

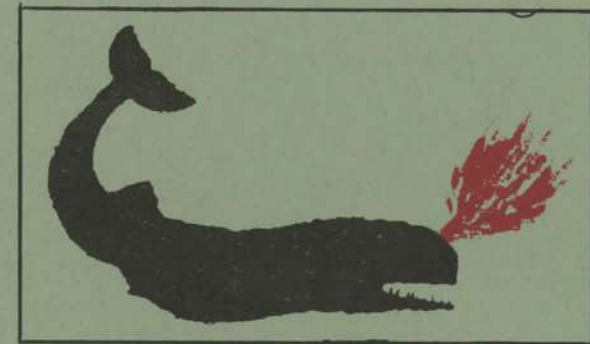
Journal of History of Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands



# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 41, NO. 3

FEBRUARY 2000



*In 1838, log keeper Manter sketched this dying whale in the Oscar's log. The spouting is in red ink, the whale's blood.*

## Whaling: An Ancient Industry

by EDWIN R. AMBROSE

## Teaching and Preaching: Two Hundred Years of Indian Schools

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

## Yarns of Yesterday

by HARRY R. BUTMAN

## A Running Account of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

### MEMBERSHIP DUES

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*Dues are tax deductible except for  
\$15 to cover the cost of this journal.*

### CORRECTIONS

In a footnote on page 25 of the August/November 1999 issue, there was a genealogical error by the Editor involving lineage. Capt. Horace O. Hillman was not the grandson of George W. Brown, nor was Elizabeth G. Brown the mother of Captain Hillman, as fn. 2 states.

Horace was the son of Beriah Hillman and Abby B. Pierce. His brother, Arthur Beriah Hillman, married Elizabeth Gertrude Brown and Olive Hillman was their daughter.

We regret the confusion and are grateful to Polly and Ted Meinelt for making us aware of it.

The Editor also made an error in his introduction to Edwin Ambrose's article on the voyage of the whaleship *Rambler*. On page 4, he wrote that the *Rambler* went whaling in "the far eastern Pacific Ocean." In fact, it was in the far western Pacific Ocean, as is obvious when one looks at the map accompanying the article.

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## Teaching and Preaching: Two Hundred Years of Indian Schools

By ARTHUR R. RAILTON

ALMOST FROM the beginning, the invaders of America (to use Francis Jennings's characterization<sup>1</sup>) talked of educating the "savages." Those early English settlers knew that converting and educating were linked. Thomas Mayhew Jr., the Vineyard's famed missionary, wrote to Rev. Henry Whitfield in Connecticut about it:

... first I pray with them, teach them, chatechise [sic] their children, sing a Psalm in their own language.<sup>2</sup>

Young Mayhew wrote those words in 1650, only a few years after his family settled on the Vineyard. But even earlier, a plan to give the Indians a much higher level of education had begun in Cambridge. Harvard College, founded in 1636, according to its charter, was for educating "the English and Indian Youth of this Country in knowledge."<sup>3</sup> The colonists believed that educating the "savages," would "civilize" them and make them more willing to accept the English way.

The Indians were hungry for knowledge, but what they wanted to know differed greatly from what the English wanted

ARTHUR R. RAILTON is Editor of this journal and has written a number of articles about the relationship between the English and the Indians on Martha's Vineyard.

<sup>1</sup> Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America*, W. W. Norton, N.Y. 1975. Indian historian Jennings, a long-time resident of Chilmark and now at the Newberry Library in Chicago, has emphasized the point that the English were invaders, not merely settlers.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Whitfield, *Present State of the Indians in New England*, 1650; reprinted by J. Sabin, N.Y., 1765. Letter was dated Sept. 7, 1650. Young Mayhew spoke the Indian language, as did Rev. John Eliot, who translated the Bible and other religious works into a phonetic Algonquin.

<sup>3</sup> Emphasis added. Despite its charter, Harvard did little to educate the Indians. It did create a separate Indian College, which had only one class and one graduate: Caleb Cheeschamuck of Martha's Vineyard, Class of 1665. Two made it to their senior year, both from the Vineyard. The second one, Joel Hiacoomes, died in a shipwreck near Nantucket shortly before graduation. After 1665, Harvard's Indian College was discontinued. See *Intelligencer*, Feb. 1988.

to teach them. In 1646, Rev. John Eliot, the missionary in Roxbury, discovered that when, after delivering a long sermon to the Indians about heaven and hell, he asked for questions. The first were: "What is the cause of thunder? What makes the sea ebb & flow? What makes the wind blow?"

Eliot had no scientific answers to such questions and no doubt explained that those happenings were the work of the Lord. The mix of preaching and teaching<sup>4</sup> continued well into the 1800s, nurtured in the colonial years by the fact that the teachers of the Indians were paid by missionary societies. The first was formed in 1649 as the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospell among the Indians and others in North America," a Puritan group under the Commonwealth of Oliver Cromwell that came to be better known as "The New England Company." In 1701, after the monarchy was restored, the Puritan society was abolished and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was formed by Royalists to continue the work. Both Roundheads and Cavaliers agreed that the Indians must be "civilized" or more to the point, Anglicized. After the American Revolution, a Boston missionary society with a similar name took over the funding until the mid-1800s.<sup>5</sup>

The first move to organize the education of the Indians was in 1651 when the London Society wrote to the Commissioners of New England asking them to confer with missionaries John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew Jr., to estimate "what buildings, meeting houses and so on would be needed by the Indians, what salaries should be paid to ministers and schoolmasters and how much all this would cost."<sup>6</sup>

Richard L. Pease, perhaps the Island's most knowledgeable historian, wrote that a school was formed in 1652:

In 1652, January 11, Mr. Mayhew [Junior] set up a school to teach the natives

<sup>4</sup> It must be said that this was typical of all education at the time. Ministers often held second jobs as teachers and principals in public schools. It wasn't until the 1800s that the training of public-school teachers became secular.

<sup>5</sup> The school at Gay Head continued to receive aid until the mid-1800s and was the last school in the country to be helped by the group.

<sup>6</sup> William Kellaway, *The New England Company 1649-1776*, Barnes & Noble, N.Y., p. 66.

to read. About thirty came in at first, and more and more they kept coming every day. . . . As an assistant to Mr. Mayhew, there was "an able, godly Englishman, named Peter Folger, employed in teaching the youth in reading, writing, and the principles of religion by catechising; being well learned likewise in the scripture, and capable of helping them in religious matters."<sup>7</sup>

Historian Charles E. Banks, who depended greatly on Pease's notes for his two-volume history of Martha's Vineyard, named Peter Folger as the first teacher of the Indians on the Vineyard, being "imployed by Mr. Mayhew" in 1656. If Pease's date is correct, Folger did not come until four years after the school was started, making Thomas Mayhew, Jr., the first teacher. Along with Folger, two Indians, Hiacoomes and Pan-nuppaqua, were paid teachers:

Folger probably acted as schoolmaster to the native youth, and the two Indians acted as preachers probably. . . . In this year [1656] at the annual meeting of the commissioners. . . . the pay of "an English Scoolmaster Imployed by [Mayhew]" (Peter Folger), was reduced ten pounds, and this sum was granted to "Mr Mayhew Seni'r," but the purpose is not stated.<sup>8</sup>

One year later, 1657, Thomas Junior sailed for England to accept his wife's inheritance. The vessel he was on was lost at sea. For two years, the elder Mayhew refused to accept his death as the Indian preachers and schoolmaster Folger continued the work. Finally, in 1659, the elder Mayhew wrote to his friend, Gov. John Winthrop of Connecticut (one of the Commissioners), asking that his pay to be increased because he had taken over his son's work as missionary.<sup>9</sup> The Commissioners voted to pay Mayhew an additional 30 pounds a year for, among other things, "teaching . . . the Indians."

Peter Folger, "Teacher and Scoolmaster to the Indians," was paid 20 pounds. Hiacoomes, "Indian Scoolmaster and Teacher of them on the Lords day" was paid 10 pounds and "seaven other Indian Teachers comended. . . by Mr. Mahew" were paid a total of 17 pounds, 10 shillings.<sup>9</sup>

What was taught is not recorded, but the ability to read from the English Bible is often mentioned. Hiacoomes was the

<sup>7</sup> From Richard L. Pease, "Indian Missions on Martha's Vineyard," *The Gay-Head Light*, April 11, 1866. The quotation marks are in the original, but Pease doesn't give any attribution.

<sup>8</sup> Banks, (v. I, pp. 226-7).

<sup>9</sup> Mayhew was also paid as ruler of the Indians. His salary continued until his death in 1682.

first Indian converted by Thomas Mayhew Jr., and as "Indian schoolmaster" it seems likely he was teaching religion. The payroll described him as "Teacher of them on the Lords day."

Schools for the Indians occupied the occasional attention of the Massachusetts General Court. In 1665, it reported to the King's Commissioners in England:

There are six towns of Indians [in the colony] . . . who profess Christian religion. . . the Sabbath is constantly kept by them, and they all attend to the publick worship of God; they have schools to teach their children to read and write in several of their towns, and many of their youth and some older persons can read and write.<sup>10</sup>

The rationale for teaching the "savages" English was that it would make them more easily converted and therefore less likely to cause trouble:

The Comrs having had a full debate concerning a motion made for the erecting of English Scooles amongst the Indians whereby they may be brought up to learne the English Tounge, doe highly approve therof as being most probable to reduce them to Civillity; and capassitate them to be Religiously Instructed. . . the necessary charges thereof shall be considered by the Commisioners at their next meeting.<sup>11</sup>

The Commissioners were slow in their involvement in Indian education. It had been going on at the Vineyard for years. According to Experience Mayhew, the first Indian school was formed in 1651. The school, it seems, taught the Indians more than "civility":

Japheth Hannit was born in or about the Year 1638, in the Place now called Chilmark. . . His Father was an Indian of prime Quality there, named Pamchannit. . . and when there was a School set up for the Indians on the island in the Year 1651, his Father sent him to it, and he then learned to read both in the English and Indian Tongue, and also to write a very legible hand, and was then also well instructed in his Catechism. . . and in that War betwixt [the Indians and English] which began in the Year 1675, and was commonly call'd Philip's War, good Japheth . . . was imployed by the English to observe and report how things went among the Indians. . .<sup>12</sup>

Japheth wasn't the only Christian Indian who "spied" for the English. Earlier, John Sassamon, a protégé of Rev. John Eliot, had done the same and was killed by other Indians when

<sup>10</sup> *Mass. Hist. Soc., Coll.* vol. viii, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, 1826, pp. 65-6. Towns are not listed and it is not certain that Vineyard places were included, as it was not a part of Massachusetts at the time.

<sup>11</sup> Richard L. Pease, *Transcripts from Colonial Records*, notes from Plymouth meeting, Mar. 20, 1678/9. MVHS Archives.

his treachery was discovered. His murder, some say, triggered King Philip's War:

The direct cause of the war was the murder of a converted Indian, John Sassamon, and the subsequent trial implicating Philip. After briefly attending the Indian College at Harvard, Sassamon returned to his native ways for a time and served as Philip's secretary, before becoming a preacher at the praying town of Nemasket. There he heard one day of a conspiracy to destroy the English. A few days after informing the Plymouth government of this intelligence, he was found murdered.<sup>13</sup>

Two Indians were accused by the English of Sassamon's murder and quickly executed, bringing a reprisal attack by Chief Metacom, whom the English called Philip. The subsequent armed reaction by the English started what has come to be known as King Philip's War.

When it was over, 3000 Wampanoags and 600 English were dead. Chief Metacom was captured in a swamp in Rhode Island and murdered. His severed head was mounted on a pole and carried triumphantly to Plymouth where it was displayed for years as a symbol of victory. To the Indians, it symbolized the black side of becoming "civilized":

Sassamon symbolized the ultimately destructive consequences of exposure to the best that "civilization" had to offer an Indian. Forced to choose between his people and the English, his loyalties went to the latter. . . proof that the trend toward English domination had to be halted at once.<sup>14</sup>

The atrocities on both sides convinced many English that the missionary work had failed. It was an unfair conclusion. The praying Indians, in the main, did not take part in the war, although many of their villages were destroyed by the English and the inhabitants incarcerated on Deer Island in Boston harbor under dreadful conditions that killed many. It also killed public confidence in the missionaries:

The blow dealt to the praying Indians by the war was enormous: in Massachusetts, where they suffered most, only four out of 14 Indian towns survived it. . . [it brought] both Indian and missionary into greater contempt in the eyes of the white population.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Neal Emerson Salisbury, *Conquest of the "Savage,"* thesis, U of Cal., 1972, p. 247.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Kellaway, p. 117. None of the Indian villages on the Vineyard was affected by the war, although it may have changed the attitude of the English inhabitants.



