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Vineyard Whalemens In The Arctic

by
DOROTHY COTTLE POOLE

DCHS News

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Vineyard Whalemen In The Arctic

by

DOROTHY COTTLE POOLE

Whaling and the settlement of the Atlantic coast were concurrent, but the earliest mention of whales on Martha's Vineyard was in November, 1652, when Thomas Daggett and William Weeks were "appointed whale cutters for this year," according to Edgartown records. The same source gives John Butler as the first known Island whaleman and Thomas Lothrop as his mate.

Weymouth's journal in 1605 had noted that the Indians captured drift whales: dead whales which are washed ashore or, occasionally, a live whale which has ventured too close to the shore and has been left stranded by the receding tide.

The early white settlers found the Indians chasing whales along the coast in their dugouts and they followed suit until whales became scarce, and then they built larger vessels to follow their prey offshore.

The eighteenth century saw whaling grow to a thriving industry which, though badly crippled by the Revolution and the War of 1812, yet survived. It spread from the Atlantic coast to the Cape de Verdes, to Africa and Brazil, the Falklands, Patagonia, the Pacific coast of South America and Japan. The first Vineyard whaleship to go to the Pacific was the *Apollo*, Captain Jethro Daggett of Edgartown, in 1816. Vineyard men sailed their ships wherever whales were found and far-distant ports became as familiar as New Bedford or Nantucket.

It should be noted that new England colonists were whaling in Davis Strait, going as far north as 66°, as early as 1732. Joseph Chase in the sloop *Diamond*, 40 tons burden, was the first recorded Vineyarder to seek whales there. He first went in 1738.

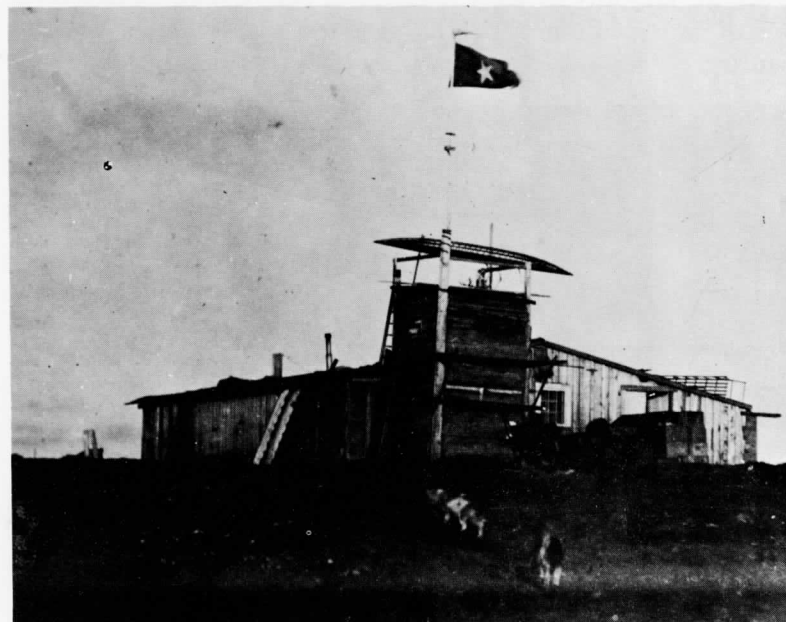


A whaler off Cape Thaddeus, Siberian coast.

But it was not until 1848 that whaleships entered the Arctic, and that was accidental. In the thick fog so prevalent in the North Pacific, the bark *Superior*, Captain Royce of Sag Harbor, and the ship *Ocmulgee*, Captain Frederick W. Manter of Holmes Hole, drifted through Bering Straits into the Arctic Ocean. Finding a new species of whale, the fattest they had ever seen, they cruised cautiously until they had full ships and then sailed for home. Captain Manter's account of this voyage apparently did not spread beyond Martha's Vineyard, but Captain Royce's account became well-known and the Arctic whale, or bowhead, was often called Royce's whale. As a result of this voyage, and because of its proximity to the Arctic, San Francisco became an important whaling port in 1860.

For forty years whalers followed in the wake of these two pioneers, spending the short summer season in the Arctic and a "tween-seasons voyage" in the South Pacific. None pushed very far into the Arctic, the whole fleet keeping to the small area bounded by the islands and the straits on the south, the coast of Siberia on the west, and that of Alaska on the east. To the north was unknown, forbidding territory of treacherous currents,

constantly shifting ice-packs and shoals. The fleet cruised back and forth, from coast to coast, never venturing far beyond Point Barrow, never venturing far from one another. Only the leaders had a chance for a full ship; the season was too short for the others.



The signal station at Point Barrow, Alaska.

Some of the younger officers began to think about wintering in the Arctic, believing that, by so doing, whales could be caught later in the fall and again as soon as the ice broke up in the spring, long before the vessels from San Francisco could get by Point Barrow to reach the whaling grounds. One of these young men was Hartson Bodfish of Holmes Hole. He had begun his experiences in the Arctic when he was still in his teens, shipping aboard the *Belvedere*, the second steam whaler to be built in the United States. Cyrus Manter of West Tisbury was master until the steamer reached Honolulu, where Leander Owen of Holmes Hole

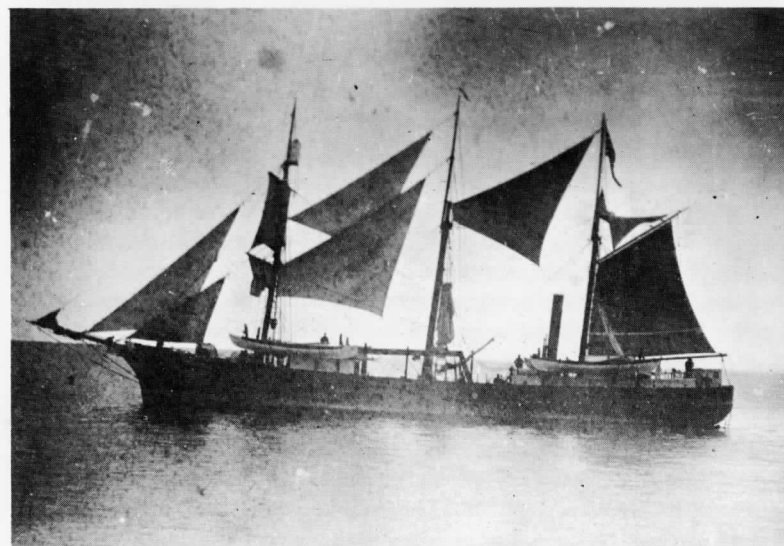
took over as master and Mr. Manter became mate. Though Hartson Bodfish had made no great fortune, he had returned season after season because he wanted to learn all he could about the Arctic Ocean and get all the whaling experience that he could so that he could command a ship of his own and put his theories to the test. Ultimately, he did just that and became an Arctic authority of great repute, but before that, he had been part of an expedition which began a new chapter in the whaling industry.



