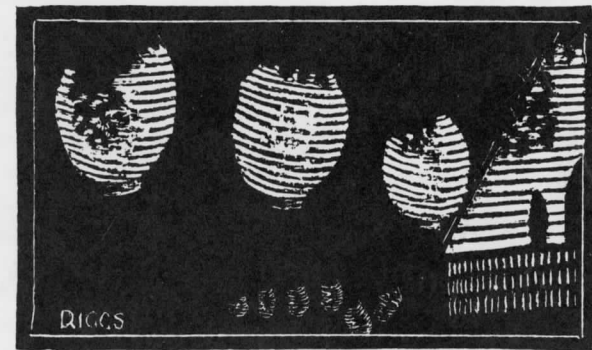


# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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



## Wonders of the Vineyard

by  
CAROL W. KIMBALL

## Portraits of Some Gay Head People

by  
KATHRAINE W. TWEED

## Historical Society News

May 1968

Vol. 9, No. 4

# DUKES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Active members	\$3.00 annual dues
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Life members	\$100.00

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.

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# Wonders of the Vineyard

by

CAROL W. KIMBALL

Moslems say go to Mecca and then die. We say go to Martha's Vineyard and renew your age.

*Mystic Press*, August 30, 1878

THUS WROTE one of the Vineyard's ardent supporters in the columns of *Mystic Connecticut's* weekly newspaper. That seaside village was unimpressed by most vacation spots, considering its own surroundings equal or superior to any. But from 1875 through 1879 natives of *Mystic* left their native shores in numbers, in August, to attend the Vineyard's glamorous Festival of Illumination. Their enthusiasm began when an enterprising merchant chartered the Norwich Line steamer *City of Lawrence* for a weekend excursion from nearby New London to the Vineyard. They left the wharf Saturday, August 19, 1875 at 2 P.M., and although this first venture was reported "not as successful pecuniarily and numerically as expected," on board was one very appreciative gentleman—Mr. L. M. Guernsey, editor of the *Mystic Press*. His entertaining account of the trip furnished wonderful publicity and insured future popularity for the excursions.

When ticket sales lagged the manager hired the *Mystic Cornet Band* at the last minute, but with 30 minute's notice they could muster only 14 of their 45 players. However they performed bravely as the *City of Lawrence* steamed out of New London harbor. She carried only two thirds of her capacity, but it was a lovely day and passengers had plenty of room to lie around and enjoy the sights (many of them over the side, reported Guernsey.) They reached the Vineyard at 7 P.M., well repaid by the beautiful scenery and prospects of the great festival held annually before Camp Meeting Week. The band led them ashore and marched through Ocean Avenue, serenading the cottagers. At dusk camp grounds, cottages and surrounding trees were "illuminated" with Chinese lanterns and other lights, forming "a picture fairy-like and magnificent," according to Mr. Guernsey.

Later, passengers found accommodations ashore or returned to spend the night on the steamer. Sunday those who cared for preaching chose between two fine pulpit orators—the Baptists' Dr. Lorimer of Tremont Temple and the Methodists' Mr. Meredith of Springfield.

The editor reported at length in the August 27th issue of the *Press*, mentioning the Baptist "Open Air" Meeting, and predicting that such

gatherings, held entirely in the open air without tents or buildings, would be the beginning of a series, and a pleasant way to spend one or two weeks in summer—

infinitely better than the godless gathering of gamblers, jockeys and adventurers at Saratoga and other watering places. . . . If these classes could be induced to follow such meetings they might possibly be turned from the error of their ways.

This unsolicited advertising aroused such interest that the managers planned a trip in 1876 aboard the famous Stonington Line steamer *Narragansett*, engaging the entire Mystic Band well in advance and also the Third Regiment Band. The musicians played appropriate tunes as they left New London August 18, and they were later invited to accompany singing at the Grove, but the Regiment Band had to refuse, "being unprepared to furnish sacred music." The Baptists listened again to Dr. Lorimer and the Methodists to Dr. Foss of Wesleyan University. The *Narragansett's* passengers returned Monday night, their verdict—"Sail and company all that could be desired."

