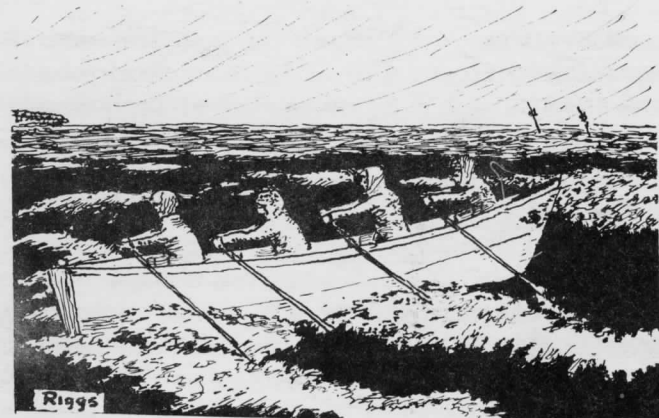


THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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



Whaling Song

The November Gale of 1898

Dragging - 1934

by
GALE HUNTINGTON

DCHS News

February 1971

Vol. 12, No. 3

DUKES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

ALFRED HALL *President*
 GALE HUNTINGTON. *Vice President*
 JOHN WORTH OSBORN *Treasurer*
 ADELINE H. RAPPAPORT *Secretary*

Council

LYDIA HOWES DREW *Term expires 1973*
 DOROTHY COTTLE POOLE *Term expires 1973*
 DORRIS S. HOUGH *Term expires 1972*
 NELSON COON *Term expires 1972*
 DR. SIDNEY N. RIGGS *Term expires 1971*
 B. JEAN SILVA *Term expires 1971*

MARGARET R. CHATTERTON *Curator*
 GEORGE H. CHASE *General Counsel*
 DOROTHY COTTLE POOLE *Historian*
 LYDIA HOWES DREW *Genealogist*
 DR. SIDNEY N. RIGGS *Cover Artist*
 D. OSBORN BETTENCOURT *Reference Librarian*
 GALE HUNTINGTON *Acting Editor, Intelligencer*

DUES

Active membership	\$5.00 annual dues
Active husband and wife membership	\$8.00 annual dues
Sustaining membership	\$10.00 annual dues
Life membership	\$100.00

PLEASE- give us your change of address promptly to save postage
 and insure arrival of every issue of the Intelligencer.

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

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

Copyright 1971
 by the
 Dukes County Historical Society, Inc.
 Edgartown, Massachusetts

Editorial Note.

With the exception of the DCHS News this issue of the
Intelligencer has turned out to be purely nautical, and perhaps
 a few words about the three papers are in order.

"Whaling Song" is as good a description of killing a sperm
 whale as has ever been written, even though it is a little technical
 in spots and very bloody. But whaling was a bloody and cruel
 and dangerous business. In early nineteenth century whaling,
 however the whale at least had a chance to fight back. That is not
 true of modern factory ship whaling where the whale is killed
 with a bomb which explodes in his body. Because of that so very
 efficient method, eight species of the ocean's whales, including
 the magnificent sperm whale are in danger of extinction. Two
 days before he was fired from office by Mr. Nixon, Secretary of
 Interior, Walter J. Hickel, to try to save the endangered whales,
 banned the importation into the United States of all whale oil
 and whale meat. Two days after he was fired Mr. Nixon cancelled
 that order. Interesting.

"Whaling Song" is by an unknown author. It was printed as a
 small pamphlet in New Bedford in 1831 where the author was
 identified only as a "foremast hand." All must agree that the
 foremast hand could write. The last stanza is anticlimax and could
 have been added at the publisher's request to help sell the pam-
 phlet. The Quaker whale oil merchants of New Bedford were not
 popular with seamen.

The only known existing copy of the pamphlet is in the Harris
 Collection of American Poetry at Brown University. The song as
 given here was taken from a much later newspaper reprint found
 pasted inside the front cover of the logbook of the bark *Josephine*,

of New Bedford, for a whaling voyage begun in 1905. The punctuation of that version has been slightly changed and simplified. The melody is "Moll Brooks" because the pamphlet says that the song should be sung to that tune.

"The November Gale of 1898" is taken word for word from a penciled account in the Society's archives. There is no hint of the author's identity. The November Gale is sometimes called "The Portland Gale" from the name of the paddlewheel steamer, *Portland* which left Boston in the teeth of the storm bound for Portland, Maine. She was lost with all on board - an estimated hundred and seventy lives - passengers and crew.

In all more than three hundred vessels and more than two hundred lives were lost in the storm. The wind at the Blue Hills Observatory registered only fifty-eight miles an hour. But surely at the Vineyard, judging from the damage it did to vessels all the way from East Chop to Dogfish Bar at Lobsterville, it must have reached almost hurricane force.

The illustrations showing the harbor the day after the blow are also from the Society's archives. They were taken by Richard G. Shute, long the Island's leading photographer. The following list of vessels sunk, ashore, or badly damaged at Vineyard Haven is from the *Vineyard Gazette* of December first, 1898.

Schooner	Leora M. Thurlow, sunk.
"	Annie A. Booth, dismantled.
"	E. J. Hamilton, ashore.
"	M. E. Eldridge, ashore.
Barkentine	Nellie M. Slade, ashore.
Schooner	James A. Brown, ashore.
"	Newburgh, British, ashore through the steamboat wharf.
"	James Ponder, Jr., ashore.
"	Canaria, British, ashore.
"	Lucy Hammond, ashore.
"	Abby K. Bently, ashore.
"	Bertha E. Glover, ashore on fire. (Lime cargo)
"	Sadie Willcutt, ashore.
"	Marion Draper, ashore.
"	J. D. Ingraham, ashore.

Schooner	Chas, E. Raymond, ashore.
"	Quetay, British, ashore.
"	Winnie Lawry, ashore.
"	Nellie Doe, ashore.
"	E. G. Willard, ashore, burned. (Lime cargo)
"	Edith McIntyre, ashore.
"	William Todd, sunk.
"	Carita, British, ashore.
"	Flora Condon, dismantled.
"	Hattie M. Howes, dismantled.
"	Tay, British, dismantled.
"	Rondo, dismantled.
"	Pafetta, British, waterlogged and badly damaged.
"	Georgie, British, bowsprit gone.
"	E. Waterman, dismantled.
"	Delta, British, injured in collision.
Barges	Falcon, Byssus and Beaver, sunk, crews saved.

"Dragging - 1934" was found recently with a number of other old manuscripts when the acting editor's wife asked him to please clean out the eaves. It is given here with no changes, and it is hoped that the readers of the *Intelligencer* may find it interesting as giving a picture of dragging in a small launch thirty-six years ago, in the days of the great depression. The paper also shows that the results of overfishing were well understood even as long ago as that. The yellowtails have managed to survive to the present, but with large fleets of Russian trawlers using small mesh nets and fishing close off our shores, their prospects for the future look dim.

The paper seems to have been written with the Invitation Issue of the *Gazette* in mind. But if so it was never used. Perhaps a few words about some of the people named in the account should be given here.

Tom is the author's father-in-law, Captain Thomas T. Tilton, of Vineyard Haven. He retired from active commercial fishing a few years ago at the age of seventy-five. Alice was Tom's wife and the baby is Mrs. Erwin Lowe of Vineyard Haven who now has babies of her own. Alton is Captain Alton Tilton, Tom's brother, who is

still engaged in commercial fishing, as is George Fisher who was then his mate.

Les, whose place the author took for that trip, was Leslie Tilton, Tom's elder son. He was drowned a few years later when he was fishing as captain of his own boat in a still unexplained accident. The boat was never found, nor was the body of Les' mate. Les' body was found, brought up in the net of another dragger.

