



50TH YEAR

THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 50, No. 4

MAY 2009

MORNING GLORY FARM

The Edgartown tax sale that launched a nourishing Island enterprise: a historical essay from Tom Dunlop, author of a new book about the farm.



ALSO IN THIS EDITION:

- Robert M. Copeland's *Design for Oak Bluffs: 'It Turned Out to Be a Jewel'*
- *Glass Plate Negatives, Saved from an Attic, Illumine Oak Bluffs History*
- *Wheat Bounties: Island Farm Subsidies, 170 Years Ago*

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TO OUR READERS

This quarter's Dukes County Intelligencer looks at development from two distinct, yet related angles. In his history of the property that became Morning Glory Farm, Tom Dunlop, who has written the text for the upcoming book *Morning Glory Farm and the Family that Feeds an Island*, reviewed in this issue, explores how the seventeen acres of what was considered a tax liability on the Edgartown rolls, was rescued. Pamela Street takes a look at the work of Robert Morris Copeland, landscape architect, who designed the resort development of Oak Bluffs. Nowadays we hear the word 'development' and either cringe or rub our hands together. If the Athearns hadn't believed that farming was a fine way to make a living, those seventeen acres, and many more since, might have ended up being developed not for farming but for residences. At the same time, the development of Oak Bluffs — a resort prettified by parks and curvilinear streets, which has long been considered a jewel of urban planning — was built on 75 acres of Norton farmland.

This winter photographer Alison Shaw brought a treasure trove of 74 rescued glass plates to the Museum. Douglas Ulwick and Sally Dagnall have captioned six of them for this issue. An exhibit of many more of these historic images will be on display at the Museum through the summer.

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— Susan Wilson, Editor

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A FARM'S BEGINNINGS:

Seven Bucks for Seventeen Acres On 'a Barren, Ragged Plain'

by TOM DUNLOP

This article is an adaptation from the book Morning Glory Farm, and the Family that Feeds an Island, to be published this summer by Vineyard Stories.

ACCORDING TO AN ATHEARN FAMILY story, sometime during the day on June 8, 1943, somewhere in Edgartown, perhaps at town hall or the courthouse, Kenneth T. Galley, Sr. came within ear-shot of a tax sale.

On this late spring morning, following a lengthy economic depression and now in the midst of a world war, the town auctioneer was trying to recover unpaid taxes by selling a foreclosed parcel of land at the western approach to Edgartown. Made up of seventeen and a half acres, the land was undeveloped, wooded, and shaped roughly like the handle of a revolver. It lay on the southeastern fringe of a vast wilderness that stretched out across the interior of the Island, described on one 1830 map as "wast land."¹

The auctioneer faced a difficult marketing challenge as he tried to dispose of this particular lot: There were no buyers in the room. Spotting Ken Galley, he called out to him to "come in here and bid on this land. Get it off the books."

Galley was well known in Edgartown, an Islander whose lineage went

1 Edgartown file, map collection of the Martha's Vineyard Museum.

TOM DUNLOP, the author of *Morning Glory Farm and the Family That Feeds an Island*, is a former editor of and now contributing writer to *Martha's Vineyard Magazine*. He is also producing a romantic comedy, *From Adam*, by screenwriter Kevin Luperchio of Los Angeles. The writer would like to thank Catherine Merwin Mayhew for her assistance in the preparation for this article.

back three working-class generations. His grandfather, Arthur, came to the Vineyard from Calais, Maine, in 1882 and opened a ship's chandlery on the Eastville side of Vineyard Haven harbor. Ken's father, Truman, worked as a carpenter, patrolman, and night watchman in Edgartown. Ken, an aspiring architect, returned to the Island from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, after the stock market crash in 1929. He went to work as a contractor and eventually opened his own firm, K.T. Galley and Company in Edgartown, still in business today.

Ken Galley, like many Islanders, knew that the land the auctioneer was pushing was useless, and might have been useless since the time the Vineyard was settled by Massachusetts colonists a few hundred years earlier. After hearing the auctioneer's pitch, he casually offered seven dollars.

Not per acre. Seven bucks total, roughly forty cents an acre — and about \$85 in today's money.

With the bang of a gavel, one of the most unlikely but consequential transformations on the landscape of Martha's Vineyard was slowly set in motion. Here, within a single generation, a young, hardworking couple named James and Deborah Galley Athearn bucked the generational turn away from farming and began to grow and build what is now the largest, busiest and best known agricultural operation on the Island. They cleared the land of trees, built a house with their own hands, planted a crop of corn and a plot of morning glories and with the passage of some years, felt they could declare themselves to be "real farmers."

This is where Morning Glory Farm got its start, either on — or right next door to — what the original Athearn settler on Martha's Vineyard had once derisively labeled, nearly three hundred years earlier, "a barren ragged plain of no town."²



History can hide many things. For such a historic piece of ground, it's maddening how little we know for sure about the seventeen and a half acres on which the farm stand rises today, along with the greenhouses, herb garden, several fields, barns and storage areas, and the Athearns' own homestead. To find out anything about this place where everything to do with Morning Glory Farm began, titles must be searched and indistinct borders on archaic maps studied. Even after that, science must enter the picture — reports on landscape history and discussions with wise farmers about soil composition.

The narrative must be assembled and laid out in the way a detective might close out a murder mystery. Except, of course, that this mystery

² Foster, David R. and Glenn Motzkin, *Historical Influences on the Landscape of Martha's Vineyard: Perspectives on the Management of the Manuel F. Correllus State Forest*. Petersham, Massachusetts, 1999: 16.



Jim Athearn works the land.

Alison Shaw

deals with a small piece of real estate that, after a dramatic presentation of the evidence, can't confess anything.

A Vineyard historian may make the case that the land on which Morning Glory Farm is now headquartered was either partially — or entirely — mentioned in a deed in 1669, just twenty-seven years after colonial settlement. The deed, referring to the holdings of a T. Buchard, describes "... land (at) Meeshackett containing I judge 63 acres more or Less Bound with the Shrubed plain or Comon Land on the North. ..."³

"Meeshacket" — now spelled "Meshacket," the name given the winding road that runs along the side of Morning Glory's parking lot — is a general term referring to land lying off the southeast quadrant of what we now know as the Manuel F. Correllus State Forest.⁴ Thus the Buchard property apparently lay there too, either on the grounds of the present day forest, abutting it in some uncertain way — or perhaps both.

But in those days the forest was quite a different place.

Through the late 1920s, when plantations of mostly red and white pine were first seeded there as an investment in what would turn out to be a largely unsuccessful timber industry, this expanse at the very center of the Island was known not as the state forest, but as the Great Plain. It was a

³ Ibid, 16.

⁴ Ibid, 16.

spreading swath of scrubby, undivided land ("the Shrubby plain") belonging to no particular town, but startling in its low-lying, arid, fire-prone and unpopulated beauty. In 1874, geologist Nathaniel Shaler rode across the Great Plain on horseback. His report for a mainland magazine was reprinted in a December edition of the *Vineyard Gazette* at the end of that year:

The trees are all young; in most cases from the saddle or carriage seat the eye ranges above their tops for miles over a billowy sea of the deepest green . . . all of a deep, rich hue, with a wonderful gloss, surpassing in brilliancy anything we get on the main-land. The extent and unbroken character of the [scrub oak] is amazing; in one direction we may journey through the [shrub] for ten miles without a trace of habitation or culture. Through it runs a maze of old paths made before the rich foliage could bar the way.

The ten miles of growing forest is, for us fortunately, a waste in the eyes of the good citizens who crowd its eastern border, and, as such, shunned. . . . One wight [person] told me a doleful tale of his having driven six hours at high speed to get through it, to find himself back at his starting-point at the end.⁵

If the Buchard property at Meshacket generally — or the future Ken Galley purchase specifically — lay within the actual perimeter of the Great Plain, then from the time of the first white settlers through Shaler's visit at least, the ground on which Morning Glory built its farm stand and grows a significant share of its fruits and vegetables would have been considered nearly valueless. It would have been almost impossible to grow anything marketable there.

Great Plain soil — now state forest soil — is generally sandy, acidic, porous and extremely tough on agriculture. At the same time, ancient river valleys, through which glacial meltwaters once flowed, run north and south across the landscape; to this day, these long hollows are known as frost bottoms because they are bit by frosts every month of the year. And finally, the scrub that grew across the landscape was almost explosively prone to wildfire. Whether a Great Plain or a state forest, the place was always horticulturally hopeless.

But Jim Athearn points out that in older times the scrubby boundaries of the Great Plain were never sharply drawn, and Vineyarders had various ideas about where it really began and ended. And there are anecdotal reasons, grounded in the soil itself, to believe that while the land on which Morning Glory Farm would get its start certainly edged up against the Great Plain, Ken Galley's future purchase might not have been part of it.



Across Meshacket Road from the farm stand and bordered on the

5 *Vineyard Gazette*, December 11, 1874: 1

north by West Tisbury Road, there's a large field, part of which the Athearns affectionately call Rocky Top and where they grow lettuce, corn, sunflowers and pumpkins. This ground is challenging — hilly and littered with stone, like the nearby morainal Great Plain topography — and there are maps at the Martha's Vineyard Museum that suggest Great Plain scrub oak at times encroached on Ken Galley's original seventeen and a half acres.

But the Galley purchase and the cropland at Rocky Top and vicinity are also different from the old Great Plain in important ways.

