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by HAROLD C. WILSON

Vinland And The Vineyard
by GALE HUNTINGTON

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A Field Trip For Louis Agassiz

by
Harold C. Wilson

Editorial Note.

Harold C. Wilson is undoubtedly the world's leading authority today on Bartholomew Gosnold. Several of Mr. Wilson's articles dealing with various aspects of Gosnold's famous voyage to Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands in the year 1602 have appeared in the pages of the Intelligencer. But Mr. Wilson is also a teacher in the New Bedford High School, This paper was written for his students. We hope that the readers of the Intelligencer will find it interesting.

In 1873, exactly 100 years ago, Louis Agassiz of Harvard College founded the John Anderson School of Natural History on Penikese Island near Cuttyhunk, one of the Elizabeth Islands.

Agassiz was a great scientist and an outstanding teacher. He was expert on everything from minnows to glaciers. In fact, it was mainly his research that brought forward the conclusion on the "Glacial Theory." And it is now accepted that great ice masses once covered large portions of the northern United States.

Louis Agassiz was loved and respected by his students at Harvard. They often called him, "The Master." Many times they assisted him in his various projects. He in turn, was personally devoted to his students. No doubt, he would have been a great addition to the faculty of the New Bedford High School.

Agassiz liked to teach outdoors. In fact, he discouraged the use of textbooks except for detail. One of his favorite sayings was:

"When you study nature in books, when you go out-of-doors you cannot find her."

Also he liked to sit on a rock with a small group of students and discuss the specimens they had collected. He would make sure that the students understood the significance of their finds whether they might be a shining gemstone or a strange looking fish or crab. Afterwards many of his students felt they became better human beings because of his teaching. Not only could he teach, but more important, he understood his students.
One of Agassiz’ goals was to establish a summer school where students could live while they were exploring and studying nature in detail. For several years he tried to interest people in his idea, but in vain. Many thought he was “completely gone” with such a wild scheme. However, Agassiz was a patient man. Early in 1873, a wealthy New Yorker named John Anderson gave to Agassiz Penikese Island and fifty thousand dollars for his school. Anderson probably said, “Here, Lou. I like your idea. Go ahead and do your thing but don’t mess up the Island.”

On July 8, 1873, the John Anderson School of Natural History on Penikese, directed by Louis Agassiz, opened its doors to fifty students and several teachers. For eight weeks, the students climbed all over the island, studying shellfish, minerals, plants, birds and everything else. They even had a small boat to explore the surrounding waters. In the morning they would attend lectures on such subjects as bugs, worms and algae. Most of the afternoon they collected various specimens of the flora and fauna.

An old barn was used as a lecture hall and laboratory where, often, the students would dissect their specimens at night by candle light. A long and narrow, hastily constructed, building was used as a dormitory. The boys lived at one end and the girls at the other. The two compartments were separated by a sailcloth suspended from the rafters.

The students were completely “in love” with nature and on Sunday nights they would meet at the highest point of the island and have a community sing. Obviously, the summer of 1873 was a successful one for the Agassiz School.

Susan Wilson, the author’s daughter, standing at the base of a glacial boulder on Penikese.

But the following winter, tragedy struck the infant institution. Its beloved founder died. “The Master,” Louis Agassiz, whose inspiration and pure hard work made everything possible, was no longer there to lead and guide the school. His son attempted to operate the school the following summer, but it just was not the same without Agassiz. When the students left Penikese after that second summer, they would never return again. Although, the
John Anderson School of Natural History vanished from Penikese, it left a lasting imprint on science teaching in America. Today, many teachers incorporate the “field trip” in their curricula. And the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole and other institutions owe their existence to the Agassiz School.

Since the summers of 1873 and 1874 and until May 1973 as far as is known, no organized expedition of high school or college students explored Penikese. There were, however, a few scientists from various colleges who did perform studies there, and bird-watchers have, at times, visited the island.

When Harold Wilson of the New Bedford High School faculty was teaching geology to his senior Chem-Physics class, he talked a lot about Penikese. The island contains many minerals and rocks and its landscape shows how the large ice sheets changed the surface of earth some 10,000 years ago.

Mr. Wilson also told his students something of the weird history of the island. He called Penikese: “The Island of Evil.” At one time, snakes crawled all over the island and a man once collected 500 of them. When the snakes began eating the eggs and young of the birds that nested there, they quickly vanished. The birds would swoop down on their enemies and destroy them.

During the breeding season, numerous species of sea-birds struggle for control of the island. The scene is almost incredible-thousands and thousands of birds fighting for a place to nest. The mangled bodies of terns, gulls and ducks, victims of the struggle, can be found scattered all over the island. The birds have even attacked people. Indeed the place reminds one of the Alfred Hitchcock movie, “The Birds.”

In the early part of this century, there was a leper colony on Penikese. These poor and wretched outcasts of society lived in small cottages at the west end. When death, mercifully, relieved their suffering, they were buried in a solution of quicklime. This was done because leprosy was considered to be contagious even after death.

Trees have a difficult time surviving on the island. In fact, almost nothing, including man, has been able to wholly adapt to the hostile environment of Penikese. The island seems to be strictly for the birds. When observed from an airplane it resembles some kind of pre-historic monster. A few hauntings have even

been reported, the ghosts being the spirits of the departed lepers.