It was no wonder Indian parents became wary of having their youth attend mission schools where they were taught to turn against their tradition, even to become traitors. On the Vineyard, where the war had brought no violence, the wariness was strengthened when several young "civilized" Indians came to early and tragic ends. Two Vineyard Indians,<sup>16</sup> chosen by Mayhew to attend Harvard's Indian College had died before they could return to the Island; and a third Indian had accompanied Thomas Mayhew Jr., on the ill-fated voyage to England and was lost. No wonder Indians came to believe that accepting the English way of life brought tragedy.

At about this time a movement began, led by Judge Samuel Sewall of Boston, to provide the Vineyard praying Indians with an enclave where they could live protected from any influence by their "savage" brethren. Enclaves had been successfully established on the mainland by Richard Bourne on Cape Cod and Eliot outside Boston. Sewall urged the London Society, for which he was agent, to buy the area owned by Lord Limerick known as Gay Head Neck.

In 1711, the Society took Sewall's advice and bought Gay Head from Limerick<sup>17</sup> for 550 pounds as a "reservation." Their reasoning was outlined by William Ashhurst in London, writing to Increase Mather:

I hope it will be a means to make the Indians live comfortably upon it, and prevent their scattering abroad, which would certainly have brought their offspring back to their old Idolatry.

A few years later, the Society sent Judge Sewall, to Gay Head to see first hand what had been purchased and to determine what should be done with the property. His instructions from London said nothing about education, but Treasurer Sewall had paid Society money to "teachers of the Indians" on the Vineyard and he was eager to learn what the expenditures had accomplished.

His receipt book, now in the Massachusetts Historical Society, shows that in February 1709, "Ebanazor Allen" had re-

ceived 38 pounds "for various persons on Martha's Vineyard." Whether these included teachers we do not know. But three times that year, Benjamin Allen of Chilmark,<sup>18</sup> Ebenezer's brother, was paid as "teacher of Indians." He was the only Gay Head teacher mentioned in Sewall's receipt book.

When Sewall went to Gay Head in April 1714, he described his meeting with the Gay Head Indians:

About one Hundred Men and Women were gathered together besides Children. . . Mr. Mayhew preached. . . a good Discourse. . . I enquired if any could read English; proclamation was made. At last only two young men were produced. I set him to read in my Psalm-book with red Covers, and then gave it him. Promised a Testament to the 2d.

Sewall's remark that "at last only two young men were produced" suggests he was not pleased. Six years later, Experience Mayhew, now the Society's missionary, gave a much more optimistic report about the reading ability of the Indians:

There has, from time to time, been much care taken that the several [Indian] villages<sup>19</sup> might be provided with School Masters to teach the Children to Read and Write; yet some of them have not been so constantly supplied. . . when the Spring of the Year comes on, the Indians take their Children from school, alleging they want them for Tillage of the Land; and so the Schools fail till the Fall; and this has much hindered their Progress in Learning: Nevertheless, I think the greatest number can read, either in the *English* or in the *Indian* tongue, and some in both.

There is also care taken to *Catechise* the Youth: For besides what is done in the kind, by the *Indian* School-Masters & Preachers, I frequently examine the Young People my self. . .<sup>20</sup>

Indians who did not live in their own villages were not permitted to attend town schools. At least, not in Chilmark. In a 1732 case, the court ruled that Chilmark illegally refused to allow an Indian girl to attend school. The girl was the servant of a descendant of Thomas Mayhew Jr., who had brought the case and was assigned damages. We don't know whether the girl was then accepted or not. The ruling doesn't make that clear:

<sup>18</sup> Banks has him as Rev. Benjamin Allen, living in West Tisbury. He had graduated from Yale in 1708, the village's first college graduate, and had come home for a short stay after graduation, during which he apparently was a paid teacher at Gay Head. He left the Island in 1710.

<sup>19</sup> The villages may have been Christiantown, Chappaquiddick and Deep Bottom.

<sup>20</sup> Experience Mayhew, "A Brief Account of the State of the Indians on Martha's Vineyard . . . 1694-1720," June 2, 1720, p. 3. As one would expect in a report to his employers, he may have been giving an overly optimistic picture.

<sup>16</sup> The two Indians, whom we have mentioned earlier, had not attended the Vineyard Indian schools, but had been sent to a preparatory school in Cambridge for several years.

<sup>17</sup> Limerick had bought the land from Matthew Mayhew and wife Mary, who had purchased it

Paine Mayhew Esq., [granted] a Writ against Francis Bryan then School master of the said town for refusing to teach the said Zephaniah Mayhew's Indian girl to read and gave Judgement against him for five shillings damages and 17 shillings and 10 pence costs. . .

After spending so much of its funds to buy Gay Head, the London missionary society was running low on money. In 1727, it decided to lease out some of Gay Head to get income for the education of the Indians. On his 1714 inspection trip, Judge Sewall had lodged in Chilmark at Ebenezer Allen's inn and Allen had asked Sewall about renting part of Gay Head:

If any of the Gay Head is to be Leased out, Mr. Ebenezer Allen, our Landlord, desires he may have the first Refusal of some Pasturage, if it may stand with the Main design of benefiting the aboriginal Natives.<sup>21</sup>

Sewall chose Sheriff Allen as the renter of the 800 acres, bordering Menemsha Pond on the south and Vineyard Sound on the north. The lease granted him the right to use the land as pasture for 21 years.<sup>22</sup> The rent, totaling 845 pounds over the term of the lease, was to be used for Indian education. Allen paid only one year's rent although he used the land for years.

During King Philip's War, many of the Indian language Bibles were destroyed when the English burned the villages. The Commissioners were asked to reprint the Bibles, but many were opposed, arguing that Indians should be forced to read English. Cotton Mather, a Commissioner and a realist about Anglicizing the Indians, wrote to the missionary society in England:

The grand concern of reprinting the Indian Bible often comes under our consideration. The most of your Commissioners are averse to doing it at all, and rather hope to bring the rising generation, by schools and other ways, to a full acquaintance with the English tongue, in which they will have a key to all the treasures of knowledge which we ourselves are owners of. My own poor opinion is that the projection of anglicising our Indians is much more to be talked of than to be accomplished. It will take more time than the Commissioners who talk of it can imagine.<sup>23</sup>

The Commissioners may have been reluctant to reprint the Bible in Algonquin, but the Indians were eager to have it

<sup>21</sup> Sewall Diary, MHS, v. II, p.433. Historian Banks describes Ebenezer Allen as "an early real estate speculator," v. III, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Dukes County Deeds, Book IV, pp. 199 and 242. Living on the 800 acres were 16 Indian families who were ordered to "remove" to other land which "we think most suitable to be inhabited by Indians" ("we" being the commissioners).

<sup>23</sup> Selected Letters of Cotton Mather, Edit. Kenneth Silverman, Louisiana State U Press, Baton Rouge, 1971, p. 126.

done, even to the point of being willing to help pay for the reprinting. So Experience Mayhew reported:

The Indians on Martha's Vineyard & the adjacent Islands do hitherto understand the Indian Tongue much better than that of the English; and therefore complain much for want of Indian BIBLES, having now but very few among them. Nor are there any to be had; the last Edition being now gone. These Indians are therefore very desirous of another Impression of the BIBLE; if it might be obtained; and divers of them have told me . . . that they should be willing, according to their capacity, to contribute to it.

In that same report, Mayhew listed the several books that had been translated into Algonquin. All were religious. The only one with a "secular" title was "the Indian Primer," but it was also a religious tract. Its subtitle, which Experience does not list, is, *The way of training up of our Indian youth in the good knowledge of God and in the knowledge of the Scriptures*. . .

Experience argued for Indian-language books:

But the disadvantage which the Indians are under thro' the Scarcity of BIBLES is some-what helped by the Care of the Honourable Commissioners to supply them with other useful Books in their own Language, viz, The N. England Confession of Faith; Several Catechisms & the Practice of Piety; Mr. Shepard's Sincere Convert; Mr. Baxter's Call to the Unconverted. And several sermons of Dr. Mather's &c. besides the Psalter & the Gospel of JOHN, Printed in the Year 1709. And the Indian primer Printed this Year, in Indian and English. All which Books are now very useful unto them.<sup>24</sup>

Rev. Cotton Mather was often at odds over Sewall's expenditures. He believed (and with some validity) that the money the Society was paying for preaching and teaching was not carefully supervised. He wrote to a friend in London about how he would handle the task:

Procure two things among the Christian Indians at Martha's Vinyard: a Tutor, to bring up Indians for the Ministry; Secondly, a Visitor for the Schools, to see that their Ends be answered.<sup>25</sup>

In Boston, the notion was spreading that Mather was on the right track. There should be closer control; London was too far away to supervise adequately. But when in 1762 some Boston men requested authority of the Crown to incorporate a local missionary society, the King turned down the idea, prefer-

<sup>24</sup> As reprinted in *Appendix, India Christiana*, by Cotton Mather, B. Green, Printer, Boston, 1721, pp. 93-94. It is difficult to believe that such books, especially Mather's Sermons, would be very useful to beginning readers. The sermons are most obscure, even to the well-read today.

<sup>25</sup> Silverman, p. 493 (to Benjamin Colman, Dec. 6, 1717). Mather makes it clear that the pur-

ring control to remain England. After the Revolution the King became irrelevant and in 1787 a Massachusetts society was formed. In 1790 it sent its first missionary to the Vineyard, Rev. Zachariah Mayhew, great-great grandson of Gov. Thomas Mayhew. He took over the mission at Marshpee (Mashpee) as well. The Boston society was named "The Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Indians and Others in North America" and had 47 members, mostly Boston Unitarians. It supported both missions and schools for "the poor inhabitants in the eastern part of this commonwealth," funds being provided to "educate" the poorer English as well as the Indians. In 1787, the Society distributed 8987 books and pamphlets of which only 544 went to Indians, 8443 went to poor whites.<sup>26</sup>

Soon after its formation, a stroke of good luck befell the new society benefiting, it would seem, the Vineyard Indians:

[It] received a handsome donation . . . [from] the estate of the Hon. John Alford, Esq. . . with the income of the sum the Society supported one school, for the instruction of Indian children upon Martha's Vineyard.<sup>27</sup>

We have found no record of where that money was spent, but it apparently did not go to Gay Head. One year later, 1791, Rev. Zachariah Mayhew reported that there had been a rebellion at Gay Head. Among the reasons for the rebellion, he wrote, was the lack of a school. The income from the lease of 800 acres on Gay Head (the "Farm") was supposed to have been used to educate the Indians. It had not been:

The Farm at Gayhead, put into the hands of the Hon'ble Society for propagating the Gospell among the Natives, was by violence taken out of my possession in the year 1789 . . . The pretence of the Natives was that they had no benefit from it. . . There now appears a disposition in the natives in general to have their children instructed by having good schools among them. . . If your hon'able Society should see fit to . . . appropriate the Farm to the benefit of the natives, particularly for the instruction of their children, by

<sup>26</sup> There was another agency operating at this time to supervise the Indians. In 1746, the state legislature began appointing "Guardians to the Indians." These "Guardians" were empowered to sell Indian land and to use the money to aid the indigent and seem to have taken little interest in education. Their designation must have further damaged Indian self-esteem as it suggested that they were like children, unable to take care of themselves. In 1775, the Guardians for Gay Head were Jonathan Allen and William Mayhew. This agency has been ignored by most historians and deserves further research.

<sup>27</sup> From a document dated 1790 at William Clements Library, U. of Mich., Ann Arbor, Mich.

having good schools among them, it is my opinion that it would be so pleasing to them as to prevent all future acts of violence. Z. M.<sup>28</sup>

Nor was the Alford bequest, "for the instruction of Indian children on Martha's Vineyard," spent on Chappaquiddick schools. In 1809, "Mary Cook, Elisabeth Carter, Hanarettee Simson and Charlotte Matteson, Coloured Women of the Island of Chappaquidick," protested the absence of education there.<sup>29</sup> They petitioned the Governor, demanding "a school for the education of their children" and sent copies of their petition to the state's Guardians of the Indians and the Boston missionary society, which had received the Alford bequest, earmarked for educating Vineyard Indians.