For one thing, modern surveys suggest that, geologically speaking, the terminal moraine of the former Great Plain begins to yield to outwash topography near the boundary of Meshacket Road. Jim Athearn confirms that here and there, you can find a significant difference in the soils between the two landscapes: On the former Great Plain and current state forest, the soil is almost entirely "Carver loamy coarse sand," a porous type that helps make agriculture so difficult there. But, says Jim, surveyors have found areas of "Haven very fine sandy loam" near the farm stand, and — usefully to a farmer — this soil type contains some clay.

"Haven's pretty good," says Jim. "It's a matter of the ratio of sand to clay. Clay can hold more water and nourish plants." Crops grow on the original Morning Glory fields in ways they never could have on the adjacent Great Plain. Moreover, though the croplands at Rocky Top roll gently like the Great Plain, the hollows on this farmland are not so contoured that frost afflicts them every month of the year, the way it does in the nearby bottoms of the state forest. So though it's clear the Great Plain lay hard by the Ken Galley purchase, it seems fair to believe that Ken Galley's purchase wasn't exactly Great Plain landscape.

Soil tends to wash down from higher ground to lower; over two decades, Jim Athearn and his sons Simon and Dan have used various techniques to build up the topsoil at Rocky Top to an average depth of about ten inches above the yellow sand beneath it. This unceasing effort suggests another reason why no farmer in older times seems to have tried to grow anything near the future Athearn farm stand and homestead before Jim and Debbie began to work this ground in the middle 1970s. Indeed, the original Morning Glory property appears to have been too far removed from town and too hard to work in any meaningful way to warrant bothering with it very much at all.



"It was back of beyond," says Mary Jane Carpenter, a title researcher for Reynolds, Rappaport and Kaplan and an avid Island historian. It's possible to see from her compilation of assessors' maps of the town how the future Morning Glory Farm appeared to lie at a vortex of Edgartown agriculture

and industry, a kind of no man's land, not quite suited for one purpose or the other. It's also possible to see how, surrounded by more productive and desirable working and agricultural lands closer to town, the eventual Galley purchase came officially to be called "The Offset" — a term often used for any property left over after the original proprietors and later buyers had divided up the more useful properties nearby: house lots, planting fields, and woodlots.

From the maps, it's also clear how small the heart of Edgartown really was and how limited the farming was around it. "This was not agribusiness," says Carpenter of the farms that lay along the edge of town. "They were farms that you do wonder how they fed anybody other than themselves." To the north of the center of town lay swatches of agricultural land (hence Planting Field Way), but several farms in this sector — like the Thomas A. Norton Farm, confined generally to the grounds of what is now the Edgartown Yacht Club tennis courts — were tiny.

Other farms on the perimeter of the town were larger, but stubborn topographical facts often limited them too. Not far to the southeast of the farm stand and the Rocky Top fields stood the John Cleveland Farm. Swamped with boggy ponds and bisected by ancient ways, the croplands of the Cleveland farm could have been neither large nor terribly well ordered. It's almost impossible to believe that the neighboring Offset could have been any more productive by way of size, soil or circumstance — if it were farmed at all.

But what of industry? Might not the Morning Glory land have served some manufacturing or commercial purpose?

Almost directly to the north, across West Tisbury Road, lay ground that was probably rather like the sandy, rocky soil the Athearns would later improve and work at Rocky Top and fields around it. Across these lots run roads still known as Tar Kiln and Clay Pit. Entrepreneurs originally used these roads and paths to get pitch pine to make barrels, among other enterprises, says Carpenter, "and so it was all very integrated with what was going on at the docks" of Edgartown Harbor. But there's little evidence, either from the names of roads that cross the landscape or the relics found there in later years, that the first fields and headquarters of Morning Glory Farm were ever put to that kind of use.

Even so, this property must have been used for *something* in the three hundred years between European settlement and the June day when Ken Galley bought it. "There's some traces of work on the land," says Jim Athearn, who began clearing it in 1976 with the notion that it might originally have been a woodlot, a source for firewood. He soon changed his mind. "There was the remnant of a trench and some iron machinery that was peculiar, I thought, for it being a woodlot."



The Athearn family, in the early years of Morning Glory Farm.

Alison Shaw

More evidence of what the original Morning Glory land probably didn't do. Is there any, then, for what it actually did?

Mary Jane Carpenter thinks so.

She cites a series of maps that show how cartographers saw this ground a century and more ago. A pair from the nineteenth century, drawn eighteen years apart and cited in a scientific study of the state forest conducted by Harvard Forest in 1999, appears to agree on what natural and man-made features lay in and around the original Morning Glory landscape.

These maps, from 1830 and 1848, show that this ground lay on a discernable border between wooded and open land, which seems to square with the description of the T. Buchard property of 63 acres "lying more or Less Bound with the Shrubby plain" in 1669. The 1848 map — actually a collection of maps prepared by the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey — suggest three additional things about the area around the main Morning Glory ground, each interesting:

One is an absence of buildings. Another is an absence of fences. And the third is a thatch work of roads, three of which were eventually connected and paved to make up the sharply curved, bucolic way known at its Morning Glory end as Meshacket Road and at the Pease's Point Way end as Clevelandtown Road.⁶

Carpenter points to Sweetened Water Pond (it was once called Beetle Swamp), just to the east of Rocky Top and surrounding fields. She picks out other ponds that neighbor the farm stand and nearby croplands — there's a large one to the north, just across West Tisbury Road, and several boggy wetlands hidden in the woodlands to the south and west. Tracing her finger along Meshacket Road from these sources of water, she finds a path branching off a curve in the road. On the assessors' map, the path is called Swimming Place Road, which once ran from this fork at Meshacket Road to a landing at Edgartown Harbor. There, at the narrows between Edgartown and a point just south of Caleb's Pond on the Chappaquiddick side, villagers swam their cattle from winter pastures in town to summer pastures over on the sparsely populated island. This crossing was known as the Swimming Place.

She points to the features surrounding the Ken Galley purchase: Open land, some of the soil just good enough to hold water and grow something besides the scrub oak that overran the nearby Great Plain. The boggy freshwater ponds. The road leading to the Swimming Place. All these indicate to Carpenter that the land was once pasture: "You see, there's a pond. And here's another one, and another one and another one. If you have animals, you need water. So that probably was what it was." Which would also account for why the land lost what little value it may have held as farmers gave up their fields and pastures in the nineteenth century, moving into town to take up the commerce of the industrial age.

Even in a time of deep recession, Carpenter knows that latter-day residents look back in wonder that so few Islanders predicted how pricey even the most benighted tracts of Vineyard property would one day become. To her, this reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of how things stood on Martha's Vineyard half a century and more ago. Many Vineyarders simply had no cash to invest, and land like Galley's offset lot appeared in those days to have no history, to say nothing of a valuable future.

"They'd take things for taxes for fifty cents," says Carpenter, "Even during the Depression, the town could barely afford to even collect the taxes. I can only imagine how difficult things would have been. But the other thing was, nobody would starve. Nobody would go hungry, because there would always be fish — there'd always be something you could do."

In a title search some years ago, Carpenter learned that this offset of

seventeen and a half acres eventually wound up in the possession of a family named Kelley, who owned the Kelley House in Edgartown, among other businesses.

"The [Joseph V.] Kelleys sell the land to two men named [Tristram] Ripley and [Alexander] Fisher in 1880. They didn't pay the taxes, and someone sells it to a Mayhew, and he doesn't pay his taxes. It's like cursed land!" she says. By the 1930s, the town "had officially foreclosed the rights of redemption by saying it was 'land of low value.' At this time it was just trash. Half the time nobody knew who owned it and nobody wanted it."



For thirty years after he entered the empty auction room in June 1943, Ken and his wife, Ruth, held on to the old, orphaned ground at the western gateway to town. Woods grew high on the thin topsoil. People dragged used-up machinery into out-of-the-way corners and left it there to rust.

Ken Galley died in 1964, and Ruth Galley divided the land between her son, Ken Jr., and daughter, Deborah, who in the summer of 1969 married her high school sweetheart, Jim Athearn of West Tisbury. And that might have been that — except for rising ambitions in Jim and Debbie, who came home to the Vineyard in 1973 to start a family after trying their hand at a number of trades on Cape Cod and finding no work or mainland village that really satisfied them.

In the summer of 1974, Jim and Debbie sold a crop of vegetables, grown in the yard of an Athearn family home in West Tisbury, to Hugh Taylor at the Chilmark Store (the price: five dollars). Jim had grown up on Music Street, the second son of Elmer (Mike) and Elizabeth Athearn. Jim's father was an appliance repairman and a passionate gardener, but in his boyhood Jim was deeply aware how hard it was for his dad to make a living this way. Jim looked for other careers in which he might contribute usefully to the world as well as earn enough to get ahead (being a psychologist seemed appealing for a time). But the idea of farming kept tugging at him too; he found that it often occupied his dreams at night and distracted him from his studies during the day. It was the sale of those vegetables to Hugh Taylor at the Chilmark Store in 1974 that finally convinced Jim Athearn that he just might be able to earn enough to support a family as a farmer.

His ambitions led Debbie and Jim to Edgartown, to a parcel of Galley family land off West Tisbury Road measuring seventeen and a half acres. Ruth Galley, Jim recalls, wasn't even quite sure what the boundaries were. Still, Jim thought that with a lot of clearing and even more work, maybe — just maybe — this old ground might make decent farmland.

"It seemed like a radical idea at the time," says Jim, "because sometimes you don't think of woods as being a potential field." Jim and Debbie talked it over. They bought out her brother Ken's half-interest in the property.

⁶ *Historical Influences*: 10-11

In 1976, Jim Athearn began to clear the old offset land of trees and, with Ken's help, build a house just off Meshacket Road. The following spring they planted seeds in a field out behind the house, and as soon as the first crops came up, they sold the corn and other vegetables out of a tool shed, up which strings of morning glories had begun to grow.

