

# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

Published by  
DUKES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.  
EDGARTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS



JONATHAN MAYHEW AND THE MISSIONARY MAYHEWS  
by  
DORIS COTTLE GIFFORD

A LETTER HOME FROM HERSCHEL ISLAND — 1891  
by  
HARTSON H. BODFISH

Feb. 1967

Vol. 8, No. 3

# DUKES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

NELSON COON . . . . .	<i>President</i>
GEORGE H. CHASE . . . . .	<i>Vice President</i>
JOHN W. OSBORN . . . . .	<i>Treasurer</i>
DAVID HUGO . . . . .	<i>Secretary</i>

### Council

DORRIS S. HOUGH . . . . .	<i>Term expires 1969</i>
FLAVEL M. GIFFORD . . . . .	<i>Term expires 1969</i>
ALLAN KENISTON . . . . .	<i>Term expires 1968</i>
DR. SIDNEY N. RIGGS . . . . .	<i>Term expires 1968</i>
ALFRED HALL . . . . .	<i>Term expires 1967</i>
GALE HUNTINGTON . . . . .	<i>Term expires 1967</i>

MISS DOROTHY R. SCOVILLE . . . . .	<i>Curator</i>
GEORGE H. CHASE . . . . .	<i>General Counsel</i>
FLAVEL M. GIFFORD . . . . .	<i>Genealogist</i>
HENRY BEETLE HOUGH . . . . .	<i>Historian</i>

DR. SIDNEY N. RIGGS, Cover Artist

## DUES

Active members	\$3.00 annual dues
Sustaining members	\$10.00 annual dues
Life members	\$50.00

The Intelligencer will be mailed free to all members of the Society. Non-members may purchase it for fifty cents a copy.

This Society is supported entirely by membership dues, gifts, and bequests.

Your gift or bequest will be deeply appreciated and should be made payable to the "Dukes County Historical Society, Inc." All such contributions are deductible under Federal Income Tax Law.

Material from the Intelligencer may be republished provided that credit is given to the author and to the Dukes County Historical Society.

## JONATHAN MAYHEW AND THE MISSIONARY MAYHEWS

by

DORIS COTTLE GIFFORD

Any proper understanding of the life of the Rev. Jonathan Mayhew must include the study of his genealogical, geographical, social and economic backgrounds.

Governor Thomas Mayhew was Jonathan's great great grandfather. I am sure that Jonathan was well aware of his ancestry. Because of their isolation probably most of the inhabitants of the Vineyard could trace their descent from the first settlers. In addition, Jonathan had inherited a background of devoted and continuous service which was known well beyond the Island.

Jonathan's genealogical chart shows no marriage into other Vineyard families. His father, Experience's first wife, from whom I am descended, was a daughter of Governor Hinckley of Plymouth. His second wife, Jonathan's mother, was a daughter of Shearjashub Bourne of Mashpee, a family that was also noted for its missionary work with the Indians. From both sides, then, Jonathan inherited a strong dedication to a work of service.

Jonathan's mother's sisters had married two Allen brothers here on the Vineyard. His mother's mother was a Skiffe with Island connections. It has always interested me as to how people met people. There seems to have been a close association between the Island settlers and those of the Plymouth colony.

Governor Thomas Mayhew came to the Island for purely economic and social reasons. He became Lord of the Manor of an entire island and he had ambitious plans for his descendants. The Island was similar in size to the Isle of Wight, with which as a resident of Southampton, he must have been very familiar. He was familiar, too, with the attractive way of life of the English landed gentry.

Governor Mayhew seems to have been a just and righteous man, but one who brooked no interference with his decisions as to what was right and just. He came here, I am sure, with no missionary zeal. His only son, Thomas, must have been a quite different person, and yet there seems to have been a close tie between father and son.

Thomas Junior immediately became impressed with the need for work with the Indians, and gave his whole life to that work. He accomplished tremendous results in the Christianization of the Indians, and also in building up an excellent organization to carry on that work and to see to its financing. He was greatly loved and his manner with the Indians must have been gentle and kind. We are all familiar with his story as told at "The Place By The Wayside."

The amazing thing is what happened after Thomas Junior's death. His father in no way obligated or even prepared to carry on this missionary work dedicated the last twenty-five years of his life to doing just that — to carrying it on. The work could well have stopped at that point. His decision to carry on the work of his son without a doubt affected the whole course of history. At the time of King Phillip's War the Indians far outnumbered the white men here and could easily have wiped out the entire colony. But not a hand was raised against the English settlers. Not a house was burned. History records that there was strong pressure brought to bear from the mainland for the Indians to rise in arms against the whites. I think the same thing held true in Mashpee where Jonathan's maternal relatives, the Bournes, had worked so hard.