At about this time, Rev. Joseph Thaxter, a devoted friend of the Indians who may have assisted the Chappaquidick women in their petition, recommended that Frederick Baylies be hired to organize a new Indian school program. A complete overhaul was necessary; the existing system was not working. Thaxter was so sympathetic to the Indians that he had personally paid for school supplies on Chappaquiddick. When it learned that, the Society reimbursed him \$100, a considerable sum.<sup>30</sup> Missionary societies had been paying teachers for more than 100 years yet there still were no functioning Indian schools, at least not at Gay Head and Chappaquiddick. That troubled Thaxter who believed educating should have priority over converting:

I consider the instruction of these poor creatures an object of importance. . . I have been acquainted with them for near 40 years and am fully persuaded that schooling the children ought to be the first object: preaching to them, the second. Were the missionary intrusted with a small sum to employ a schoolmistress, it would be productive of a great good. . . Farm Neck and Christian Town are trifling objects compared with Gayhead and Chabaquiddick.<sup>31</sup>

On the Parson's recommendation, the Society hired Baylies, putting him in charge of reorganizing Indian education on the Vineyard, Nantucket and Cape Cod. Baylies reported:

<sup>28</sup> From Massachusetts Historical Society archives.

<sup>29</sup> The designation "people of colour" included Indian, Negro, Portuguese and any individual not "white," whatever that meant.

<sup>30</sup> Reverend Thaxter's salary as minister was \$333 a year.



In my visits, my feelings are often hurt; the universal complaint is, "Our children are suffering for want of a school, and we are not able to support one. Can you help us?" Women school teachers, superintended by a man, would be productive of great good. Most of the books which I have received I have distributed . . . those received with the greatest thanks are the Testaments and Spelling books.<sup>32</sup>

Thaxter and Baylies began encouraging the Vineyard Indians to help pay for the schooling. In 1818, Baylies reported: The Indians. . . chose a committee of seven to agree on a woman to take charge of the school, etc.<sup>33</sup> On the 28<sup>th</sup>, the school was opened. On the 3d of July I visited it. There were present 30 scholars from 5 to 16 years of age; 2 only could read in the Testament and they but poorly. The mistress, who was a coloured woman, told me 36 had attended and that 4 could read in the Testament.

On the 25th of Sept. [I] had an interview with the Committee and they agreed to pay the expense of the schools for the preceding 10 weeks. [I] then advanced them six dollars to commence a new school [term] and promised them six more as soon as it should be wanted. . . On the 30th of August Betsey Carter, a woman of colour, opened school at Chabaquiddick, to continue 8 weeks. . . She has over 20 scholars and gives good satisfaction.

On the 6th of September, Miss J. Luce opened school at the North Shore to continue 6 weeks. She has 13 scholars and discharges her duty with fidelity. The above schools are well supplied with books which the missionary received from the Corporation, the Society, and Bible Society.<sup>34</sup>

Five years later, the Society's annual report indicated that the Baylies plan was working. Both whites and Indians were attending the schools and learning to read and write. On Chappaquiddick, Baylies taught for 4 weeks while Mrs. Betsey Carter, the "coloured woman," taught 12 weeks. There were 48 Indians and 9 whites in the school. Among the Indians, 20 could write, 19 could read the testament.

At Christiantown, Baylies taught 3 weeks and Miss Jedidah Luce 9 weeks, with 12 Indians and 35 whites in attendance. Among the Indians were 8 writers and 8 who could read the testament.

At Gay Head, Baylies taught 4 weeks and Mrs. Wamsley, an Indian, 8 weeks. In addition, the Indians themselves

paid Aaron Cooper, also an Indian, to teach another 8 weeks. There were 37 Indians in school: 14 could write and 10 read.<sup>35</sup>

The improvements instituted by Baylies continued and in 1827 when the Massachusetts General Court sent a Committee to check the status of the Indians, its report was encouraging. The first object of inquiry "was as to the existence and state of schools among them":

Your Committee found, that in each of the tribes, which they visited, viz, Marshpee, Gay Head, Christiantown, and Chappedquiddic, schools are taught from three to five months in a year, chiefly at the expense of the *Society for propagating the Gospel among the Indians and others, in North America*; under the general superintendence, and partly under the instruction of their Missionary, the Rev. Frederic Baylies. From the specimens of proficiency, which your Committee had an opportunity to observe in reading, writing, and orthography, they are of the opinion, that the different branches of a common school education are taught with fidelity, and success, among the Indian youth of the above tribes. . . At Gay Head, in addition to a term of twelve weeks, during which a school was kept in the year 1826, by Mr. Baylies, and by a person employed by him at the expense of the Society, the Indians themselves, provided for eight weeks more, and employed an Indian man for their teacher.<sup>36</sup>

When Frederick Baylies died in 1836, the Society ended its financial support of the Gay Head mission and school, but then for reasons not clear in the data resumed them in 1851, continuing the payments until Gay Head was incorporated as a town in 1870 and the school came under Massachusetts law.

Soon an act was passed calling for the division of "lands belonging to the Indians and people of colour, inhabitants of the Island of Chappaquiddick. . . [and] Christiantown."<sup>37</sup> The Act authorized each family to be given a surveyed lot and that some public land be set aside for a school. On Chappaquiddick, Lot 33, adjacent to the peat swamp and the property of Sally Webquish, was chosen.<sup>38</sup> As a result of this act, Indian schoolhouses

<sup>35</sup> Baylies also taught Indians in Narragansett and Dartmouth. Totally, in his schools there were 202 Indians and 87 whites.

<sup>36</sup> Report of the Massachusetts Committee of the House of Representatives, March 10, 1827.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* The act exempted the inhabitants of Gay Head from the land division until they voted to accept it. They preferred to keep it communal, as had been their tradition, and it remained that way until 1871.

<sup>38</sup> The lot can be reached by walking north from the Chappaquiddick Road, across from Brine's Pond, via a utility easement.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> We don't know which school this was.

<sup>34</sup> Chronologically, this is confusing, but it is what Baylies wrote. The North Shore school was, no doubt, the one at Christiantown.

were built on Chappaquiddick and at Christiantown.

Milton Jeffers, Wampanoag member and a former resident on Chappaquiddick remembers being told about the schoolhouse there:

My father would tell me that his uncle, who brought him up, Charles Webquish, used to tell stories about going to the old Indian school. I don't know when that closed, but it must have been a long time ago because when I was a kid there was nothing there but a pile of old bricks and a few of the old boards. . . . Must have been a long time ago.<sup>39</sup>

Indian education continued to concern the Commonwealth. John Milton Earle, Indian Commissioner, wrote a lengthy report in 1861. From it, we learn that 12 pupils was the average attendance in the Chappaquiddick school that year out of 16 children of school age (between four and sixteen) on the island. That was, he wrote,

. . . a very good proportion, indicating a very commendable interest on the part of the parents in the education of their offspring. . . . They receive one hundred dollars a year from the school fund, which gives them about five months' schooling. . . . The amount of schooling is considerably abridged by the necessity of purchasing fuel, there being no wood on the plantation. It is unfortunate that this school, and those of the other tribes, make no part of the great school system of the State, that they are isolated and cut off from the rest. . . . it would be far better to bring the children into adjacent district schools. . . . it would create a mutual and beneficial emulation, and by bringing the children together, mitigate, if not remove, the principal prejudices which more or less prevail.<sup>40</sup>

Earle's views on integrating the Indians into the public school system brought action. The Chappaquiddick Indian school was closed some time between 1861 and 1876. In that latter year, the report of the Edgartown School Committee indicates that the Indian school, which was a better building than the public school, was no longer being used:

The Indian school-house, so called, on Chappaquiddick, should be removed to a suitable place on the main road of the island. It is a very much better building than the one now in use [as a public school], and should be utilized at once; and the other should be disposed of as unfit for school purposes.

The Gay Head schoolhouse had been built on what is now Church Street, some time before 1844. That year, Albert

Koch, a German traveler, visited Gay Head (which he describes as "the lowest part of the island . . . no wonder our fellow citizens left this desolate region as the last refuge to the poor Indians."). Earlier, the Baptist Church basement had been used as a school, but now the schoolhouse was being used as a church:

. . . a church service. . . was held in a large schoolhouse a distance of about 1 ¼ English miles from here [the Indian home in which he stayed]. The [school] house lies on one of the most imposing elevations of Gay Head. From three sides one has a view of the ocean; on one side the Elizabeth islands show not far away, while one sees on the other side even closer the little island, No Man's Land, on which three families live. But here also as far as the eye can see there are no trees.<sup>41</sup>

The view from the school may have been inspiring, but a report to the General Court in 1849 makes it clear that there was little inspiration inside:

. . . the condition of the school [at Gay Head] was unpromising in the extreme. They are poorly supplied with books, particularly writing books.<sup>42</sup>

Some time after this, the schoolhouse was moved to the corner of today's Church Street and State Road, where it continued as a school through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. June Manning was the last person to teach in it. It is now the town library.

Shortly after the 1849 report, Gay Head became the center of national attention. In 1854, the tall, brick Gay Head Lighthouse was built and equipped with the remarkable Fresnel lens. This lens, a scientific marvel in its day, drew reporters from the nation. Some of their reports mentioned the schoolhouse. A reporter for the *Namasket Gazette*, in Middleboro, wrote in 1856: Leaving here [West Tisbury] we proceeded to the place of our destination -- Gay Head -- distant about 11 miles. Here, a good Christian family, by name How-was-wee, received us and provided the bodily needful for several days. The natives here number about 200 and live very comfortably. . . . they prefer their land to remain undivided, each one cultivating as much as he chooses, the revenue of the remainder going for general purposes.

They have a little church of about 50 members, preaching for the most part being provided by a fund at Harvard College. There is also a school of

<sup>41</sup> Albert C. Koch, *Journey through a Part of the United States of North America in the Years 1844-1846*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1972. p.19.

<sup>42</sup> The 1849 Report of the Commissioners to the Legislature on the Indians in Massachusetts, as quoted in *Gay Head Light*, April 11, 1866. Baylies had died in 1836 and many of his improvements were apparently falling into neglect. After his death, the missionary society stopped its financial support of the Gay Head church and school, renewing it in 1851 and continuing it until about 1870.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Milton Jeffers. Oral History File, MVHS, c.1973.

<sup>40</sup> John Milton Earle, *Report of the Indian Commission to the Guardians of the Indians*, 1861, p. 21-2.

between 40 and 50 scholars, that would compare favorable with the schools in this town [Middleboro]. We never before had the pleasure of looking into 80 or 90 black eyes at once, each beaming with true native intelligence.<sup>43</sup>

In 1859, the nationally known travel writer and artist, Porte Crayon, journeyed to Gay Head and described the new lighthouse with its wondrous Fresnel lens in *Harper's Weekly*. He, too, visited the school, in a weak attempt at humor calling it "the Academy." His characterization of the pupils may have been typical of a Southerner writing before the Civil War:

We . . . wended our way to the Academy, where we found the school in session. Seated at the desks were some five-and-twenty younglings, of both sexes and of mixed blood, where negro, Indian, and white ancestry were jointly represented. Some few were pure African, and two or three only untainted aboriginals. The schoolmistress, a good-looking mulatto girl of twenty years old or thereabout, received us with quiet civility and at my request went on with the school exercises.

