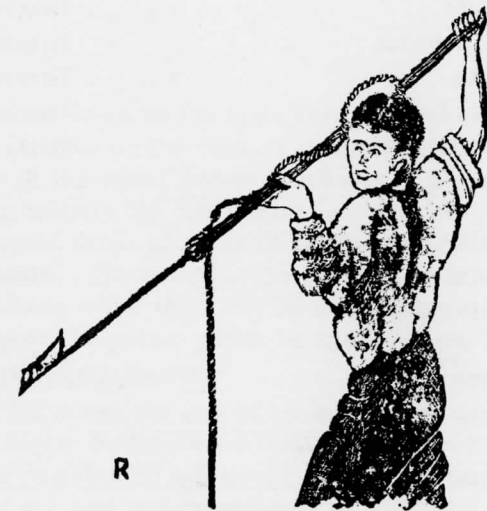


# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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Antone Fortes, Whaleman

by

DOROTHY COTTLE POOLE

Edgartown - Some Old Photographs

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## Antone Fortes, Whaleman

by

DOROTHY COTTLE POOLE

The sun blazed down on Ponta da Vermelha, on the island of Sao Nicolau. It beat on the back of young Tony Fortes, hacking at the weeds in the sweet potato patch beside his father's small adobe house, halfway up the mountain. The heat parched his throat and caused drops of sweat to form on his brow and course down his cheeks. Occasionally, he brushed them off with the sleeve of his loose white shirt, but he kept doggedly at his work. If weeds choked the potato patch, he and his three brothers and three sisters would go hungry.

A shadow fell across the end of the garden and the boy looked up to see a frigate bird swoop to snatch a scrawny chicken and soar over the neighboring housetops toward the sea. The boy's gaze followed the bird and caught sight of a flock of shearwaters, skimming across the harbor. He sighed in envy, and then attacked the weeds with new vigor.

When he reached the end of his last row, he leaned his hoe against the house and went whistling down the steep path, which led to the harbor. At the water's edge, he shrugged off his garments and dove into the sea to join other boys, released from their morning chores. They swam, dove, and frolicked all afternoon. At last, tiring of their fun, they sprawled on the hot sand and idly chatted in their soft *lingua crioula*, a Cape Verde simplification of Portuguese.

"Did you work in the sugar cane this morning, Tony?"

"No, I had to weed the potato patch beside our house. How hot it was there, not a breath of air."

"So; it was almost as bad in the cane field. And I never saw a rabbit. I'd hoped to catch one so I could go eeling later."

"I have a couple of rabbit hearts, but no hooks. If you'll trade me a hook for bait, we'll get our poles and catch some eels, when the sun goes down."

"So, it's much too hot to go now. Do you suppose any whaleboats will come ashore today?"

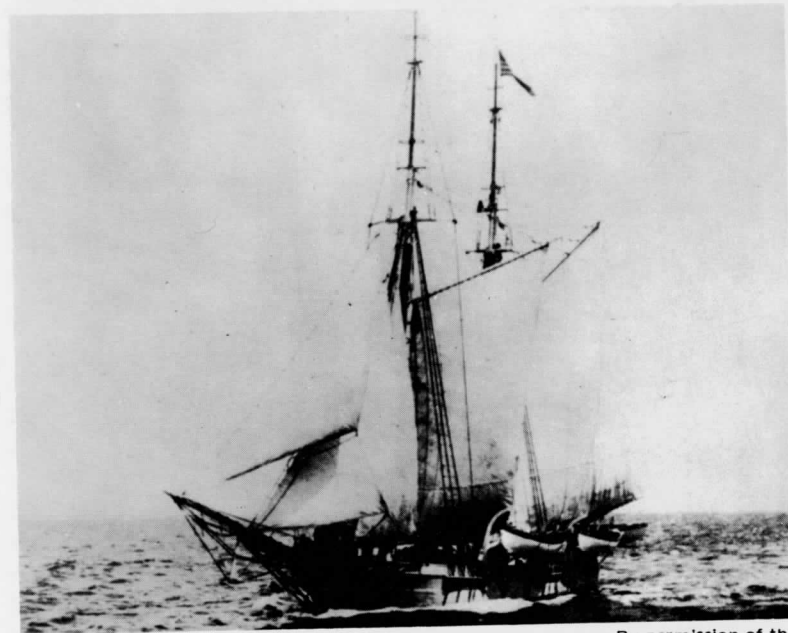
"Who knows?"

To the boys of Sao Nicolau, New Bedford whaleships were the magic carpet which could free them from their unproductive island and take them to America, where all things were possible. But such a journey was not easy, for the law required each young man to serve two years in the service of his king before he could leave his native land. Such conscription came at nineteen or twenty, and the lads of Sao Nicolau were ready for men's adventures long before then. So they lay on the hot sand and speculated about the various whaleships and their crews, until the splash of oars and the creak of oarlocks roused them. They jumped to their feet and ran to the water's edge to pull ashore a whaleboat and its crew. The men had come to fill their water casks at the mouth of the river which flowed down the mountain, and the boys eagerly assisted them.

Often the sun evaporated the streams to mere trickles and hot winds from the Sahara spread a fine film of red dust over the island, choking the inhabitants with every breath they drew. But today, the wind was not blowing and the sun, though hot, was not the searing, scorching sun of midsummer.

The whalemens bantered with their helpers, even as they tested their strength and sized up their abilities. Whaleships constantly needed replacements for crewmen who had deserted, or been disabled, or had been lost at sea. The officers knew that these young Portuguese made good whalemens, and that they were eager to leave their barren, rocky homeland. The whalemens befriended

the boys who gathered around them to hear exciting tales of boats stove in by whales, of stormy passages, and of teeming ports visited. The boys never tired of these tales and their dark eyes shone with excitement, as they pictured themselves participating in the feats described. Every boy in the village longed for the time when he could, with or without parental consent, sail on one of these vessels. So when the whaleboats returned to their ships, they often carried one or two more crewmen than on their shoreward journeys.

