

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



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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FALL 2011



HIGHLAND SUMMERS, A CENTURY AGO

Reminiscences of Days at Windyghoul
And All Around East Chop

PLUS:

A Chilmark House – Perhaps
the Island's Oldest



A Hurricane Bob Notebook

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TO OUR READERS

IN THIS ISSUE we welcome back a frequent contributor to these pages. Dr. Jonathan Scott explores the history of one of Martha's Vineyard's undisputed oldest structures, the Mayhew-Hancock-Mitchell House at Quansoo, now owned by Sheriff's Meadow Foundation. Scott, a professor of Art and Architecture at Castleton College, examines the almost four hundred year evolution of what may have begun as a multi-purposed school house and meeting house built by missionary Thomas Mayhew, Jr. for the Island's native peoples. By the ancient carpenter's marks and clues the beams and timbers reveal, Scott interprets the long history of this remarkable structure that, since the 1650s, has endured several 'modernizations' and renovations each subsequent century.

Primary sources are an invaluable aid that researchers depend upon to understand the true flavor of a period of time or an event, so when Lauren Brown offered to share with us her great uncle Andrew Mills' recollections of his late 19th century youth on East Chop we were thrilled. Mills' retrospective allows us to take a peek into what summer resort life was like when women wore split skirts to ride that new-fangled bicycle and the arrival of the *Monahansett* meant heading home for lunch. Beyond getting a sense of the pleasures of an Island summer in the last days of the 19th century, we also flinch a bit at those less than politically correct attitudes and benign outspokenness; but this, too, is history.

Finally, we welcome Peg Kelley as a new contributor. Peg is a longtime Edgartonian — by blood and by tenure — and devoted docent at the Museum's Cooke House. Her essay on her experience of Hurricane Bob, presented on this 20th anniversary of the last major hurricane to hit the Vineyard, is pure delight.

— Susan Wilson, editor

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Forgotten Tales of an Ancient Farm House — Perhaps The Island’s Oldest

by JONATHAN SCOTT, PH.D.

ARIDER GALLOPING along the beach to a remote Christian mission; a Meeting House for Indians, the first of its kind; a young missionary and his family’s pioneering spirit; a picture, never before seen, of a topsail sloop that once plied these waters in the earliest days of settlement; and later the ship of a sea captain imprisoned and released in a dangerous era of European conflict.

Just coming to light, these compelling tales are locked up in the history (and most of all the structure) of an ancient Vineyard homestead — the Mayhew-Hancock house (or sometimes known as the “Hancock-Mitchell house). In an *Intelligencer* article of 1981, the late Henry Scott (my father) first called attention to this unimposing, somewhat dilapidated old Chilmark farmhouse, and what might be its remarkable past. In a thorough and well-documented article, Scott traced the history of the house back to the Mayhews of the 17th century. He then told an extraordinary family legend handed down by Mitchells and Hancocks (former owners), which states that the house was originally built as an Indian Meeting house in the 1650s by Thomas Mayhew Jr., the famous missionary son of the first Governor Mayhew. If true, this legend would make this unquestionably the oldest surviving house on the Island. Fanciful as this may seem, recent discoveries within

JONATHAN SCOTT, Professor of Art and Architectural History at Castleton College, Castleton Vermont, has published numerous articles in the *Dukes County Intelligencer*, including, as mentioned in this article: “Vineyard Houses Had Thatched Roofs;” “Ships Drawings on Boards of Vineyard Houses;” “A History of Barn House” (showing drawings by Laurie Miller of 17th century half-house and 18th century full-house stages), and “The House That Gave Tea Lane Its Name.” His Ph.D. dissertation (1985), “The Early Colonial Houses of Martha’s Vineyard,” is available in the library of the Martha’s Vineyard Museum and in the Chilmark Library.



Figure 1. The Mayhew-Hancock house in Quansoo as it looks today. To the left of the front door is the original southwest part, which we believe was first the one-room Indian Meeting House of the 1650s, later to be expanded to the half-house of John and Elizabeth Mayhew in the 1670s or 1680s.

the Quansoo house lend credence to the story, as will be shown.

Visiting it today, one has to be struck by the lonely beauty of its setting. Looking across salt meadows and marshes, you see the sparkling waters of Black Point Pond to the right, and a little further off to the left, Tisbury Great Pond. Straight ahead, not far, is the South Beach. Always you hear the sound of the surf.

But it is remote. And thinking back to the early days when this part of the Island was first settled, others were choosing to cluster their homesteads along the rivers of Tisbury, two to three miles away, or around the salt waters of Great Harbor (Edgartown), eight to ten miles distance. So why settle here in Quansoo, the easternmost point of Chilmark? Perhaps the Natives or Indians would have understood.

Quansoo refers to the long eels, easy to catch in the Great Ponds nearby. The natives considered these very good eating and, we are told, they offered them to Thomas Mayhew Jr., their missionary and friend, when he came to visit. How much he enjoyed them is not recorded. But, at the head of these Ponds, near the ocean, there was other fare as well — crabs, shellfish, schools of fish, and birds, also easy to catch.

Inland from here, close to today's village of West Tisbury, early deeds speak of a sheltered valley where "Titchpits House and his sonnes" and Paapameks "were in the winter of 1668" (Banks II, "Annals of West Tisbury," p. 8). But they did not stay. An early chronicler, Josselyn tells of having seen "half a hundred wigwams together on a piece of ground, where they showed 'prettily,' yet within a day or two, or a week, were all

dispersed.” (Hare, *Thomas Mayhew*, pp. 43-44). Where did they go? The warm season had arrived, and they moved to summer campgrounds along the South Shore at the edge of the Great Ponds where life was easy and food was abundant and varied. At this season, for the Indians, Quansoo would not have been remote and lonely; it was the place to be.



The Indian Meeting House

Enter now Thomas Mayhew Jr., son of the elder Thomas Mayhew, later known as “The Governor” who had purchased the Island in 1642. The younger Thomas, then only 21, led the first settlement at Great Harbor (now Edgartown). Those of us interested in material history would love to be able to picture the look of that early settlement of pioneer dwellings, largely fashioned from what could be gathered nearby. We now know that Bank’s idea of log cabins cannot have been correct, for at that time the English had no knowledge of such structures (as Nathaniel Shurtliff pointed out in his *Log Cabin Myth*). Probably, Great Harbor at first may have resembled today’s reconstructed village of “Plimoth Plantation,” where we can see hewn-frame cottages with dirt floors, rough stone foundations, wattle and daub walls, and thatch roofs, like small, crude versions of English country houses.

Four years later, much to the relief of the young Mayhew, his father arrived to take over the temporal affairs of the new settlement. This allowed Thomas Jr. to pursue his real passion and “calling” — to bring Christianity to the Island Natives. The remarkable story of Hiacoomes coming to the new Faith, teaching Thomas Jr. the Indian tongue, of his going out amongst the natives, teaching them the ways of Christianity and ministering to them when many came down with a dread sickness, earning their trust and ultimately their love — all of this is well known in the Island histories.

Nine years after the first settlement, Thomas Mayhew Jr. could write the Reverend Henry Whitfield with some pride:

“And now through the mercy of God, there are an hundred and ninetie-nine men women and children that have professed themselves to be worshippers of the great and ever living God. There are now two meetings kept every Lord’s day, the one three miles, the other about eight miles off my house. Hiacoomes teacheth twice a day at the nearest, and Mumanequem accordingly at the farthest; the last day of the week they come unto me to be informed touching the subject they are to handle. This winter I intend, if the Lord will, to set up a school to teach the Indians to read viz. the children, and also any young men that are willing to learne.” (Banks, I, p.223).

News of the remarkable success of Thomas Mayhew’s mission to the Vineyard natives caught the attention, not only of the famous Henry Whitfield of Connecticut but reached an English group interested in such



Figure 2. Reconstruction of a thatched roof cottage at Plimoth Plantation – the “John Howland House”. Early settlement houses on the Vineyard probably looked like this.

matters called “The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.” Inspired by what they had heard, they raised money for an Indian Meeting House on the Island. In 1654, they wrote Thomas Mayhew:

“We therefore have agreed...for the Meeting House which you desire to be built for the Indians...we shall allow you forty pounds in iron work, nayles, glasse and such other pay as is in our agent’s hands, expecting the Indians should improve their labors to finish the same as they did at Natocke...” (Banks I, p. 225).

As subsequent deeds suggest, this Meeting House was built at the gathering place eight miles from Thomas Mayhew’s house. Experience Mayhew says that Momonequem preached twice every Sabbath Day to his countrymen here in Nasowakemmuck (Chilmark).

A land deed of 1666 speaks of “the highway down to the Meeting House” across the Tiasquam River in Chilmark. Other early deeds of the 1660s speak alternately of a “Meeting House” and a “School House” somewhere in Nashowakemmuck (Chilmark). Banks believes that the same building was probably used for both purposes, as Mayhew’s letter to Henry Whitfield implies. These deeds going back to 1663 confirm the existence of such a structure in Nashowakemmuck. At this early date, nine years or more before any English settlers arrived in this region, it could only have been Thomas Mayhew’s Indian Meeting House.