As the races predominant in the assembly have never shown much aptitude for book-learning, we did not expect a brilliant exhibition, and were not disappointed. In fact, the creatures had that brow-beaten and jaded appearance that we observe in educated quadrupeds.<sup>44</sup>

The state had been appropriating \$60 a year for the Gay Head school, but when that was discontinued in 1859, its only funding was the small amount still coming from the Society for Propagating the Gospel.<sup>45</sup> The inhabitants, then among the poorest in the state, had little money for schools:

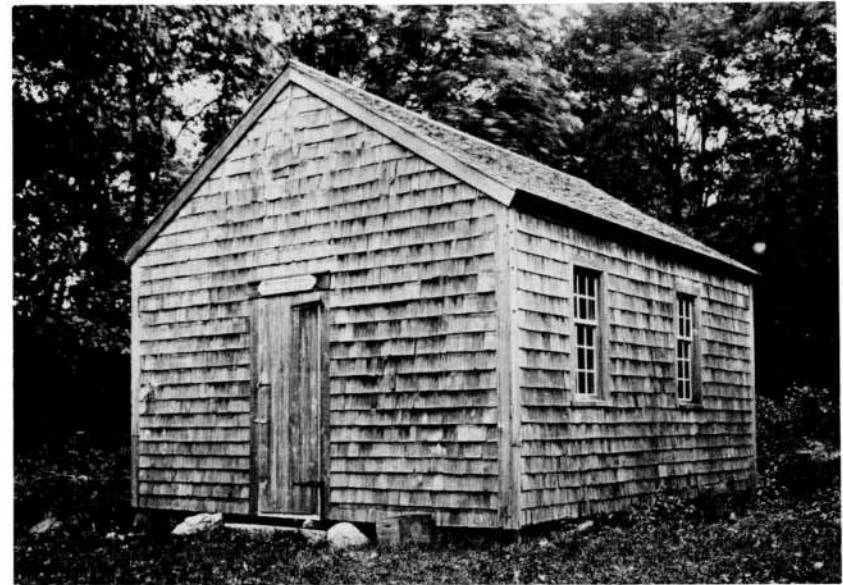
. . . a large portion of the residents find it as much as they can do to provide clothing such as will make their children appear decent at school, and it is believed that much of the benefit which might be derived from the schooling is lost for the want of such books and stationery as are necessary for the use of the scholars. This waste of time and loss of opportunity for education should not be permitted by the State to one of the most unfortunate classes of her population.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> As quoted in the *Vineyard Gazette*, Nov. 28, 1856.

<sup>44</sup> Porte Crayon was the pen name of David H. Strother, author and artist, born in 1816 in Martinsburg, Virginia (now West Virginia). His article was in *Harper's New Monthly*, Sept. 1860. Passing Menemsha school, his description was more generous: ". . . ruddy boys were playing at horses, rolling and prancing over the green with merry shouts of laughter; opposite was a line of girls, with voices like bluebirds in the spring. . ."

<sup>45</sup> Gay Head was the last Indian village to receive financial support from the Society. It made an annual contribution of \$200 to the church and \$50 to the school, according to *The Gay Head Light*. Also see *Report of the Select Committee of the Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Indians and Others in New American*, John Wilson and Son, Boston, 1862, p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Earle Report, p. 37.



Built in 1829 under Frederick Baylies's tenure, this building has been both a school and a meeting house at Christiantown. Photograph was taken in 1910.

Leavitt Thaxter of Edgartown,<sup>47</sup> state-appointed Guardian of the Indians, painted a brighter picture of the conditions (as he would be inclined to do, being responsible for the well-being of the Indians):

Their sabbath and public schools have been well attended, and the conduct and improvement of the scholars have been highly satisfactory. They keep their meeting-house, schoolhouse, and parsonage, in good repair; highly appreciating the kindness of the State, and especially the aid and sympathy of your Society, in promoting their educational, social, and religious welfare.<sup>48</sup>

By 1865, conditions at the school were better, if an account in the *Gay Head Light* can be believed. The article, published that year, compared it to what it had been:

The school has been taught this winter by Mr. George B. Fitts, of Middleboro, assisted by Miss Paulina Vanderhoop. The relations between teachers and scholars have been perfectly harmonious and pleasant throughout. We doubt if there has been a more orderly school in the State than this, or one that can show greater general improvement. . . Mr. Fitts . . . [came] with a determination to do his duty – to work; and not, as has too often been the

<sup>47</sup> Leavitt Thaxter, son of Rev. Joseph Thaxter, was a school teacher himself, having conducted Thaxter Academy in Edgartown for a number of years.

<sup>48</sup> Report of the Select Committee, etc. p. 23. According to the Earle Report, the "kindness of the State" had ended in 1859, two years before this report by Thaxter.





*In the mid-1800s, this building was built as the Indian school at Gay Head. Moved to this site in the 1900s, it is now the town's public library.*

case with teachers, to pass away the winter as easily as possible, pocket his money, and be off. . . His assistant, too, has shown herself possessed in a remarkable degree of those qualities which make a successful teacher; and we ardently hope she will not fail to qualify herself by further study.<sup>49</sup>

There were 35 pupils in the school and they performed some "exercises" for the occasion (the publication of the first and only issue of the newspaper). Taking part were members of 18 families, among them Vanderhoop, Belain, Mannings [sic] Madison and Jeffers, all well-known Island families today.

The third Indian school on the Vineyard during these years was at Christiantown. That "plantation" (as the Indian villages were called) was smaller than Gay Head. The 1861 Earle Report described the school:

The amount expended for schools here is \$100 a year, the same as at Chapquiddick. It is partly drawn from the [state] school fund, and is made up, the remainder, from the interest of the portion of the surplus revenue set apart by the State for their benefit. This gives them about five and a half

<sup>49</sup> The publisher of this newspaper, *The Gay Head Light*, was the same Mr. Fitts who was so lavishly praised in this issue dated April 11, 1866, making the account highly suspect, it would seem. He was also the minister of the Baptist church.

months' schooling in the year. . . There are only about fifteen minors on the plantation of age suitable to attend school, and of these, two or three of the girls, whose parents are very poor, have been obliged to be out at service to obtain suitable clothing for themselves, so that the school is of no benefit to them. The average attendance, the last season, has not been more than from eight to ten scholars.<sup>50</sup>

The school these scholars were attending is today called the Wampanoag Chapel at Christiantown. For some years it was known as the Mayhew Chapel, but of course the Mayhew missionaries had no connection with this building. It was built in 1829, long after their time, as a meeting house and school. That was during the tenure of Frederick Baylies. From about 1859 until 1870, it was used exclusively as a school. It can be visited today, as can the adjacent Indian cemetery.

In 1870s, all Vineyard connections with the missionary society ended when the state incorporated Gay Head as a town. What had been the last Indian school on the Island was then designated the town school and became part of the state's educational system, thus ending more than 200 years of separate Indian schooling.

During all those years, much had been invested in money and in human effort, wisely or unwisely, in converting and educating the "savages." Finally, America accepted the idea that the Indians were citizens, were entitled to vote and to have a secular education like all other inhabitants. It was a move that was long overdue.

<sup>50</sup> Earle Report, pp. 28-9.

# Whaling: An Ancient Industry

by EDWIN R. AMBROSE

THE EARLIEST written mention of whaling seems to have been some time before 900 A.D., when a Norwegian explorer named Ochther reported to King Alfred about his voyage of exploration north. He informed the monarch "that he sailed along the Norway coast, so far north as commonly the whale hunters used to travel."<sup>1</sup> This reference indicates that whaling had been going on long before his trip north, driven by the growing demand for oil which was prized as an illuminant.

That same author, Beddard, provides another insight into the importance of whale oil, this one even earlier:

M. Pouchet tells of a convent mentioned in the life of St. Philbert which had run short of oil. In answer to the prayers of the inmates a large whale was found stranded the next day. This was in the year 684.<sup>2</sup>

Centuries later, the Basques hunted the right whale off Iceland and as far away as Newfoundland. In the 17th century England, Holland, Germany, Norway, France and Spain were all sending whalers to the Greenland Sea and Davis Strait, where they found a larger right whale, which became known as the Bowhead, or Greenland right whale.

Before Columbus "discovered" America in 1492, Europeans had already visited the continent while hunting whales in the waters around Greenland and Newfoundland:

The Basques fished for whales before the invention or use of the mariner's compass. . . and are said to have attained in 1372 the Banks of Newfoundland, where they encountered whales in abundance. This whale they called the Sarda. . . [that] signifies a whale that keeps together in schools.<sup>3</sup>

Native Americans began whaling long before the arrival of the Europeans. Indians in large canoes would chase and kill

EDWIN R. AMBROSE, the Research Editor of this journal, is writing a series of articles about the whaling industry and how it affected life on Martha's Vineyard. The first article was published in the August/November 1999 issue. Others will follow.

<sup>1</sup> Beddard, F.E. *A Book of Whales*, pp. 111-12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.108.

<sup>3</sup> J. T. Jenkins, *A History of Whaling Fisheries*, Kennikat Press, Port Washington, N.Y., 1971, (first

whales swimming close to shore, using stone-headed arrows and spears. Weymouth's Journal of his voyage to America in 1605 describes how Indians did their whaling:

One especial thing is their manner of killing the whale which they call a powdare; and will describe his form; how he bloweth up the water; that he is twelve fathoms long; that they go in the company of their king with a multiple of their boats; and strike him with a bone in made in the fashion of a harping iron fastened to a rope, which they make great and strong of the bark of trees, which they veer out after him; then all their boats come about after him as he riseth above water, with their arrows they shoot him to death; when they have killed him and dragged him to shore, they call all their chief lords together, and sing a song of joy; and those chief lords, whom they call sagamores, divide the spoil and give to every man a share, which pieces so distributed, they hang up about their houses for provisions; and when they boil them they blow off the fat and put to their pease, maize and other pulse which they eat.<sup>4</sup>

A more organized form of shore whaling, using heavier boats and help from the Indians, began in Easthampton, Long Island, in 1650. A watch was kept at the beach, to put out the weft (signal flag) when a whale was sighted. Then villagers were rallied and set out in small boats in pursuit. By 1687, seven companies were chasing whales off Long Island, with large try-works on shore where whale blubber was boiled, or rendered. The whales they killed were usually the right whale.

The Vineyard had an early history of whaling:

Martha's Vineyard, nearer the mainland, was settled before Nantucket and whaling began there at some time before 1652 when the town records mention the appointment of Thomas Daggett and William Weeks as "whale cutters for this year." At the town meeting held the next year it was voted that drift whales were "to be cut out freely, four men at one time, and four at another, and so every whale, beginning at the east end of the town." Whale cutters were appointed each year thereafter and the industry flourished.<sup>5</sup>

Nantucket, which was not settled by the English until 1659, gained experience with whales that drifted ashore and soon sought knowledge about shore whaling. In 1690, some Nantucket residents contracted with Ichabod Paddock of Cape Cod to teach them how to catch whales. He began organizing

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *Whale Fishery of New England*, Reynolds-DeWalt Printing, p.15.

<sup>5</sup> George Francis Dow, *The Whale Fishery in Colonial New England*, p.20. The hill above Squibnocket Beach in Chilmark was called "Lookout Hill" because of its use in spotting whales.

teams to spot the many whales that frequented the coastal waters and established lookouts along the south shore, with each man assigned a certain area to patrol. Each participant got his share of whales. Such whaling from shore continued until 1712 when Christopher Hussey, while chasing a whale, was blown out to sea and came across and killed a sperm whale, the first they had seen. Its rich oil opened the eyes of everyone to offshore whaling and soon whalers were setting out after them in small sloops and schooners. As the whale hunt moved farther out to sea, larger ships were built for the purpose and soon Nantucket was the premier whaling port in the colony.

By 1768 Nantucket was sending out 80 whalers with an average burden of 75 tons. Probably as many more went out from the other New England ports, including the Vineyard. The whalers sailed to Davis Straits (off Greenland), the Straits of Belle Isle (between Newfoundland and Labrador), the Grand Banks (off Nova Scotia), and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. However, Europeans still held the major share of the industry. To illustrate that, between 1759 and 1768, the Dutch sent 1324 vessels to the Greenland fishery and captured 3018 Right or Greenland whales, producing 146,419 barrels of oil (averaging 48 1/2 bbls. per whale) and 8,785,140 pounds or 4392 tons of bone (averaging 1 1/2 tons per whale). British ships during the same period sent out about one-third that number of vessels.

By 1775, the American whaling business had increased dramatically: over 350 New England vessels were engaged. Many whaleships were lost to English raiders during the Revolution. Most of Nantucket's ships were captured or shipwrecked and over 1200 men were killed or taken prisoner.

After the Revolutionary War, the whaling industry revived with Nantucket still ranking as the leading port. The rapid expansion of the industry depressed prices and profits as the market became flooded. Massachusetts tried to help its whalers by a bounty system, but the bounties increased production and oil prices declined even more. Thomas Jefferson, who then was our Ambassador in France, realized that export of whale products would do much to offset the nation's negative trade balance with Europe. This was a delicate political issue as

From *The Whale*, Simon & Schuster, N.Y., 1968.



Woodcut of 1590 of an unhappy whale being cut up on shore in Spitzbergen.

against the import of whale oil to protect their own mariners.

