

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



# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 44, NO. 3

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*Grey's Raid: Was it an Attack or a Shopping Expedition?*

## The Story of Martha's Vineyard: How We Got To Where We Are

*(Chapter Four)*

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

## Ups and Downs in a Great Family's Life: When Being a Pease Wasn't Enough

## Diary of Farmer and Teacher William Butler of Farm Neck

*(April 26 to October 7, 1792)*

*Whaling: the Vineyard Connection*

## Whaleboat Crewing as Described By a Whaleman in 1866

In Memoriam:  
Fred Williams and Fred Kingsley

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#### CORRECTION & AMPLIFICATION

In the November 2002 *Intelligencer* there is a delightful memoir by Harry R. Butman, minister of the Federated Church in Edgartown during the 1930s. Writing without notes, totally from memory, he made a couple of mistakes. Being almost 99 years old, he is entitled to at least that many.

The last paragraph on page 73 is where they occurred. He identified Olive, partner of Stuart Avery in a real-estate agency, as Avery's sister. She was not related to him. She was Olive Hillman, daughter of Arthur Hillman, president of the Edgartown National Bank, who is also mentioned in the article.

Olive and Stuart bought the business from R. E. Laidlaw, whose father-in-law was Capt. Jethro Cottle, founder of the agency, said to have been the first modern real-estate office in Edgartown. Olive and Stuart were also partners in a furniture store, adjacent to the real-estate office. The store, too, had been founded by Captain Cottle, but as a dry-goods shop.

In that same paragraph, Harry Butman wrote that Preston Averill Sr., was postmaster. He was not. His father, Alfred Averill, was postmaster. Preston did clerk there at times.

We thank the many members who have pointed out these lapses in the memory of our oldest contributor, who in a little more than a year will be 100 years old.

Keep writing, Harry, we'll correct the mistakes.

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## Moments in History

### Ups and Downs in a Great Family's Life: When Being a Pease Wasn't Enough

THE EARLY 1800S WERE VERY GOOD YEARS for the Pease family. It was one of the two largest Edgartown families, making up six percent of the town's population. Only the Nortons were more numerous. But numbers alone do not tell the story. The Pease family, many of them the descendants of master mariner, Capt. Noah Pease (1755-1841), seemed to run the village, holding office at every level from local to federal.

At various times in those years, members of the Pease family served as Edgartown Postmasters, as Dukes County Sheriff, as the Deputy Collector of U. S. Customs, as well as a school teacher, one of the town's tailors, one of two boat builders, several store keepers and a manufacturer of marine blocks and pumps. Not all were landlubbers. There were 19 mariners, including several whaling masters, one of whom it is claimed, was Herman Melville's model for Captain Ahab. The Peases were the town's "First Family."

While Captain Noah spent most of his life at sea, his sons seemed to prefer the land. His oldest son, Isaiah D. Pease, became the most influential politician on the Vineyard, serving as County Sheriff for 40 years, from 1822 until he died in 1862. He was an active Methodist and was responsible for maintaining peace and order on the campground during the annual meetings each August.

The sheriff's brother, Jeremiah, was a United States customs officer, as well as being keeper of the Edgartown lighthouse, a surveyor, a shoemaker, bone setter for the Island and the man recognized in history for having selected and laid out the site of the Methodist Campground on East Chop. He knew the area well, being exhorter and chorister at the Eastville Methodist Church, going there by buggy from his home on North Water Street in Edgartown several times a week to lead the services.

Noah's son, Chase Pease, served as Representative to the General Court in 1839. He lived in the large house (now often called the "Yellow House") next to today's Edgartown Town Hall (originally a Methodist church). He was such an early convert that he allowed those first Methodists to meet in a shed on his property.

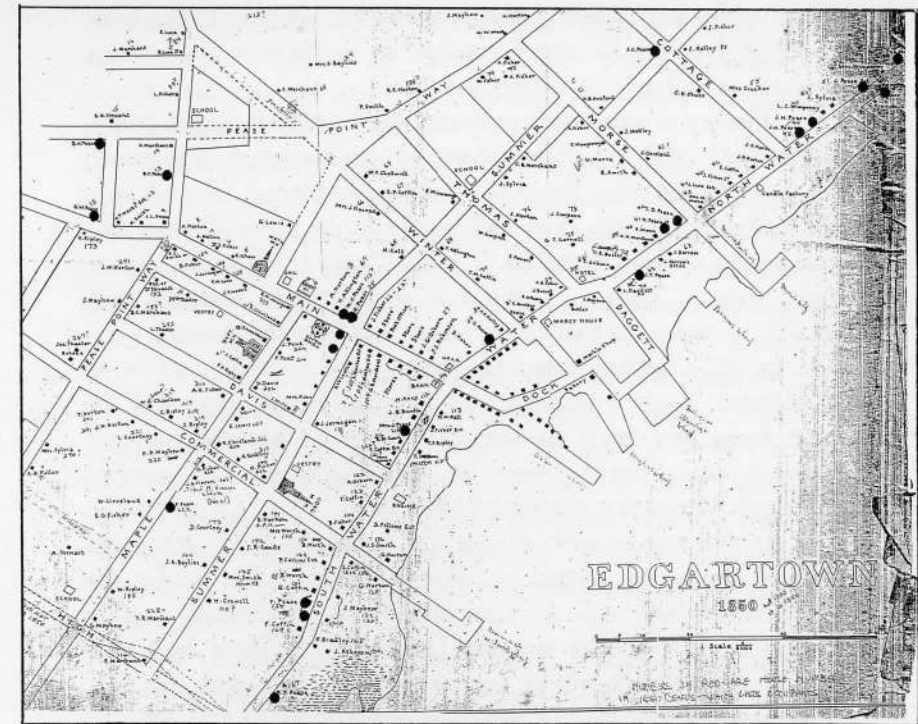
While many of the Peases, like Chase and Jeremiah, were early converts to Methodism, others became Baptists, the Island's first evangelical sect. Rev. Jesse Pease, a distant cousin of Jeremiah, was the leading exhorter for the Baptists. When the Edgartown Baptists organized their first church in 1823, it had 27 members, 8 were named Pease, including Zachariah Pease and his son, Jesse, who was listed on the membership roll as "(Rev'd.) Jesse Pease."

But the Noah Pease family was mostly Methodist. For years, they were active in the Edgartown church. In the mid-1800s, the Edgartown Methodist choir had 21 members; more than half, 11 of them, were in the Pease family, among them, Sheriff Isaiah D. Pease, bass, his son, Silvanus L., tenor, and another son, Richard L., choir leader.

Tenor Silvanus (sometimes spelled Sylvanus), grandson of Noah, was one of the family's rising stars. In 1838, at only 22 years, barely old enough to vote, he was appointed Edgartown Postmaster. No doubt, his appointment was helped along by his father, Sheriff Isaiah.

Richard L. Pease, the oldest of Sheriff Isaiah's seven children, attended Wilbraham Academy in Connecticut and was hired as teacher in Edgartown at only 19 years of age. He became an ardent Whig, bringing him in sharp dispute with his family, most of whom were Democrats. Unlike brother Silvanus, he never seemed to gain the affections of townspeople. Perhaps it was his "superior" attitude that turned them off. He considered himself to be (and he probably was) the best teacher on the Island, putting him often at odds with Rev. Hebron Vincent, who disputed that claim, being equally certain that he, Hebron, was the best.

For reasons Richard never disclosed, he was abruptly fired in 1839 after teaching in Edgartown for five years. There was



Pease family members owned 26 houses in Edgartown in 1856; 22 of them are shown here, marked with enlarged black dots. The other four were off this map.

no reason for his firing, he believed. He had done wonders with the pupils, being especially proud of the discipline he maintained in the classroom at a time when there was little of it in most schools. This young teacher in his early 20s, recently married with one child, found himself out of work in a village where jobs were scarce for men of letters.

Discouraged and desperate, he took a temporary teaching position in the North Shore School at Lambert's Cove. There, although a married man (his wife and child continued to stay in Edgartown while he lived in a boarding house near the school), he became enamored of the daughter of the woman who ran the boarding house. The story of that romantic entanglement is told in the *Intelligencer*, February 1985.

It is likely that when the affair became public knowledge (as it surely must have) it so damaged his reputation that he

never again was hired to teach in public school. There is no proof of that, but he never returned to public-school teaching, the career he had trained for and loved.

When the temporary position on the North Shore ended, he moved back to Edgartown, his indiscretion apparently forgiven by his wife. Eager to continue teaching, he took over the private academy that had been run by David Davis, who had taken it over from its founder, Leavitt Thaxter, son of Rev. Joseph Thaxter. Like his predecessors, Richard was unable to make it a financial success and he soon closed it.

In 1850 he was hired to conduct the Federal Census on the Island. It was a position that occupied him for much of the year, from July until November. When he entered his own name in the Census book, he listed himself as a teacher, although he was not teaching at the time.

At the top of each of the 136 pages in the voluminous census, his name appears as "Ass't Marshal." No doubt, the "Chief Marshal" was a state officer. Clearly Pease was in charge of the county census. He seems to have had paid assistants, probably one for each village, to help with the task, that required a personal visit to every house on the Island. The occupants of each were listed by family, by full name, date and place of birth and occupation. Also included in the final pages of the volume are the names and birthplaces of all mariners who were aboard ships in the harbors on one day in October.

The final version of the Census, preserved in a large, well-bound volume, was signed by Richard L. Pease, on November 25, 1850, no doubt the day on which it was sent to the marshal. The Society has in its archives the working copy in Richard's precise handwriting.

Having learned surveying from his Uncle Jeremiah, he was often called upon by the state to plot areas of Indian lands, becoming an Island authority on the subject and for a few years was a paid "Guardian of the Indians."

At intervals, during his long life, he held public offices, including for one year soon after the census ended being Register of Probate, between two long terms of his rival, Hebron Vincent. Edgartown hired him as its accountant

occasionally. For several years he was Clerk of County Court and late in his life he served eight years as Edgartown postmaster. But he never again taught in public school after the Lambert's Cove incident.

His overriding personal interest was collecting Island history, a project he began when the County Commissioners hired him to review the historical records to make sure they were accurate. He filled notebooks with copies of Colonial documents he painstakingly made at various repositories around the state. Several of the notebooks are in our archives.

It was his plan (and the hope of many citizens) to write the history of the Vineyard. It would be his legacy. Though he lived into his 70s, he never did start the writing. When he died in 1888, his notes were given to Charles E. Banks who used them extensively in writing his *History of Martha's Vineyard*. The genealogical notes gathered by one of Richard's two daughters, Harriet, throughout her life became the basis for Banks's third volume.

Prof. Alexander Graham Bell, a friend, used Richard's notes extensively in his study of deaf-mutism. "I found him a perfect mine of information," Bell said. Richard Luce Pease was, it would seem, the outstanding Pease in his generation.

One family member who might challenge that was Joseph Thaxter Pease, his cousin and the eldest son of Jeremiah Pease. Joseph held public office throughout his life, serving first as Collector of Customs and later as Judge of Probate for 25 years. But his intellectual interests were much more limited than those of cousin Richard.

Joseph's younger brothers, the twins William and Cyrus, both had outstanding careers, but mainly off-Island as officers in the United States Revenue Service, forerunner of the Coast Guard. Cyrus was also a talented portrait artist, recognized in Washington and New York before he joined the Revenue Service during the Civil War. He resumed his art career after the war and some of his portraits of Vineyarders still exist.

Another brother, Jeremiah Pease Jr., besides being Town Moderator, became Deputy Collector of Customs in 1857, when his father died. That federal position was a family



dynasty for three generations, until it was abolished in 1913.

