



# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 42, NO. 2

NOVEMBER 2000

## Lower Lights

(An Affectionate Memoir)

by HARRY R. BUTMAN D.D.

## *An Eyewitness Account*

## The Portland Gale of 1898: Our Deadliest Storm

by MICHAEL F. HARRINGTON

## Our First Automobile Arrived 100 Years Ago

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

### Whaling: The Vineyard Connection

## Early Whaling and the Development Of Onboard Trypots

by EDWIN R. AMBROSE

### Documents

## A Running Account of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

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### Vineyard Haven Village in the 1890s.



The complete lithograph of Vineyard Haven, circa 1890, a portion of which is shown in centerspread of this issue. It is 17 by 24 inches. If there is sufficient interest among members, the Society will have full-size reproductions printed, suitable for framing. Please let us know if you have interest in purchasing copies.

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## Lower Lights (An Affectionate Memoir)

by HARRY R. BUTMAN, DD

WHEN I READ William E. Marks's article on lighthouses in *Martha's Vineyard Magazine*<sup>1</sup> with Alison Shaw's superb shot of Edgartown light at dawn, my mind flashed back to a long-ago time. Reading Lane Lovell's concern about the non-functioning light and his worries for "any vessels that may be out there trying to find their way to the harbor for shelter," brought back memories of one stormy night I visited that lighthouse nearly 70 years ago.

On these pages I have written about two brilliant and beautiful Edgartown women of yesteryear: Bertha Beetle and "Lovely Lucinda."<sup>2</sup> The lady I will write about here, Lil Thomas, was neither. She was corpulent, weighing nearly 250 pounds. Her sole physical daintiness was in her absurdly small feet.

Lil was of limited intelligence and I suppose that part of my irritation with her was due to the fact that my over-adorned Sunday discourses made no appeal to her whatever.<sup>3</sup> She occasionally, and critically, compared me to her uncle, Rev. Jerry Macauley, a famous evangelist whose fiery sermons to the seamen in New York City were true Gospel stuff.

Despite her criticism, as the newly called minister of Edgartown's Federated Church, I did my pastoral chores and visited her faithfully. The memory of one of those calls brings a smile to my lips as I write these words seven decades later.

Lil was the wife of Keeper Lyman Thomas. They had few visitors in their home, standing as it did alone on an island in

<sup>1</sup> *Martha's Vineyard Magazine*, Fall/Holiday 1999, p. 38ff.

<sup>2</sup> See *Intelligencer*, February 2000.

<sup>3</sup> In those days, as my friend Joe Robichau once pointed out to me, I counted no page well-written that had fewer than three literary allusions.

REV. HARRY R. BUTMAN, 96 years old, lives in California. From 1932 until 1937, he was minister of Edgartown's Federated Church. The author of many books and articles, this is his second contribution to our journal.



Edgartown harbor. The light was mounted on the roof of their house, which you got to by way of a dauntingly long boardwalk bridge extending three hundred yards out from the foot of the Lovell property on North Water Street. Lil, alone in the living area most of the time while her husband did his chores around the light, filled up her empty afternoons by listening to radio broadcasts of the baseball games of the Boston Braves. Television was not even on the far horizon in those days and the Braves had not yet departed for Atlanta via Milwaukee.

It may seem strange that a pious Baptist like Lil should be a keen baseball fan, but such was the case.<sup>4</sup> Lil not only followed the progress of each game, but she listened avidly to the wealth of statistical detail which the announcer poured forth about each player. She did not simply listen. She had a memory which matched that of an idiot-savant and her mind was richly packed with inconsequential data of each player's skills.

One afternoon, Lil did not come to the door in answer to my knock, but called for me to come in. When I entered, she put her hand to her mouth to indicate silence and pointed me to a chair. I was a bit surprised, for Lil usually greeted her minister more formally. But as I listened, I learned the reason for Lil's tense absorption.

The game in progress was no ordinary contest. It was the Boston Braves against the New York Giants with their Hall of Fame southpaw, Carl Hubbell, on the mound. The game was in the bottom of the ninth and, incredibly, the Braves had loaded the bases with one out. A single would put them where they had never been since the great days of the 1914 champions, at the top of the National League.

I saw Lil's lips thin with compression and a shadow of worry cross her face when the name of a pinch hitter was announced. But alas for high hopes. "Old Squarepants" hitched up his belt and threw. The hapless lubbard at the plate promptly smacked a crisp one-bouncer to the shortstop for a game-ending double play. The dream of league-leading twitched like a bursting bubble and was gone.

<sup>4</sup> The Federated Church, then newly organized, was a merger of Edgartown's Congregational and Baptist congregations.

Photo by Rufus Pease Davis.



*Edgartown Harbor Light not long after the author's pastoral visits with Lil Thomas, wife of Lighthouse Keeper Lyman Thomas. Photo was taken in October 1938.*

Lil sat in somber silence, her face a Cassandra-mask of despair. At last she spoke.

"I should have known it," she said hoarsely, "He only hit .231 for Montreal."

The next episode of my pastoral relationship with Lil Thomas was far more serious. It had a lasting impact on my professional life. It began when I was trying to re-establish the mid-week prayer meeting and Bible class at the Federated Church, but having small success. One Wednesday night in November, with the elm branches groaning and tossing under the lash of a wild northeaster and icy rain slanting against the windows, I crossed the yard after ringing the last bell, looked at the abso-

lutely empty chapel and came to a decision: I would give up the mid-week meeting. If nobody cared, why should I?

As I sat there, angry and moody (for defeat came hard), the door opened and in staggered Lil, her fat face ashen with fatigue. I looked at her in alarm. For her to come to this meeting was a dangerous physical ordeal, for on such a night as this the seas would be surging over the foot-bridge, and even after she made it across the bridge to North Water Street, she was a mile from the church.

"My car wasn't there," she said. "They didn't think I'd be going. I had to walk."

Her tiny feet were ill-adapted to carry her great bulk such a distance, her ankles were swollen and she was in pain. I conducted the meeting for the two of us – Scripture, prayer, a brief talk, the benediction – and then drove her to the Lovell house. I helped her walk out to the lighthouse, the driving, freezing rain cutting our faces and the high sea coming up through the planks to soak our legs.

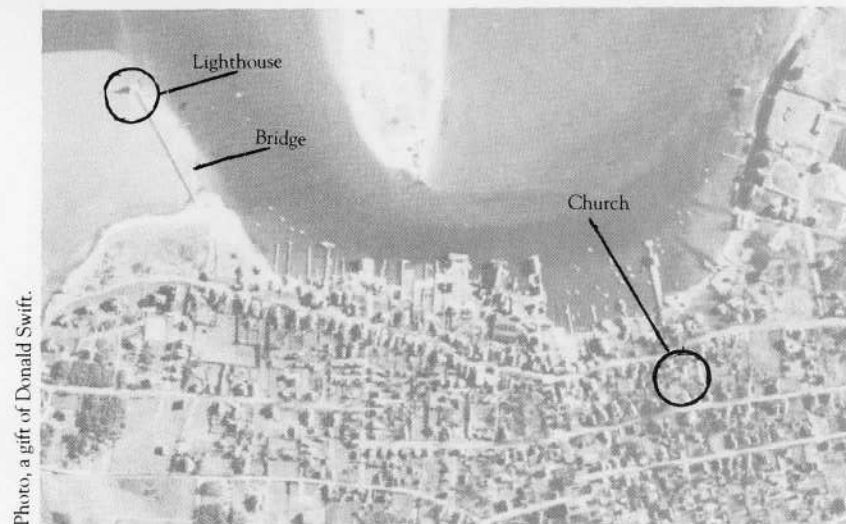
With dawn, the gale had died down. In the afternoon I went to call on her.

"Mrs. Thomas," I asked, "what made you come out last night?"

Lil hesitated before answering and I shall take advantage of her pause to do some back-pedaling which will give meaning and dignity to her brief reply.

Before coming to Edgartown, I had read of a lighthouse in a Great Lakes town (on Lake Erie, I think) which was curiously parallel to the Edgartown situation. Both were at the entrances to harbors and in each the keeper and his wife lived in the lighthouse. The husbands kept the big upper lights and the wives kept kerosene lamps in the windows that looked out on the harbors. The major difference was that, unlike the wide deep-water channel into Edgartown harbor, the Great Lakes harbor had a narrow channel through a treacherous bar. If the harbor light should fail during the darkness of an onshore gale, a ship seeking refuge would be in hazard.

Here, I should parenthetically note that Lil was not the only Edgartown woman to put a lower light in a harbor-facing



Photo, a gift of Donald Swift.

*Edgartown, November 1938. Light area, left, is shallow water covering flats that today are sand dunes and beach. Lil walked from lighthouse to the church, far right.*

window. Helen Collins, in her house above the beach named for the family, burned such a beacon to steer her husband, "Tea" Collins, as he rowed homeward in the early dark of winter evenings after a hard day shellfishing on the Katama Flats. (John Osborn, Edgartown selectman and bank founder, told me that the sobriquet, "Tea," was a reference to the bottle of cold tea that was always part of his noonday lunch out on the flats.)

I saw that light myself one night as I was ghosting in my sailing dory before a gentle southerly wind headed for my stake off Collins Beach. It was a tiny point of gold in the total darkness. In those long-ago nights, there was no dazzling electrical shore-front glare.

Now back to Lake Erie. One morning after a wild blow, the lady of the lighthouse had a visitor. He was the skipper of a lumber schooner that had found refuge inside the harbor the night before.

"Your kitchen lamp saved our lives," he said. "Just when we needed the light to get us over that damned bar, a cloud dropped down and hid the big light. But we could still see your lower light and that saved us. We do thank you." And with that, he took his leave.



On a stormy night in November, such as the one on which Lil took her walk, this open bridge could be treacherous. Photo was taken a number of years earlier.

Lil had never heard that story, but she knew the old gospel hymn that it had inspired:

*Dark the night of sin has settled,  
Loud the angry billows roar;  
Eager eyes are watching, longing,  
For the lights along the shore  
Trim your feeble lamp, my brother:  
Some poor sailor, tempest tossed,  
Trying now to make the harbor,  
In the darkness may be lost.  
Let the lower lights be burning  
Send a gleam across the wave.  
Some poor suffering shipwrecked seaman  
You may rescue, you may save.*

Lil stayed silent. I repeated my question: "Why did you come out last night?"

Then she pointed upstairs to the lighthouse tower. "Lyme has to keep that light going in all kinds of weather and I figured



Land in the foreground is the Lovell property mentioned by the author; a peaceful scene, unlike the night of Lil's walk. Chappaquiddick Island is in the background.

I had to keep my light going too." She hesitated, then said: "Let your light so shine. . . ." She did not finish the quotation.

I said little, but I have never forgotten her fidelity. I think my continuing contrition is due to the fact that I had been so blind in my intellectual arrogance, so enamored of beauty and intelligence, that I failed to see the inner light in a vessel of corpulence and ignorance – as the world counts ignorance.

I made some expiation for my hubris in the forty-four remaining years of my active ministry by always holding a mid-week meeting. Lil's lower light still burns in a corner of my memory.

In middle life, I left the New England of my Puritan-pastor ancestors and went to Los Angeles. There, I served two long pastorates: one at the Church of the Messiah in a sophisticated suburb; the other in downtown First Church, a church which in its glory days had a membership of 5000 and which still worships in a cathedral of Gothic grandeur. In these churches, and in my work in the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches and in the International Congregational Fellowship, I met a number of women with brains and beauty.

But their brilliance never dimmed the undying gleam of a lower light I saw burning on a wave-washed bridge on that stormy Wednesday night in Edgartown long ago.



by MICHAEL F. HARRINGTON

THE GALE OF NOVEMBER 1898, the historic Portland Gale,<sup>1</sup> killed at least ten men in Vineyard Haven harbor. None of them were Vineyarders; all were mariners aboard the vessels that had sought refuge there from the gale.

The Vineyard was one of the places in southern New England that was hit hardest, but the damage ashore was relatively minor: chimneys were blown down, shingles torn from roofs, church steeples damaged, but no serious injuries resulted. Coastal vessels in Vineyard Haven harbor (plus one blown ashore in Oak Bluffs off East Chop) were hit the hardest. It was the most deadly storm in our history. More than 30 coastal schooners, most of them heavily laden, were blown ashore or sunk. Many more were dismasted or heavily damaged.

We have an eye-witness account of the storm and its aftermath in a letter written by Michael F. Harrington to his sister Mary. He wrote the letter a few days after the storm to assure his family in New Bedford that he was safe. Michael was a young man, in his early 20s, it would seem.

The Cottage City directory of 1897 lists M. F. Harrington of Eastville as manager of Luce's mill. The mill was in Eastville, probably near the site of today's hospital. Its owner, Frederick O. Luce,<sup>2</sup> was not well (he died about a year later). In the directory, the mill advertised that it did "Planing, Sawing, and Turning," producing lumber, shingles and cedar posts. Michael is living with the Luce family.