The Governor's interest and devotion to the missionary work was so strong that he felt the need for the family to carry it on. One of his grandsons, Matthew, was chosen for that work. Matthew was an able leader, but he was more inclined to a life of civil service. So it was John who picked up the mantle. John must have been much like his father, Thomas Junior — a very quiet, dedicated, lovable man. Under his hand the missionary work reached its height. But John died at the age of thirty-eight.

Experience, John's son was then in his teens. The family had settled in the Quenames area. The house in which the John Whitings live is the old Mayhew homestead. It dates from 1755. Experience died in 1758. I have been told, though, that older sections of the house are believed to have been built by John. But the character of the house has been changed over the years.

The missionary mantle settled naturally on the shoulders of

Experience. His work and life are so well known that I will not dwell on them here.

By his first wife he had three children. The son, a mentally deficient child, died single. But both daughters married, one an Adams, and one, my ancestor, a McGee, a weaver from Northern Ireland. Both couples settled in homes near their father.

By his second wife Experience had two daughters and three sons. Nathan, the oldest son, was sent to Harvard at considerable financial sacrifice, for the sole purpose of carrying on his father's work. But he died very soon after graduation, so now the choice lay between Zachariah and Jonathan. Jonathan was a scholar and he was very much under the scholarly influence of his father. It soon became apparent that he, too, must go to Harvard. With outside help and with more sacrifice Jonathan was sent there, but with no idea of entering the ministry, but rather of carrying on the work of his missionary forebears.

Experience was land poor. Life on that remote Island farm was not easy. There were many privations, but there were compensations, too, for a young boy. That Jonathan was greatly influenced by his father in those formative years shows clearly in his later life.

Experience was becoming discouraged with his work. Disease had taken its toll of the Indians and the native population was rapidly decreasing. Money from Boston to carry on the missionary work was not being sent as it should have been. The Gay Head people had come under the influence of some of the Rhode Island Baptists, and many of them turned away permanently from the teachings of the Mayhews.

Experience may have looked back often, as he grew older, on a lifetime of dedicated work and at the resulting severe economic hardship. Was what he had accomplished worth the price he had paid? His respect for education was so great that for many years he refused an honorary degree from Harvard. He might have gone far in the outside world, but twice he sacrificed opportunities for himself and gave them to his sons. All of those things may have had much to do in influencing Jonathan in his decision not to return to the Island.

To digress a bit; Jonathan died in 1766 when he was only

forty-six years old. He was a very high strung "nervous" person and never in good health. The record says he died of "a violent nervous disorder." In my grandmother's notes I find the following in regard to Jonathan's sister Mary, "She was sickly and nervous."

Mary had six children, five of them girls. The boy left home and settled in North Carolina after serving in the Indian Wars. Of the girls, four of them died young, and my grandmother noted that at least three of them were "nervous and had fidgetts." Concerning Hannah, the youngest, and my ancestor, who died at the age of seventy-five, I quote my grandmother again, "Her mother Mary never nursed her but brought her up by hand. The Doctor said she must do so or she would be good for nothing like the others, hence this was always considered to be the reason why she lived."

To sum up Experience's family, one son was mentally deficient. Mary and Jonathan were not in good health and were "nervous." Nathan's death at twenty is unexplained. As there were two mothers, any inherited weakness in health probably came from Experience. And remember, too, that John, Experience's father died at thirty-seven. I have too limited a knowledge of genetics to reach a settled opinion on this matter but I think they must have been an "intense" people.

I have dwelt long enough on the background of this brilliant young preacher, Jonathan Mayhew, whose light shone forth for so short a time. He entered Harvard in 1740 and for seven years there studied, prayed and played with the future leaders of the Revolution: Otis, Cooper, Bowdoin, Warren and Cushing. His social status was high, if not his economic status, and on that basis he was placed in eighth position out of a class of one hundred fifty students. But he was often in serious trouble with the college authorities, which in his senior year brought serious results. He was moved from eighth to fifteenth place. In June before graduation the position was restored.

Jonathan's contacts, now, with the Vineyard were slight. Once or twice a year Experience, a man in his seventies, travelled to Boston. This first year was the year that Whitefield and Tennent came to Boston, and to Harvard. Jonathan was at first greatly influenced by them. He wrote his brother one year later that he had decided to enter the ministry. Subsequent letters show con-

tinued preoccupation with the "Hell fire and damnation" type of preaching. But five years later when Jonathan again wrote of Whitefield's farewell sermons he showed a marked antagonism to the man.

