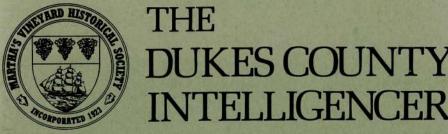
Journal of History of Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands



VOL. 40, NO. 3

FEBRUARY 1999

James Naismitto 191

Signature of the inventor of basketball, James Naismith. An 1891 graduate of Springfield College, he spoke there in 1932 and Robert Hughes of Oak Bluffs, a student and basketball player, asked for his autograph.

The Glory Days of Basketball
In the High Schools of the Vineyard

by CLYDE L. MacKENZIE Jr.

Two Years on a Frozen Island

Shipwrecked 525 Miles from North Pole With Captain Coffin of Edgartown

PART THREE by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

Documents: A Running Account
of Matters & Things
by HENRY BAYLIES

MEMBERSHIP DUES

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AMPLICATION

Dear Editor:

I am enjoying your serialization of the Coffin-Fiala fiasco a great deal.

Your interpretation of "too much aft," I am sure, is correct. It is a not-unknown but not too common reference to the sort of airs suggested by the context.

This was a very structured society, afloat. On shipboard they [the sailors] would certainly never have been invited aft for dinner or anything else. Many officers often did not even know the men's names, or care! It is a sad commentary and it was a sad time for human beings.

The annals of exploration, and particularly polar exploration, certainly are filled with the wildest examples of unprincipled human behavior. I guess the bigger-than-life people who led these forays reverted to type once the constraints of normal social behavior were removed.

The Intelligencer continues its outstanding ways. Thank you, OSTERVILLE, MA TOWNSEND HORNOR

THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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Editor: Arthur R. Railton
Founding Editor: Gale Huntington (1959--1977)

The Dukes County Intelligencer is published quarterly by the Martha's Vineyard Historical Society (formerly the Dukes County Historical Society). Subscription is by membership in the Society. Copies of all issues may be purchased at the Society's library, Cooke and School Streets, Edgartown, Massachusetts.

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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

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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.



The Glory Years of Basketball In the High Schools of the Vineyard

by CLYDE L. MacKENZIE Jr.

THE REFEREE blew his whistle, tossed the ball high in the air, the two centers sprang upward, as cheers rocked the hall. The basketball season had begun -- a season of exciting high school games that provided the major winter entertainment for Island residents for more than 30 years from the late 1920s until 1959. As many as 40 games were played each season by Tisbury, Oak Bluffs and Edgartown High School teams, each game played in crowded halls.

These were the glory years of Island basketball. Probably nowhere else in Massachusetts did public excitement over games rise to the level it did on the Vineyard. The insular character, the proximity of the three towns and intense local pride, all came together those winter nights to make each game an emotional high for residents.

In the early years, games were played in non-regulation halls not designed for the sport, but eventually each high school had its own gymnasium, designed for basketball, the "sport of kings" on the Island in those years.

Each town had three teams: the boys' team; the girls' team; and the boys' junior-high team. Townspeople, whether they had children in school or not, were caught up in the inter-town rivalry. The excitement over the battle for the Island championship was something that has never since been equaled. Even in years when their school had a losing record, fans turned out, filling the gyms with cheers. Then, in 1959, when the Regional High School was built, this intense intertown rivalry ended. From then on, the competition was with off-Island schools, town rivalries were no more.

During the first few years, the New Bedford Standard, the

CLYDE L. MacKENZIE Jr., an Edgartown native, is a regular contributor. Although he modestly did not mention it in his text, he was one of the great basketball players during the glory years.

Island's most-read daily newspaper, covered the games, printing the results in the next day's paper. In the early 1930s, the same publisher started the *Cape Cod Standard Times* in Hyannis and it took over Island coverage. About 1936, the weekly *Vineyard Gazette* began summarizing the games, listing points made by each player and team scores by quarters. Later, a reporter went to the games and more complete stories were published. These stories were treasured. Students, players and non-players, kept scrapbooks of clippings from all the newspapers.

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Origin of the Sport

Basketball was invented by James Naismith, then 30 years old, in 1891 at the YMCA in Springfield. He wanted a game that could be played indoors in the New England winters. As one story describes it, he asked the janitor to nail up a box at each end of the gym into which players would toss the ball. The janitor, an unsung hero as it turned out, had no suitable boxes so he substituted peach baskets. Result: the game became known as basketball. Had he nailed up boxes, as requested, we might now be writing about the sport of boxball.

The lower edge of the balcony in the YMCA gymnasium was ten feet above the floor, determining the basket height. Today the basket height is still ten feet. Players used a soccer ball. Each time it went in the basket, someone had to climb up on a ladder to retrieve it. It was only a short time before the bottom of the peach basket was removed.

Two years later, 1893, the peach basket was replaced by a cylinder of chicken wire, but the term "basket" survived. Then, as the game became popular, a new ball, 10 inches in diameter, went into production, replacing the smaller soccer ball.

Games began, as today, with a center jump in which the two centers, usually the tallest players on each team, stood in the center of the court as the referee tossed up the ball between them. The two centers leaped, trying to tap the ball to one of their four teammates arrayed around the floor. Unlike today, that center jump took place after each basket was scored, slowing the tempo considerably.

Before 1923, any player could be chosen to shoot free throws for the team, not necessarily the player fouled. Certain players became expert at the penalty shot. Today's intentional fouling was an unheard-of tactic. During the early 1920s, backboards, to which the basket is attached, were standardized. The courts, in cramped gyms, were sometimes surrounded by a chicken-wire cage to contain errant passes, hence the name "cagers" became associated with the players. Such a cage of chicken wire was placed at each end of the hall in the Luxemoor Building in Vineyard Haven where Tisbury High School played in the 1910s and 1920s.

During the 1930s, a number of major rule changes were made. A slightly smaller ball was adopted to make dribbling (bouncing the ball by the player while running down the floor) easier. The basket's hoop was standardized at 18 inches in diameter with a cord netting dangling from it so all could see that the ball had swished through. In 1937, in a move to speed up the game, the center jump after each score was eliminated, retained only at the start of each half. The team scored upon quickly tossed the ball into play from under the basket instead of players assembling at center court for a jump ball. Opponents of the change argued that it penalized the team making the score by turning the ball over to the other side. But it soon became popular as it did speed up the action.

Naismith's game spread quickly, especially in high schools and colleges. It was a game with minimum body contact and soon girls were being taught to play, providing one of the few competitive sports open to them. With only five players on a team (six for the girls) and a minimum of expensive equipment required, the sport appealed to smaller schools, like those on the Vineyard.

Early Vineyard High School Teams

Details about the start of basketball on the Island are obscure. The best information comes from research done by Jay Schofield, a former coach at the Regional High School. He interviewed the late Harold "Stan" Lair, who played for Tisbury High in 1918-1920. Together, they traced the school's games back to 1906, when Walter Besse and Clarence Ward played.

Stan Lair told Schofield there were only two teams on the

¹David Anderson, The Story of Basketball, Beach Tree, 1988.

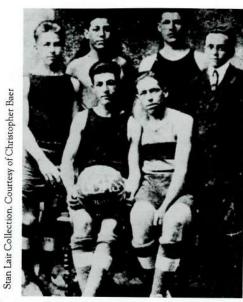
Island at that time: Tisbury and Oak Bluffs. Edgartown High School did not have a team in 1906, the first year the game was played here. Tisbury and Oak Bluffs played each other, plus a few games with mainland teams. Tisbury High used a hall above the Vineyard Haven Town Hall; Oak Bluffs, a hall above the fire station across from the harbor. Both courts were smaller than regulation and the center circle and foul lines were drawn on the floor with chalk. Windows in the halls were often vulnerable to an errant ball and were protected with narrow wooden slats. The ball had a stitched leather cover over a rubber inner ball. A tight lacing closed the opening that provided access for inflation and for replacing or repairing the rubber bladder.

Tisbury and Oak Bluffs had a boys' and a girls' team. The girls team, under the rules, had six players, not five as the boys' did. There were no junior high school teams, those coming later. Only a few games were played each season.

In both the improvised courts, long shots were difficult as beams stretched across the open ceiling and the ball had to be arched carefully between them on its way to the hoop. Even in these early years, the games attracted crowds of spectators, who sat and stood close to the action. Research disclosed no reports of games in the *Vineyard Gazette* during those earliest years.

The author talked with George Baptiste of Vineyard Haven, whose father played for Tisbury High about 1918, when Stan Lair was playing. His father said that play was rough. Body contact was penalized only when it became excessive, usually only when a player wrapped two arms around an opponent or slapped his hand (not his arm) while a shot was being made.

Another source of information was the late Ham Luce who played center for Oak Bluffs High in 1925. By then, Edgartown had a team and the three Island schools began the rivalry that was to become so intense. Tisbury High still played above the Town Hall, but Oak Bluffs High had moved to Noepe Hall, above the Dreamland Garage; Edgartown High was using the hall, once the Methodist Church sanctuary, above the Town Hall on Main Street. According to Mr. Luce, in the early 1920s



Oak Bluffs 1916-17. Left to right, rear, Alton Bunker, "Doc" Amaral, Brad Church and unidentified manager; front, Joe Amaral and Ken Hutchinson.

Island teams with games on the Cape were taken across in a catboat, returning the same night. Sometimes the school held a dance after the game so the trip back was after midnight.

In the late 1920s, Marion Leonard Keniston played on the first girls' team in Oak Bluffs. Girls' rules were different from boys'. Teams used six players: two forwards, two guards, a center and a side center. The court was divided into three sections and the players were restricted in movement: the forwards to the end with the opponents' basket; guards to the other end to defend their own basket; and the two centers to mid-court.

When the new Edgartown High School (now the elementary school) was built, it had a gymnasium and the *Vineyard Gazette* speculated:

The approach of the basketball season this year finds the Island with only one hall suitable and available for basketball practice and games, the Edgartown school gymnasium. Last year, Tisbury and Oak Bluffs schools rented the Columbus Club hall, but this has since passed out of the ownership of the club and has been so changed that basketball cannot be played there.

The new school in Vineyard Haven was built without an auditorium or

 $^{^2}$ Oak Bluffs also played for a while in Columbus Hall, as Ham remembered it.

gymnasium, although it is planned that a gymnasium may be added in the future. Negotiations are underway for use of the Edgartown gym, if an arrangement can be worked out without conflict. The games apparently will have to be played in Edgartown.³

Harry Dorr, who became the Oak Bluffs coach in 1927, remembers that rules were not vigorously enforced before he took over. Players pushed and tripped one another, double-dribbled, and even occasionally ran a few steps with the ball. It was not easy, he recalls, to get players to respect the rules as they had never seen a game played in compliance with them.

Three kinds of shots were used. Mostly, the two-handed set shot, released some distance from the basket. One-handed shooting was not encouraged, being considered inaccurate. A great deal of ball passing went on near the basket as the offensive players moved the ball around, hoping for a defensive mistake so an unblocked shot could be taken.

The only one-handed shooting was the lay-up shot in which the player dribbled the ball right to the basket, leaped into the air and tossed it into the basket, usually bouncing it off the backboard. Slam dunks had not been invented. Foul shots were almost always shot underhanded with two hands. Nobody shot them as is done today, one-handed. Coaches did not teach any one-handed shooting in the early years.

As today, boys practiced their shots at home, often into a discarded basket, its bottom removed, nailed to a garage or shed. Rarely, perhaps never, did a boy have a regulation basket and backboard at home in those early years. When hoops came into use, fish netting was dangled beneath them on the Island.

In 1927, the Island's high school principals formed an organized league.⁴ Each team would play the other two four times in the season. The team with the best record would be declared the Martha's Vineyard Champion. Although they also played off-Island, at Nantucket, Bourne, Falmouth and other schools, including North Kingstown, R. I., the major competition was to become the champions of the Island.

As today, the games were played in winter, mostly in January and February, when the Island offered little other



Tisbury High 1915. Left to right, rear: Bill Powell, manager, Theodore Howes, Jessie Oliver, Marshall McDonough, Mr. Dunlap, coach and principal. Front: Frank Carroll, Don Swift, "Chicken" Baptiste, Charlie Merrill, Gene Smith.

entertainment. The games filled the void. Here, for example, is the 1936 schedule for the boys' teams:

Tisbury at Oak Bluffs, January 8; Tisbury at Edgartown, January 12; Oak Bluffs at Edgartown, January 15; Oak Bluffs at Tisbury, January 22; Edgartown at Oak Bluffs, January 26; Edgartown at Tisbury, January 29; Oak Bluffs at Tisbury, February 9, Tisbury at Edgartown, February 12; Edgartown at Oak Bluffs, February 19; Tisbury at Oak Bluffs, February 22.

As a warm-up before the regular season, it was the custom for each boys' team to play a team of school alumni. If there weren't enough alumni on-Island to make up a team, the game would be played against alumni of another school.

The rather plain uniforms were similar, differing mostly in color for identification. Tisbury's colors were maroon and white; Oak Bluffs's were brown and gold; and Edgartown's orange and black. The only lettering was initials on the front of the sleeveless shirts: T, E and OB. It was not until the 1940s that numbers were sewn on the back of the shirts to identify the players. At about this time, the full town name began to be used on the front. Regular sneakers were worn; no high-tech Nikes, only ordinary Keds or Converse models, the same

³ Gazette, Nov. 7, 1930. As it turned out, those schools did not play home games in Edgartown.
⁴ The principals were Henry Ritter, Tisbury; Bert Merrill, Oak Bluffs; Walter Morris, Edgartown.

sneakers worn for everything. Uniforms were taken home to be

washed after the games.

The Edgartown High School gymnasium (now the grade school) was built in 1925 with a 50 by 30-foot floor and bleachers for about 200 spectators. Tisbury in 1938, as a work project in the depression, added a gymnasium to its high school. The floor, larger than Edgartown's, also had more seats, holding about 500. During the 1940s and 1950s, Oak Bluffs was playing in an old church building seating about 200. It was not until 1952 that Oak Bluffs High had a gymnasium, about the same size as Tisbury's, but with more seating: 12 rows on each side, the largest capacity on the Island.

There was no surplus of balls. Budgets didn't permit that. Each school bought a new one every year for use only in games. During practices and warm-ups before the games, the previous years' balls were used. The manager guarded them like jewels.

Composition of Boys' Squads

Typically, the boys' basketball squad had about ten players (five starters and five substitutes), plus the team manager. There wasn't a large student body to draw from. Enrollments were small. Oak Bluffs and Edgartown High Schools had only a dozen or so boys and girls in their senior classes. Tisbury was larger, drawing as it did from Chilmark, West Tisbury and Gay Head as well as Tisbury. Its senior class usually had about 25

boys and girls.

Most players played every position as needed, being able to shoot, pass, dribble, rebound and guard. Some, of course, were better at certain skills. Tallness and agility were major assets. Because of the small enrollments, it was sometimes difficult to find five good players to make up the first team. As most of the players had played together since they were children, they were aware of what each was best at, making team play easier. Height often determined a player's position. The tallest became the center, the forwards were the next in height and the shorter players were assigned to guard. Scoring by players ranged widely because forwards and centers did most of the shooting after the guards brought the ball down the court and fed it to the shooters near the basket.

Basketball was so important that some players remained in high school only to play. It wasn't unusual that in their senior year players would quit school when the season ended.

The team manager had a lot of responsibility. It was up to him to make sure the practice balls were available and in good shape for warm-up sessions and to collect them when the game started. Manager of each team sat at the scoring table and recorded shots and points scored. They were the game statisticians and their record was official. Another student operated the time clock and another handled the scoreboard. Timing was critical. Once the center jump after each basket was eliminated, the ball had to cross the mid-court line within ten seconds. Balls that went out-of-bounds had to be put in play within five seconds. It was the student timer who made sure those rules were observed.

Managers had other duties. They located housing for players when required. Before playing Nantucket, the Vineyard manager called the Nantucket manager to give him the number of players and coaches who would be coming. The Nantucket manager set up housing in homes of students or supporters. Sometimes, principals did this, but usually it was the managers.

Girls' Basketball

Girls' teams played about as many games as the boys, although fan enthusiasm was lower. The games were slower and less physical, in part due to rules. By the 1940s, the rule that divided the court into three zones had been changed, the new division being only in the center. The forwards from one team and the guards from the other had to stay on one side of mid-court, while their counterparts were restricted to the opposite half. The guards, when not blocking shots, would try to intercept passes and throw the ball down the floor to their forwards at the other end. In off-Island games, the girls played on the same night as the boys, but started earlier. Girls' games between Vineyard schools would start at 3:30 in the afternoon before the boys' game that was played at night.

Rivalry among girls was every bit as intense as with the boys, but the games did not get the same attention in the press or from spectators. When Oak Bluffs High School girls won the



Oak Bluffs Girls 1946. Left to right, rear, Carol Carr, Barbara Ricci, Carolyn Ripley, Barbara Pond, Phyllis Amaral, Virginia Hodgton, Coach David Dix. Front, Betty Brown, Louise Doughty, Doris Perry, Lillian (Ricci) Cook, Joan Golden, Priscilla Earle.

Lions Club cup in 1936 after winning three championships, that news was reported, but most girls' games, even season championships, seem to have been down-played or ignored.

Junior High School Basketball

Junior high schools on the Island had their own league. Their teams played no off-Island games, limiting their games to those with Vineyard rivals. The games were held on the same night as the senior games, starting earlier. With the high-school girls playing in the afternoon and the two boys' teams playing in the evening, basketball was the Island's major activity of the day -- indeed of the week.

These junior-high teams were the minor league of Island basketball. Players learned how athletes from other towns played, most helpful when they faced them in high school.