The Vincent brothers were high line draggers of that period. Kelly Chase of the little *Vega* later became Tom's mate and was actively fishing until a few years ago. Sam Cahoon's fish market in Woods Hole has long since been sold, and the space it occupied is now part of the Steamship Authority's property.

Whaling Song

But where it lies? Why blast my eyes You've of-ten heard I'll
pledge my word of what they call Ja - pan, boys, I'll
let them tell who can, boys. I've been that way but
still can say I've on - ly formed the no - tion Ja -
pan is found some-where a-round the North Pa-ci-fic O-cean.

But where it lies? Why blast my eyes
You've often heard I'll pledge my word
Of what they call Japan, boys.
I'll let them tell who can, boys.
I've been that way but still can say
I've only formed the notion
Japan is found somewhere around
The North Pacific ocean.

But never mind 'twas on the wind
In almost unknown seas, lads
We stood, which blew if logs were true
A four or five mile breeze, lads.
Our mastheads manned and every hand
In genuine train for whaling
While for a bit we feasted it
On cold salt junk regaling.

When from the main was heard the strain
With joy to whalemens frouth, sirs,
Sung out as loud as common cloud
Would thunder, "There's white water!"
As quick as thought the sound is caught
On deck springs up the captain,
And "Where away?" is heard to say
While silence all are wrapt in.

"Upon our lee two points or three
Abaft our larboard beam, sir,"
Cried he aloft in voice so soft
You'd think 'twas penguin's scream, sir.
"And how far off?" in voice so rough,
"Is what you've got your eyes on?"
The captain cries. The man replies
"Quite, sir, on the horizon."

"You worsted head," the captain said.
"Up helm, hard up, you jackass!
"Flames take it all. You steward clear.
Sail, sail, and bring my spyglass.
I'll up and see what it may be
While you the yards may square in,"
He tells the mate with joy elate
The noise to have a share in.

"Now forward there, jump up and square
The yards," the mate is bawling,
"My men, men? I wonder when
You'll answer to my calling."
We up and haul, meantime they bawl

Aloft, "There! Keep her steady."
And down below again we go
To be for lowering ready.

Across the tide we gaily glide
A fine breeze on our quarter.
We're not deceived, for now relieved
Aloft sings our, "White water."
And hark, the strain from fore and main
Is heard of, "There she breaches."
Aloft some run to see the fun.
Some stay to hear the speeches.

"Now there they blow," and "There they go,"
And "There she blows," they're bawling.
"Get ready boats," in alto notes
Meantime the mate is calling.
"There blackskins it. Lop tail fins it,"
And Kipler humps," they bellow.
A landsman there would surely swear
That half the crew was mellow.

"And there go flukes!" With eager looks
We mark the way they head, sir.
We've neared them half and one would laugh
To hear the odd things said, sir.
Some dreamed last night and dreamed aright
Of whales and blood and corpses.
Old bungs with glee declares that he
Dreamed too, about truck horses.

And round the boats you'll hear the notes
Of all the main hatch gentry,
And old Nick n'er was busier
When typhoons are most plenty.
Their craft they view, their tubs they slew,
'Twould set the whales a-quaking
The half to know of what a row
The boatsteerers are making.

And, lo, again the whales are seen.
"Port helm," the captain sings out.
"Port helm," all cry, till the reply
"Port helm," the helmsman sings out.
"How lead you now?" He answers how,
And there is bid to keep her
And not to stray to flames away
Like some old bothering sleeper.

But fair and soft he's gone aloft
Who'll give it out in style-o.
"Why, Captain, see, that whale can be
Scarce off the ship a mile-o,
See, there she blows, and there she goes
Ahead, too, like vexation."
The captain says, "And pray where is
This running botheration?"

"Why here, sir, here. Why can't you see?
Just on the larboard bow, sir."
"Why that one is," the captain says
"A bothering little cow, sir.
But look out there! Those soldiers are
Much better worth our taking.
By Jove, I see their humps," says he,
"They're scarce a ripple making."

"That's right old sogs, lie, lie like logs!
I'm thinking you'll not far get.
Ah, blow it out! I'll change that spout
To blood as thick as tar, yet.
Thus threatens he till bid to see
All things got clear for lowering.
And then the call of "Mainsail haul!
Snug up!" he gives out roaring.

"All hands on deck! Nor for God's sake
Move briskly, men, if ever.
The whales in sight are slow as night
A better chance ye'd never.

Stand by once more. Brace up the fore
And mizzen yards, and luff there.
Well. Well I say. Belay, belay!
You're braced up sharp enough there.

"Your cranes all swung?" "aye, aye!" each tongue
On board the ship replying.
"Then lower all!" Each davit fall
Through glowing hands is plying.
"Let go!" "All gone" "Haul up! Down, down!
Out oars and spring together.
Give us fair play and we'll today
At least one soldier weather."

Four boats - our pride - together glide
Along the sunny main, sir.
Where'er they roam the sparkling foam
Bedecks the watery plain, sir.
In generous strife, like things of life
They're bounding o'er the billows,
And beauty bright would own the sight
Worth all her flowers and willows.

And now the power of every oar
Is felt more swift propelling
Each gallant boat. And see, the spout
Is just beyond them swelling.
The sparkling spray points out the way,
The humps gleam o'er the ocean.
While every view new nerves the crew
And gives each boat new motion.

"Pull, men! For, lo! See there they blow,
They're going slow as night, too.
Pull. Pull you dogs! They lie like logs.
Praise be! They're headed right, too."
Then each who steers his crew off cheer
While with judicious glance, sir,
Each marks his way upon his prey
To unperceived advance, sir.

"The chance is ours!" the mate now roars.
"Spring! Spring! Nor have it said, men
That we could miss a chance like this
To take them head and head, men.
There's that old sog lies like a log.
Spring, lads, and show your mettle.
Strain every oar. Let's strike before
He'll gally, mill or settle."

And so it is. The chance is his.
The others peak their oars, now.
From his strained eyes the lightning flies
And like a lion he roars, now,
"Pull, pull, my lads, why don't you pull?
For God's sake pull away, men.
Hell's blazes pull! But three strokes more
And we have won the day, men.

"Stand up there forward! Pull the rest.
Hold water! Give it to her!
Stern all, stern all. God damn it heave
Your other iron through her!
We're fast, we're fast. Stern all, give way!
Here, let me come ahead, men.
There. Peak your oars. Wet line, wet line.
Why, bloody zounds, you're dead men!"

The monster struck with fin and fluke
High high o'er their heads sends flying
The foaming brine. While out the line
Yet slack springs, stop defying.
A turn is caught, and now the boat
With force resistless sped, sir,
Ever humming while each flake drawn out
Spins round the loggerhead, sir.

But all in vain he cleaves the main
In vain the ocean lashes.
Still in the wake his struggles make
Onward impetuous dashes

His fearless foe, prepared to throw
The lance and quench its gleaming
In the warm tides that from his side
In crimson current's streaming.

Next he rounds to and makes as though
Both hope and life had failed him,
But no. That spout comes roaring out
Clear as though nothing ailed him.
And more, observe with graceful curve
He now from out the ocean
Rounds his huge length, renews his strength
And with majestic motion.

High o'er their heads his huge flukes spreads.
And though in blood now reeking
Down headlong goes from his fierce foes
In flight a refuge seeking
Deep 'neath the waves where pearly caves
Resplendent as the morn, sir,
With echoes ring as mermaids sing
And Triton winds his horn, sir.

For aid! For aid, a sign is made,
Hands wave and hats are shaking
For now their spoil is coil on coil
Their line like lightning taking.
Vain all their force to check his course,
Deep, deep and deeper sounding
Till scarce can float that joyous boat
Late o'er the billows bounding.