Thirty years later, this small parcel of land — once so forlorn that an auctioneer had to call a bystander into the room to bid on it — may now be considered the most radically transformed of any on the Vineyard, thanks not to a developer who built it up or a wealthy summer resident who closed it off, but to a family who turned waste land into cropland and an offset property into a farm that feeds an Island.



Alison Shaw

Robert Morris Copeland's Plan For Oak Bluffs

A Public and Personal Legacy

by PAMELA STREET

“HE DEVOTED HIS ATTENTION to landscape gardening, and rose to the first rank in his profession. He brought to it enthusiastic love of natural beauty, and the tastes and instincts of an artist, united with great practical capacity, which enabled him to make his work attractive and its effects lasting.”¹

Robert Morris Copeland. It is a name with which many Vineyarders have at least a passing knowledge due to articles in this publication, references in Island newspapers, and particularly in books written by legendary Vineyard Gazette editor, Henry Beetle Hough; Vineyard historian, Arthur Railton, and architectural historian Ellen Weiss. Before moving to the Vineyard I spent childhood summers here, but Copeland's name and his role in Oak Bluffs history had never entered my consciousness. This surprises me now, since for many of those summers I was literally living under the roof of a rather close Copeland connection.

My first introduction to Copeland came when my husband and I were packing to move to the Vineyard from Northern California nearly a decade ago. In a cabinet, a box of miscellaneous papers contained a map titled: “Plan of Oak Bluffs, Made by Robert Morris Copeland, Landscape Gardener, June 1, 1871.” I hadn't remembered seeing it before, but assumed it must have made its way to me via my grandparents, Harriet and Judge Arthur W. Davis who lived in Edgartown and with whom our family stayed for many summers.

The layout vaguely resembled the outline of the Vineyard more than it did of the Oak Bluffs I knew; where were the Campgrounds and who was Robert Morris Copeland? I filed those questions away with the map. I could find out more about Mr. Copeland and his plan once on the Vineyard.

And I did, but just bits and pieces until I took a course at the Landscape

1 From the obituary of Robert Morris Copeland in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, March 30, 1874.

PAMELA STREET is a former journalist. She lives in Vineyard Haven.

Institute in Cambridge to fill in the rest of the blanks. The Landscape Institute offers professional education in landscape design, landscape history and landscape preservation. I had heard about The Institute, which allows students to enroll in a single course as well as earn a certificate in one of the three disciplines, and had always been interested in the area of landscape history. A course being offered, "Gardens in the American



The subject of this portrait is believed to be Capt. Shubael Lyman Norton, whose land became the summer resort called "Oak Bluffs."

Landscape: Surveying the Field, 1750-1900," caught my eye. It would serve a dual purpose — expand my knowledge of landscape design during this period and shed more light on Copeland, a prominent name in 19th century landscape design.

A research paper was required and I would do mine on Copeland: "Robert Morris Copeland's Plan for Oak Bluffs — Safeguarding a Legacy: From Speculative Subdivision to Historic District." What I wanted to do in my paper was concentrate on Copeland's design process, find out — in his own words — what influenced him. This focus had only been touched on by others who had written more extensively on the history of Oak Bluffs, which must be covered briefly here to review how Copeland arrived on the Vineyard for the Oak Bluffs commission.

We need to begin with the formation of the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company. This was created in 1866 when Captain Shubael Lyman Norton sold five-sixths of his 75 acres of inherited land to five individuals for the purpose of laying out lots and offering them up for sale to create a summer resort called "Oak Bluffs." Norton's land bordered Nantucket Sound on the western edge of Edgartown. Before 1880, Oak Bluffs, as we know it today, was made up of various subdivisions and was part of Edgartown. In 1880, three of the subdivisions — the Methodist Campground, the resort of Oak Bluffs created by the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company, and the Vineyard Highlands — were incorporated as Cottage City. The town was renamed Oak Bluffs in 1907.

Erastus P. Carpenter, a wealthy straw hat manufacturer from Foxboro, became the leader of the six-member syndicate which included Norton. It is Carpenter who is considered responsible for hiring Copeland to layout the former Norton property.

So, how did Carpenter connect with Copeland?

By the time of the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company, Copeland

and his partner, Horace William Shaler Cleveland, had made a name for themselves creating rural cemeteries known for their bucolic terrain. In Foxboro, Carpenter was a major civil force and helped create the town's rural cemetery, Rock Hill. Such rural cemeteries appealed not only to Carpenter and those looking for a final resting place which enveloped nature, but also to individuals seeking to stroll in a park-like setting. They were especially popular in the Boston area at the time, in large part due to Cambridge's Mount Auburn, consecrated in 1831.²

Copeland and Cleveland, who had been his partner prior to the Civil War, had also gained notoriety with their co-authored work, "A Few Words on the Central Park," in 1856. It was the pair's effort to win the design competition for the New York City park.

In their essay, Copeland and Cleveland once again evoked the healing power of nature: "We believe that a love of the beautiful in nature lies at the foundation of all true taste in art, and we do not hesitate to affirm, that the silent and unseen influence (of nature's wonders) exerted upon the minds of the multitudes who will here seek relief from the cares and trials and anxieties of daily life..."

That commission, of course, went to Frederick Law Olmsted who is credited for putting the term Landscape Architecture into wide use after first using it in his winning entry for his Central Park design. A landscape gardener would soon be elevated to a landscape architect.

While the two designers were referring to the attributes of their design for Central Park, wouldn't an attractively laid out seaside resort dotted with modest parks and the curvilinear roads and paths Copeland had advocated in his influential work, *Country Life, A Handbook of Agriculture, Horticulture & Landscape Gardening*, published in 1859, prove an equally countrified allure for those wishing to escape "the cares and trials" — not to mention the summer heat — of Southern New England's cities and towns?

The thought must have occurred to Carpenter who was also familiar with the area from previous summer visits to the proposed development's

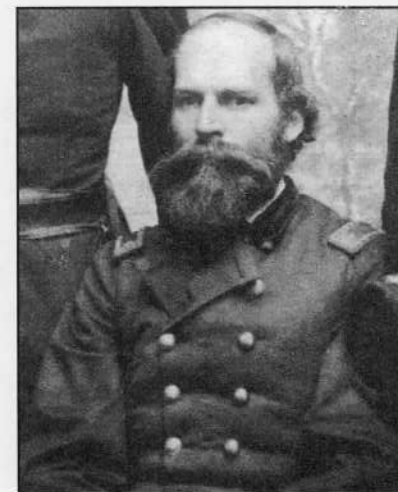


Photo courtesy of Susan E. Schnare.
Robert Morris Copeland, in a photograph taken with fellow officers in the Civil War.

² Copeland is buried in one such cemetery, Mount Feake in Waltham which he designed in 1857. His plot, No. 1735, juts out into the Charles River and has one of the most commanding locations in the cemetery. He obtained it as partial payment for his design work. The 1857 plan of Mount Feake can be viewed at the Waltham Public Library.

neighboring Wesleyan Grove. The businessman had witnessed the crowds the Methodist Campground drew and certainly would have noted its inviting and meandering circular paths. It is logical to assume, with his interest in rural cemeteries, that it was Erastus Carpenter who promoted Copeland and convinced his five partners that with the landscape gardener's knowledge of rural cemetery design, Copeland was the right choice to plan the lots and streets of their development.

Unfortunately, historians have so far discovered nothing in Copeland's own words about his Oak Bluffs work. Nor have they unearthed any detailed accounts/journals on any of his projects. This may be due in part to his premature death at the age of 44. He died in 1874 of complications resulting from an accident he suffered designing another planned community, Ridley Park in Pennsylvania.³ So we need to rely on what Copeland wrote about landscape design in *Country Life*. His other projects also provide clues.

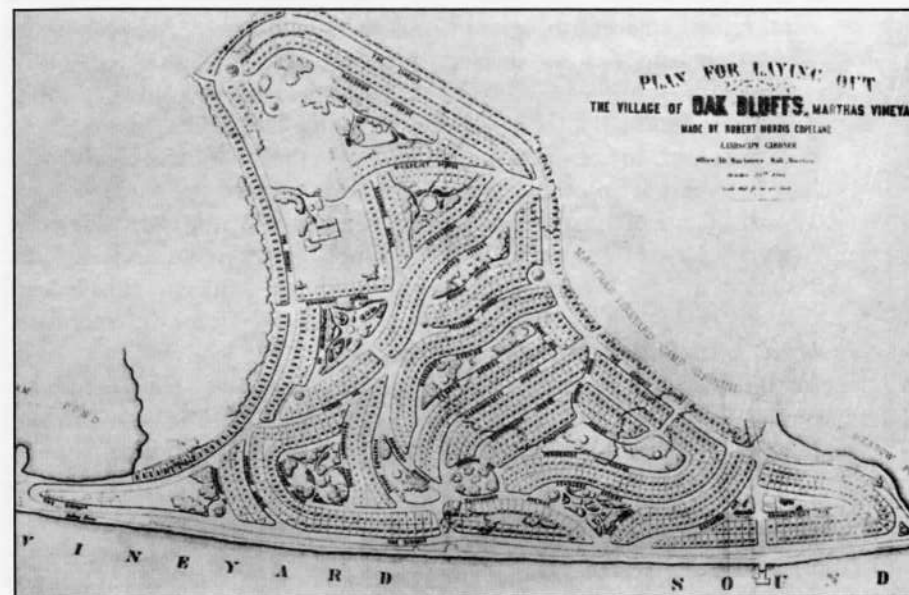
Arthur Railton, in his *History of Martha's Vineyard*, tells us that Copeland and his men visited the Island (presumably in the summer of 1866), surveyed the land and originally laid out 1000 small lots along curving roadways. The results of this first design did not please Carpenter when he arrived on the Island to review Copeland's work. And before the syndicate members were satisfied, there would be five plans: the original plan of October 1866; another plan dated October 25, 1866, but with noticeable changes; a third dated February 8, 1870; a fourth dated June 1, 1871 and the final plan with changes (the one I have) also dated June 1, 1871. It is the first and second plans that give us the clearest indication of Copeland's design philosophy.