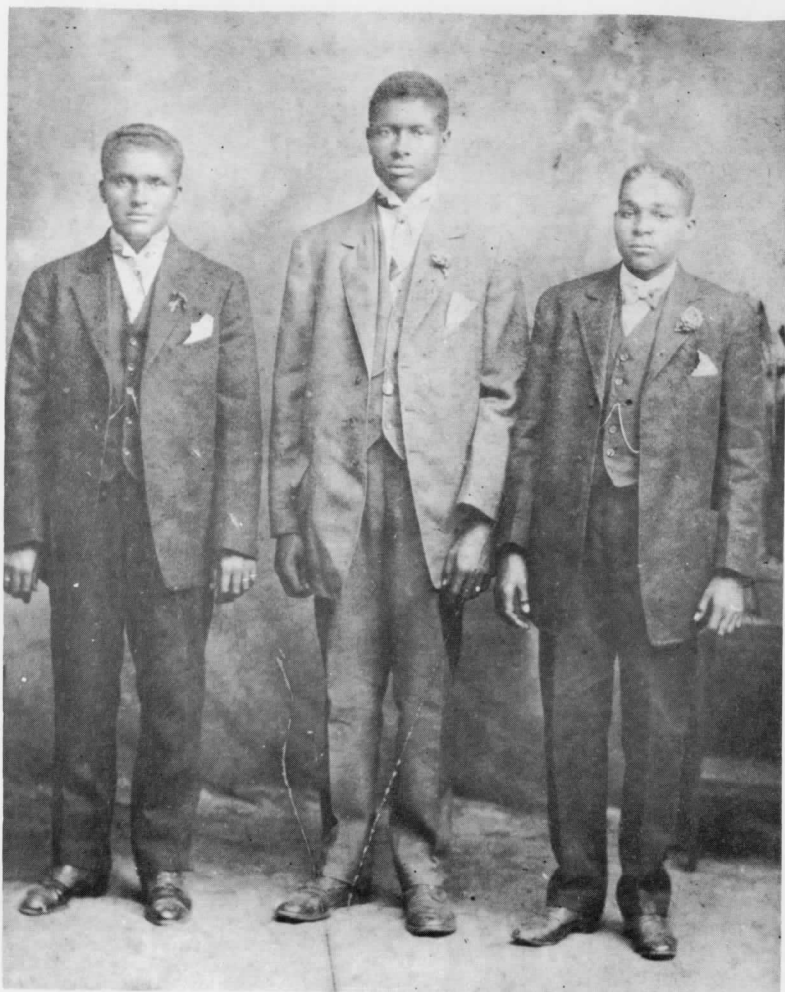


By permission of the  
Marine Historical Association  
Mystic, Connecticut

*The Pedro Varela*

Tony Fortes did not go to the whaleship with the first crew which tried to entice him. He waited for the *Pedro Varela*, Captain Antonio Corvelho<sup>1</sup> from New Bedford, Massachusetts.

<sup>1</sup>"Returns of Whaling Vessels Sailing from American Ports, 1876-1929", by Reginald B. Hagerty, and "Whaling Masters", compiled by the WPA of Mass. (1938), both state that Henry Mandly was master of the *Pedro Varela* on this voyage. Mr. Fortes says that Captain Corvelho was the master. As this is Mr. Fortes' story, and as he was there, we have used his version.



Three young whalemén. They are, from left to right: Jose Oliviera, Antone Lopes and Mr. Fortes. Antone Lopes and Mr. Fortes were cousins, Mr. Oliviera a friend. They all came from Sao Nicolau on the *Pedro Varela*.

Captain Corvelho had known Tony's family for many years and he had watched the boy grow from a tiny infant to the gangling youth who stood before him now, on the deck of the *Pedro Varela*, two days out from Ilhas de Cabo Verde. With sober mien, but twinkling eyes, he queried the boy about his presence on the ship.

Then, the necessary formalities out of the way, Tony was assigned to the third mate's boat and was put to work holystoning the deck.

This was early fall, 1908, and, until spring, the *Pedro Varela* chased sperm whales along the African coast. In late March, she discharged 500 barrels of oil at Bridgetown, Barbados; recruited, and then fished the next three months on the Western Grounds (between the Azores and the Gulf Stream.) On July 18, 1909, she landed 400 barrels of oil in New Bedford. At last, Tony had arrived in America. He planned to stay, and went ashore to find friends and relatives, who had preceded him. He made arrangements to live with his godmother, Mrs. Frances Britto, in New Bedford.

Tony searched for a job and found one in a rope factory in the West End, where he worked, from seven to five, each day through that winter. When the five o'clock whistle blew, Tony and his fellow workers hurried out of the mill; slipping, jostling, and pushing each other, they plowed through the snow, until they parted to go their several ways.

As Tony walked toward Second Street, he saw boys and girls coasting down the snowy hills on bright colored sleds. It reminded him of his childhood in Ponta da Vermelharia. There was never any snow there, but the boys, using planks for sleds, slid down the steep cliffs of white sand. When their rides seemed too slow, they'd line the tracks with dried grass, which soon became exceedingly slippery. Tony's nose still bore a scar, the result of an exciting ride which ended abruptly when he and his plank collided with a large rock. Unconsciously rubbing his nose, Tony hastened toward home.

After supper, Tony walked from his godmother's house to the corner of Pleasant and Madison Streets. Here, in the neighborhood school, he was enrolled, with nine others, in an English class. Tony enjoyed these evenings for Mr. Swift, the teacher, was a young man and knew how to make prosaic translations a real challenge.

Working in the factory by day, and going to school by night, kept Tony well-occupied and happy as long as the snow lay on the ground and the biting winds buffeted him about whenever he



ventured outdoors. He had never seen snow on his native Sao Nicolau, one of the fourteen islands which form the crescent shaped archipelago, Ilhas de Cabo Verde, just off the western coast of Senegal, Africa. Once he had seen hail, huge pellets which cut and stung, but melted as soon as they struck the rocky ground; but he was not used to snowstorms and protracted periods of cold weather, so he found life in New Bedford much more agreeable indoors than out. But when the sun woke him earlier and earlier, the snow began to melt, and the cold, forbidding waters of the harbor turned a sparkling blue, he began to chafe at his confinement. Instead of going straight home from the factory, he began to haunt the waterfront where whaleships, tied to the docks and anchored offshore, were being overhauled and outfitted to put to sea.

The *Pedro Varela* was one of these and Tony went to the shipping office of Antone Sylvia, agent, to ask for a berth. He signed on and was told to report for duty in three days.

On the twenty-seventh of April, 1910, he went aboard the *Pedro Varela*, lying at anchor outside the harbor. She looked smart and trim with her gleaming white paint and shining masts. Tony did not know that she was over fifty years old, once a U. S. Revenue Cutter.

The officers and boatsteerers of the *Pedro Varela* were all Portuguese. So were four crewmen. The rest were a motley gang of Americans, small-time criminals, a self-confessed murderer, a drug addict and peddler, and a burglar. All were greenhorns. Whaling was no longer a thriving business and no longer attracted stalwart young New Englanders, eager to work their way aft to a master's berth.

Schooner PEDRO VARELA                      Antonio C. Corvelho, Master

April 26th, 1910

#### CREW LIST

Name	Birthplace
1. Joao Manuel Cabral - 1st Mate	St. Nicholas
2. N. A. Martin - 2nd Mate	Brava, C. V. I.
3. Nicholas P. Cruz - 3rd Mate	St. Nicholas
4. Joaquim F. Lopes - "Marjot"	St. Nicholas

5. Miguel Cabral - Boatsteerer (1)	St. Nicolas
6. Daniel de Vivieros " (2)	St. Nicolas
7. August Camello - Cook	St. Nicolas
8. Antonio M. Cabral - Boatsteerer (3)	St. Nicolas
9. Christopher Dunellow - "Chris"	Fayal
10. Antonio Fortes - "Tony"	St. Nicolas
11. George Lewis - "Lou"	St. Eustatius
12. William D. Albert - "Billy"	Sioux Falls
13. John W. Haddock - "Fishy"	Fall River
14. Jose D. Livrament - "Joe"	St. Nicholas
15. Charles H. Mitchell - "Happy"	London, England
16. Edward Whillga - "Red"	Nashua, N. H.
17. Charles Turner - "Turner"	Cambridge, Mass.
18. George White - "Whitey"	Boston, Mass.
19. Jeremiah McCarthy - "Jerry"	Somerville, Mass.
20. Walter Hammond - "Doe"	Stonington, Conn.
21. William Baxter - "Bill"	Stonington, Conn.

