

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



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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AUGUST 2003

House Building on the Vineyard Between the Two World Wars

by CLYDE L. MACKENZIE JR.

Seeking God, Gold, Whales & More

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

(Chapter Six)

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

In Memoriam:

Faith Churchill and Stanley Murphy

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CORRECTION AND CLARIFICATION

The footnote on page 171, May 2003, misidentifies the father-in-law of Mrs. Dorothea Southworth of Edgartown. Her father-in-law was the first Kenneth A. Southworth, not his son Kenneth Junior, who was her husband. We regret the error. The succession of Kenneth A. Southworths continues, the newest being Kenneth A. Southworth V, who, to reduce the confusion (and perhaps future errors by editors), is being called by his middle name, Alden.

A clarification: Tisbury was not the only Island town the state sued for failing to provide a school, as implied on page 189. All three Island towns were sued at that time.

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3

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13

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by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

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56

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House Building on the Vineyard Between the Two World Wars

by CLYDE L. MACKENZIE JR.

MOST OF US THINK of the grand houses built during the whaling era as being what give the Vineyard its charm and character. Captains' houses on Water Street, Edgartown, and William Street, Vineyard Haven, are the ones shown in guidebooks and on postcards. Those handsome and impressive houses were the trophy houses of their time. They are not typical of the "true" Vineyard house. That house is more modest, cedar-shingled, plain and practical. It was probably built during the first third of the 20th century by carpenters working for one of the Island's woodworking shops.

From 1920 until 1940, those men were among 85 or more skilled craftsmen who worked for Frank L. Norton and Elmer West in Edgartown, H. N. Hinckley, William Dugan and Herbert Hancock in Vineyard Haven and Daniel Manter in West Tisbury. In Chilmark, there was a smaller shop run by Roger Allen off South Road. In those days, most builders did their own mill work, planing the rough-cut lumber, making doors, windows, moldings, cabinets, stairways and banisters. They were woodworkers in the old tradition.

The shops and the craftsmen who worked in them created the buildings that today give the Vineyard its personality, its unspoiled appearance. They built (and usually designed) the stores and the houses, the chicken coops, the fishing shacks and those ubiquitous "shops," as the multi-purpose sheds in back yards were called (some housing an emergency privy). These shops, more useful than garages before the car took over, were a place for the handyman's workbench, a place to store seasonal items, to hide no-longer-needed "junk" and sometimes a place where visiting grandchildren slept in summer.

The 1920s are called the boom years, but the houses being

CLYDE L. MACKENZIE JR., is a regular contributor to these pages. This subject, carpentry, is one he grew up with. His father, Clyde Sr., worked for Frank L. Norton. Their home was only a hundred yards or so from Frank L.'s shop on Mullen Way.

built on the Vineyard at the time were simple. When plumbing and electricity became more common, new houses were slightly more complex, made so by those new craftsmen, the plumbers and the electricians (in 1910 there were no electricians in Edgartown, only two on the whole Island).

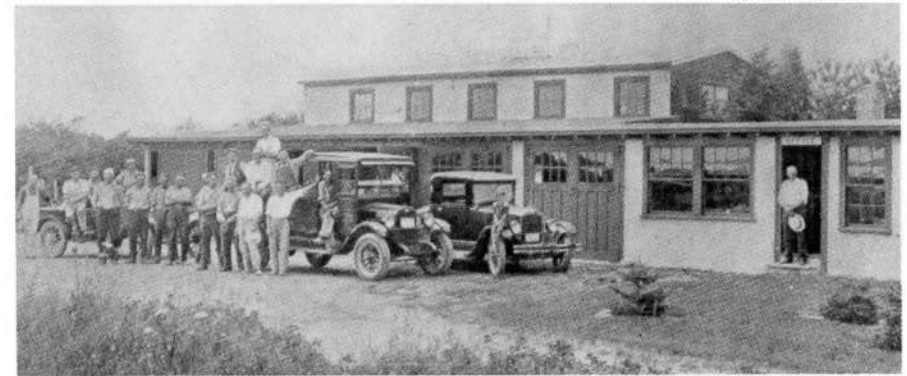
Builders, unlike car manufacturers, put no visible trademark, no name plate, on their products so there is no way to be sure who built which. Occasionally, a carpenter would scrawl with blue carpenter's chalk his name and a date on a floor joist or a roof rafter, leaving a clue. But that was rare – and usually confusingly cryptic. To identify the builder, we must depend on memory. And memories fade.

Carpentry was one of the better paying jobs, although very seasonal. During the winter, most carpenters went fishing or quahauging. To pay the bills through the year, Vineyarders needed more than one occupation and skill.

Best known of the builders in Edgartown was Frank L. Norton, who was born in the town in 1893 and as a young man learned to be a tinsmith, at that time a flourishing occupation. While working for John L. Mayhew in Oak Bluffs, he switched to carpentry and soon William W. King of Edgartown hired him. It wasn't long before he was foreman of King's building crew. When King retired in 1915, Frank L. (as he was always called to distinguish him from Frank Norton Jr., a plumber whose shop was nearby) took over the business. His son, Winthrop, "Sonny Norton," graduated from Wentworth Institute in Boston and when he joined his father in the business, it became Frank L. Norton and Son. A grandson, Allen Norton, carries on the family tradition, still using his grandfather's workshop on Mullen Way, just off Pease's Point Way.

Some of the craftsmen who worked for King and later for Frank L. were Elmer E. Norton, David Pease (father of Patty Pease, famous for helping fishing boats tie up at the town wharf and other things) and Charles Crowell.

Among the other carpenters who learned the trade with King was Manuel Swartz, later famous for the boats he built on Dock Street. He had his own carpenter shop before switching to boat building. His houses are known for their height and the steep pitch of their roofs. He built houses on Tower Hill,



FRANK L. NORTON—General Contractor and Builder
Painting and Paper Hanging
 Pease's Point Way Edgartown,
 TELEPHONE 57-21

Frank L. Norton's ad in a 1920s brochure. Frank L. stands in the office door, his men line up alongside the truck, his granddaughter sits on the fender of the coupe.

Green Hollow, as well as his much-photographed shop (now Old Sculpin Gallery), with its tower apartment, Edgartown's first penthouse, where he and his wife lived when first married.

As Frank L.'s business grew so did his crew with the addition of Del Jernegan, Clyde MacKenzie Sr., (father of the present author), Elmer and Sherman Burnham, Tony Duarte, Bill Hathaway, Everett "Fix a Leak" Harding (he was well known for his skill at finding and repairing roof leaks), Evie Fisher, Jack Borges, Carl and Harold Norton, Carvel Lutz and Phil Dube. Bookkeeper was Kenneth T. Galley, who later formed his own company, hiring a number of Frank L.'s carpenters.

According to his ad in the early 1920s, Frank L. built "the new service station for John R. Look. . . many of the finest all-year homes and cottages. . . including the theatre. . . [and] the residences of Elmer J. Bliss and S. B. Norton. He also remodeled the Episcopal Church in Edgartown." Later, he built the Edgartown Yacht Club (1927) and the original Martha's Vineyard Hospital (1928-29).

Another Edgartown builder in the 1920s was Elmer West, whose first shop was in a long building near today's Old Sculpin Gallery. In that area along Dock Street, along with Elmer's shop, there was a cluster of boat houses and fisherman's shacks. All were moved or torn down when Capt. Sam B. Norton

bought the land for his new home, the building known today as "The Anchors," that was built, as mentioned above, by Frank L. Norton. When Elmer West died in the late 1920s, Mrs. West and his foreman, Ernest Mortimore, continued the business. By then, the shop had moved to a private lane between School Street and Pease's Point Way in Edgartown.

Herbert N. Hinckley was an early builder in Vineyard Haven. Born in Maine in 1864, he apprenticed as a carpenter. In 1888, he moved to the Vineyard at the suggestion of Clarence Luce and started his own business with a total capital of \$18 and a fine set of tools. The first house he built was on West Chop. Before it was finished, he had contracts for two more houses on the Chop. He is said to have made a profit of \$500 on the three. More important, they made his reputation. His company became one of the largest on the Island. In 1924, he and his two sons added the lumber yard to his shop.

William E. Dugan, along with his contracting business, ran the largest woodworking shop in Vineyard Haven on Beach Road near the shipyard. A superb designer and a skilled reproducer of old moldings, cornices and carved panels, Bill was also well known for his duck decoys. He was skilled in estimating the lumber needed after a quick study of the plans. There was never much left over, his pencil was so sharp.

Leo DeSorcy was his shop foreman in the 1930s and 1940s, with "One Cut Willy" Arthenault, his master carpenter. Dugan's outside foreman was Joseph Leonard. In World War II, he joined with William Colby, who owned the shipyard, in building wooden barges for the navy. Also during wartime, the Dugan shop made clothes pins and wooden soles for shoes. Son Harold continued the business when his father died. Another son, William (Babe) Dugan, a skilled lathe operator, carried on his father's reputation in wood carving.

Herbert C. Hancock's shop in Vineyard Haven was smaller than the other two. His son, Hariph, was active in the business, later taking it over. Among their foremen were Gene Rogers, Lawrence Winterbottom and Winthrop Reno.

Daniel Manter's shop in West Tisbury was on New Lane. Dan ran the woodworking part while George Churchill was foreman of the building crew. They built two or three houses a



Hinckley's lumber yard and office on Beach Road, Vineyard Haven, about 1925.

year, remodeling others, including the West Tisbury school.

All these contractors bought their lumber, nails and other materials at two yards in Vineyard Haven not far from the steamboat wharf. Very close to the wharf, in fact adjacent to it, was the Tilton Lumber Company, founded by Capt. Owen H. Tilton in 1883 after retiring as a whaling master in 1878. When he died in 1901, his son, Frank, took over; he, in turn, was followed by his son, Donald.

The company employed one yard man and one delivery man. From 1953 until the company closed in 1976, the delivery man was Bob Tilton, Donald's son. He trucked lumber to as many as a dozen building sites a day, unloading it by rolling it off the rear of the flatbed. Tilton Lumber Company closed down in 1976 when the Steamship Authority bought its waterfront property for a vehicle staging area for the ferries.

The other lumber yard was the Hinckley Company, formed in 1924, as mentioned above. It is still in business.

Most framing lumber in the early 1900s came from the western states. Rough cut in the forest, the lumber was hauled to a port on trains and loaded on freighters that took it through the Panama Canal to a wholesaler in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, from where it was shipped to the Vineyard aboard the small freighter, *Eban A. Thatcher*, whose master was

H. N. HINCKLEY CONTRACTOR AND BUILDER VINEYARD HAVEN, MASS.

I am pleased to refer to the following, for whom I have built during the past few years.

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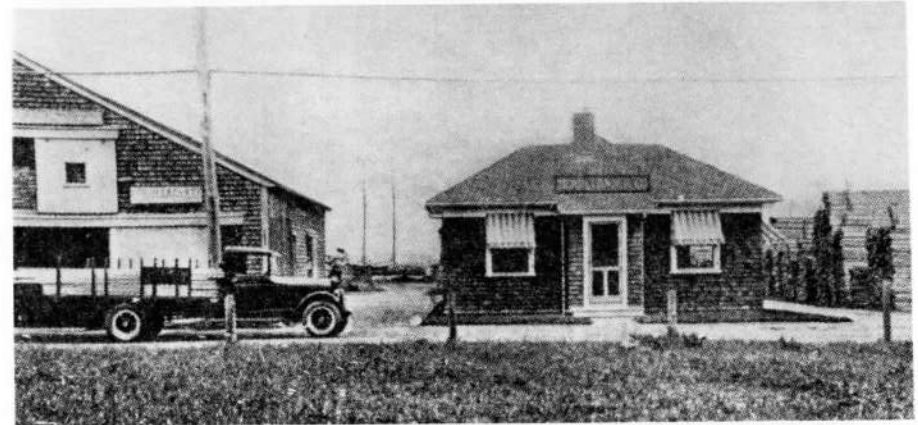
Hinckley built many fine houses and proudly listed them in a 1910 ad.

Capt. Armando Pinto. The *Thatcher's* owner was Henry Stevenson, father-in-law of Joe Allen, writer of the fisherman's column in the *Vineyard Gazette* for many years. After 1950, the lumber was brought by truck from Portsmouth on ferries from Woods Hole.

Pine was cut in Idaho, while spruce and white cedar still came from northern New England and eastern Canada. In addition to those common woods, cherry came from Canada and mahogany from Honduras.

When it arrived on the Vineyard during the early years, framing lumber was only rough-cut, just as it had come from the sawmill in the forest. Vineyard shops would plane it smooth, reducing an original 2 x 4 to 1 5/8 x 3 5/6 inches.

White-cedar shingles came in bundles from Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. Specialized shingle mills cut cedar logs into sections, called bolts, 18 inches long. The bolts were



In the 1920s, the Tilton Lumber Company occupied today's ferry vehicle-staging area on the harbor in Vineyard Haven. Truck, loaded with lumber, is a Reo Speedwagon.

then sliced into thin shingles by saws that made two passes, tilting after each pass to create the wedge shape. A bolt 12 inches in diameter would yield about 22 shingles, which were stacked in loose piles to dry for two days, before being bundled.