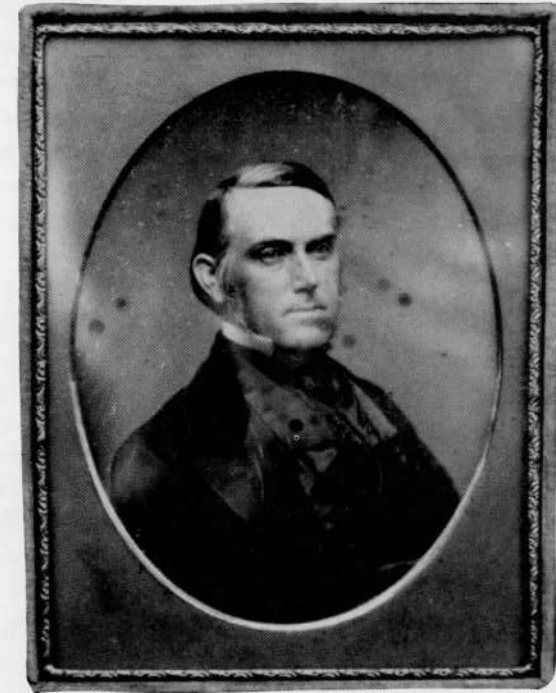
The Pease family, it seems, was involved in everything on the Island. Being a Pease, one might have supposed, would make life's path a smooth one. Sadly, that was not the case for all of them and especially not for Silvanus.

In 1842, Silvanus, then the young Edgartown postmaster, married Nancy Sayer of Bristol, R. I. They may have met at a Vineyard camp meeting. Many Bristol Methodists regularly attended, as did Silvanus and others in the Pease family. Wherever it was they met, they fell in love and married. Their first child wasn't born until five years later, in 1847, an unusually long delay in those years. They christened her Henrietta and she was known as Etta.

The year that Sylvanus married, 1842, was notable for another reason: the Pease family's dominance in town affairs was starting to crack. A "palace revolt" among the Whigs, the dominant party, spearheaded by Capt. Abraham Osborn had ousted Richard L. Pease, a founder of the Whig Committee and its secretary, replacing him with Samuel Osborn, son of Abraham. An angry Richard wrote:

... this year (1842) has been marked by the greatest venality, corruption and intrigue ever known in this town. Early in the season every effort that could be made was made, every influence that could be used was used, to secure the election of S. [Samuel] Osborn. In fact, it was currently reported in 1840, when Capt. A. [Abraham] Osborn was elected as representative to the Legislature, that it was then mutually agreed and fixed upon that A. . . should go that year and Sam'l. the next. Circumstances confirm the report. For in 1841, strenuous efforts were made to secure the election of S. O. [Osborn] but he was then defeated and R. L. Pease [the writer] chosen. In 1842 . . . he was again in the field — a self-made candidate — supported by the "counting house" influence of his son-in-law, H. A. C. [Henry A. Coffin] and that proved too much for the integrity and independence of many. Threats were made where milder measures could not succeed and resort was had to influences of every kind to obtain support at the polls.

That year (1842), Richard L. Pease was elected to the



*Richard L. Pease around the time of the Whig revolt.*

General Court. But for the next two years, voters were so split over the struggle between the Peases and the Osborns that they couldn't agree on a representative to send to Boston in either 1843 or 1844. Richard saw the infighting as a conspiracy against himself and his principal ally, Dr. Daniel Fisher, two of the founders of the Whig Committee. He wrote:

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of Nov. (Friday), the Com[mittee] met, according to notice, in the "Counting Room" of A. [Osborn] & H. A. C. [Henry A. Coffin], when it was determined to call a Caucus on the next evening — Saturday — to nominate a candidate for Representative!! (Rather, to add the Sanction of a caucus — and one thus called, — a packed one — to what had been determined upon long before.)

They met. A. Osborn, Chairman, H. A. Coffin, Secretary. Out of 37 votes, S. O. [Osborn] had 32, and was thereupon declared elected.

At this meeting, I [Richard L. Pease] took the opportunity

to present the following resolutions – seconded by Dr. Fisher – and they were adopted, though much against the wishes of the *clique*, who said it was not a suitable time, etc., etc., etc.

Not long after that “packed” meeting was held, the Whig Committee met to hear a political speaker from New Bedford. When the speaker finished, Richard tried to bring to a vote his resolutions opposing the recent “secret” meetings, called without adequate notice. His motion was rejected:

I took the opportunity, as soon as he [the speaker] had closed, to offer the following resolutions, accompanied with some few remarks. But such a reception as they met with – poor *still born* buntlings – such squirming of the clique I never yet saw. I was not treated even with common politeness and the Chairman, Esq. Cook, decided that he could not, as chairman of a meeting called for such a purpose [to hear a speaker from New Bedford] entertain them. They were returned to me . . .

It was increasingly apparent that the Pease influence had weakened, a fact that Richard was unwilling to accept.

There were other setbacks for the family. When Silvanus’s first-born, Henrietta, arrived in 1847, it was a poor time for the couple. The year before, he had lost his position as Edgartown postmaster. James Polk, Democrat, was elected president and in those years any change in the party in the White House brought changes in the nation’s post offices.

Out of a job, Silvanus went into business for himself, being listed by brother Richard in the 1850 Census as a trader, a description that usually meant a shopkeeper. We don’t know what kind of a store he ran (we do know he sold the town stationery occasionally). The store didn’t have to last very long because in 1853, with the election of Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire as president, Silvanus was back as postmaster, replacing Jared W. Coffin. That same year, brother Richard, his private academy now closed for financial reasons, was elected County Registrar of Deeds. The family seemed to be enjoying a return of its former status.

But Postmaster Silvanus was not able to enjoy it. When Nancy again became pregnant, her confinement, as child-birthing was called, developed major complications. She was 37 years of age and it being only her second pregnancy, such

problems were not unusual. A few days after she delivered their second daughter, Nancy died. The next day, the infant died. In his diary, Silvanus’s uncle, Jeremiah Pease, wrote:

Sept. 19, 1855. . . . Sister Nancy Pease, wife of Sylvanus Pease, died at about 5 A.M., having been lately confined. She was a very pious woman and is a great loss to the Church and Society in general.

Sept. 20. The infant of Sister Nancy Pease died.

Sept. 21. Funeral of Sister Pease. . . a solemn event. The Infant was placed upon her arm in the same coffin. Her Father and Mother did not arrive from Bristol in time for the Funeral. She was deposited in a Tomb to wait their arrival.

Sept. 23 . . . They came on Saturday. After the funeral service, the connections and friends walked in procession to the Church yard, where the corps was removed from the Tomb to the grave and deposited there, it was a solemn season.

Postmaster Silvanus and daughter Etta, now seven years old, were living in the house of Tristram Pease, on the corner of Morse and North Water Streets. He soon remarried, once again choosing his wife from Bristol, R. I. The second Mrs. Silvanus Pease was Mary Alger. When their only child was born the following year, they named her Eliza, the name of the infant who had died the day after her mother in 1855.

Silvanus no doubt thought life had taken a happy turn. Then in 1861 when the party in the White House changed with the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln, the very popular Postmaster Silvanus was again out of a job. The Edgartown community was not pleased, at least so the *Vineyard Gazette* editorialized:

A NEW POSTMASTER.—Jared W. Coffin has been appointed Postmaster at Edgartown, vice Silvanus L. Pease, removed. Mr. Pease has, without any doubt, been one of the most efficient and accommodating men who ever held the position, which is no pleasant one to a person who loves ease and comfort.

We regret, and we think the public generally, will regret this removal. Mr. Eliot, in making it, has acted in utter derogation of the wishes of nearly or quite seven-eighths of the people of Edgartown, and his popularity in this portion of the district will not be enhanced by the course he has pursued

– as we believe will be made manifest when occasion may permit. [Eliot may have been the representative in Congress.]

Again, Silvanus went into business for himself, this time as an express man, a teamster, an occupation hardly matching the prestige of postmaster. But the loss of prestige was trivial compared to what happened shortly afterward. In October 1861, he took his beloved daughter Etta, now 14 years old, to Bristol to visit her grandmother, Mrs. Rowse P. Sayer. He returned to the Vineyard, intending to come back for her the following week. Etta had many friends in Bristol, as she visited there often. One afternoon, she walked over to the home of Miss Susan Tilley, one of those friends.

The *Bristol Phoenix*, a weekly newspaper, reported what happened next:

She [Etta] was informed [by Benjamin Tilley, the father of her friend, Susan] that the daughter had gone out to walk. Miss Pease then seated herself by one of the west windows. Wm. James, son of Mr. Tilley, entered into a conversation with her. Shortly after, Mr. Tilley went out to his barn, when young Tilley took his father's gun from behind a door, and playfully snapped it at her, but there being no cap upon the lock, it of course made no explosion. A few moments after, he went to a secretary to look for a key, and found a gun cap. He put the cap upon the gun, aimed it at her head and fired, killed her instantly, the charge taking effect on the left side of her head.

Hearing the shot, Mr. Tilley rushed in from the barn to discovery the tragedy. Distraught, he wrote a long letter to the newspaper explaining how it had happened:

It seems, by inquiry, that after my leaving, the boy got up and took my gun from behind the door and playfully snapped it; but it could not be fired as there was no cap on it, I having carefully put away all [the caps] that I know of on a high shelf, so as to be out of the way of the children, knowing that the gun could not be discharged without a cap, and, moreover, he had no intention of so doing as he was unaware of its being loaded; he put the gun back and went to the secretary drawer to get a key, and there accidentally found some caps. He put one on the gun and playfully snapped it at her. They both were talking about having their ambrotypes taken before she went home . . . to his surprise and horror, the gun was

discharged with such fatal effects.

It may be asked how come the gun [was] loaded? I will say that, being very much annoyed by the number of large dogs some three or four weeks ago, I waited on the owners and told them they were destroying all my onion seed and if not kept away I should shoot them. I accordingly loaded the gun, and as I had formerly forbidden my children to disturb my gun, and not knowing there were any caps to which they could gain access, I was unprepared for this . . .

The Bristol community was understandably upset by the actions of the "boy," as his father described him. William James was not a boy. He was 16 years old, an age at which young men regularly went to sea on whale ships. Certainly, the accident was not the playful act of an innocent child. Nor, of course, was it murder. William knew the cap would explode, frightening the girl, but he had no way of knowing that the gun was loaded.

In the next issue of the *Phoenix*, the editor, a friend of the young man's father, took back what he had printed earlier. William had not "aimed it at her head and fired," as had been reported. Also denied was the statement in the father's letter that William had "playfully snapped it at her":

In our statement of the unfortunate affair which occurred in this town last week, we did not intend to convey the idea that the young man deliberately *aimed* the gun when he fired. The gun was lying carelessly on one arm while he operated the hammer with the other hand. The young man was not in the habit of using fire arms, and therefore did not raise the piece to his eye.

Etta's body was taken to Edgartown and buried alongside her mother and infant sister. A memorial service was also held in the Tilley home in Bristol where she had died.

Twelve years later, teamster Silvanus had an accident, the details of which we do not know. In November of that year, 1874, at only 54 years of age, he died of those injuries. The *Gazette* wrote:

Mr. Pease never rallied from that insensibility which came over him when he first met with the accident which caused his death. . . During 40 years he was an active and influential





*John Wesley Pease, last Deputy Collector, relaxing in Customs Office at Four Corners, Edgartown. He had 13 cats and was called "Tabby" Pease.*

member of the Methodist Church. . . for 14 years, he held the position of postmaster of Edgartown and gave unqualified satisfaction in that position. . . it seemed always to be his desire to please and accommodate all his fellow citizens. . . His funeral on Sabbath last was attended by a large number of citizens.

The *Gazette* said nothing about the earlier tragedies that had marred his life.

When the Whig party vanished from the political scene, most members joined a new party, the Republicans. As a Republican, Richard, nearly 70, was named Edgartown postmaster in 1877, serving until 1885 when Democrat Grover Cleveland was elected president. He was replaced by a cousin, Henry A. Pease, no doubt a Democrat. Richard died September 2, 1888.