Nor vainly made that sign for aid.
One boat their danger heeding
Across the deep the rowers sweep
And every sail is speeding,
And now 'longside is seen to glide
And now her line to heave them
And it they take while their last flake
Is menacing to leave them.

Their trusty line forced to resign
The second's boat has taken.
Her line in turn begins to burn
Though soon their hopes awaken
For lighter now she heaves her bow
From out the waves around her.
And less the strain that to the main
As if fast anchored bound her.

"He's gone his length. He's spent his strength.
He'll soon be up to spout, men.
Then cheerily your energy
In unison lay out, men.
Haul one haul all, together haul,
See! See he's giving back line.
Stick overboard nor chance afford
Of getting foul your slack line.

The boat moves slow. For far below
Where deep sea lead ne'er sounded,
Though immense, that line tense
With its own weight is rounded.
Untired they toil til coil on coil
Their own line all on board, sir,
The first is to its own boat's crew,
The crew made fast, restored, sir.

With joy again they heave the main
As now with rapid motion
Their unseen prey pursues his way
Beneath the face of ocean.
And hauling still their practised skill
Soon marks the course he's steering
And from the line detects each sign
He gives of reappearing.

Till from the deep with mighty leap
High and high he breaches
So strongly sped his scarred grey head
High as the topmast reaches,

And like a rock with mighty shock
From mountain height descending
Loud thunders he upon the sea,
Ocean with ether blending.

And hark once more that lengthened roar
From out his spout hole gushing,
His breath long spent now finds a vent
Like steam from boiler rushing.
And see his blood the azure flood
Again with crimson dyeing,
While on the wave as if he'd brave
His foe, he now is lying.

His struggles cease. But short the peace
That to him now is given.
For see ahead, like arrow sped,
A boat toward him is driven.
His die is cast, she too is fast
Two more harpoons now gore him
And following fast that last harpoon
The lance is gleaming o'er him.

No feeble force directs its course
No careless aim is taken,
The fatal shaft sinks to its haft
And his vast frame is shaken.
Again he cleaves the foaming waves
Again the billow lashes,
But short his flight for now in fight
Fierce on his foes he dashes,

Hard on he drives. "Pull for your lives!"
And o'er the billows leaping
The boat swift sped just clears his head
As on resistless sweeping
With flukes well plied the foaming tide
He heaves in wild commotion
While far around the blows resound
And roars the troubled ocean.

Writhing with pain he mills again.
And now the turmoil ended
Prone on his back the mad attack
Renews, with jaws extended.
His tusks he shows two horrid rows
Like harrow's teeth projecting -
Once brought to bear no chance was there
Of that light boat protecting.

So wide the space that one might place
Between those jaws expanded
Boat, oars and men, scarce even then
Were the whole space demanded.
A moving cave, a living grave
Terrific yawns to seize them.
Nor skill nor strength a half boat's length
From the dread danger frees them.

Unequal fight. His matchless might
Unwieldy naught avails him
Against his foes in combat close
And the keen lance assails him.
And now his blood a purple flood
From out his spout hole gushes.
And far and wide the foaming tide
Encrimsoned, round him blushes,

A savage sight, though with delight
And boisterous shoutings greeted.
And now close on him passive grown
Both boats with thrusts repeated
Unsated yet more fiercely set
Deep in his heart their lances,
While shivering, he upon the sea
Scarce his own length advances.

The combat's o'er for see the gore
A torrent each breath doubles
Fresh from his heart with fitful start
From out his spout hole bubbles.

A crimson flood a sea of blood
Unmingled, frothy, reeking
Bathes his vast sides as on he glides
Some spot of refuge seeking,

To end his woes. For now the throes
Of death his frame are shaking
And mad with pain he scours the plain
His dying circle taking.
His rapid way the blood-stained spray
In cloudless sunshine gleaming
Marks far and wide high o'er the tide
A crimson radiance streaming.

One boat alone within that zone
Of blood impetuous dashes
Half his head, as o'er it spread
The sundered billow splashes
While by her sides the foaming tides
Above her gunwales curling
Rush to her wake, convolve and break
In countless eddied whirling.

With giant force his spiral course
In lessening circles winding
Like serpent's folds their prey still holds,
From death no refuge finding,
Till spent at length with his last strength
From out the wave he breaches
And falls fin out, while many a shout
From out the billow reaches

With deafening din, as falls that fin,
And death that jaw relaxes.
The glad huzza a wild hurrah
More loud and louder waxes.
"Dead, dead," they cry as to the eye
The lance applied, discloses
Of life no spark, the unerring mark
That he in death reposes.

O'er his vast bulk as o'er a hulk,
Upon the waves extended
The billows play, and fling their spray
With oozing blood still blended.
The black flag flies. The ship descries
From far the well known sign, sir,
And toward their prey fast ploughs her way
Across the foaming brine, sir.

And soon she lies longside her prize
With headyards back, while gliding
Fast down its tall mast
The topsail fast is sliding.
The headline's thrown. The buoy has shown
Its place. And round the small, sir,
The ponderous chain clanks till its strain
Clenches, securing all, sir.

If old George Fox knew half the knocks
We get in getting oil, sirs,
The scanty fare, the sleepless care,
The danger and the toil, sirs,
And knew, too, what his friends have got
To be where all are freemen,
I'm thinking he would start to see
A Quaker cheat a seaman.

The November Gale of 1898

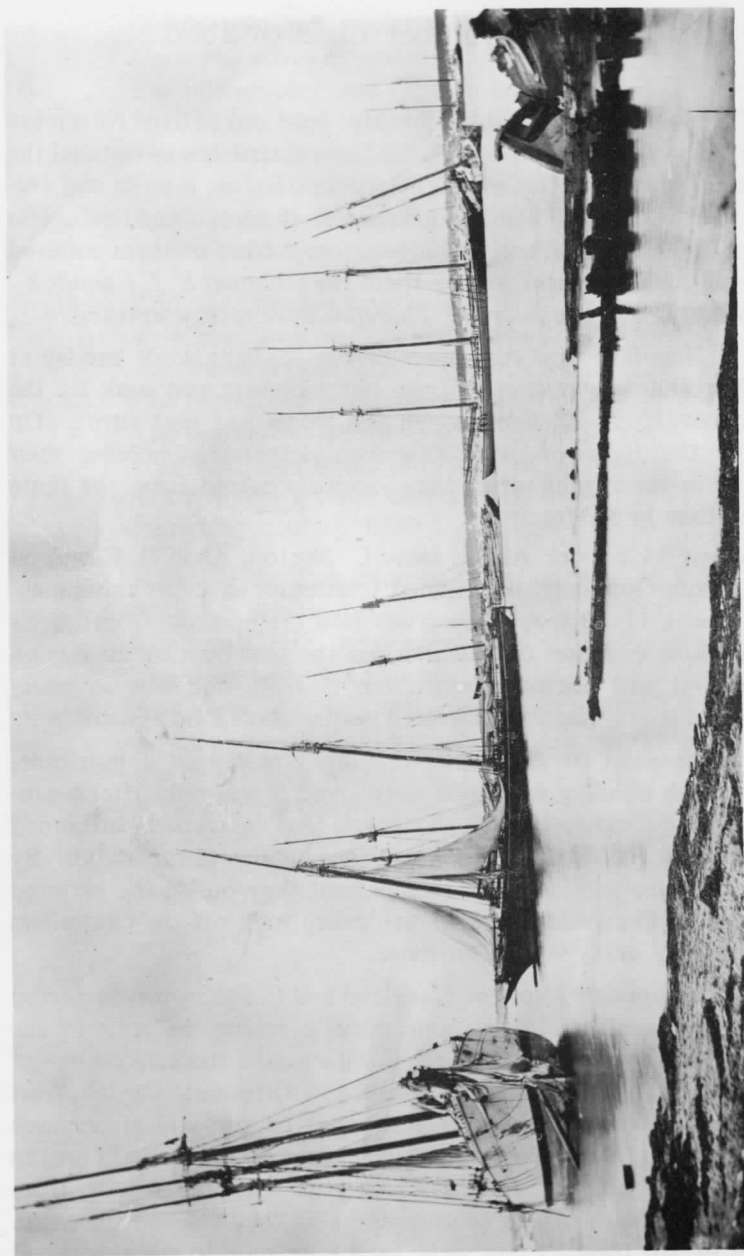
The storm of Saturday and Sunday, 26th and 27th of November 1898 is well known as one of the fiercest that has devastated the coast of Massachusetts within fifty years. Before it set in and during the early hours of its blowing many coasters sought refuge in Vineyard Haven Harbor, and a large proportion of them suffered severely, while several, among them the schooner *E. J. Hamilton*, *Annie A. Booth* and *Leora M. Thurston* were totally wrecked.