Early in the morning of April twenty-eighth, the *Pedro Varela* weighed anchor, headed for the Hatteras Grounds. The tug which had towed her out into the bay returned to New Bedford. The men aboard the whaleship stowed the heavy anchor chains, coiled the halyards, and scrubbed the decks.

Late in the afternoon, all hands were ordered aft. Captain Corvelho studied his crew as he pointed out to them the need for cooperation and consideration for others in the close quarters of shipboard life; the necessity for explicit obedience, and the punishment which would inevitably follow any disobedience, or any slackness in the execution of orders. Then the three mates chose their boat crews, selecting the experienced men first. Tony was in the third mate's crew.

Life aboard the whaleship settled into routine. As most of the crew were greenhorns, they had to be taught the terms which designated parts of the ship, the spars, the yards, the sails, and the lines, as well as the names of all the whalecraft, so that orders could be executed correctly and promptly. A mistake could mean the loss of a whale - or the loss of a ship. The men had to be taught how to handle the whaleboats, to row, to paddle, and to pull the boat close to a fast whale. When the *Pedro Varela* was becalmed,

the boats were lowered to give the men practice in these arts. There was no spare time while greenhorns were "getting their sea legs and learning the ropes."

By nightfall, the men were so tired that they crawled into their narrow bunks and fell asleep at once, even though many of them slept on pallets of straw. Their meals were monotonous and unappetizing, but working all day in the salt air discouraged finicky appetites. Breakfast was always hurried; a mug of coffee sweetened with molasses, a piece of hardtack and, possibly, a little hash. Dinner was a slab of salt beef, (often called "salt horse"), pieces of hardtack soaked in boiling water, and coffee. Supper was a cup of very strong tea, a slab of bread, and "scouse", salt horse and soaked hardtack, mixed and baked. The monotony was seldom broken and became more and more unbearable as the drinking water got worse and worse.

Drinking water aboard whaleships was never very good. Before sailing, the ground tier of casks was filled to provide water for several months, and to act as ballast. If the casks were new, the water tasted of the wood; if they had been used, the whale oil which had been in them lent its disagreeable flavor to the water. Even tea and coffee could not completely disguise this unwelcome taste, and grumblings among the crew were constant.

The *Pedro Varela* cruised the Hatteras Grounds for several weeks without raising any whales. The weather continued to be bad, with high winds and rough seas, so Captain Corvelho ordered a course almost due east, which would bring the vessel to the Western Grounds. Here whales were reasonably plentiful and at the welcome cry, "Blow! Blow!" all three boats were lowered.

In the third mate's boat, the mast was stepped, the leg-of-mutton sail hoisted, and the boat beat to windward until the whales were only about a half mile away. Then the sail was lowered, the mast unstepped, and the men were ordered to use their paddles so that no noise would frighten away the whales as the boat approached.

As they drew near to the whale, the mate swung the boat in behind it and told the boatsteerer to stand. Dropping his paddle, the boatsteerer jammed his thigh into the "clumsy cleat" and

picked up the harpoon, just as the whaleboat struck the whale, between hump and flukes. At the mate's command, "Give it to him," the man in the bow darted the harpoon into the broad back and, quickly seizing the second harpoon, placed that iron close to the first one. "Fasto!" he shouted, as the mate ordered the men to ship their paddles and man the oars. The whale humped for a dive and the whaleboat shot back at the cry, "Stern, all," - and none too soon, for the whale's great flukes rose into the air and then struck the sea resoundingly, - just where the whaleboat had been.

The line raced out of the tub and around the loggerhead as the whale sounded and then surfaced, pulling the whaleboat in its wake. After about twenty minutes, the whale's speed decreased. The harpooner and the third mate changed positions so the latter could drive his lance deep into the whale's side. The whale dove, smashing hard with his flukes. The whaleboat was too near to get out of reach so, three times, it was pulled in close to the whale's head to avoid the flailing tail. Then the mate drove in another lance, twisting and turning it deep in the whale's vitals. The surrounding water reddened and dozens of fins cut the surface, as the sharks gathered. The whale rolled over, dead.

By the time the third mate's boat reached the *Pedro Varela*, the men aboard the vessel had everything ready for cutting in and trying out the big whale. Everyone worked until the blubber was stripped from head to flukes and the huge slabs were piled on deck, waiting to be consigned to the tryout kettles. The head of this whale was too large to be taken aboard, so it was secured alongside and buckets on long poles were lowered into the case and brought out, brimming with oil, which was poured directly into hogsheads on deck. Fifteen barrels of spermaceti, the very best oil, used for making candles and as the finest lubricant, were bailed from the whale's head, which was then cut loose to be devoured by the waiting sharks.

Then the regular four-on, four-off routine was reestablished, and yellow flames leaped from the tryworks all night, as the trying out continued. The hot oil was emptied from the pots into the cooling tanks and then pumped by hand into the casks below decks. This whale made sixty-four barrels of sperm oil.

Before the decks were cleared, the *Pedro* ran into torrential rains and gale force winds and was forced to heave to. Darkness, heavy rain, and towering waves had limited the lookout's vision to little more than 100 feet, when he saw a large, full-rigged ship bearing down upon him. Closer and closer she came, driving before the wind. Before the startled watch could cry out, the ship passed astern of the *Pedro Varela*, much too close for comfort.

The little schooner rolled and thrashed through the night and most of the next day. Then the skies cleared and the *Pedro Varela* could get on with her whaling, with only occasional squalls to interrupt the even tenor of her days.

Storms were not the only excitement. One day, while all three boats were out and the third mate's boat was on a "Nantucket sleighride," the mate's boat fastened to a whale about 400 yards away. The whale came up right under the boat, hurling it high in the air. Men, gear, and pieces of the boat flew in all directions. The third mate killed his whale, and then went to the rescue of his shipmates who, being experienced whalers, were keeping afloat by hanging on to the wreckage. Men, gear, and the wrecked boat were picked up by the other two whaleboats and, by that time, the ship had worked up near them, and took them aboard.

A different kind of excitement prevailed when the watch sighted the bark, *Morning Star* Captain Valentine Roza, of New Bedford. He and Captain Corvelho would have a gam, and the crews of the two ships would have a chance to see new faces and hear new tales.

The third mate's boat and crew took Captain Corvelho to the *Morning Star*, while that vessel's first mate and crew visited the *Pedro Varela*. Tony and his shipmates were impressed by the *Morning Star*, a large bark, carrying five boats. (Her tonnage was listed at 238, while the *Pedro Varela's* was 89.) The crew's quarters were much larger than those of the *Pedro Varela*, but were as crowded because the crew was so large. However, everything about the roomy bark seemed bigger and better to the crew of the little schooner. They understood that the dinner served them was unusually good, just as they knew that their cook would have served a better-than-usual meal to the visitors on the *Pedro Varela*. But the water was so much better than that aboard their vessel that it was mentioned many times. The crew of the *Morning*

*Star* said that their water had been bad until they put into Fayal with their first load of oil. There, when the oil had been discharged, they filled their casks with fresh water, a great improvement on that they had brought from New Bedford.