Many nails pounded on the Vineyard came from the Tremont Nail Company in Wareham, arriving in wooden kegs about two feet high, which when empty became handy storage receptacles and stools in backyard shops. A few shops still have kegs shipped from Wareham years ago, now filled with useless, rusting hardware. The nails were made from steel wire and came in five sizes: four-penny; six-penny; eight-penny; ten-penny; and sixteen-penny, as today. The names are said to be based on their original price per 100 nails. Carpenters carried various sizes in pockets of vests provided free by the Island's lumber yards, their names emblazoned on them.

Carpenters ranged in age from under 20 to 65 or even older. It was a life-long occupation, starting with an apprenticeship. Standard uniform was a pair of blue or brown overalls and a long-sleeve shirt. Each carpenter carried his own tool box filled with tools usually purchased in local hardware stores such as Hancock's and E. T. Walker's in Vineyard Haven. There were, of course, no portable power tools in those years. All cutting on the job was done by hand. Carpenters were proud of their square cuts and their handsaws, planes and chis-



Dugan crew poses for photo while building Brickman's Vineyard Haven store.

els, which they kept sharp on their own time.

A craftsman's wooden tool box (there were no huge plastic carriers in pick-up trucks then, also few pick-ups) was made by the carpenter himself, about 2½ feet long and 8 inches wide. A handle ran its full length as did a center divider that kept tools organized. Each box usually contained two cross-cut saws, one rip saw, two hammers, a screwdriver, plane, nail set, a rasp, several files, a variety of chisels, a brace and bits, plus a folding wooden rule. Every kit included a snipping line with a chunk of blue chalk to mark a line to guide the worker when he was laying shingles (as well as other tasks).

Handsaws and hammers have remained virtually unchanged for years, made with precision by such companies as the Stanley Tool Works, which sold the most complete line in the world. The company had its own 15,000-acre tract of hickory in the south where it harvested wood for handles on saws, planes and braces. Stanley Works has a close connection to the Vineyard. In Oak Bluffs, the small-boat harbor near Farm Pond, known as Harthaven, was created by Stanley's president, William H. Hart, in the 1920s. A number of its retired executives now live on Abel's Hill in Chilmark.

A young man wanting to be a carpenter usually started out as a laborer, driving a truck to pick up lumber or supplies at Tilton's or Hinckley's, mixing mortar for the masons, carrying bundles of shingles up a ladder. When ready to start his apprenticeship, he was given elemental jobs such as driving nails into sub-flooring or siding, learning to swing a hammer for hours at a time with few bent nails. He helped carpenters raise rafters into place and gradually advanced to more precise nailing of exterior trim and shingles.

Older carpenters were proud of their best apprentices as they watched them do things just the way they had taught them. It was their way of passing on their heritage.

In those years, there were no paid vacations, no unemployment insurance, no benefits. When there was work, the men worked. Vacations were taken, if taken at all, when there was no work. Their only days off (unpaid, of course) were a few holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas and the Fourth of July. Although they were considered among the best paid, in the depression years their wage got down to under a dollar an hour. By the 1940s, the rate for a journeyman carpenter had risen to \$1.25 an hour; by the 1950s, \$1.50. By then, young men who started as lumpers (laborers who carried boards and shingles to the craftsmen) were paid about 50 cents an hour.

As in all trades, skills varied. Those who became known as "sloppy" in their work were assigned to the rough jobs, such as framing. The more careful, skilled craftsmen did the finish work, the cabinetry, finish flooring and stairs. Cutting rafters required skill, as all cuts were by hand saw. The various angles needed for accurate fits took great skill. One of the most highly skilled was Sven Carlson, who worked for Frank L. Norton.

In the 1940s, carpenters worked 8½ hours a day and 4½ hours on Saturdays. They carried lunches, prepared by their wives each morning, in metal lunch boxes, eating them during a half-hour break. Noon was signaled by the town's fire horn, heard almost everywhere six days a week as a convenience to outside workers. The blast let all know it was noon. There were, of course, no portable radios blasting away on building sites to mark the time and entertain workmen. Carpentry was done in a quiet broken only by sounds of hammers and saws.

Houses were built on contract, usually for an agreed-upon amount. The sooner finished, the more the contractor made. There was continuous pressure to keep the job moving, despite pride in workmanship. Worker tardiness was not acceptable. If a man did not show up on time or skipped a day without good cause, he was soon let go. The hardest workers, the most dependable, were held in high esteem, both at work and in town.

A carpenter's ability was judged not only by his work, but by his tools and how well he maintained them. Another highly regarded skill was getting the maximum use out of the lumber. Carpenters known to "have a good head on their shoulders" would always have the smallest pile of scrap lumber when the job was done. There were no big dumpsters alongside each site into which vast amounts of scrap were tossed. The scrap pile was a measure of a good workman. Another measure was the size of the chips he made while shaping a piece of lumber. The smaller the chips, the more skilled the craftsman.

Saturday was a half-day as well as pay day and the men would go home for lunch, after which, sometimes with their wives, they would head "down street" in Vineyard Haven and Edgartown (in Oak Bluffs, it was "down town") to cash their checks at the store and take home the next week's food. Few had a checking account. It was a cash society.

Many buildings they built have been torn down, replaced by "trophy" houses. But enough are still standing so that the few old-time carpenters who survive can drive around, viewing with pride their contributions to the Vineyard charm.

Acknowledgements

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

(Chapter Six)

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

Seeking God, Gold, Whales & More

IT WAS A TIME OF UNREST. After years of contentment, of satisfaction with their simple Island life, many Vineyarders began to want more. There was not discontent enough to spawn a revolution, but more than enough to encourage the feeling that life should be better.

In northern and western Edgartown (now much of Oak Bluffs), residents in 1836 petitioned the state to permit them to secede, to form a new town. Others, their families expanding, needed more farmland. Finding none, they moved to Maine or Ohio where land was plentiful, often free.

Other factors aggravated the unrest. Irish workers, mostly female domestics, began arriving. With them came Roman Catholicism, a "foreign" religion – a threat, some thought.

An occasional fugitive slave from the south would escape from a coastal vessel in a Vineyard harbor, seeking help and causing problems with the law.

In 1848, gold was discovered in California, tempting Island whalers, their voyages longer and less profitable, to seek a quicker path to riches.

Perhaps the growing unrest moved Jeremiah Pease and other Methodists to seek a retreat, a secluded spot where they could get away from the problems, a place where they could feel closer to God. In August 1835, they set up a campground where praying and preaching went on day and night for four days, as they sought salvation, not land or gold.

Camp meetings had been popular on the mainland for years. Jeremiah and other Island Methodists often attended. There had even been one on West Chop some years before, but

ARTHUR R. RAILTON is Editor of this journal. The Society plans to publish these continuing chapters in book form when complete. The author asks readers finding errors of omission or commission to let him know before the final publication.

it had lasted only one season. Jeremiah wanted a permanent campground where Vineyarders could revel in God's glory.

He had found the perfect site: an oak grove south of Squash Meadow Pond on East Chop, remote from any village, surrounded by open pasture, silent except for birds singing and the whispering wind in the trees. He showed it to other Methodists. They liked what they saw and, before leaving, they met with William Butler, owner of the grove. Butler, a farmer and himself a recent convert to Methodism, agreed to rent it for \$15 a year, plus payment for any damages to trees and livestock.

It was early summer. If a camp meeting was to be held that August, as Jeremiah wanted, work must begin. With Jeremiah on that day were Thomas M. Coffin, Chase Pease, Frederick Baylies Jr., Rev. Daniel Webb, Presiding Elder of the District, and Rev. James C. Boutecou, Edgartown Methodist pastor.

Baylies and Coffin were two of the town's finest carpenters and they agreed to build a preachers' stand and put up benches for worshippers right away. They went to work the next week. With them was Henry Baylies, only child of Frederick. Years later, he wrote about that week of building:

A vessel was freighted at Edgartown with lumber, sails, etc., for the new camping-ground. Her cargo was rafted ashore on the east side of the [East] Chop . . . It was a hard day's work to get the material ashore and up to the grove; but it was done, and the preachers' stand was partly constructed the same day.

During the week, the stand was completed, seats were arranged, and some nine tent frames, built of rough joists were covered with superannuated sails of various patterns. While the men were thus employed, we two younger boys, John Wesley [Coffin] and myself, were employed in pulling up huckleberry brush within the "circle of the tents" and doubtless thought we had the hardest part of the work. . .

Water was obtained by sinking two barrels close to the edge of the Squash Meadow Pond . . . These barrels furnished sufficient water for the first meeting. . .

[In] our party, camping on the ground this first week, were Thomas M. Coffin Esq., and his two sons, Sirson P., and John Wesley, and Frederick Baylies Esq., and his son Henry, the writer hereof, all of Edgartown. . .

This was the day of small beginnings . . .

Indeed, they were small beginnings. Hebron Vincent described that first camp meeting in August 1835:

The stand was a rough board shed of quite limited capacity, with a one-pitch roof, much in the style of some [fire] wood shelters. It was specially for the ministers. There was a seat in front under the projection of the cover for them to sit on, and standing room to preach from. Within were bundles of rye-straw upon the bare ground for them to spread and sleep on. Fortunate, indeed, was the man of the cloth who had a quilt to cover him, and an extra sheaf of straw for a pillow. These were the luxurious provisions for the clergy.

In front of the stand were arranged un-planed board seats without backs for the audience – the men and women being required to sit apart, on opposite sides of a middle aisle.

To provide preaching day and night, ministers from the mainland were invited. Only a few came, Vincent wrote:

The number of preachers in attendance was of course small; the exact number is not now known [he is writing in 1858]. Nor are the names of those who preached, except two or three . . . The waving trees, the whispering breeze, the pathetic appeals, the earnest prayers, and the songs of praise, as well as the trembling of sinners . . . and the shining countenances of Christians lighted up with holy joy, all conspired to say "Surely the Lord is in this place."

Most of those "shining countenances" belonged to Island Methodists, living in sailcloth tents for four days:

Nine tents, many of them small and rudely constructed, some of vessels' sails drawn over poles, graced the little circle, being furnished within with chests and trunks, possibly with a few benches and straw upon the bare ground for beds at night. At bed-time, a high cloth curtain was extended across the tent, about in the middle, to separate the space into lodging apartments for the two sexes. (At first, we had no family tents.)

Food was brought picnic-style from home, dishes that needed no additional cooking. There was, of course, no refrigeration, making it a challenge during the warm August days. A few women did cook over open fires:

Tables for meals were set under the shade of the trees, in rear of the tents. These tables were spread for the ministry as well as for the brotherhood. For supplies of food such as could not well

be carried from home ready prepared for the table, cooking arrangements were improvised out back of the tables, where camp fires were safely made.

That first meeting lasted from Wednesday through Saturday. Those present were so pleased that before they left nearly enough money was collected "to cover the whole expense of the present meeting, and to purchase the lumber." They would be back next year. William Butler agreed to allow them to leave the structures standing over the winter. The following August, the second meeting drew more off-Islanders:

Brethren were present from New Bedford, Fairhaven, Falmouth, Nantucket, So. Yarmouth, Sandwich, Fall River, Bristol, and several other places. Our meeting was more fully attended than it was last year.

Word of the beauty of the place had spread:

The preachers present. . . even the aged and more experienced of them, were unanimous in pronouncing this the best place for a camp meeting of any they had ever seen.

Maintenance of the grounds was done by Edgartown Methodists, but control of the meetings was quickly taken over by the mainland ministers. Within a few years, they and the congregations who came with them, so far outnumbered Vineyarders on the campground that Jeremiah's dream of a simple retreat for Islanders quickly ended. Local Methodists had become merely part of the throng – and custodians.

Although it was inconvenient to get to the campground from the mainland, once one was there its placid beauty was overwhelming. Even the act of leaving brought joy. Rev. Franklin Fisk of Yarmouth Port wrote in 1838:

The Camp Meeting broke up at 12 o'clock on Tuesday night . . . at midnight, under the exhilarating influence of the full moon . . . beaming down among the trees . . . we left the ground. O lovely spot! Shall I ever visit it again?

There is something peculiarly dear to me about the Vineyard. There is not another place on earth which ever seemed to me so much like paradise . . .

Walking at midnight under the full moon to the Eastville beach to board their waiting boat for the sail to Yarmouth across moonlit Nantucket Sound, they surely were filled to

overflowing with a love of God and his world.

Word of the grove's unspoiled beauty spread. Attendance increased each year. It seemed that it would go on forever, but after nine years the mainland ministers, who controlled such things, decided it was time to move on. Hebron Vincent, camp-meeting secretary, explained:

. . . having been held here for nine successive years, it had become "an old story," and that to remove it to some other place, where such meetings have never been held, would . . . accomplish a greater amount of good. . .

So, no camp meeting was held on the Vineyard in 1845. The preachers' stand and the benches were torn down, the lumber sold. The grove, cherished by thousands, was returned to Farmer Butler's sheep. Jeremiah's dream was over it seemed.

