

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



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Whaling: the Vineyard Connection

Whaling From 1815 Until Today: A Brighter Future for the Leviathan

by EDWIN R. AMBROSE

After a Frustrating Quest, the Start of Something Big

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

(Chapter Five)

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By Joan Druett

In Memoriam:

Ruth Galvin and Kenneth A. Southworth III

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CORRECTIONS

In the two most recent *Intelligencers* there are errors to be corrected (at least, there are two that we know of).

The first, with our thanks to Marjorie Good of Woodbury, Connecticut, and Chilmark, for pointing it out, is on page 116 of the February 2003 issue, where we wrote that Wilbraham Academy is in Connecticut. The academy was when Richard L. Pease attended and it remains today in a town of that name in south central Massachusetts. Mrs. Good is very familiar with its location as both her mother and her son were students there.

Our second error is in the issue of November 2002, where footnote 13 on page 110 states that "Sandy River Plantation in Maine was organized by the Nortons of Farm Neck." The Norton family did move there in numbers (six of Peter Norton's sons did), but they were not the organizers. However, the nearby village of New Vineyard, Maine, was organized by Vineyarders in 1791.

The Editor is sorry for these mistakes.

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Whaling: the Vineyard Connection

- Whaling From 1815 Until Today:
A Brighter Future for the Leviathan** 163
by EDWIN R. AMBROSE

- The Story of Martha's Vineyard:
How We Got To Where We Are** 176

After a Frustrating Quest, the Start of Something Big
(Chapter Five)

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

Book Review

- In the Wake of Madness**
The Murderous Voyage of the Whaleship Sharon 206
By Joan Druett

- In Memoriam:**
Ruth Galvin and Kenneth A. Southworth III 208

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Whalers soon were sailing all around the Pacific. Many islands were visited by westerners for the first time ("discovered," is what they called it). A whaleship approaching an island did not know if it would be welcome or not. Certain islands developed reputations as "unfriendly" and were avoided. But most became reliable sources of fruit, meat and water, as the whalers learned how to trade with the natives.

Within the American Century, the richest years began about 1835, opening a period that can be called the Golden Age. During the next ten years, the whale fishery reached its peak, with as many as 670 American whalers prowling the seas at a time. They brought back enormous quantities of oil, creating huge fortunes for ship owners and masters. In the early 1840s, an average of 160,000 barrels of sperm oil arrived in New England ports every year, worth \$6.7 million, today the equivalent of more than \$100 million. They also brought back a great knowledge of the size and diversity of the planet.

Beginning in 1847, whaling went into decline. As whales became scarcer and more difficult to catch, voyages were lengthened to four years and longer, adding to the expense and reducing the profit. The longest voyage on record lasted eleven years, from 1858 to 1869, by the ship *Nile* out of New London, Connecticut. She came to be known as the "jinx" ship because of the deaths of a number of her many captains.

As whaling declined, enterprising whaling masters began seeking fresh grounds. A new market was developing for whalebone used as stays in the tight corsets required by the latest in women's fashions. In 1848, the first whaler sailed north through the Bering Strait, which separates Alaska from Siberia, and came upon pods of bowhead whales, finding them comparatively tame and easy to strike. They were similar in that regard to right whales, but they produced more oil and much more baleen, the flexible whalebone that now had become a valuable product.

There was an added advantage in Arctic whaling: the long hours of daylight in summer allowed whales to be taken all night unless interrupted by the frequent dense fogs. Within three years, 250 ships were whaling in the Arctic.

When the Civil War began, the whaling fleet played a role in a most unlikely way. The war was only six months old when the U. S. War Department decided to cut Confederate trade with England by blocking a major southern port. It bought 25 old whaleships with the plan to sink them in the channel into the Confederate port of Savannah. For whaleship owners, the operation came at a convenient time:

Whaling as an industry was already past its prime; and the decline, combined with a justified fear of Confederate privateers, had caused the withdrawal of many vessels from the whaling service during 1861. . . these vessels lay at the piers of the major whaling ports in varying degrees of seaworthiness.¹

Twenty-five deteriorating vessels were bought by the War Department and loaded with stones, gathered from New England's stone walls and purchased at 50 cents a ton. Hence, the armada came to be known as "The Great Stone Fleet." Before the stone-laden ships headed south, holes were drilled in their hulls and carefully plugged in a way that would make scuttling easy once in place at the channel into Savannah. When the fleet got to Savannah, it was learned that the Confederates had already blocked the entrance to protect it from invasion, so the plan was changed. The fleet sailed up to Charleston.

One of the 25 vessels in "The Great Stone Fleet" was the bark *American* from Edgartown, owned by John A. Baylies. She had just returned from a rather unprofitable voyage in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Owner Baylies welcomed the chance to sell her and put her to bed at the bottom of Charleston harbor. Ship owners, like Baylies, were paid \$10 per ton, averaging about \$3000 per ship. The scuttling took place in mid-December 1861.

A second Stone Fleet of 20 vessels was purchased and arrived at Charleston soon after the first had been sunk. No Vineyard vessels were involved. Altogether, 45 ships were scuttled in an attempt to block the harbor entrance.

But the sinking of two Great Stone Fleets was a waste of money. The harbor entrance soon became deeper:

Thus, in the end, a channel deeper than the original one had

¹ *The American Neptune*, Oct. 1961, "The Stone Fleet," by John E. Woodman Jr.

in a short time manifested itself . . . a new channel had been scoured out by the force of the winds and the tides, [and] the stone vessels apparently sank into the shifting sands at the bottom of Charleston harbor and disappeared forever. . . [all] were before long forced ruefully to agree, with [Herman] Melville, that "A failure, and complete/ Was your Old Stone Fleet."²

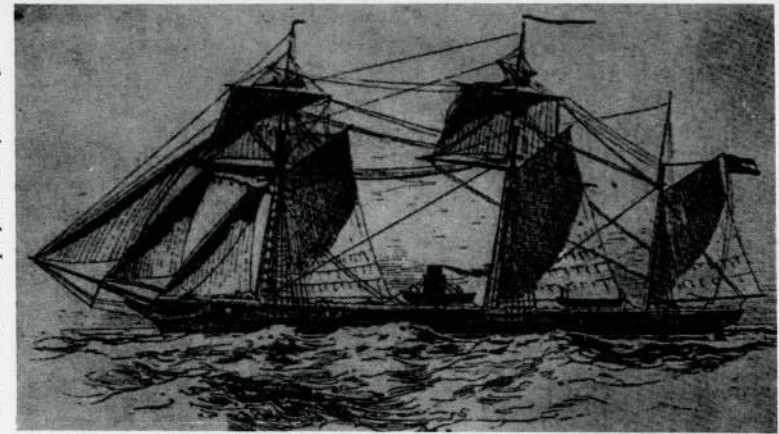
Contributing to the decline of whaling during the war was the fear, mentioned above, of destruction by Confederate privateers. Most feared was the famous raider, *Alabama*, whose master, Capt. Raphael Semmes, insisted that she was not a privateer, but a Confederate warship. He resented always being labeled "the notorious pirate" in the newspapers. He was an officer in the Confederate Navy. The *Alabama* was built in Liverpool, England, ostensibly as a merchant vessel for an Southern entrepreneur, James Bulloch. She was powered by steam and sail, her propeller being designed to be lifted out of water when the ship was under sail. After her launching in 1862, she sailed to the Azores where she was fitted out with cannon and other armaments needed in her role as a Confederate man-of-war. She was a Confederate ship, but the only southerners on board were the officers, the crew was European.

When her transformation into a warship was finished, the *Alabama* sailed out of the harbor at Terceira on a shake-down cruise, circling the Azores. On the twelfth day, she came upon her first victim, the *Ocmulgee* from Edgartown, owned principally by Abraham Osborn. His son, Abraham Jr., was her master. A helpless prize, she was laying to off one of the Azores, cutting-in a very large sperm whale that was expected to produce 180 barrels of oil – a great strike. When Captain Osborn saw a vessel approaching with the Union flag flying from the topmast, he thought that at last the Secretary of War, Gideon Welles, had sent out a gunboat to protect the whaling fleet.

The *Alabama* came up to within 100 yards and lowered a boat, hoisting her Confederate flag at the same time. The boat came alongside the whaler and an armed officer climbed onto her deck and announced, "You are a prize of the Confederate steamer *Alabama*, Captain Semmes."

²*Ibid.*

From Ghost Ship of the Confederacy.



The fast Confederate raider, *Alabama*, much beloved by Capt. Semmes.

In a book he wrote after the war, Captain Semmes described the Edgartown whaler, Capt. Abraham Osborn Jr.:

. . . [her] master was a genuine specimen of the Yankee whaling skipper: long and lean, and as elastic apparently as the whalebone he dealt in. Nothing could exceed the blank stare of astonishment that sat on his face as the change of flags took place on board the *Alabama*.

As Semmes wrote, Captain Osborn and his crew were stunned. They were ordered to stop cutting-in the whale. Each officer was allowed to pack a trunk of personal things, each crewman to pack a bag. The 37 officers and men were put aboard the *Alabama*. Many provisions were taken from the *Ocmulgee*; captured vessels were the *Alabama's* principal source of supplies. In the morning, the *Ocmulgee* was set afire, the first of many victims of the raider *Alabama*.

Semmes described what happened next:

The next day, Sunday, dawned beautiful and bright. . . and having approached the beach [at an island near Flores], we hove the ship to, and hauling alongside from the stern, where they had been towing, the whaleboats of the captured ship, which we had brought away from the prize for this purpose, we paroled our prisoners, and putting them in possession of their boats, shoved them off for the shore. . . the boats were valuable and I permitted the prisoners to put in them as many provisions as they desired, and as much other plunder as they

could pick up . . . excepting always such articles as we needed. . . the sale of their boats and cargoes to the islanders gave them the means of subsistence, until they could communicate with their consul in the neighboring island of Fayal.

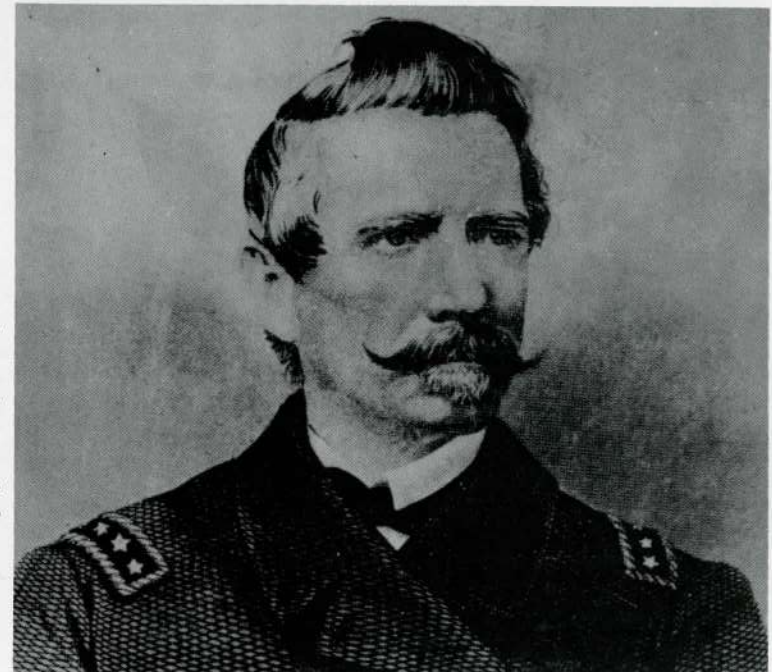
Among the 14 whaleships the *Alabama* destroyed in less than two years at sea were four others with Vineyard connections: *Levi Starbuck*, commanded by Capt. Thomas Mellen of Edgartown; *Virginia*, Capt. Shadrach D. Tilton of Chilmark; *Kate*, Capt. Stephen Flanders of Chilmark; and *Lafayette*, Capt. William Lewis of West Tisbury.