The first design, Carpenter said, was deficient in one key area: parkland. The revised plan, with a key addition, was ready in July of 1867⁴. An additional seven-acre park had been added. It would be called Ocean Park and would become the centerpiece of the design.

In studying the first plan, it appears as a wavy sea of lots with small patches devoted to open space. The largest open area is a rectangular space (seen prominently on the second plan) identified as "Farm & Supt's House." In smaller print, a structure is labeled "Farm Barn." It is unknown whether the "house" or "barn" existed when Copeland first saw the property, but by the time of the third plan, they had been sacrificed to more lots bordering rectangular-shaped parks. The "farm" section could have been a holdover from the days when the property was engaged in raising sheep.

3 Copeland's obituary, which ran on March 31, 1874 in the Boston Daily Globe, reported that Copeland arrived in Boston about 10 days after his accident in Ridley Park "in order to consult skilled medical opinions in reference to a broken arm, but the illness resulting there from was of too serious a nature to be cured, and no permanent relief was obtained."

4 It is assumed this is the second plan, marked with the same 1866 date as the first.



The first Copeland plan for Oak Bluffs, dated October 1866, reflects what might be called maximum build-out with only a few horticultural islands of the curving lines and geometric shapes the designer favored.

It is conceivable that it was also Copeland's idea and may have been used by him. Copeland opens *Country Life* with "A Plan for Laying Out a Country Place, 60 Acres" (page 20). The drawing includes a structure labeled "Farm Barn." The handwriting of the words 'farm barn' is very similar to, if not exactly the same as, the handwriting of the same words found on the first two Oak Bluffs plans. When Copeland worked on the plan for Ridley Park, he had a greenhouse to grow plants and shrubs which, given his background, is something he knew a great deal about.

Agriculture and horticulture had been a part of Copeland's life from an early age. The Roxbury, Massachusetts, home where Copeland spent his childhood still stands on the property where his father, Benjamin Franklin Copeland, planted fruit trees and vegetables.⁵ The property was listed for sale in 2007 and, according to the realtor at that time, the remaining 1 1/2 acres of the original Copeland property were "still lush with fruit trees that are believed to date to the 19th century." Benjamin Copeland was also a founding member of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and, it has been suggested that Robert Copeland may have apprenticed with the noted scientific agriculturalist Rev. Morrill Allen of Duxbury, Massachusetts. Scientific agricultural practices are documented throughout Copeland's *Country Life* which also contains drawings of his nine-acre

5 B.F. Copeland bought the property in 1825; Copeland was born in 1830.

rural retreat adjacent to Beaver Brook Falls in Belmont, Massachusetts, where Copeland lived and farmed from 1857.

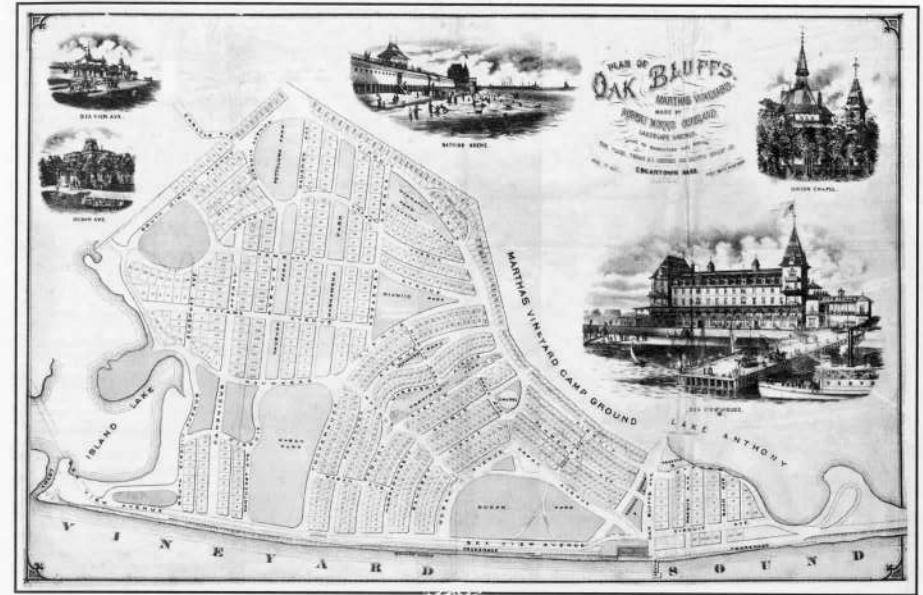
We can't determine whether the "farm" on the first two plans was in fact used by Copeland. But there is evidence that the trees and shrubs on these same plans, which are virtually nonexistent on the other three plans, could have been part of Copeland's design scheme or else were pre-existing.

As the name of the summer resort implies, any existing trees were most likely oaks. According to Suzan Bellincampi, Sanctuary Director of Mass Audubon at Felix Neck in Edgartown, sheep and goats would have kept the trees down, but it is likely that some oaks were left for different uses. Some oaks can live more than 300 years.

Copeland does not provide a key on any of the five Oak Bluff plans, but he did include an “index” for his plan labeled “The Seaside Town of Katama” 1872, and for his Ridley Park plan. Katama was another planned subdivision on the Island, also financed by Carpenter, south of Edgartown. Due in large part to an economic downturn, it was never realized. The Katama index includes three design elements denoting “Deciduous Trees,” “Evergreen Trees,” and “Public Grounds and Reservations.” These design elements are similar to those drawn in groups on the first two plans, although more clearly on the second.

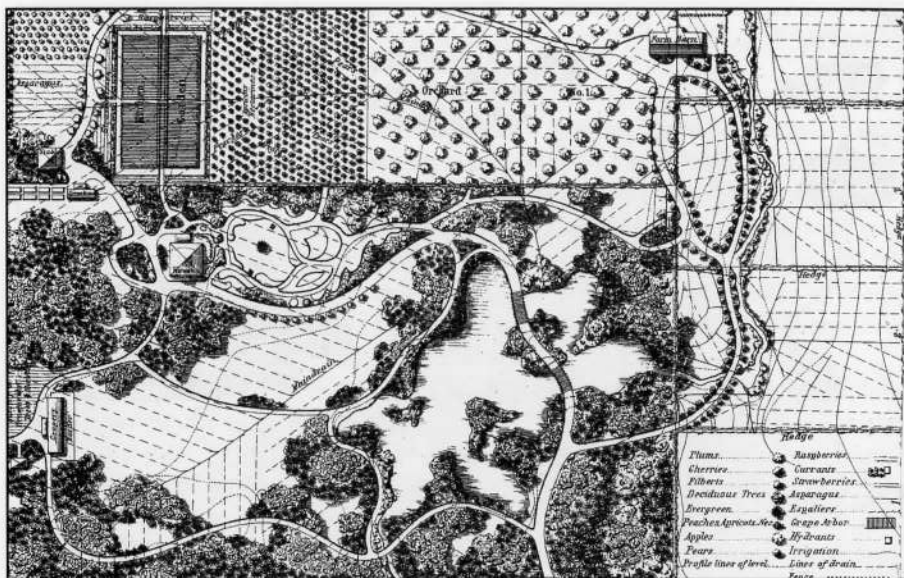
Copeland even may have had an additional purpose in mind with these stylized horticultural islands. In *Country Life* he writes of the benefits of the "remarkable gardens of England where 20 acres have been devoted to the display of annual, perennial, and bedding-out flowers....Such a garden, kept open to the public, near some large city, might be of great service to the people; it would expand their minds and cultivate their tastes..."

It is possible Copeland could have been trying for this educational effect on a much smaller scale here, just as his influential predecessor Andrew Jackson Downing had sought to do in his important work, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, adapted to North Amer-*



ica; with a View to the Improvement of Country Residences, published in 1841. Downing wrote "I have sought, by rendering familiar to the reader most of the beautiful sylvan materials of the art, and by describing their peculiar effects in Landscape Gardening, to encourage a taste among general readers." Unfortunately, Copeland's fanciful garden designs were sacrificed to include more lots in subsequent Oak Bluffs plans.

In 1869, three years after Copeland created his first plan, he designed the Mansion Grounds of the Frederick Billings estate in Woodstock, Vermont. The "Cultural Landscape Report" for the site mentions that one sees not only "winding drives and walks," but also "a series of oval and rounded-shaped ornamental beds" similar to the shapes in his early Oak



The drawing of a "Country Place" from Copeland's book, *Country Life*, includes a "Farm Barn" (upper right) suggesting that the open rectangular area with its "Farm Barn" in Copeland's first design (upper left, page 17) may have been the landscape architect's idea.

Bluffs plans. Two other Copeland projects reveal the landscape gardener's penchant for the curvilinear: his pre-Oak Bluffs design of Mount Feake Cemetery and his plan for the Shelter Island Grove Association, another Carpenter venture, on Shelter Island, Long Island in 1872, just after his work on Oak Bluffs had finished.