Cheerleaders

Until the end of World War II, there were no cheerleaders. But they soon became a big factor with each school having from six to twelve. Their uniforms were made, in some cases, by the girls themselves. Opposing cheerleading



Tisbury cheerleaders, late 1940s. Front: Margaret Wittemore, Leah Perlstein, Sandra James. Rear: Cathy Beauchemin, Pam Kurth, Judy Marchant, Joan Wittemore.

squads competed as strenuously as the teams, taking turns at stirring up the spectators and urging on the players. Among the cheers used in Edgartown was one with a somewhat unclear message composed, it is said, by the school janitor, Em Elliot:

Give 'em the oil!

Give 'em the oil!

Give 'em the heavy, heavy oil!

Officials

Until about 1940, only one official, the referee, handled each game. Later, two were hired. Most were former players. Bob Hughes from Oak Bluffs and Bill Brown from Edgartown officiated from 1935 until the 1950s, except during the years of World War II when they were in the service. Both had been outstanding players. They were paid \$5 to officiate both games in an evening. It was no easy task. They especially earned their pay when the games were between two Island teams, each having rabid and vocal supporters in the crowd.

Clement Amaral, who became a well-known dentist in Oak Bluffs, officiated in the 1920s. At one game in the

Columbus Hall in Oak Bluffs, the Edgartown High principal, Walter Morris, kept heckling Amaral for "favoring" Oak Bluffs, his home team. Referee Amaral became so fed up with the principal's complaints that he went over to him, gave him the whistle, and said, "Here, you referee," then walked off the floor.

The Influence of the Sport

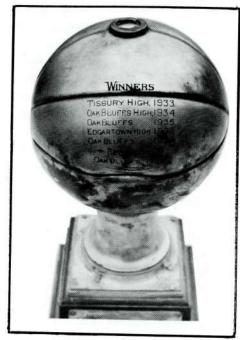
During their grade-school years, most boys dreamed of playing on the high school team. It was their highest badge of success, especially to win a championship. With no television bringing sporting events into their lives, high school teams took center stage. The players upheld the honor of the town at a time when communities were more independent, more individual, than today. Chilmark and Edgartown, though only 20 miles apart, were hundreds of miles apart in social relationships. Up-Island was rarely visited by down-Islanders, especially in winter. Basketball brought the young people (and adults, too) from Island towns together -- as intense rivals, of course. But at least they got to mingle.

The sport created heroes and hero worship. Boys listened to their older brothers and fathers talking over last night's game and got caught up in their enthusiasm. Many began shooting baskets in the backyard at an early age. Huddy Worden of Edgartown remembers practicing "day and night" to learn to shoot. He and his friends were determined to "make the team" and to bring acclaim to themselves and the town.

The squads were an extended family, coaches being concerned about the health and circumstances of each player. Wives of coaches became deeply involved. Betty Robichau, the Edgartown coach's wife, remembers hosting off-Island coaches and their wives. After the game, she invited teachers and friends to stop by for a social hour to meet the visitors and, of course, to talk over the game.

After the 1937 season, when Edgartown lost some very close games and Oak Bluffs won the coveted Lions Club trophy, the Vineyard Gazette editorialized:

The basketball season is over, but it is not with a defeatist spirit the Edgartown High School boys lost the Island championship this year. Scattered through Edgartown back yards and vacant lots are many hoops,



Coveted Lions Club Trophy 1930s won by Oak Bluffs

the targets of hopeful basketeers ambitiously preparing for the next year while clinging to the last vestiges of a beloved sport about to be usurped by those of the new season. Among the Edgartown boys who have hoops in their yards are: John O'Neill, Sylvester Luce, John and Manuel Mello, Charles Leighton, Jack Enos, John Look, Charles Madeiros, Kenny Grant, Huddy Worden, Phil Perry, and Duncan McBride.

Not only in Edgartown were there hoops in backyards. In Tisbury, they could be seen in the yards of Lester Baptiste, Phil Baptiste, Connie McDonough, George Maury, Bob Canha, Bob and Ray DeNormandin, Preston Morris, Carl Hermaneau, Francis "Sancy" Pachico, Frank and Tony Jardin, and Donald and Ronald DeSourcy. There was even a basket at the Tisbury Town Hall.

Oak Bluffs was no different. In addition to the many backyard baskets, the three town parks provided practice hoops. During non-school hours, boys were allowed to use the school gym. According to contemporaries, among the players most often seen at these spots were John Randolph, Chuck

Gonsalves, Richie DeBettencourt, Jim Ciciora, Art Collette, Don Combra, John DeBettencourt, Frank and Paul Estrella.

For school teams, practice began a few weeks before the season's opening game and was usually held three times a week from 7 to 9 p.m. Training was in the fundamentals as there were few set plays to be memorized. Most time was spent shooting foul shots, set shots and in scrimmages between the starting five and the substitutes.

At Island games rarely was there an empty seat. The crowd was made up of about one-third students from each competing school, the other two-thirds being parents, teachers, former players and the many townspeople who followed the game enthusiastically. Teachers collected the admission fees: 10 cents for students; 25 cents for adults (in the 1940s).

In each town were dedicated fans who rarely, if ever, missed a game. Dolf Manning was one in Tisbury in the 1940s and 1950s. Every time his team got the ball in the back court, he would jump up, waving his arms, shouting, "Get the ball up there!" at the top of his lungs. That was his signature call. Nellie Amaral was an Oak Bluffs fan who never missed a game and she, too, could be heard above the crowd at every exciting moment. When Oak Bluffs lost, she would sometimes dress down a player she met on the street. Capt. Levi Jackson was one of Edgartown's biggest fans, with four grandchildren who were outstanding players: Charlie, Sam, Sally and Stella. He was at every game, cheering on the team and his grandchildren.

At many games, there were so many spectators, that some stood against the walls at the ends of the court, their feet nearly touching the base lines. Many stood or sat in the same section at every game. They became very knowledgeable about how the game should be played -- often making that knowledge known vocally. The result was a social evening with much friendly bantering -- a community outing in mid-winter.

For non-playing students, the games were treasured social occasions, rare opportunities to get out at night with their friends, both male and female. Adults also enjoyed the evenings out. Most socializing took place before the game began. During the fifteen-minute warm-up session, the players

would, at times, talk with spectators from the floor. With three balls in use (old ones, of course), the loudest sounds were those of dribbling and shooting. When a ball bounced off the rim and into spectators near the basket, the fan who recovered it usually took a shot at the hoop. If it went through, a player would toss it back for another try. It was a convivial evening in the two longest months of a Vineyard winter.

Finally, the Game Begins

After the center toss and the battle for the ball began, the noise inside the hall became intense. The old halls were small enough to be intimate and spectators shouted out individual players' names in encouragement. A 1952 news report of a game between Oak Bluffs and Edgartown catches the feeling: ⁵ In a return game at the Edgartown gym, Friday night, the basketball forces of Coach Joseph Robichau of Edgartown and Coach Dan McCarthy of Oak Bluffs fought it out in what might be called a referee's nightmare, with Edgartown avenging a former defeat at the latter's court, by an eight-point margin, 42-34.

The gym was overcrowded. . . with rooters from the Bluffs outnumbering the home fans, in the hope that their team might repeat their former performance.

The contest was fast and furious. . . Before the game was one minute old, a half-dozen fouls had been committed, with the result that Oak Bluffs was able to capitalize on their free throws, while Edgartown could not seem to hit the strings. Garth Umstot connected for a two-pointer for Edgartown early in the game, but Francis Bernard broke through to tally neatly for the Bluffs to keep his team in the fore. The crowd was jumping out of their seats during this first hectic period with both sides scoring even field goals, but the Bluffs lads' foul shooting held the margin at the end of the quarter to lead 8 to 6.

The second quarter saw the home team begin to hit more consistently. At the end of the first half they had forged to a 16 to 13 lead. At the beginning of the third period there was a question as to which team would lose some stars through the foul route, due to the fouls being so numerous. It wasn't too long before Edgartown's star center, Garth Umstot, went out. One could feel the disappointment of the home fans and perhaps a good percentage of them thought this was the end of Edgartown's hopes. But Edgartown's determination to win could not be denied. They came out and played their hearts out, every man playing his part to perfection. They not only managed to hold their own but gained a point to hold a 27 to 23 lead at the end of the third session.

⁵ Vineyard Gazette, January 11, 1952.

In the final period the pace continued with Edgartown losing Roland LaBell and Ken Searle and Oak Bluffs losing the services of Tubby Rebello and Denny Alley. Both teams refused to give in and fought it out right down to the wire with Edgartown opening a twelve-point lead . . . the hard-fighting McCarthy squad hauled it down to eight by the time the game ended.

Coach Robichau. . . summed up his pleasure in the way his boys played by stating that he would not have felt badly if they had lost. They could not possibly have played a better game. Coach McCarthy should feel just pride in his team, for they also gave their best in a contest which could

easily have gone either way.

Donald Dube in taking top honors for the night with 19 points, showed his determination to win, after having a difficult time to find the hoop in the first half, while Francis Bernard of the Bluffs proved his ability to tally points, though hard pressed by his rivals, by scoring 14 points.

The following year was another exciting season. The Gazette reported on the Oak Bluffs-Tisbury game in the brandnew Oak Bluffs gym. There were lots of fouls and, as a result, lots of criticism of the officials:

Last Thursday night a large following of basketball fans from all over the Island crowded the new Oak Bluffs gym to witness the first meeting between last year's Island champions, Oak Bluffs High, coached by Dan McCarthy, and the forces of Tisbury High, coached by John Kelley.

The contest was looked forward to with interest because it had been figured that the two teams were fairly evenly matched, and as it turned out the predictions were correct. The first quarter of the game was close. Ken Silva of Tisbury hit the strings for two neat set shots, the ball being brought down very nicely and fed to him by Frank, their right guard. The teams battled back and forth and Morris, Oak Bluffs' left guard, tossed in a free throw for their first point, followed shortly by another foul shot by Denny Alley, the only points garnered by the McCarthymen for the first period, while Ken Silva dropped in two more fouls and Frank one for Tisbury, making the score 9 to 2.

In the second quarter the boys again played air-tight ball, with Oak Bluffs, sparked by Alley and Gordon, getting the better of the session, 12 to 8, and the half ending 17 to 14 in favor of Tisbury. In this quarter Oak Bluffs showed its best brand of ball, putting their opponents on a tight

defensive.

In the final quarter, it was the case, as often happens in these close contests, that one team or the other has to give from the strain of the fast pace and it was Tisbury who held steady, forcing their opponents to commit numerous fouls and causing them to lose Morris and Goodwin by the foul route.

Both teams showed excellent shooting ability from the free-throw

line. Tisbury getting 15 and Oak Bluffs 11.

Credit should be given to the referees, Bill Brown and Bob Hughes, who came under constant fire from the players, coaches and fans. They can call them only as they see them, regardless of how it hurts or pleases others. But after the heat of each contest has cooled off just dues are usually given to these first-rate referees. Tisbury, led in scoring by Silva with 16 points, Drew with 11 and Frank with 9, won the game 41 to 31. Alley led Oak Bluffs with 12 points while Gordon had 11.

For several days after a game, the playing and the players were talked about on the streets and in the houses of the towns involved. Basketball was the biggest happening of the winter in those glory years.

Scoring Trends Through the Years

From the 1930s until 1959, the total points scored per game, very low in the early years, increased steadily. The 1937 elimination of the center jump after each score did increase the tempo of the games, but it didn't seem to affect points scored noticeably. There was just a slow, continuous climb in scores, as these average points per game make clear:

1930s 22 pts. 1950-1953 45 pts. 1940-1942 25 pts. 1954-1957 55 pts. 1945-1949 37 pts. 1958-1959 62 pts.

The increase was due to several things: first, the skills of individual players improved, helped by a gradual improvement in over-all health through the years. Coaching also got better. But probably most of the gains can be attributed to changes in shooting techniques. In the early years, the two-handed set shot was common. It started at waist height, a relatively easy ball position to block. In the 1940s, the one-handed push shot was adopted. That shot began at chest level and the ball release was much higher and faster, more difficult to block. Then in the 1950s, the jump shot was used, beginning above or behind the head and extremely difficult to block without fouling.

A contributing factor was that college and professional games began to be shown on television, giving high-school players a chance to see how experts played. They studied the moves and began imitating them.

In the 1920s and 1930s, high-school players had few chances to watch a skilled team play. There were a few teams of ⁶ Points scored in the 1920s are not available.

former high-school players that competed in an Island league. Younger players attended these games and learned. This opportunity ended during World War II, but after the war the state ruled that every school gymnasium must be made available to veterans during winter evenings. Renewed interest in the sport was the result. Two teams of veterans were organized on the Island. They played each other and also against other veterans' teams on the Cape. High-school players usually attended these games and watched former school stars perform, learning techniques. Among those veterans were: Dick Gale of Tisbury, Jim Ciciora of Oak Bluffs, Sam Leighton and Huck Look Ir., of Edgartown, as well as Dan McCarthy, former Oak Bluffs High coach.

Island Championships

The drive to win the Island Championship occupied the attention of every high school player. Even elementary school children became caught up. Playing on the championship team made a young man a town hero and the stars became local legends. For many on championship teams, the high-school years were the happiest in their lives. They were, for that year at least and, in some cases, for years after, celebrities.

Increasing that status, as well as increasing the intensity of inter-town rivalries, was the announcement in 1933 by the Vineyard Haven Lions Club that it would present a large trophy to the first high-school team to win the Island championship three times. This trophy would be kept in the school building in perpetuity, a tribute to the team's achievement. This trophy became the Holy Grail of Island teams. The 1934 game between Oak Bluffs and Tisbury was for the first of the three championships needed to take the trophy: At Tisbury Friday night, the Oak Bluffs High School defeated Tisbury High, 39-30, the game giving the Oak Bluffs team the Martha's Vineyard

Oak Bluffs started scoring early, running up a total in the first quarter of 12 points to Tisbury's 5. In the second period their scoring punch was checked somewhat and the half ended 17 to 12 in favor of the winners. During the rest period, something must have happened to the Oak Bluffs squad because they came out and played a masterfully offensive game, increasing their score to 32 points while holding Tisbury to 17. The Oak

high school championship and the 1934 leg on the Lions Club trophy.

Bluffs defense seemed to be clicking and the blocking was excellent. They lost one of their regulars, the only player with height, Clarence Hermann, who went out on personal fouls at the end of the third period. The last quarter saw Tisbury playing much better, sinking several long shots and outscoring the victors two to one . . .

Madeiras was high scorer with 13 points. Combra was next with 11, Hermann next with 9. Lewis got 5 points, while Hughes got a basket from practically underneath Tisbury's goal. Oak Bluffs has won 10 out of 12 games this year, which includes games with off-Island competition.⁷

Oak Bluffs won its second Island championship the next year, giving it two legs on its quest for the Holy Grail. But in 1936, its streak was broken. The next year, 1937, with Oak Bluffs needing only one more win, the battling among the three schools was more heated than ever. School officials were concerned about the roughness of the play. The Gazette headline read, "Rough Playing Leads to Official Concern": Rough playing in both the girls' and boys' game led to some concern in official quarters and a meeting was set for last night between representatives of the schools to consider ways of preventing a repetition.

What other actions were taken, if any, have been forgotten, but it was decided to import an off-Island referee to officiate the final game. In that 1937 game, Oak Bluffs High School won its third Island championship, defeating Edgartown, to take permanent possession of the Lions Club trophy: [Oak Bluffs won the trophy] by defeating Edgartown by the narrow score of 24-22. Only rarely do three-year trophies disappear so quickly in four or five years of competition. Harry Dorr was the coach in charge of the Oak Bluffs teams during that period, and the showings of his teams were a tribute to his patient work.

Played at Oak Bluffs, the struggle was the third played during the year decided by one or two points. For that crucial contest, Coach Demers of Bourne was imported as referee. He found the players guilty of 31 personal fouls, 17 against Edgartown and 14 against Oak Bluffs.8

The fact that the referee had been brought in from off-Island indicates the intensity of the rivalry.

Off-Island Championship

Edgartown High, in 1941, became the only Vineyard team to win an off-Island tournament championship before regionalization. The game was in Bourne. Edgartown's win of the Island championship made it eligible to compete in the

February 1999

Vineyard Gazette, March 16, 1934. 8 Vineyard Gazette, February 26, 1937.

Cape Cod tournament. The team almost didn't get to go as there was no money in the budget to send the squad off-Island. Parents and fans were determined not to deny them this opportunity. They stocked a vacant store on Main Street with homemade sandwiches and townspeople turned out in numbers to buy, despite the scarcity of money in the depression. The necessary amount was raised.

That championship game, the top high-school game in southeastern Massachusetts that year, was described in great detail in the Cape Cod Standard Times:

Edgartown High School added the Cape championship to its Island title Saturday night in Bourne, when it out-classed Barnstable High 34 to 20. In the final and most successful -- for Edgartown -- game of the tournament, the two teams, though tired from their previous games, put on a grand game and a huge crowd roared in appreciation throughout the affair.

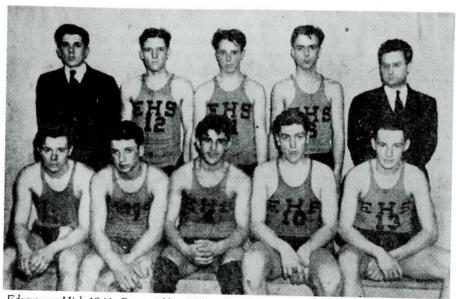
A substantial portion of the crowd was comprised of players and fans of Falmouth and Sandwich, the teams which Edgartown had beaten earlier in the tournament. They stayed over to see the game, hoping tiny, underdog Edgartown would beat heavily-favored Barnstable, nearly always a dominating team in the Cape League because it has a large student body. The Cape boys showed the strain of their three previous struggles, which they had won by one point each, and proved unequal to the slightly fresher Island five.