In total, the *Alabama* captured and burned 70 Union vessels, none of them warships. In June 1864, she met her own fate off the coast of Cherbourg, France. She had gone into that port for repairs and provisions. Her whereabouts were soon learned and the U. S. warship *Kearsage* was sent to do battle. Semmes challenged, via the American consul, the *Kearsage* to a battle outside the three-mile limit. The two ships met the next day, seven miles offshore. Thousands of French lined the shore to watch.

After one hour of fierce fighting, the two ships circling each other with cannons blazing, the *Alabama* sank after taking many direct hits. Her ammunition, long unused, had deteriorated so much that many of the 370 shells she fired did not explode despite being direct hits. Nine of her 149-man crew were killed in the battle and twelve more drowned. The *Kearsage* seemed hesitant to rescue the men in the water, but a private yacht and several French pilot boats took over. Semmes was one of those picked up by the yacht and was taken to Southampton, England, where he and the other survivors were welcomed as heroes. The *Kearsage* had only three wounded, one of whom died later.

The *Alabama* was no more, but the Confederates did not give up. That same year, 1864, a new raider was fitted out. She was a merchantman, the *Sea King*, just back from her maiden voyage to the Orient with a cargo of tea. At 1100 tons, she was nearly three times as large as a whaleship, and measured 222 feet long, powered, as the *Alabama* had been, by a steam engine as well as sails.

From Ghost Ship of the Confederacy.



Capt. Raphael Semmes, master of the Confederate raider, *Alabama*.

Because English law forbade the sale of armed vessels to belligerents, a deception was organized by the Confederates similar to the one used with the *Alabama*. The *Sea King* left England as a merchant ship bound for Madeira Island. There, the ship *Laurel* waited, loaded with cannon and other armaments. When the armaments were mounted on the *Sea King*, she was renamed the *Shenandoah*, the newest warship in the Confederate Navy. Her new master was Capt. James Waddell, a southerner who had resigned his commission in the United States Navy to join the Confederates early in the war.

Guns installed, she sailed down the Atlantic, around the Cape of Good Hope, across the Indian Ocean, past Australia and up to the Arctic where many whalers were hunting, safe, they thought, from any raider. The *Shenandoah*, arriving there late in June 1865, caused havoc, burning six whalers in the first few days. During the following week, the busiest week of

her plundering career, the raider captured 23 whaleships, destroying most of them.

Among them was the *William Thompson* of New Bedford whose master was Capt. Francis Cottle Smith of Chilmark. It was his eighth voyage as a whaling master.³

In the Society archives are two journals of that ill-fated voyage, one was kept by Captain Smith, the other by his 16-year-old son, Allie. They learned some sad news on Sunday, June 18, 1865, as Captain Smith wrote:

Spoke Ship *Euphrates* [and] from Capt. [Thomas B.] Hathaway I learned the sad intelligens of the Death of President Lincoln by the hand of an assassin. . . A grate man has fallen, but not only a grate man, but a good man.

President Lincoln had been assassinated April 14, so it had taken two months for the news to reach the whaling fleet in Bering Sea. The next day, with "*Euphrates* in Co. [company]," Captain Smith had "a severe attack of Rheumatism."

Two days later, the captain's journal ended, his final entry closing with, "At 6 p.m. Cape Navrin not a grate way off to the north." The events of the next day, surely the most traumatic day of his life, were not recorded by Captain Smith. He was not feeling well. Perhaps his rheumatism was worse. Fortunately, son Allie wrote down exactly what happened that day, although he obviously added it much later:

June 21. Begins with Strong NNE Winds with rain, land & one sail in sight. Father is not very well to day. Light winds from NNE. Raised a sail, thought it was a whaler boiling. Clewed up her sails and came down to us. It was the Rebel Pirate *Shenandoah*. Capt. Waddell sent two of his officers on board of us and ordered us on board of his vessel then broke out all the Provisions he wanted and then set fire to the Ship at four o'clock. The next day, put us on board of the Ship *Milo* and sent us to San Francisco. There [we] took the Steamer and came home. [signed] Mr. James A. Smith, Edgartown, Mass. U.S.A.

³ Captain Smith retired from whaling after his next voyage. He became famous on the Vineyard as a real-estate developer in Oak Bluffs and Chappaquiddick. See Henry Beetle Hough, *Summer Resort*, p. 167. Whaling records (Starbuck) say he died at sea on his last voyage, but ours show he retired and lived until 1911.

From *Dixie Raider, the Saga of the C. S. S. Shenandoah*.



Capt. James Waddell, whose raider, *Shenandoah*, replaced *Alabama*.

Another description of what occurred is in the book, *Dixie Raider*. The author gives no sources so his version is suspect:

The cruiser [*Shenandoah*] steamed alongside, the Russian flag at her peak. A prize crew under Orris Browne boarded her.

Francis Smith of New Bedford, one of the oldest masters afloat, met the boarding party at the rail.⁴ Browne told him to get his papers and proceed to the *Shenandoah*. He did not protest. While Smith was in his cabin gathering his documents, the mate of the *William Thompson* protested "My God, man, don't you know the war has ended?"⁵

It is certainly unlikely that such a question was asked. There was no way for the first mate to have known the war had ended. They had just heard about Lincoln's death. The war didn't end until a month after he was assassinated.

Author Morgan writes that while the prize crew waited for Captain Smith to assemble his documents, the *Shenandoah* sailed off to capture the *Euphrates* and set her afire. In the

⁴ Captain Smith was 51 at the time and from Edgartown, not New Bedford. Years later, his son Allie's daughter, Fanita, married Kenneth Southworth. Their son, also Kenneth, became the father-in-law of Mrs. Dorothea Southworth of Edgartown.

⁵ Murray Morgan, *Dixie Raider: The Saga of the C. S. S. Shenandoah*, E. P. Dutton, New York, 1948, p. 213ff.

middle of the night, she returned to set Captain Smith's ship on fire. That's how Morgan tells the story (we prefer to believe Allie, he says it was the same day). Here's Morgan's version:

At 3 a.m. of the 23rd, the biggest of New Bedford's ships, the \$40,000 *William Thompson*, was put to the torch.⁶

After nearly wiping out the Arctic fleet, the *Shenandoah*'s captain finally was convinced by an English captain that the war was over. He sailed back to England unscathed, having destroyed 34 ships, valued at over one million dollars, and taken over one thousand prisoners. At one time, the *Shenandoah* had so many prisoners Captain Waddell had to put many of them in whaleboats towed astern until they could be transferred to the several whaleships he had spared for that purpose.⁷

Reparations of \$15 million were later paid by Britain to the United States for damages inflicted by the *Shenandoah* and the *Alabama*, both of which had been built and supported by English interests. Some Vineyard residents collected thousands of dollars.

Whaling in the Arctic had peaked before the Civil War. In 1846, there were 292 whaleships in the northern grounds. This number declined slowly over the next ten years. By 1860, the Arctic fleet was down to 121 ships. During the Civil War, the number dropped to 59 and never recovered. Fitting of ships had become very expensive and the risks of damage by Arctic ice were great. Frequent desertion of crews during the Gold Rush in California had also been a factor.

In 1871, disaster befell the reduced whaling fleet north of Alaska when 34 whaleships were crushed by the ice. Over 1200 men had to make their way through 60 miles of floating ice to reach safety. Amazingly, not a single life was lost, but soon there were 1200 unemployed survivors in Honolulu.

The decline of whaling continued. By 1877, the entire American whaling fleet, in all oceans, was only 112 ships and

⁶ At 495 tons, she was not the biggest of New Bedford's whalers, but one of the biggest. There were several larger; the *George Washington* was 609 tons. Starbuck lists the *William Thompson*'s valuation as \$56,000.

⁷ One of them was the ship *Nile*, which holds the record for the longest whaling voyage in history: 11 years, the voyage she was on when this took place.

barks, plus 51 brigs and schooners, a total of 163; the total in the 1840s had been four times that number, 676 vessels. In 1924, for the first time in two hundred years, there was not one American whaler on any of the oceans.

The end was caused by a variety of reasons. A major factor was the 1859 discovery of oil in Pennsylvania, bringing much cheaper and more plentiful illuminating oil to market. In the 1870s, sperm oil cost eight times as much as petroleum.

The steady depletion of whales, particularly sperm, was also an important factor. Whales, normally shy, became increasingly wary on repeated contacts with whalers. Sperm whales move in pods, or groups, with the older females controlling other females as well as juvenile and new-born males. Bull sperm whales roam the seas as loners, diving as deep as 5000 feet to obtain their favorite food, the giant squid. They return to their original pod, or to another, to mate only sporadically.

The large sperm were the most desirable catches as they produce more high-quality oil. Most of these males, however, learned that whaleships were bad business. When young, still in the pod, staying near the surface of the sea, they had seen whaleships sail into the group, killing large and medium whales. After witnessing this many times, when fully grown, the young males with their good memories as mammals would swim away from any approaching whaleship. They learned also that a whaleship cannot sail straight upwind, but must tack, and so they swam upwind. Their swimming speed, 21 to 30 miles per hour under attack, was far faster than a whaleship could sail.

Unlike humpback and right whales, which are found in coastal waters, sperm whales stay in the open seas, away from land and harder to locate. It is estimated that there are about as many sperm whales alive now as there were 100 or 200 years ago, even after the massive slaughter in the 20th century. Experts say that over one million sperm whales are alive today.

The right whale, on the other hand, lives close to shore, is easily approached and easily killed. Its fleeing speed is only 7 to 11 miles per hour. As a result, there are fewer than 300

northern right whales alive today and they are considered to be endangered.

The whaling industry was markedly changed by the introduction of steam whalers and the explosive harpoon. Steam whalers could head upwind and chase all types of whales, including fast swimmers such as the humpback, fin and blue whales that had been able to evade the slow, sail-powered whaleships. Killing whales from small whale boats was no longer necessary. The steam whaler could draw close to its prey and a gunner in the bow could shoot harpoons with explosive charges into the great mammals.

A Norwegian, Svend Foyn, developed this use of explosive harpoons in 1868 and Norway quickly took over as the whaling leader, replacing America. British historian Gordon Jackson has written:

Modern whaling began as a Norwegian industry and expanded as a Norwegian industry. When the time came for it to spread abroad it still depended upon Norwegian personnel; and Norwegian was the universal language of whaling. . .

