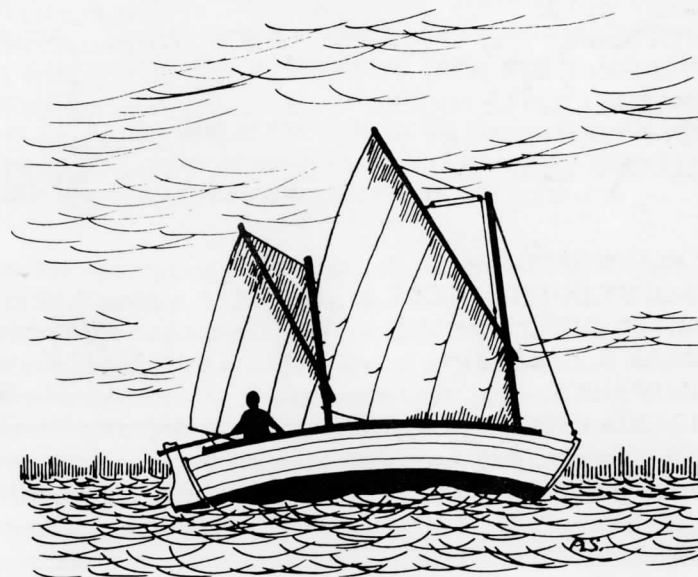


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The Vineyard's First Business Boom, 1815-1860

BY JANET VAN TASSEL

Nomansland, Salt Codfish And The Nomansland Boat

BY GALE HUNTINGTON

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The Vineyard's First Business Boom, 1815-1860

BY JANET VAN TASSEL

Editorial Note.

This article by Janet Van Tassel is part of a book size manuscript called, "The Economic Transition of Martha's Vineyard." That in turn is a dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree from Tufts University.

Jan did a great deal of the research for the work in the library of the Dukes County Historical Society. Perhaps in a later issue of the *Intelligencer* we can use another section of her paper.

By the early years of the nineteenth century the economy of Martha's Vineyard had begun to recover from the depression caused by the Revolution. Now Islanders began to look forward to a renewed prosperity which the revival of whaling could stimulate.

Yet determination alone could not provide one essential required for the growth of the whaling industry. That was freedom of the seas. Hostilities between the French and English once again jeopardized the safety of American ships and sailors, and despite a government declaration of neutrality, both nations attacked U. S. vessels. The Embargo Act of 1807, which prohibited the sailing of all American ships to foreign ports, was designed by President Jefferson to alleviate the situation, but instead it severely stifled the development of American shipping industries. As one man remarked, "It had probably saved some of our sailors from the press gangs, but it had sent them to the poorhouse instead. It had ruined many of our merchants and benumbed the seafaring instincts of the people.

Vineyarders fervently opposed the President's actions, and were not alone in doing so. The Embargo Act was referred to by many New Englanders as the "Dambargo" or "O Grab Me." Its repeal and replacement by the Non-Intercourse Law in 1809 were equally unpopular and unsuccessful in preventing the seizure of American vessels and the impressing of seamen from them by the

British navy. When war was declared against England in 1812, the people of Martha's Vineyard, due to their opposition to the President and experiences during the Revolution, assumed a pacific stance toward the conflict. Thus, their involvement was minimal except for those individuals who left to join the mainland forces, the navy, and some privateering.

Although smuggling had been carried on since 1807, there were shortages on the Island, and all businesses suffered a period of stagnation. There were no raids conducted against the Island however, and hardships were less severe than during the Revolution. It was the sea-faring enterprises and whaling in particular which suffered most of all, as the men waited on shore while the governments settled the international disputes. The mood of discontent present throughout New England finally resulted in the Hartford Convention, held in 1814, to denounce continuation of the war. Protests became academic, however, when a peace treaty was signed shortly thereafter.

For the second time in thirty years, the people of Martha's Vineyard were confronted with the task of restoring their stagnant economy. Their way of life had been interrupted, but not destroyed. Rather it had been reinforced. The Island's self-sufficiency in producing its own necessities represented a stable foundation for growth and development, not in the sense of change but in the sense of revitalization of the old reliance upon land and sea. The wealth of Martha's Vineyard began to manifest itself not in hard money as much as in resources and initiative.

Nowhere was the news of peace more welcome than in the Yankee whaling ports along the northeast coast. Bitterness was overcome by excitement, anticipation and preparation. On the Vineyard, and particularly in Edgartown, whaling prospects lured hundreds of young and even middle-aged men to New Bedford, Nantucket and other ports to man the ships, as captains or cabin boys, harpooners or foremasthands. The berth itself seemed to be of little significance compared with the opportunity for experience, advancement and possible wealth.

By December 31, 1815, there were almost fifty ships pursuing the leviathans in the North and South Atlantic, the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Two of these ships were from the Vineyard, the schooner *Harmony* of Holmes Hole and the ship *Apollo* of

Edgartown. That a whaler sailed from Holmes Hole as well as Edgartown emphasizes the influence of this industry upon the entire island. Since records are not available, it is impossible to estimate the number of Vineyard men who served aboard whalers in a variety of capacities; however, remarks by various observers indicate that it was a majority of the men from Edgartown, Tisbury and Gay Head, and a very large number from Chilmark. Yet those who did not participate directly in the industry as crew members, nonetheless played significant roles in subsidiary businesses which provided essential supplies for the whalers.

The whale ship, representing almost a community unto itself while at sea, required many of the same provisions which sustained the Island's residents at home, and therefore provided a market for many surplus goods. Thus, those men who left to go to sea were not lost to the economy, but rather, assisted in stimulating it. Such items as casks, kegs, staves, iron hoops, clothing, beef, pork, corn, corn meal, beans, peas, potatoes, cheese, butter, dried apples and fish were all available on the Island. Preparations demanded the skills of blacksmiths, coopers, bakers, cordwainers, carpenters, caulkers, weavers, tailors, laborers, fishermen, farmers, millers and dairymen. Nearly every spectrum of the Island's economy was affected.

For all the romance, adventure and danger attributed to whaling, it was first and foremost a business, and one which could pay and pay. The oil derived from the whale's blubber was used for lighting lamps, lubricating machinery, softening leather, making candles, and even for treating some illnesses. The whalebone, which was often regarded as useless during early voyages, became valuable around 1840 for its use in manufacturing women's garments. Yet whaling required such an enormous capital outlay combined with a high degree of risk that only an extremely wealthy individual could afford to own and outfit an entire vessel himself. A system of fractional ownership evolved, which permitted men of wealth to protect themselves by scattering their holdings over a large number of vessels, while also making it possible for men of moderate incomes to invest in the industry. Thus, despite the lack of cash on the Vineyard after years of economic stagnation, some of the more financially stable individuals were able to cooperatively sponsor vessels and initiate a

period of growth on the Island which would later permit more widespread investment.

Yet the main source of the Vineyard's rising affluence never came from the possession of ships themselves as much as from the success of its whalemens in advancing to positions of authority. The close of the War of 1812 witnessed a rise, not only in the number of vessels at recognized whaling ports, but also the creation of many new ports promoting the business. Vineyarders, because of their tradition of seamanship and long whaling experience, were everywhere in demand as crew members. In fact, the Vineyard probably furnished commanders for more ships than the same population in any other part on the globe. Edgartown alone, from 1820 to 1890, claimed one hundred and ten whaling masters, and although the exact number is not known, it is certain that the other Vineyard towns were also represented by a large number of captains.

The records of the whaler *Lion* which sailed from New Bedford in 1805, afford a fair representation of the earnings of high ranking officers from a successful voyage of almost two years, which returned a cargo valued at \$37,661. The "lay" or share of the profits, of the captain was 1/18 or \$2052.13, that of the first mate was 1/27 or \$1381.41, and the second mate's lay was 1/37, equal to \$1008.06. While the shares of other crewmen fluctuated, the masters and mates were able to maintain their positions and continued to earn large sums for their work. The money earned by Vineyarders represented valuable contributions to the prosperity of the Island whether they were in the form of investments for more ships, the purchase of farms to be worked by mariners' families while they were at sea, assistance to a friend or relative to establish a business, or simply acquisitions at local shops and stores. All of these were stimuli for the Island's growth and development.

