An Unpleasant Day For a Civil War Soldier
by
CHARLES MACREADING VINCENT

During much of the Civil War, this flag topped the Gazette editorial page

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

The Civil War: Its Bounties, Substitutes, the Draft & the Dead
(Chapter Seven)
by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

How Mr. Clark Tried to Get Rid Of His Wife in 1867

In Memoriam:
Mildred A. Huntington
(Inside Back Cover)

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

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MEMBERSHIP DUES

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*Tax deductible except for $15, *$25 and **$35.

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CORRECTION AND ADDENDA

On pages 35-6, Intelligencer, August 2003, there is a brief biography of Francis J. Silvia, born in the Azores, who married Jane S. Dunham of Edgartown in 1838. It stated that he had probably died in the 1850s.

Mary Jane Carpenter, a member, has pointed out that their daughter, Emma Silvia, kept a journal, excerpts of which were published in the Vineyard Gazette, when she visited Francis, her father, in Pico, Azores, in 1869, where he was living with his second wife and their children. Probate records show that he did not die until 1892.

It seems that we bestowed on him a more “benign” character (to use Mrs. Carpenter’s word) than he deserved. Two weeks before she died in March 1856, his wife, Jane, made a will leaving all her property, including her house on North Water Street that had been paid for with money from her father, Joseph Dunham, to her daughters, Susannah and Emma. She named her brother, also Joseph Dunham, guardian of the girls. Not a word about husband Francis, who, it seems, was in the Azores, soon to remarry.

We regret the error and thank Mrs. Carpenter for pointing out these facts and Jean McCarthy for her research on this at the Court House.
An Unpleasant Day
For a Civil War Soldier

by Pvt. Charles Macreading Vincent

THE 40th REGIMENT of the Massachusetts Volunteers was at Warrenton Junction in “traitorous Virginia,” as Pvt. Charles Macreading Vincent called the rebel state. It had arrived there July 25, 1863, after a march of several days in intense heat from Maryland. Private Vincent of Edgartown was a member of Company D of the regiment.

The Society has a copy of his journal. He served from 1862 until the war ended in 1865. In the journal, he describes a memorable Saturday only a few days after the regiment set up camp in Warrenton. He and the company were on picket duty several miles from regimental headquarters when without explanation, in the middle of the night, they were ordered to break camp and return to headquarters.

August 1, 1863. Saturday.

Two o’clock this morning we had orders to pack up, rally on the reserve and march into camp. Like good obedient soldiers, we did so, and [when we got to camp] found the boys all busy cooking their breakfasts ready for a start.

At 5 a.m., we were off and after marching about 10 miles came to Greenwich and halted. Here, we found out the sudden cause of our departure for this place, which was done to witness the execution of a deserter belonging to the 157th New York Vols., of our Brigade. His name was Bradford Butler and according to all accounts was a hardened criminal.

The day was intensely hot. The place selected was an open field, on low ground, surrounded almost entirely by woods. Their [sic] was scarcely a breath of air stirring and the

CHARLES MACREADING VINCENT, 17, was apprentice printer at the Vineyard Gazette when he enlisted. His father was Samuel G. Vincent, one-time Treasurer of Edgartown. His mother was Harriet D. Pease, daughter of County Sheriff Isaiah D. Pease, and whose brother was Clerk of the Court Richard L. Pease. An impressive family.
After the election, which Abraham Lincoln won the four way they were! don't took the deck press the Union they were for the Union and go! keep things secret. After the election there was a strong feeling in the Democratic camp that they had the majority of the votes cast in the presidential election. Lincoln's victory, by a majority of the votes cast in the presidential election, was received nationally. By taking the highly populated eastern states, the Democrats were in the majority in the electoral college. The northern states, with their larger population, can be expected to have a majority of the votes cast in the presidential election. The southern states, with their smaller population, can be expected to have a majority of the votes cast in the presidential election.
their strong opposition to the Personal Liberty Law, a recent Massachusetts law passed to obstruct enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 and 1850.

These men opposed secession, but they felt slavery was a southern problem and northerners should not get involved. Slaves were property and any who managed to run away should be returned to their owners. That explained their opposition to the Personal Liberty Act, which required that a jury trial be held at which the runaway could testify on his own behalf before he could be returned. Meeting in the "counting room" of Daniel Fisher & Co., the Bell supporters included, in addition to Doctor Fisher, Abraham Osborn, Benjamin Worth and John A. Baylies, leading citizens all.

The third group was made up of most of the Island’s regular Democrats. They supported Stephen Douglas for president. Like the Bell group, they opposed the Personal Liberty Act, but they were Democrats and Douglas was their nominee. He believed people living in new territories had a right to decide whether to allow slavery or not. Members included Henry Pease 2nd, Rodolphus Pease, Seth Cleveland, Samuel W. Lewis, and the Vineyard Gazette’s editor, Edgar Marchant.

Democrats had long been a minority party on the Island. Chilmark was the only town where they had had any success. In 1856 the town had voted for Democrat James Buchanan, who won nationally and was now president.

On the Island, as well as in the nation, the Democrats were divided over the slavery issue. Not all Island Democrats supported Douglas, whose position on the issue was ambiguous. Those who did not like Douglas made up the fourth group. So eager were they to placate the south that they supported the pro-slavery candidate, John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, the incumbent vice president. This small group held its “conventions” in the office of long-time Democrat, Capt. Ira Darrow. Constant Norton of Edgartown was president and James Norton of Tisbury, secretary. Anxious above everything else to preserve the Union, they were for the status quo: keep things the way they are; don’t rock the boat.

After the election, which Abraham Lincoln won, the four Island groups disbanded. Lincoln carried the Vineyard with 59 percent of the vote, a far higher percentage than the 39 percent he received nationally. By taking the heavily populated northern states, he won a majority in the electoral college.

Lincoln’s election by a minority of the voters caused Gazette Editor Edgar Marchant, a Douglas Democrat, to worry about whether the new president would be able to keep the nation together. The editor feared disaster and quoted Wendell Phillips, the noted Massachusetts abolitionist:

... [for] the first time in history a slave has chosen a President... What but the slave question was the turning point? The South cannot look without some anxiety upon political triumph effected by the free states combined against the slave states. South Carolina has already taken the initiative in the matter of a southern secession.

That possibility of a breakup of the Union troubled Editor Marchant and many Vineyarders. Although their choice, Lincoln, had won, they did not feel “merry,” as Marchant wrote:

People feel sorrow because the late election has created serious fears for the safety of the Union.

Southerners had their own fears. They were afraid that the new president, despite his campaign promises to the contrary, would give in to the northern abolitionists and free their slaves. That would mean disaster, economically and socially. Vineyarders shared that worry. To ease their concerns, Marchant printed a collection of quotations from Lincoln’s speeches to show that he would not abolish slavery:

... there is no right and ought to be no inclination in the people of the Free States to enter into the Slave States and interfere with the question of Slavery at all...

I would not be the man to introduce [the Fugitive Slave Law] as a new subject of agitation upon the general question of slavery.

... if the people [in a territory] shall... do such an extraordinary thing as to adopt a Slave constitution ... I see no alternative... but to admit them into the Union.

I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races. I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making
voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office or to intermarry with white people. . . I do not understand that because I do not want a negro woman as a slave I must necessarily want her for a wife. . . I will, to the very last, stand by the law of this state [Illinois] which forbids the marrying of white people with negroes.

Although he had not supported Lincoln, Editor Marchant favored his conciliatory position:

The question whether slavery is right or wrong is not the question we have now to discuss. . . Will we be brethren, and live peaceably together, and respect each others' right and promote each others' welfare; these are the real questions.

Outgoing President Buchanan felt the same way: nothing should be done to interfere with slavery where it already existed; the Fugitive Slave Act should be enforced; Personal Liberty Laws and secession were unconstitutional.

All parties, it seemed, were opposed to anything that might break up the Union. All, that is, except the southerners.

On December 20, 1860, even before Lincoln was inaugurated, South Carolina seceded. Within 40 days, six more states had done the same thing and joined in a Confederacy. Eight other states were expected to join. The Confederates began taking over federal property in their states, especially the forts and arsenals.

Early in January 1861, the federal government tried to send supplies to Fort Sumter, the only fort it still held in South Carolina. Sumter was still under construction, standing on a manmade island outside Charleston. The unarmed supply ship, The Star of the West, was fired upon by Confederates in nearby forts and forced to turn back.

Major Robert Anderson, commanding the small, beleaguered force in Fort Sumter, sent a message under a white flag to the South Carolina governor, stating that if he did not disclaim the firing, he (Anderson) would consider it to be an act of war (a bold threat with nothing to back it up).

On the Vineyard, hopes of conciliation continued, despite the confrontation at Sumter. Marchant pursued that course:

The Republican party are about to enter upon office and power. . . let the party remember that conciliation and reasonable compromise can alone save the country. . . and a refusal to listen to the zealots of their own party, can alone . . . preserve our beloved Union.