The Edgartown boys seemed determined to make sure of the game soon after the opening whistle, because they dropped in three field goals in rapid succession to take the lead. The Hyannis boys seemed to be bewildered by the sudden attack and they faltered. The Islanders followed up the advantage, sinking three more field goals and a foul shot to take a 13 to 2 lead at quarter time.

In the second period, the Cape team regained some of its composure, but the Edgartown quintet rolled on to a 20 to 6 lead at the half. In this half, the visitors played some of their best ball of the tournament; their passes were working smoothly, their defense was at its best and their offense was functioning satisfactorily, with Sammy Leighton hitting shots from all over the floor.

The second half saw the winners coasting in on the 14-point lead. They did not press too hard, scoring 7 points in each of the final quarters. The Barnstable quintet fought desperately, but the best they could do was to score 6 points in the third quarter and 8 in the final period. Their total of 14 was a stalemate with Edgartown's 14 and they remained 14 points behind.

Sammy Leighton amassed a total of 22 points for Edgartown. The Cape boys couldn't hold him down and it seemed as if he couldn't miss the



Edgartown High 1941. Front: Eldon Willoughby, Sam Leighton, Charlie Mello, Bud Brown, Bob Morgan. Rear: Francis Perry, manager, Elmer Porter, Duncan McBride, Danny Gaines, Coach Joe Robichau. (Edgartown's Best Team of all Time.)

basket, making them from all angles. Charlie Mello played a fine all-around game. Good defensively and always in there on the offense, he cleared the backboard many times with his fine following-up. Bobby Morgan, who had been playing fine defensive work for Edgartown throughout the entire tournament, topped it off with a splendid performance, holding Crowell of Barnstable scoreless of field goals.

As in the two games previous, the game was a clean-fought battle, with sportsmanship prevailing. In fact, all the teams competing were congratulated on the manner in which they conducted themselves.

Sparking Edgartown's win was forward Sammy Leighton, who scored 22 of the team's 34 points, more than the entire Barnstable team, whose high scorer had only 7 points. Edgartown's other forward, Bud Brown, had 7 points. Charlie Mello and Bob Morgan 2 each while the center Eldon Willoughby made one free throw. The *Standard Times*, which presented its trophy to Coach Joe Robichau, had this to say:

The tourney has gone into history and a new champ has been crowned, and all the fans and rooters will agree that Edgartown is a scrappy, well-balanced and smooth-passing team. From the spirit of these Edgartown rooters during and after the game, it is probable that they will declare a holiday in that little town to celebrate.

If you have decided just who is the hero of the final game, we will bet that you have picked Leighton, the man with number 7 on his back. Sam Leighton will go down as the hero of the tourney and we bet that he will "own the Island" from now on. He is just a bundle of hustling, cagey and crackshot material that makes up one of the best school-boy players who has ever played in this tourney.

When the players returned to the Island they landed at Oak Bluffs and were met by fire trucks, cars and hundreds of cheering admirers. The parade was down Beach Road to Edgartown. That evening, a victory dinner was held in the Episcopal Church hall.

Never before had an Island basketball team done so well. Never before had a team received so much adulation.

The Final Year of Island Competition

The final year of competition between Vineyard high schools was 1959, the year before the Regional High School opened, ending town-against-town rivalries on the basketball court. The Gazette recorded the historic change:

The final year will be an important memory for the sentimentalists, who in the past have doted on the intense rivalry of the three Island teams in spite of the official viewpoint of the school authorities that playing the game well, not winning, was the most important thing. It will mark the end of the Island basketball triangle. Next year, the three Island teams will be merged into one regional aggregation. . . .

Next year begins a period of consolidation and cooperation in athletics as well as in other phases of secondary education. Just as there will no longer be the intramural duplication of effort in a limited number of academic subjects, but an opportunity for a broader curriculum, there will also be no more intramural athletic rivalry, but an opportunity for extramural excellence for the Vineyard.

That final year was a triumphant one for Tisbury and a disastrous one for Edgartown. The last high school game ever played in the Edgartown gym was high-scoring, but a game and a season that home town fans would like to forget:

The Edgartown school gym saw its last official high school basketball game on Friday night, and it was not a game to induce nostalgia among Edgartonians. In the final home game, Edgartown was resoundingly defeated by Tisbury. The score: 90 to 59.

The game Friday was Tisbury's tenth victory in eleven starts, a splendid record that has already won Tisbury a bid in the Tech Tournament. It was the eighth straight loss for Edgartown.

Tisbury's drive to hit a round 100 before the game's end was thwarted

by the Edgartonians, who froze the ball in the final minutes. Edgartown's center, George Willoughby, was top scorer of the game with 22 points, 16 of which were produced by successful foul shots. Art Metell and Mike Bettencourt turned in healthy scores of 18 and 14 points respectively.

But there was just no denying the Tisburyites once they warmed up. All but one of the fourteen Tisbury players in the game scored, and four of them achieved double-figure scores: Ken Mansfield, 20; Owen Rabbitt, Dave Munn and Roger Andrews, 14 apiece.

That same *Gazette*, February 20, 1959, reported on the last high school game in Tisbury's gymnasium:

Left over from last week is the final chapter in this season's scholastic basketball saga, the game between Edgartown and Tisbury last Thursday night. Contrary to most final chapters, this one contained no climaxes and no surprises. Tisbury, a veritable Goliath this season, won its twelfth game out of thirteen, and Edgartown, no David by a long (sigh) shot, went down for its tenth straight defeat by the decisive score of 84 to 44.

Also in that *Gazette* was the story of the last intra-Island high school game. Played in Oak Bluffs, the game became a sad memory for Edgartown fans, not just because it ended the long-cherished three-town basketball rivalry, but because its team lost, its eleventh loss in a year of disappointment:

The rug was yanked right out from under the Edgartown basketball team Tuesday night during the final minutes of its last game of the season with Oak Bluffs. It was a game marked by roughness and dispute. Nevertheless, Oak Bluffs wound up its season and its career as an individual high school basketball team with a final victory.

Record of Island Championships

From 1928 through 1959, Oak Bluffs High School won the most Island championships by a wide margin. We were unable to find records for 1930. There was no single Island champion in 1932, that season ending in a triple tie. During 1943 and 1944, the World War II years, little high-school basketball was played and no champion was declared. During the 28 seasons we have records for, Oak Bluffs won 12 Island championships, Edgartown and Tisbury each won 8:

1928 Oak Bluffs	1936 Edgartown	1944 War year	1952 Oak Bluffs
1929 Oak Bluffs	1937 Oak Bluffs	1945 Edgartown	1953 Tisbury
1930 Unknown	1938 Edgartown	1946 Tisbury	1954 Oak Bluffs
1931 Oak Bluffs	1939 Edgartown	1947 Tisbury	1955 Oak Bluffs
1932 Triple tie	1940 Edgartown	1948 Tisbury	1956 Oak Bluffs
1933 Tisbury	1941 Edgartown	1949 Edgartown	1957 Oak Bluffs
1934 Oak Bluffs	1942 Tisbury	1950 Tisbury	1958 Oak Bluffs
1935 Oak Bluffs	1943 War year	1951 Edgartown	1959 Tisbury

There were periods when one school had a "hot streak,"

winning consecutive championships, usually when it had a star player or two (more about these stars later). Edgartown's longest streak came just before World War II when it was champion four years in a row. Tisbury's longest reign was three years, from 1946 through 1948. Oak Bluffs is the all-time champion. It won more championships and also had the longest streak: five championships from 1954 through 1958.

Oak Bluffs, despite those Island wins, had the worst record against the Vineyard's principal off-Island opponent, Nantucket High, winning only eight times to Nantucket's ten. Island teams each played Nantucket twice a year, one game on each island. For many players, it was the only time they ever visited the sister island. Nantucket players made more interisland trips, coming three times each season, once to each of the three Vineyard towns.

According to our research, the inter-island record was close: Vineyard teams won 25 times while Nantucket won 24.

Best Teams in History

It is risky to name the "best" teams because through the years overall play greatly improved. An average team of the 1950s would probably defeat the best team of the 1930s.

Admitting that, it is safe to say that the 1948 Tisbury High School team was the "best" Tisbury team ever. It not only won the Island championship, but it did not lose a game to another Island team. In fact, it never even came close to losing:

Tisbury 59, Oak Bluffs 16
Tisbury 53, Edgartown 13
Tisbury 60, Oak Bluffs 9
Tisbury 58, Oak Bluffs 34
Tisbury 49, Edgartown 23
Tisbury 91, Oak Bluffs 18
Tisbury 49, Edgartown 27

Game averages against opponents:

Tisbury 67, Oak Bluffs 19.3. Tisbury 49.5, Edgartown 22.

Starting players on that great team were Lester Baptiste, Bob Canha, George Cournoyer (who alternated with "Sancy" Pachico), Art Pachico and Joe Leonard. Pachico averaged 10.9 points a game (his game high was 19); Leonard averaged 9.3 points (14 high), Cournoyer, 7 points (14 high), Baptiste, 5.8 points (12 high), Pachico, 3 points (5 high) and Canha, 2 points (4 high). Regular substitutes were Henry Cryer, Dana Coggins and George Manter.



Tisbury High 1948, best of all time. Front: Buddy Healy, Bob Canha, Art Pachico, George Coutnoyer, Tony Mesada. Rear: Coach Art Nelson, Lowell Hammet, manager, Lester Baptiste, Arthur Hermaneau, George Manter, Joe Leonard, Sancy Pachico. Seated: Henry Cryer.

That Tisbury team was invited to play in the South Shore Interscholastic Tournament at Brockton. In the first round, it defeated Bridgewater High, 28 to 24. Joe Leonard was top scorer with 9 points. Henry Cryer set some sort of record by scoring one point (a free throw) although in the game only one second. In the second round, Bourne High knocked Tisbury out of the tournament, 36 to 24. It was Tisbury's first defeat after 16 wins. None of the starting five came back to school in 1949 and an all-new Tisbury team lost that year's championship to Edgartown.

No doubt, the best team ever to play for Oak Bluffs High was its 1931 champions, led by Cap Perry. On the team were Francis Madieras, Herbert Combra, Clarence Herman and Manny Lewis.

Edgartown's best was the 1941 quintet which not only won the Island championship, but also won the Cape and Island Vol. 40, No. 3



Oak Bluffs High 1931, best of all time. Front: Clarence Herman, Francis Madeiras, Antone "Cap" Perry, Herbert Combra, George Hughes. Rear: Alfred Lawrence, Manuel Lewis, Robert Edwards, Leo Camara, Guy Clements.

championship. Its performance was described in detail earlier.

Best Players in History

Selecting the "best" individual players from the many who played through the years is no easy task. But those who saw them play agree on a number who have earned that ranking:

Tisbury

1918--1919 Ralph "Laffy" Lair

1920s George "Chicken" Baptiste and Joe Campell 1930s Eddy Figueiredo, Manny Lawrence and Keeby Look 1940s Lester Baptiste, Dick Gale, Joe Leonard, Art Pachico, Sancy Pachico

1950s Roger Andrews, Bob Hope, Dave Munn and Kenny Silvia
Oak Bluffs

1920s Bill Bernard, Alton Bunker and Huck Look [Sr.] 1930s Herbert Combra, Bob Hughes, Howard Leonard, Francis Madeiras and Cap Perry

1940s Jim Ciciora and Rich DeBettencourt 1950s Francis Bernard, Carl Lawrence, Tubby Rebello and Bill Thomas *Edgartown*

1920s Em Eliot, Bob Jackson Jr., and John Norton



Clyde MacKenzie, left, author of this article, John Osborn and Coach Joe Robichau, of Edgartown High's 1949 Island championship team, before playing in Boston Garden.

1930s Edmund Berube, Bill Brown, Frank Mello and Huddy Worden 1940s Dick Enos, Sam Leighton, Huck Look Jr., Clyde MacKenzie Jr.,⁹ Johnny Madieras, Charlie Mello and John Osborn Jr. 1950s Donald Dube, David Dube and Jerry Grant

Legends in Island Basketball

Memories of Vineyard teams remain strong among many former players and fans, some now in their 80s, or even 90s. They still recall the outstanding players and teams from as far back as 70 years. Especially vivid in those memories are three players, one from each school, and three coaches. They truly can be designated "Island Legends."

The legendary player from Tisbury High is Ralph "Laffy" Lair, who played in 1917--1918. He was about 6 feet 2 inches tall, with a rugged build. Exciting to watch, he was quick and instinctive and outstanding in many sports. In the 1920s, he played semi-professional football and boxed professionally.

The Oak Bluffs legend is Cap Perry. He was the Island's best basketball player in the 1930s. With a muscular body, he was 5 feet 9 inches tall. Fast, a good dribbler, an excellent shooter and a strong defensive player, he is remembered by his

⁹ The author did not include himself in the list, but independent sources insisted he be added.

coach, Harry Dorr, as excelling in all aspects of the game.

Considered by many to be the greatest player the Island ever had, Sam Leighton of Edgartown was just over 6 feet tall. An excellent shooter, he could score from any angle, averaging 17.4 points a game in his senior year, scoring half the team's total points. His quick reflexes and great leaping ability made him an excellent defender as well. After graduation, he played for Boston University and in 1946-1947 set a record for college players in Boston Garden, scoring 37 points in one game.

Those are the Island's three legendary players.

Three coaches attained the status of a basketball legend. Now 94 years old, Harry Dorr coached the Oak Bluffs team for nearly twenty years, from 1927 until 1944. He still loves to talk about the sport with former players and fans. When he began coaching in 1927, the rules were little known on the Vineyard. He had much teaching to do. As we have seen, his team won the treasured Lions Club cup in 1937. During his first ten years, he won seven Island Championships, a record never equaled. His favorite player was Cap Perry, one of our Island legends.

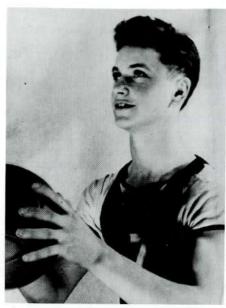
Joe Robichau, Edgartown's legendary coach, is proudest of his team that won the Cape and Island Championship in 1941. His career ran from the late 1930s through the early 1950s. His favorite players were Huddy Worden in the 1930s, Sam Leighton in the 1940s and Don Dube in the 1950s.

Another Edgartown coaching legend is the late Ed Staruk, who taught in 1944 and 1945 and brought the 1945 team up to win the Island championship, the year the sport was revived after World War II. He is remembered as being a more "high powered" coach than either Dorr or Robichau.

One man who must not be overlooked in this accounting of legends is George Santos of Tisbury. He knows more about the history of Vineyard basketball than any other person. He played forward on the Tisbury team that won the Island championship in 1942. Recalling the great games in basketball history, he said, "Each school had its turn at winning."

That's how it should be.

The Island's fondness for basketball continues, although the rivalry among the towns is no more. With that loss, much



Sam Leighton, Edgartown's star player in 1941 and 1942, was, in the author's opinion, the Island's greatest player of all time -- a basketball legend.

of the intensity among fans has diminished. Whether that is good or bad is not to be determined here.

What is definitely to be determined here, however, is that the years of intra-Island competition were surely the "glory years" of Vineyard basketball. Playing those pressure-packed, competitive games, boys and girls learned how to solve problems, a lesson they carried with them the rest of their lives.

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Shipwrecked 525 Miles from North Pole With Captain Coffin of Edgartown

PART THREE

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

FOR MORE than a year, the thirty-nine men of the Ziegler Polar Expedition have been on Rudolph Island in Franz Joseph Land, an archipelago in the Arctic Ocean. They are adventurers who hope to go down in history as the first humans to reach the North Pole 525 miles away. Plans changed when their ship, America, was crushed by ice floes in January and sank, taking with her tons of coal and provisions. Gone, too, was any certainty of getting home, across miles of ocean. Their hopes now rest on a relief ship expected in late summer 1904.

It is the end of March. From October through February 1904, they had lived in darkness, so far north that for five months, the sun never rose. They lived in a crowded hut under dim oil lamps as they prepared to make the "dash" to the Pole. It was no dash, of course. It would be a torturous marathon, more than 500 miles on foot across the Polar Ice Cap to 90 degrees north, where no man had been. Once there, they would hike 500 miles back to base camp. All this for fame. And fortune. William Ziegler, the New York millionaire who was financing them, had promised them both.

For those who would make the dash, it meant surviving on the ice for four months, eating provisions carried on sledges pulled by dogs and Siberian ponies, and drinking water from ice melted over tiny stoves. The animals also had to eat, adding to the cargo. Daily, each dog needed one pound of food, each human two pounds. The ponies consumed hay and oats in quantity. It was a challenge of great proportions.

Sixteen sledges would start out. Three would go all the way. The others were in support parties that would go only part

ARTHUR R. RAILTON, Editor of this journal, hopes to conclude this tale in the next issue.

way, hauling supplies. As each support party's provisions were consumed, it would return to the base, the now-empty sledges abandoned and ponies slaughtered as food for dogs and men. The third and final support party would stay with the polar party for three weeks before turning back, leaving four men, the four most fit, and three sledges to continue to the North

Pole. A bold, daring adventure, it was typical of the grand era

CAPTAIN COFFIN 137

of polar exploration 100 years ago.

The expedition had already made one attempt to reach the pole. Earlier in March, Commander Anthony Fiala started north with 26 men, but in a few days was forced to return by injuries and equipment failure. Fiala discovered that he had taken too many sledges, too many animals and too many men. He realized also that some of the men were unfit, physically or mentally, for the challenge. He told Russell Porter, assistant scientist who was on the trek, they would "start again with a very small party. . . six of [this] party were unfit." The second effort would be smaller and fitter: 16 men instead of 26; 16 sledges and 88 animals, instead of 25 and 133.

