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A ROOM FROM MARTHA'S VINEYARD
AT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

by
RODRIS ROTH

THE LOSS OF THE U.S.S. GALENA ON GAY HEAD

by
CAROL W. KIMBALL

EDGARTOWN—SOME OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

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A ROOM FROM MARTHA'S VINEYARD AT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

by

RODRIS ROTH

Editorial Note:

Rodris Roth is associate curator of cultural history at the Museum of History and Technology in the Smithsonian Institution's United States National Museum. She graduated from the University of Minnesota and received her M.A. in early American culture and decorative arts as a fellow in the Winterthur Program of the University of Delaware. She is the author of *Tea Drinking in 18th-century America: Its Etiquette and Equipage*, in the Smithsonian series, "Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology." Her study *Floor Coverings in 18th-century America* is scheduled for publication in the same series. She also wrote "The Colonial Revival and 'Centennial Furniture,'" which appeared in *The Art Quarterly*.

In 1805 Edmund Crowell, aged thirty and recently married, bought from his father-in-law "a certain Lott of Land lying in Home's Hole" on the island of Martha's Vineyard off the coast of Massachusetts. Today the village of Home's or Holmes' Hole is known as Vineyard Haven. And the parlor of the house that Edmund Crowell built on that "Lott of Land" is in the Smithsonian Institution. The Federal style woodwork and the overmantel painting were a gift to the museum from Mrs. Gustave A. Murman in memory of her husband.

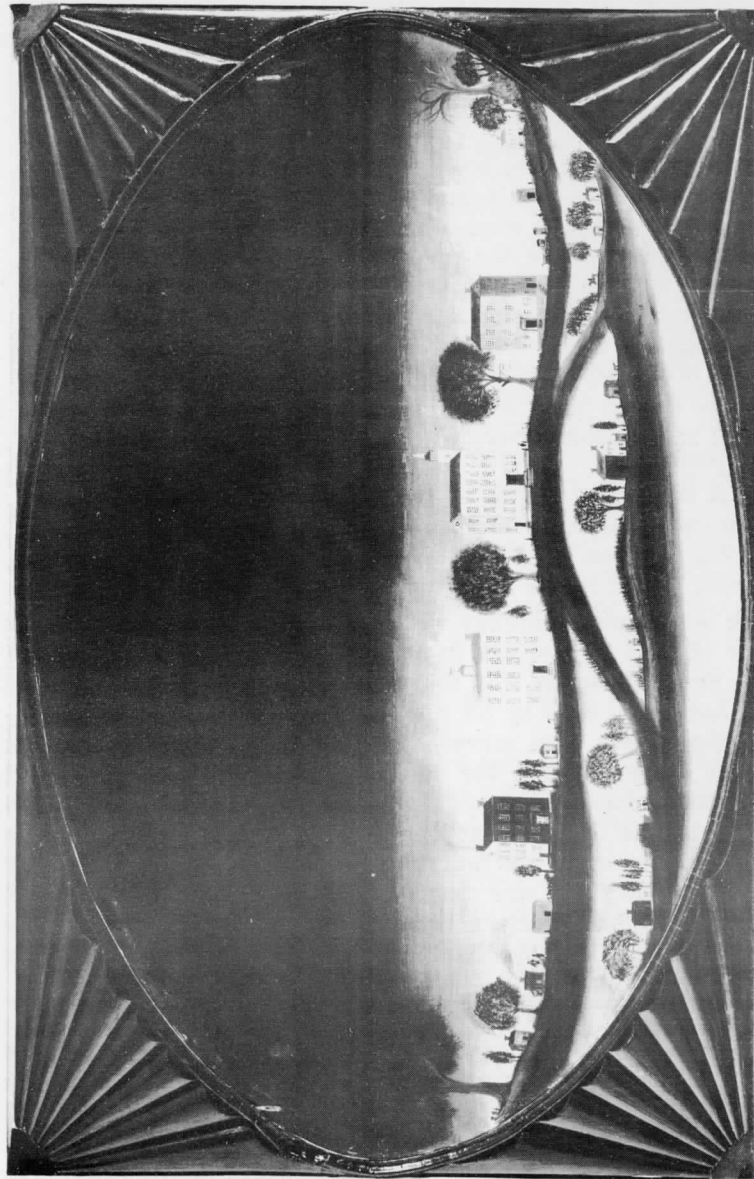
As a period room exhibit, the parlor will be equipped to resemble its appearance when new. In order to do this it was necessary to determine when the house was built, learn about the people who had lived there and locate inventories to serve as a furnishing guide, besides acquiring suitable pieces and then installing them. Consequently, a written report was prepared. It was based on information already available, on data obtained during a visit to the Island in the summer of 1966 when the land and probate records in the Dukes County Courthouse were investigated and materials in the museum and library of the Dukes County Historical Society were examined, and on personal interviews and correspondence with local residents and family descendants. (1) A modification and rearrangement of that report forms this account of the room, the furnishings appropriate to it, the house from which it came, the surrounding village scene, and the people associated with it.

The outstanding feature of the room is the overmantel painting. It is a townscape, as yet unidentified. Small buildings and minia-



4

The Crowell House on Main street, Vineyard Haven, as it looked during the winter of 1964-1965, and from which came "The Room from Martha's Vineyard at the Smithsonian Institution." The room was the gift of Mrs. Mildred Murman in memory of her husband, Gustave A. Murman. The date over the door should read 1808. The photograph was taken by Mr. George Watson for the Smithsonian Institution.



5

The overmantel oil painting on wood. Men, women and children as well as animals may be seen here and there along the sandy-brown paths that meander over grassy knolls and past clusters of white or green or rust color buildings set among leafy trees beneath a clear blue sky. Smithsonian Institution photograph (80730-B)

ture figures dot the grassy, tree-studded scene that is dominated by a quartet of oversize three-story structures. In 1921 Mrs. Howes Norris discussed the various houses of Vineyard Haven in a booklet entitled *Sketches of Old Homes in Our Village*. (2) Mrs. Norris, an Island resident and historian, had this to say about the painting:

In the parlor of the house, the wainscoting and cornice is quite elaborate and it is said the work was done with a jack knife, but the most interesting feature of the room is a painting done on the wood panel over the mantelpiece. It was the work of Miss Jane Norton when the house was just finished; Miss Norton taught school in the village but belonged in North Tisbury. The picture represents a village street with a field in the foreground; a row of houses three stories high, with a chimney at each end, face us, and men in knee breeches and women in old style dress appear.

A coach has dashed up to the Inn, which we know by the sign hanging from a nearby tree; and carts of hay and a dog are seen. The color is extremely dark and it is not a work of art but is most curious and interesting.

Such overmantel paintings were often the work of traveling as well as of local artists. (3) In fact, when the parlor was donated to the Smithsonian, it was suggested that the overmantel panel might have been done by an itinerant painter and that the woodwork might have been carved at sea aboard a whaling ship. It also was suggested that the painting might be signed. A short row of small dark marks suggestive of carefully stamped or lettered alphabets does appear on the lower right portion of the panel. Unfortunately, the marks seem no more decipherable after than before the panel was cleaned. With further study, however, it may be possible to determine what the marks are and whether the picture was done by Miss Norton, some other local artist or an itinerant painter.

The townscape, done in oil on a pine panel, is framed in an oval formed by the surrounding fan-shaped wood sections that fill each of the four corners of the rectangular overmantel. The painting is still in its original frame so to speak, since the panel and encompassing woodwork were not separated when the room was dismantled but were taken down and reinstalled in one piece. The oval theme is repeated in a medallion centered on the mantel board.

A border of hyphens and reeds is seen directly beneath the shaped mantel shelf. The fireplace opening is trimmed across the top with a diamond fret border and flanked at the sides by a pair of pilasters faced with bands of interlaced circles. A continuous border of bound reeds runs around the room at the upper edge of the paneled dado. The plaster walls above are crowned by a cornice ornamented with flattened modillions and set on a wide diamond fret border that is a magnification of the trimming over the fireplace opening. The woodwork is probably of local or nearby mainland origin. It would appear to be the product of a professional craftsman, skilled in carving interior trim, rather than the result of spare-time whittling on board ship by a carpenter-sailor.

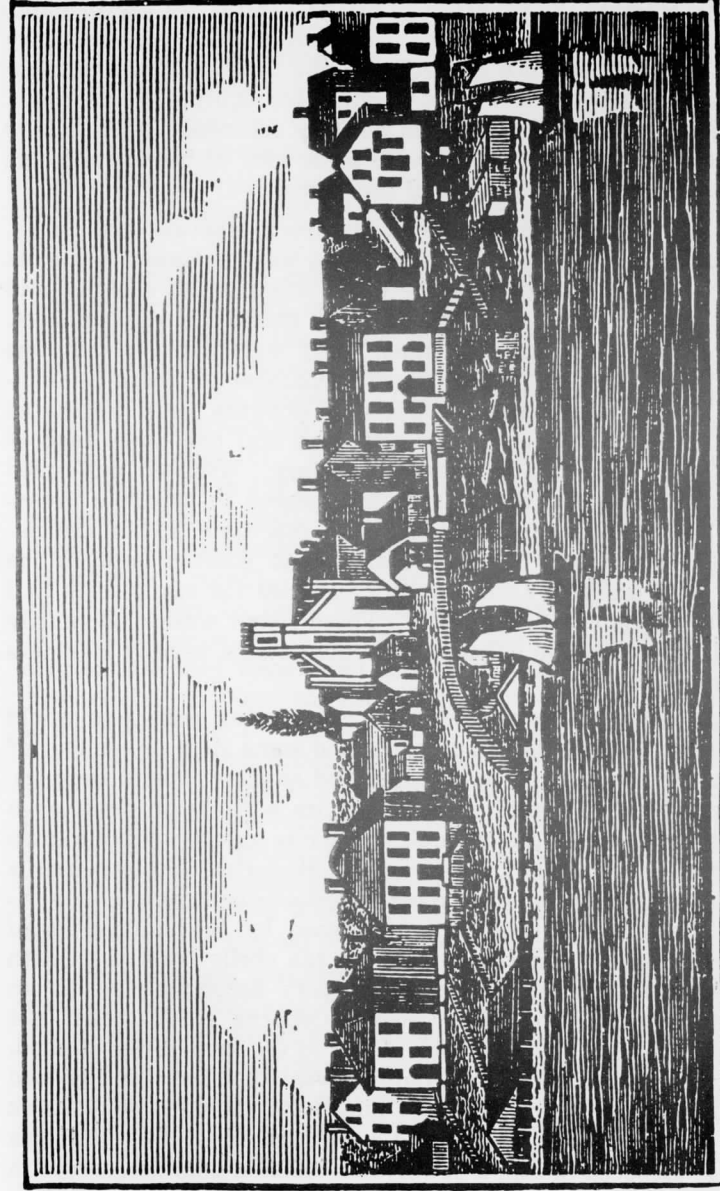
The woodwork has been covered with layers of white paint. Originally it was a rich, blue-green color. This became apparent when the strips of modern cove molding attached with wire nails to the dado at each corner of the room were removed. Preserved underneath were the early layers of paint applied directly to the wood. Tests made elsewhere on the woodwork revealed the same blue-green paint with the exception of the fan-shaped sections in the overmantel. They were a mahogany brown color which emphasizes their position as a frame for the picture panel. This treatment is an unusual and handsome one for an overmantel. Samples of the original colors will be preserved in place and the woodwork repainted to match them. The plaster walls are believed to have been left uncovered until fairly recently since no trace of early wallpaper was found.