<sup>1</sup> Called the Portland Gale because the greatest loss of life was on the steamer *City of Portland* that disappeared with more than 110 aboard off Gloucester.

<sup>2</sup> Our records show that Frederick O. Luce (1855-1900) was the adopted son of Ichabod Norton Luce (1814-1894), one of the most influential men in Island history (see Henry Beetle Hough, *Martha's Vineyard Summer Resort*.)

MICHAEL F. HARRINGTON, a New Bedford native, was living and working in Eastville on the eastern shore of Vineyard Haven harbor when he witnessed the Gale of 1898. We are indebted to Cynthia Vieire of Artesic, California, who gave the Society a copy of the letter Michael wrote to her great-grandmother, his sister, Mary.

The letter, despite the tragic story it tells, ends light-heartedly with a few jokes, some about the Spanish-American War, which had just ended. It is signed humorously, "M. F. Harrington, Judge Probate, Box 453, Cottage."<sup>4</sup>

We print the letter with Michael's misspellings and grammatical errors (punctuation has been added when needed for clarity).

Cottage City, Dec. 2nd

Dear Sister Mary,

I write you theis [these] few lines to let you know that I am alive after this grat storm. I have never saw any thing like it in all my life. Saturday night I started for town on my bike. it was terrible dark but it was fearfull calm. about 9 o'clock it started to snow and blow. my heavens if I didnt have the time getting home. I was sock [soaked]. the boss wife waited till I got back and made me take my cloths of and go to bed. she is as good to me as a mother.

about 2 o'clock Sunday morning we heard terrible banging and howling. both barn doors were tore off. I had to get Call the boss. we tried to get the doors but you might just as well try to stop the wind. it was Snowing and howling like mad.

we heard the crying for help from the harbor witch is as near to where I live as the railroad is to you. their was no sleep that night at four oclock we went to the beach that was 4 oclock Monday monring and I have been on it ever sence to night will be the first night sleep I will get sense last Saturday night one week tomorrow.

I have been night watching on the beach ever sense watching for dead bodys with the Volinter crew that rescued most of the men. There are 15 of us. This Ike Norton<sup>4</sup> you see so much about saving so many is Himie Burden's brother in law, where our sister Kattie used to go down south. he is married to his [Himie's] sister.

the boss and my self found 2 bodys and 50 thousand feet of

<sup>3</sup> Cottage City was sometimes called simply "Cottage."

<sup>4</sup> Isaac Norton (1851-1937) married Euphemia Burden in 1869. They lived on Beach Street, Vineyard Haven. He is listed as a fisherman in the 1897 Directory. Others in the rescue party with Norton were Alvin H. Cleveland, George Golart, Stanley Fisher and F. Horton Johnson, Vineyard Haven postmaster. All were given gold medals for heroism by the Federal government.

lumber, about one hundred dollars worth. we will have to wait to see what the underwriters and insurance men say about it. they are here from Boston, Providence, New York and all around. one of them was in the mill today. he said we would get 10 dollars for the 2 bodys and 50 percent for the lumber.

the beach was lined with lumber, trunks, bags, dishes, chairs, lounges, cumpass, checks, pocketbooks, cloths -- every thing you can name. I found captins Roberts<sup>5</sup> pocket Book near the Look-goon [Lagoon] Bridge. their were Bank checks and letters from his wife and son. the checks was no good they were drawn in 1885. this is the captin who died in the riggin, frozed to deth.

when he was laid out in captin Nortons barn, I went to see if I knew him. he was in his stocking feet. I pulled the Blanket off his face I knew him right away. he carried lumber for my boss from Portland Main 2 or 3 times. his eyes was wide open. he looked as if he sufferd a good deal. he was worth 40 thousand dollars and it was [to be] his last tripp.

well, mary, of all the sights I ever saw this beats them all. the two fellows who came to sketch for the [New Bedford] Standard did not get half of the pictures. I was talking to them on the beach. I know both of them. one fellow, Eddie Ashley, I went to school [with] and the other fellow, Ed Dewolf, I got acquainted with here in the summer with.

on most all of the schooners they had Old Glory Glory [sic] up-side down wich means Union down calling for help. they were in the riggin from 12 oclock Saturday till Sunday night. till 6 oclock [it was] snowing and blowing like hades. one schooner that you don't see in the paper was about 50 feet from the beach with 5 men in the riggin. it was the saddis [saddest] sight I ever want to see again. they called for help to shore. their were about 50 of us standing their and could not do a thing. finely [finally], they began to die, frost to death. they began to drop into the see one by one and that is the last we ever saw of them.

another schooner was further up the beach they took a water pail, tide a sounding line to it, but it would not float to shore, but a fellow here by the name of Ben Pease took a fish line swung it

<sup>5</sup> Captain Roberts of the schooner *Leora M. Thurlow* was from Maine with a cargo of paving stone. The mate and two seamen were rescued by Norton and the others.

around his head a couple of times and let it go. it landed square on the deck of the vessel. they tide a big howser to it and we pulled it a shore. then they got their end of it tied to the yal [yawl] boat and cryed, all reddy. we ran up the beach with it and saved 6 of them. they were pritty near done for. the captin, when he landed, busted out crying and said boys, I shall never forget you. I was in Captin Bunkers crew, but you don't see any thing about us in the *Standard* but the paper printed here gives us a grate shot.

But mary they never can praise Ike Norton, Hottie [Horton] Johnson, Al Clevand [Cleveland], Gorge Gulark [George Gollart], to much. they put out in a common size dory<sup>6</sup> that was patched with canvis. I know them all [as] well as I do any body in New Bedford. I have been on watch with them every night and you never here [hear] them blow about what they done. they are all good see men [seamen]. Ike Norton was quarter master on the revenue cutter *Dexter*.

Tell Bill, your Bill, that I ride a bike for the [illegible]. well, I have a new girl now. her name is Miss May A Canavan, 42 Harvard St., Cambridge. I am going to see her Chistmass.

my boss has been in the mass general Hospital last summer for about 4 months. well, when Dan Harrington gets married it is about time for me [to] get their. But I belive like a good many fellows down here, as happy a life as was ever lead was allways to court and never to wed.

I saw in a new York paper where a Irish man came home and laied down to sleep. he was awaken by the nurse who showed him twins. he looked at the clock. it said 2 oclock, he looked at the stand and it had 2 cigars on it. on his bed were 2 sheets, 2 quilts. he had 2 matches in his hand. he said thank God I did not come home at 12.

I went with a girl here from Hoboken, New Jersey, and promised to marry her last October, but I never liked her. she was a Hobo from Hobocan.

tell your bill that he writes well. I may on my way from Boston

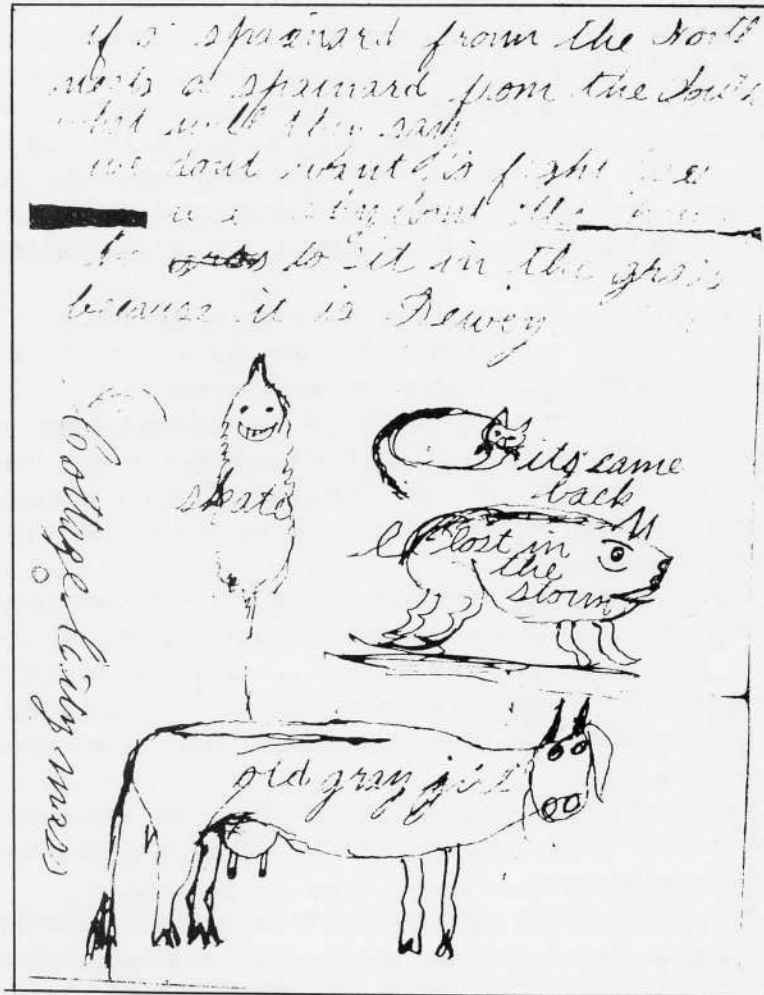
<sup>6</sup> This dory, a large one, had been rowed ashore by seamen from one of the wrecked schooners and had been damaged, requiring some canvas patching. There were demands after the storm that a lifesaving station be established in the harbor, equipped with appropriate gear for rescue work. It did not happen.



stop over for a night. I will go by the way of woodhole. ask Bill why he did not write and let me know if he got my pictur.

hoping you are all well, I will say good night for I am dead Sleepy. with love and best wishes to you all, I remain yours Truly Hon. M. F. Harrington, Judge probate, Box 453, Cottage.

if a spainard from the North meets a spainard from the South what will they say? we don't want to fight du wee? why don't the spainard like to sit in the grass? because it is Dewey.



The final page of the letter that Michael wrote to his sister, Mary, after the storm.

## Photographic Record of the Wrecks

Richard G. Shute, Edgartown's photographer, recorded the wrecks and sold six of his best photographs for \$1.25. They are shown on the following pages. Vineyard Haven photographer Chamberlain also took photographs. We have only two of his. Both are shown.

### Photographic Views OF Vineyard Haven Harbor, Taken after the storm of Nov. 27th, 1898. BY R. G. SHUTE, EDGARTOWN, MASS.

- No. 56. From Beach Road looking North
- No. 57. " " " Northwest.
- No. 58. " Head of Harbor, Northeast.
- No. 59. Sch. Newburgh halfway through Wharf.
- No. 60. View down Wharf Street.
- No. 61. General View from Beach.

Price: 25cts. Each, or the whole Set (six views) for \$1.25 sent to any address, Post Paid, on receipt of money.

## Wrecked Vessels

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Leora M. Thurlow, paving stones, sunk.      | Winnie Lawry, lumber, ashore, little damage. |
| Annie A. Booth, lumber, dismasted, afloat.  | Nellie Doe, lumber, ashore, total loss.      |
| E. J. Hamilton, coal, ashore.               | E. G. Willard, ashore, little damage.        |
| M. E. Eldredge, clay, damaged, ashore.      | Edith McIntire, ashore, little damage.       |
| Nellie M. Slade, clay, dismasted, ashore.   | Pareta, lumber, afloat, damaged.             |
| James A. Brown, grain, bow gone, ashore.    | Georgie, afloat, damaged, bowsprit gone.     |
| Newburgh, in ballast, sliced through wharf. | E. Waterman, coal, ashore, dismasted,        |
| James Ponder Jr., lumber, ashore.           | Delta, in ballast, ashore, bowsprit gone.    |
| Canaria, in ballast, stern damaged, ashore. | Nellie M. Slade, ashore, total wreck.        |
| Rebecca W. Huddell, piling, ashore.         | Maylu, steam tug, ashore, little damage.     |
| Lucy Hammond, coal, ashore.                 | Falcon, barge, coal, sunk.                   |
| Abby Bentley, fertilizer, ashore.           | Byssus, barge, coal, sunk.                   |
| Bertha E. Glover, lime, ashore, afire.      | Beaver, barge, coal, sunk.                   |
| Sadie Willcutt, plaster, ashore.            | Many local boats, sunk or ashore.            |
| Marion Draper, lumber, ashore.              |  |
| J. D. Ingraham, ashore, little damage.      |  |
| Charles Raymond, lumber, ashore.            |  |
| George H. Mills, stone, ashore.             |  |
| Quetay, lumber, ashore, little damage.      |  |