Experience was instrumental in bringing about this change. He himself had had and lost great hopes from this "Great Awakening." In a letter to his son he wrote, "Faith and reason, as criteria of religious truth, must be supplemented by experiential evidence." The Knowledge of the Holy is Understanding.

Jonathan soon became convinced of the evils in the excesses of revivalism, and as he diagnosed his own emotional response to this he developed a mistrust of religious enthusiasm which was to affect his whole life. The aftermath of the "Great Awakening" left him persuaded that he must check his powerful emotions, and in religion be a calm, clear-headed rationalist.

In 1747 he had a call, first to Cohasset, and then to the West Church in Boston. He accepted the latter call. The time for his ordination came and Jonathan was completely ostracized by the Boston clergy. But his ordination was attended by the clergy from neighboring country churches. There were several reasons for the coolness of the Boston clergy, but perhaps the most important was the gossip that Mayhew was heterodox and could not be silenced. His father read the charge. The ostracism continued and entered his social life as well.

But the wealthy congregation of the West Church was well satisfied with its choice. Jonathan's style of preaching was said to be one of "colloquial ease" expressed in a blunt and direct manner. He either made friends or enemies. His M.A. thesis at Harvard was an affirmative stand on, "Does reason correctly accord with faith?"

Now the ostracism included the Boston Association of Congregational Ministers and participation in the Thursday Lecture. Jonathan responded to that with Thursday lectures of his own. Paul Revere, then a boy in his teens received a beating from his father for his attendance there, and because of his enthusiasm for the pastor of the West Church.

In 1750 because of his printed *Seven Sermons* the University of Aberdeen conferred a Doctor's degree on Jonathan Mayhew

In February of 1750 he preached his most famous sermon, "A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers." This stated, "God does not interpose in a miraculous way to point out the persons who shall rule and to whom subjection is due." Kings are made by men, not God.

Mayhew was no advocate of levelism. To quote, "There is, as there ought to be, a wide difference of rank and circumstance amongst mankind in the world." He saw no prospect of making the lot of the poor any more comfortable or any less burdensome. He had come a long way from his boyhood Indian friends on Martha's Vineyard and his ancestors' concern with their welfare.

In 1756 he married Elizabeth Clarke, a member of a prominent Boston family. Only one child of the marriage, Elizabeth, survived. She married a Wainwright, from whom comes the continuous line of Jonathan Mayhew Wainwrights, including the General, the hero of Corregidor, and now his son.

In the last ten years of his life Jonathan Mayhew was in continual controversy — theological, ecclesiastical and political. He could denounce in scathing invective those who refused to accept his views, while making — at the same time — a plea for broad minded toleration.

Finally there came his rejection of the Trinity. But Mayhew's excursions into heresy had a definite boundary, he had an unshakable faith in the Holy Scriptures. His repudiations of original sin, predestination and the validity of the Trinity were based on rigorous study of the Bible.

In 1763 Mayhew began an all-out attack on the Church of England. As the Anglicans screamed in protest his Congregational brethren forgot that he was a dangerous heretic and rallied to his support. Then followed the controversy over the Stamp Act and his famous sermon based on the text that contains the words, "For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty." Six variations of liberties were listed leading up to the last, "Civil liberty."

Somewhere in that sermon Jonathan mentioned the Stamp Act. The next night a mob rioted in Boston and the story spread that his sermon has inspired the disorder. This greatly upset Mayhew for he deplored the violence and the next Sunday he preached

against "abusing liberty to licentiousness." His radicalism was doctrinaire and there is no evidence that he was ever linked with Adams, Otis, or the Loyal Nine.

In June 1766 he was asked to go to Barre to sit on a council to hear charges against the pastor there. He returned home fatigued and weak and on July 9 he died. The fires which had raged so violently within him had burned out. Tributes in verse and prose came from all directions. A boy from Martha's Vineyard had spoken in a voice that carried all the way to Whitehall.

To add a quirk of fate — Jonathan's only grandson entered the Anglican priesthood and returned briefly to Boston as rector of Trinity Church. Later he became Bishop of New York and proclaimed there that, "There cannot be a church without a bishop." Mayhew's West Church, and his Boston, moved on to the Revolution and the American Unitarian movement.

No one knows where Jonathan Mayhew is buried. The burial Procession is recorded as leaving the church but there is no indication as to where it went. I do not know how much contact Jonathan had had with his Vineyard associations. I suspect very little. He lived in a brilliant whirl of fiery oratory in the pulpit of Boston's wealthiest church. But in the light of history the lives and deeds of his four direct male ancestors shine far more brightly. There seems to be no evidence in him ever of any interest in the needy or underprivileged. As I quoted before, he felt that there must always be such. He is not to be considered with the Missionary Mayhews and history has so relegated him.