But where exactly would this Meeting House/School House have been?

Eight miles from the site of the old Mayhew homestead in Great Harbor (Edgartown) along the Edgartown-West Tisbury Road brings you to the outskirts of West Tisbury village. From here, it is another mile to the Chilmark line (Nashowakemmuck), and two and one-half more to Quansoo. The Edgartown Road, laid out in the 19th century, straightened and shortened the ancient Takemmy Trail which followed the head of the Ponds to West Tisbury. The old way would have been longer, maybe much longer. Though Banks believes this is the way Thomas Mayhew Jr. would have come, none of these distances seem to work out. Could he have taken another route?

In the 1650s everything up-Island was native territory. There would be no English settlement in West Tisbury for another twenty years. As no better road was needed at this time, Takemmy Trail was probably just that — an Indian path through the woods. This would be sufficient for those who had the time, but young Thomas Mayhew undoubtedly felt the need to travel frequently and quickly to keep in touch with his new communities of Indian Converts. Eight miles or more along paths through the woods to the Nashowakemmuck gathering place, and eight miles or more back would certainly have been long and tedious.

A far easier route to his Indian Meeting House, especially if he were riding a horse, would be to follow along the beach south of the Great Ponds. By going this way, no woods, thicket, or overhanging branches would hinder his progress. Nor was this unusual. In the absence of roads, early Island settlers often used the beach as the easiest way to get around. From the Mayhew homestead, following a course along the South Beach, just over eight miles would bring young Thomas Mayhew exactly to Quansoo in Nashowakemmuck. In fact, this is the only way “about eight miles” will get you from Edgartown to Chilmark.

We believe this must have been the way he came. And in just such a spot between Black Point Pond and Tisbury Great Pond where fish, shellfish, crabs and birds are most abundant, the Island natives were known to have their summer settlements. What better place to build the Indian Meeting House? This might also explain the otherwise remote location of the Quansoo farmhouse, almost three miles from the settlement in West Tisbury.

Whether the original part of the Mayhew-Hancock house was, in fact the Indian Meeting House, as family legend states, we cannot prove. How-



Figure 3. Wall with wattle and daub from Plimoth Plantation.

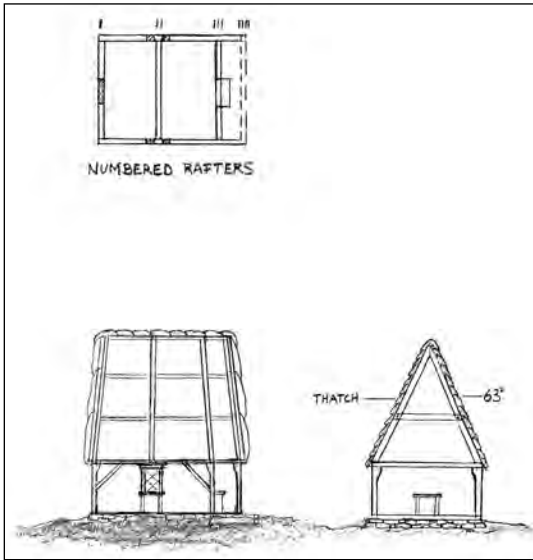


Figure 4. This shows the plan and elevations of the Indian Meeting House of Thomas Mayhew Jr. as it might have looked in 1654-57.

ever, we do have evidence that this house was once a one-room structure, which would be in keeping with a 1650s date, and this gives some credence to the legend. There is also this. In the southwest room, obviously the oldest part, underneath the later plaster, still survives the yellow clay of an original wattle and daub wall. This is an extraordinary find — a rare example of the earliest form of wall construction in the Colonies (in this country, there are only four recorded examples of this technique). In 1621, a year after the settlement at Plymouth, both Bradford and Winslow speak of

wattle and daub walls in the seven cottages they had built by then. A house with walls of this kind, and early framing techniques like those at Plymouth, would also have had a steeply pitched roof of thatch.

Knowing this, and based on the dimensions and details of the original southwest room, I have made three drawings to show how the Meeting House might have looked. This room measures almost fifteen feet in breadth and just under fourteen feet in depth. Though not large, it is in keeping with small pioneer structures of the early 17th century. A single summer beam, eight inches wide, spans the room as was traditional. The simplest form of beveled chamfer terminated on either end with v-checks is the only accent. The corner posts are all splayed and are edged with similar chamfers. At the southwest and southeast corners of the room are diagonal wind braces, used to stiffen the frame of early houses. On the back, or north, wall we can see the Center Beam of the house. This divides the front and back rooms. What is unusual here is that this beam is chamfered only on the south side facing the original room. On the back, or north side, it has been left unchamfered, which would only be the case if this were once an exterior wall. In the attic above, the floorboards are divided in an unbroken line just above the Center Beam, clearly showing the joint between the original southwest room and what was added later.

The rafters and purlins shown in the drawing are the same dimensions as those above the western end of the Quansoo house. However, by narrowing the span to the depth of the original southwest room, the pitch in-

creases from 37 to 63 degrees. Sixty degrees, more or less, is the best pitch for thatch, which is what I have shown as a roof covering. In doing this, I am replicating what we know happened to the Norton-Harris house, which still has thatch ties on the purlins. This house was moved from Nomans Land Island in the early 19th century and rebuilt near the Brick Yard on the North Shore of Chilmark with a lower pitch roof for shingles (see Jonathan Scott, “Early Vineyard Houses Had Thatched Roofs,” *Dukes County Intelligencer*, 1984).

I have added a small conjectural half bay addition on the eastern end of the main room for the pulpit or altar, as was traditional. Here the end rafter pair would be numbered four (IIII). Curiously, in the Quansoo house, this rafter pair is missing altogether, possibly removed when they added a large chimney in this bay. For a window on the south side, I have shown a single small, diamond-paned, casement, as was usual in the 17th century. This window occupies the narrow space between the pair of large windows that are there now. Framing for just such a small casement window was found in the early Vincent and Robert Luce houses, both Island homesteads of the 17th century.

What we have here is unlike any structure that survives today. We believe our reconstruction may give a picture of a unique type of early Meeting House that may have been common in the mid-17th century, or before. Humble and intimate in scale, this structure may also have served as the first Indian School House on the Island.

In 1657 Mayhew’s Indian converts gathered at a spot along the Takemmy



Figure 5. Post on west wall of borning room which shows the drill holes to take the ladder of support for wattle and daub, the earliest 17th c. form of wall construction.



Figure 6. The ceiling of John and Elizabeth Mayhew’s half-house kitchen showing saw marks and uneven cutting of the early pit-sawn joist (This area restored by Jonathan Scott and crew, 1986).

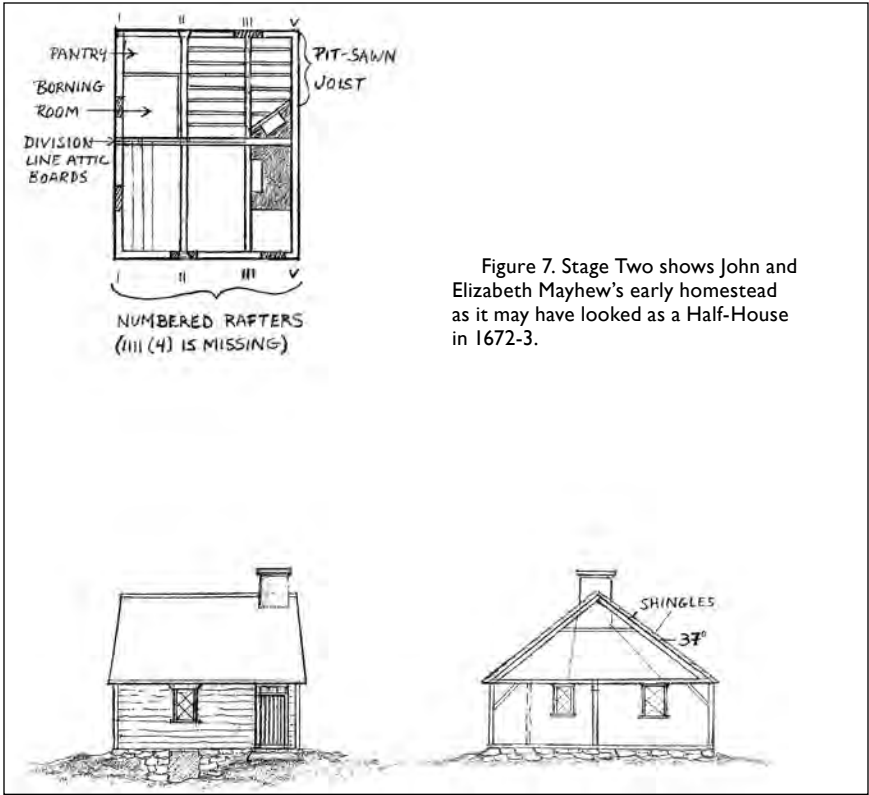


Figure 7. Stage Two shows John and Elizabeth Mayhew's early homestead as it may have looked as a Half-House in 1672-3.

