.

<sup>9</sup> There must be some reader who can explain "tin sailors." Is it meant to be demeaning of sailors who serve on steamers?



mand, turned to the *America*. She was his responsibility, nobody else's. Fiala had lost interest in her once they were at Teplitz. Moored far from shore to ice that could break up, she was not secure. Captain Coffin tried to prepare for the worst: Yesterday I had a 700 lb. anchor put out on the solid bay ice and made two parts of nine-inch hawser fast to it. So if the ice from off shore goes off in a body we can hold the ship from going too. The steamer is lying with her bow against the solid ice and stern about 15 feet or 20 feet from it. So with steam and hawsers I can hold the ship against the bay ice until the gale would moderate and let us freeze in again. I hardly think the ice can go off, but have to make sure and give the ship the benefit of the doubt.

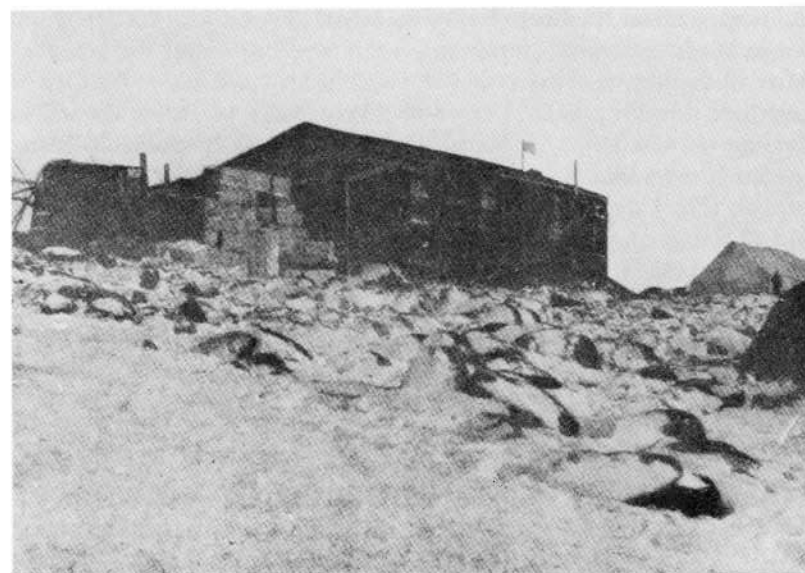
Chips, the ship's carpenter, and First Officer Haven had put together two sledges and one tent. Fiala decided to try them out on a trip to Cape Fligely, the northeastern tip of Rudolph about 10 miles away. He took along two of his favorites: Colin Vaughn, the young medical student "in charge of the dogs," and "Old Pierre" LeRoyer, Mr. Ziegler's French-Canadian hunting guide, the "assistant in care of dogs."

They left on October 15th, the last day that the sun would appear above the horizon for two months, and returned six days later, having gone about 20 miles, less than four miles a day. At that rate, getting to the Pole would take 260 days. To carry provisions for that length of time was impossible.

Fiala explained that a fierce storm had forced them to spend one day in the tent. But even at five days, the average distance per day was not much over four miles. While Fiala was testing the first tent, First Officer Haven had been sewing a lighter silk version:

Sled making going on. Mr. Haven finished his tent yesterday, 'tis all right, and weighs 8 1/2 lbs, 'tis for Fiala [sic] and I hope it will be pitched beyond 86 degrees 36 minutes.<sup>10</sup>

Fiala's return to camp had been just in time. The next evening, a fierce storm with gale winds ripped the *America* loose from her mooring and blew her out to sea. For three days, Coffin and his crew struggled to keep her from being wrecked. The camp lights had gone out when the steamer broke away so Fiala knew something was wrong, but was unable to see what had happened:



*In the dim light of late September, the finished house with the stable tent at right.*

On October 22d. . . at half-past nine at night the arc-light suddenly went out and we knew that our connection with the ship was broken. We feared that something was wrong aboard the *America* but were helpless to assist. . . During the evening of the 23d, there was a lull. . . and Mr. Peters and I, carrying lighted lanterns ran. . . toward the place where the *America* had been moored. . . to our horror, we found [nothing] but a wild black sea. . . our ship with over half of the expedition company had disappeared! . . For three long days the storm raged.<sup>11</sup>

Coffin's account describes how a normal evening aboard ship had suddenly become a night of terror:

Oct. 22nd. . . Mr. Haven commenced working on tents with one man. Ice remains the same. . . Around the ship no change. At 8 this eve the whole of the outside ice has broken off [two words illegible]. At ten the Chief [Engineer] says the wires connecting the camp had gone, that means the whole bay ice has left the shore and we are adrift. That means we will have to steam in shore and have all the outside ice come against us. A bad egg and how to get over it we will have to wait until daylight.

Lost all our stores and boats I am afraid.<sup>12</sup> . . she was holding by stern fasts, only small ones too. . . I gave the Chief orders to turn over very slow astern in order to take the strain off the lines. . . One of the lines fouled in the propeller which stopped the engine. Let go Port anchor in 28 fathoms

<sup>11</sup> Anthony Fiala, *Fighting the Polar Ice*, Doubleday, Page & Co., NY, 1906, pp. 48-49

<sup>12</sup> The small boats from the steamer, plus a large cache of provisions, had been placed on the ice near the steamer, ice that presumably had broken loose and was now adrift.

<sup>10</sup> Apparently this would be a new record. It was not the North Pole, which is 90 degrees.

... trying to cut the lines clear of the wheel. T'was a long hard job, only one man could work at a time, he on the cross beam over the propeller. After all the turns had been cut, Mr. Hartt had to have four of the crew to help jack over the wheel as steam could not budge it. Before dinner, he turned over with steam. . . Wind blowing very hard. Immediately started steaming under one bell, ESE to NNE, heading the wind. Big anchor hanging (Port) and 70 fathoms chain. Useless to try to heave it in by hand and all the steam pipes are disconnected. . . the only thing I can do is to steam and hold on with the anchor hanging.

The *America* was somewhere off Rudolph Island in a violent sea. Coffin couldn't tell exactly where he was. Nor where he was heading. Her compasses were "running clear around" under local magnetic attraction. The only clue of location came the next day when a flare from camp was seen.

The anchor and chain, hanging far down in the water, were too heavy to raise by hand and the steam windlass wasn't working as the pipes to it had been disconnected at Teplitz:

The compasses were having much local attraction, continually running clear around & some times not moving before the ship had made a 3/4 circle as I tried [to do] by watching the wake through the white porridge ice. . . Mr. Haven said the anchor was dragging over the bottom. Slowed down & at 8:05 PM stopped the engine to [try to] get the anchor up. Dark and you cannot see more than 100 feet. . . I fired off a white and red signal from a brass pistol in answer to Mr. Fiala's.

Suddenly, the dragging anchor set and pulled the steamer to a standstill. There was no way to haul it in. Then, in the dim light, land was spotted:

... about 2 AM, the 2nd officer came to my room and reported a Glacier showing off the starboard beam about E, which would be [Cape] Saulen. I went on deck immediately but it was obscured again & I saw nothing. Just after 6 AM, Second Officer again called me & said the Pack ice was in sight drifting towards us & quite close. I went on deck and. . . concluded to not try to get in any chain or slip the cable, but let the heaving ice come against the ship and break the anchor off from the bottom. . . When the floe did bring up against the ship's bow it dragged the anchor off as if it had been a straw. After it was off bottom, I backed the steamer until she was far enough in the hole to turn. T'was then 7:30 and growing a little lighter. . . Headed ESE. . . at 9 AM saw the land ahead showing faintly through the fog (Glaciated land). Kept off, steering SE until 10:30 when I made Cape Saulen. . . 8 miles off.

Kept off to pass the cape until the anchor brought up solid on bottom and commenced to stop the ship. Stopped steaming & tried to heave up the anchor. Hove until no more could be hove in with all hands on the

brakes. Then in order to have a chance to get back I had the chain sawed off with a Hack Saw. Rung up full speed and headed down by Saulen.

I arrived at the same place we were when the gale came on. . . With all hands, managed to plant one 1600 lb. Anchor in the ice, this time securely, and leave the rest for the next day. I had the 1 1/2 inch chain shackled to the anchor holding her by the head and then I felt as if a good day's job was done. The ship was securely fast.<sup>13</sup>

Looking back on the near disaster a year later, Captain Coffin assessed its effect on his men:

This trip was a disagreeable one. Blowing a gale most of the time. Everybody worked well and all in good spirits. With all, we were very fortunate to arrive back at the old berth without doing any damage. . . This was the first proof that this bay was not a safe harbor, or any harbor at all. Also gave the crew an idea that they were unsafe, which was afterwards proved very clearly by most of them deserting the ship and going on shore to the Expedition house. Even the cook left his Galley, so demoralized had they got.<sup>14</sup>

The next day was Sunday, but it was no day for rest. The crew worked all day, making the steamer secure, it was hoped, to prevent another such near-disaster:

I moved the steamer Port side to the ice. Had to get out Port chain and shackle it on the Starboard chain as the starboard chain was caught [on a bar] listing the ship over. Got out the 700 lb. Kedge and planted it (on the ice at the quarter) and put wire hawser and all the Manila line we had on it. Hope to freeze in before we get a gale. . . Had to fill up Coal Bunkers today (to commence). . . Mr. Fiala and Peters came off for an hour or more.

The work continued Monday:

Got out all the lines (we had) this AM and made them fast to ice anchors and two big anchors (ship's). No ice at all outside the steamer (to Starboard). . . Mr. Peters, Porter & Dr. Shorkley off this AM. Dr. S. came off again this PM. . . bad weather drove him right back to camp. . . No danger of anyone coming off from camp this Eve. . . Engine all ready to go ahead at any time as we have to use fifty lbs [of steam] to run Dynamo. . .

The following day, Fiala moved back on the ship. Coffin doesn't disclose his feelings, but it's not likely that he was pleased. With Fiala on shore, Coffin was in command of the ship. With the Commander aboard, that might change.

Mr. Fiala sent his baggage off this afternoon and came off with Mr. Peters at nine to stay all night. He said it was so much brighter on the ship. No noise or confusion and he can do his writing and figuring so much better.

<sup>13</sup> Coffin described this event several times. The preceding combines lines from each.

<sup>14</sup> From *Elmwood* notebook, private notes and records of Coffin, p. 61.



Certainly it was quieter on the ship. With the addition of the crew members who preferred the crowded camp to being lost at sea, the camp must have been noisy. But quiet wasn't the reason Fiala gave in his book for the move. It was duty:

I had been living in the house on shore. . . But, after the experience of the last storm, with the drifting away of the ship, and the uncertain feeling of safety aboard, I felt it my duty to take up my abode there, and moved my little store of personal belongings to my old cabin on the *America*.<sup>15</sup>

Quickly, the near disaster was forgotten as preparations for the February dash to the pole continued. It was already mid-November. Time was running out. The ship's coal supply remained Coffin's biggest worry. He alone, it seemed, realized how essential it was. Nearly 150 tons were in the hold of the steamer, held in reserve to steam back to Norway. In camp, they were burning coal left there by Duke d'Abruzzi in 1899, but it didn't burn hot enough to bake biscuits being made for the trek north. So some of the ship's coal was swapped for it:

Shut down the Dynamo at 9 last night and will continue to save coal. Brought off some coal to trade for ship's as there was some ice mixed with the camp coal. Steward is making Pork & Bean Biscuits for the trail and says he needs the coal.

There were only 39 men in the two groups, on shore and on ship, but each had its own kitchen. That seemed wasteful of coal and food, but it was fine with Coffin. He liked his own galley, although rarely were things cooked to his taste. As a result, he had trouble keeping cooks. Here's a sample of Coffin's complaints:

Cook says he can't sleep nights for thinking what he will have for breakfast. Still he will have very Salty Bacon for Breakfast. No time to soak out the salt I suppose because he must think nights and not prepare food over night.

But the galley was one of his small concerns. The ice was a big one. It kept piling up around the steamer. Daily, he walked around her, checking the ice pressure against the hull. The pressure was building up. On November 12, there came the first sign of serious trouble:

ice commenced to squeeze up and we had many pressures on the steamer. The last one was hard and listed the ship to starboard, jamming her against the solid ice. Got everything out to leave her. The pressure let go

<sup>15</sup> Fiala, p. 50.

and there was no leak so we left off taking things out. The ice cracked inside of the cache so we commenced to move the cache farther in on the ice. . . The ship had a hard squeeze during the third pressure. . . No more leak noticed as yet. . . 'Tis a hard outlook for the *America* lying exposed to all SW to West crushes and if we come out whole in the summer it will just be luck and a strong ship.

Fiala, now staying on board, had his first experience with ice pressure. He was more worried than Coffin:

On the morning of November 12th, I was awakened about four o'clock by the shaking and trembling of the ship. I lay for some minutes listening to the groaning and moaning of the timbers under pressure of the ice, and then "Moses," the Captain's dog, pushed his way into my cabin and put his paws on me, looking into my face with his great black eyes as if beseeching me to rise. I learned later that after coming into my room he went below into the Captain's cabin and awoke him.<sup>16</sup>

I got up. . . and went out on deck. It was so dark that I could not see very far, but I could distinguish in the distance the ghostly form of the ice in a jumble of confusion, and could see the pressure ridges approaching. . . I returned to the cabin. . . While I was putting on my clothing, Captain Coffin knocked at my door and told me that he had ordered all hands to be ready to leave the ship. I agreed with him. . . and went out on deck. . . About six o'clock the Engineer reported to me that the water was above the fire-room plates and that he had started to pump the ship. . . I returned to my cabin to save some furs and records, which I . . . gave to two sailors who passed them over the side to their shipmates on the ice. . . With the last severe pressure the ice fields became quiet. . . Accompanied by the ship's officers, I crawled over the walls of ice blocks, tumbled in massive confusion around the *America's* stern. . . The ship in her new cradle of ice blocks seemed to be safer than before and the reassured crew carried their blankets back to the warm and cozy quarters aboard.<sup>17</sup>

Before morning, the crew had a change of heart. Fiala's "warm and cozy quarters" seemed less so and some of them went ashore. The men in camp wondered why:

Six of the men & the cook left the ship this morning between 4 and 6 o'clock, also one fireman, without saying a word to any one. Mr. Peters, Dr. Shorkley & John Vedoe came off about seven to see what was the matter. . . Vaughn, Moulton & Truden off and took dinner with us. . . blowing hard SEly about 60 miles an hour in gusts. Truden and the two other men caught on board and will have to stay for the night. Duffy and Mackiernan of the sailors came back to the ship this forenoon. The others still on shore.