It is with Copeland's third plan, created in part due to an additional land purchase which would eventually total 45 acres, when we see the introduction of an axial design, the addition of more lots and parks and the demise of the "farm." Weiss suggests that this "new formalism might reflect an admiration of Back Bay, with Commonwealth Avenue, in Boston." The developers had called for more parks for the obvious reason that lots surrounding them would fetch a higher price, especially those bordering Ocean Park, the largest, with its expansive view to Nantucket Sound. The grandest homes were built here and many of them survive today.

In vintage photographs taken of Oak Bluffs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there are pockets of formal plantings nestled close to and around some of the grander homes. Those did not survive, nor did any of Copeland's detailed planting designs from the first two plans. But the charm of Copeland's core design remains. As Douglas Peckham, a resident of the Cottage City Historic District created in 2003, told the *Vineyard Gazette*, "The way this gentleman Copeland laid this all out, it just turned out to be a jewel.

There's such variety in the way the streets meander, and yet there's still order — these wonderful rhythms that go on from Ocean Park and radiate out."

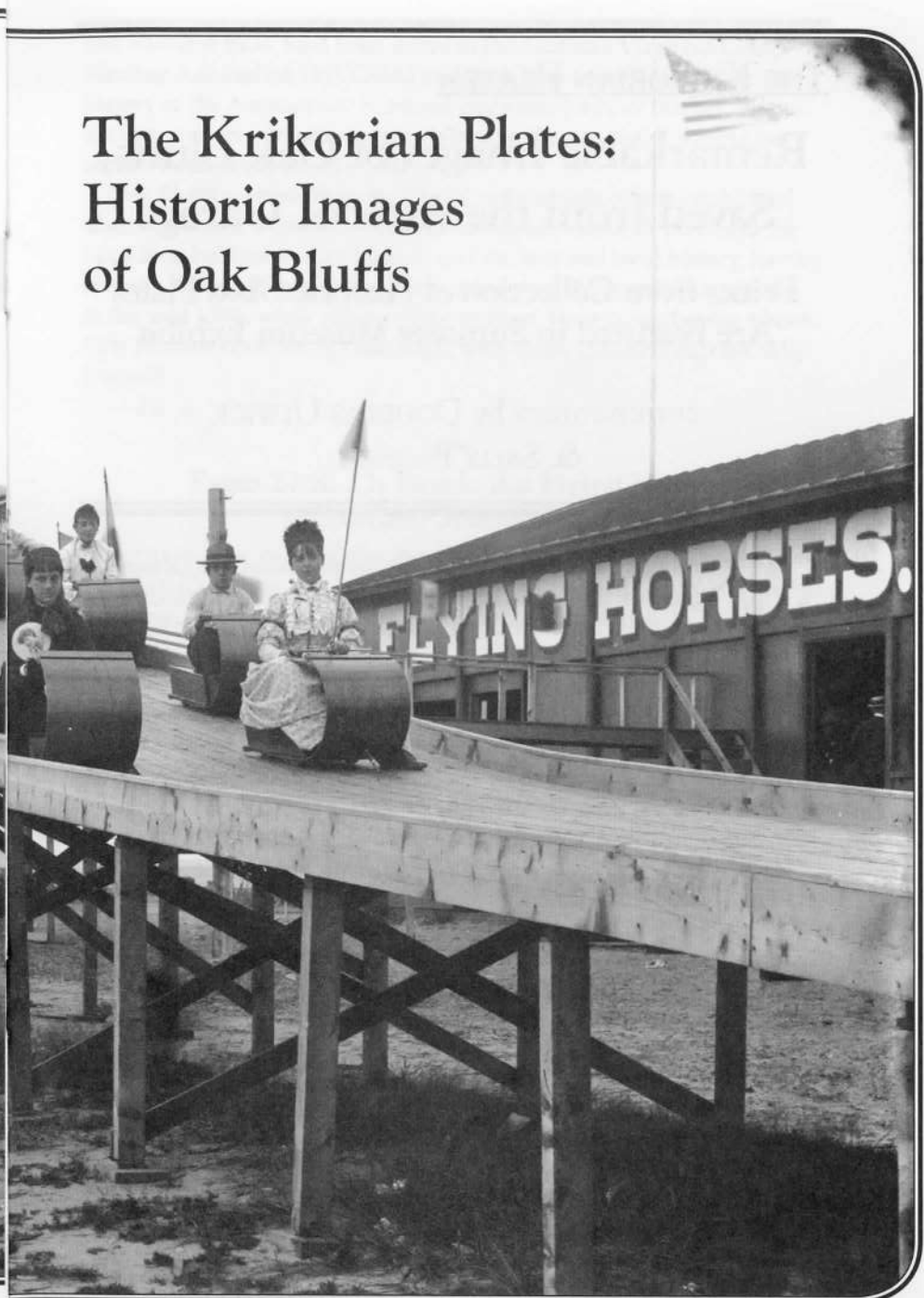
In my research which included several visits to the Martha's Vineyard Museum, all the Vineyard libraries and many of the libraries at Harvard, where Copeland was a member of the Class of 1851; personal interviews and voluminous email correspondence, I thought I had left no stone unturned. But the question of the origin of that map found in California always gnawed. Then I zeroed in on the credit line for Copeland's original plan (page 17) in Henry Beetle Hough's book, *Martha's Vineyard, Summer Resort 1835-1935*: "From the original owned by Mrs. Arthur W. Davis." My grandmother. Further genealogical sleuthing bore fruit: My grandmother must have inherited the original plan from her grandfather, Captain Shubael Lyman Norton. My grandmother Harriet Davis — a source too late to interview as she died over 40 years ago. Thus far, the original plan, which Hough described as "a rare item," has not surfaced. But I haven't given up the search.

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The Krikorian Plates: Historic Images of Oak Bluffs



THE KRIKORIAN PLATES:

Remarkable Images of Oak Bluffs, Saved from the Attic & Garage

Prints from Collection of Historic Glass Plates Are Featured in Summer Museum Exhibit

commentary by DOUGLAS ULWICK
& SALLY BAGNALL

WHEN THE LATE EDWARD KRIKORIAN purchased the Ocean View Restaurant in Oak Bluffs, he also acquired a building next door. Years later, preparing to sell that property, he discovered a large collection of negatives, most of them eight-by-ten glass plates, depicting scenes of life in Oak Bluffs from the 1880s into the early 20th century. Realizing their value, he brought them home, but never did anything further with them.

Years passed until, after Mr. Krikorian's death, his widow, Shirley, found the negatives while cleaning out the garage of their Lake Avenue home. She told a friend, Geraldyn DeBettencourt, about the negatives. Geraldyn told photographer Alison Shaw, and Ms. Shaw acted quickly, rescuing them a second time.

Over the past winter the collection of plates was digitally scanned by Claire Cain at Ms. Shaw's photography studio, and this spring the entire collection of more than seventy negatives, with digital scans, prints and a written inventory, was donated to the Martha's Vineyard Museum, where it will be the focus of a special exhibit this summer.

In this final edition of the *Intelligencer's* 50th anniversary year, we present a handful of samples from this summer's exhibit, with commentary by two writers who are among the most knowledgeable on the history of Oak Bluffs.

Sally Dagnall, author of *Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association 1835-1985*, has vacationed on the Vineyard since the 1940s and, for the last twelve years has lived on Island for almost six months each year. She,

and husband Russ, have been active in the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association (MVCMA) and both have an avid interest in the history of the Association. A retired elementary school teacher, mother of three and grandmother of six, Sally is in the process of writing her second book about the MVCMA.

Oak Bluffs resident Douglas Ulwick is an architect who established *ulwick affiliates, architects*, based in Abington, Mass., 21 years ago. He has a long-held interest in historic architecture and local history, having served as a founding member of the Abington Historical Commission in the mid 1970s while still a college student. He is co-authoring a book, *Fifty Historic Glimpses of Oak Bluffs*, with Campground historian Sally Dagnall.

— Ed.



Pages 22 & 23: Beside the Flying Horses, A Summer Toboggan Run

IN THE EARLY DAYS of the development of the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company, alongside the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association, there was an attempt to acknowledge and respect the sacred nature of the site. The Company went so far as to erect non-denominational Union Chapel, a highly ornamented octagonal structure designed by S.F. Pratt, atop Temple Hill just above the business district of Circuit Avenue.

As the religious fervor waned and the Methodists took cover under the permanence of their iron Tabernacle in 1879, the adjacent community also welcomed a new structure, the mammoth skating rink erected out on the North Bluff just beside the Sea View House at the head of the Oak Bluffs wharf. In this photo the rink would have been just over the photographer's right shoulder. The skating rink was followed by the installation in 1884 of the Flying Horses Carousel in this — its first — location on the North Bluff in Oak Bluffs.

The toboggan run featured in this photo was installed in 1887. Henry Beetle Hough in his *Martha's Vineyard, Summer Resort* probably gives us the most complete description, noting that it was the first of its sort to be built in New England and tells us it ran a course 850 feet in length. The 1887 "Bird's Eye View" drawing of Cottage City depicts the course as running almost the full length of the skating rink building before looping around to return to the point of origin. Hough speculated that it wasn't exciting enough to sustain popularity, but a June 1889 article in the *New York Times* gave another reason for its demise, noting that the severe winter storms had cut into the bluffs, destroying the old Plank Walk and "the carousel that had stood next to the Casino [skating rink] has been moved

from the sea front to safer quarters near the main street, and the toboggan slide is a thing of memory." This remarkable amusement apparently only stood for one summer season.