Henry L. Whiting, a leading (West) Tisbury resident, wrote to the Gazette calling for a county convention to urge repeal of the Personal Liberty Act. Henry Bradley of Tisbury presented a petition to the General Court signed by 75 citizens urging its repeal. It was clear: Islanders were for conciliation.

When Lincoln was inaugurated in March 1861 what he said about the slavery issue pleased Vineyarders:

I declare that I have no purpose, either directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so.

Perhaps the nation could be spared the war that many feared was coming. Perhaps Lincoln could save the Union. Marchant was doing his part:

. . . [let us] persuade our people to let slavery alone. . . Our meddling . . . has done no good to the slave — none to the master — none to the church — none to the country — but evil, evil only, and evil continually. . .

Had we not better let the subject alone (the everlasting Nigger question)? Six months or even three months of silence, would restore peace to the country.

While the vigorous editor was exhausting himself pleading the cause, most Islanders were becoming disinterested. There were no abolitionist meetings, no protests against secession. The divisions that separated the four groups before the election had been forgotten. Editor Marchant realized that his readers were tired of his arguments. They wanted to get on with their lives. He went along. In a lighter tone revisited his goal of making the Island a famous “watering hole”:

As all the world has come or is coming to the Vineyard this summer for recreation and fishing, we wish to give some advice. But first let us thank the editor of the Boston Courier for helping this matter along by giving a first-rate notice of Sword-fishing and saying, “that the best place to enjoy this sport is probably at Edgartown, on the Vineyard.”
Then, in jest we must believe, Marchant invited the nation’s leading editors and politicians to visit the Vineyard and forget their antagonisms at the “watering hole”:

If they are terribly pugnacious and excited, let them go out and harpoon sharks and bang them on the head with a good-sized club, and also to turn their attention to Sword-fishing... Or, if you please, present the eye with a picture of harmony, wherein Douglas and Lincoln, Bell and Breckinridge are all seen rowing a four-oared red boat in a Regatta in our harbor, contending with other boats for a prize.

Despite the country's problems, or perhaps because of them, the 1861 Methodist camp meeting was bigger than ever. At least 500 tents circled the preacher's stand, now rebuilt and greatly enlarged. A telegraph office was set up in the camp-ground. (A daily campground newspaper began in 1862.) Visitors, many of them influential citizens, poured in:

...the meetings are made up, mostly of people from New Bedford, Providence and other large places embraced within that Conference. Among its attendants are to be found people from the higher walks of social and civil life, who take their families with them.

Word of the Island's recreational appeal was spreading. But there were some less appealing disclosures. A visitor from Hallowell, Maine, wrote in his hometown paper:

Tisbury, more familiarly known to the seafaring class as “Holmes Hole,” is becoming quite a favorable resort for those who have in years past chosen the more exciting scenes of Newport and Saratoga, but now find a quiet and cheerful “home” at the Mansion House, kept by a hospitable and gentlemanly retired “son of the Ocean,” Capt. [Leander] West... there is not a drinking saloon in town... and there has not a lawyer resided here for twelve years, the last one had to leave town or starve, for want of employment.

The citizens have obtained most of their wealth in the whaling business, which has been carried on extensively through the agency of Hon. T. Bradley... A sad feature among the citizens of Tisbury is a predisposition to insanity. Within a very few years, twelve persons have been carried to the “Insane Asylum.”... The upper part of the Island contains an almost incredible number of deaf and dumb persons and many blind from birth. These calamities can only be accounted for... by the intermarriage of relatives.

When the article was reprinted in the Gazette, there was a quick response from a Chilmark reader:

Within 50 years there have been eight families into which deaf and dumb children were born. In four cases, the parents were related, in the other four, they were not. We know of no child ever being born blind in this part of the Vineyard.

It was not until 20 years later that Alexander Graham Bell began his study of the curious incidence of deaf mutism on the Vineyard. This Maine reporter may have been the first to make the phenomenon public. No wonder it troubled the Chilmark letter writer. Another letter, this one from Edgartown, asked why the visitor from Maine had not gone there, where much more was happening:

If the Hon. T. Bradley has done much for Tisbury, Hon. Daniel Fisher... has done far more for our town... a bank has been chartered in the past few years and is doing business in a neat brick building... Doctor Fisher is president. His oil manufactory and candle works, located here, are the largest in the country, and he is now building mills a few miles from the village, which will be of great advantage to the people of the Island.

A new brick Courthouse has been recently erected; an extensive factory for making shoes; another for the manufacture of soap, etc., etc.

As a place of resort in summer, for fishing and gaming, I am not aware that any spot can be found equal to it. We have two hotels... every variety of fish abound... blue, sword and codfish, halibut, scuphages, blackfish, boneta, tautaus, etc. The fowl are equally numerous... Larks, plovers, dippers, red-heads, brant, wild geese, canvas-back and black ducks.

He didn't mention the impressive lineup of Captains' Houses (the Island's first trophy houses) recently built on Water Street by the town's affluent whaling masters.

The new soap manufactory had been started by Sands & Smith, producing "Yellow and White Erasive Soap, and Toilet Soap, together with common varieties of Hard and Soft Soap."
Grease and tallow taken in exchange for soap,” their advertisement stated. We don’t know where it was located.

The Dukes County Boot and Shoe Company, headed by Nathaniel Jernegan, was another new “manufactory” in Edgartown. It produced 16,200 pairs of shoes and paid out $4000 in wages in its first year, $700 of the wages were paid to females. Such job opportunities were scarce for Island women. Shares in the company were being offered to the public so it could buy more machinery for its Dock Street factory.

Edgartown wasn’t the only place where things were happening. In Chilmark, the brick works at Roaring Brook had shipped 700,000 bricks from its wharf on the north shore in 1859 and expected to ship more in 1860.

Also on the north shore, about two miles east of the brick yard, there was a large paint mill that had recently gone into production. It was not the first such mill on the Island. In the late 1700s, there was one operating in or near Gay Head, but we can find no details other than that it existed. There also was a smaller paint mill on Roaring Brook behind the brick yard during the mid-1800s that was owned by brothers, Frances and Hiram Nye from Falmouth.

The large paint mill east of the brick yard was also owned off-Island. It made six to eight tons of paint a day. The “paint” was not a fluid, ready to apply, but a dry pigment made of clay of various colors ground into fine powder at the steam and water-powered mill. The pigment was shipped in barrels to be liquefied off-Island. In 1866, the mill was destroyed by fire, but was soon rebuilt and was back in operation within a year.

It and the brick yard were the first two up-Island exporting “industries” we know of, both shipping quantities of their products to the mainland from their wharves on Vineyard Sound. Years before, as mentioned previously, tons of clay had been exported from Gay Head to be processed off-Island.

Predating all this, what may have been the first up-Island industry was Chilmark’s fulling mill. It dates back to the 1700s, but we have little information on its longevity. A fulling mill made rough woolen cloth softer and more tightly woven by shrinking and scrubbing it with “fuller’s earth” and then beating it with water-driven wooden paddles. It was a noisy place while the heavy pounding was going on.

Henry Cleveland’s mill in the center of West Tisbury produced satinet, kersey and flannel fabrics with local wool. Satinet and kersey were woven with a combination of cotton and wool yarns and, being very durable, were popular with mariners and as army and navy uniforms. The mill’s indigo blue yarn was in great demand among Vineyard knitters.

Capt. John R. Sands, partner in the new soap factory, was eager to sell Vineyard products, especially his soap, in the south. He loaded the schooner John Oliver with shoes, whale oil, sperm candles and soap, as well as potatoes, turnips, onions, cranberries and quince and sailed for South Carolina. He was hoping to start a profitable export business with Charleston merchants. His timing was poor. Shortly after the John Oliver arrived there, South Carolina seceded from the Union, ending its business ties with the north.

Edgartown’s Dr. Daniel Fisher, expanding his empire, invited visitors to see his new grist mill in North Tisbury where flour was ground from winter wheat imported from Kentucky. The flour sold for $6 a barrel. He had dammed Mill River to provide water power and built a road to the mill from Tisbury.

Chilmark resident Mrs. Mary G. Tilton accepted his invitation. While she watched the grinding, her clothing was caught in the machinery and before the mill could be stopped her left leg was crushed. It had to be amputated at the knee.

Hers was not a happy life. Five years earlier, her husband, Capt. Otis Tilton, had been killed, along with two other officers, by mutineers aboard the whaler John of New Bedford, leaving her with two daughters, ages 3 and 6.

There was other bad news. The schooner Mogul, sailing to New Bedford with a load of up-Island apples and bricks from the Roaring Brook brick yard, was swamped and sank in Vineyard Sound. Capt. William A. Luce and his brother were lost.

The schooner Dorchas Ireland was blown ashore on Nemons Land while sailing to Boston with southern cotton for the mills of Lowell – perhaps the last shipment before the war.

An enterprising citizen planned to open a billiard hall in
Edgartown where men could spend their evenings. It would keep them out of trouble, he said. There was a strong outcry from church members. Billiards would bring gambling and that was a sin. One Gazette reader thought otherwise:

Edgartown is certainly not overstocked with places of amusement...[playing billiards] would take up a portion of the hours spent in sitting in the stores hugging the stoves.