Captain Bauldry and officers. Captain Bauldry was the master of the *Helen Mar* on an Arctic voyage in 1877.

In the summer of 1889, Hartson Bodfish was second mate on the *Grampus*, Captain Henry G. Dexter, Holmes Hole. They were at anchor in Harrison Bay when a trader came from the Mackenzie River and reported plenty of open water in the "forbidden sea." It had been a poor season, so seven steamers, the *Lucretia*, the *Jesse Freeman*, *Orca*, *Narwhal*, the *Thrasher*, the *William Lewis* and the *Grampus* steamed to the east of Point

Barrow to try for whales. It was over 400 miles to the mouth of the Mackenzie and it was August 11th before the little fleet anchored on the east side of Hershel Island. They cruised cautiously over the unknown waters until the *Freeman* reported a shoal, whereupon some of the ships left. The *Orca* and the *Thrasher* hung on for about a week and each got two whales before they followed the others out of the Arctic. No one had made a killing, but the idea of wintering in the Arctic had been born.



Steam whaler *Grampus* in Bering Sea. With the *Mary D. Hume* the *Grampus* was the first vessel to winter in the Arctic - 1890-1891. She was lost off Point Smith, Arctic Ocean, July 18, 1901 but all hands were saved.

On his return to San Francisco, young Bodfish was surprised to learn that agents and owners there, and on the east coast, too, were seriously discussing wintering in the Arctic. The following letter, written to Frederick Swift, agent, in New Bedford, is one example of how intelligence was transmitted from coast to coast and how news of their whaleships often reached owners long before the ships returned to port.

Point Barrow August 19th 1889

Frederick Swift Esq.

New Bedford

Dear Sir

In an interview with your father, Wm. C. N. Swift Esq., the day I left home I promised to write to you and inform you how I found things at Point Barrow. The House of Refuge is at last erected, and I am in charge. Now concerning whaling - On the 26th day of last July, a man, Joe he is called, left the company's station with three natives, in an open boat for the Mackenzie River. On the 9th inst. he returned with accounts that made almost everybody crazy, of the great amount of whales down there. He struck several but saved only one head. He has gone down again in U. S. Steamer Thetis. The P. S. W. Co's sloop with seven men has also gone down, with the view of returning here again this fall - All the steamer captains are crazy to get there. The way that Joe expresses it is "that whales are thick as bees" he wintered on the banks of the river in a log hut. Saw whales on 28 of Oct, plenty of open water: closed by ice in Nov. first whales in the spring 6th of May - open water in April, good harbor for wintering at Hershel Island. - large forests of fir and spruce, abounding in game such as Moose, Deer, Black, Brown and White Bear, Red, White, Black & Silver Gray Fox. He brought down several of the latter - nice skins - and has a store there now of skins & bone. He says there are strong currents at the mouth of the river and that immense quantities of drift stuff and trees are brought down. Had the vessels that attempted to go down last season kept a little more in shore for a few miles farther, they could have gone down without fail, once in the Bay there is good water, and plenty of places for wintering. The beaches are lined with driftwood so there be no danger of freezing and as there is plenty of game, with ammunition there be no danger of starving.

A light draft vessel is needed, say 8 or 10 feet and provisioned for two winters, then if not able to come out, come down on the coast as far as possible and with sleds or boats reach this station. No great crew are needed as the natives may be utilized, they are better, and able to obtain their own living by hunting, having ammunition and time.

This Joe seems to be a very candid and energetic man. I had several talks with him and obtained, as I thought, much valuable information in regard to the country to the E.

On our way up in the Bear we were several days at Point Hope. The natives there had taken eleven, mostly small, whales. Mr. Baine 7, mostly large. Arriving here we found the natives had taken twenty-two, mostly small. The Ina's gang three, & Mr. Leavitt trader for the P. S.

W. Co. also three, all six quite large, while the Co's whaling gang got their time quarreling over the whales they were going to kill.

There is considerable Bone now remaining here and at Point Hope which the natives are holding for whiskey. Mr. Leavitt has shipped over 7000 & of first class Bone from trade and catch. So you can see the object the P. S. W. Co. has in view of the station here. Although the whaling gang of 14 men has earned nothing for the Co., being here under pretense, the Co. is making money by the station, aside the bone a large amount of furs has been shipped. I suppose you are aware that a strong undercurrent of prejudice against N. B. whalers exists in certain quarters. It is supposed that Lieut Cantwell had some influence in Washington and that he favored N. B. parties. Lieut Cantwell was discharged for incompetency from the Bear at Unalaska on the way up. Although Capt. Healy treated me very kindly on board the Bear, I am confident I was not the one chosen by him for the station, and it remains to be seen in the not far distant future whether this "Refuge Station" established by Govt. and kept up and maintained for the benefit of shipwrecked Am. whalers, or for the pecuniary benefit of certain individuals.

In regard to fleet, nothing has been done since the springs catch. the steamers are all to the E. the sailing vessels have been detained at the Point for several days by wind and ice. all are now gone, one or two to the E of the Point closed by ice, the rest went W yesterday and the day before. Heavy ice now lies on the shore from the Point as far as can be seen. About a week ago word was brot to the station that Tamerlane (1) had forefoot started and (2) was leaking badly the next day word came that the J. A. Howland had lost her rudder. Since then I have heard that both vessels had repaired so as to continue cruising. I suppose you have already heard of the loss of the Ohio 2nd (3) and damage to bark Lagoda (4). It is also supposed the Schr. J. A. Hamilton (5) of S F is lost with all on board. A bark was seen by one of the China steamers somewhere to the W. bottom up, a whaler as she had davits, and supposed to be the "Cape Horn Pigeon." (6)

For your consideration, I have given you a few points in confidence trusting you will treat them as such I remain

Yours most Respectfully

G. B. Borden

The events in Mr. Borden's letter introduced a new and, for most New Englanders, a final chapter in whaling. The Arctic ice was heavy, treacherous, constantly shifting; the currents were swift and unpredictable; shoals were many and uncharted. The



A small Eskimo boy on the deck of a whaler at Point Barrow, Alaska.

whaling bark or ship, hitherto in use, could not move fast enough and, when caught in the ice pack, was easily crushed despite its heavy sheathing of ironwood, as the tragedies of 1871 (7) and 1876 (8) attest. Though often reluctantly, whalers who remained in the business shifted from sail to steam and San Francisco became the center of the industry. Petroleum had ruined the price of whale oil, but bone was still in demand and it was shipped overland from San Francisco (9) to New Bedford and other New England ports.