The room from Martha's Vineyard now in the Smithsonian Institution was located in the northeast corner of the Crowell house on the ground floor, to the right of the front door. It measures approximately fourteen by fourteen feet and has three windows and two doors. As an exhibit installation, one door, that opening off the entrance hall, will be replaced with a glassed-in viewing alcove so that the museum visitor may in effect, enter and stand just inside the parlor. The fireplace and second door are to the left. One window is centered on the adjoining wall facing the viewer, while on the wall to the right are the two front windows looking east toward the harbor.

Such a neatly finished parlor suggests that Edmund Crowell and his wife Deliverance were aware and approved of current fashions. The choice of a painting as the overmantel decoration further indicates a nicety of taste and a concern for the visual as-



The parlor from the Crowell house now at the Smithsonian Institution. The woodwork has been freshly painted to match the original rich blue-green color, and the fan-shaped sections framing the overmantel are once again painted a deep mahogany-brown. Smithsonian Institution photograph (60730-C)



"Northern View at Holmes' Hole, East Tisbury," This wood engraving is from Barber's *Historical Collections* which was published in 1839.

pect of their surroundings. Restraint, however, would probably have characterized the furnishings of the room if we are to judge from contemporary inventories. And judge from contemporary inventories we must since no listing of the Crowells' own furnishings has been located to use as a guide for equipping the room. Accordingly, ten inventories from Tisbury recorded between 1800 and 1820 have been used to provide some idea of the furnishings appropriate to both the place and the period. (4)

Beds and bedding, candlesticks, andirons, shovels and tongs, chairs, tables, desks, and looking glasses were common to almost all inventories in addition to the usual utensils for cooking and eating. Pictures were uncommon, being mentioned exactly once. Equally rare were window curtains. They were listed in only one inventory and then in connection with chamber or bedroom furnishings. Clocks and cases or chests of drawers were almost as scarce. An eight day clock and one high and one large case of drawers were listed in the same inventory. Whereas one wood clock and one case of drawers each appeared in separate inventories. The Island's contribution to the maritime life of the nation, and the whaling industry that was to flourish later in the century, are recalled by the inventory entries for spy glasses and "1 Hadleys Quadrant 1 Small 1." These items were customarily listed with the personal belongings of the owners, usually mariners or master mariners.

Though Edmund Crowell was not a seafaring man, one would like to imagine that his parlor contained some item or symbol of the voyages to distant ports that involved so many Island families. For example, an Oriental lacquer box on a table or desk, or a porcelain ornament on the mantel. Or to cite objects with a known Island association, the Dukes County Historical Society has a coffee and tea set of Oriental export porcelain displaying an American eagle motif said to have been owned by William Jernegan (1728-1817) and a box encrusted with sea shells from the South Pacific that was, according to the history accompanying it, an engagement present for Eliza Crocker Osborne (1806-1836). Yet objects of this kind do not appear in any of the inventories studied. Nevertheless, contemporary accounts reveal that the comings and goings of vessels, many of which may have included such items in their cargoes, were watched and kept track of all over Martha's Vineyard. Rebecca Smith, a young and sociable Islander, wrote in her diary on a Monday evening in October, 1813:

Harrison has just returned from Holmes's Hole informs us that one of the stupendous ships which we saw on Sunday last is now in Holmes's Hole harbour she is a Spanish ship loaded with molasses — The other was one of King George's seventy fours — (5)

The view from the Crowells' parlor windows of Holme's Hole harbor and its ships may serve in lieu of objects as a constant reminder of the Vineyard's maritime character. In the museum, the parlor windows will be backed with sketches suggesting this view.

As a period room exhibit, the parlor will be furnished as it undoubtedly was when new, that is, with pieces of New England origin dating from the early years of the nineteenth century. Between the front windows or next to the one on the north wall of the room there might be "One breakfast table \$1.50." Or in place of a table perhaps "One desk \$14." These items were listed in the inventory of "David Smith late of Tisbury Mariner." Smith was born in 1781, six years after Crowell, married in 1806, two years after Crowell, and died in 1820. The Smith inventory is, therefore, of particular importance in determining what type of furnishings Crowell, his contemporary, might have had. Although no room by room headings are given in the Smith inventory, the sequence and juxtaposition of the furniture items strongly suggest that they were listed as found grouped in separate rooms. "Six chairs \$9./One around chair .75" were listed after the above cited desk. In contrast were the next three entries which also were those immediately preceding the table mentioned above, namely: "Six chairs \$3./One stand .40/One rocking chair .50." The difference in the valuation of each set of chairs, for undoubtedly they were sets, points to their being used in different rooms, as, in fact, does their separation in the inventory. For seating in the Crowells' parlor such a set of chairs could be placed against the dado as was the custom of the day.

In most houses, according to the inventories studied, windows were not curtained and floors were not carpeted. This does not necessarily imply a drab or colorless existence. The blue-green woodwork in the Crowells' parlor as well as the scene depicted in the overmantel painting suggest otherwise. And there are listings in four of the ten inventories dated between 1800 and 1820 for "green chairs" in sets or groups of three, six (in two instances) and twelve. It is highly probable that these were windsors. one of the

most utilitarian and ubiquitous chair forms in this country, and one commonly painted, often a dark greenish color. Furthermore, the sets of chairs cited in the Smith inventory of 1820 could have been a type of the so-called fancy painted furniture. The Dukes County Historical Society has a pair of such chairs, painted a brownish color with bamboo turnings, spindle backs and rush seats, believed to date about 1808, from the Squire Cooke house. Also at the Historical Society but later in date is a painted Boston-type rocker made about 1825 by Herman Arey, an Island cabinetmaker.

Certainly painted fancy furniture was popular at the time the Crowells were furnishing their house. Moreover, it was available in a wide range of prices. The moderate valuations given to most of the chairs, and the moderate quantity of furniture items listed in the inventories between 1800 and 1820 suggests that not opulent but modest furnishings were to be found in many of the Island houses. This may have been due to esthetic preference or economic necessity or a combination of the two. The inventories further indicate that while cash on hand might be considerable, that invested in furnishings was moderate.

Whether or not the Crowells' room as a museum exhibit is to be equipped with a desk or breakfast table as were the rooms in the Smiths' house, it could have "One pair bras[s] and Irons \$4.50/One large bible \$3./One Small ditto .50/Sundry books .50." These, incidentally, are the entries immediately following the breakfast table. On occasion the master of the house might leave "One umbrella 50¢" by the door of the parlor and the mistress "One muff \$2." on a chair, suggestive of a stroll to the harbor and back on a cold and rain-threatened day. These objects were listed among the personal belongings in the Smith inventory of 1820. In the same inventory the lighting devices were listed with the kitchen items, as "Two candle sticks one Lamp and trimmer .20," and with the tableware, as "Two lamps brass .50." No doubt they were used in the various rooms as needed, and so either candlesticks or lamps might be placed in the Crowell parlor.

Other items, too, would be brought to the parlor when needed. For example, a tray with "one Dozen cups and saucers \$1." and "One Tea Pot .25" and "Six . . . tea spoons \$4.50/Six common do. \$2./One sugar tongs .12." Or on another occasion perhaps "one half dozen tumblers 60¢" or "four wine [glasses] 20¢ one tray . . . 50¢." The drinking of alcoholic beverages, however, was not the usual social practice according to the Rev. Dr. James Freeman.

Of such customs, observed during his sojourn on Martha's Vineyard in 1807, Dr. Freeman wrote:

Beer and cider are scarcely known: the common drink is water, or tea or coffee, which constitutes a part of the dinner in seven eighths of the families on the island. Molasses and water, especially when a little ginger is put into it, is a beverage which is highly valued: spirits and water are given as a treat: wine is seldom seen. The entertainment, to which company is invited, is tea in the afternoon, when bread and butter, pies, cakes, and in particular gingerbread, are presented. (6)

Such an afternoon entertainment might well have taken place in the newly finished room with the freshly painted blue-green woodwork and recently completed overmantel painting that was once the parlor of Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Crowell of "Home's Hole."

The house from which the room at the Smithsonian Institution came was once a typical New England story and a half dwelling with steeply pitched roof and clapboard or shingle-covered walls. Placed back from the street on a slight rise of ground, the house, with its roof now punctured by a second story addition, is approached by a flight of cement steps. The front entrance is placed slightly off center, flanked on the left by a single window and on the right by two of the parlor windows. The ends or roofpeak sides of the house have a pair of windows on the second story as well as on the ground floor. Additions to the house project from each side, the kitchen ell on the south and a bed-sitting room on the north. Although it is a house form still built today, the central chimney, story and a half house was especially popular in the newly formed United States when it "was an answer to the post-war need for short order housing." (7)

The house was probably built between 1805 and 1810. Such a dating seems logical in terms of what is known about both the structure and its owners. The Crowells were newly wedded and, presumably, desirous of setting up housekeeping on their own, had purchased a lot of land. Mrs. Howes Norris in her *Sketches of Old Homes in Our Village*, says that "the old Owen homestead," as she called the Crowell house, was

built in 1805 by Edmund Crowell, who was a tailor by trade. He married Deliverance — or Dilly as she was called

— daughter of Lieut. Timothy Chase of the Revolutionary War.

Mr. Crowell had a shop in the corner of his yard which is now an ell to the house.

This ell may be the present kitchen wing since it is at least as old as the house in the opinion of Mr. George H. Watson, special contractor for the Smithsonian Institution who dismantled and reinstalled the parlor. The house is still on the original lot in the northern portion of the village — the frontage is on Main Street — and it still faces west toward the harbor.