An Island legend was just beginning. Nancy Luce, living alone with her animals in (West) Tisbury, was starting her career as an eccentric poet. Two of her pet hens had died, one in 1858, the other in 1859, deeply grieving her. In 1860, she somehow managed to write and have published in New Bedford, with the help of her physician, Dr. William Luce, her first booklet, *Poor Little Hearts* — a memorial to her pets. It was the start of her amazing rise to becoming an Island celebrity, the first Vineyard woman to support herself by the pen. She was not yet famous in 1861 when she wrote to the Gazette, offering advice to hen owners:

**MR. EDITOR:** I send you a piece to put in your paper, if you please, without charging me.

My pullets commenced laying [at] 4 months of age. My bantie sort lay as well in the winter as they do in the summer. They must have good fine meal scaled with milk, and warm bread made of milk and good southern corn, and warm milk to drink in winter, and a warm clean house... Be good to your hens and not cruel. Consider how you would feel if you could not help yourselves and folks was cruel to you and let you suffer.

I have kept about 8 hens which layed rising 1500 eggs a year.

**NANCY LUCE**

Some Vineyarders, unlike Miss Nancy, were keeping track of what was happening in Washington. Soon after Lincoln took office, the Gazette published an ominous letter from Chilmark signed "Democrat":

As for Mr. Lincoln, we like him well enough, although we don’t want to let him know it at present. He is good at splitting rails, and if things are to go on so, it will soon be seen that he can not only split rails, but also these United States.

That splitting soon began. Fort Sumter was fired on and burned by Confederate forces on April 12, 1861. Major Anderson and his small force, almost out of supplies, evacuated the fort. Despite heavy cannonading and much damage to the fort, there were no casualties (although one man was killed when one of the fort’s cannons exploded while firing in a “celebratory” 48-gun salute just prior to the evacuation).

The Civil War had started.

The next day, President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to enlist in the army for three months. Their task, Lincoln said, would be to retake the federal property, especially the forts, that Confederates had confiscated. An optimistic Gazette thought it wouldn’t take long:

...thousands have already responded to the call. In a week or two the government will show its strong arm and traitors will feel its power. Treason must be put down at once or all is lost.

In the next issue, Editor Marchant placed an engraving of Old Glory atop the editorial column. It stayed there throughout most of the war. His words were bloodthirsty:

We fling today the Glorious banner of the Stars and Stripes to the breeze... Down with the traitors. Let them swing from the yard arms and from the gibbets... Let Jefferson Davis, and Wiggall and Toombs and Rhett, and a host of others like them, receive the reward due to enemies of the freest and fairest government on earth.

But let not their carcasses be interred in American soil to contaminate the earth and the air of heaven with their foul pollution. No. Let them be cast into the sea and become food for sharks and other voracious monsters of the deep...

A company or two of veteran whalmen, armed with the harpoon or with lance and spade, would... send terror into the hearts of Southern traitors.

If President Lincoln would call upon the whalmen of Nantucket, New Bedford and the Vineyard, he could raise a regiment before [which] no human could stand for a day... this same martial spirit pervades the people of the whole Vineyard... Let every man be ready to shoulder his arms!

Despite Marchant’s jingoism, Vineyard whalmen didn’t line up to shoulder arms. Not one man on the Island volunteered, but a former Vineyarder, H. Vincent Butler, who had
been living in Providence for three years, joined the Rhode Island Volunteers, a marine artillery unit. Much later, when each town was given a quota to be filled with volunteers, Butler's name was brought up as one who should have been credited to Edgartown, his birthplace. A meritorious claim.

Within weeks, four more states seceded. North and south readied themselves for the bloodiest war in American history.

The Island was caught up in the hysteria. Tisbury voted to raise $2000 to join in with New Bedford and hire an armed steamer to patrol Buzzards Bay and Vineyard Sound. It asked the state to supply three rifled cannon and 100 stand of small arms to repel an invasion. Edgartown mounted a “Liberty Pole” atop the Town Hall and ordered a large flag from New Bedford. Charles H. Shute hung an American flag outside his store above a banner proclaiming: “Down with Home Traitors.” The war was on everybody’s mind:

A great Union demonstration was held in Edgartown on Tuesday last... a vigilance committee of 13 appointed. At Holmes Hole, a similar meeting was held Wednesday. The people there are awake and ready for action.

The ladies of Holmes Hole began collecting clothing and blankets to be sent to the Massachusetts Volunteers. Edgartown men formed a “Home Guard” of 75 volunteers, led by Cyrus Pease. The town borrowed $1200 to buy them uniforms.

Chilmark and (West) Tisbury joined forces to form an up-island Home Guard headquartered in Agricultural Hall. Tisbury chose to spend its money on the armed steamer to patrol Vineyard Sound. When it tried to raise a company to man the cannon being sent by state, only five men signed up. Recruiting a Home Guard company was out of the question.

Lt. George M. Macy of Nantucket had signed up 30 young men on that island in August 1861 and hoped to enlist “many more from our Island,” the Gazette wrote. When he came to seek volunteers, only three men joined: Barzilla Crowell, Elisha M. Smith and Peleg Davenport. When the trio left, it was given a royal sendoff:

The Volunteers from Holmes Hole started today on the Canonicus, under the command of Lieut. Macy of Nantucket. The citizens contributed some 20 dollars towards a purse, which was handed them on the pier. They left in good spirits... any in Edgartown who wish to assist their country in her time of need... can join the Nantucket and Vineyard boys...

The sarcastic remark about Edgartown was not fair. One of the three, Elisha M. Smith, was from Edgartown and was later given that town's bounty, although he had enlisted in Tisbury. Two more Tisbury men soon joined that first group of Islanders at Camp Meigs, the state’s mustering-in camp at Readville, (the camp was in today's Hyde Park, south of Boston). They were John Wilbur and Benjamin N. Luce. These five were the first Vineyarders to enlist in the Civil War.

They were an unlucky five. Three died in the service, two of them in battle: Peleg Davenport at Fredericksburg and Elisha M. Smith at Gettysburg. The third, James Wilbur, died of typhoid fever. The other two were wounded and disabled, but survived. Barzilla Crowell had his left leg amputated after being wounded in Virginia and Benjamin Luce lost the use of his left hand from wounds at Fredericksburg.

As an unnamed Edgartown sailor wrote in the Gazette, there was a less dangerous way to serve:

The Navy is the best place in the world. Very little work and plenty to eat... we want some of those spunky Edgartown boys here.

Unfortunately, those who enlisted in the navy were not counted towards the town quota. The navy didn’t need men; the army did – more every day. And there still was no enthusiasm on the Vineyard to join. Part of the reason may have been a lack of conviction about the rightness of the war. In June 1861, a Menemsha resident, who signed his letter to the Gazette, “Spindle Shanks Jr.,” openly opposed the war:

We are not traitors here at Menamsha [sic] but we want our government to remember that in making war upon the Southern states we are pursuing a suicidal course and that it will eventually bring ruin and destruction upon the whole of this great and glorious country.

In regard to the slavery question, some of us think there is no great harm in it if thereby we can enlighten their dark and
benighted minds and improve their moral condition.

Indeed, we think it would be no great trouble for us to find several texts of Scripture to support this view.

This brought an irate response from a reader who signed his letter, "Union." He advised the Menemsha man to be careful what he said or he might find himself "being accommodated with a coat that will be hard to get off."

By the end of the summer of 1861, even Editor Marchant had lost his enthusiasm. The war must not totally occupy us, he wrote. There are other things to do:

We have not yet got to paradise and we must snatch our pleasures as we can on our way... Farming is carried on with profit and soon... even the shoe business, which has proved so disastrous here, may, in other hands, become profitable. Many think that the whaling business must soon be given up altogether, but we believe that money can still be made in that direction... genuine whale oil was hardly known in the great towns and cities... that hurt us... [to] bring back the people to whale oil [we must] send only the pure article into the market, the use of which will be cheaper, safer, and more pleasant and healthful than any other oils.

Others agreed. New Bedford businessmen were offering a prize of $3000 for the most improved whale-oil lamp in an effort to fight off the competition of petroleum. The Gazette was in favor:

Kerosene, Camphene and fluid are dangerous and smelly and all that is needed is an improved whale-oil lamp to bring back the whaling business.

Whaling was not the only industry needing help. The Dukes County Boot & Shoe Company, despite Marchant's optimism, was still having a hard time. To try to make the company profitable, the shareholders had elected two new men to run it: Samuel Osborn Jr., president, and Capt. S. W. Crosby, assistant president. But within a few weeks, both resigned and a month later the company closed down. Shareholders were assessed $165 per share to pay off the debt. Editor Marchant's dream of a profitable shoe company had ended.

Not all was dark. Thomas Bradley's shipyard in Holmes Hole, had just launched the brig Island Queen, the largest ves-

sel ever built on the Island. And the swordfishing was good:

Sword fish have this season been taken in unusually large numbers... There are now some thirty vessels out on the favorite fishing ground for them, which is about 15 or 20 miles south and east of Nomart's... The season for them is from the middle of June to September. The usual size of the sword fish taken there is from 10 to 12 feet long, weighing from 400 to 500 pounds.