Trail, now marked with a boulder and engraved plaque, to say goodbye to their friend and mentor. Thomas Mayhew Jr. was about to take a trip to England to gain further support for the Vineyard Mission and to handle some family business. As it turned out, this was a true farewell, for Mayhew and the ship carrying him were never heard from again, presumed lost at sea. His third son, John, who would follow in his father's footsteps, was only five years old at the time.



The Half-House of John and Elizabeth Mayhew

By the 1660s new things were just beginning to stir. As early as 1663, a bridge had been constructed across the Tiasquam River to link up with the "School House Path" into Nashowakemmuck (Chilmark). By 1668, a grist mill had been built just up river from the bridge. In 1669, land had been purchased from the Sachem Josias, and homestead lots were laid out in what was then called "Middletown," today's West Tisbury. By 1672-3, the first houses of early settlers like Josiah Standish, John Manter, Henry Luce, Isaac Robinson, James Allen, and Simon Athearn were under construction. A few years later, a Meeting House was built at the opposite end

of town from the Tiasquam, but this should not be confused with the older Indian Meeting House of Thomas Mayhew Jr.

And in 1672, John Mayhew, the third son of Thomas Mayhew Jr. married Elizabeth Hilyard. John was just twenty and Elizabeth only seventeen. Deeds of the 1670s and 80s clearly place this young couple as settling at Quansoo, and records suggest they were the only white settlers in this region for many years. Banks calls John “the first actual white settler in the limits of Chilmark” (Banks II, “Annals of Chilmark,” pps 25, 26). And in the “Annals of West Tisbury” he says: “With his young bride, he set up a home for himself at Quansoo, where he ever after lived, and raised a large family of eight children, the eldest of whom was the celebrated Experience, and there ended his days.” (Banks II, p.75)

We can only imagine what drew this intrepid young couple to pioneer a solitary homestead here, almost three miles distance from the new village of (West) Tisbury. Was it the presence of his father’s Indian Meeting House, the bounty of the Great Ponds, the wild life, the salt meadows, the sound of the Atlantic surf? Did the Natives still gather in the warmer months along the Ponds nearby?

Certainly for John memories here must have been strong. Just a boy when his father was lost at sea, John grew up speaking the Indian tongue fluently. Later, he took over his father’s mission work, becoming Pastor to both the Christian Indians and to the new congregation in (West) Tisbury. We are told:

(John Mayhew) was so beloved and respected by the Indians that they would not be content until he became a preacher to them as he was to the English. It is said of John that while a young man he was often resorted to by the chief Indians of the Island for advice, and that he knew their language well.” Banks adds this: “John Mayhew inherited the personal qualities of his father, in so far as the temporal returns of his services. From 1682 to 1686 he was paid but ten pounds a year (by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) for his work with the Indians. ‘And yet,’ says Prince, ‘he went on cheerfully in hopes of a rich and joyful Harvest in Heaven.’ (Banks I, p. 248)

By the 1680s, as indicated on his gravestone, he was also Minister of the Gospel to the inhabitants of Tisbury and Chilmark combined. And all this time, he and Elizabeth were pioneering a new homestead and raising a large family. He must have been a remarkable young man!

The deeds which mention John Mayhew and/or his house are as follows. In February, 1673, John Mayhew is spoken of as “plantor, now of Tisbury” (Deeds 3:202). This was before the establishment of Chilmark, and it is likely John had already settled in Quansoo, which was then considered part of Tisbury. In 1680, another describes a parcel of land “opposite against the point of a neck of Quenames, which John Mayhew’s

house standeth upon” (Deeds I:266). Quansoo neck is next to Quenames. In 1681, John bought from his brother Thomas Mayhew III, “a tract of land in Tisbury at a place called Quansoo” extending up to the “highway” (the South Road) (Deeds 3:353). In a deed from Matthew to Thomas Mayhew III, it speaks of a meadow “lying on the beach side against the opposite to the necks of land my brother John Mayhew now dwelleth and inhabiteth upon.”(Deeds I:407). At Quansoo salt meadows lie between the house and the beach, a short distance away.

We thus believe that probably by 1672 John had settled here in Quansoo with his young wife. Three years before, in 1669, the Indian meeting place had moved to Christiantown. No longer needed as a house of worship, could the now empty Indian Meeting House have been the magnet that drew John and Elizabeth to this spot? If so, the young couple may have occupied this one-room structure as an initial dwelling place while they put down roots. Later, as their family grew with the birth of eight children in the 1670s and 1680s, John acquired more land in this area and extended his house. He must have added a back kitchen with adjacent borning room and pantry, built a new chimney with fireplaces and cooking hearth, put a cellar beneath for the storage of food, and extended the roof for a sleeping area above.

In figure six, I have included a plan and two elevations of what the half-house may have looked like when John, Elizabeth and their young family lived here. As we know from other houses that were springing up in (West) Tisbury at this time, sawn boards were newly available. These enabled John Mayhew to replace a probable early dirt floor with a wooden one, and to add a cellar beneath (as shown). Within, hand-planed partition boards and paneling were added and on the outside, exterior boarding on walls and roof made possible the use of clapboards and shingles. Finally, the old thatch roof, a fire hazard, was abandoned, and the roof pitch was lowered to accommodate the back rooms.

All of the dimensions are drawn from the present Quansoo house where there are clear indications it was once a half-house that was later extended to become a full-house. In the attic we can see the traditional hewn oak rafters and purlins with vertical boarding. The older west half has only two purlins on each side of the roof (the old English scheme), while the eastern end has the later Vineyard tradition of three purlins to a side. The west end is vertically boarded (an early plank-frame construction technique brought to the Island by new settlers from Plymouth Colony). In the east, studs have been added to the gable end to receive horizontal boarding (preferred in Chilmark after 1720). In the west, the builders’ marks number the rafters from the gable end through the chimney bay. In the new eastern end the numbering sequence begins all over again from the

east gable to the edge of the chimney. If we had nothing else, this would be a very clear indication of old and new work. Below, in the kitchen area, notches for a diagonal wind-brace that once buttressed the northeast corner of the former half-house, are clearly visible. This wind-brace was sawn out when the kitchen was enlarged to the east. Above this wind-brace, the chimney girt is unchamfered on the east side where there are also nail holes indicating an outside wall was once fastened to this girt.

In the late 1980s, Mrs. George Harris, then owner of the property, commissioned our crew to rebuild and resupport the back half of the severely sagging house. In the process, we removed the plaster ceiling in the kitchen area to expose very early pit-sawn joist above just the half-house part. These can still be seen. In the floorboards above, there was a faint indication of an unusual angled fireplace in what would have been the cooking hearth of the half-house kitchen (this is now covered). We also removed wallpaper and the outer plaster walls in the adjacent borning room. Here, to our surprise, we discovered posts with drill holes along the inner surfaces that once held the ladder of supports for a wattle and daub wall. By this time we realized we were uncovering the structure of a rare and very early Vineyard house.

When Jonathan Jr., my son, and John Pilson pulled up the sagging kitchen floor, we discovered log joist beneath, some with bark still attached, and smoothed off only on the upper face. These were not in good shape and had to be removed.

Accompanying this, just by accident, we discovered another intriguing picture of early Vineyard life. On the bottom side of one of these floorboards was a primitive etched drawing of an early ship, the likes of which we had never seen. Nor, when we studied it, would we have ever have thought to associate this unusual vessel with Vineyard maritime history. It showed a very early type of topsail sloop, with high stern, raked mast, and possibly portals for guns. Were the seas dangerous in those days? It is similar to another, more detailed drawing by Burgess from the early 1700s of a "sloop

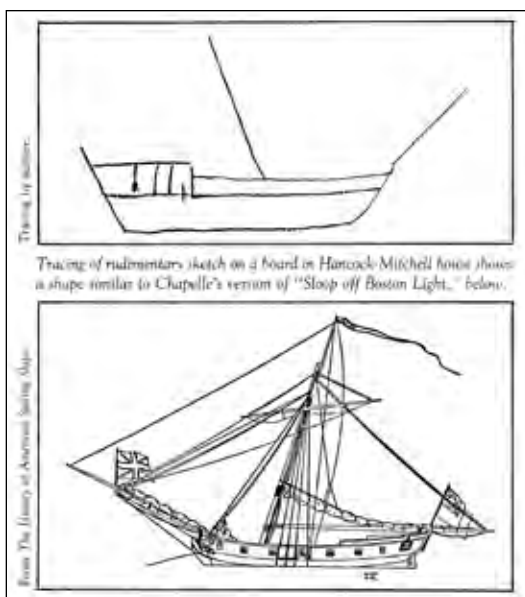


Figure 8. Tracing above found on bottom of a floorboard in the early kitchen area of the house shows an unusual sloop with high stern, raked, mast, and gun ports. It is similar to Burgess's drawing of "Sloop off Boston Light" from the early 1700s.