The 1845 meeting was held at Westport Point, in Massachusetts near the Rhode Island border, convenient to the Providence office of the Methodist District. The new location "was tolerably good, yet the ground was quite rough . . . an excellent boiling spring of water nearby conduced greatly to the comfort of the encampment." Some of the most faithful Vineyard Methodists attended, Jeremiah Pease and Hebron Vincent among them. Jeremiah wrote in his diary:

1845, August 16. Went to Camp Meeting in Sloop Vineyard, arrived at Westport about 2 PM, stayed there until the meeting closed on Tuesday Morning, returned in Steam Boat Massachusetts via N. Bedford. . . there were not so many people present as generally attended the Camp Meetings at the Vineyard, except Sunday. . . a greater number attended on that day.

Vineyard meetings had ended on Saturday so the Sunday meeting was new and popular. Hebron Vincent described it:

. . . [a] vast concourse gathered on the Sabbath, estimated at between five and six thousand. . . It was considered very safe to put down the number of conversions at twenty.

Although it was on the mainland, the Westport site was more accessible by boat than by land. New Bedford Methodists chartered a steamboat to carry them home. The Vineyard Methodists joined them. As Hebron wrote, so did God:

On our way [back] to New Bedford, on board the fine steamer, Massachusetts, Capt. Lot Phinney Master, Dr. Pitman, by the

request of the company, preached a most able and soul-stirring sermon . . . Tears moistened the eyes of many present, not excepting those of our excellent and noble-hearted commander.

Not all Vineyarders had regretted the move of the camp meeting to the mainland. Certainly not the Baptists, who were envious of the popularity of the Methodists (they later built their own campground on East Chop). Congregationalists, too, must have been pleased. They had suffered much from the loss of members to both the Methodists and Baptists. The exodus had so injured their pride that in 1828, even before camp meetings began, a group of Congregationalists decided to build a larger church in Edgartown. With a shrinking congregation, they didn't need a larger sanctuary, but they did need a spiritual lift and the new church provided that. Its simple, graceful interior and towering spire made the Methodist church seem dowdy. Methodists may have been gaining members, but the Congregationalists were standing proud.

Edgartown Baptists also built themselves a new sanctuary. They, too, needed a lift of their spirits. They had been the first evangelicals on the Island, but the Methodists soon overtook them. That success, it seems, was due more to the emotional power of charismatic Methodist evangelists than to deep doctrinal differences, although there were objections to the Baptists' insistence on total immersion and adult baptism.

Strangely, while all the activity was going at the campground, non-Methodists seemed to take little interest. Contemporaneous writings indicate that. One is a journal kept by Dr. Leroy M. Yale of Holmes Hole from 1829 to 1849, the years surrounding those first camp meetings. Doctor Yale does not even mention them. He did write a description of the public mood in 1833, four years after he arrived. A Harvard graduate, his thoughtful observations do not flatter the inhabitants:

. . . there is a marked enmity towards any one who has prospered in business and apparently rising above the State of mediocrity in point of wealth.

In relation to such as come to this place from abroad, there exists apparently much jealousy lest they should take some interest in the affairs of a public nature, or in some way exert an influence for their individual benefit, as though they [the na-

tives] possessed some reserved or inherent rights which a Stranger (as they term those who gained a residence here) has not the right to interfere with. . . [It] is for the most part merely envy.

The doctor lived and practiced in Holmes Hole in sight of Eastville where boatloads of Methodists heading for camp-meeting went ashore each August, but he makes no mention of them or of the meetings. It is not that he is non-religious; he is much interested in what the denominations are doing. In 1833, two years before the first camp meeting, he was concerned when a Sabbath passed without a local service:

It is Sabbath and we have no preaching in the village [Holmes Hole] today. The only organized Societies in this place are the Methodists and Baptists and there is but one meeting house in which both Societies worship alternately, the Methodists . . . half of the time & the Baptists at present only one-third of the time. Consequently, we have no preaching a part of the time . . . the Methodists are now about building a meeting house for their own use. They have also opened a Singing School for . . . a choir of singers for the new house.

Doctor Yale was a Congregationalist, but seems to have attended either Baptist or Methodist services as there was no Congregational church in Holmes Hole. More than 10 years later, he decided to do something about it. Along with teacher Nathan Mayhew and merchant James L. Barrows, both of Holmes Hole, he raised money (much of it his own) to build the first Congregational church in the village. They also hired a minister from the mainland. This upset the other denominations so much that they tried to induce an off-Island doctor to come to the village to compete with him:

This step, viz., the organization of the [Congregational] church & building of the meeting house, has called out the most violent opposition by the Baptists & Methodists. So much so that they or individuals of the Baptist Society have advanced money to the amount of 2 or 4 hundred dollars to set up a physician in opposition to me. . .

There is other evidence of the lack of attention by non-Methodists to camp meetings. In Edgartown, David Davis, an educated man who for some years had run a private academy in

town, organized a Lyceum in 1836, the year after the campground opened. Meetings were held in the main hall of his discontinued Davis Academy.

The Lyceum movement was very popular in Massachusetts. Clubs were formed where men gathered to debate civic issues, local and national. Although exclusively for men, some Lyceums, including the one in Edgartown, allowed women to attend on occasion, but they were not permitted to enter the discussion. In our archives is a record book of the Edgartown Lyceum from 1836 to 1854. With its more than 70 members, the club's debate topics are a sampling of Island concerns.

Listed are 122 debates over nearly 20 years. Not one is about camp meetings or revivals. A few did have religious overtones. One, early in the Lyceum's life, was: "Ought an Atheist be allowed his Oath in a Court of Justice?" After the debate, the vote overwhelmingly supported the atheist. Another debate: "Have differences of opinion in politics caused more bloodshed than differences of opinion in religion?" This vote too was overwhelming, but in the negative, both showing a surprising open-mindedness to religious matters.

Another subject not debated was the desire of some Edgartown residents to secede and form a new town. In March 1836, a group of 36 men, led by Ichabod Norton of Farm Neck, petitioned the state, asking it to create a new town that would include the northern and western parts of Edgartown. The signers, the petition said, were "all incommodiously and very unhappily" living in remote sections of the shire town and had to travel long distances to attend town meetings. The new town would be named Farmington (they were mostly farmers). In Boston, the petition was turned over to legislative committees for study. Two years later, it was withdrawn without action and also without having been debated in the Lyceum.

Equally surprising is that no debates were held on the morality of slavery, a question much on the nation's mind. Frederick Douglass twice visited the Island and delivered abolitionist speeches on his way to Nantucket, but the Lyceum did not debate the issue. Nantucket Quakers actively supported abolition, but Vineyarders were lukewarm. Several debates were held on slavery-related issues, but all were on technical questions, not

on its morality. Argued was whether more slave states should be admitted into the Union; and also whether or not coastal vessels should be prohibited from carrying slaves between the states. But there were no debates on freeing the slaves.

A similar debating club, not called a Lyceum, was founded in Holmes Hole five years after the one in Edgartown. Doctor Yale mentions it, along with other news:

February 9, 1841: Some time last week there was a debating club organized in the village & last evening they held their first meeting. . . The subject for discussion was: "Ought this Island to be exempt from military duty?" It was decided by a tie vote.

There was also a meeting of the Baptist Society in which they voted to appropriate their surplus funds, about 400 dollars, to the object of building a parsonage & Vestry. . .

There appears to be quite a spirit of enterprise in getting out small vessels for [whaling in] the Atlantic Ocean. Some 2 or 3 having been bought to be fitted at Edgartown.

During 1841 and 1842, five whalers were financed with Edgartown money to chase Atlantic whales. These were smaller vessels, usually schooners, and it was hoped they would be profitable making shorter voyages than the Pacific whalers.

Whaling was the principal occupation of Island males. Starting as young as 13 or 14, they signed on as crew aboard whaleships, mostly owned in New Bedford or Nantucket. In the decade of 1810-19, twenty Islanders went whaling on New Bedford ships, nearly half of them (9) were men "of color," meaning Indians and blacks. During the next ten years, 1820-29, there were 72 males who signed on, a nearly four-fold increase (14 were of color). In the decade of the 1830s, the number dropped to 41, with 10 of color. We don't have data on crews of Vineyard-owned ships, so we don't know how many Islanders served on the vessels Doctor Yale mentioned, but very likely there were many.

As we wrote in the previous chapter, the Vineyard was not a major owner of whaleships. However, because so many of its men went whaling in vessels owned elsewhere, the Island became involved in whaling legend, famous and infamous.

In 1824, probably the most bloody whaling mutiny of all

time involved the New Bedford whaleship *Globe*. All her officers, including the master, were killed. All four were from the Vineyard: Capt. Thomas Worth, William Beetle, John Lumbert and Nathaniel Fisher. Leading the mutiny was a boatsteerer, Samuel Comstock from Nantucket, who planned to set up his own kingdom on a South Sea island, using the *Globe* as lumber to build his castle. He, too, was killed, not by fellow mutineers, but by loyal crewmen. Altogether, thirteen men were murdered, seven of them Vineyarders. This horrific tale has been told in recent books and in the *Intelligencer* so we will not re-tell it, except to emphasize its awfulness and its Vineyard connection.

Another Vineyard involvement in whaling violence was in 1842 aboard the whaleship *Sharon*. Her master, Capt. Howes Norris of Holmes Hole, was brutally murdered and his body dismembered by three crewmen, all South Sea islanders. The captain had for months been physically abusing his black steward, finally beating him to death. Three black South Sea islanders, fearful that they would be next, brutally murdered Captain Norris, while the rest of the crew and officers were off chasing whales. When the whaleboats returned, the heroic Third Mate Benjamin Clough (not a Vineyarder) managed to climb aboard the *Globe* during the night and kill two of the murderers. The story is told in Joan Druett's *In the Wake of Madness* (2003).

Less violent is a third example of the Vineyard's connection to the lore. Herman Melville, whose novel *Moby Dick* (1851) is considered literature's finest whaling story, shipped aboard the whaleship *Acushnet* of New Bedford. Her master was Valentine Pease Jr., of Edgartown. Melville's Captain Ahab, some claim, was modeled after Pease. That is unlikely, say those who knew him on land, but others point out that whaling masters often became changed individuals once at sea.

Vineyarders were aboard ships destroyed by Confederate raiders during the Civil War; some were on vessels crushed by Arctic ice at the turn of the century. Islanders were part of whaling history. These men, away from home for years at a time, weren't around to see how the Vineyard was changing in their absence. Each time they came home, they must have been astonished. Pleased or displeased? We will never know.

Many of the changes involved religion. The Congregationalists, Methodists and Baptists had become very competitive. In August 1841, Methodists, having outgrown the large meeting house they had built only a few years before (now Edgartown's Town Hall), bought some land on the opposite side of Main Street for \$700 and in two years built a new church. It was then, and is now, Edgartown's grandest structure, known as "The Old Whaling Church." Hebron Vincent explains:

. . . the [old] church building, although of medium size for the community, was quite too small. Every pew in it was occupied and twenty more were wanted. . . The whaling business, the chief interest of the place, was then good, our people were doing well, we had a large number of mechanics [he had written "carpenters," but crossed it out, replacing it with "mechanics"] in our [Methodist] Society . . . and the demand was . . . for a more commodious church building. . . Land was secured, a draft was made by Bro. Frederick Baylies, a Master builder . .

Among the many noble-hearted men who were foremost in this work was Josiah Gorham, a comparative Stranger, formerly of Nantucket, but now for quite a series of years a resident here. He was an Oil Manufacturer, a man of some wealth, yet he was not eaten up with the world. . . He was public spirited . . in the cause of education. Although he had no children to educate, and was a large taxpayer, he always favored the appropriating of liberal sums for this object. He shared largely, as did some others, the responsibilities of this new church enterprise. . .

The new church edifice – the present church – was completed in the autumn of 1843. The enterprise had been conducted by a building committee of which the venerable Thomas M. Coffin was the first named, and the company of workmen was headed by Mr. Ellis Lewis.

Hebron, who was personally involved, provides some revealing facts: (1) he credits Frederick Baylies Jr., today called the architect and builder of the church, only with offering a "draft" of the proposed building, perhaps a sketch he made based on an architectural pattern book, such as Asher Benjamin's; (2) he says that Josiah Gorham, an oil manufacturer who had moved to Edgartown from Nantucket, "shared largely" in the cost; and (3) that the church was built by a "company of

work men . . . headed by Mr. Ellis Lewis." Today, neither Gorham nor Lewis is given credit, instead we are told that the church was paid for by Edgartown whaling masters and was designed and built by Frederick Baylies Jr., architect and builder.

Grafton Norton of Edgartown was among the "some others" who helped with the financing. His contribution was a loan of \$500, at 6 percent a year interest. Signing the note, along with the generous Josiah Gorham were Jeremiah Pease, John Osborn, Thomas M. Coffin, Charles Worth, Hiram Jernegan and Frederick Baylies. The loan and all accrued interest were paid off in 1849. Most of the construction costs were paid by the sale of pews to members.

Josiah Gorham is listed in the 1850 Census as an Edgartown "oil manufacturer," 57 years old, married, with \$3200 worth of real estate, an impressive amount, although only a fraction of what Dr. Daniel Fisher owned. He was born in Barnstable, his wife in Nantucket. They had no children. An Irish maid lived with them in their Water Street home. Apparently they rented rooms to John Linton, laborer, his wife and their two children, as they are shown living in the same house.

Gorham came to Edgartown in the 1830s to start an oil and candle manufacturing business. He sold half interest in it in 1836 to Dr. Daniel Fisher. They were partners for several years until Fisher bought him out. Gorham's role in creating that enterprise has been forgotten, eclipsed by the better-known Doctor Fisher.