Their flesh is esteemed a great delicacy and commands a ready sale in New York and most of the cities and towns south. It comes nearer the consistency and qualities of meat than any other fish that swims in our waters.

The sport of taking them is usually of the most exciting character. After the fish is harpooned, it [swims] away with the rope playing out and sometimes an hour is used up before it is brought on board.

Dr. Daniel Fisher's son had the record catch. A mighty fish it was:

LARGEST SWORDFISH ever taken in these waters. By Daniel Fisher II, the fish was 13½ feet long, weighed 700 pounds. "Very far."

Swordfishing may have been more sporting, but most fishermen went after fish that ordinary people could afford:

Mackerel fleet: Seventy sail of schooners belonging to the mackerel fleet were anchored in Menemsha Bight, rocking to and fro like the boughs of some lofty pine trees. About 7 o'clock the sailors raised the sails... presenting a scene truly magnificent as they sailed out to sea.

A few codfish and halibut have been taken, enabling the most active and successful to make fair wages.

And then there was a more unusual fish to go after:

About 15 boats and 20 men are occupied dogfishing off Menemsha. The oil obtained from dogfish is said to be nearly equal to sperm for burning.

One industrious fisherman tried to bring back the oyster harvest by stocking one of Edgartown's ponds:

The Selectmen of this town have granted a license to Mr. Peter West to plant, grow and dig oysters in a certain part of Squash Meadow Pond for 20 years. The oysters grown on this
Island are of a very superior quality. . . and hundreds upon hundreds of bushels of the finest of bivalves were [once] taken from its waters. . . it is again becoming stocked and we shall hail with delight the day which once more brings to our village, as of old, cart load after cart load of these fine shell-fish.

Not all were so enterprising. With few jobs available and time heavy on their hands, many men, young and old, were turning to alcohol. In all the Island towns, stores were not permitted to sell alcohol. Liquor could be bought only for "medicinal" purposes and then only from the towns' liquor agents. Their business was good:

We learn from the Finance Committee of Edgartown that the sales of liquor for the past two years amount to upwards of 1200 gallons — more than half being rum. A large amount of medicine for a town of 2000 inhabitants, say the committee in their report.

Edgartown residents complained that many young "rowdies" from Holmes Hole were coming into town, where illegal liquor sales were more easily made. They roamed downtown streets at night, creating disorder and bothering young ladies who were out strolling. The Gazette advised parents to keep their daughters at home.

One reason Holmes Hole men came to Edgartown was because the Sons of Temperance chapter in their village had chased them out. The Holmes Hole chapter had been formed only five months before and already 140 men and women were members. It was a powerful force and it wasn't long before a chapter was formed in Edgartown.

The churches in Edgartown joined in the fight for temperance. The Baptist Society planned a major change in its building to handle its increased activities:

. . . the old vestry building will be dispensed with. The ground under the house has been removed and a fine large room finished off for a vestry, where the Sabbath school and evening meetings hereafter will be held. The old vestry has been sold to Mr. Thomas Dunham who is now engaged in removing the same, preparatory for finishing it for a dwelling house.

With Island business in a slump, the steamer Eagle's Wing cut back its winter service to two round trips a week to New Bedford. There was an immediate public response. Without more frequent, dependable service, one letter writer said, there is no hope of prosperity. Business won't come to the Island if getting to the mainland is a problem. There must be one trip every day six months in the year and one every other day in the winter. The present service is uncertain, there is no keeping to the schedule, sailings are cancelled or depart early at the whim of the captain. Up-Islanders make the long trip to Holmes Hole or Edgartown only to learn that the trip had been cancelled or that the steamer had left early because it had to make a side trip to tow a boat to Falmouth.

When the new Monohansett went into service in June 1862, things looked better. The Gazette said:

Vineyard people have suffered much from the lack of regular communication with the mainland. . . Now that we have a steamboat, let us all take courage once more.

The new service didn't last long. That fall, the New Bedford owners chartered the Monohansett to the Union army for $500 a day and she sailed to Alexandria, Virginia, where for more than a month she was used as a troop transport. Vineyarders had to go back to the schooner L. Snow for their ferry service and were very critical of the New Bedford owners who had taken the steamer away for a month to make more money. In 1863, the Monohansett again went into army service, this time for almost two years.

Her proudest moments came in August 1864 when she was assigned to General Grant's headquarters as a dispatch ship. He sometimes came on board and on her return to civilian life, the main saloon was labeled, "General Grant's State-room," in honor of her Civil War service. A table from the state-room is now at the Martha's Vineyard Historical Society in Edgartown.

Charlie Macreading Vincent, one of the early Edgartown volunteers, was a witness to the paddle-wheeler's military service in South Carolina. He wrote in his journal:

November 6, 1863: Much to my joy, found the good steamer Monohansett lying in the stream. I lined [?] her for the wharf and soon hove in sight of the big Captain Crowell, who
loomed up "like a herring in a strap tub."... He invited me to come aboard and... I had the pleasure of seeing Charlie Smith, Capt. Wm. B. Fisher and several others from the Vineyard, among them the good natured "Fred Cook."

In February, Charlie's unit was transferred to Jacksonville, Florida, and once again the Monohansett was in the harbor. Also in Jacksonville was a former Edgartown school teacher, Lt. George B. Mussey, with the 55th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (Colored). It was a pleasant interlude for Charlie:

February 28, 1864... met Lieut. Mussey and Lieut. Thomas M. Sweet of the 24th Mass. and they were very kind to me. Through the kindness of Lieut. Mussey I got a feed for my horse and a breakfast for myself... spent the evening on the Monohansett, and had a very pleasant time. Charlie Smith was very kind to me. Truly I am among friends and I am very thankful it is so.

Charlie was so envious of Mussey's life style that he wrote his father to ask if Uncle Richard L. Pease could get him commissioned as lieutenant and assigned to one of the black units, all of which had only white officers. It didn't work out. Charlie did become a lieutenant when discharged at the end of the war, a promotion often given to long-time sergeants.

It was during this decade, the 1860s, that croquet was introduced into the country from England. After the war, it would become the major recreation at Vineyard camp meetings. Courts were set up in and out of the campground and between prayer meetings the pilgrims played (except, of course, on the Sabbath). Methodist ministers became so proficient at the game that a more sophisticated form, called Roque, was introduced. It was played on clay courts framed by rubber-covered planks off which the ball could be banked, as in billiards. The name, Roque, was created by dropping the first and last letters from croquet.

Later, when a new editor, James Cooms, took over the Gazette, he found little pleasure in croquet, wondering how it differed from billiards, which Methodists thought sinful:

[Croquet is] a game that tends, we are told, to the softening of the brain, but which, at least, we shall pronounce absurd. The radical difference between this game and billiards — which the prejudice of the people tend to denounce as demoralizing — is that one is played upon the ground and the other upon a well-finished and convenient table.

Camp meetings and croquet were distractions from a war with mounting casualties. Merchant continued to argue it was not a crusade to end slavery, but a civil war to end secession:

We talk not now of emancipation. We are not bathing ourselves in blood... to compel them to free their slaves... That would be madness... We are moving on to suppress a rebellion.

In July 1862, Lincoln called for more volunteers. Massachusetts was told to provide 15,000. New quotas were assigned: Edgartown, 20 men; Tisbury, 15; and Chilmark, 4. To help recruiting, Frederick Manter of (West) Tisbury announced:

I will give $50 each to the first two men on the Vineyard who will volunteer to join our army... The money will be paid on the day of enlistment.

Manter may have been the first to see the value of money as a recruiting tool, but the towns quickly followed. Edgartown voted a bounty of $100 to each unmarried volunteer, $125 to those with dependents; Tisbury voted $125, plus $1 a month for each dependent. Chilmark went along, bringing up the unwelcome thought that a draft might be coming:

Voted: To pay the sum of one hundred dollars to each of the first four volunteers, or, in case of no volunteers... to each of the first four persons hereafter drafted, provided such persons shall pass the necessary examination before the authorized officer.

Chilmark was the first town to mention the possibility of a draft, something abhorrent to all. There never had been a draft in the nation and it was certainly not something anyone wanted. Bounties were the alternative: Pay men to sign up and no draft would be needed.

Other towns began paying bounties. But despite the incentives, only 2000 Massachusetts men out of the 15,000 needed volunteered; none from the Vineyard. The Island had
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Other towns began paying bounties. But despite the incentives, only 2000 Massachusetts men out of the 15,000 needed volunteered; none from the Vineyard. The Island had
just experienced its first war death. Sgt. Frederick M. Vincent of (West) Tisbury had died of disease on Ship Island, Mississippi, after only a few months in the army. His unit, the 3rd Massachusetts Regiment, Cavalry, had arrived on Ship Island a month before and his death had come so soon that it shocked the village. He and six other men in his company died of illness and were buried there.

When Sgt. George B. Mussey of Edgartown, not yet commissioned, went home on a 30-day leave from the 1st Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Cavalry at Hilton Head in May 1862, he brought news of a troubling concern among the soldiers. The sergeant, along with many men in his unit, held some strong, disparaging opinions of blacks and of the actions of their commander, Gen. David Hunter, Commander of the Department of the South.