Figure 9. Looking from the pit-sawn joist and flared post of John Mayhew's half-house kitchen toward the new eastern part added by Russell Hancock. Through the open door is the borning room where Deborah may have given birth to her seven children (Restoration by Jonathan Scott and crew, 1986).

off Boston Light” (illustrated in Howard Chapelle’s *History of American Sailing Ships*). Was this the kind of coastal vessel sailing these waters in the late 17th and early 18th centuries?

Tragically, John Mayhew died in 1688 while his children were still young. He was only thirty-six. After his death, his widow and young family may have con-

tinued living here for many years while the children grew up. In his Will, John left all his property in Quansoo and Quenames to his elder son, Experience (Deeds I: 396-7). Probably in 1695, at the time he was first married, Experience moved out of the crowded family homestead and built a new house for himself and his new bride at Quenames. This is the present John Whiting house, which, for generations, has been known as the “Experience Mayhew house.” The three younger sons later settled on land given them by their father in Nashaquitsa. John’s widow, Elizabeth, and the unmarried daughters, Deborah and Ruhamah, evidently lived on in the old homestead for many years. Deborah eventually married Ebenezer Norton of Farm Neck in 1715, a man ten years her junior, and moved in with him at Major’s Cove on Sengekontacket Pond. How the house was used after this time is something of a mystery. Ruhamah and her mother were still alive, but the remote farm would have been difficult for these two women to maintain. In any case, ownership of the Quansoo homestead eventually passed to Deborah, who left it to her favorite granddaughter, and namesake, Deborah Mayhew Norton.



The Full House: Deborah and Russell Hancock’s Eastern Half

In 1766, young Deborah Mayhew Norton married Russell Hancock, son of the Reverend Nathaniel Hancock, and they made their home in the Quansoo house, which was now referred to as “the Old Homestead.” Here, they raised seven children during the period of the American Revolution. With inheritances from his father and his wife, Russell Hancock was a major landholder. It was said of him that “he was a farmer and owned sev-

eral tracts of land...including the old homestead, 'Quansoo' near the Atlantic Ocean, about two and one-half miles from West Tisbury, in the town of Chilmark, where his children were born" (see Henry Scott, "The Story of a House: Perhaps the Island's Oldest," *Intelligencer*, August, 1981, pp 28-30).



Figure 10. Mayhew-Hancock house as it looked around 1900 (from the collection of Stan Lair).

It is almost certain that the eastern half of the house was added at this time. This included, in the back, an extended kitchen with a new cooking fireplace (now gone) and a small adjacent bedroom where Deborah's children may have been born. This back kitchen, pantry, borning room area was where the working women of the household could be found. It was used for cooking, eating, food preparation, storage of butter and perishables in the cool northwest pantry, and also the tending of young children, who could be put in the two adjacent "borning rooms" for nursing, naps, or when they were sick. For convenience, the stairway upstairs was moved from the front hallway to the back kitchen and led to a new attic bedroom, much needed for Russell and Deborah's growing family.

For more formal occasions, a fine new front room, the largest in the house, was added. This room could boast a paneled fireplace wall, wainscoting, and double summers above, and was obviously considered the best room in the house. It measured almost fifteen and a half feet in breadth by fourteen feet, four inches in depth. With the completion of this eastern half, Russell and Deborah fulfilled the promise of earlier stages by creating a full house plan.

Some sense of what the house looked like in this final stage can be seen in Stan Lair's photograph taken around 1900. Here you can see the large, proud, original stack that served the big cooking fireplace in back and the two smaller fireplaces of the front rooms. The front door is a little off center because the eastern half was larger. The two over two sash windows must have been added in the late 19th when this type was popular. They would have replaced small-paned, twelve over twelve sash windows (the universal 18th century type) which almost certainly were added when Russell Hancock renovated the house. These, in turn would have replaced the early 17th century diamond pane casements, shown in figures four and seven.

From Russell and Deborah, the house passed to their son, the Master Mariner Samuel Hancock. When our crew was restoring the back half of the house, we removed the wallpaper that covered the hand-planed vertically boarded walls of the west borning room. Here Will Savage, our painter, noticed, lightly scratched into the walls, drawings of square-rigged, two-masted brigs of a kind that could have been used for merchant service or whaling at this time. It is possible there is a connection with Samuel Hancock who may have sailed in such ships as a Master Mariner in the

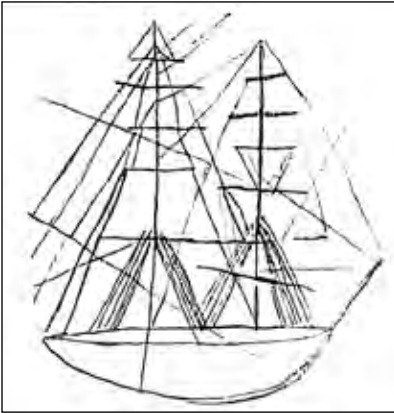


Figure 11. This drawing is traced from a carving found on the wall of the west borning room. Captain Samuel Hancock may have sailed such a ship during the turbulent years following the American Revolution (tracing by author).

trans-Atlantic trade. Captain Hancock lived in turbulent times, and his letters, published in the *Intelligencer* (August 1981, "Captain Sam Hancock, Master Mariner," pp. 36-37) tell of being taken captive at sea, first by the French in 1789, and then by the British at the outbreak of the War of 1812. He wrote of twice enduring incarceration, and of finally returning home to his English-born wife living in the homestead at Quansoo. While he was at sea, his wife, often lonely, was said to have walked the South Beach longing for her homeland across the sea.

In the upstairs bedroom, Laurie Miller found old maps of European coastlines that may also have gone back to Samuel Hancock's time in the "Old Homestead" (see also Jonathan Scott, "Historic Ship Drawings," *Intelligencer*, February 1992).

Sometime in the 19th century, the big ell was added on the back of the house with larger, possibly Greek revival, proportions that are out of scale with the rest of the house. At this time, iron cook stoves were becoming popular. As happened in many Vineyard houses, this ell became the new kitchen with an iron cook stove replacing the old cooking fireplace and kitchen workspace of the original house.

Cyrus Hancock inherited the property from Samuel and passed it on to his daughter Sophronia. She married West Mitchell, and thus the house passed into the Mitchell family. Adelbert Mitchell inherited and passed it on to his daughter, Elaine, who married James Cosgrove. His son, James Jr., and other members of the family lived in the old house during the warmer summer months. Mrs. George Harris acquired it from the Cosgroves and, some years later, left the property to Sheriff's Meadow Foundation, the present owner.

Now cleaned out and with walls and ceilings stripped back, the old house stands revealed with its hand-hewn framing, builders' marks, wattle and

daub walls, pit-sawn joist, and the clear evidence of earlier one-room and half-house stages. Unfortunately, the ancient massive chimney was removed in the 20th century, to be replaced with a thin, inappropriate stack set forward of the peak.

Today, as you would expect, the house has some problems with rot and settling. Still, with its remarkable past, touching on so many memorable moments in early Vineyard history, it is a prime candidate for restoration and preservation. One can only hope that this historic house will get the needed attention it deserves before it is too late to save it.

For more information on early Vineyard houses, see Jonathan Scott, *The Early Colonial Houses of Martha's Vineyard*, 1985 (two volumes), in the collection of The Martha's Vineyard Museum.

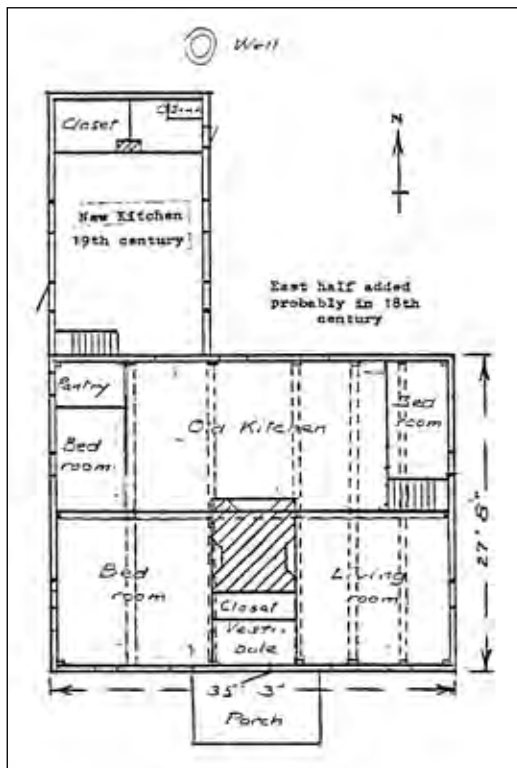


Figure 12. Full House plan of Mayhew-Hancock house (Drawn by Henry Scott Jr.).