For the 1877 excursion, 800 passengers crowded aboard the Norwich Line's *City of Boston*, a fine fast passenger steamer which at one time held a speed record from New York to New London. Mr. Guernsey reported the participants "a good deal troubled to find interjections to express the delights of the sail, the weather and the illumination." The crowd included a lively party from Mystic, but happily "none of the turbulent class."

August 17, 1877, thirty thousand persons witnessed the most extensive illuminations ever displayed at Oak Bluffs. Soon after seven o'clock flags, buntings, Chinese lanterns, red, blue and green fires, shells, rockets and exploding mines made a grand display which continued "amidst the wildest excitement" for three hours. A procession marched behind a band down the principal avenues. Their arrival at Ocean Park set off a grand explosion of rockets and bombs from every cottage on the Bluffs, from stations about the park and from hundreds of sailing craft at anchor in the Sound.

In 1878 the excursion via the *City of Boston* left New London Saturday August 24 and returned Monday, allowing passengers to attend the closing of the Baptist meeting and the beginning of the Methodist, and of course, the illumination. This trip was reported in the *Mystic Press* by a correspondent who signed himself "Pequot," said to be the pen name of Frederic Denison, local historian, author and educator.

Pequot counted about a score from Mystic aboard when the steamer left New London at noon. They arrived at the Bluffs at 5, in time for a leisurely supper before the illumination. When the great display began, one impressionable lass described it by exclaiming sim-

ply, "Oh, oh, O-o-h!" Bewildered by the carnival atmosphere a lady moaned, "Oh my! it is simply stunning!"

But those who had attended before informed the novices, "Ah, it ain't equal to last year."

But as gaudy stars exploded in the sky, shot from new machines of wondrous power, and devices of birds, ships, beasts, trees and houses appeared and the grand finale spelled out OAK CITY 11th ANNUAL CARNIVAL, the old hands muttered no more about last year but cheered with the rest.

Over 1000 cottages were illuminated in every gable, cornice, window and piazza. Outshining all was Dr. Tucker's lofty cottage, perhaps because it had more surface to emblazon. Some ridge poles held lights, while lines of Chinese lanterns swung from the top of flag staffs to the ground. Flower beds were surrounded by the radiance, and shrubbery danced and sparkled with all the colors of the rainbow before the dazzled eyes of 30,000 spectators.

A gentleman residing on Ocean Avenue permitted the Mystic group to sit on his steps where they could watch the fire works amid drip-pings from lanterns overhead (for which nothing extra was charged, remarked Pequot.)

On Sunday came three meetings under the octagon wooden dome of the Baptist Temple, nearly filled in the morning despite some rain, and crowded from center to circumference in the evening as 4000 came to hear Dr. Alden. The Methodists' meeting began with an earnest and powerful discourse by Dr. Fox of Hyde Park, which Denison thought "ought to have brought out the anxious under the old Methodist tent."

The *City of Boston* left these delights at 7:30 A.M. Monday, and after a three hour stop-over in Newport returned the happy travelers to New London.

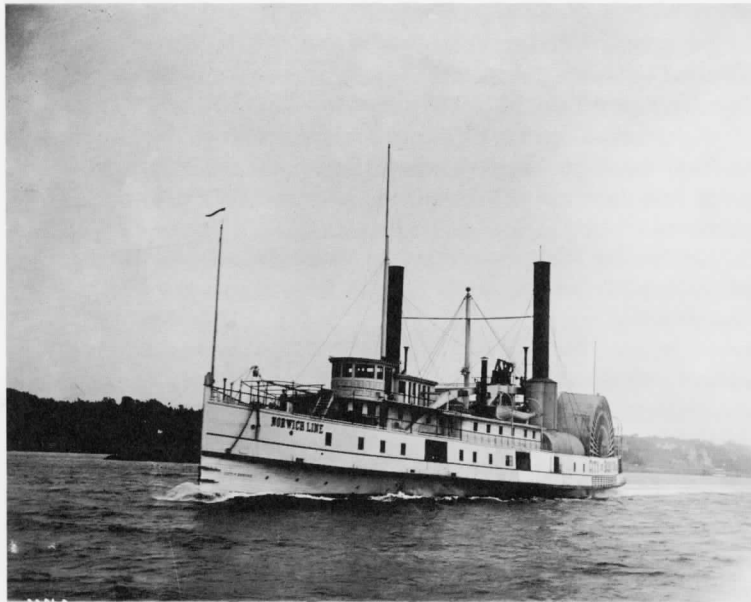
Pequot had a glowing description of the weekend in the next issue of the *Press*, but he included a word of warning:

One thing—when you go don't engage rooms ahead at the Bluffs. We actually counted 50 places where rooms were to let when crowds were the largest. If you do engage and pay beforehand, 10 to 1 somebody will overbid you and take your lodgings. Madam E. C. Colford of Massasoit Avenue did that same to some of us. She got our money but we did not get the room, nor would she refund. But there were others to be had.

Moslems say go to Mecca and then die. We say go to Martha's Vineyard and renew your age. The trip through Sounds and Ocean and among islands where every slope is crowded with sea-side cottages and at every place you see sights is alone worth the money many fold, to say nothing of the city of cottages and the other wonders of the Vineyard.

The *Mystic Press* carried a brief item September 4, 1879, stating that a large company from both sides of the river went to witness the grand illumination. "Hope they all came back illuminated," remarked Guernsey.

This was, as far as the local paper was concerned, the last year for interest in the Vineyard summer. Railroad excursions to Narragansett Bay lured away Guernsey's interest and the customers as well. But the old bound volumes of the weekly *Press* in the Mystic and Noank Libraries preserve the stories of Mystic's experiences at the Vineyard illuminations.



*Steamboat "City of Boston"*

## Portraits of Some Gay Head People

*Lorenzo Jeffers*

*Harrison and Celina Vanderhoop*

*Lyman Madison*

*Amos and Addie Smalley*

*Frank Manning*

*Charles W. Vanderhoop*

*George Cook*

*Napoleon Madison*

*Edmond S. Cooper*

*Leonard Vanderhoop*



*Lorenzo Jeffers*



*Harrison and Celina Vanderhoop*



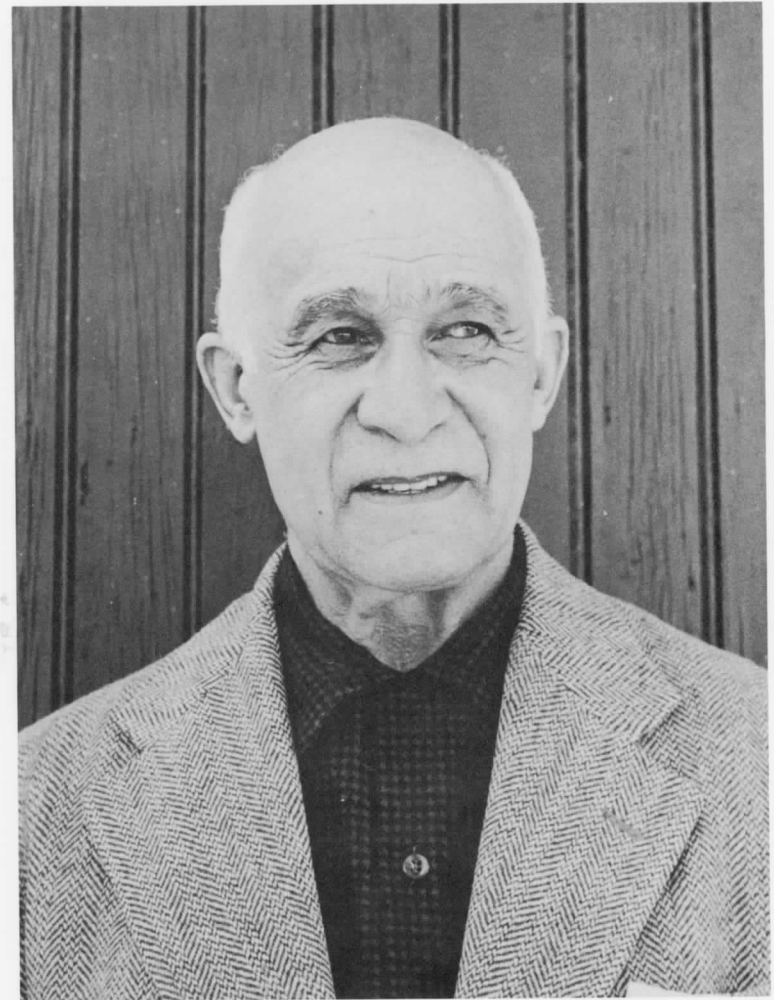
*Lyman Madison*



*Amos and Addie Smalley*

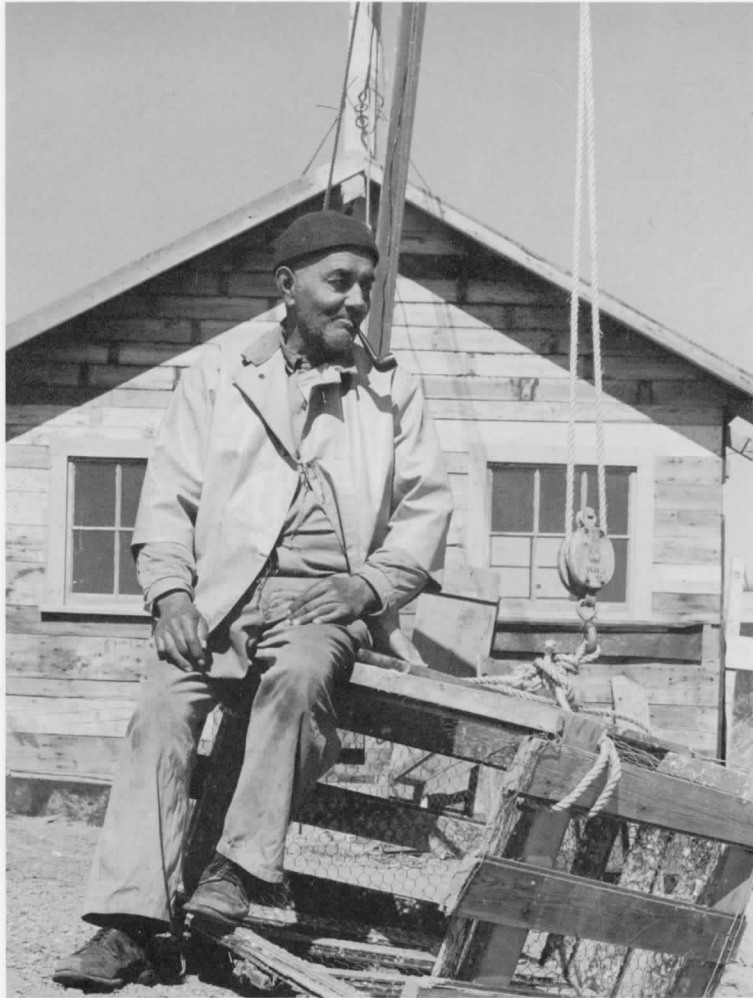


*Frank Manning*



*Charles W. Vanderhoop*





*George Cook*



*Napoleon Madison*





*Edmond S. Cooper*



*Leonard Vanderhoop*

## Historical Society News

TO KEEP members better informed about Dukes County Historical Society activities which go on from one annual meeting to the next, a report from the curator is planned for each issue of the *Intelligencer*.