With the help of his (and the new nation's) friend, the Marquis de Lafayette, Jefferson (who was anti-England at the time) convinced the French government to exempt American whale oil from its restrictive measures and as a result trade with France began. In 1786, the Nantucket inhabitants, grateful to Lafayette, expressed their gratitude:

... the inhabitants of the island of Nantucket thought of a way to indicate their appreciation of what Lafayette had done for whale oil. They agreed that each of them would give the milk of his cow for twenty-four hours in order that a cheese of 500 pounds could be made for the Marquis.<sup>6</sup>

Larger whaleships were built as voyages became longer. In 1791, the first ship from Nantucket sailed around Cape Horn into the Pacific, returning with a good catch. Other Nantucket ships soon followed, and Nantucket profited handsomely until the War of 1812, when the British Navy blockaded all whaling. Nantucket suffered greatly because that was its only industry.

After the war, demand for whale products increased and the industry quickly revived. In 1818, a Nantucket ship discovered the prolific whaling grounds in the Pacific closer to Japan. Previously, whalers had stuck to the shore of South America. In 1819, Nantucket's fleet numbered 57 whaleships. New grounds north and south of the Equator opened up and before long whaling ships were sailing over most of the Pacific.

<sup>6</sup> *The Whale*, Simon & Schuster, N.Y., 1968, p. 45.



Thirty islands and reefs in the Pacific are named for Nantucket captains and merchants, evidence of their activity.

Nantucket continued as the leading whaling port until about 1830, when New Bedford overtook her. Nantucket's problem was that as an island, access to markets for oil and bone was more difficult than at a mainland port. Returning ships sold their cargoes at New Bedford and the industry hub moved there. Also she was unable to accommodate the larger ships (300 tons and more) that were coming into use. A sandbar at the mouth of Nantucket harbor made access by heavily laden ships impossible. Various improvisations (such as "camels," floating dry docks inside which the ships were towed across the sandbar) were tried, but with limited success. By 1846, the "boom" year in New England whaling, Nantucket was sending out only 16 vessels compared to New Bedford's 69. In 1869, Nantucket sent her last ship out. It was the end of an era.

The American whaling fleet was now the largest in the world. In 1847, of 900 whaling vessels worldwide, 772 of them flew the American flag. New Bedford, the new leader, had a whaling fleet of 329 vessels in 1857, and employed 12,000 seamen and many thousands more in support industries.

The Civil War brought whaling to a virtual halt as the famed Capt. Raphael Semmes and his Confederate raider, *Alabama*, roamed the oceans capturing and burning Yankee whaleships.<sup>7</sup> The first ship captured by the *Alabama* was the Edgartown whaler, *Ocmulgee*, owned by Abraham Osborn and others. Capt. Abraham Osborn Jr., was the master who from the deck of the *Alabama* watched his ship, carrying many barrels of oil, burn until she sank off the Azores. Some months later, a second Edgartown master, Capt. Thomas Mellen, had his ship, *Levi Starbuck*, destroyed by the Confederate marauder.

Adding to the Civil War decline was a futile attempt by the Union forces to block the entrance to Charleston harbor by sinking scores of whaleships at its entrance. The action became known as "The Great Stone Fleet" because the hulls were loaded

<sup>7</sup> There had been a brief interruption in the whaling boom around 1850 when some ship owners chartered their vessels (some even sold them) to mining companies to haul New Englanders to San Francisco to make their fortune in the Gold Rush of 1849 (few did). Several such

Photo from A Window Back, Photography in a Whaling Port. Spinner Pub., 1994.



New Bedford in about 1870 when whaling was the city's major source of income. Barrels of oil have been unloaded from the returned whaleships.

with stones before heading south to be scuttled. The blockade attempt failed. None of the sunken ships blocked the channel.

After the war, the center of whaling activity moved to the west coast. With the discovery of petroleum, the market for whale oil as an illuminant collapsed. Baleen, a flexible material in the mouths of Right whales and Bowheads, became the product sought and oil was secondary. Baleen had many uses because of its strength and flexibility, a principal one being the stays in women's corsets. Whalers sailed to far northern Pacific waters in search of whale bone, as baleen was called.<sup>8</sup> With the advent of steam whalers, the whale kill became larger and larger

<sup>8</sup> In 1871, another disaster occurred when 34 ships were trapped in the ice north of Alaska and

until lightweight flexible steel became available at lower prices, collapsing the baleen market.

As far as the Vineyard was concerned, whaling was of major economic importance from about 1820 to 1880. Its principal involvement was in personnel, providing many captains and officers for the fleet. The numerous "Captain's houses" (the trophy houses of that period) are evidence of how much money whaling brought to the Vineyard. Several men, notably the Osborn family, made money as ship owners, but the total number of whaleships registered on the Vineyard was very small compared to other places. Dr. Daniel Fisher, an entrepreneur, made a lot of money from whaling, but his business in whale oil and candle manufacturing was relatively small compared with mainland enterprises.

In our series called *The Vineyard Connection*, the Island's involvement in whaling will be described. The Society has a wealth of information on whaling in its Gale Huntington Library of History. Included are 138 logs from whaling voyages, nearly 100 books on whaling, and many other publications including *The Whalemens' Shipping List*, a weekly industry newspaper published in New Bedford, beginning in 1843. Using this research material, plus sources off-Island, we will try to provide a comprehensive picture of the Vineyard's role in this great industry.

With all our efforts, it is unlikely that we will be able to match the summary of the whaling industry written by Jean Randier in his *Men and Ships Around Cape Horn*:

Ships, great and small, from Nantes, St. Malo, Le Havre, Bordeaux, Hull, Bremen, Hamburg, Amsterdam, New Bedford, Salem, Boston and Nantucket crossed half the world in pursuit of the whale. . . No one knew the ways around icebergs or the secret channels better than the whaling captains; . . . Cook saw whales in the Pacific in 1775; three years later, whalers left London to hunt them off Chile, Peru and the Galapagos, and later, California, Japan and Australia.

All rounded the Horn with great skill. . . The whaling captains were superb seamen, their ships nearly always at sea. To avoid desertion by the crew, they rarely put into port, anchoring only in some remote bay to wood and water.

These men gambled with the sea. When it was at its worst, they never lost



Remnants of Edgartown's past. Three abandoned whalers at Osborn's wharf.

boats. And what boats! Masters of oars and paddle, they fought the sea to reach their prey. The whalers interested themselves in everything, returning to port with information, logs of their voyages, souvenirs, "curios." If they were not great draughtsmen or surveyors, their memory and experience were precise enough for hydrographers to follow. So the routes of the whalers assumed great geographical importance,

Masters of the harpoon from the North Pole to the South, they searched the bays and creeks of the Seven Seas; nomads of the ocean, their business was weighed in blubber and whale oil. They saw things upon which no other men had gazed and brought back strange tales from the deep.

Their ships wallowed in steam and smoke, the sails streaked red by the reflection of the ship's fires at night; on board, the bearded crew, begrimed with soot and grease, worked on, oblivious to their appearance and the appalling stench. These iron men, as brave as they were undisciplined, submitted to the lash of the cat-o'-nine-tails long after it had been abolished elsewhere. Stripped to the waist, their hands lashed to the shrouds, they took their punishment, aware that the next day they would once more hunt the whale, harpoon in hand.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Jean Randier, *Men and Ships Around Cape Horn*. David McKay Co., N.Y., 1966, pp. 140-42.



## Yarns of Yesterday

by HARRY R. BUTMAN

**W**HEN THE Editor of The Intelligencer asked me if I would jot down a few of my memories so that they would be available for scholars and historians, I answered him by saying that I could not match the meticulously footnoted papers that are ordinarily found in the pages of that learned quarterly, but if he so wished I could produce some nostalgic reminiscences of the Edgartown I knew almost seventy years ago. These yarns are the result.

[Editor's note: Where possible, we have footnoted details, such as dates and family connections, to give these "yarns" more context. In researching, we discovered that some tales fit in the category usually called "local tradition," with occasional elements impossible to confirm or deny. With that in mind, they should be read as delightful memories that accurately reflect the essence of the Island in the 1930s.]

### The Men from the Azores

It is a historical truism that many of the men and boys from the Azores and Cape Verde Islands who signed on as crewmen on New England whalers never returned home after their voyages. Instead, they settled in New England and many of them ended up on Martha's Vineyard, becoming the ancestors of the present large population of Portuguese descent living there. I will tell of three: Capt. John Foster, Captain Tony King Silva and John Bent.

#### Capt. John Foster

In 1933, I bought a 21-foot lapstrake sailing dory, the first of a fleet of small sloops in which I sailed Katama Bay, Cape Poge Pond and the Sounds from Muskeget to Cuttyhunk. I was used to rowing, my grandfather having given me a 12-foot dory for my seventh birthday, but I was a novice in sail. I had, however, a kindly mentor: he was John Foster, a small, veteran boat man who had a pier at the south end of Collins Beach. (I recall with a smile a mound of material on the shore by the pier. The

REV. HARRY R. BUTMAN, now 95 years old, lives in California. He was minister of the Federated Church in Edgartown from 1932 until 1937, but continued to vacation here after leaving the church. He has written many articles for the Intelligencer and has been a member of the Intelligencer's editorial board.

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Vineyard Gazette once ran an artsy photograph of it which Henry Hough kindly captioned, "A rich profusion of nautical detail." It was, in point of prosaic fact, John Foster's junk pile.)

His pride and joy was his 28-foot catboat, Agnes, of narrower beam than Manuel Swartz's boats and with a mast set well back from the bow. She was a rare craft and John Foster handled her with consummate skill. It was a delight to watch him make a landing in the motorless Agnes, fore-reaching up the narrow slot of deep water, dead into the southwest wind – dying or half-gale – and touch her stem to the caplog with a gentleness I called an "eggshell landing."

John Foster took me under his wing and gave me good counsel on the general business of small boats on wide water and in such arcane matters as the fore-laying of dangerous rips in Muskeget Channel in a boat with no motor. He was a kindly man and I remember him pleasantly.

#### Capt. Antone King Silva

Capt. Tony King Silva was also a memorable man. (Incidentally, "Captain" was a title rather randomly bestowed on respected elderly boatmen.) Captain Silva took an inexplicable shine to me and told me tales of fishing in the days of sail when Vineyard catboats had sails with four, and even five, reefs. One of his stories was unforgettable. In his youth, he said, he once shipped on an old, sea-racked schooner out of Gloucester. One night, as they were driving home in a heavy wind with the lee rail under, the seams of her planking were so loose that from his bunk on the windward side he could see the stars through the gaps. The pressure on the leeward side kept the seams squeezed tight and so prevented foundering.

He was a man of blunt speech. Once, when I sought further counsel about fore-laying the Muskeget rips, he gave me a direct answer which, for propriety's sake, I bowdlerize: "Keep away from them 'Gee Dee' rips, Reverend."

I had always supposed that Captain Silva was a Catholic, but I was summoned back from Randolph to conduct his funeral service which took place in the vestry of the Methodist Church in February 1948. I properly eulogized him and it so happened





*Dr. Daniel Fisher house, c. 1900. It was the site of Lucinda's triumph ( p. 81)*

that I sitting in a place where I could see the undertaker closing the lid of the casket so that my eyes were the last to look on that strong, weather-bronzed face.<sup>1</sup>

### **John Bent**

I never knew John Bent, the third of my Azores exiles; he died in 1928, four years before I came to Edgartown.<sup>2</sup> But on the very day of my candidacy for the Federated Church, I carried with me Hawthorne's essay on his ramble through the old Westside burying grounds. Soon after I was called, I began to walk that ancient cemetery. One headstone charmed me. It was that of Deacon Richard Norton, an indigent bachelor, who was sexton for the Congregational Church and for long years kept that lovely edifice flawlessly clean and functional. He died in poverty, with no kin to give him proper burial, but his fellow



*John Bent's homemade grave marker, as it stands today, still asking for prayers.*

deacons chipped in and raised a headstone with a text of exquisitely appropriate wording: "Devout men carried him to his burial and made great lamentation over him." (Acts 8:2)

But the grave which fascinated me most (and still does) stood at the extreme northeastern corner of the old Westside Cemetery, bordering on Cooke Street. It was a rectangular lot with low cement curbing adorned with hundreds of pure-white beach stones. In front was a cement headstone and on it in carefully crafted letters were these words: "Pray for the soul of John Bent."

As he became ill, I learned, John Bent began to realize that he would never go back to the land of his birth. Kinless and alone, he would go to his grave a stranger in a strange land. No mass would be said for him, no good Father would bless his final resting place. So in his need, he devised a means whereby he could ask blessing from kindly strangers who might pass his grave in the long, long years to come: "Pray for the soul of John Bent."

I found his appeal poignant and irresistible and I always heeded that request. A number of years ago, I noticed that

<sup>1</sup> A copy of the author's eulogy is in the Society archives.