There was little time. The ice cap would be breaking up in summer, fingers of open water would block their advance. Now late in March, only two weeks after the first, a second start was made. Capt. Edwin Coffin recorded it:

Friday Mch 25th. The sledge column started at 11 AM sharp. Comprised of 9 dog sledges and 7 pony sledges. They all got away in good shape. None seemed to be overloaded. One dog from Pierre's sledge got away which was immediately caught [and] only caused a delay for five minutes.

Capt. Edwin Coffin, whose journals are the basis for this account, was a native of Edgartown and a veteran Arctic whaling master. Now 50 years old, he had been hired to command the steamer *America* and to carry the expedition to Franz Josef Land from northern Norway. He had done that, despite adverse conditions. The ice had been unusually thick and unyielding. When they finally reached Teplitz Bay, their base camp, at midnight, September 1, 1903, they were a month behind schedule. But Captain Coffin, his adrenaline pumping,

Russell W. Porter, The Arctic Diary of Russell W. Porter, National Archives, p. 38. We thank Heddi Vaughan Siebel, granddaughter of Dr. Vaughn of the Ziegler expedition, for making a copy available; and also thank Whit and Laura Griswold for making her aware of these articles.

steamed past Teplitz, continuing due north under the midnight sun, for 26 more miles. When he turned back, he had set a record: the *America* had gone farther north than any steamer in

history.²

That record did not impress the expedition commander, Anthony Fiala. His goal was to stand on the North Pole, not to set a northern record for steamships. The two men were very different, rarely agreeing. Fiala, 30 years old, was an adventurer, an artist of some merit, a photographer and a soldier of fortune. As the official photographer on a previous Ziegler Polar Expedition, he had impressed backer William Ziegler with his work. Ziegler had spent a lot on that failed expedition. Fiala's photographs were all he had to show for it.³ In gratitude, he put Fiala in command of this second polar expedition.

Coffin had not been on that first expedition. He had been chosen to command the steamer on this second effort because of his experience with Arctic ice. He knew its power first hand. The whaler *Rosario*, under his command a few years before, had been crushed by ice in Bering Sea. He was deter-

mined not to let that happen again.

During the slow, torturous voyage through the ice pack north, differences had developed between the two men. By the time they reached Teplitz Bay, their relationship was severely strained. Over the long, dark winter, it worsened. Especially so when Fiala insisted that Coffin keep his ship at Teplitz Bay all winter, despite the captain's warnings that it would be crushed. Before leaving New York, Coffin and Ziegler had agreed that the ship would be moved to a safer harbor. Now Fiala insisted that its presence was essential to the polar trek. If he moved it, Coffin would be responsible should the attempt fail, Fiala said.

Coffin was right. The *America* was crushed in a December storm that brought huge cakes of pack ice into Teplitz. Another storm soon after blew the ice and the ship out into the Arctic Ocean. No piece of her, not even a spar, was found.

His ship gone, Captain Coffin was without a command.

For the story of that trip see Intelligencer, November 1998.

His sailors had no duties as a crew. Fiala began giving them orders without consulting their captain. Soon, Coffin wrote, he was "simply an outsider, even with my own crew."

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Now, as March ended, Fiala had left the camp on his second attempt at the Pole. As soon as the three support parties had come back, most of the expedition would march south to Cape Flora to await the relief vessel, due in late summer. Coffin would command that 165-mile sledge trip.

He began at once to prepare. The trek would be across the ice covering the channels between the islands of the archipelago, ice that would soon break up in the summer. As on the polar trek, here no time could be wasted.

The relief vessel they were expecting had been promised by William Champ, Ziegler's secretary, before they left Norway. It was to bring fresh supplies and men so another attempt at the North Pole could be made in the spring, if the first attempts had failed. Now that the *America* was at the bottom of the Arctic Ocean, the relief ship would become their rescuer.

For those at Teplitz Bay getting ready to head south on the first leg of the trip home, the mood was good. Especially that of Captain Coffin. Now he was in command.⁴ He would once again be captain. He now had a purpose, a responsibility, even though he had lost his ship.

That joy didn't last. Two days after leaving camp, Fiala and the entire party returned, aborting the second Polar effort: At 5 PM sleds reported coming in. At first I supposed it the first [support] party returning from Fligley, but it proved to be the advance teams of the whole expidition party. The sleds broke up badly. Mr. Fiala said twas very rough ice and they only got one mile from the island when they camped at about 2 PM for two hours. Then broke camp and started back to land, camping for the night at Cape Fligley. . .

This [makes] the expidition North this year a failure... the plans for the future I do not know... Another year to stay for a certain number I think, but with a poor prospect I am afraid...

Fiala, in his book,⁵ described the aborted trek as morale

³ That earlier attempt, the 1902 Baldwin-Ziegler Expedition, ended when disputes arose among the leaders. Ziegler had invested \$300,000 in it. Now, he was spending \$350,000 on a second expedition, making a total of \$650,000 or the equivalent of millions of dollars today.

⁴ The chain of command became unclear when the ship was lost. By maritime law, once a ship is lost, the captain loses his command and the crew is no longer paid. But here they continued to be paid as expedition members and, it would seem, legally came under Fiala. Coffin didn't agree. ⁵ Anthony Fiala, Fighting the Polar Ice, Doubleday, Page & Co., 1906. Hereafter, citations in this book will be following the text, as Fiala.

breaking, but he still was hoping for success:

We arrived [back] at Camp Abruzzi filled with the pain of a second failure. . . and the hope that through the bitter lesson just experienced Victory might yet be wrested from Defeat. . . many of the men lost interest in the northern campaign and openly expressed their deep felt desire to go home. I called for volunteers to stay with me for another attempt in 1905. Quite a large party offered at first, but as the time of leaving drew near, a number weakened and the little band of true explorers grew smaller and smaller. I now set about preparations for a sledge journey to Cape Flora where the Relief Ship was expected to arrive in July or August of 1904. [Fiala, p. 88.]

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Fiala had told Coffin he would remain at Teplitz Bay to prepare for the third attempt, starting out in boats, as the ice would be breaking up:

Mr. Fiala has made up his mind to stay up here for another try for the record.⁶ Will try this summer in a boat, or two boats, ice opening enough. Keeping about 12 men here to go with him.

The sailors had proved to be better prepared, mentally and physically, than the men in the Field Department. Many volunteered for the third polar attempt:

The Steward informed me this morning that he had volunteered to stay here and was accepted. Also Duffy & McKiernan. Fireman Sigurd also. The ship's crew are furnishing the sinews of war it seems. Anton Vedoe will stay also. What others I do not know at present except the 1st Engineer Mr. Hartt. He is bound to stay at all hazards.

Then suddenly, Fiala changed his mind, dashing Coffin's hope of commanding the trek to Cape Flora. Fiala would not make another attempt for the Pole until next year:

Mr. Fiala said he had made up his mind to go to Cape Flora with the party and return to this camp to get ready for the winter. Also to give up his proposed boat Journey North this summer.

Fiala claimed he was needed to make sure the men got to Cape Flora safely. He was "obliged" to go and, sadly, that encouraged others to "leave the field of exploration":

Unfortunately, I was obliged to lead the retreating party to Cape Flora in person, returning to Camp Abruzzi before winter; a plan that had the effect of increasing the number of those who were anxious to march south and leave the field of exploration. I did not wish any one to remain on Rudolph Island to await my return -- and march north with me the following year -unless he was anxious to stay. [Fiala, p. 93.]

With Fiala in charge of the march, Coffin again became an "outsider" and, like some of the others, a care and anxiety to Fiala that would end only when they left on the relief vessel:

After arriving at Cape Flora I intended to return with a few men in the fall to my North Station, Relief Ship or no Relief Ship. . . when the men left Teplitz Bay it was for good and meant the loss of service to the expedition of nearly all of them, and they could not be considered in any other light than as a care and a source of anxiety to the leader until they were aboard the Relief Ship. [Fiala, p. 95.]

He may have considered the men "a care," but Captain Coffin thought otherwise. It was he who was responsible for his crew and they were 15 of the 25 who would be hiking to Flora:

I must now look out for my crew as I and I only am responsible for their persons after we start South, notwithstanding all contrary reports. Plenty of Self at Camp. . . Mr. Fiala is in no condition to start down for Cape Flora now. I am afraid he will give out. There is much feeling against him in many ways.

Fiala, ailing or not, issued one of his General Orders. Fourteen men would stay at Abruzzi, six of them all winter to keep the camp ready for Fiala's return to try again for the Pole. Seven others were given these orders:

Porter, Rilliet and Anton Vedoe will leave in 10 days on a surveying trip to Graham Bell Land and Zichy Land. In compliance with an expressed wish of Mr. William Ziegler, you will simply letter or number newly discovered islands or land. Near the end of July, Peters, Tafel, J. Vedoe and Spencer are to leave for Cape Flora. You [Peters] will leave somebody in command when you leave. [Fiala, p. 98.]

The main body, 25 men, would leave on April 30th. Captain Coffin and Haven did some scouting the day before:

Everything rushing for the sledge trip. All kinds of work that 38 men could do so as to get away tomorrow at midnight. Nights will be the best time to travel and sleep days. I went over to Cape Auk and one mile out along the shore ice. Mr. Haven went with me. . . to pick out a road through the heavy ridge ice on to the smooth ice close along the rocks. The main thing was to find out if there was any ice in the immediate vicinity of Cape Auk. Had been reported that it was all water. . . I found the ice solid all the way and no water at any place. . . The walk of ten miles was quite enjoyable. Just cold enough not to get too warm.7

More than two tons of foods were loaded on the sledges, more than half of it for the animals. When carefully rationed,

⁶ Now he will try only "for the record," not necessarily for the Pole. The record was 86 degrees 34 minutes North and had been set by Captain Cagni of the d'Abruzzi team in 1900.

⁷ The 50-year-old captain was in good shape, as we shall see.

Fiala calculated, that would last until the relief vessel arrived. Each man was allowed to take 42 pounds of clothing and personal effects. Such equipment as tents, cookers, utensils, tools, small boats and building materials, were loaded on the sledges. Fiala had limited each pony sledge to 700 pounds, each dog sledge to 350. Months later, when they ran out of tobacco, a highly prized item, Coffin was critical of those limits:

Tobacco might have been brought down very easy. Any pony could [have] haulled 800 lbs here. Also 50 lbs more on nearly all the dog teams which would have been nearly 3000 lbs that could [have] been of the kind of food we are without and would given us full rations for the time we stay here, call it to August 20, 1904.

They would hike at night when the sun, which never sets at this time of year, was in the north, behind them, putting less glare on their eyes. Night marching meant lower temperatures, desirable because they did not perspire, keeping clothing drier. It meant firmer snow to sledge over. In addition, under the daytime sun, their tents would be warmer for sleeping.

Departure day, April 30th, was beautiful:

... fine weather... much packing... all hands were eager to be on the Retreat and so they worked with willing hands. At 8 PM we got clear of the camp on the flat young ice (we travelled over yesterday) and made good time.

Before leaving, Fiala met with the men who would stay behind, those willing to go on the third polar attempt:

I called together the little band who were to stay at the Northern Station and told them that I would return in the summer or fall, and that I would bring with me letters from home expected on the Relief Ship -- and possibly new men and dogs. We shook hands all around and then I gave the signal to start our backward march. We left, a party of 25 men, 16 pony sledges, and 8 dog teams and sledges. [Fiala, p.99.]

That first night, the thermometer read 5 degrees above zero. Sledging was without problems and they covered 7 miles before making camp for the day. Coffin was pleased:

Had our first meal of Pemmican and Tea.⁸ We were all hungry and it tasted fine. We were very comfortable in our tents. I never slept better in my life nor did I feel tired with the day's trip.

The "retreat" (as the march was called) had been ex-

pected to take 26 days, about six miles a day. They did much better than that. The second night they made 14 miles, the third, 21. Coffin was in good spirits, even a bit childish:

We are doing much better than we figured on. Instead of 26 days to Flora we will probably make it in sixteen sure. Fine weather. I am feeling better every day and not at all tired. The first day out, I wrenched my back sliding down a glacier (playing boy) and it bothers me to get in the right position to sleep.

Each midnight, they stopped for "lunch" and then continued until the less-fit men tired. Coffin and his sailors were doing well. Weather observer Long had an accident:

A few of the men seem tired, particularly Moulton who is not in good condition. All the sailors and others of the *America's* crew are in good shape and do not tire. . . Mr. Long fell and hurt himself. . . the latter part of the day's trip [he] rode on his sledge.

Only an injured man could ride. They all walked beside their sledges, at times getting behind to push them through difficult stretches. It was exhausting, especially for the older men. Sergeant Moulton and Mr. Long were among them. Both had been on the earlier Ziegler expedition. Moulton, an Army cavalryman on leave, was in charge of ponies, and Long was from the Department-of Agriculture.

The 24 sledges, pulled by dogs and ponies, moved over the snow and ice in single file. At the end of a night's march, they set up camp, eight tents and about 100 animals, an activity that was time-consuming. Even the midnight lunch stop took an hour, Fiala wrote:

I halted the column after a four or five hours' march and prepared hot coffee, and in one hour from halting we were on the march again, each one of the men having received two cups of the steaming beverage and all the water he wished to drink; quick time when it is considered that the water had to be melted from ice at the temperature of the air. ¹⁰ [Fiala, p. 102.]

The two main meals, breakfast and dinner, took much longer, two hours each. Fiala and steward Spencer prepared the food. It must have shocked Coffin to see the expedition's Commander in the cook tent. Too much democracy, he probably

⁸ Pemmican is made from dried beef, dried fruit and suet pounded into cakes, usually for dog food, but on sledge trips it was eaten by men.

⁹ Long was very fit for his 40 years and experienced in the Arctic. He had been on the tragic Greely expedition to N.W Greenland in 1881-84, one of only seven who survived.

¹⁰ At lunch, the men ate from their weekly ration of seven pounds of bread and 21 pork and bean biscuits, plus condensed milk, sugar, butter and chocolate, all of which they carried as personal baggage. The cook melted the ice and made the hot coffee.

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muttered. Fiala seemed to romanticize the scene:

The menu consisted of coffee or tea, bread, butter, cold meats, and a stew. It was upon this stew that the cook and I bent our energies in the hope of producing something appetizing. . . 14 ounces of meat were allowed each day per man. . [mostly] pemmican. When a meal was ready, one man from each tent came to Cook with a tin for the food allowed his tent. . . On his return, sitting in the pleasant warmth of the [sleeping] bag of deerskin, they partook of the hot food, and smoked their pipes of peace. Nothing so delights a sailor's heart, as a smoke after a warm meal. [Fiala, p. 103.]

As a sledge's provisions were consumed, the sledge was abandoned and a pony killed (the least fit), its meat being fed to the 80 dogs. The ponies, like the dogs, were hard-working beasts and it pained some, including Coffin, to see them slaughtered. There were arguments over which was better for the job, dogs or ponies. One pony pulled more than a 10-dog team, but, being heavier, it would break through the crust:

Shot one Pony just before leaving for dog food. . . Demolished one sledge that the pony killed was drawing . . . Pretty hard going for the ponies as they broke through the crust so much. One gave out and we stopped, made coffee at 4 AM. . . The ponies worked well but they would cut through the crust, sometimes go in to their bellies. The dogs had a picnic as it was hard enough to hold them up.

Rough ice forced them to deviate from the straight course to Flora on the eighth day, meaning extra miles to hike. The ice caused other problems, as Coffin wrote:

Made a crooked course this trip going through some rough ice. . . Sledges upset at the last ridge. . . Camped under the glacier. Broke camp at 9 PM and worked all around from NNW to South. Wherever we went, we found rough ice. . . the ponies would go in to their bellies. . . Made only two miles . . . Worst ice so far. . . went into camp at 2:15 A.M. Everybody tired. . . Cutting of roads through the ridges was [only] about half done. . . That was the cause of the sleds upsetting and breaking.

Coffin had no patience with those who criticized without facts. Even the more empathetic Fiala now agreed:

Some of the wise ones in the column wondered in grieved tones why we did not take the smooth strip that they had seen from camp before we started. . . I had come to realise that much of the criticism emanated from fatigue and empty stomachs. Judgments were more just after a rest and a good meal. . . the crew of the lost *America* proved particularly good travellers, and were cheerful and helpful during the entire march. [Fiala, p. 107.]

Only one day was the weather bad. The fog was so thick

on May 8th they stayed in their tents for 24 hours. Coffin was continuing to act tireless, as did his dog, Moses:

... weather thick and the ice so bad it wouldn't pay to grope around in the fog. We all went to bed. . . Broke camp at 7:30 P.M. . . Everybody was ready to start after the long rest but soon got tired. I have got along very well and feel in better condition than at the start from Camp Abruzzi. The ponies are all right. It seems a pity to have to kill them at Cape Flora. . . The [dogs] are fine. Many good ones among them. Moses, our ship dog, proved to be good as any working and grew fat on it. The trip has been done by easy stages and no one ought to feel any inconvenience from it.

There were some who disagreed with the captain about the "easy stages." The next night, there was a mutiny:

While Mr. Fiala and myself were ahead on the lead, all the party went into camp without any orders. When we started to go back, the distance was about 1 3/4 miles, we supposed there had been some serious accident, but it only proved [to be] that the ponies were tired, ditto some of the Field party. So they stopped and camped for the night. The orders and intention [had been] to make Eaton Island. . . When I got to the camp everybody was settled down and some eating lunch of hard bread, taking the world easy. \(^{11}\)

For nearly two weeks, the men had been trudging across ice and snow. It was no wonder they were tiring. All winter they had been sitting around camp, getting little exercise. Now, they were hiking more than 165 miles, as far as from Boston to Albany, N.Y., across rough ice and snow, sleeping in thin silk tents, eating little. They had a right to be exhausted. But Coffin gloats, describing how he and his crew are doing: ... march is pretty slow to allow the tired ones to keep up and the stops to

rest were numerous, 7 in two and a half hours in the first part on account of the ponies, the Doctor said. [2nd Officer] Nichols is doing very well. Mr. Haven [1st Officer] is fresher every day. The rest of the crew are OK and say they are never tired and always ready to continue any day's journey when we went into camp. . . The going is about all alike, deep soft snow most of the time 12. . . Mr. F. and self were leading & never sat down at all.