The grandfather of the present author was a gunner in the Norwegian navy. As a young man at the turn of the 20th century, he twice took leave to go whaling as a harpoon gunner.

In the 20th century, Norwegian whaling expanded from the northern Atlantic to the South African coast, where most whales were humpbacks. In 1913, they accounted for nearly one-third of all whale-oil production. Humpbacks are slow swimmers that pass close to shore where they are easy victims. By 1918, they had been nearly wiped out.

As the humpback became scarce, attention turned farther south to the blue whales, the largest of all. Before this, 150,000 blue whales swam in the Antarctic. Some weighed 150 tons and were 90 feet long, nature's grandest creatures. In the 1920s and 1930s, 20,000 blue whales were killed each year. *The New York Times* reported on December 7, 2000, that only 10,000 to 12,000 blue whales still survived.

Coinciding with the slaughter of blue whales was the development of the factory ship. These ships were designed to haul whale carcasses up a ramp in the stern to be butchered on

board. Blubber, meat and bones all were processed by machine. Washed overboard was the baleen, once used for corset stays and a major product of the right whalers. It had become worthless, replaced by cheaper and more flexible spring steel.

In the 1930s the first efforts to regulate whaling began. After many ups and downs, the industry formed the International Whaling Commission, which, in its first 30 years, was ineffective. Almost 1.5 million whales were killed despite the Commission's activity.

From 1964 to 1974, an average of 24,270 sperm whales were killed each year by Japanese and Russian whalers. At the peak of American whaling in the 19th century, sperm-whale harvest had been under 5000 per year. In 1972, the Pacific stock of sperm whales was estimated at 291,000 and by 1984 it had increased 62 percent to 472,000. This remarkable increase was the result of numerous protests against the destruction of the whale (the organization Greenpeace was the most effective). One by one, governments banned whaling.

Today, the world population is about one million sperm whales, only slightly less than at the beginning of the 19th century. Japan, Iceland and Korea still kill a few hundred whales each year, for so-called "scientific reasons." Whaling by Eskimos in Alaska, Greenland and Siberia takes even fewer and those that are killed are used for essential food and fuel.

In 1988 fewer than 700 whales were killed worldwide, an amazing reversal of the previous trend. The National Bureau of Economic Research published a study in 1997 called: *In Pursuit of Leviathan*. It ends with good news:

Sperm whales have survived both the American assault of the 19th century and the much more formidable assaults of the 20th.

Let us hope that we humans continue permitting that great sea mammal, the whale, to multiply and prosper.



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

(Chapter Five)

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

After a Frustrating Quest, the Start of Something Big

WHEN BERIAH NORTON OF EDGARTOWN boarded the ship *Active* at Rowe's Wharf in Boston on June 19, 1784, bound for London, he quickly discovered he had made a lucky choice of vessel.

One of the other passengers was Abigail Adams who was going to London to join her husband, John Adams, America's new Minister to England. He had just helped negotiate the treaty that ended the American Revolution. Traveling with Mrs. Adams were her eighteen-year-old daughter, also named Abigail, and her two servants, a man and a woman. As the most distinguished of the eleven passengers, Abigail received a number of visitors before sailing. Among them was Beriah, as she noted in her journal (the only one mentioned by name):

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

Beriah was making his second voyage to London as he kept trying to persuade the English to pay for what they had taken from the Island during Grey's Raid of September 1778.

The *Active* left the wharf at noon the next day. As soon as she was outside Boston harbor, the ocean swells brought distress to Abigail and others:

... [the captain] sent word to all the Ladies to put on their sea cloaths [clothes] and prepare for sickness. We had only time to follow his directions before we found ourselves all sick.

For the next two weeks, the turbulent ocean made their lives miserable. She wrote:

To those who have never been at Sea or experienced this

disspiriting malady 'tis impossible to discribe it, the Nausia arising from the smell of the Ship, the continual rolling, tossing and tumbling, contribute to keep up this Disorder, and when once it seazeis [seizes] a person it levels Sex and condition . . . my maid was wholly useless. . . every Body on Board Sick except the Dr. and 3 or 4 old sea men. My [man] Servant as bad as any.

A cow, on board to provide fresh milk during the month-long voyage, was severely injured by the ship's rolling. She had been knocked down and was unable to stand. The ladies were asked whether the animal should be put out of her misery. The captain delegated Beriah to make inquiry. The women agreed that the cow should die, as Abigail recorded:

Col. Norton was charged with the message and delivered it in form – upon which Sentence of Death was pronounced upon her; and she was accordingly consigned to a watery grave; but not without mourning, for we feel her loss most essentially.

When the ocean finally quieted and the passengers had somewhat recovered, Abigail and her servants cleaned the dirty and disorderly cabin. She made puddings that the queasy passengers were able to keep down. There were only three other females on board: her daughter; her maid; and a second Mrs. Adams (no relation). They had been given the "state-room," a tiny saloon about eight feet square, that had been partitioned, probably by curtains, to provide some privacy. The men slept in the large main saloon, just outside the ladies' cabin door. It was not a comfortable arrangement:

The door [to the women's stateroom] opened to the cabbin where the Gentlemen slept. We were obliged to keep open our Door or be suffocated and poisoned so that we only closed it to undress and dress and sometimes [we were] so sick that we fell from side, to side, in doing it.

As uncomfortable as the trip was, Beriah realized that traveling in the company of someone as important as Mrs. John Adams was worth it. He sought her friendship and she seemed to approve of this quiet man from the Vineyard. Later, he hoped, her acquaintance would open doors in high places.

He would need all the help he could get. On the first trip, he had to spend a year in London before winning his case.

And even so, the victory had been partial. The Royal Treasury did authorize payment of £7000 from funds available in New York, the amount Beriah was seeking, but when he tried to collect that sum in New York, the English commander there, Sir Guy Carleton, gave him only £3000, as part payment.

Beriah took out his one-third (the arrangement agreed upon with Islanders) and the remaining £2000 was distributed to petitioning Vineyarders, giving each far less than expected, causing a general feeling of disillusionment with what he was accomplishing. But Beriah had not made out well either. His £1000 was hardly enough to reimburse him for his living expenses in London, not to mention the need to support his family in Edgartown during the year he was away. His precarious finances made him as anxious to collect the remaining £4000 for his one-third share as he was for repaying the Vineyarders (he was among those with claims, having lost 2 cattle and 45 sheep in the raid).

His farm was on the road to [West] Tisbury, about one mile from Edgartown village. The house is shown on a map in *Letters from an American Farmer*, by Hector St. John Crèvecoeur, the French immigrant who ran a farm in this country at the time of the Revolution. The book is a series of letters he wrote to a friend in France about life in America. In one letter, he described a visit to Martha's Vineyard, where Beriah had been one of his hosts:

. . . here, let me remember, the hospitable treatment I received from B. Norton, Esq., the colonel of the island, as well as from Dr. Mahew [sic], the lineal descendant of the first proprietor.

His stay on the Vineyard was brief, only a few days. At least one night was spent at the Norton farmhouse. A rather crude map of the Vineyard in the book identifies only three houses: Beriah Norton's in Edgartown; James Athearn's in (West) Tisbury; and Dr. Mahew's (Dr. Matthew Mayhew) in Chilmark, the three places he seems to have stayed. His report on the number of sheep and cattle indicates that his visit was before Grey's Raid (the book was published in 1782):

A good ferry is established between Edgar Town and Falmouth on the main . . . the number of inhabitants is com-

puted at about 4000, 300 of which are Indians . . . The stock of the island is 20,000 sheep, 2000 neat cattle, besides horses and goats; they have also some deer, and abundance of sea-fowls. . . . The Indians there [on Chappaquiddick] appeared, by the decency of their manners, their industry, and neatness, to be wholly Europeans, and no way inferior to many of the inhabitants. They often go, like the young [English] men of the Vineyard, to Nantucket, and hire themselves for whalemen or fisherman; and indeed their skill and dexterity in all sea affairs is nothing inferior that of the whites.

Now, in 1784, on his way to London, Beriah is no longer living in the farmhouse where he had entertained Crèvecoeur. He sold it shortly before this trip and moved his family into the village of Edgartown. The sale may have been to provide money for his trip. He was so short of money that he had solicited financial help from some Edgartown men with claims against the English. At least two of them, Peter Norton and Ebenezer Norton, agreed to pay him £10, but his account book shows they still owed him their pledges many years later.

Beriah was very hopeful of collecting the £4000 the British still owed. The revolution was over; the peace treaty had been signed. And now he had this chance meeting with Mrs. John Adams, whose husband had built a strong relationship with the English during his diplomacy to end the war. He was sure her support would be helpful.

Beriah was 50 years old at the time, as Abigail had estimated in her diary. He and his wife, Anna (née Cosens or Cousens), had nine children born to them, two of whom were dead, one having died only a month before Beriah left on this second trip. Six were still unmarried and probably living at home. It was a big family to support. Although he had been a farmer, he now listed his occupation as "weaver."

That job description probably was due to a retail business he had. It dealt mostly in textiles (although he bought and sold a great deal of alcoholic liquor) and seems to have been a "commission" operation, buying goods from off-Island on orders from Vineyarders. The society owns two account books he kept. Before Grey's Raid, the business prospered, but afterwards there is a sharp drop in activity, as would be expected

with him being off-Island so much of the time.

Paying his expenses was a financial drain on his family. In London, he had to dress well, as he met members of Parliament and the Treasury. He had to have a "good" address from which to operate. The cost of the voyage could not have been small. Although the accommodations seem primitive to us today, surely Abigail Adams, wife of the new minister to Great Britain, was not traveling economy class.

Despite his optimism, this second trip brought no success. We don't know how long he was in London, but he was back on the Vineyard in the fall of that same year, 1784.

He did not give up. He returned to London the next year. We know he made a third "Voiage" because he says so in a letter to the Commissioners of the Treasury on July 15, 1785:

... your memorialist [himself] on receiving the said £3000 [in 1782 in New York] proceeded to the Island of Martha's Vineyard and distributed the same in just proportion to each ones demand and returned to New York in the Spring 1783 in full expectation of Completing the business but the peace taking place prevented a final Settlement at that time.

... your memorialist has therefore been under the necessity of making a Second and now a third Voiage to England to Complete the Said business. . .

Also during the trip, Beriah wrote to Prime Minister Pitt:

... this being the third Voyage I have made to England for the sole purpose of settling the Balance on behalf of myself and of the Inhabitants of the Island of Martha's Vineyard, who entirely look up to me for Payment. . .

After explaining how much was still owed to the Vineyard residents, he took a more personal, pleading tone:

The heavy Expences I have been at in coming to, and returning from England to Martha's Vineyard, and the necessary Supplies which must be afforded to a distant and suffering Family, fill me with distress, and urges me thus to submit to you, Sir, the Case of myself, and of those on whose behalf I am empowered to intercede.