I began with the Missionary Mayhews, and so with them I will close. Jonathan and Zachariah, sons of Experience. One, Jonathan, a Harvard graduate, a member of the Harvard Board of Overseers, and a brilliant, important, intellectual leader in a wealthy city pulpit. The other, Zachariah, slow, inarticulate and retiring, at heart a farmer, but weighed down by his conscience to carry on the work of his father, thus entered into history as one of the Missionary Mayhews.

\* \* \*

This paper was read to the Acanthus Club, October 1965. The middle section is largely based on Charles W. Ackers' *Called Unto Liberty*. Other sources: Banks' *History of Martha's Vineyard* and the personal notes of the author.



## A LETTER HOME FROM HERSCHEL ISLAND — 1891

by  
HARTSON H. BODFISH

### EDITORIAL NOTE:

Captain Bodfish was among the most successful of the latter day Vineyard whalemén.

He was born in West Tisbury in 1865, and was twenty-six years old when he wrote this letter to his mother from Herschel Island. When he was eighty years old he gave the letter to the Dukes County Historical Society with this brief note of explanation.

Dukes County Historical Society.

My son Howe<sup>B</sup> Bodfish, Mrs. Emma Whiting and Joe Allen think this should be in the care of the Society for future reference. It was written by me to my mother when I was wintering for the first time at Herschel Island in the Arctic. I was then 1st. officer of the stmr. Mary D. Hume with Captain Jas. A. Tilton of Chilmark Mass. Contrary to sentiments expressed by me in the latter part of the letter the voyage turned out to be very successful as we returned with thirty-eight bowheads, over fifty thousand pounds of whalebone. I am giving the Society this letter and if you don't want it please return it.

(Signed) Yours sincerely

H. H. Bodfish, Captain.

The voyage was indeed successful, as the whalebone sold in San Francisco for \$400,000, and Mr. Bodfish's lay as first officer was \$8,000.

Also, this was a pioneer voyage. It was the first time that a whaler had deliberately wintered in the Arctic to be ready when the ice went.

Captain Bodfish told the story of his life and whaling career to Joseph Chase Allen. The work was published by Harvard University Press in 1936 as *Chasing The Bowhead*.

The photographs that accompany the letter were taken by a

member of the crew of the steam whaler *Alexander*, not of the *Mary D. Hume*. Also, they were taken four or five years after the pioneer voyage of the latter vessel.

Gale Huntington

Herschel Island  
Feb. 8th 91.

Dear Mother:

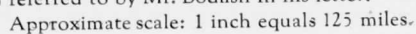
Sunday afternoon and trying to kill time. Routine for the day month after month, get up in the morning for breakfast, lay around till lunch, lay around till supper, lay around till bedtime, varied by playing cards and setting the men to hauling and sawing wood and once in a while going after a load of ice or meat.

There are also about sixty natives living close by us in snow houses. They are a very lazy and improvident set of people never looking out for tomorrow, Their motto — sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Some of them are very good looking, and they are generally a very healthy set. Many of them never saw a white man till we came among them. I often catch them gazing at me with a look of wonder, and I suppose thinking what a lucky man I am as I seem to have everything that goes to make up life with them.

The only amusements that I see among them are playing football and watching their medicine man going through his dances. I went to one of them to see the performance.

Imagine a snow house with a door that you have to get on your hands and knees to go through. With one hole near the top with a thin white skin drawn over it for a window. Two wooden troughs filled with oil and a piece of blubber suspended on a stick over them, with a little moss along the edge for a light — one on each side of the door — furnish the light and heat. There were about twenty-five sitting around the wall, the medicine man in the center with nothing on but a pair of pants and stockings.

For a headdress (he wore) a loon's bill sewed on a piece of skin. And he had a bunch of beads on each wrist and knee. Going through all the contortions of face and body that you can think of to the music of three drumhead instruments beaten by some of the audi-



ence and the chanting of all, and you have one of their methods of amusement and of driving away sickness, and etc. Their football game is like our own but not as rough. And one very good trait about them — they do not beg much of us — a trait that the natives to the westward of us are adepts at. They are very superstitious and will not work on a deer skin when they are sealing and vice versa.