### Off Cottage City

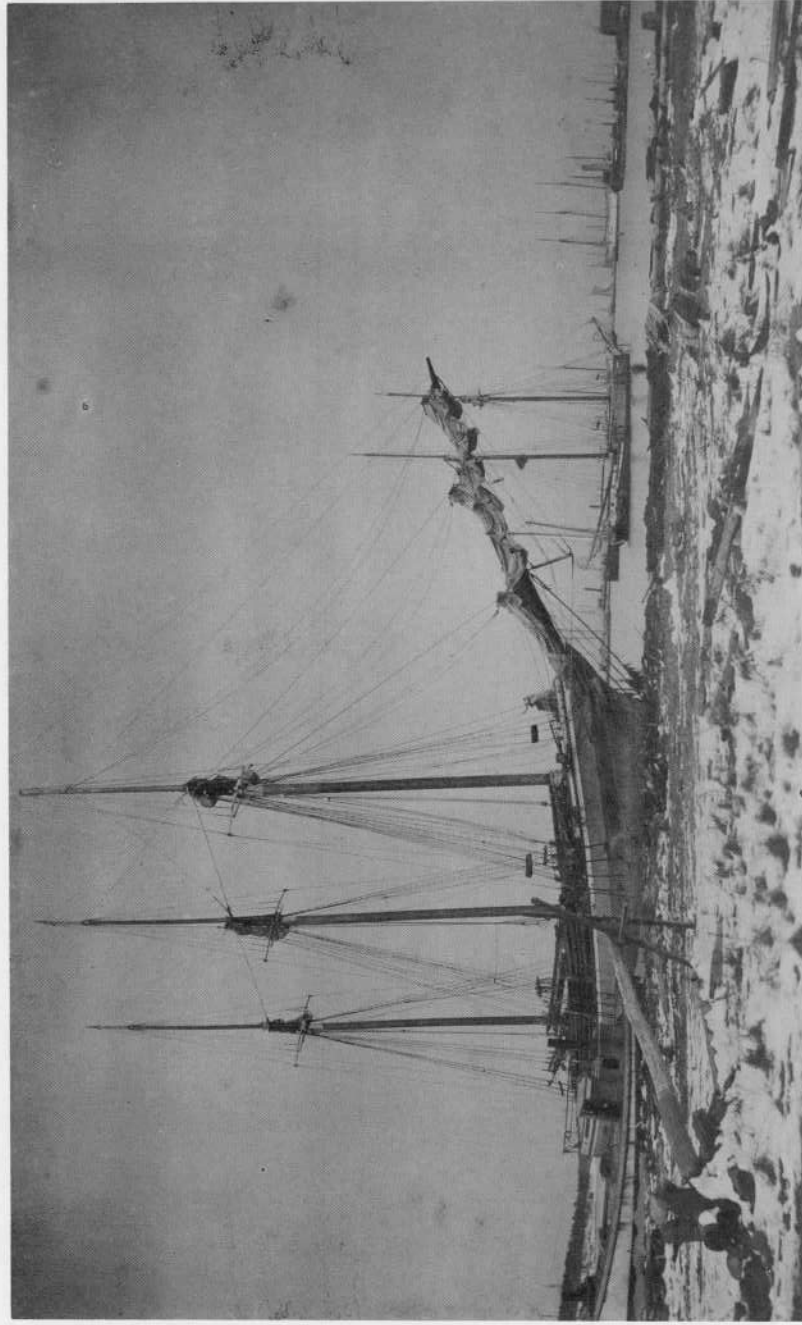
Island City, broken up, all lost.

### On Sow and Pigs Reef, Cuttyhunk

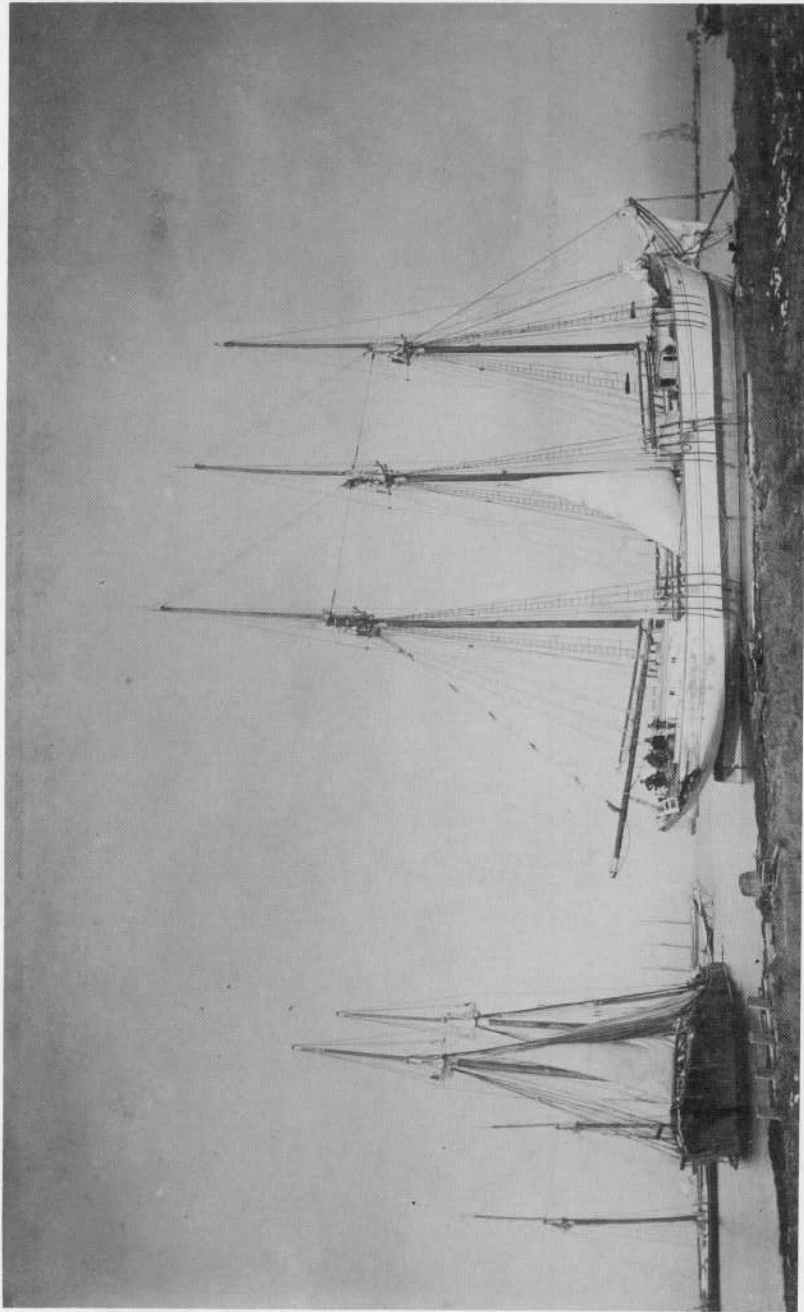
Steamer Fairfax, passengers, crew rescued.



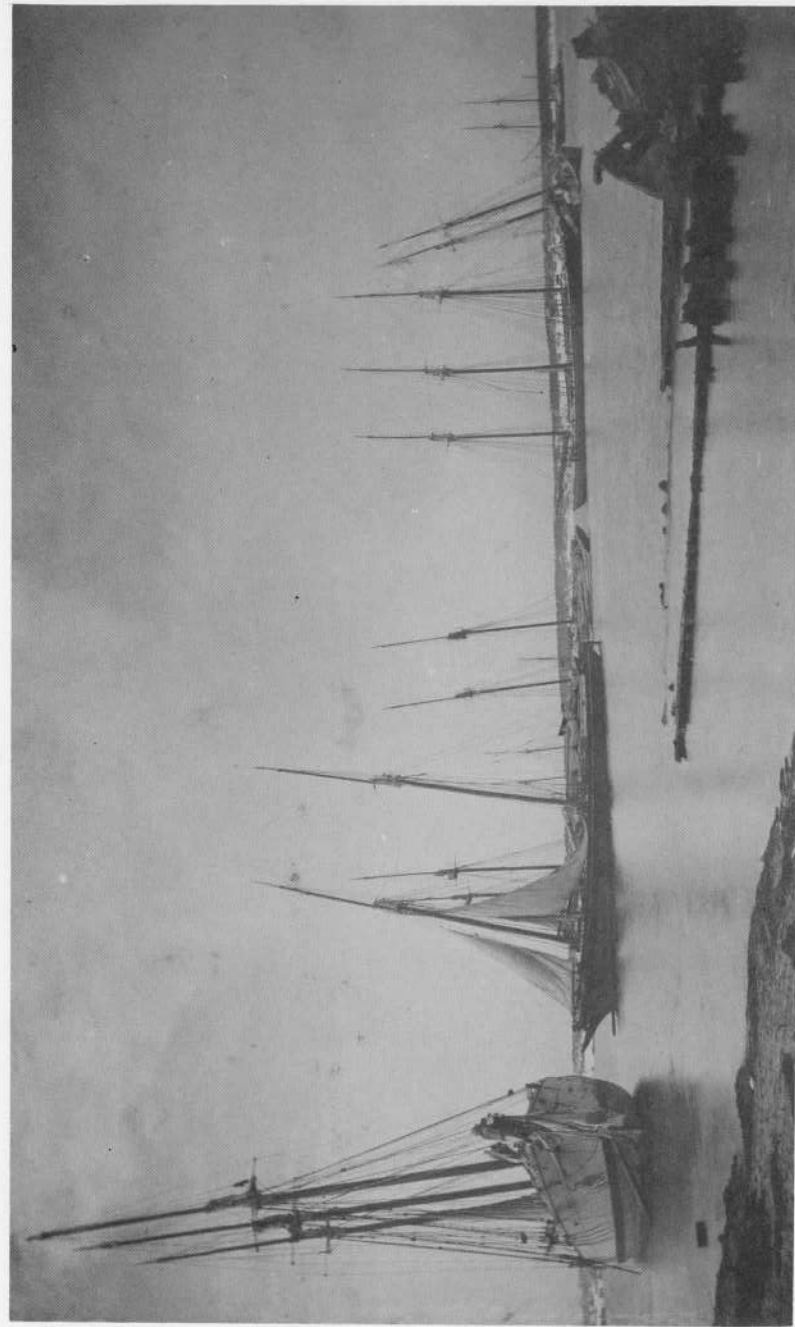
Shute called this a "General View from Beach." It is hard to believe but on one of these schooners, beached only 50 feet from shore, five men froze to death in the rigging while Vineyarders on shore watched helplessly (see p. 60).



Three-master hard on the beach at the "Head of the Harbor," in Shute's words. At left, a small steam lighter ashore.

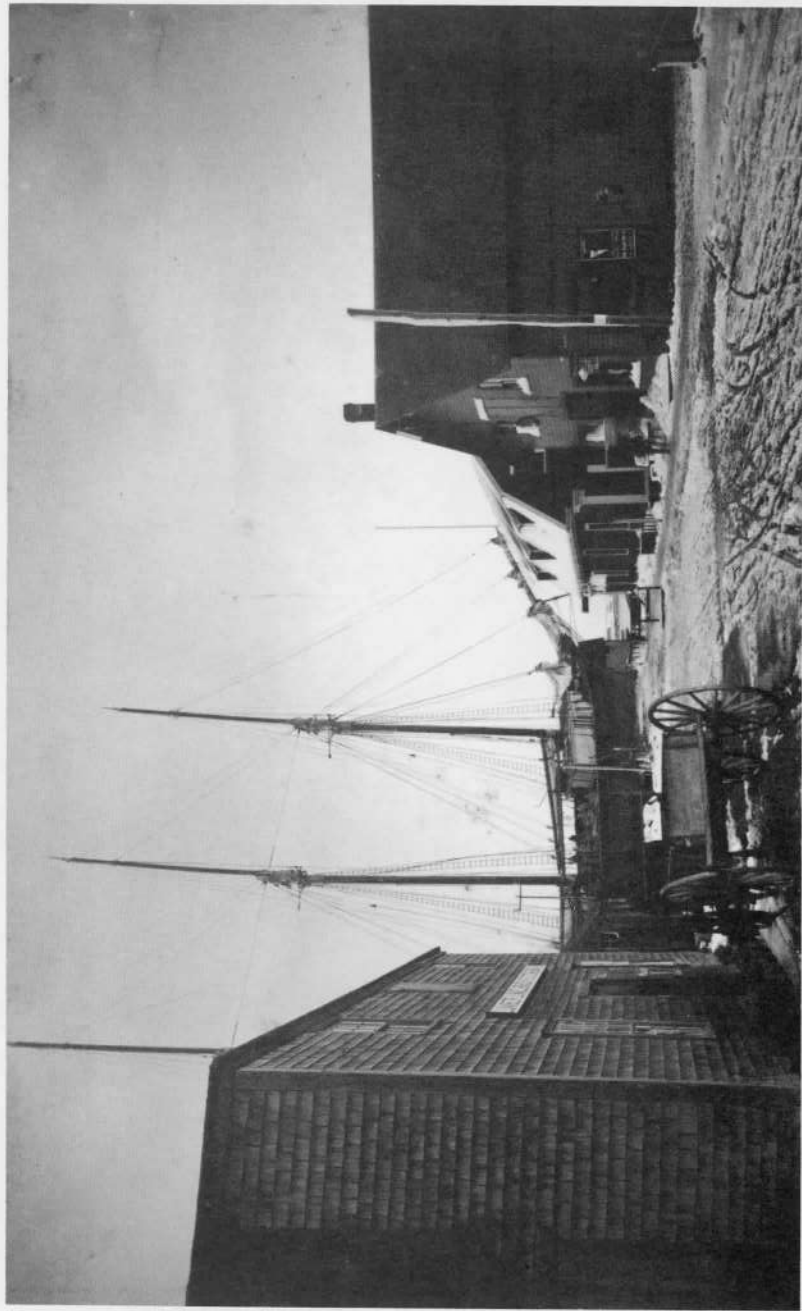


*The 90-mile-an-hour gale, the crashing waves and the freezing sleet seem far removed on the day after the storm, but on one of these beached schooners, Captain Roberts died, encased in ice in the rigging. He had planned to retire after this voyage.*