One other remarkable aspect of this photo bears mentioning. The state of the art of photography at the time with relatively long shutter-open exposure times meant that "stop action" photographs were a technical impossibility. Notice in the picture the blur of the flag flapping in the breeze. To arrange this photo each of the individual toboggan sleds had to be stopped in place and the riders somewhat rigidly posed. Perhaps that explains the glum expressions on their faces. You can almost hear them say: "Take the picture, already!" as they were about to experience a short-lived piece of Oak Bluffs history. — *D.U.*



Page 27: The Prospect House Offered a Clear View To Tisbury, Easy Access to the Trolley

THE LAND DEVELOPMENT created by the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company that became the heart of the future town of Oak Bluffs was so successful that it spawned many imitators — but none as successful. One of the also-rans was Lagoon Heights. Created with north and south sections in 1873, based on a survey by Richard Pease, it was bounded by the Lagoon Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, County Road, and Winne Avenue. Most of Winne exists only on paper today, running parallel to and between Lagoon Avenue and Worcester Avenue. The other streets are still well known.

The original layout of streets and parks made no provision for a hotel, but at some point it was likely decided that a hotel would bring potential buyers to the neighborhood. A location in the south section was chosen at the corner of "New York Avenue" (later renamed Hudson Avenue) and Beacon Avenue, the site taking up a modest area of approximately 100 feet by 100 feet. This photograph was taken from the Hudson Avenue end facing south. Beacon Avenue runs along the right side of the hotel in this picture.

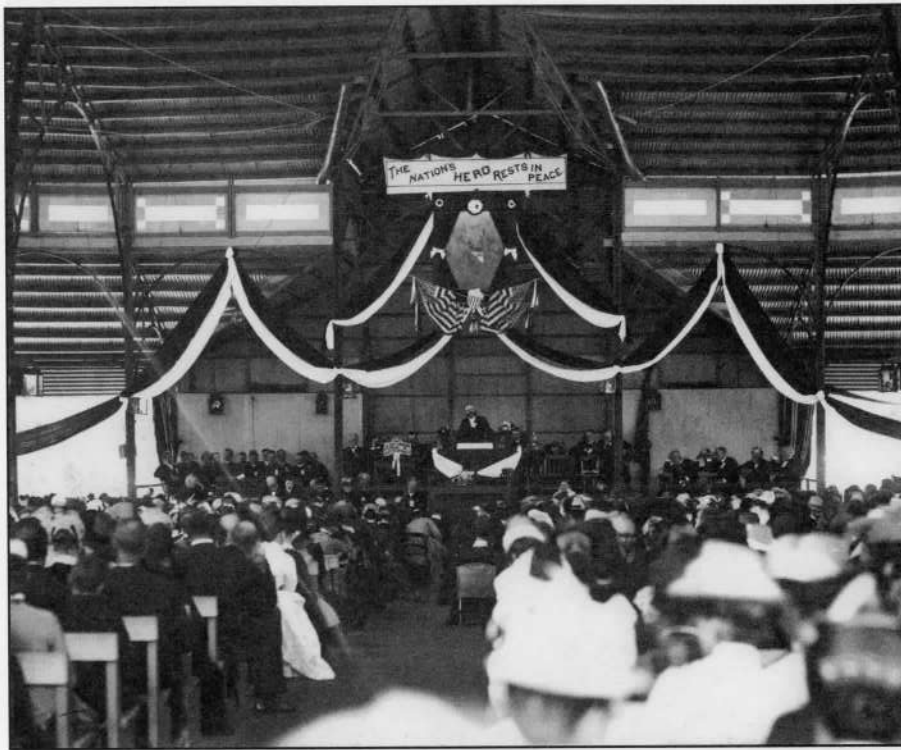
The architecture of the Prospect House is in the Mansard or Second Empire style, three and one half stories high, one story incorporated into the roof and one story half buried, likely housing staff, kitchens and laundry. This raised the main level a half story out of the ground for a better view. It is important to say something about the view since there isn't one there today. In the 19th century the land between the Prospect House and the Lagoon was barren, providing an unobstructed view towards Hines Point and Vineyard Haven. The tower of the hotel likely provided views back to downtown Oak Bluffs and Sengekontacket.

In addition to the view, another major selling point was accessibility.



The electric trolley line had opened up to Lagoon Heights, traveling up Wing Road, turning onto Alpine, then turning onto Hudson, passing the Prospect House on its way to the Lagoon, ending up at the present day boat launch at the foot of Hudson Avenue. An 1894 advertising brochure touts its new management (it was sold in 1888), its accessibility by street car, its views, its size — accommodations for 200 guests — and its rates at \$2.50 per day.

The Prospect House suffered a fate similar to the other notable Oak Bluffs hotels, the Sea View House (burned 1892) and the Highland House (burned 1893), as it burned in 1898 in the off-season and there was no reason to rebuild. The rest of Lagoon Heights lay dormant for decades. It had been the victim of poor timing. The "boom" years in Oak Bluffs had passed just as it was getting off the ground. It would be for another generation to settle in and develop the homesites. An interesting historic footnote was that famous New England photographer and furniture maker Wallace Nutting, while a student at Harvard in 1885, also worked managing the Prospect House. — *D.U.*



In Early Years at the Tabernacle, Tearful Farewells for an American Hero

THIS INTERIOR VIEW of the Martha's Vineyard Camp-Meeting Association's iron Tabernacle, built in 1879, was probably taken at the time of President Ulysses S. Grant's death in 1885 as indicated by the picture above the podium, which appears to be of President Grant, and the banner reading: "The Nation's Hero Rests in Peace." The smaller sign to the left of the speakers' stand, although hard to read, likely declares: "You Have Fought a Good Fight." We do know that the picture was taken prior to the 1900 restoration of the Tabernacle, when it was said: "This is the year the Tabernacle was rebuilt." The entire back extension of the Tabernacle was removed due to deterioration and replaced with a new wood wall and, it is thought, the palladium windows were added at that time.

In enlargements of this photograph, the corrugated roof and the rear wall can be seen clearly, as can the latches and cables that operated the lower clerestory windows. Note also, the original oil lanterns on the main trusses, the lanterns to light the stage area, and the benches extending all the way to the stage.

President Grant, "Hero of Appomattox," was best known as the Union general who led the North to victory over the Confederate South during the American Civil War, and was the first President to visit the Vineyard. He came in 1874 at the invitation of the Reverend O.F. Tiffany, minister of the Metropolitan Church in Washington D.C. where President Grant was a member.

Grant and his wife were guests of Bishop Haven at his #10 Clinton Avenue cottage on the campgrounds. Being Methodist, he was very much at home on the campgrounds and attending services in the canvas tabernacle. An illumination was held in his honor which Grant viewed from the home of Harrison H. Tucker in Ocean Park in the emerging resort town of Oak Bluffs. — S.B.



Isaac Rich Cottage Once Commanded the Scene Amid the Parklands of East Chop

THIS RESIDENCE, somewhat obscured by the trees in this photo, still stands as 350 Massachusetts Avenue in the East Chop/Highlands neighborhood of Oak Bluffs and is currently owned by the Whitman fam-

ily. Later alterations, particularly to the front façade shown in this picture, and the removal of the tower, have made it nearly unrecognizable, at least from this perspective. The birdbath/fountain in the foreground still stands although the statuary has changed over the years. What is not immediately apparent to the casual observer, but is hinted at in the photo by the placement of bollards and chains around the area in front of the house, is that the modest-sized house lot is surrounded by East Chop parklands. The birdbath/fountain is actually situated in one of those parks, this particular one unnamed.

Although identified in early stereoviews as the Isaac Rich house, there is some irony in that title. While the house was constructed in 1872 for Rich, a *New York Times* article from August of 1873 touting the cottage as one of the most expensive in the community, also indicates that Rich “was just ready to move in when he was removed to that house appointed for all living,” — a roundabout way of saying he died before he could ever occupy the cottage.

Isaac Rich was a wealthy self-made man who was born in Wellfleet in 1801. Along with Jacob Sleeper and Lee Clafin, the father of another prominent Oak Bluffs summer resident, Governor William Clafin, he founded Boston University in 1869. Upon his death, Rich left an estate worth \$1.5 million to Boston University — at the time the largest single donation to an American university.

By the publication of the 1880 “List of Residents of Cottage City” (later Oak Bluffs), Joseph S. Spinney had taken over the cottage. The address back then was listed as 159 (the lot number) Seaside Park. Seaside Park is the land to the left side of the picture, also set off by bollards and chains. Spinney, of Great Neck New York, had lived on Clinton Avenue in the Campgrounds where he had famously joined two adjacent cottages with an elaborate tower. He christened the Highlands cottage built by Rich as “Bella Vista Cottage.” It is likely he relocated to the Highlands for a larger house with more privacy and a better view.

While any water views have long been obscured by the subsequent growth of vegetation and buildings, 19th century panoramic photographs by J. A. French who summered in nearby Westmoreland Cottage (destroyed by fire c.1960) paint a very different picture. Both the Isaac Rich Cottage and the neighboring Atwood cottage, dubbed “Twin Cottage,” (demolished 2004) had virtually unobstructed views across what would become Oak Bluffs harbor, and views from their towers stretching back to West Chop. — *D.U.*



**Dunmere Cottage, at the Top of Old Circuit Avenue,
Before Its 1910 Move to Penacook**

CIRCUIT AVENUE, the core of the Oak Bluffs business district, has changed faces many times in its long history. Some of the buildings are still recognizable from the earliest days, others have been altered beyond recognition, and still others have been removed and replaced. Dunmere Cottage is in the latter category. This photo shows it in its original setting at the top of the Circuit Avenue hill on the left hand side on the site of the current Greene Block #42 Circuit.