Numerous Vineyarders probed deep into the Arctic in the next two decades. The steam whaler *Mary D. Hume*, Captain James A. Tilton, master, and the steamer *Grampus*, Captain H. H. Norwood, were the first whalers to winter in the Arctic. They were frozen in at Hershel Island through the winter of 1890 - 1891. The sea began to freeze September 14th and they first saw open water on April 11th. Hartson Bodfish was first mate aboard the *Hume*, which caught twenty-seven whales and returned to San Francisco with 70,000 pounds of bone valued at \$400,000 the biggest season

ever made up to that time.

Other Vineyard masters who followed the whales far into the icy Arctic about this time were Benjamin D. Cleveland in the *William Baylies*, Edwin Coffin in the *Rosario*, George Donaldson in the *Andrew Hicks*, James A. M. Earle in the *Charles Morgan*, Charles W. Fisher in the *Alaska* and Edward J. Smith in the *Stamboul*. Captain Horace P. Smith had the *Baleana* and then the *Narwhal*, while E. E. Smith became master of the *Baleana* and Ward P. Vincent commanded the *Grampus*.



Siberian Eskimo hut

Captain Eugene O. Thaxter of Edgartown was accompanied by his wife (Mabel Marchant) when he was hemmed in by the ice for thirty-five days in the Bering Sea. When the *Helen Mar* was finally able to move, the captain sailed for Unalaska, where Mrs. Thaxter was put ashore to await a steamer that would take her to San Francisco. There she was to wait while the captain searched for whales in the Arctic. On October 6, 1892, while a whale was being cut in, the *Helen Mar* was crushed by the ice.

Captain Thaxter and his crew of thirty all perished. Alone, Mabel Thaxter returned to Edgartown where, a few months later, her daughter was born.



An Eskimo couple, Siberia

It was at this time that Hartson Bodfish began his intensive Arctic whaling. He was first mate aboard the steamer *Newport*, and James Tilton had replaced W. P. S. Porter as master. Seven ships wintered at Pauline Cove, frozen in by October 2nd. The next summer was not a good season and, in the fall, fifteen sail and steam ships anchored at Pauline Cove, Hershel Island.

Captain Ellsworth West, as relief master on the *California*, took his bride for a honeymoon cruise in the Pacific. When the 'tween-season voyage was over, Gertrude waited in San Francisco while her husband whaled in the Arctic. But the next year she sailed with him and was one of the first white women to land at Point Barrow. Company policy forbade wives going to the Arctic, so the next year Captain West was demoted and sailed as mate on the *Belvedere* with Samuel P. Smith as second mate. This season

Captain George L. Donaldson was relief master on the *Horatio*; Captain J. A. M. Earle commanded the *Charles W. Morgan*, Captain C. W. Fisher, the *Josephine* and Captain Benjamin Cleveland, the *W. H. Meyer*. Captain West Mitchell was relief for C. F. Gifford aboard the *Abram Barker*, which was lost off Cape Navarin on May 7, 1894. The crew was saved by the *Horatio*. Whalers were lost every now and then in Arctic gales or crushed by the treacherously shifting ice: five in 1888, three the next year, one or two almost every season. But in 1897 the whole fleet was in jeopardy.



Steam Whaler *Beluga*, Captain Hartson Bodfish, trying out oil while anchored to the ice.

Captain George Fred Tilton said that when he first went into the Arctic in 1882, any captain who took his vessel as far as Franklin's Return Reef would have been considered "stark, raving crazy." But by 1897, ships were going 700 miles beyond the Reef to Banks Land and Melville Sound. They navigated above the Arctic Circle so much that by the time they reached Franklin's Return Reef they considered themselves safely out of the Arctic.



Captain Tobey on the deck of the whaling bark *Abraham Barker*.



Whaling bark *John Carver* in the ice in Bering Sea.

The entire summer of 1897 had been unusually icy and the fleet had had to steam south along the shore. The *Narvarch*, Captain Whiteside of New Bedford, was caught in the ice for two days. Then an easterly wind and fog caused the ice pack to drift off-shore, taking the *Narvarch* with it. The ice swirled and smashed against the ship, threatening to crush her momentarily. Captain Whiteside, his wife and all but nine of the crew, who refused to leave, abandoned ship and travelled three days over the ice, dragging three whaleboats. They hoped to reach open water and the *Bear*, but thick fog shut in and they had to return to the *Narvarch*. A few days later, they set off again. Fourteen men died or drowned, attempting to get across the ice. Nineteen were saved by the steamer *Thrasher*, after living on ice and the soles of their sealskin boots for eight days. The mate, Joseph Belain of Gay Head, built five canvas boats, light enough to be carried but large enough to hold several people. Captain and Mrs. Whiteside, five officers and ten seamen reached the edge of the ice pack and then paddled three miles through very rough seas to reach the shore. Mr.

Belain was responsible for the success of this attempt as he had to take charge, because Captain Whiteside became ill.



Whaling bark *Young Phoenix* beset in the ice. This photograph shows very clearly how ice could surround and crush a vessel.

The last part of August, George Fred Tilton, Mr. Gordon from the trading station, and three natives went off to the *Narvarch*, which was still afloat. They found all nine crewmen in good health and persuaded seven of them to go ashore. The other two refused to leave and were never heard from again because the wind breezed northwest and the *Narvarch* drifted off in the ice pack.