The *Hamilton* was run down before daylight while she lay at anchor and was wrenched from her moorings and sunk by the schooner *M. E. Eldridge* which the storm had sent adrift. On board the *Hamilton* were five men desperately holding their places in the rigging when they were discovered from the shore some time in the forenoon.

About 11 o'clock A. M., Isaac C. Norton, Alvin H. Cleveland and Frank Golart, Jr. determined to attempt to rescue those men, and about 11:30 they pushed out into the breakers from Luce's beach in a common dory which was the best boat obtainable although it had drifted ashore from a wreck and was so badly damaged that it had to be repaired before they could embark in it.

The tempest at this time amounted nearly to a hurricane, laden with blinding snow and sleet. And it was only after a prolonged and almost superhuman struggle that the rescuers succeeded in reaching the wreck which lay on the east side of the harbor. By dint of brave and judicious management they pulled the battered little dory alongside and without mishap took off the five sailors whom they safely landed on shore.

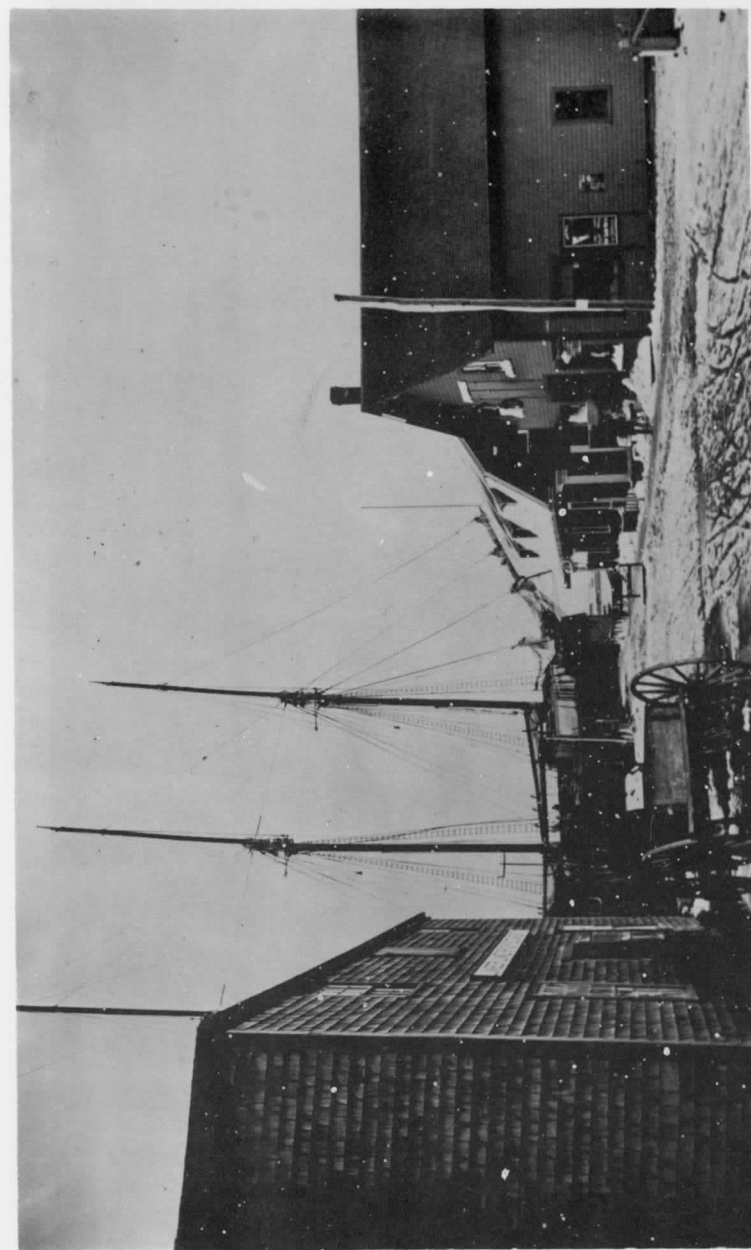
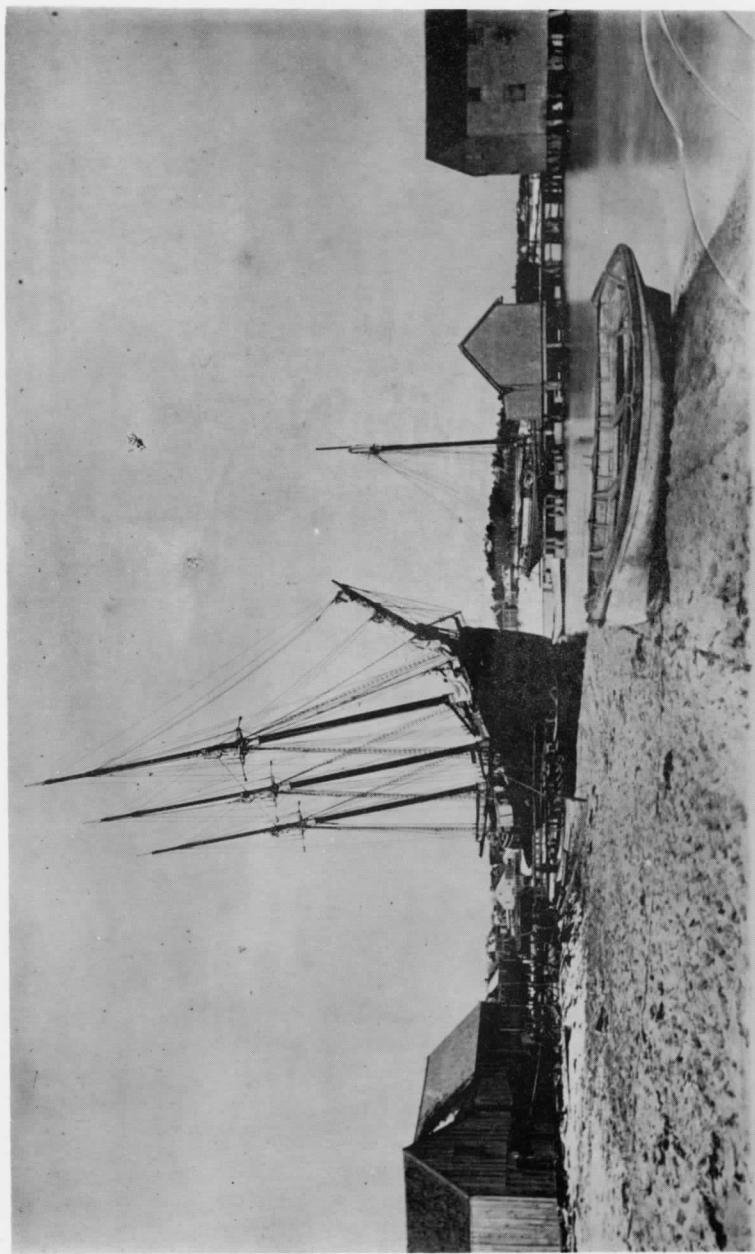
Just before dark, Norton, Cleveland and F. Johnson volunteered to make an effort in the same dory to rescue the crew of the schooner *Annie A. Booth* which was dismasted and sunk, if one of the several tugs in the harbor would tow them out. Captain West of the tug *Robert Lockhart* consented to try, and after much difficulty and danger succeeded in placing the dory, amid broken spars and a mass of tumbling wreckage near the Booth, from which spot, with superb courage and skill they rescued the entire crew of six men. There were then nine men in the dory, and