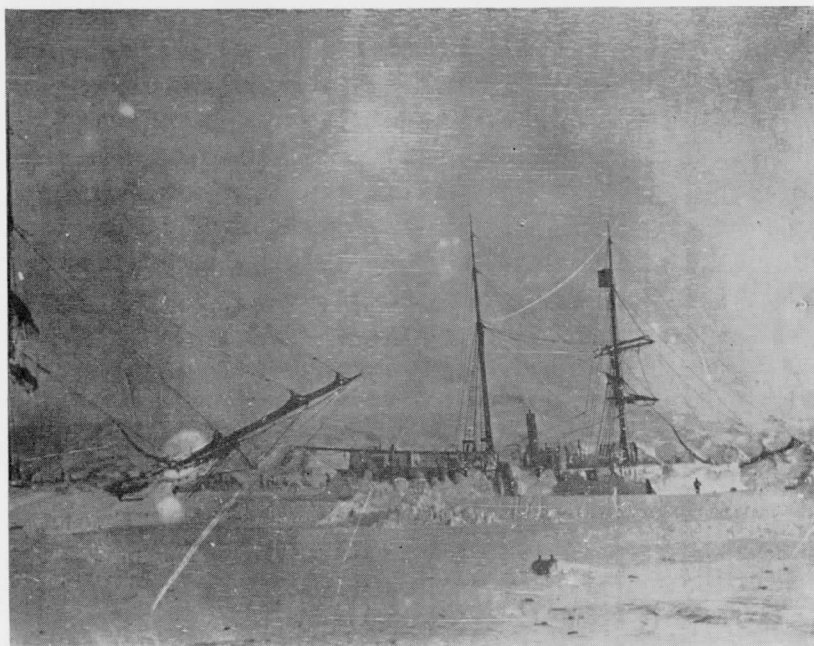
Well for a description of our winter quarters. We are in a little bay on the south east side of the Island. (It is) about an eighth of a mile across the mouth (of the bay, and we have) about three fathoms of water under us. The *Grampus* lays about a hundred feet from us and the schooner *Nicoline* about five hundred. We are protected on the outside by a sand spit. The ice is piled up on it to the height of about forty feet, showing us that when it starts in it can do about as it has a mind to. It is a very windy place blowing so hard at times that it is hard to stand against it.

The only part of the vessel that is visible is the masts and a small piece of the bow. The rest looks like a huge snowbank with four smokestacks sticking out of it. We run three fires and therefore consume a considerable wood.

We were frozen in on the sixteenth of September, about three weeks earlier than we expected. We did not get a whale and so have put in one year for nothing. We saw quite a number in the young ice but could not chase them. We had a little skating at first, but the ice was very soon covered with snow and stopped that fun. Captain Tilton had a pair of skates and the engineer made some for the rest. I did not have any of the fun as my foot was not well at the time, but was all right soon afterwards.

We had some hunting in the fall. But everything in the shape of game (with the exception of grouse which stay here all of the time) left about the twentieth of October. But we laid in a stock of ducks and geese for Thanksgiving and Christmas. We also had fresh pork and deer meat. We watched the old year out and the new in, and scared the natives half to death by the blowing of horns and shooting of guns. They thought we were murdering each other never having seen anything of the kind before.

I took the skin off my tongue in blowing a horn as it was thirty below zero, and everything that was damp was frozen the moment it was exposed. I have frozen my fingers, nose, ears, and cheeks quite a number of times since, but think nothing of that as only the skin peels off if you get the frost out as soon as you notice it. The coldest we have had it so far is forty below zero.



The steam whaler *Alexander* frozen in the Arctic ice. The *Alexander* was about the same tonnage and rig as the *Mary D. Hume*.

The sun left us on the 29th of November and came in sight again on the 12th of January, being away forty-four days. It did not get as dark as expected, there being no time, in what you would call the middle of the day, that there was not a couple of hours of good daylight. Another thing I was disappointed in was the Northern Lights, for I have seen them in better shape up here in the ordinary season. But we see lots of them, and see them every night unless it is cloudy. We also see the moon going around in a circle, and

more stars it seems to me than I ever saw in any other part of the world. I see lots of sights and often wish that some of my friends were with me to enjoy them also. But lots of things make me homesick and wish I was anywhere else but here.

April 12. It is a long time since I started this letter but as time is not of much account with us it will not matter. To continue my History: We had one sad episode and that was the death of Mr. Drayton, second mate of the *Grampus* on the fourth of November. He was a great friend of mine. I was with him when he died. He was very much afraid of death, poor fellow, but he had to go and now lies on Herschel Island.

We had two or three visits from the inland natives before winter set in. They brought deer meat and skins to trade. They are Christians and lots of them speak very good English. It takes them about seven days to come from the missionary settlement. There are two white men there, but they have never held any communication with us, and so we let them alone.