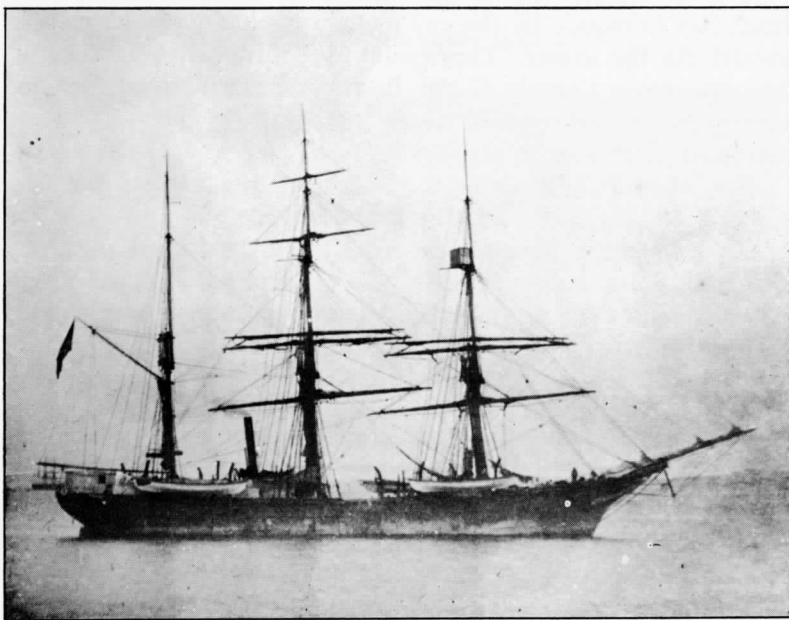
The ice formed early this year and northerly winds drove the pack toward shore at Point Barrow. Eight vessels: the bark *Wanderer*, the schooner *Rosario*, and steamers *Belvedere*, *Fearless*, *Jeannette*, *Jesse H. Freeman*, *Newport* and *Orca* were cut off from the open sea. Their position was critical for all had expected to

reach San Francisco by the end of the year and none had supplies enough for the winter. They could expect no help before spring. The *Wanderer*, Captain G. W. Porter, managed to get free and return to Hershel Island, where the *Mary D. Hume*, Captain George B. Leavitt, with supplies for two years, was wintering.

The *Orca*, Captain A. C. Sherman, the *Jesse Freeman*, Captain W. P. S. Porter, the *Rosario*, Captain Edwin Coffin, and the *Belvedere*, Captain M. V. B. Millard, worked their way down to Point Barrow. There they encountered a heavy ridge of ice through which they had to blast their way. They worked furiously for three days and three nights, using 1000 pounds of powder and tonite to clear a canal one and a half miles long. The steamers got through all right, but the *Orca's* rudder was smashed and she had to be towed by the *Freeman*. Off Seahorse Islands, about forty-five miles from Point Barrow, the *Orca* was caught between two great ice floes and crushed. The men jumped onto the ice where they were stranded until the *Belvedere*, which had nearly reached clear water, turned back to rescue them.

A few hours later, the *Freeman* was caught and the *Belvedere* steamed three hours to get to her. With 147 men from the three vessels, the *Belvedere* finally got into Pearl Bay, behind Seahorse Island, where the full pressure of the ice pack would not reach her. But a shift of wind could easily start the ice piling up, so the men decided to go ashore and build a camp. Two days later, the natives burned the *Freeman*, leaving three crews aboard a ship inadequately provisioned for one. The *Rosario* was very near Point Barrow; the *Fearless* and the *Newport* about fifteen miles east and a mile offshore; the *Jeannette* thirty miles farther east and four miles from land. All were frozen solidly in the ice.

Several men, including Stephen Cottle, volunteered to go to Point Barrow for help. Charles Brower, the manager of the whaling station there, sent dog teams to carry the whalers back to the station. Mr. Brower and the masters of the ships inventoried all supplies. They decided that the entire stock, plus whatever game the natives could supply, might last for two meals a day until the first of July, but rations would be mighty scant and half the men would probably die. Furthermore, there was no guarantee of relief in July.



Steam whaler *Belvedere* off Cape Lisbourne in the Arctic. Vineyard whalemens who commanded the *Belvedere* were: Capt. George F. Smith, 1883-1885; Capt. George Fred Tilton, 1903, 1904 - he completed the voyage in 1903 when Capt. Davoll died at sea, and was in command the next year; and Capt. Stephen Cottle, 1905-1913.

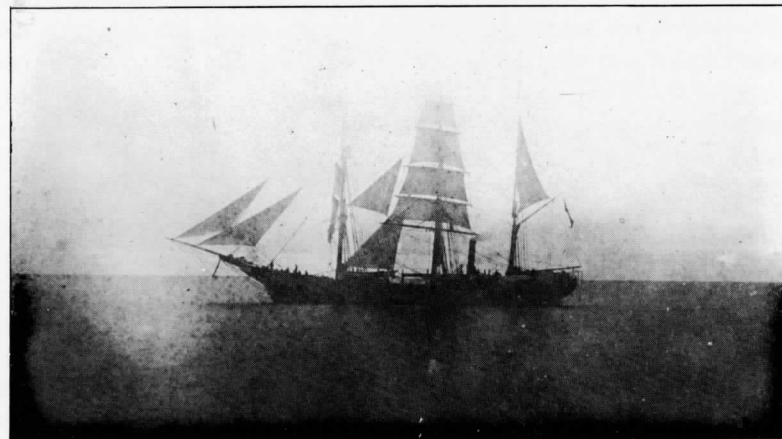
George Fred Tilton volunteered to go south to the United States for relief and, with two Siberian Indians, he started his trek across 3000 miles of snow and ice. Hurricanes, blizzards, desertion by his guides and many other harassments pursued him, but he reached San Francisco on April 17, 1898, five months after leaving Point Barrow.

The same day that Tilton reached San Francisco, Lieutenant Jarvis and Dr. Call, of the Revenue cutter *Bear*, arrived at Point Barrow with a herd of reindeer. The masters of the few ships which had got out ahead of the freeze-in had alerted the government to the others' plight and the *Bear* was sent to aid them. James and Call had been landed at Cape Vancouver to drive a herd of reindeer north, while the *Bear* worked her way as far as Unalaska. There she had to stay all winter because of the ice. The cutter reached Point Barrow July 22, 1898, and took the 102 stranded whalemens home. The five ships frozen in to the eastward were

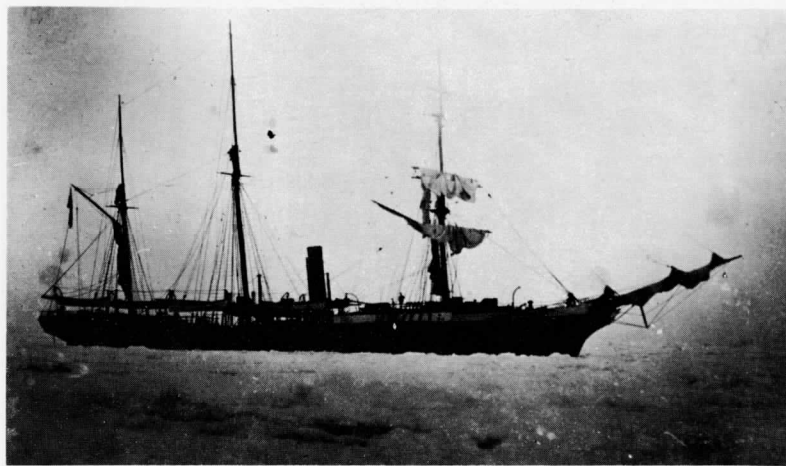
all right and, with the *Belvedere*, remained to whale in the Arctic that summer.