Although Mr. Wilson’s students had a difficult time believing some of his stories about the island, curiosity finally overcame them, and with their teacher’s help, they organized an expedition to the “Island of Evil.”

Several weeks were spent in preparation. The students studied the flora and fauna that they might find there. In class, work was done on mineral identification, topography and contour maps. Transportation to the island was provided by Mr. Benjamin Baker of the Coast Guard Reserve; and on Sunday, May 20, 1973 at exactly 8:35 in the morning, the group boarded Mr. Emile Morad’s power boat, Midnight Sun and left Fairhaven, bound for Penikese.

Members of the field trip to Penikese having lunch on the beach.

The exploring party consisted of six New Bedford High School students, four adults, and Mr. Wilson’s 12 year old daughter, Susan. They were: Harold C. Wilson, Eugene Wilusz, Dr. Charles Hutchings, Robert Maucone, Richard Fournier, Paulette Jadlowic, Gordon Santos, Frank Rodrigues, James Whitehead,
Carol Periera and Susan. With a calm sea and little wind, *Midnight Sun* plowed across the blue-gray waters of Buzzards Bay towards Penikese, some fourteen miles away. The fast power boat reached the island at about 9 o'clock. Penikese is not an easy place to land. However, Mr. Morad is an experienced boatman. He is the commander of the Fairhaven Coast Guard Auxiliary, one of the oldest flotillas on the coast, and *Midnight Sun* cautiously entered the cove on the east side of the island and then touched shore near an old stone pier. James Whitehead was the first member of the group to get foot on Penikese. The time was about 9:30. After everyone was safely ashore, Mr. Morad said that he would return and pick up the party about three o'clock in the afternoon.

While the landing operation was taking place, thousands of seagulls standing near their nests, were watching the invaders. The green east slope of the island was literally covered with the gray-white forms of the birds. They obviously resented this unexpected intrusion of their nesting ground. After the party of explorers had selected a campsite on the beach, it was decided to stay, more or less, in one group while exploring the island. The plan was to circle the entire 73 acres of the island before lunch. Then, after eating, the site of the Agassiz school would be examined. Before leaving, the party would spend at least an hour discussing their experiences.

As the group prepared to climb the steep east slope, thousands of screaming gulls took flight and circled overhead. This harassment by the gulls was to be continuous throughout the day. On occasion, the birds would make threatening passes at the group. Mr. Maucione was almost pecked a few times. The great black-backed gulls were the ones most often attacking the adventurers. Gull nests usually containing three eggs, were found on the ground everywhere. One had to keep looking downward in order not to step on them. At the very beginning of the journey, James Whitehead and Dr. Hutchings found a small growth of poison ivy. This was the first time that this plant was reported as
growing on the island.

Near the highest point of the island is a weather-worn boulder bearing a bronze tablet that reads,

In Commemoration
Of The
Anderson School Of Natural History
Established Fifty Years Ago On The
Island Of Penikese By
Jean Louis Rudolfe Agassiz
Born 1807 — Died 1873
The Marine Biological Laboratory
The Direct Descendant Of The
Penikese School Erects This Tablet
1923

Standing near this spot, one could understand why Agassiz and his students were so involved with their work. Penikese contains hundreds of erratic glacial boulders of various sizes. One of them is about the size of a small house, standing at least fifteen feet in height. These rocks contain shining minerals such as rose quartz and garnet. On the outside, however, they are rather homely, being of a brown and gray color, because of lichen growth and constant exposure to the elements.

The gulls have taken over the entire island. At one time the terns had control but only one of these smaller birds was spotted during the expedition. Some Canada geese and a few ducks and their nests were found on the northeast side. Although Penikese appears to be nothing more than a pile of rocks and stones, interesting plants do grow on the island. Wild carrot, rose hip and several types of fern were found, mostly at the eastern end. Seaweeds such as kelp, knotted wrack and fucus thrive along the shore.

As for mammals, the island now has a large population of white-tail rabbits. A few of their badly mangled bodies were found on the ground, apparently victims of the birds. One muskrat was seen near the northwest side. Although no clams of any kind were found, it is supposed that the cove contains a large number of quahogs. The blue-black mussel was found in abundance, clinging to the rocks below the high water mark.

There are four small ponds or kettle holes on the island. At the time of the visit, they were filled to the brim with fresh water. The entire island with its knobby hills and trench-like valleys is a perfect example of morainal terrain resulting from the last ice age, an ideal outdoor laboratory for the study of natural phenomena in general.

Stone marking the grave of one of the lepers.

On the west side of the island are the remains of the leper cottages, small foundations of fieldstone covered with debris and beach grass. On the wind-swept north end is the burying ground of the lepers. Only eight markers are still to be seen. It is known that sixteen lepers died while the colony was in existence and it is supposed that some of the markers have been stolen. One grave appeared to have been robbed, for there was a rather large hole or depression next to the marker. In the hole was a herring gull nest with three eggs.

At about 11:15 a.m. the entire group gathered at the campsite for lunch. Over an hour was spent relaxing and talking about the findings. Everyone was tired from climbing the rough terrain. In
fact, Gordon Santos was exhausted and fell fast asleep.