Although there are no precise records to indicate the production level achieved by other economic interests on the Vineyard during the decade following the War of 1812, the account books of David Look, who owned a mill and store in West Tisbury, provide some insight into the economy at that time. His sales' records indicate that while free trade and prosperity now enabled the people to purchase more goods, the economy

nonetheless maintained a high degree of self-sufficiency and the buying habits of the people, up-Island at least, altered very little. Those commodities which appeared continually throughout his books include rum, tea, coffee, molasses, sugar, pepper, tobacco, spelling books, cotton cloth, needles, pins, scissors, thread, buttons, paper, cups and saucers. In addition there were frequent sales of items such as pitch forks, scythes, hoes, flints, jackknives and nails.

Notably missing among these items is flour, which was recorded only twice throughout all of Look's account books from 1799 until 1830. One must assume that the Vineyarders had become accustomed to the corn meal bread, and rye bread and that there was little need for the luxury of wheat flour. Of course, there were some luxury products sold, among them were velvet breeches, silk cloth and handkerchiefs and fancy jackets; however, it would seem that while mariners returned from their voyages with priceless articles from ports around the world, those who remained on the island were content to live primarily on what they could produce themselves. Look's store also carried a variety of these products as well, including wool, beef, pork, potatoes, corn, rye and sheepskin shoes, and in addition, kersey and satin produced at Look's carding and fulling mill.

The Edgartown Tax Records provide an outline of the town's economy once the influence of whaling and its consequent prosperity had been established. The most outstanding characteristic represented is the continued diversification, even among those who were involved in whaling enterprises. This is best exemplified by an individual such as Captain Valentine Pease, a mariner, who became famous as the model for Captain Ahab in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. In addition to his earnings as a whaling master, Pease in 1827 had invested in the ship *Loan*; owned one-third of the schooner *Nelson* a trading vessel; had interests in a set of saltworks and the Mattakesett Herring Fishery. His homestead consisted of a house, barn, meadow, forty-six acres of land and a number of cows, swine and sheep. Of course, such participation in a variety of concerns by one man was not an exception for the time, but it does portray the extensive impact of whaling profits which would become more widespread as the industry developed. It also exemplifies the broad-based

foundation of the town's economy, which at that time supported ten shops, nine stores, two mills and three sets of saltworks.

There can be no doubt, though, that whaling was the single most important factor in the development of Edgartown. By 1828 the number of shops had increased to twenty and there were eleven stores. The number of people taxed for shipping investments, primarily whaling, had risen from ten the year before, to forty-two, which was the same number of people who were taxed for livestock on farms. Those who invested in whaling represented a broad spectrum of the community which was benefiting from the industry. Among these were Herman Arey, who owned a set of saltworks; James Bunting, a blacksmith; Allen Coffin, a storekeeper; William Coffin, a banker; Rufus Davis, a miller, and Joseph Dunham, a shopkeeper. Thus, the profits of these men, which had been magnified by whaling, played a vital role in continuing the cycle of economic growth.

Tisbury, on the other hand, was not such an immediate beneficiary of the whaling prosperity, but continued to depend upon farming, fishing and coastal trading and piloting to support its economy. Although officially one town, Tisbury was divided into a western parish, which had developed around the up-Island mills, and an eastern parish, Holmes Hole, which centered around the activities of the harbor.

In 1828 Tisbury had six mills, including David Look's carding and fulling mill, ten sets of saltworks, four stores and eight shops. Shipping investments were significant, particularly in the eastern area; but, unlike Edgartown, the records indicate that these were predominantly shares in trading and fishing vessels. Only three individuals were specifically designated as owning stock in whalers, while thirty-three others were taxed for interests in shipping. The most striking contrast with Edgartown was the fact that one hundred and eleven people in Tisbury owned stock on farms.

It is unfortunate that Chilmark's records to 1861 were destroyed in a fire, and therefore no accurate statistics are available for comparison. The emphasis of Tisbury's western parish upon agricultural and milling interests nonetheless does provide a reasonable parallel for understanding Chilmark's economic development until 1861. Sheep raising was the most valuable industry in this town. Dr. Banks states that by 1837 there were

6470 sheep there which produced wool valued at \$5180. It is a fair assumption that Chilmark's natural economic advantage of three large brooks contributed to the economy by providing water power for grist mills and a fulling mill. The land in this town was also recognized as the most productive on the Island, and no doubt continued to supply a surplus of grains, fruits and vegetables to be sold to whalers or exported, in addition to a supply of dairy products and meat available from livestock.

With an era of freedom of the seas firmly established, the promise of prosperity of past generations became a reality in the first half of the nineteenth century. The evidence of the sea's influence is represented by the population growth experienced in Tisbury and Edgartown between 1820 and 1830. The former increased by 135 people to a total of 1374 residents, while the latter gained 116 inhabitants to reach a population of 1223. Chilmark, on the other hand, had been undergoing a decrease in its number of citizens since 1800 when the population was 800, to 723 in 1810, 695 in 1820 and 691 in 1830. It is apparent that the lure of the sea did not encourage a proper development of agricultural interests to their full potential.

The activity along the waterfront steadily increased. On February 15, 1832, Thomas Mayhew was authorized to build a wharf in Edgartown and the very next day, Joseph Mayhew and Joseph V. Kelley were granted a similar privilege. Exactly one year later, Grafton Norton and Benjamin Worth had their plans for construction of still another wharf at Edgartown harbor approved by the state, and a month later Charles Smith and John Holmes did the same. This made a total of at least eight wharves extending into the waters of Edgartown's harbor if those described by Freeman in 1807 were still standing, and the activity and development showed no signs of diminishing. On March 9, 1835 John O. Morse obtained permission to construct a wharf and marine railway.

The cash profits from whaling transformed Edgartown's economy from one of self-sufficiency to one which encouraged savings and investments. Since 1818 residents of the town had sponsored eighteen different whaling vessels, and by 1836 eighty-one of its inhabitants owned shares in shipping interests. By that time there were twenty-nine stores and sixteen shops nearly

all of which accommodated the needs of seamen and their ships.

Whaling was not the only industry to gain investors during the 1830s. In fact, despite the number of Edgartown men involved in whaling, the number of people raising livestock had risen to ninety-four by 1836, and since 1831 the number of cattle and swine in particular, had increased considerably. This was probably an effort to meet the demands of whalers for salt beef and pork, which had also induced Ichabod Norton to establish a slaughterhouse in Edgartown in 1829.

The largest new industry, however, was the candle factory. In 1835 Josiah Gorham and Benjamin Barney, both of Nantucket, purchased the wharf store and large tract of land owned by Charles Smith and John Holmes and constructed an oil refinery and candleworks on the lot. Gorham bought his partner's share of the business in November, 1835, and in May, 1836, sold half of the company's holding to Daniel Fisher, a physician of considerable wealth and influence. In 1838 Dr. Fisher purchased the remainder of the industry, including the wharf and store, for \$6500.

It was under Fisher's management that the factory grew in production and value. Although a doctor by profession, he was a shrewd businessman who strove to use his talents to improve the Island's economy as well as his own financial status. His \$40,000 capital investment in the factory included funds to modernize the machinery as well as buy large quantities of oil, which were stored at a warehouse known as "Dr. Fisher's Fort." By 1841 oil and candles on hand at the plant were valued at \$15,000 and two years later that amount had risen to \$28,000. The factory employed fourteen men who earned a total of \$450 a month, and it is estimated that it grossed an income of a quarter of a million dollars annually.