<sup>2</sup> The author is misremembering. John Bent died in 1934, age about 63. After being ill for a number of years in an off-Island hospital, he returned to the Vineyard to prepare to die. He owned a market on lower Main Street, Edgartown, and lived above it. At the corner of Norton Street and Pease's Point Way, opposite the cemetery, he had a piece of land on which he raised fresh vegetables and melons. It was called "John Bent's farm" by Edgartown folks, jokingly.

somehow a small tree had taken root in a crack in the cement and was splitting the base and tilting the headstone itself. I notified my son, Jack, who had been a tree surgeon in his youth. He went to the grave, removed the troublesome little tree, carefully re-cemented the split base, righted the slanted headstone and strengthened the grave against the coming ravages of time and the weather. I later told Bob Convery, who was superintendent of the cemetery, what we had done and he smiled approval of the unauthorized act.

If this story ever achieves print, I hope that there will be kindly and percipient readers who will hear the ghostly cry from a long-ago yesterday and "Pray for the soul of John Bent."

### *Miss Annie Mayhew*

"You must call on Miss Annie Mayhew," I was told, "but she might not let you in."

So it was with a bit of trepidation that I approached the door of the fine old house across School Street from the museum – a house, incidentally, which Admiral Shinn later beautifully renovated.<sup>3</sup> I knocked and the door was opened by a small woman; her dress was blue with a round lace collar, her face was narrow, with a vulpine quality, and there were traces of red in her gray hair.

"Come in," she said tersely. "Please take a chair."

Across the room I saw a stiff, armless wooden chair and, moved by some obscure impulse, I marched over and sat down. When I looked again at Miss Mayhew, the fox-look had been replaced by a delighted smile.

"Why did you pick that chair?" she asked.

"Well, it looked like a minister's chair," I replied.

"It was Mr. Dunham's chair," she said.

The Reverend Mr. Dunham was pastor of the first Church of Christ on Martha's Vineyard shortly after the initial ministry of Thomas Mayhew and my act of perception proved me to be of the right ministerial stuff. This was the first of many calls on Miss Annie Mayhew, some pleasant, some sad. Here, I tell only of the happy ones.

She explained her coldness toward pastors:

"One night before Christmas there was a noise on my front lawn. I looked out and there was Mr. B (she named one of my predecessors) with a group of children who were singing loudly. I wanted to stop their caterwauling for my brother was upstairs trying to sleep. So I signaled for them to stop their noise, like this."

Here, Miss Mayhew vigorously waved her right hand up and down.

"Now wouldn't you think that any sensible man would know that meant 'Stop your noise and go away'?"

"Why, of course," I said cravenly. I did not think it wise to tell her that any pastor, bringing his young people to sing Christmas carols to a shut-in, would supposed that such a gesture was a happy acknowledgment of a kindness!

One day I said to Miss Mayhew, "Why is it that nobody seems to know where Governor Mayhew is buried?"

To appreciate her answer you must realize that Miss Annie held a low opinion of her kinsfolk, the three Mayhew sisters who owned the splendid mansion on South Water Street facing Edgartown harbor.<sup>4</sup> (That house, by the way, willed to the Federated Church by Miss Sara Joy Mayhew in 1956, is perhaps the most upscale manse in all America.)

Miss Annie's answer was tart. "Do you know that little cemetery between the big house and the Methodist parsonage?"

I said that I did.

"Well," she said with a certain morose satisfaction, "if you could dig under Bertha Mayhew's candy shop,<sup>5</sup> you'd find the bones of our illustrious ancestor."

Once she surprised me by saying, "Would you like to see some priestly vestments?" And when I said I would, she produced two stunningly beautiful robes, one white, as I recall, and the other scarlet. Both were so stiff with gold and silver thread stitching that they could stand alone if carefully propped.

<sup>4</sup> The Mayhew sisters were the widow Florence Swallow (who organized the Edgartown Public Library and was the only one who ever married), Sarah Joy and Bertha Lee. They were Annie's first cousins, twice removed. Sara Joy outlived the other two.

<sup>5</sup> The Methodist parsonage was on the southeast corner of S. Water and Cooke Streets. No longer

I caught my breath with astonishment. "They're gorgeous. Where did you get them?"

"Oh, my sister got them when she was in Spain," replied Miss Annie. "I guess some monasteries needed money."

She smiled reminiscently. "Would you like to hear a story about them?"

I would, I said. I will let her tell the tale in her own words. Her eyes sparkled as she told of her dealing with a *nouveau riche* boor.

"Not long ago," she began, "this person came to my door and asked if he might come in. I admitted him, but did not offer him a seat."

"I hear you have some robes for sale," he said.

"I have some robes," I told him, "but they are not for sale."

"I've heard about them," he said. 'Sight unseen, I'll give you six thousand dollars for them.'

"They are not for sale," I said again. "Will you please leave!"

"Seven thousand dollars.'

"Sir, will you leave my house?" I said. I was angry. The mannerless fellow did not move back to my doorstep.

"Eight thousand. And that's my last offer.' The fellow almost shouted at me. Then he snarled, 'What would somebody like you want those beautiful robes for?'

Miss Annie's eyes shone as she recalled the denouement of her victory over the *gross parvenu*.

"Has it occurred to you," I told him, "that I might like to look at them myself?"

"And with that – it wasn't ladylike, I know – I shut the door in his face."

Miss Annie put a high price on her pride. With inflation factored in, eight thousand deep-depression dollars were the equivalent of about \$100,000 today.

I had many visits with Miss Annie Mayhew, but the last one is too sad to be told here. She and her brother Charley<sup>6</sup> have

<sup>6</sup> We find no record of "brother Charley." Her brother in our records was William ("Willie") H.

long been sleeping the big sleep in a corner of the old Westside Cemetery.

### *Lovely Lucinda*

This is the strange story of lovely Lucinda and I will neither tell her surname nor her place of residence, for she may have present-day descendants who would seek my blood for telling her tale of love and shock.

When I knew her, nearly 70 years ago, she was a charming person, a devout church goer and, despite her great age, her face still something of her beauty in youth. When I spoke of this to Bertha Beetle, she smiled without malice and told me a tale of Lucinda's younger days – a strange but true story, Bertha averred.

In those days of her youth, Dr. Daniel Fisher was the great man of Edgartown. He bought and sold whale oil and in those pre-kerosene years that made him a man of much wealth. With it, he built that magnificent mansion on Main Street next to what was then the Methodist Church. He also had an eye for feminine beauty and (or so Bertha claimed) he and Lucinda became what in these days would be known as "an item."

The day after his death, his lawyer came to Lucinda with a singular proposal. Dr. Fisher's body would rest in a small room apart from where the family and other mourners would sit. If Lucinda would walk into that room and sit by the casket, she would receive a legacy of one thousand dollars.

Lucinda had brains as well as beauty. She knew what name would be hers if she accepted that offer – she would be a scarlet woman of the Hester Prynne model.

But in those days, a thousand dollars was big money and on the day of the funeral Lucinda marched bravely past the glaring, outraged family to take her seat by the casket – along with five other women!

There's the makings of a novel in this yarn told me by Bertha Beetle.

### *Joe Robichau*

It occurs to me as I tell these tales of the notable men and women of Edgartown's distant yesterdays, that I ought to include one who is still in the land of the living. And so, I speak of



Joe Robichau. By the time these scribblings attain the dignity of print, Joe and I will have passed our 96<sup>th</sup> birthdays (*Deo volente*) and, since our mothers jointly wheeled us in our baby carriages in Beverly, it can be accurately said that we are indeed old friends.

Joe came to Edgartown in 1933 as director of the newly founded Boy's Club.<sup>7</sup> He stayed on as a high-school teacher and later as Selectman. The town gave him the highest honor that could be bestowed on an off-Islander: it made him Moderator. I venture to class him with yesterday's memorable figures because, at the age of 95, he still is pulling clams and quahaugs out of the Katama mud. Arguable, he is the oldest man who ever worked in that ancient protein factory.

We were both avid readers of "The Wheelhouse Loafer," a bizarre mix of sober fishery facts and wildly imaginative tales. Joseph Chase Allen, its author, had an imaginary postoffice box located on Skiff's Island – an intermittent sandbar off Wasque Point. Joe and I wanted to visit this singular postoffice, so one fine summer morning, Cecil Grant, borrowed his father's powered catboat and took us around Cape Poge, down along East Beach to the few acres of bare sand that was Skiff's Island.

It was a calm day, but a long, slow sea was running so that we couldn't anchor on shore. We nosed the boat up onto the beach and Joe jumped ashore, scooped up a handful of sand and hastily climbed back aboard. Several summers ago, I went back, again looking for the site of the mythical postoffice, but Skiff's Island was no longer there. Joe Robichau might well have been the last living person to put foot on that vanished islet.

### Deacon Vincent

Of all the men and women in Edgartown's yesterdays, the one I knew best and who is clearest in memory is Deacon Edward T. Vincent. His local fame is legendary and the town has named a Katama street after him. I have previously written of him in my books and in the columns of the *Vineyard Gazette* and Henry Beetle Hough has chronicled his solitary gallant stand

against the U. S. Navy (which is another story), but I elect to tell this particular tale because it deals with a historic Edgartown feud – the Pond People versus the Creek people – and because of its *outré* and quietly dramatic final scene.

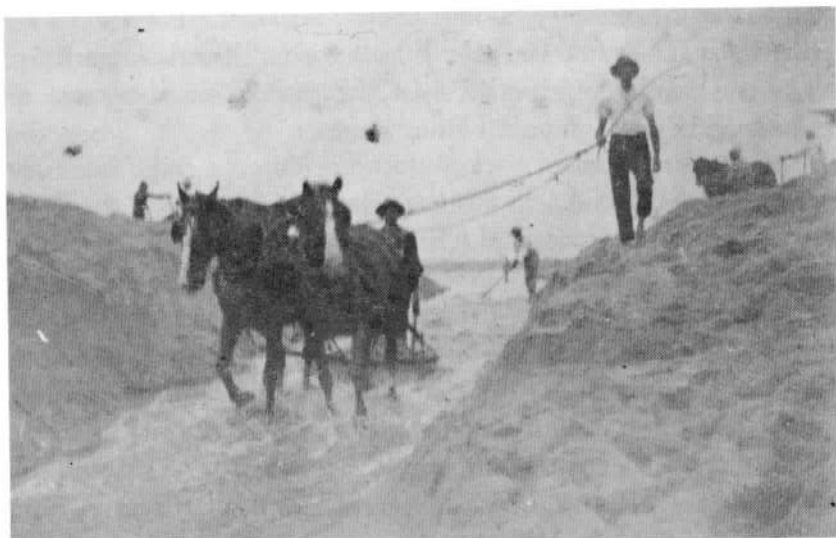
But first a bit of background. Ed Vincent came honestly by his title of Deacon. He was the sole male member of the Baptist branch of the Federated Church and we had a strange relationship. It wasn't exactly love-hate, but it was an ecclesiastical friend-foe business. He did not approve of my sermons, but in one critical church meeting he would not cast the negative vote that could have cost me my job. One day on Collins Beach he approached me and said that he had had a covenant of prayer with a recently deceased Baptist minister on the Cape. Would I take his place? I did, and Ed and I prayed for each other until his death.

It was on Collins Beach, incidentally, that Ed gave proof of his adherence to the Puritan work ethic. In his eighties, he would totter on two canes across the sand, get into his outboard skiff and go quahauging in Katama Bay. Several times he told me with pride how much he had made that day.

But now to the story. Along the south shore of Martha's Vineyard, from Edgartown Great Pond on the east to Tisbury Great Pond on the west, behind the long sweep of the Golden Strand, lies a string of ponds, blue water jewels against the muted viridescence of the Great Plain. And around those ponds, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and even into the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup>, lived a breed of farmer-fishermen known as the Pond People. They farmed the thin soil, raised sheep with a superior brand of wool, and fished the ponds and the open sea beyond them. From the ponds they reaped a rich marine harvest – white and yellow perch, eels, pickerel, mullheads, bass and alewives, plus shellfish: clams, quahaugs and oysters.