Cousin Joseph T. Pease, son of Jeremiah, was now the only Pease holding county office, being Judge of Probate, a

position he held until he died in 1897. At the federal level, a Pease was still deputy collector of customs, a position that had been in the family for three generations, beginning with Jeremiah. John Wesley Pease had taken it over from his father, Jeremiah Jr., when he died in 1890. The Edgartown office was closed down in 1913, ending a Pease dynasty.

The family never regained the power and status it had held before the Coffins and the Osborns took control of the Edgartown Whig Committee in 1842. There were many other reasons than the "clique" for its decline. Demographics were involved. As new families moved to the Island, the Peases couldn't keep up with the population explosion and new names began to take over public offices.

In 1906, if any animosity still lingered between the Peases and the Osborns, it surely vanished when Deputy Collector John Wesley Pease, grandson of Jeremiah Pease, married Mary Tucker Osborn, daughter of Capt. Abraham Osborn, the man who had led the "clique" that ousted Richard L. Pease in 1842. It was not a marriage of young lovers: he was 55; she was 59.



The best-known Pease in Edgartown in recent years was the late Oscar Pease, who lived in the village throughout his life, making his living, as his father had, from the sea, aboard their catboat, *Vanity*, built by Manuel Swartz Roberts in his shop on Dock Street. When Oscar died, he left the *Vanity* to the Society and she still sails proudly out of Edgartown harbor every summer under our auspices.

Oscar and Nellie Pease died childless after a long life together in a house that Oscar built, appropriately, on Pease's Point Way. If the present trend continues that thoroughfare, Pease's Point Way, may soon be the only reminder we will have of one of the Island's great families.

The editor thanks Joan C. Prescott, Director of Rogers Free Library, Bristol, R. I., for her assistance in gathering information about the shooting of Etta Pease.

# The Story of Martha's Vineyard: How We Got To Where We Are

(Chapter Four)

by Arthur R. Railton

## Grey's Raid: An Attack or a Shopping Expedition?

THE FEROCIOUS STORM that battered the English and French fleets as they prepared for battle off Narragansett Bay in late August 1778 did more than shatter the masts of European ships, it also shattered the hopes of Americans.

The French alliance had given birth to great expectations as beleaguered Americans allowed themselves to dream of victory. But d'Estaing's failures so shattered their dream that an ugly backlash developed with accusations of French cowardice and deceit. There was even violence.

General Sullivan, the brash, inelegant Irishman who led the rebels blockading the English base on Rhode Island, wrote a critical letter to Admiral d'Estaing who then was sailing his storm-damaged fleet to Boston, having left Sullivan without naval support. The Frenchman was insulted. Who was this commoner, this Irishman, who writes this way? James Flexner wrote in his biography of Washington:

... From the first, d'Estaing and Sullivan had got on badly. The French courtier-admiral had complained that the short-set, ruddy, rough Irish-American frontiersman "has shown towards me the manner of a commander to his servant; he styles himself my general. . . while [his] troops were good for a defensive, they had no qualities necessary for attack." The Americans. . . accused the French of being "thin, polite, and always dancing. . ."

After the French had sailed away, Sullivan insulted them in his general orders. . . [General] Lafayette took offense and insulted the American officers back, becoming, as he angrily reported to Washington, "more upon a warlike footing in the American lines than when I come near the British lines at Newport."

ARTHUR R. RAILTON, the Editor of this journal, invites suggestions and corrections from readers to this continuing series of Island history.

D'Estaing was a French count, a general in the French army, and an admiral in the French navy. He was not accustomed to insults. He had no desire to die for democracy. He was fighting for his king. A few years later in Paris, he was captured and guillotined by the revolutionists for doing just that — battling for his king.

He had come to America to defeat the British, not to risk his men and ships for a piece of real estate called Rhode Island. He would take his damaged fleet to Boston for repairs no matter what General Sullivan thought.

Once the French arrived in Boston, the insults grew worse. Street fights broke out between d'Estaing's men and the patriots, who called the French cowards, unreliable allies and worse. One such incident at a bakery became deadly. The French, always eager to eat well, had set up a bakery to provide their sailors and marines with fresh white bread daily. Boston residents, who had been without white bread for years, became violent. MacKenzie, the Welch diarist in Newport, wrote:

There have been some Riots at Boston, on account of the Scarcity of Wheat bread. The French Seamen are served with white bread, and the British Seamen on the American service receiving hard bread, or Indian corn [bread] only, assembled and forced some bread from the bake houses. A French Major and several others have been killed.

That was not what George Washington had expected when, at Valley Forge, he called for "Hazzahs" in praise of the French King Louis. Worried that d'Estaing might take his fleet and leave, he wrote soothingly to the Frenchman:

I most ardently hope, that my countrymen will exert themselves to give you every aid in their power, that you may, as soon as possible, recover from the damage you have suffered, and be in a condition to renew your efforts against the common enemy.

That same day Washington wrote to Congress:

... I will use every means in my power to conciliate any differences that may have arisen in consequence of Count d'Estaing's going to Boston, and to prevent a publication of the protest. . .

These were difficult days for General Washington. He had

been so hopeful at Valley Forge, but now he resented the "foreign aid," French and German. Again, quoting Flexner:

Washington was very angry. He had no reason to love the French. They had been his enemies in his previous war and had incited the Indians to great brutality against Virginians. He could not doubt that France had entered the war for no high-minded motives but because it was to her "interest" to weaken Great Britain. . . [The German] Steuben was off junketing to Congress. . . to have most of the supervision of the army taken away from Washington and put in his own hand. In a fury, Washington wrote, "I do most devoutly wish that we had not a single foreign officer among us except the Marquis de Lafayette."

While d'Estaing was on his way to Boston, Admiral Howe, his ships quickly repaired in New York, had returned to Rhode Island, expecting to battle the French. When told they had gone to Boston, he set out in pursuit, knowing that d'Estaing was sailing under improvised jury rigs and would have slow going. He hoped to intercept the fleet before it reached the safety of Boston harbor. But he didn't. The French were in Boston by the time Howe got to Massachusetts Bay. Aware he would be bombarded by rebel batteries on the harbor islands if he tried to get into Boston, he returned to Rhode Island.

Admiral d'Estaing never again was active in the fighting in New England. When his ships were finally repaired (it was a slow process, enabling the Frenchman to charm many of Boston's high society, including Mrs. Abigail Adams), he left New England, sailing to the West Indies to fight the English. He was still fighting for his king. Before leaving Boston, according to a 1795 history, he published a manifesto to be distributed in Canada, reminding Canadians of their former loyalty to France and urging them to rebel against the British.

A second English fleet was at Newport when Howe got there. It was carrying 4300 troops under General Clinton and had sailed up from Whitestone, Long Island, to join the fighting. A powerful naval force with warships and 20 troop transports, it was the fleet that would conduct Grey's Raids.

The British and Hessian troops on board were eager for battle, but there was no enemy to fight. General Sullivan had

withdrawn his diminished army from Rhode Island to the mainland, safe from English attack. Thousands of militia had gone back to their farms, upset by the French departure.

With no battle in prospect, Clinton turned his fleet over to Gen. Charles Grey and returned to New York. He ordered Grey to sail along the coast, ravaging villages, destroying the privateers that captured ships carrying supplies to Newport.

Admiral Howe opposed Clinton's order to pillage seaports, believing that it would encourage more rebellion, not hasten its end. He had given up all hope of reconciliation, a course he and his brother, General Howe, the retired army commander, both favored. He reluctantly agreed to wait off Block Island with his fleet in case Grey needed help.

General Grey, on September 5, took the huge fleet under the naval command of Capt. Robert Fanshaw into Buzzard's Bay. By sunset, it was in Clark's Cove, south of New Bedford. Six companies of troops went ashore and marched into New Bedford during the night to begin their destruction. The troops had been kept on board ship for weeks and were eager to have something to do, especially pillaging. In two days, they burned more than 30 buildings. Grey described the results:

26 storehouses at Bedford, several at McPherson's wharf, Crane's Mills and Fairhaven [were burned]; these were filled with very great quantities of rum, sugar, molasses, coffee, tobacco, cotton, tea, medicines, gunpowder, sailcloth, cordage, etc. Two large ropewalks [were burned].

Seventy vessels, plus many small craft, were also destroyed. Smoke from the burning rum, molasses and gunpowder blackened the sky, surely visible to residents of Martha's Vineyard, 20 miles away. Would they be the next?

General Grey reported to Clinton on the successes at New Bedford and Fairhaven, in a self-serving manner:

. . . The Business was finished, and the Troops all re-embarked this Morning by 12 of clock, with the loss . . . of only 5 or 6 Men wounded, one of whom is since dead. The Stores destroyed were valuable, and the Number of Ships burnt about 70, Privateers and other Ships, ready, with their Cargoes in, for sailing. The only Battery they had was on the Fair Haven side, an enclosed Fort with eleven pieces of Cannon which



was abandoned, and the Cannon properly demolished by Captain Scott. . . and the Magazine blown up.

I cannot enough praise the Spirit, Zeal and Activity of the Troops you have Honored me with the Command of. . . also their Sobriety in the midst of Temptation, and Obedience to Orders, as not one House in Bedford and Fair Haven I think was consumed that could be avoided, except those with Stores. . . .

I shall proceed to Martha's Vineyard for the purpose of Collecting Cattle for Rhode Island, etc. Immediately after performing that Service, shall return with the Troops to Long Island. . . s/ Charles Grey

His plans for the Vineyard sounded peaceful, not like a raid, but more like a provisioning expedition. Its purpose was "collecting cattle," not, as at New Bedford, punishing rebels for privateering. Fresh meat was much needed by the Newport garrison where troops had been on short rations for some time. A Hessian soldier stationed there wrote to his family in Germany on September 8, the same day Grey's fleet headed for the Vineyard:

. . . it is so sorry looking around us, as far as fresh vegetables and meat are concerned. . . we shall hardly have anything here in a fortnight, since we are now having to live on nothing but salt meat, dried peas, and rice.

Provisions on board the British fleet were also low. As he sailed for Holmes Hole, Grey ordered the rations cut by one-third. But he knew things would soon be better. He sent word to the Newport commander to dispatch all the vessels he could spare to Holmes Hole to carry back the livestock he planned to collect from Vineyarders.

At noon, September 8, Grey's ships left New Bedford, crossing Buzzard's Bay. But before they had all made it through Quick's Hole in the Elizabeth Islands, the tide changed, forcing many to anchor in the bay and await a fair tide. There were other delays and it was six in the morning of September 10, before the armada of 11 warships and 20 troop transports were completely through Quick's. They soon were at Holmes Hole. Vineyarders must have watched nervously from the north shore as the huge armada sailed down the sound.

Grey had advance knowledge of what was on the Island. He had received an intelligence report that day, no doubt from a Vineyard Loyalist. Here are a few excerpts from the report:

The number of farm animals: 600 oxen, steers, etc.; 560 cows; 13,000 sheep

Militia, a Colonel, 5 captains, 600 men, mostly at sea.

Almost all the bread consumed on the Island is procured from Connecticut, their other supplies are brought from Bedford & Boston. There is hardly any Timber of Size on the Island, and wood for fuel, or building vessels chiefly brought from the continent.

The number of Inhabitants do not exceed 3500, exclusive of Indians of whom there are about 60 Familys who cultivate a little ground and are possessed of about 60 head of Cattle & 200 Sheep. . . few vessels [are] properly owned here, having formerly shared in those fitted out at Nantuckett & Bedford for whaling, as they do now in the Privateers.

On the afternoon of September 10, anchored off West Chop, General Grey, aboard his flagship *Carisfort*, studied the report, deciding what he would demand from the Islanders. He had sent several warships and transports north to ravage Falmouth, where he had been told, there were many privateers. When they got there, so many local militia lined the shore of the narrow harbor that the English quickly left.

A second pillaging expedition of Grey's also had to be abandoned, as he explained in his report to Clinton:

The Transports with the Light Infantry, Grenadians and 33rd Regiments were anchored without the Harbour as I had at that time a Service in view for those Corps whilst the business of collecting cattle should be carry on [sic] upon the Island. I was obliged by contrary winds to relinquish my designs.