The late 1830's also witnessed a renewed interest in utilizing the herring fishing opportunities in Edgartown, which previously had been limited to Mattakessett Creek. On April 3, 1839, John Coffin, Nicholas Norton, Chase Pease and their associates created the Trapp's Creek Fishing Company and were authorized to dig a canal to open the pond to the ocean in order to seine herring. Two years later Ichabod Norton, Constant Norton, Benjamin Kidder and their associates were granted similar rights for the

Sengekontacket Fishing Company. Like that at Mattakessett, these were semi-private corporations which leased their fishing rights from the town, and divided their profits among shareholders. Although records are not available, it is known that these new companies were not as profitable as Mattakessett Creek, and that fishing, like agriculture, was not developed to its full potential. Nonetheless, by 1841 fifty-two people owned shares in one of Edgartown's fisheries.

Tisbury in 1836 had not claimed a whaling vessel since the schooner *Harmony* twenty years before. The number of shops and stores in the town had increased by only one each since 1828, and the number of shipping investments by only twelve. Although its inhabitants were not undergoing the dynamic growth experienced by Edgartown, they did sustain a thriving, diversified economy, which included seven mills and eleven sets of saltworks. A visitor to the town in 1837 described the varied occupations of its citizens. "Tisbury farmed and also manufactured salt, boots, shoes, leather, hats, bricks, and had 2655 sheep. . . As many as one hundred men netted herring, twenty sought codfish and about forty prepared dogfish oil for market."

As stated earlier, a majority of the men from this town were mariners, and together with the businessmen, they were taking steps to attract more profits in Tisbury's direction. Efforts had already begun to develop the economic potential of the excellent natural harbor facilities. In 1833 Charles Smith obtained approval of plans for a wharf constructed there, since as late as 1830 there were none at this port, although at one time Lambert's Cove had had three. It was just the beginning, however, for it was followed in 1835 by the incorporation of the Holmes Hole Wharf Company by Elijah Hillman, Bartlett Allen and Charles Look, and a year later John Holmes was authorized to build a marine railway. In 1840 Leroy Hale obtained permission to build another wharf at Holmes Hole under the ownership of the South Wharf Company, and two years after that, Messrs. Hale and Thomas Bradley and their associates were granted permission to build a second marine railway at Holmes Hole harbor.

The rising influence of such individuals as Thomas Bradley and Elijah Hillman, who were determined to develop the economy of Tisbury, and the port of Holmes Hole in particular, reflects the

delayed economic manifestation of the whaling prosperity in this town. Bradley, a former mariner, invested his earnings in a variety of concerns, which in 1828 included shares in five Edgartown whale ships. Hillman at that time, had cash, notes and holdings in vessels worth \$1350. By 1833 Bradley owned two houses, a barn, twenty-eight acres of land, two shops, a set of saltworks, a mill and over \$1000 worth of whaling shares, while Hillman had two houses, a barn, a store and a set of saltworks to augment his shipping investments. It was these men and others like them, who had accumulated profits from whaling and other diversified interests, that initiated and directed the development of waterfront activities at Holmes Hole. When two whale ships were outfitted for whaling voyages in 1837, Thomas Bradley was the major stockholder and agent for one of them, the ship *Delphos*. Thus, the seeds of economic expansion which had produced abundant prosperity in Edgartown had begun to grow in Tisbury as well.

The year 1835 ushered in what historians have designated as "The Golden Age of Whaling," and the ensuing decade saw this industry reach its peak in importance and commercial value. By 1844 Edgartown had ten whale ships, totalling 2936 tons, and the industry attained its zenith in this town two years later when nineteen vessels were owned there. Only New Bedford, Nantucket, Provincetown and Fairhaven ever exceeded that number. As previously stated, however, the Vineyard's most valuable asset for promoting and profiting from whaling, was its seamen, who had established a proud tradition that the younger generation was anxious and expected to follow. This was even acknowledged by Vineyard educational institutions, such as the Dukes County Academy then in Edgartown, whose 1840-41 curriculum gave special attention to "practical mathematics, and astronomy, such as lunar observations, and measuring altitudes, distances, elongations, etc." A first-rate sextant and chronometer were used for instruction, and a special nautical education program was also offered.

The significance of the sea was so profound that one visitor gave the following description of an Island boy's experiences:

He is weaned upon ship biscuits and cuts his teeth upon a sea shell. As soon as he can fairly walk he may be seen fishing

from the wharf or throwing hand-lines into the surf. About the time that a young Virginian mounts his first pony for the ride around the paternal estate, the Island boy holds the tiller of his sailboat, galloping over the salt-sea waves -- the estate of his fathers. In youth the fizzig and harpoon supply the place of rifle and fowling piece and the great ambition of his life to be a Captain supersedes and swallows up all other ambitions -- Congress and the Presidency included. (*Harper's Magazine*, 1860).

Thus, an island man learned the business from childhood and was prepared to work his way up through the ranks to command a ship and help maintain the foundation of economic prosperity.

Although the rate of growth in Edgartown had levelled off by 1840, new shops and stores were still being established, and in 1845 the town supported thirty-three shops and eighteen stores in addition to two mills and two sets of saltworks. Investments in whale ships continued to increase and by 1845, 105 residents owned such shares. Those investing in Edgartown vessels were not all residents of the town, nor were they all mariners or merchants. The records of the ship *York* which sailed from Edgartown in 1845, indicate that its shareholders represented such diverse occupations as millers, schoolteachers, farmers and businessmen from all three Island towns. Fishery interests had also undergone steady growth, with sixty-six people owning shares in either Mattakesett Creek or Trapp's Creek. In 1848 the Pocha Pond Meadow and Fishing Company was established by John Vinson, J. T. E. Gage, William W. Huxford and their associates.

The discovery of gold in California in 1849 attracted many adventurous men to the West Coast in search of fortunes. Large numbers of Vineyarders left Pacific whalers to try their luck, and an entire mining camp of men from the Island was established in California, though there is no record that any of them ever found any very valuable ore. On the Vineyard itself the Dukes County Mining Company was established in Edgartown in 1849 by R. W. Coffin, William Mayhew, E. Mayhew, A. D. Luce and others for the purpose of taking a vessel to California.

Tisbury, under the progressive leadership of men like Thomas Bradley, continued on a course of economic development, and the harbor had begun to reflect its new affluence. By 1845 it claimed

four whaling vessels, which totalled 1287 tons, and Bradley was a stockholder and agent for three of them. As in Edgartown, Tisbury's prosperity was reflected in an increase in the number of stores and shops. By 1847 there were fifteen of each in the town. While maintaining a broad, diversified base, which included six grist mills and three sets of saltworks to meet the needs of farmers and fishermen, the number of investors in fishing, trading and whaling vessels also witnessed a steady increase. In 1847 there were eighty-nine such shareholders, thirty-one of whom held interests in whalers. The Look cloth mill was purchased by Thomas Bradley in 1845 and continued to produce kersey and satinets, and Charles Cottle established a tannery at Lambert's Cove. Tisbury also sought to develop its fishing interest by establishing a free fishery for all the town's inhabitants at Chappaquansett, under the regulating control of a town commission. Expenses incurred by the town were deducted from the profits earned, while the remaining fish were divided among those who participated in the catch.

By 1850 Martha's Vineyard had attained a level of economic prosperity which was unprecedented in its history thus far. Yet the influx of hard money to the Island did not alter the determination of its inhabitants to produce what they could themselves. Thus, each of the towns supported a broad-based, diversified economy, which, while profiting from whaling in varying degrees, was not dependent upon it. In all three towns the number of mariners exceeded all other occupations. Edgartown, with a population of 1900 people, claimed 373 mariners, Tisbury, with 1803 residents, had 303, and Chilmark with 747 citizens had 104. In all three towns the second largest occupation was farming, followed by laboring and carpentry. While Edgartown and Tisbury supported a wide variety of specialized craftsmen and artisans, Chilmark had very few, as most of its residents who did not go to sea focused their attention on the soil. It should also be noted that although each man had one primary occupation, nearly all of the Islanders supplemented that with other sources of income or food. Thus a carpenter, for example, would also own a small farm, shares in a fishery and do some hunting to provide for as many of his family's necessities as he could.