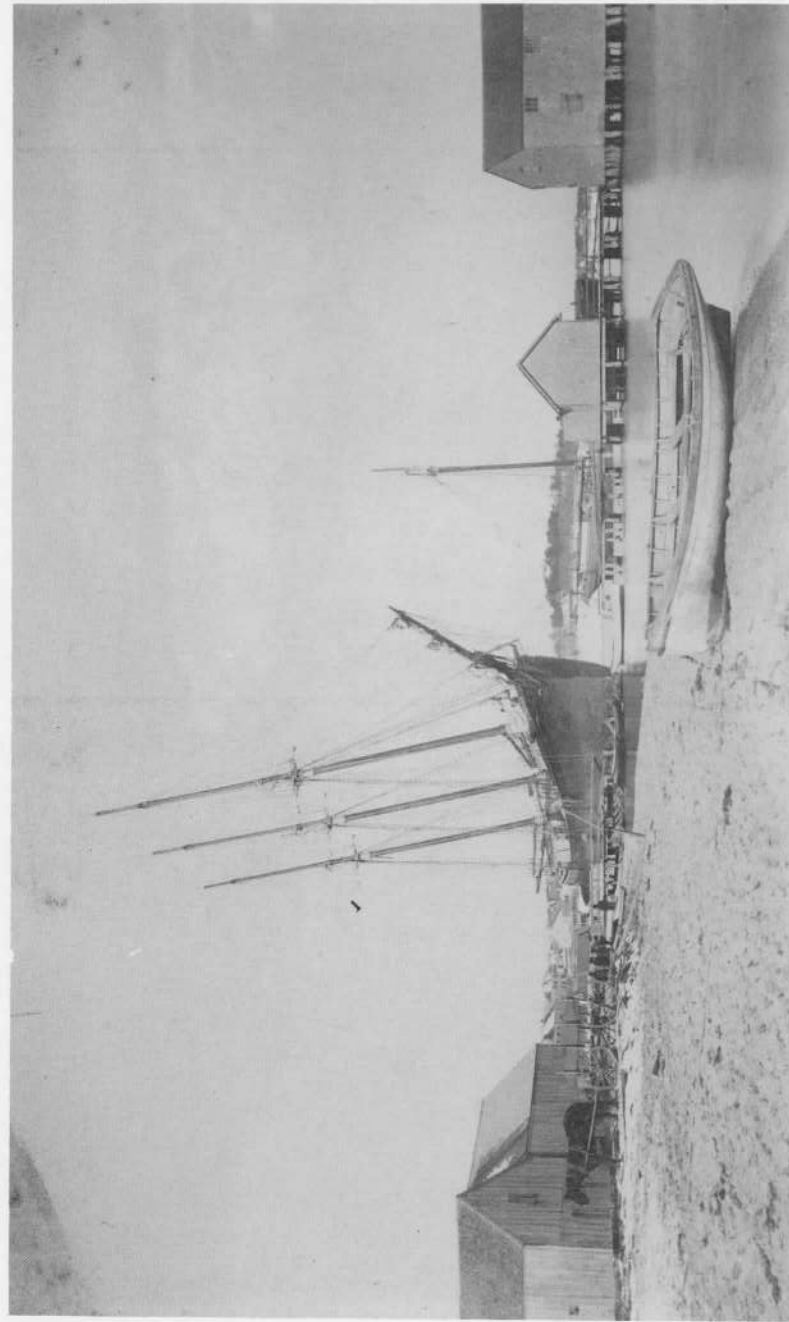


*Altogether 22 vessels were washed ashore. As waves crashed over their decks, men climbed the rigging crying for help.*

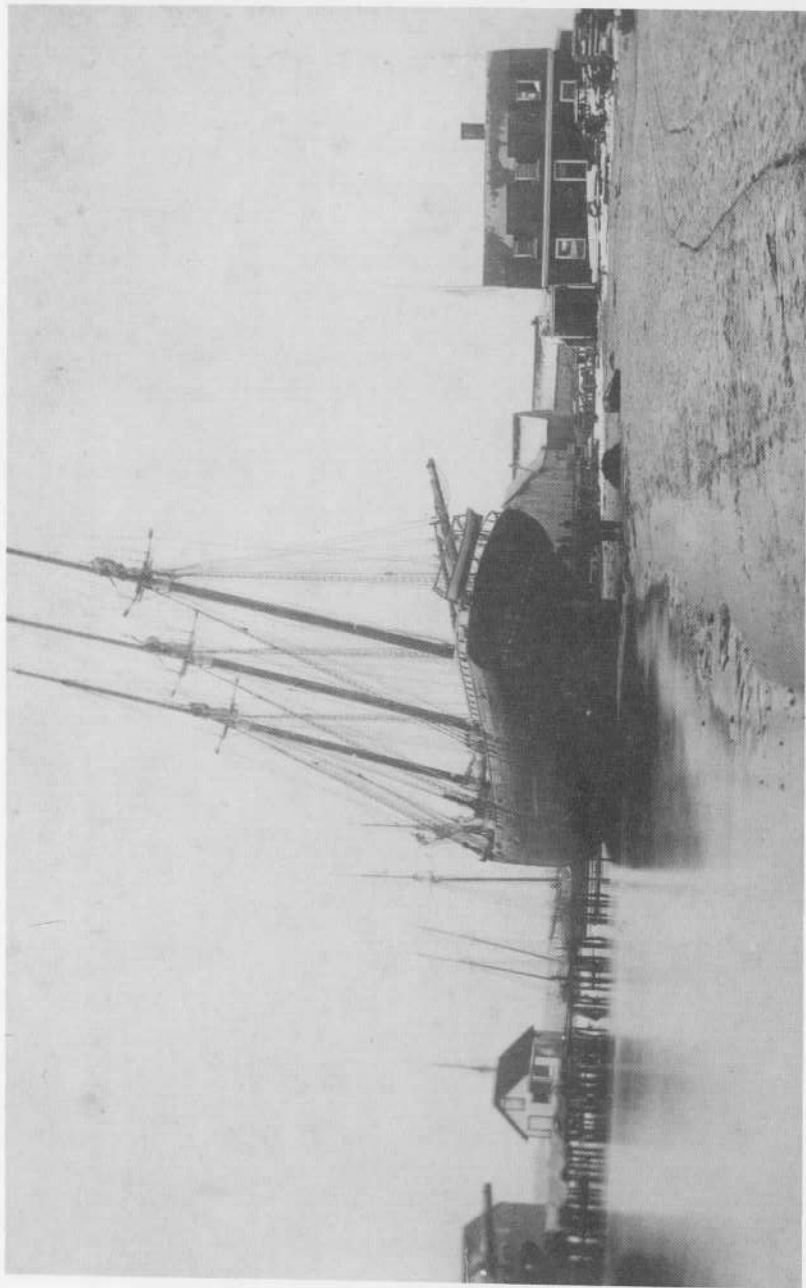




*Schooner Newburgh was driven halfway through the ferry wharf. Thick coating of ice is visible on the pole. That ice killed the mariners in the rigging. Seaman's Bethel is the building with dormers in center. The schooner was in its front yard.*



*Bow view of the Newburgh in the quiet after the storm. The sliced steamboat wharf, with buildings on it, extends out to the right.*



Photographer Chamberlain of Cottage City took this stern view of the British schooner Newburgh. The Bethel is at extreme right.



Three men died in the rigging of the Island City when she beached on East Chop near the opening to Lake Anthony (Oak Bluffs harbor). The hull remained there for years. In background is the Highland Wharf, located where East Chop Swim Club is today.



Gift of Jean and Arthur R. Silva

Vineyard Haven a few years before the Portland Gale. Schooner Newburgh (pp. 68-70) sliced through the steamboat wharf (center). This view was made before the Bethel was there. Shute took his photos at various points along the beach between the Lagoon and the harbor that hooks out from the right to Eastville where the letter writer lived and worked.



## Our First Automobile Arrived 100 Years Ago

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

ONE HUNDRED years ago, the first automobile came to Edgartown. The Island hasn't been the same since.

It was on Saturday night, August 4, 1900, when it happened. Elmer J. Bliss, president of the Regal Shoe Company and a long-time Edgartown summer resident, had motored all day to Woods Hole from Boston in his new Locomobile. By early evening, he was aboard the steamer, probably the *Gay Head*, the first horseless carriage she had ever carried.

When the steamer docked at Edgartown late that evening, there was no band, no cheering crowd, to mark the occasion. There should have been. It was the start of an era.

The *Vineyard Gazette* reported his arrival this way:

Edgartown is in the swim with the other resorts. The horseless carriage is here. The first to appear is the locomobile of Mr. Elmer J. Bliss of the Regal Shoe, who brought this vehicle down from Boston Saturday night. Mr. Bliss had his locomobile out on Sunday and it worked very satisfactory on our streets.<sup>1</sup>

There is more than a bit of irony in the fact that only three months earlier, on May 17, the steam locomotive, *Active*, had rolled down Main Street under its own power on its way to the mainland, marking the end of the Vineyard's earliest experiment with mass transit:

Last week Friday . . . has seen a locomotive traversing Main Street under its own steam. The locomotive. . . is now on Chadwick's wharf awaiting transportation to Boston. . . James E. Chadwick was in charge. . . shifting sections of track were laid. . . in 3-rod lengths.<sup>2</sup>

ARTHUR R. RAILTON is the Editor of this journal.

<sup>1</sup> *Vineyard Gazette*, August 9, 1900. The last steamer of the day spent the night in Edgartown, after stopping at Vineyard Haven and Cottage City.

<sup>2</sup> *Gazette*, May 17, 1900.

Photo from Encyclopedia of World's Automobiles.



Elmer Bliss's Locomobile looked like this. It was steam-driven. Photograph is of a restored model.

The 1900 Locomobile Mr. Bliss drove was steam driven based on the Stanley Steamer design. The Stanley brothers of Newton, Mass., after selling 200 of their cars in 1899, became bored with the business (it was a hobby with them) and sold their design to Lorenzo Barber, an early Stanley owner, and J. B. Walker. These men began building cars, based on the Stanley design, under the nameplate Locomobile in 1900.

Mr. Bliss must have been among their earliest customers. We don't know how long it took him to drive down to Woods Hole from Boston, about 100 miles, but his speed would have been limited by the roads. Steam cars, like electric cars, could build up remarkable velocity, but they needed a smooth surface. Roads then were built for horses and buggies not automobiles. The drive from Boston must have taken at least 12 hours. The last last steamer left Woods Hole at 7 o'clock in the evening.

The Bliss car was the first in Edgartown, but it may not have been the only car on the Island, although we are not certain of that. On September 6, 1900, the Cottage City (now Oak Bluffs) news column in the *Gazette* mentioned an

automobile, unidentified, that may not have been the Bliss car. Surely, he didn't drive on the same street in Cottage City daily: We miss the automobile which rushed by our door daily the past week and was taken off on the boat Monday.

Today, 100 years later, when a major concern is too many cars, few of us would be saddened by seeing one leave. A century ago, it was different. Every automobile that arrived, it seemed, made news. Sometimes, tragically:

E.A. Milliken, on Friday July 18, driving his automobile on Vineyard Haven State Road, passed a team loaded with lumber, driven by Ariel Scott, West Tisbury. The horse was frightened, Scott was thrown from his seat, leg broken and internal injuries. He died at his home the next day. "It is claimed that the automobile did not slow up in passing, but was going at a high rate of speed." Manslaughter charges were brought against Milliken.<sup>1</sup>

That was the first fatal automobile accident on the Vineyard. And it occurred only a year after the first motor car arrived. Town officials soon realized there was a dangerous machine on their streets and the next year Tisbury took action:

Vineyard Haven selectmen voted that no vehicle, not horse drawn, may be driven on any street or highway in Tisbury at speeds greater than 6 miles an hour. [Gazette, July 24, 1902.]