He had planned to send those transports to Nantucket to destroy privateers and ships' stores while the livestock were being collected on the Vineyard. But as was often the case, the wind and the tide took over. Grey didn't mention in his report to Clinton that the real cause of the abandonment of the Nantucket mission was the foot-dragging by Captain Fanshaw, the fleet's naval commander. When the fleet arrived at Holmes Hole, the wind and tide were right for sailing to Nantucket,

but Fanshaw insisted on meeting with the captains of his ships first. When the meeting ended, the tide and wind had become unfavorable. Postponed until the next day, the adventure was abandoned a few days later when Grey was ordered back to New York.

Capt. John André, Grey's aide-de-camp who was hanged by the rebels later as a spy, was on board the *Carisfort* and he describes in his diary what happened next at Holmes Hole:

In the evening a Flag of Truce with three Committeemen came on board. They professed the most peaceable dispositions and the utmost readiness to comply with the General's requisitions. General Grey ordered them ashore to direct the inhabitants to drive in their sheep and cattle, or that Troops should be marched thro' the Island; likewise to bring in their arms, or that the Colonel and Captains of the Militia should be sent prisoners to New York.

The colonel André mentioned was Col. Beriah Norton, who headed the party of three who came aboard under the flag of truce. Beriah had experience in negotiations with the English. A year earlier, on Sept. 9, 1777, as head of the Island's Committee for Defense, he had received a letter from Capt. Jos. McCartney of His Majesty's Ship *Abuscade*, then in Holmes Hole harbor. McCartney demanded provisions for his men. The diplomatic Colonel Norton, eager to conserve the meager supplies of the Island which, he said, had to be brought over from the mainland, responded:

Colo. Norton's Compliments to Capt. McCartney in behalf of the Committee, met to Consider of his request, beg leave to Observe the unhappy Situation of this County, its dependence on the Continent for Supplies.

As to a Small matter for Capt. McCartney's Table, the Committee will Present him with Three Sheep & doz. or Two of Fowls Tomorrow at 10 oClock at the Landing where his Boat has Landed this day. Expecting Capt. McCartney will not make any further demands on these People as their Case is extraordinary.

From your Most Obt., Humble Serv't, Beriah Norton.  
N.B. The Sheep on this place are but Indifferent as they have no winter keeping. If this is Agreeable, Capt. McCartney will please to return an answer by the Boat.

We don't know how the matter was resolved, but we feel certain that the captain accepted Beriah's gracious offer and left the Island with the Vineyard's hens and its "indifferent" mutton. Norton's remark was no exaggeration. The Vineyard sheep were range animals. It was not until the early 1800s that fatter, more wooly, Spanish Merino sheep were imported into the colony and much later before they were brought to the Vineyard. Until then, the animals that survived winters on the Island's grasslands were, indeed, "indifferent."

Beriah, the top-ranking military man on the Island, was the person who was called on to negotiate with the English each time they sailed into a harbor making demands. He soon became comfortable in the presence of high-ranking English officers and they learned to respect his integrity.

The visit aboard the flagship *Carisfort* was his first big test, his first face-to-face meeting with such a high-ranking officer as General Grey, who commanded not a single vessel, but a huge fleet. With Beriah at the meeting were two other Islanders, one of whom was Joseph Mayhew of Chilmark. There is no record of the discussion, but it was obvious that Norton did not resist General Grey's demands. The meeting was brief and at its end, Beriah was given this written order by B. Symes of General Grey's staff:

Beriah Norton, Colonel of Militia at Martha's Vineyard is required to order the Militia of the Island to assemble at Day Light tomorrow morning, collect the horned Cattle, Milch Cows excepted, & Sheep in their Different Districts & proceed with them immediately to homes hole. They are expected at the appointed place precisely at two in the afternoon, in failure of which the Troops will March at that hour to collect them. The Militia are ordered to bring their armes, accoutrements and ammunition.

It was getting late in the day. To begin collecting livestock all over the Island at dawn the next day must have seemed impossible to Colonel Norton. During the night, he somehow managed to get Grey's orders delivered to his five captains:

You are hereby ordered to muster your Company of Militia by Day Light tomorrow morning & Collect all the oxon & Sheep

in your Destrect and Bring them with your armes, acutorment & ammunition to home's hole harbour By two oClock tomorrow, there to Receive further orders.

It must have been a frantic night on the Vineyard as the militia men rode about the Island arousing residents and ordering them to drive their animals to Holmes Hole (Paul Revere's ride comes to mind). No quotas were given, the order simply said: "Collect all the oxen & Sheep" and have them in Holmes Hole by 2 p.m., that day.

A number of years later while seeking restitution for the livestock taken, Beriah Norton described in detail his meeting aboard the *Carisfort*:

On General Grey's arrival. . . I was one that immediately waited upon him, and I solemnly affirm that he did not at the time suggest in my hearing any intention of punishing the Inhabitants by military exactions. . . He required that they should deliver up their arms (which were the same they had formerly used as a Militia under the King's Government) and this was instantly complied with.

He also required a large quantity of Stock, Cattle and Sheep, these were also immediately collected at the landing, persons were appointed to take an invoice of them and appraise them and every formality of a contract was observed, nor was there during General Grey's continuance there a single circumstance which resembled depredation on Enemies or levying a contribution upon the Inhabitants . . .

The whole of this business was negotiated between the General and myself and I most sacredly declare that on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> of September on board the *Carisfort* Frigate, General Grey assured me that upon the Stock being delivered according to agreement, I might depend upon its being paid for in full or in part and that every justice should be done to the Inhabitants. . .

The following morning, September 11, 1778, about 450 troops from the 4300 aboard the transports went ashore in Holmes Hole, setting up camp in the open area near Bass Creek (about where Five Corners now is in Vineyard Haven). Grey promised that the residents would not be bothered by the troops if his demand for 10,000 sheep and 300 oxen, plus hay, was promptly met.

Colonel Norton's order brought quick results. Before noon the next day, livestock from nearby farms began arriving at Holmes Hole, creating much confusion. For two days, flocks of sheep kept coming in. Controlling them became a problem. The village was in turmoil, its downtown area alive with the sounds of baa'ing sheep.

By the end of the day, twenty vessels had sailed into the harbor from Newport and anchored close to shore waiting to load the livestock.

It was a remarkable accomplishment, but General Grey was not satisfied. The number of weapons that had been turned in, 229 guns and not much ammunition, did not meet the number he knew was in the hands of the militia. He sent one regiment to Edgartown to pressure the inhabitants and put Colonel Norton and his captains in confinement until the rest of the weapons were turned in.

A warship and some troops were also sent to Edgartown to collect the tax money held in the county court house. The soldiers, happy to have something to do, busied themselves by destroying two small vessels in the harbor.

For two days, the frenzy continued. All the collecting was being done by the residents. The English troops were present to intimidate, not to forage or harass. Most of the sheep came from up-Island, but no troops had been sent there. In the owners' minds, they were selling their livestock. It was an involuntary sale, to be sure, but it was a sale nonetheless.

In Holmes Hole, the men in charge soon organized the loading of the animals onto the transports. The confusion began to subside. As each animal was loaded, a record was made of its condition and estimated weight. By the end of the day, the transports had been filled and they left for Newport with orders to return immediately for the rest of the animals.

Soon after they left, a vessel arrived with orders from Lord Howe, who was still at Block Island. Grey was ordered to sail his fleet back to New York at once. No explanation was given.

More than 4000 sheep were still in Holmes Hole. Grey ordered them loaded on to his ships. While that was being done, the troops that had gone to Edgartown were recalled. By



the evening of September 14<sup>th</sup>, all the men were on the ships.

A roll call revealed that two British soldiers had deserted. Residents were ordered to turn them in or else four Islanders, probably Beriah's captains, would be taken to New York as hostages.

By nightfall, the two deserters had been turned in. Norton and his captains were released. All was ready for a departure in the morning. In a parting gesture, General Grey ordered a salt works on shore destroyed and its store of salt confiscated.

Colonel Stirling, the officer commanding the troops on shore, told Colonel Norton to assemble the residents to hear a statement he would read from General Grey. Several hundred villagers gathered in an open field near Bass Creek. Beriah Norton described the meeting:

. . . he [Stirling] informed us that General Gray [sic] had directed him to inform us that we ware [were] to apply at New York for payment for the Stock they had received. I asked the Colo. if we had Best send a man in the fleet at that time for the payment, to which the Colo. replied we might if we Chose, but recommended to us to wait a Little time before Aplication was made.

No Vineyarder was sent with the fleet, but shortly after, Beriah Norton sailed to New York to begin his campaign to obtain compensation for what had been taken. Just before Grey left, he required Colonel Norton to commit the Island's inhabitants not simply to be neutral in the rebellion, but to assist any English warship by furnishing provisions when asked. (This commitment has been used in recent years to block Vineyarders from being accepted as members of the Daughters of the American Revolution.) In his journal, Captain André recorded the terms that Beriah was forced to accept:

. . . a solemn injunction to abstain from taking part any more in the War or persecuting others for their political opinions; they were also bound to assist the King's ships with water or provisions whenever they should call upon them to do it.

It is unlikely that Colonel Norton put up much resistance to the pledge. He was not a firebrand. Like many Islanders, he was an accommodater. If selling fresh meat and vegetables to an English warship would keep the Island peaceful, that was

fine with him, as it was no doubt with them. But even if he had objected, there was little he could have done except to agree. Furthermore, with so few Island militia armed resistance to an enemy warship might be heroic, but it would be futile.

The fleet, its ships loaded, was scheduled to sail with the tide at six in the morning of September 15, 1778, but there were delays, as usual. It wasn't until sunset that they left. During the delay, two small vessels in the harbor were burned.

Colonel Norton watched the huge fleet sail away to the west, into the setting sun. He had reason to congratulate himself. His had been a major accomplishment. Little damage had been done, nobody had been hurt, no shots were fired and the Vineyarders would be paid for what had been taken from them. Norton wrote about it proudly in 1782:

When it is considered that the requisition for Ten Thousand Sheep and more than Three Hundred Cattle was made on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, that the Stock was to be collected from the extreme parts of the Island and the whole business was effected by the Inhabitants alone, the Stock put on board, and the Troops re-embarked and ready to Sail on the 14<sup>th</sup>, I flatter myself. I need make no further observation.

He admitted that all the gunpowder had not been turned in promptly, causing him and his captains to be jailed briefly:

The quantity of Gun-powder, which the General [complained was missing] was a few pounds belonging to an Individual, which was secreted for his own private use and the Proprietor of it at that time [was] off the Island.

Few documents written by Vineyarders who took part in the events of those momentous days have survived. The Society does have three statements written by Chilmark men. The purpose of the statements (they seem to be affidavits) appears to have been to determine how many sheep were taken from individual owners so that a fair compensation could be made. The first is from 40-year-old Moses Lumbert:

. . . I was Near the house of Simon Mayhew's in Chilmark in Company with Johnathan Allen when I see a large Drove of Sheep Driving in the highway or Road Leading from the Neck of Land Caled Squipnocket. Mr. Allen observed that those Sheep Might be from that Neck of Land [and] if they where he

had Sheep at that Place & [they would] likely be among them. Your Deponant was of the Same mind having Sheep at the same place . . . the Sheep was then Drove of Towards the Harbour where the British Fleet Lay for General Gray, as the Drovers said, the Drovers to that flock being Four in Number all belonging to Chilmark.

Lumbert claimed only that some of his sheep were "likely to be among them." His account affirms that owners were not told how many of their sheep were being taken. In the urgency of the demand, all available sheep were rounded up and driven to Holmes Hole. Any accounting of whose sheep were taken would have to come later.