General Hunter on April 12, 1862, had declared that “all persons of color... in Fort Pulaski and on Cockspur island, Georgia, [which his units had just captured] are hereby confiscated and declared free” and, if needed, would be enlisted. Soon after, he freed all persons, “heretofore held as slaves,” in the states of Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina.

Ten days later, President Lincoln annulled the general’s orders. Freeing the slaves, Lincoln said, was a power “I reserve for myself.” The Hunter dispute was in the news when Mussey arrived on the Island on his furlough. The Gazette interviewed him and asked him what the soldiers thought about their commander’s actions. He said:

... the effect of Hunter’s proclamation upon the soldiers of the division was very marked, as all [of them], with the fewest exceptions, looked upon it with feelings of disgust... our army is not yet at all disposed to fight to free such a class of lawless beings without a plan for immediate colonization... the attempt to educate them by... the band of female teachers has been a sad failure as will Gen. Hunter’s attempt to raise a negro brigade and fit them... for combat, unless the war goes on for several generations.

As we have seen, Mussey was later promoted to lieutenant and assigned to the 55th Massachusetts (Colored) Regiment, providing us with an interesting insight into the attitudes of white officers who were chosen to lead the “colored” units.

Governor Andrew of Massachusetts agreed with General Hunter. He made that clear when he was invited to address the closing ceremony of the 1862 camp meeting, the first non-preacher to do so. The governor told the 10,000 in the congregation that God wanted President Lincoln to support Hunter:

I believe that from the day our Government turned its back upon the proclamation of General Hunter, the blessing of God has been withdrawn from our arms. We were marching on, conquering and to conquer, but since that day I have seen no victories...

Opening enlistment to men of color would solve the manpower shortage that was plaguing Governor Andrew. General Hunter, who was called “Black Dave,” did not give up and later he organized the north’s first black unit, the 1st Carolina Regiment. Many who volunteered were freed slaves.

Lincoln was not pleased with Hunter’s action and soon he was transferred to administrative duties in Washington, D. C. It wasn’t until May 1864 that he was again assigned a field command and this time it was in West Virginia, not in the south. By then, Lincoln had come around to Hunter’s position and was eager for blacks to go into combat, as he wrote Andrew Johnson, military governor of Tennessee:

The bare sight of fifty thousand armed, and drilled black soldiers on the banks of the Mississippi, would end the rebellion at once.

This change in Lincoln’s position had an effect on the lives of at least two men of color living on the Vineyard. Both joined the 5th Massachusetts Cavalry (Colored), the army’s first black cavalry unit.

One of the men, James W. Curtis, had married Frances E. Prince, a Chappaquiddick Indian, and volunteered in January 1864.

The other was James Diamond, who had married Abiah Manning of Gay Head. His induction into the 5th Cavalry was less voluntary than that of Curtis. Years before, in 1858, he had been sentenced to 10 months in Dukes County Jail for breaking into the Chilmark Store. He escaped from the poorly
guarded jail and when he was recaptured in May 1863, he was sentenced to one year of hard labor with an alternative: Join the army and you will be pardoned. He joined.

The war didn't occupy everyone's attention, especially not at camp meeting time. In 1862, the Gazette found space among its war news for an informative campground article:

Nothing is more amusing than the scene that is presented on the arrival of a steamer at this place [Eastville], which contains a small cluster of houses. The shore is alive with ox carts and innumerable vehicles of every description, attached to which are jaded skeletons of horses who seem actually bewildered by the amazing transmigration of bodies.

Such an everlasting hurry-skurry of business you never saw! such a pleasant conglomeration of beds and boxes, bundles, and rocking chairs and babies you never dreamed of! The distance to the Camp is trifle over a mile and a half, which does not preclude pedestrianism, the most preferable, especially if one knows how to cut off a portion of the distance by a ramble through the woods.

One week after that meeting, three Edgartown men told Cornelius Marchant, the town's enlistment agent, that they were ready to enlist. They were Samuel Pent, Benjamin Dowling and William Harrington. A week later, Charles Macreading Vincent, apprentice printer at the Gazette, joined them. But they were only four; twenty were needed to fill the town's quota. A draft seemed inevitable. Governor Andrew was sure that Massachusetts would never need a draft. At that 1862 camp meeting, he had told the congregation:

I cannot believe that this glorious old Bay State of ours shall ever see a conscript son marching to the defense of the liberties of his country. No conscripts in the old Bay State! All are volunteers in the army of the Lord.

The governor may have believed a draft would never be needed in the "old Bay State," but the "volunteers in the army of the Lord" failed to respond. Something had to be done or men would be drafted. The three Island towns decided more money was the answer. Edgartown raised its bounty from $100 to $500 for three-year men, and $300 for nine-month volunteers, plus $25 for their dependents. Tisbury raised its from

$125 to $500. Chilmark was more generous, raising its bonus of $100 to $600 for all three-year volunteers and $300 for nine-month men.

The richer payments worked. All three towns filled their quotas immediately. Because their bounties were larger than those paid by many mainland towns, offers to enlist poured in from off-Island. Edgartown heard from 40 men willing to volunteer as local residents if paid the bounty. The town said it didn't need them - not yet. The Gazette exuded pride:

OUR QUOTAS: Both quotas for Edgartown may now be considered full. Twenty men have enlisted under the three years' call and twenty-seven for nine months. If more are needed, they can be obtained. So we are all right at last.

On August 29, 1862, eight of the Edgartown recruits left to go to war. One was Charlie Macreading Vincent who described their departure in his journal:

Today we, the volunteers from Edgartown, to the number of eight: . . . John R. Ellis, Benj. Smith, Richard G. Shute, Alonzo Ripley, Elihu M. Bunker, Francis Pease, Jr., W. M. Harrington and Chas. M. Vincent, started from the goodly town of our abode, on our way to the defence of the glorious Union and the cause of civil and religious liberty. There was a large concourse of friends and relatives at the wharf from which we embarked in the schooner L. Snow, Captain A. L. Cleveland, for New Bedford.

The Gazette's confidence was premature. Things were not all right. The war was going badly for the Union. Its capital city, Washington, was threatened. More men were needed. A draft seemed imminent. The Gazette cautioned:

There is no time to wait for the draft. The men are wanted now and must go forward at once, to the aid of our friends battling for the capital.

With expectations of a draft, the men on the Vineyard were taking no chances. They began applying for exemptions from a draft they were sure was coming. Of nearly 800 men in Dukes County eligible to be drafted, two-thirds were given exemptions. Twenty percent were for physical reasons and the other 45 percent were for reasons such as having an essential
occupation or being the sole support of children or elderly parents. The Gazette was shocked at the number who were declared exempt for health reasons:

The amount of sickness among our men, just at this time, is certainly alarming.

Poor health was widespread. The number of health exemptions given in Boston was so “alarming” that the federal government sent inspectors there to determine the reason.

As Union losses kept mounting, President Lincoln called for more men. Island towns were given new quotas: Chilmark, 12; Edgartown, 37; and Tisbury, 37.

There was no way to raise that many. By the end of October 1862, only eleven Edgartown men had volunteered. They were mustered into the 3rd Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers. The unit was quickly shipped to Newbern, North Carolina, with the Edgartown recruits:


The Island was far short of meeting its quota. Then a month later, the state, still adjusting its records, announced that the Vineyard did not need to send any more men, its quota had been met.

The pressure was off, but the war’s toll continued. The Island learned that two more of its men, one in the army, the other in the navy, had died in the service, both of sickness.

The soldier was William H. Harrington, 33, of Edgartown, who died of typhoid fever at Minor’s Hill, Virginia. He was one of the eight men who had left three months before to the cheers of townspeople. He and the seven others had been mustered into the 40th Massachusetts Volunteers and immediately sent to Virginia to stop the Confederate drive on Washington.

Early in October he had optimistically written home:

We are now encamped at the foot of Munson’s Hill. . . We expect to be home very soon, for we all think the war will soon end.

Less than three months later, the war did end for him tragically. When his body arrived in Edgartown, the whole village turned out in his honor. The war was beginning to feel very close.

Master’s Mate Francis Adlington Jr., also of Edgartown, was the first Island sailor to die. The cause was “remittent fever” aboard the Union naval ship Vermont. He was 29 and had been a whaler before being commissioned a Master’s Mate, a highly desirable post. But it didn’t protect him from the fever.

After the battle of Gettysburg in July 1863, when 23,000 Union men were killed, wounded or declared missing, the state finally initiated the draft. A drawing was held in New Bedford and 124 Vineyard names were picked, creating a draft pool from which men would be called up to meet the next quota. The ceremony was described in the Gazette by its New Bedford correspondent, “Catchelot”:

I was on the platform Monday last when the dreaded wheel was set in motion and saw nothing to lead me to believe the thing was not done fair. Your townsman, Richard L. Pease, was stationed at the crank and if there are any secrets he knows them...

I was sorry you got elected, and knowing your pluck . . . I feel you will either march or pay the price of your ticket.

