

THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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MARTHA'S VINEYARD
in the
1880's and 1890's

photographs by
RICHARD G. SHUTE

August 1965 — Vol. 7, No. 1

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Richard G. Shute was born on Nantucket on September 17, 1844, the son of Charles and Harriet Shute. But the family moved to Edgartown when the boy was very young.

He lived in Edgartown all his life with the exception of the time he served in the army during the Civil War, and he died in Edgartown May 10, 1923. But the fact that he had been born on Nantucket was never quite forgotten or forgiven. Still in spite of that terrible handicap, he became, without question, the Island's outstanding and most popular photographer.

His father, Charles Shute, was also a photographer and had a store and photographic studio on Main Street in Edgartown. Young Richard helped his father in the store, and in the studio, as a small boy. The elder Shute was also the leader of the town band, and young Richard was playing snare drum there almost as soon as he was helping his father in the store.

In 1862, when seventeen, Richard enlisted in the 40th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, and because of his band training he became one of the Regiment's drummers. He was very small for his age, and very slightly built, so that he looked much younger than his seventeen years, and, indeed, very much like the traditional drummer of Civil War stories. This very boyish appearance seems to have fooled Abraham Lincoln.

The President was making a visit to the regiment, and was seated in his carriage close enough to Richard Shute so that the boy could have reached out his hand and touched him. Mr. Lincoln looked at him and said, "Do they feed you enough, my boy?" Richard said, "Yes." In telling the story afterwards, he said that he would have said yes, even if he had been starving to death.

He was discharged from the army in 1863 as the result of an injury, and returned home to Edgartown. Almost immediately he set up shop as a photographer, not in partnership with his father,

but by himself; for soon after his discharge from the army, the *Vineyard Gazette* was running this advertisement.

Photographs
Melaneotypes
Vignettes and Ambrotypes
Taken in all weather
In the highest style of art by
Richard G. Shute

But perhaps Richard didn't do too well in business by himself, for in the following year the advertisement read:

Chas. H. Shute & Son
Have refitted their rooms and enlarged their skylight
(which is second to none)
And are prepared to furnish at astonishing low prices

Cartes de Visite
Photographs
Ambrotypes
Melainotypes
Nellotypes
Gems

Small pictures enlarged. In fact all pertaining to the Art
done in a workmanlike manner and warranted to suit.
Chas. H. Shute & Son.

In the following years Richard Shute did indeed, produce views of Martha's Vineyard, which were done in a pretty high "style of art." He made portraits of Island people, a few of which are reproduced here. He made stereoptican cards and post cards, and pictures of Island houses and buildings, both exteriors and interiors. It is because of his work we have a pretty good idea of how the Island looked about seventy-five years ago.

The Dukes County Historical Society is fortunate in having a large collection of Shute photographs, and from time to time we plan to reproduce more of them. Also, the Island was fortunate in having had a photographer of Mr. Shute's calibre.



Gay Head. The lighthouse and keepers' house behind it. This photograph must have been taken about 1880.



Gay Head. An excursion steamer with all her flags flying, tied up at the old Gay Head wharf.



Vineyard Haven. Looking toward "The Grove" from Vineyard Haven wharf, and showing the fish houses on what is now the bathing beach.



Vineyard Haven. The foot of Union street showing the Seaman's Bethel, two store buildings that have since been moved, and a three-masted schooner where the wharf should be. This coaster cut through the wharf when she came ashore in the November gale of 1898.



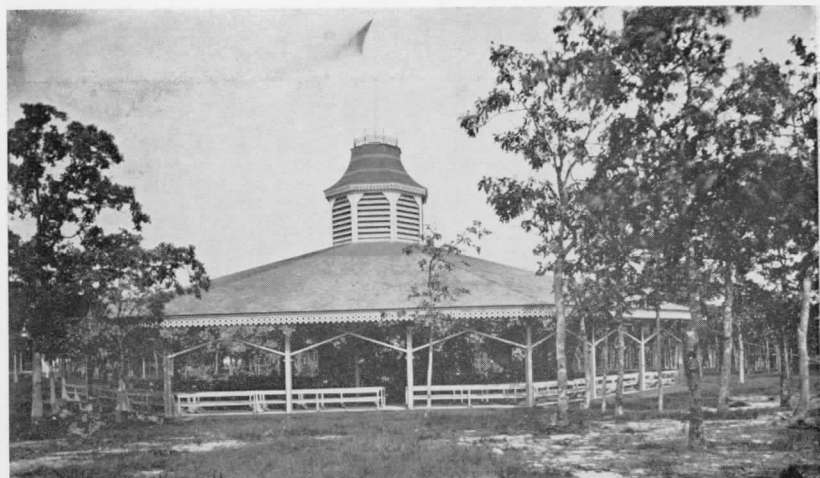
Vineyard Haven. The old Methodist Episcopal church which was later destroyed by fire. The present Methodist church stands on the same site.