The second affidavit adds a little more to our knowledge of the procedure. Not everybody's sheep were taken. In this case, those owned by Indians were separated from English-owned sheep pastured on Gay Head, apparently evidence of the undefined status of the Indians as citizens:

I Francis Mayhew of Chilmark. . . do say that when G. Gray was at the Vineyard taking off[f] stock, cattle & Sheep, the Indians brought the Sheep off of the Gayhead and yarded them on Mr. Benjamin Mayhew's land. . . and took out the Sheep that they had in keeping and Drove them Back to sd [said] Gayhead. I was Present at the yard when they took out their Sheep. . . the rest of said sheep [in] sd yard where [were] drove Eastward to go to sd. Gray.

The third deposition explains how the town of Chilmark determined how many sheep had actually been taken from it. All the sheep that remained in the town after Grey left were counted. Ownership of the animals was determined no doubt by examining the ear-marks, which were registered in the town. Among those who still had sheep was Sheriff Peter Norton:

I Nathanel Mayhew [state] that soon after sd Gray went from this place, people were yarding sheep in sd Town [Chilmark] in order to find what they had remaining. . . at a yard on M. Tilton's land where I saw sd Peter Norton's son take out a considerable number of sheep belonging to sd. Peter & his sons.

Nathaniel, while giving his deposition, was asked if he had

ever been paid for livestock taken from him. His response sounds a bit sarcastic:

I suppose I received part pay for one yoke of oxen.

General Grey did not give an exact count in his report to General Clinton, made only a few days after the events. Round numbers were good enough for him. He summarized his four days on the Vineyard this way:

On our Arrival off the Harbour [Holmes Hole, September 10], the Inhabitants sent persons on board to ask my Intentions with respect to them, to which a requisition was made of the arms of the Militia, the public Money, 300 oxen and 10,000 Sheep; They promised each of the Articles should be delivered without delay: I afterwards found it necessary to send small detachments into the Island and detain the deputed Inhabitants for a time, in Order to accelerate their Compliance with the demand.

The 12th I was able to embark on board the Vessels which arrived that day from Rhode Island 6000 Sheep and 130 Oxen.

The 13th and 14th were employed in embarking Cattle, and Sheep, on board our own Fleet, in destroying some Salt Works, in burning or taking, in the Inlets, what Vessels and boats could be found and in receiving the arms of the militia.

On the 15<sup>th</sup>, the Fleet left Martha's Vineyard and after sustaining the next day a very Severe Gale of Wind, arrived the 17th at Whitestone without any material damage.

I hold myself much obliged to the Commanding officer of the Corps and to the Troops in General for the Alacrity with which every Service was performed.

In a later report, this one in Captain Andre's handwriting, sent to General Clinton in New York, there is a more precise account of what was destroyed and what was taken:

In Old Town Harbor [Edgartown], Martha's Vineyard:

1 brig of 150 tons burthen, burnt by the *Scorpion*. 1 schooner of 70 tons burthen burnt by ditto.

23 whale boats taken or destroyed. A quantity of plank taken.

At Holmes Hole, Martha's Vineyard:

4 vessels, with several boats, taken or destroyed. A salt work destroyed and a considerable quantity of salt taken.

Arms taken at Martha's Vineyard:

388 stand, with bayonets, pouches, etc., some powder and a quantity of lead, as by artillery return.

£1000 sterling, in paper, the amount of a tax collected by authority of the Congress, was received at Martha's Vineyard from the Collector.

Cattle and sheep taken from Martha's Vineyard:

300 oxen, 10,000 sheep.

The report failed to mention that nine of the 388 rifles, were, on Grey's order, given to nine unnamed men in the three villages for maintaining order after the English left.

When the three towns completed their careful counting of losses, the totals came to 10,574 sheep and 315 cattle, plus 52 tons of hay to feed the livestock on the ships. Thirty years later, the claims for payment had become a joke. Travel writer Edward A. Kendall, like tour guides through history (anything for a laugh!), wrote, after visiting the Island in 1807:

In the rebellion, large numbers [of sheep] were taken, and paid for, for the support of the King's troops, but it is a common jest in the neighbourhood, that the number paid for far exceeded the whole number the island could have produced.

The Vineyard's contributions to the diet of the English troops may have seemed large when the sheep were being loaded at Holmes Hole, but in fact the mutton didn't last long. There were many hungry men to be fed and the food inventory had reached its lowest point, as historian R. Arthur Bowler wrote:

. . . for all its apparent success, Grey's expedition kept the army in meat for no more than two weeks . . . there were still only four day's provisions in the storehouses when the British fleet arrived in New York harbor in January 1779 [four months later].

But while they lasted, the fresh mutton and beef were much enjoyed. Sir Robert Pigot, commander of the British troops in Newport, wrote to General Grey to thank him. He mentioned the help Grey had received from a Loyalist named Tupper:

Many thanks to you my dear General for the fine parcel of Sheep you have been so kind as to send us. Everything was

ready for a second Trip [by the Newport transports] the day before you appeared off [Newport], but the Convoy receiving orders to proceed to New York with the Cattle, our Motions were retarded till we could provide another armed vessel here. . . I am glad Tupper the Guide was useful to you, he is a valuable man. . . He tells me that if you would be so good as to give him one of the Sloops taken at Martha's Vineyard, he could get a livelihood by fetching wood for the [Newport] Garrison . . . I send this by the Wood Fleet, an Article we are much in want of.

P.S. Pray are the sheep to be paid for? Mr. Leonard, the Commissary, thinks they are & that a Valuation was fixed upon them.

The question in the postscript indicates clearly that the provisions taken by Grey were not thought of as plunder, but had been taken with the full intention of being paid for. Leonard, the Commissary mentioned, had been with Grey at Martha's Vineyard and no doubt watched the inventory that was taking place as the animals were loaded.

Pigot was not the only person who was grateful for the Vineyard mutton. Our oft-quoted diarist Mackenzie, the Welsh officer at Newport, wrote of others who enjoyed the welcome fresh meat:

14<sup>th</sup>: Very fine day. Wind N. The Stock brought from the Vineyard was partly landed on the East side of this Island [Rhode Island]. The vessels are to return for more, as soon as they are unloaded.

15<sup>th</sup>. Above 5000 sheep have been landed from Martha's Vineyard for the use of the troops on this Island [Rhode Island]. This will prove a seasonable supply as the Stock on this Island is nearly exhausted.

26<sup>th</sup>. . . 200 sheep of those brought here from Martha's Vineyard have been put on board the *Princess Royal*, and *Culloden*, for the use of the Officers and men . . . [These two ships had just arrived from England, a voyage that had taken 15 weeks. Fresh meat would certainly have been appreciated.]  
Oct. 6<sup>th</sup>. . . Each Commissioned Officer of the troops of this Island received a Donation of a Sheep, out of those brought from Martha's Vineyard.

Feeding the thousands of troops stationed on Rhode Island



was a continuing problem. General Sullivan's army on the mainland had blockaded the English base so all provisions had to be brought in by boat. This was a problem for the English, but it provided welcome income for some Americans. A few weeks after the English in Newport received the Vineyard sheep, diarist Mackenzie, stationed there, wrote:

Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>. . . . A boat from Long Island came in this Morning with some Provisions to sell. . .

10<sup>th</sup>. The Wood fleet from Lloyd's Neck, Long Island, came in this morning, under convoy of the *Fowey*, they have brought 534 Cord of wood . . .

Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>. Two Block Island boats came in last night with 24 quarters of good beef, some Mutton, Cheese, pigs, fowl, etc.

Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>. The Block Island boats frequently bring 3 or 400 Sea fowl of different kinds. . . [the business is] a great relief to the poor Inhabitants.

General Clinton, in New York reading Grey's reports of success, was pleased. On September 21, 1778, he sent his own report to London. In it, he explained that before going to New Bedford, he had intended to pillage New London, but the plan was abandoned due to adverse winds and the scarcity of privateers in port. He then returned to New York, sending Grey with the fleet to burn warehouses at New Bedford and to the Vineyard for provisions. Such coastal raids, he wrote, would send a message to "those poor deluded people":

I therefore left G. Grey with the troops, and directed him to move towards Bedford. His success [there] was complete, and since that, at Martha's Vineyard, and I hope it will serve to convince those poor deluded people that that sort of war, carried to a greater extent and with more devastation, will sooner or later reduce them.

One of those "poor deluded people" was Col. Beriah Norton, the Islander who had been most involved. But it was only a beginning. He spent most of his remaining years trying to collect payment from the English for what they had taken.

Within a few days, the selectmen of the Vineyard's three towns met to plan what action to take to get the money. They prepared a statement to be delivered to the General Court in Boston by Colonel Norton and two other men. It explained

that when Grey arrived the residents had no choice but to comply with his demands and consequently now "our case is rendered deplorable by having neither sufficient beasts for draught or provisions for our support."

The message described their condition, but asked for nothing specific and no action was taken. A week later, September 26, 1778, another try was made. Colonel Norton, James Athearn and Thomas Cooke signed a petition to the General Court in which they said help was needed in the Holmes Hole area by "many persons with large families." Nothing was said about sheep. It was a request for relief, not compensation:

. . . the late stop of the British troops have made in Depriving them of their stock has rendered the case of many persons with large families Truly deplorable. In particular near the Harbour of Holmes Hole where they landed who are not only Deprived of every article & necessary of life not having an Exchange of any kind of clothing for them or children and unless immediately assisted must unavoidably suffer extremely or period. . . .

The reason there was no mention of sheep may have been that the Vineyarders were fully expecting to be paid for them as soon as they could present the bill to the English in New York. With that in mind, James Athearn was sent to New Jersey with a letter from the General Court asking General Washington to allow him to go through the British lines and into New York to present the Island's claim.

General Washington seemed not a bit eager to become involved and forwarded the request to the Congress in Philadelphia where it died for lack of interest. Thus, Athearn's trip to New Jersey, which Islanders hoped would present their claims to the English in New York, ended in failure.

Other problems occupied the attention of Vineyarders, some more critical than getting paid for livestock. A serious small-pox epidemic had broken out in Edgartown and Chilmark. Tisbury, sandwiched between the two towns, was greatly concerned. Late in December 1778, the town named a committee to determine whether transients wishing to pass through Tisbury in their travel between Chilmark and

Edgartown should be stopped at the town line. James Athearn was named to head the committee, but when he came down with small pox himself, the blockade seemed useless.

The Revolution was now principally being fought in the southern theater, but there were occasional raids along the New England coast by an amateur navy manned by British sympathizers, Loyalists, led by George Leonard of Boston. He had been given a fleet of ten vessels, castoffs from the English Navy. He fitted them out at his own expense and regularly sailed along the south shore of the Cape harassing ships and villages. They were known as the "Refugee fleet," its sailors being refugees from the country, deprived of property and civil rights.

On one adventure, he used Edgartown and Holmes Hole as his base for some weeks. From there he raided Nantucket, taking considerable quantities of sperm oil, whale bone and coffee. Leonard was particularly eager to harass Nantucket as he had been part of Grey's fleet when the Nantucket raid was aborted in 1778. He became well-liked by Vineyarders and was able to convince them to sell fresh provisions and wood to the British at Newport. Some years later, William Jernigan wrote about the Leonard fleet:

... about the year 1779, a fleet of the British ships anchored in our harbour at Edgartown. Some of our People was then anxious to fire on them with our small arms. Wm. Jernigan [he often wrote in the third person] then and there interposed and used his influence with the People not to fire on them: if we did we should have our Houses burnt. At that time, they did us but little damage and went off with themselves.

This "Refugee" fleet was protected by the pledge, mentioned earlier, that Colonel Norton was required to sign when General Grey left:

... a solemn injunction to abstain from taking part any more in the War ... also bound to assist the King's ships with water or provisions whenever they should call upon them to do it.

The Island's towns were still trying to put together an accurate count of the livestock and other items taken by Grey. For some reason, Chilmark was not pleased with how the things were being done and it hired attorney Timothy Folger of

Nantucket to represent it. The other two towns were so upset by Chilmark's move that they told the English that the town's claims were greatly exaggerated.