There were 265 farms on the Vineyard in 1850, seventy-nine in Edgartown, ninety in Tisbury and ninety-six in Chilmark, which produced a total of over 12,000 bushels of corn, nearly 10,000 bushels of potatoes, 3515 bushels of oats, 2075 bushels of rye and lesser quantities of barley, peas, and beans. While the yield of these crops was fairly even in each town in proportion to the number of farms owned, Chilmark produced nearly half of the Island's 23,147 pounds of butter, and almost six times the 710 pounds of cheese which was produced by Tisbury and Edgartown combined. Another area which reflected Chilmark's more intense agricultural and livestock development was wool production. In 1850 Chilmark produced 13,199 pounds of wool, while Tisbury's output was only 5933 pounds and that of Edgartown's was 3258 pounds.

Tisbury had the most diverse business interests of the three island towns in 1850. At that time Charles Cottle's tannery employed three men, had over two thousand dollars worth of stock in trade, and produced over two thousand dollars worth of leather annually. Zachariah Heald operated a boot and shoe business which made two hundred and fifty pairs of shoes and one hundred pairs of boots a year, valued at \$525. Thomas Bradley also used water power to run his cloth mill, which yielded nearly \$10,000 worth of kersey and satinets each year. In addition to these concerns, residents of the town owned three whaling vessels worth a total of \$78,300, and whose combined profits in 1850 were \$135,288. Two fishing vessels also operating from Tisbury caught over \$2000 worth of mackerel annually.

Chilmark had only two businesses in 1850. One was that of brickmaking, which had been undertaken on a small scale at various times since the Revolution. The first known owner of the brickyard in the 1800's was William Mitchell, who established his works on Roaring Brook in 1845. The yards consisted of three acres of land, a plant nearly half covered by roofs and twin metal smokestacks. By 1850 the factory was under the control of Smith and Barrows, who employed twelve men, and turned out 600,000 bricks a year. Most of these bricks, except those which were imperfect, were exported to the mainland.

The other industry was that of paint making. Hiram and Francis Nye had a mill on the Paint Mill Brook on the North Shore that

ground clay and annually produced over 46,000 pounds of paint.

In 1850 Dr. Fisher's candle factory produced candles, refined oil and pressings worth \$284,370, and had \$257,000 worth of sperm and whale oil in stock. The only whaling ship that returned to Edgartown in 1850 was the *Vineyard*, which had a cargo of oil and bone valued at \$83,267. Four fishing vessels yielded over \$6000 worth of mackerel, while the Mattakesett Creek Fishery caught 1250 barrels of herring, worth \$4500. The only other enterprise in the town was Joseph V. Kelley's block and pump business, which earned \$510 a year.

The appearance of new businesses on the Vineyard, such as the paint mill and brickworks, represented a trend of economic expansion which was becoming increasingly more significant on the mainland. In New Bedford, whaling profits were utilized to establish new industries, including the Wamsutta Mills and the New Bedford and Taunton Railroad. Just as the whalers had protected their investments by the fractional ownership system, they now balanced their holdings in the traditional industry with stocks in more modern enterprises.

On the Vineyard, the main outlet for investment continued to be the whaling and shipping industries. In 1851, 104 Tisbury residents owned stock in these businesses, although only six of these were shares in whaling. That same year, however, eleven people also owned interests in the New Bedford and Taunton Railroad. Ninety-nine inhabitants of Edgartown owned whaling shares in 1852, but here too, the signs of change were apparent. Two people owned stock in Wamsutta Mills; and Consider Fisher had introduced a revolutionary source of entertainment, a bowling alley. Both towns continued to grow, Tisbury had opened two new shops since 1847, and Edgartown had opened eleven new stores since 1845. In 1855 the Martha's Vineyard National Bank was established under the direction of Dr. Daniel Fisher.

The fishing industry was also on the rise in the 1850's. In 1849, 442 barrels of pickled fish were exported from Edgartown, but a year later that number had increased to 994 barrels. In 1852, 553 swordfish were caught and sold for four cents a pound, and in 1855, 150,000 pounds of bluefish were sold at a price of three cents a pound. New Island fisheries were established at Squibnocket in 1855, Farm Pond in 1856 and Kaleb's Pond and

the Lagoon in 1856. In 1857 the *Vineyard Gazette* reported that 5000 bluefish a day were being caught and sold from aboard the boats for one cent a pound.

By 1857 the trend of mainland investments had become more widespread among Vineyarders. Fifty-two residents of Edgartown owned stocks in businesses other than whaling and shipping, among them, the Fairhaven Railroad, Falmouth Bank, New Bedford and Taunton Railroad, Wamsutta Mills and the New Bedford, Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard Steamboat Company. In 1859 there were thirty-two such investors in Tisbury, with holdings in the New Bedford Flour Mill, Bay State Glass Company, Union Bank, Boston and Maine Railroad and Western Railroad, in addition to those businesses previously mentioned.

These new investment interests among Vineyarders, did not represent a rechanneling of funds away from whaling, and shipping but as in New Bedford, were supplementary interests. In fact, the number of Vineyard whaleship shareholders continued to increase. By 1857, 147 Edgartown residents owned stock in whaling and shipping. A report the following year recorded eighteen whaling vessels owned by residents of Edgartown, which totalled 5757 tons, employed 450 seamen and returned a cargo of whale oil, sperm oil and whale bone worth over \$346,000. In 1859, eighty people from Tisbury owned shipping interests, forty-two of them specifically in whaling.

While the profits from whaling fluctuated with the prices of oil and bone, the costs of sponsoring voyages rose at a steady rate. Not only had the cost of purchasing articles to outfit a ship increased, but the scarcity of whales forced more extended and, consequently, more expensive trips, with no guarantee of returns. Also, the lays of high-ranking officers did not decline, and therefore, the ship owners suffered the primary burden of a lower profit margin. Nonetheless, the industry continued to prosper and find new investors until the outbreak of the Civil War.

Other island business interests continued to develop during this decade. In 1850 Matthew Allen established a new grist mill on the Tiasquam River in West Tisbury, farther up from Thomas Bradley's cloth mill. Bradley's mill continued production although it must have felt the competition of cotton from New Bedford mills. In an advertisement in the *Gazette*, he urged Vineyarders to

"patronize a home industry" and purchase his satinets and kerseys. On May 27, 1858, this mill was sold to Henry Cleveland for \$3000, who continued its operation. Thaddeus Luce bought Charles Cottle's tannery, while Mudgett and Andrews assumed control of the brickworks on Roaring Brook in Chilmark. Roaring Brook was also the site of a grist mill owned by Francis Nye which could grind thirty bushels of corn a day. Another business advertised in the *Gazette* was the Sands and Smith Soap Factory; however, no other reference is found to this business in other sources, and it is probable that its operations were short-lived.

Although Vineyarders were employed in a variety of occupations, there were those who felt the need for greater employment "in the lighter arts and manufactures." Thus, in the Preamble to the By-laws, the founders of the Dukes County Boot and Shoe Company explain the reasons for its creation. This business, whose officers included David Davis, Captain Nathaniel Jernegan, Joseph Wolley and Samuel Osborne Jr., was designated to inaugurate "a plan from which there may grow or spring up, a branch or branches of industry and enterprise which shall give new means of support and improvement to the poor . . . and to increase and promote the prosperity of the community at large . . . and furnish a new source among us for the justifiable investment of capital." Its stockholders were primarily men who had earned their money in whaling and sought a new outlet for investment and economic stability by developing new businesses in a fashion similar to that of New Bedford.