<sup>16</sup> Fiala, pp. 52-53. Could it be that Fiala wanted to tell his readers that even Coffin's dog, who lived on the steamer, knew who was now in command?

<sup>17</sup> Fiala, pp. 53-55.

During the day, the other sailors returned, but none of them was without worry. Nor was their captain:

The rest of the men came off this AM . . . Cook showed up and will go to work in the galley. All the boys are badly demoralized. . . the ice has piled up. . . Everything looks favorable for a series of squeezes. . . There are two on the steamer who in time of need will be somewhere else.<sup>18</sup> . . . Called all the men together and they all agreed to stay. . . Tomorrow, we will send all the men's extra luggage on shore. . . in case the steamer should get carried off. There is no way of holding the ship should the bay ice break off where it cracked. . . Well, how long will we be before something again takes place? (*Quien Sabe*)

Worried about more pressure, Coffin kept a late watch: "I went to bed at 2:30 AM." Two days later, Monday, he felt encouraged. The piled-up ice might protect the steamer:

. . . the ice around the steamer is thick enough now to hold off the moving outside ice except in case of a heavy direct blow from SW to West. . . Mr. Nichols making clothes bags on the machine for the sled expedition. . . I can hear the ice at times breaking and piling up off shore. Then a long quiet. . . all are prepared to leave the Stmr in case of getting smashed or carried off by the ice breaking off inside. Working on sledges in Carpenter's shop today.

As the days passed without more pressures, they began to relax. The men, Coffin wrote, "are now in good shape, having gotten over their scare." The ship's carpenter finished the first six sledges and they were taken ashore to the storehouse. First Officer Haven resumed work on his tents; Second Officer Nichols continued making harnesses for the dog teams. Chief Engineer Hartt was not feeling well. The expedition's surgeon came aboard to examine him:

Dr. Shorkley reports Mr. Hartt's rectum in bad condition, if not serious (without a surgical operation). Mr. H. says he don't want any operation performed. Tis a fissure and was healing, now broken out again.<sup>19</sup>

As November drew near its end, Fiala interrupted his planning for the polar dash to publish a proclamation:

Mr. Fiala gave me two of his Thanksgiving Proclamations for his expedition which I have (as requested) handed over: one to the Officers, one to the crew.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps there was reason to be thankful; perhaps the pressure had subsided. For a number of days, it did seem that

way. Then at midnight, November 20, three days after Fiala's Thanksgiving Proclamation, Coffin's worst fear came true:

The ice broke off at 12 in the outside crack. . . the wind hauled to S & W, bringing the whole ice back. At 5:30 AM, it brought up against the ice off south of the stmr [steamer] and pushed it up like an egg shell, although it was more than three feet thick. It piled up against the ship's side so it bursted in the gangway and bulwarks forward. . . shoving on the deck pieces [of ice] that would weigh three to four tons. At about 8 AM there came a heavier squeeze and bursted in the port side. . . breaking timbers. . . shoving the ship up on the solid bay ice so her keel forward was raised well out on the ice. . . about six feet of water in the engine room. The pressure lasted until about 9:30 AM. . . all possible taken out the ship until it got dangerous to stay on board. At 10 all went to camp, taking the baggage on pony teams and got breakfast. After [eating], crew went on board ship to take out provisions. . . tore down bulkheads to fix up sailors' quarters on shore. Steamer a total wreck. . . Have given her up.

Mr. Fiala, Mr. Haven and myself held a survey where we could see and condemned the *America*. . . Twas a very hard squeeze and the *America* stood it well before she gave away to it.

Although his journal entry is very matter-of-fact, the crushing of *America* was traumatic to Coffin. He revisited the disaster in his writings several times, in each adding details. His biggest fear had happened: his ship was crushed. Fiala's behavior during the crisis bothered him also:

Remarks on Nov. 21st, 1903, when the *America* was crushed by the ice. The ice broke off. . . about 100 yards off the Starboard Side. Between 7 & 12, the wind was blowing a gale from the east which broke off the ice about 12 midnight of the 20th. . . When the ice broke off, I went to bed, considering that now everything was all right. . . slept soundly.

About 3 AM, the wind hauled to SW bringing the whole pack back. I was not called by the watchmen (2) so knew nothing until I awakened and knew by the unusual sound that something was wrong. So I immediately got up. Just before I got full dressed, Mr. Haven came to my door and said the ice was coming back quickly. I asked him which way the wind was. When he said South West I knew before I came on deck 'twas serious. I went up and took one look and said to him, "This is the wind twill finish the *America*." Told him to call all out.

Excepting Fiala, all were up. . . I went down to my room and commenced to get out a few more necessary things. . . strapped my Chronometer, secured my Grip which had the steamer papers, took my Rifle. . . I told all the men to get off the ship on to the ice until the pressure was off. . . went down in the engine room. . . Chief had immediately started the steam pump, the water then was nearly up to the fires. I told him 'twas no use, the wood work around the stern had been carried away. . . and the

<sup>18</sup> Who are the two he is referring to?

<sup>19</sup> It is not surprising that Hartt would not choose to be operated on up there.

<sup>20</sup> These were printed on the press Fiala had brought along for such pronouncements.



rest of the ship was out of the water. . . Gave the mate orders for all to leave as I considered it unsafe with the masts liable to fall at any minute. Mr. Fiala asked or ordered the men to help him get out some of his expedition stuff. . . after I had informed [them] the ship would stay where she was, so if any one got hurt it was their own fault. There was not the slightest use for anyone to stay on the ship. . . Even after I had given orders for no man to go on board (this after the pressures stopped) he allowed one man of his party who came out from camp to go on board, not three minutes after I had told him. And my room was looted of many of my private things: Ship's Commission was taken, also some Vouchers. . . all my lead pencils, other things too numerous to mention.

A year later, in another revisit, he wrote:

Notes on the crushing of the *America*  
on the morning of November 21st, 1903.

. . . There was two watchmen watching the cracks (old ones) on the bay ice every quarter hour or oftener to see they did not open any. Mr. Haven & I had been out also all around the ship previous to midnight. Also when the watchman reported the ice broken off outside, we both went up and looked at it. That was just what I had been waiting for as the ice breaking there would take all the strain off from the ice where the ship was. . . So I went to bed without any thought of any danger to the ship.

About 2:30 the wind hauled to S by W, blowing fresh which would bring the ice back. I was not called as no orders had been given to that effect. I never gave a thought of the wind coming out from the west of south (this was the first time it did). I was awakened towards five AM by unusual noises and I immediately got up. . . Before I was fully dressed Mr. Haven came to my door. . . I asked him how the wind was. Said SW. I knew something serious must happen. I went right up and took one look (that was enough) I said to Mr. Haven, "This is the wind up twill finish the *America*. Is all hands up?" He replied all but Mr. Fiala, I will call him. I found out that Mr. F. had been out before, but had retired again. . . I told all to leave until the pressure was gone, but Mr. Fiala had a host of things which he must get then so the men helped him, he not realizing any consequences any more than he did when he by pressure made me winter against my decision there. . . & so ends the *America* (condemned that same day).<sup>21</sup>

Fiala also described that night (he dates it as December 21st, but it was November 21st). He is more poetic:

Early in the morning of Saturday, December 21st, I was awakened by the . . . crunching of the ice. . . the *America* began to shake. . . she shrieked like a living thing in pain. . . The First Officer and then the Captain and Chief Engineer came to my room where I was busy collecting records and

<sup>21</sup> Elmwood, pp.62-63.

<sup>22</sup> Coffin, in three different accounts of the night, never mentions going to Fiala's room.



A total loss, *America's* reinforced bow rests on the ice undamaged, her stern planking crushed and engine room flooded. Midnight photo taken in moonlight.

valuables and told me it was best to be ready to leave as the ice was bearing down on the ship<sup>22</sup>. . . About 7:30, Engineer Hartt came to me and, with tears in his eyes, said that the water was entering the ash-pits and that he could not keep up steam. . . By the light of a candle I was busily engaged placing small articles of value in bags and had just filled the last one, and had given it to a sailor to take over the side. . . The Engineer reappeared to tell me that he and I were alone on the ship and that I had better go if I did not want a bath. . . together we passed by the Jacob's ladder from the forecandle down to the ice.<sup>23</sup>

Nowhere does Fiala show any regret for requiring Coffin, against his wishes, to keep the *America* at Teplitz. Nor does Coffin ever state that Fiala admitted his mistake.

The next day, it was snowing. Coffin, from inside the

<sup>22</sup> Coffin, in three different accounts of the night, never mentions going to Fiala's room.

<sup>23</sup> Fiala, pp. 57-59.

crowded camp, could barely see his ruined steamer:

The *America* showed like a large black blot against the horizon. . . blowing and snowing furiously. No outside work done on account of the storm.

With everybody inside the camp, changes had to be made. Rooms had to be added for the ship's officers and men.

Busy inside putting up bunks for the crew. Also building a new cook's room in order to make room inside to accommodate ship's officers. . . Mr. Fiala is doing his best for us and we, Capt. and 1st, are quartered in his room. The Kerosine lamps are poor and few so we do not have any too much light. The stewards are feeding us very good and they only have two small stoves to cook on. Yesterday, we brought the ship's Galley Range off to Camp and with that set up it will give us plenty of stove. Few went to the ship this morning and came right back. I think now she will stay where she is. She is a badly used vessel, squeezed entirely out of shape. . . Poor old ship. She had. . . to stay and take it all. And this means hiking to Cape Flora.<sup>24</sup>

The mood was resignation; the work to be the first to reach the North Pole was put aside. Now top priority was making space to get through the winter. Thanksgiving Day came and Fiala held his divine service. After it, perhaps in an attempt to refocus their attention, he announced details of the trek to the Pole. Calling for volunteers, he warned they must be "ready on February 8th to start at one hour's notice."<sup>25</sup>

All wishing to take part. . . should apply to the Commanding Officer before the end of November, 1903, and receive their allotment of skins for clothing, with the understanding that after preparation -- should a member be unable to go on the Sledge Trip -- his furs are to be turned over to Commanding Officer for use on the trail.

The plan called for 24 men to start out with 20 pony sledges and 12 dog sledges hauling enough provisions and equipment to support a trip of more than 1100 miles over ice. The men would walk all the way behind the sledges, resting only at night in their tents. It would be physically very demanding. To accomplish it, the men were to be assigned to one of three groups. The First Support group would carry supplies for the entire expedition for seven days, after which eight men would return to camp. The Second Support sledges would haul provisions for 27 additional days and at that time

<sup>24</sup> They had planned to go to Cape Flora on the *America*. Now they would have to go on foot for 165 miles across the ice.

<sup>25</sup> Fiala, pp.59-60.

eight more men would return. The third party would continue on to the Pole. It would consist of 6 men and 11 sledges, with rations for 92 days, enough to get to the North Pole and back, according to Fiala's calculations. As provisions were used up, the emptied sledges would be abandoned, their ponies killed for dog food.

Selection of those in each of the three parties would be "after experience has proved each member." When it was time for a support party to return to camp, Fiala would assign the eight least fit men to it, those more fit would continue on the trek. Competition to be among those to go down in history as discoverers of the Pole would be intense -- or so he hoped.

But there had been no training of either men or animals. No time for that. They were now totally occupied in removing items from the crushed steamer and enlarging the camp to accommodate the steamer's crew. Coffin and his officers would move into two rooms next to the kitchen, now being enlarged to take the steamer's galley stove. The ship's crew would bunk in the storehouse. A new storehouse was to be built. No time for training. No empty space either:

The houses have been crowded so much I only brought in just what I actually needed. Luggage everywhere, tread on it and fall over it, see it suspended, stowed under the beds, underneath pillows, in fact everywhere. At night, the long dining table is occupied [sic] by sleepers, also under the table. . . Have now got the ship's range set up and have a fire in it. . . we need it for this big crowd. Everybody is in good spirits and all look forward to the sled expedition for the Pole. . . the wind has hauled to East some and that means some danger of the ice [going away]. . . taking the ship off with it.

Two items still had to be removed from the steamer: her tons of coal; and her dynamo, the electric generator:

All hands over to the ship today, sacking coal and also sledding it to camp. I went off and dug some medicine (tablets) out of the snow in the upper Cabin. . . Got about 6 tons coal to camp today. Also Dynamo & engine are outside in the snow. . .

Coffin wrote, "Everything goes along smoothly and I hope it will continue. I miss my quarters on the ship although I have good ones here." By New Year's, the ship's dynamo would be working on shore, bringing back the electric lights. The ship's carpenter had set up his shop in the storeroom to



continue assembling sledges. Coffin was proud of his carpenter, Norwegian Peter Tessem:

Getting ready for Xmas and all the other different works keeps about thirty men busy all the time. . . Finished the fiftieth sled (50) today. Not much loafing by that crowd who worked on sleds

Despite their workload, they celebrated Christmas and New Year's in style, even with a newspaper. Fiala was pleased: The Christmas and the New Year holidays passed happily. We celebrated them with banquets, to which our hard working steward contributed many delicacies. A Christmas edition of the *Arctic Eagle* was printed. Assistant Commissary Stewart. . . running the press and Seaman Montrose, who had once been a printer, acting as compositor. Nearly all the members. . . contributed to its columns and much amusement at its quips and personals was the result.<sup>26</sup>

Even Captain Coffin allowed himself some sentimental thoughts. And a brief mention of his crippled steamer:

Last Xmas was so different. Home with all its comforts and loved ones are now so far away but our thoughts will be the same. . . Tonight [Christmas Eve] we celebrated with a rather mild Rum Punch made of ice water, Grated Pineapples & Cherries. Very good and well patronized. Also one loaf of Plum Cake (tinned). Had about one gallon of punch left, so it shows that we are quite a temperate lot in far off Prince Rudolf Land in 81 degrees 47 min. 10 secs. North latitude. Toasts and good will were in order. . . I have not been down to the steamer this day. The ice remains the same. . .