Today the view of the harbor from the Crowell house is hidden by a mid-nineteenth-century dwelling directly across Main Street from it. But a description of the harbor that Edmund Crowell and his wife Dilly would have known, and could have seen from their parlor windows, is given by the Rev. Dr. James Freeman in his *A Description of Duke's County. Aug. 13th, 1807*. Geography as well as customs and manners were observed by this minister and resident of Boston during his visit to the Island for the purpose of recommending sites for placing huts and other accommodations for shipwrecked mariners. Of the harbor or "hole" he wrote:

Beginning north, proceeding east, and following the coast round the island, we first enter the harbour of Holmes's Hole, formed by the West and East Chops; the first of which is two miles and a half, and the second, two miles from the head of the harbour. These points are two miles and a half apart. There are flats, which make off a little way from each side; but no shoals to obstruct the entrance. The depth of water is from eight fathoms to three and a half, rising gradually; the bottom excellent holding ground, bluish clay. Vessels can anchor at any distance from the shore in the harbour, which is secure against all winds, except those which blow from N.N.E. to E.N.E. From twenty to seventy sail of vessels, bound to Boston bay or to the eastward, and which have put in here, are frequently seen at the same time in the harbour, waiting for a fair wind. About a thousand or twelve hundred sail anchor in it in the course of a year. . . . The beaches are a deep sand, and sand mixed with gravel and small stones.

Dr. Freeman did not limit his observations to the harbor. He also looked at the town of which he gives us this description.

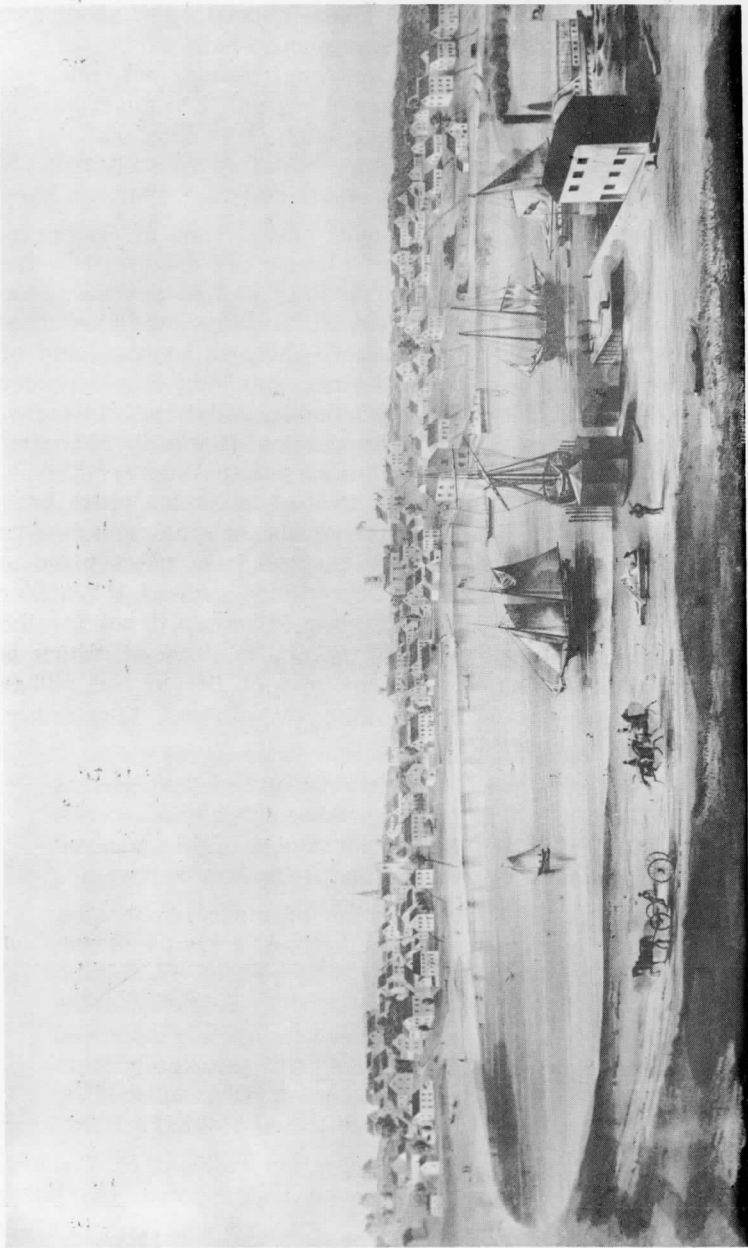
At Holmes's Hole there is a village consisting of about seventy dwelling houses, a meeting-house built partly for the Baptists and partly for the Congregationalists, and two schoolhouses. . . . The village is beginning to flourish; and several new buildings have lately been erected. A house lot of a quarter of an acre sells for two hundred dollars: the rent of a house is sixty dollars a year.

Some of the houses that were built at the time of Dr. Freeman's visit may still be standing, for there are dwellings in the village contemporary with, as well as later and earlier than, the Crowell house. But as a whole, Vineyard Haven shows little trace of having been in existence since the eighteenth century, and of having borne, when it was Holmes' Hole, the oldest English place name on the Island. The difference between yesterday and today, however, is much more than a name change. It was in 1871 that the name Holmes' Hole was officially changed to Vineyard Haven. Some of the visible transformation took place twelve years later when — in 1883 — a large portion of the original village was destroyed by fire. Since then other changes have taken place to further alter the form and flavor of the village. Indeed, the earlier appearance of the village would be quite lost were it not for the work of a few mid-nineteenth-century artists some of which is reproduced on these pages. And the way of life of the village has changed even more greatly than its physical appearance. Again to quote Dr. Freeman.

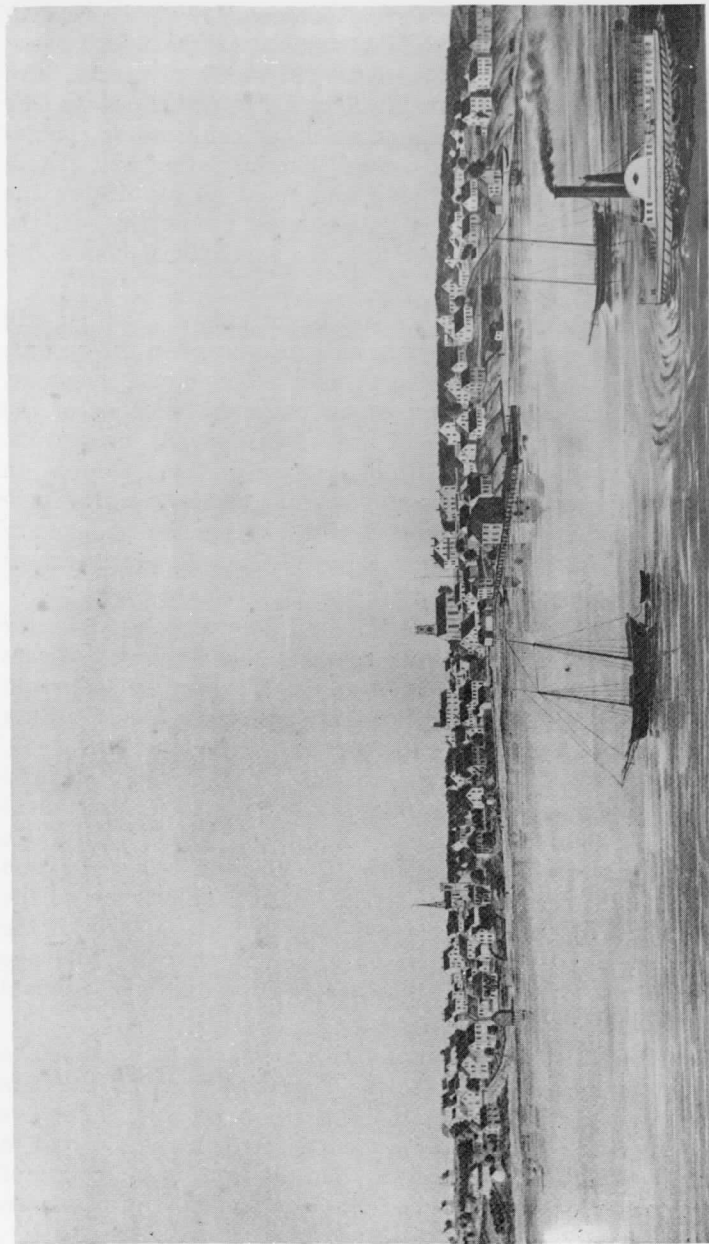
Next in importance to the manufacture of wool is that of salt. There are in Edgartown three sets of salt works, . . . and in Tisbury, five sets, containing eight thousand nine hundred feet. This manufacture is increasing; . . .

The other manufactures are not of much importance. There are tanners, sadlers, and hatters, a few; and mechanicks, as many as necessary. The rest of the inhabitants are either seamen or farmers. In Edgartown the young and middle aged men are seamen, and are employed in fishing and foreign voyages; and sail principally from other ports. The elderly men are employed in cultivating the land. The same thing may be said of Holmes's Hole.

Edmund Crowell was a third generation resident of Tisbury. Both his father and grandfather were husbandmen, the latter having settled in the town about 1735. Edmund was born in 1775.



"Front View of the Village of Holmes' Hole, Martha's Vineyard, Mass."
This print of what is now Vineyard Haven Harbor is dated 1853.



Here is another view of Holmes' Hole harbor dated 1856.

married to Deliverance Chase on November 4, 1804, a property owner in 1805, and with his wife a member of the first "class" organized by the Methodist Church in 1816-1817. He may have been a tailor as Mrs. Norris stated in *Sketches of Old Homes in Our Village*. Nothing has been found that either confirms or contradicts this. Apparently Edmund Crowell like his father and grandfather before him earned his living and spent all his life on the Island. He did not, as far as is known, ever follow the sea, the specialty of Vineyard men, nor piloting, the particular sub-specialty of Holmes' Hole.

The date of Edmund Crowell's death is not known. Neither will nor inventory, not even an intestate notice, appears in the records of the Registry of Probate. There need be no doubt, however, that while living he was an active and respected member of the community. The *Records of the Town of Tisbury* (8) prove this. The name of Edmund Crowell first appears in these records on April 18, 1808, "at a meeting Legally warned and held as the Law directs for the drawing of Grand & petit Jurors for the county of Dukes County." At this meeting Edmund Crowell was chosen as one of the "Pettit Jurors."

In 1816 the records read, "Vote Edmund Clowell [sic.] Collector sworn." This entry is for the town meeting held to choose officers for various duties including that of raising "a Sum of Money to Support the poor and the other Insidental Charges & also a Sum for public Schools for the Currant Year." The following year, 1817, at the town meeting in April, those present "Voted Edmund Crowell [and] John Holmes school Committee." For the May meeting there is the entry, "Edmund Crowell . . . Jurors on Trials." Crowell's name was among those "Drawn out of the Box" in 1820 for grand jurors and in 1821 for jurors on trials. In 1826 he was one of the field drivers. [This was an important post. It was the duty of the field drivers to impound stray animals, and in that day and age there were plenty of such. The owner could retrieve his animal on payment of a fee. Ed.]