There was one fact of nature that brought social and economic tension into the toilsome but productive life of the Pond People. The ponds, into which much of the Vineyard's rain drained, tended to be fresh, which checked the growth of shellfish. And so it was the ancient custom of the Pond People to gather on South Beach on stormy nights late in the spring

<sup>7</sup> Author Butman persuaded Joe to come to the Island to take the job. The two young men had been stars on a basketball team, the Beverly Five Aces. When Joe came to the Island, he and Reverend Butman formed a basketball team, the Edgartown Whalers, causing the church to be



*What the Pond People fought for: opening the barrier beach about 1890. This is Tisbury's Great Pond, not Edgartown's, but the activity was the same at both.*

when the ponds were brimming with the winter rains, and with horses and plows and shovels cut openings in the barrier beach. A narrow cut was all that was needed. The high pond water, gravity-driven, would in a few hours make a wide opening in the beach through which, with the rising tide of the next day, salt ocean water could pour, making the ponds brackish, to the benefit of the shell fisheries.

But this was counter to the desires of another strong company of Edgartonians – the Creek People. It was to their interest that the ponds remain fresh so that the alewives – the herring – would go up into the ponds to breed. This they would not do if the ponds were brackish. (It should be pointed out that the alewives were a highly important food for early colonists in the “starving times” of late spring and early summer.) Old town records are full of battles, legal and physical, fought over the taking of alewives.) The Edgartown Creek People incorporated and dug a long narrow channel, “Herring Creek,” from the west end of Katama Bay to the most eastern pond – Cracktuxet, as I recall its name, so that the alewives could easily swim to their breeding grounds in the fresh water of the south-shore ponds.

Thus two powerful Edgartown factions sought to tip the



*Bountiful and profitable harvest of herring the Creek People were defending at Mattakeset some time before 1925. In the photo are Charles Farle, Albert Vincent and Edwin T. Smith.*

balance of nature in their economic favor: the Pond People by beach openings and brackish ponds; and the Creek People by the herring creek and fresh-water ponds. It was open and declared war, sometimes fought on the beach, not with gun or sword, but with fists, boots and sticks. These violent encounters took place on the occasions of attempted openings and at other times on the floor of town meetings, or even in the halls of the General Court of Massachusetts. Each faction had its champion: Ed Vincent for the Pond People; Ben Collins for the Creek People. Neither would compromise or surrender.

I never knew Ben Collins personally, as I did Ed Vincent, but he was a man of influence and power. Eventually, he won, both in Edgartown and in Boston, and it became illegal to cut an opening in the barrier beach. The Creek People were the victors. As a newcomer, I knew nothing about the bitter internecine battle, but later I heard it from Ed's lips. Once in a while he would stop at the Pease Point Way parsonage and take me for a ride. On a trip to Pohogonot, he told me the story of the town meeting that had made pond openings illegal and of the conflict between him and Ben Collins:

“After the meeting, I said to Collins,” the Deacon did

not raise his voice, but there was implacable determination in his tone and in his face. "All right, you've closed the ponds and you've got the right to seine bass, but I tell you, Ben Collins, that I'll live to pour sand from an opening onto your grave."

Not long after that conversation, I moved to Randolph, but we bought a little place on Upper Main Street, Edgartown, and for the rest of my active life I spend my summer vacations there. Over the years, public opinion changed and by town vote it finally became legal to cut openings in the beach.

One day, Selectman Johnny Osborn said to me, "Early tomorrow morning, the Grant boys are going to open Great Pond. Want to go down?"

I did. We parked at Katama and walked westward on the beach. The Grant brothers must have begun work at first light, for as we arrived they were leaving with their heavy gear. And the opening was already a wide, shallow river of brown pond water rushing down the slope of the beach and staining the surf, high and creamy white under the strong southwest breeze.

Across the broad opening stood a lone figure.

"It's old Ed Vincent," said Johnny.

Ed shouted something in answer to our waving, but the noisy surf prevented us from hearing his words. Then he stooped down, scooped up a handful of sand, and holding open his jacket pocket, poured it in. He did this three times.

"What's he doing?" asked Johnny, perplexed.

"I don't know," I said. But of course I did.

By pure chance, the next Sunday I was standing on the corner where Old Parson Thaxter's manse once stood,<sup>9</sup> when I saw Deacon Vincent, dressed in his go-to-meeting best, walking in the Westside Cemetery. I crossed Cooke Street to meet him.

"Good afternoon, Deacon Vincent," I said. "Did you have a pleasant stroll?"

"Indeed I did, Mr. Butman," he said. (We never used first names with each other.) "I have just kept an old promise."

We both smiled – smiles born of an old secret and shared mirth as Deacon Edward T. Vincent, champion of the Pond People, turned to walk home, victor at very long last.

### Afterword

There are other people who come into memory as I pen this memoir of old Edgartown: Mellie Norton, who was the organist at the Federated Church in my first year, and her three sons, Sam, Isaac and Phil.<sup>9</sup> Phil once took me swordfishing on the *Malvina B.*<sup>10</sup> and let me catch a 50-pound tuna on rod and reel with South Beach merely a dim line on the northern horizon. To watch Sam bring the great yawl *Manxman*<sup>11</sup> into port under sail alone, putting her bow within mere feet of the caplog of the town wharf, and then coming about on the starboard tack with a deafening thunder of sail and slatting gear, was to witness a consummate artistry of seamanship.

However, it is not about people that I conclusively write, but about the town itself – and its quiet, uncluttered loveliness of land and water. There was a blessed emptiness in Edgartown then – a spaciousness untrammelled by too many people. When I read of the literal mobs that thronged and packed South Beach on the Fourth of July in 1998 and 1999, my mind recalls another July night – the 12<sup>th</sup> in 1932. On that night, my first in Edgartown, I walked the Katama Road (dirt then) across the Herring Creek bridge to the Great Beach, stood rapt for a long while, and walked home. And in all those six miles and two hours, I did not meet a single person or car.

And I also remember towing my sailing dory, centerboard up and family aboard, across the Katama shallows to Horace O. Hillman's goose-shooting camp, halfway between Katama Road and Norton Point. One year, we spent three days and two nights there and not one person passed by.

That magnificent emptiness, that spacious glory, and the way of life it fostered are gone. And they will not come again.

But there are those of us who still remember, with admiration and affection, the men and women of Edgartown's golden yesterdays.

<sup>9</sup> Mellie was Malvina B. Norton, Deacon Vincent's sister, and grandmother of a former president of the Society, S. Bailey Norton of Edgartown.

<sup>10</sup> The author is misremembering. Phil Norton's boat was the *Josephine II*. Phil's brother, Ike, owned the *Malvina B.*, a much larger swordfishing schooner that went out on the Banks.

<sup>11</sup> *Manxman*, the largest yawl in the world at the time, was owned by Edward W. Clucas, a Wall



## A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

**H**ENRY BAYLIES, a Vineyard native and one-time Methodist minister, is now an educator. He and his wife, Harriette, have been in the South for her health, but will soon return to the Vineyard. Her condition has not improved and he is unable to find work.

They went south aboard a sailing packet, the voyage ending in a shipwreck at Mobile, Alabama. They will return by boat, but this time by river boat, going up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. We will follow their voyage as Henry provides a revealing description of long-distance travel in the mid-1800s.

**Saturday, March 22, 1851.** Poor heart-broken journal, could you complain by word of mouth, how bitterly would you complain of my heedless neglect. Another week has come & gone & not a record – not a line has been written in this Running Acc't, etc.

Little has occurred of interest. One or two strolls with Bro. Neely,<sup>1</sup> reading, packing trunks preparatory to leaving, nursing & preparing, or rather remodeling, a discourse for tomorrow, has been the principal business of the week. Br. Neely announced last Sabbath that I would preach tomorrow morning & so I must. I really feel little purpose to preach, both spiritually & mentally, not to say bodily. Notwithstanding the

severe discipline to which I have been subjected, I have failed quite too culpably to make that improvement in spirituality I ought. . . My prayer, earnest & daily, is that God will bestow on me grace to strengthen & guide me into the ways of life everlasting.

Hattie during the early part of the week was quite sick, likewise on Friday. On Wednesday she walked on the ground for the first time since the 9<sup>th</sup> of Aug. 1850, at least. On Thursday she again walked, perhaps 130 yards & felt very little fatigue from it. Today she again walked a short distance. She is still very fragile, yet increased in flesh & improving in freedom from neuralgic pains & spasms. . . I have pretty nearly concluded to leave in Tuesday's boat for Mobile en route home or at least to Cincinnati.

**Sabbath, March 23.** . . . The congregation this morning was very good. . . I preached this morning for Rev. Bro. Neely. My subject was Christian Zeal, a subject upon which I have before preached, but which I this time remodeled & considerably altered. . . I had rather more than ordinary liberty & engaged the unflagging attention of the entire congregation for about an hour. Harriette, my dear wife, was praying for me at home. I have since heard the most encouraging, not to say flattering, reports of my acceptability. . . I am encouraged but not elated.

This afternoon I attended the coloured meeting in the vestry. Hattie attended meeting for the first time for many months. She walked to Bro. N.'s study opening into the vestry where she was very comfortably seated & listened to some very good remarks from "Dr. Jordon," to several songs & prayers & to some of the negro extravaganzas. Pre-

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ceding "Dr. J.," Bird Billups read a portion of scripture upon which he commented very blindly. Bird is a slave. The "Dr." has paid for his freedom all except two or three dollars which he leaves unpaid that he may remain here as all free negroes are required to leave the country. When the free negroes were driven out a few months ago, one slave who had bought his freedom returned to his former master & requested him to buy him so that he might remain here. . .

Thus has passed probably my last Sabbath in Columbus, Mississippi, perhaps my last on land in these Southern States. . .

**Tuesday, March 25.** Still remain in Columbus. Bro. Neely last week extended a sincere invitation to us to stay a week longer with the expectation he would accompany us to Mobile & N. Orleans. As Hattie had improved somewhat last week by walking out & wishes to remain another week I concluded to remain till Tues., next. Yesterday & today, have been looking over Giles's discourses on life & his Essays, Emerson's Essays, Dr. Greene's Essays & Whittier's. . . I have been so long by force of circumstances out of or one side of the literary world that I very much need this little respite & access to libraries to brush myself up & get at least an introduction to some of the men of the age. Instead of dwelling so much in the company of divines who lived in former & very different ages from our own, the Pulpit should cultivate an intimate acquaintance with the men of our own times who, faithfully watching the tendencies of the world without, talk about them in our own language. The clergy live too much in the past with Abraham, Isaac & Jacob & the patriarchs & not enough among their

fellows & confreres. The press has of necessity assumed many of the duties formerly devolving on the ministry & the people are drinking from other springs of learning that were formerly bubbling in the Sanctuary & they will not, cannot, be satisfied if their preachers do not think & talk like men of the age – earnest men – reflecting men!<sup>2</sup>

Last night by invitation of Rev. Schooler I called on Bro. Moore who is nearly wasted away with Consumption. Bro. M. is ripe for the harvest. He said to me, "the way has got bright and it keeps bright. I have lost all relish for & satisfaction in the pleasures of the world . . . I expect that the first second I spend in Heaven I shall enjoy more happiness than all human hearts on earth have enjoyed since the world began."

What glorious hopes! . . . This evening Bro. Moore sent for me. . . He is very feeble & languishing. He wished me to express to his wife my views concerning the recognition, etc., of pious friends. I did so. Christians quite too frequently forget or at least have very crude & inadequate views of Heaven, its employments, & relations. I prayed & sang with them. . .

Relative to my sermon on Sab., I hear very encouraging reports. A Steward & Leader told Bro. Neely my discourse was the best preached in this church for years, if not forever. . .

**March 28, Friday.** Bro. Moore, whom I visited this week twice, died – rather, began the better life – this morning at early day. His sufferings just previous to death were very distressing owing to the filling up of his lungs. "Gone safely Home!" As I told him the other evening, I hope & expect to recognize him

<sup>1</sup> Brother Neely is the minister of the church and Henry's benefactor in Columbus. The Baylies' are living in his house.

<sup>2</sup> A rather progressive position, it would seem for a Methodist in 1851.

in Heaven.

. . . Today has been showery. Harriette has felt the change & suffered more than for some days past from general neuralgic pains. She is however greatly recovered disease so that changes affect her comparatively slightly.