Evidence of the quirks in the 1850 Federal Census is that Fisher, who owned the manufacturing business at the time, is listed only as "Physician"; Gorham, who had sold his share to Fisher, is still an "Oil manufacturer." Incidentally, neither was an Islander: Gorham was born in Barnstable; Fisher in Sharon.

The 1843 Methodist church became the most impressive structure in the village (even today it overwhelms other buildings on Main Street). Handsome as it was, it didn't please all. Choir members complained that the loft from where they sang was poorly built. They petitioned the building committee in September 1843, while construction was going on, asking that more consideration be given to them:

. . . the Choir have at considerable expense, furnished their

own music, etc., one of our members having paid some thirty dollars for the use of the double bass viol, an instrument which has been of signal service to the singing . . . We also respectfully request that the carpet now in the [old] church be assigned for the gallery of the new house . . . it is much needed as the floor is made of the very poorest materials.

Edgartown was not the only Island village where Methodism was flourishing. Other societies in Chilmark, Holmes Hole, (West) Tisbury and North Tisbury were all growing. Their nightly meetings, ridiculed by traditionalists because of the shouting and wailing that went on until late, were first held in private homes, but soon they built churches. The first one up-Island came from Edgartown. When that town's Methodists moved into their new church on Main Street (today's Town Hall) in 1821, their old building was sold to the Chilmark Methodists, who took it apart, hauled it up-Island and re-assembled it. More than twenty years later, it had to be replaced. Vincent explained:

The plain, wood-colored building brought hither from Edgartown had answered as a place of worship for quite a number of years, but taking it apart for the sake of greater convenience of transportation, had operated injuriously upon it as to its durability; and now. . . the brethren there had seen that a new House must supersede it. . . In January 1843, occurred the dedication. . . Among the many who had helped in this church enterprise . . . was Capt. Charles Weeks. . . a successful commander of a whale ship . . . Retiring from the sea, he purchased a good farm in Chilmark . . . in 1837. . . He was usually the leader of religious meetings in the absence of the minister.

At Holmes Hole, the Methodists also were doing well, especially after the arrival of Rev. Edward T. Taylor, a former mariner who later became famous as the Sailor's Preacher. Although assigned to the Edgartown Methodists in the 1820s, he often preached in Holmes Hole. It was during those years that the society built its first meeting house, today's Capawock Hall.

Reverend Taylor is credited with being the first preacher to hold prayer meetings on whaleships just before they left on a voyage to call on God to bring good luck. Such meetings began, it is said, in Edgartown. Methodists would board the fitted-out vessel at the wharf to hear Reverend Taylor call for God's help

in the killing of his largest mammals. Again, Vincent:

The sermon was in Mr. Taylor's characteristic pungent style, and his prayer almost assumed the dramatic. Sending up his fervent petition for the Divine protection of his brother sailors, and a prosperous voyage, he would enter in imagination into the affrays with the big fish and ask God to direct the harpoons into the "leviathans of the deep."

Pity the whales. Nobody was praying for them.

Only in Gay Head were Methodists not the dominant sect. There, among the Indians, the Baptists reigned. But in Eastville, even before the nearby campground was created, Methodists were the leading denomination. Jeremiah Pease, their lay leader, had conducted services twice a week or more for years, traveling from Edgartown village by horse and buggy. Methodist societies also prospered on the North Shore and at Pohoganot on the South Shore. Rev. Joseph B. Brown, who was assigned to the western end of the Island in 1837, included Pohoganot in his parish. It had been a wild place, it seems:

... [he] preached at a place called "Pohogonot," a part of Edgartown about five or six miles from town. Quite a number were converted there. . . The violin and the dance, for which that section had been noted, gave place to prayer and praise to God. [*Hebron Vincent.*]

In the winter of 1852, the Edgartown Methodists were so eager to find salvation that they held the longest revival ever conducted on the Island. Prayer meetings, intense and emotional, were held in the vestry of the new church for 100 consecutive nights – more than three months of continuous exhorting. The extent to which the village was emotionally involved is described by church historian Vincent:

A sea captain who was keeping a bowling alley was so powerfully convicted that he declared to some of the young men – his customers – he should quit the business and that he was going that evening to the Methodist Vestry and . . . ask the Christians to pray for him . . . the young men, quite incredulous, went to the meeting to see if the Captain would keep his promise, which he did, and he said to them, "No more bowling alley!"

A few evenings later, while a dance in the Hall nearby was progressing, several of the young men . . . left the dance, went

to the meeting and came forward for prayers. And the dance, which was intended to extend far into the night, as usual, was broken up at ten o'clock. . .

But the most marked case of all was a gentleman of high respectability who had been a skeptic. He was Principal of the Dukes County Academy in West Tisbury. . . He was induced to attend the Methodist prayer meeting to be held in the Vestry . . . he went voluntarily to the "anxious seat" where he soon kneeled. Immediately, he was overpowered with mental agony, insomuch that he felt sensations of suffocation, which led him for relief to tear off his cravat. For some half hour, he writhed in the greatest distress . . . "prayer ardent" being offered up in his behalf. He then became calm and soon arose as though into a new world. . . he has since held various business relations in different parts of the country, and a responsible position to which he was appointed by the President of the United States, [but] he cherishes a fresh and grateful remembrance of the . . . wonderful change which [took place] in that vestry. . . The gentleman was Freeman N. Blake Esq.

Mr. Blake was principal of the academy for only two years, 1852 to 1854. It was during his first winter on the Island that he was "born again." He became a distinguished lawyer and served for a time as United States Consul to Canada.

Readers will recall that it was also during this prolonged revival that Jeremiah Pease's wife became very ill, perhaps being emotionally upset by Jeremiah's total commitment (he was chorister and exhorter) during those 100 nights. Jeremiah never mentions whether his wife, from a steadfast Congregationalist family, ever became a Methodist. As we have seen, their son, Capt. William C. Pease of the U. S. Revenue Service, wrote, after learning of his mother's illness:

I wish a Methodist Minister had never seen Martha's Vineyard. . . the whole Town seem to be running mad. . . and act just like so many Block Islanders. . . they seem like so many raving Hottentots . . . [howling] like so many Coyotes.

No matter what Captain Pease might have wished, the Methodists had conquered the Vineyard.

While all this religious activity was going on, important changes of other kinds were occurring. During the 1830s, the first

steamboat began regular ferry service, replacing the sailing packets. It was not a Vineyard enterprise. The Nantucket steamboat *Telegraph* began making regular runs, three times a week, between that island and New Bedford, with stops at Holmes Hole and Woods Hole. In 1842, the Nantucket company built a larger and faster steamboat, *Massachusetts*, for the New Bedford run. Edgartown residents had long petitioned the Nantucket company to include a stop at their village and in 1843 one was added. But despite the faster boat, running time to New Bedford was extended so much that Nantucket residents complained and the Edgartown stop was eliminated.

The steamboat allowed a traveler to leave Boston by train at 8:30 a.m., catch the ferry at New Bedford, and arrive at Holmes Hole shortly after noon (today, it takes about as long). That could be done only every other day as the steamer did not make a daily round trip. On alternate days, a sailing packet filled in, as we learn from the journal of Dr. Albert C. Koch, a German paleontologist, who went to Gay Head in 1844 searching for fossils:

Monday, July 22. At eight o'clock in the morning, I departed from Boston by train to go via New Bedford to Martha's Vineyard. . . I arrived [at New Bedford] at 10:30 and right away had my things brought . . . to a small dainty, four-masted ship which connects this place and the town of Holmes Hole . . . a steamboat also travels the same route, [but] it runs only three times a week. . . At eleven o'clock, our boat set sail; the crew was very small . . . two very deft men, of whom the older was introduced to me as the captain and the younger as the mate. . . we covered the 28 English miles to Holmes Hole in four hours, landing at three o'clock. I had fun watching the captain and the mate alternate at the helm, and when both were needed to change the sails, how they fastened the rudder with a rope and left it alone.

Residents of Edgartown, proud of their shire-town prestige, did not like having to travel by horse and buggy to Holmes Hole to get the steamboat. A group of them put up money to build the Island's first steamboat. On August 25, 1845, the *Naushon* arrived to begin service between Edgartown and New Bedford, with a stop at Woods Hole. No stop was made at Holmes Hole.

Jeremiah Pease recorded the town's reaction:

August 26, [1845]. Steam Boat *Naushon*, Capt. H. W. Smith, arrives from N. York having been built there for this place. She

being the first Steam Boat ever owned here, quite a rejoicing with many on the acc't.

August 27. S. B. *Naushon* sails for N. Bedford with 320 passengers, principally from this Town. P.M. the wind changes to N.E. suddenly with rain, a Gale for a few hours. The Steamboat proves very satisfactory on acc't. of her speed and moddle [model--design] in a heavy sea.

Steamboat service between Edgartown and New Bedford was not profitable and after three years it ended. The *Naushon* was sold to a group of newspapers in New York and renamed *News Boy* because she met incoming vessels off Sandy Hook and sped in with the latest newspapers from Europe.

Edgartown swallowed its pride and again begged the Nantucket steamboat owners to include a stop there. It never happened. Soon Nantucket steamers ended the run to New Bedford, going instead to Hyannis to connect with the railroad to Boston.

When a branch line was laid to Fair Haven from the Boston-Hyannis Railroad, some businessmen there thought it would be good for business to run a ferry to Edgartown. They financed a steamboat, *Metacomet*, to begin service in the fall of 1854. Suddenly, the Nantucket company decided it would add an Edgartown stop to its Hyannis run. This sudden change caused the *Vineyard Gazette's* editor to explode:

Noble Steamboat Enterprise!!!

This is about as cool a piece of impudence as it ever was our fortune to record. During the past five years we have been without direct steamboat communication with New Bedford and all of our efforts to induce the Nantucket Steamboat Company to cause their boat to stop here have been treated with the most marked contempt. . . Some enterprising capitalists abroad [in Fairhaven], determined to build a fast sailing, commodious steamer expressly to accommodate the whole Vineyard people . . . [and she] will soon commence her trips between this place and Fair Haven, touching at Holmes Hole and Woods Hole. . .

The [Nantucket] boat is not wanted here and will not be patronized. . . We should be surprised, indeed, to know that a single Edgartonian would take passage on the Nantucket boat. . . Our people know that the object . . . [is to] cause the withdrawal of the boat built expressly for our accommodation, and then leave us to whistle over deserted hopes.

When the *Metacomet* began the run to Fairhaven in October 1854 the *Gazette* puffed with pride, exclaiming that three days a week, you could now leave Edgartown at 7:45 a.m., connect with the Boston train in Fairhaven at 11:20 a.m., and be in Boston early in the afternoon. That first month, more than 1200 persons took her to Fairhaven. It was, the *Gazette* said, "A good beginning." In December, the cheer-leading editor said business "had far exceeded the anticipations of the parties interested."

But despite the *Gazette's* cheer-leading, the *Metacomet*, like the earlier *Naushon*, was not profitable. To attract more patrons, fares were reduced to \$1 from Edgartown to Fairhaven and 75 cents from Holmes Hole. That was still not cheap; one dollar was what a school teacher made in a day. If it took a school teacher's daily wage to get to the mainland, few Vineyarders could afford to go. *Metacomet* continued to lose money and in 1857 the service was abandoned.

Again, Edgartown had no ferry. The *Eagle's Wing*, a discarded Nantucket steamer, was purchased to make the run to New Bedford. She had been sailing between Nantucket and New Bedford, but the route from Nantucket to Hyannis to Boston had put her out of business. Edgartown swallowed its pride and put Nantucket's cast-off into service.

That swallowed pride got a much-needed boost in 1846 when Edgar Marchant began publishing *The Vineyard Gazette*, the Island's first newspaper, in the shire town. Marchant, an Edgartown native, was born in 1814. He left the Island as a young man to learn the newspaper business. We have little information, but he may have started at the *Gloucester Telegraph*, at least so the *Gazette* files indicate. He also seems to have worked in New York City and it may have been while there that he met and married Janet Turner, a Scottish immigrant. Their first child was born in New York in 1844, so it seems he was there then. Two years later, he returned to Edgartown, a 32-year-old eager to own his own newspaper.

Janet's brother, a printer, was the paper's first typesetter. It seems likely that the two men had worked for the same newspaper in New York. *The Vineyard Gazette* began publishing each Friday in 1846 (its name then included "The"). The weekly, now simply *Vineyard Gazette*, still comes out every Friday, the oldest

continuous business in the village. Marchant quickly recognized where the Island was headed. In October 1847, long before summer visitors were arriving in volume, he predicted that the Vineyard would soon become the East Coast's "Watering Place."

At about the time the first *Gazette* was published, there was another boost for Edgartown's pride: the Methodist camp meeting returned to East Chop. It had taken only one meeting at Westport Point to convince mainland Methodists that the "old, old story" was still worth telling, as the hymn says.

With the return of the camp meeting in August 1846, the Methodists were so sure it would stay that they signed a ten-year lease on the campground. A roomier preachers' stand was built, plus more benches for the congregation (the new benches had backrests). Improved transportation, by steamboat and train, helped increase attendance. Day-trippers began pouring in on camp-meeting Sundays, enjoying the voyage and the preaching.