After lunch some of the group investigated what remained of the Agassiz School while the others continued to collect various specimens. Only the foundation stones of the school remain and it was difficult to ascertain which building was which. Mr. Wilusz managed to uncover a small porcelain object which seemed to be part of a lamp. At around 2 p.m. everyone mustered at the campsite for a general discussion and critique. Notes were compared and Mr. Wilson collected all of the specimens. They would be identified at school the following week.

At three o'clock the *Midnight Sun* arrived and the tired explorers climbed aboard. They left behind a reminder of their visit. A weather-worn log, standing erect at the campsite, bears the following inscription:

Campsite of  
Natural Science Field Trip  
held  
May 20, 1973  
by  
New Bedford High School Students  
for  
Lou Agassiz

Perhaps these students felt that Penikese Island was not so “evil,” after all, but a place of nature for man to appreciate and ponder.
LIST OF SPECIMENS COLLECTED AND OBSERVED
AT PENIKESE ISLAND

May 20, 1973

SEAWEED

Kelp

Fucus

Codium

Laminaria

Knotted wrack

SHELLFISH

Blue-black mussel

Periwinkle

BIRDS

Herring gull, the most prevalent
Ring billed gull
Lesser black-backed gull
Canada geese
Ring necked duck
Blue jay
Red-winged blackbird

Great black-backed gull
Common tern, only one noted
Laughing gull
Marsh hawk, only one noted
Black duck
English sparrow
Baltimore oriole

ANIMALS (General)

King snake

Common white-tail rabbit

Musk rat

PLANTS (General)

Pig Weed
Poison ivy, the first known report of its growth on Penikese
Dandelion
Rose-hip
Donkey weed
Wild Carrot

Milk weed
Beach grass (various)
Fern (various)
Sedge
Iris, found in clumps, central portion

MINERALS AND ROCKS

Syenite
Milky quartz
Smoky quartz

Gabbro
Feldspar
Biotite

Plagioclase

Vinland And The Vineyard

by

Gale Huntington

Vinland and the Vineyard. Can there be a possible connection between the present name of our Island and the Vinland that the Norsemen discovered and perhaps settled almost a thousand years ago? Vinland was somewhere on the east coast of North America, but it was undoubtedly a much larger land than just Martha’s Vineyard. So the question might better be, was our Island a part of ancient Vinland?

Our knowledge of Vinland comes entirely from two of the Norse sagas, one usually called “The Saga of Eric the Red” and the other the “Vinland History of the Flat Island Book.”(1) There are wide discrepancies in the two accounts. The reasons for that are that both were written probably from oral tradition some centuries after the events described took place, and each was written to give the credit for the discovery to a particular hero. In other words, neither is history. But a great deal in both can be verified by the Icelandic Annals and other turly historical accounts.

The description of Vinland, however, in both accounts is strikingly similar. Vinland was a pleasant place and it was given its name because of the wild grapes that grew there in great profusion. Wild grapes also grow in profusion on the Vineyard today. It was because of the grapes that the Norsemen called the land they had discovered Vinland. Almost exactly six centuries after the Norse voyages, in the year 1602, Bartholomew Gosnold gave our Island its present name for the same reason. The Martha part was for a small daughter at home in England.

The Norsemen who discovered Vinland in the early years of the eleventh century - Leif’s voyage was probably made in the year

(1) Olson, Julius E., “The Voyages of the Norsemen” in The Northmen, Columbus And Cabot, And Anderson, Rasmus B. The Flatey Book. There are other less readily available translations of the two sagas.
1001 - came not from Norway or any other part of Scandinavia but from Greenland. But they were indeed Norsemen although with a quite large admixture of Irish blood. Greenland had only been settled a few years earlier, but already there were flourishing settlements there. The first actual settlement was made in the year 986, or possibly a year earlier, by Eric, the son of Thorvald, usually called Eric the Red. Eric was a man of the minor Norse nobility. He was also a man entirely typical of his time and place — only perhaps a little more so — rough, brutal and fearless.

About the year 970 Eric was driven from Norway for manslaughter, which was probably a more polite term for murder. Eric made his ship ready and sailed for Iceland. All men of his class then had their own ships. He took his family with him, his retainers and their families, and his servants, whose status was almost that of slaves, and their families, as well as cattle, sheep and personal belongings. The vessel was undoubtedly a little crowded.

Eventually, after some moving around, Eric settled in the western part of Iceland. But he had only been there for some ten or eleven years when he was in trouble again, and for the same reason - manslaughter. Again he was exiled, but this time for only three years. The question was where would he spend those years. He would not have been welcome in any of the Norse colonies in the British Isles or in any other part of Europe, so again he sailed westward. This time to a new land to the west, which he named Greenland, that the Norsemen knew existed but which they had never explored. The east coast of that great island was grim and inhospitable. So Eric sailed around the southern tip later given the name Cape Farewell and found the western coast very much to his liking. He built a house there and established a farm and did some exploration of the coast.

But Eric, or perhaps it was his family or retainers, missed having no neighbors, not even Eskimos, for the climate of Greenland was so much warmer then, near the end of the tenth century, that the Eskimos were all settled farther to the north. So when the three years of his exile were up, Eric returned to Iceland and organized an expedition to settle the land which he had called Greenland. He gave it that name to make it sound more hospitable.