Update on the Mayhew-Hancock-Mitchell House, As of November 2011

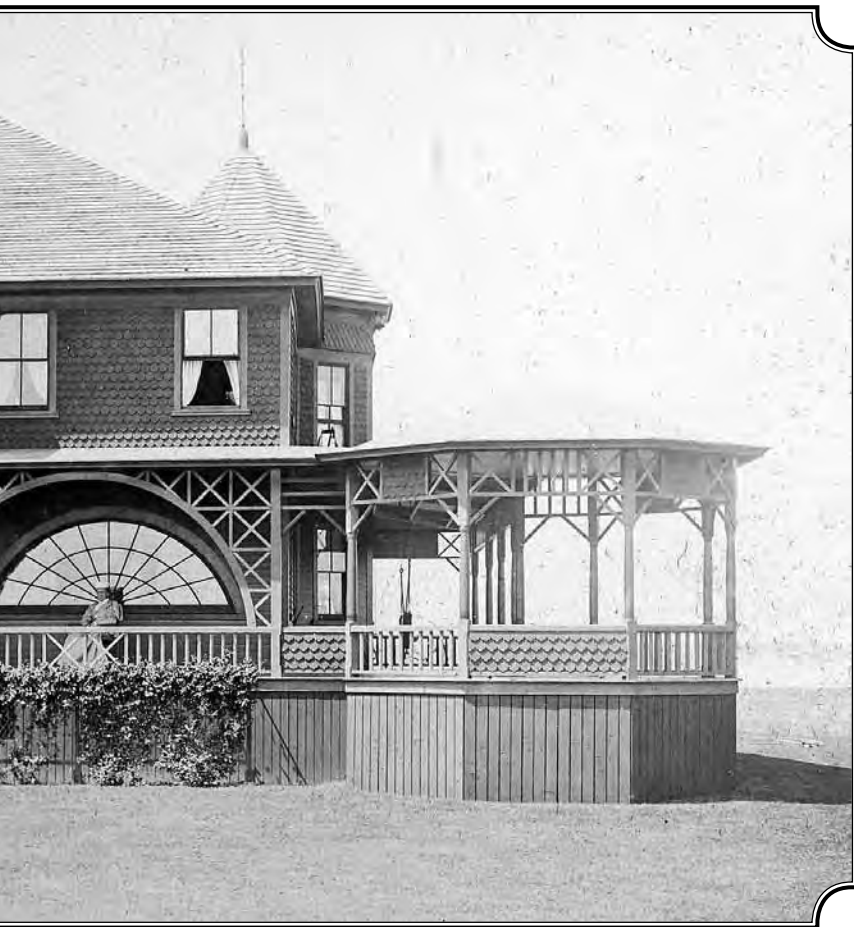
Andrew Moore, executive director of the Sheriff's Meadow Foundation, has let readers of the *Dukes County Intelligencer* in on its plans for the Mayhew-Hancock-Mitchell House. The Foundation plans to restore this antique house in its setting at Quansoo Farm. To that end they are preparing a master plan for the area surrounding the house, one that will address the needs of the Mayhew-Hancock-Mitchell House, the neighboring executive director residence at Quansoo, current and future outbuildings and all landscaping. They are being aided in the preparation of this plan by a \$3,000 matching grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In addition, Sheriff's Meadow is beginning the process of listing the house on the National Register of Historic Places. Those with an interest in this effort are encouraged to contact Andrew Moore at moore@sheriffsmeadow.org.



This early view of Windyghoul includes the accoutrements of summer resort life — tennis



WINDYGHOU WAS BUILT in 1891 by George W. Mills, Senior, for his family. Located on East Chop Drive, on Weston Avenue, it is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Flanagan. He purchased it in 1991 from the Prudential family, a century later. As can be seen in these photographs, with several owners and over more than a hundred years the house has seen much use and renovation. The Flanagans call this view the View. See Jane Meleney Coe, *Guide to Nantucket Families 2001*.



rackets and bicycle. Photo courtesy of Lauren Brown.

by Andrew
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 e house Ferry
East Chop



Now called Ferry View: the house today. Photo by Grosvenor Richardson.

Highland Memories

Of a Beloved Sailboat, Bicycling at Night, And the Seventy-Nine Steps to the Beach

by ANDREW L. MILLS

THE FOLLOWING REMINISCENCE *was written by Andrew L. Mills, who lived from 1875 to 1962. As a teenager and a young man, Mr. Mills spent summers around the turn of the 20th century in East Chop with his family. He was born and raised in New York City and, like his father and grandfather before him (who were also named Andrew Mills), he served for many years as president of the Dry Dock Savings Bank. The bank disappeared through a merger in 1983. Though this piece is not dated, it is thought to have been written in the late 1950s. It was found among family papers by his great-niece, Lauren Brown.*

A “Highland” Boyhood

Our family had always spent the summers out of town, and prior to 1890, in hotels, but in that year the arrival of my youngest sister, Dorothy, in March it was decided that it might be better and more economical to find a cottage. My Father’s sister and her family, the Bennets, had a cottage at Martha’s Vineyard for some years so it was decided to give it a try, especially as the fishing, of which Father was very fond, was good. A small and rather crude cottage was rented and we moved down, bag and baggage, for the first of sixty-odd summers for the family.

Our mail address was Cottage City (now Oak Bluffs) and it was here that all marketing was done, but our colony was on what was called the Highlands, a high sandy bluff near East Chop, which with West Chop, marks the entrance to Vineyard Haven Harbor. Nobody kept house for we all went for our meals to a nearby boarding house run by a colored man and his daughter, named Simmons. The food, as I recall, was not too appetizing. No cottage had a bathroom for everybody went in for a swim or a dip every day, and toilet facilities were naturally crude. At the foot of the bluff was a narrow pier, sheltered from the prevailing Southwest wind, and a pier led out from shore for about one hundred feet for those who did not care to wade out over the rocks to shore. It was seventy-nine steps, as I

recall, from the top of the bluff down to the beach, and as time went on it must have been an increasingly heavy burden for the older people.

Unless the wind was from the East the water was calm and clear, ideal for swimming and diving, and you could see bottom in fifteen feet or more. The young people would begin to gather around 10:30 and stay till the so called "noon" boat would appear. This boat, for some years the *Monohansett*, came from New Bedford to Cottage City, where she was due at 1 p.m., and back to New Bedford. When she hove in sight we realized that we had better go home to dinner. As the tide ebbed and flowed at two knots or more, we warned all newcomers, swimmers and non-swimmers, so that they would not be carried away from the dock. We had at least one near drowning as a result of this, but they were strangers and were alone at the time.

Our first summer was so successful that Father decided to build, and the next summer we were in our own cottage which we were to occupy till Father died in 1931, and which still stands, although somewhat changed by successive owners. Even the modern cottages were without bathrooms at that time, and it was not until the older people found the steps to the beach too tough that this innovation began to appear. The Ferris family were, I think, the first to install one. As time passed the families started to keep house and abandoned the boarding house, Sunset Pavilion, we being among the last to desert. Our new cottage was about a quarter of a mile from the boarding house, and on stormy days my brother Herbert and I would take a washboiler and a small express wagon to bring back the food from the restaurant. This was cumbersome and not entirely satisfactory.

The men of the colony came down from New York every Friday night, arriving at the Vineyard at eleven o'clock Saturday morning. Father spent all his spare time out after bluefish, and eventually wearied of using hired boats. As a result he contracted with Wilton Crosby, of Osterville over on Cape Cod, a famous builder of catboats for a suitable pleasure and fish-



Andrew Mills, age about 18. Photo courtesy of Lauren Brown.

ing boat. This was delivered in the early summer of 1892. She was named *GEM* after Mother's initials, and was to do good service for the next twenty years. She was twenty-five feet long with a ten-foot beam, and with a ton and a half of lead pigs stowed along the Keel, she would stand up to anything that one would want to go out in.

George Cleveland of Vineyard Haven, was engaged to run her, but he proved so inefficient that Timothy Weeks, a local schoolteacher, was hired to help him out. As it was only a one man job, the following year George was dispensed with. Tim was a very fine fellow, fond of big words, but an interesting talker within the narrow limits of his experience. I will never forget the shock of the news of his death in my senior year at Princeton in 1896. However his younger brother, Harry, took over and was to render faithful service till Father's death in 1931. Tim taught me all that I ever knew about sailing, and such seamanship as a boat that size could provide. It was from him that I learned the verse made up of the names of the Elizabeth Islands that separate Buzzards Bay from Vineyard Sound.

Naushon Penikese

Nashawena Pasquenese

Cuttyhunk Nonamessett

Uncatena and Wepeckets.

That was sixty years or more ago and I have never found anybody who had ever heard that verse until a few years ago an article appeared in the *American Neptune* giving half a dozen versions of it. I still think that the above is the best, however. Harry was a fine fellow, and an able boatman and fisherman, but being very reserved and silent he was not as good company as Tim had been.

Of Bicycles and Sport

It must have been in the [18]90s that the bicycle reached the peak of its popularity, and we all had them. All the roads in and around Cottage City were paved with what we erroneously called "concrete," a mixture of tar, sand and gravel that was ideal for the wheel. Beyond the immediate vicinity of Cottage City and Vineyard Haven the roads were dirt and gravel where we would have to use a wheel rut or a side path, if any, and down toward Gay Head long stretches of very deep sand. Even Mother, for some years, went to market gaily dressed in the divided skirt that all women wore for this form of transportation.