After 16 days of hiking, they arrived at Cape Flora, the most southern point in the archipelago. In a few months, the relief ship would be coming to take them home. But hope faded when they looked south toward Norway:

As we reached the top of the raised beach, all eyes were turned south in

¹¹ Coffin was told later that young Dr. Vaughn had been the "ringleader" of the revolt.

¹² Strange that snowshoes are never mentioned. Apparently, they wear boots they made themselves from seal skin. It would seem that they should have had more suitable footwear, especially when some were expected to hike 1100 miles to the North Pole and back.

hope of beholding an open ocean. But disappointment was ours. A vast sheet of glistening white, the Barentz Sea, from horizon to horizon, lay silent and dead in the grasp of the Ice King. [Fiala, p. 109.]

Although disappointed about the ice, all were pleasantly surprised at the caches they found, left by previous expeditions, years earlier. Packed in metal-lined boxes, soldered tight, were huge amounts of food. Little did they know how essential these would be to their survival.

Before setting up camp, there was an unpleasant chore, upsetting to both Fiala and Coffin:

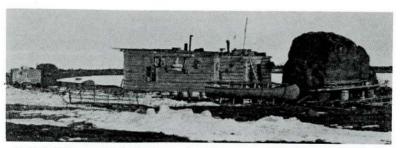
Our arrival at Cape Flora was marked by. . . one of the saddest events of the two years. The ponies which had served us so faithfully for many months and, as their last hard task, had dragged down from Teplitz Bay the heavily loaded sledges, were shot. [Fiala, p. 110.]

They were carrying, the doctor said, a serious disease that could spread to humans: glanders, a respiratory infection, sometimes fatal, of the lymph nodes. Coffin, softhearted about animals, thought the executions should be delayed. For months after, he remembered the action as a mistake. He felt they should have been killed later, as needed for food:

The ponies were all in good shape so far as I could judge by an outward exam. The Doctor says they nearly all have the Glanders. As soon as the whole party arrived, the Ponies were led out one side and shot -- 10 of them -- saving two at Mr. Fiala's request, as he wishes [to use] them to go back to Teplitz Bay.

Coffin and Haven inventoried the caches. The amounts and variety in them were amazing. The food had been there for three years or longer yet it was almost all unspoiled, indeed, in some cases, delicious. There were 4400 pounds of biscuits (very good), 13 1440 pounds of butter (very good), 600 pounds of herrings, 200 pounds of Edam cheese (some damaged), 600 pounds of cooked ham (very good) and boiled beef (200 pounds), corned beef (200 pounds), roast mutton (216 pounds) and rabbits (410 pounds).

There were canned vegetables, dried rhubarb and olive oil, as well as such non-food items as 777 candles, various medicines, ammunition, kerosene (50 gallons), matches, two stoves, several lamps and some soap.



Coffin's "Elmwood," the log house, in mid-summer 1904. Behind it is a fresh water pond, frozen over. The huge rock to the right was a good windbreaker.

On higher ground above the beach were the remains of three buildings of previous expeditions. One was a storehouse used by the Duke of Abruzzi in 1901, where the cache was found. It was a ten-sided wooden structure, its canvas roof gone. The second was a log house, built by the English explorer Frederick Jackson in about 1895.14 The third building had been a stable, now all that remained was its wooden frame, the canvas sides shredded by the winds.

The walls and floors of the log house and storehouse were saturated with water from ice and snow that had drifted in over the winters. But both offered roomier and warmer shelter than tents. Coffin's Deck Department, plus Fiala, would live in the log house, once it was made habitable:

We found the house Elmwood, named by Jackson, in bad condition. The roof had been off for some time, blown by the severe gales of last winter all over the ground. All the outer windows, the glass was all broken. Quite a number of the inside sashes had the lights broken. Hovlik [the Norwegian fireman] repaired what he could right away. The floor of the house was covered with ice, some places to a depth of 6 inches. Frost hanging all over the ceiling. . . The house was lined throughout with felt and that was all full of frost. Quite a quantity of coal was found and we started the fires, the stoves were in fair condition and [we] kept them going night and day. Looks if it would require one week to dry out . . .

The Field Department's eight men would live in the eight-sided storehouse once it was dry and its roof in place.

The work took their minds off the ice that blocked

¹³ In parenthesis are Coffin's comments about each item.

¹⁴ Frederick George Jackson from 1894 to 1897 had explored Franz Joseph Land, discovering it was an archipelago not a continent as had been thought. In the winter of 1896, by chance he discovered Norwegians Nansen and Johansen close to death after failing in an attempt to reach the North Pole, saving their lives.

their rescue. For most, there was no doubt that by summer's end they would be on their way home. Fiala and Coffin seemed less certain, although neither would admit it. Later, Fiala wrote that preparations for spending the winter at Flora began at once. That was not the case. Fiala was writing with hindsight: The Relief Ship was expected. . . in July or early August [but] there is nothing certain above the ice line in the Arctic. . . [so we began] our preparations at once to provide for a stay through the winter should the Relief Ship not arrive. The officers and crew of the lost *America* therefore laboured industriously to remove from their icy envelopes the barrels and cases of food deposited by other explorers. [Fiala, p. 111.]

Just as at Teplitz Bay, the ship's crew did most of the work while the Field Department's "scientists" stood by. Muscles, not brains, were needed now. After hiking more than 165 miles in 16 days, most of the ship's crew got no time off: Got dinner at 7 PM and immediately commenced to take an inventory of the available stores with members of the stmr's crew. The members of the expidition [Field Department] went to sleep in their tents. . . Part of my men were cleaning out the house. Mr. Nichols [2nd mate] did not come to work. Staid in his tent. He was pretty well played out when he arrived here by all accounts. Truden worked, the only one of the Field party. Ross of the crew and the boy Dean did not come to work. Tired with having so much sleep yesterday.

The following day, the "scientists" joined in:

The field party are unloading the sleds and packing the loads on top of the stable. Finished taking acc't of the Duke Abruzzi's cache. Found the record of stores which saved me much trouble and time. All tallied out except 20 c [cases] of condensed milk which only counted out one half. 20 c Salt not found. This afternoon the same men commenced to clear out the stable for a storehouse. Tis full of snow and ice.

The Field Department men had been picked by Fiala and William Champ, some having been with Fiala on the earlier Ziegler expedition. Despite this, Fiala did not move in with them, preferring to stay with Coffin and the sailors:

The Field party have applied for and are going to fix up the Round House with the canvas top [that] the Duke had his cache in. Mr. Fiala and all the stmr crew will live in the log house & will probably have the best quarters. The house commences to look better now as the ice melts out. . .

While the two living quarters were being dried out, the



Rear of the log house. The Round House is in distance, right. Behind, left, is the talus, 900 feet high. It was on it, at 600 feet up, that a coal vein was uncovered.

men slept in tents. The log house, while larger than the round house, was still small -- about 20 feet square. ¹⁶ In it, 17 men would live. When Jackson built it in 1894, he complained that it was too small for eight men. Now it would house twice that many. It had to be modified:

Knocked down all the partitions in the house. . . leaving only the cook's room in the SW corner. 17 Now the house is in condition to put in berths. Also stripped all the felt [insulation] from walls and ceiling and the old oil [cloth] carpet from the floor. . .

Ship's carpenter Peter Tessem, a Norwegian, had stayed at Teplitz Bay, volunteering for the third attempt at the North Pole in the spring. Fortunately, fireman Hovlik, another Norwegian, was a jack of all trades. Coffin, who had trained as a machinist, was also handy with tools:

Today I had to rip off all the outer roof boards to clean out the inside. Not many left to rip. Many boards are missing and tis a conundrum how I will cover it and we still [need boards]. . . to erect berths inside the house. With care I believe the roof can be made tight. The field party are wanting all [the boards] they can get.

With so much at stake, it would seem there would have been a spirit of cooperation between the two groups. There they were, 25 men, marooned and desperate, with a single goal: to survive until the relief ship arrived. But the split between the Deck and Field Departments that began on the way from

¹⁵ In Elmwood, p. 4, Coffin wrote: "Stores left by Duke of Abruzzi 1901. Record found in a bottle with the stores cached in a wood upright & canvas top house."

¹⁶ Porter, p. 66.

¹⁷ The cook, who was expected to get up early, was given a room next to the galley so he could have a quiet place to sleep.

Norway had not healed:

Mr. Haven [1st mate] lent the only shovel he had to the folks at the R. [Round] House to be returned in a few minutes. . . Sent one of the men after it after a lapse of half an hour. Doctor N. [Newcomb] replied to the man, at his request for the shovel, "Oh, let the sons of Bitches wait. They want everything." Fine gentleman talk.

If the North Pole had been two miles North of Cape Fligley these men would never [have] reached it unless there had been another party ahead [that] might reach it before they did. . . This P.M. Truden with the help of the ship's crew put up frames for 12 berths, 17 to put up all told. 18

When Russell Porter, assistant scientist, arrived at Flora from Camp Abruzzi in July, he was shocked at what he found: I met the different members of the party here as the day wore on, but regretted to learn that two distinct cliques had been formed, living independently of each other to a great degree, and that all food supplies had been divided on a proportionate basis. There seemed to be two different sides to the different incidents leading to this state of affairs. . . [Porter, p. 40.]

That animosity was apparent a day or so after they arrived at Flora when an argument developed over liquor found there. Alcohol, rarely mentioned by Coffin, was a commodity that, if available in quantity, could have brought disaster:

Even now in my tent I can hear Truden making a tirade with Mr. Fiala [concerning] the outcome of two bottles of Jamaica Rum which I took from a box (left here by the Duke) and handed to Mr. Fiala. . . They keep [Fiala] stirred up all the time and he has no real power to prevent these tirades. I heard Dr. Shorkley tell him not to speak to him socially again. He had done with him. Only on business to approach him.

In the log house, 17 bunks were built, mostly three high, around the walls, leaving space in the center for a common area and a table. Coffin and two men built double-deck bunks (he called them berths): one for Fiala, the lower, and the upper for him. Shelves were mounted along the wall and at the foot of the bunks. Later, Coffin built himself a folding writing table. On May 23rd, he moved in. One day later, Fiala joined him. Coffin liked the new quarters:

The Berths are built on the side therefore will be dry if we have to winter here. The house has been swept out half a dozen times today. So much work going on tis dirty all the time. Jackson never would recognize the interior of his house now. Tis now in good condition for a good sized party. We are 17 men. . . more comfortable than when at Teplitz Bay.

Things had turned out better than they had expected. It was now daylight all the time, the sun never setting. The temperature had moderated, almost tropical compared to what they had been through during the winter. ¹⁹ They had plenty of food, fresh water from a stream of melting glacial ice behind them. Thanks to the Duke d'Abruzzi, there was enough coal for cooking and heating until relief arrived. And relief was on its way. So the men kept telling themselves.

And there was sport: hunting. Whenever the occasional bear showed up, the dogs and many of the men took off after it. It was exciting and not just for fun. It was for survival. Bear meat was essential as food for the dogs and shortly it was to became a treat for themselves.

Within a week, they killed the first bear and bear steak was served. The cook wasn't sure how to prepare it and there was mixed opinions about its taste. But he soon learned how and bear steak became a favorite.²⁰

The dispute between Fiala and the men in the Field Department was getting worse. John Truden, the commissary officer, reopened the argument about the rum:

Now I am informed by Mr. Fiala that he, Truden, said he was there when the box was opened and there was three bottles of Rum. Now if this is so, the third bottle is in or was in his hands. I am certain though that he was not near when I took the two bottles to Mr. Fiala.

Twas this way: Dr. Vaughn came there after the box had been open and did himself take out the second bottle of Jamaica Rum and placed it on the snow beside the other bottle that I laid down and I told him I was going to take them to Mr. Fiala . . . I had hardly reached the tent of Mr. Fiala before Dr. Shorkley made his appearance and wanted to know what he was going to do with that Rum. Mr. F.'s answer I did not exactly catch. Something about keeping the Liquor himself for a while.

Rum wasn't all they argued over. There was a large carton of soap in the Duke's cache. Truden, as commissary officer responsible for stores, had not shared the much-wanted item fairly, or so the sailors claimed:

men and the dogs, according to Coffin's Elmwood journal.

¹⁸ This disproves Coffin's repeated claims that Field Department men were not cooperative. Commissary Officer Truden from the Round House is helping install berths in Coffin's house.

¹⁹ However, it was not warm. In June, July and August, there were only 16 days when it did not freeze. Warmest was July 19, with a low of 40, a high of 54. On July 30, it snowed.

20 During their stay at Cape Flora, 66 bears, 16 walrus and 24 seals were killed and eaten by the

Truden was in after a division of soap castile. . . two of our men informed Mr. F. that Truden, the first time the soap was found, carried off over half of it and now he comes over after one half of the other half. . . of 120 [cakes] he took 64 cakes without permission and issued it to the field party. This is what they call gentlemanly conduct.

Fiala sided with the sailors and ordered Truden to make the division equal. The commissary officer disputed the decision. Bitter words were exchanged:

Truden was over here this afternoon on purpose to insult Mr. Fiala. It looked so as he did [it] more than once. After Mr. F. told him to resign, he replied he would not and [said he] did not recognize him as the commander of this expidition. Mr. F. then said turn over all your books and. . . said, I relieve you from duty. Truden said he did not recognize his authority. . . He would turn [the books] over to Mr. Ziegler. He said all this in a manner to lead one to say it was all premeditated.

I should call him an utter failure. I record this as I think I may be called to witness the gross treatment of his Commander

Fiala was not one to crack down on such things. He preferred to forget them, hoping they would correct themselves without action by himself. However, he was bothered by the rebellious mood. To escape the problem, he decided to return to Teplitz to prepare for his third attempt at the North Pole: Mr. F. has made up his mind to go back to Teplitz Bay but I hardly think he will go. I think he is making a mistake as the going will be bad and he may meet Mr. Peters on his way down. ²¹ Although he [Peters] was to start in July, he may start sooner. Other reasons are more weighty still. He ought to see Mr. Champ first.

William Champ, Ziegler's secretary and the man who controlled the money, had accompanied them to Vardo, Norway, a year earlier. As they left for Franz Joseph Land, he promised Fiala he would bring a relief steamer to Cape Flora the following summer with supplies so that if they had not yet made it to the Pole, another attempt could be made the next year. It was this steamer they were awaiting. If Fiala left, he would miss a chance to talk to Champ about what to do next.

A week later, Fiala changed his mind about going north. He would await the relief vessel. When he announced this, perhaps recalling Truden's outbursts, he made sure all knew that he was the commander. Coffin, in the privacy of his

journal, made clear that he was not included in the remark: At 8:30 P.M., Mr. F. talked to all the party at quite a length. I could not quite see the point of his address. He read the papers given him by Mr. Ziegler which gave him possession of the property owned by him. And also other privileges I will not enter into. They gave him power over all private contracts. Although of course not over a Government Commissioned officer and Master on the high seas or on the land where there was no law.

Coffin and Fiala both believed the relief ship would not arrive until late summer, but the men were impatient. It was now mid-June. Daily they hiked up the high talus behind the camp to search the southern horizon, hoping to see clear water through which the ship could come. Imagination often took over as they stared. Coffin, as usual, was critical:

Thwing came in last night and reported lots of open water and walrus iumping around it. I was out just before and could see no water to the south within five miles. Another eye delusion. I do not know what to make of the people whose imaginations can let them see anything. I can see a great deal of disappointment in some of my own crew who think they know it all & actually know very little. . . Now they have a worried look, thinking possibly the ice will not open and let our relief ship come to us.

Their anxiety increased as weeks passed with the ice holding solid. The men became increasingly indolent, doing only a minimum of housekeeping. When they weren't up on the high land looking for the relief ship, they sat around the house arguing, playing cards or merely lying in their berths. With Commander Fiala in the house, Coffin gave no orders. Who was in charge? Nobody, it seemed. The men argued: we're not on ship, the captain can't give us orders. Why do any work that is not essential? When the ship comes, we'll leave. This place was in shambles when we got here. We fixed it up. When we leave it will go back to shambles. Why do any more?

Their argument made sense. But not to a captain who wanted everything shipshape. It was hard for him to adjust to the situation, especially to living in the same room as sailors: Some funny things are heard. This morning a man said, "Oh! I never heard of such a thing as waking a man to sweep up the floor at 7:30 and we have breakfast at 8."

He believed work to be good for the soul. It kept the men out of mischief. But he wasn't in command. Fiala was. And all Fiala wanted was a peaceful house, a happy team: On Mr. Fiala's account I have to swallow many things like this [the sailor's

 $^{^{21}}$ Peters, the Chief Scientist, had stayed at Teplitz and Fiala had instructed him to come to Flora with three others late in July to meet the relief ship.

comment about sweeping]. Simply a man working his own sweet will. And after, he will blow [boast of] how he worked the boss on his last trip. I hardly think Mr. Fiala can say no.

Coffin didn't like the way Fiala was ingratiating himself with the sailors and distancing himself from the Field Party:

He holds on to the steamer's regular signed crew like a drowning man to a straw. . . [and] seems deserted by the Field Prty and they are now doing just as they like without any restraint. They have been very anxious to get the two bottles of rum in their possession.