Actually the land was green. There were vast areas of verdant grasslands between the sea and the ice cap, and Eric discovered that cattle thrived there, and enough hay could easily be made to carry them through the long dark winters. Eric made the land sound so pleasant to his neighbors in Iceland that seventeen ships made the return voyage to Greenland with Eric and settled and established farms there. The farms were actually more like estates with a home not only for the proprietor but also with houses for retainers and servants.

The colony grew rapidly. At the height of its prosperity in the twelfth century there were two main settlements, the East Bygd which had been settled first, a smaller settlement, and the West Bygd, farther up the west coast. The total population of Greenland at that time was probably somewhere between two and three thousand people. And it was a prosperous land. Some of the barns of the great farms would shelter a hundred head of cattle. There were regular merchant voyages to Iceland and western Europe where the surplus dairy products of the farms were sold and the necessities of civilization brought back to Greenland.

At the time of the settlement Greenland was pagan. But in the year 999 Leif, one of Eric's sons, made a voyage to Norway and spent the winter with King Olaf. Olaf, at the time was busy converting all of Scandinavia to Christianity, and he was powerful enough to accomplish that. He made a Christian of Leif, too, and in the spring sent him back to Greenland, with a priest, and commissioned him, or perhaps ordered him, to convert the colony to the new faith. Leif after his famous voyage to Vinland, devoted his life to doing just that, but he seems never to have been able to convert his father, old Eric. And undoubtedly there were other hold-outs of the older religion, perhaps particularly in the West Bygd. A papal diocese was established for Greenland with a cathedral at Gardar in the West Bygd, and in the whole colony there were sixteen or more churches. We know this from both historical and archaeological evidence.

Such briefly was the Greenland from which the voyages to Vinland were made. The recorded voyages, with the exception of the great voyage of Thorfin Karlsefni, and the tragic voyage of the Icelanders Helgi and Finbogi were all made by the children of Eric.

(1) Some estimates of the population of Greenland are as high as seven or eight thousand.
the Red, by Leif and by two of his brothers and by their sister Freydis. That surely indicates the importance of Eric and his family in the early years of the Greenland colony. Freydis' voyage - her husband was along - was made jointly with Helgi and Finbog in two ships. That expedition ended in tragedy because Freydis got greedy and decided that she wanted the second ship and its lading in addition to her own, so she had all the Icelanders murdered. There is a tradition that the bones of those murdered Icelanders are still reposing in a peat bog on Squibnocket. (1)

Freydis' voyage was made some twenty years after her brother Leif's, and it is the last voyage to be recorded in the sagas. But it is the contention of this paper that many later voyages to Vinland may have been made.

When Gosnold came to Vinland - the Vineyard - so many centuries later he was much more interested in the sassafras that he found growing there than he was in the wild grapes. But to the Norsemen on the other hand the discovery of grapes growing in Vinland was of extreme economic importance. For vines were essential in the construction of the Norse ship. The skin of the Norse vessel - the planking - was not attached to the timbers with spikes or trunnels but was bound to them with vines or wythes. This was beautiful construction for a lapstreak vessel, and all of the Norse ships were lapstreak. When the ship was pulled up on the beach, as the Norse ships always were when not in use, because the planking was not spiked to the timbers, it would not pull at them and open up as it dried out. Thus there would be little leaking when the vessel was put in the water again.

There were two distinct types of the Norse ship. The one illustrated by Dr. Riggs' cut on the cover of this issue of the Intelligencer is a knarr, which was essentially a cargo or merchant and trading vessel. The other type, was the war ship which was longer, slimmer and sleeker than the knarr. Its sides were decorated with the shields of its fighting men and it depended on oars for great bursts of speed, though in making a long passage it probably depended mainly on its single square sail. The war vessel is the one usually seen in pictures of the Norse ship.

The knarr also carried oars but it depended mainly on its single sail. It was wider, and deeper than the war vessel and usually at least partly decked over. Its single square sail was efficient off the wind, but there is a statement in the story of Leif's return voyage from Vinland that makes us believe that the vessel could also work to windward. Leif's vessel had almost reached Greenland when, on a small island off the coast, Leif saw what turned out to be a wrecked vessel. Leif ordered his steersman to hold her a little more on the wind, indicating that she already was sailing on the wind. The knarr did not have a centerboard, or can we find any record of the use of leeboards, and still Leif's vessel was sailing on the wind. The fact that she was deep laden surely helped, but just possibly an oar might have been thrust down on the lee side which would have acted as a lee board or centerboard. At any rate, the statement indicates how greatly the knarr depended on sail.

Leif rescued the people of the wrecked vessel and salvaged its cargo, which probably means that he confiscated it. At any rate it was that incident, and not his voyage to Vinland, that gave him the sobriquet "Leif the Lucky."

The Norsemen did not have the compass, and of course nothing like a chronometer, and still they made their landfalls with astonishing sureness. They had to depend entirely on the sun and the stars and the direction of the wind to hold to their course. And they depended on sailing directions. The sailing directions for their voyages are surprisingly detailed. (1)

Many scholars have been hesitant to place Vinland as far south as southern New England but it is in southern New England that wild grapes are at their best, and nowhere are they more profuse than on Martha's Vineyard. Perhaps the Norse did make some wine from them. Perhaps they dried some and took them back to Greenland as raisins, but the vines as noted before were the important thing. Also, Vinland was heavily wooded and they took timber back to Greenland with them, just as so much later Bartholomew Gosnold took cedar timbers back to England.