After visiting Mattapoisett and other shoe manufacturing towns, the company began manufacturing men's, boy's and youth's buffs, kips and split brogans, and calf, goat, enameled, imitation goat and leather goods. While a reasonable venture in theory, the company's records for 1860 indicate, however, that in practice the business, with total assets of \$21.13 was failing. The management apparently was unable to manage its funds properly. The following year, despite sales worth \$30,381, the company showed a net loss on the original investment, of \$1500. By December, 1862 the deficit was \$7451.55, and in 1865 the company was disbanded.

These were not the only men who sought to improve the Island's economy. Dr. Fisher, whose candle factory had become the largest of its kind in the world, embarked on another

enterprise in 1860, a mill for grinding wheat and bolting flour. He invested \$30,000 to purchase six hundred acres of land in West Tisbury, and to buy the best machinery available and to import the finest wheat from Maryland. Vineyarders also were encouraged to raise wheat and grain which was ground at Fisher's Mill and carted to Edgartown, but few did so. The enterprise was given up after his death in 1876.

Thus, as a result of the whaling prosperity, the Vineyard experienced almost half a century of growth and development in nearly all facets of its economy. While agricultural interests maintained a constant production level capable of meeting the needs of its inhabitants, and some of those of the whalers, new shops, stores, and businesses arose to provide more products, revenue and sources of employment. More effective utilization of natural resources ensued, with improved harbor facilities, new fisheries and modern techniques for producing paint and bricks from the Island's clay. Widespread investments were made both on and off the Vineyard to insure continued prosperity, but no one could insure what the future would hold once Fort Sumter was fired upon and the nation became embroiled in yet another war.

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Nomansland, Salt Codfish And The Nomansland Boat

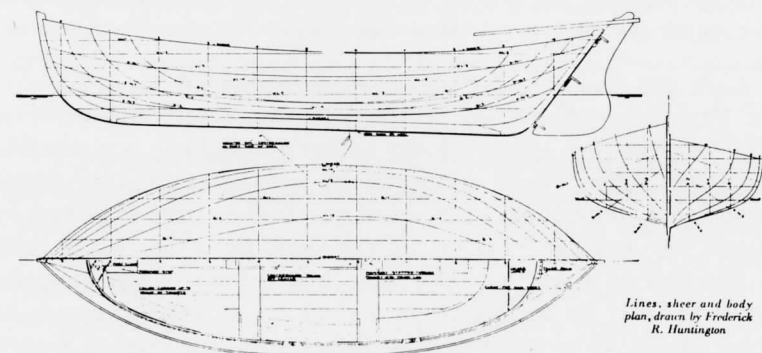
BY GALE HUNTINGTON

The original intention was that this would be an article on the Nomansland boat and only that. But I had hardly started to put it together before I realized that some information about the place which gave the boats their name, and the fishery in which they were chiefly engaged would add to the understanding of the boats themselves. Hence the title.

Note also that in this article the name of the little island that lies some four miles south of Squibnocket and Gay Head is spelled Nomansland. Not No Man's Land or Noman's Land but all one word. That is the way it is spelled in all the old deeds, and that is the way it is pronounced. Also that is the way Bill Taylor spelled it in a very nice article in the March 1932 issue of *Yachting*.

William H. Taylor, he was always Bill on the Vineyard, was a leading writer on boats, yachts, and everything maritime. He had the distinction of having won the Pulitzer prize for his story on one of the America's Cup races.

In his article on the Nomansland boat Mr. Taylor says, "Before the last of these boats rots away through neglect I wish that someone who has the skill to do such things accurately would take off the lines of one."

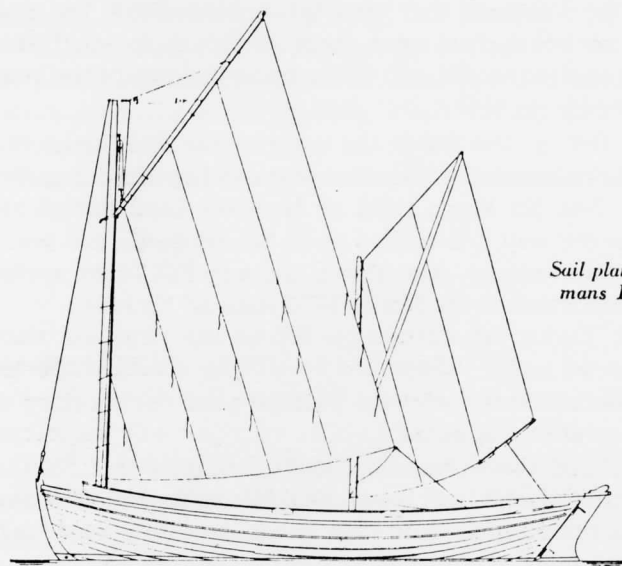


Lines, sheer and body plan, drawn by Frederick R. Huntington

Courtesy *Yachting*

Note that this later Nomanslander was fitted for oarlocks, not thole pins.

In the very next issue of *Yachting* the lines and sail plan of a Nomanslander do appear in an article by Frederick R. Huntington, my brother. He certainly did have the skill to take off the lines, for Fred Huntington as he was known in the world of boats and yachts - he was always Fritz on the Vineyard - was one of the leading naval architects of his time.



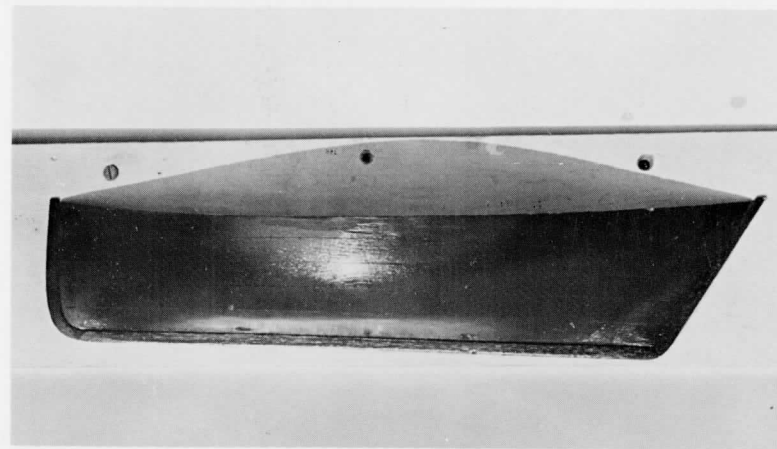
Sail plan of a Nomans Land boat

Courtesy *Yachting*

Note the gaff rigged loose-footed foresail. This drawing is by Frederick R. Huntington.

Both Bill Taylor and Fred Huntington thought very highly of the Nomansland boats. My brother had this to say of them, "For their purpose they were probably as fine a model as it was possible to devise. They were exceptionally seaworthy and of equal importance, they could be beached or launched from the beach in almost any weather." Fritz did not say in the article whose boat it was that he took the lines from, but I think it was Freeman Smith's. Later on in this article I shall try to list the names of some of the Vineyard men who fished in Nomanslanders before the coming of power.

There was nothing unique about the fact that the Nomansland boat was a double-ender. There were any number of double-ended boats on the Atlantic coast. The most famous of them and the most graceful of all was the whale boat. Some of the other double-enders were the Block Island Cowhorn, the Quaddy boat, the Hampton beach boat and many more. They all had one thing in common besides the fact that they were double-enders. They were beach boats and as such and as double-enders, they were much less liable to slew in the surf and capsize. Even the fisherman's dory was almost a double-ender, and the whaleboat, too, had originated as a beach boat.