With James Athearn sick with small pox, Colonel Norton took over. He was certainly qualified. Massachusetts Bay gave him permission to travel to England to argue the case for remuneration, but it required him to post a bond to assure that he would not do any business with the enemy except to try to negotiate a settlement.

Going to England would be expensive. Islanders were not eager to have Norton living in London at their expense for what might be a long mission. So he agreed to pay all the expenses himself. He would receive money only if the English agreed to pay; then he would get one-third of the amount. If there was no payment, he would receive not "one farthing." It was a bold move (see inside back cover for his written pledge).

In August 1780, he sailed to London, to represent the entire Island (Chilmark had returned to the fold). He was there until the spring of 1782 – a frustrating 18 months. His petition was quickly turned down by the Board of Whitehall Treasury, but that didn't stop him. He became an active lobbyist for the Island, cultivating friends among the lords and ladies, no doubt charming them with his farmer's wit and dignity. He argued that Vineyarders had not fought the English despite what General Grey claimed. Furthermore, Grey had promised to pay for what he took, Norton could prove that. He cited the alacrity with which 10,000 sheep were driven down to Holmes Hole as proof of the cooperative attitude.

The Treasury asked Sir Henry Clinton for his opinion. Clinton, you will recall, was the general who had turned the fleet over to General Grey in September 1778. Apparently, he sided with Norton because the Treasury overruled the Whitehall board and authorized the payment of £7000, subject to the approval of the commanding officer of His Majesty's Forces in New York.

It must have been an enjoyable sail back to New York for Beriah. Now, all he had to do was to make his case with Sir Guy Carleton, the New York commander. In New York, he

presented his case, knowing that there was money available if he could convince Sir Guy. He prepared a docket of 21 documents to support his position. Among the documents was a harsh criticism of General Grey for misstating the facts:

The solemn injunction which General Grey refers to, to abstain from taking part in the War or prosecuting others for their political opinions has been religiously attended to; and . . . the King's Ships, Troops, and Garrison have been uniformly supplied with every article the Island affords . . .

. . . at the time of [General Grey's] landing. . . not a man was armed, nor were any of them collected. . . all remained quiet at home untill summoned by the General's order to bring in the Stock . . . which they faithfully performed. . .

It is very fortunately in my power to produce the most irrefragable evidence of this promise [to pay for the livestock] made by General Grey from the Deposition of Mr. Leonard who acted as Commissary upon that Service. . . For what purpose. . . was so particular an account taken of the number and weight of the Stock supplied and the value of each article ascertained . . . by persons appointed by the express order and direction of Generals Grey? Surely such conduct was by no means consistent with the Idea of a contribution to be levied upon the Inhabitants as a punishment for their disloyalty, but clearly evinced a deliberate intention at the time that compensation should be made. . .

On July 8, 1782, Colonel Norton was notified to come to New York where Major General Peterson would convene a board "to hear what you have further to urge in favor of the Claim of the Inhabitants of Martha's Vineyard."

Colonel Norton presented his documentation. Two weeks later, Sir Guy Carleton, Commander of His Majesty's Forces in the colony, ordered his paymaster to give Col. Beriah Norton, "agent for the Inhabitants of Martha's Vineyard without deduction the Sum of Three Thousand Pounds Sterling being part of the Demand made by them for Cattle, Sheep & Hay furnished General Grey in . . . September 1778."

Beriah had won. He had convinced the English to agree to pay for what they had taken. It was a triumph for the farmer from Edgartown, who had defeated one of England's military leaders, General Grey (although not on the battlefield!). To

be sure, it was only partial payment, but the principle had been agreed to: England would pay.

Colonel Norton was still not satisfied. In October 1782, he posted bond and was granted permission to return to New York to try to collect the remaining £4000. But nothing came of this visit. Rumors were prevalent that a peace treaty would soon be signed. Nobody wanted to jeopardize the prospects of peace. Beriah came home, but he didn't give up the fight.

A year later, on September 3, 1783, the peace treaty was signed in Paris. The American Revolution was over. Signing the treaty for the United States were John Jay, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams.

Early in 1784, Beriah Norton sold his farm for £458 and moved into a small house that he had recently purchased for £59. He would need the money for his continuing quest. In June 1784, he left the Vineyard for Boston. He would sail to London aboard the ship *Active*. On the vessel, he quickly learned, was a distinguished passenger, Mrs. Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams. She was sailing to London to join her husband after his successful diplomacy had ended the war. In her diary on the day the *Active* sailed, Mrs. Adams wrote:

Several of the Passengers called upon me, amongst whom was a Col. Norton from Martha's Vineyard, a Member of our Senate, a grave, sedate man about 50 years of age.

The farmer from Edgartown was moving up in the world.

(To be continued.)



## Diary of Farmer and Teacher William Butler of Farm Neck

This is the second and concluding installment in the brief diary of William Butler (1761-1844) of Farm Neck, now Oak Bluffs. The first installment was published in November 2002.

During the ten months in 1792 covered by this diary, William Butler courted and married Rebecca Smith, who lived on a farm in Pohogonot, between Oyster Pond and Job's Neck Pond on Edgartown's south shore.

Rebecca Smith belonged to one of the Island's outstanding families. In 1691, a century before this diary was written, her grandfather, Samuel Smith, married the widow, Hannah (Mayhew) Daggett. Hannah had been the favorite of her father, Governor Thomas Mayhew. She was called "Deputy Governor" because of her influence on him. When she married Samuel, she was 56; he was in his 30s. They had no children.

Marrying into the Mayhew family, no doubt, helped Samuel become Registrar of Deeds, where he became knowledgeable about land dealings. He soon began buying land from the Indians on Pohogonot, eventually owning 400 acres. When wife Hannah died in 1721 at 85 years, Samuel married Catherine, daughter of Rev. William Homes of Chilmark. She was 22, he was 60. Probably it was at this time that he moved out of Edgartown village and established Pohogonot as the family home.

Despite Samuel's age, he and Catherine had four children. He was 72 when their last child was born. One son, Samuel Smith III, "inherited" the position of Registrar when his father died. He and his wife, Anne (Wass), had four children, the youngest being Rebecca, who will marry William Butler, our diarist.

William, too, was part of a distinguished Vineyard family that came to the Island in 1652, soon after the Mayhews. Nonetheless, William thought he was "moving up" by marrying a Smith. In truth, the marriage was a merging of two exceptional Vineyard families.

### Acknowledgements

The editor is indebted to Eric Peters, Edgartown attorney, whose 1977 thesis on the Pond People of Edgartown, contains considerable data on the Smith family that have been of great help to him in annotating this diary. The notes of the late Gale Huntington, founding editor, have also been of great help.

**Sunday, April 29, 1792.** At Old Town [Edgartown]. In the afternoon Mr. Thaxter preach'd again. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. At Mr. Smith's. Found them well. Becca Seam'd lively & pleasing.<sup>1</sup>

**Monday, Apr. 30.** Came down from Mr. Smith's. This day run lines with Rufus Davis & fixed the line where to Set the fence. [lengthy and obtuse details of the bounds follow].

**Tuesday, May 1.** This day we had Dr. Nathan Smith to dine with us. Tho. from Old Town.

**Wednesday, May 2.** Employ'd Carting manure, puting into Corn hills. Shall distinguish my rising for the future by a light Stroke before the first figure in the margin.<sup>2</sup>

**Friday, May 4.** Dr. Smith is very sociable at our House. It appears to me he has a notion of getting a young Wife. What will be the consequences I cannot tell, but he seems very amorous.<sup>3</sup>

**Saturday, May 5.** Very warm. Begun to plant.

**Sunday, May 6.** I still keep up the

<sup>1</sup> Becca (Rebecca) lives at Pohogonot on the South Shore, a long horseback ride from Farm Neck where William lives. He usually stays overnight. He never refers to it as Becca's house, always Mr. Smith's.

<sup>2</sup> A mysterious remark. The editor has been unable to find any clue as to its meaning.

<sup>3</sup> Banks's *History* says Dr. Smith practiced on the Vineyard from 1767 to 1775, when he moved to Canada. Here, he must have returned to find a wife. He is 62. (Gale Huntington suggests he was after William's sister Rebecca Butler, 23, but, if so, no luck. She never married.)

term of Reading the Bible, 8 Chap. a day.

**Wednesday, May 9.** Drove up Cattle to Sq'nocket.<sup>4</sup>

**Thursday, May 10.** Doctor Mayhew this day came to Cornelius Marchant's Wife. By our request he call'd & let blood from Mother. He took away about two-thirds of a pint. The blood seem'd very thick.<sup>5</sup>

**Friday, May 11.** Set out for Pohogonut about 5 in the afternoon. Call'd at Benj. Coffin's, purchased 3 goat Skins of the old Gentleman at 2/ each. Found all well at Mr. Smith's. Our Friend Tho. was their [sic] & Spent the evening.<sup>6</sup>

**Saturday, May 12.** Got down from Pohogonut. This day put our hides in to Soak.

**Monday, May 14.** This day the fray took place.<sup>7</sup>

**Tuesday, May 15.** This day a number of Old Towners Came up, among which were Sarson Hilley, Temple Cooke, Thankful Daggett, Salli Daggett, Hannah Ward, etc. At Squipnockett, fencing. Made a half Wall fence next to Samuel Norton's Land.

**Wednesday, May 16.** Employ'd fencing with H. Butler at on [sic] Squip'kt. Rain in the afternoon which put us by.

<sup>4</sup> This is quite a distance. Twelve miles on a straight line, about 15 by roads at the time.

<sup>5</sup> Banks shows no Dr. Mayhew practicing on the Island at this time.

<sup>6</sup> He often mentions Tho., but never gives his last name. He may be Thomas Cooke.

<sup>7</sup> See May 17 entry.

**Thursday, Mary 17.** Came down from Chilmark in the evening. Left Henry [Butler] there. Last Monday the Scrable between Esq. Smith & Tim. Johnson happened. It appears that Tim had the better of him in the Struggle but did not attempt to hurt the Old Fellow, but only defended himself against a whipping.<sup>8</sup>

**Friday, May 18.** Employ'd planting potatoes, etc.

**Saturday, May 19.** Nabby Pease Arriv'd from Sandy River.<sup>9</sup> Sally Francis from Providence.

**Tuesday, May 22.** Employ'd fencing in the Corn field at Squash Meadow.<sup>10</sup>

**Wednesday, May 23.** This day muster'd up plank for Tanfat.<sup>11</sup>

**Thursday, May 24.** Another visit this day at Mr. Smith's. All things pleasing.

**Sunday, May 27.** Rain. Eliakim & I had something of a dispute. Cannot think but a man has a Right to take his property where he can find it & prove [?] property.

**Tuesday, May 29.** This day Settled with Abigail Pease<sup>12</sup> & Squar'd all off.

<sup>8</sup> Tim Johnson worked at the Butler farm. "Probably an Indian," Gale Huntington noted. We do not know who Esq. Smith is, but he may be another Samuel Smith, a yeoman who died in 1796 and may have lived on the Butler farm at Farm Neck.

<sup>9</sup> The new settlement in Maine just formed by a number of Farm Neck families.

<sup>10</sup> Area is now the village of Oak Bluffs.

<sup>11</sup> Although this is clearly "tanfat", it probably is his spelling of "tanvat", a tub in which hides are soaked during tanning.

**Wednesday, May 30.** Brought home a tanfal from Wm. Coffin's. Expect he will charge 12/ for making [it].

**Thursday, June 1.** Put our Hides in lime. Up at Mr. Smith's. Carried Love & left Her. The Weather seems very dry. Congress is adjourned to November, first Monday.<sup>13</sup>

**Friday, June 2.** Employ'd hoeing among Corn. Rec'd of Abigail Pease a Note of Hand on Mr. Hinder. 6/ Due on it.

**Monday, June 4.** Employ'd geting bark.<sup>14</sup> On the West Side of the Harbour mustering up Calf Skins.

**Tuesday, June 5.** It is hard for mankind to do any ways near Right – to discover faults in Others is easy, but to see them in Our Selves is almost impossible, much more to correct them.