I have been out hunting for the last two months with a family of natives, making a visit back to the ship once in a while as my provisions gave out. We killed about twelve hundred grouse while out but did not see any larger game. I lived in a snow house and had some very peculiar episodes, and am getting to be quite a linguist also.

We were camped on a river and I happened to wake up one night and found my posterior in a puddle of water about a foot deep. If I hadn't had a lot of bushes under me would have found myself pretty wet. As it was my sleeping bag and pants were soaked through so I had to come to the ship to dry them. The water had come up through a crack in the floor and overflowed all around us.

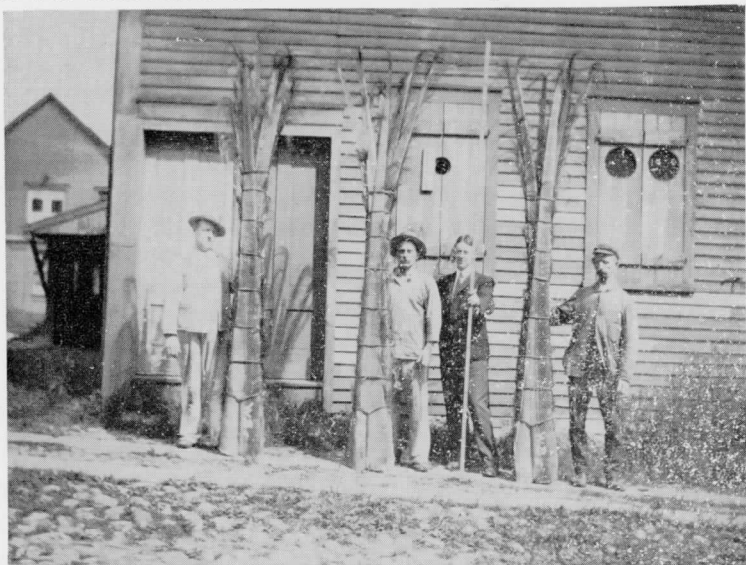
Captain Tilton has gone out now after some deer that a native killed. When he gets back I think I will go off again as it relieves the monotony of ship life. Also we get lots of fresh meat by the operation.

On my arrival back at the ship, I found that there had been an exciting time. One of our men and three of the *Grampus'* had stolen



a lot of stuff and run away. At first it was not the intention to go after them, but it was found that they had stolen so much that a search for them was made. They were found at a native's house about seven hours travel from the ship by dog team. They were all frozen very badly and it had taken them about two days to get where they were.

They had slept out of doors one night when the thermometer was thirty below zero, they were very glad to be caught. Since our man came back I have had to cut his big toes off so he has something to remind him of his wicked ways. Our steward, cook and cabin boy were all in the mess and have had a very sorry time of it since the plot was discovered. The steward is laid up now. . . .



Whalebone or baleen. It was for whalebone rather than oil that the *Mary D. Hume* wintered in the Arctic. Does anyone recognize any of the men in the photograph?

We also had a man that suffered from temporary insanity, and who wanted to kill himself. He thought freezing was an easy death and started off one morning but we found him the next day and brought him back to the ship with only his toes frozen. (Those on his left foot so badly that we had to cut off half his foot.) He hasn't

walked since and he also has a nice mark to remind him of his error.

I tell you Capt. Tilton and I missed our vocation when we started whaling. We ought to have been surgeons. We administer chloroform and off with them. So far everything has turned out all right and none of our patients have died on us. I think there will be a "corner" on toes when all get back to Frisco, as three of us lost eight, and I think two more will have to go. If father hadn't bought a livery stable I think I would have been a doctor. Well, will close for tonight as it is bed time.

June 23 rd. It is quite a while since last I wrote on this sheet but everything remains about the same on board of the ship, but how changed is the atmosphere, land and ice. It is summer with us now but not much like summer at home. The thermometer goes up to about sixty in the sun and averages just above the freezing point for this month, but we think that warm. The snow is nearly all gone off the land, only a little remaining in the gulches. Flowers are in blossom, the grass growing and birds singing just as in warmer countries. I have found five varieties of eggs, among them wild goose. The eggs taste fine I can tell you. We are just beginning to catch fish, having caught three today. We have had some before that we bought from the natives. They have all left us and gone to the mainland deer hunting. We are living on venison mostly now, and have about seventy-five stowed in our ice house for winter use. It is a fine place to keep things but it cost us lots of work and about one hundred pounds of powder. It is a hole ten feet square by twelve feet deep and roofed with logs and then sods on top of that about four feet thick. There is lots of work on one of these trips and no pay so far.