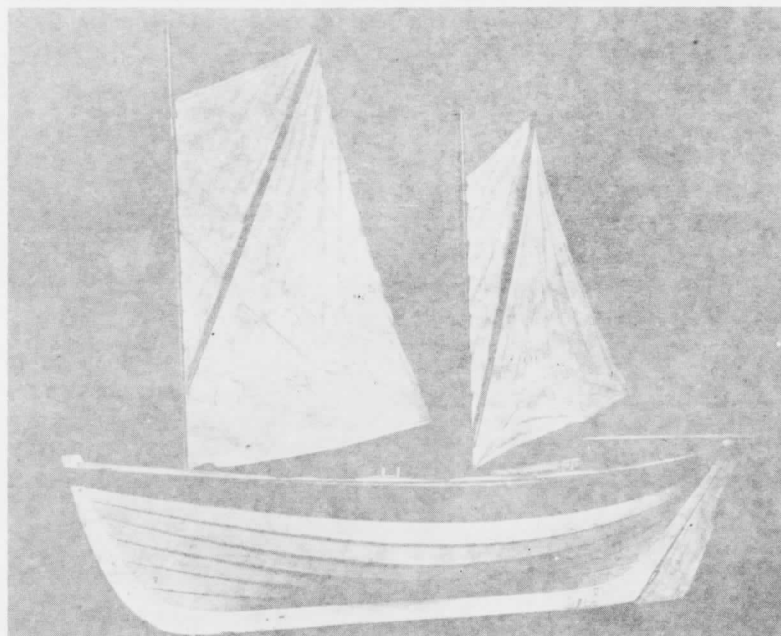


Courtesy Norman Benson

Half model of an early Nomansland boat. The boat was built by Charles G. Gifford at the shipyard in Vineyard Haven perhaps about 1870. The half model is owned by Capt. Norman Benson.

The overall length of the Nomansland boat varied from fourteen to eighteen or nineteen feet. There were even a few a little longer than that. The early boats were shorter than the later ones. Perhaps eighteen feet was the most common length at the time of their greatest use. An eighteen foot boat would have been perhaps fifteen feet six inches on the waterline, with a beam of six feet six inches and a draft of a little less than a foot with the centerboard up. That depth included a keel from stem to stern that was usually some two or three inches deep.

The prototype of the Nomansland boat was called the Chilmark boat, and sometimes the Vineyard boat. It seems to have originated on the North Shore. It was a double-ender, of course, but chunkier and fuller than the later true Nomansland boats. These earlier boats had no centerboards but only the long keel. But with a load of fish they would probably sail pretty well to windward.



Courtesy Dorothy E. R. Brewington. From *The Mariner*.
Model of a very early Nomansland boat built by William N. Cleveland. Note the thole pins in the plain gunnel.

The early boats - the Chilmark boats - were entirely open. That is with no washboard or curbing, but only the plain gunnel like a dory with holes bored in it for the thole pins. For always, until engines began to be installed, the Nomansland boats depended almost as much on oars as on sail.

When the centerboard became an essential part of the boat the sailing qualities were greatly improved for now she would go to windward light as well as laden. George H. Butler of Nomansland

is credited with being the first fisherman to equip his boat with a centerboard. That must have been about 1870, although David Cabot (Cabot, 1952) gives the date as 1880. The centerboard that Capt. Butler installed was offset. That is it went through the port garboard strake rather than through the keel. This off-set centerboard was ideal for the Nomanslander, for with it there was much less danger of the box being clogged with gravel when the boat hit the beach. Also the keel and kelson were not weakened.

Also, before we get off the subject of centerboards we must note that in her book, Annie Wood (Wood 1931) says that none of the boats had centerboards. Her informant must have been speaking of the very early boats. Mrs. Wood herself did not come to live on the island until long after all fishing from the beach had long since ceased.



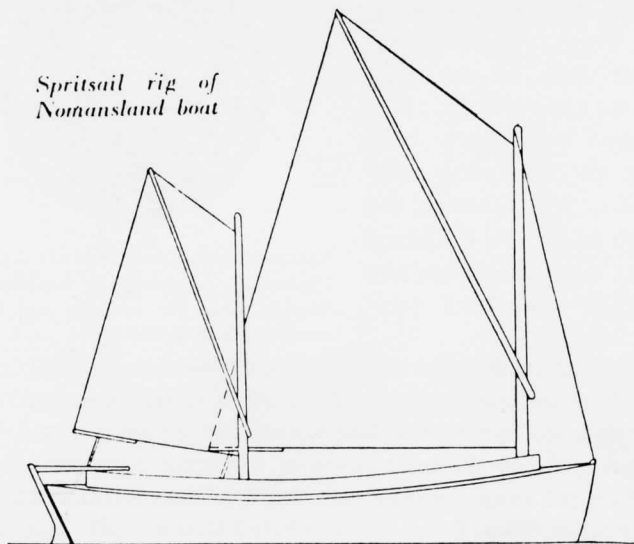
Nomansland boat on the seal of the town of Chilmark. According to tradition Dan Vincent made the seal. He also built a number of Nomansland boats.

The Nomansland boats were always of the finest construction. The planking was clear cedar, and the stem, stern piece, and ribs as well as the knees were of well-seasoned oak or apple wood. Until very late almost all the boats were of lapstrake construction. The usual Vineyard term for that was clinker-built. Later boats were carvel or what Tom Tilton calls smooth-strake built. The earlier boats seem all to have been built on the Vineyard by local builders, or even at home by the farmer-fishermen who were going to use them. Later boats were built off-Island by such noted builders as Delano of Fairhaven and Beetle of New Bedford. Also Capt. Josiah Cleveland of Vineyard Haven built some, as did Dan Vincent of Chilmark.

The spritsail was universal for the boats until quite late. Joe Allen (Allen n.d.) says that the very early boats carried two spritsails of equal size. Later the foresail became larger and the mainsail smaller until the boats ended up with their typical ketch-like rig. But the smaller sail was always called the mainsail. Willie Mayhew (William S. Mayhew) is given the credit for being

the first fisherman to use a gaff-headed foresail. That must have been somewhere about 1890. But the little mainsail always used a sprit. Indeed, Tom Tilton (Capt. Thomas T. Tilton) who lived on Nomansland as a boy and remembers the fleet of Nomanslanders - there were twenty or more of them still fishing there then - says that almost all the boats depended almost entirely on the foresail and almost never used the little main. Estimates of the number of Nomansland boats fishing from the beach before Tom Tilton's time there - the 1890's - vary between fifty and a hundred.

*Spritsail rig of
Nomansland boat*



Courtesy Yachting

Drawing of a Nomansland boat showing full spritsail rig. Usually the foresail did not have a club.

The little mainsail still had its place, however. If the boat was caught in a really bad time the foresail and mast would be lowered to the thwarts and the little main stepped forward in its place. Then the boat was really battened down.

Also the main always had its place in making a long passage. And long passages - for the Nomanslander - were made, to New Bedford and Providence, and sometimes even as far to the westward as New York. For it was the Nomansland boats that carried most of the salt cod to market, just as they brought back

to the island most of the supplies that were needed - provisions and kerosene and, of course salt for the corning.

But if a doctor was needed on the island it was a fisherman's dory that went to Squibnocket Landing to fetch him, for that was the nearest place. Nomansland boats never, or almost never landed at Squibnocket, for there were no oxen there to haul them up the beach. A dory could be hauled up by the men who had rowed her over. Then someone would ride a horse to West Tisbury to get Dr. Luce or Dr. Fairchild.

Tom Tilton tells a story of once when a doctor was badly needed on Nomans. Nellie, one of George H. Butler's daughters had pneumonia. So a dory was rowed over to Squibnocket Landing. As Tom Tilton remembers it there were only two men in the dory, George and Frank Butler, Nellie's brothers. But Chester Poole told me the same story years ago, and I am sure he said there were three men. The power of the extra pair of oars would more than compensate for the added weight.

It was a bad time. There was a strong easterly wind and even at Squibnocket Landing the surf was high, but the rowers managed to land the dory safely. Then someone rode to get Dr. Fairchild. It was Dr. Fairchild not Dr. Luce that time because Dr. Fairchild's place was a little nearer.