It wasn't until the following year, 1903, that a motor car made it up-Island, a long drive over sandy, rutted roads. The Chilmark news in the *Martha's Vineyard Herald* on August 27, 1903, briefly recorded the sighting:

The first automobile to be seen in town was on the South Road last Thursday.

By this time, 1903, automobiles were being sold on the Island. The first dealer, an off-Islander, opened his "automobile stable" in Cottage City:

Mr. DeWolfe came from New Bedford last Saturday bringing with him a handsome automobile. Mr. DeWolfe has opened an automobile stable on Sea View Avenue and will have some excellent machines for sale. [Martha's Vineyard Herald, July 22, 1903.]

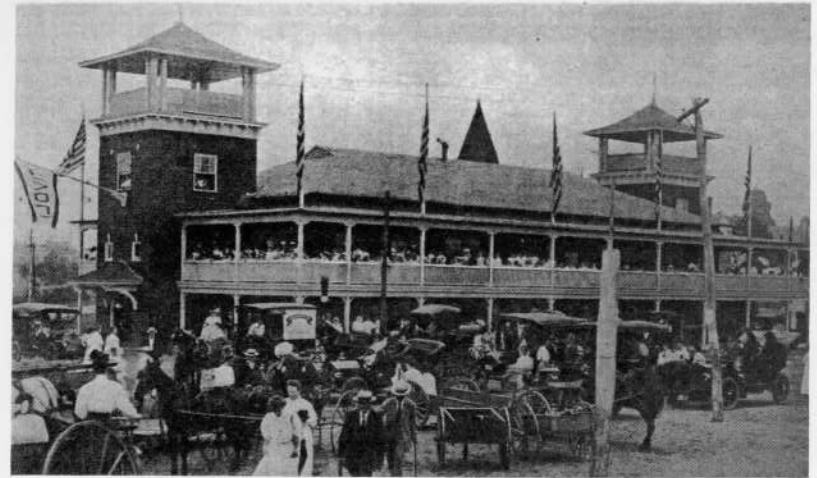
DeWolfe announced his business quite modestly in the *Herald*, the Cottage City weekly:

Automobile storage. Also automobiles for sale. H. B. DeWolfe, agents for the Knox Carriage, Residence, 30 Narragansett Ave.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vineyard Gazette, July 18, 1901. Ariel Scott was a West Tisbury farmer. We don't know if Milliken, who may have been a summer resident, was found guilty of manslaughter by the court.

<sup>4</sup> Knox, a three-wheeled automobile, was built in Springfield from 1900 until 1923.

From Martha's Vineyard Directory, 1907.



You think parking is a new problem? In this 1906 photo of Oak Bluffs Avenue at the famed Tivoli ballroom, three drivers are looking for a place to park their cars.

"Automobile stable" was the accepted expression at the time. It made sense in a horse-and-buggy era. The French word "garage" wasn't adopted until later, along with "mechanic" and "chauffeur."

Mr. DeWolfe soon had a competitor. An advertisement in the *Herald* announced:

Stabling for automobiles. Central location. H. J. Green.<sup>5</sup>

In 1904, despite the speed limits in Vineyard Haven, there was another serious accident:

Already the automobile has begun its work. At Tashmoo near the place of Mr. Pray, Mr. Shubael Gray of Davistown was quite badly injured. [Herald, May 26, 1904.]

The *Herald's* editor urged Cottage City to adopt speed limits as Vineyard Haven had done two years earlier. These accidents were too serious to be ignored:

Automobiles should barely crawl through the avenues of Oak Bluffs and the Camp ground. We are not sure that it would not be wise to have a flagman proceed the machine.

Speeding 'autos' on our concrete<sup>6</sup> avenues is dangerous. Roaring lions. . . are not to be more dreaded.

<sup>5</sup> H. J. Green was Treasurer of Vineyard Grove Company, which owned much of East Chop, plus the bathhouses on the beach in Oak Bluffs (Cottage City).

<sup>6</sup> Concrete then was not what we have today. It was a thin coating over gravel.

The "roaring lions" continued to arrive:

Mr. Clifford Edwards arrived here [in Cottage City] last week bringing his automobile, with which he and his friends are enjoying a pleasant vacation.

A few weeks later:

Mr. Timothy Sprague, of Boston, arrived last week, with his automobile, to spend some time with his parents.

The editor's demand for protection from the "roaring lions" was answered at the end of the next summer. There would be a speed limit in Cottage City, at least on one street:

**Town of Cottage City  
Notice**

Notice is hereby given that after this date no automobile will be allowed to be driven at a greater speed than five miles per hour on any portion of Circuit Avenue between Lake Avenue and the Catholic Church.

By order of the Selectmen: Frederick W. Smith, Secretary.  
Cottage City, Mass. Aug. 31, 1905.<sup>7</sup>

Nantucket didn't take kindly to the automobile. In 1906, the editor of its newspaper was urging summer residents to leave their horseless carriages at home. Editor E. E. Landers of the *Martha's Vineyard Herald* saw an opportunity:

Our concrete streets and roads are great for automobiling. Come down here with your automobile. Nantucket doesn't want you, but we do. [*Herald*, July 12, 1906.]

Whether the Landers invitation helped or not we don't know, but the cars kept coming:

John E. White is taking much comfort in his auto car this summer, and seldom a day passes that he fails to take a spin down [to Edgartown] from Vineyard Haven. [*Gazette*, July 19, 1906.]

With more cars came more problems:

There are 175 automobiles on the island. . . at the present time. . . nearly all get to Edgartown every 24 hours [or that] seems apparent on pleasant days. . . One large automobile about 1 p. m., passed Furber's Corner. . . at more than 30 miles per hour, 4 of 5 automobiles are driven with care and consideration, but the 5th is driven with a Public be d-----d spirit. [*Gazette*, Aug 2, 1906.]

One year later, another collision made the news. There were no personal injuries, but the damage was great:

A collision of automobiles on the road between Edgartown and Oak Bluffs on Sunday night resulted in damages to the machines estimated at several

<sup>7</sup> *Herald*, Sept. 7, 1905.



*When Elmer drove his Locomobile ashore 100 years ago, he did so here and probably from this steamer which spent the night tied up in Edgartown.*

hundred dollars. [*Gazette*, Aug. 29, 1907.]

In 1912, the automobile crossed the channel to Chappaquiddick, causing quite a stir on the pastoral island:

We understand the first automobile on the island of Chappaquiddick went careering [sic] over hill and dale yesterday afternoon [July 17, 1912]. It was taken over on a large scow and belongs to Dr. Frank L. Marshall of Boston, who has a summer place near Joel's Landing. . . the frequent honks as it proceeded to the Doctor's place so aroused the staid inhabitants that Gov. Handy<sup>8</sup> came to town to see what it was all about. [*Gazette*, July 18, 1912.]

By now, the automobile was no longer a plaything owned only by summer people. There were three dealerships selling cars to year-round residents. Henry Ford had opened the flood gates, offering a car at a price even Islanders could afford. Walter Renear<sup>9</sup> of Vineyard Haven advertised Tin Lizzies for as little as \$440. Two other dealers in Vineyard Haven were also advertising cars: one had the improbable name of Legrand Lockwood Aldrich Co., and was selling the Mitchell car for \$1500; and another, the Dukes County Garage, advertised Buicks, but gave no price.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "Governor" William H. Handy lived on Sampson's Hill, ran a general store, delivered the mail, and did just about everything on the small island.

<sup>9</sup> Walter H. Renear had many businesses, including undertaker, and for a number of years was the Dukes County Sheriff.

<sup>10</sup> *Gazette*, Dec. 19, 1912. The Mitchell was made in Racine, Wisconsin, from 1903 until 1923, when Nash bought the factory to build its cars. Buick began business in 1903 and now, 1912, had become the star of William Durant's new General Motors.



Competition for customers was keen, but not at the bottom of the scale. Ford had that market. And to rub it in, W. H. Renear, the Ford dealer, announced that Ford would rebate dollars to customers in order to increase production to its most efficient level. His advertisement was large, bold and pricey:

**Buyers to Share in Profits  
Lower Prices on Ford Cars.**

Touring Car -- \$490

Runabout -- \$440

Town Car -- \$690<sup>11</sup>

The advertising copy explained that the factory's maximum efficiency would be reached when production of 300,000 cars a year was reached. Ford promised:

And should we reach this production, we agree to pay as the buyer's share from \$40 to \$60 per car (on or about August 1, 1915) to every retail buyer who purchases a new Ford car between August 1, 1914 and August 1, 1915.

By 1916, Chester E. Pease in Edgartown was offering "livery service by automobile, 25 cents<sup>12</sup> to Oak Bluffs, to connect with all boats." And Coulter and Sibley's Garage, Dock and Kelley streets, Edgartown, advertised its "White Line" buses running between Edgartown and Oak Bluffs.

Walter H. Renear's Fords were by far the cheapest as Ford Runabouts were now only \$390. But not everybody wanted the Tin Lizzie, especially not the proper folk in Edgartown. There, the first dealership was Fisher's Garage on Morse Street, selling Maxwells.

World War I interrupted the automobile boom. When it ended, cars came back into the news. In June 1919, H. Flanders and J. Andrada were driving their automobiles along Water Street in Vineyard Haven and, for reasons not explained in the story, they collided. Although there was only slight damage to each car and no injuries, it made the news. On State Road in Edgartown two cars collided and again only minor damages, but it was in the news. That same week, another accident, more serious:

<sup>11</sup> *Herald*, June 3, 1915. In smaller type the ad stated "F.O.B. Detroit, all cars fully equipped."

<sup>12</sup> Nearly half a day's pay for a laborer.



*There was no standby line at the Oak Bluffs wharf when this photo was taken, probably before 1910. One lonely automobile shares space with buggies.*

Mrs. A. P. Eagleston and her daughter, Muriel, were injured in an automobile accident last week. [*Vineyard News*, July 31, 1919.]

The early cars were hazardous even when standing still:

L. W. Mayhew, while cranking his car, suffered a fracture of the arm. [*Vineyard News*, July 3, 1919.]

Summer people, then as now, were bringing their cars with them; some even brought two:

Dr. Elon O. Huntington has come from Florida and joined his wife and family at their summer home at Quitsa. The doctor drove up from Florida in his touring car. [*News*, June 19, 1919.]

Many enthusiastic motorists [are] in town [Vineyard Haven] Mrs. C. E. Whitney is seen daily in her limosine. Her touring car has not yet arrived, being garaged in Woods Hole. [*News*, July 3, 1919.]

You could rent a car, but a driver came with it. No drive-yourself cars in those days:

**FOR HIRE  
BUICK SIX**

Disk Wheels      White Windshield  
Parties taken to all parts of the Island by hour or trip.  
D. D. LOOK      Phone 81-15

In what was no doubt the most prestigious wedding in Island history until then, perhaps even since, Miss Gladys Butler and Theodore Waterbury Ellis were married at "Mohu," the

summer estate of her father, former State Senator William M. Butler. Among the guests were the Governor of Massachusetts and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, plus a long list of notables, both Vineyarders and off-Islanders. Automobiles played a starring role, many of them driven by women:

Many cars were mobilized for the occasion, with a result that the visitors were well taken care of. Full credit for the arrangements goes to Norton & Bradley. Misses Hazel Butler, Mae C. Briggs, Laura Hinkley and Mrs. John B. Luce volunteered to drive automobiles to transport the guests and their services were accepted. [News, Aug. 28, 1919]

A front-page article gave full details of the event:

Nature blessed Gladys Butler with a perfect day for her bridehood. . . The ceremony was one of the most charming in many seasons. In the open air, under the pergola of the beauteous gardens on the Butler summer estate. . . the orchestra was concealed under greenery back of the impromptu altar, and at the first strains of the Lohengrim processional, the bride stepped into the garden. . . two little flower girls, Mollie, four, and Beatrice, six years, sisters of the bride . . . strewed rose petals in her pathway.

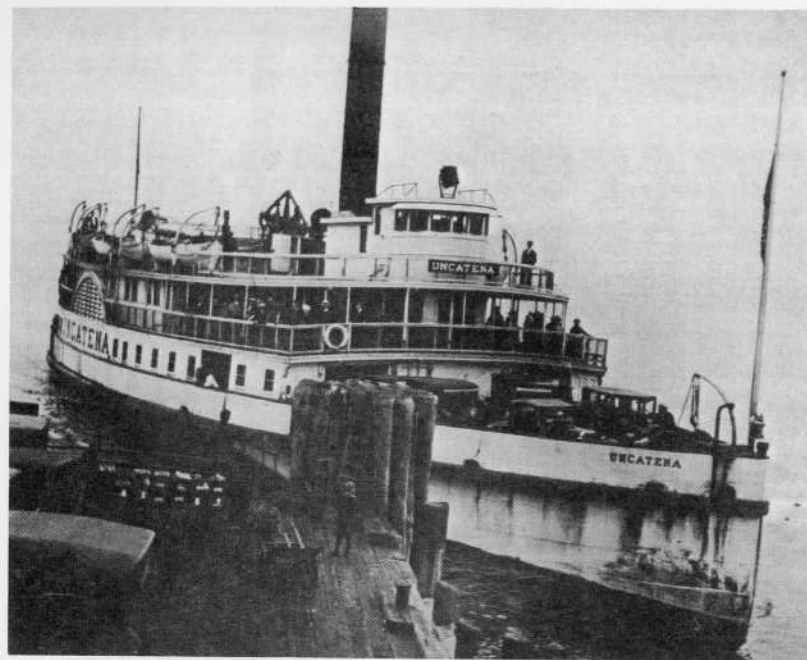
After the reception, the couple were taken to Woods Hole on a catboat that had been moored around the point, hidden from view to fool those guests who were planning to accompany the newlyweds to the mainland on the steamer. Once on the mainland, the couple were whisked away in a waiting car to complete their "escape."