A year later, he was still in London, seeking restitution. In our collection are invitations in July 1786 from two Englishmen, Lord Sydney and Col. Symes, inviting him to their

homes for dinner. (Symes was one of General Grey's aides present during Beriah's discussions aboard the *Carisfort* in 1778.)

He may have been well received in London, but when he got back to the Vineyard empty-handed, he was treated as a pariah for spending so much time and money in distant places with so little to show for it. It was an unfair judgment. He was paying all his own expenses, a drain on his finances that reduced his family to near poverty. But Islanders showed little sympathy. In 1789 when the governor appointed him justice of the court, Thomas Cook, a Justice of the Peace himself, was outraged, according to a deposition taken for a law suit later:

I, Cornelius Norton . . . testify and say that I was in Company with Thomas Cooke Esqr., at his house Some time in November 1789 when said Cooke Brought on Some Conversation Respecting a Justice's Commission that was Come from the Governor for Beriah Norton Esqr. at which time Said Cooke appeared to be much against said Norton taking such Commission; and said, "if said Norton Should take . . . Said Commission, that he the Said Cooke would Put him in Goal . . . and further Said that he would Distress him as much as Possible, for he, the Said Cooke, thought Said Norton to be a Bankrupt therefore not Suitable for Said Commission and the Said Cooke Seemed to Discover Temper on the occation.

The deposition was taken when Beriah sued Cooke for slander, a case he won, being awarded \$100 damages. He served as justice until a few years before his death. He also was appointed as Edgartown's first postmaster on January 1, 1795, a post he held until 1819. The combined income from these two positions was small. The postmaster was paid a percentage of what he took in and the records show that between April 1 and July 1, 1795, he collected only \$33.60 in the postoffice.

He remained convinced that he could win restitution and even thought of making a fourth trip to England to get the £4000 still owed. He petitioned Congress, then in New York, to pay for the trip. Congress turned the request over to John Jay, secretary for foreign affairs, and he replied:

It appears to your Secretary that Martha's Vineyard being American ground, the enemy had good right, *flagrante Bello*, to take away all sheep and cattle they found there without

paying anything for them. If however from Motives of Policy they *gratuitously* promised payment. . . it would not be proper for the United States to take any measures respecting it.

If, on the other hand, this Promise or Contract is to be considered as being of legal obligation and not merely *honorary* & gratuitous, then the Memorialist has his remedy at Law . . . national Interposition . . . should not be extended to such concerns and affairs of Individuals as . . . do not touch or affect the National rights.

One would think that Jay's opinion would have put an end to Beriah's quest, but he did not give up. He went to Philadelphia in 1800 to meet with President John Adams, a trip that caused Vineyarder Thomas Butler to write Ichabod Norton of Edgartown, enlisting financial help for the traveler:

Col. Norton is bound to Boston to Morrow with Capt. Jethro Worth [who ran a packet between Boston and the Island]. The old Gentleman seems to be much Crowded for a little Money. . . he tells me he will make it his particular business to go to [Boston] respecting our matters . . . and also {to meet} the President. To enable him to do which, I think you and I can do no less than give him one Dollar apiece. Which if you are disposed to do, you may send by my Son James. Your Friend, Tho. Butler.

In Philadelphia, Beriah had "Conciderable Conversation with the President" [John Adams, Abigail's husband] and later "had a full Hearing before the Committee." He got no money however, but he never gave up. Nearly 20 years later, in 1818, only two years before he died, he wrote to President James Monroe, reminding him that when Monroe was Governor of Virginia, he had been a guest in the Monroe home with "the Honor of Being Seated at the right hand of your Precious Lady." After introducing himself that way, he turned to his reason for writing:

Since which time, as well as During the whole of the Revolution war, my Station was Extreem Difacult and I have met with many, very many, Grievous Losses and Misfortunes whereby I am reduced to real Dependence as you may See by the Statement here inclosed - and as I am now about Petitioning the Secritary of war for Some assistance to Support me in my old age, I have thought it Posable that you Sir in

your Goodness Might Condesent to Say Some thing in My Behalf.

He was no longer seeking remuneration for Vineyard residents. He was pleading for himself.

It was a sad closing of a life that had been so rich, that had taken him to high places where he met some of the leading men of the time. Now, he was reduced to pleading for himself and his family. Nowhere is his desperation more apparent than in a letter he wrote to Mrs. Thankful Ripley, asking that she persuade her son to delay his demand for payment of a note Beriah owed her late husband:

I have lost more than \$7,000 Cash, Lost my three Sons, one of which was 25 years & 5 months, under a Deranged State of Mind, at Great Expençe. My wife Benn [been] helpless many years. My own late Misfortunes is Greivous. I beg of you, Mrs. Ripley with your Son, Capt. Ripley, to think & act on the above on Christain Prinsapel. I wish to see Capt. Ripley my Self whether he Does anything or not.

The final years of his life were sorrowful. His wife was bed-ridden. Of their nine children, three sons and one daughter died before their parents; two married daughters had moved off-Island, one to Maine, the other to Georgia; two other married daughters, Zoraida and Sarah, had lost their husbands and returned home with their children, dependent upon him. His youngest daughter, Ann Frances, never married, no doubt burdened with care for her mother. With many expenses and little income, he had reason to write those pleading letters.

Beriah lived to be 87 years old, dying in December 1820. His wife, Anna Frances, lived only a few weeks longer, "having declined for a number of years and was helpless," Reverend Joseph Thaxter noted in the church records.

A life that had seemed so promising, had ended in despair.

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THOUGH MANY VINEYARDERS showed little sympathy for Beriah Norton, there were some who might have had they known of his frustrations. They were the Island's Indians who had themselves been seeking restitution for nearly 200 years without success. What they had lost was much more

than sheep and oxen. What they had lost was their way of life.

There was no way to compensate them for that.

By 1810, these original Vineyarders had ended up, under social and economic pressures, segregated in several so-called Indian Lands. Rev. James Freeman of Boston, a founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society and a friend of Rev. Joseph Thaxter of Edgartown, visited the Island in 1807 and wrote the most complete description that exists of Island life during that time. Here are some excerpts of what he wrote about Gay Head and the Indians living there:

It is destitute of trees; but there are many swamps, some of which afford peat, and others springs of good water. . . there are no roads. The Indians have twenty-six framed houses and seven wigwams. The framed houses are nothing better than mean huts. There are three barns, and two meeting houses, which are small buildings, not more than twenty feet square. The number of families is thirty-four; and of souls, a hundred and forty-two; beside whom about a hundred Indians are absent. . . some of whom are children put out to service in an English family; and others whale-men . . .

Every native, whether he lives off or on the island, is considered as a proprietor; and every child born to him is entitled to a right, which is equivalent to the pasture of three sheep. No sheep are kept; but a cow is reckoned equal to six sheep; an ox to eight; and a horse to ten. . . Nine men are pure [Indian], and still more of the women; the rest are intermixed, chiefly with negroes: the mixed race is better than the pure Indians. Almost all of them have cows; and a few of them, oxen; they own as many as twenty horses.

A part of their land is every year let to the whites; and the income is appropriated to the support of their poor. The Indians raise very little corn, but have pretty good gardens. They annually sell a hundred or two hundred bushels of cranberries [sic] which grow in great plenty in their cranberry bogs. The rest of their subsistence is derived from fishing; and from the sale of clay . . . Small as their numbers are, they have two preachers; one of whom is a Baptist; the other, a Congregationalist; and both of them, Indians. . .

. . . there is one Indian house, and three wigwams in Chilmark; all the inhabitants of which, except a woman living in one of the wigwams, have rights at Gay Head . . .

Next in population numbers were the Indians on Chappaquiddick. Reverend Freeman described them:

On this island [Chappaquiddick] they have a tract of land reserved to them, containing about 800 acres. They are much intermixed with white and negro blood, very few of them being pure Indians; and they have been improved in their industry and general habits by the intermixture. Several of them live in framed houses, are good farmers, and are tolerably neat in their persons and habitations. The old men only are farmers, and are assisted by the women, who sow and hoe the corn; the young men are seamen . . . Their numbers, which are probably increasing, are sixty-five of whom nine are strangers [off-Islanders] intermarried with them. The framed houses are ten; the wigwams, two.

At Farm Neck, there was a smaller Indian village:

Near Sangekantacket, adjoining the lagoon [Lagoon], at a place called Farm Neck, there was formerly a large town of Indians; and twenty persons of a mixed race still remain, who live in six houses. . . and retain near two hundred acres of land.

After stating that "there is one Indian family, consisting of five persons," at West Chop, he detailed Christiantown:

In the north-west part of Tisbury there is a tract of land, called Christiantown, assigned to the Indians, who are placed under guardians. They consist of nine families and thirty-two souls, of whom one male and six females are pure; the rest are mixed, chiefly with whites.

Altogether, in 1807, there were an estimated 330 Indians on the Island compared with more than 3000 when the English settlement began. What had been a proud, independent people was now only a remnant. Reverend Freeman commented on how it had happened:

The Mayhews, however pious and benevolent, did not much benefit the Indians; but the English derived the most essential advantages from the ascendancy which was gained over their minds; they were disarmed of their rage; they were made friends and fellow subjects. . . their numbers dwindled away, their courage abated, and they sunk into a mean and depressed people.

They had become, the whites came to believe, so incapa-

ble of taking care of themselves that Guardians were needed to take care of them, as though they were children.

Indians from time immemorial had taken good care of themselves and the land on which they lived. The men, once skilled hunters, now had no place to hunt. Fences and the English concept of private property denied them access. With no place to hunt, and few other marketable skills, many men became lost souls, reduced to sitting around feeling sorry for themselves, prey to the addiction of alcohol, happily sold to them by whites.

Something more was taken from them: their Indian-ness. As Rev. Joseph Thaxter wrote:

The natives, by mixture with the Blacks, have lost, I believe, much of the Fox and acquired more of the Bear and Wolf. These perhaps have better capacities for learning. But the misfortune is that most of the blacks that come and marry among them are very dissipated. They are a most improvident gang. They go to Nantucket and enter the Whaling Business and after a Voyage of Two or Three years often come home in Debt. In their absence, the Squaws scratch as well as they can and support themselves and children as well as they can. Clams, Quahogs, Ells [eels], etc., afford them a subsistence and they are generally remarkably healthy.

Those squaws did more than "scratch as well as they can," keeping themselves and their children alive, they also became active politically, especially at Gay Head where many women were Proprietors, meaning they had equal status with men, something not known among whites. Two petitions submitted by the Gay Head Proprietors to Massachusetts Bay governors are evidence. One of them, dated 1749, is written in the Indian language; the second was written in English in 1776. The first was signed by 32 Proprietors, ten of them women. The second has 37 signatures (some signed with marks) of which 16, nearly half, were by women.