The Dunmere was owned by Hamilton J. and Katherine Greene who are listed in the 1880 List of Residents as being at 147 and 149 Circuit Avenue. (The numbering system has changed over the years). In the February 1983 edition of the Dukes County Intelligencer (vol. 24, No.3), Stuart MacMackin, Hamilton’s grandson, recalls that: “Grandfather constructed the [Greene] block on the site of the old Dunmere, a large three-story boarding house that had been moved some time around 1910 to Pena-

cook Avenue.” The MacMakin family holds a photograph of the building in the process of being moved, taken closer to Union Chapel. The logistics of moving a three story building intact through the streets of Oak Bluffs seems unimaginable, but cottage and building moving in the community seems to have been a regular event. The move was quite successful and the Dunmere still stands at #7 Penacook and it looks remarkably like the 19th century photo. It is still possible to rent space at “Dunmere-by-the-Sea” as it is currently listed. — *D.U.*



On the Waterfront, the Observatory Overlooked Railroad Terminal & Well-Dressed Bathers

WHILE THERE ARE a lot of places and things to point out in this photo, the most prominent element is the Observation Tower, or the Observatory as it was sometimes called. The book, *A Centennial History of Cottage City*, lists its year of construction as 1890 and cites its inspiration as the 1889 Eiffel Tower. That date seems unlikely as the Observatory is shown on an earlier bird's eye view drawing of Cottage City in 1887. The correct date for its construction has remained elusive. The tower rose out

of the row of bathhouses that paralleled the embankment to a height of 75 feet, presumably above the roadway, Sea View Avenue. The enclosed connector piece to the left actually bridged over the tracks of the Martha's Vineyard Railroad that ran from the Oak Bluffs wharf to the Katama section of Edgartown from 1874 to 1896. The open pavilion to the left of the enclosed connector is the original Bathing Pavilion built along with the plank walk that ran from the old Sea View House at the head of the Oak Bluffs wharf down to Waban Park, constructed in the very early 1870s.

In the foreground of the photo, the large rock mass rising out of the water is “Lover’s Rock,” which provided the backdrop for many a photograph and was always a gathering place. The stairs and elevated walkways along the shore also bridged over the train tracks, connected to the bathhouses, and provided direct access to the water, skipping the beach altogether. It was unseemly to wander around in bathing attire anywhere other than at the beach, so bathers would change clothing in the bathhouses. To the far left of the photo one can see the tower of the Barnes Cottage right at the corner of Ocean Park. By the time this photo was taken, it had been acquired by the Oak Bluffs Club (founded in 1886), joined to a neighboring cottage, and converted to their clubhouse and dining facility.

We know that this photo was taken between 1892 and 1895 by what appears in the photo and what is missing. The Oak Bluffs landing appears at the rear of the photo, but the Sea View House that stood at the head of the wharf is missing. It burned on Sept. 24, 1892. The Observatory itself fell into disrepair (it was likely made of wood) and was demolished in 1895. In later years the Oak Bluffs Club would disband and the old Barnes Cottage would be demolished to make way for a newer residence, although the connected adjacent cottage survived in a new location at the corner of New York Avenue and Towanticut Avenue. The bathhouses would be damaged beyond repair in a hurricane and be hauled away. Even Lover’s Rock was removed, apparently buried in a jetty. The ocean, the beach, and a newer version of the Oak Bluffs wharf are all that remain. — *D.U.*

BOOK REVIEW:

The Story of a Family, a Dream, And a Nourishing Enterprise

by SUSAN WILSON

Morning Glory Farm and the family that feeds an island. By Tom Dunlop. Photographs by Alison Shaw. Vineyard Stories, 2009.

THIS BOOK IS THE STORY not just of the popular farm stand offering up luscious fruits and vegetables, baked goods and Halloween pumpkins, but the story of a continuum of Island life dating back to the original Simon Athearn in the 1650s. It is a story of a dream. The story of a family and, especially, the story of sustainable development.

Seventeen acres of Rocky Top, the name the Athearns dub the acreage hewn out of scrub oak and stony soil, were the realization of Jim Athearn's dream of being a farmer. As with many people, Jim denied himself his dream, instead attempting to find a life off-island with his bride Debbie Galley. But the roots in island soil were tenacious, and Jim and Debbie returned to the Vineyard in time to have their daughter Prudence become the 11th generation of Athearns to be born an Island native.

In 1974 Jim Athearn sold surplus zucchini from his home garden to Hugh Taylor at the Chilmark Store. Jim had produced something that had earned him money, and that small victory re-ignited the dream to make a living from the soil. Jim and his wife Debbie bought out her brother Ken's share of a 17-acre patch of land bordering the State forest and West Tisbury Road and turned it into today's Morning Glory Farm.

The first chapter in this book is a marvelous exposition on a Saturday in August, of harvesting, selling, not sleeping, harvesting some more, selling some more. A perfect circle of activity. Author Tom Dunlop brings the reader right into the moment, the feel of corn husks, the taste of new potatoes, the scent of carrots pulled from the earth; the bustle of the Farmers Market. The layers are there, the love-hate relationship with rain, the race against the clock, the hand-picking — everything only hours out of the ground or off the vine and ready for market — and the

Morning Glory Farm

and the family that feeds an island

INCLUDING 70 FAVORITE MARTHA'S VINEYARD RECIPES

BY TOM DUNLOP

PHOTOS BY
ALISON SHAW



sons who have come into the family business.

Sustainability is a modern buzzword. But for thousands of years sustainability, and its cousin, subsistence, meant growing enough food to feed a family or a village. It meant keeping water clean and fences mended. It meant being a good neighbor in times of trouble and a good citizen in taking an interest in village or town affairs. By taking these acres out of the 70s boom times' rapacious need for buildable lots, and instead developing the scrubby wasteland into arable acres, for thirty years the Athearns have not only reduced the carbon footprint of hauling foods from great distances, but have given Island families a better choice in healthful, organic and local products. In doing so, they have been good neighbors, good world citizens.

It is important to keep in mind that history isn't something that is out

of sight, out of memory, restricted to quaint objects and musty paper. History is being made every day and Tom Dunlop has captured the essential history of an Island family and its impact on Island living. Alison Shaw's photographs capture the spirit of the people who make up the family, friends, employees and customers of the Athearns.

As generations of cooks have passed their recipes down to daughters and daughters-in-law, this book passes on to the reader the best and favorite dishes made by Morning Glory cooks, bakers and family. Debby's Meatloaf, Judy's Simple Chicken Pot Pie, Monkey Bars and Morning Glory Scones encourage the reader to try and imitate the popular goodies served up daily from May through December at the Farm.

In a time when agribusiness dominates the food industry, when chemicals, benign and less so, are deemed necessary to feed a hungry world, there is hunger. Hunger for organically grown, a hunger for real taste. Lines form early in the morning, awaiting the opening of the farm stand — especially in August when the corn is high. It is exceedingly fortuitous that this book comes out just about when Morning Glory Farm opens for the season. It would be beyond cruel to have to wait for those luscious tomatoes.



It was a book meant to be.

Before he died in 2008, John Walter and his wife and partner in Vineyard Stories, Jan Pogue, approached the Athearn family with a book idea.

Jan relates the story: "John and I had wanted to do a book on Morning Glory since we started Vineyard Stories in 2005. We knew it would be a complicated book — a history, a photo book, a cookbook. We talked about it off and on for a couple of years, sort of marshalling our forces and also, truthfully, waiting for the moment when we felt we'd learned enough as publishers to handle it. In the meantime, our daughter, Lily, started working there in the summer between her freshman and sophomore years in college. As we began to see it through her eyes, we just fell pretty deeply in love with the farm, the Athearn family and the whole environment there.

"A year ago, we screwed up our nerve to approach the Athearns about our idea. . . . We sent them a letter describing what we wanted to do, how we saw all this coming together, who we hoped would photograph and write it. Believe me, it was a huge leap into the darkness; we couldn't imagine they'd be interested. And, typical of us, we didn't have the nerve to just pick up the phone and call — our belief in the power of the written word is pretty strong — so it had to be a letter. I was checking [for messages] and I picked up the message from Jim saying that this was a great idea, and why didn't we talk? I remember turning to John to tell him about the message, and not much coming

out of my mouth. I was that excited about the whole idea.

"As it turns out, it's the best possible moment for the farm: Thirty years old. And the best possible moment in our own food lives, as America starts to take a good look at how we eat."

Jan continues: "I knew from the start it had to be Alison Shaw shooting this book. Just had to be. The day I called her to ask if she was interested, I carefully described the book to her, doing most of the talking for about five minutes. She didn't say a word. When she did, she kept saying just four words — 'Yes. Oh, thank you. Yes, oh thank you' — to everything I was proposing. It was a book meant to be.

"The dedication page carries two dedications, one to Debbie's mother and one to John Walter. It's a sign of the Athearns' deep generosity that they'd share that page with us, as publishers. John would just have loved that. When they asked me about it, I started to cry. I mean, for goodness sakes, we've only been on this Island for six years. I just felt so embraced."