The couple were rowed from the beach to the "On Time," a catboat owned and sailed by Frank Chetwood Vincent, and sailed to Woods Hole where their car was waiting. . After a honeymoon, spent in motoring through New England and Canada, the couple will make their home in Springfield.

Capt. Vincent, in a bylined article, described the surprise boat trip to Woods Hole:

The *On Time* was the honeymoon boat. The craft lay up off Lambert's Cove, out of sight from the house. The bridal couple set off from the shore in a fisherman's dory. I was rowing. . . The couple had waited until most of the guests had departed to catch the 4:05 boat from Oak Bluffs and then. . . instead of getting into an auto and starting on their honeymoon by way of the steamer, got into my dory. . . We got out of the dory into the *On Time*, and I gave the engine a turn and we were off. We beat the *Sankaty* to Woods Hole. The couple got into a waiting auto and were off on their honeymoon. [News, Aug. 28, 1919.]

The automobile brought demands for better roads. In the dry days of summer, the dust clouds were suffocating. Drivers



From Island Steamers. Robert C. Caldwell photo.

By the 1920s, cars were filling the freight decks of steamers like this one docking in Oak Bluffs. Cars are waiting on the wharf to make the trip back to Woods Hole.

wanted relief. When it was proposed to give the road between West Tisbury and Edgartown a "Tarvia topping," the editor of the *Herald* commented:

This will make it possible for automobiles to make the circuit from Oak Bluffs, Edgartown, West Tisbury, Gay Head, and back through Tisbury to Oak Bluffs. [Herald, Aug. 28, 1919.]

Only the highways, and perhaps a Main Street or two, were "paved" at the time. In town, streets were coated with crushed scallop shells and wood ashes, the latter creating its own problem. A warning was printed in the *Herald* urging motorists not to drive on William Street in Vineyard Haven. The wood ashes that had been spread "contain many nails." One automobile picked up three punctures in only one trip, the article stated.

Doctor Huntington, who had driven his new Chandler all the way from Florida, soon decided it was too big for up-Island:

E. O. Huntington, Chilmark. 1918 seven-passenger Chandler touring car. 6 good tires. \$1000 cash or part cash and a Ford.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> E. O. Huntington was father of our founding editor, E. Gale Huntington.

The doctor's Chandler wasn't the only used car for sale:

E. B. Fisher, Summer St., Edgartown: Fine Dort<sup>16</sup> 4-cylinder, one-man top, demountable rims, electric lights, starter. [News, Sept. 11, 1919.]

Accidents continued to make news. One of them must have been spectacular, although the newspaper account was most matter-of-fact:

A flivver driven by Joseph A. Silvia of Oak Bluffs ran off the Lagoon Bridge<sup>17</sup> and landed upside down in the water. The tide was low and only a foot deep. The driver was uninjured and he pulled the car out of the water with a horse and wagon. The next day, he had it back running. [News, Feb. 19, 1920.]

The year 1920 was a watershed for the automobile and its affect on the Vineyard. Three news items make that clear. The first occurred when Eben D. Bodfish, the most aggressive real-estate broker on the Island, decided to open a restaurant near the Gay Head Lighthouse. His customers would be coming by car so he created what probably was the Island's first parking lot. The News announced the landmark event:

Eben D. Bodfish has further increased his holdings at Gay Head by the purchase of the Horatio Pease<sup>18</sup> property near the Light House for use in parking automobiles in connection with the restaurant Mr. Bodfish will operate at the Head this season. [News, April 8, 1920.]

The second watershed item was on the front page of *The Vineyard News* under the headline:

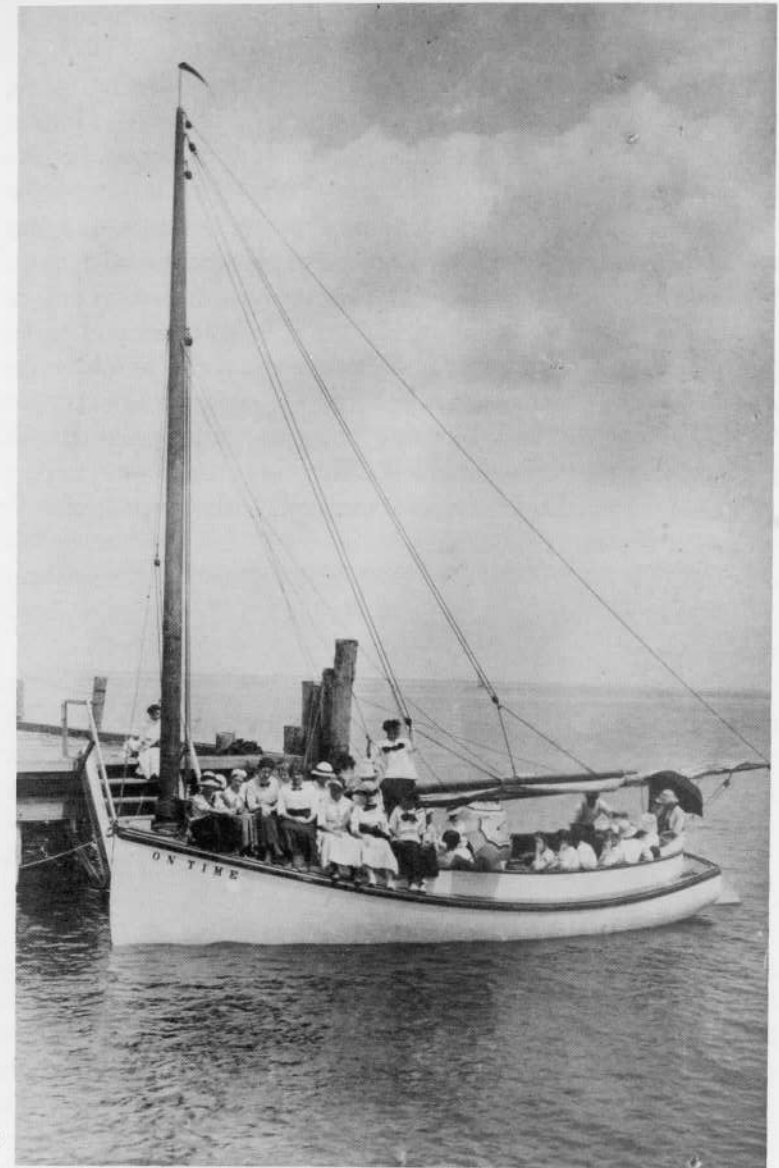
**The Best Interests of the Vineyard  
Demand that the Unsightly and  
Disgraceful Menemsha Road Be  
Quickly Made into a Good Highway**

Vineyarders were urged to petition the State Highway Commission to provide funds to improve the road between Chilmark center and Menemsha: "The roadway has been in deplorable, nay, wretched condition and will never be but a disgrace to the Island . . . Any Legislative Committee brought here . . . would be convinced by a ride over the present wretched roadway, a muddy 'road to Dublin' which finally ends in an

<sup>16</sup> The Dort was built from 1915 to 1924, an offshoot of the Durant-Dort company, the nation's largest carriage manufacturer.

<sup>17</sup> The bridge was the subject of great controversy soon after. It had been built about 40 years earlier as a drawbridge, but the mechanism no longer worked and only the smallest boats could get in and out of the Lagoon. Boat owners demanded a new bridge. Others said it was not needed. Finally, the state built a new, more reliable drawbridge.

<sup>18</sup> Horatio Pease had been lighthouse keeper at Gay Head from 1869 to 1890.



John Leavens Collection

Capt. Vincent's newlyweds' escape boat, *On Time*, with a load of girls from the YWCA camp at Makonikey soon after the wedding. Let's hope they were posing for a photograph, not heading out for a sail in this overladed condition. Life jackets?



outlook upon one of the most inspiring panoramas of beauty in all America."

The third watershed dealt with a problem familiar to all, even today. So many car owners were lining up at Woods Hole to get their cars to the Vineyard that there were demands for one extra trip daily between Oak Bluffs and Woods Hole simply "to take care of the automobiles." Steamers routinely ran three times a day in the summer from New Bedford to Nantucket, with stops at Woods Hole and Oak Bluffs. Car owners urged that on one of those trips the steamer interrupt her trip to Nantucket and make an extra trip to Woods Hole and back to haul the automobiles that were waiting there.

That was in 1920. Nothing came of the proposal. But it was clear: the future had arrived. The automobile was taking over. In the year 2000, we are still struggling with the problem.



Capt. Frank Vincent on the honeymooners' "getaway" boat.

## Early Whaling and the Development Of Onboard Trypots

by EDWIN R. AMBROSE

THE FIRST EUROPEANS to go whaling off the coast of North America were not from Nantucket or Martha's Vineyard; they were from Spain. They hadn't come to hunt whales. It was cod they were after in the mid-1500s. But while they were codfishing, the Basques spotted large numbers of whales in the Strait of Belle Isle, between Newfoundland and Labrador.

They knew how valuable whales were. Basques had been whaling in the Bay of Biscay between Spain and France since the ninth century and "had by the fifteenth century developed something approaching a modern 'industry' as local fishermen went out to attack whales breeding in the the Bay of Biscay."<sup>1</sup>

Motivated by the market for whale oil in Europe, merchants and whalers in Bilbao and San Sebastian, learning of the Belle Isle spottings, combined their finances and talents to establish a number of whaling stations on the coasts of Labrador and western Newfoundland. As in the Bay of Biscay, the men would get close to the whales in small boats, harpoon them and after killing them, tow them to shore for rendering in trypots.

These Spaniards were the pioneers of whaling in America. More than 400 years ago, 50 or more of their ships would sail across the Atlantic after whales. In peak season, an estimated 2500 Basques were in Labrador, producing 20,000 barrels of oil annually. Winter icing of the Strait limited the season to eight months a year and the ships would return home, their holds filled with casks of oil.

The activity slowed toward the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century partly because of the depletion of whales, but also because fewer

<sup>1</sup> Gordon Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade*, Archon Books, Hamden, Conn., 1978, p. 31.

EDWIN R. AMBROSE, Research Editor of this journal, is doing extensive research on the history of whaling and its place in Vineyard history.

ships and less capital were available after Spain's failed attempt to invade England in 1588. The Spanish Armada, consisting of 130 ships, including merchant and whaling vessels, and 30,000 men, was decimated by battle and storm in that expedition. Only one-half of the ships made it back to Spain, a crippling blow to the nation's economy and to North American whaling.

When records of Basque whaling were found in Spanish archives in the 1970s, the Canadian Government began searching for those early whaling stations. Extensive archaeological work, on land and underwater, in Red Bay, Labrador, uncovered seven large tryworks and another on a nearby island. Eleven smaller tryworks were found on Saddle Island. These tryworks consisted of shallow, copper trypots which were fired to extract the oil from blubber and are identifiable as deep, round depressions in the sandy soil.<sup>2</sup>

Also discovered in Red Bay were the remains of three ships and four boats. One of the boats, called a chalupa (shallop) is now on display in the Red Bay National Historic Site. Also there are the remnants of cooperages with the tools used by the barrel makers who lived there 400 years ago. Uncovered were additional artifacts and a cemetery with the remains of 140 humans.

That is the first evidence of whaling by Europeans in the New World. But there is no doubt that native Americans were making use of whale meat long before. Then, as now, a dead or dying whale would occasionally drift onto the beach. These carcasses were harvested by the natives for their meat and oil. Brereton, with Gosnold, provides evidence that Indians used trypots to boil out the oil, learning the craft from the Basques.<sup>3</sup>

When the English settlers arrived in New England in the 1600s, there was controversy about who owned those drift whales.

<sup>2</sup> By 1600, the number of European whalers in the region was much higher. In 1602, John Brereton in *A Brief and True Relation of the Discoverie of the North Part of Virginia*, wrote of Newfoundland: "whither doe yeerely repaire about 400 sailes of ships, for no other commodities than Fish and Whale-oiles."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Micmac Indians (Newfoundland), apparently employed by the Basques, learned about extracting oil, perhaps doing so themselves. Brereton wrote: "eight Indians, in a Baske-shallop with mast and saile, an iron grapple, and a kettle of Copper, came boldly aboard us, one of them appparelled with a wastcoat and breeches of blacke serdge, made after our sea-fashion, hose and shoes on his feet."