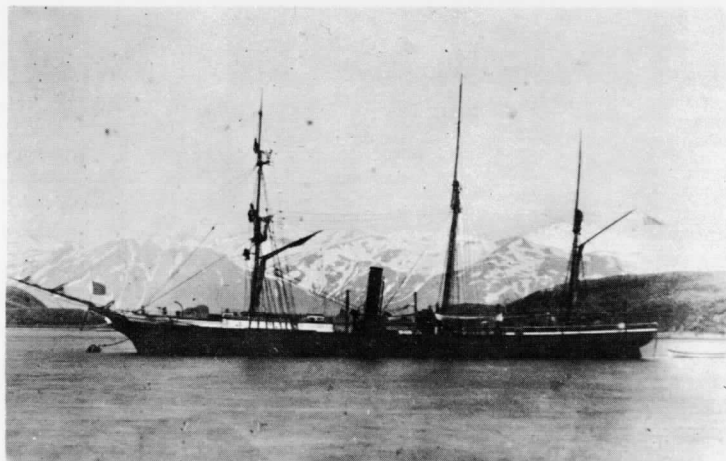
Whaling bark *Jacob A. Howland*, Captain John McInnes trying out oil. The *Howland* was lost near Johnson's Island, in 1889.



Steam whaler *Thrasher*, Captain Leander Owen, in Bering Sea.



United States Revenue Cutter *Bear* in the ice, Bering Sea in the month of June.



Another photograph of the *Bear*, this time moored at Unalaska.

Captain Hartson Bodfish in the *Beluga*, largest ship of the Arctic fleet, had wintered at Langdon Bay, 250 miles east from Pauline Cove, and did not hear of the disaster there, nor of George Fred's remarkable journey, until March 1898, when the bark *Wanderer* arrived with last July's mail. Captain Bodfish was fishing intensively, testing and proving the theories he had formed in

previous years. By the end of the summer, he had thirty-five whale. He loaded his bone on the *Baleena* and began whaling again.

By October, his ship was frozen in and did not get clear until July 11th. The last part of June, Captain Bodfish sent part of his crew over the ice with whaleboats to Cape Bathurst, where they set up a camp. As the ice broke up around the cape, whales appeared in the leads (open water) and the *Beluga's* crew took four, the earliest ever caught in the Arctic. The first week after the *Beluga* picked up the men and boats at Cape Bathurst, they took fourteen more whale so already had a season's catch before the *Hume*, which had wintered at Pauling Cove, could join them.

Captain Bodfish's third and fourth voyages in the *Beluga* combined whaling and trading. He had now spent twenty-three summers and eight winters in the Arctic and wanted a year ashore, so he returned to the Vineyard. When he sailed again, it was as master of the *William Baylies* and he made a most successful voyage, landing 35,000 pounds of bone and 1400 white fox skins. Captain Bodfish's share was \$13,000. He made three more voyages in the *Baylies*, but on the third voyage the vessel was crushed by the ice in Anadir Bay, Siberia. Captain Bodfish and his men got onto the ice, but they had no shelter and few stores, for the vessel sank in twelve minutes. Gale winds, heavy snow and the constantly cracking ice made the night a nightmare. At daylight, the storm cleared and they could see the *Bowhead* in open water, two miles away. It took them nine and a half hours to reach her.

For the next few years, Captain Bodfish was master of the steamer *Herman*, whaling and trading. But the demand for whalebone was over and, when the *Herman* landed 30,000 pounds and Captain Bodfish received not a penny, he decided to quit whaling.

Meanwhile, after his epic journey, George Fred Tilton shipped as mate on the *William Baylies* and on the *Belvedere*. In 1903, when Captain Devoll died on the voyage north, George Fred succeeded him and made a successful voyage. He then sailed again as master of the *Belvedere*. After that, he shipped as master of the *Bowhead*, making two good seasons.

In 1907, Captain Tilton had 13,000 pounds of whalebone

which brought \$104,000. He warned his owners of rumors of the advance in the manufacture of steel and its threat to the bone industry, but they sent him out again on March 17, 1908. That year the bone market collapsed and the *Bowhead* was \$18,500 in debt. She was sold to a moving picture company and was burned in 1915.



Eskimo dog sleds. On the edge of Arctic Ocean.

The number of whaleships sailing from San Francisco was now sharply reduced. The treacherous Arctic had taken its toll; many vessels had returned to New Bedford and other Atlantic ports. Most had been converted to other uses. Vineyard men had been among the first to go into the Arctic whaling and they were among the last, Stephen Cottle and Hartson Bodfish persisting until 1914. Little whaling has been done from American ports on either coast in the last forty or fifty years and now Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans has banned all commercial whaling in the United States to protect the remaining whales, fast becoming extinct.



Landing Place at Cape Lisbourne, Arctic Ocean.



Whaling bark *Helen Mar*, Captain Eugene O. Thaxter, trying out oil. The *Helen Mar* was lost in the Arctic, October 6, 1892.

Vineyard Masters Whaling in the Arctic

1848 - 1914

Allen, Hezekiah	Manter, Frederick W.
Bodfish, Hartson	Marchant, _____
Campbell, Thomas	Mellen, Thomas
Cleveland, Benjamin	Mitchell, West
Coffin, Edwin	Norton, Ariel
Cottle, Stephen	Osborn, Abraham
Cottle, William	Owen, Leander
Dexter, Benjamin	Pease, Henry, Jr.
Dexter, Henry G.	Smith, Edward J.
Donaldson, George	Smith, Everett E.
Earle, James A. M.	Smith, George A.
Fisher, Charles W.	Smith, Gilbert
Fisher, James H.	Smith, Horace P.
Jenks, George	Smith, Samuel P.
Jernegan, Jared	Thaxter, Eugene O.
Kelley, Edmund	Tilton, George Fred
Kelley, William	Tilton, James A.
Lewis, Valentine	Tilton, Shadrach
Manter, Cyrus	Vincent, Ward P.