The Christmas celebration was no doubt the closest to the North Pole ever held, but there was no visit from Santa Claus. There was plenty to eat and drink, however:

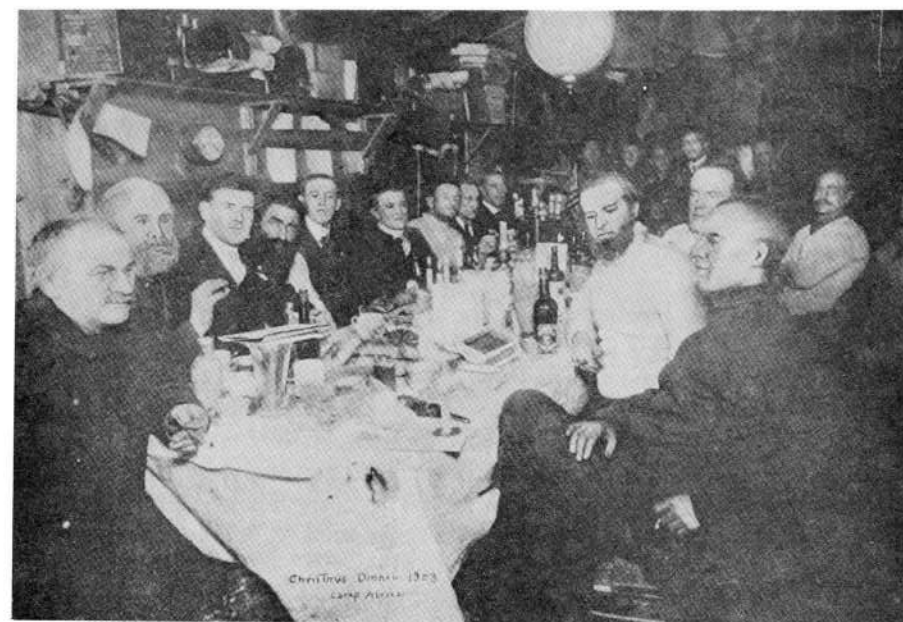
Friday Xmas 1903 at Crown Prince Rudolf Land (Camp Abruzzi)

All hands are enjoying themselves according to their own ideas of the word. There was an issue of Peter Milk Chocolates, 2 doz. apiece, so the boys played Roulette for them a large part of the day.<sup>27</sup> . . Had lunch at 12 today and dinner at 8 PM. [Copies of] Menu were printed for all hands. . . The *Arctic Eagle* came out in fine style. . . 6 pages of bright sparkling good-feeling reading matter. Now a suppliment will come out in order to get in what was crowded out of the first issue. I will copy the Menu as it may get lost:

Xmas Menu  
Consomme a la Teplitz  
Spencer Rolls

<sup>26</sup> Fiala, pp. 61-62. Sadly, no copy of it seems to have been saved by Coffin.

<sup>27</sup> Chocolates were given out every Sunday at Fiala's church service. They weren't eaten immediately, but were used, as here, as chips in the Sunday poker game after church.



Christmas dinner 1903, only 525 miles from the North Pole. At left is thought to be Coffin; behind him Haven. Right foreground is Fiala, behind him probably Peters.

Olives -Salted Peanuts Almonds  
Creamed Alaska Salmon  
from the Head of Stikeen River  
Yankee Chicken Croquettes  
New Style Cut Beans a la Abruzzi  
Potatoes County Cork  
Royal Sherbet  
Danish Grouse  
Long Peas Fort Conger  
Cranberry Sauce New Bedford  
Ice Cream, 30 degrees below  
Certified by Ob's.  
Strawberries a la Capitaine "Cagni"<sup>28</sup>  
Cake Biscuits Raisins  
Coffee A la Camp Ziegler

The Xmas Banquet has passed off well and no accidents to record. Also had songs. At the end, we arose and broke up with "Home sweet Home."

The chorus of *Home, Sweet Home* came well after

<sup>28</sup> "Spencer Rolls" were named for the Steward, who made them. "Ob's" was the signature written on each weather report by Francis Long, the weather observer. "Cagni" was captain of the ship of the Duke d'Abruzzi expedition which had spent much of 1899 at Teplitz Bay in its failed attempt to reach the North Pole. Perhaps he had left the strawberries in a cache.

midnight. Sleeping late was the rule the next morning. Even the early-rising Coffin wasn't up until nearly noon -- in time for a happy surprise:

... at 11:30 AM I went out and found (to my surprise and joy also) it quite light. Day has come once more. I could distinguish an object in a radius of 20 yards without a lantern. . . This day is short to us because we left the table at 1:30 this morning and most of us were up gamming in each other's rooms until four. So late rising to day has made us all say, when we meet, good morning at five in the afternoon. . . The dogs I think celebrated Xmas by howling half of the night. The Duke<sup>29</sup> in his book writes "We got so tired of each other, when we met we had nothing to say to each other, we were all talked out, being so much shut up together through the long Arctic nights." One thing this party have not yet experienced. . . We have had too much work. . . Twenty ponies to take care of. . . and 200 odd dogs. . . Bear skins to scrape, tan and make up, 50 sledges to put together with much alteration. Not to mention the whole shipload of stores, etc. moved to camp, moved several times after. . . Building alterations even now in December.

The holiday spirit moved the Captain to say a few good words about the scientists, something he had not done before: The Scientific crowd of four [are] out in all kinds of weather standing a regular watch night and day. Doing fine and correct work which will show for itself if it ever reaches civilization.

So the cure is work. Work of any kind. Now [that] we actually have the day[light] commencing, we need not be afraid to arrive at the point the Duke's party did. Furthermore, we have an immense lot of work more to accomplish to get the sled party North started.

Then comes the march South to Cape Flora, to equip and all hands get away towards our own country. A small part of the way. Still not a picnic to make [that trek] in May. . .

Too much work to rest between Christmas and New Year's. The weather was no help. Coffin, to whom hard work was a religion, was full of praise:

Plenty of work going on out of doors. Rather cold on the fingers though. Seems to be no end of work. . . Never in the history of the world did ever any expedition have this kind of out of door work to do through the darkness. . . Mr. Peters has a new Magnetic house up now on the ice where the Duke's was.

New Year's Eve brought another celebration:

January 1st 1904. Happy New Year at Crown Prince Rudolf Land. . . All the ship's officers up for breakfast. The general rule. Very quiet. . . this morning. Everybody talked out last night, I imagine. No work to day.

Celebrated New Year's by a banquet, commenced at 8 PM and got up from the table at 2 AM. Three kinds of wine and some hard liquor. Soup, Lentils, Grouse, two kinds of crackers, Coffee, Ice Cream, Queen Olives & Cigars. Well I hope this is our last New Year in this region of frost and snow to say nothing of furious gales. Hope to pass the next at home.

Last night, Mr. Fiala took a flash light picture but unfortunately forgot to remove the cap of the camera. There was too much smoke and an hour wait for it to clear to take another. . . it must have been four before all the boys went to roost. Then all not to sleep. . . The boys from the fore-castle were invited in after dinner and sang and danced, in fact did about what they wanted to -- all in good feelings.<sup>30</sup>

The next night brought a full moon. There was no wind and Fiala, a skilled photographer, set up his camera:

A full moon on the evening of January 2d, without a wind, gave me a long wished for opportunity to photograph the wreck of the *America*. . . 30 degrees below zero. . . After setting up the camera and opening the lens I went back to camp, returning to the ship again in about an hour and a half to end the exposure.<sup>31</sup>

Fiala's schedule called for them to start for the North Pole February 8th, just over a month away. Those going all the way would be on the ice several months, requiring many rations to be loaded on the sledges. Food was wrapped in small packets to prevent waste. Several thousand were made up: all the expedition stores. . . are done up in the most compact manner. And stowed to avoid unnecessary handling. . . butter is in squares of about 8 to 10 ounces and wrapped in two thicknesses of paper. Sugar in 21 oz. bags.

Everything had to be secured to prevent loss during the trip across rough ice and stowed so as to make items easy to find. Four men worked on the logistics: Commissary Truden and his assistant, Stewart; Quartermaster Rilliet and his assistant, John Vedoe (whose brother Anton was Second Assistant Engineer in Coffin's Department). All but Stewart had been on the earlier Ziegler expedition with Fiala.

As each sledge was loaded it was stored in a tent-like shelter made of the steamer's spars and sails. It was between the house and the stable tent. Huge snow drifts had to be cleared so it could be put up. The machine shop and carpenter's shop were being built. The dynamo would go in

<sup>30</sup> The former storehouse, where the sailors lived, is now called the fore-castle, as on ship. It is strange that on New Year's they needed an invitation to join the others -- but not for dinner. With only 39 persons in this remote spot, they ate separately! What a sad commentary.

<sup>31</sup> Fiala, pp. 63-64. The photograph he took is on p. 67.

<sup>29</sup> The Duke d'Abruzzi, the previous occupant of Teplitz.



the machine shop. The amount of work involved, as Coffin wrote, was enormous, and not always fairly distributed:

A party went off to the ship after lumber. . . Got back pretty well iced up. All the sailors working on the excavation for the sleds. The fireman who was working on boots is today shovelling snow. When it blows, he will be expected to sew boots and the other sailors will be at leisure. Also the expedition party the same. . . the engine room department working on the machine shop. Carpenter and Truden boarding up. The frame was raised yesterday. Pretty rough weather to work outside. Young blood however ought not to complain of the cold. The house for storing the sleds is quite necessary (after they are loaded) and they all feel that way. .

If the weather kept the men inside, they went to work sewing their fur clothing for the polar trek. Even on Sunday: Table [in dining room] after [Fiala's religious] services looked like a sweat shop. Every one sewing on different kind of articles.

Coffin, the old whaler, accustomed to the strict discipline on a whaler, didn't like Fiala's way of running things: I have come to the conclusion that too much equality bestowed on *some* people make them forget what they agreed and are signed for. 'Tis hard in a foreign place to sit down on them. 'Tis the old maxim: One voyage to learn. I find everything changed from the original agreement.

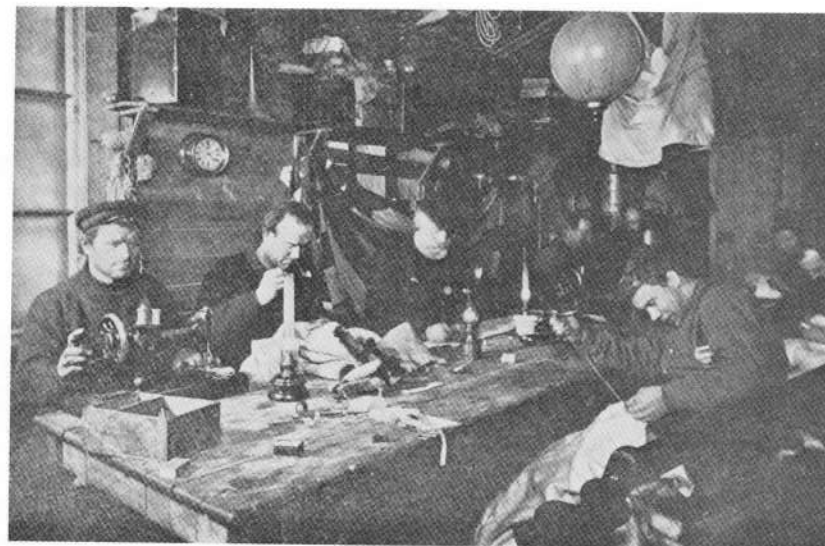
The *America*, smashed and helpless in the ice, was his only command. He walked down to her daily, watching her being stripped to provide lumber and hardware for the new buildings. She was now a supply ship in a way he could not have foreseen. His heart must have been heavy.

Late in January, the temperature rose. For nearly a week, it was above zero. With the warmer air came a blinding snowstorm that made it impossible for anyone to leave the house. Huge drifts blocked the doors, covering the house. When the storm ended, Coffin was able to get out to check on his steamer. He wasn't prepared for what he saw:

At 9 AM went outside & couldn't see the ship . . . Mr. Fiala and self went down on the bay ice and found that all the bay ice had moved out. . . The steamer has gone.

The *America* was nowhere to be seen. The bay ice to which she was secured had broken up in the storm and was swept out to sea, taking the ship with it. Her hull crushed, she would have gone to the bottom in minutes once her cradle of ice was gone. No piece of her was ever found.

Commander Fiala, describing the loss, showed little re-



Men sewing their fur garments for pole trek on dining-room table. At left, Norwegian Sigurd Myhre, who died of illness in 1904. Haven is third from left.

gret. Instead, he becomes rather rhapsodic:

January was a wild month. . . a storm in which the wind reached a hurricane velocity. . . The great frozen mass. . . which we thought nothing could move had been crushed and blown away. . . At our feet lapped the inky waters of the bay. . . We could not see far enough. . . to know whether the ship was in the bay or not. . . but no sign of the ship or the provision cache could be found, not even a case, barrel, or spar. The *America* had disappeared in the darkness of the Arctic night. . . Whether she went to the bottom. . . or whether she was blown toward the northern axis of the earth, where now she floats in unheralded victory, no man knows.<sup>32</sup>

He never admitted to a mistake in keeping the steamer in Teplitz Bay. He never mentioned Captain Coffin. It is as though he was no longer there. But to the proud Edgartown captain, the loss was shattering. He had lost more than his ship, he had lost his reason for being there.