Another thing is certain from the sagas, it was a long voyage from Greenland to Vinland. Two lands are noted in the sailing directions for the voyage: Helluland and Markland. Helluland, could have been either Labrador or Newfoundland. And Markland,
could have been either Newfoundland or Nova Scotia. Then came Vinland. But the description of the climate for Vinland in the sagas does not agree with that of either Newfoundland, where archaeologists have recently discovered Norse ruins, or with Nova Scotia.

The climate of Vinland as described in the sagas does agree entirely with the climate of southern New England. The Flat Island Book account has this to say about it, “Cattle would need no fodder there during the winter and the grass withered but little.” The climate of earth was warmer in the early years of the eleventh century than it is now, but even so, that sounds much more like southern New England than it does like Newfoundland or Nova Scotia. And during Karlsfeni’s attempt at colonization cattle were turned out to pasture during the winter. Also the same saga states that in Vinland the days and nights were of much more nearly equal length than in Greenland or Iceland. That also would have been true of Newfoundland or Nova Scotia but much more true of southern New England. Indeed, all the evidence in the sagas points to southern New England as the site of Vinland, and to the area of the Vineyard, Nantucket and Cape Cod in particular. However, because Vinland was undoubtedly a large territory it may have included most or all of what is now New England.

The period of the voyages as described in the sagas covers only about twenty years. If the products of Vinland were so important to the economy of Greenland and of Iceland, too, and they were, why did the voyages stop? It is the contention of this paper that perhaps they did not stop. The voyages described in the sagas were voyages of discovery and exploration. Later voyages would have been routine commercial ventures bearing the products of Vinland to Greenland and to Iceland and to Scandinavia and northern Europe, too routine to be recorded. Just so, the voyages between Greenland and Norway, which were of course purely commercial, and which continued for several centuries after the establishment of the Greenland colony, are little recorded. But enough of them are to give us at least a glimpse of the cargoes carried. Those cargoes consisted of the products of Greenland, of course: dairy products from the big farms, narwhal tusks and products of the Greenland fisheries, and the famous Greenland falcons which were then highly prized in Europe, for those were the days of falconry. But also in those eastbound cargoes we get a glimpse of products which Greenland could not have produced: timber and lumber, and the skins and furs of animals which did not live in Greenland and which must have come from Vinland.

Karlsfeni’s attempt at settlement in Vinland failed, but it is the speculation of this paper that other attempts may not have failed, and that there may have been one or several permanent Norse settlements in what is now New England. One of those supposed settlements may have been on Martha’s Vineyard. Historical evidence for that belief is slight indeed. It consists mainly of just a few brief statements in the Icelandic annals.

The most important such statement is this: A. D. 1121 Bishop Eric of Greenland went in search of Vinland. That is very little, but very important. Why would the bishop of Greenland make a voyage to Vinland unless there was a settlement or settlements there and churches? That he actually did make the voyage may be borne out by the fact that only recently a number of stones bearing runic inscriptions, including the bishop’s name have been uncovered at Popham Beach in Maine. These stones seem to indicate that Bishop Eric died in Vinland. At any rate a new bishop was consecrated and reached Greenland in the year 1124. It must also be noted that the see of Greenland was also called the see of Greenland and Vinland.
Also in the Icelandic annals there is this account for the year 1347: There came also a ship from Greenland... There were seventeen men on board, and they had sailed to Markland but had afterwards been driven hither [to Iceland] by storms at sea. That surely shows that as late as the middle of the fourteenth century voyages were still being made from Greenland to one of the new lands noted in the sagas. The ship had probably gone to Markland (Nova Scotia) for timber. If voyages were still being made to Markland as late as that it is certainly possible that voyages were still being made to Vinland too.

As to concrete evidence of Norse settlements in Vinland, aside from the Popham Beach stones, there is nothing that can be called definitely authentic. There seem to be no other runic stones that scholars will accept as genuine. No house foundations or ruined churches such as there are in Greenland and Newfoundland have been found. The so-called Norse tower at Newport\(^1\) has not and probably never will be accepted as truly of Norse construction. The Chilmark cromlech almost certainly was not erected by the Norsemen. If it is authentic, and it well may be, it is much earlier, perhaps contemporary with England's Stonehenge.\(^2\) If there actually were Norse settlements in Vinland, and if Vinland continued for centuries after the voyages of discovery of the sagas, why have the sites of the settlements never been found? The answer to that could be in the erosion that has been destroying "these fragile outposts" for a thousand years and which is still continuing. Any traces of the Norse settlements may now be miles out at sea and fathoms deep. For surely, the Norse settlements would have been near the shore, and harbors and inlets that the Norse used may long since have been obliterated.

If those settlements vanished what happened to the people who had inhabited them? The answer to that question also may never be answered with any degree of certainty. But here too, perhaps a little speculation is in order. Could the Norsemen of Vinland have been absorbed into the Indian population of New England and the Maritime Provinces? We know with certainty, from archaeological and other evidence, that when earth's climate became colder in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and when voyages between Greenland and Europe ceased, the remnants of the Greenland Norse were absorbed into the Eskimo people.\(^3\) Just so could the remnants of the Vinland settlements have been absorbed into the coastal Algonquians? During the years of their greatness as seafarers and wanderers, the Norsemen - Danes, Norwegians and Swedes-conquered many lands. They conquered what is now Normandy as its name still bears witness. They conquered much of Britain and Ireland. The conquered Sicily and parts of southern Italy and great tracts of land in Russia. The startling thing is that within a very few generations, wherever those conquests were made, the Norsemen ceased to be Norse and were completely absorbed into the peoples whom they had conquered. If that happened in Greenland and everywhere else, and it did, why may it not have happened in Vinland too?