Vineyard Haven. Main street looking toward Dr. Lane's block.



Vineyard Haven. Wrecks in the harbor after the November gale of 1898.



Oak Bluffs. The Baptist tabernacle on the Highlands. It was dedicated August 18, 1878, and this photograph was probably taken very soon after that. It stood in almost the exact center of the Highlands development, and was usually called the "Baptist temple."



Oak Bluffs. Looking up Circuit Avenue. There seems to be no traffic problem for the man on the antique tricycle.



Oak Bluffs. The Camp Ground showing the car tracks of the horse railway that led to the Highland wharf.



Oak Bluffs. Looking toward the old Sea View House, and the wharf of the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf development company.



Oak Bluffs. The Wesley House when it was known as Wesley's Hotel, and three good-looking one-horse rigs.



Oak Bluffs. Another view of Circuit avenue showing two of its famous old stores: "The Wigwam" and Kreekorian and Nahigian Company's Oriental goods.



Oak Bluffs. The crowds on Circuit avenue at the height of the season.



Oak Bluffs. Cottages on the Camp Ground with a posed family group.



Edgartown. Looking toward the harbor and waterfront from Tower Hill.



Edgartown waterfront. Showing whalers at Osborn's wharf.



Edgartown. Showing part of the bathing beach and a small coaster entering the harbor.



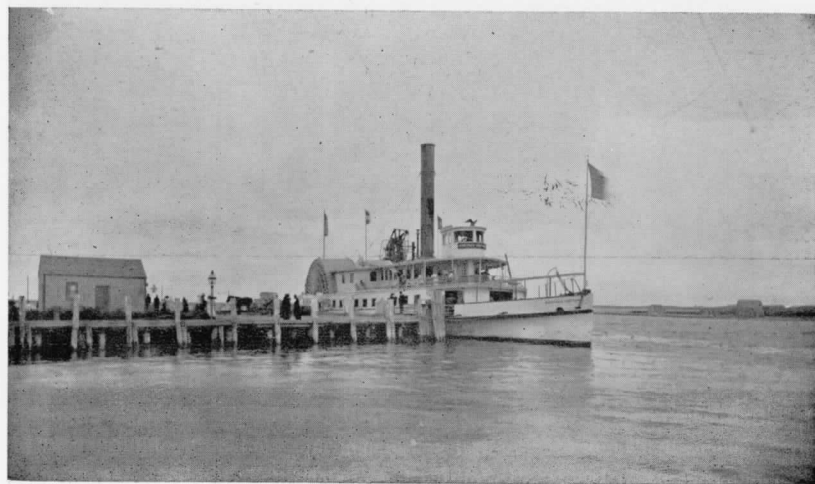
The Edgartown depot of the Martha's Vineyard narrow gauge railroad, showing the locomotive, tender and one coach, and probably most of the railroad's employees.