In 1827 Crowell was voted one of two members to be added to the "Health Committee" of the town. The same year, he also was among those voted "Titheingman," a position he held again five years later in 1832. The last entry found for Edmund Crowell in the *Records of the Town of Tisbury*, like the first, is indicative of the respect accorded him by his fellow townsmen. At the town meeting of April 22, 1835,

The Selectmen and Town Clerk being present drew from the Juror Box the name of Edmond [sic.] Crowell to serve at said court as Traverse Juror.

From this evidence it seems clear that Crowell was a judicial and responsible man, a man of common sense and of standing in the community.

Deliverance Chase was twenty years old when she married Edmund Crowell. The daughter of Timothy Chase, she was born January 21, 1784, and died September 25, 1879. Her father was a great grandson of Isaac who had come to Tisbury in 1674 and whose "large landed estate, comprising nearly the whole of the present village of Vineyard Haven, became an inheritance for his children." (9) It was a small portion of this land, owned for four generations by Chases, that Edmund Crowell purchased from his father-in-law. Timothy Chase was a miller by trade, a fact noted in the deed of land he gave his son-in-law. Chase owned considerable real estate in Tisbury as well as "half of the windmill," all of which was valued at \$4,588.00 after his death in 1818. His personal estate was considerable, too. According to the inventory taken in 1818 it totaled \$2,218.72. This included "cash in silver 638 dollars/Gold 126.50/Money in Bills 55." Among the bequests to his children that Timothy Chase recorded in his will, probated in 1818, was that of one hundred dollars to his daughter Deliverance.

It was from Timothy Chase, his father-in-law, that Edmund Crowell bought the land on which to build his house. The deed is recorded in the Dukes County Land Records for 1805 and reads, in part, as follows.

Know all men by these present that I Timothy Chase of Tisbury in the County of Dukes County and Commonwealth of Massachusetts Miller, In Consideration of the sum of One hundred dollars to me paid by Edmund Crowel[l] of the aforesd. Town County & Commonwealth . . . the Receipt where of I do hereby Acknowledge, Do give grant, sell, convey & confirm to him . . . a certain Lott of Land lying in Home's Hole in Tisbury . . . to be four & one half rods wide in all its parts containing by estimation Fifty four rods be the same more or less . . . with all the privileges & Appertenances to the same. . . .

The "foregoing instrument" was, in addition, further acknowledged

by Timothy Chase on February 8, 1808, "to be his free Act & deed." This was officially entered in the land records with the original deed that had been "Signed, Sealed & delivered" on March 2, 1805.

Mr. and Mrs. Emery Y. Morse are the present owners of the house, having purchased it in 1965 from Mrs. Gustave A. Murman. Mrs. Murman, who gave the room from Martha's Vineyard to the Smithsonian in memory of her husband, purchased the house in 1960 from Miss Marley Putnam. Miss Putnam, in turn, had purchased the house in 1937 from Mrs. Gamsby. Here the official records end.

But the prior order of ownership is not lost. In fact, the house and property remained in one family for more than one hundred and thirty years. With the help of family descendants, Island residents and students of local history, it has been possible to reconstruct the devolution through the female line, presumably by inheritance. This may explain the puzzling lack of any record of the property's ownership between 1805 and 1937 in the Registry of Deeds for Dukes County. There is a map of Holme's Hole for 1858 which establishes the fact that Captain Lot Luce occupied the house in the middle of the nineteenth century. Upon learning that the Captain's wife was Adelia Crowell, daughter of Edmund and Deliverance, it is clear that the house was still lived in by the family. No wills or inventories, however, were found for any of the family in the Registry of Probate to prove inheritance. Apparently, each of the property owners died intestate. It seems safe to assume, therefore, in view of the strong local tradition and lack of evidence to the contrary, that the property was handed down from mother to daughter. The family relationship showing this devolution through four generations is summarized below.

I. Edmund Crowell, b. 7 July 1775 and still living 1835; m. Deliverance Chase 4 November 1804 who was b. 21 January 1784 and d. 25 September 1879. Children included Adelia Crowell.

II. Lot Luce, b. 18 October 1805 and d. 1883; m. Adelia Crowell 5 June 1836 who was b. 31 July 1818 and d. July 1896. Children included Jane Grafton Luce.

III. Leander Clark Owen, b. 15 October 1833 and d. 25 March 1911; m. Jane Grafton Luce 25 April 1859 who was b. 26 August 1840 and d. 13 June 1913. Children included Jennie Owen.

IV. —?—Gamsby; m. Jennie Owen, date unknown, who was born 1860's (?) and still living in 1937.

When the property left the family ownership in 1937 a survey of the lot was made and filed with the land records at the Dukes County Courthouse in Edgartown. The size of the lot sold by Mrs. Gamsby in 1937 coincides with the size of the lot purchased in 1805 by Edmund Crowell. The room itself, however, has produced the final confirming piece of information. An inscription was recently discovered on the oval medallion centered on the mantel board. Hidden for years under later coats of paint, it is a monogram of intertwined script initials E and D flanking C above the date 1808. In this distinctive manner, the owners took possession of their new house and, with pride, placed their initials and the date upon the mantel. The parlor from the house Edmund and Deliverance Crowell built upon that "Lott of Land lying in Home's Hole," with its accompanying history summarized in this article, will provide a view of everyday life in the American past when it is exhibited as the room from Martha's Vineyard at the Smithsonian Institution.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

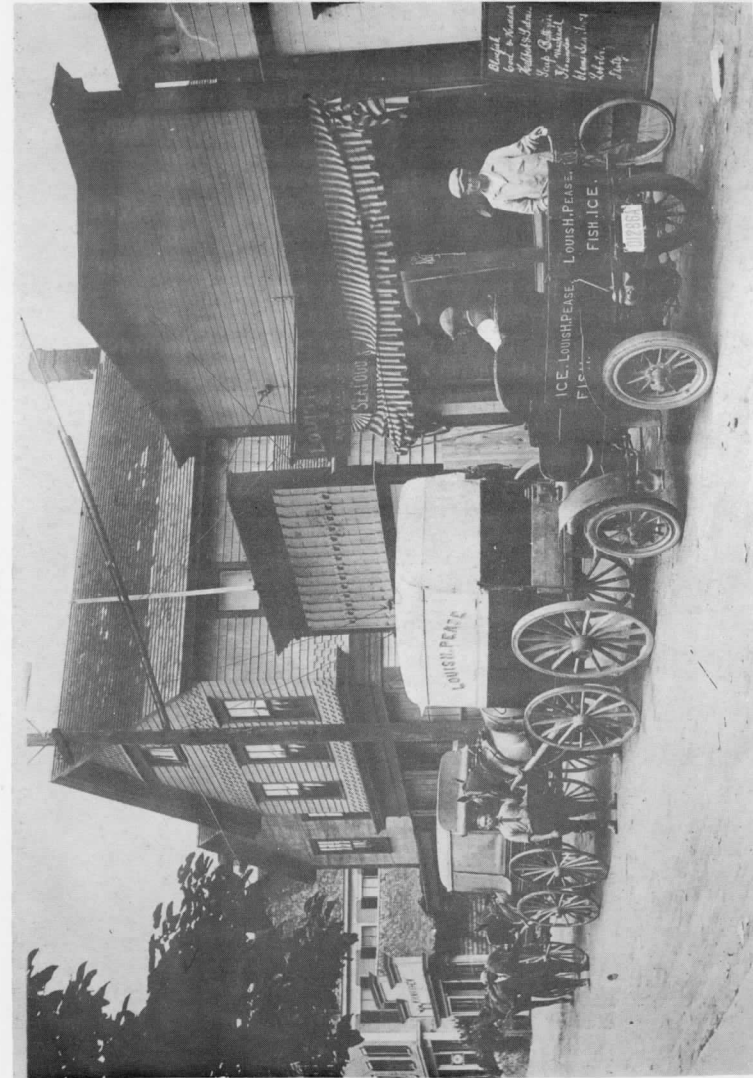
- (1) Assistance was generously given by many people, including Mrs. Gustave A. Murman, donor of the room; Mrs. Emery Y. Morse, present owner of the house, who brought Mr. Henry Ottiwell's work to my attention; Mr. Paul Barry Owen, a descendant of Edmund Crowell; Mr. Henry Beetle Hough, editor of the *Vineyard Gazette* (Edgartown, Mass.), in which it was reported on August 13, 1965, about the room, "Now It Belongs to the Nation"; Mr. William M. Honey; and Miss Dorothy Scoville, Curator, and Mr. E. G. Huntington, Librarian, Dukes County Historical Society.
- (2) Norris, Mrs. Howes. *Sketches of Old Homes in Our Village*, Sea Coast Defence Chapter, DAR, Vineyard Haven, Mass., 1921.
- (3) Little, Nina Fletcher. *American Decorative Wall Painting, 1700-1850*, Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, Mass., 1952.
- (4) Dukes County Probate Records. Inventories, mss, Registry of Probate, Courthouse, Edgartown, Mass. (The ten inventories recorded for Tisbury residents between 1800 and 1820 are here listed in alphabetical order.)
Butler, Thomas. Carpenter. March 14, 1816. Total estate \$913.00.
Chase, Timothy. Miller (and father-in-law of Edmund Crowell). July 2, 1818. Total estate \$6,806.72.
Claghorn, Joseph. Housewright and school teacher. February 3, 1806. Total estate \$4,027.19.
Clifford, Thankful. Widow of Vernal Clifford. April 12, 1808. Total estate \$129.50.
Clifford, Vernal. Mariner and farmer. September 8, 1807. Total estate \$691.75.

Luce, Enoch. Yoeman and laborer. May 11, 1808. Total estate \$1,011.35.
Luce, William. Yoeman and husbandman. July 20, 1818. Total estate \$686.10.