This day have experienced something in Others in itself pernicious & find myself in some measure guilty of the like. The Circumstances is thus: Some Years ago there was two of our Neighbours Sheep frequently found in our Grain field. They would jump over most any fence. Rather incautiously I will venture to say without informing the Owners [we] hamstring'd them. The present is thus

<sup>12</sup> Abigail Pease is the Nabby Pease who had just come down from Sandy Point. She seems to have been involved in some business dealings (see entry June 2).

<sup>13</sup> Love is his sister. It isn't clear where he "left her." His mention of Congress is a rarity. It is unclear what prompted it.

<sup>14</sup> Bark is used in tanning hides.

Circumstanc'd.<sup>15</sup>

**Friday, June 8.** The Storm still Continues. Wind & Rain. a Schooner from the West Indies gone on Shore at the head of the Harbour [Holmes Hole].

This day with Wm. Beetle & found due to me 1-19/4 [1 pound, 19 shillings, 4 pence] which [he] promis'd to turn in to Aunt Beetle on my Account. Uncle Eben has been twice here this day for me to Write for him Secret Affairs that he has Discover'd, have put him off for the present. Told him would Write at Some other time.<sup>16</sup>

**Saturday, June 9.** Washing Sheep at Squipnockett. There was Some difficulty between Moses Lumbert & Zach Norton. The Case was thus – Lumbert & J. Stewart had hir'd [grazing] Rights of Esq. John Allen on Squipnockett for a number of Sheep. It appear'd by numbering their Sheep which I did myself as they drove them from the wash pen, that they had about 200 which was the Whole number pastur'd in the Esqr's place & on John Coffin's Right. It also appear'd evident that nearly one half of them had been out of their pasture into Zach's & others' pastures during the Whole Spring. Norton Said he ought to have compensation for keeping his Sheep. Lumbert said No. There was

<sup>15</sup> Another mysterious entry.

<sup>16</sup> Ebenezer Butler, 70, brother of William's father, was a bit "peculiar" and had to be indulged. Aunt Beetle, sister of William's father, married Christopher Beetle, who is now dead. William Beetle is their son.

no Order on Squipnockett & [he] should not [have to] compensate [him] for eating his Crop.

It appears to me that Some body ought to pay for it. If Esqr. Allen has taken in more Sheep than his Land will keep, he ought to reimburse for as many as should appear to be over what his Land would keep.

Jeremiah Stewart told me he had lost 30 Sheep. He Shore [sheared] about 100 on the day before the Storm, but Notwithstanding all the Care that was possible by Housing them bating [?] in his meadow he lost the above number. Deacon J. Davis lost 7 at Jacamia.<sup>17</sup>

**Sunday, June 9 [10].** Just at night rode up at Mr. Smith's, found Becca a good deal exercis'd with the tooth ache, had a turn of it myself in the morning but Shook it off in Some measure.

**Monday, June 11.** Came down from Pohogonut with Love [his sister]. Draw'd my hides out of the Lime & hair'd them. Find Hides Should be well lim'd in Order to get off the fine short Hairs.

**Friday, June 15.** Employ'd with Allan & Joseph Warner hoeing. Have been very much troubled with the Ague & tooth ache, have kept about my business untill this afternoon.

**Saturday, June 16.** Timothy Johnson left us this day. I feel rather Confus'd at thoughts of his Depart-

<sup>17</sup> Will someone identify Jacamia?

ture, perhaps partly on the account of head ache.<sup>18</sup>

**Sunday, June 17.** Very much excersiz'd with the tooth ache.

**Tuesday, June 19.** Shearing Sheep at Squip'nkt.

**Wednesday, June 20.** Came down from Squip'nkt. We tarried all night on Squip, on account of not finishing Shearing. Eliakim, Henry & my self made our bed on some fleeces of Wool, raising each Side with our Sacks of Wool. Not much Sleep did I get, being troubled with the tooth ache.<sup>19</sup>

**Thursday, June 21.** Employ'd Shearing Sheep at home.

**Saturday, June 23.** Jonathan Daggett begun his month's employ. Agreed to give him 4 Doll. per month.<sup>20</sup>

**Sunday, June 24.** Mr. Hines preach'd on the West side. I Could hear but indifferently in the fore part of the day as my expectation being so great with regard to having my tooth haul'd out between meetings as was propos'd. Chase took it out in very good Order.<sup>21</sup>

**Monday, June 25.** Employ'd Shearing Sheep at the farm Shore. 46 [sheep] – 100 lb. Wool.

**Tuesday, June 26.** Marking Lambs.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy Johnson, Indian farmhand at Butler's, had been involved in a fight with Smith earlier. Gale Huntington believed that because of the fight, William fired him.

<sup>19</sup> Tough guys these. Spending the night on the meadow in Chilmark with a toothache.

<sup>20</sup> He's replacing Tim Johnson, it seems.

<sup>21</sup> Chase, certainly not a dentist, pulled the tooth, but we don't know which of the many Chases living in Holmes Hole he is.

**Thursday, June 28.** Up at Mr. Smith's. Miss Becca very much troubled with the tooth Ache.

**Friday, June 29.** At Old Town, view'd Tho's Tan yard. Mr. Hines preached at Major Norton's.

**Saturday, June 30.** Employ'd Working hides.

**Tuesday, July 3.** Rode [to] Mr. Smith's. Tarried all night.

**Wednesday, July 4.** Brought Miss Becca to Homes's hole.<sup>22</sup>

**Thursday, July 5.** Employ'd plowing among Corn.

**Friday, July 6.** Bought a Cow of H. Butler, price Eight Dol & three quarters. Turn'd her on the Neck. Just heard Capt. Frank Butler Seized in the West Indies.<sup>23</sup>

**Saturday, July 7.** Miss Berra's Charms are inexpressible. She is now here & Seems almost too pleasing.<sup>24</sup>

**Sunday, July 8.** Carried Becca down [back home to Pohogonot].

**Monday, July 9.** Storm of Rain. Spent the most of the day at Mr. Smith's.

**Tuesday, July 10.** Rec'd a Sow of Joseph Dexter for 6 Dollars.

**Thursday, July 12.** J. Beetle brought his Cow.<sup>25</sup>

**Friday, July 13.** I find myself employ'd for nearly half my time

<sup>22</sup> The Fourth of July. No parades, no fireworks, only 16 years after 1776?

<sup>23</sup> Probably Capt. Francis Butler, master mariner of Edgartown, who, Banks says, was "lost at sea" in June 1796, four years later.

<sup>24</sup> This is not young love. He is 36, she is 30.

<sup>25</sup> Probably to be "serviced" by their bull. The Beetle family lived nearby in Eastville.

tending my Skins, have between twenty & thirty in all.

**Sunday, July 12.** A few of the Singers met together [at] Mr. Baker's

**Tuesday, July 17.** Hard fortune attends us in regard to hogs. Mother's old Sow has been Cut very much in her hind parts. We sew'd the wound up & put on plaster of Wax.

**Wednesday, July 18.** Begun to cut Rye. I judge the easterly wind that continued so long about the time the Rye was blossoming has cut off about one Quarter of the Rye in general. It totally destroy'd about 3 acres of ours next the Clift on Bank at the Little Neck.

**Friday, July 20.** Up at Mr. Smith's, found them very lively on the Account of the Arrival of their much beloved Son Wilmot. Nanny [Becca's mother] said Becca had of late taken it upon her[self] to work.

**Saturday, July 21.** Came home from Mr. Smith's. Employ'd working of my Skins in ooze [?], laying away hides, etc.

**Sunday, July 22.** Mr. Mayhew [at Farm Neck] preach'd among the Indians – Strangers.<sup>26</sup>

**Monday, July 23.** Rain. Wind flat-tering & small.

**Tuesday, July 24.** I find the easterly Storm has beat down the Rye very much. One Quarter part that cannot be gather'd with the Sickle.

**Saturday, July 28.** Capt. Hillyard Mayhew this day paid us a Short visit. He told us he had been two short Cruises on the Shoals a Fish-

<sup>26</sup> "Strangers" later became a euphemism for transient blacks. It may mean that here.

ing, had caught about 60 or 70 Quintals each time.<sup>27</sup>

To avoid difficulties in Families if possible is much best, discord will arise I find by the most trifling words even when no ill is meant.

**Sunday, July 29.** The weather Seems very Cold for the Season. Corn very backward.

**Monday, July 30.** Stormy weather. We have now had two Storms of Wind & Rain on part of our Rye which has very much beat it down.<sup>28</sup>

**Tuesday, July 31.** The People of the Neighbourhood were disappoint[ed] today it being lecture day & Mr. Thaxter's not coming.

**Wednesday, Aug. 1.** Sarson Butler arriv'd from Norwich with a small sloop for the Coasting business.<sup>29</sup> There were here this day two men from Coaxit to purchase Corn.

**Saturday, Aug. 4.** Employ'd Sowing Turnips, laying away Skins, etc.

**Sunday, Aug. 5.** At Old Town in the afternoon, at Mr. Thaxter's meeting. Arriv'd at Mr. Smith's about dark. Miss Becca had been troubled with the tooth Ache.

**Monday, Aug. 6.** A Storm of Rain.

<sup>27</sup> Captain Mayhew of Chilmark was now living in Westport. He apparently had stopped in Holmes Hole on his way home.

<sup>28</sup> On this day, William drew a statement of marriage intentions in his diary: "Miss Rebecca Butler Intended." On the back: "The within was printed July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1792 On a Stormy Day – Heaven send Happiness, And a Blessing." (See back cover.)

<sup>29</sup> Sarson, a nephew, had formerly lived at Farm Neck, but like many others from that area had recently moved to Maine.



Spent the day at Mr. Smith's.

**Tuesday, Aug. 7.** We begun this day to Mow English grass. Find we have let it alone too long.

What a being am I? How have I been disturbed since evening before last, neither can I give any rationall account for the Cause of it. It is matter of Wonder & deserves the most Serious reflections that I should be So left to my Self. Good God direct me & lead my mind to the more worthy meditations. Instruct me & turn me in the right way that I may enjoy a Peace of mind.<sup>30</sup>

**Wednesday, Aug. 8.** I am in some measure relieved from that disturbance of mind.

**Friday, Aug. 10.** Employ'd laying skins away. The weather is now warm. Vegetables grow fast.

**Saturday, Aug. 11.** How have my feeling alter'd. Thanks be to God that I have some evidence left . . .

**Monday, Aug. 13.** I now find my thoughts Calm & Serene & now enjoy pleasure that is many degrees above pain.<sup>31</sup>

**Monday, Aug. 13.** We are much engag'd getting in Our English hay.

**Tuesday, Aug 11.** Wilmot & Nanny Smith at our house on a visit. Find my Self very much attach'd to the family. If I know my heart, it is sincere & must remain so.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> It would seem that he and Becca had a lovers' quarrel the "evening before last."

<sup>31</sup> That lovers' quarrel must have been very serious to elicit all this.

<sup>32</sup> Wilmot Smith is Becca's brother, Nanny is her mother, his future in-laws.

**Monday, Aug. 20.** Employ'd getting in Rye.

**Wednesday, Aug. 22.** Miss Hillman & Wm. Daggett at our house.

**Thursday, Aug. 23.** Up at Mr. Smith's.

**Saturday, Aug. 25.** Employ'd mowing Salt Grass.

**Sunday, Aug. 26.** Mr. Mayhew preach'd among the Indians. The Singers did not bring their Books.

**Friday, Aug. 31.** Up at Mr. Smith's.

**Saturday, Sept. 1.** Set out for [New] Bedford Eight O'clock in the morning. Arriv'd there in the afternoon. Was very seasick crossing the Bay.

**Sunday, Sept. 2.** Set out in the Packet, Capt. Parker, Six in the morning & was landed on the East Side, Homses hole Harbour at nine.