I discovered a few days ago that Hattie is able at any time, of her own will & alone by herself or in company, to throw herself into a species of mesmeric sleep & clairvoyance. During her sickening in June 1850, she was subject and since to severe spasmodic attack from which I found I could relieve her by mesmeric manipulations. This I practiced when necessary with success. During the time since then however I have seldom, very seldom, put her in a state of sleep although I at once ascertained she was an excellent subject. Mesmerism is not a new subject with me. I began its study & practice in 1842. During the 4 years in college I frequently exercised my power in placing persons asleep & in relieving the suffering from their diseases, yet always with the utmost secrecy. A Miss Mary Burnell, a Sabbath School scholar of my class in Middletown, was my first & chief subject to whom I administered relief from suffering. I had missed her from her class for many weeks. At length on particular inquiry I found her residence & found . . . she was suffering from entire prostration of her nervous system with loss of voice, sleep, strength, etc. She was able to sit up only one hour in the 24. By request of herself & parents, I attempted to relieve her of the violent pain in her head & succeeded. I likewise restored her so far without aid of any medicine whatever that in 14 days she did not lie down an hour a day, but was busy at work! She slept well, had relief from headache &

her general former sickness, except loss of voice. I attempted to cure this by manipulations & succeeded so that she was able to speak as well as ever, although she had not spoken a loud word for more than three months. . .

During my stay in college, Dr. Oliver sent for me to see if I could do anything for his relief. The good old President had been suffering a long time from nervous prostration. How he heard of my "practice" I knew not. I operated on him several times but without relief. I several times put him in that state where, as he expressed it, his body was perfectly asleep & he began entirely to yield to my power. But just at the instant he felt himself going soundly asleep, his mind would rouse itself & discover the psychological [sic] change & thus prevent it. . . His belief in the efficacy of mesmerism was founded on the testimony of several eminent Physicians in N. Y., Baltimore & elsewhere.

After I left College & began to preach, I left mesmerism almost entirely alone . . . My experimenting upon Hattie has been out of sense of duty to her. I long time ago discovered she is a natural somnabulist. She has many times got up in her sleep & even gone out of doors. Suffering probably from pain, she has even taken medicine, such as Morphine, in enormous doses large enough to put a common man in an eternal sleep. Several times I have looked for medicine to administer to her when she was awake & suffering & found it missing. This night walking & her indiscriminate medicine taking has caused her great anxiety of mind & a vigorous casting about ourselves for a relief or preventive. In her waking moments she is entirely unconscious of the transactions of her sleeping moments, yet when again put in the mes-

went - what she did, etc. Hoping that while in this state she might be able to suggest some remedy or preventive to her getting up nights which is prejudicial to her health, I made the attempt several days ago. While asleep I asked her what I should do to prevent her getting up nights. She replied I should simply will her not to get up & she should not. I did so, but wishing to "render assurance doubly sure" I secured a cooperation of her will. She promised me she would not get up or take any medicine in sleep without my consent. I had a trial of the strength of this preventive last night. She awoke me saying she wished to get up. I asked her for what & she told me. I asked her why did she did not get up without waking me & she replied she did try but could not & thought she ought not without asking me.

Here was a practice proof at least of the efficacy of the prevention. She said she had not got up since she promised me she would not. This forenoon while she lay on the lounge she attempted to place herself in a sleep-walking state. I was writing at the time & on looking up observed a change in her appearance although she held a book & appeared to be reading. I spoke to her asking if she was in a spasm. When she answered in the negative, I asked if she was asleep. She answered in the affirmative. I left my writing & sat beside her. I interrogated her as to why she put herself to sleep. She said it was an experiment to see if she could really do it. I urged her not to make the experiment again to which she consented excepting however that she might do it to find a half dollar which a child lost under the carpet of our room more than a year ago. I asked how she knew there was a half dollar which a child had lost, to which she replied she had seen it, but was not then

(now) sufficiently asleep to see it. I consented to this in order that I might secure the general compliance. I awoke her & went to dinner.

On returning after dinner I found her apparently awake but really asleep. She smiled & said she hoped I would not observe her. I asked her what she put herself to sleep for, to which she replied she was looking for that half dollar the child lost.

Do you see it? said I. She replied, "Yes and I'll find it, if you will buy some morphine with it & commit it to my trust. I will take it only when necessary & never without your knowing it."

I questioned her as to the money, if she had not put it there under the carpet, etc., etc., to all of which she pled ignorance. I consented in part but objected that if we should find a half dollar it would belong to Bro. Neely. She replied "It would not for it was lost by a child before Bro. N. came here. . . the child had 13 or 14 half dollars in a purse of which it tucked two under this carpet & one under the entry carpet - that the one under the entry carpet was found but the other two remain."

. . . I accordingly consented, not believing however any money would be found. She got up, I assisting her, passed across the room put her foot down & said, "It is there, right down there."

Where she placed the toe of her shoe there were two thicknesses of the carpet. I lifted up one thickness & felt just under the edge of the other, which did not quite extend to the side of the room & found the half dollar coined in 1836 & well covered with dust.

I inquired how she happened to see the half dollar under the carpet. She said she was looking around the room in a sleep for pins of which she was lacking. She then saw the dust in great abundance & at length the half dollar.



On waking her, I said nothing for some minutes about what had transpired. Asked how she felt, when she said "quite fatigued in mind." After a while I took out the half dollar & showing it to her, asked if she ever saw it before. She appeared surprized at my question. I further asked if she had hid it under the carpet, etc., etc., to all of which she was quite indignant & affirmed entire ignorance.

When I told her what had just taken place she listened with as much incredulity & curiosity as an indifferent person would listen & affirmed she knew nothing at all about the matter. There was no collusion nor any ground for the slightest suspicious but that the whole affair was honest & open. I knew nothing of the concealed money & she in her waking moments knew nothing of it. These are the facts. The Philosophy, I do not attempt.

This forenoon, wrote two additional pages of a letter to Parents Baylies which I mailed this P.M. This evening have written a letter of four full pages to Parents, Sister & Brother Wilcops, N. Bedford, which together with the writing in this Journal makes about thirteen pages of writing besides reading, talking, sleeping & walking. This for such a dull day & a dull boy does quite well.

Sally, the cook, yesterday gave me her little black bird, a boy of four months, & she offered herself, but she is so fat, I would not accept. As it happens however the Mother is not the owner so that her gift is invalid. Were it valid, I seriously question if immediate emancipation or colonization would be expedient in his case. The poor little brat is dependent on his huge mother's huge black bust for his daily nourishment & would starve to death if left dependent on himself.

crous . . . yet the thought has suggested itself that this case is a fair parallel with a large proportion of the Slaves in the South. They are no more fit for emancipation or colonization than this four-months-old black baby boy.

**Monday, March 31.** On Sat. morning Bro. Neely informed me he should expect me to preach on Sat. night. I pled want of preparation & notice, but this was unavailing & I must preach. Accordingly, I commenced preparation of a sermon from "Work out your own Salvation, etc."

Yesterday morning I visited the Sabbath School. Few were in attendance & no order was observed. A general conversation on almost any topics I judge was going on among the children while most of the Teachers having gone through their lessons were sitting listlessly or reading. By request, I made a few remarks to the Teachers & Scholars of a practical character. . .

In the P.M., I listened to a discourse from "Dr. Jordon" in his peculiar forcible negro style. Harriette for the first time since August 8<sup>th</sup> put on a tight dress - her pink satin -- & to our surprize found she is more fleshy than when she wore the dress before.

She sat in Bro. N.'s study & heard the "Dr." She is really a very pretty woman dressed up. It is so long since I have seen her dressed, I should hardly have known her. During a portion of the past week she has suffered from a pain from her breast through her left lungs to the shoulder blade & difficult breathing. . . My fears are what is termed a metathesis of disease. Yesterday, however, in a mesmeric sleep, she told me the pain in her lungs was caused by lifting a trunk - that they are not diseased. Thus my fears are partially relieved & I have yet hope she will become a healthy woman

## In Memoriam Drucille Vose

1913 - 1999

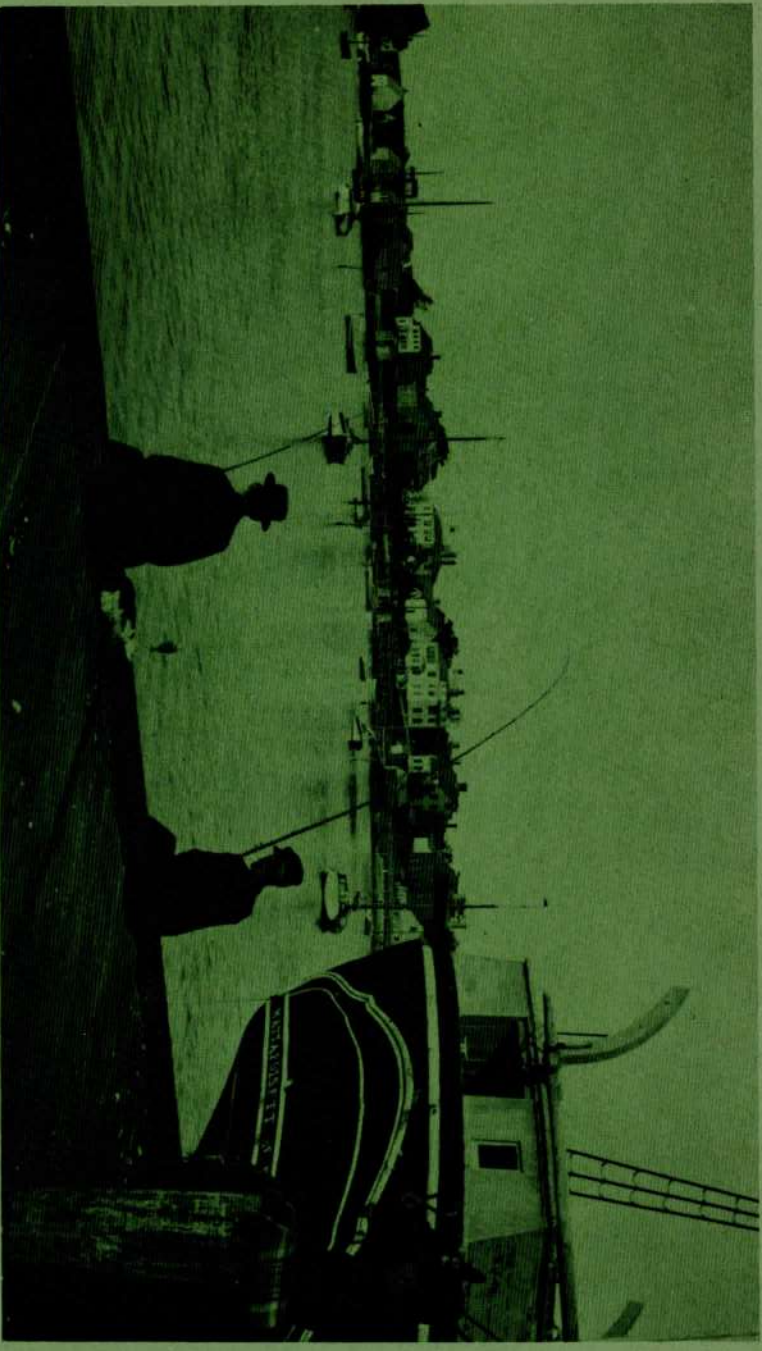
Drucille Vose, a dedicated volunteer at the Society, died at her home on Tower Hill in Edgartown December 15, 1999. She was the wife of Donald W. Vose, a long-time member of our Board of Directors. They would have celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in January 2000.

Mrs. Vose had been a faithful member of what we call our "Sparklers," not because they sparkled as individuals (which of course each did), but because of what they brought to the Fresnel lens in the lighthouse on our grounds. Each spring, they climbed the steep ladder to the huge lens, the centerpiece of our campus, to perform their work. More than 1000 pieces of fine French optical glass make up the beehive-shaped Fresnel, now nearly 150 years old. Most are prisms with three sides, making a total of more than 3000 surfaces to be carefully and tenderly polished. Many are inaccessible except with a ladder and the procedure was an anxious one for onlookers and participants alike. The volunteer group was organized by the late Eleanor Olsen in the 1970s. Her first recruit was her friend Drucille Vose.

A generous and kind person, she opened her beautiful home overlooking Edgartown harbor to the Society last summer for a memorable event that featured an inspiring talk by Society member and historian, David McCullough. Although in poor health, she enjoyed the gathering and expressed a wish that we do it again when she was feeling better.

We offer our deep sympathy to her husband and her family and will remember Drucille Vose each time we see the Fresnel lens sparkling in the sunshine or casting its red and white beams across our grounds every night.





A symbolic photograph, circa 1890. Two men sit on Osborn's wharf in Edgartown catching scup, alongside the "mohballed" whaleship Mattapoisett, Edgartown's last whaler, now only a memorial to the glory days of whaling.