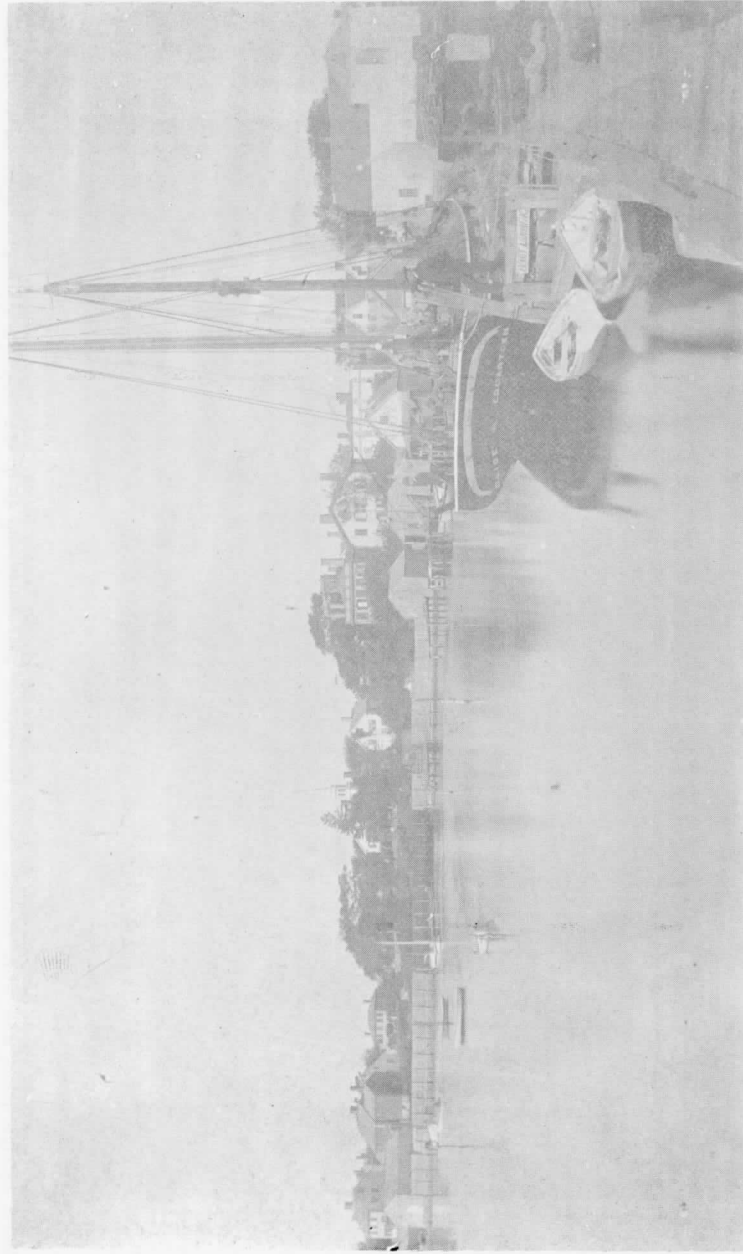
Merry, Joseph. Occupation unknown. April 1, 1802. Total estate \$1,367.68.
Smith, Capt. David. Master mariner. November 16, 1818. Total estate \$3,977.25.

Smith, David. Mariner. May 20, 1820. Total estate \$1,388.46.

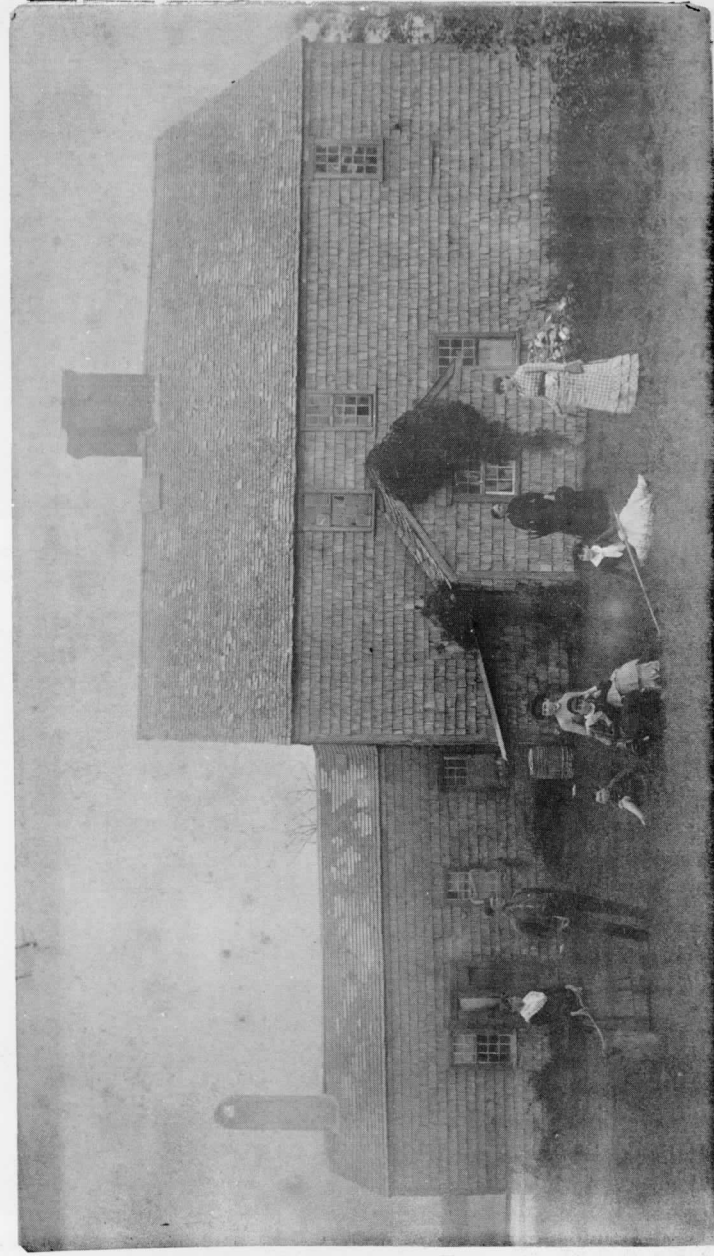
- (5) Smith, Rebecca. "Diurnal Records for the Year 1813" (continued), *The Dukes County Intelligencer*, Edgartown, Mass., vol. II, no. 4 (May, 1961).
- (6) [Freeman, James.] "A Description of Duke's County. Aug. 13th, 1807," *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, Boston, Mass., 2nd series, vol. III (1815, reprinted 1846).
- (7) Cummings, Abbot Lowell. *Architecture in Early New England*, Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, Mass., 1958.
- (8) *Records of the Town of Tisbury, Massachusetts. Beginning June 29, 1669, and Ending May 16, 1864*, arranged and copied by William S. Swift and Jennie W. Cleveland; Wright and Potter Printing Co., Boston, Mass., 1903.
- (9) Banks, Charles Edward. *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, 3 vols; G. H. Dean, Boston, Mass., 1911-1925. The source for this and most other genealogical citations is vol. III, "Genealogies."



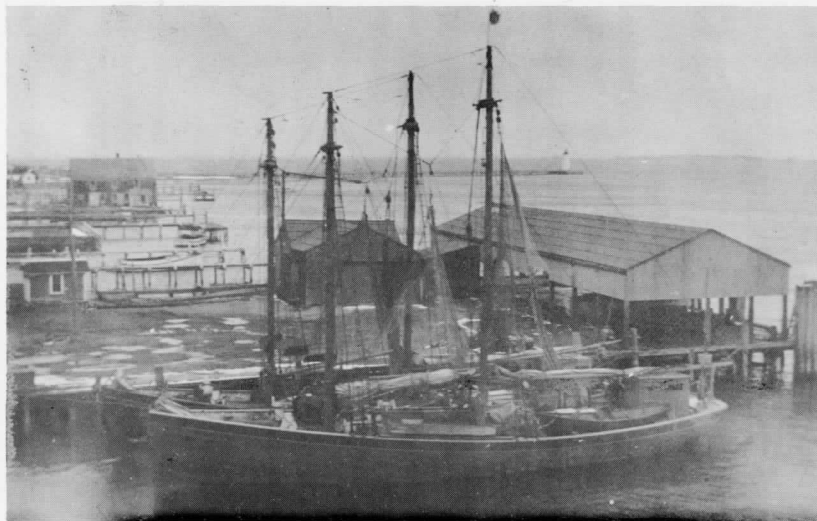
Louis H. Pease's fish market and delivery wagons on North Water street just beyond Main Street, in a time before electric refrigeration, and when cutting ice in the winter and delivering it to the Island's ice boxes in summer was an important business.



Glide one of Edgartown's little coasting schooners that in her time was almost as well known and as well loved as Vineyard Haven's later and larger *Alice S. Wentworth*.



The old Mayhew house with a posed group, perhaps of Mayhews. Until it was torn down in 1910 to make way for a more modern era this was the oldest house on the Island.



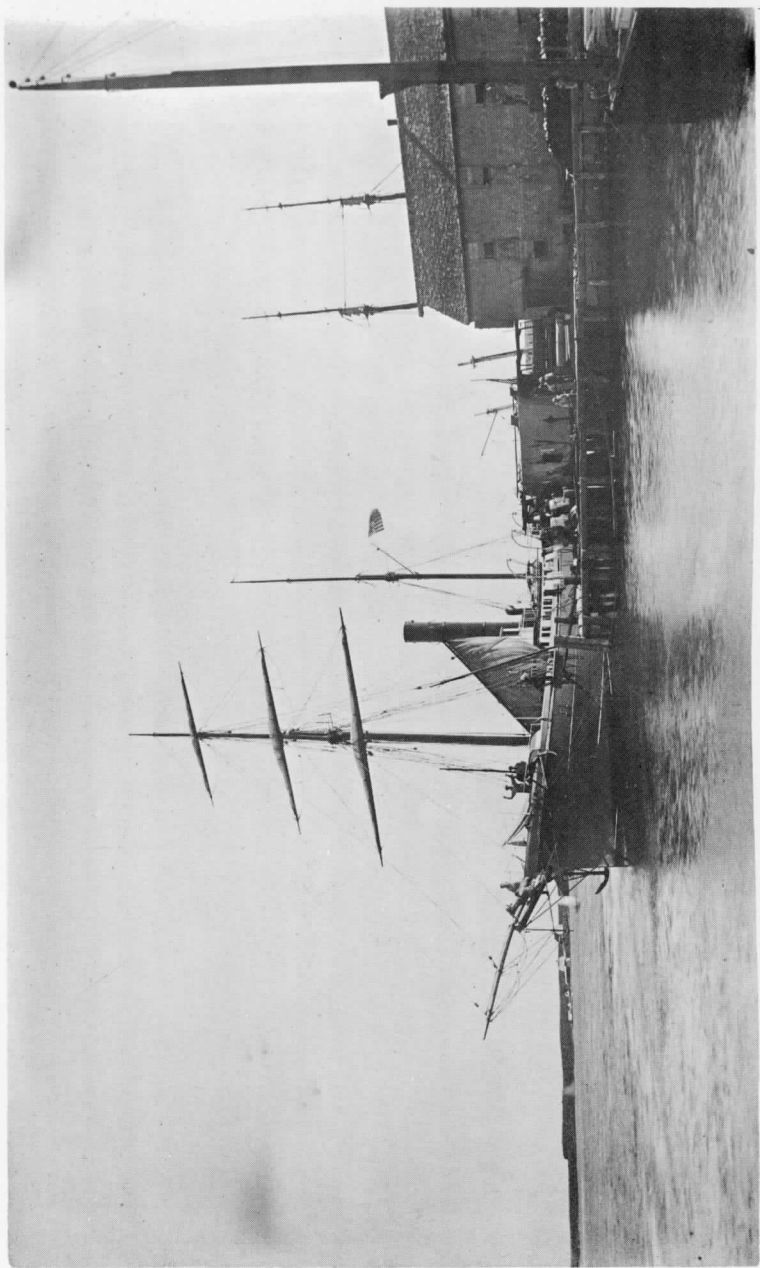
The fishing schooners *Liberty* and *Hazel M. Jackson* about 1935. Now there are only party boats and yachts to take the place of such vessels as these which were once a living part of the Island heritage.