As “Catchelot” wrote, one of the men “elected” was James M. Cooms Jr., the new editor of the Gazette. He had taken over the paper from its founding editor, Edgar Marchant, four months before. Cooms, an Edgartown native and a printer on the Gazette, was 23 and single, a prime prospect for army service. Two years later, in August 1865, after the war was over, he married Charlotte Marchant, Edgar’s niece. He never did go into the service.

The Gazette listed the names drawn and explained the rules of the draft and the exemptions, which were many. There were other ways than exemption to avoid service. By paying the government $300, a man received a “commutation” and his name was not placed in the “dreaded wheel.” If he didn’t do that and his name was drawn, he could hire a substitute to take his place, or the town could fill his place with a hired substitute. Catchelot referred to these options as “the price of your
ticket" in his letter to Cooms.

Although his name had been drawn, Cooms was satisfied with the system. He editorialized about the draft's fairness:

Not a postmaster or a clergyman, who is able to shoulder a musket, is exempt, any more than the most obscure laborer. Congregations may raise the three hundred dollars to furnish a substitute for their pastor, if they cannot spare him... As for editors and reporters, nothing short of $300 will clear their skirts from the draft.

Despite the editor’s praise for the draft’s fairness, there were so many opportunities for exemption that of the 124 Vineyard men whose names were drawn in New Bedford, we can find only four who ever went into the army. There may have been five others, but as their names differ slightly (usually middle initials) from those in the service records we cannot be certain. Even if we include them, of the 124 men whose names were drawn, only nine put on a uniform.

Six others whose names were drawn were in the navy and five others might have been (again, their names were slightly different). So at the very most, only 20 of the 124 men whose names were drawn (16 percent) ever went to war.

For Vineyard mariners, the navy was an attractive alternative. Many of the more experienced were certified as Master's Mates, a much more desirable post than being cannon-fodder in the army. The Edgartown sailor quoted earlier had made the point: the Navy was “the best place in the world” if you had to go to war.

The draft, designed as an equitable way to select men for war service, had many inadequacies. Names were placed in the drawing with the assumption that the men would be available should their names be drawn. On the Island, and in many coastal towns, one-third of those on the list were away at sea and unavailable (some had gone to sea with that in mind). Many men whose names were placed in the lottery wheel were in the navy and unavailable if drawn although they were not credited against the town's quota.

These subtractions, peculiar to coastal towns, made the pool of Vineyard men available to serve so small that the towns decided to find another way to meet their quotas. In town meetings, it was voted to borrow enough money to hire off-island substitutes, as permitted in the law. Men were sent to Boston to do the buying through enlistment brokers, an occupation that had quickly developed when it became obvious that money could be made by selling men as recruits — ironically, not too much different from selling them as slaves.

To pay for these substitutes, the towns took out loans. Edgartown was soon $30,000 in debt, paying $2500 in interest annually, twice as much as it was paying for schools. The war had become an expensive burden for the town.

Of the 58 men to whom Edgartown paid bounties, nearly half are names unknown on the Island. Many have Irish names and were signed up in places like Lowell and Boston, where unemployment was high. The substitute system opened the door to corrupt practices. Recruiting agents would get the men to sign up, collect the town and state bounties and share them with the recruits. While still in the Massachusetts mustering-in camp, many men would desert and report back to the agent, who would give them a new name and sell them to another town. It became a scam.

A spot check of the men credited to the Island towns who were mustered into the 42nd Infantry Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers, shows that of the eight men to whom Vineyard towns paid bounties, seven deserted within one month. All had been signed up by brokers and none was an Islander.

Desertions were not what bothered Vineyarders. Their complaint was that many men they had paid bounties to were not credited against the town quota. Edgartown claimed that it had paid $10,350 to men for whom it never received credit. The procedure was so flawed that Richard L. Pease of Edgartown (Charlie's Uncle Richard) in June 1864 began a statewide campaign to change it. With Henry L. Whiting and Rev. William H. Sturtevant, both of (West) Tisbury, Pease published a “Circular,” detailing the system’s failings. It was sent to towns around the state. Besides demanding accurate crediting for the recruits the towns had paid for, it also asked that they be credited for their men who enlisted in the navy.

The circular concluded with a call for action:
Will your town join with us, and other towns, in a convention to be holden at the Marlboro Hotel in Boston, the twenty-second day of June, instant, at 11½ o'clock A.M., to take such action as may be deemed most certain to result in securing for each town in the State the full credit to which it is entitled, for men heretofore furnished for the army and navy of the United States?

It was a bold move: three men from a little-known island calling for a revolt against the state. They were not alone for long. So many delegates arrived at the Marlboro Hotel that the convention had to be moved to the larger Parker House.

After two days, the complaints were summarized in a petition that was taken to the state house and presented to Governor Andrew. He ordered a major overhaul, promising that “any number of clerks required to make the revision would be promptly furnished...[and he would] do all in his power...to secure to every city and town...its just and equitable rights.”

He asked his adjutant general to examine the problem. That official, William Schouler, blamed it on the bounty system and payments by the towns to the recruiting brokers:

These bounties warmed into life a certain class of men known as recruiting or substitute brokers, who agree to furnish men to fill the quotas of towns for a specified sum. I have not a high opinion of this class; and I have no doubt that many of the selectmen and town agents have been grossly swindled by them...I have no doubt that in many cases, the recruits and the broker were fellow-partners in the swindle.

There was truth in Schouler’s charge. He offered a solution to the swindling:

The cause has been the free use of money by trading with brokers and swindlers. And the remedy is not to pay a cent of bounty or premium until the recruit is mustered in; and then to pay it to the recruits and not to the broker.

His advice did not sit well with Reverend Sturtevant. Under the heading, “Who Is to Blame?,” he wrote in the Gazette that the problem was in the crediting of the towns for the men they provided. Desertions and multiple enlistments were not the towns’ concern. They were problems for the state and the army. All he wanted was credit to the town.

In September 1864, the federal government, perhaps encouraged by the Pease convention, agreed to give towns credit for men in the navy. Edgartown had 45 of them and so, instead of needing more recruits, it should now have a surplus.

While all this quota controversy was going on, some other Islanders not in uniform were facing enemy guns. They were the officers and men aboard whaleships that were being captured and burned by the two Confederate raiders, Alabama and Shenandoah. These mariners were ordered at gunpoint to abandon their ships, becoming prisoners, although only briefly, aboard the Confederate raiders before being dropped off ashore or put aboard a whaleship they had spared for the purpose.

In October 1862, the Alabama, commanded by Capt. Raphael Semmes, began her destructive career by capturing and burning the Edgartown whaler, Ocmlugee, just off the Azores. The crew was busy cutting in a large sperm whale, when the Alabama burned her as its first “trophy.” The raider had just been built in England. Master of the Ocmlugee was Abraham Osborn Jr., of Edgartown, son of her principal owner. She had left Edgartown July 2 on a whaling voyage into the Pacific and, as was customary, had gone to the Western Islands to fill out her crew. Soon after leaving there for the Pacific, they spotted and killed a sperm whale. That turned out to be an unfortunate catch. Had she not stopped to kill and cut in the whale, she would have been far from the scene when the Alabama arrived.

The Ocmlugee was the first of five whalers with Vineyard connections that were destroyed by the raiders. The bark Virginia, Capt. Shadrack R. Tilton of Chilmark, was burned soon after the Ocmlugee. The third victim was the Levi Starbuck, Capt. Thomas H. Mellen of Tisbury.

When the Alabama was sunk off the coast of France by a Union warship in June 1864, her place was taken by the Shenandoah, a fast armed ship equipped with both sail and steam power, like the Alabama. She also was built and financed by the English, who provided many of the crew, being eager to get southern cotton back into production for their textile mills.

The Shenandoah did her marauding in the Pacific and
there, two of her victims, the fourth and fifth with Vineyard connections, were the William Thompson, Capt. F. C. Smith, and the Waverly, Capt. Richard Holley, both masters were from Edgartown. These two whalers were sunk, along with a score more, in the North Pacific some weeks after the end of the war. Captain Waddell of the Shenandoah claimed he had not received official word that the war was over, although some of the whaling masters knew it and told him so. He finally believed it when told it was a fact by the master of a British ship.

Ten years after the war, payments for damages were made by England to the owners of the whaleships. The Edgartown owners of the Octogone, the Osborns, received $94,102, which included interest at four percent from the date she was destroyed. The Osborns had claimed they were owed $400,000.

By early 1864, the tide of war had swung to the Union. Losses on both sides were still heavy. President Lincoln called for more men. The quotas assigned to Massachusetts and the Vineyard were so high that they were unable to meet them with volunteers. Once again, they turned to the draft. More than 60 Viney wholees were needed.

Another drawing of names was made in New Bedford and 32 were drawn for Edgartown (it needed 21), 43 from Tisbury (28 needed) and 21 from Chilmark (14). As with the earlier drawing, few of those whose names were drawn ever went to war. Out of the 96 names drawn, we can find only three who put on an army uniform.