Occasionally a crowd of younger people would go for a picnic although we were somewhat limited by the poor going as soon as we left the paved roads. In those days most of the Island was terra incognita, and places like Tisbury, Squibnocket and Chilmark were merely names on map. Gay

Head, at the western end could be reached by water and the steamer, Island Home, would take excursions there occasionally. The last remnant of the native tribe of Indians lived there, although I do not think there were many pure bloods among them, there having been more or less intermarriage with Negroes. One member of this tribe was a valued member of the *Bonne Homme Richard* under Paul Jones.

Sometimes when I could not sleep, if there was a good moon I would get out of bed, dress sketchily and go off for a lonely ride in the moonlight, my acetylene lamp helping the moon to illuminate the road. The road from Vineyard Haven to Tisbury had recently been macadamized for three or four miles, and I would ride out to the end, back to Cottage City and then five miles to Edgartown. This performance always disgusted Father who could not understand the urge.

Father was always very fond of duck-shooting, and about 1912 or '13 bought a lot of property on Great Tisbury pond and put up a crude but comfortable shooting-box. The property took its name from a point sticking out into the pond, Great Sandy, and for many years it meant a lot to him to go down for a few weeks in the fall. The day he died, August 4, 1931, just one month short of his eighty-third birthday, I had paid for a case of 500 shells sent down for his shooting that year. Unfortunately I was able to shoot with him only once, in 1914, and it was a lot of fun although I do not recall that I made any fancy shots.

After Father's death, Mother did not care to occupy the cottage, so from then on it was rented when possible and finally sold, Mother and my sisters Gertrude and Dorothy going over to Vineyard Haven. Finally, at the age of ninety-four the trip got to be too much for Mother, although the Girls continued to spend some time there each summer and still do. Mother died in 1947 at the age of ninety-eight.



Andrew Mills, Sr., on a duck-hunting outing. Photo courtesy of Lauren Brown.



Left, Andrew Mills, Sr., aboard *GEM*. Right, unidentified companion, possibly one of the Weeks brothers.
Photo courtesy of Lauren Brown.

A fair tide to come home on...

To return to the sailing, which, after all was the thing that I liked best. There were no motors in those days, and we were dependent on wind and tide. The latter ebbed and flowed at the rate of from two to three knots, and was a real factor if the wind dropped off as it frequently did. This meant we always figured on having a fair tide to come home on. The swiftest tide locally was through Woods Hole, here it ran about six to seven knots, and you had to have a pretty heavy wind behind you to get through against it when it was going strong.

We tried to get through from Buzzards Bay on the way home one time, and very nearly got wrecked. We had a fair wind but had missed the tide which was running strong against us. To escape the full force of the current we went to the wrong side of a large can buoy which did not leave us too much room between it and a ledge. We managed to get a little way past the Buoy but not enough to luff across it, nor could we drop back so as to cross back into the channel where we would have more room to maneuver. Finally, in desperation, I decided to make the attempt and threw the helm hard over. No go, the current had brought us broadside down on the buoy. Fortunately, the force of the current had pressed the buoy so far down that we merely bumped and slid over it at the expense of a little paint. Harry Babcock was down in the cabin doing something about lunch, and the noise down there must have been terrific, for he shot up through the hatch

like a Jack-in-the-Box, with two eggs in one hand and a kettle in the other. With more room in the main channel we finally made it.

As Father used the boat only on week-ends and during his brief vacations, I was able to have the *GEM* during the week, and the first summer I figured on a “cruise” to Nantucket, about twenty-eight miles due East. So my two cousins Arthur Bennet and Will Mather and I, together with George and Tim, set sail. We could sleep four after a fashion on the transoms, but a fifth would have to be satisfied with the floor of the cabin. After spending one night in Nantucket Harbor proper we sailed down several miles to a place called Wauwinet, and from there walked across the



The catboat *GEM*, circa 1900. Photo courtesy of Lauren Brown.

Island to Sconset. There, on Sankaty Head, is one of the best lights on the coast which we duly inspected and having everything explained to us by the keeper. Nearby was the fishing village which was made up of many tiny shacks, and was supposed to be one of the sights. Sconset, even then, was attracting an artistic and stage crowd, and while I have never seen the place since, I understand that now the whole shore is built up with attractive summer places.

It was this year that we heard the bluefish were running in Quicks Hole, which is the channel between Naushon and Pasque, and the only passage between the Elizabeth Islands suitable for large vessels. We sailed down and spent the night there and the next morning started out to fish. The fish were there alright, but unfortunately, the wind dropped after we had caught enough to show the sport was unusually good. As the only way to catch these fish is by trolling we were out of luck. Father got out in the dinghy with a rod and reel and tried to cast and reel in, but had little or no luck. I stood up on the cabin roof and tried to heave and haul by hand, but the rigging tangled me all up. We caught enough fish, however, to warrant

George Cleveland to row all the way to Woods Hole in the Dinghy to get ice to preserve the fish caught till they could reach the market upon our return to Vineyard Haven. The arrangement being that the crew could sell all the fish caught at the market, except what we might want for the house.

In trolling for bluefish we used a line about one hundred and twenty feet long. If there were enough of a crew to handle them we would put our four lines, two stern and two outrigger. On each line there was a pewter "jig" or an eelskin. If a fish struck and was hooked it was pulled in by main strength. It took some experience to be able to keep the fish coming in smoothly without allowing any slack. Meanwhile the boat would be going about three knots.

One day Harry and I started out to look at a vessel that had been sunk the night before as the result of a collision. It was well over toward Cape Poge on the end of Chappaquiddick Island. All we could see was the tops of the masts so we decided to go onto Cape Poge and see if there were any fish. It was down the far shore of the Island that we did most of our fishing. We no sooner looked around the point than we saw a catboat sailing along under a flock of tern and hooking fish right and left. Harry, in his enthusiasm, immediately rigged four lines, two stern and two outrigger, and we sailed through under the gulls. Bingo! All four lines were struck and there were only two of us. By the time we got the lines in, whether we landed any fish I do not remember, they were so tangled that we simply threw them aside and put out only two lines. Even so one of us had to steer the boat, and if his line was struck he had to straddle the wheel and pull in his line as best he could. The final result was thirty odd fish weighing about seven pounds. Harry made a killing that day for there was only one other boat on the job.

When there were not bluefish around, and in later years they seemed to desert the Vineyard entirely, we would go bottom fishing, this was for seabass and scup, with an occasional flounder. This was entirely different from trolling, for you drifted with the tide over the ground, letting down a very heavy sinker till it touched the bottom, and then raising it slightly. While, of course, these fish were much smaller than the blues it was good sport. On the way home either Harry or I would clean fish to take home or give to the neighbors, and I will never forget the broiled bluefish for supper only a few hours out of the water. Broiled over a coal fire, it would come in on a big platter with all the high spots charred, the whole drenched in butter. Hannah, our cook for many years, was an expert.

On the day described above we had not expected to stay out for lunch and the only thing we could find to eat on board was half a loaf of stale bread. Also hauling in so many heavy fish blistered my fingers right through the rubber finger-stall so that it was pretty hard going toward the end. That was the hardest day's work I ever did.

I think Father's original idea was to have a hot lunch, and we carried condensed coffee, Van Camp's Baked Beans, Richardson and Robbins canned chicken and other things that I can't remember. We had a single-burner oil stove and as time went on I took over the cooking, or, at least, the preparation of the lunch. If it was too rough, and it frequently was, to do any cooking or heating, I would make chicken and jelly sandwiches. I can see myself now clad in oilskins, braced against the centerboard trunk, constructing sandwiches of a not too delicate appearance and handing them out to those in the cockpit. How I ever avoided being sick I do not know. I must have been immune.

The only time I felt at all queasy was on our only try for mackerel. We heard that the mackerel were running in Menemsha Bight, about half way down to Gay Head in the Vineyard Sound. They were small of the size known as "Tinkers." It was necessary to find some "Chum" to bait them. Chum is, properly speaking, menhaden, or moss bunkers, ground up and salted down. As this fish is hard to come by at the Vineyard it is put in a cask as obtained, and the various vintages can be recognized by the discoloration of the layers. The final result is a rich aroma that can better be imagined than described. Well, we found a man who had some and bore it off in triumph. We sailed down to the Bight and spent the night in Menemsha Creek, starting out early next morning.

The way to fish for mackerel is with a short handline, baiting your single hook with a piece of bacon rind or some other indestructible material. You then ladle out some of the chum which attracts the fish in droves, you let your line down in the middle of the fish that are grabbing for anything in sight. Among other things they will grab at the bait on the hook, you pull them up and slap them off on the floor of the cockpit. In this way you pull them in as fast as you can get your line back in the water. As there was very little breeze and we had to lie to in a rolling sea and a hot sun, and the ever present chum, I felt uneasy for the first and only time in my life. Fortunately the fish stopped biting before the crisis was reached, and we sailed for home.