Not every ship brought happy passengers. Some were filled with the sick and the dying. In early 1849, one such vessel, carrying Irish immigrants to Boston, anchored in Holmes Hole. Her passengers were seriously ill with ship fever (typhus) brought on by unsanitary conditions during the long voyage. Her captain called for help. Doctor Yale was rowed out to the disease-laden vessel. He could do little for the suffering passengers, but the visit did much to him. He told his wife soon after the ship left, when he began to weaken with fever: "I believe, Mother, that something is due that ship."

Within a month, he was dead of "ship fever." The ship had collected her dues. He was only 47 years old. So beloved was the village doctor that as his coffin was being carried to the village cemetery on the shoulders of pall bearers, a group of townspeople stopped the procession and asked for one last look at their doctor. The coffin was opened to allow the grieving citizens to pay their final respects to their doctor and friend.

Doctor Yale had moved to Holmes Hole immediately after finishing Harvard Medical School. He had not intended for it to become his lifelong practice, but it did. When Dr. Daniel Fisher, who had preceded Yale as the village doctor, married Grace C. Coffin in 1829, she persuaded Fisher to move to Edgartown, where she lived. The village fathers of Holmes Hole wrote to

Harvard, seeking a replacement. Doctor Yale, a new graduate, accepted their offer and arrived in Holmes Hole aboard the packet from Boston in July 1829. Taking care of the residents of Holmes Hole became his life's work. He married a much younger woman, the daughter of the widowed village innkeeper (their son, Leroy Junior, became a distinguished children's doctor in New York and a highly regarded artist, whose etchings still receive acclaim). As we have already seen, the elder Yale was one of the founders of the Congregational Church in Holmes Hole.

The two doctors, Yale and Fisher, became friends. It was Doctor Fisher who took care of Yale in his final illness. By this time, Fisher had become the Island's wealthiest man, not from doctor's fees, but from his entrepreneurial skills. As noted above, in 1836 he purchased the Edgartown whale-oil manufactory and candle factory from Josiah Gorham. He owned a bakery that made hardtack for whalers and built a grist mill in North Tisbury where he dammed a stream to provide waterpower. When Island farmers couldn't provide enough grain to meet his needs, he imported it from the mainland.

Fisher's financial success was helped by his marriage to Grace Coffin. Her father, well-to-do himself, had given the couple land on Main Street, Edgartown, on which the Doctor Fisher House (impressive still) was built in 1842. Today's Memorial Wharf on Dock Street and the adjacent land, extending along the waterfront towards the lighthouse, were owned by Doctor Fisher.

He certainly couldn't have done that from doctor's fees. By 1850, there were eleven physicians on the Island, five of them in Edgartown. The other four besides Fisher were J. Hovey Lucas, John Pierce, Clement F. Shiverick and a surgeon/dentist, Joseph R. Dillingham.

Six years later, Dr. Edwin Mayberry arrived in Edgartown as surgeon, perhaps the Island's first specialist. The *Gazette* reported a major procedure he performed in 1856 on Chappaquiddick Island. The patient, Margaret Peters, 60, underwent "probably one of the most critical [operations] ever undertaken in this vicinity." Her breast was removed, along with "a six-pound cancerous tumor." Doctor/dentist Dillingham administered the anesthesia, no doubt the simple application of chloroform.

The operation took place in the patient's home, as did most medical care then. She didn't live long after the surgery, it seems. In March 1857 the legislature authorized payment for her medical care, something usually done to settle accounts after death.

Margaret Peters, is listed in an 1823 census of Indians on Chappaquiddick by missionary Frederick Baylies as Peggy Peters, 35, half Indian, one-quarter negro and one-quarter white. She never married. The 1861 Indian Wampanoag census has no Margaret Peters, so it is likely that she died soon after the surgery.

So many Irish were now coming into the country as well as to the Vineyard that hysteria began to develop over their religion, Roman Catholicism. A new political party, its members drawn mostly from the Whigs, was formed. Called the "Native American Party," it was better known as the "Know Nothing party." Members, unwilling to admit to being anti-Catholic, when asked about the party position, would reply: "I know nothing about it."

On the Vineyard, the Whigs, who for years had dominated Island politics, were soon absorbed by Know Nothings. In 1854, the *Gazette* seemed to favor the new party when it warned of a developing world-wide conspiracy:

A Catholic priest arrived in town on Tuesday and took lodging at the Edgartown Hotel. He came here to look after a "TWIGG" [sic] of "Know Nothings" and it is said, obtained the names of every member. . . soon [to] be published to the world, under Catholic auspices.

One month later, Editor Marchant, still favoring the Know Nothings, again warned of the threat of Catholicism:

It may interest some of our people to know that the Catholics are trying to acquire an influence in Dukes County. A Catholic priest has commenced his regular visits to our Island. Last week, he visited Holmes' Hole and Edgartown, pardoning the sins of all the Irish population, granting indulgences, and praying souls through purgatory — for a consideration. There are about fifty Catholic girls in the places named, nearly all of whom, it is believed, paid tribute to him while he was here. One girl said to a Protestant friend that she should give five dollars to have her sins pardoned, and seven dollars to have her mother relieved from purgatory.

We are informed that, at a moderate estimate, the priest re-

ceived not less than 200 dollars during his visit here. We are sorry that these girls live and labor under such an infatuation . . . [that] a man . . . [would] impose upon poor, ignorant and deluded girls.

The priest while here also performed the Catholic marriage ceremony for a couple who were married some thirteen months since by a Protestant clergyman. Mr. Jose Silva was remarried to his wife, Mary . . .

. . . it becomes the Protestant churches to awaken to the dangers that surround them, so that they may be unitedly prepared to stand firm against the foe.

The anti-Catholic movement quickly gained adherents on the Island. The Know Nothings dominated the 1854 election. Henry J. Gardner, their candidate for governor, received more than twice as many votes as the Whig and Democratic candidates combined. Only in Chilmark were the Know Nothings denied a majority, but they did receive 20 votes, the same as the Democrats (the Whigs got only a handful). In the next election, the Know Nothings easily carried Chilmark.

Marchant's warnings about the papal threat turned out to have been idle. It took another 25 years before there was a Roman Catholic service on the Vineyard. It was in 1880 and conducted by a visiting "mission priest" who came to Cottage City (now Oak Bluffs) from New Bedford. The mission from off-Island continued for another twenty years until Cottage City Catholics built the Sacred Heart Church. Their first full-time resident priest, Rev. Patrick E. McGee, moved to the Island in 1903. Soon after arriving, he wrote to George A. Hough editor of the *New Bedford Standard Times* to thank him for the letters of introduction he had written to Island residents. Hough, father of Henry Beetle Hough, who later took over the *Gazette*, was a summer resident at his camp called Fish Hook in North Tisbury.

In his thank-you letter to Hough, Reverend McGee describes his 1903 visit to *Gazette* editor Charles H. Marchant. His welcome was a far cry from what he would have been given by the previous Editor Marchant, Edgar, fifty years earlier:

. . . I went to Edgartown yesterday and saw Mr. Merchant [sic]. . . I am receiving a cordial reception from every one and marks of esteem. The Catholics here are delighted to have a resident priest. The old folks were praying to have a priest near at their

death. . . The folks here are all used to nautical terms. I see a lurking smile at times when I ask, "What do you mean by that?"

Twenty years later, two more Catholic churches were organized: St. Augustine's in Vineyard Haven; and St. Elizabeth's in Edgartown. By this time, the Island's worry about a papal conquest had subsided. But back in 1854, it had been real. Catholics paid the price of prejudice, as had Quakers 150 years before when a few of them came to the Vineyard from Nantucket.

Those early Irish "domestic servants," as well as the handful of Portuguese mariners like Jose Silva, who had settled here from the Azores, would have been thrilled to know that finally the Island had a resident priest, something they had only dreamed of.

Jose Silva was not the first Portuguese Vineyarder. We don't know when he arrived, but he is not listed in the 1850 Census, which shows only three heads of households from the Azores. Two are named Sylvia, but seem unrelated, living in different houses: one is Francis J. Sylvia, 40, born in Pico, Azores, who had married Jane S. Dunham of Edgartown in 1838; the other is John Sylvia, 37, born in Fayal, Azores. The third is Manuel De Susan, 41, born in the Western Islands (which includes the Azores). All are mariners, probably whalers, who settled on the Vineyard and married Edgartown women.

Francis J. Sylvia was the most successful of the three. It is impossible to track his career precisely, but we know that for some reason he returned to the Azores in 1841, where he ran an advertisement in a Pico newspaper in November that year:

Notice to Whalers

The subscriber having lately removed with his family from Edgartown, Mass., to Magdalen, of Pico, opposite Fayal, (Western Islands) hereby gives notice to all Vessels touching at the Islands, that he is prepared and will furnish on short notice, such Fruit and Vegetables as the Islands afford and at the lowest possible prices.

Francis J. Sylvia, Western Islands

He didn't stay in Pico long. In 1841, daughter Mary Jane was born there, but a second child, Susannah, was born in Edgartown in 1843. In 1849, Emma Retina was also born in Edgartown. The 1850 Census lists the entire family living with boat builder Joseph Dunham, Jane's father, in Edgartown. Mary Jane, 8, is listed as Mary C. Nunes, probably her father's name when born in Pico.

Back on the Vineyard, Silvia (often spelled "Silva") again went whaling. No ordinary seaman, he was first officer of the whaleship *Governor Troup* and took command in Honolulu in May 1845 when her master died. On his next voyage, in 1859, he was master of the whaler *Atlantic* of New Bedford, but he left in mid-voyage (usually that means sickness).

He is not in the 1860 Census; the illness probably was fatal. His wife had died in 1856. Daughters Susannah and Emma Retina are still living with their grandparents, the Dunhams. Susanna, only 16 years old, is shown as owning \$1400 in real estate and \$300 in personal property, no doubt inherited from her parents. Mary J., 18, now uses the name Silvea and is living with the family of Charles W. Pease, a prosperous Edgartown farmer.

The 1850 Census shows that most of the Island's population were white, Protestant and of English ancestry, much as they had been from the first settlement. Of the 380 heads of families in Edgartown (which then included Oak Bluffs), 295 had been born on the Vineyard, another 75 of the heads of households were Americans born off-Island. Only 10 had been born in a foreign country. Three of the 10 were the Portuguese men from the Azores named above. The other seven were from Canada, England, Scotland, Norway, New Zealand and West Indies.

Among the 75 Americans who had been born in the United States, but off-Island, many worked in skilled occupations. Included were most of the Island's ministers, half of its teachers, all its physicians, several coopers, coastal pilots and shoemakers, plus a blacksmith, a barber, a baker and a musician.

In addition to the ten foreigners who were heads of families, there was a small number of foreign-born residents, unmarried, living with local families. Most were from Ireland: 8 single women, working as domestic servants (average age, 24) plus 2 unmarried Irishmen, 28 and 26, both laborers.

Whaleships had much more diversity than the Vineyard. Legend has it that they were the nation's first racially integrated workplaces and certainly foc'sles did house a variety of nationalities. As whaling voyages lengthened, masters were forced to replace crewmen who jumped ship in distant places. There was another factor, as Elmo P. Hohman explains in *The American Whaleman*. Yankee males had lost interest in whaling. He makes

those "who go down to the sea in ships" seem less than our best:

More and more [in the mid-1800s] the intelligent and ambitious young American refused to go to sea, even in New England, and least of all on a whaler. This drift away from the sea began as early as the thirties, was greatly accelerated during the fifties by the lure of California gold . . . as the better types of Americans forsook the forecastles, their bunks were filled by criminal or lascivious adventurers, by a motley collection of South Sea Islanders known as Kanakas, by cross-breed negroes and Portuguese from the Azores and the Cape Verdes, and by the outcasts and renegades from . . . the Old World and the New. . .

By 1880 the dregs of American-born men comprised only one-third of the 3896 hands who manned the New Bedford whaling fleet. Another third was made up of Portuguese; and the remainder included negroes, Kanakas and scattered individuals from most of the great ports of Europe and of Asia. . .

Like the changing forecastles, the Vineyard was changing. Islanders were leaving for a better future – or so they hoped. Many farmers, whose families were expanding, saw a bleak future on an island with limited land. New farms were not being formed. The land just wasn't available. A number moved to where land was abundant and cheap – sometimes even free, as the federal government encouraged new settlements. Many went to Maine, so many they named their town, New Vineyard. Others settled in Ohio, some went as far west as Iowa.

In most cases those who left were descendants of the early settlers. Rarely did "persons of color" leave. They didn't have the money. Owning land was something they only could dream of. Most Indians, now virtually all mixed with blacks and Portuguese, were living on "Indian Lands," where they were denied the vote and public services were primitive, if they existed at all. They had become wards of the state, isolated in rural ghettos. The only English on Gay Head were the families of the lighthouse keepers (it was not until 1920 that the government finally named a Gay Head Indian, Charles W. Vanderhoop, to be keeper).