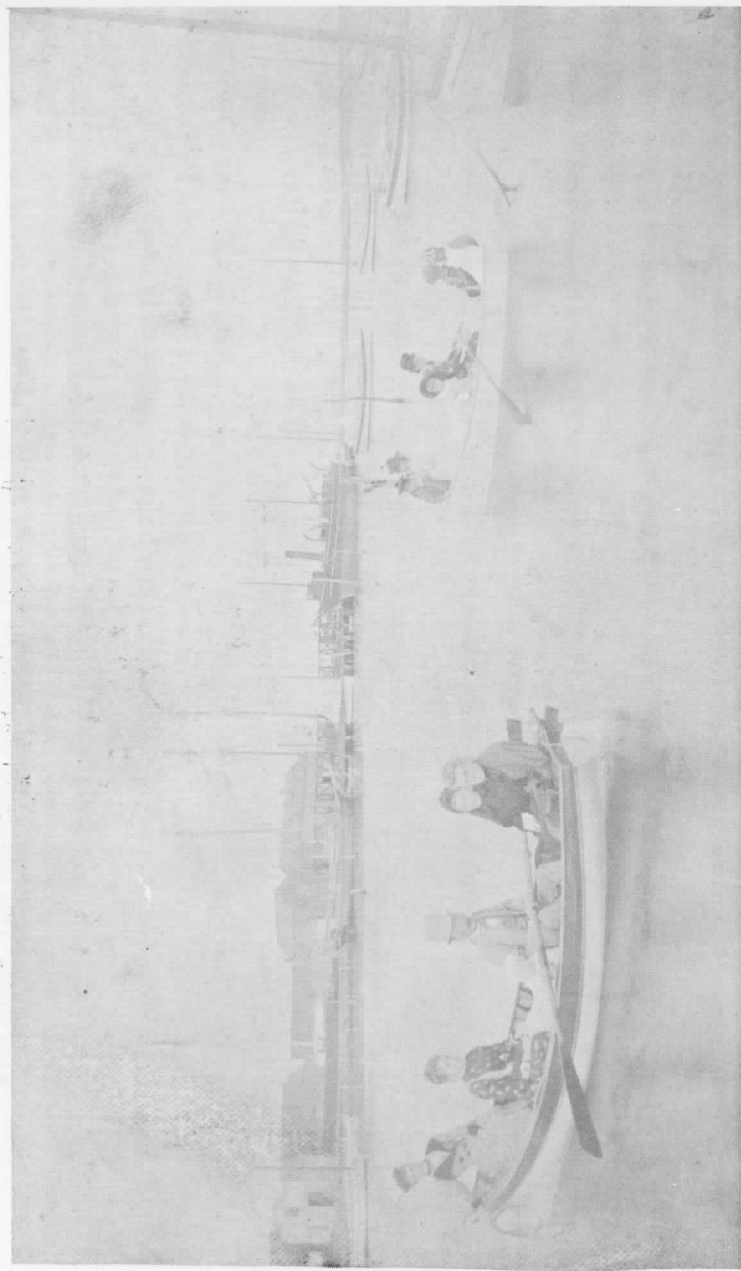
Garbage collection in Edgartown about 1900. The giant cask once probably held whale oil.



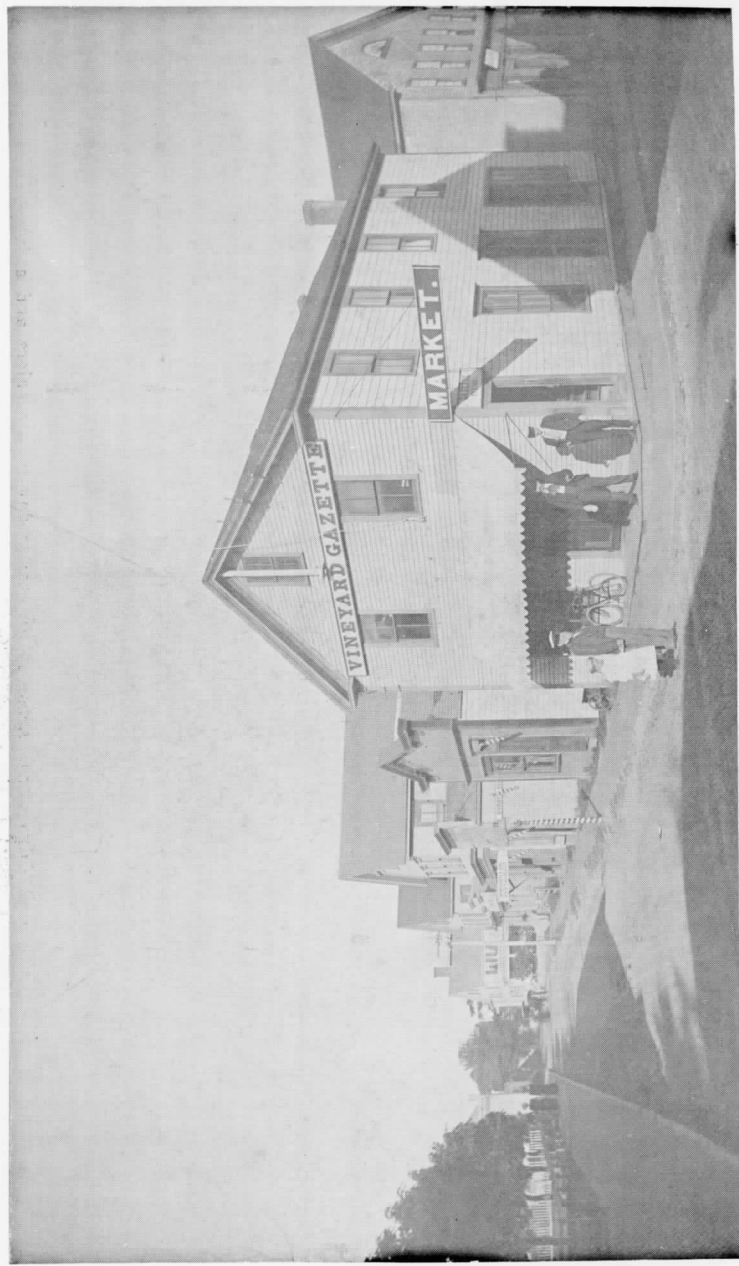
The Mayhew store and tin shop at the corner of North Water and Winter streets.



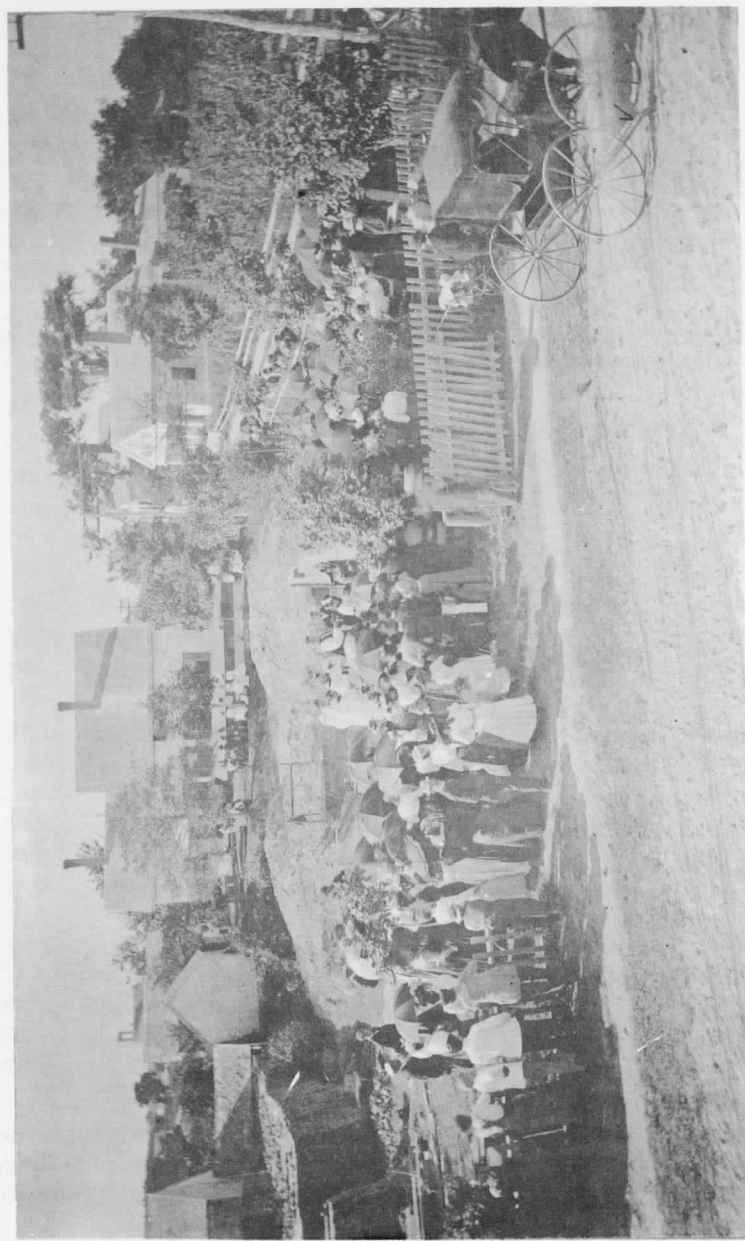
The United States Revenue Cutter *Gallatin* at the wharf in Edgartown. Edgartown — and the Vineyard — always thought of the *Gallatin* as its own.



Boating on Edgartown harbor in an earlier day with whalers and a tug at Osborn's wharf in the background.



The Vineyard Gazette office and plant at the corner of North Water and Main streets. This photograph was probably taken about 1900.



Laying the cornerstone for St. Andrews Episcopal Church.