Are there any cultural traits among the coastal Algonquians, particularly those of the area of present New England and the Maritime Provinces which would distinguish them from other Algonquian peoples and from other Indians of eastern North America? There certainly are.\(^2\) We shall mention only a few of them, particularly as they apply to the Wampanoags and Narragansetts. These people used flint and iron, iron pyrites or bog iron for making fire, not the usual bow and fire drill of most tribes. Their system of government was purely feudal, not communal as with most North American Indian peoples. The local Vineyard Indians, at the time of Bartholomew Gosnold's visit in 1602\(^3\) wore false beards, at least on ceremonial occasions. This certainly sounds like a cultural memory of the time when the Norsemen had first come among them. At least the Narragansetts used both sail and oars in addition to the universal Indian paddle, and very few other Indian people seem to have done so. Just so, the Greenland Eskimos used oars and sail whereas other Eskimos depended entirely on the paddle. The Delawares had the cross-bow. And one could go on.

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(1) Holm, Hjalmar R. *America 1355-1364.*
(2) Nansen, F. *In Northern Mists.*
(3) Flannery, Regina. *An Analysis Of Coastal Algonquian Culture.*
(3) Burrell, Henry S. *Early English And French Voyages.*
Among the Algonquian tribes of Maine and the Maritime Provinces there were many myths and tales that surely could have derived from the Norse Eddas. Perhaps there were some of those tales and myths among Algonquians of southern New England, too. But if so they have not survived. The English who settled in southern New England, and that includes those who came to Martha’s Vineyard with the Mayhews, were not at all interested in Indian myths. As far as the Indians were concerned their chief interest was in taking their best lands away from them, and in saving their souls by turning them into good Christians.

Nor were the English interested in any traces of Norse culture that may still have existed among the Indians. Roger Williams among the Narragansetts was truly interested in Indian culture, but he was not an anthropologist. Also, he thought he saw traces of a European language in their speech, but he thought that language was Welsh, not Norse. Williams on the whole gives us a broader and better picture of coastal Algonquian culture than any other of the early English settlers in New England.

One man, Reider T. Sherwin, wrote two books, or rather two volumes of the same book to try to prove that thousands of words in the Algonquian language, including many place names, derived from Old Norse. While not a linguist, Sherwin certainly knew his Old Norse. While scholars seem to have entirely neglected Sherwin’s work, to the non-linguist some of it is certainly pretty convincing. And, if Sherwin is correct in his thesis Old Norse surely must have been spoken for at least several centuries along the eastern seaboard for so many of its words and phrases to have crossed over into the Algonquian language. At the very least, Sherwin’s theory makes for interesting speculation.

Recently the Sea Coast Defence chapter of the D. A. R. in Vineyard Haven gave the stone illustrated here to our society. The letters on the stone are not runes but crude Roman. But by the fourteenth century Roman letters had begun to replace runes. We know very little about the history of this stone. There is an illustration of it on page 81 of Henry Franklin Norton’s little history of Martha’s Vineyard. There is not a word of explanation of the stone, only the caption under it which reads, “Indian Gravestone From Gay Head.” The point is that the inscription on the stone, the name, sounds much more Norse than Indian. But the fact that the letters are not runic only leads to more speculation. Undoubtedly the stone is not a fake but how old is it? If it is pre 1642, the date of the coming of the Mayhews to Martha’s Vineyard, it almost certainly must be Norse. But is it pre-Mayhew? Could Haiki Cagnehein, if that is what the letters spell, possibly have been an Indian name? Or the name of a later European settler on Gay Head?

Before closing this paper on Vinland and the Vineyard we should mention four possible runic stones connected with the Island. One of them, the so-called Black Rock of Nomansland, may be a fake. It lies, or did lie, on the beach at the west end of that little island. Two of the other stones are lost and the fourth may be lost, too, if, indeed it actually was a runic stone. That fourth stone also may be on Nomansland. It is Hattie Butler’s story.

Hattie Butler grew up and lived on Nomansland until she married Welcome Tilton a whaleman and mate on coasting schooners. She knew that the writer of this paper, her grand son-in-law, was very much interested in the Vinland story. At the time, the so-called black rock of Nomansland was still believed to be authentic. One day about twenty-years ago, we were talking about it, and about runic characters. And Hattie said, “You know, Gale, there may be another of those stones on Nomans.” Of course her grandson son-in-law wanted to know about it and this is the story she told him.

(2) Williams, Roger. A Key Into The Indian Language.
(3) Sherwin, Reider T. The Viking And The Red Man.

The stone was on the north side of the Island not far from the shore. It was a fairly large stone and inscribed with characters cut deep into the rock that no one was able to decipher. "They were sort of like those runes that you were talking about," Hattie said. "And we always called it the Captain Kidd’s stone because it was believed that those letters were a sort of secret writing that told where Captain Kidd had buried his treasure. The ground was dug up for yards around in every direction but no one ever found any gold."