Gay Head in 1844 was a remote, desolate place, according to Doctor Koch, the German paleontologist, mentioned earlier, who had gone there seeking fossils in the clay:

July 23rd. After ten o'clock, I started my journey to Gay Head

[from Holmes Hole]. . . a distance of 18 English miles; the first 11 miles of the way can be traveled without risk by carriage and I rode the stretch with a man who twice a week, carries the mail in a one-horse carriage. . . The part of the Island I had to traverse on foot was very barren . . . no wonder that our white fellow citizens left this desolate region as the last refuge to the poor Indians. . . I left the carriage at the last house [probably at Nashaquitsa], which was surrounded by a few trees . . . from here . . . only bare hills . . . frequently broken by ocean inlets and small sand steppes . . . separated into irregular fields by man-made walls of field stones . . . After a very arduous march I arrived at the house of the old Indian who, I had been told, would, for pay, give lodging to strangers . . . [I was provided] a very decent room in which a large, genuine American double bed played the leading role . . . I ate and drank better than I could have expected.

The German fossil-hunter's journal provides an eloquent description of Gay Head's colorful cliffs, 160 years ago:

. . . on the shores of Gay Head, all colors of the rainbow show themselves in such a brilliance and such a beautiful fusion as only the richest fantasy of a painter could imagine . . . the landscape takes on an almost unearthly and magical appearance which probably has no equal in the whole world. . . the red color plays a leading role . . . from a large mass of the best red ochre, which is found here in such quantity that in stormy weather the waves wash it off so that the ocean is dyed blood red for one English mile . . . The white comes first from an alabaster-white special sand . . . which in appearance has much similarity to kitchen salt, secondly, from a very beautiful white pipe clay, which is found in abundance and sold by the Indians to the whites for clay pipes.

Koch was at Gay Head for more than a week, hiring Indians to dig the fossils. They found 15 sharks' teeth and a few vertebrae he thought to be from "saurians" [dinosaurs]. In the next week:

. . . a boat arrived to take on a load of white clay, which is used in great quantities by alum factories as well as for [clay pipes]. . . this clay is regarded as public property, and every inhabitant of Gay Head who is willing to dig and help load the ship receives a part of the profit, which for these people is not small. A ton . . . of this clay is sold for three dollars, and a man can, without much exertion, produce a ton a day. The ship which is now here loads approximately 90 tons. . .

Not long after Koch left, thousands of men began digging,

not for fossils at Gay Head, but for gold in California. Among them were many Vineyarders. The Gold Rush of '49 began after a mechanic building a sawmill for Johann Sutter on the Sacramento River in California in early 1848 spotted gold nuggets in the raceway diverting water from a mountain stream to the mill.

Quickly, the country became infected by the gold bug. The Vineyard was no exception. The first of the Island's gold-seekers, 16 men, sailed from Holmes Hole, February 7, 1849, aboard the schooner *Rialto*. They were followed by many more. Vineyarders, joined by off-Islanders, organized mining companies, buying or chartering vessels to take them to California. In all, six Vineyard ships made the long trip around South America. Two others, from Nantucket and Mattapoisett, also carried Island Argonauts to the gold fields. More than 200 Vineyard men left in the first nine months of 1849, surely the Island's largest short-term exodus. More than ever, the Vineyard suffered a male shortage.

These were not only adventurous single men. Among them were responsible heads of families, eager to strike it rich in California, seeing little chance of doing so at home. A sampling of those aboard the *Splendid* (Dukes County Mining Company) and the *Walter Scott* (Edgartown Mining Company) shows that the average age of officers and directors was 41 years, with 7 out of 10 of them heads of families. The average age of ordinary members was younger: 34 years, with half of them heads of households.

These mining companies had strict rules: no drinking, no swearing. All the gold discovered would be shared equally. Decisions would be made by majority vote, even as to who would run the ship. There would be a strict observance of the Sabbath, no work would be done on that day. A letter in the *Gazette*, May 10, 1850, written aboard the ship *Splendid* en route to California, describes the religious dedication of those heading for gold:

At the ringing of the bell on a pleasant Sabbath morning, about all the crew are to be found assembled on the quarter deck, attending meeting; and it is truly a scene of deep interest, and well worthy of recording, that on the deck of one lonely bark, upon the deep, 60 to 70 men, neatly attired in their sailor suits, listen to the instructions from God's word.

Things changed once they got to the gold fields. Most companies soon disbanded and rules were forgotten, including obser-

vance of the Sabbath. The Dukes County Mining Company was broken up as soon as the *Splendid* arrived in San Francisco, each member paying the captain \$100 for his passage (some who signed notes to pay later failed to do so, resulting in a number of lawsuits when they got home). Members, freed of communal commitments, took off for the mines as individuals, any gold they found would be all theirs, not to be shared.

Cyrus Pease, son of Jeremiah and twin brother of William who had been so critical of the Methodists, was secretary of the Edgartown Mining company that sailed on the ship *Walter Scott* on May 7, 1850. A talented artist, Cyrus made a number of sketches both during the voyage and in California. One sketch of the *Walter Scott*, he titled "Shippe of fooles," emphasizing his disillusionment. When the *Walter Scott* arrived in San Francisco, Capt. Henry Pease 2nd agreed to let certain members buy their way out of the company. Cyrus did so. He headed for the hills, as he wrote to Lucy Crane of Vermont, whom he hoped to marry when he returned, his pockets filled with gold:

I left for the mines with all the materials for comfort, viz., a coffee pot, frying pan and some lucifer matches. . . . Some nights, while on the journey it was so pleasant that I did not even pitch my tent, but wrapping my blanket about me, I threw myself upon the ground and slept like an Indian. Upon our arrival at the mines we commenced building a stone house . . . which looked like something between a bear's den and the cell of St. Anthony. After digging some gold, I returned again to our ship after my brother [John A. Pease], according to promise. There, learned that the Edgartown Mining (or *undermining*) Company had disbanded . . . the rainy season . . . rendered a return to the mines impracticable and I determined to remain . . . in San Francisco.

John has not succeeded very well at the mines and, from the experience of both of us, I fear that even the *reasonable* expectations which we entertained at starting from home will not be realized. The accounts which [we] then had of the mines were much exaggerated . . . A few were successful and their good fortune was trumpeted the length and breadth of the country by those interested in the influx of population. Benton, Fremont & Co., have much to answer for . . . [Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton was the great-uncle of Vineyard artist, the late Tom Benton, and an early booster of California, as was his son-in-law, Capt. John C. Frémont, its appointed governor in 1846-7.]

Soon, Cyrus returned to Edgartown only to learn that Lucy, with whom he had fallen in love while painting her portrait a few years earlier, had married a St. Louis doctor. Years later, Lucy said of Cyrus: "the poor fellow went to California in '49 and was swallowed up in the crowds of those who failed to draw a prize."

Disappointed in love, he joined the U. S. Revenue Marine Service, rose to captain and retired in 1877. He continued his occasional painting, never married, and was considered somewhat eccentric, a characteristic considerably aggravated by his fondness for alcohol. He died in 1887.

The *Walter Scott* was the second mining-company ship to sail from the Vineyard. A short time earlier, the brig *Vesta* had left, taking the Winnegahee Trading and Mining Company with (among others) 22 Vineyard men, all from Tisbury and Chilmark except one from Edgartown. The *Walter Scott*, with 35 Edgartown men plus 9 from other Island towns, sailed soon after, followed by the *Sarah* and *Splendid*, both carrying mostly Edgartown men. Others went to California in the schooner *Two Brothers* of Nantucket, the bark *Oscar* from Mattapoisett, and the schooner *L. M. Yale* of Holmes Hole, named for Doctor Yale who died before the schooner, which he helped finance, was launched.

Most Vineyard men did not stay in California long. They soon discovered that gold was not everywhere, but sickness was. At least twelve died while in California or while going or returning. Many returned sick, with little financial gain. On January 2, 1851, Frederick Baylies Jr., in Edgartown, wrote to his son, Henry, then in Alabama, about some of the returning '49s:

. . . S. Stewart, John A., Frederick and I. D. Pease Jr., have arrived at last. They left San Francisco about the middle of Sept. [1850] in a sailing vessel . . . John A. Pease is quite sick, complaint Fever & Ague, Frederick [Pease] has been quite sick, but is better. . . What they have made I know not, but think they have had enough of California.

One Islander who surely must have had enough of California was Clement Vincent of Edgartown. He had accumulated \$4000 in the gold fields, but all of it had been stolen.

Some did make money. One who claimed to have struck it rich without lifting a shovel in the mines was Timothy C. Osborn, 22, who had left on the *Splendid* as a passenger, not a mem-

ber of the mining company. In California, he started a store, selling essential goods to the miners and soon became rich, or so the *Gazette* reported. Rich or not, he was back in Edgartown in December 1850, working as a clerk.

As early as July 1850, the *Gazette* reported that five Gold Rushers had already returned. Among them were Charles Vincent with \$1500 in gold and Ichabod Luce, who brought home \$3000, plus another \$5000, the paper said, he had carried home for men still in the diggings. If true, and there is no reason for doubt, these are large sums to have earned in so short a time. School teachers worked 10 years to make \$3000.

Most, however, came home disappointed and broke; some did not come back at all. Henry Baylies, who did not go, had commented on those deaths in his diary months before:

February 15, 1850. Letters from California are very discouraging. Disappointments, disease & terrific suffering & death heads the list. Thus the love of Gold hath allured, ensnared & destroyed those souls who by economical industry might have lived very happily with their families for years.

An article in the *Gazette*, signed by "Caution," was printed shortly after the ship *Walter Scott* left with the Edgartown Mining Company. The writer prophesized (correctly, it turned out) that the men would be lucky to come home with enough to repay what they spent getting there. Another letter writer responded critically, giving an account of the economic conditions on the Island in 1850:

. . . the writer ["Caution"] supposes the *Walter Scott's* company will obtain enough "to pay their debts" and have a *little* left to start upon. . . permit us to ask if *that* is more than some of them would have done if they had remained at home. . . Even the carpenters who are here [in Edgartown] have little to do. . . Coopers [complain] that casks are obtained elsewhere and boat builders are idle, while the packets tow [into here] boats from New Bedford. The baker, too, has complaints . . .

What inducement have you to remain here on this island? We can see none for any man who has not enough of "this world's goods." . . What encouragement any one can find to remain here we cannot perceive. Is the whaling interest alarmed, lest *others* should obtain something?

The 1850 Census gives us a skewed view of how many men

were employed at the time on the Island. Many men who were in California, or going to California, when the census was taken are listed as mariners, their previous occupation, not as gold seekers. Of 1463 men in the census, 686 are shown as mariners, nearly half; 342 call themselves farmers; 117, laborers. These three occupations, mariners, farmers and laborers, account for more than three-quarters of the adult male population.

We don't know exactly how many of the total were in California in 1850, but certainly it was more than 200, most shown in the census as mariners. Also listed as though they were still on the Island are 71 carpenters and cabinet makers, 14 tailors, 14 coopers, 10 boat builders, 19 blacksmiths and 10 physicians. We know that many of them were in California, not working on the Island in the occupations they had before the Gold Rush.

Census data do tell us how few "industries" there were where men and women could find work. The largest, employing 14 men, was the candle works and oil manufactory in Edgartown, now owned by Dr. Daniel Fisher. (Fisher is now the richest man on the Island with real estate valued at \$18,700.) The brick works in Chilmark, owned by Smith and Barrows, had 11 men on the payroll. In (West) Tisbury, Thomas Bradley's woolen mill on Mill Pond employed 4 men and 3 women, producing 7000 yards of satin and 9000 yards of kersey a year. Charles Cottle's tannery in Holmes Hole had 3 male employees. A boot and shoe maker in Holmes Hole and a paint mill in Chilmark, each had one worker. Also listed in the census as "industries" were four whaleships sailing out of Holmes Hole and one more out of Edgartown, plus six mackerel vessels, two out of Holmes Hole and four out of Edgartown. A land-bound fishing company was at the herring run at Mattakesett Creek, which in season hired 8 men to catch and ship 1250 pounds of herring.

Inhabitants who lived in the Indian Lands were not included in the census. However, four Gay Head Indians did make it. They sailed for California as crew members on the Edgartown ship *Splendid* with the Dukes County Mining Company and therefore are listed as Edgartown residents: William Jeffers, Paul Cuff, Levi Cuff and Hebron Wansley, all from Gay Head.

Whalers, already having trouble filling their holds with oil, were further hurt as gold tempted men to jump ship and head for

the diggings. It is not surprising that whalers went. They were gamblers at heart. Nobody would go chasing whales for four years with no guarantee of pay if he was not a gambler. It was inevitable that when the odds of winning suddenly looked better in the gold fields, they would switch tables in the casino:

When gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in California in 1848, whaleships saw a wholesale defection of their crews – and sometimes their captains as well – as soon as they docked in San Francisco. (*Men and Whales*, Richard Ellis, 1991, p. 166.)

But the Gold Rush wasn't the sole cause of the decline of whaling: over-killing had made it inevitable.

According to historian Starbuck, of the 68 whalers scheduled to return to New Bedford and Fairhaven in 1858, more than half, 44 of them, had lost money. The whale fishery's total loss that year was "at least \$1,000,000." After years of profits, whalers had so depleted the whale population that ships had to go farther, stay out longer and yet often came home with less oil.

The sperm-oil catch dropped 50 percent in each of the two decades between 1846 and 1866. In the first, 1846 to 1855, it fell from 160,000 barrels to 81,000. In the decade ending in 1866, it fell to 37,000 barrels. The second decade, of course, was affected by the destruction of many whaleships during the Civil War by the Confederate raiders *Alabama* and *Shenandoah*. But the decline had started in the 1840s.