Most of the men knew that when the vessels lay alongside the wharves in New Bedford, they were overrun with rats. While in port, the rats found water ashore, but when the vessels put to sea, the rats had to search for it and they easily discovered the loose bungs on the water casks and scurried in - to drown, not improving the quality of the drinking water. This putrid water had always caused mutterings among the crew, but after the gam with the *Morning Star*, it seemed more unbearable.

Moreover, the *Pedro Varela* cruised the next two weeks, looking for whales that did not show. In the dogwatches, the Portuguese crewmen stayed by themselves, but every evening they heard the same complaints from the rest of the crew: no whales, monotonous deck duty, bad food and worse water. Some of them declared they would desert ship at the first port. (Maritime Law required whaleships to land at least once every six months, and the *Pedro Varela* had been out nearly that long.) Meantime, the food and water got worse.

The men decided to approach the captain. Hammond agreed to be spokesman, so he went to the poop deck to ask the mate to tell the captain that he wanted to speak to him. The crew had trailed along and stood in a group amidships, awaiting the outcome. The mate took one look at them and dashed for the captain's quarters. In seconds, the captain, the three mates and the boatsteerers, all armed, appeared on deck. The captain ordered the men forward. They obeyed, but Hammond stood his ground and delivered his complaint:

"We can't eat the food. The salt horse is rotten, the bread is full of kerosene oil, and the water stinks."

"Oh, it does, does it?" the captain replied, "Then you'll not get as much to holler about," and he put them on short rations: one cake of hardtack and one cup of water daily, for three days. Hammond was ordered to stand an additional watch at the mast head and the "mutinous dogs" were kept so busy that they had

no time to plan their next move until that night.

All the crew were disgruntled and hungry, and the ringleaders urged revenge. Some wanted to arm themselves with harpoons and lances and kill the officers, others favored desertion, and some proposed that they slack off their duties so no whales could be caught. They were dissatisfied, bitter, and potentially dangerous.

Then the *Pedro Varela* ran into the doldrums. For days and days, there was no breeze at all. They raised and captured more whales, so many, in fact, that the men grew more rebellious. Their resentment grew until the Fourth of July. As they talked about past celebrations, parades with flags flying and bands playing, some one said,

"We ought to ask Captain Corvelho to set the American flag. It's the Fourth of July." The request was made, but the captain not only refused to grant it, he had the Portuguese flag set instead.

That night was dark and starless, but dead calm, so the boat-steerer in charge of the "graveyard watch" had turned in and was sound asleep in the larboard boat. The black shadows, which crept out of the forecabin, spread over the starboard side of the deck. Now and then, there was a splash close to the whaleship, but on deck there were only indistinct shufflings. Suddenly, just at daylight, there was a tremendous clatter. The "shadows" had not been content with throwing overboard the harpoons, lances, bailers, skimmers, spades, and all the other whaling craft, but had smashed the windlass and shattered the tryworks, throwing overboard all the pieces they could move. They were making sure that no more whaling could be done aboard the *Pedro Varela* until after she had put into port for refitting. The commotion brought the captain and his officers on deck. A swift glance across the deck showed the havoc that had been wrought and its perpetrators. Captain Corvelho ordered the men in irons. He felt sure that Hammond was the instigator of the uprising, but he was not confined to the hold because he had a great gash on one leg, cut by a flailing ax during the night. The rest of the culprits were manacled and confined to the hold and the whaleship immediately headed for Fayal.

When Hammond's leg began to heal, he joined the others below

decks. Limited to one piece of hardtack and one cup of water daily, even with one meal every three days, the men in their cramped quarters below decks were always hungry and thirsty. They searched until they found a water thief to draw water from the casks. Then, with their knives, they dug at the thick head of the huge casks which held the hardtack until, hours later, they had made a jagged hole large enough to reach in and help themselves to hardtack. For several days, they ate and drank at will.

Even with Haddock and Hammond returned to duty, as they soon were, the *Pedro Varela* was short-handed. Tony and the other Portuguese had had no part in the mutiny, but Haddock and Hammond had to be watched carefully. These six, with the boatsteerers and officers, had to man the whaleship. She was nearly becalmed, through alternate days of brilliant sun and drizzling rain. A few whales were raised and two were captured, but there was no way of hoisting the blubber aboard, so the spermaceti was bailed from the heads and the whales were abandoned to the sharks. This was most unprofitable, so Captain Corvelho made all possible sail to speed their journey to Fayal.

About 200 miles from their destination, they ran head-on into a three-day storm. When the storm subsided, the *Pedro Varela* was 600 miles from Fayal and it was six weeks before land was sighted again.

Approaching the harbor, the *Pedro Varela* got too close to the headlands and started drifting toward the rocks. Because of the useless windlass, the anchor could not be used to hold the vessel from the rocks, so two whaleboats were lowered and spent the afternoon towing the *Pedro Varela* into a safe position, where she could pick up the wind and sail into Fayal Harbor.

Here the mutineers were supplied with water for the first bath they had had in months, and were outfitted with clean clothes. They were then sent ashore to be locked in the local prison, until the three American battleships, due in from a Mediterranean cruise of duty, arrived in Fayal. Then they were to be transferred to the brig of one of those and taken to the United States for trial.

They were tried in the Federal Court in Baltimore on charges of mutiny on the high seas. This uprising was unique in the annals



of maritime law for, technically, the affair on the *Pedro Varela* was not a mutiny because the men did not refuse orders, did not attack officers, and did not plan to take the ship by force. The Federal judge sentenced them to the Federal Prison at Atlanta, but a few weeks after they began their sentences, they were unconditionally released.

Refitted, and with windlass and tryworks repaired, the *Pedro Varela* left Fayal, near the end of September. Ten new crewmen had been shipped to take the place of the mutineers and, when the schooner was well out to sea, a young stowaway was brought on deck. He was Joseph Gomes, brother of the young lady to whom Captain Corvelho was engaged. Gomes was seasick for months, but he managed to do the tasks assigned him and was willing and eager to learn. All hands welcomed him to the forecabin, a few months later, when he was made a seaman.

The *Pedro Varela* had a good season and the days sped by uneventfully. Sighting a small island in the middle of the South Atlantic, Captain Corvelho hove to and sent a couple of boats ashore to gather turtle eggs. The isle was rocky, with almost no vegetation, but the crew filled several large boxes with turtles' eggs, and captured several turtles which were kept alive aboard-ship until they were to be eaten.

As long as the supply lasted, the cook served one meal of turtle every day and the men found it a very welcome change from "salt horse." Some of the eggs were eaten "fresh," but, as many of them were very rotten, most were used by the cook. He would stand by the rail, crack an egg, catch it in a bowl if it were good, or if not, skillfully let it slide over the rail.

By late March, the ship, full of oil, arrived at Barbados to recruit and then sailed to Dominica to ship her oil home. Arriving at Dominica, two whaleboats were lowered to tow the *Pedro Varela* to the mother ship, *Richard W. Clark*, of New Bedford. Casks were lifted from the schooner to the *Clark* by a boom on the latter. When all the oil was unloaded, new casks, filled with clothes, boots and hardtack, and barrels of molasses and corned beef were hoisted from the *Clark* onto the *Varela*. Then all the casks were stowed in the hold and chocked, so they could not possibly roll.