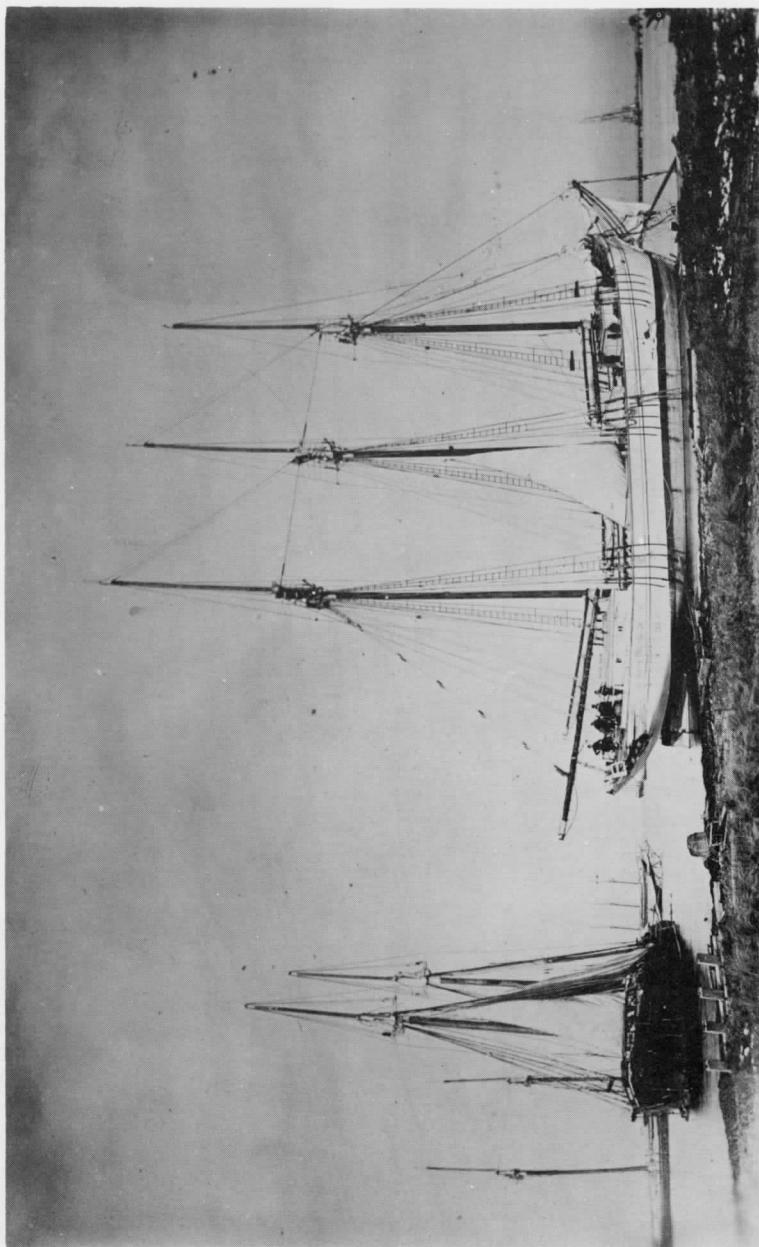
Looking at the sunk and damaged schooners from the Beach Road.



Wrecked and damaged vessels looking northeast from the head of the harbor. Notice the small lighter high on the beach at the extreme left.



The Schooner *Newburgh* through the Vineyard Haven wharf. The Seamen's Bethel is the second building on the right. Notice the snow and ice plastered pole in the right foreground.



A two and a three master both with bowsprits gone.

realizing the extreme hazard of trying to land on the beach they resolved to place the sailors on board the schooner *Samuel Hart* which was still holding to her anchors nearby. With the aid of the crew of the *Hart* they were placed on board that vessel where they fortunately remained until the storm was over.

As soon as this was accomplished, although night was already come, Norton and his companions, with weary arms but unflagging devotion set out to the assistance of the crew of the *Leora M. Thurston* which had sunk not far away. After a brave and persistent effort, however, they found the enterprise was beyond their power and reluctantly pulled ashore, but with their heroic purpose still unshaken.

Stanley Fisher then joined the company, and the dory was carried along the beach to a place abreast of the stranded schooner *Charles E. Raymond*, where under the lee provided by this wreck, the four men forced the dory afloat again and pulled with all their might for the *Thurston*. There they found four poor fellows clinging to the foremast rigging where they could not have survived much longer, the captain having already perished. They took the men into the dory and delivered them safely on shore. Fifteen lives had been saved from the three vessels and Norton and Cleveland had participated in all three of the rescues.

Eye witnesses believe that all these lives would have been lost but for their fearless and timely efforts. The rescues were undertaken in the face of extremely discouraging conditions amid a din and confusion of wave and wind that might well have caused the stoutest heart to falter. The general severity of the tempest is not only a matter of notoriety, but the testimony of seafaring people who were there, and the number of disasters in Vineyard Haven harbor, show that it was especially severe at that point. All the witnesses agree that these men braved every danger freely, without expectation of reward, and wholly in the interest of humanity and at the peril of their own lives.

In recognition of their heroism Congress awarded them gold medals which were presented by Congressman William S. Greene in the Baptist Church in Vineyard Haven in the presence of a large gathering of townspeople.

Dragging - 1934

by

GALE HUNTINGTON

I was back of the house sawing wood for winter when Tom drove into the yard. His mother Hattie, Mil's grandmother, was with him, and Alice and the baby, and George Fisher. George Fisher is Alton's mate.

"What you driving at?" Tom asked me.

"Not much," I told him. As a matter of fact I was quahauging, and sometimes making as much as three dollars a day at it. They were mostly chowders. And all John Correia would pay for chowders was fifty cents a bushel. But there were a few cherry-stones and littlenecks with the big ones to bring the total catch for a day up to that three dollars. Sometimes. Mil always took the catch down to Edgartown and sold them. That was where she was that afternoon.

"Like to go fishing for a trip or two?" Tom asked. I didn't answer right away.

"Well, what do you say?" he demanded. "Les is layed up with a sore hand." Les is Mil's brother and Tom's regular mate.

"I'll go," I told him finally.

"Good," he said. "Boat's tied up in the Basin. If there's any chance at all we want to get out early. About four thirty."

"I'll be there," I told him. "Come on in and I'll make some coffee."

"No," Tom said. "Alton's waiting for George and I want to pump the boat out. Where's Mil?"

"Gone to Edgartown," I told him.