But we hope to see the pay this summer and fall. We have had a year's experience so far, and that don't amount to much. I have been out on the ice about fifteen miles from the ship and lived for thirty-three days looking for whales but did not see any. The second mate was with me. We lived in our boats with a canvas covering over them to protect us from wind and weather. We did our own cooking and had our provisions sent out to us once a week by a

dog team. Out there thirty-three days and only killed fifty-six seal. The seal we got for dog feed. The skins make clothes, and the blubber runs out fires. Our stoves were buckets with a hole cut on the side for draft, and a hoop iron rack to set on the edge to set our pots and pans on. Do you think you could cook on anything like that?

One thing at a time was all we could cook, but we used to have some fine feeds. There is one thing nearly everyone is blessed with in this country and that is a fine appetite. I haven't had but one of my periodical biliousnesses since I have been up here and that very slight. And my hair is beginning to grow on the top of my head. I think it is because I go bare-headed so much. I am getting to be a regular Indian, and wear my clothes their style, and of the same kind. I haven't had on a woolen shirt except to sleep in for nine months.



Native girls and children visit on board the *Alexander*. This photograph seems to bear out Mr. Bodfish's statement that they were "good looking and generally a very healthy set."

My dress now consists of four articles; a shirt with the hair next to my body, and a hood to go over by head if it feels cold, pants with the hair inside, stockings the same, and a pair of watertight boots that come to my knees. Oh. One other thing a piece of sinue for a belt. Only think of it, not a pocket in the whole outfit. Where would father put his hands if he had on such a dress? My tobacco, knife and matches I carry in a little bag that I tuck under my belt. I can talk the lingo pretty well, too, now, but I haven't got a "coonie" or wife yet. Haven't seen anything to fall in love with yet. Guess I will have to remain a bachelor, for if things don't turn around soon, I won't have enough to take care of myself, much more a wife. But I expect to start off to the Eastward pretty soon to find the great "El Dorado" that the natives tell so much about. They say we are not in the right place here, so will have to change our plan of action and leave this place, but have it for a headquarters, as we have our house ashore as it is the only safe place for a vessel, here, I think.

The *Grampus* will come home this year if she can get out, and I hope she will, for she and her crew are only a bone of contention and have caused us lots of trouble. The schooner *Nicoline* will also go out but I do not think she will come to S.F. We'll miss her very much as I have passed many pleasant hours on board of her. The mate of her is a fine man but he will get drunk if he gets the chance. I intend to stay in the country till I make a stake out of it, unless we get orders to come back. Then of course I will have to go "stake" or no "stake." But I don't think you will see me for another year anyway.

July 8th and not much change as yet but the ice is going very fast, as the weather continues very warm. We got up steam last night the first time in ten months and steamed about a quarter of a mile. It seemer very natural and everything worked to a charm. We plainly see that we have to melt out as no winds seem to affect the ice in the bay although there has been open water on the north side of the Island for two months now. Just as soon as we can get out we are going, and are bound to that undiscovered country that lies to the eastward of us. Only hope that it will turn out to

be the great "El Dorado" that we expect it to be. If that fails us why then we are left, and all we will have to depend on will be a season of fall whaling to the westward providing we can get there.

From the appearances now I think there will be little trouble for the other steamers to get to us this summer. The prevailing winds so far have been from the Northeast, and that clears the ice off the shore. I hope that they will get to us and long to see some new faces as I am pretty well tired of looking at the old ones, and will be very glad when a change arrives. We have a fine crowd and get along finely together, but our bone of contention is the steamer *Grampus* and they break us all up. I hope that they will leave us this summer as they all expect to do from the captain down. But enough of this.



Polar bear cubs playing.

You ought to see the change. Yesterday I took a tramp over the Island and I had one of our Indians start with me. We were after wild geese, but found that they are just as wild up here as they

are at home, and I arrived back with two duck eggs that I found in my ramble. Instead of walking on snow as I did a short time ago I was travelling on a bed of flowers. And young birds in great quantities were flying in all directions and chirping at me as much as to say what right had I to come and disturb them in their occupations. The flowers are very fragrant and make a man wish he was anywhere but where he is.

The Indian returned about four hours after I did and he brought home a fox. He came across a hole and found the mother and family but only got the mother as the young all ran into the hole and he couldn't get them out. We intended to go and look for them today, but as it is blowing very hard had to give it up, but will probably go and get them the first opportunity and have them for pets. They are very cunning when small and get attached to whoever finds them.