West, Ellsworth

Other Vineyard men who whaled in the Arctic included:

Belain, Joseph	Earle, Billy
Butler, David	Flanders, Robert
Campbell, Donald	Hammett, Franklin
Cook, William	Look, Andrew

NOTES

(1) The Bark *Tamerlane*, Capt. John Rogers, returned to San Francisco on Nov. 22, 1889, with 65 barrels whale oil & 1900 pounds bone. She made two more voyages to the Arctic, under different masters, and then was sold in Nov. 1891. The next Jan., Capt. W. F. Howland cleared the *Tamerlane* for the North Pacific, but the vessel was wrecked off Hilo on the second of February and Capt. Howland and 18 men were lost.

(2) The *J. A. Howland*, Capt. John McInnes, continued cruising after make-shift rudder repairs and returned to port on Nov. 3, with 80 pounds of sperm oil, 95 barrels of whale oil and 1000 pounds of bone. In less than a month, Nov. 30th, she sailed again, but was lost near Johnson's Island. Her crew was saved by the bark *Abram Barker*, Capt. C. F. Gifford, on Dec. 26, 1889.

(3) The *Ohio II*, Capt. E. Gifford, was lost at Cape Lisburne in October 1888.

(4) The *Lagoda*, Capt. Charles H. Tucker, returned to San Francisco in July, 1889, with only 80 barrels whale oil and 1400 pounds bone. In Nov., she sailed again with Theodore A. Lake as master, but was condemned at Yokahama the following August.

(5) The schooner *James A. Hamilton*, Capt. Alfred Ryder, left San Francisco Dec. 14, 1889, and was lost on its passage to the Arctic.

(6) Mr. Borden's supposition about the *Cape Horn Pigeon* was incorrect. She had left San Francisco on Nov. 28, 1888, and she returned there on Oct. 30, 1889, with 35 barrels of sperm oil, 900 barrels of whale oil and 10,000 pounds of bone. She made annual voyages to Japan and Ochotsk until July, 1897, when she was lost in the Japan Sea with 800 pounds sperm oil and 100 pounds whale oil. All hands were saved.

(7) In 1871, the southern limit of the Arctic ice pack was unusually far south. Thirty-three vessels were within sight of one another (seven others were known to be beyond) when the ice closed the bight between Point Belcher and Icy Cape. There were 1219 men, women and children aboard the imperiled vessels with no hope of getting free from the ice, not nearly enough provisions, and no chance of getting more.

On Sept. 12, the masters of the imprisoned vessels decided to abandon them and to try to reach the vessels which waited near the edge of the ice field. The 70 mile journey in crowded whaleboats was a nightmare, aggravated by howling gales and slashing rains. But by the end of the second day all, except one man who stayed with the fleet, were aboard one or another of the seven vessels. Captain Thomas Mellen took 244 aboard the *Europa*, the *Progress* had 188, the *Lagoda*, 170, *Daniel Webster*, 155, the *Milas* had 143

and 319 were divided between two other vessels. In Oct., the rescue ships reached Honolulu, where anxious families waited. Vessels, outfits, oil and bone worth two to three million dollars were lost, but every life was saved.

Less than two weeks after the fleet was abandoned, a northeast gale raged for several days and forced the ice fields back from the shore. Some ships went off the pack and were sunk at anchor, some drifted off with the ice, a few were burned by the natives, several survived the winter, but only one, the bark *Minerva*, ever came back. She was saved by Capt. Thomas Williamson the next season. The lone man who stayed behind said he would not spend another winter in the Arctic for \$150,000.

Of the 32 vessels lost in this disaster, 14 were commanded by Vineyard masters: Hezekiah Allen, Benjamin Dexter, James H. Fisher, Jared Jerneagan, Edmund Kelley, William Kelley, Valentine Lewis, West Mitchell, Ariel Norton, Abraham Osborn, Leander Owen, Henry Pease, Jr., Everett E. Smith, George A. Smith.

(8) 1876 was another disastrous season. By Aug. 1, the fleet at Point Barrow was hemmed in by ice. Other vessels, driven north by the floating ice were completely icebound 20 to 30 miles off Smith's Bay. The first of Sept., they abandoned ship and, dragging whaleboats full of supplies and sails to use for shelter, they walked 120 miles to open water. A severe storm caused some of the men to give up and return to their ships. These were never heard from again as the vessels were probably carried northeast by the immense ice packs. The rest finally sighted the *Rainbow* and the *Three Brothers*, lightly frozen in, on Sept. 9th. The *Florence* was caught at Cape Smith, but on Sept. 13th an easterly wind freed her and she sailed for San Francisco. Five days later, the *Rainbow* and the *Three Brothers* were released and sailed for Honolulu. Twelve vessels were lost and three Vineyard masters who had lost their ships in the 1871 ice pack again lost their commands. They were Captains James H. Fisher, William Kelley and West Mitchell. (The next year the *Three Brothers* was lost in the ice. Leander Owen was master and Benjamin Dexter was first mate.)

(9) Prices for bone were considerably lower in San Francisco than in New Bedford and other New England ports. That year, bone worth \$4.50 per lb. in New Bedford brought only \$1.75 in San Francisco. If the whalers waited until they returned east, their lays were based on the higher price, but of course, in doing that they'd missed an entire season, so it was not common practice.

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Letter from G. B. Borden and Photographs, courtesy of the late Rodman Swift.

DCHS NEWS

The Dukes County Historical Society, with its Thomas Cooke House, Carriage Shed, Fresnel Lens, Research Library, and beautiful gardens, is continuing through another summer of activity, with visitors coming from all over the United States and from far-away countries. Often we are asked by our local friends, "Are you busy yet, over at the Historical Society?" to which we reply, "We are always busy."

During the past six months, changes have been made in both the library and the Thomas Cooke House. In the library stacks, we have placed over two hundred volumes of the *Vital Records of Massachusetts* which we received from the West Tisbury Public Library last year. Also our collection of the annual volumes of the *Vineyard Gazette* are in a more convenient position. Work has begun on an inventory of our maps, and photographic collections, an assignment which had become increasingly necessary due to the great demand for these materials by the public.

Research in our library this year has centered primarily around the study of Island History in preparation for the Tercentennial Celebration. Representatives of various committees have consulted our photographs, maps, biographies, paintings, clippings, *Gazettes*, etc., for use in reports and displays.

Members of our Council were prominent in the planning of the very exciting Tercentenary Week, while the Society loaned pictures for the Hall of Fame in West Tisbury, and properties for the remarkable play written by Mary Payne. It was our pleasure to work with Miss Nancy Hamilton and her committee, representing Miss Katherine Cornell, in providing in a small way historical materials and ideas for the movie "This Is Our Island" which had its first showing during the week of the Tercentennial. The movie is a delightful combination of scenes taken years ago, and currently, of our beautiful Island, with the narrative by Miss Cornell.