Clearly, the Civil War draft was an inefficient way to recruit soldiers. In July 1863, 54 Vineyard men whose names were on the list making them eligible to be drafted went to New Bedford to apply for exemptions. Nearly all were declared exempt (51 of the 54) and of the three who were turned down, two paid $300 to buy commutation, leaving only one to face service.

Although the draft did result in about 150,000 men entering the Union army, three-quarters of them were not drafted but were paid substitutes for men who had been drafted. Only about 20 percent of all soldiers in the Union army were genuine draftees. The Vineyard numbers were little different. Few names drawn in New Bedford show up in the service records. Most had been replaced by substitutes paid by their towns or by themselves.

In 1865, after the war, a state report declared the 1863 draft had been a failure. Among its findings:

Massachusetts drew 32,077 names as eligible to be drafted. Of them, 2,883 failed to report when called, 2,922 furnished substitutes, 3,702 paid commutation money to the state to be exempted. Only 807 of those whose names were drawn entered the service, while 22,363 were exempted for various reasons: 12,581 were physically disabled; 876 were the only sons of widows; 614 only sons of aged parents; 363 were fathers of motherless children under 12; 138 had two brothers already in the service; 35 had been convicted of felonies; and 3,367 pleaded alienage.

As the war's toll kept rising so did the calls for men. An agent from Holmes Hole went to the mainland looking for recruits and reported that he could get twelve men for $175 each, plus the bounty.

When the federal government in 1864 authorized the enlistment of blacks in the army, 20 (West) Tisbury men saw this as a way to meet the town's quota. They pledged nearly $2,000 of their own money to send agents into the south to recruit freed slaves as substitutes. They would be easy to recruit,

as the Massachusetts State bounty was larger than that for any other state it was supposed that she would command the market for recruits.

The Gazette ran an article signed by "J. M. Forbes and seventy-one others," asking the people of the state to contribute $50,000 to provide "50,000 acclimated [black] soldiers... it seems to us that the prompt enlistment of colored men is all important to the Union cause."

With the army open to colored volunteers, recruiters came to Gay Head from the mainland. The Gazette reported that a New Bedford man had left with five men from Gay Head and wanted to know which town would be credited: New Bedford or Chilmark? Gay Head was still part of Chilmark at the time.
One of the five volunteers from Gay Head may have been Alfred Rose, 15 years old, who enlisted in May 1864. He is the only volunteer we have found who was officially credited with Gay Head as his residence. Private Rose served in Company K of the 23rd U.S. (Colored) Infantry and was killed in the failed mine assault at Petersburg, Virginia, in July 1864, two months after he enlisted, indicating how little training troops, and especially black troops, were given before being sent into battle. He is the only Vineyard Wampanoag we know of who was killed in combat and certainly the youngest Vineyarder to die, being only 15. The Petersburg assault in which he was killed is famous because of its failure. General Grant wrote:

The effort was a stupendous failure...due to inefficiency on the part of the corps commander and the incompetency of the division commander.

There was another Vineyard soldier who might have been a Wampanoag. In his history, Charles E. Banks lists a Peter Johnson "of Gay Head" as serving in the 44th Regiment. Official records show a Peter Johnson, "resident, Martha's Vineyard," who enlisted in December 1863 at age 26. We do not find him on the roster of the 44th Massachusetts Regiment, which was mustered nearly a year before he volunteered so it is unlikely that he was in it. Official records do not give a unit for Peter Johnson nor do they give Gay Head as his residence, only Martha's Vineyard. He remains a mystery.

When Lincoln opened the army to blacks, it provided a new source of recruits for the Union. Edgartown, still far from meeting its quota, called a town meeting to authorize borrowing money to buy substitutes. The Gazette beat the drums:

Let us all take heed...Money in plenty we have, but men we have not and consequently money must buy men. Let noble thoughts arrest the stagnation of the mind and let the soul expand under the influence of generous action and soon the coffers will be filled with enlistment funds.

No decisions were made so another town meeting was called soon after. That meeting announcement said it all:

Come to Town Meeting Saturday to authorize our recruiting agent to obtain as many men as he can to fill our quota. They can be had for $50 over the bounty.

At that second meeting, the voters authorized the town to borrow an additional $3000 to buy substitutes from off-Island. The town had already borrowed about $30,000. But there seemed to be no other way. Within a month, it was reported that the Island's recruiting agent, Thomas Bradley, had hired another 25 off-Island men to help fill the quota. At least 50 Island men were in the Navy and, despite the federal ruling, the Island still hadn't received credit for them. The Gazette took up that cause:

...about fifty of our town's brave sons [are] as busily engaged in harpooning of Jeff Davis's privateers or sending bombs into the very vitals of inflexible forts as they had ever been in catching whales.

We have given so much emphasis in this chapter to the hiring of substitutes that readers may get the impression that the Island did not do its part in the war. That would be wrong. There were, according to one account, 185 men serving in the army who were credited to the Vineyard. There is no definite figure on how many of them were Islanders and how many were paid substitutes, but our estimate is that about 30 percent were substitutes. This is not much different from other towns. The hiring of substitutes was not shameful and certainly not illegal. When one considers that about one-third of the men of eligible age for war duty were at sea, unavailable, and that there were about 170 Vineyarders serving in the navy, the total number of Vineyard men who served, about 300, is an honorable one. The Island never failed to meet its quota, whether with residents or with substitutes.

The records are so confused that it is impossible to state with certainty who was, and who was not, a Vineyard resident. As one Vineyard man who served during the war wrote:

...complications in the muster rolls and town credits...show why it is impossible to establish a correct list of soldiers properly belonging to a given town...[undated ms., probably Beriah T. Hillman, about 1900, MVHS.]

It is not even easy to state with confidence how many Vineyard men were killed or wounded. We have mentioned a number of those who died in service, but not all. The follow-
ing are all we know of who died in the army:

Elihu M. Bunker, Edgartown, of disease.

John Carr, Edgartown, killed at Port Hudson, Louisiana (he is not in the 1860 Census and may be a substitute).

Thomas D. Cleveland, Edgartown, of disease after being in a prison camp.

Cyrus Fisher, Edgartown, of disease after being a prisoner at Andersonville.

William H. Harrington, Edgartown, of disease.

Lewis P. Luce, Tisbury, of disease, Baton Rouge.

Alfred P. Rose, Gay Head, killed at Petersburg, Virginia.

Elisha M. Smith, Edgartown, killed at Gettysburg.

Frederick M. Smith, Tisbury, of disease, Ship Island, Mississippi.

Thomas A. West, Tisbury, killed at Winchester, Virginia.

Our records show two Vineyard men who died while in the Navy. They are:

Francis Adlington, Jr., Edgartown, of disease.

Henry Clay Wade, Edgartown, of disease.

There may have been others. If any reader can provide additional information, the author would be most grateful.

In January 1865, Congress passed a constitutional amendment ending slavery and sent it to the states to be ratified. An enthusiastic meeting of Edgartown citizens urged its approval. Both the public and the Gazette had changed position on slavery. They had previously called it “the south’s problem.” The Gazette’s change may have been due to the change in its editor. Edgar Marchant, the founding editor, had turned the paper over to James Cooms Jr., a young man and a printer on the paper. He was not one to mince words. He took his new “bully pulpit” seriously.

His editorial strongly supporting the slavery amendment explained why some minds, including those at the Gazette, had changed: the issue of secession had initiated a civil war which in turn had brought slavery to an end:

We cannot, hereafter, be justly charged with inconsistency . . .

The future historian will point to the leaders of the rebellion as being the indirect cause of the abolition of slavery on this continent – showing how good is made to spring out of evil.

Despite his youth, Cooms had a Puritanical streak. He didn’t like what was going on. Vice and sin abounded:

. . . let it be decided now whether riot and vulgarity shall fill our streets evening after evening and streams of iniquity flow on until we have lost our moral character irretrievably.

One month later, he was proved to have been correct. Seven young women (he did not print their names) were found guilty of “street walking” and sentenced to the House of Correction for 60 days. They were still in jail, unable to join in the town’s joyous celebration, in April 1865 when General Robert E. Lee surrendered and the war ended. In every Island town, church bells rang continuously all day. During the night, some young men, eager to keep the party going, entered the Edgartown Methodist church and rang its bell so vigorously that the balance wheel broke and the bell could not be used for some weeks.

The joy of peace soon passed. President Lincoln was assassinated at Ford’s Theatre two weeks later. The Gazette ran a thick black border around its pages. Memorial services were held on the day of his funeral. Cannons were fired by a revenue cutter in Edgartown harbor every half hour from sunrise to sunset. The Island was in shock.

Lincoln had just been reelected in a landslide. On the Vineyard, he received even more votes than in his first election. In Tisbury there were 195 votes for Lincoln, only 50 for McClellan. Edgartown was even more Republican with 232 for Lincoln, 52 for McClellan. Chilmark was the only town with any strong vote against the president: 42 for Lincoln, 35 for McClellan. Gosnold cast seven votes, 6 went for the president and 1 for McClellan, prompting what may have been the first piece of humorous verse to be published in the Gazette:

THE VOTE OF GOSNOLD
It seemeth queer, and all amiss,
But I have it now, by Heavens!
The returns show the voting lists,
Were all at “sixes and sevens.”