After they'd gone I went back to sawing wood, and thinking. Sawing wood is good for thinking. I thought about how many more cords I'd have to saw up to get us through the winter. And I thought about Franklin D. Roosevelt, and if he was ever going to be able to stop the depression. It didn't look as though he was. But mostly I thought about dragging - that was the fishing Tom was doing - and how I didn't like it very much.

I'd been dragging some. Mostly with Reginald Norton, and it's a mean kind of business. Ask any handliner, ask any lobsterman, ask any fisherman except a dragger and he'll tell you that. It ruins the bottom and it drives the fish and kills them. Eventually dragging will kill itself for when there are no more fish there'll be no more dragging. Then maybe the bottom will come back and the fish with it and there'll be a chance for the handliners and the trap fishermen once more.

Mil wasn't going to like it very much that I said I'd go with Tom. She takes a dim view of dragging. Next morning the alarm went off at three thirty and the weather looked pretty good, so Mil got up and got me some breakfast not talking much.

There wasn't a sign of life on any of the boats when I got over to the Basin. The weather didn't look so good now. What wind, what there was, and it seemed to be freshening, was out of the northeast. A bad point. The sky was overcast with a feeble moon just showing through once in a while. I thought maybe I'd have done better to shut off the alarm and go back to bed. But anyway, I got the pump and went to work on the *Artemesia*. After about five minutes it pump sucked, and just then Tom drove up.

Alton in the *Three and One* went out the jetties ahead of us. He was bound for Sam Cahoon's to take out what fish he had, but Tom wanted to fish one more day before going to market. Miller was getting under way astern of us. The explosion from his diesel engine lit up the whole Basin when he started her.

Tom went below to make a fire and get himself some breakfast. I guess Alice didn't hold with getting up at three thirty. So I let her go for the light on Cuttyhunk. There was just a hint of dawn then, and the wind was breezing all the time. Northeast. I didn't think we'd do any fishing that day, which just goes to show how much I didn't know about Tom's kind of dragging. Tom is a driver.

There was a coaster anchored off dogfish bar, a stone schooner she was, for her two masts were set wide apart. Likely she was bound east, I thought, and waiting for a fair wind. There was a lantern aloft in her rigging and I kept inside of her. It was getting lighter now, and pretty soon I could make out the buoy on the end of Devil's Bridge. From the buoy we set her course for the Vineyard Sound hooter, and from the hooter let her go sou'west

about twenty minutes. There's deep water there, about twenty fathom. It's a small ground but sometimes a good one. We let the net go over.

Dragging is a broad term, and there are many types of draggers, from the little two man boats such as the *Artemesia* to the great steam trawlers that fish Georges and the Grand Banks and the Greenland grounds. But they all have one thing in common. They drag the bottom and catch every kind of bottom fish for which there is a market. Of course they catch the fish for which there is no market, too, and the fish that are too small for market, and kill them.

Perhaps dragging does not hurt the free swimming fish, the mackerel, swordfish, tuna and many more. But I think it does hurt them. I think dragging hurts every fish and every type of fishing there is, for it destroys the natural balance of ocean life. And what it's doing to the ground fish, cod, haddock, flounders of all kinds and the like, is an open book. And dragging will not be stopped until the fish are all gone, for it is too big an industry.

You hear fishermen say that if dragging were stopped the fish would come back. That's true. You hear them say that if everyone went back to handlining and line trawling and gill netting and seining the price of fish would go way up and every fisherman would have a chance to make a decent living again. And that's only partly true. The price of fish would go up all right, but there aren't enough fish left for fishermen to make a living with a hand line or any other kind of fishing any more except dragging.

When I was a boy, and that's not so many years ago, there were men who went off the beach in dories in the spring and fall for cod and made a good living at it. They couldn't now. Thirty, forty and fifty years ago there were men who made fortunes trap fishing. Last summer the one fish trap still operating in Menemsha Bight failed to pay expenses by more than five hundred dollars. And the answer to almost all of that is dragging. I could go on but I won't. I'll get back to the deep hole to the sou'west of the Vineyard Sound hooter.

Tom said he thought he'd make about an hour and a half set unless the lines came together sooner, but he didn't think there

was much trash there. Trash consists of all the fish for which there is no market, all the edible fish which are too small to market, and the grass and weeds on the bottom where the fish are feeding. Sometimes a net will come up so heavy with fish and trash that it can't be hoisted into the boat. I saw that happen once when I was dragging with Reginald. We hoisted the net as high as we could and then cut it open and bailed the fish out on deck, then sewed up the net and repeated the process until finally it was light enough to swing on deck. But that was six years ago when there were still some fish.

After dragging sou'west for half an hour Tom set a waif, then he swung around and headed back over our course. A waif is nothing more than an anchored bouy, with a flag on it on a pole, to show you where you are. It's a position marker to show where the fishing is good or is expected to be good.

It was rough now. Really rough, and I was feeling pretty seasick, but not quite bad enough to lose my breakfast, and I was hoping I wouldn't get any worse. Any strange boat has a different motion and my stomach didn't like the *Artemesia's*. A number of boats had arrived on the ground now. Miller had set about the time we did, and was fishing off to the southard of us. Warren Vincent was there, and his brother Jerry, the *Pal* from Stonington; a big launch from New London and one or two more.

There was a chill in that northeast wind and a mean looking bank of clouds in the southeast kept the sun from doing any good. I was feeling very miserable and right then I hated dragging more than I always did. But the work of taking in the net warmed me up and made me feel a little better.

I'll go just a little into the technical details of dragging. Properly the net is called an otter trawl. It is a great improvement over the beam trawl that was developed in the North Sea many years ago. By improvement I mean it kills more fish. The mouth of the net is wide. The one we were using had a ninety foot sweep. The mouth of the net is held open by two doors, heavy lead or iron weighted boards which are towed along the bottom at an angle of maybe forty-five degrees from the course of the boat. The pressure of the water against the angle of the boards as they are being towed, keeps the foot of the net with its heavy chain and lead rope taut.

A top line fitted with bobbers or floats may be used to keep the top of the net high enough. The rest of the net is a long tapering funnel with a heavy mesh bag at the end. It really is a simple enough rig. That is it's simple until you set out to make one, or repair one.

Because the water was deep we were using seventy-five fathom of tow line, each line leading to a door. The lines are rove through blocks on the end of a short boom that extends over the starboard side, then through a snatch block and so to the drum. The lines we were using were good heavy manila. The drum works by power from the engine.

The net came in slowly, for seventy-five fathom is a lot of line. When the boards broke water they were made fast, and then I hoisted the net in, section by section, while Tom shook it free of the weeds and trash in the meshes. Then came the bag. I made the fall fast and hoisted it in with only two turns on the drum. It wasn't very heavy. Tom pulled loose the purse line and the contents of the bag spilled on deck. It didn't look like much to me. Then we set the net over again and started on another drag.

When the net was towing again I started in to clean up the catch. All the trash; goosefish, skates, sand sharks, sculpins, four spots, and God knows what all else, went over the side. Almost all dead, of course, as well as market fish that were too small to keep. What was left had to be sorted and washed and then packed in ice in the pens below deck. That drag we got a dozen or more big flukes; a bushel and a half of blackbacks, sometimes called pugs, or if they're big enough, lemon sole; almost a bushel of yellowtails; a few sea scallops and one scup. Darned poor fishing, I thought, but Tom said it didn't look too bad.

Flukes are the big summer flounders and they usually bring a fair price. The ones we caught there in the deep hole ran from ten to eighteen or twenty pounds each and we got eight cents a pound for them at Sam Cahoon's. Blackbacks and yellowtails are flounders, too. Though to my way of thinking yellowtail is the best and there's no finer eating fish in the world. But no matter what they are, fluke or pug or yellowtail or whatever, in the retail markets on the mainland, and the restaurants, they are fillet of sole.