The last echo of the halcyon days...

While Nantucket and New Bedford are more famous whaling ports, the Vineyard added its quota to that industry, Edgartown being the principal port. When we first went down there were two old dismantled whalers tied up to a dock there. One, as I recall was named the *Mattapoissett*, a town on Buzzards Bay. I was surprised at the size which was much smaller than you would expect in a bark rigged vessel. The deck amidships was all cut up from cutting the blubber to a size to go in the try-pots. The first vessel

destroyed by the Confederate Cruiser *Alabama* after she was fitted out and commissioned at the Azores, was the *Okmulgee*, a whaler of Edgartown. For some years in the '90s there were a number of old whalers tied up at New Bedford, one which was the *Bertha* whose name I have run across in whaling books. For years there was a pile of barrels on a dock there, covered with seaweed, The story was told that they were part of a cargo of oil that arrived in port on a rather lower market than the Captain of the whaler expected, and that he said he would hold for his price. They finally disappeared, I do not know what became of them.

The bar across the entrance to Nantucket Harbor necessitated the use of the "Camel" to lift a returning whaler loaded with oil safely over it. This was the forerunner of the floating dry dock, and I do not think originated in Nantucket.

The last echo of the halcyon days did not reverberate long. In 1924 the bark *Wanderer* was fitted out at New Bedford for an old-fashioned whaling voyage, fully equipped and provisioned she got only as far as Cuttyhunk where she went ashore for a total loss.

The waters around the Vineyard were ideal for small boat sailing, smooth except in a blow, and plenty to see within reasonable distance. There was Buzzards Bay which we usually entered through Woods Hole with Quisset, Monument Beach, Buzzards Bay where Grover Cleveland had his summer home Gray Gables, Sippican Harbor at Marion and Mat-tapoissett, ending up with New Bedford on the Acushnet River. Coming back into Vineyard Sound there were four passages between the Elizabeth Islands: Woods Hole between Naushon and the mainland, Robinsons Hole between Naushon and Pasque, Quicks Hole, a ship channel, between Pasque and Nashawena and Kinnepitsett between Nashawena and Cuttyhunk. On the Sound side of Naushon is Tarpaulin Cove, according to history the resort of pirates in the old days.



The piece ends abruptly here. Perhaps there were more pages that have been lost.

A Hurricane Bob Notebook

*Recollections of Margaret (Peg) Vincent Kelley
Of the Day When 'Giants Played Tinker Toys'*

August 19, 1991

The weather channel assures us that the storm will come, and that it will be strong. We have tracked the latitude and longitude coordinates that the weather bureau has given us and realize that the storm has indeed moved rapidly during the night. Jim calls Edgartown Air to cancel his flight to New Bedford, and the girl agrees. "Good idea," she says. "We'll probably not go, anyway."

We walk downtown about 8:30 a.m. to watch the preparations. Our own preparations were finished last night. Between Green Ave. and Pease Point Way, there is a Boston whaler on a trailer. The trailer has a flat tire. Not a good start to the day. There are long lines at the A&P and the gasoline stations. What, we muse, will the people do with all that gas, where will they actually go? At the A&P, every other person is buying toilet paper, as if hurricanes cause diarrhea.

The town itself, as we walk through on our way to the wharf is seemingly nonchalant, but as we approach the harbor, it is apparent that the forecasts are being taken more seriously. There is a moving van at the Yacht Club, removing the piano and the ovens. Shop girls are busy taping windows. Does anyone know why? Perhaps it is like asking an expectant father to boil water — it gives them something to do and keeps them out of the way.

At the wharf, there is much bustle and the excitement level is high. Tourists with cameras and paper cups of coffee are standing about watching as Edgartown Marine busily shuttles our own version of boat people to shore. Many small boats are being lifted out of the water for safe storage, others are being moored more securely. The charter sloop *Tesoro* motors out to the other side of the Beach club, where it will be out of the way if other boats in the harbor break free of their lines. One whaler is being lashed too securely to the Daggett House pier. Surely, if the tide swell is high, the boat will not have enough slack to ride with it. The police come,

MARGARET (PEG) VINCENT KELLEY has been a volunteer docent at the Museum for almost 20 years. An amateur historian, she also enjoys writing essays to keep her far-flung family aware of news of the Vineyard and of what is going on in her life.

with their PA system, to tell us that all streets will be closed at noon. The excitement of the crowd increases.

Harbormaster Bob is busy directing his underlings to stow emergency equipment in his boat, and issuing orders. These callow young men are lusting to order people around as early as 9:30, but were restrained by Bob because of possible police-state charges by those of us who are innocently exercising our right of peaceful assembly. A fat cat with a big cabin cruiser, tied up outside The Shanty, wants help removing his boat to a mooring and almost runs over the whaler helping him. The wind begins to gust and we decide to move on.

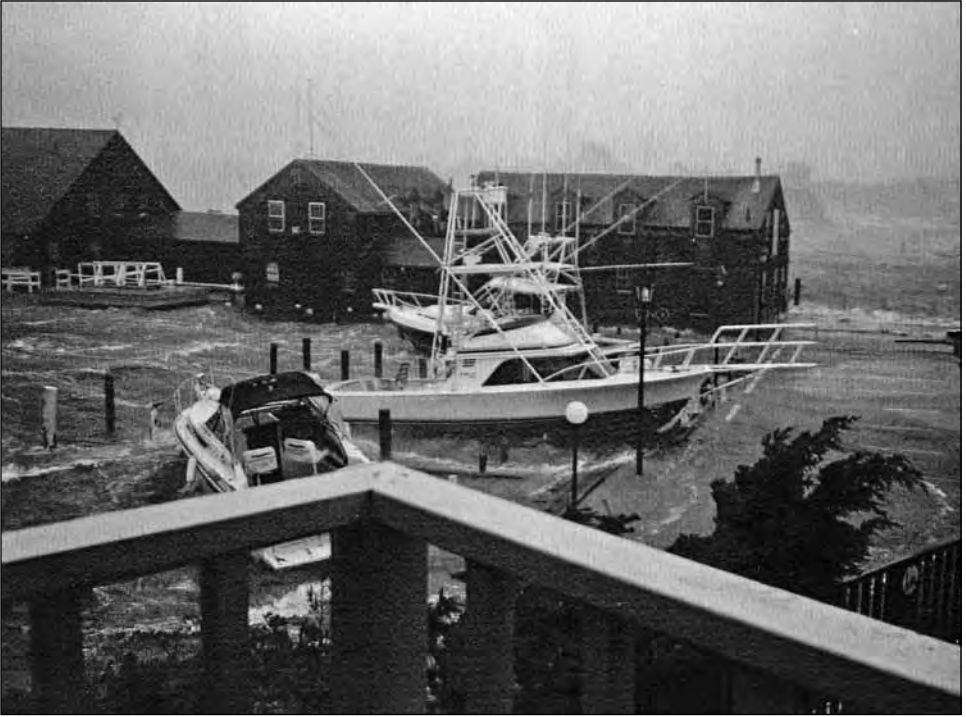
As we return through town, preparations have begun in earnest. Swinging signs are being removed. Carroll and Vincent Real Estate have three men on the job. How many Realtors does it take...? Point Way Inn has made no effort to prepare for the storm. The croquet pitch is still up, flower pots are attractively arranged.

The lines at the gas stations and the A&P have increased. Cars are parked on our bike path. We briefly wish we need something so we can join the crowd. My sister reports that only five people at a time are allowed into the Granite, which quickly sold out of batteries. There was a black market for batteries at Your Market at the Triangle — sort of a “psst, try the Market” sort of thing. I think I see Orson Welles.

We had a big breakfast, and curled up in front of the TV. The people on the weather channel are delighted. At last, they have some real news to report. Channel 6 in Providence devotes a good deal of their coverage to the floodgates downtown. These gates were designed and built to prevent the extent of water damage that occurred in the city during the hurricanes of 1938 and 1954, but have yet to be tested. Now, at last.

Here on the Island, we shut down in steps. The last ferry is the 10:00 a.m. from Woods Hole. Harvey Ewing is on the radio, telling us where to go for shelter. The streets clear quickly as the noon curfew passes and it becomes strangely quiet. By phone we learn of a coup in the Soviet Union as several people call to report what is being reported about us in the outside world. We are unable to make off-Island calls but we can fax, so we reply by machine. However, power surges interest us more than Russia for the moment and we scurry around shutting off the computer and other machines as the first gust hits, about 12:30.

By 12:45 the wind is ESE and coming directly up Main Street. The gusts are so strong that we are afraid to sit out on the porch and watch. There is very little rain. Branches begin to fall and roll up the street. Guests at the Heritage House congregate on their little front porch, watching our gate swing back and forth. Four teenagers defy the gale and saunter up empty Main Street barefoot, swigging beer. By 1:30 the gate and half the fence



High water and battered boats by the Edgartown Yacht Club. Photo from the MVM collections.

nearest the house is down. Large branches continue to fall from the two maples right on the bike path. There is a loud thud on the deck and Jim goes upstairs to investigate. At 1:35 the power goes for good. We learn later that it has been shut down purposely, so as to avoid danger from falling wires. People are having their pictures taken on the Heritage porch.