There is one thing about this country that is very fine, that is that we don't have much rain. And that is a great blessing for if there is anything a sailor despises it is rain. We are still catching fish and living on fish and venison. I only wish I had a chance to send you a little as I have an idea that you would think them very nice, just as a good home cooked meal would taste to me.

We celebrated the Fourth of July to the best of our ability, hoisted flags, fired a national salute and had a big feed, but could not go on a picnic as there is not much here but what consists of the male gender. And who ever heard of a picnic without girls? Our dinner consisted of roast goose a la stuffing, macaroni and cheese, stewed tomatoes, mashed potatoes, apple sauce, and for desert jelly cake covered with chocolate, and three kinds of pie — apple, mince and cheese. Then for supper fried venison and all the fixings. A big feed and had a good sleep afterwards and withal the day passed off very pleasantly.

Mr. Leavitts, the 2nd mate was the only one absent. He went off on a cruise with his boat and crew two weeks ago, and has not been heard of since, so do not know where he is. I am in hopes he has fallen in with whales and is piling up bone for us to take



aboard when we go his way. But I am inclined to think that he is jammed up somewhere by the ice.

I stopped writing to get dinner and since then have been ashore and got another duck egg, and have also had supper. The ice has changed a considerable during the day and it begins to look like getting out of here pretty soon. I only hope we do as I would like to have a change. And things are getting very monotonous. I am getting mad, and more mad with myself every day. I don't think that I am mentally constituted for such a trip as this. There is too much humbug and so fourth to suit me. But I am getting lots of experience and that is what I am sent here for. The only thing about it is that it is the kind of experience that I don't want. And that, as far as I can see will never do me any good unless it teaches me not to come on any more such trips.



Three more native girls on board the *Alexander*.

I will feel brighter tomorrow perhaps as it seems as if everything has gone the wrong end to for the last few days. Well mother,

I hope you will get this letter all right. I am going to put it on board the schooner *Nicoline* tomorrow. And if she gets out why think that you should get it all right. If the other ships are here I will have lots of letters to write, but if they do not you will have to pass this around and let all read it as it is only a descriptive letter anyway, and what I want to tell you in particular I will write on another sheet.

Of course everything depends on the wind and ice as to whether we hear from the outside world or not. If the ships do not come we can live easily on such provision that we have on hand. Then we will have to get out. All I want is to get back in time to go to the World's Fair with money enough to see me through it in good shape, and then come home and see you all again and trust to luck for the rest whatever that may be.

If we don't get reading matter from the other ships we will be pretty short next winter as we have read about all we brought with us. I thought that I had enough anyway but find that I am a long way short. But as Daggett says, it don't make much hodd's arter all. So good by and goodnight till next time.

From your loving son  
Hartie.

#### BOOK NOTE

In his diary for the year 1792, part of which we published in the November issue of the *Intelligencer*, William Butler noted the severe cold and hard storms of January of that year.

He was not exaggerating, as is born out by a description of that winter in David Ludlum's *Early American Winters 1604-1820*, which the Society has just added to its library. The book is published by the American Meteorological Society and is one of a series on the history of American weather.

It is a scholarly book with full documentation. Mr. Ludlum notes that in January of 1792 there was a frigid period with "a record duration of below-freezing temperatures." That certainly bears out our William's account.



Some Publications of the Dukes County Historical Society on  
Sale at Island Book Stores and in the Society's Library

*Whaling Wives* by Emma Mayhew Whiting and Henry Beetle Hough. A new edition. 294 p., illustrated. Cloth \$4.50.

*Bartholomew Gosnold Discoverer and Planter, New England — 1602, Virginia — 1607* by Warner F. Gookin and completed by Philip L. Barbour. 271 p. Cloth \$8.00.

*Capawack Alias Martha's Vineyard* by Warner F. Gookin. 58 p. Cloth \$1.00.

*Martha's Vineyard A Short History and Guide.* Eleanor Ransom Mayhew, Editor. New 1966 edition with added index. Maps and illustrations. 191 p. Paper \$2.50.

*The Wampanoag Indian Tribute Tribes of Martha's Vineyard* by Milton A. Travers. 78 p., illustrated. Paper \$2.00.

*The Heath Hen's Journey to Extinction* by Henry Beetle Hough. 31 p., illustrations. Paper 50¢.

*The Fishes of Martha's Vineyard* by Joseph B. Elvin. With 36 illustrations of fishes. Paper 50¢.

*The History of Martha's Vineyard* by Charles Edward Banks. A new edition. Indices, illustrations, three volumes. Cloth \$25.00.