That stone may still be there or it may long since have been blasted to pieces by the United States Navy’s long continued use of Nomansland as a bombing range. Another possible lost runic stone is the one found in North Tisbury on the former Priester place. The inscription was copied by the farm hand who found it, but the stone itself has vanished. Maybe it was built into a stone wall, or into a dam.

Perhaps we should not have included these stories in what is intended to be a serious account of Vinland, but it does seem that every possible lead, no matter how ephemeral should at least be mentioned. There is even one more story of a possible Vineyard runic stone. Supposedly, it stood on the bluff at Oak Bluffs, but because of erosion has since fallen into the sea.

So, the whole Vinland story is a will-o’-the-wisp and such it may always be. Even the Popham Beach stones have not yet been fully authenticated. But of one thing we can be sure, Martha’s Vineyard fits the description of the Vinland of the sagas as well as any place on the whole Atlantic Coast. And if Vinland did indeed continue for centuries after the voyages of discovery of the sagas, our Island may well have been the site of one of the settlements.


SOURCES

Anderson, Rasmus B. The Flatey Book And Recently Discovered Vatican Manuscripts, London...New York, 1908. This work contains the Icelandic and Latin texts with translations into modern Danish and English.

Bauer, George W. Cree Tales And Beliefs, in Northeast Folklore, Vol. XII, Orono, Maine, 1971.

Burrage, Henry S. Ed. John Brereton’s "Briefe And True Relation Of The North Part of Virginia," in Early English And French Voyages, in Original Narratives Of Early American History, New York, 1906. This is a contemporary account of Gosnold’s voyage of 1602. Gabriel Archer, who was also with Gosnold wrote another account. That will be found in Purchas...... London, 1625. Excerpts from both accounts will be found in Warner F. Gookin’s A Voyage Of Discovery To The Southern Parts Of Norumbega, Edgartown, 1950.

Flannery, Regina. An Analysis Of Coastal Algonquian Culture, Washington, D. C., 1939. This is a dissertation in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Catholic University of America.

Gathorne-Hardy, G. M. The Norse Discoverers Of America, Oxford, 1933. This is perhaps the best and least speculative of all the works dealing with the Vinland story.

Gray, Edward F. Leif Eriksson, Discoverer Of America, New York, 1930. This is a detailed analysis of Leif’s voyage to, and exploration of, Vinland. Gray places Leif’s headquarters at the western part of Martha’s Vineyard. However, considering the changes that a thousand years have wrought on the coastline that must be accepted only as speculation.

Holand, Hjalmar R. The Kensington Stone, Ephraim, Wisc., 1932. This and the following two books deal with various aspects of the whole Vinland story. Mr. Holand believed firmly that Vinland existed for centuries after the voyages of the sagas, and devoted much of his life to trying to prove it.

Holand, Hjalmar R. Westward From Vinland, New York, 1940.

Holand, Hjalmar R. America 1355-1364, New York, 1946.

Holand, Hjalmar R. “The Runic Inscription on No Man’s Land,” The New England Quarterly, vol. XVII, March, 1944. A description and analysis of the so-called black rock of Nomansland. Two New Bedford fishermen later confessed to cutting the inscription, which they may or may not have done. At least that makes the authenticity of the stone questionable.

Huntington, Gale. An Introduction To Martha’s Vineyard,
Vineyard Haven, 1969. A brief account of Freydis’ murder of the Icelanders who accompanied her to Vinland and speculation regarding the human bones that tradition says were found in a Squibnocket peat bog.


Nansen, F. In Northern Mists, New York, 1911. Nansen in the opening pages discusses the very early European voyages that might lend weight to the belief that the Chilmark cromlech, if it is authentic, might actually be a dolmen and date back to the time of Stonehenge. The book also gives a fine account of the Norse Greenland voyages. For the very ancient voyages seen also Massingham, H. J., The Heritage Of Man, London, 1929.


Sherwin, Reider T. The Viking And The Red Man, 2 vols., New York and London, 1940, 1942. Sherwin holds that many Algonquian place names are derived from the Old Norse.

Skelton, R. A., Thomas E. Marston and George D. Painter. The Vinland Map And The Tartar Relation, New Haven, Conn. & London, 1965. The map is pre-Columbian from the middle of the fifteenth century and shows Vinland clearly marked.


Vineyard Gazette, May 5, 1950. This article shows the copies inscription (runic) from the Priest’s farm stone.

Williams, Roger. A Key Into The Language Of America, London, 1643, reprint, Providence, R. I. 1936. This little book contains a great deal more than just words and phrases of the Narragansett Algonquian dialect.

DCHS News and Accessions

The summer of 1973 was an eventful period with all of our experiences being pleasant ones. Approximately 4,295 visitors passed through our gatehouse, where they paid an admission fee of $1.00 for adults and 50 cents for children. Unquestionably, the gatehouse and admission charge have caused some significant changes. Attendance was down by about 30 per cent over last year, but revenue was up by 35 per cent. In addition, the gatehouse provided an excellent control point that will allow us to continue displaying our exhibits in their natural state rather than either putting everything under glass or limiting access to the rooms.