A wide variety of interesting accessions have been catalogued since last August. Out in the carriage shed is an ingenious potato cutter believed to have been used on Seven Gates Farm during the days of Professor Shaler. It was the gift of Mrs. Percy Burt. Mrs. Lucy Andrew Dowd's collection of paper dolls is quaintly outfitted. Mrs. Myron Vincent has contributed the Humane Society silver medal awarded her uncle, James Mosher of Chilmark, who was one of the heroes of the *City of Columbus* wreck off Gay Head in 1884. Mrs. Weston Howland sent us a Squibnocket Club history written by one of the members, the late Dr. John Cunningham.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Waggaman's treasures include an 1898 Sanborn map of Edgartown, a rare Matthew Mayhew signature on a letter of 1691, a Dukes County Academy record of 1854-1896 and an Edgartown selectmen's record of 1864 to 1893.

Mrs. Howard Hart, who has added a number of valued items to the Society, gave a spinning wheel in beautiful condition. (We hope to have it demonstrated this summer.) She also gave two unusual seed pod bracelets from the South Pacific, several large shells, also from the same area, an elaborately scrimshawed whalebone box and the Howland coat of arms with a genealogy.

Our genealogical collection also has been augmented by the Luce coat of arms handpainted by Jno. Coles in 1898. This was the gift of Mrs. Madeleine Luce Brooks of Wolfeboro, N.H. Mrs. Hariph Hancock added the Howes genealogy by J. C. Howes.

Mr. and Mrs. Prescott Fay brought in a blubber cutting spade used by Seth Vincent of Slough Cove, whose initials are carved in the handle. Mrs. Rose Treat gave two of her seaweed pictures, cleverly contrived in the modern manner, in contrast to the mountings we have dating from the 1890's. The Rev. Eldon Mills added a West Tisbury Congregational Church record book of 1781. A hand-carved mahogany rolling pin, ridged for cutting biscuit, came from Mrs. Donald Jenks.

Edgartown's night watchmen long ago carried a big lantern with ornate brass top and this now is on display as the gift of Miss Louise Meikleham. Another memento of Edgartown history is the engraved and tinted certificate of membership in the American Flag House and Betsy Ross Memorial Assn., dated 1900, bearing the name of Mrs. Stella Norton Crowell, daughter of Capt. Francis Perry Norton. This was given by R. W. Darnley.

Mr. Austin Warren, summer visitor from Ann Arbor, Mich. added his book, "The New England Conscience" to our library and Mr. Monroe Schere contributed "Navigation, Land, Sea and Sky" (Hellman) which has an illustration of a backstaff, early navigational instrument, similar to the one displayed in our whaling room at the Thomas Cooke House.

The Society library also received a number of photographs, illustrating Vineyard history. A large collection came from Mr. Henry B. Hough, the Society's past president and historian. Mrs. Blodwen Sidebotham, now of St. Augustine, Fla., who formerly owned the Sabra Fisher house, also sent some old photographs, as did Mrs. Charles B. Salisbury of Hartford, Conn., who spent girlhood summers in Edgartown as Edith Casy Leonard. Miss Mary Coles gave eight of her sketches of Edgartown's storm wrack from the 1944 hurricane.

All these accessions are much appreciated additions. Do come see them!

The Society will miss the late Mr. Allan Keniston, a Council member whose kindly interest always has been helpful.

Have you noticed our new postage meter ad, "Visit Our Vineyard Museums"? The Dukes County Historical Society again is aiding the Seacoast Defense DAR chapter in keeping their Vineyard Haven museum open this summer.

We have added an Addressograph as well as a postage meter to our office equipment in order to facilitate mailings to our more than 800 members.

PLEASE—let us know when you change your address! This will save extra postage and you will receive every issue of the *Intelligencer* at mailing time.

Dorothy R. Scoville  
Curator

## *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 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 by Will Huntington. Paper, 50¢.

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

*Tales and Trails of Martha's Vineyard* by Joseph C. Allen. 234 p. Illustrated. Paper \$3.95. When ordering by mail please add 25¢ to cover postage and handling.