Finally the doctor arrived at the beach. After he had gotten someone to take care of his horse he looked at the surf and said, "Isn't that pretty bad? We're not going out in that are we?"

Willie Mayhew who was acknowledged as the best doryman on the Island said, "Why Doctor, we go fishing lots of times when it's worse than that." Which was probably the biggest white lie ever told. So Dr. Fairchild and his bag were ensconced in the stern of the dory. Then two or three men on each side held the dory in the wash while Willie Mayhew studied the seas. Finally he said "Go!" and the rowers dug in their oars.

Of course, they made it. And Dr. Fairchild must have done a good job, too, for Nellie lived to a good old age. She married Charlie Wood her father's hired hand on the farm. Later when Nomansland was abandoned the Woods moved to Whitman where Charlie eventually became a foreman in a shoe factory. He was not a boatman.

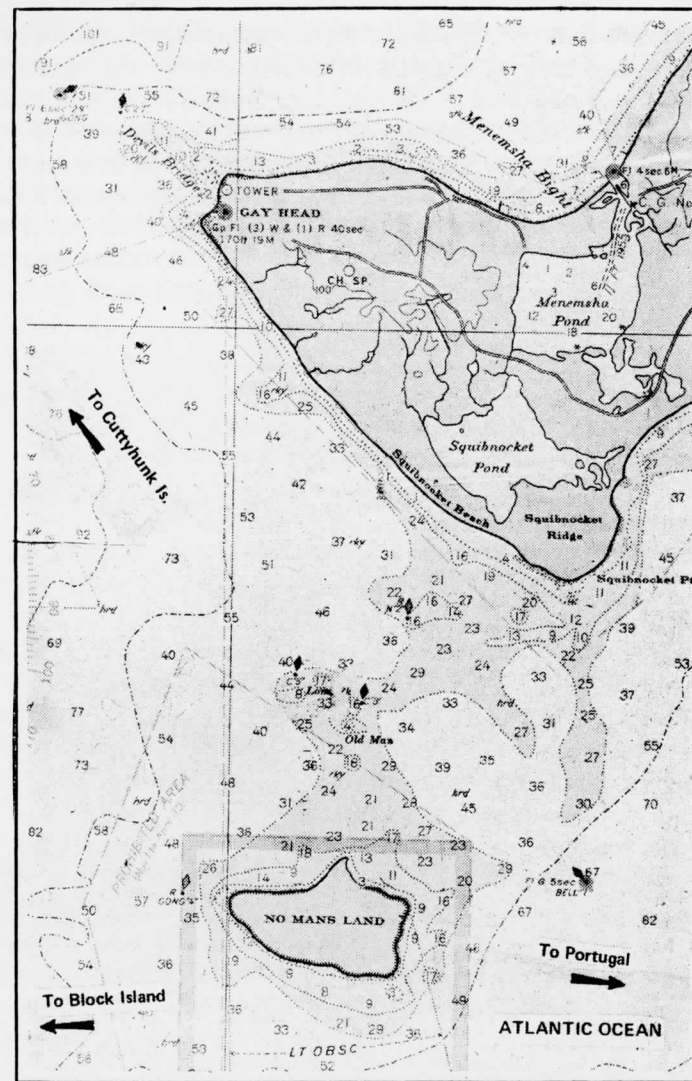
In several accounts of the Nomansland boat it is stated that when coming in to the beach for a landing the sail would be wrapped around the mast, and mast and sail thrown overboard. Tom Tilton, who was there, says that that just was not so. The foresail would be lowered, or wound around the mast just as the boat was about to hit the beach where the ladders and oxen were waiting for her. Why throw mast and sail overboard unless it was absolutely necessary? It would only be if the surf was exceedingly high that such a thing was ever done.

Grover Ryan who also lived on Nomansland as a small boy, but only seasonally, spring and fall, for his father, Charles Ryan, was one of the fishermen who took his family to the little island with him, says that if there was no sign of oxen on the beach when a boat was coming in for a landing the fisherman would blow his horn. The horn was usually a conch shell which made a very nice loud blat.

There was no harbor on Nomansland. That was why the boats had to be hauled up the beach at the end of each day's fishing. This is how it was done. Every boat had a hole bored in the stem near the waterline. A wooden pin was passed through the two eyes of a U-shaped toggle iron and through the hole in the boat's stem. Then an iron hook attached to the harness rope of a yoke of oxen was slipped into the toggle iron and the oxen hauled the boat up the beach on "ladders."

These hauling ladders looked like ladders but they were of heavy construction. The rungs were of heavy oak with a deep notch or groove in the center of each one for the keel to fit into. One account of the ladders says that the rungs turned but I can find no verification of that. Instead the grooves were heavily greased with fish oil. Two or more men steadied the boat as it was being hauled up the beach, and when it reached the last ladder, which was above high water mark, the pin would be driven out releasing the toggle iron and the oxen would be driven back to the water's edge for the next haul. The boats were held upright on the beach by wooden props on each side.

Most of the fishermen had their own sets of ladders. But occasionally two or more would share a set. Launching the boat was a simple matter. She was simply slid down the greased rungs of the ladders, two or more men holding her upright until she



Courtesy National Fisherman

Nomansland in its relationship to Gay Head and Squibnocket, reached the water's edge. Then the skipper, and his mate if he had one, jumped into her and the men on the beach pushed her off into deep water. If the wind was on shore a few pulls at the oars would carry her out to where the rudder could be hung, the

centerboard lowered and the foresail raised. If there was no wind it would be a long hard row to where the fishing was to be done that day.

At Nomansland although all were competing against one another as fishermen, every man depended on the help of every man for the success of his season on the island. The mutual help in launching the boats and in hauling them up the beach was just a small part of it. In every aspect of the work the mutual help was automatic. The work and life on Nomansland were beautiful examples of cooperative effort.



Courtesy Kenneth Mahler, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Conn.

This is *Orca*, Onslow Stewart's Nomanslander under sail. Note that she is fitted with two spritsails of equal size. That is the very early rig. Undoubtedly when she was fishing at Nomansland the mainsail was much smaller.

In the earliest days the fishing was entirely with hand lines. Later some of the fishermen began to use line trawls which lengthened the season for them into early winter. But most of the Vineyard fishermen were home before Thanksgiving and their salt cod taken to market.

Albert O. Fischer and his brother Walter, in the early years of this century, owned and operated a marine hardware store - it was almost a ship chandlery near the steamboat wharf in Vineyard Haven. They also prepared and marketed a product called Fischer Brothers Boneless Codfish. Their source of supply was salt codfish from Nomansland tied up in fifty pound bundles. At that point, before it was processed by the Fischer brothers, it certainly was not boneless.

Albert Fischer issued a little leaflet advertising his product entitled, *About Cod Fish: How They Are Caught, Cured and Packed*. The leaflet is illustrated with a drawing of a Nomansland boat showing the later rig, the gaff foresail and sprit mainsail. The instructions in the leaflet for cleaning and curing the fish are a little sketchy for anyone who might want to follow them today. But here they are:

Split the fish and put them in tubs of clean salt water to take out all the blood. Next morning scrub the fish and salt them. When salted enough, wash the fish again and remove the black nape skins. Then spread on Stony Point to dry. When dried the fish are tied up in fifty pound bundles.

When dry the fish are white as snow and as clean as it is possible to make them. I claim that they are better than any banks fish.

I take these fish, skin them, remove all the bones and pack them in three pound boxes lined with waxed paper.

They have fished from Noman's Land for more than a hundred years.

Tom Tilton says that he can remember the fish drying on Stony Point. Some were dried directly on the cobblestones on the Point and others were dried on raised platforms.

Emily Poole has much better instructions for cleaning and curing the fish than are found in the Fischer Brothers' leaflet, but we are saving them for a hoped for article on Quitsa, Squibnocket Landing, and the Squibnocket herring creek in a later issue of the *Intelligencer*.