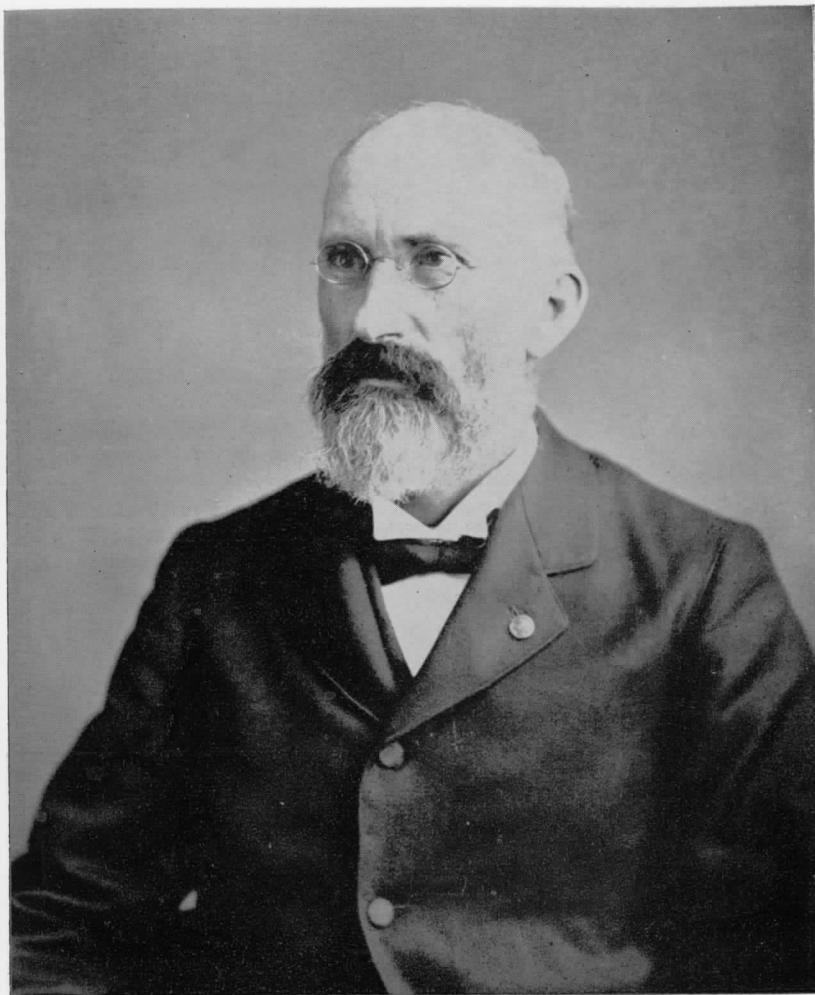
Edgartown. Looking up Main street from Osborn's wharf from just about where Eldridge's Fish Market is now. And note the rigging of the topsail schooner at the wharf on the left.



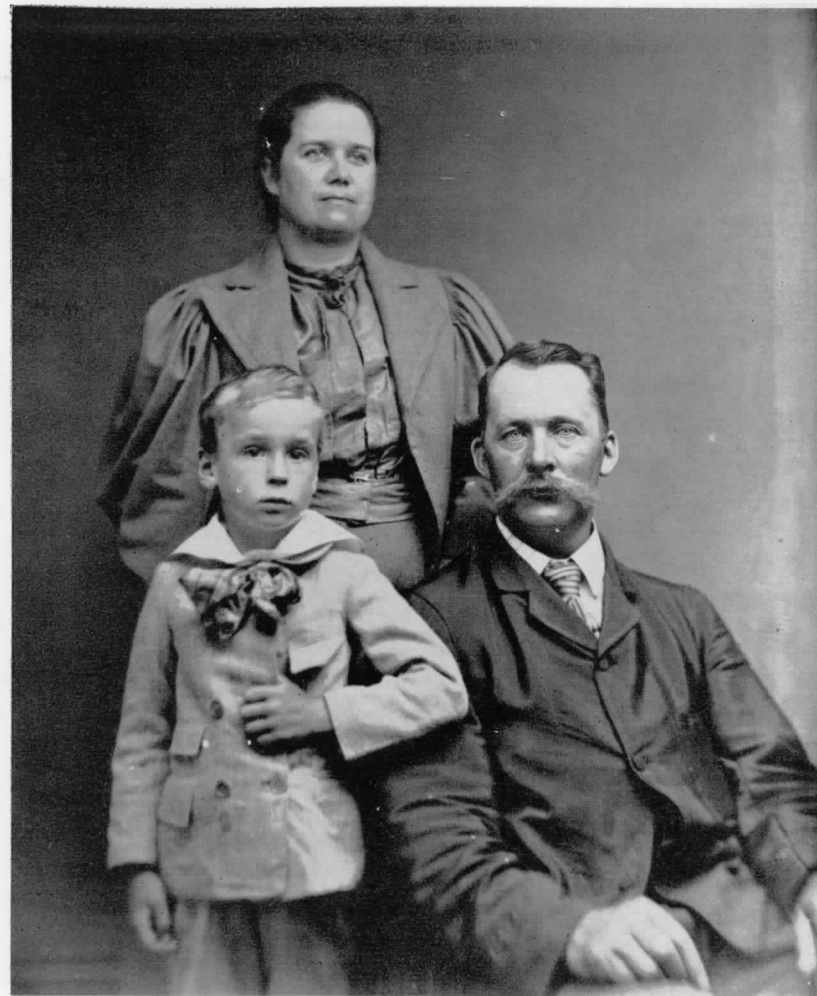
Edgartown. A footrace which was probably a part of a Fourth of July celebration. The building at the right is Richard G. Shute's store and studio.