THE LOSS OF THE U.S.S. GALENA ON GAY HEAD

by

CAROL W. KIMBALL

Editorial Note:

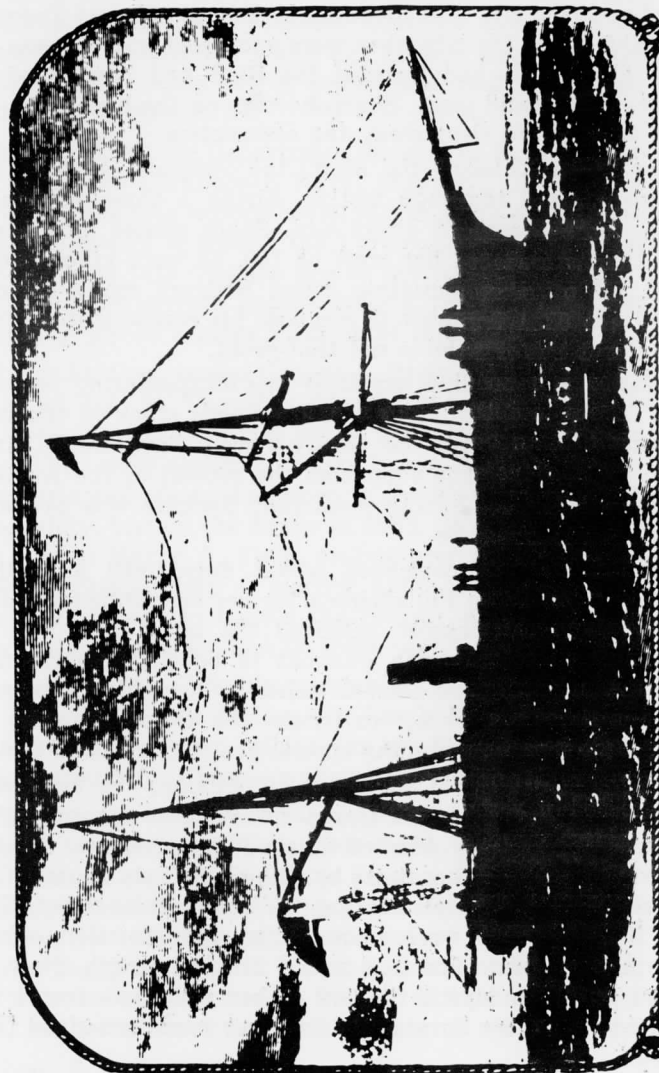
Mrs. Kimball teaches in the Mystic, Connecticut school system. She was one of the first volunteer workers at Mystic Seaport. That was when Carl Cutler, the author of *Greyhounds of the Sea* and *Queens of the Western Ocean*, and one of the founders of the Seaport was the entire staff there. So her interest in maritime history is understandable. She says, "I took both courses at Munson Institute of American Maritime History. For my master's thesis I wrote 'A Narrative History of Groton, Connecticut for the Use of Teachers of Social Studies in the Elementary School.'" This was later printed in booklet form as *The Groton Story*, and now Mrs. Kimball is working on a hard cover edition of that town's history. She says that she writes very slowly but that the research is fun.

Friday the 13th of March, 1891, in a southeast gale, the U.S.S. Galena rolled helplessly off Gay Head. Bound for repairs at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in tow of a Navy tug, the 216-foot vessel was lost in heavy fog and darkness. On the bridge her commander, unsure of his exact position, made up his mind to change course.

This was the *Galena's* unlucky night. After 30 years in the Navy during which she led three lives — as ironclad, wooden gunboat, and finally flagship of the North Atlantic Squadron — she was about to end her useful days on the Gay Head sands.

She had started out as the Navy's second ironclad, second only to the *Monitor*. In September 1861, when Maxson, Fish & Co. began to build this "bomb-proof" steamer in Mystic, Connecticut, villagers shook their heads; they put their faith in stout oak ships. They watched shipyard workers fashion the 181-foot wooden hull and "armor" the bulging sides with iron plating. Carefully dove-tailed bars, 3½ inches thick and 4 inches wide, were bolted over the frame, fastened every 6 inches with ¾ inch bolts which went through the hull and were held firmly in place with "screw nuts." When she was ready to launch on Valentine's Day, 1862, hundreds of curious spectators crowded the shores to see if she would founder in her heavy casing, but she glided smoothly down the ways and floated majestically on the river.

Rushed to completion at the Green Point yard that built the *Monitor*, the *Galena* was commissioned at New York, April 22nd, and sailed for Virginia to assist in the Peninsula Campaign under Commander John Rodgers, a remarkably skillful officer.



The U.S.S. Galena as she appeared soon after her launching in 1862. Harper's Weekly.

Early on May 15, 1862, at the personal request of Abraham Lincoln, the *Galena* with the *Monitor* and three other gunboats steamed up the James River under orders to proceed to Richmond and shell the city into submission. But at 200-foot Drewry's Bluff, 8 miles below the city, they were surprised with cannon and rifle fire. The Rebels had fortified the Bluff and barricaded the river so no ships could pass. Sharpshooters on the high bank discouraged attempts to clear away the obstruction.

Rodgers anchored below the Bluff; the *Galena's* carefully contrived armor got a thorough testing during a three hour bombardment. She suffered 28 direct hits. Shells dented and pierced the thin iron plating. Of her crew of 150, 13 were killed and 11 wounded. While his ammunition lasted Rodgers coolly returned enemy fire; then he withdrew to compose his classic statement — "We demonstrated that she is not shot-proof."

With Navy men belittling her after this disappointing performance, the *Galena* kept afloat with cannon balls stuck in the wood at her waterline. During the bloody Seven Days Battle, from June 26th to July 2nd, she supported the retreat of the Army of the Potomac with such effectiveness that Rodgers was promoted to Captain for his services.

The Mystic ironclad continued picket duty until May 1863, when she was ordered to Philadelphia for her first transformation. At the Navy Yard workmen removed the bulky iron and the *Galena* emerged as a wooden gunboat to be with Farragut at Mobile Bay, with the little *Oneida* lashed to her side. When her partner suffered a direct hit in battle, the *Galena* carried the crippled vessel to safety, winning special praise from the Admiral.

After the war's end and six years of oblivion, she underwent a second and more drastic transformation. With no appropriations for new vessels, the Navy adopted a rebuilding program, creating a new class of unarmored cruisers by "repairing" six rugged Civil War veterans — the *Galena*, *Marion*, *Mohican*, *Quinnebaug*, *Swatarra*, and *Vandalia*. The work amounted to reconstruction, enlarging them to a uniform 1900 tons and a 216-foot length. Now the *Galena* lost all of her Mystic timbers — her white oak frame was replaced by live oak for durability. Only her name remained from the old days.

After six years at Norfolk rebuilding, she joined the European Squadron in 1878, a sleek new cruiser far removed from the clumsy ironclad. The new *Galena* had one brush with action in

1882 during the British bombardment of Alexandria, Egypt, but for the most part serenely sailed the seas. In the late 1880's she served as Admiral Stephen Luce's flagship in the North Atlantic Squadron, engaged in peaceful missions along the coast. This career was interrupted when her boilers gave out. On July 23, 1890, she was taken out of commission and laid up in the New York Navy Yard.

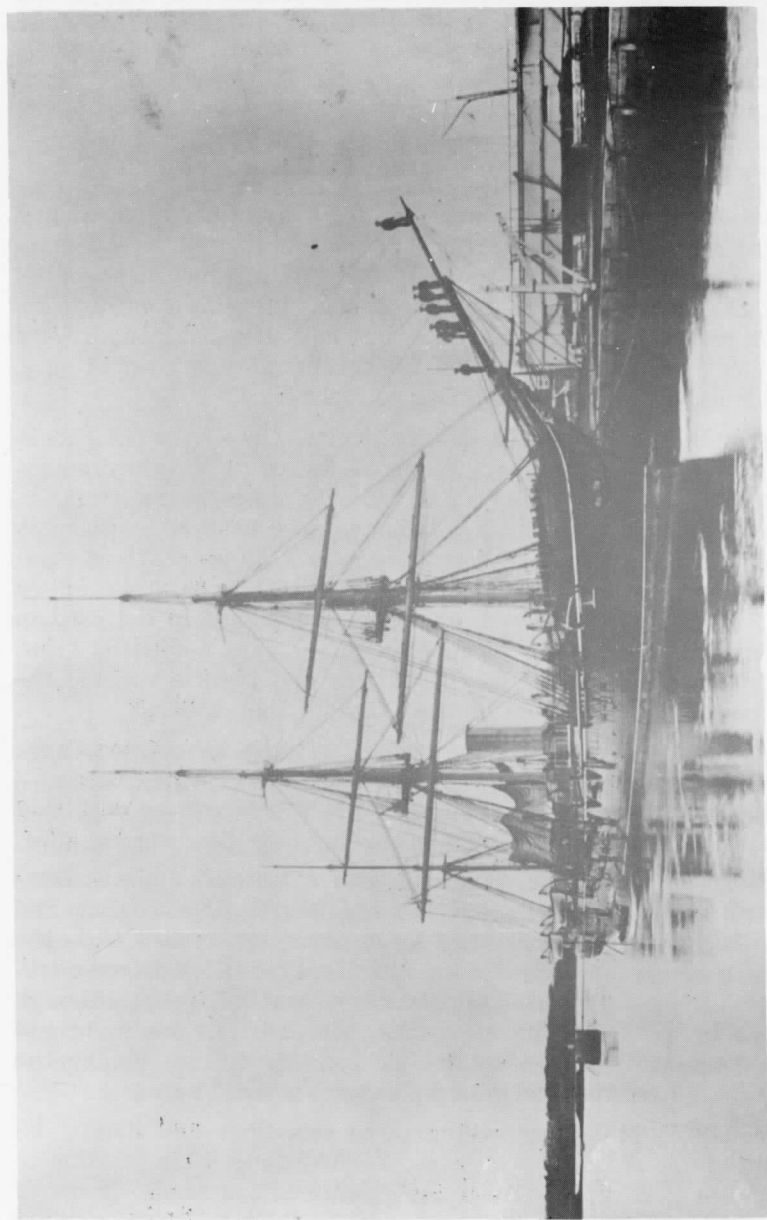
Early in 1891 the Department decided to have her repaired and refitted at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. In that New Hampshire port she was eagerly awaited, for work on the *Galena* would boost the town's economy; the Portsmouth *Morning Chronicle* reported March 14th that she was on her way. If enough funds were available from current appropriations, repairs could start at once, "bringing joy to a large number of mechanics."

Under Lt. Commander George A. Bicknell, the *Galena* left Brooklyn about 9 A. M. Thursday, March 12, towed by the Government tug *Nina*. Because she was out of commission, personnel from the Navy Yard were assigned to take her up to Portsmouth. Bicknell, an experienced officer, had been in the Navy 30 years, 15 of them on sea duty, last on the *Essex* in 1889. With him as junior officer was Ensign Harry A. Field, an engineer assigned to the yard in 1890 on "Special duty — electric lights." It was a skeleton crew, just enough men to handle the hawser and steer a course; the once powerful cruiser had no more dignity than a barge.