Those were not the only times Indian women became active in politics. In 1809, four Indian women on Chappaquiddick, Mary Cook, Elizabeth Carter, Hannaretta Simson and Charlotte Matteson, petitioned the Governor of Massachusetts to have a school provided for their children. Some of

the white residents of Edgartown supported them and urged the Governor to take action:

we are well acquainted with the Women -- they Belong to the first families on the said Island and are generally of good moral character. We consider that their Endeavor to have the Gospel Preached among them, and a School for the Education of their youth is a Laudable Pursuit and hope they may Succeed.

No doubt Reverend Thaxter had encouraged this action by the Indian women (and their white supporters). He had long recognized the failure of the missionary work since it was started in the mid-1600s by Thomas Mayhew Jr. The missionaries, five generations of Mayhews, had devoted themselves in a sincere and well-meaning fashion to preparing the "Savages" for life in the hereafter. What was needed was preparation for life now. Thaxter knew that:

I consider the instruction of these poor creatures an object of importance . . . I have been acquainted with them for near 40 years and am fully persuaded that schooling the children ought to be the first object: preaching to them, the second. Were the missionary intrusted with a small sum to employ a school mistress, it would be productive of a great good. It would not only benefit the children, but endear him to their parents and render his labors much more useful.

In 1836, at a ceremony memorializing King Philip, the Wamponoag tribal chief who had been killed in Rhode Island many years before, Rev. William Apes, himself an Indian, was hard on the missionaries, agreeing with Reverend Freeman:

But must I say, and shall I say it, that missionaries have injured us more than they have done us good, by degrading us as a people, in breaking up our governments, and leaving us without any suffrages whatever, or a legal right among men.

The last of the five generations of Mayhew missionaries, Zachariah Mayhew, in 1791 recognized the need for education. He convinced the mission society in London, which still held title to Gay Head, to use the money it received by leasing 800 acres known as "the Farm" to pay for a school. It was not a new idea. Years earlier, in 1714, when the land was first leased, the Indians were promised that "Every penny received of Mr. Ebenezer Allen, or of any other, is all laid out only to make you a

happy people." But that had not happened because nobody was collecting the rent and so Allen and others used the land without paying. Later, when the Indians took back the farm by force, Zachariah realized that something must be done. A school at Gay Head would stop the violence, he thought:

There now appears a disposition in the natives in general to have their children instructed by having good schools among them. . . . If your hon'able Society should see fit to adopt such measures as to appropriate the Farm to the benefit of the natives, particularly for the instruction of their children, by having good schools among them, it is my opinion that it would be so pleasing to them as to prevent all future acts of violence.

The efforts of those activist Indian women, the Island's (and perhaps the nation's) first feminists, seemed to be getting results, meager results, but results nonetheless. Other Indian women, off-Island Indians, were raising a more sensitive issue as a 1792 document by Jeremy Belknap of Boston indicates:

From the difficulties which [the Indians] experience in obtaining support, and from the sufferings which they endure by the want of food, we find that many arts are practised by the wives to prevent, as much as possible, the increase of children and the augmentation of their families.

A bold and shocking practice that was.

Zachariah's death in 1806 left the Indians without a missionary. For the first time in five generations, no Mayhew was interested in the job. The Boston missionary society that had been paying Zachariah asked Reverend Thaxter who should replace him. Thaxter, a trusted friend of the Indians, saw a chance for a major change. He urged the society to hire Frederick Baylies, then a teacher of the Indians on Nantucket. Although he was not a minister, the Boston society, to its credit, hired him as its missionary. He was expected to combine teaching with Bible study. But that didn't satisfy the Indian women as they made clear to missionary Baylies, who wrote:

In my visits, my feelings are often hurt; the universal complaint is, "Our children are suffering for want of a school, and we are not able to support one. Can you help us?"

It was not a good time for education, Indian or English. The few schools that existed were stingily financed, attendance was

arbitrary, pupils came when they had nothing better to do, discipline was weak. Tisbury, in 1783 and again in 1793, was sued by the state for failing to provide any public school for its children. As late as 1823, the village was spending four times on much to support the poor (\$800) as to provide schools in its four districts (\$200 in total, \$50 per district).

There were few trained teachers. In 1793, William Butler, a farmer at Farm Neck in northern Edgartown took over the job as teacher in the small school there. He realized how unqualified he was for the job and was trying to improve:

It now appears to me that I make but small progress in my Studies. I have lately been applying myself to English Grammer [sic] . . . but find it hard & most impossible to confine my mind wholly to that noble Science.

A few weeks later, he suddenly "Left off running School," making no mention of who, if anybody, would replace him.

Towns that were not eager to pay for schools for the white children felt absolutely no obligation to educate Indians. That was something for missionary societies. Baylies, paid by one, pushed ahead, establishing schools in the Indian Lands, staffing them with native teachers. Among the first Indian teachers he hired was Mrs. Betsey Carter, one of the four activist women on Chappaquiddick who had petitioned for a school in 1809:

On the 30th of August [1818] Betsey Carter, a woman of colour, opened school at Chabaquiddick, to continue 8 weeks. . . . She has over 20 scholars and gives good satisfaction.

At Gay Head, Baylies was given a good reception:

The Indians. . . chose a committee of seven to agree with a woman to take charge of the school, etc. On the 28th, the school was opened. On the 3d of July I visited it. There were present 30 scholars from 5 to 16 years of age; 2 only could read in the Testament and they but poorly. The mistress, who was a coloured woman, told me 36 had attended and that 4 could read. . . . The scholars conducted themselves handsomely and appeared very decent. . .

A third school, this one taught by a white woman, was opened at Christiantown for six weeks. There were 13 pupils. Altogether, 97 Indians attended the schools set up by Baylies, brief though their terms were, they were in school.

Paid \$350 a year by the English missionary society, Baylies was an educator not a minister and his work was the first serious effort at teaching Vineyard Indians. He also supervised Indian schools in Nantucket and Rhode Island. In his five schools, about 200 Indians attended, some for 16 weeks a year.

On the Vineyard there was little money for educating anybody. Residents were struggling to feed themselves, as they tried to recover from Grey's Raid in 1778. They had lost 10,000 sheep with little hope of full payment. Gradually, their flocks were being rebuilt. By 1800, wool once again was the Island's leading export. Writing in the first decade of that century, Rev. James Freeman computed how many sheep were then on the Island and how much they contributed to the Island economy:

Eleven thousand seven hundred pounds of wool have this year [1809] been purchased for exportation; the same number of pounds are annually manufactured [on Island] into stockings, mittens, and cloths, chiefly flannels and blankets; making the whole twenty-three thousand four hundred pounds. [Since] sheep . . . yield a pound and a half of wool annually, there must be then fifteen thousand six hundred sheep.

The number of pairs of stockings knit for sale by the women of the island in a year are about fifteen thousand; of mittens, three thousand; and of wigs [caps] for seamen, six hundred. The stockings, which bring fifty cents a pair, and the mittens, one third of that sum, are sold to the traders on the island, and in New Bedford, and paid for in goods. A pound of wool makes two pair of stockings.

The wool, which is not manufactured [into clothing here], is principally purchased by persons who come for it from Connecticut, and who also carry away poquaus [?] and dry fish; they pay for it [the wool] about thirty cents a pound.

Freeman indicates that the Island had in 1809 recovered from its livestock losses in Grey's Raid. There were 15,600 sheep on the Vineyard, about the same as before Grey. He also lists other manufacturing on the Vineyard, mostly in Chilmark and Tisbury where streams provided water power. Only the wind and the sun were available in Edgartown:

To prepare the wool for the manufacturers there is in Chilmark a carding machine, at which 5000 pounds are carded annually. Connected with it is a fulling mill at which in the year 1805,

3200 yards of cloth were pressed. . . There is in Tisbury another mill at which about 700 or 800 yards are pressed in a year.

Besides these mills there are, for the grinding of corn, four windmills in Edgartown, one of them on Chappaquiddick; one windmill and three watermills in Tisbury; and five watermills in Chilmark. These watermills are very small and grind only two or three bushels of corn in a day. . .

There are in Edgartown three sets of salt works, containing 2700 [square] feet; and in Tisbury five sets, containing 8900 feet. This manufacture is increasing and probably in three or four years there will be more than double the number of feet.

The other manufactures are not of much importance. There are tanners, sadlers [cordwainers] and hatters. . . and mechanics, as many as are necessary. The rest of the inhabitants are either seamen or farmers. In Edgartown the young and middle-aged men are seamen and are employed in fishing and foreign voyages and sail principally from other ports. The elderly men are employed in cultivating the land. The same thing may be said of Holmes's Hole. But in other parts of Tisbury and in Chilmark. . . a majority of the inhabitants obtain their subsistence from tilling the soil.

Much of this changed during the War of 1812, a war that was strongly opposed by New England. It seriously hurt the Vineyard. The Embargo Acts cut off shipping to the mainland, ending the export of Island wool. Much Island food came from the mainland and prices skyrocketed when it had to be smuggled in. In 1813, things were so bad that Tisbury sent a memorial to the Congress, stating the need for help:

. . . in consequence of the War with Great Britain many of [our residents are] destitute of employment by being deprived of their real Occupations and the present high price of bread . . . nearly double the Usual price. They see with infeigned Sorrow, Vessels daily carrying Bread stuff (under British Liners) out of the United States to the ports & Countries under the controul of the British Nation & their Armies. In return we see the Manufacturers of Great Britian filling our ports & Towns thereby aiding our enemies as well as drawing out precious Metals (now so much wanted in our Country). . . we request that the Nonimportation Law be strictly and rigidly enforced against Great Britain which will we believe alleviate many of our Citizens in the price of Bread and find Employ-

ment for our own Manufacturing Citizens.

Again in 1814, Tisbury petitioned for lifting the embargo on coastal shipping:

. . . our Oil, Salt, Wool and other domestic Articles and Manufacturers are cut off from their usual markits of New York & Connecticut their being no markit within our limmitts . . . deprived of the Necessaries of life and Employment for our Fisher and Small Craft . . . [we] ask that Embargo Act be so modified that wee can have a communication by water with . . . New York & Connecticut.

The embargo was eased when Nantucket residents told Congress that they were threatened with starvation if it was not.

Food and money were the major concerns of Vineyarders during the war, but there was another. They were vulnerable, so vulnerable that Edgartown Customs Collector Thomas Cooke was told by the Collector in Boston to transfer the bonds he was holding for customs owed into a Boston bank.

There was reason to be apprehensive. Cannon firing was regularly heard along the south shore. Rebecca Smith, a teenager living at Pohoganut, wrote in her diary between April 1813 and March 1814, of hearing cannon fire ten times. Here are two:

April 20, 1813. A dead silence reigns throughout this mansion, all is still save the roaring of distant cannon . . . America once happy land is now involved in war; America, methinks I saw your blooming sons fall in battle . . .

July 18, 1813. A stately ship is now full in view . . . She is a "74" [a large warship] by her majestic appearance. . . As I sat viewing the stupendous barque from the top of the house my ear was suddenly saluted with the report of deep toned cannon from the ship . . . I espied another ship of equal bigness . . . A continual roaring salutes my ears.