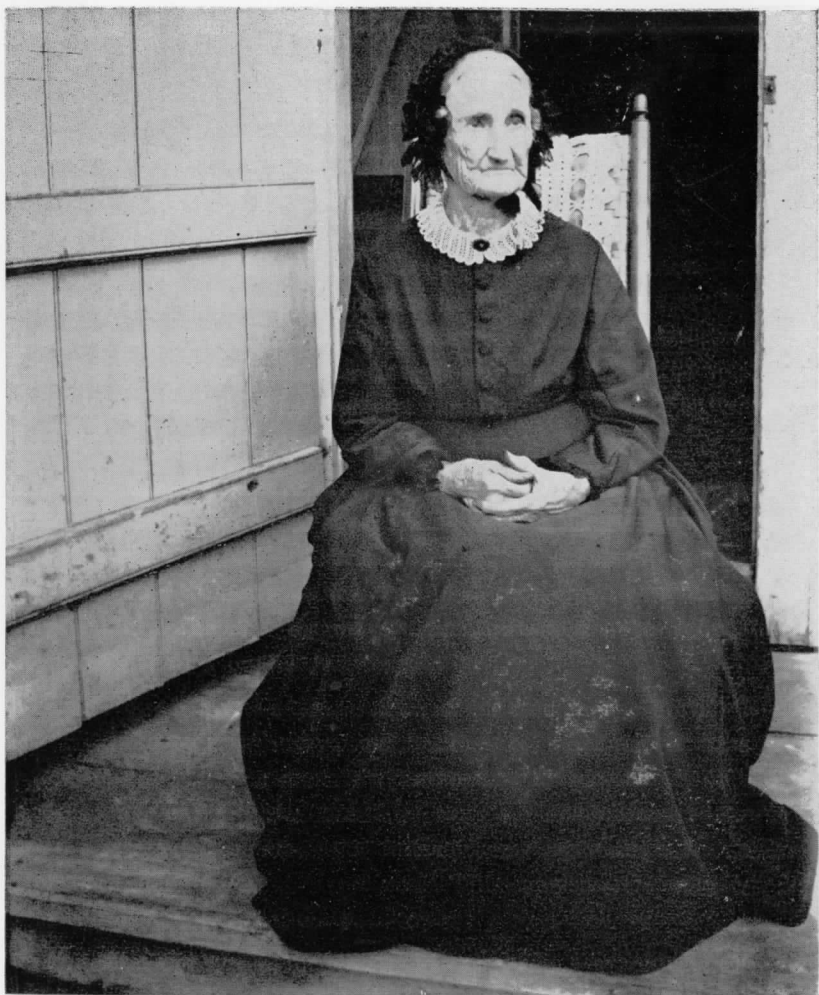
Edgartown. The paddle-wheeler Martha's Vineyard at the steamboat wharf.



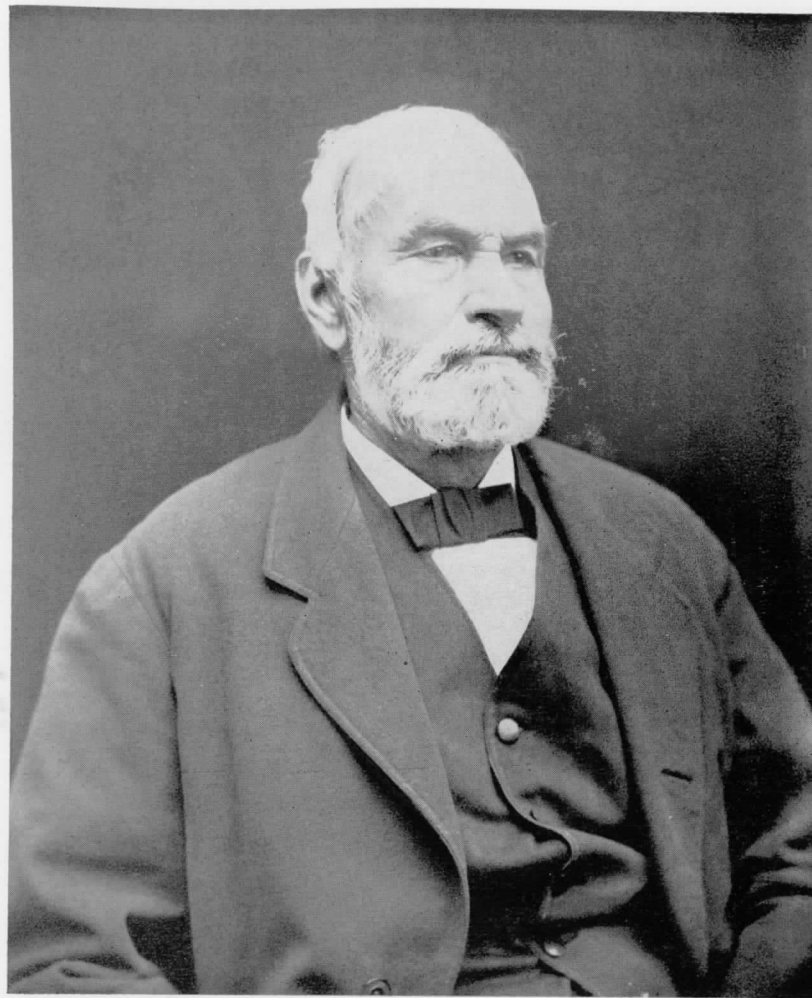
Beriah T. Hillman. The *Vineyard Gazette* has called judge Hillman one of the Island's "Grand old men." He was born in Chilmark in 1843 and died in Edgartown in 1925. During the Civil War, he served in the 43rd Massachusetts Volunteers. After the war, and after teaching school off-Island for some time, he returned to the Vineyard and became active in just about every aspect of Island life. For many years he was Register of Probate and special justice of the District Court.