Nearly every visitor commented on the quality of our exhibits, and the tourists from other countries were often reminded of their own homelands, because many of the items on display were brought back by whaling captains from distant seaports. Today, Martha’s Vineyard has become a stopping place for world travelers, and in the last few months we have had visitors from many other countries including England, Scotland, Italy, Columbia, the Bahamas, Holland, Ireland, Canada, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, and Australia. A number of our visitors became members of the historical society, and we were pleased to gain three new life members—Winthrop Brainerd, and Mrs. William Van Der Heggen’s daughter Muriel and her granddaughter Kathryn. Mrs. Van Der Heggen has been a member of the society since 1934.

On August 20, the Dukes County Historical Society held its annual business meeting, and afterwards the members gathered at the library for refreshments that marked the celebration of the society’s fiftieth anniversary. The credit for the success of the afternoon belongs to Mrs. Dorothy Cottle Poole, who planned the celebration and coordinated the efforts of several able volunteers. On a more solemn note, Rev. John T. Golding dedicated the memorial planting to the late Allen B. Gelinas.

At the business meeting, the society members approved several by-law changes. In addition to increasing the size of the Council,
the by-law amendments raised the cost of a sustaining membership from $10 to $25. This is a substantial increase, but we hope that most of our sustaining members will be able to continue in this category and thus help to offset the ever increasing costs of operation. Also at the business meeting, the society members elected John H. Montgomery, Stanley Murphy and Rev. John Golding to the Council, and Marian R. Halperin was elected as the society's secretary. After having served as president for four years, Alfred Hall announced his retirement from the office, and on the following day the Council met at the library and elected Doris C. Stoddard as the new president. William E. Sorensen was elected to fill Mrs. Stoddard's place on the Council. Vice-President E. Gale Huntington and Treasurer John W. Osborn were returned to their offices. Alfred Hall then turned over the proceedings to Mrs. Stoddard, and thus ended a four-year period of steady growth under Mr. Hall's strong leadership. The members of the Council heartily expressed their appreciation to Mr. Hall for his years of service, and fortunately, immediate past presidents will continue to serve on the Council.

During the summer and early fall, the library has continued to be a center of historical research even though such activity usually slows down in the warmer months. One area of research that will interest our readers is the continuing saga of George Weldon who, as you will remember from the story in the May Intelligencer, was a woman in disguise serving as a crewman on a whaling ship. In the last issue of the Intelligencer we noted that Orin Lambert Romigh owns a log which confirms the story of Weldon. To verify this information, Mr. Romigh sent us a photostat of the appropriate page in the log. The copy is not sharp enough to reproduce, but we have it on file, and the log's entry is the same as the one that was quoted in the article on Weldon.

For the old house buffs among you, we have learned of an opportunity to purchase an ancient farmhouse on Martha's Vineyard, but it must be moved from its present site. Anyone interested in this should contact Mrs. Robert P. Bigelow, 39 Grove Street, Winchester, Mass. 01890.

The historical society has not started its drive for the Preservation Fund, and probably will not do so until next spring. Nevertheless we have collected $124. The contributors through

the first week of October were Mrs. Thomas Brainerd, Rev. Winthrop Brainerd, Mr. and Mrs. John T. Galvin, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Littleton, Mrs. John J. Trask (in memory of her aunt Enid Yandell), Mr. and Mrs. Paul Wagner, and Mrs. George B. Duffield.

We are now on our winter schedule, which is not the same as last year. The Thomas Cooke House, of course, is now closed until spring, but the library is open from 1-4 on Thursday and Friday afternoons and from 10-12, 1-4 on Saturdays. Frequently, our researchers in the winter come from off-island, and we feel that the new hours will be much more convenient for them. We will be looking forward to seeing many people in the library during the winter months.

Thomas Norton
Curator

ACCESSIONS, July - September 1973

ARTIFACTS:

Fan Coral given to donor in 1908 by Joshua Slocum, gift of Nathaniel L. Harris.

Silk dress worn by Sara Marble Brownell at wedding to Capt. William Taylor Levare, 1859, gift of Sara West Sullivan, granddaughter.

Child's printed cotton dress, black satin dress, and parasol, gift of Mrs. Frank Learned.

Two small Japanese dishes formerly belonging to Miss Lucy Adams, gift of Michael Ryerson and Susan Ryerson McPhillips.

BOOKS:

Genealogy of the Whipple Family, 1857, gift of Caroline O. Reynolds.

Tracing the Route of the Martha's Vineyard Railroad (three copies) by Walter Blackwell, gift of the author.


The American Whaleman by Elmo Paul Hohman, 1928, gift of Mrs. Weston Howland.

PAPERS AND MANUSCRIPTS:
Marriage certificate of William Pent and Margaret Vinson (Vincent), 1855, Discharge paper of Samuel Pent, 1865, Provisional commission to Second Lieutenant, First Regiment of Louisiana Cavalry Volunteers of Samuel Pent, 1864, gifts of Caroline O. Reynolds.

Correction: The November 1972 issue incorrectly lists the donor of An Account... Martha's Vineyard Agricultural Society, 1893-1933. It is the gift of Mrs. Charles Turner.

Marian R. Halperin
Registrar
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¢.


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.


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

Come - Tour With Me by Deidamia Osborn Bettencourt. A description of the Dukes County Historical Society's Cooke House, museum and grounds. Illustrated, paper. 50¢.

Shipwrecks On Martha's Vineyard by Dorothy R. Scoville. Illustrated, paper. $3.00.