After the fish are iced down below, the deck has to be washed and swept, for it becomes altogether too foul and slippery if it isn't attended to after every drag. Finally when everything is shipshape again there's nothing to do until it's time to bring up the net once more. But I've seen the time when so much trash came up in the bag that it was impossible to keep the deck clean between drags. When that happens there's no breathing time at all, not even time to eat, much less catch fifteen or twenty minutes of sleep. Understand that that cleanup work is done by the mate. The captain steers and keeps track of where he is, which is more important.

Just about sunset, and it was a pretty one, we went down and spoke Alton who had come on the ground a little after noon, because Tom wanted to borrow a lantern from him to lash on the waif. The wick on ours was burned down too short to throw much light. We jockeyed the boats together and I caught the lantern as George Fisher threw it. Then we towed down toward the waif, but a lighted lantern was already lashed to it when we got there. The draggers are always doing something like that to help each other. Some other boat was using our waif to make his tows by and now we were using his lantern. It is just that kind of cooperation that often enough saves lives, too.

It was a pleasant night and I ate enough supper to make up for the dinner I hadn't wanted. The moon was in the last quarter and wouldn't rise till toward morning, so it was dark. Dark but clear. Away to the northward there must have been a low overcast, for there were four distinct glows in the sky, reflections from the lights of New Bedford, Fall River, Newport and Providence.

Below the horizon, visible only by the reflected glow of its flash we could make out the position of the light on Block Island, and more faintly still that of a light off Newport. Gay Head and Cuttyhunk showed bright and clear as did the Sow and Piggs lightship. It was a fine night for fishing but from sunset on the catch fell off steadily. We took in the net for the last time that night a little before two o'clock. The bag was pitifully small as it swung in on deck. Two flukes and less than a half bushel of blackbacks was all that the floodlights showed us.

"Time to go to market," Tom said. "No use risking a net any longer for this kind of fishing."

While we were making the run, and after we tied up at Sam Cahoon's we got something like three hours' sleep apiece. When the market gang showed up around six we unloaded and took on ice and a hundred gallons of gasoline, and a big box of groceries, for this time we were bound off shore. Kelly Chase and his mate in the little *Vega* were bound with us. They reported some flukes and a good run of yellowtails at a spot about twenty miles south by west from the Nomans Land hooter.

South by west from Nomans Land is going to sea, and the *Vega* was too small to go that far in the fall of the year. When you come right down to it, so were we, but dollars are hard to come by these days and so are fish.

The weather held fine with a soft westerly wind barely rippling the water of the sound. There had been a land fog earlier that morning, and Jimmy Mayhew, my old lobster skipper, used to say that a land fog before breakfast meant one of three things; it meant fog, or rain, or a storm within twenty-four hours. But right then there was no sign of anything but the finest kind of fine weather. And that's what's wanted when a small boat heads off shore in the fall of the year.

Off Lucas Shoal we passed the old stone schooner that had been anchored off Dogfish Bar bound east. She had her fair wind at last, what little there was of it, and she was making the most of it, wung-out with everything set. Stone schooners certainly aren't pretty vessels, with their masts so wide apart, and the foresail almost as big as the mainsail. But there is something about the sight of a vessel under sail, no matter how old she may be, or how ugly, or how hogged, that makes you feel good. And every year it seems that fewer coasters are passing through the sound.

It was well after noon when we reached the grounds. Nomans Land had dropped astern of us and we were off shore, out of sight of land and on our own. No matter how many times a man goes off shore, he always has that feeling, a little, I think, when the land drops from sight, of being on his own with only his shipmate or shipmates to depend on. And with that feeling comes a quickening of the blood, and a quickening of all the perceptions.

The fleet was there ahead of us. They were bigger boats mostly, schooners, ketches and big launches, and there were twelve or

fourteen of them. The work is a little easier on a big dragger than on a small one. For one thing there is more room to work in, and the motion of the boat is not so fast. But mainly the work is easier on a larger vessel because there are more hands to do the work, so there is more time to catch some sleep. Not much but some. For once a dragger reaches the grounds she fishes continuously, day and night until the weather drives her in, or until her hold is full of fish, or until the ice and fuel begin to run low.

It was about two thirty in the afternoon when we put the net over. And the weather was the finest, clear, and warm with scarcely any wind at all. There was a swell coming in from off-shore, though, from the eastward, low and barely perceptible, and wide apart. It might mean something or nothing.

Carlton Mayhew in the *Carrie V.* came down and spoke us. He was swordfishing, late in the season as it was, and the three of them, Carlton, and Ben, and Linus Jeffers were perched in the cross trees like crows in a dead oak, steering from aloft while they looked for fish. They had one fish and had raised another under water but hadn't been able to strike it. They left us, cruising slowly to the northward toward home and a hot supper and a warm house.

After about an hour's dragging we took up, and the catch was good. Nearly seven bushels of yellowtails and eleven big flukes. But it was dirty fishing, which meant no sleep, for the net was fairly plastered with a fine curly marine grass. It was in that grass that the fish were feeding, and every drag we brought up great wads of it.

The rest of the afternoon and the early night went slowly. The fishing was very good, though it did fall off a little after dark. Over and over again we went through the routine: take up, clean the net as it came in, dump the bag, pick out the marketable fish, wash them, pack them below in ice, get the trash overboard and clean up the deck. It is hard tiring work. Tom went below and lay down for twenty minutes or so about midnight. I planned to get my rest toward morning, but that plan didn't work out.

As the night wore on the fleet spread out, covering more ground, until there were lights everywhere in a great circle around us. Red and green running lights, the bright points of the masthead lights,

and the glare of the working lights on deck, and every light cast its reflection on the quiet water. It was like the lights of a city, I thought, but a city that was never twice quite the same, a city that moved and shifted and was never still. Sometime after midnight the stove went out, but we didn't rebuild the fire, as the cabin was plenty warm from the heat of the engine.

Things happen fast on the water. There was no warning of that breeze. Tom was in the pilot house holding her on course, and I was on deck picking up fish, when I felt a cold wind on the back of my neck. It was from the northeast, and there was a black streak in the northeast, too, hiding the stars. "A breeze coming," I told Tom.

"I felt it," he said. "Probably won't amount to much." But it did. Within less than half an hour it was blowing all we wanted and then some. "We're going to get out of here," Tom said. We took the net in and got the boards on deck and had the bag alongside. By then it was impossible to stand without holding to something and holding hard. "I'll put her into the wind," Tom said, "and when I bring her up swing the bag on deck, and don't try to dump it now. We'll let it lay."

You wouldn't think a sea could make up that fast. It was short, sharp and very mean and it came at a different angle from the swell, and I was glad I'd been on the *Artemesia* long enough to know her a little. Working at night in a sea like that is no fun. In the daytime you can see a sea coming and brace yourself for it but at night you can't until it's on top of you. It's not so bad either when you can hold on with one hand and work with the other, but sometimes you have to use both hands to work with, and then you hang on with your knees or your elbows to anything that's handy, and hope it's solid.

It was a bad time. Tom had that forty horse Lathrop almost wide open kicking her directly into the teeth of it, and the *Artemesia* was forging ahead, but slowly enough. She rode the seas beautifully, though, not pounding much, nor diving either. But every once in a while she'd stick her nose into a big one and a solid sheet of cold water would come flying aft. Inside of five minutes, in spite of my oilskins, I was soaking wet.

"We wouldn't want any more wind than this," Tom said when I finally was able to go into the pilot house with him. "I hope Kelly's all right with the *Vega*."