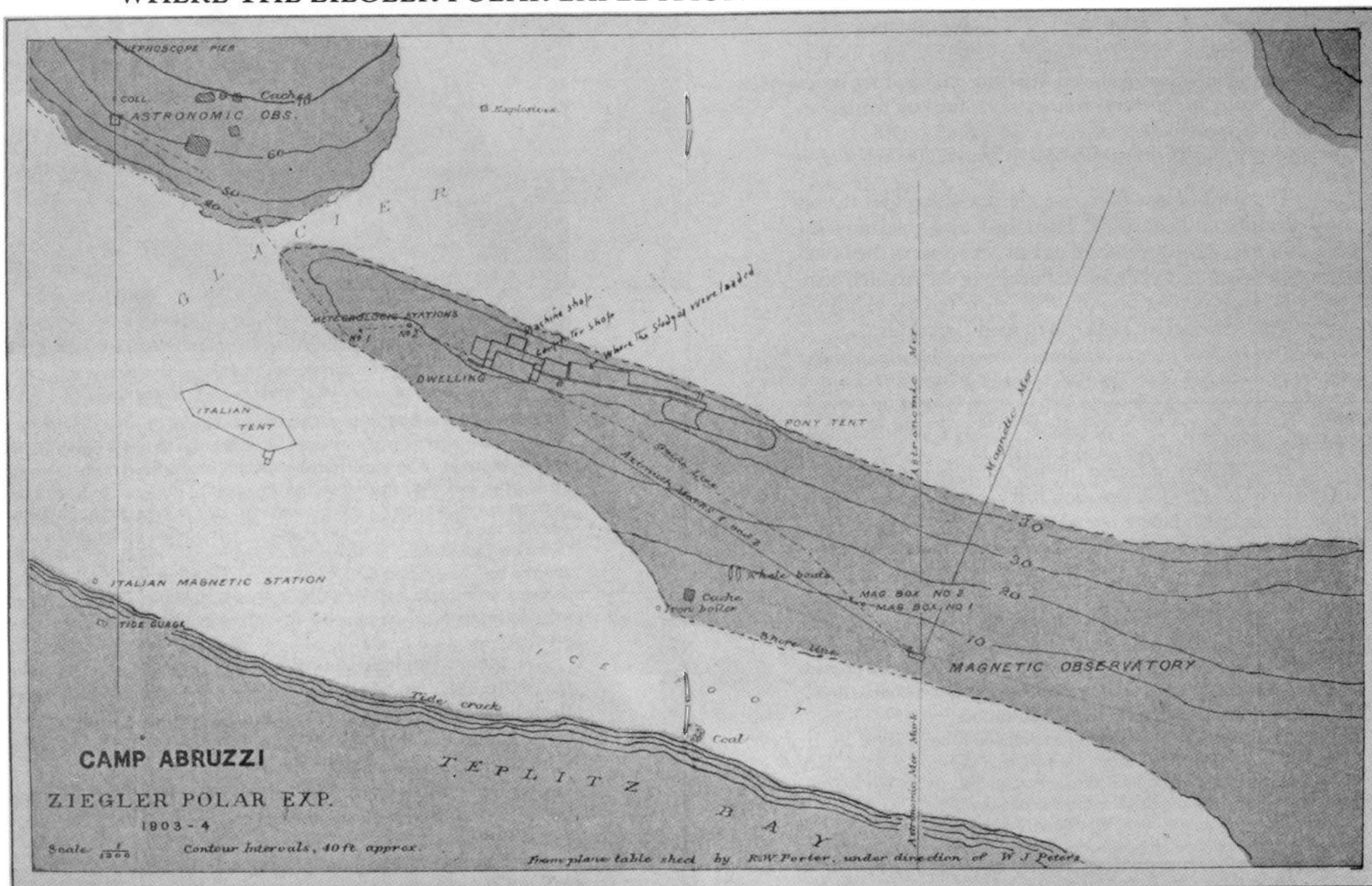
Gone too were a large cache of provisions<sup>33</sup> and the precious coal that Coffin had been conserving -- the fuel necessary for their survival in the frigid Arctic:

. . . This is a hard blow for us, our ship gone off with about one hundred tons of coal we intended to get out when the weather moderated. Also the cache. Not much ambition was showed to get the cache of provisions up

<sup>32</sup> Fiala, p.66.

<sup>33</sup> In the cache were provisions they had unloaded and left on the ice next to the steamer.

## WHERE THE ZIEGLER POLAR EXPEDITION SPENT THE WINTER OF 1903 -- 1904



Many structures were built after the loss of the steamer. Before that, the men lived in the small rectangle labeled "Dwelling." The steamer was tied to shore ice near the "Italian Magnetic Station," lower left. All the white area is glacial ice; gray area is land and ocean that is not permanently ice-covered.



from off the ice. Now I am afraid 'tis too late. Lucky we got so much coal out as we did.

Chief Engineer Hartt was not mourning the loss of the coal. He was celebrating. The dynamo, which he and his two Norwegian firemen had removed from the ship and set up in camp, was ready to generate electricity. He fired up the boiler. Coffin didn't seem impressed:

The engineer is blowing the steam whistle at intervals. Probably likes to hear it.

The job had not been easy. It was miraculous that it could have been done at all. Hartt had used steel recycled from the Duke's gas generator that had been left on the beach to build a boiler for the dynamo. But the boiler required coal. How much was not yet known. With their reserve supply on the bottom of the ocean, Fiala had to spoil Hartt's fun:

... our Engineer [was] ready to illuminate the camp with electricity, but with the disappearance of the *America* vanished the large store of coal in her hold, and we could not afford to keep up steam by using the coal pile ashore. So we economically continued our work under the light of oil lamps and candles.<sup>34</sup>

Fiala doesn't mention it, but their kerosene was in short supply as well. The situation had become critical. Coffin blamed it on Fiala's failure to enforce discipline:

All or nearly so of the kerosine oil has been used, contrary to Mr. Fiala's orders. Likewise coal from the coal heap alongside the house. Such is all life at the camp.

Their Christmas optimism vanished with the *America*. They suddenly realized that supplies were limited and that to get through the winter and make it to the Pole would require discipline. As they sewed their fur clothing in the dim lighting, music and chocolates helped their mood:

Lamp chimneys are now so scarce 'tis an exception to see a whole one. . . . Some have discarded their Lamps, no part of a chimney. Bottles have been tried but they give no light through them. Too thick. We are running short of the luxuries fast. Also some necessities.

... the sewing machines were kept busy (every one is an operator). . . . Then the Graphophone [gramophone] was brought out and run for two hours or more. The records are bad and only a few give any satisfaction.

Been anxious all day to go out on the ice to look up the cache. The wind made it impossible. Little doubt that we will find any of it. Still we

must live in hopes. We have. . . food here now for two years and also plenty of coal [if] used rightly. Flour would come short. Plenty of meat, as during the summer we could get plenty walrus, seals and bears. Also some birds too. The switchboards and other necessary stock was left on the ship for safekeeping so that will perhaps end all electric light except in the machine room. . . . Issued all around Peters Chocolate (fine) and shelled almonds

The next day the weather improved and two men went out (Coffin didn't go) to see what was still on the ice after the *America* loss:

The sargeant [Moulton of the U.S. Cavalry] and one sailor, Bed-dow, went out towards where the ship had been, but could not locate any provisions or any signs of where they had been. None of the sled trip equipment [had been] left on the ice so that is one case of luck. That must cut a large figure in this Pole trip. I had told Fiala many times that life was not long enough for me to know all about the working ice. That I learned something new right along about it. Only this I know: You have to take the ice as you find it and go where it lets you.

With the certain knowledge that the cache left on the ice was gone, the men continued to prepare for the trip north. Lamp chimneys were in short supply, as Coffin wrote, and the ingenious Norwegian, Sigurd Myhre, had a solution:

The fireman Sigurd made a square lamp chimney out of glass to night and a lamp also. Both all right.

The amount of work being done was impressive, especially under the conditions. Coffin, who now seems impressed by their industry, reported on January 29th:

Mr. Haven sewing a double seam in tents he made at first with a single machine stitch. . . . Charley Kunold putting the extra fastenings or loops to fasten to. Truden putting up coffee into rations in papers. Charlie Hudgins putting together several lengths of dog chain to moor dogs to each sled. . . . Sigurd [Myhre] making shoes. Cowing making over Deerskin Boots. Burns helping. Truden. Hartt, Vedoe and Hovlick working in the machine room on boots & gear. Stewart working on Records for Truden [Commissary]. Pierre deRoyer in stable looking out for the livestock. Doctor Shorkley washing his Cloths. Duffy [is] day Watchman. Mr. Nichols & his men filling 3 gallon kerosine tins for the sled trip after emptying them to test quality of the oil. Others who were working through the night [have] turned in. Mr. Rillette sewing on his "Arctiga" [?]. Ship's Chips working on the canoe. That's about what is going on every day. Scientific folks doing their work too. . . . The galley is cold. Yesterday the Cook was out in the main room warming himself three times to my knowledge. Kunold covering the dog chains with heavy cotton cloth.

<sup>34</sup> Fiala, pp.66-67.

Fiala's plan called for starting for the North Pole on February 8th, ten days off. That was impossible. Not only had the loss of the steamer cut their work time, but there had been so few days without strong winds that little training of sled teams and men had been done. It was needed, much of it:

[The dogs] are chained up in the big tent for training. Looks as if they had never seen a harness, judging by the way they work or don't know how to work, only snarl themselves up in the harness. They will have much trouble... as the harnesses are rather complicated. . . I saw one team of seven dogs working well (Duffy's team).<sup>35</sup>

Coffin, the oldest man on the expedition, may have been too old to hike to the Pole, but he still was able to help:

Tried an expedition tent this afternoon. Dr. Seitz & Porter & I. It worked fine. Took about five minutes to put it up and one to take it down. Shove the lower end of the tent pole through the door and down comes the tent flat. 'Tis held at the bottom by four stops, although there are four more preventer ropes to be used in blowy weather. The tents are Mr Haven's idea and all made by him and Charles Kunold. Also Harry Burns helped. . . When we all three were inside, the steam from our breaths made it quite thick, like smoke. Much more than I had an idea of.<sup>36</sup>

Watching every activity as he did, Coffin couldn't help but offer his opinions:

. . . issued whips and pony Harnesses [to] all who were entitled to draw lots for ponies last night. This little room looks like a variety store now. . . Mr. Haven is one of the pony men. Each [pony] man on the start has two ponies. . . What is left will go south [with me to Cape Flora]. About 150 dogs will also go north. Twill be a job to find a place level enough (when out on the ice) to pitch their tents near each other as. . . the steward is to do all the cooking in one tent with assistance of several men (I don't think the scheme will work at all). One man from each tent goes around for food coming to that tent.

Fiala knew the departure could not be delayed much longer. It would take four months to get to the Pole and back. In warmer weather, the ice cap breaks up and open water could block their travel. Everything would have to be ferried across the breaks aboard the canoe they would carry along. It would be dangerous and slow. A feeling of urgency was developing. Getting to the North Pole was why they were here. They must get going. But the weather still interfered:

No weather again to day for dog practice. The ponies don't get any sledge practice so I presume they think the ponies are all right. I do hope they will not be disappointed in them. Many dogs are green hands & don't act as if they had ever seen a sledge and about all of our folks are in the same boat. Truden putting up Figs, Raisins & Cranberry Jelly for the Pole dash. . . no end to the fitting out. . . A little colder [weather] is wanted. . . to freeze all up close to land in order to let the boys get onto the solid ice.

Much of the equipment was still untested. The stove they would take north did not satisfy the cook. Fiala designed another one and Chief Engineer Hartt made it, but it had never been used on the ice. The fur clothing the men were making for themselves was also untested. It was decided that a test was necessary:

Mr. Fiala is intending a trip for his whole party to Cape Saulen or Cape Germania very soon to try tents, sleeping bags, in fact everything. So it will give him a chance to correct any fault that may exist in the construction of the equipment.

But the test run was never made. The weather continued unfavorable and they ran out of time. Also there was too much still undone:

Carpenter just finished the tent pegs. The canoe getting its first coat of paint. . . Mr. Haven started again making covers for mittens out of silk.

Coffin compared the delays in fitting-out to those that were common in whaling:

Most of the work is alterations of everything. . . see no end of it yet. 'Tis like outfitting a whale ship. You can find something [to change] every day you hold the ship in Port. Here they don't want to start until all is perfect as there is no chance to make anything on the trail.

Then, after ignoring Coffin for months, Fiala called him and Deputy Commander Peters to a private meeting:

Mr. Fiala, Peters & Self had a conference in the Observatory this PM about the details of the coming months (although not fully) and at nine o'clock this eve he, Mr. F., will read the orders. . . There is much care for all to accomplish this Pole dash. I personally think Mr. Fiala has chosen and classed his expedition party well. . . [tonight] Mr. Fiala read the orders and sledge instructions to all. . . after having roll call.

Two days later, the General Orders were published, giving the details in writing. They seemed unclear to Coffin: Mr. Fiala issued the orders for the Sledge Journeys North and South. As usual, all were not satisfied. I do not exactly understand them myself.

That same day, February 18th, new sleeping bags were given to the men who would go north. Coffin, not one of

<sup>35</sup> Duffy, one of Coffin's seamen, became Fiala's favorite and was picked to go to the Pole.

<sup>36</sup> Further evidence of the lack of advance planning is the fact that such essential items as tents had to be designed and manufactured by First Officer Haven, a whaler not a tent maker.



those going north, added a comment about the Italian food the Duke had left in a cache four years earlier:

Sleeping bags of Deer Skin were given out to twenty-six or rather 25 bags and Pierre LeRoyer has to make another out of old Deer Skin coats. Lately we have been eating many meals from the Duke's Cache and all of them are superior to Armour's food of the same kind. They are put up in 2 1/2 lb. packages.