If they were forced to spend another winter, survival would depend on discipline and Fiala was not up to that, Coffin knew. They would have to cut rations further. That meant discipline. Already, the sailors complained about their short rations. One called the house, "Starvation Camp." They knew that the men in the Round House were eating better. Dr. Vaughn did the cooking there and he enjoyed tasty dishes, even made doughnuts. The sailors decided to get more:

Some little things have been stolen from the store room and I think tis easy to place the parties. Nailed up [the door] until Hovlik made a key.

The next day Hovlik locked the storehouse. How he accomplished it we don't know. Hovlik was a miracle man. The day he signed up in Tromso as fireman was a lucky day for all. Skilled and resourceful, he could fix just about anything and he soon became the one indispensable man at Flora.

The groups continued to bicker. Dr. Shorkley, in report on the trek south, charged Coffin with being uncooperative: In Doctor Shorkley's report he said I frustrated the full report of the bodily condition of the Sledge party by refusing to be examined. The only time he ever said anything about it was on the steamer on the way through the ice between here and Norway. I then told him, before he requested me, that I did not belong to the Expedition party. [I] was the Captain employed to put the expedition as far north as possible, therefore he did not need my phisical capabilities. That was all. . . Mr. Fiala is all wrong if he thinks the expedition party has to do with me. . . Tis no use to repeat and I keep still.

Hunting eased the anxiety. During the long days of summer, game was plentiful. As soon as the dogs began barking excitedly, the men, guns in hand, would take off on the chase: At 8:30 some one exclaimed, "Bear!" and there was another rush, Mr. F. in the lead, bareheaded and half clothed. He is too careless and will pay for it if he is not more careful.

Bears were the most desirable and most exciting game.

But even the hunt could bring on an inter-house dispute:

A bear came towards the camp on the ice (first seen by Cowing). All the Field party came out with rifles & about 40 dogs turned out. They soon overtook him (as he was in no hurry to get away) and brought him at bay. Dr. Vaughn shot him. Brought him to Camp with a dog team. Skinned and cleaned him. Divided the carcass by sending over [here] the forequarters and some of the carcass, keeping the hind quarters for their use. Never a word said to Mr. Fiala about it. . . Truden came over to the house, awakening all at midnight (after the men had been working all day) saying what are you going to do with your meat? One of the forequarters was shot to pieces, with an explosive bullet (I should judge). A very unfair division, to say the least.

Without dogs, few bears would have been killed. They chased the animals, surrounded them, nipping at their backs, and kept them at bay until the men got close enough to shoot: Cowing and Duffy went out hunting after supper. The dogs (7) scented a bear near but just out of their sight and started after him. The bear ran out on the ice and the dogs brought him at bay on a hummock where they shot and wounded him. After exhausting the three cartridges they backed off and let the dogs hold him on top of the hummock. Hudgins was up on the Talis and saw their predicament and ran into camp and Mr. Fiala started out on a run. The game was about 1 1/2 mile away. . . They finished the bear immediately, he was shot seven times all told. Twas a large male.

Walrus was also much sought after. Especially when Russell Porter, recently arrived from Camp Abruzzi, set up a tent camp two miles north on Walrus Point. At first, walrus was only for dogs. Then the men found the liver delicious. When Porter and the men brought in a tender young walrus, the cook decided to try adding walrus steak to the menu:

Had some yearling Walrus for dinner and I liked it very much. Also Walrus (the same) liver for supper. Fine also. Mr. Fiala said he preferred the bear's meat to the walrus meat. I never hear any opinion expressed by any of the men. Mr. Haven liked both.

Seals also were good eating. Coffin thought they were the best of all. Round House men preferred bear meat:

The large seals are fine eating. In fact the best of any meats so far. The R. H. men seem to like bear meat as they have ate about 7 already. We don't seem to eat much. [Although] the last time we had some it was finer than usual, without the strong taste that had been in all before.

Seals had many uses. Oil was boiled out of the blubber and burned in lamps. The skin was made into waterproof boots and cut into narrow strips to make strong bindings for lashing.

Another favorite sport was shooting birds. In summer, there were thousands of loons on the talus. Geese were less numerous but much sought after for the table:

Butland came in this evening running. . . reported Brant Geese close to the house. Mr. Fiala & the Cook went out with him., Mr. F. giving him the double-barreled shot gun and he took his rifle. There were eleven Geese. Butland fired both barrels of his gun, Mr. F. his rifle at the same time. Three geese were killed, all killed by a rifle ball passing through the three. Mr. F. was very proud of his shot, probably they were the first large birds he ever had a chance to shoot. Butland never shoots well. The Cook's gun would not go off, the hammer refused to budge, owing to his not throwing the breech lock in.

Sunday dinner featured roast goose and loon. Coffin, although pleased, couldn't resist second-guessing the cook:

There was a fine dinner here today. Baked Goose & Loons, Tapioca pudding & mashed potatoes. The sailors got the Geese. The Officers and Commander the Loons. They were very fishy with the skins left on, still they tasted all right. They are better stewed. I never heard any comments on the Geese but suppose they were fine.²²

After Sunday dinner, Fiala, a religious man who spent much time reading the Bible, sent a sailor over to the Round House to announce his regular Sunday service. They were not usually well attended. This day, Truden, perhaps seeking forgiveness for his angry attacks on Fiala earlier, came over, along with Pierre LeRoyer, the French-Canadian fishing guide of Mr. Ziegler. Coffin never records his own attendance, although he regularly mentions the services. The following Sunday, Truden once again attended, less voluntarily this time:

Mr. Fiala held religious services this A.M. after ten. No one here from the other house excepting Truden, who got caught on an errand and Mr. F. quickly caught up his Bible and said, "We will have services now."

Fiala's Bible quoting and pressure on attending did not appeal to the sailors and may have been a factor in the growing discontent. After one service, Coffin wrote:

Kunold, the worst egg of the lot, was heard to say by Mr. Haven that he would raise hell with that ---- old preacher (some hard name) when he got to N. York.

Collecting eggs was another "sport" and one that also

improved their diet. Thousands of gulls and loons nested on

The boys got 4 dozen eggs today, mostly (as yesterday) Gull's. Dr. Shorkley and Seitz were also up with a ladder they made over at the other house.

The fresh eggs made breakfasts special:²³

Had yesterday's eggs for breakfast, fried and they were very good.

Coffin rarely hunted, although he had two excellent rifles that he would lend to sailors. Instead, he and First Mate Haven hunted fossils, climbing the talus often for specimens. It isn't known what happened to their collection. In his book, Fiala mentions bringing back fossils, but does not credit either Coffin or Haven:

Some of the members of the expedition have collected mineralogical specimens, but nothing of scientific value except possibly the fossils collected at Cape Flora. [Fiala, p. 252.]

Much of the quarreling between the Field Department and Fiala was childish. Especially so, given the circumstances. Sometimes it was brought on by Fiala's indecisiveness. He preferred letting matters drift. The men forced his hand:

Dr. Vaughn came over to tell Mr. Fiala that he must divide the coal stowed against their house (in sacks)24. . . when he first came in he would not allow Mr. Fiala to have any say. Perhaps he didn't think just how his demands sounded . . . many were present in the house at the time.

Truden, who insulted Fiala earlier, had apologized and was now a favorite. This did not please the sarcastic captain, whom Truden had replaced at the chess board:

Truden is very much in favor once again. . . [he] almost lives over here and monopolizes my chair to play chess with his friend Fiala, of whom he has spoken so well since leaving Teplitz Bay.

The Fourth of July came and went with no celebration except the making of a few patriotic gestures:

Monday July 4th 1904. . . Put up a pole on the house and hoisted the America's ensign, also another small American ensign. On the R. House, they put up a small silk ensign belonging to Long [sic]Truden.

The next day, all were surprised when two men who had been expected to stay at Teplitz, 165 miles away, for another year walked into camp. Both were members of Coffin's

the talus and the men climbed its steep face to rob the nests. When the eggs at the lower levels were gone, they built a ladder to get higher. Round House men did the same:

 ⁷³ The men in Coffin's house collected nearly 300 eggs.
 24 This was the coal that had been left there by the Duke d'Abruzzi.

²² Coffin recorded 312 loons and 7 geese having been killed.

route to Flora, they decided to go along, eager to get on the relief ship. The trek from Teplitz had taken two months:

At 10 this evening a Sledge team showed up, coming around Cape Flora on the ice close to the land. It proved to be the Steward [Spencer] and McKiernan who left Camp Abruzzi the 9th of May with Mr. Porter who was on a mapping expedition on his way to this place and stopped on this island's NE point (Camp Point). They stopped 12 days at Camp Ziegler and sorted and secured all the stores at that point. From there to Camp Point it took them 26 days. All are well. When they left Camp Abruzzi, the carpenter [Tessem] was sick with cold and [so was] the fireman Seguard. . . Mr. Porter will be here in a few days. He has with him Mr. Reliette & Antone [Vedoe]. Mr. F. is much pleased with the success of the sledge party just come in. Well, tis just what we might expect of Mr. Porter. He is from Massachusetts. 25

Two days later, Porter and his two assistants arrived, having completed their surveying work at Camp Point. They brought some much-needed bear meat. The addition of five men to the roster meant smaller rations for all. Coffin invited them to stay in the log house, but they declined:

Porter's crowd shot a bear the morning they left Camp Point and brought it into camp. They look well and well seasoned. They are a welcome addition to our party and draw their rations with us. Today, Mr. Fiala figured out just how much change there would be in issuing our rations now [that] we are 22 men instead of 17... the boys have concluded to live in their tents. We will not build berths for them in the house. Tis much better living out in tents. One can lie down without having to listen to all kinds of yarns. The men who came in would not live with some now in the Round House.

Porter, the assistant scientist, was part of the Field Department, but Coffin was eager to have him in the log house: I laid out a bench for Mr. Porter to sleep on using his sleeping bag for a bed. Beddow did the work and now tis already for him. So I expect he will be in to sleep here tonight.

After deciding to stay in his tent, Porter must have regretted it, if Coffin's description of the next night is accurate: There was quite a land slide just above Porter's tent and was so near them that they tore their tent in trying to get out quickly. Some of the rocks rolled down to the foot of the Talis, two hundred yards from the tent. But it sounded so loud that they thought it was right on top of them.

A week later, a violent storm tore his tent into shreds: I [Porter] lay in my bag as long as I could, hoping I might be able to avail myself of the fresh air and independence that living under canvas gives, but the silk continued to tear. . . the rain came, soaking my bag and outfit until I was forced to seek shelter in the log house. The environment [in there] is distasteful to me, the atmosphere bad, damp and close. But there is no alternative 26. . . I long to be back on the trail. [Porter, p. 41-2.]

That morning, Mr. Porter moved into Coffin's house. His stay was brief. A little over a week later, he and five sailors set up a hunting camp. He makes it sound as though he had been ordered to do it, but it more likely was his choice. He just didn't like staying in the log house:

I was detached with a hunting party to a point about two miles north to prosecute walrus hunting. I remained at this place five weeks with five men, during which 14 walruses were secured. They were pleasant days . . . even though it rained and blew a good deal of the time. The men with me were Butland, Mackiernan, Beddow, Montrose and the cabin boy James Dean. . . When not out after game, we were at work on harpoons, blubbering skins, removing the hair, making long walrus lines from the oogook seal and drying the skins for soles. [Porter, p. 46.]

All those who joined Porter were Coffin's men. Among them was fireman Butland, whose departure pleased the captain. "Our thorn," is how he had described him. A week later, Coffin walked down to the tent camp on Walrus Point, as it was called.²⁷ His earlier favorable opinion of Porter, the man he said was from Massachusetts, changed:

I went down to the point yesterday. They are situated all right with tents raised on rocks with a board bottom to each of the two. Mr. Porter seems to be the King and his subjects seem to like him. I fancy he does not care for company [such] as Mr. Haven & I, as he was barely civil to us in the way of talk. I am not quite used to these things although I ought to be after being with this Polar expedition so long. This was a good sample of how big we are in our own minds.

Porter, in his journal, comments often about Coffin's personality, providing a counterpoint to the captain's writings: How I have longed to have Kipling here to shape [these events] into readable form. The Captain seems to do a good deal of his thinking aloud.. delivering an almost perpetual broadside of stage asides . . . Occasionally some one will catch my eye, throw me the wink, and nod significantly toward the skipper. . . I take this man to be the most amusing man under observation at these quarters -- a weatherworn whaler from Edgartown who

²⁶ In reporting this, Coffin added: "Still his evil genius followed him." It is unclear to what he was referring. Was it Porter's evil genius or one of the men in his party?
27 That was Coffin's name for it; Porter, revealingly, called it Peace Point.

²⁵ Fiala's roster shows him as Russell W. Porter, Springfield, Vermont. [Fiala, p.12.]

knows all about oil, grease, blubber, bone and a modicum of lore about the sea and ships. But his unbounded conceit and self esteem is at times too laughable to bear. [Porter, p. 62.]

As summer drew to an end, hopes of relief were still clung to by some, among them Rilliete, one of those who had just come south with Porter from Teplitz Bay. He climbed 980 feet to the very top of the talus, and placed there an American flag. It would be visible for miles. Steamer "sightings" were becoming frequent. One afternoon Truden came down from the talus, very excited. He had seen smoke from a steamer. But no steamer arrived. Even Fiala caught the fever, telling Coffin he was sure the steamer was within 100 miles. The next day, he climbed the talus and reported he, too, had seen smoke. Coffin had been up there and seen none:

Simply because water is in sight they all think that the relief ship ought to come in. Forgetting when we arrived here [a year ago], after finding ice all the way up from 74 [degrees north], there was no ice floe on the land here at all. Tis rather tiring to be in the same room and hear so much nonsense.

Porter and his hunters continued to do well. One day they shot two large walrus, providing a ton of meat. Two days later, they shot another along with her calf. Coffin was pleased: The dogs are happy now with their appetites satisfied on walrus meat. We had the calf liver for supper this eve and it was fine. Good as any liver I ever ate and tender also. Judging by the way it disappeared, all were of the same mind. There has not been the slightest trace of scurvy come to light in any of our people.²⁸

The unpleasantness continued between Fiala and the Field Department. The disputes continued to be childish:

Mr. Fiala had a disagreeable interview with Vaughn on account of coal. He, Vaughn, is the spokesman or what we call at sea the Ringleader. Mr. Long arrived here last night at 11 PM to have his watch rated. I was in bed and Mr. F. had partially undressed. Still that was no matter. Science must have its way. Mr. Fiala said this had been a long trying day to him.

When Fiala went over to the Round House the next day to try to improve matters, it didn't work:

Mr. Fiala has had another experience with his Field party over in the Round House. I think I will change the name from Round to Row House. . Now we have plenty of Walrus feed for the dogs. . . No relief ship today. A new one in the pool is on since yesterday, Mr. Long.

As one would expect, the men had formed a betting



Sigurd B. Myhre, Norwegian fireman, 29, died at Teplitz Bay and was buried there. The ship's carpenter, also Norwegian, carved a handsome cross (see p.167)

pool, each picking a date for the arrival of the relief ship. The final date bet on was near the end of July. It was almost here:

The ice don't look very encouraging for the ship to get in to land. . . Much talk I hear nowadays about going to Norway in a boat and they don't think much about having someone to navigate. As [if] anybody can go to Norway. The boys are nearly all disappointed at the non-appearance of the relief ship and also having the ice hang on around the island so long. The 29th was the very latest guess. . . A few of us, a very few, had thought about the middle of August. . . judging from the experience last year. ²⁹

One of Coffin's chores was to keep the expedition's chronometer accurate, requiring regular sightings of the sun. After days of overcast, on July 28th the sun came out:

Sun out good at 9 AM when I got a good sight, which proved my suspicions right that the Chronometer had gone to pieces. Ever since coming here, the instrument has been running steadily on a slow rate of a fraction of a second. . . today I find her 7 m. 24 s. slow (losing). This was the only chronometer I had belonging to the steamer although there were two others, one on Sidereal time, the other on Greenwich time (mean).

The others did not worry about the precise time. All they worried about was the time of their rescue. Dreams of discovering the North Pole had been forgotten. Now, what they wanted to discover was a way to get off this desolate island:

²⁸ Eating fresh food prevented the disease, Coffin said.

²⁹ The America had not reached Cape Flora until August 12 the year before.

Steward & Cook are very much worried over the non-appearance of the frescue ship] and visit the Talis several times every day with glasses. Lots of forecastle arguments going on at all hours³⁰. . . No signs of a relief ship getting a chance to get any where near the island.

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At Porter's Walrus Point, things were better. His party had killed two more walrus and a large seal. They now had more meat than would keep without spoiling, ending the worry about the winter's dog food. But there was a shortage of an equally essential item: tobacco. Especially during the long winter would it be vital. Coffin couldn't resist "I told you so":

The men are running short of Tobacco. They all thought sure the Relief steamer would be here before this date and did not bring much. I tried to get them to bring tobacco for me, I would give them a big share of it on arrival here, but they would not listen, knew all about when the steamer would come and now suffer the consequences of too much knowledge.³¹

Mid-August arrived, the time that Coffin had predicted the ship would arrive. But no ship came. The ice was still solid. The men's mood was worsening. Nerves were becoming taut: Nearly all the men's minds in the house seem to be at a tension which requires but little to set them going. Particularly the steward & cook are set agoing by remarks made by [seaman] Kunold who seems to like to foster and agitate [against] the harmony of the camp. Keeps up his reputation which he earned in Trondheim. His place is forecastle and not aft of it. In some ways he is not entirely to blame, having much encouragement from those who do not know any better.32

Though trying to appear less anxious than the men, Coffin was worried:

I would like much to see the relief ship myself. Just now I have no authority over my crew at all unless I fight against and injure the success of Mr. Fiala. He wishes to do all and run even the smallest job of work, so I keep still. . . His Expedition men at the R. H. are their own masters as much today as when Truden said he did not recognize him as his commander, an assertion which . . . [was] duly recorded on the ship log. 33

When supply officer Truden, now a favorite of Fiala's,

30 Forecastle arguments are those among the sailors, beneath officers' concern. (See inside front cover for an interesting letter about this.)