Rules were made to decide who had rights to the whale carcasses and how the blubber and meat should be distributed. English settlers, who wrote the rules, received blubber rights and being familiar with whale-oil extraction, set up trypots on shore.

To increase their catches, settlers began manning lookout stations on high ground to spot whales close to shore. Visual signals would be sent to waiting boat crews who would row out and harpoon the mammal. Once it was dead, they would tow the carcass ashore for rendering. This inshore whaling, as it is called, was similar to that had been developed by Basque whale fishermen many centuries earlier.

Inshore whaling went on for many years, even after offshore whaling began. Obed Macy, writing about the practice of killing whales that way on Nantucket, said:

It appears that in 1726 they were very numerous, for eighty-six were taken in that year, a greater number than were obtained in any one year, either before or since that date. . . . This mode of whaling continued until about the year 1760, when the whales became scarce, and it was by degrees discontinued.<sup>4</sup> Since that date, whales have only occasionally been obtained by boats from the shore.

The next step began in the 1700s when larger vessels were outfitted with enough provisions to stay at sea for a few weeks and with barrels enough to hold the blubber of one whale. When a whale was taken, it was cut up and the blubber sealed in the barrels. The vessel sailed home, delivered the blubber and provisioned for the next voyage. Gradually, larger vessels were built that could carry more casks and provisions to make it possible to stay out as long as six weeks, killing as many whales as possible and returning with the blubber for trying-out.

The whales they were hunting came to be called "Right" whales because being slow and docile, they were easier to harpoon compared with other types. Also, they floated after being killed, unlike sperm whales which sank. They were the "right" whales.

Whaling legend has it that the first Nantucketer to take a sperm whale was Christopher Hussey, who, when hunting Right whales near the shore in 1712, was blown out to sea by a strong northerly and found himself in the middle of a school of sperm

<sup>4</sup> Obed Macy, *The History of Nantucket*, Hilliard, Gray and Co., Boston, 1835, p. 31.

whales. He killed one and when he returned with it to Nantucket, there was much excitement.<sup>5</sup> The sperm provided so much more oil of better quality that larger ships were then built and outfitted for very long voyages offshore to track them down.

These long voyages offshore required the revolutionary move of installing the try pots aboard ship, eliminating the need for the vessel to return to port with the blubber. Onboard try pots reduced the bulky blubber to oil that was sealed in huge casks, making it possible to kill many whales before returning.

This required the solving of a number of problems. Try pots, housed in what was called a camboose or caboose, required enormous fires to boil out the oil. On the wooden deck of a whaleship that presented a great hazard. To overcome this danger, the tryworks was built on top of several layers of bricks, their perimeter forming an insulating pool into which sea water was constantly being poured. Herman Melville described the insulating design this way:

The intense heat of the fire is prevented from communicating itself to the deck, by means of a shallow reservoir extending under the entire enclosed surface of the works. By a tunnel inserted at the rear, this reservoir is kept replenished with water as fast as it evaporates. . . .<sup>6</sup>

Development of the on-board tryworks, which allowed whalers to stay at sea until their holds were filled with oil, is usually attributed to the American whaling industry.<sup>7</sup> There were many technical innovations during the following 125 years, but the general characteristics of this American style of whaling have continued.

On the grounds of our Society's museum in Edgartown are two try pots set up in a camboose very much like the ones used on whaleships. They are worth a visit.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36. According to Macy, that was not the first sperm whale seen on the island: "The first Spermaceti whale known to the inhabitants was found dead and ashore on the southwest part of the island. It caused considerable excitement . . . all were anxious to behold so strange an animal." No date is given. p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, Modern Library, 1950, p. 419.

<sup>7</sup> Davis, Gallman & Gleiter, *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, U of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 36.

## Documents

### A Running Account Of Matters & Things

by HENRY BAYLIES

**H**ENRY AND HATTIE BAYLIES are now back in Edgartown after six months in the South in an attempt to improve her health. There was no improvement so they have come home.

Henry was unable to find employment and they were running out of money. When they arrived in Edgartown he had less than \$40 to his name, about a month's salary for a school principal. Fortunately, they can live with his parents.

Almost immediately (in fact, the day after they returned), he has a stroke of good luck, as we will read below.

In this installment, we learn about petty politics among townspeople and the lack of discipline in the classroom. Henry takes the problem very seriously, as we shall see. Who said those were the good old days?

Thursday, May 15, 1851. Two weeks have passed since our arrival under the paternal roof.<sup>1</sup> During these weeks we have been resting from the excessive fatigue of so long & protracted a journey. Hattie has felt the fatigue very much yet much less than might have been expected. She took a severe cold on the journey to which she has made certain sundry additions so that she has suffered from a distressing soar [sic] throat & difficult breathing with general

<sup>1</sup> The "paternal roof" refers to the house of his father, Frederick Baylies Jr., on Main Street, Edgartown, on the site of today's movie theater. It was moved to Starbuck Neck in the early 1900s. In the margin, Henry once again drew his symbol for menstruation and "Mond. May 4."

soariness of nerves. My own throat has distressed me more severely since my return than for many months – perhaps two years. It is now better.

The day after my return, I met Mr. Wm. Vinson, Prudential Committee of the Town School district, with whom a few words passed relative to my taking the High School.

I remarked to him, "Well, I have returned & feel satisfied to settle down a while. Have you got anybody up here (meaning at the High School House)?"

He replied, "No."

I continued: "I suppose you would not give it to me if I wanted it." His countenance brightened with apparent interest while he inquired, "You would not take it if you could have it, would you?"

I replied, "I guess I would."

He said he would see me again about it. This is the substance & in general the words of our conversation.

Some days after, I saw Rev. Hebron Vincent, one of the Sup[er]ior School Com. at Bro. Steward's shop. In the course of conversation, we spoke of the High School, when he said he understood I had applied for it. To which I answered by a relation of the above conversation & added, "I have very little expectation of getting it. They would probably get a teacher from Down East."

Previously, in speaking of Rev. Mr. Goodenow,<sup>2</sup> he observed the school made much greater proficiency under my tuition than under his, although I taught only 2½ months & Mr. G. about 4½ months. In reply to what I said about a Down Easter, he observed for his part he would be glad for me to have the School provided it would be for the interest of the school: he thought because

<sup>2</sup> Goodenow, a minister in town, had taken over the headmaster's post when Henry left.



of the difficulties last year there would be opposition.

I mentioned all I thought would be opposed, viz. Capt. Benj. Worth, Wd. Sophie Smith, Nicholas Norton & John Cleveland.<sup>3</sup> He added Mrs. Coffin (Lydia) did not like it because I did not punish Charles Chase but brought him home for them to punish. I saw at once the ground of Hebron's opposition, or inability of seeing it would be for the interest, etc., "Aunt Lydia" governs!<sup>4</sup>

Yesterday morning I had a few words conversation with R[ichard] L. Pease<sup>5</sup> in which he said to me he had information from the most reliable source that Rev. Hebron Vincent was opposed to my continuing the school last Summer & was on the point of requesting me to resign before I did!

Probably the ground of his opposition was my refusal to punish corporally. My rule was the pupils should behave like gentleman & ladies & if they could not & would not they might leave. Such a rule I supposed the only proper rule for young men & women of from 16 to 21 years of age. I believe Bro. Vincent, a truly conscientious man, but greatly lacking in independence of character & opinion. He is by far too much swayed & governed, in my opinion, by "Aunt Lydia."

Yesterday forenoon Mr. Wm. Vinson

<sup>3</sup> These were the parents of the pupils Henry had to discipline the year before.

<sup>4</sup> Aunt Lydia is the widow, Mrs. Holmes Coffin, Hebron's mother-in-law. He married Lydia Coffin. Hebron and family lived with Aunt Lydia in what is known as the Holmes Coffin House, 25 School St., Edgartown. Lydia was Henry's aunt; two of his father's brothers had married Coffin women.

<sup>5</sup> Richard L. Pease was the Vineyard's most thorough collector of historical data. Many future historians have borrowed from him.

called on me to engage my services in the High School. He said he had been waiting to learn if possible the amount of opposition. He had been unable to learn positively of any opposition but presumed the persons I have mentioned are opposed because of last Summer's difficulties. All who had spoken with him were favorable. To conclude, we struck an engagement for three months at \$40 per month. I engaged only for 3 months, so that if I should choose I might engage elsewhere more satisfactorily. This was quite as pleasing to him.

Thus by guidance of Providence I am returned home just in season to rest a few days & enter upon the duties of the School. Ever since my failure at Columbus, Miss., I have felt unwavering confidence that Providence would provide for me some employment in due season.

In making up my acc'ts for the last year I find my accounts thus:

Cash on hand April 26<sup>th</sup> 1850:-  
\$101.56

Rec'd from April 26, 1850, to May 2d,  
1851:- \$411.57.

[Total] \$513.13

Cash pd. from April 26, 1850 to May 2,  
1851:- \$473.63

Cash on hand May 2, 1851:- \$39.50<sup>6</sup>

Thus I begin again with less than \$50 in my purse, but with good cheer & courage & confidence in Him who has thus far helped me in all my distress.

**Saturday, May 24.** A week of pedagogical life has "past & gone." On last Monday morning at 8¼ o'clock I doffed the traveller & gentleman of "otium cum dignitate" & became responsible for the good behavior & intellectual progression of near three score sons & daughters of

<sup>6</sup> Henry spent about \$500 in six months travelling and living in various places in eastern United States, caring for a sick wife. That was a year's salary for a schoolmaster.

the latter Adams & Eves.

The Edgartown "Higher School." Rev. Henry Baylies, AM (!), Principal, & Miss Frances C. Mayhew, daughter of H. P. Mayhew, Esq., Assistant, has opened under favorable auspices. Favorable in some respects & very unfavorable in others. I find the pupils less tractable than when I took the school last Spring. The peculiarities & eccentricities of Rev. J. B. Goodenow's system of government are very evident & annoying. Whispering is or was carried on without correction & so far as I have carried examinations, the school is by no means so far advanced as when I left there last July.

Whispering I have pretty nearly abolished & shall succeed I think perfectly. Master Geo. E. Lewis has been disposed to violate rules & resist authority. Having spoken to him several times publicly & privately relative to his behavior, I at length told him I should on repetition change his seat where he could not whisper. Yesterday morning I told him to take his books & come up to seat 57 but he did not do it & I suffered the matter to rest till recess when [he] still refusing, I went down & sent him up & sent his books to him.

He refused to study during the forenoon & in the afternoon took his original seat with his books. I ordered him back but he refused several times to go. I went to him & told him to go & upon his refusing, seized him by the collar of his jacket & his pantaloons & dragged him away from his seat which he had firmly grasped & put him by force where I requested him to go. When his class was called, he took his place in the recitation room<sup>7</sup> but on returning threw his

book on the bench & left the room.

I saw his father last evening & stated the facts. Mr. L. appeared well about it & expressed his hearty disapprobation of such actions.<sup>8</sup> So much for this first transaction. . . I think of nothing else of the week's instruction worthy of notice, nor this either. The soul & the body go on as usual with, I fear, little improvement in either. . .

Under Dr. Luce's advice I am applying croton [?] oil to my throat externally as a counter irritant & a gargle of brandy & gold-thread [?] as a stimulant & es-tringent. From ear to ear, my throat is covered with loathsome [?] pustules.<sup>9</sup>

Hattie has been down & up. She is very sensitive to changes in diet & climate - hence her variableness in health.

**Wednesday, June 11.** Little of importance or interest has occurred since my last entry 'til the present week. The concerns of the school have transpired with nothing thrilling except perhaps the tragical affair of my taking Master James Pease<sup>10</sup> out of his seat, etc., his seizing hold upon another form, my wrenching him & form, fastened down with six 10d nails, quite clear from the floor. I have purchased . . . a vulgarly called a cowhide or more properly a rod for the fool's back, which rod I am carefully keeping against I find a fool desiring it.

nearly "three-score" students and the seat close to the teacher was number 57). As it came its turn for instruction, the grade moved into a "recitation" room to be taught.

<sup>8</sup> The father, Ellis Lewis, an Edgartown carpenter, lived in the house at 39 School St. Son George was 13, at the time.

<sup>9</sup> Readers will remember that he gave up preaching because of his throat.

<sup>10</sup> James was 16, son of Elbridge Pease, a shopkeeper in Edgartown. Earlier this year, James was listed in the census as a laborer.

<sup>7</sup> An interesting sidelight: apparently all the pupils had a desk in one room (he mentions

On Monday morning, only day before yesterday, yet a year ago it seems, my wife left my bed & my father's board & went to Providence to visit her parents. She last week rec'd a very cordial invitation from Sist. Addie to make a visit, immediately if possible. I thought best for her to go for she has evidently failed considerably during the last fortnight & I fear it is in part the effect of climate. Our Island atmosphere is exceedingly bracing. I have myself been suffering for a fortnight from nervous headache.