The storm increases in intensity. The trees whip around and bend. Branches come off, but the trees do not break. We patrol the house, checking on things that might come loose. The screen door to the deck needs to be lashed shut. The view from the upstairs back hall is best. The trees in front can be seen from the deck door, the trees in back, from the big room there. To watch from the front of the house is scary, the gusts shake the whole house. I fear for the oak that is our major defense against the Chinese restaurant's trash bin, but it holds. The two spruce trees in front, the ones that Martha Look expects to come down daily, hold.

By 3:15, the wind has backed to the SW, and the sun is out intermittently. We cautiously peer out, to see others, all along Main Street peering out, too. There is a quorum outside the Ewings, discussing damage. We have a glass of wine, and toast our luck. No trees gone, the fence was broken anyway, both cars survive. The chain saws and the few people out on Main Street become more and more until finally there is a parade of



Hurricane winds drove harbor water into yards along North Water Street. Photo from the MVM collections.

friendly, happy people heading downtown, as if to the July 4th fireworks. At 5:30 we join them.

Lots and lots of lines are down. Four trees did not survive the storm all close to one another — in Womack’s, at the tip of Cannonball Park, and on Main and Cooke Streets. Branches are everywhere. A big tree is across the road on School Street, at Davis Lane. The police are examining the damage and putting up yellow tape. A huge tree is across North Water Street, above the library. The street below the bank has been crudely barricaded off, but the pedestrians ignore the barriers. Ernie Boch, our resident self-appointed spokesperson, has been reporting on radio: “live from Edgartown Harbor,” and so those with batteries in their radios now lead us to the damage.

Rumor abounds, naturally, but the damage is there. A sloop, appropriately named *Bacchus* has entered the Navigator Bar. The water is high and the police, somewhat ineffectually, are asking us all to leave so that clean-up can begin. We do not get to Memorial Wharf, but we see masts at crazy angles on the Chappy shore. Strangely, there does not seem to be much other damage. There is a post lantern broken in front of the Stobart Gallery, and the Adirondack chairs at the Point Way Inn have been destroyed, a stained glass window in St. Elizabeth’s has fallen out, but hardest hit are trees and boats. Even the trees seem to have fallen neatly. There is one near Pease Point Way that has fallen between houses and has landed just short of a car.

Commerce is at a standstill, nothing is open as there is no electricity. We come back up the street, eat peanut butter and jelly, play gin and wonder how people know that the Chinese restaurant is open. They are cooking by candlelight and long lines have formed in the pitch darkness of the backyard. When someone really needs to see, a driver obligingly turns on his headlights.

August 20

We get up early, yesterday's excitement still with us, but a quick glance into the living room shows the VCR screen black and unblinking so we know there is still no electricity. Last night's peanut butter was not enough and we are hungry. We take the car and go downtown.

Main Street has been swept up, but not much else has changed from last night. There is one parking space at the Yacht Club and we park there and in the drizzle walk to the wharf to examine the damage. Here and there shop owners are out with buckets, cleaning. Boats in the harbor are everywhere, some in the water, some leaning on the beach, some hull up in the water, including the Boston whaler at the Daggett House. I am in the way of a man with a video camera, so he, wordlessly, pushes me out of the way. Today, however, no one is drinking coffee. There is no electricity in town so there is no place to get food.

People are milling everywhere. There must be someplace open but there isn't. I listen to the 9 a.m. report on WMVY, then light charcoal to reheat yesterday's coffee. Jim makes the rounds of Midway Market and the A&P. He comes home empty handed, and the coffee smells of charcoal. This isn't fun anymore. By 11 a.m. the Commonwealth Electric truck is in the restaurant driveway, and before noon we have our power again. We are lucky. Some people will wait until Thursday to get their power back and WMVY says it will be Friday before the crews get to Gay Head to even assess the problems. The people without power are easy to spot; they are the dirty ones, who buy three bags of charcoal and four bags of ice at the A&P.

A quick trip to Oak Bluffs and East Chop reveal that many trees are down in Hart Haven, some roof damage in Oak Bluffs, including the cupola on the police station, and the wharf is closed — it looks like a giant has been playing tinker toys with it. The side street in front of the Catholic church is covered with branches, and the sign at the Big Bridge, the one that states: Entering Edgartown. Inc 1672, is gone.

We Get Mail

In Honor of Arthur R. Railton

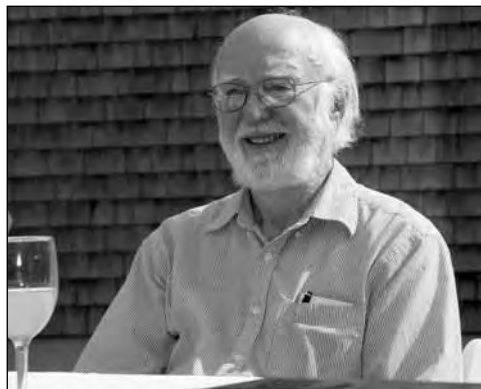
We give this tribute in honor of our Commodore, Arthur R. Railton, whose stern countenance could never hide his soft heart.

For generations of Menemsha racers, the only thing that topped his congratulatory cheer at the finish line was the thrill of appearing in one of his incomparable Gazette articles. Entertaining and ever witty, unfailingly positive even when written about a skipper whose day had not gone according to plan, the racing column always celebrated the effort required to complete a race, overcoming the obstacles Mother Nature and fellow competitors presented along the way.

There was never any shame in finishing last, and no particular honor in finishing first. After all, we all knew that this was “sandlot racing”—Arthur’s perfect moniker for our particular pastime — as far removed from the guns and flags and brass and varnish of a yacht club as one could get, and so much the better for it.

Now that he and Marge have tacked smartly across their final finish line, heading into Quitsa and up, up, up the final hill, what trophy can we give them, what Glorious Cup would be a suitable award? No silver for their mantel, no plaque to hang upon their wall, but a mighty bellow from a thousand thankful sailors, “Good going, Art and Marge!”

— Dan Karnovsky and Family, Chilmark and Brookline



From the Executive Director

2011 has been a very productive and positive year for your Museum.

In September, the Museum Board of Directors purchased the former Marine Hospital and St. Pierre School of Sport property located at 151 Lagoon Pond Road in Vineyard Haven. The same month, we sold a nearly 10-acre parcel of land in West Tisbury to its adjacent neighbors, The Agricultural Society and the Polly Hill Arboretum.

These are significant steps in an ongoing process for the Museum to meet its mission for preserving and presenting the history and culture of Martha's Vineyard. For more than a decade Museum leadership has sought to upgrade facilities to meet its stewardship responsibility to care for the collections. It also seeks to fulfill the increasing demand from members, residents and visitors to participate in exhibitions, programs and research.

A formal feasibility study confirmed that the Lagoon Pond Road property meets the future needs of the organization; it allows for the preservation and adaptive re-use of the 1895 wood-frame building and the addition of a new collections, exhibitions and programming facility. By late spring 2011, generous donors had provided sufficient funds both to secure the purchase of the property and to continue the next steps of developing a detailed architectural program and design, as well as to build a foundation for future capital fundraising. The long-term objective is to operate the Thomas Cooke House seasonally in Edgartown, but to move all of the other Museum operational functions to the new location.

At this stage in the process, we are not able to provide specific dates or dollars associated with the build-out of the Vineyard Haven property. However, the Board is convinced that the opportunity is vital to meeting its responsibility and that it will be transformative to the future.

I want to know what members think. This is your Museum and your attitudes and aspirations are important to us as we move forward in planning in 2012 and beyond. Please write, email or call me (dnathans@mvmuseum.org or 508-627-4441, ext 122).



David Nathans
Executive Director

The *Intelligencer* welcomes contributions. Letters to the editor intended for publication are also welcome.

Write: Editor, *Dukes County Intelligencer*

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Edgartown, MA 02539

E-mail: swilson@mvmuseum.org. Put “*Intelligencer*” in the subject line.

SUPPORT for the *Dukes County Intelligencer* is always welcome. Please make your tax deductible contribution to the Martha's Vineyard Museum, designating your gift for the *Intelligencer*. If you enjoy receiving the *Intelligencer*, consider making a gift of membership to a family member or friend so that they too can enjoy the journal of the Martha's Vineyard Museum, as well as all the other benefits of membership. See our website, www.mvmuseum.org, for more information about how you can support our work.

THE NATIONALE

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RICHARD N. FOX,
Editor and Proprietor.

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The sinking of the City of Columbus, a passenger steamer bound from Boston to Savannah, Ga., in January 1884 off the coast of Gay Head was a tragedy that seized the American imagination. Here's the cover of a national magazine with an artist's vivid imagining of the disaster, from the MV Museum's current exhibit, "Out of the Depths: Martha's Vineyard Shipwrecks."