When all was in order, the *Pedro Varela* sailed to the Western Grounds. Three months later she was full, so Captain Corvelho decided to go in to Fayal to leave part of the oil. The second week of July, he put ashore 200 barrels of oil, to be shipped to New Bedford. Then he cruised toward Flores, his native island.

Captain Corvelho and young Gomes went ashore to visit their families while the ship cruised about for a week. Then a whaleboat was sent ashore to bring the men back to the *Pedro Varela*, headed for Fayal to discharge cargo.

On the way to the Cape Verde Islands from the Azores, the *Pedro Varela* sighted the whaling brig, *Sullivan*, with all four boats down. As the ships came within hailing distance, Captain Hagerty signaled that he wanted the *Varela* to "mate," that is, to send out boats to help catch the whale, share and share alike. The chase proved to be arduous and unprofitable. At one time, five of the whaleboats were fast to the whale, but he was wild. He tore through the sea so fast that the whaleboats just hit the crest of the waves. The other crews rowed with all their might to try to overtake their comrades, but could not do so until the whale slowed down. The *Varela's* mate struck the whale so "his chimney was afire," that is, he spouted blood through his blow hole. But this did not stop him, as he turned and started back toward the *Sullivan*. The fourth mate from the *Sullivan* threw a lance, the whale cut the bow of his boat right off, and the fourth mate went into the sea. Another *Sullivan* boat picked him up and went to the rescue of his mates. The whale had eight harpoons in him, had been shot a number of times, and had towed four whaleboats most of the afternoon, but just wouldn't slow down or die.

At dusk, the boats were ordered to cut from the whale, but it was after ten o'clock before they were all aboard their vessels. The men couldn't cease talking about how clever that whale had been, never making the same move twice. He was what the whalers called a "rogue whale."

About three weeks later, the *Pedro Varela* reached Sao Nicolau and Tony, Joaquim, and Jose, as well as the boatsteerers, the mates, and the cook all had a chance to go ashore to see their families and friends.



Tony's liberty coincided with the Feast of Santa Cruz, celebrated annually on May third. Everyone took part in this gala event. The men butchered several cattle and cut the meat into family sized portions, which the women carefully cooked according to an age-old custom. Kitchens in the village were fragrant with the smell of the simmering meat and of freshly baked bread, large round loaves with delicately browned crusts. The food was taken to the church to be blessed by the priest and then was put into baskets, suspended from long poles, which two boys would carry across their shoulders. When all was in readiness, a procession was formed.

A young man, appointed by the priest, carried the crucifix. Behind him came the flag bearer and the musicians with drum, cymbal, and *pandeiro*. They were followed by a bevy of young girls in beautiful white lace dresses and a group of young men and boys, carrying the baskets of bread and meat. As they walked through the village, more and more people joined the march until, by the time they reached the large open field where long tables had been set in readiness, all the families for miles around were assembled. Everyone was given all he could eat of *sopa*, delicious bread and meat, over which was poured the rich spicy broth, served only on this occasion. When all were sated, the musicians struck up some lively music and old and young danced till they could dance no more.

At dusk, the villagers returned home to do their evening chores, humming and singing as they worked. Tony had had a wonderful day, but he had set his course and he was quite ready to return to his whaleship.

The next season, on the Western Grounds, the *Pedro Varela* filled early and was ready to sail for New Bedford, six weeks ahead of schedule. She was very short of water, as several casks had had to be pumped overboard to make room for the extra oil. Then the vessel was becalmed for several days. This made the water shortage acute, but the crew voluntarily rationed themselves. They were homeward bound and knew their plight would soon be over.

On the sixteenth of August, they passed *Hens and Chickens Lightship* and sailed through Buzzards Bay to New Bedford. The tug *Sherman* came out to tow them into the harbor. When the

doctor and the immigration officers had given the ship a clean slate, she was tied to Merrill's Wharf, where her oil would be discharged. The voyage was over and the crew was discharged.

The *Pedro Varela* had tied up at Merrill's Wharf, August 20, 1912. As soon as her cargo had been landed, and all necessary formalities connected with the voyage had been taken care of, Captain Corvelho sailed, by steamer, for the Azores, to claim his bride.

Tony again spent the winter in New Bedford, where he felt much more at home than he had when he landed there three years ago. He had no trouble getting a job, finding his way about, or finding companionship now, so he was busy and happy until signs of spring sent him hurrying to the waterfront to find another berth.

The *Pedro Varela* was sailing April 8th, under Captain Thomas MacKenzie, but Tony learned that Captain Corvelho had bought an interest in the bark, *Greyhound*, and was to be master of her on her next voyage. The *Greyhound* was over twice the size of the little schooner, *Pedro Varela*, so Tony decided to sail again with Captain Corvelho, but this time he was signed on as boatsteerer.

The *Greyhound* had much work to be done before she was ready to sail, so Tony spent his days supervising the refitting and the rebuilding of the tryworks. The tryworks were brick fireplaces in which hung huge pot-bellied kettles to be filled with great slabs of blubber. The hot fires, used to melt the blubber, were restrained by iron doors across the front of the fireplace. To keep the wooden deck from burning, these fireplaces were built over a brick and cement trough, which was kept full of water whenever the fires were lit.

The shipfitters completed the caulking, while the crew worked on deck until the new paint glistened and the masts shone like new. The *Greyhound* was ready to sail on Monday, May 5, 1913, and, on the afternoon before, the bark was open for inspection.

A Salvation Army Band played and sang hymns on the forward deck and Merrill's Wharf was crowded all afternoon with people coming to say goodbye to members of the crew and to wish the ship "greasy luck."

Early Monday morning, the *Greyhound* was towed out and her course was set for the Western Grounds. She was out a week before whale were sighted, but the first catch was an excellent one, a big bull. The season was quite good so, by mid-August, the ship was nearly full. Captain Corvelho headed for Flores where his bride joined the ship. It was beautiful weather and whales were numerous so the *Greyhound* was full when she anchored at Fayal, early in September.

After discharging and recruiting, she sailed for Sao Nicolau, on her way to the South Atlantic. As they neared the island, Captain Corvelho noted that the brig, *Viola*, and schooner, *Margaret*, were anchored in the harbor. This was unusual, but Captain Corvelho decided to follow suit. When the *Greyhound* was anchored, the captain, his wife, and most of the crew went ashore to join the officers and crews of the *Viola* and the *Margaret*.

Later in the evening, the barometer dropped sharply. A strong breeze sprang up and the vessels pulled at their anchors. The *Greyhound* and the *Viola* held, but the *Margaret* dragged closer and closer to the jagged rocks. The few men on the *Greyhound* managed, with great difficulty, to get a line aboard the *Margaret* and thus hold her away from the rocks, but it was an anxious night for all hands. Around daylight, the gale slackened, but did not abate until late in the afternoon. By then, everyone was once more aboard his own whaleship and preparations were made for an early start the next day.