Alison Shaw

WHEAT BOUNTIES:

19th-Century Subsidized Farming And the Claim of Prince Athearn

by LINDA WILSON

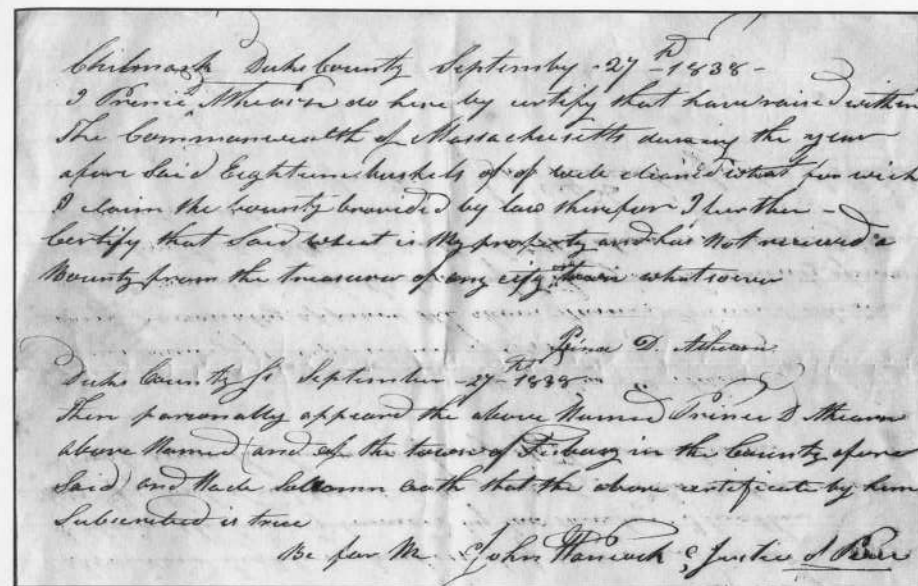
AN EARLY EXAMPLE of state support for agriculture was recently found in the Archives of the Martha's Vineyard Museum. The relevant papers are located in the unprocessed records for the Town of Tisbury and relate to wheat bounties awarded to Vineyard residents in the late 1830s. Through state reports and manuscript papers in the archives a record of one wheat bounty remains.

The concept of providing special financial support to various interests in the nation first appeared in the early 1700s. On through the Civil War, bounties were offered on everything from growing corn and beef cattle to eradicating wolves. And some one hundred and forty years into our nation's history, Presidents Hoover and Roosevelt in turn each refined the process with programs of price controls and supports on agricultural products. The cause was the Great Depression. The results of these efforts were unexpected and often disastrous. But that is another story.

A look at the U.S. Constitution, Article I, Sections VIII and IX, shows that the Framers, mostly farmers and planters themselves, wrote nothing specifically about agriculture. Known for explicitly enumerating the powers of Congress, Section VIII and Section IX contain some of the fundamental principles that have guided the Government's conduct. But recurring economic crises, like the Great Depression and the faltering economy of 2008, have always allowed for broadly applied legislation. Two examples of this were Hoover's 1929 Farm Board and the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933. Both included subsidies in the form of price and production protections for two crops in particular, wheat and cotton. No doubt 2009 will see application of the "elastic clause" of the Constitution applied once again.

The Vineyard Connection

In the late 1830s, Henry Colman, Commissioner for the Agriculture of the State, decided to offer a bounty for growing wheat to the farmers of the Commonwealth. Tiring of traditional grains like corn meal and rye, Massachusetts residents had become enamored with white bread made from wheat coming



In this 1838 affidavit, Prince Athearn declares he has raised 18 bushels of wheat and requests a bounty.

in from the West via the newly opened Great Western Canal in New York State. Commissioner Colman's goal was twofold: to assess the ability of the state's farmers to produce this new crop, and to determine techniques that would insure a successful crop. The young nation's traditional barter based economy was moving to a more complex system. The Great Western Canal was designed to open commerce to the west, but it also brought goods east and wheat flour was one of those products. Colman believed local farmers should benefit from this opportunity by producing their own wheat crops and offered a bounty or subsidy to encourage their participation.

The Documents

This brings us to Prince Dexter Athearn, born and raised on Martha's Vineyard and working farmland in 1838, the very year the wheat bounty act was passed. In his affidavit of September 27, 1838, Athearn states he has raised 18 bushels of wheat and seeks payment of a wheat bounty from the Commonwealth. John Hancock, Justice of the Peace for Dukes County at the time, attests to the truth of the affidavit on the same document. He uses the exact wording required by the 1838 law. On the verso the names of four claimants and their monetary requests are listed: Hannah Look, \$2.34; William Chase, \$2.23; Jonathan Athearn, \$2.40; and Prince D. Athearn, \$2.15. But there is only one affidavit.

In 1840, Commissioner Colman issued his *Report on the Culture of Wheat in Massachusetts, 1838, Senate Report, No. 36*, which the Senate of the Commonwealth required him to publish. The report was over 250

pages in length and contained data Colman had collected on wheat production in Massachusetts. A total of 3,600 individuals statewide claimed bounties on more than 108,000 bushels of wheat in that first year. Chilmark reported 55 bushels grown by three claimants. Edgartown had two claimants and produced 55 bushels. Tisbury produced 78 bushels divided among four claimants. Island crops were affected by drought and blight and were fertilized with hog manure and ashes.

Also found in the voluminous records for the Town of Tisbury is a document issued by the Treasury Office for the Commonwealth and dated October 18, 1841. The Town of Tisbury is advised to "... confer a favor by calling for..." \$75.15 before the end of the calendar year. Of that amount, \$73.15 was due to the School Fund, not a penny in "Support of Paupers," and, for an 1839 Bounty of Wheat, the amount of \$2.00 was available for payment.

Whose payment was this? It might well be the one due to Prince D. Athearn as his is the only affidavit found and presumably forwarded to the State. But no receipts for this payment, or for any other, have been found.

The same year Prince D. Athearn was growing wheat on Martha's Vineyard, he married Mary Bassett Tilton in Chilmark. They had five children. He died in California in June of 1850. A gravestone marks his death in the village cemetery in West Tisbury. He is listed in the 1850 Census for Tisbury. Speculation is that word of his death had not reached the Island at the time the Census was conducted in September of 1850. He did not live to see his 35th birthday.

Agricultural subsidies still exist in many forms. Considered entitlements by those who receive them, they have been nearly impossible to prohibit regardless of economic conditions. Today they often go to agribusinesses rather than to small family farms as originally intended.

The Great Western Canal revolutionized commerce and migration patterns in the United States. Today it is known by another name: the Erie Canal.

Although working mills were available to farmers through the history of Martha's Vineyard, the Island's climate and sandy soil were not conducive to wheat production and it never became a profitable cash crop.

Sources

MSS Affidavit, Chilmark, Dukes County Sept. 27, 1838. Tisbury Town Records, Unprocessed Box, Huntington Research Library and Archives, MVM.

For a full text copy of the 1840 Colman Report see:

<http://books.google.com/books?vid=HARVARD32044107237976&printsec=titlepage#PPP1.M1>

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Treasury Office, Boston, Oct. 18, 1841. Tisbury Town Records, Unprocessed Box, Huntington Research Library and Archives, MVM.

Genealogy records supplied by Catherine Mayhew, MVM.

WE GET LETTERS

Congratulations on the new *Intelligencer*. I have had a very nice time reading it and especially enjoyed the education articles. . . . On the inside front page you mention previous editors — Gale, Art, and John. I knew there was another and thought I remembered his name but did nothing about it until the *Gazette* came today, along with his obituary. George W. Adams took over briefly from Gale, and he introduced having four different colors to distinguish the quarterlies for a year.

—Marian Halperin, director emeritus, Martha's Vineyard Museum.

George W. Adams served as editor of the Dukes County Intelligencer from February 1978 through February 1979 — Volume 19 No. 3 through Volume 20 No. 3 — when Arthur R. Railton took over as editor. — Ed.



And this from genealogist Kay Mayhew regarding Leavitt Thaxter:

Twenty years ago Florence Kern published an article in the *The Intelligencer* about "Customs Collectors in Edgartown." She wrote extensively about Leavitt Thaxter and his many jobs on the Island, from Federal Judge of the Court of Insolvency to State Guardian of the Indians on Chappaquidick and at Christiantown, as well as his appointment to the prestigious position of Customs Collector. . . . Soon after that article appeared, Art Railton showed me a book on law in our library that was inscribed "to my son John Mayhew, Esq.," from Leavitt Thaxter. Art asked me to find out who he was. Leavitt Thaxter's will confirmed the relationship, naming his "adopted and beloved children John Mayhew, Esquire, and Martha Leavitt Thaxter."

I found that Leavitt's brother-in-law Constant Mayhew died at Williamsburg in December 1827 of typhoid fever. He left a wife, the former Roanna Phinney, and five children ranging in age from 10 years to 2 months of age. A few years later Patty and Leavitt Thaxter took in the two middle children, raising them as their own. The girl, Martha Mayhew . . . was 13 when as "Martha Leavitt Mayhew, an adopted daughter of Leavitt Thaxter" she changed her name to Thaxter on 13 March 1832. The boy John Mayhew never changed his name. His obituary says he came to Edgartown to attend Thaxter's Academy by the time he was about 12, in 1834. At 18 he trained as a carpenter, then worked as a clerk in the custom house for about six years. In 1850 he established a successful express shipping business on the Islands while acting as purser for the steamboat company. Later he was also a general freight agent with the New Bedford, Nantucket & Martha's Vineyard Steamboat Company. . . . The adopted daughter Martha Thaxter never married but was a loving daughter to her adoptive parents.

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On which is a beautiful Grove of seventy acres, with two Steam-bout Wharves, at one of which the New York Boats stop regularly in Summer.

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Address, **Vineyard Grove, Mass.**

JULY, 1871.

From the Museum archives: this full-page ad is from a pocket-sized booklet, *The Tourist's Guide to Southern Massachusetts* (3rd edition), published in 1871 by Robert B. Taber, New Bedford.

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