S. PIANI

With the war over, Editor Cooms devoted his editorials to
more political issues. He seemed to enjoy controversy. He was ahead of his time on how to treat the freed slaves. They should be given the vote, he wrote:

...as they helped with the bayonet so too... with the help of the ballot they will help to reconstruct, recuperate and help to carry out in those States the establishment of peace and equity where... even now, anarchy and misrule hold sway.

He even was bold enough to recommend an eight-hour day. The twelve-hour day, six days a week, was the standard at the time. Again Cooms was ahead of the times.

But he was not diplomatic. After he visited the campground and was unimpressed with its croquet, he gave other reasons for his negative views:

It is an irregular and tiresome life amid the haunts of poisonous mosquitoes and under the arbitrary rule of the select few... [the leaders] must seek another spot where the incongruous elements of secularism will not too often intermingle and too often predominate over the religious fervour that should prevail.

The religious fervor that had inspired Jeremiah Pease to stake out the campground in 1835 was steadily being diluted. The pleasures of August on the Vineyard were more and more the attraction for mainlanders.

That did not trouble most Islanders. They welcomed the influx of pleasure seekers and sought ways to encourage more of them to come. One way was to improve the ferry service. Henry L. Whiting and others were organizing a company to buy the Island own steamboat. He urged all to invest in it, so that the Vineyard would no longer depend on the New Bedford group. Those who have bought shares, he wrote in the Gazette, are mostly from Tisbury and Chilmark. More Edgartown investors should join. Local money, invested properly, could bring prosperity to the Island:

Let our capitalists and businessmen turn their attention to the development of our ample home resources. Then instead of our deserted streets and idle wharves our beautiful island may be full of life and enterprise and prosperity.

Those "deserted streets and idle wharves" were making the Island less attractive to its young men. There was little to do except to farm, and even that was in decline. A man who signed himself, "Rustic," wrote a two-part report that Cooms published in the Gazette. The value of goods produced on the Island, "excepting manufactured oil and sperm candles," was $300,000. Two-thirds of that amount, $200,000, came from farming. But, he added unhappily, men were leaving the farms to seek better opportunities on the mainland:

In 1845 there were 12,000 sheep in this county. In 1855, there were but 9000 and 1 judge that to be about the present number [in 1865]...many of our farmers...dissatisfied with their condition...have sought prosperity in distant places; but...prosperity brings no peace while the home-yearning still lives in the heart... Stick by the paternal acres, my young friend...

When that was written the war was ending, but peace didn't bring any improvement. Nearly thirty Island families left within a few months for the mid-west. Both Dukes and Nantucket counties had had a drop in property valuations during the war. They, along with Plymouth county, were the only ones in the state to have declined.

The prospects seemed bleak.

In the spring of 1865, the Martha's Vineyard Steamboat Company had enough capital to go into business. Thomas Bradley of Tisbury was elected president and Ira Darrow of Edgartown, secretary. The new company purchased the steamer Helen Augusta from New York. She was a modern propeller vessel, the first "Propeller," as such vessels were called, in Island service (the larger Monohansett, owned in New Bedford, was a paddle wheeler). The Gazette described her as "a neat little craft and has excellent speed." Her schedule was for her to leave Edgartown at 7:30 a.m., three days a week and to return the following days, departing from New Bedford after the arrival of the morning train from Boston.

The Maine Steamboat Company in 1865 announced that its steamer City of Bath would stop at Holmes Hole twice a week during the summer, on Wednesday evenings en route from Boston to New York and Saturday evenings on her return
to Boston. The Island for the first time had a direct connection to the two major cities of the northeast.

Perhaps there was hope. Editor Cooms thanked the New Bedford Mercury for pointing out that Edgar Marchant’s dream was beginning to come true:

The Martha’s Vineyard campground is now called “a poor man’s Saratoga.”

One Edgartown businessman was investing his money, if not in a new industry, at least in a new house. For two years, not one house had been built in town. Now a handsome home for Samuel Osborn Jr., was going up on South Summer Street (it is today’s Charlotte Inn). It will cost $6000, the Gazette said proudly. But one house didn’t satisfy young Editor Cooms:

No town or city more than Edgartown requires a regeneracy in its business... It needs but a small tithe of the money that is now dodging taxation or deposited for 6 percent... to regain its former prosperity. It is only selfishness that influences men to hide away in strong vaults their accumulated wealth.

He had more cause to continue his scolding when, in December 1865, Richard G. Shute and Charles M. Vincent, two Civil War veterans and Edgartown natives, left town to go to Connecticut to start a photographic business:

The same story, going to look for business. Can our citizens read the handwriting on the wall!

There was plenty going on offshore. Vineyarders were watching, as it sailed past:

On June 26th [1866] from sunrise to 6 p.m. 290 vessels passed Falmouth on the way through Vineyard Sound. At one time, 127 were counted within a distance of three miles, having come out of Holmes Hole on a change in wind... A gentleman of Tisbury, whose house is near a high hill commanding a view of the Sound for its entire length, one day counted 366 sail in sight at one time.

The war had ended, business was coming back to life, but not, it seemed, on the Island.

(To be continued.)

How Mr. Clark Tried to Get Rid Of His Wife in 1867

In the spring of 1867, within a month, the following two items appeared in the Vineyard Gazette. The first was a paid announcement that was printed in the February 22nd issue; the second, a Letter to the Editor, was in the issue of March 22nd.

NOTICE.
WHEREAS my wife, Mary J. Clark, has left my home and now is absent from me against my consent, all persons are forbidden to harbor or trust her on my account, as I shall pay no bills of her contracting.

FRANK D. CLARK

Holmes Hole, February 22, 1867

A month later, March 22, 1867, there was the following Letter to the Editor:

MONTICELLO, Florida, March 7th, 1867

To the Editor of the Vineyard Gazette:

In the Gazette of Feb. 22nd, I see a notice signed by my husband, F. D. Clark, saying that I am absent against his consent, which I wish to say is wholly untrue. My visit here with my mother and friends has been intended and agreed to by him for the past year, and I not only had his consent but his company as far as Boston; also money from him to pay my fare here, but he took fine care not to give me enough to pay my fare back, or to defray any little necessary expenses of a visit for a few months, and had it not been for the kindness of true friends I should have been nearly penniless on my arrival here.

Again, I say, I did not come here without my husband’s consent, although such treatment as I have received from him it is a blessing to be free from for a while, at least, and I hope that during some of his moments of serious reflections he may consider on the evil of his ways.

MARY J. CLARK

Villagers must have been filled to overflowing with sympathy for the 20-year-old Mary. And, perhaps, scorn for husband Frank, 29. We have found no record of how long they had been married, but it had been long enough for Mary to
have received such treatment as to make her happy “to be free from [it] for a while.”

Then, probably after some “moments of serious reflections,” Frank seems to have come to the conclusion that Mary had won the argument. He went down to Monticello, Florida, (Mary’s home town) to ask for her forgiveness.

Mary forgave and Frank stayed. In 1870, daughter Lillian was born. Then, some time before 1880, the family returned to Tisbury, where that year son Frank E., was born while daddy worked as a grocery clerk. We can find no record of where he worked or whether or not he owned the store.

The family did not prosper. In 1887, the town of Tisbury remitted a $2 town tax that Frank owed because, the report said, he “was unable to pay.”

Frank died not long after that on November 17, 1887. He was 54 years old.

We cannot find anything more about the family. Perhaps Mary returned with the children to Florida. There are no records of them on the Vineyard after Frank’s death.

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In Memoriam:

Mildred A. Huntington
1912 – 2003

In every organization there are individuals who expect no credit and get none for the work they do. It is enough for them to be helpful in a cause they believe in.

Such a person was Mildred A. Huntington, who died earlier this year. She was the widow of Gale Huntington, long-time librarian and founding editor of this journal. Her name appears in every issue as the Founding Editor. Hers should be alongside his as the Founding Co-Editor.

Husband Gale was the historian and writer. He would, in his scrawl, write and edit articles for each issue. It was Mildred’s job to turn Gale’s scrawl into something a printer could read. For nearly 20 years, she did that at their home on Hines Point, Vineyard Haven. Only Gale and their daughter Emily (plus the grateful printer) knew how much work she did.

She was the perfect person for the task. Fastidious in everything from her personal appearance to her typing and proof-reading, she made sure that there were no misspelled words and no ungrammatical sentences. Most of the time, she relied on Gale for the facts, but if the article involved her family, the Singing Tiltons on North Road, Chilmark, or up-Island history in general, she was especially critical.

In all the years that she worked on this journal, her name never appeared in its pages. Until the end, she read every issue from cover to cover, encouraging the present editor with her comments. Sadly, she will not read these words. She died in August at 91 years of age.

Goodbye, Mil. Sorry to be late with this appreciation.
List of subscribers for Personal Substitutes

In order of credit.

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First page of a document that lists 43 Tisbury men who made a first payment of $10 for hiring a personal substitute in case they were drafted. We do not know the meaning of the "X's," nor who kept this record.