More of our logbooks have been microfilmed by Douglass C. Fonda, Jr. founder of the Whaling and Marine Manuscripts Archives, Inc., of Nantucket. We now have a good collection of microfilm in this specific field, and have had the offer of the temporary use of a microfilm viewer for students until such time as we

shall have the funds given to us to purchase our own. Mr. Fonda has also done a skillful piece of work in removing the clippings from those logbooks which had been "pasted up" as scrapbooks through the years.

We were able to participate in the preparation of material for the Island History course, given by Dr. and Mrs. Sidney R. Riggs, of West Tisbury, at the Regional High School during the winter. Attendance for this course was record high.

In early June there were four school tours; the third grade of Edgartown, Mrs. Dixon Renear, teacher; fourth grade of Oak Bluffs, Mrs. John Bacheller, teacher; eighth grade of Oak Bluffs, George Tillett, teacher; and a freshman class of the high school, with Mrs. George Anthony, teacher. Great enthusiasm was displayed by the students, and the two younger classes rewarded our staff with "thankyou notes" (illustrated) giving what the writers considered to be the high points of their tour.

Our work with the social-studies teachers will continue, with committee meetings to explore ways in which we can work together. Courses on Island History and Maritime History, in which we hope to have a share through the use of our library facilities, are being offered at the Regional High School this fall.

When spring belatedly came to the Island, there was much activity on the grounds, with several crews working at the same time. Allen Gelinas and his men fixed up the lawn and gardens. The plants in the herb garden, which had been taken in during the winter, were set out by Douglas Look of Vineyard Haven, under supervision of Nelson Coon, chairman of the grounds committee. Burnham and Magnuson built new steps into the library and made repairs to the try-works, while Tiah's Cove Painting Company followed with touching up the carpentry and doing a limited amount of painting and papering, a program which had been hampered by a long, cold winter. The two front rooms upstairs in the colonial house, plus the front stairway, are now attractively repainted. The wall-paper for Whaling Room One, in period design, was selected with the help of Mrs. Kenneth Southworth, Jr. We hope to continue with more painting this fall.

Our summer staff this year is composed of Mrs. Hilda Gilluly, of Edgartown, as senior hostess; Miss Anne Luedeman of Lambert's Cove; Miss Gillian Dowley of Hampshire College and a summer res-

ident of East Chop; Miss Mary Lee Steimel from the University of Louisville; Miss Frances Phelan, teacher in Baltimore, Maryland, and summer resident of Edgartown; and Richard Kane of the University of Pennsylvania and summer resident of Chappaquiddick. Mrs. D. Osborn Bettencourt serves as reference librarian on a year-round basis.

Richard Kane does our janitorial work, also serving as a guide and working on displays. Under the sponsorship of Operation Mainstream, Miss Luedeman has been working with us since the first of May, doing research, cataloguing, mending, and arranging in the Costume Room, with very gratifying results. She has also helped in preparing many of the other displays, notably the "workshop". Miss Dowley has been helpful on displays, school tours, and publicity. Miss Steimel devotes most of her time to sorting and cataloguing the photographic archives. Mrs. Gilluly and Miss Phelan bring their past experience to the task of guiding the visitors, while Mrs. Bettencourt is in charge of the sales department and also helps visitors in research.

Mrs. Joy Rhodes, of Vineyard Haven, assisted in getting the Colonial four - harness loom ready for use, and her pupil, Beverly Erickson of Edgartown, has been weaving on it. It is good to see the loom in actual use. In the same department, Mrs. William Block of West Tisbury, is repairing one of the flax wheels for demonstration purposes.

The Gay Head Light has been serviced by Kenneth Deitz of Edgartown, who recalls as a small boy visiting Charles W. Vanderhoop Sr., lighthouse keeper at Gay Head. The Fresnel Lens will be demonstrated Sunday evenings at 9:00 P. M. during July and August.

Life certificates, designed and printed by Dr. Sidney R. Riggs, with calligraphy by Mrs. Sara Chatterton Snoek, and Miss Alice Hajenian, were sent in February to each life member in recognition of support and continued interest through the years. It is our hope that more of our regular members will take out life membership.

There is a risk in listing the names of those who have helped with the possibility of leaving out some names. We apologize to those we may have omitted.

E. Gale Huntington, Acting Editor of the *Intelligencer*, attended the Seminar on Historical Agency and Historical Museum Publica-

tions, in Nashville, Tennessee, where he joined others in receiving instruction from some of the nation's leading editors, publishers, and designers.

We attempt to keep in touch with organizations which have a common interest with ours, such as the American Association of Museums, and the American Association for State and Local History, to mention a few. Most important of all, we are happy to exchange publications with our sister historical societies, especially in the Bay State Historical League.

On June 26, 1971, the Curator attended the annual meeting of the Bay State Historical League which was held in Pilgrim Hall, at Plymouth, Mass. The speakers were: Robert F. Brown, area Director of the Archives of American Art; Captain George M. Cunha, Conservator at the Boston Athenaeum (with a very comprehensive talk on the effects of light, heat and humidity on artifacts and displays); Walter Muir Whitehill, Director and Librarian at the Boston Athenaeum, and a panel consisting of David B. Little, of the Essex Institute, David D. Hall, Director of American and New England Studies at Boston University, and L. D. Geller, Director of Pilgrim Society at Plymouth. The meeting included the dedication of Pilgrim Hall as a certified Massachusetts Historical landmark. The League meets four times per year. Information regarding the programs may be secured from the Curator.

We are trying to broaden the involvement of our members, with the hope that more will help carry the load which is too burdensome for a council of ten directors. As you can see by this report, the work of our Society is ever-expanding. As it was stated by someone at the Plymouth meeting, we should no longer be considered merely an "antiquarian society" but as a contemporary organization alive to the interests of all ages in the community during these active times. In order to fulfill this important function as an educational institution, we need the help of our entire membership through visits, volunteer work, ideas and increased financial giving.

ACCESSIONS

The following is the list of thirty-four donations during the first six months of 1971, with the names of the donors.

BOOKS:

Two large Bibles:

English Version of the Polyglot Bible, with Old and New Testaments, Apochrypha, and Brown's Concordance, Charles Gaylord, Boston, 1842.

Old and New Testaments, with Observations by the Reverend Mr. Osterwald, Switzerland. Mrs. Ralph Estes, Falmouth, Mass.