The *Greyhound* had not gone far before she struck a dead calm. For several days all sails were set, but the bark made no headway as the sails just flapped idly. Then a lone whale spouted close by. He sounded and breached twice, making great waves which rocked the bark. Captain Corvelho ordered one boat lowered, "nice and easy - use paddles." The boat neared the whale and the boatsteerer drove two harpoons into him. As the whale took off, his tail flipped the bow of the whaleboat and the boatsteerer went high into the air and came down head first beside the boat. One of the crew held out his paddle and the boatsteerer climbed aboard. By that time, the other two boats had been lowered, had come into position, and all three were fast to the whale. He was a fine bull, making ninety barrels of oil.

That ended the jinx and the *Greyhound* had a good season. When they reached Dominica, they found not only the *Richard W. Clark*, but also the *Morning Star*, Captain Rose; the *Alice Knowles*, Captain Hagerty; the *Fairhaven*, Captain Gomes; the *Margaret*, Captain Mandly; the *Wanderer*, Captain Edwards; the *Carleton Belle*, Captain Sylvia; and the *Viola*, Captain Lewis. These men held many conferences while awaiting their turns to unload and refit.

The mate on the *Alice Knowles* was hospitalized and Captain Hagerty needed some one to take his place. He asked Captain Corvelho if he could spare Mr. Cruz, the second mate. It was so arranged, and young Gomes was made second mate on the *Greyhound*.

So the new year began aboard the *Greyhound*. A full moon shone in the clear sky above the Sargasso Sea. The water was smooth, the wind northwest, and the *Greyhound* on the starboard tack, was sailing by the wind. Suddenly a white squall appeared on the sea, but the crew of the *Greyhound* noted only that they had picked up considerable speed. Without warning, the bow of the ship rose up, up, up, and then dove right into the sea. The whole ship shuddered and trembled. A surging wall of water rushed back toward the quarter deck. All the men clung to the rigging, but the livestock on deck were all swept overboard, pigs squealing, sheep bleating, and hens squawking. Water rushed across the quarter deck, pouring through open doors and port-holes and out over the stern. All the livestock, which was to furnish meat for weeks, was gone; but, otherwise, all was well though very, very wet, aboard the *Greyhound*.

On the whole, spring fishing was good and it looked as if the *Greyhound* would be full when she kept her rendezvous with the *Clark* in August. This time the mother ship was to be at Las Palmas, in the Canary Islands. The authorities at Fayal had been charging the whaleships larger and larger harbor dues each season, so the New Bedford owners had changed their port of call.

In mid-June, another gale struck. The barometer fell rapidly and the wind velocity increased to well over eighty. The waves became enormous and broke over the *Greyhound* with great force. The ship had to tack, but as she did, the jib split into

ribbons with a tremendous roar. The maneuver was completed and the jib replaced, but the men who carried out the job had to be tied to the stay as the bark's bow dove into every wave. The storm was mercifully brief and subsided as fast as it had come up. No further gales assailed the *Greyhound* and, toward the end of July, she headed for the rendezvous with everything, including the cooking tanks and the try pots, full of oil, forty barrels more than on her last cruise.

For the next two years, the *Greyhound* followed this same course, winter fishing in the South Atlantic, and on the Western Grounds in the spring and fall. She put in at either Barbados or the Western Islands every three months to discharge oil and to recruit. But in September, 1916, she returned to New Bedford, having landed 2580 barrels of sperm oil.

Tony was glad to be back in New Bedford. War was raging in Europe and all shipping was hazardous. There were many U-boat scares and the whalships went on fewer and shorter voyages. However, the next August, the *Greyhound* left for the coast of Brazil. Captain Corvelho was master and Tony was once more a boatsteerer, one the captain knew to be dependable. He had some crewmen this voyage whom he despaired of ever making into whalemens; but in wartime, what can one expect?

A few days out of New Bedford, the lookout raised a pod of whales. All three boats were lowered. On the *Greyhound* there were only the captain and five men, one of whom was Brown, a promising lad who had been learning to "shoot the sun." The cook and the mess boy were working in the galley when they were attacked by two sailors. The captain, on the quarter deck, had his glasses trained on the whaleboats, off the starboard bow, when something made him turn - and just in time. Armed with an ugly looking knife, Brown was sneaking up behind him. The captain scrambled up the rigging, out of reach. Once there, he signaled for the boats to return. A quarter of a mile away, the mate's boat was fast to a whale, but he cut loose and returned, as fast as possible, to the ship. Approaching cautiously, the mate and most of his crew were on deck before the man taunting the captain realized he was no longer alone. The boat crew quickly overpowered the rebels, who were put in irons until the ship

reached Barbados. The cook had a severe gash on his forehead, but the captain and the mess boy were unharmed. The vessel fished its allotted three months before putting in at Barbados. The morning after their arrival, when the captain sent for the rebels to be brought on deck, they could not be found. They had disappeared, irons and all, without a trace. The local officials were notified and a house-to-house search of the island was instigated, but the rebels were never flushed out. They had not succeeded in getting control of the *Greyhound*, but they had made good their escape.

The next few months along the coast of Brazil in the *Greyhound* were uneventful. She reached New Bedford, June 23, 1918, having landed 750 barrels of sperm whale oil.

The first week of September, Captain Corvelho again took the *Greyhound* down the coast of Brazil and, again, Tony shipped as boatsteerer. The *Greyhound* was old and it was hard to get material and labor for repairs because the United States was now embroiled in World War I. The whalers tied up, or sailed as they were. The *Greyhound* sailed.

The season was an average one and the *Greyhound*, with 750 barrels of sperm oil to her credit, was bound home. She had been leaking the entire voyage, but off Bermuda she encountered a stiff gale and the pumps had to be manned, night and day. For three days the gale smote the little bark and the seams along the water line opened from stem to stern. It seemed that the vessel might founder at any moment. In the lee of Martha's Vineyard, Captain Corvelho ordered heavy chains wrapped around the hull, bow and stern. The men still manned the pumps constantly, but they were exhausted. Because of the heavy seas, they had had no hot meals, only hardtack and water, for three days. At last, August 22, 1920, they made New Bedford, a battered vessel and its exhausted crew.

The next year, the *Greyhound* was sold for a Brava Packet, so Tony signed aboard the *John R. Manter*, Captain A. J. Mandly. This voyage he was third mate when they left New Bedford, destination "Atlantic Ocean." They sailed in mid-March and returned August 9, 1921, with 500 barrels of sperm oil. This was a real "plum-pudding" voyage.

The following February, Tony shipped as third mate aboard the *Athlete*, Captain Mosher, of New Bedford. This schooner was listed at 96 ton, little larger than the *Pedro Varela*. Ten days out of New Bedford, a huge bull whale was taken and made fast alongside, ready for cutting in. It was Tony's job to make a hole in the blubber and pass the strap through it, so it could be hauled aboard the vessel. As the great slab of blubber was being raised, the vessel rolled and Tony's leg was caught between the blubber and the cutting stage. His leg was so badly broken that there was little the captain could do, except to keep him under sedation and get him to a hospital as fast as possible. He was taken to Fayal, where he remained in the hospital eight months. The bones in his leg had been cruelly shattered and tiny splinters came out, every now and then, for several years. But he had an excellent surgeon and, in the spring, he was able to walk with crutches, so he came back to New Bedford on a passenger ship, and has never been to sea since.