There would be 13 men staying at Abruzzi when the Pole party left. Volunteers to continue to stay there when Coffin's party left for Flora were needed. These men would await the polar party's return from the North Pole. Fiala wanted Abruzzi manned when he got back. One of Coffin's men, Thwing, volunteered and at the same time asked for a job change back to cook and a pay increase, something Fiala had no responsibility over. Seeing his authority eroding more, the captain didn't let the action go unrecorded:

Thwing has offered to stay here another year if necessary. Also made application to have his salary changed from Seaman to Cook with the increase that goes with it: 15 dollars per month. Went to the wrong man, as Mr. Fiala has no jurisdiction over any of the crew signed on Merchant Marine Articles.

Monday, February 22nd, Fiala assembled the men and announced that the trip to the pole would begin in one week. It was to celebrate and remember who was paying the bills: We all drank a toast to the Gentleman who is the head of the financial part of the expedition, Mr. Ziegler.

Vaughn, Moulton and Spencer immediately left for Cape Fligely, the point where the polar party would leave land to start across the ice cap. They would cache one day's provisions at Fligely so the polar party could go one day on the ice without using its own stores. The trio soon returned:

The sledge party came back again having neglected to take the signal poles or tent pole. They were to mark all bad crevasses with signals. They will probably make an early start tomorrow. The expedition party were all weighed again today. Most of them have lost, I think the average is 6 lbs. Mr. Fiala went from 157 to 151 lbs.<sup>37</sup>

Coffin, a stickler for protocol, took care to protect himself from any future claim that he had ordered the men to join in the trek north:

Yesterday I got a certificate signed by the members of the crew that are going with the sledge party that they go of their own free will.

Thwing continued to be a problem:

Mr. Fiala has removed the Cook Thwing for incompetency. On the steamer he was all right and served better meals than the steward. Here 'tis too much Aft for his own head to stand.<sup>38</sup> Too bad as we have no one to replace him. . . Many people are troubled with swelled heads in this kind of climate. Seems to be no cure.

And once again, Fiala moves into Coffin's territory. The captain is taking it very hard:

Charles Kunold delegated to the responsible position as Cook. . . I knew nothing about it as I am now simply an outsider, even with my own crew. I do not see things run very smoothly.

His problem worsened when Fiala asked Haven, who had volunteered to go on the polar trek, to give him the steamer's log that he had been keeping since they left Norway: This afternoon my 1st Officer turned over the steamer's log to Mr. Fiala without saying a word to me.

A ship's log is normally kept by the First Officer and at the end of the voyage he turns it over to the Captain. After reading it for accuracy (and to be prepared to talk about the voyage with the owner), the captain presents it to the vessel's owner. Fiala wanted the log. It was another blow to the captain's self-esteem. He had become, as he wrote, "simply an outsider." Later, he would record his intimate thoughts in a small homemade booklet entitled "Elmwood." On its title page, he wrote: "Copied records and Misc. other notes written at Elmwood, Northbrook Island, during my enforced stay, 1904-1905. N.B. For my own use only."

In it, he described the log controversy. It had started when Coffin told Haven to have the Second Officer Nichols take over the log when he (Haven) left on the polar trek.

I found out this day [March 4, 1904] that my first officer had turned over the Stmr's Log to Mr. Fiala after my telling him to turn over the same to 2nd officer in order to have the Log continued. Then tried to make me believe in excuse that he had always been in the habit of turning over the Log to Owners, which I know is false. . . Then [he] tried to fall back on friendship. He was willing to do me but I was to say nothing. As a 1st Of-

<sup>38</sup> Does anybody know what he means by "Too much Aft"? The editor's guess is that it refers to the fact that the cook at camp is living in the same quarters as the officers, not forward in the foc's'l as he would be aboard ship. Is that a good guess?

<sup>37</sup> Not a drastic loss considering the circumstances. Their food must be all right.

ficer he is a failure in many ways. E.C.<sup>39</sup>

I see at this late date the sympathies of my 1st are for the crew, always a-leaning that way. Anything to be called a good man. . . Why he wants to hold up their side is simply because 'tis his duty to keep them straight, which he does not [do] in the least. . . Only make believe.<sup>40</sup>

At about this same time, Coffin became concerned about how the crushing of the *America* would be explained to Mr. Ziegler, her owner, when they got back. The ship was his responsibility. He would make sure the explanation was right: I have commenced to make out a report of the loss of the ship and the events that happened to her before we were finally crushed.

Delays continued. The loaded sledges were ready to go, but nothing was happening. Coffin was annoyed. Nobody wanted his advice:

About all the boys seem to find something to alter, make larger or cut down. I only hope their things will turn out half as well as they expected. They have some things that will fail . . . 'Tis no use for one to tell any of them what our people had to use and found all right. They must learn by experience. That means up here out on the ice.

Then on March 6th, one month late, Fiala announced that the waiting was over. They would leave in the morning:

Dreading a further delay, I resolved to begin the march and gave my last instructions to Commissary Truden whom I left in charge of Camp Abruzzi. . . I also gave instructions to Captain Coffin who, after the return of the supporting detachments from the field, was to conduct the party south to Cape Flora where the Relief Ship was expected in the coming summer. . . After the usual divine service, I gave instructions to the men. . . [who] would begin the journey north the next day.<sup>41</sup>

Departure day began with an early breakfast. The sledges didn't get far the first day:

All hands went at work immediately after breakfast to get their clothes and teams ready to start for their long hard trip towards the Pole. At 9:50 they got started. . . got about 3 1/2 miles out up towards the highest point of the island on the glacier and camped as the snow was drifting badly under a strong North wind. . . At one thirty, Dr. Vaughn came [back] to Camp Abruzzi after dogs that ran away and some other things overlooked. Montrose [had gone along] with the sledges helping Mr. Riliette's dog team out with a horse (pony). Mr. R has not had any spare time to train his dogs. . . Montrose returned with Dr. Vaughn. They will go back tomorrow. . . [I] have taken charge of all the Chronometers until Mr. Tafel

returns. . . Mr. Riliette came in alone after some cups to ladle out soup & goes out in the morning.<sup>42</sup>

[Steamer's] Crew who left on the expedition North are as follows: 1st Officer E. A. Haven, 1st Asst. Engineer Chas. Hudgins, 2 Asst. Antone M. Vedoe, Steward B. E. Spencer, Mess Boy James Dean, Carpenter Peter L. Tessem, two firemen, Geo. A. Butland, Sigurd Myhre, sailors John Duffy, Elijah L. Perry, Alfred Beddow, D. S. MacKiernan & J. E. Myers.<sup>43</sup> All volunteered willingly.

In the morning Vaughn and Riliette left to rejoin the polar party. Montrose went with them and would return with the pony. Coffin didn't waste time moving:

He [Montrose] arrived back a little after 11 AM. Reported everything all correct and that the Pole Sledge Party started all right before he left their camp. . . Seems queer to have only five to dine at one time. I have been busy all day moving my goods into Mr. Fiala's room. 'Tis larger but colder. Only way I gain is there is room to write. . . Very quiet in the house.

Commissary John Truden, an Army lieutenant on leave, was named by Fiala to be in command at Abruzzi, with Coffin's Second Officer Nichols as his assistant. Coffin's responsibility was to get ready for the trip south to Cape Flora in a couple of months. Only 13 men now lived at Camp Abruzzi: eight sailors in the "forecastle"; four "officers" in the house with Coffin. Two men in the Field Department who stayed behind were tending the weather and magnetic stations. Coffin's men were doing the housekeeping:

The ship's company are doing all right and are the only men doing work as the two Expedition men are doing the scientific work until Long returns. When the reserve arrives at camp, I will write the names of the party who were chosen to go onward. They will be chosen by their capabilities. Quiet at camp all day.

That was Thursday, March 10th. The next day, he was surprised and, doubtless, disappointed:

At 2 PM to my surprise in walked Dr. Vaughn and said, "Well, we have all come back." The dog teams came in 1 1/2 hours ahead of the pony teams. . . They [had] arrived at Fligley Tuesday PM and camped. Mr. Riliette ruptured himself, not badly, although he was brought back in his sleeping bag. I think he will be all right in two weeks so that he will be able to travel. Mr. Haven froze the ends of his fingers some. Mr. Fiala will . . . start again in about two weeks. The Cookers got used up and only one

<sup>39</sup> Here too we don't know what Coffin meant. Can any member explain "do me"?

<sup>40</sup> Elmwood, p. 41.

<sup>41</sup> Fiala, p. 75-76.

<sup>42</sup> After many months preparing, they seem to have forgotten something essential!

<sup>43</sup> Out of his 23 men, 13 volunteered to go on the polar trip. Remaining behind were two of his top men: Second Officer Nichols, whom Coffin didn't like, and Chief Engineer Hartt, who was ill. We don't have a list of the "scientists" who went, but most did.



worked. . . The boys all appeared to be glad to get back to camp. They will have to hustle to make a record as the travelling time will be short, [only] April and May. Many of the expedition are unsuited for hardships.

Fiala explained his decision to end the trip:

In a twenty-mile wind, on the morning of March 7th, we left Camp Abruzzi. . . twenty-six men, sixteen pony sledges and thirteen dog sledges. . . eleven silk pyramid tents. . . men in white silk wind-coats. . . [we reached Cape Fligley March 8 and set up camp] Steward Spencer and myself did the cooking on all the sledge trips. . . one man disabled by a rupture from over exertion, another with a strained back, and three others not in condition to go forward.

While getting supper two of the cookers gave out. . . Our last cooking machine gave out just as we were preparing breakfast<sup>44</sup>. . . they were made air and oil tight by the use of some cement. . . we completed the meal. . . [Next two days stormy and windy, did not proceed]. The poor condition of five men, the leaky cookers and the fact that one man had torn his sleeping bag and that two others complained that theirs were too small, decided me to return to camp. . . reaching the camp at 4 p.m. . . much disappointment expressed, some of the men criticizing the dogs, the equipment and the ponies, stating that the last named were not adapted for Polar work and would fail us when we reached rough ice. . . The enthusiasm. . . dropped to the cold of a Arctic night. . . Many a revelation of character was made during our sojourn in the land of ice.<sup>45</sup>

The warmth of the camp at Abruzzi seemed like heaven to the cold and discouraged men, but not to Coffin:

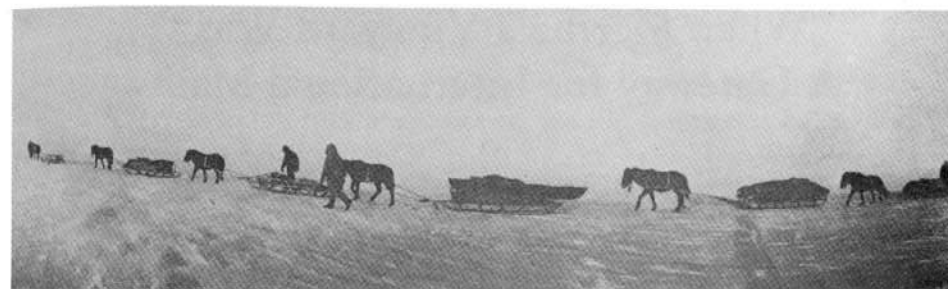
The house looks crowded enough. Sleeping bags hanging by every imaginable device from overhead. Mittens, clothes. . . In fact, looks like a pawn shop. All the tents withstood the blow at Fligley. Excepting the Cookers, all worked well. Some of the men are in favor of discarding their furs. One great trouble is the civilized tanning. In extreme cold, the skins shrink and also clog up with ice around the chin and neck. . . nothing like an Eskimo tanned deer skin. Some of the sleeping bags cracked open like glass. . . This was the shortest journey by a (big) party ever made.

I had moved all my effects to Mr. Fiala's room & moved them back in one hour. Considerable rivalry between the dog & pony men on the question of which worked the best as the ponies were supposed to be the key of the situation. Now, the dog men claim their dogs to be the key. . . that remains to be proved. . . time will be short to get ready for the Cape Flora journey<sup>46</sup>. . . The [polar] party. . . comprised 26 men, 18 Ponies, 105 dogs. The next will be smaller. . . This experience has shown no large party can attempt a journey like this with any hope of success.

<sup>44</sup> We don't know if all the failed cookers were those designed by Fiala.

<sup>45</sup> Fiala, pp.79-81. Too bad this hadn't been discovered before they started north.

<sup>46</sup> This was Coffin's responsibility. They would have gone in the summer by steamer, but now they would travel by sledge over ice and had to start earlier before it broke up.



Ponies hauling sledges on the aborted trip in March. Center sledge carries the expedition canoe.

After the aborted trek, Fiala wasted no time. On Sunday, March 13th, Coffin learned (not from Fiala) of his plan:

Just now, 3 PM, I hear (not from authority<sup>47</sup>) that there will be a meeting held tonight to make future plans known and the start will be made sooner. . . Mr. Fiala called all the expedition, including the steamer's crew, and asked. . . volunteers to go out on the pole dash to send in their names by tomorrow noon. Also fairly warned them of the hardships. . . Dangers, and all pertaining to such an arduous trip. In fact, perhaps too much.

The new plan, as described in Fiala's book, was for 14 men to start, not 26 as the first time. Five would go all the way to the Pole, down from six.<sup>48</sup> Going this time were 7 ponies (down from 16), 81 dogs (down from 117) and 16 sledges (down from 25). He learned in his first effort that some were not physically and mentally equipped. Cutting the number of men, reduced the number of sledges needed to carry their provisions. Coffin listed those whom Fiala chose to go:

At 8 this eve, Mr. Fiala called the boys together in the dining room and read over the names of those selected to go out with him. . . Of the Expedition men: Dr. Shorkley, Dr. Seitz, Dr. Vaughn, Porter, Stewart, Pierre LeRoyer, John Vedoe, Sgt. Moulton. Mr. Fiala and Peters [are] the two heads. Of the steamer's crew: Mackiernan, Duffy, Antone Vedoe & Spencer, the steward. Long also volunteered. Beddow, Myhre, Butland<sup>49</sup>. . . will get away about Wednesday next, weather permitting.