Narrative of an Expedition to the Polar Sea by Admiral Ferdinand Wrangell, Harper and Bros. 1841. Mrs. David Rappaport, Oak Bluffs.

Flags of Maritime Nations, Washington D. C. 1870. Mrs. Gladys Pease Reid, Edgartown.

Gospel Hymns, Bigelow and Main Co. (Hymnbook belonged to Emma W. Mayhew).

Church Hymns and Gospel Songs, Bigelow and Main Co. (Hymnbook belonged to Ulysses E. Mayhew.) Thomas E. Thatcher, West Tisbury.

The Colonial House, by Joseph Everett Chandler, Robert McBride, Co., 1916. Mr. and Mrs. Eldon West, Edgartown.

The Pictorial Book of the Commodores, comprising lives of distinguished Commanders of the Navy of the U. S. compiled by John Frost, 1845. The Reverend John T. Golding, Edgartown.

Whale-Ho, written and illustrated by Charles W. Kronenberg, Business Services, Inc. Danbury, Conn. 1969. Donated by the author.

Martha's Vineyard, Photographs by Alfred Eisenstaedt, and Text by Henry Beetle Hough, Editions I and II. The Viking Press 1970 and 1971. From the Viking Press Inc., New York City.

The Ames Family of Bruton, Somerset, England (1520-1969) by Faber K. Ames, 1969. Faber K. Ames, Los Angeles, California.

PAPERS AND MANUSCRIPTS:

List of Vineyard Seamen (377) for whom there were Protection Certificates (July 1, 1834 to Oct. 12, 1869). Reginald B. Hegarty, Curator, Melville Room, New Bedford Public Library.

Protection Certificate of John Adams Pease, from his grandson, Kenneth A. Southworth, Jr. Edgartown.

Bill for medical services, to Mrs. Charles W. Fisher, from Dr. Thomas J. Walker, dated July 1881.

Copy of *Vineyard Gazette* August 6, 1896, with lists of the soldiers of 1776, and also the list of charter members of the M. V. Chapter of D. A. R. Mrs. Gladys Pease Reid, Edgartown.

Five cancelled shares of stock in the Old Colony Railroad. (dated 1884-1900). Elkin M. Adelson, Vleta, Florida.

The Experience and Nativity of Walter Pierce Hillman, (1880-1943). Miss Olive Hillman, Edgartown.

Biographical Sketch of Charles Wood Vanderhoop, Sr. Keeper of the lighthouse at Gay Head (1920-1933) by his daughter Mrs. William C. Page, Harrisburg, Pa.

Glass-framed map of *Marine Disasters of Martha's Vineyard*, plus maps of marine disasters in other areas: Nantucket, Buzzards Bay, Narragansett, and Cape Cod. Compiled by S. W. Luther, published by Peter J. Closson, of Sandwich, Mass. Donated by publisher.

Three collections of letters written to Charles O. Tilton, by his father, T. W. Tilton, (1877-1880-1883). Edward G. Tilton, Orinda, California.

Daggett Genealogy, Martha's Vineyard and New Vineyard, Maine. Mrs. Dorothy Daggett Johnston, So. Dennis, Maine.

Booklet: *Educational Revivals in Ante-Bellum New England*, by Paul H. Mattingly, Asst Professor of Educational History, New York University. Donated by the author.

Magazine article, *Yankee Magazine* July 1968, regarding the M. V. Railroad. Thomas E. Thatcher, West Tisbury.

Reproduction of a *Whale Chart of 1851*, by M. F. Maury, Lt. USN. Chester B. Van Tassel, Edgartown.

Clipping from *Falmouth Enterprise*, May 18, 1971: "Student of Gosnold Analyzes John Brereton's Familiar Account". Harold Wilson, Pres. of Gosnold Society.

PICTURES

Two *pictures* of Mr. and Mrs. Lyman Cottle of Chilmark, taken in 1870. Miss Eva Ryan, Gay Head.

Photographs of the residence of J. R. Fornian, of Edgartown, and of the Edgartown Lighthouse, taken in 1892. Suzanne Twitchell, Northport, N. Y.

Seven *stereoscopic views* of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, taken by Chas. H. Shute and Son. Mrs. Thomas McGovern, Swansea, Mass.

Assorted *picture cards*, Mrs. Lucy Dowd, Tuckerton, New Jersey.

Picture of *Charles Wood Vanderhoop, Sr.* Mrs. (C. H.) Jane Gaston Mahler, Charleston, N. C.

Collection of *photographic prints* of DCHS scrimshaw collection, Mrs. Barbara Johnson, Princeton, New Jersey.

ALSO:

Dolls' clothing for two dolls in our collection, Mrs. Richard Morris, Oak Bluffs.

Collection of forty items of *clothing* and *accessories*, of 19th century origin, Mrs. Ralph C. Estes, Falmouth, Mass.

Embroidered linen parasol found in home of Mrs. Nellie Burleigh, of the Mansion House, Mrs. David Rappaport, Oak Bluffs.

Parasol of embroidered linen and white lawn afternoon dress, (ca. 1880-1900) which belonged to Miss Eliza Kent. Donated by granddaughter of Mrs. Joseph C. Kent, of Kent Harbor, Edgartown.

Porridger, bootscraper, one pair of "*creepers*" (for walking on ice) and a set of *leg-irons* brought home from a whaling voyage by Capt. Theodore L. Wimpenney. Miss Mary Wimpenney, Edgartown (granddaughter).

One large *tortoise-shell comb*, which belonged to Desire Osborn Fisher. Mrs. Muriel Harding Bliss van der Heggen, Menemsha.

Small *receptacle* made from *clay* at Gay Head cliffs. Miss Olive Hillman, administrator of estate of the late Mrs. Mabel Lumsden.

Two *boat models* (half-models) and plaque of builder, No-man's land boat, and Bass boat, made by Manuel Swartz-Roberts of Edgartown. Mr. Austin P. Winters, Summit, New Jersey.

Scrimshaw (pie-crimper) Probably made by seamen for Laura Mellen, on board *the Europa*, Captain Thomas Mellen, Edgartown. Mrs. Freeman Wallin, Green Valley Arizona, and Edgartown.

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¢.

Whaling Wives by Emma Mayhew Whiting and Henry Beetle Hough. A new edition. Illustrated. Cloth \$4.50.

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

Martha's Vineyard A Short History and Guide. Eleanor Ransom Mayhew, Editor. New edition with added index. Maps and illustrations. 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. 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. Illustrated. \$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.

Indian Legends Of Martha's Vineyard by Dorothy R. Scoville. Paper \$2.50.