He settled in New Bedford and worked at the Wamsutta Mill. He again made his home with his godmother and, in 1924, he took her to spend the month of August on Martha's Vineyard. There he met Frances Araujo whose mother was Mrs. Britto's hostess. When Tony left Ponta da Vermelharia, fifteen years before, Frances had been a very small girl in the neighboring village of Preguica. Now she was a charming, vivacious young lady, who captured Tony's heart. They were married in 1925 and lived in New Bedford for a couple of years, but moved to Martha's Vineyard after their son, John, was born.

Tony worked as gardener on several of the large summer estates on the island. Later he served as custodian of the Tisbury School until 1964, when he retired at seventy-four.

Now, he and Mrs. Fortes live where she grew up in Vineyard Haven. Their son lives across the road and so their four grandchildren are frequent visitors. The house is warm and sunny and again, as during his first winter in America, Tony finds it pleasanter indoors than out. He sits by the sunny window and watches the children at play. Sometimes he thinks of the little village on Sao Nicolau, where one of his sisters still lives, but he does not wish to return there. He is glad that his son and his grandchildren are

Americans and have never known the hardships he endured as a youth.



A portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Antone Fortes taken in New Bedford shortly after their marriage.



Sometimes he relives his whaling days. When he goes to New Bedford, he can still find a few contemporaries who like to recall their voyages aboard the last of the whaleships, but all the whaleships are gone. And on the Vineyard, all the whalers are gone, except Antone Fortes at one end of the island, and Napoleon Madison at the other. Whaling, which was once the life and breath of Martha's Vineyard, is now a thing of the past.

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#### RESOURCES

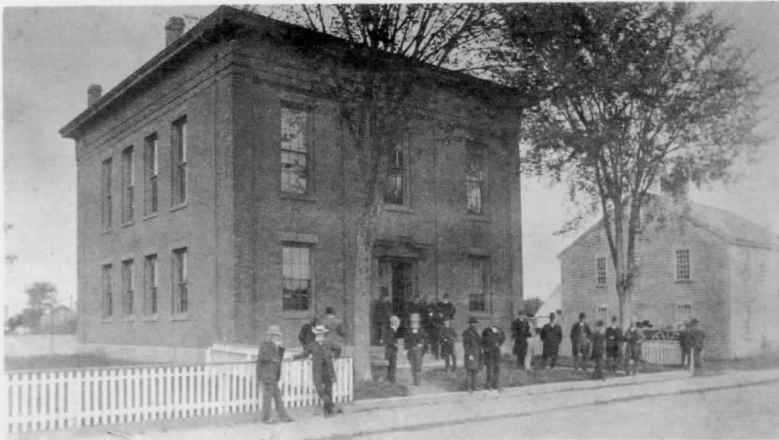
We are indebted to Mr. Antone Fortes for the basic facts of this account, to Mrs. Fortes for many anecdotes which she related herself or prompted Mr. Fortes to recall, and to Captain Donald LeMar Poole for technical advice, editorial assistance and constant encouragement.



Whalers *Greyhound*, and astern of her the *John R. Manta*.

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Court Day at Edgartown before the addition to the Courthouse was built. From the way the men are dressed, and from the size of the elm trees the date of the photograph must be about 1900. The elms were planted in 1861.



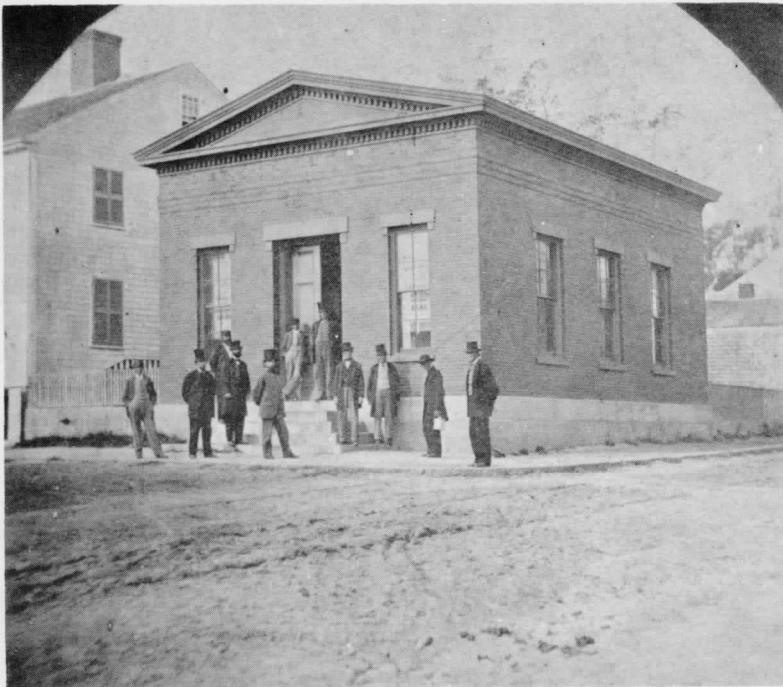
Edgartown Harbor from the Congregational Church steeple. The whaleship in the middle distance is being hove down for repairs.



Houses on South Water Street from the harbor side about 1890. The houses are, from left to right, the Mathew Mayhew House built in the early 1700's, the *old* Mayhew House built in 1697 and torn down in 1910. Then the *new* Mayhew House built in 1838 and which is the present Mayhew Parsonage. Beyond that is the Captain Grafton Collins House.



Four coasting schooners at Osborn's wharf with three whaleboats in the foreground. This photograph was taken some time in the 1890's. In the old days all bulk freight came to the Island either by schooner or barge.



The bank building at the Four Corners. It was incorporated as The Martha's Vineyard Bank by Dr. Daniel Fisher about 1850. During the Civil War it became the Martha's Vineyard National Bank. When the Martha's Vineyard National Bank was moved to Vineyard Haven in 1905, the old building at the Four Corners became the home of the newly incorporated Edgartown National Bank.



The Edgartown Yacht Club building at the foot of Main Street about 1910.



The North School. This old building, much altered is part of the present Carroll Apartments. Beyond the school on the left is the Sabre Fisher House. And behind the school is the old grist mill for which Mill Street was named. This photograph is old.



The roofs of the town looking south, with a glimpse of Katama Bay on the left and the Congregational Church on the right.



South Water Street. Over the hill was the road to Katama. This photograph was probably taken about 1905.



North Water Street in early spring when the way was muddy. The John Coffin House is in the foreground on the left and the Kelly House is the white house on the right. The photograph was taken by Richard Shute probably about 1890. Shute's caption on the back says "North Water Street to Hotel (both hotels.)"



Tower Hill perhaps about 1900. The unique Vose boathouse is on the left. The small yacht at anchor is a cutter.



The Edgartown Reading Room on what was formerly Commercial Wharf at the foot of Cooke Street. Because of the wharf, Cooke Street was once called Commercial Street.



The old South School on School Street. Before the new school was built on the Edgartown-West Tisbury Road high school was held here. The building is presently the home of the Edgartown Boys Club.