**Monday, Sept. 3.** Levi is now here Tayloring & Singing.<sup>33</sup>

**Tuesday, Sept. 4.** I was this day with Esq. Smith & Capt. Davis, requested by Wm. Coffin to Appraise what movable Estate there was left by David Coffin, Deceas'd, at Wm. Coffin's house. After valuing the Same was told to divide it into four parts & Cast lots for them.<sup>34</sup>

**Friday, Sept. 7.** I got up at Mr. Smith's [at] Sun Set, found Sober rather than Airy.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> His father had a younger brother, Levi, but we don't know if he is this tailor/singer. No doubt, his visit is related to the wedding.

<sup>34</sup> David Coffin of Nantucket apparently had moved to the Vineyard to live with son William. He must have had four heirs.

<sup>35</sup> He and Becca will be married in the coming week. He seems to have expected the family to have been in a lighter mood.

**Monday, Sept. 10.** We are now prepairing [sic] for Wedding.<sup>36</sup>

**Thursday, September 13.**<sup>37</sup>

**Thursday.** I have wrote this Day over again before I was aware of it. This day cannot be forgot by me. I will now venture to declare that I am Married to the most Amiable Woman in the World. Should it turn otherwise, do I think fortune had harmed our happiness? No.

I despise the thought. It shall not be in the Power of Riches or Poverty to deprive me of my felicity. He that is not above this world is mean.<sup>38</sup>

**Thursday, Sept. 27.** What can be the Cause of my being so very well compos'd at the time of entering into the marriage State & also afterwards, thus far? It must be in consequence of having a happy Companion.

**Friday, Sept. 28.** This Day have intended to have gone to Pohogonut. Got down [to Farm Neck] twelve at night from Squip'nckt, brought away our Cattle, part of our Sheep. How am I disappointed. In imagination am there.<sup>39</sup>

Was overtaken near Wm. Tilton's by Mr. Robert Allen now un-

<sup>36</sup> A humorous, unintended play on words: "prepairing" for the marriage.

<sup>37</sup> He wrote the day and date in a very large and bold script - it's his wedding day!

<sup>38</sup> There are ink blotches on this page, the only page in the diary to have any. This last sentence is tortured. He is on a high!

<sup>39</sup> He and Becca seem to be living with her parents at Pohogonot and he couldn't get there, having arrived too late at Farm Neck.

der Mr. Hallock, etc., but what was the most pleasing: Allen driving the Team asked me, If I was not the man who had lately married one of his cousins.

**Sunday, Sept. 30.** I have read a most all Day today. Should have gone to Pohogonut had not it been so very blustering. We are now daily expecting the Small pox among us. The whole Town of Boston is now a Hospital. It is said nearly one-third who are ennoculated die.<sup>40</sup>

**Monday, October 1.** Came down from Pohogonett. I find that it does not do for me to be gone from home any time.<sup>41</sup>

**Sunday, Oct. 7.** At Mr. Morse's meeting, both forenoon & afternoon with Becca.<sup>42</sup> Din'd at E. Jones's. Drank tea at Benj. Allen's.

**Monday, Oct. 8.** We are now at Benj. Allen's Widow's.<sup>43</sup> And Mr. Zachariah Mayhew's.

*(End of the diary.)*

<sup>40</sup> In the early days of smallpox inoculations, a live virus was used and patients often developed the disease, hence there was much public resistance to being inoculated.

<sup>41</sup> He has us confused. He must have gone to Becca's at Pohogonot Monday and then returned to Farm Neck the same day, no doubt to take care of his livestock. "Home," for William, must still be at Farm Neck. Apparently, Becca did not return with him.

<sup>42</sup> Rev. Asarelah Morse was pastor of the church in [West] Tisbury at this time.

<sup>43</sup> The widow of Benjamin Allen is the daughter of Reverend Morse. We are left in confusion. Have they gone up-Island on a visit? Perhaps Becca would stay with Mrs. Allen while he went to Squibnocket to tend his sheep. It is too bad he didn't tie up these loose ends before finishing.

## Whaleboat Crewing as Described By a Whaleman in 1866

Research Editor Edwin R. Ambrose is frequently surprised by what he comes across while reading logbooks. An 1866 log of the whaler *Janus* is one such case. Slipped in with routine entries about daily happenings was a terse essay describing one of whaling's most crucial activities: the crewing of whaleboats upon which the success or failure of every voyage depends. Here are Ambrose's notes:

Capt. Francis Cottle Smith of Edgartown was master of the whaleship *Janus*. It was his last whaling voyage. They left New Bedford December 6, 1865 and returned June 8, 1871.

One officer (not Captain Smith, it seems) wrote an account of what happens when the command, "Lower boats!" is given: the most exciting and dangerous activity in whaling. The success of the voyage and men's lives are at stake.

The whaleboat is a highly specialized design, excellent for its task, of little use for anything else. It is about 30 feet long, 6 feet wide, extremely lightweight, fragile and packed with so much critical gear that each boatsteerer's main job is to see that everything is aboard, that all tools are sharp, that oars (each different) are in place, that lines are perfectly coiled in their tubs. There is no room for error. Everything must be at hand instantly when needed.

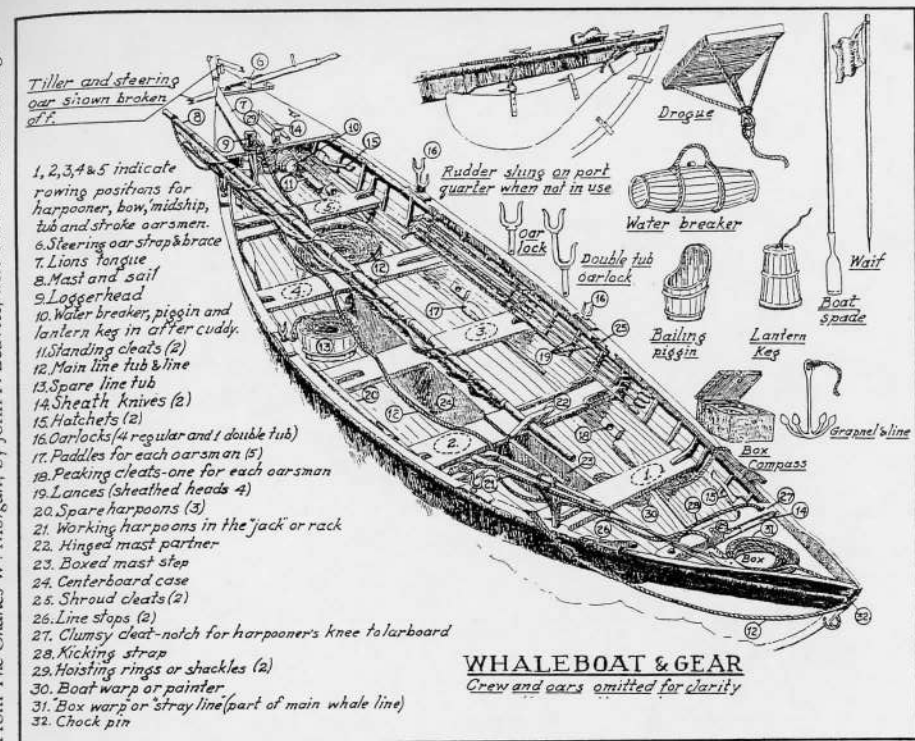
Rarely do we read anything in a log about this important work. Here is what I found in the *Janus* log of May 9, 1866:

A whaleship 300 tons carries five boats as a general thing, namely (S.B.) Starboard Boat, (L.B.) Larboard Boat, (W.B.) Waist Boat, (L.B.B.) Larboard Bow Boat, (S.B.B.) Starboard Bow Boat.

The Captain takes charge of the S.B. The Chief Mate takes charges of the L.B. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate of the W.B. Third Mate of the L.B.B. and the 4<sup>th</sup> Mate of the S.B.B. Each Officer has a crew belonging to their respective boats, one man is called a Boatsteerer. He has to keep the boat in order and strike whales when he has an opportunity.

In whaling, when whales are seen and the Captain thinks there is a chance to capture one or more, he gives the order to call all hands (providing they are not all on deck) and to get

From The Charles W. Morgan, by John F. Leavitt, who also made the drawing.



The whaleboat, perhaps the most complex, specialized row boat ever built – a floating tool box. The best of these refined craft were made in the Azores.

the boats ready for lowering. There are six men to each boat and each one has his respective place and are called, namely, Bow Oarsman, Midship Oarsman, Tub Oarsman & After Oarsman. The Boatsteerer pulls what is termed Harpooner Oar. The Officer steers the boat until a whale is harpooned by the Boatsteerer; then they change ends and the officer lances the whale to kill it.

When a whale is captured, it is made an account of in The Log Book and marked to boat (name) which struck it first. Had I more space on this page I would write more, but must come to a close.

(The officer stopped, not because he has run out of time – there is plenty of time on a whaling voyage – but because he has filled a page in the log, each page of which is precious; more than four years of whaling were yet to be recorded.)



**In Memoriam:**  
**Frederick Williams**  
 and  
**Frederick W. Kingsley**

Fred Williams and Fred Kingsley shared more than their first names. They shared a dedication to an institution — this institution, serving as board members and officers for years.

Neither would claim to be a historian. You would never find either man in the library, pouring over old documents. That was not their thing — their thing was keeping this institution alive so the real historians had a place to work.

Both Freds put their energies into doing that. Both sought out new members, new sources of support. Sometimes, when no other source was available, they dug into their own pockets.

A staff member recalls years ago, early in her career here, when one of the Freds asked her what she most needed. She thought a minute: "A new dehumidifier. The one we have is old and inefficient. It can't handle the load in the summer."

Fred immediately wrote a check for a new dehumidifier.

That was typical of the dedication these two men had for the Society. They were determined to keep it afloat. In such institutions as this, there are times when the bank balance hits zero, when payment of oil bills has to be delayed, when staff pay checks can't be written. At such times, these two Freds worked miracles, getting us through the crisis.

Both Freds had wives who were partners in their work. Doris Williams and Nancy Kingsley regularly attended our fund-raising events, charming the crowd with their winning ways, spreading the word of how important this institution is to the community, making converts.

Recently, the two Freds died within days of each other. It will be many days, many years, before memory of them dims.

We offer our deep sympathies to Nancy and Doris and their families, along with our thanks for what they themselves have done for the Society through the years.

Whereas I Beriah Norton of Edgartown in the County of Dukes County State of Massachusetts being in New England Eng<sup>d</sup> having Received Authority from the Hon<sup>ble</sup> General Court of the State of New York to proceed to Great Britain by the way of New York to solicit payment for the Stock & delivered General pay in the year 1778, & whereas the said Beriah Norton being also duly empowered by the proprietors of said Stock, Inhabitants of said Town and whereas it is necessary that the Conditions on which the said Beriah undertakes said Business should be made known in Express & Explicit Terms Therefore the said Beriah Norton doth hereby Covenant & engage <sup>in Europe</sup> to proceed to Great Britain agreeable to his instructions, and use every possible means in his power to obtain pay for said Stock for which service the said Beriah shall receive Thirty three and a third per cent upon whatever shall be obtained & no more, & in case the said Beriah should not obtain payment for said Stock the Proprietors thereof are not to know or pay one farthing of the Expense or time during the said Beriah's Voyage but he himself shall suffer, & pay his own Expense to the true performance hereof the said Beriah Norton Binds himself to the proprietors severally that do empower him to negotiate the said Business aforesaid in the Penal Sum of Two Thousand pound in Spanish Milled dollars at Six Shillings each, In Testimony thereof I the said Beriah Norton have hereunto put my Hand & Seal this 23 Day of May Anno Domini 1780.

Beriah Norton wrote, before sailing to London to seek payment for the sheep, this statement that he would be paid only if successful; then he gets one-third.



An Announcement of Intentions to Wed in 1792

Miss Rebecca Butler  
Intended

*The Ceremony is now Accomplished*

On July 30, 1792, William Butler drew this announcement of his intention to marry Miss Rebecca Smith. It was "a Stormy Day," he wrote on the back. They were married September 13 (see p. 155ff.)