The approach of the Civil War had another impact as the northeastern states became hotbeds of abolitionists. The first anti-slavery society was formed in Philadelphia in 1833. In a few years, it had spread the word so far that even the Vineyard heard it. Jeremiah Pease wrote of an anti-slavery preacher at Eastville:

March 4, 1838. Went to East Side, Holmes Hole . . . Slavery preaching at evening.

Although Jeremiah doesn't give any details, it would seem likely that the preacher was an abolitionist, seeking followers. As is often the case through history, the Island wasn't eager for drastic changes. Whites were comfortable with their relationship with "persons of color." Occasionally, a black preacher would be allowed to speak at camp meeting, seeking contributions to help some black mother buy her child out of slavery, but that was about the extent of the Island's enthusiasm for

abolition. Black singing groups would sometimes perform in the villages, but such happenings were few. Blacks were rarely in attendance at public gatherings and did not demand access. Being comfortable was easier than being defiant, both sides thought.

One Island resident even flaunted his pro-slavery beliefs. He was John Presbury Norton of Lambert's Cove, a man important enough to have been Collector of Customs in Edgartown from 1830 to 1842. He brazenly petitioned the Massachusetts General Court in 1849 to pass a law so he could own slaves:

February 10. Petition to the Massachusetts Senate and House by John P. Norton of Tisbury requesting that a law be passed "permitting him to import from the slave-holding States one or more slaves, and hold them in perpetual servitude, for the purpose of cultivating his farm."

State legislators were shocked. Who was this Island antediluvian asking them to vote to allow him to buy slaves in a state where it had been illegal since 1783? It was insulting:

A motion to commit this petition to the Committee on the Judiciary "excited some debate, several members contending that it was an insult to the House and that the petitioner should have leave to withdraw."

We have seen no evidence that Islanders recoiled at the insensitivity of Norton's petition, suggesting that on the Island there was no strong opposition to slavery in the mid-1800s. Members of minorities, Indians and blacks, were opposed, as one would expect, but they were not very vocal, nor influential.

In New Bedford and Nantucket, abolitionists were more active. There was an Underground Railway "station" in New Bedford where fugitive slaves, usually arriving as stowaways on coastal vessels, were helped to get to Canada and freedom.

Such incidents occurred rarely on the Vineyard, as one did in September 1854 at Holmes Hole. A black man, said to be a fugitive slave, escaped during the night from the vessel on which he had stowed away in Florida. The captain, who had discovered him during the voyage, stopped at Holmes Hole to turn him over to a customs officer. Unfamiliar with the procedure, the Holmes Hole officer wrote to the Boston collector for advice. One night, while a response from Boston was being awaited, the slave escaped. The *Gazette* reported:

Sept. 22, 1854: A RUNAWAY SLAVE—The bark *Franklin* which arrived at Holmes Hole from Jacksonville, Florida, had a slave on board who secreted himself in the hold while the vessel was loading. During the night, while the vessel was lying at anchor, he took a boat and made good his escape to the shore; since which his whereabouts have been known to only a select few. He was from 25 to 30 years of age. . .

In its next issue, the *Gazette* ran a follow-up story:

Sept. 29, 1854: After the escape of the slave from the *Franklin*, he landed on West Chop and proceeded to Gay Head, where he entered a swamp and remain[ed] concealed for several days. On the 16th inst., a warrant was placed in the hands of Deputy Sheriff Lambert of Chilmark for his arrest on a charge of larceny, the offense alleged being the stealing of a boat from the *Franklin*. . . Just previous . . . two women from the lovely village of Holmes Hole . . . heard of the slave and were determined to save him from capture . . . they drove with all speed to the swamp at Gay Head . . . boldly entered the swamp . . . after a short search, they found the slave, who endeavored to escape, but after being furnished with food and learning that the heroic women were his friends . . . a woman's dress and bonnet were soon placed on him and they all emerged from the swamp and jumping into the wagon drove directly to Manainshe [Menemsha] Bite and entered a boat. . . which the same women had engaged to meet them at the place before leaving Holmes Hole . . . the warp was unfastened and the already hoisted sails filled to the breeze!

After arrival . . . at New Bedford, the women took the slave to the residence of an abolitionist and arrangements were made . . . [to forward] the slave to Canada.

The following week, the *Gazette* concluded the story:

Oct. 6, 1854. The slave who made his escape from a vessel in Holmes Hole is reported as having arrived in Canada.

The slave's rescue was published in New England newspapers. The Boston Vigilance Committee interviewed those involved, including the slave himself. In the book *Slave Testimony* (Louisiana State University Press), the slave's own story is reprinted, as it first appeared in a Boston newspaper in 1858. The interview with the slave, Edinbur Randall, seems to have taken place in New Bedford.

Randall said he was born in Alabama of an Indian mother and a negro father. They were not slaves. Only four years old

when they died, he was taken into the home of farmer Gabriel Smith, where he was well treated and later became a farm hand.

Benefactor Smith died when Randall was 18. He continued living on the farm with Smith's daughter, Martha. When she married an Irish immigrant, his life changed drastically. The Irishman badly mistreated him.

Frequently beaten and fearing for his life, he escaped from the farm, living for several months on berries and other wild things in the forest. Making his way to the port of Jacksonville, he watched the *Franklin* being loaded at the wharf with pine lumber. The night before she was to sail, he sneaked aboard and hid in the forward hold.

After a few days at sea, he sought help. Sympathetic sailors gave him clothing and food. The captain and officers, however, showed no sympathy, saying they would send him back to the south at their first opportunity. As we have seen, the first stop was Holmes Hole, where the captain reported him. Randall protested that he was not a slave and not subject to the Fugitive Slave Act, but he was not believed. The sailors told him his best chance at freedom would be in Gay Head. Escaping, he made his way there. He described what happened next in the newspaper, *Liberty Bell*, Boston, in 1858:

. . . [I] made towards Gay Head, where I found the Indians, who readily took me in, and kindly ministered to my necessities.

The next day a young Indian, William Francis, came to the house where I was, and said that the deputy Sheriff, Thomas H. Lambert, was up on Gay Head, with a warrant to arrest a colored sailor, who stole the boat from the ship *Franklin*, and offered a large reward to the Indians to find him. . . the Indians told me to go into a swamp near by. I took their advice, and went into the thickest bushes about one hundred yards, and remained there some time; at length Beulah Vanderhoop, the Indian woman who took me into her house, came to the swamp, called me out, and put a gown, shawl, and bonnet upon me, and took me some distance to the house of her grandmother, Mrs. Peters, hid me in the garret, and then went to engage a boat to take me from the island . . . [she] engaged two Indian boatmen, Samuel Peters and Zaccheus Cooper . . . and I was accompanied to their boat by a number of Indians, whose kind efforts for my escape I can never forget. The boat left the Island with a favorable wind, and I was

soon put ashore upon the main land, among other friends of the slave.

Years later, in February 1921, the *Vineyard Gazette* published a somewhat different account by Netta Vanderhoop, who, the paper said, had written it in 1867, when she was 15. She described what she had been told by her family about the fugitive (she was only two when the escape took place). Like Randall, she does not mention any Holmes Hole women. Nor is there any mention of the rescued "slave" going to Canada. Netta says he settled in New Bedford and often returned to Gay Head to visit his benefactor, Beulah Vanderhoop, whom he called "Mother."

The *Gazette* reported some more fugitive slaves being rescued in Edgartown the following spring, May 1855. It doesn't give any details of how they arrived. This is all it said:

SLAVES:- We learn that two or three slaves, fresh from the South, were in town last week. They were conveyed to New Bedford by one of the colored residents of Chapaquidic.

There may have been other slaves who escaped from ships in Island harbors, but we have found no mention of them. The two published accounts above indicate there was little interest among white Vineyarders in their rescue. That seems to have been left to the "people of color."

Island whites, like most northerners, were opposed to the spread of slavery. They didn't want it to be extended by the admission of pro-slave states into the Union. But they were not abolitionists, demanding that the slaves be freed. Public meetings opposing the admission of slave states were held occasionally, sponsored usually by the Know Nothing party that had added the issue of slavery to its anti-Catholicism.

One such meeting was held in Edgartown in 1855. Editor Edgar Marchant of the *Gazette* was elected chairman. Speakers included David Davis, Charles J. Barney and Ichabod Luce, all of whom later became Republicans and strong Lincoln supporters, as did Samuel Osborn Jr., a rising star in business and in Republican politics, who also spoke.

These men, strongly opposed to admitting pro-slave states, had probably taken little interest in the lives of two black women born on the Island, one as a slave.

The women were Nancy Michael and her daughter, Re-

becca Francis. The daughter had died at 44 years just before the above meeting. Her son, William, was a cooper and boatsteerer on the *Waverly* of New Bedford on his way home from a long whaling voyage in the Pacific. The family lived in a rented house (probably more a shack than a house) on Pease's Point Way, then the edge of the village. Nancy died at 84, a year after her daughter.

These three were descendants of African slaves owned in Chilmark in the 1700s. Nancy's mother (also named Rebecca) was a slave owned by Col. Cornelius Bassett of Chilmark. Her father was probably Sharper Michael, son of Rose, an African slave owned by Zaccheus Mayhew, a Chilmark justice of the peace. Born to a slave before Massachusetts outlawed slavery, Nancy was considered to be a slave (an 1852 court ruled that with the passage of the law outlawing slavery in 1783 she became "born free," although born a slave). Colonel Bassett died in 1779 and Nancy was sold, at seven years, to Joseph Allen of Tisbury, who "held and used her as a slave for a series of years." She and her brother, Pero, along with another female slave, Cloe, were listed in the inventory of Bassett's estate in 1779:

1 Negro boy called pero aged 18 years -- £300

1 Negro woman called cloe, aged 27 years -- £150

1 Gall Dto. [ditto] called nancy, aged 7 years -- £180

Some time before 1812, Nancy, now a free person, moved to Edgartown where she "fell into distress" and became a town pauper, a condition that continued throughout her life. As late as 1854, the town was spending more than \$80 a year for her support. In that year, the town bought from her for \$10 a house she had inherited in 1819 from her brother, James, a mariner, the money presumably was used to help pay her support.

From that start in slavery and poverty, these three generations of black women, seemingly without any support from males, produced the Island's only black whaling master, Capt. William A. Martin of Chappaquiddick. It is a Vineyard saga.

When William's mother, Rebecca, died, little notice was taken. We know of it only from Jeremiah Pease's diary:

October 29, 1854: Attended meetings at E'ville [Eastville]. Rebecca, a coloured woman, dies, she was the Daut. of Nancy Michael, aged about 50 years. She died about 8 o'clock A.M.

October 30, 1854. A little rain. Funeral of the above coloured Woman, Rebecca. Service by Rev'd. Mr. Keller [Methodist].

Jeremiah gives no details, but it would seem that he had known Rebecca and probably attended her funeral, perhaps her only white mourner. Two years later, in December 1856, when Nancy died, Jeremiah did not mention it. But the *Gazette* did, publishing an unusual obituary, some of it warm and sympathetic, some disparaging and mocking:

AN OLD LANDMARK GONE. Mrs. Nancy Michael, known to most of our readers by the familiar cognomen of "*Black Nance*" is no more. She departed this life on Saturday last, at a very advanced age. Probably she was not far from 100 years old. She had changed but little in her appearance for 40 years past; and those who knew her 50 years ago looked upon her as an old woman. She was a very remarkable character in her day. Naturally possessed of kind feelings, she was very fond of children, and usually attentive to their wants; and there are but few among us who have not at some time been indebted to her.

Possessed of a strong natural mind, she acquired great influence over some of our people, by many of whom she was looked upon as a witch. She professed to have the power of giving good or bad luck to those bound on long voyages; and it was no unusual thing for those about to leave on whaling voyages to resort to her, to propitiate her favor by presents, etc., before leaving home. Special woes were denounced by her upon those who were too independent to acknowledge her influence. In case of bad news from any vessel commanded by one who had defied her power, she was in ecstasies, and her fiendish spirit would at once take full control of her.

At such times she might be seen in our streets, shaking her long, bony fingers at all unbelievers in her magical power; and pouring forth the most bitter invectives upon those whom she looked upon as her enemies. Her strange power and influence over many continued till the day of her death, though for two or three years past she was mostly confined to her room.

Taking her all in all, she was a most singular character, and it will doubtless be a long time before we shall look upon her like again. She was a professor of religion, and we believe at one time adorned the profession. "May her good deeds long live in our remembrance, and her evil be interred with her bones." [*Vineyard Gazette*, January 2, 1857.]

Graciously, the *Gazette's* editor did not recite the many times Nancy's daughter, Rebecca (who went unmentioned, as did grandson, William A. Martin), had been in trouble with the law, sometimes on the complaint of Nancy herself. Rebecca was a "regular" at the county jail, usually overnight on a charge of "breaking the peace" (drunkenness). She was once charged with theft, another time with "lude" behavior. Her missteps seem to have been triggered by alcohol and an understanding sheriff took that into account, holding her only until she was sober.