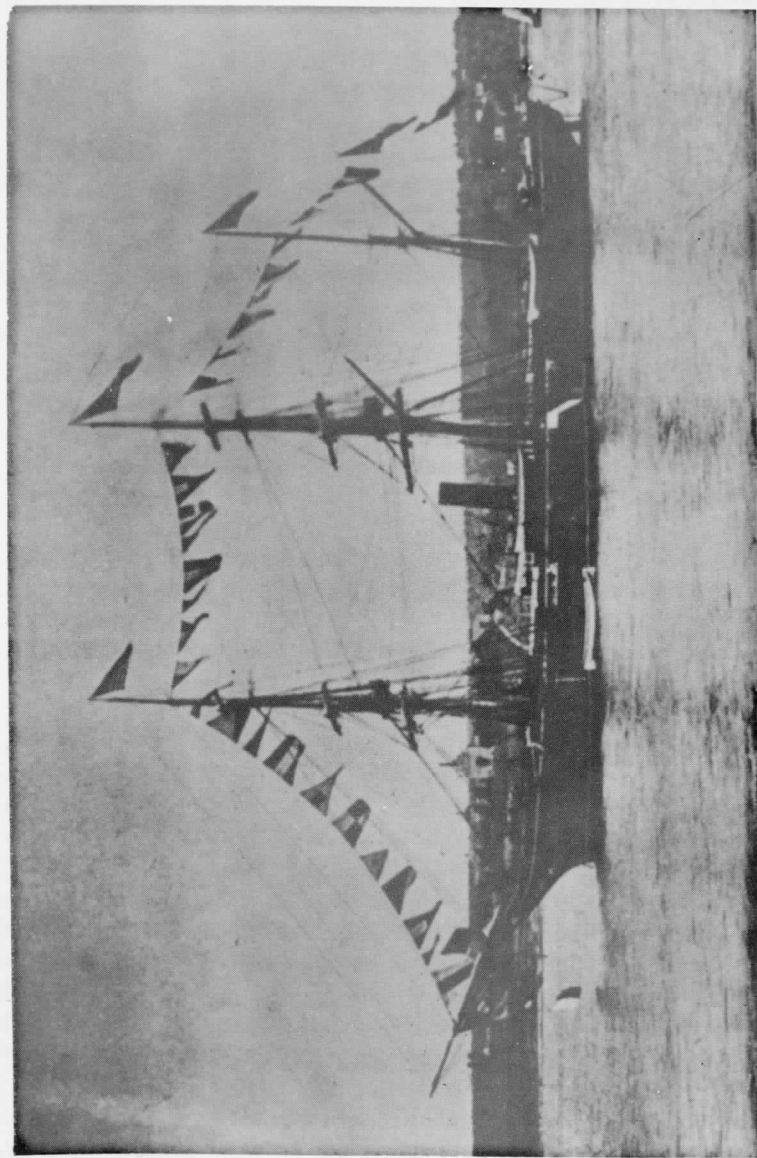
Lashed to the *Galena's* quarterdeck aft the mizzenmast were her three large new boilers. In her hold was a heavy cargo — \$30,000 worth of ammunition for the U.S.S. *Lancaster* outfitting at Portsmouth for Chinese waters, plus her own disassembled guns.

The 306 ton *Nina*, an iron tug with a crew of 50, was commanded by Master of Tugs Thomas A. Smith of Brooklyn. She was schooner-rigged, "indicated horsepower 340," speed 10 knots. It continued all the way. Friday afternoon off Block Island Bicknell took his bearings and set his course east by south; although it grew foggy he kept on his way, confident of his sea room and the truthfulness of his course. But as darkness fell on Friday the 13th, neither Bicknell nor Smith was sure where he was.

About 9 P. M., after making three soundings and finding no bottom at 15, 17, and 20 fathoms, Bicknell judged his position to be 5 miles west of Gay Head with plenty of sea room. However the vessels twice came near grounding. Captain Smith advised



The U.S.S. Galena when she was the flagship of the Atlantic Fleet, and not too long before she went ashore on Gay Head. United States Navy photograph.



Another photograph of the Post Civil War U.S.S. Galena with all flags flying. Courtesy Manners Museum, Newport News, Virginia.

against attempting Vineyard Sound in the dangerous fog, but Bicknell, in command by virtue of Naval rank, insisted on continuing without delay.

At 10:10 the Commander was on the bridge, with Boatswains William Anderson and John Sutton on watch. As the *Galena* rolled helplessly, hemmed in by fog, Bicknell came to his decision.

Out of New York they ran into thick weather almost at once; He set a new course, northeast three quarters north, by which he expected to round Gay Head and make Tarpaulin Cove, ordering Ensign Field to transmit this course to Smith. Unfortunately Bicknell had misjudged his distance by some ten miles.

To secure bearings on a foggy night, captains making for Vineyard Sound listened for the steam whistle of the lightship at Sow and Pigs Reef. New Bedforders later claimed that when Bicknell changed course he was in no position to place or even hear this whistle. Aghast at his 10-mile error, they questioned whether the huge iron boilers on deck could have affected the compass and falsified his course.

On the tug, Smith received the order and changed onto the new course. Almost at once he felt a grating and then a jar as the *Nina* plunged onto sand. The *Galena* had no chance to veer around before the wind and sea carried her broadside to the tug. The fresh breeze reached gale force and drove great seas against the helpless vessels, pouring spray over their decks.

At 10:20 the *Nina's* whistle blew and the *Galena* sent up rockets. And then, according to the *Boston Globe* (March 16, 1891) "as if in pity of the vessels' misfortune," the fog lifted. Within ten minutes the captains could see they were aground on the west side of Gay Head about one mile south of the lighthouse. Too late to be of use, the light shone clear and bright over the whitecaps.

Friday the 13th brought some good luck; it was fortunate the vessels landed at that spot. A mile to the north lay Devil's Bridge where the *City of Columbus* struck in 1884 with 121 lost; if Bicknell had continued on his original course they might have hit the shoal between Squibnocket and Noman's Land, almost surely with loss of life. The *Galena* and her tug were far enough south to strike on sand, and help was nearby.

Gay Head Indians were roused from their beds at the first alarms. Descendants of the original Wampanoag tribe of the Island, they were reckoned among the world's best boatmen. It was part of

their life to turn out in winter storms to answer distress calls. By the time the fog had lifted both men and women had gathered on the beach.

The *Nina* was nearer and a line was soon made fast to the tug. Bernard Doherty started ashore hand over hand, but midway to safety he lost his grip and slipped into the sea. The hardy Indians, joining hands, formed a human chain and rushed into the surf to fish him out. After this narrow escape a boatswain's chair was rigged to bring the others ashore where they warmed themselves around the Indians' bonfires. Last to leave the *Nina* was Captain Smith. When he was nearly ashore the chair fell from the rope and he struggled in the breakers. Courageous Gay Headers dragged him out in time to save him from drowning. Just two hours after the alarm, at 12:20, the *Nina's* 50 men were safe on shore.

The *Galena* was more difficult. After an hour they managed to cast a line ashore, but it parted before it could be used. There was no Life Saving Station on the Island in 1891, but the Massachusetts Humane Society had supplied boathouses with emergency equipment. The Indians got a yoke of oxen and dragged the breeches buoy, gun and cart to the beach. While the breakers pounded and the wind screamed they managed to shoot a line to the ship. A rope was rigged and the crew came ashore in the breeches buoy. Bicknell, last to leave the *Galena*, set his feet on the beach at 5 A. M. The Gay Headers had worked all night long with their resourceful heroism — the rescued crews believed that "but for them many a coffin would have been necessary." With all hands safe the Indians distributed the men among the families to go home for food and rest. Not a life was lost.

All day Saturday the storm continued. Heavy seas beat against the *Nina* and *Galena*, driving them nearer to shore. Waves dashed over them, loading the rigging with ice. The Indians expected the vessels to go to pieces; neither could be boarded for salvage. That morning Bicknell made his way to Vineyard Haven to telegraph the bad news to Commandant Braine at New York, requesting orders.

Saturday afternoon New Bedford and Boston heard that "one of Uncle Sam's men-o-war had sailed to destruction on the Head and was in need of assistance." Heavy seas in Buzzard's Bay made it impossible to send aid from New Bedford. There was no further word from the island; the only wire to the mainland was broken.

All night the town wondered about the warship's fate.

The U.S.S. Tug *Triana*, identical to the *Nina*, dispatched from Boston to aid the *Galena*, was wrecked off Cuttyhunk on Sunday, the 15th, a total loss.

Sunday morning Boston *Globe* reporters left New Bedford on the tug *George W. Hunt*, Col. G. C. Hart commanding. At Gay Head they found the vessels only 50 yards from shore, the tug pointed head on, her bow left high and dry by the receding tide. Through a hole in her starboard side the crew recovered clothes and valuables. On the beach Indians and rescued sailors gathered around another bonfire; nearby were two ship's cutters stove in by the wreck which the crew chopped up to feed the fire.

The *Galena* lay broadside on "with the appearance of being disabled forever," broken in two amidships, rudder and screw gone, mizzenmast snapped, jibboom carried away. Gay Head seamen said her heavy cargo caused the damage — "Her setting on the bottom with this great weight and lifted by the sea broke her backbone." She was "a most deplorable sight — the once beautiful cabin was full of water." Amidships she was "badly hogged; in fact that once good ship has a broken back." The Indians knew she was done for.

On Monday the Boston Tow Boat Company, authorized to salvage everything possible, sent wreckers and tugs to make a thorough inspection of the damage. The *Nina* was eventually repaired and returned to duty at New York where she was still in service at the turn of the century, but nothing could be done for the *Galena*. The *Vineyard Gazette* of May 29th carried a notice that her wreck would be sold to the highest bidder.

Lt. Commander Bicknell was placed under suspension May 27, 1891, but after a lengthy Court of Inquiry he was returned to duty.

Master of Tugs Thomas Smith was fond of saying that if they had held off 10 minutes longer on Friday the 13th, clearing weather would have permitted them to locate themselves and all would have been well. But the *Galena* had never been a lucky ship, and it was somehow fitting that she met her end grounding off Gay Head on Friday the 13th of March, 1891.

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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.

24

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
BY
JOHN HUTCHINSON
OF THE BARRISTER AT LAW
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF JUDICATURE
IN THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX
IN GREAT BRITAIN
LONDON
PRINTED BY J. DODD, ST. MARTIN'S LANE
1764