To the west and south of us we could make out an occasional wildly pitching masthead light, but that was all. As soon as that, the fleet had completely scattered, heading for New Bedford or Newport or wherever they figured on taking out the catch, or just for a lee to ride it out. It was impossible at a time like that to look for *Vega* or any other boat. But I could see that Tom was worried about Kelly Chase and his mate. The *Vega* was heavy forward, and had the bad reputation of wanting to bury herself in a sea. They wouldn't be able to open her up and would be lucky if they were holding their own.

There was a bang, and crash of crockery under our feet, and I went below to see what I could put stops on. One port had come open and the cabin was as wet as if a hose had been turned on it. Broken cups and dishes were sliding from one side of the cabin to the other as she rolled. Worse, the generator had come loose from its moorings. I got everything as secure as I could, got the port closed, the generator back where it belonged but not running, and lashed down the skylight from the inside. Then I went back to the pilot house and told Tom about the generator.

"I'll get it running," he said. "But it's getting nastier all the time. Think you can take her?" I told him I thought I could. The moon had risen though it was hidden behind the flying scud most of the time, but at least you could see the seas coming a little better, and dawn couldn't be too far away. Presently I could make out Nomans Land, and bleak and desolate as it was, no land ever looked better to me.

Daylight showed us the *Rose Jarvis* of New Bedford maybe a quarter of a mile ahead of us. She was bigger than we were, quite a lot bigger, but she was having a rough time of it. She would rear up on a sea and then smash down, the spray flying as high as her masthead. They had a riding sail rigged to steady her, but it didn't seem to be doing much good for she was writhing and twisting like an eel. Compared to her the *Artemesia* was riding like a lady.

In the lee of Nomans Land we dumped the bag on deck and got the net stowed down, but it was too rough to do much cleaning up.

I didn't have the last of the fish on ice and the trash overboard until we were nearly in Woods Hole, and that was just about seven hours from the time we had left the grounds. There were boats ahead of us at Sam's and it was late afternoon before we finally got our fish out and our ice and gas aboard. Just as we were ready to leave the *Vega* came in. They must have had one awful trip. We got a cent and a half a pound for our yellowtails. My share for the trip was sixteen dollars and some cents.

Just about dark we tied up alongside the Eben Thatcher at the wharf in Vineyard Haven and it was still blowing hard. "It doesn't look like much of a day for tomorrow," Tom said, "but if this wind does let go we want to get started early. Better set your alarm for three thirty."

DCHS News

This is our winter season: the tourists are gone, the Thomas Cooke House is closed, and the beautiful gardens on the grounds lie dormant, but the boxwood retains its dark green throughout the cold weather. The boat shed is boarded up to keep out snow from the whale boat, peddler's cart, fire engine, and other outdoor exhibits.

Over in the Museum Library, the scene is warm and cozy. Students come in for information for their term papers, while Christmas shoppers have dropped in to buy books as gifts for their families and friends. This is a time for quiet study by those who wish to browse among the books. For the Staff, it is also a time for bookkeeping, inventory, cataloguing, repairs, evaluation, and planning for the months ahead. Our winter program is a sharp contrast to the more hurried summer season.

At this time of year, we are in touch with schools and are in the process of developing a closer tie between our program and the curriculum on both elementary and secondary levels. This is being implemented by Social Studies teachers representing all Island schools, who plan to use our library as the setting for one of their January meetings. Along with our traditional function as an Historical Society, and Museum with manuscripts and treasures from the past, we recognize the need to re-think our position in current sociological trends and our function of teaching both children and adults to relate lessons of the past to our everyday living and personal growth. This is not an easy task.

Most of you read in the *Vineyard Gazette*, in late October, after our last issue had gone to press, that twelve whaling logbooks and a journal of an arctic exploration were returned to the Island and put in safe custody. For this we are especially indebted to three men who have worked with members of our Council to make this possible: Lieutenant George E. Killen assigned to the District Attorney's office, Lieutenant William Flanagan of the Barnstable Police Department, and Chief Dominic J. Arena of our Edgartown Police, who procured the valuable logbooks from Hyannis. Having

been aware of the presence of the logbooks on the Cape, our Council and Staff had felt extremely frustrated to have them so near, yet unavailable for identification or for use in any way. Just having them safely back in Edgartown has given us encouragement to hope that someday all of the missing logbooks will be back in our archives. It has given our membership assurance, too, that a sincere attempt is being made to straighten out this unfortunate matter.

We wish to correct a typographical error on page 76 of the November issue. The collection of glass plates, taken by Alexander M. Orr in the 1890's, was donated by his nephew Alexander O. Viotor, Curator of Maps at Yale University, and life-long summer resident of Edgartown.

We also wish to correct the spelling of one name in that accession list. The large 1816 Holbrook Edition of the Bible was donated by Mrs. Isabelle Wimpenny Wilson.

In reference to the pie crimper mentioned in the November accession list, we now have Miss Brier's story connected with her gift:

"One day, during the Revolutionary War, Mrs. Lavina Stewart, who lived in a farmhouse on Great Plain, Edgartown, answered a knock at her door. There stood a British officer, demanding a search of her home. She replied that she had no silver, or anything he would really want, but that she had made some mince pie and invited him to sit at the table and have all he could eat. When he finished, he said, "Madam, thank you for the best pie I ever ate in all my life." The search for silver was forgotten and he left. The pie crimper which Miss Brier has given to the Society had been used to decorate that pie.

We are pleased to announce the following accessions to our library and museum, with the donors' names. They were received during the months of September through December.

A scrapbook of newspaper clippings of the Rice murder trial of September, 1940. Honorable Robert H. Boudreau, Barnstable Mass.

Twenty-four greeting cards of yesterday; a copy of *East and West* of August, 1900, containing some Vineyard poems. Mrs. Robert

Chapman, Edgartown.

Photographs, copies of old deeds, discharge papers, etc. Mrs. Lucretia Sibley, Edgartown, and Holden, Mass.

Six Flaxie Frizzle children's books, Boston, 1885. These books belonged to Mrs. Fanita Clyde (Smith) Southworth, granddaughter of Captain Francis Cottle Smith. Kenneth A. Southworth Jr.

Sailing Ships of New England, John Robinson and George F. Dow, first edition, Salem, 1922. Mrs. (A. J.) Virginia Muckerheide, Oak Bluffs.

Papers and clippings (Civil War and Campground). Mrs. Mary Willey, Edgartown.

Rohrbach Genealogy, Lewis Bunder Rohrbaugh, Philadelphia, 1970. Lewis Bunker Rohrbaugh, Rockport, Maine.

Domats Civil Law, London, 1722, (two volumes). Edward Schulman, West Tisbury.

Shipping Arrivals and Departures, Sydney, Australia, 1788-1825, Sydney, 1965, John S. Cumpston. John S. Cumpston, Canberra, Australia.

The Only Edgartown, Edgartown High School, 1926; *An Islander's Love*, Mary Starbuck, Nantucket, 1914; *The Aldine*, volume IV, New York, 1873; Pease family genealogical material. Mrs. Gladys Pease Reid, Edgartown.

Baleen, a six foot length. Mrs. (H. Woodward) Ruth McDowell, Chilmark.

Watercolor painting of the Governor Mayhew House by Jennie C. Marchant; razor hone. Mrs. Lucretia Walker Sibley, Edgartown and Holden, Mass.

Civil War material, a large canteen, three bayonets, a leather bullet pouch. Edward F. Dillon, Vineyard Haven.

Indian artifact, a wedge probably used in constructing dugout canoes, found during recent construction work on the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road. Paul David Corwin, Edgartown, (grade four).

Two dolls, circa 1900. Mrs. Gladys Pease Reid, Edgartown.

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. Illustrated. Paper \$3.50.