Jail records show her first as Rebecca Ann Michael (sometimes Michaels), later she is Rebecca Ann Martin, then after marrying John Francis in 1831, she is Rebecca Ann Francis. The Martin name was adopted, it would seem, when a man named Martin fathered her only known child, William A. Martin, born in 1827.

With such a pattern of behavior by his mother, young William must have been raised by grandmother Nancy, a remarkable woman. Although we know nothing of his early years, William must have gone to sea as a boy. We know he was cooper and boatsteerer on the *Waverly* of New Bedford, as mentioned, in the North Pacific from 1851 to 1854. He had signed on with a 1/37th lay, better than those of the second and third mates, a tribute to his skill. Only the captain and first mate had better lays. His other known voyages include the *Almira* and *Europa*. On the latter, in 1857, he was first officer and log keeper (the log still exists). Before sailing on the *Europa*, he married Sarah G. Brown of Chappaquiddick, who was one-quarter Indian.

After sailing as first officer on the *Clarice* in the 1870s, he was promoted to captain on *Golden City*, *Emma Jane* (1883-84) and *Eunice H. Adams*, all owned by Samuel Osborn Jr., of Edgartown. The promotion made William A. Martin the Island's only black whaling master. While master of the *Eunice H. Adams* (1887 to 1890), he left in mid-voyage, probably due to illness. He seems not to have gone to sea after that.

He died in his "Captain's house" on Chappaquiddick, September 5, 1907, after being a paralytic for seven years. The

house had been inherited by his wife, Sarah, from her parents. It was hardly a "Captain's house"; no match for those on William Street or Water Street. But Capt. William A. Martin didn't need a trophy house to prove that he was a success.

Sarah's parents were Abraham and Lucy Brown. He was black with no Indian ancestry, she was one-half Indian. In the 1849 report to Gov. George N. Briggs both are listed as Indians on Chappaquiddick. Daughter Sarah, also listed as Indian, married William A. Martin in 1857 at 25 years, he was 28.

The Walling map, published in 1857, shows a house belonging to A. Brown on the Chappaquiddick Indian Lands near Tom's Neck Point. In about 1907, Hope J. Heath wrote in the *Gazette* of spending her summers in the Chappaquiddick house. Her family, she wrote, rented it from Mrs. Sarah Martin. It was "a little gray shingled house overlooking Pogue Pond." She did not mention (perhaps didn't know) that it was a "Captain's house," home of the Vineyard's only black whaling master.

That house also was probably one of the "neat and comfortable" houses on Chappaquiddick that John Milton Earle of Worcester visited between 1859-61 while making his sympathetic study of the Indians of Massachusetts. Earle's report followed the Briggs report mentioned above. It was one of a series of studies the state funded as it tried to ease its conscience over the fate of its Indians.

Earle states that 17 families were living in the Indian Lands on Chappaquiddick with a total of 74 persons. Also living there were seven "foreigners" (persons not born there). Among Earle's remarks about the Chappaquiddick Indians are some that sound familiar by now, having been written often:

In the division of the island between the Indians and the whites, the latter, as usual, obtained much the better portion. That belonging to the Indians is bleak and exposed, the soil light, sandy, gravelly and barren, and without wood for either fuel or fencing, yielding, as was well said by the commissioners in 1849, "a precarious subsistence to the most untiring industry.."

Most of the residents have framed houses and things in and about them have a neat and comfortable appearance, as much so as among their white neighbors...

Under the law of 1828, the territory of this tribe has been divided . . . among the inhabitants. . . a certain quantity was assigned to each individual, including those of every age . . . the whole amount assigned to any one family was set off in one lot. . . the father held and occupied the same . . . usually during his lifetime . . .

Like all the other Indians of the State. . . those of Chappaquiddick are disfranchised, with the exception of two families who reside on the other side of the line, in Edgartown, and own property there for which they are taxed. . .

In Christiantown, another Indian Land, Earle counted 53 Indians, all native to the Island. Gay Head, the largest Indian population, had 46 families totaling 204 persons, of whom 10 were "foreigners." Gay Head differed from the other Indian Lands in that it had refused to allow the land to be divided among families, preferring to keep it owned in common, each Indian being allowed to use as much land as he needed.

A few years earlier, another report on Gay Head, this one much less formal, had been published in the *Namasket* (Middleboro) *Gazette*. The letter writer went there in 1856 to see the exciting new Fresnel lens in the brand-new brick lighthouse tower. The lens was one of the scientific wonders of the age, having been exhibited in an exposition in Paris before being installed at Gay Head. The letter gives excellent details:

Here [in Gay Head] a good Christian family, by name, How-was-wee, received us and provided the bodily needful for several days. The natives here number about 200 and live very comfortably – their condition is better than those at Marshpee. They appear temperate, moral and industrious. Unlike their brethren in Marshpee, they prefer their land to remain undivided, each one cultivating as much as he chooses, the revenue of the remainder going for general purposes. They have a little church of about 50 members, preaching for the most part being provided by a fund at Harvard College. There is also a school of between 40 and 50 scholars, that would compare favorably with the schools in this town [Middleboro]. We never before had the pleasure of looking into 80 or 90 black eyes at once, each beaming with true native intelligence.

This part of the island seems for the most part to be a bed of valuable white and red clay. It is worth \$3.50 per ton on the

spot and is carried off in cart loads to Providence, Taunton and other places. Sometimes in calm weather, large ships anchor near the cliffs and load; at such times they all turn out, the women as well as the men; the men cut out the clay in lumps; while the women stand in rows down to the vessel and pass it along in their hands after the manner of passing pails of water sometimes at fires; they afterwards divide the money, one man having as much as two women. As another source of profit to them, I will mention their cranberries, of which some years they pick nearly 300 bushels.

With the arrival of the state-of-the-art Fresnel lens from France, Gay Head suddenly became a place of great interest to writers. However, life changed little for the Indians. Their refusal to accept private ownership of land, preferring it to remain communal, was a sticky point with the state. As historian George Ellis warned many years later, in 1882, there could be no peaceful co-existence with Massachusetts until the Gay Head Indians gave up their "communism."

Although Gay Head resisted changes, many were taking place on the rest of the Island.

The first wooden "cottage" was built in the campground early in the 1850s by Rev. Frederick Upham. It should not be dignified by the word "cottage," being a simple wooden box the same size, 7 by 10 feet, as the tent it replaced. But it had attributes no canvas shelter had. It was dry. Reverend Upham, who had been Methodist minister in Edgartown from 1848 until 1850, was a long-time camp-meeting participant. After a heavy rain drenched the campground and its tent dwellers one night in 1869, *Zion's Herald*, the Methodist weekly, described Upham's delight:

Out of his box, he walked serene in the morning and, rubbing his hands in his humorous and devout style, dryly remarked, "Bless God for shingles."

A Wareham man named Dykes bought the campground's 30 acres in 1856 for \$1000. He offered to sell it to the Methodists for \$1600 or, if they preferred, would lease it to them for \$100 a year (they were paying only \$15 under the existing lease). The Methodists immediately began looking for another site. The speculator cancelled his purchase and the lease was unchanged.

In 1850, the United States Congress appropriated \$4000 to

complete the wooden causeway from shore to the Edgartown Harbor Light. The light, mounted atop the keeper's house built on a man-made island on the shoal, could be reached only by boat. The causeway, when finished, became famous in Vineyard legend as "The Bridge of Sighs." Young lovers walked along it nightly, enchanted by the beauty of the moonlit harbor and each other.

A major breakthrough in 1856 gave the Island instant telegraphic communication with the mainland thanks to a submarine cable laid from West Chop to Woods Hole. A giant celebration marked the event. A few weeks later, the cable was cut by a ship's anchor. No telegrams were received for a while.

The brand-new keeper's house at Gay Head leaked so much that extensive repairs had to be made when the keeper's family became sick with an illness caused, it was said, by the moisture.

Edgartown got the Island's first high school after the state began enforcing the law requiring towns to provide free education through 12 grades. The town advertised it would sell school books to high-school pupils at no profit (as the law required).

The Dukes County Shoe and Boot Company began business on Dock Street, Edgartown. Nathaniel Jernegan was president. It never made money and lasted only six years.

In Pennsylvania in 1859 a man drilling for water, struck oil. It was the country's first oil well. Whaling would never be the same.

Capt. Ira Darrow, who ran a packet between Edgartown and the mainland, in 1850 took the first step towards making Editor Marchant's prediction a reality. The *Gazette* reported:

We are glad to know that a commodious bathing house has just been erected and opened for the accommodation of the public by Ira Darrow Esq. It is situated below the residence of Mr. Darrow [on North Water Street, Edgartown].

In April 1861, the Federal Fort Sumter in South Carolina was fired on by Confederate forces and forced to surrender. The Civil War had begun.

Editor Marchant's prediction that the Island would become an "East Coast Watering Place" would be delayed.

(To be continued)

In Memoriam:

Faith Churchill

As one staff person who worked with her said, "She was correctly named: Faith was among our most faithful volunteers, Twice a week, year-round, good or bad weather, she was here."

Her house was two long blocks from the Society and, despite arthritic knees, she always walked. And how she walked! Her walk was triumphant, even with a cane. That cane was not something she leaned on, it was something she swung like a scepter. Erect, determined in her stride, she was a majestic figure, walking between the Society and her lovely home on Water Street.

Brought up in a very proper world, she would occasionally let loose an outburst that would have blown the white gloves off the young ladies at the Chapin School had they heard it. Such an outburst would often come on those occasions when she arrived to find her desk cluttered. When she left, the desk was always clear, no papers anywhere except in the correct files.

Faith was our receptionist, but much more. She was a faithful (there's that word again) advocate of the importance of the Society to the community. She was also someone who had little patience with procrastinators. Whenever she delivered a message to one of us, she followed it up, making certain that action had been taken. Every group needs such a person. Faith was ours.

We all promise, in Faith's memory, that things will get done promptly and that there will be no clutter on her desk.

Stanley Murphy

Another person who wanted things done – correctly and promptly – was Stan Murphy, the Vineyard's premier painter (he refused to call himself an artist, although he was). He did much for the Society. About 25 years ago, he joined our board, just as we were expanding and he played a major role in that expansion.

On the back inside cover (opposite) are the thoughtful comments of a staff member who began her work here under Stan's guidance. She describes him with warmth and gratitude.

It is unnecessary to say how grateful we are for the work of these two, who have left us — and how much we will miss them.

An Appreciation of Stan Murphy

In the fall of 1980, as a young newcomer to archival work, I offered my services to the Society to help with the research for the exhibition to be placed in the recently completed Francis Foster Museum. Stan Murphy, former vice president, headed the project. He was, I thought, amused by my youthful enthusiasm and innocence as he graciously accepted my offer of help. He asked about pay. I told him I would work for \$25 a week. He smiled at my proposal and said the Society would pay me \$100 a week to research and plan the displays that would highlight Vineyard maritime history.

There was so much material in the archives for me to digest that Stan soon became impatient. His quick mind and artistry came to conclusions long before I did, slowed as I was by inexperience, by "maybes" and "what ifs." Often my indecisiveness would get on his nerves and I could feel him saying to himself, "Let's get on with it!"

As we made the final assembly in the spring of 1981, we had a bit of a disagreement over labels. He was a minimalist and disliked their intrusiveness. His keen sense of design told him that we should let the artifacts speak for themselves. Too many labels, he felt, would divert attention from the artistry of the display. Viewers would be too busy studying the details to digest the beauty inside the cases. We compromised, although I, the young, overwhelmed student, had to give up more.

To see the results of his artistry, one needs only to study the case of scrimshaw in the Foster Gallery. That case was Stan's favorite and his masterful arrangement of the pieces, minimally interrupted by words, demonstrates his point dramatically.

When the entire exhibit was finished and ready for the public, Stan and I viewed it together, alone in the room.

"A job well-done," he said, looking at me with gratitude. His appreciative look, his gentle smile and those words were like manna from heaven. He wasn't one to drop compliments lightly. His approval was a true gift from a fine artist who had taught a beginner so much.

Stan's art and insight were profound. His well-known portraits of Island natives prove that. They are more than representations, more than pictures; they are character studies that show the love and respect he felt for his subjects. As I went on to begin my oral-history work, I was inspired by Stan's example. I have tried to elicit more than merely words. I have tried to get the spoken words to bring out the person's character.

Stan taught me that.

Linsey Lee, Society Oral Historian

John Presbury Norton of Tisbury Petitions to Buy Slaves in 1849

In the Mass. House of Representatives on Wednesday
Feb. 14, 1849, the following petition was presented:

To the Hon. Senate and House of Representatives, in
General Court assembled:

The undersigned, a resident in the town of Tisbury
in Dukes County, would most respectfully request your hon-
orable body to pass a law permitting him to import
from the slave-holding States one or more slaves, and
hold them in perpetual servitude, for the purpose of cul-
tivating his farm, and as in duty bound with good pray,

John P. Norton

Tisbury, Feb. 10th 1849.

A motion was made to commit this pe-
tition to the Committee on the Judiciary, which
excited some debate; several members contending
that it was an insult to the House, and that the
petitioner should have leave to withdraw. The
motion to commit prevailed.

In 1849, long after Massachusetts banned slavery, John P. Norton of Tisbury asked the state to pass a law allowing him to buy "one or more slaves" to be held "in perpetual servitude" (see page 45).