Coffin was anxious for them to leave. He wanted to begin organizing the sledge trek to Cape Flora. He would be in command of that -- once again, the captain. He liked that.

(To be continued)

<sup>47</sup> Understandably, Coffin continues to be hurt by the way Fiala ignores him.

<sup>48</sup> There is a difference between Fiala's report and Coffin's journal that lists 15 or 16, depending on how it is interpreted (see following footnote). Fiala's plan called for reducing the number who would make the final trek to the Pole to three or four, if the food supply was low.

<sup>49</sup> This is confusing. Myhre, the Norwegian, and Long, the weather observer, went along, but Beddow and Butland did not. Perhaps he means they volunteered but were turned down.

## When Martha's Vineyard Was A Gateway for International Mail

by DOUGLAS N. CLARK

Until late in the nineteenth century, any United States seaport frequented by vessels from foreign countries was a gateway for international trade. Edgartown and Holmes Hole, each having a Customs Officer, were such.

In addition to commercial goods, there was another category of commerce and that was the mail, entering the United States from foreign, and sometimes domestic, ports addressed to some other place in the country. Such pieces of mail were known as Ship Letters.

Old Ship Letters are now collected by specialized philatelists, the author being one. He describes a number of them in his collection. Each made its entry into the United States at a Vineyard port and was forwarded by the local postmaster to the proper destination via domestic mail.

BEFORE postage stamps and international treaties that facilitate today's mail communications, sending a letter from one country to another could be rather haphazard. The sender would go down to the waterfront, if he lived near the sea, seek out a vessel bound for a port near the address on his letter, and place it in the hands of the captain, who was expected to carry it safely to a postoffice in the country to which he was bound.

Domestic postoffices at any seaport used regularly by vessels traveling to and from foreign ports were gateways for overseas mail addressed to any place in the country. Early letters document the fact that both Edgartown and Holmes Hole (now Vineyard Haven) enjoyed this gateway status.

DOUGLAS N. CLARK, a Society member, lives in Lexington, Georgia, and edits the *Transit Postmark Collector*, a publication specializing in mobile postoffices. With a summer house in Woods Hole, he favors postmarks from this area, one being from Holmes Hole in 1796.

Sometimes a sender could not conveniently find a vessel going to the country he wanted, usually because he lived too far from a busy port to have access to such shipping. Such letter writers often made use of seaside businesses called forwarding agents. For a fee, these agents would locate a suitable outgoing vessel and place the letter with the captain.

Once that vessel had sailed, the sender's worries were not over. What was to stop the captain from dumping bags of letters overboard to avoid the inconvenience of storing and delivering the letters as promised? To help insure delivery, most nations paid captains of incoming vessels a certain amount for each letter he turned over to a domestic postoffice. This amount, known as the "ship fee," was added to the postage to be paid by the recipient of the letter. Most letters, and virtually all Ship Letters, were sent collect with postage to be paid on delivery in the years before postage stamps came into use. That was not until 1847 in the United States. Such a system was not infallible and letter writers would almost always send duplicate letters in an attempt to insure that at least one copy made it to the intended recipient.

In the early years of this nation before reliable post roads and railroads, some domestic mail, especially letters between distant places, was sent as Ship Letters, using the above procedure. Such a method was quicker and sometimes cheaper, the latter was especially true during the years when postage rates were based on the distance involved.

In this article, I will illustrate the aspects of such mail deliveries by showing various letters I have collected through the years that entered the United States mail through Vineyard seaports. Their Martha's Vineyard postmarks provide proof of the Island's gateway status. I have arranged the letters in order of antiquity, the oldest first.

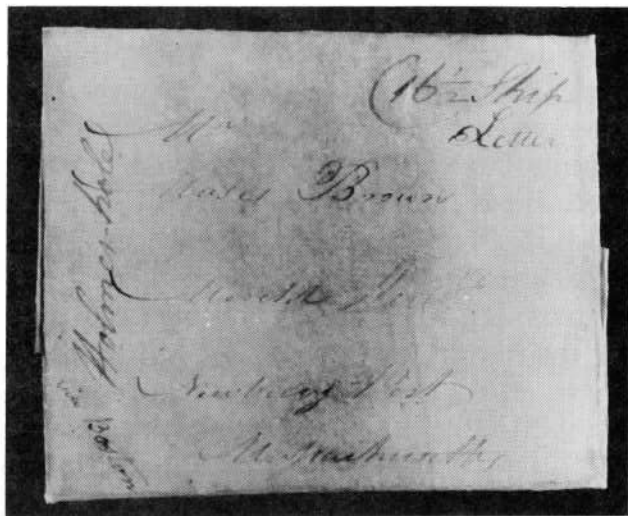


Figure 1. Letter from South Carolina to Newbury Port, Massachusetts, via Holmes Hole in 1796, where the postoffice had been in operation only one year.

In Figure 1 is shown the oldest Ship Letter I have seen bearing a Martha's Vineyard postmark. Like most letters of its era, it has no envelope, being simply a single sheet of paper folded, then sealed on the back with wax and addressed on the side shown in the photograph.<sup>1</sup>

It originated in Charleston, South Carolina, on February 3, 1796, and is addressed to Moses Brown in Newbury Port, Massachusetts. The sender intended it to go "via Boston," as he wrote on the lower left corner, but it arrived first at Holmes Hole as is shown by the handwritten "postmark" on the left edge of the folded sheet.

In the upper right corner we read: "16 1/2 Ship Letter." This was written by Postmaster Isaac Daggett in Holmes Hole, the village's first, having been appointed only a year before. The letter was delivered to him by the ship's captain and Daggett indicated a charge to be collected from the recipient of 16 1/2 cents. This amount was set by a 1792 federal act setting the "Ship Fee" at 4 cents, to be paid to the captain. To that is added the domestic postage rate of 12 1/2 cents (per sheet), charged for 100-150 miles, the distance from Holmes

<sup>1</sup> The writing on this letter is very faint, making it difficult to reproduce here. The editor thanks David Franklin of Vineyard Photo for his especial care in copying all the letters.

Under 30 miles	6c
30-60 miles	8c
60-100 miles	10c
100-150 miles	12 1/2c
150-200 miles	15c
200-250 miles	17c
250-350 miles	20c
350-450 miles	22c
over 450 miles	25c

Table I, domestic rates, 1792.

Hole to Newbury Port (see Table I). Added together, the two total 16 1/2 cents, to be paid by Moses Brown when the letter is delivered in Newbury Port.

Had the letter been sent from Charleston over land, the postage due at Newbury Port would have been 25 cents (a distance of over 450 miles). One can only imagine how long it would have taken and how uncertain its delivery would have been, passing as it would through many hands.

Under 40 miles	8c
40-90 miles	10c
90-150 miles	12 1/2c
150-300 miles	17c
300-500 miles	20c
over 500 miles	25c

Table II, domestic rates, 1799.

Under 30 miles	6c
30-80 miles	10c
80-150 miles	12 1/2c
150-400 miles	18 1/2c
over 400 miles	25c

Table III, domestic rates, 1816



Figure 2. 1805 letter to New Hampshire, via Edgartown.

In Figure 2 you see a very early Ship Letter that entered the United States at Edgartown destined for Messrs. Hale in New Hampshire. It is unusual in that it is not a folded letter, but an outer wrapper. Any letter that had been inside is missing. There is a docketing inside which tells us the year is 1805, but it gives no indication of where it was mailed.



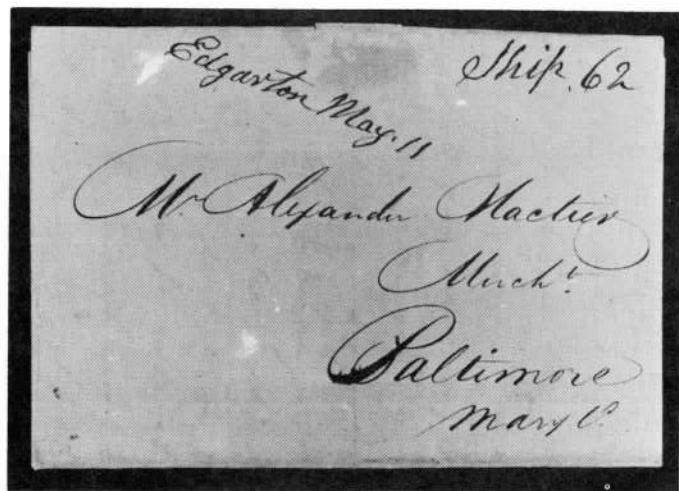


Figure 3. 1814 letter from Bermuda to Baltimore via "Edgarton."

In the upper right corner, the rate marking reads: "Ship 19," written boldly by Postmaster Beriah Norton of Grey's Raid fame. A new postage rate had been passed in 1799 (see Table II), setting the ship fee at 2 cents, to be paid to the captain. The domestic rate was 17 cents, for 150-300 miles, covering the distance from Edgartown to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where it was going. Total due: 19 cents.

The Ship Letter in Figure 3, addressed to Mr. Alexander Hactier, Merchant, Baltimore, Maryland, originated in St. Georges, Bermuda, April 22, 1814. The captain of the vessel gave it to Edgartown Postmaster Beriah Norton on May 11.<sup>2</sup> The postage totals 62 cents. Although the postal act of 1799 lowered the rates, this letter cost more because it had two enclosures, for a total of three sheets of paper, the third forming the envelope. This called for tripling the domestic portion of the rate, 20 cents per sheet for the 300-500 miles distance between Edgartown and Baltimore.<sup>3</sup>

An interesting aspect of this letter is that it had come through the British blockade of the Massachusetts coast in the War of 1812. It may have had an eventful passage into Edgartown from Bermuda in May 1814.

<sup>2</sup> Edgartown is misspelled, the "w" being left out. Although incorrect, it seems to have been preferred at the time. Certainly, Col. Beriah Norton was aware of the original spelling.

<sup>3</sup> The total, 62 cents, was nearly a day's wages for many at the time, to mail a letter.

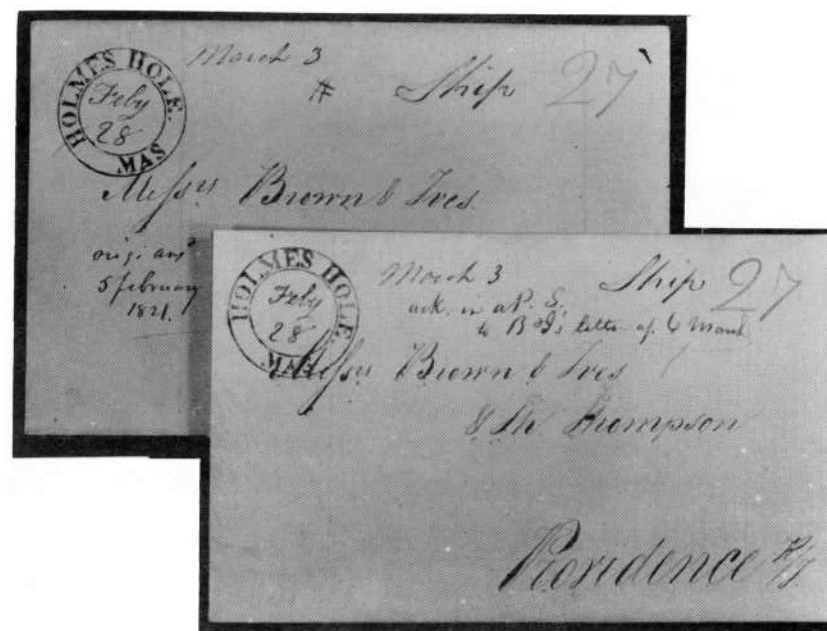


Figure 4. Two letters from Amsterdam, Holland, to Providence went by way of Holmes Hole in 1820, 27 cents each.

Beginning about 1820, the Holmes Hole postmaster began using an attractive hand stamp for the postmark (Figure 4). It must have saved him some time when a ship brought in a bag filled with letters, although he still had to write the date (no year however) inside the stamped circle. Previously, all postal markings were written by hand at Vineyard postoffices. A new schedule of postal rates went into effect in 1816, reducing the mileage categories to five (Table III). These two letters came under the new schedule. Postmaster Theodosius Parsons jotted the amount due on each: 27 cents. He got that total by doubling the domestic postage, 12 1/2 cents x 2 (each had two sheets of paper), for 80-150 miles and adding 2 cents ship fee.

The two letters are identical, having been mailed in Amsterdam, Holland, on March 3, 1820 (see notation at top) and reached Holmes Hole on July 28, en route to Providence. The precaution of sending duplicate letters was wasted here, as both copies crossed the ocean on the same ship.

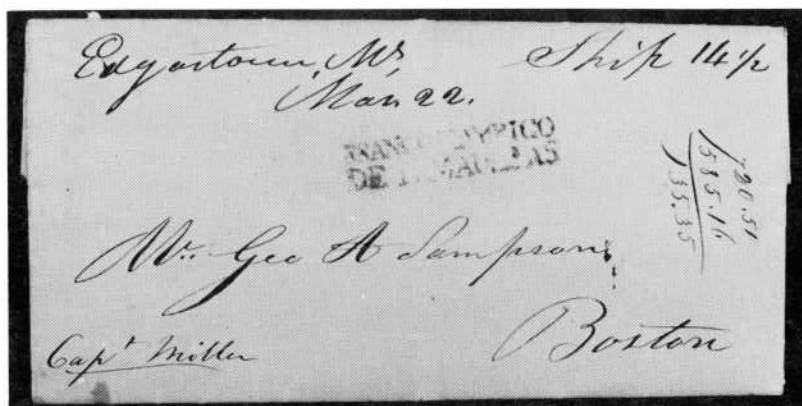


Figure 5. This letter was mailed in Tampico, Mexico, and arrived in Edgartown five weeks later on its way to Mr. Sampson in Boston.