Edward Elliott Mayhew, Mrs. Mayhew, the former Florence Blackwell, and their son, Walter Lloyd Mayhew. Mr. Mayhew was the owner of the Chilmark store, and his slogan was "Dealer In Almost Everything," which was almost true. He was also the postmaster, and he ran a big farm on Quitsa. This photograph was taken in 1895.



Mrs. Lucy Hoban. On March 24th, 1888, when this photograph was taken, Mrs. Hoban was ninety-five years old. Which actually wasn't very old for the Vineyard at that time. For nonagenarians then were about as common as people in their sixties are today. This led to the widely held belief that there must be something especially healthful about the climate of Martha's Vineyard.



Lorenzo Fisher. Captain Fisher was one of the Island's outstanding whaling captains. In "Boyhood Memories of Edgartown" in the December 1876 issues of the *Vineyard Gazette*, the author speaks of having a copy of Childe Harold that had formerly belonged to Capt. Fisher, and makes the observation that people are sometimes surprised at the idea of a whaling captain being well-read and well-mannered.

The following books are currently on sale at the Society's Museum Building.

The Guide Book—*Martha's Vineyard, A Short History by various hands together with a Guide to various points of interest.* 1963 edition. Paper cover. \$2.00

The Gosnold Book — *Bartholomew Gosnold Discoverer and Planter, New England 1602 — Virginia 1607*, by Warner F. Gookin and Philip L. Barbour. \$8.50

Records of the Town of Tisbury, Massachusetts, 1669–1864. 841 pages of Island history. \$5.00

The Wampanoag Indian Tribute Tribes of Martha's Vineyard by Milton A. Travers. 74 pages. Beautifully illustrated. \$2.00

A few back issues of the *Intelligencer* are available at fifty cents each at the Dukes County Historical Society in Edgartown.

Vol. 2, No. 1 — Dr. Sidney N. Riggs' illustrated article on "*Vineyard Meeting Houses.*"

Vol. 2, No. 2 — "*The Episcopal Churches of Martha's Vineyard,*" by Dr. Riggs; the "*Annual Report and Account of Accessions*" by Eleanor Ransom Mayhew, and second installment of Rebecca Smith's *Journal*.

Vol. 2, No. 3 — "*Years of Innocence on Martha's Vineyard,*" by Henry Beetle Hough. "*Some Gay Head People About Sixty Years Ago,*" by Eva Ryan. "*A Cache of Indian Artifacts,*" donated by George Magnuson.

Vol. 2, No. 4 — *The Singing Tiltons and Some of Their Songs* by E. G. Huntington, also a continuation of Rebecca Smith's *Diurnal Records For The Year 1813*.

Vol. 3, No. 1 — *Merrily They Rolled Along — On Skates — Five Miles At Sea*, by C. Nelson Bishop; *Sand Dunes and Sea Law* by Stanley King.

Vol. 3, No. 2 — *The Peddle Cart* by Flavel Gifford; *Rounding Cape Horn* by Elon O. Huntington; *Annual Report* by Eleanor Ransom Mayhew.

Vol. 3, No. 3 — *The Story of Pasque and the Pasque Island Club* by Alice Forbes Howland.

Vol. 3, No. 4 — *Adventure on St. Augustine Island* by Capt. Henry Pease, 2nd; *Some Vineyard Authors* by Dorris S. Hough.