Caption on page 163





The former home of the Martha's Vineyard Chapter of the D.A.R. Now the Dukes County Savings Bank.

On the back of the photograph, which was probably taken about 1905, the ladies are all named. They are, front row, Mrs. William C. Nevin, Mrs. L. C. Wimpenny, Miss Annie Mayhew, Mrs. L. C. Bliss, Mrs. C. C. Nevin and Mrs. F. L. Clapp. Second row beginning with the lady on the extreme left, Mrs. William King, Miss Chloe Coffin, Miss Jennie Dunham, Mrs. Caroline Huxford, Miss Enid Yardell, Mrs. Fannie Deane, Mrs. Masury, Mrs. Holmes Smith, Mrs. Lena Wimpenny, and Mr. L. C. Bliss. It is not explained how Mr. Bliss got in the picture. Rear row, beginning with Mrs. Storms in the doorway, then Mrs. Huckins, Mrs. Susan Coombs, Miss Lizzie Marchant, Mrs. Flora Fisher, Mrs. Hinkson, Mrs. Chase, Mrs. Jernegan, Mrs. W. H. Cottle and Miss Susan Beetle.

The Edgartown Cornet Band. Unfortunately only a few of the members have been identified. The man with the bass drum is Charles B. Osborn. In the second row second and third from the left are Channing and Bill Nevin. Fifth from the left is Rodolphus Morgan. In the third row third from the left is John Wesley Mayhew, and almost directly behind him is Richard Shute, the leader of the band and Edgartown's master photographer.

Caption on next page.



## DCHS News

The Museum- Library of the D.C.H.S. has remained open afternoons of three days of the week, plus Saturday mornings, throughout the winter months. Scarcely has a day passed without visitors, mostly residents of the Island, occupied at the reading-tables, working on research projects.

As a research library, our resources have been utilized for a wide variety of subjects, among which have been: Shakespeare's presumed reference to our islands in *The Tempest*; Indian legends; Indian use of herbs; the Missionary Mayhews; maps of early settlements of Great Harbour and Holmes Hole; Indian and early American genealogy, Whaling ships, history of the island libraries, and beginnings of the Island as a summer resort. Inquiries through the mail have come from individuals looking up family genealogy, graduate students working on theses, and historical societies looking for information.

Our first accession in 1970 was a gift from the Essex Institute in Salem. It is a microfilm of the logbook from the *Linda Stewart* of Edgartown, during a whaling voyage from May 15, 1867 to April 7, 1870, with Frederick A. Smith, Master. This is the first of our microfilm collection on whaling logs. More are to be added soon.

In appreciation for the use of our records, Mark Vande of the Mass. Institute of Technology, has sent us a copy of his term paper: "An Investigation of the Plan and Dwelling Forms at the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Grounds". This paper was immediately put into use by another reader.

Miss Mary Wimpenney has begun transcribing notes taken years ago from conversations with her father, the late Theodore Sedgewick Wimpenney. From these notes she has already given us a list of whaling captains' houses, plus a list of whaleships owned in Edgartown, as her father remembered them. We hope that she will continue with this, as it represents a significant link with the past.

Our library has received the following additions to its shelves: Miss Frances McGaw at the Lagoon, has given us four volumes of the *Handbook of American Genealogy*, edited by Frederick Virkus.

For children, we have received two paper-bound books, donated by the author, entitled *Boys and Girls on Olde Cape Cod* and *Earning a Living on Olde Cape Cod*. These were written by Mrs. Marion Vuilleumier of West Hyannisport, and are used in the schools on the Cape. In similar vein, we have received from Miss Helen Sampson, a frequent visitor to the Island, *Braintree Our Town* by Elizabeth Metayer, depicting colonial days for the third-graders in Braintree.

Added to our old books and records, we now have an account-book of a store (1836-44) and in the same volume, a diary dated 1855-56, by a young school-teacher, Henry Robinson, who taught in Edgartown. This was sent by Edward C. Fales, dealer in old and rare books, Salisbury, New Hampshire.

Other small but valuable accessions include two old photographs of Gay Head, from Fred C. Alexander of Pocasset Heights; a prospectus of the Martha's Vineyard Institute (1880) from John M. Coward of Montclair, N. J. and an exquisite doll's commode, donated by Mrs. Gladys Pease Reid, to whom it had been handed down through four generations, from her great-great-grandmother.

From Cape Town, South Africa, we have received from Edna and Frank Bradlow, (1969 visitors to the Museum) co-authors of the book *The Alabama*, a quarterly bulletin of the South African Library, in which there is an article describing the capture of the Edgartown whaling ship, the *Ocmulgee*, by the confederate ship the *Alabama*.

We have been honored as one of the first historical societies to have whaling logbooks microfilmed for the newly incorporated Whaling and Marine Manuscript Archive located on Nantucket. Douglas C. Fonda, Jr., founder and president, spent several days with us, personally filming our collection. The contents of the archives will be available to qualified researchers, with permission of the owners. Any persons on the Island having logbooks in their possession are invited to register them on a list at the Society for future reference and microfilming.

We are pleased to announce that the D.C.H.S. is sponsoring the new book *Indian Legends of Martha's Vineyard*, written by our former curator Miss Dorothy Scoville, and published by the Martha's Vineyard Printing Co. It will be on our book shelves for sale. (\$2.50)

A new book, sponsored by the Felix Neck Wildlife Trust, *Exploring for Sea Shells on Martha's Vineyard* by Richards J. Heuer, Jr., will soon be on sale at Island bookstores. The book is particularly pertinent to Martha's Vineyard. It contains features not found in other shell guides, including where on the Island, on what beaches, and about the shores of which ponds, the various shells are most likely to be found. It also tells how the shells should be cleaned and stored, and of course, how the shells should be identified. It supplies a long-felt need just as did Nelson Coon's *Wildflowers of Martha's Vineyard*, and serves as a companion book to *The Fishes of Martha's Vineyard*, by Joseph B. Elvin, and *The Mammals of Martha's Vineyard*, by Allan R. Keith, published by the D.C.H.S. As Mr. Heuer has spent many summers on the Vineyard, it is truly an Island product. It is printed by the Martha's Vineyard Printing Company, soft-cover, 100 pages, \$3.50. The book is attractively illustrated by Holly Heuer, daughter of the author.

The Thomas Cooke House opens officially June 2nd. We look forward to seeing you this summer.

Margaret R. Chatterton  
Curator

## *Some Publications*

OF THE DUKES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ON SALE  
AT ISLAND BOOK STORES AND IN THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY.

*The Mammals of Martha's Vineyard* by Allan R. Keith. Illustrated, paper. 50¢. If ordering by mail please add 15¢ for postage.

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

*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.

*Our Enchanted Island* by Marshall Shepard. An attempt to prove that Martha's Vineyard is the Island of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Paper, 50¢.

*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.

*"Cap'n George Fred" Himself.* The autobiography of Captain George Fred Tilton of Chilmark. A new edition. Cloth. \$6.50

*Wild Flowers of Martha's Vineyard* by Nelson Coon. Illustrated. Paper \$3.95.

*An Introduction To Martha's Vineyard* by Gale Huntington. Paper \$3.50.