Although this sensitive, poetic girl lived in remote Pohoganut, she was not isolated from news. Her father was the County Registrar of Deeds and he had his office at home. Islanders arrived almost daily, bringing the latest news along with deeds to be registered. She makes frequent mention of their reports, including one of an English privateer in Edgartown. Here are a few of her entries:

June 6, 1813. I have just been informed that the Frigate *Chesapeake* is taken. Uncle [Rev. Joseph] Thaxter was at Boston, was an eye witness, saw the battle fought and saw the

conquering enemy bear away the prize. Mr. B. Luce is here and tells the same.

July 7, 1813. Mr. Jabez Smith is here this evening. He brought a News paper which gave an account of the defeat of Gen. Dearborn's army. Thus, thousands of our country-men have lost their lives by this ungenerous and cruel war. . .

July 22, 1813. Melancholy news from the South. Richmond is taken and plundered.

September 28, 1813. I am this day informed that the United States Brig *Enterprise* captured the Brig *Boxer* on the 5th instant after an action of 45 minutes. Both Captains killed and buried side by side.

October 20, 1813. The all accomplished Mr. Lev [Leavitt] Thaxter has been here this morning, informs us that there is an English Privateer in Old Town Harbour. Yesterday they burnt one of the Smacks belonging to Mr. Fisher and Mr. Coffin . . .

If Leavitt Thaxter's report is correct (and there is no reason to doubt it), that was the only "invasion" of the Island during the War of 1812.

There was much privateering by both sides. Islanders served in the crews of many of the armed vessels that harassed British shipping. Many were Indians and Thomas Cooke, as Guardian of the Indians of Chappaquiddick, wrote to the privateer owners, telling them to send any prize money due to Indians to him so he would be sure the money went to their families. He also wrote to whaleship owners, asking that money owed to Indians be sent to him.

When the war ended in December 1814, shipping activity soon recovered. Customs Collector Thomas Cooke Jr., reported to the Island's representative in Congress that in the first nine months of 1816, 712 vessels entered Edgartown and Holmes Hole and that 100 of them were foreign vessels, carrying imports. If the Vineyard was their first port of call, he was required to certify their arrival in the country before allowing them to proceed to whatever port their cargo was to go. He complained that because they did not pay duty here, he was not compensated for all the work the increased activity required.

Thomas Cooke was only one of the Guardians of Indians. Each town had these political appointees. There is little evidence that they did much to improve the lives of those they

were supposed to be protecting. The guardian system had become so bad that a petition was sent to John Brooks, governor of Massachusetts, by Chappaquiddick Indians in 1818:

Under the Special Law passed January 26th, 1789 . . . the Governor was empowered to . . . appoint two white Persons and one Indian as Guardians, to have the Care and oversight of the said Indians . . . Guardians have Repeatedly been appointed. . . yet it has so fallen out at this time that one of the white Guardians, namely Samuel Smith Esqr. . . shall Send up his Resignation; and that Isaiah Johnson, the Indian Guardian, for a Long time Past [has] been absent and is not Likely to Return . . . in Consequence of which your petitioners . . . are greatly injured by their white neighbours in that they neglect to keep in Repair the Partition Fence which separates their Lands from ours, which by Law belongs to them to keep in Repair, and their Cattle, Sheep, and other Creatures frequently Come into our Lands and Destroy our Corn, Rye and Grass. . .

The fence in question ran east and west, dividing the island of Chappaquiddick in half, the Indians being confined to the north side (except for a wood lot on the south side). The petitioners urged the governor to appoint Capt. Valentine Pease Jr., "a Person in whom we Can Confide," and Ebenezer Cadody, an Indian, to fill the two vacancies. Elijah Stuart, Esq., the third guardian, should be retained, the petitioners said.

The guardian system had indeed fallen into disuse and never had protected the Indians from those aggressive whites who found ways to take over their land, sometimes by purchase, sometimes not. The General Court seemed to go along. As Reverend Thaxter wrote to his friend and fellow Unitarian, Reverend Freeman (quoted earlier) in 1823, cheating an Indian was no sin:

I think it extremely wrong for the Gen'l Court to give leave to any to alienate [sell] their Right [to property]. Christiantown and Farm Neck have and must suffer sorely in Consequence of this Practice. A few Designing white men have acquired Property and the Natives [are] left to perish or live by begging. . . When sick, their sufferings are beyond Description . . . I fear those who have been benefited by buying their Lands have but little feeling for them. . . I do fear that there are those who think it is no Sin to cheat an Indian.

Many Indian males, both young and middle-aged, tried to escape from the system by going to sea. They were eagerly sought by ships' agents and masters to fill their crews. It was becoming harder to find whites willing to sign on for the long voyages. Pay for "men of color" was usually below that of whites and they often finished a voyage with little or no money due them, after deducting what they owed for purchases from the slop chest and advances given at various ports of call. Even among mariners, as Thaxter wrote, "it is no Sin to cheat an Indian."

We have no way of knowing how many of the Island's "persons of color" were mariners in the early 1800s. Non-whites living in "Indian Lands" were not included in the 1850 Federal Census. But crew lists show that almost every whaler had men of color in her crew. Skin color was recorded in a variety of tones: black, brown, yellow, negro, African and Indian were some.

The New Bedford Public Library crew lists of the whalers owned in New Bedford, Fairhaven and neighboring ports show the following about skin colors of Vineyarders aboard whalers:

Edgartown: Total crewmen, 73. Of whom 4 were black and negro, 3 were colored and yellow (usually meaning mulatto).

Tisbury: Total crewmen, 85. Of whom 2 were black, 1 was negro, 1 was copper and 1 was Indian.

Chilmark: Total crewmen, 44. Of whom 3 were black, 4 were colored, 6 were Indian and 1 was copper.

Gay Head: Total crewmen, 8. Of whom, 4 were Indian, 1 was native, 1 was black [for the other 2, no skin color was given].

No doubt, many of those men of color who said they were from Chilmark actually lived in Gay Head, which was then part of that town. Mariners gave their town of residence, the officers decided on the color of their skins. Skin color was not listed in every case. The term "white" was not used. Instead, "fair" and "light" were the adjectives and those two colors made up the largest number in all Vineyard towns except Gay Head. Edgartown had 39 (out of a total of 73 mariners); Tisbury had 58 (85 total); Chilmark had 18 (44 total); Gay Head, none.

Men of color rarely made it up to positions of responsibility, such as boatsteerer or officer. Conventional wisdom has it that Gay Head Indians were sought out as harpooners (a term rarely used among whalers, who called the man who thrusts the

harpoon into the whale the boatsteerer). The harpooning skill of Indians, no doubt, became an accepted fact as a result of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Melville's boatsteerer is named Tashtego, "an unmixed Indian from Gay Head." The Vineyard, Melville added, "has long supplied the neighboring island of Nantucket with many of her most daring harpooners."

Melville's claim that Gay Head Indians were sought out as boatsteerers could not have become widely accepted, as it is today, until after the decline of whaling. The novel, *Moby Dick*, published in 1851, was virtually unknown until after Raymond M. Weaver's biography of Herman Melville came out in 1921.

The New Bedford crew lists show that no Vineyard Indian (of any of the various skin colors listed) was a boatsteerer. The Vineyard did have one black whaling master. It is not known how much, if any, Indian ancestry he had. He was Capt. William A. Martin of Chappaquiddick, master on three whaling voyages between 1878 and 1890. He commanded two schooners and one brig. Two of the three were owned by Samuel Osborn Jr., of Edgartown. There may have been more off-Island whaling masters of color, but records suggest that non-whites never got up very high in the hierarchy.

For white Vineyarders going to sea was a chance to get rich and it was the most popular occupation in the 1800s. The Census of 1850 lists 686 males with the occupation "mariner," compared to 342 farmers, the second most numerous. With so many men going whaling, it is said that the Vineyard had more whaling masters per capita than any other place, although no data are known to prove it.

As for the number of ships owned, the Vineyard was far down the list compared to Nantucket, New Bedford and several other ports. The peak years of Vineyard ownership were 1841 and 1842 when there were 16 Island whalers in service. During those same years, New Bedford had more than 70, Nantucket had 25. Vineyard whalers with the longest and most successful records were *Almira* (15 voyages), *Splendid* (13), *Vineyard* (12), *Champion* (11) and *Mary* (10). All were active during the great years in whaling from 1830 to 1879.

In terms of sailings, meaning the number of times whalers left their home ports on a voyage, the minor-league status of the

Vineyard is obvious. Judith N. Lund, in her masterful work on whaling voyages (published 2001), shows 5146 departures from New Bedford throughout the history of whaling, 2223 from Nantucket, 1156 from Provincetown and 1116 from New London. Edgartown had a meager 237, with 17 more from "Martha's Vineyard."

Capital investment in whaling (ship ownership) may have been small on the Vineyard, but there were many males who invested years of their lives. So many, in fact, that it engendered a major social change. With so many men away for years at a time, women were forced to take enlarged roles in the community. Children were raised in what became in fact single-parent homes. The business of keeping up the house, of paying the bills, of disciplining and educating the children, all fell on the shoulders of the mothers. Unmarried women were greatly affected. They had fewer dates, fewer men with whom to socialize, to share the joys of young love.

This is not to minimize the affect of whaling on teen-age males. More than half of Island youths between 14 and 19 went to sea, becoming isolated during those formative years aboard ships, living totally with men – often crude, cruel men. The dictatorial behavior, the sadistic treatment by some whaling captains must have had a profound affect on the personalities of those young men. Inadequate diets, unsanitary living conditions, sexual experiences, both on ship and ashore, combined with the tyranny of their officers, certainly damaged some of them physically and mentally. They lived through their critical teen years denied the gentility, the grace, the courtesy, they would be exposed to in a society with half the population female.

There is a saying, "Send a boy to sea and get back a man." No doubt, true. But what kind of a man? It is no wonder that whalemens turned to scrimshaw, sea chanties and danced the sailor's hornpipe to add touches, however slight, of gentility to their totally male-oriented lives.

The shortage of males on the Vineyard perhaps caused young women to be drawn to religious meetings, virtually the only social life at the time. During these years, the Island (along with other places) was experiencing a religious reformation. Young women eagerly attended nightly meetings held by the

evangelists. We don't know exactly when meetings began on the Vineyard, but Rebecca Smith's diary may provide a clue. On August 2, 1813, she wrote, mysteriously:

Mrs. Beetle informed me that there has been an eruption broke out amongst the inhabitants of the East side of Holmes's Hole, has been allmost as dangerous as those which issue forth from the burning Volcanoes, Vesuvius and Aetna.

Rebecca doesn't describe what was "erupting," but it is likely that it was an early outbreak of religious fervor. She would have been especially interested in such a religious "eruption" as her uncle was the Rev. Joseph Thaxter, minister of the Congregational church in Edgartown, which would soon be decimated as scores of its members were "born again" under the spell of Baptist and Methodist evangelists. Rebecca and her sisters, Hannah and Clarissa, often attended his services and must have been disturbed with what was happening.