The letter in Figure 5 originated in Tampico, Mexico, on February 13, 1825 and arrived in Edgartown on March 22. It is addressed to Mr. Geo. A. Sampson in Boston.<sup>4</sup> In the upper center is a red two-line handstamp reading, "FRANCO TAMPICO/DE TAMAULIPAS," which indicates that postage was paid in Tampico. In fact, the United States postage (ship fee plus domestic rate) could not have been paid in Mexico. What was probably paid there was the Mexican ship fee and if that was the case the Tampico postoffice no doubt had acted as forwarding agent for the sender.

In the upper right-hand corner of the envelope, the Edgartown postmaster, who is now Timothy Coffin Jr., has written, "Ship 14 1/2", which says that Mr. Sampson would owe 12 1/2 cents for the United States postage from Edgartown to Boston (80 to 150 miles) plus 2 cents as the ship fee for Captain Miller, whose name is written on lower left of the envelope. There is no extra charge for the international mailing. The three sets of numbers on the right seem to have no relationship to postal rates and were probably jotted down by Mr. Sampson in his office in Boston after receiving the letter.

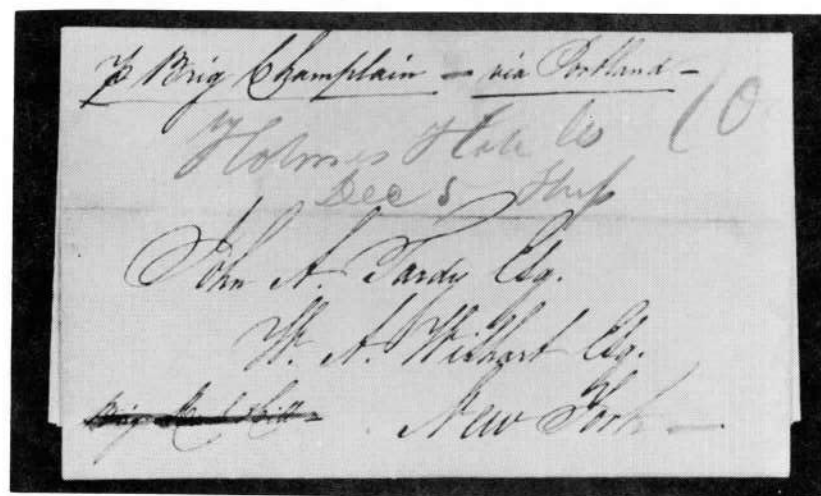


Figure 6. A letter from Puerto Rico to New York City by way of Holmes Hole

In Figure 6 you see a letter that was mailed in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, on November 14, 1840. Postmaster George Dunham of Holmes Hole was writing all postal markings by hand. Evidently the handstamp had been lost or abandoned sometime between 1820 and 1840. There had been three postmasters, besides George, in those 20 years.

He received the letter on December 5. The postal charge shown in the upper right corner resembles a 10 followed by a wiggle. But that cannot be the amount to be paid as the domestic rate for a distance of 150-400 miles (Holmes Hole to New York) was now 18 3/4 cents, it had been increased by one-quarter cent in 1825. To that must be added the 2 cents ship fee for the captain, bringing the total due to 20 3/4 cents.

In the lower left of the envelope there is the notation, "Brig Mars Hill," which had been crossed out and "p. Brig Champlain -- via Portland" added at the top. A note inside the letter indicates that the *Mars Hill* changed her destination to Wilmington, North Carolina, so another vessel was selected. If the letter was carried by the *Brig Champlain*, she apparently made her first landing in Holmes Hole rather than Portland. The wind had probably caused a change in routing.

<sup>3</sup> In those, the simpler days, addresses didn't require much detail -- no zip codes!

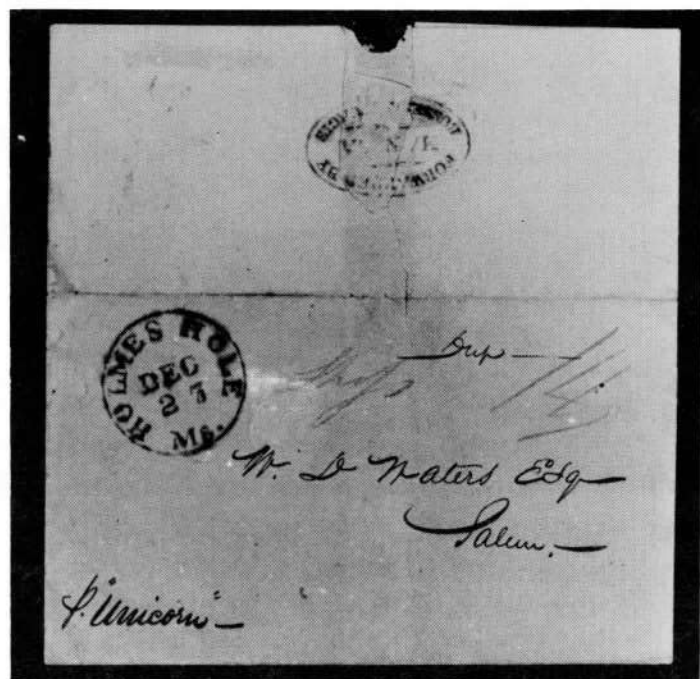


Figure 7. The Holmes Hole postmaster has a new stamp that even gives the date.

The piece shown in Figure 7 is merely a folded wrapper without contents. Postmaster Dunham in Holmes Hole now is using a new handstamp that gives the day and month, but not the year. So we can't be positive of the year, but the rate places it later in the 1840s than the previous letter. The oval stamp seen at the top (it was on the back of the wrapper) reads: "FORWARDED BY MANILA RUSSEL & STURGIS." Thus, the piece probably originated in the Philippines and was mailed with the services of a forwarding agent. The notation "P[er] 'Unicorn'" at the bottom is the vessel's name and "Dup" above the address indicates it was a duplicate mailing.

The rate is 12 1/2 cents for 80-150 miles (Holmes Hole to Salem) plus the 2 cents ship fee, totaling 14 1/2 cents. That amount (the half cent being indicated only by a slash) was lightly written on the wrapper along with the word "Ships."

On July 1, 1845, there came a simplification of the postal rates. They became 5 cents per half ounce under 300 miles and 10 cents per half ounce over 300 miles. This was

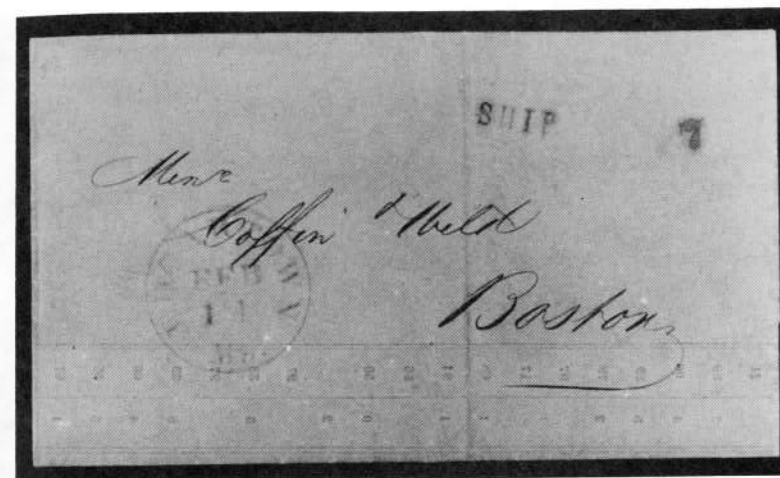


Figure 8. In the 1840s rates were cut. A Cuban letter in 1848 cost 7 cents.

brought about mainly by the arrival of railroads, that made it no longer a major operation to carry a letter from New Orleans or Charleston to a destination in the Northeast.

The new form of transportation reduced the use of ship letters markedly, especially for domestic service. Then in 1848 treaties began to be signed, authorizing the exchange of international mail with foreign countries and cutting ship's letters even more. Nonetheless, ship's letters did continue, especially to places near the great whaling cities, and mail, in smaller volume, still arrived in Vineyard ports.

In my collection are several from this later period. Among them are two (Figures 8 and 9) that show the new 5 and 10 cent rates, each having the 2 cent ship fee added. The folded letter in Figure 8 originated in Matanzas, Cuba, in January 1848 and was handled by the Edgartown postmaster on February 14. He, too, now uses hand stamps for all his notations, the rate schedule being reduced to only a few different numbers. He stamped "SHIP," and "7" (five cents domestic postage plus two cents for ship fee) and then the Edgartown postmark which now includes the date: "Feb. 14."

The second letter (Figure 9) was written in Bahia, Brazil, in November 1848 and mailed in this country at Holmes Hole on January 5. It is destined for Baltimore which being more than 300 miles away requires 10 cents domestic



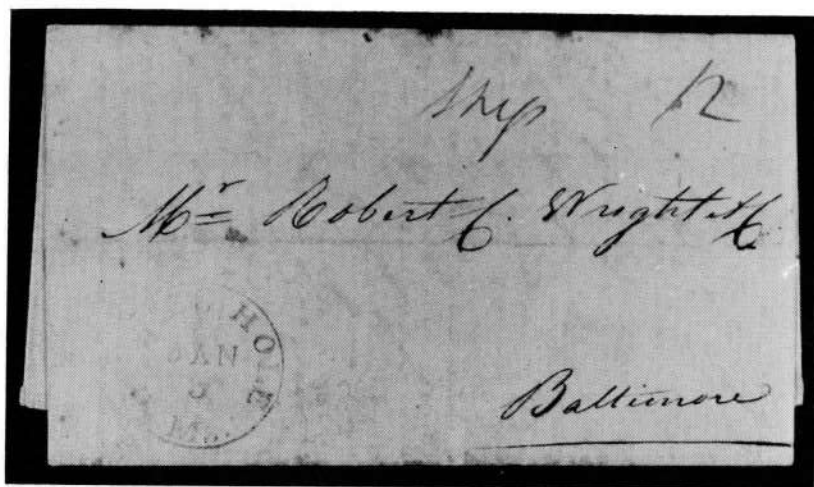


Figure 9. In 1848 a letter from Brazil to Baltimore went through Holmes Hole.

plus 2 cents ship fee. Holmes Hole Postmaster Dunham didn't use a hand stamp for the postage charge, writing "Ship 12" at the top, but did use his circular postmark stamp with the date.

In 1855, the domestic rate went down again, this time to three cents for all letters, except for coast-to-coast delivery. Postage on prepaid letters (those using the new United States postage stamps) had dropped to three cents in 1851, but it was not until 1855 that mail without postage stamps, as ship letters typically were, got the lower rate as well. This brought a ship letter to 5 cents (3 for domestic postage, 2 for the captain). With this unified rate, the Holmes Hole postmaster finally acquired a numeral "5" hand stamp (see Figure 10).

With the change to a rate per half-ounce rather than per sheet, envelopes come into general use. Figure 10 is an envelope that contained a ship letter which entered the domestic mails at Holmes Hole. I do not have its contents so I cannot tell its country of origin or the year. It arrived in Holmes Hole December 4, year unknown, en route to Deer Isle, Maine. The total cost was 3 cents domestic, plus 2 cents ship fee, totaling 5 cents, as the postmaster's bold stamp in the upper right corner shows. It also has an interesting shield-shaped handstamp reading "FORWARDED BY Holmes & Bro., SHIP CHANDLERS, HOLMES HOLE, MASS." It is not clear what the



Figure 10. We don't know where this letter originated, but it cost only 5 cents.

function of a forwarding agent would be at the port of arrival. Possibly the Holmes agent came on board for another reason and took the letters to the postoffice as a favor. Or collecting mail may have been a way to solicit business for the store and stamping the company logo considered good advertising.

The folded letter shown in Figure 11 originated in St. Thomas, Danish West Indies, November 14, 1862, and arrived in Holmes Hole December 10 on the Brig J. West. The oval stamp, "ST. THOMAS ICE, CHAS. J. LOEFOED ESTABLISHMENT," identifies a forwarding agent, who evidently gave it to the Brig J. West, as noted below the address. At the time, treaties allowed mail from the Danish West Indies to be sent by British steam packet for 10 cents per half ounce. This letter writer chose to save money, if not time, by using a sailing vessel at a cost of 3 cents plus 2 cents ship fee, total 5 cents, as shown by the hand stamp, half that of the steam packet.

In 1863 another change was made in rates. The 2 cents for the captain continued, but the recipient was charged double the domestic rate from the port of arrival. Thus in Figure 12, the letter from Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, via Edgartown, was charged 6 cents, twice the 3 cent domestic rate. The postmaster paid the captain of the sailing vessel (see note upper left) 2 cents and sent the letter to New York where Messrs. Lanman & Kemp, Druggist, paid 6 cents, double the domestic rate.

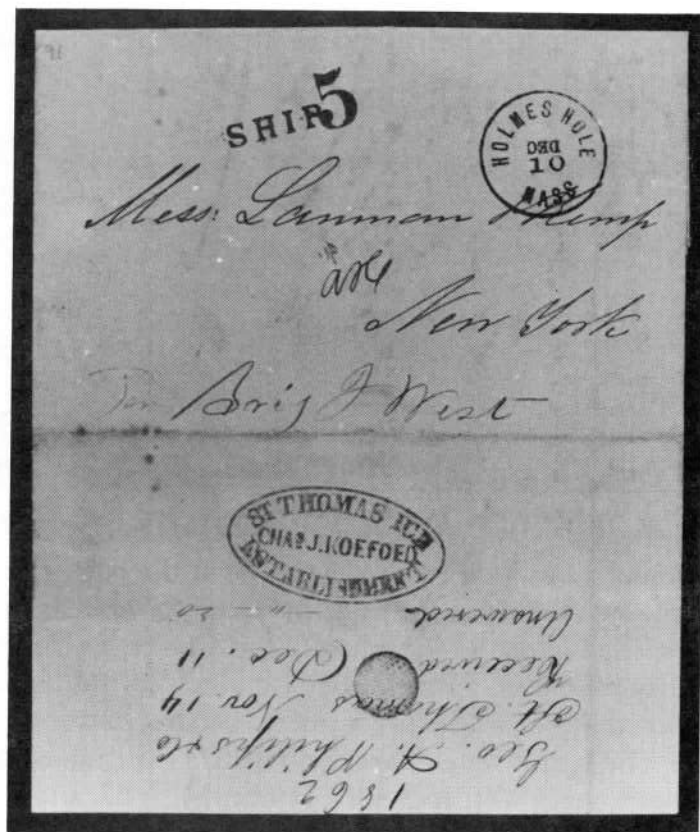


Figure 11. A letter from West Indies in 1862 via Holmes Hole.