31 Plenty of tobacco had been brought on the America and was now in storage at Teplitz Bay.

lowly belong; aft is for the "mighty" officers.

The ship's log was being kept by Mr. Haven, First Mate.

announced he would give out a special tobacco ration, Coffin wondered where the tobacco had come from. But, being a smoker, he was pleased:

Montrose was up from Walrus point after his tobacco (22 lbs were turned in by Truden today, saving these were found by Dr. Vaughn). Long ago as the first of June, Havlik was using that same kind of tobacco (Norwegian). We supposed he brought it with him. Now we know that he was given it by the R. House men who found it and never turned it in to Mr. Fiala. I presume it was found in the long box marked with a red cross, whose contents were never turned in, claiming them as medical supplies. All's well that ends well.34

At the tobacco rationing, one man from Walrus Point reported a ship close enough to be seen maneuvering:

Hudgins reported McKiernan said he saw the smoke of a steamer, also saw the outlines of her upper works. Saw her turn broadside to him from end on when first saw her. May it not be an optical allusion again. . . I am getting a little deaf and can't seem to hear anything right lately.

Coffin should have been grateful for some hearing loss. What he heard around the house always seemed to upset him:

The Steward and Cook are having a cranky spell. . . One of the Sea Lawyers, Kunold, said something about their using some [galley water] to wash in, which was no business of his in any way. The Steward ought not to listen to what emanates from any one of the sailors. . . This is no Sunday School or Saint's Home, although tis kind of run on that system.

Now, with August ending, Commander Fiala decided he must do something. Like Coffin, he had expected the ship in mid-August. Maybe she had made it this far north, but the ice pack kept her from getting to Cape Flora. He would go to the eastern tip of the island, Cape Barentz, to see if there was open water there. Perhaps, even the ship:

Thinking that there might be an open sea to the east. . . and feeling the necessity for action, I made a sledge trip to Cape Barentz accompanied by Seaman Duffy. . . Cape Barentz was barely twenty miles from Cape Flora. . when we gained the summit of the cape we were disappointed to find nothing but ice off to the horizon. . . We erected a signal pole on the highest point and cached a message at its foot in a cairn of rocks. We turned our faces in the direction of Cape Flora with very little hope in our hearts that relief would reach us that year. [Fiala, p.116.]

Fiala and seaman Duffy, an Irish story teller, had left by boat, sailing eastward through broken ice along the shore with

Coffin, who had to use some of his weight allowance on the trek south for journals and instruments, couldn't pack as much tobacco as he would have liked. Hence, his request to the men mentioned here. Fiala, in his book about the expedition, wrote that next time he would select only men without addition to tobacco.

32 Coffin continues to emphasize the class structure revered by captains: forecastle is where the

³⁴ The box with a red cross was found on arrival. The cross denoted medical supplies so Doctors Shorkley and Vaughn had taken it without disclosing to others what was inside.

a sledge and dogs on board. They soon were forced ashore, to continue by sledge. Fiala put Porter in command of the Round House during his absence. Coffin wasn't impressed:

Mr. Fiala got started for Cape Barentz about one this afternoon with five dogs. Started his journey by water. . . Mr. Porter is left in charge of the expedition affairs as regards the R. H. men. So Mr. F. informed me casually a few minutes before he started. Rather wasted his paper as they will not take any orders from any one and I persume Porter will not issue any.³⁵

With Fiala gone, Coffin took over. The men would be taught discipline, something essential to survival through the coming winter. No more "Sunday School":

There will be peace in this house now and perhaps a little more order, although it was well enough, far as order was concerned. Only the equality business will not work. Each man will have all he shipped for and no more. No favorites. That is my idea of equality with officers and men. Men should be treated like men and officers like officers, with a head to all.

Coffin, now "head to all," was pleased when Hudgins, who had joined Porter at Walrus Point, moved back:

Mr. Hudgins. . . left there yesterday for good. Growing tired of being a servant he said. . . The expidition men have always thought that all of the ship's company were their special servants, shipped especially for that purpose -- the very thing I guarded against in N. York when I made arrangements with Mr. Ziegler.

Hunting was good at Walrus Point. Now, it was certain they would have enough dog food for the winter. The men had accepted that prospect, another winter at Cape Flora. All, that is, except the homesick steward, Spencer:

Porter was up just after supper. . . He bagged one large male walrus last night. . . This makes the 12th. The last 11 bagged will weigh. . . say from 10 to 11 thousand pounds. 12 bears bagged. . . gross 40 odd hundred lbs. Several hundred Looms [Coffin regularly misspells loons] weighing about 4 lbs a pair, 300 lbs. . . We seem to turn over a new leaf. All hands in their berths at nine o'clock. The Steward keeps busy with going up and down the Talis [looking for the relief ship]. Cook has slacked off going. Also the Expedition people seem to have given up the lookout business altogether.

When Fiala and Duffy returned from Cape Barentz with their disappointing news, rumors about winter plans began: I have been 2/3 way up the Talis and had a good look. . . Dr. Shorkley and

Truden were also up on the Talis with no expectation of seeing any ship. I could see they had made up their minds to stay another winter. There are various schemes going on Sub Rosa. Porter & the gang that are with him at the point will go to Kane Lodge. Quite a number of others will go to Camp Abruzzi. Some are going to Camp Ziegler to stay. 36 This is in their minds, as no plan [is] now made. In fact, I think Mr. Fiala cannot make any, as so many want to go. The only ones who will not want to leave are the ones we could spare: Kunold, Ross, the 2nd mate. They are a fixture.

Burns is in the same boat. . . the America's crew are vastly changed and not for the better either. Even one Norwegian is tainted with this spirit. I can only attribute it to one thing and one man. Excepting reaching Crown Prince Rudolf Land, all else is a flat failure.³⁷

Just when morale had hit bottom, there was good news! Anton Vedoe, 2nd Assistant Engineer, spotted a vein of coal on the talus. A fortuitous find. Coal, like food, would be essential to surviving the long, frigid winter. The small amount left by explorer Jackson was almost all gone. The vein was about 600 feet up the talus. Coffin went up to investigate:

I went up the Talis and took a look at Mr. Vedoe's find of coal. When uncovered, it proved to be a fine vein of coal. . . So the great question of coal has been settled. Tis quite a job to get it down on the level.

No time was wasted. The next day, the men dug more than a ton with a pick and shovel. It was hard work. The coal had to be stuffed into leather sacks and slid 600 feet down the cliff. Then, the bags were carried a mile to camp. But there was an incentive -- winter was coming. They would be warm!

Seven of the crew went up coaling this afternoon. Got out about 1 1/2 tons of fine heavy coal in lumps. Brought six bags in to the camp about 300 lbs. Tis a steep rough slippery road down to the level where the house stands. Tried the coal in the stove and it burnt well. Also under the blow pipe.

On Saturday, August 20, 1904, Captain Coffin gave up. He now seemed to believe that Mr. Champ, the expected rescuer, had decided they were all lost with the steamer:

Today I give up seeing the relief ship here this winter . . . I think [the rescuers believe] that the America is lost. That the crew [is marooned] here at Cape Flora, I do not think has entered any of their heads. . . Hovlik has dreamed that the relief ship would arrive tonight. He really thinks so & has made a bet of a scarce article, tobacco, on the strength of it.

Hovlik lost his tobacco. When morning came, there was

³⁵ Porter was living at Walrus Point. Fiala's instructions were: "Suggest you spend a short time each day at Elmwood until my return." Porter was ineffective in his new role. Several Round House men left "for some days without my knowledge," he complained. [Porter, p. 47.]

³⁶ Camp Ziegler is on Alger Island about 75 miles to the east. It had been established by the first Ziegler expedition. There was some food cached there, plus a crude cabin.

This seems a bit self-serving -- it was he who had carried them there in the steamer!

no ship. Coffin revised his thoughts about why the relief ship had not come. Clearly, he was grabbing at straws:

Clear and no ship in sight. . . Steward up on the Talis this eve. Saw no water south. . . I imagine the [relief] steamer would be on her way back to meet us in Norway, same as they did the last time they came up to relieve the *America*. They didn't get through & the *America* did and was in Norway a month before them. They may think tis the same thing now. Instead, the poor old *America* [is] lying on the bottom north of 81 degrees 47 minutes.³⁸

August was ending. Even the most hopeful now realized that relief was not coming. But they wouldn't starve:

All the men now have given up the idea of getting home this season and they are now acting rational. . . I look for an early winter, judging by the looks around here, this has been an unusually warm year. We have plenty of good food. . . sugar and milk will soon be gone. Plenty of good Hard Bread & fresh meats, canned and what we have secured. We also have plenty of oils -- seal and walrus & kerosine.

Coffin's entry for this day ends with an admission that the dream had ended. They must get ready for winter:

Stove pipe to fix tomorrow

Fiala had said he would leave Cape Flora early in September even if relief had not arrived. The North Pole still beckoned. A third attempt would be made in the spring. He would have to hurry to get back to Teplitz before the sun disappeared. It was a poor time for sledge travel as the channels between islands were not yet frozen solid. There would be water to cross. Small-boat travel was risky. Coffin was worried: Mr. F. seems to have full confidence that he will be able to do it. I am afraid he will not be able to get any volunteers for this risky trip [crossing water]. You have to go a long distance in most parts before you can make a landing on acc't of glaciers & cliffs.

One volunteer was ready: Russell Porter. But Fiala wanted him to stay at Flora and be in command. Porter didn't want to: Mr. Fiala yesterday handed me an informal note. . . that he would leave me here in charge of expedition affairs. . . Neuralgia in my jaw was racking me at the time, but I passed him an equally informal note (the room was full of people at the time) protesting. . . I did not feel myself competent to deal with the situation here (a very grave one), that there were older and wiser heads who could do it better . . . I caught his eye and motioned outside. . . we talked it all over while walking over the Peace Point [Walrus Point].

The next day Fiala told Porter that he would be going north to Abruzzi with him. Rilliete was placed in command of the Round House. Then, at one o'clock the next morning, August 31st, William Peters and his men walked in:³⁹

This morning at 1 A.M. Mr. Peters, Vedoe & Taffel arrived at the house all in good condition. Came in the Indian canoe via English channel and DeBrunes Sound down the East side. They left Teplitz Bay July 8 arriving at Eaton Island August 4th. . . They got to Camp Point (this Island) August 29th leaving all their camp equipage & canoe there & walked into camp over the glacier, carrying their blankets. They had come in the canoe all the way bringing no dogs. . . They were fortunate enough to arrive here at all this year. They had put a keel on the Canoe and used a small sprit sail. Mr. Peters knows his business and is a thorough gentleman.

Tempering the celebration was the sad news they brought: one of the men at Teplitz had died:

Segurd Mehre Died at Camp Abruzzi at 1 P.M. May 16, 1904 and was buried near the observatory on a Knoll in a pine coffin & the grave marked with a cross. He was a fireman on the *America* and a Norwegian by birth. Died of some unknown disease.

His grave, 525 miles from the North Pole, is perhaps the most northern tomb on the planet. Porter gives us more details: Murray [sic], a Norwegian fireman, passed away at Camp Abruzzi with no medical aid at hand (all the physicians had come south to go home). Score one -- for the evil spirit hovering forever over this arctic waste -- against this expedition. May it be the last, though I doubt it. This man was ill when I was there the first of May and I understand he never recovered, was unconscious a good deal of the time and would not answer when spoken to. He leaves a wife in Bergen.

Now that Peters was there, Fiala was eager to get started on another Polar attempt. When he informed them of his plan, he added some words about behavior:

Mr. Fiala talked to the men about their duty towards their officers but rather too lenient to do much good I fear. Two men Duffy and McKiernan acknowledged to him after. . . Mr. F. informed me Mr. Porter would go North with him, also he wanted Duffy & McKiernan. $^{\rm 40}$

The plan was for Peters and Antone Vedoe to leave before the others, on September 16th. They would go by way of

³⁸ In 1902, the Baldwin-Ziegler expedition also planned a relief ship, but internal dissent forced them to leave Franz Joseph Land early. When the relief vessel arrived, the expedition was already back in Norway.

Peters was Chief Scientist of the expedition. He had remained at Teplitz Bay collecting scientific data. He was Fiala's second in command and his trusted colleague.

⁴⁰ Duffy, the Irishman, was not high on Coffin's list: "John Duffey, 32 years, Seaman, Mass., Mutinous. (N.G.) [No Good]. Mackiernan, 20 years old, also from Massachusetts, was "O.K." Both of these men. especially Duffy, had become favorites of Fiala's.

Eaton Island in the British Channel to pick up the scientific instruments Peters had left there on his way down to Flora. Accompanying them as far as Camp Point would be Duffy and John Vedoe (Anton's brother) who would then return to report on the ice conditions in the Channel. Peters would take the large canoe he had left there to get to Eaton Island if necessary. Again, Fiala changed his mind. This time about Rilliete:

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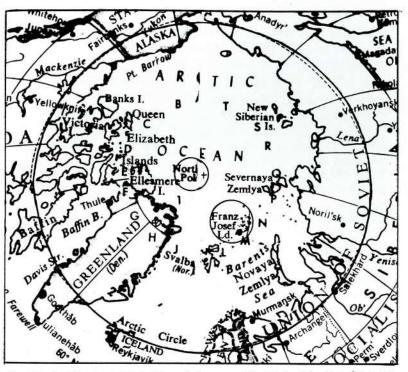
Mr. Fiala told me in the presence of Mr. Haven that he had decided to leave no one here to represent him & would take Rilliete with him North, as he wished to go, I persume from the same cause that the steward volunteered. Simply and wholley because he could not have his own way & have me and my 1st Officer over him. A man, who according to Mr. Hartt, blackened the Swedish Captain's boots for him. 41

Duffy and John Vedoe made it back from Camp Point, leaving Peters and the others to continue north. They made a fast trip back, covering the 18 miles across the glacier in seven hours. Three days later, the weather changed. A strong gale moved in, keeping everybody inside. Porter, a thoughtful, artistic man, was starting to wonder if it was all worthwhile:

I am sitting by the southwest window at Elmwood, looking out over a very bleak view of black water, floating ice pans, troubled clouds. . . I cannot. . . keep from reverting to the failure of the expeditions I have been associated with in this land of desolation. . . here I am entering on a third long night [the winter months without sun] with far less prospects of doing anything than a year ago. . . our small band of seven men [will trek] back to Camp Abruzzi ere complete darkness overtakes us. . . five minutes later, Fiala wants me to come outside and see the sunset. . . wonderfully beautiful. . . I cannot describe it. . . nature's attempting to warm up this landscape of death and ice with blood crimson. . . baffling to describe -- brutal, unreal, mystic. [Porter, pp. 51-2.]

With that beautiful sunset, the gale subsided. The next day, Fiala, with six carefully chosen men headed across the glacier to Camp Point. Coffin was probably relieved that Fiala had picked seaman Duffy to be on his carefully chosen team:

Mr. Fiala got away at 11:30 in good shape with four sledges, 32 dogs and Porter, Dr. Sietz, Rilliete, Steward, Jimmie & Duffy. Duffy is a man who is rather inclined to do more mean actions than good ones. Immie, the boy, is quite jubilant to think Mr. F. will take him along. I think that plenty of tobacco at Camp Abruzzi has much to do with his volunteering for the trip.



Far North of the Arctic Circle (shown) the men of the Ziegler Polar Expedition are marooned 500 miles from the North Pole (see small circles), hoping to be rescued.

Fiala placed Long in charge of the Round House; Coffin would be in charge of "Elmwood," as the log house was called. Three men going with Fiala were from Coffin's crew: cabin boy Jimmie; seaman Duffy (now a favorite of Fiala's); and steward Spencer (another favorite). With them gone, Elmwood would be less crowded. Disputes between the two houses would subside now that Fiala is absent. So Coffin thought. Perhaps the stark winter, those long, sunless months, wouldn't be so bad.

But again a surprise. In three weeks, Porter and Jimmie were back. They would stay all winter. Travelling with them were Duffy and Spencer, who would return with provisions for Fiala's party. They had been unable to cross DeBruyne Sound, choked as it was with shifting, dangerous ice. Still, Fiala had no thought of turning back. He had had enough of the bickering: I did not intend to return to Cape Flora no matter what came. [p.129.]

⁴¹ Quartermaster Rilliet was on the earlier Baldwin expedition along with the captain of the steamer America, the Swede whose shoes he had shined, according to Engineer Hartt.

Once again, Fiala concluded that his party was too large. The boat they had brought was too small to carry all of them. If, while crossing the treacherous pack ice in the Sound, they had to take to the boat to save their lives, some would have to stay behind. Fiala didn't want to face that. He and Porter talked and worked out a solution:

One day, after we had been out some 20 days (it was for only 20 days we had taken provisions), Mr. Fiala and I had a long talk, the upshot of which was that I volunteered to return to Cape Flora and send back additional provisions, and to remain there until early spring when I would come to Camp Abruzzi. . . He seemed pleased. . . as he had begun to realize that his party was too large. . . Whereupon I received my orders in writing, making me third in command of the expedition. . . This return was not an agreeable one to me as I would have much preferred to have gone on north. [Porter, p. 58.]