Baptist and Methodist Societies (they were not called churches at first) were formed on the Island in the late 1700s. There is little documentation of precisely when the first of the evangelists arrived, but Jeremiah Pease of Edgartown, who was one of those "born again," said the first Methodist to come was a black man, a former slave in Virginia who arrived in 1787:

The first Methodist that visited this Island . . . was a coloured man by the name of John Saunders, who with his wife came to this town in the year 1787 and took up their residence in the village of Eastville. He preached to the coloured people at Farm Neck . . . In 1792 they removed to the Island of Chappaquiddic. His first wife died. He married . . . Jane Diamond, who is now living and is 95 years old [Jeremiah is writing this in 1847].

Jeremiah's account is confirmed by the journal of Mrs. Priscilla Freeman, granddaughter of John and Priscilla Saunders. She wrote about them and of her grandfather's murder:

He was a pure African, she half white. . . They took passage with Capt. Thos. Luce. . . in a small vessel laden with corn, in which the Captain had buried them the night previous to sailing. . . arriving at H. Hole. . . they repaired to Col. Davises on the East Side and were invited to move into the little schoolhouse, standing a few rods east of the Colonel's residence. . . Here the minister's wife Priscilla died. After living 5 or 6

years in this place, he located at Chappaquiddic, where he preached and became acquainted with [an Indian] Jane Dimon, and married with her; which exasperated the Indians there, on account of his African descent; and this. . . is supposed to be the cause of his being murdered in the woods.

During the years that followed, various itinerant preachers, Baptist, Methodist and even one evangelical Congregationalist, criss-crossed the Vineyard by horse and buggy, holding meetings in private homes, gaining important converts such as Judge Benjamin Bassett, who allowed the itinerant preachers to stay with his family. The itinerants traveled from village to village proclaiming their frightening, emotional warnings of damnation, unlike the intellectual, rational, boring words heard in the established churches. Ministers like Reverend Thaxter intoned long sermons on verses from the Bible each Sabbath. The itinerants, very few of them well educated, were more interested in arousing their listeners' emotions than in teaching them Scripture. Damnation and hellfire were the verses they used.

The Congregational church was especially vulnerable. Its unemotional services and the aging of its pastor in Edgartown, had turned off many, especially young people, who according to Jeremiah, had lost their way and turned to sin:

Intemperance prevailed to an alarming degree. Vice and immorality followed with its train of evils too numerous to enumerate. . . inhabitants of this place. . . employed their evenings and I might say their nights in playing Billiards, Pitching dollars, Playing cards, and drinking. . . I have known the aged but vigorous Mother to visit those places in the night and bring out her children (young men) from these scenes of dissipation. I have known fifteen men of good abilities and worth a handsome property enter into the business of retailing ardent spirits, who in a few years became intemperate, all of whom, I fear, found a premature grave.

The evangelists, despite their exuberance, their theatrical late-night meetings, had little success converting Jeremiah's "sinners." After all, Methodists and Baptists opposed everything the young men were enjoying. Meetings were often disrupted by these "sinners" who, Jeremiah said, came from,

. . . all grades of Society who were destitute of vital piety. . .

Meetings [were] disturbed by throwing stones, mud, dead cats and the howling of dogs. . . a Baptist preacher . . . was thrown from the table [on which he was standing]. Such a scene of confusion, I presume, was never witnessed in any meeting in this town before or since. . . the assembly was confused, some shoving, some pulling, multitudes rushing for the door. . . one man struck [the preacher] with his fist and cried out, "Run, you Devil, or they will kill you."

In the early years of the revivals, Jeremiah himself actively opposed the evangelists. Standing faithfully behind Reverend Thaxter, his friend and mentor, he was so upset by their methods that one evening he, not unlike the "sinners" he became so critical of, disrupted one of the meetings. He confessed his actions to a group of Methodists years later:

One evening while [Methodist minister Steele] was preaching, he was seized with a trembling in consequence of which the house. . . shook and caused a great alarm among many of the Congregation. I heard the sound and hastened to the Meeting House, went into the Pulpit, took hold of the Preacher and offered to bring him out if any one would help me. But as none seemed disposed to assist, I retired, much enraged. . . This rash act of mine, I have always regretted.

Brother Steele, as the regretful Jeremiah came to call him, was the first Methodist to ignite the flame, the first to awaken the multitude. He was followed by John "Reformation" Adams, the most successful revivalist in Vineyard history. When Adams arrived, Edgartown had 108 Methodists; when he left, two years later, there were 160, several times the number in Thaxter's Congregational Church from which many had come, one of them being Jeremiah Pease.

Adams, a non-stop worker for the Lord, built on what Steele had begun. His flair, his dramatics, brought the revival to a peak, not only in Edgartown, but all over the Island.

What Mrs. Beetle reported to Rebecca Smith ten years earlier was surely the beginning of a volcanic change in the Island's religious life. That volcano not only devastated the Congregational church, but it broke the heart of its aging Reverend Thaxter, who for nearly 40 years had been the Island's spiritual leader. A bitter old man, he wrote to his friend, Rev.

James Freeman in Boston, February 25, 1823:

. . . In June 1821 a John Adams from New Hampshire came. He is an illiterate & weak man, his wife attends him & grasps a high degree of self confidence, not to say impudence. . . He has a thundering voice & many curious agitations of body. He boldly affirms that he was sent by God to preach the Gospel in this place. . . "I have a Message from God to you, don't you want to get Religion?" In this way they go from Town to Town & from House to House. They hold their Meetings Night & Day. . . Adams is so loud as to be heard a quarter of a mile. . . By such means as these, the whole Island has been thrown into a Flame. . . Children are set against their parents & Wives against their Husbands. . . [When his converts] "come out", as they call it. . . born again, they immediately become self-confident & swell with spiritual Pride like a puff-Fish when the Boys scratch his belly. . . Adams [Methodist] & Hubbard [Baptist] with their Wives ride about in their carriages. . . [take] frequent collections & get as much Money in one Week as I have received for the last fourteen months.

That same month, Rebecca Smith's sister, Hannah, wrote in her diary about what Uncle Thaxter had called the "Flame":

February 8, 1823: There appears to be an uncommon stir in every part of the Island respecting religion, some for one denomination and some for another.

February 20: Jonathan Allen has returned from Edgartown. He informs us that Religion flourishes in the Village.

The next Sunday, Hannah and sister Clarissa attended the services in Thaxter's Congregational Church. She commented on the small congregation:

February 30: . . . We attended Parson Thaxter's Meeting. He had but few hearers Sunday Eve.

Even the remoteness of Pohoganut could not protect the Smith family from the proselytizing of Reformation John Adams, as Hannah recorded in her diary:

June 2: Eleven o'clock. The Rev. John Adams and Lady are here – Mr. Adams Exhorts and prays with us, His prayer flows like a stream which, murmuring like the distant sound of signs and plaintive moans, creeps along the vale. 2 of the clock. Mr. Adams presents Clarissa and myself with a couple of Hymn

books. He invites me to ride as far as Harrisons with him. I accept of his invitation. [Harrison is her brother who lives a short distance away.]

We are sure that Adams did not gain any followers among the Smiths. Their family relationship with Reverend Thaxter made that unlikely. But one of Thaxter's strongest followers did succumb, as mentioned above. After years of scorning those "crazy Methodists," Jeremiah Pease attended an Adams meeting on October 1, 1822, and it changed his life. He makes no direct reference to it in his diary. Without any explanation he wrote:

Oct. 1st: This day I hope will never be forgotton [sic] by me.

No explanation of why he hoped that. No exaltation over being "born again." One would never know what had happened except for a reference much later in the Adams autobiography. The next Sunday Jeremiah again guardedly indicated his joy:

Oct. 6th. This was a very pleasant Sabbath to me.

The word "Methodist" appears in his diary for the first time more than a month later:

Nov. 28th. Became a Member of the Methodis [sic] Class.

As much as Jeremiah downplays what he had done, for the future of the Island it had been a most important decision, as we shall see.

Reformation John Adams left the Vineyard in 1824 at the end of his two-year assignment. With a quieter man replacing him, the Edgartown Methodists became more conservative. Their membership continued to increase. They and the Baptists together built and shared a church. But the hot flames of salvation had cooled. Some members were unhappy about the change and asked the Providence Conference, to which they belonged, to send Reverend Adams back. In 1826, he returned.

Again, he aroused the Methodists. As before, he traveled all over the Island, holding meetings, rekindling the fire. One night, while hurrying to a meeting in Chilmark, his horse stumbled and he was thrown to the ground and rendered unconscious. When he revived, he managed to get the horse back on its feet and make it to the home of a Chilmark follower.

Not long after, he began hallucinating, his mind became flooded with messages from God. He refused medical care. He

was in God's hands, he said. After some weeks, his followers, realizing he needed treatment, forcibly bound his arms and legs and took him from his room in Holmes Hole to Edgartown to be treated by Dr. Daniel Fisher. Two Methodist men sat beside his bed 24 hours a day to keep him from getting up. He continued to fight all treatment:

I did not believe in Doctor Fisher's medicine; for, while I was fishing for souls, he was fishing for money. . . wicked men. . . offered me medicine that I had no faith in. . . they tried to deceive me. They thought I was crazy.

In a few weeks, he had recovered enough to return to his preaching, although his mind was still confused. He saw himself and his followers as characters from the Bible and gave each a Biblical name. Later, in his autobiography, he made it clear that he firmly believed his hallucinating was God's way of inspiring him. As his second term neared its end, he was convinced that God was ordering him to assemble his soldiers on a campground where "God's forces will muster" and destroy the Devil.

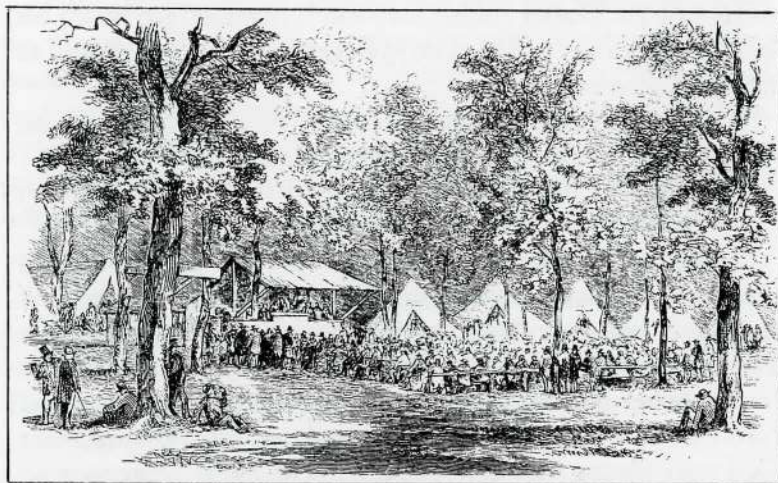
For that battlefield, he selected a site on West Chop, paid \$25 to the owner to rent it for a week, hired carpenters to build a preachers' stand and invited Methodist ministers from the Cape to a week-long onslaught against the Devil. On August 1, 1827, eight years before the Wesleyan Grove camp meetings on East Chop began, the Island's first camp meeting was held on West Chop. Reverend Adams described it:

August 1st, our camp-meeting commenced and more than twenty preachers were present and not far from thirty tents were on the ground. The people came from different islands and many from the Cape, New Bedford and Boston. All parts of the Vineyard were represented. There was but little disturbance. . . I exhorted a few times, preached once with freedom and prayed often. The care of the meeting . . . devolved considerably on me.