The two envelopes in Figure 13 were both charged at the double rate of 6 cents. Nothing tells us the year or place of origin. The name of the Holmes Hole postoffice was changed to Vineyard Haven on February 21, 1871, so we know approximate dates. The one going to Boston (top) was stamped Holmes Hole in March, so it must have been in 1870 or earlier. The other one, to Philadelphia, was stamped Vineyard Haven on Christmas Day, so it must have arrived there between 1871 and 1883 because the hand stamp is thought to have been lost in the great Vineyard Haven fire August 1883. These two are the latest Vineyard ship letters I know of.

Of course, foreign mail continues to arrive in Martha's Vineyard. But today it comes through gateway cities such as Boston and New York. No longer do Island postmasters col-

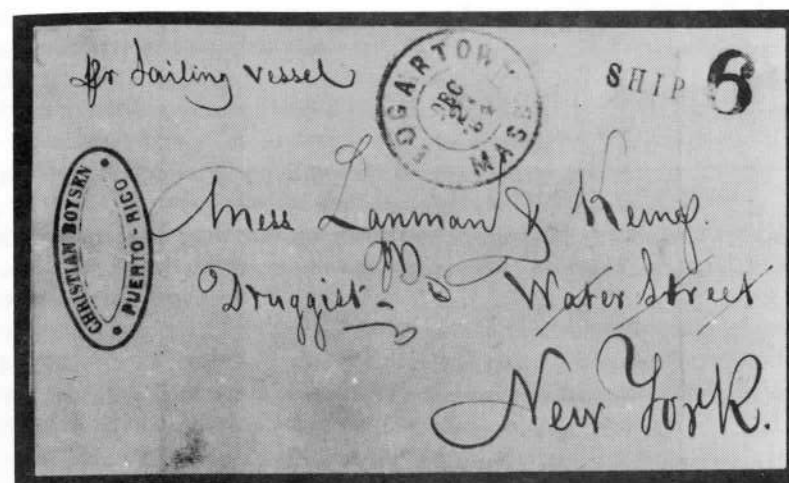


Figure 12. From Puerto Rico to Edgartown to New York in 1864: 6 cents.

lect fees and pay captains. International treaties and air mail have eliminated this -- eliminating a source of collectibles for tomorrow's philatelists as well.



Figure 13. These two letters with no dates arrived via the Vineyard gateway. The author worked out the dates. See the text.

## A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

**REV. BAYLIES** (1822-1893) is in *Mobile, Alabama*, in an attempt to restore the health of his wife, Harriette. They are both young, in their twenties. She is suffering from an undiagnosed illness.

Although an ordained minister, he is seeking a position as educator, but while doing so, he occasionally preaches in the local Methodist church. Preaching is what he would like to do, but his throat isn't up to long sermons popular at the time.

They have been in Mobile for two months and he is still without a job. At the end of this installment, they leave Mobile by river boat to see about a position several hundred miles north.

**Monday, Jan'y 13.** (continued)

I find we are making friends or at least acquaintances in Mobile. Several of the Sisters have called on us & today: Sisters Robinson & Redwood.<sup>1</sup>

Have been finishing some crayon drawings or copies today.<sup>2</sup>

**Thursday, Jan'y 16.** Wednesday (yesterday) morning at 10 o'clock I attended the funeral of a Mrs. Davis, wife of the master of the Steamer Oregon. Mrs. D., her husband said, was accustomed to attend the Methodist Meeting, therefore he wished a M. preacher to attend her funeral. . . At the grave, I read our burial service for the first time. It is customary here to read it. I believe I never heard it in the North save once at Middletown. I think it very impressive & should be

<sup>1</sup> "Sisters" being members of the local Methodist church.

<sup>2</sup> No sketches of Mobile are included.

always read in case of the burial of a Christian. I could not learn that Mrs. Davis was a professor of Religion. Her husband is an ungodly man, yet he appeared to feel her death most deeply. It was truly affecting to see him, a stout, rugged man, the tears coursing down his cheeks, his bosom heaving with untold emotion, bring his [three] children to their mother's coffin & bid them kiss ma-ma. Besides these three little ones there is an infant of days<sup>3</sup> & I believe a daughter of perhaps 12 years. At the grave, all tarried till the grave was filled & the mound raised. This is the custom in this place. The coffins are constructed in peculiar form, the Philadelphia style, I am told. The top, instead of being plain flat, is roofed.

Riding to the grave in the hot sun seven miles & then standing uncovered in the scorching sun while reading the burial service gave me quite a severe headache. . .

Last Eve I preached a lecture in the vestry of Franklin St. Church to a better audience than I have had there. . . This is the third evening I have preached & the fifth time in Mobile. My throat suffers from each effort, temporarily at least, as likewise my general health. From telegraphic dispatch from Bro. Hammilton [sic] I learn he will not be here before Wednesday next so that I am expected to supply the pulpit on next Sabbath. I think that will terminate my pastoral charge of the Franklin St. M. E. Church South in this city of Mobile, Ala. The Lord grant that my ministry may not be in vain. The word has so far been attentively listened to & I

<sup>3</sup> The mother apparently died in childbirth.

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have several times been told it was well received & profitable. To myself it has proved very profitable for what I have preached to others I have applied to myself.

Today I have been busy & yet have done little but make a cage for a couple of Quails presented to Hattie.<sup>4</sup> I called this P.M. at a Cotton Brokers where I saw a large specimen of Cotton. On one stalk there were over 130 pods or bolls of cotton. I was quite disappointed in the appearance of the cotton bolls as they're even much smaller & less flowing than I expected. This specimen I saw is to be sent to the World's Fair in London for 1851.

Hattie has not been so well for a few days. Yesterday she had a slight attack of diarrhea which quite reduced her & last night vomited & suffered from Spasms. . . P.S. A monthly visit from Grandma occurred Frid., July 1st.<sup>5</sup>

Rec'd a letter. . . from Parents Baylies in which they state that all are well, etc., & inquired my opinion as to the propriety or policy of their selling the -----<sup>6</sup> house (dwelling). They likewise express very strong desire that we should return home as soon as possible & offer us a home with them till I may be able to preach. God bless those good parents & reward them a hundred fold in this life & in the world to come, life everlasting.

**Sabbath, Jan'y 19.** I expected to preach on this day and prepared to preach twice, but Dr. Hamilton returned Sat. morning together with several preachers en route from Conf.

<sup>4</sup> What would they be? Stuffed birds?

<sup>5</sup> Written very faintly in pencil. Apparently, a discrete reference to the menses.

<sup>6</sup> He had written one word (indecipherable) and then wrote over it (also unclearly).

Rev. Mr. Fisher of Demopolis preached in the morning. His discourse was ordinary except that it was delivered with excessive vehemence of manner. In evening at 7 o'clock the Anniversary of the Female Missionary Society was held at Franklin St. Church. By invitation of Dr. Hamilton I made the opening speech. I never felt so trammelled when speaking on the Missionary subject. . . The reason was I was limited to 30 minutes & finding my subject opening before my mind as I progressed, I was obliged to dismiss each topic half completed. However, the large congregation was very attentive & interested. . . Dr. Hamilton & Bro. Dorman followed. The plate collection & card subscriptions amounted to about \$70 & subscriptions for Life Memberships to \$306.

The proposition was made by Sister McBryce to make me a Life Member. This was speedily dispatched & thus I became a Life Member of the M. E. Ch. South. . .

**Tuesday, Jan'y 21.** On Tuesday morning Mr. Rupert of the firm of Rupert & McDillan, Cotton Commission Merchants, sent for me to call on him at his office. On calling, he informed me of a situation at Warsaw where a teacher is desired. On inquiry I ascertained the location is very unhealthy by reason of the occasional overflow of the River. For this reason I thought best not to consider the proposition & so expressed to Mr. Rupert, thanking him very kindly for his interest & attention so unexpectedly shown to a stranger. During the forenoon I heard of an opening at Newburn made by the resignation of my old College mate & Eclectic Brother, Alex. Michell. On further inquiry however I ascertained



that a Mr. Richards had already been to it & decided it impossible to succeed with a school on account of dissension among the patrons of the Academy. During the afternoon I was sent for to call at Carvers' Book Store to see Rev. Mr. Spence relative to a School at Forkland. He represents the place as vacant & desirous of a Methodist preacher who would preach once or twice a month for which he would receive \$100 in addition to a salary of at least \$500 for teaching.<sup>7</sup> He represented they were waiting for an answer from him so that certainly the place was vacant. I accordingly promised him I would go immediately to F. & if pleased take the place.

**Wednesday, Jan'y 22.** Engaged last evening & today in packing preparatory to leaving Mobile for Forkland. Informed Dr. Hamilton last evening of my design of leaving M. today. This I did in part that if he or society designed to remunerate me for my services during his absence to Conference they might have opportunity. Nothing however was said on the subject by either of us & nothing was done. Not a thanks or a cent for my laborious services, not an invitation to spend a day in any Methodist family notwithstanding it was known I was boarding at \$50 per month! True, I stayed at Dr. Hamilton's 10 days or a fortnight & the Missionary Society constituted me a Life member of the Society. Perhaps this was sufficient remuneration for a poor preacher whose straightened circumstances Dr. H. knew.

Well, if so, I am now perfectly free from all obligations to my Mobile friends & the Lord have mercy on them. Hattie wishes if I return &

preach at M. to preach from "The poor have the gospel preached to them." Another might be selected, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers."

Registered my name for passage for self & Hattie on the Steamer "Sunny South" for Kirkpatrick's Landing. It rained tremendously at the hour the boat was to leave & we did not get away till . . . after 6 P.M. Our company in the Ladies' Cabin were Dr. Cunningham & Lady & J. N. Stapler & Lady. Dr. C. resides in Mississippi about 20 miles west of Warsaw & Mr. S. is from the Cherokee Nation where he has spent two years with his Brother-in-law John Ross.

**Friday, Jan'y 24.** Very little of interest occurred on our passage from Mobile to Kirkpatrick's Landing. The weather was very unpleasant, rainy & cold. The River Journey was far from pleasing. The first & only village we saw was Demopolis about 250 miles from Mobile & that did not show to much advantage. . . . Very frequently on the river banks we saw the negro cabins of plantations, all built of logs. In some sections the cane brake was very abundant & tall. "Mistletoe boughs" were often seen attached to the bare limbs of tall trees contrasting strongly by its evergreen verdure. Sportsmen in the boat frequently popped away at some hapless bird which dared to light on either shore. A crane, a crow, a turkey buzzard, a duck, etc., felt the lead. It seemed strange to navigate a river so narrow that birds might be shot with small shot on either bank. During our passage the river rose more than 10 feet & became turbid & filthy.

At about 1 3/4 o'clock P.M. Friday, we arrived at the Landing.

## In Memoriam

**Lane Lovell**

1908 -- 1998

Lane Lovell of Edgartown, a long-time member of the Society and its Council, died August 10, at the age of 90. He loved history, especially of lighthouses, boats and motor cars. He was the unofficial keeper of Edgartown Harbor Light. It was the picture in the picture window of his home on North Water Street.

He loved the water. For many years, he and Patty, his wife, sailed from New York to their summer home in Edgartown. His fondness for things maritime came naturally. His great-grandfather, Capt. Benjamin Hallett of Osterville, was founder of the Seaman's Bethel. Another great-grandfather, Capt. George Lovell, founded the Dispatch Line, operating packets between New York and Boston.

The fondness for historic automobiles was also inherited. The company his grandfather founded, and that he later ran, manufactured lamps and other products for automobiles, railroads and ships. His father invented the Klaxon horn, that raucous-sounding device which, Lane was quick to remind one, was one of the first electric-powered horns, designed to be installed on expensive automobiles. Only later, did they produce the hand-powered Klaxon with its famous gut-wrenching squawk.

Readers of this journal are beneficiaries of his generosity. About five years ago, he and friend Bailey Norton dropped into the *Intelligencer* office and were shocked at the inadequacy of the computer being used. A week or so later, a new computer and printer were delivered, paid for by the two men. The type you have been reading ever since, including this tribute, was set by the computer given to the Society by Lane and Bailey.

Lane was ninety years old. He lived a long and satisfying life. The Editor, a warm friend, is shedding no tears. He knows Lane wouldn't want that. He had a long and full life. What more can you ask for? he would say. So, we are not crying, dear friend, but we are missing you.

<sup>7</sup> A month? Or a year? More likely a year.





### Some Very Special Persons

It takes many, many more workers than we can afford to hire to make the Martha's Vineyard Historical Society what it is -- a valuable resource, not only for members, but also for thousands more who each year visit our museum and use our library. Hundreds more know us through our publications.

The individuals listed below are the volunteers who give of their time and talent to make it possible for the Society to provide these services.

They are very special persons.

And we owe them our very special thanks.

Lori Agan	Lillian Hammond	Marcella Provost
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Terry Burke	Hugh Knipmeyer	Sarah Saltonstall
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Elizabeth Chapin	June and Gene Lakso	Dick Sherman
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Faith Churchill	Dorothea Looney	Joseph Sollito
Joanne Coffin Clark	Judy LoRusso	Karin Stanley
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Helen Gelotte	Townsend Morey Jr.	Anna Tomlinson
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Tom Hale	Wes Mott	Donald Vose
Charlotte Hall	Emily Murphy	Lee Wainwright
Alice Hall	Jim Newman	Gail and John Wasson
Marian Halperin	Patricia Pease	Sylvia Weiss
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