As Father was going to Boston<sup>11</sup> & would accompany her to Providence, she concluded to go on Monday & accordingly went. Indeed, Father had waited for her from Wed. last till Mond.

Monday was exceedingly stormy yet the opinion of the weatherwise was the sun would shine away the clouds before 11 o'clock. Carefully wrapped up, I took her in a carriage to the Packet *Passport*, [Capt.] Crowell, & at 8¼ they were on their way & in 3 hours & 20 minutes in N. Bedford. I heard from her in Prov. Doing finely. She felt particularly anxious to go, having heard of the arrival of Brother Thomas from California after an absence of 2 years.<sup>12</sup> The Lord bless & restore her.

I yesterday rec'd a letter from Rev. John P. Durbin, D. D., Missionary Secretary, proposing to me to go as missionary to Oregon to take charge of the Academy at Portland or ass't to Bro. F. Hoyt in the Academy at Salem. . . I have this evening replied to him that my health & that of my wife will not admit my entertaining his proposition. Were we both enjoying health, I think

neither of us would hesitate but would go at once if selected. Possibly in future we may. The question constantly recurs, What does the Lord of Providence design to do with us? 'Tis mystery, all mystery! His will be done.

**Saturday July 26.** Notwithstanding more than a month has passed since my last journal entry yet little change has taken place in my circumstances or prospects. I have received an application to teach Latin & Greek in the E. Greenwich Seminary & have declined acceptance on several grounds. The application was a suggestion of Rev. Bro. Titus that I might possibly be secured in our Conference Seminary. My reasons stated to Bro. Allyn are that money is with me at present a necessary consideration & I can make more here during the coming few months than at E. G.; that my wife preferred, in her feeble state of health, to remain at Edgartown. There are many reasons why I should delight to teach there & the time may come when duty as well as preference may decide I shall go. I am devoting a little time daily to reviewing my studies in the Languages as to be fully prepared.

I have tonight finished my fifth article on "A Southern Tour" & "In the South West," which I am communicating to the *Zion's Herald*. I have seldom, scarcely ever, communicated with papers yet now am determined I would risk my reputation a little.<sup>13</sup>

I am weekly receiving letters from Harriette who remains in Providence. Her health I judge is slightly improved. She will probably remain till after Camp Meeting when I shall go for her.

<sup>13</sup> A series of articles by Henry covering his trips to Mississippi and back was published in *Zion's Herald* during the year. Henry pasted them in a scrapbook, now in our Archives.

My own health has, with respect to my headache, been better the past fortnight. My throat at times has been worse than for two years. I have been using various prescriptions & have just rec'd Carmill's Inhaler & polm[?] saturated with Nitrate of Silver.

My school will close next Friday after a session of eleven weeks. Camp Meeting will commence Aug. 5, the Tuesday following.

I have written various letters the last month to friends . . . besides numerous letters to my dear wife, my regular *Herald* communications & an extra on "Vineyard Camp Meeting & Boston Churches."

I love the Lord & He loves me & blesses me. It is after 11, my of late usual bedtime.

**October 21, Tuesday, 1851.** The term of my school did close as notified in my last Journal entry & the examination passed off with great credit.

Camp Meeting also began & ended. I enjoyed the privilege of attending. Great good was effected. Had the best preaching I ever heard at Camp Meeting. My throat was so sore I could do little in public. From the Campground, I went to Providence where my wife has been spending several weeks with her Parents. I there enjoyed a much more agreeable visit than anticipated – everything passed off as if all had been right from the first. From Prov. visited . . . Dighton & Dighton or Written Rock. The hieroglyphics on the Rock were very obscure.<sup>14</sup>

. . . On the last Thursday in August, Hattie returned with me to Edgartown somewhat recruited in health yet quite feeble. My School opened Mond. the 1<sup>st</sup>

Sept. & has now entered on its eighth week. Nothing unusual has occurred in the school. Miss Frances E. Mayhew assists me with her accustomed efficiency. Week before last the Dukes Co. Teachers Association met at Holmes Hole. I attended & enjoyed more extensively than usual for me its exercises.

I have been unusually busy this term in the school, in nursing Hattie & in hastily preparing my papers for the *Zion's Herald* on a "Tour in the South West." I am about through with this last, though not finished.

Harriette's health has failed since she came home. I do not think the climate at fault now as may have been the case formerly. She was quite comfortable & improving up to a night a few weeks ago when she fell [a number of Greek words follow] spraining & rupturing her lungs. This for a few days at evening induced spasms. The loss of blood from the Lungs has reduced her almost to helplessness.

Another . . . cause of her present reduced state was a letter received by her from [sister] Adella, most unsisterly & cruel. H. replied in a letter to Mother Budlong & has since written [again], to neither of which has any reply been received. I have not taken notice of the insolent letter to my wife because Hattie considerably wished me not to. Strange doings towards a poor dying daughter & sister!

Last evening & today she has suffered greatly from stricture on the left lung, raising blood, & diarrhea. She can hardly sustain many more such attacks. I saw Dr. Ruggles when at H. Hole at Association & he advised what course to take. I called Dr. Lucas, who will in the morning, according to Dr. Ruggles' advice, bleed her.

She has been very happy in the grace

<sup>11</sup> Father ran a store in Edgartown and was going to Boston to buy stock for the winter.

<sup>12</sup> Apparently a 49er, seeking gold.

<sup>14</sup> Henry delivered a lecture on the Rock some years later. We have a copy.



of God for some days past & has endured her intense suffering with perfect resignation & often with triumphant & great anxiety. To her is & has been to be more extensively useful in the cause of Christ.

My health has been very good for me except a violent touch of dysentery which laid me out the week. My throat is decidedly better & I ascribe the improvement to the use of Sand's Sarsaparilla. I have hope I may be able to take an appointment at our May Conference at which, may God grant if He sees it will advance His glory.

Thus has passed away nearly three months since my last Journal entry – the last two months of but little incident. School life is monotony.

1852

Edgartown, Jan'y 20, Tuesday. Second term of High School closed Nov. 7. Third term began Nov. 17, & continued till 9th [of January]. Examination on Thursday & on Friday P.M. an Exhibition by nearly all the school, both which passed off with considerable interest & honor. The people were especially pleased with the Exhibition at which from 100 to 150 were present notwithstanding a violent rain storm.

How readily the masses hasten to a show when not one would visit a school to listen to recitations & witness the improvement of their children in sound learning. During the whole year not one parent has visited the school except on examination or exhibition day! Our Exhibitions came near falling through in consequence of the officiousness of Rev. Hebron Vincent . . . I had conversation with Mr. V. relative to the time for examination. He had proposed two days but then thought as there was not money to pay the Committee, that one

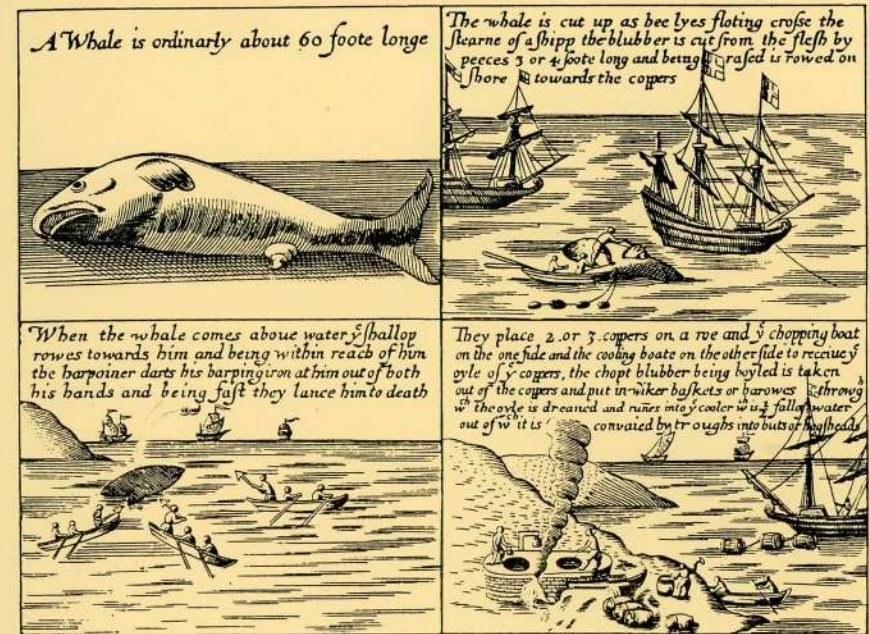
day would be enough, yet, he said, I might go on & the Comm. would be in when they could.<sup>15</sup> Afterwards I saw Dea. Harrison Mayhew of the Sup[er]ior. Sch. Com. to whom I proposed to have examination on Thursday, rehearsal on Frid. A.M. & Exhibition Friday P.M. He assented & I announced the arrangement. On Thurs. A.M., Mr. V. spoke of the examination on Frid. When I mentioned the arrangement I had made with which I presumed he was acquainted, he professed ignorance & I appealed to Deac. Mayhew who said he informed Mr. Vincent some days before of the arrangement. Moreover Mr. V. has a daughter in school who has a part in two dialogues & a boy (F. Chase) boarding up in his family, who had part in one dialogue. He appeared greatly offended, thought I had no right to make arrangements for examination. At length I told him he could make such arrangements as he chose, that if he persists in his opposition to the rehearsal on Frid., he might carry on the school. My services were completed, I should close the school that night.

Deacon Mayhew consulted with Mr. V. & at length they reported to me to go on as I had planned & I did so. The fact is, as I told Mr. V., he has always found fault with the school & attempted some kind of difficulty & felt aggrieved if his "brief authority" was not always acknowledged & succumbed to, etc. He was not present at the Exhibition. Poor man, he is to be pitied, for really he is under petticoat government & it is "Aunt Lydia" after all, & not Hebron.

(To be concluded.)

<sup>15</sup> Apparently, the School Committee was paid for attending meetings, ceremonies, etc.

## A View of Whaling in 1611 at Spitzbergen



Engraving of the art of whaling as practiced in the 1600s was first published in Hans Egede's *Beschryving van Oud-Goenland* and re-engraved for Churchill's *Voyages*, London, 1745. (From *Whaleships and Whaling*, George Francis Dow, 1925.)

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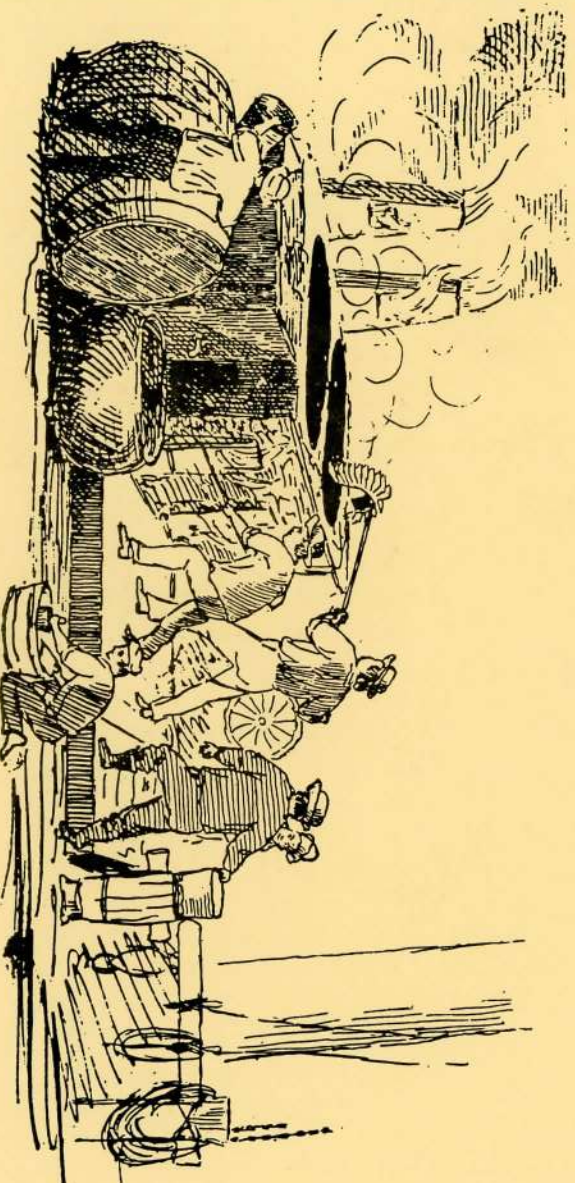
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### Forking a Book of Blubber into an Onboard Trypot



The huge blanket of heavy blubber is cut into small "horse-pieces," then sliced or minced into a "book" for rendering in the boiling trypot. This stylized sketch makes what was a dirty, greasy operation pleasing to the eye (p. 87ff).