Among those attending was his prize convert, Jeremiah Pease. With 90 other Methodists, he sailed to West Chop from Edgartown. Jeremiah wrote in his diary:

We set sail with a pleasant breeze, . . . arrive at the West Chop in about an hour & twenty minutes. . . There were about 40 very large Tents erected. On Sunday there was tho't to be about 4000 people present.

IT WAS THE START OF SOMETHING BIG



An engraving of an early camp meeting, but not the first. In 1844, the 1835 campground was abandoned and the meeting discontinued. When resumed in 1846, a new stand and benches were built, probably these.

One week later, Reverend Adams left the Island, his tour of duty finished. He left without realizing what he had done. He had planted an idea that would change the Island forever. That West Chop meeting had infected the Methodists with camp-meeting fever. Most seriously infected was Jeremiah Pease.

The West Chop Campground did not continue, But a few years later, Jeremiah, eager for another camp meeting, became the father of the Wesleyan Grove Campground. Late in May 1835, with the help of Bertrand Sherman, a Methodist from Nantucket, he spent several days at Eastville, where he was the lay leader of the Methodist Society. The two men spent those days selecting a site for today's Oak Bluffs Campground.

There is nothing in writing that tells us these two men thought this up alone, without any other Methodists involved. But it is most likely that they did. They chose a cool, shady grove of oaks on the farm of William Butler of Farm Neck. For \$15, plus damages that might be done to the trees or his sheep, he agreed to rent it to them for a week-long camp meeting.

Jeremiah marked the spot for the preachers' stand between

two of the tallest oaks. On each of the two trees a large lantern would be hung to illuminate the nightly prayer meetings. During that summer, land was cleared of huckleberry bushes for a circle of tents. Nine tent frames were built of wood over which sails would be draped to form the communal tents shared by many. At meeting time, smaller, private tents were put up outside the circle by individuals and families. Jeremiah had one, as he wrote in his diary of August 20, 1835:

20th. Wind SW. Went to East Chop to clear ground and erect our tents for Camp Meeting.

Throughout the rest of his life, Jeremiah never failed to take part in the camp meetings, spending the week in his tent, serving as an exhorter and a chorister. He never lost his faith in revivals. Years later, during the Reformation of 1853, when revival meetings were held in Edgartown for 100 nights in succession, Jeremiah was so involved, so totally engaged, that it apparently affected his wife's health. When their son, Lt. William Cooke Pease of the U. S. Revenue Service, learned of his mother's illness, he wrote to his wife, Serena:

I wish a Methodist Minister had never seen Martha's Vineyard. There is Mother sick again, just by their nonsensical pow wow – the whole Town seem to be running mad. . . and act just like so many Block Islanders. . . they seem like so many raving Hottentots, and had better stay at home, read their Bible and learn wisdom, and not rush to that Methodist Vestry every night, and howl like so many Coyotes.

Son William, aboard his revenue cutter in the Pacific, could not possibly have foreseen what his father had done. He had altered Vineyard history. Wesleyan Grove Campground turned into something bigger than anybody, Methodist or not, could have imagined. The Island would never be the same again.

But Jeremiah didn't live long enough to know that. He collapsed on June 5, 1857, while walking along Edgartown's Main Street, and died that night.

It was just as well. He would not have been pleased with what happened to his favorite oak grove.

(To be continued.)

In the Wake of Madness

by Joan Druett.

Published by Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, N. C.

Vineyarders are proud of their whaling heritage. And with good reason. In 1850, twice as many Island men were at sea as worked on the farm.

Thirty-nine of them were Tisbury teen-agers, the youngest only 14 years old, a child by today's standards.

More than 150 Vineyarders rose to the top to become whaling masters, a large number considering the Island's population.

We display our pride by giving our buildings such names as the "Old Whaling Church" and by the way we revere captains' houses.

At the Society, we are especially proud of our collection of logs and journals of whaling voyages. One of those journals is the centerpiece of Joan Druett's latest book, *In the Wake of Madness*. It was kept by Capt. Howes Norris of Holmes Hole and is not a record that will increase our local pride.

Druett has chosen a violent story that brings to light a reality of whaling. It is the story of the final voyage of Captain Norris, who was, we certainly hope, a gross anomaly among our whaling masters.

Howes Norris (1803–1845) was master of the ship *Sharon* of Fairhaven, from whence she sailed on May 25, 1841, on a whaling

voyage in the Pacific. It became "one of the most notorious voyages of the 19th century, and one of its best-kept secrets."

Druett tells of horrific happenings on the whaleship brought on by a sadistic, bigoted master who was often drunk. His victim was the black steward whom he flogged repeatedly, denying him food and water, yet forcing him to do heavy labor despite his bleeding, scurvy-ridden body.

Drawing on many documents, one of them being our journal, Druett describes how the steward feared for his life, a fear that was, it turned out, justified.

On Thursday, Sept. 1, 1842, the steward, George Babcock, a 19-year-old black man from Newport, R. I., was cruelly beaten to death by the maniacal Norris, who reported it in his journal this way: "At 9 a.m. George Babcock died very suddenly, he complained of having the cramp."

Two months later, as the voyage continued, there came retribution. Three black crewmen, recruited from the Pacific islands to fill out the crew after numerous desertions, were assigned to stay on board as shipkeepers with Captain Norris while the three mates and the rest of the crew chased whales in the boats.

The three islanders, who knew of Babcock's murder and were fearful of what might happen to them, attacked the captain and killed him. His body was mutilated as the frenzied men dismembered it with the sharp-edged tools always

May 2003

at hand on a whaler.

The new steward, a Portuguese man who had replaced the murdered Babcock, watched the killing from his perch as lookout atop the mast. He raised the flag upside down as a signal of distress. When the officers, still chasing whales, saw the signal they gave up the chase and headed back to the *Sharon*.

Once close enough to learn of the murder from the distraught steward and to see three murderous natives armed with cutting tools waiting to attack them, the officers pulled away to decide what to do.

They rowed off to make the murderers believe they were heading for the nearest land, hundreds of miles away.

When night came, in the darkness they quietly returned. Third Mate Benjamin Clough slipped into the water and swam to the *Sharon's* stern, a knife in his teeth, climbed up the rudder post and silently entered the captain's cabin through a window in the transom.

In a courageous, single-handed effort, Clough killed two of the murderers and frightened off the third, enabling the men in the boats to come on board. Clough was deeply cut in the struggle and was bleeding profusely.

Druett's account of the action is gripping and this summary pales in comparison to her narrative.

When the men slid the muti-

BOOK REVIEW 207

lated body of Captain Norris over the side, no tears were shed, just as there had been none shed by him when Babcock was buried at sea.

First Mate Thomas Harlock Smith of Tisbury took command and with his cousin, Second Mate Nathan Smith, also of Tisbury, sailed the *Sharon* to Australia, where newspapers spread the story around the world.

Their accounts emphasized the single victim, Capt. Howes Norris. No mention was made of what had brought on the action: the abusive treatment and sadistic murder of the black steward.

The captain is on record as the victim of mutineers. But this was not a mutiny. It was an act of "rough justice," as Druett describes it. The killers, after the murder of the black Babcock, could not but wonder if they, equally black, would be the next victims of the sadistic Norris.

Druett's thorough research has given us the truth of what happened on the *Sharon* and why.

For his heroism, Third Mate Benjamin Clough was promoted to master by the grateful owners and given command of the *Sharon* on her next voyage.

In addition to its gripping narrative, Druett's book provides a virtual encyclopedia of life (and death) on whalers in the 1800s.

A highly recommended book for all who care about whaling.

In Memoriam:

Ruth Galvin

One summer day a few years ago, Ruth Galvin walked into the Gale Huntington Library and told Catherine Mayhew, genealogist, that she had been a member for a long time, lived summers in her 200-year-old house just a few blocks away, and was tired of going to the beach.

She wanted something to do. That was Ruth's way. She had to be doing something, even in her 70s, in summer. When she summarized her experience, describing her years of writing for *Time* magazine, it became obvious that we could use her.

Our index of this journal was nearly ten years old (it was the work of Tweed Roosevelt in the early 1990s) and needed updating. Would she take on the task?

She did, with enthusiasm. For nearly two years, she worked on the index, in summer here at the library, in winter at her home in Westwood. She completed it through May 2002, gave us careful printouts bound in loose-leaf binders, plus a floppy disk of the computer data she had accumulated.

We are hoping to publish it for members as a memorial to a gracious, talented woman whom we all miss.

Kenneth A. Southworth III

Ken Southworth brought a different kind of skills to the Society. For years, he was our Treasurer, a task that (as in many historical societies) requires somebody who is able to present often bleak, unpleasant news about money in a way that does not cause panic. Ken was very good at that. He was brutally honest, but with a charm that kept us from jumping ship.

When his law practice became so demanding that he could no longer stay on as Treasurer, he became a member of our Advisory Council, specializing in legal matters.

His terse comments, sprinkled with wit and a smile, were the spice of the often-dreary board meetings. He will be long remembered by all who attended.*

* See footnote, p. 171, for more about his mother, Dorothea, and the Southworths.

Log Kept by Capt. Howes Norris was Mutilated by His Son

~~Howes Norris~~

21st February 1864

at Fortville Ill. Ill.

I used this book when away as a sort of
diary and record book. It had been my
father's log kept on board ship Sharon
on a whaling voyage.

The log is intact
August 10, 1897.

Howes Norris

About 50 pages were cut from the end of the journal of the ship Sharon kept by Captain Norris, who was murdered by three crew members one week after his last entry in November 1842 (see pp. 206-7). Son Howes wrote the above in the journal to explain the mutilation. His reason is not persuasive. It is unlikely that Captain Norris would have stopped keeping the log one week before he was murdered. What seems more likely is that those pages revealed information about the captain's behavior during his last week that his family did not want known. Father and son never met. The boy was born in 1841 while the captain was at sea on his final voyage. The calligraphy was done by someone who by mistake put a middle initial in the name. Howes had none and he crossed it out when he wrote the above. He was a distinguished public servant, serving as county sheriff and state senator; he founded the weekly Cottage City Star to promote the separation of Oak Bluffs from Edgartown. He deserves to be called the "father" of Oak Bluffs for his work in making separation happen in 1880. He died in 1913.

Captain James Waddell as Rip Van Winkle



THE OLD RIP OF THE "SHENANDOAH."

CAPTAIN WADDELL (AS RIP VAN WINKLE). "Law! Mr. Pilot, you don't say so! The war in America over these Eight Months? Dear! dear! who'd ever a' thought it!"

Northern cartoonists made great sport of the claim by Captain Waddell of the Confederate raider Shenandoah that he didn't know the Civil War was over while he continued to destroy northern ships after the surrender (see p. 171).