Fiala, who disliked doing such things, then had to tell cabin boy Jimmie that he too would have to go back to Flora: Jimmie almost wept in his disappointment. He wanted to stay with my party and share our adventures in the march north. [Fiala p. 130]

When Porter arrived at Cape Flora, he gave Captain Coffin a letter from Fiala explaining his changed plan:

[Fiala] says they tried three times to cross over the Sound, got two miles, the fartherest. Another of Fiala's failures. He sent this party back because, he wrote me, his party was too large to get through with the light canoe he had with him.

Coffin reacted strongly after reading Fiala's order that put Porter in overall command at Cape Flora. His response was unequivocal: Porter was not in command of him or his men:

I informed Mr. Porter he could give no orders to any of my men and I could in no way consider him as having any sort of command over any of my officers or crew. Told him I never was under Mr. Fiala. He replied that he wished . . . to do astronomical work and did not consider himself as being here to give orders. . . He is staying here in this house with the steamer's crew (and he is welcome) as a guest, but with no power to govern, as Fiala wanted. . . but he was welcome to just what we all had, and he is also entitled to use my table all he required to carry on his scientific work through the winter. He said that [was] all he wished and that he was satisfied. . . Mr. Fiala needs to be taught a lesson in many things.

Nor would the men in the Round House accept Porter as commander. In writing about this, Porter was kinder to Coffin: Mr. Vaughn came up to me and in a sneering manner referred to my position as third in command. "Third in command, eh? I don't recognize

you as third in command and I don't recognize Long in charge of us. For that matter I don't recognize Fiala himself." Plus a lot more disagreeable language . . . The Captain was surely more gentlemanly. . . (Porter, p. 59.)

Duffy and Spencer, who would return with the provisions, were behaving strangely, or as Coffin described it, "in a mean manner while here, keeping aloof from this house":

Steward & Duffy go back tomorrow if possible. I never saw either of them. My cook got dinner ready for the whole party but they for some reason or reasons got their own food in the little Rilliete Cabin on the hill. I hardly know what to make of that outfit, Steward [Spencer] & Duffy. I only hope they will be a help for Mr. Fiala. His reasons for sending back two men are that the party was too large with his resources to accomplish the journey. I think there are others.

In the morning, Duffy and Spencer loaded the sledge and were ready to go. Coffin, writing a letter to Fiala, sent a man to tell them to wait. The response was hardly respectful:

One of my men came in and said they were not going to wait for me to write a letter to Fiala, "Not by a damned sight!" But they did. . . All the men are glad to have those two men go back as they have rendered themselves obnoxious . . . Another of Fiala's choices. Poor men.

Coffin did not go out to see them leave, but he was pleased when they did. He didn't need the "mutinous" Duffy in the house during the long winter darkness. Their patience would be tested many times. But, he told himself, we are ready: A most comfortable house for the winter. We are quite a contented lot. No wrangling going on. With no loud talk, this room has changed from a forecastle to a ship's cabin. . . the only cause is absent. The change is due to the men knowing their lawful officers are in charge.

The lawful officer in charge, Captain Coffin, was optimistic. Overly optimistic, it turned out. The winter would not be one of contentment.

(To be concluded)

A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

REV. HENRY BAYLIES (1822-1893) Hattie has appeared better. The and his ailing wife, Hattie, have just motion of the boat assisted her to sleep arrived on the river boat at Kirkpatrick's very quietly. This morning she had a Landing, Alabama, after a two-day trip severe time of vomiting. This however up the Tombigbee River. They are heading relieved her . . . The late arrival of our for Forkland where, he has learned, there boat gave her opportunity to recruit is an opening for a teacher-minister, a before landing. She endured the ride combination ideal for him, a Methodist very well. preacher turned educator.

Mobile without success, he has now teacher was conditionally engaged & decided to look elsewhere. While there, he served as a substitute preacher, filling in when the Methodist minister was away.

He left most unhappy, as he had not been paid for his services, although the church knew his funds were low. He was, however, made a Life Member of the church. Flattering as that was, he would have preferred money. His finances are running low as they have been travelling without income for three months.

When this installment begins, they are disembarking from the steamer Sunny South at Kirkpatrick's Landing.

carriage to take us up to our stopping 1 Henry must be accustomed to such disappointplace & a cart to take our baggage. Mr. ments by now.

Williamson A. Glover's is four miles from the Landing where Hattie & self arrived about four P. M. We received a ready welcome in Mr. G.'s family.

During our passage till this morning

On arriving at Mr. Glover's I ascer-After seeking a job for two months in tained to my disappointment that a that my services would consequently not be needed. Well, this is only another in the list of disappointments. 1

Saturday, Jan'y 25. A mild but cloudy day. A horse was furnished me & I rode over a portion of Mr. G.'s plantation. As Mr. G. & son had gone to Eutaw on business I rode alone. I visited the "quarter" which is the negro settlement. The houses or Cabins are framed, with mud floors & sufficiently comfortable. I inquired for the babies of which Sister Glover said there are about 40 in the care of some old woman while their mothers are at Friday, January 24, 1851 (Continued). work. When I returned by the cabins By the politeness of the Clerk two of most of the children were assembled in the servants took Hattie in a chair & front of it but a few skulked behind the carried her up to Mrs. Kirkpatrick's chimneys. I afterwards learned from house. It was a difficult job, for the Sister G. that one of the old men came embankment or bluff was very high, down & asked her what it meant, that steep & exceedingly muddy. Mr. & a gentleman rode up & wanted to see Mrs. Stapler likewise stopped at the K. the babies & he did not know but he Landing. We engaged a very fine had a mind to carry away some &

suspected as much & was quite a- not see outdoors between the logs. In roused.

soil. Very providentially I suffered no in a most unlikely place we met two injury although my clothes were lew pedlers on horseback with their bountifully bedaubed. The horse took goods swung across the horses' backs. fright from the rolling of the saddle & One of them was excessively musical the fall & ran at the top of his speed, & polite. In conversation between one threw blanket & saddle. Col. Thorton & Mr. Bullock, our travelling comkindly sent his boy who caught the panion, Mr. B. spoke about his (the horse & saddled him for me. About 5 Jew's) eating pig's feet & chittlings. P.M., Bro. Glover returned from Eutaw "What!" he exclaimed, "I a Jew eating & brought with him much to my hog! How do you know I am a Jew?" surprize my old college mate Winchell He hastily replied. "I'll bet you a dollar with whom I enjoyed a pleasant social I am not a Jew." "Oh well," said I, "it's chat.

Sabbath, Ian'v 26. Winchell & self accompanied Bro. Glover to the Baptist Church & listened to a semi-Arminian & semi-Calvinist discourse. The singing was very ordinary or rather extraordinarily poor, as all singing of Methodists in the South is. The day was warm but inclined to rain.

Monday, Jan'y 27. Rode to Forkland in company with Winchell. Forkland is a name rather than a place. It contains a Post Office, kept in a log house & three stores with scanty stocks. A good store well managed, it is thought, might sell \$20,000 easily. Mr. Glover says he formerly merchandized here & sold I think \$39,000 a year. Beside the stores there are a few log houses & one or two frame houses. We called on Dr. Taylor & I for the first time enjoyed the privileges of sitting down in a log house which is said to be a model log house. The floors were open so that you might see the ground below. I did

the afternoon, rode to the River three I had an introduction to an intimate miles distant across the plantations acquaintance with some of the mud of over ditches through swamps & woods the roads. My horse stumbled & fell in This ride was the wildest ride I ever the soft mud & threw me ten feet over took & reminded me strongly of his head prostrate & plowing the liquid travelling in early days. On returning, no use to bet as we have no means of deciding the question, but you are both

> "I'll bet you a dollar," said he, "I am not circumsized." "Perhaps you ran away before you were circumsized." said Bro. Glover. "Ah," said he, "they circumsize us when we are only a week old." "Circumsize us," retorted I, "who but a lew would say that?" "No! No!" he denied. "I said the Jews circumsize, etc." Mr. Glover told him he said "circumsize us" & the poor apostate lew boy whipped up his horse & cleared.2

> Tuesday, Jan'y 28. Having learned of a school vacancy at Clinton, beyond Eutaw, I proposed to accompany Winchell to Eutaw. Mr. Glover kindly proffered his horse & at 10 o'clock we started. Our Journey lay 18 miles through the prairie limestone mud to E. The travelling was very hard so that

² A most insensitive exchange, but attitudes were different in those days.

we were about four hours making the 8 o'clock. Mr. Gordon would receive journey. A heavy shower overtook us nothing for my lodging, etc. In return-& made the travelling much worse. On nothing for my lodging, etc. In returnarriving at E., I felt so thoroughly ing I saw the road over which I had exhausted that I concluded to have my passed in the dark last evening. Near horse put in a buggy & make the rest of Mr. G's was the school house, a log the journey easier. The horse was put edifice of humble dimensions. In order in & we drove off but the horse be- to afford sufficient light upon the came unmanageable & showed he was writing benches arranged around the not used to the harness. I procured a building, the scantling was chipped out negro to carry the horse back & had between the logs just over the door, him resaddled with a sheepskin.

At about 5 o'clock P.M. I left Eutaw. I found Clinton was 8 miles from Clinton -- 5 miles -- I did not find a Eutaw instead of 6 as before stated & house on the road. I saw one or two the school house located 5 miles be- some distance on crossroads. C. is a yond Clinton instead of there as wee bit of a place with a few houses, reported. I arrived at Mr. Gordon's two or three stores, two taverns, a just before 8 o'clock & got my answer tailor's shop, a Druggist's & Physician's before I got my seat, that two men had establishment & blacksmith shop. It is attempted to get up a school but were much more of a place, if comparison is unsuccessful & that it would be possible, than Forkland. There is little impossible to get up a school. One of of interest to note between Clinton & these attempters was my informer who Eutaw. E. is the county town & is a said he thought I could get up a good place of some consideration. Its court school & might commence with 30 house is a very respectable brick scholars. I felt I would quite like to flog building & many of its residencies are him for making me such a long useless delightfully situated & adorned. It ride. I rode about 10 miles after dark contains about 1,000 inhabitants & is I over a new rode [sic] through brooks & believe very flourishing. over shaky bridges & beneath dense woods. I again thought of early ed. one in E. & the other about a mile itinerants. I had the privilege of sleeping for the first time in a log house with a free circulation of the breathing fluid. Previous to retiring I asked & enjoyed the privilege of praying with the family. The servants were called in. . .

Wednesday, July 29th. Long before I to pay for it. His prospects are flatterarose I felt a great change in the ing. I had the pleasure of seeing his temperature. The wind blew high & good lady with whom, however, I was the cold pierced every crevice & but in part favourably impressed as to crevices were not few nor far between. extraordinary intelligence or accom-Was up early hoping for a sunrise start plishments. I exceedingly regretted to for Forkland but was delayed till about learn she is not a professor of religion.

leaving a crack three inches wide!

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From Mr. G's to the village of

Two female academies are establishdistant in what is called Mesopotania. Winchell's purchase of the Mesopotania Academy is I think very fortunate for him For \$4,000 he has purchased property which cost about \$12,000, advances nothing on the purchase & has as much time as he wishes

I arrived at Mr. Glover's at just after Sabbath, Feb'y 2. A raw, chilly air this Sunset, quite stiff with the cold. This morning & appearance of rain which was my first horseback ride of any dis- began to fall about 1 PM. I had tance & for the first was very well ac- engaged to attend Bro. Newcomb's complished. The whole distance was preaching at Trinity in Fisherbee Flats about sixty four (64) miles.

ued, I retired early.

sion that the Southerners either have quite pleasantly & I hope profitably. I what is favourable & unfavourable or conversation & reading with Hattie. promising or unpromising, or that they The Lord bless us both. prefer to please with flattering stories Monday, Feb. 3.. The rain of yesterday at the sacrifice of truth.

30, 31, Feb. 1. These days have been Columbus, Miss., as this seems the only on Friday as late as 1 o'clock p.m. & very cordially & politely invited us to probably all day. Even in the sun, the visit C. provided I did not like or sucice scarcely yielded. On Thurs, heard ceed in Forkland. I am now deciding in of a probable vacancy in a school 3 my mind to go to Columbus & miles below. I immediately rode down establish a school even if I can get only & saw Mr. Brooks, the Teacher. Mr. B. pupils enough to half pay my expenses. had partial previous engagements to From all representations, C. is a pretty that of teaching at Forkland. Since he place delightfully located with strong has received an election as President of Methodist influences. I am really a Bapt. Female College in Lafayette, brought into a straight place.4 What Ala., at a salary of \$1,500 and house the end of these things will be I really rent, he wished release from present do not know. So far I have endeavored engagement, but on Sat. I learned from to follow implicitly the leadings of him that the School Committee re- Providence & I will still try & do the fused to release him. Thus another same. The promises of God are in my probable opening has failed & I am yet 3 Columbus is about 75 miles up the Tombigbee son called on Mr. Glover and made application for the school I came for. Mississippi, but Henry makes no mention of that This makes five applicants for the little coincidence. school in this little place.

about 10 miles distant but the unpro-Was introduced at Mr. Glover's to pietieous state of the weather, the Rev. Mr. Murray of the Prot. Episcopal sitting in an open log church & Hat-Church. He is a "good brother," as Bro. tie's ill health caused me to remain at Upham says. Being very much fatig- home. Hattie for the week past has been quite subject to spasms & this eve And now another hunting excursion she had the severest for a long time. is accomplished & accustomed results She has probably taken some cold & realized. The representations were as in the severe change from warm to very every other instance very flattering. I cold has doubtless had much to do am pretty nearly arrived at a conclu- with her health. Spent the Sabbath no correct discrimination between find my greatest comfort in religious

continues vigorously today. I expected Thursday, Friday, Saturday, July to be on my way today or tomorrow for very cold. Ice remained on the roads alternative left us.3 Rev. Bro. Neely

River from Forkland, just inside Mississippi. It is, the map shows, only 10 miles from Mayhew,

⁴ What does this idiom mean?

them. "God works in mysterious ways replied one was a gentleman from the his wonders to perform."

wealthiest county in the state of Ala- communicated it to the "Alabama bama. Much of the land is rich prairie Planter" of Mobile. Another Southern land underlaid with limestone. All of Gentleman traveling in the North perforated with holes resembling the Carolina Paper. I expressed to him my ination I am inclined to think these were grossly imposed upon by some holes were bored by such. . . Nodules Northern wags; that men should be of iron ore are found among the lime- sent out South on such errands was a the fork between the Tombigbee & the He later said, "Martin Van Buren was Black Warrior Rivers renders it very South some years ago & we paid him rich.... The residences are generally great court but if he should come on the elevations commanding a view South now we would hang him!" of the surrounding country.

one direction three miles & a great the landing on the Tombigbee River. I distance across. He owns about 140 have visited this landing before. Much Negroes of all ages & sizes. They of the way through the plantation & appear very happy & contented. There woods we had to ford a stream swollen is none of that sullen, sorry expression by the late rain. The water rose half up so frequently pictured by abolition lec- the saddle & I found it impossible to turers. Mr. Glover is a staunch Dem- keep my feet out of the water. On ocrat & has been called in my presence returning, we met a negro on a mule at by his wife a "Fire Eater." He appears a the ford. Mr. G. asked him if he knew hospitable, kind, intelligent, enter- the ford, to which he replied negprizing man. His lady is an ac- atively. Mr. G. misdirected the poor complished, intelligent woman of more fellow & he started off with great than ordinary power. The children are difficulty as his mule was obstinate & amiable & intelligent. Mr. G. men- brought up against a tree. He returned oned to me on Sat. that he is one of & started again & poor fellow! was the Vigilant Committee to guard the submerged to his waist. When he took interests of the slaveholders in Greene the water & felt his "bottom" wetting Co. He states they have received sat- he groaned out lustily. isfactory testimony that Teachers, Preachers etc., would be sent out to the South this winter secretly to agitate the Abolition subjects. This was all news to me having never heard a suggestion of this kind before. I renewed the subject with him this P.M. &

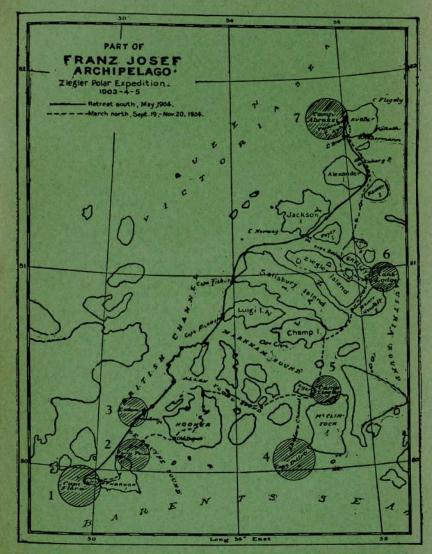
favor & I will try to embrace & apply asked who his informants were. He South traveling in Maine who there Greene County is considered the learned this supposed fact & the limestone I have seen is thickly communicated the same to a South holes bored in wood by a species of belief that the travelers from the South delicate shell fish. On careful exam- were either so only in name or they stones. The location of the county in most groundless & foolish suspicion. . .

Tuesday February 5. This morning I Mr. Glover's plantation extends in rode in company with Mr. Glover to

(To be continued.

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

Frozen Islands Where Ziegler Expedition Is Marooned.



Solid line is the path taken on the hike south to Flora. Dotted line is the route taken by Fiala on his return to Camp Abruzzi from Cape Flora. Shaded circles mark places that are often mentioned by Captain Coffin:

- 1. Cape Flora (Elmwood and the Round House); 2. Cape Point;
- 3. Eaton Island; 4. Cape Dillon; 5. Camp Ziegler; 6. Kane Lodge;
- 7. Camp Abruzzi (the northern base camp where ship was crushed).

Artist Porter created a four-page brochure of life at Camp Abruzzi for Christmas 1904 (two pages shown here). Steam engine for the boat was improvised by Engineer Hartt. It failed.