As far as known, there are three Nomansland boats left in the world today. Two are at Mystic Seaport and one is at the Dukes County Historical Society in Edgartown. That last boat belonged to Albert Reed of Menemsha, and she is in terrible condition and

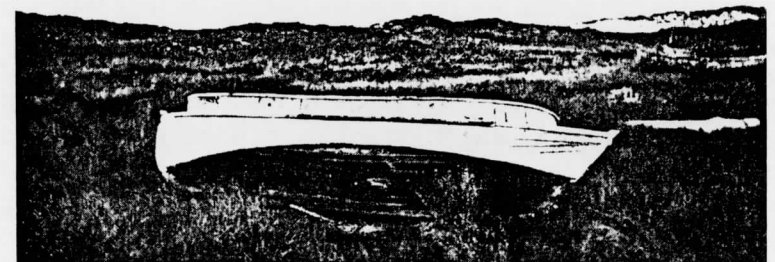


Courtesy Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Conn.

Rod Cleveland's Nomansland boat, at Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Conn. She was built by Rod's grandfather, Captain Josiah Cleveland at Vineyard Haven about 1890. She was used by Captain Cleveland's son, Charlie B. Cleveland and later by his grandson, Rod. The hole through the stem near the waterline for hauling out by oxen is clearly seen. Also note the thole pins.

with the ugly high wash-board that was used in most of the Nomanslanders after they were converted to power and that completely spoiled their original lines. It would cost several thousand dollars to restore the Reed boat to what she must have looked like once. Of course her centerboard and box have been taken out of her, and the engine beds are still in place.

I can remember her well when she was still in use because Albert Reed's daughter, Louise, as a teenager went mate with her father. I remember Willie Mayhew's Nomanslander, too, because when he was dory fishing from Squibnocket Landing he kept her moored in Clam Point Cove of Quitsa Pond. Willie Mayhew never did add the washboard to his boat, although he did install an engine.



Courtesy Yachting

Two Nomansland boats ending their days in the beach grass on the shore of Menemsha Pond. The boat at the bottom has the high washboard that was added in many when engines were installed.

In contrast to Albert Reed's boat, the boats at Mystic Seaport have been beautifully restored. One of those boats was used by Charlie B. Cleveland at Nomansland. Later it was used by Rod Cleveland, Charlie B's son. He used her from Vineyard Haven. In 1952 Rod sold her to Mystic Seaport. There is a good unsigned article in the *Vineyard Gazette* of June 27, 1952, telling about the sale. The article also contains some information about the Nomansland boats in general.

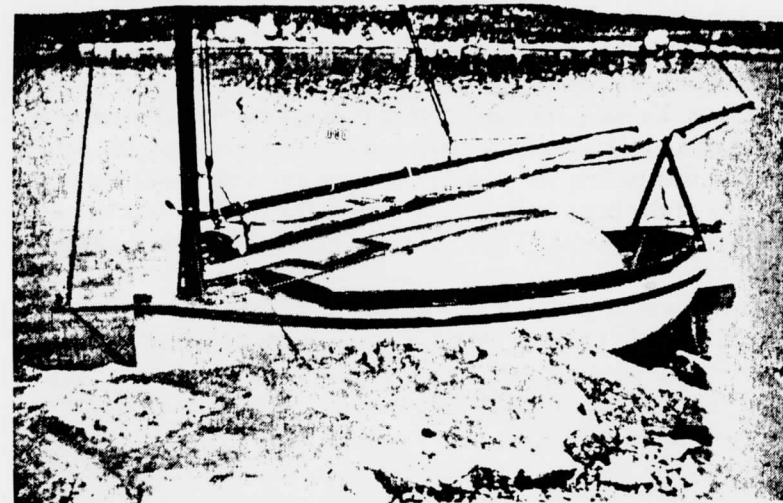
The second boat at Mystic, the *Orca* - many or perhaps most of the Nomansland boats had no names - was built in 1882 for Onslow Stewart of Chilmark. He fished her from Nomansland and also from Lobsterville. Later she was used, mainly for lobstering, by other members of his family. Later still, she was used mainly for scalloping in Menemsha Pond by Stanley Murphy, then of Chilmark. Stan sold her in 1954 to the westward, and in 1963 Robert Baker of Westport, Mass. gave her to Mystic Seaport.

The Nomansland boats were not fast. They seem always to have been under-canvassed. With a larger sail area they undoubtedly would have been much faster. But when they fished from Nomansland speed was not the important thing. The important thing was to be able to stand up to any weather that came along, deep laden with fish, or light. And there the rig they carried was unbeatable. Remember, too, that until engines went into them they were often rowed almost as much as they were sailed.

We have spoken about the fishing at Nomansland as a beautiful example of cooperative effort. But there seems to have been nothing cooperative about hauling the boats up the ladders. The charge was five dollars for the season's hauling. As long as he was able to, Israel Luce a deaf mute, and his yoke of oxen hauled boats. But according to Tom Tilton from time to time Israel had competition. For a time it was Henry B. Davis and his oxen, and another time it was Charlie Wood and his big horse. Israel resented the competition. He seemed to believe that because his family had lived on Nomansland for almost a hundred years all that hauling money should by rights belong to him.

There probably were never more than four or five families living on Nomansland year round. In the last decade of the last century the following men and their families were living all year on the island; Israel Luce, George H. Butler, Henry B. Davis, Welcome

Tilton and Charlie Wood. But with the men who came for the codfishing spring and fall it was another story. At one time there were almost a hundred fishermen there. They came from all parts of the Vineyard, and even a few from the mainland, but the majority were from Chilmark, Gay Head, and the North Shore.



Courtesy Yachting

A Nomansland boat converted to cruiser with cat rig. Bill Taylor says that she was a smart sailer, and would steer herself for hours. That is something that a catboat will never do.

The seasonal fishermen lived in two clusters of fish houses, almost villages, near the beach. One was called Crow Town and the other Jimmy Town. No one seems to know how those names originated. A few men brought their families with them but most batched it, two or three living together. One supposes that many of the wives of the fishermen may not have wanted to spend spring and fall on Nomansland. Many others couldn't follow their husbands even if they had wanted to because they had to stay home to take care of the cow and the horses and the chickens and the pigs. For most Vineyard men of the time, whether they were fishermen or whalemens or merchant seamen, had a subsistence farm to come home to.

Also, perhaps there were some women who didn't like the thought of that long ride in an open boat. But there were some who didn't mind it. Walter Manning tells a story that illustrates that.

Once John Vanderhoop was taking his mother to Nomans with him to keep house for him for the season's fishing. Presumably the boat was loaded with provisions and other things that they would need during the long stay on the island. There was also a minister with them who would conduct a regular service in the little schoolhouse-meetinghouse.

It was blowing sou'west but not too hard. Off the sou'west rocks of Gay Head it blew harder and there was quite a rip. John's mother was bailing for dear life to keep the water sloshing in the bottom of the boat from ruining things. The minister was admiring the beauty of the cliffs and John had his hands full with tiller and sheet.

There was a little group of people on the top of the cliff watching their progress. Suddenly the minister began waving to them. "Get your gahdam hands down," John told him. "If you want to use 'em bail." One wonders what the topic of the minister's sermon was the next day.

There was a schoolhouse on Nomansland, built cooperatively from lumber that came ashore from lost deck loads of coasters. And from time to time there were quite a few children on the island to attend the school. Tom Tilton thinks that Nettie Vincent from Quitsa was his teacher when he went to school there, but he can not be sure. The schoolhouse was also used as a meetinghouse, but there was seldom a minister on the island to conduct the services.

Until about 1900 most the Nomansland boats used thole pins, and whittling a good supply of them from well-seasoned oak or ash was a welcome occupation on days when it was not fit for fishing. Later galvanized oarlocks entirely replaced the thole pins.

Although codfishing was Nomansland's most important fishery there was lobstering from there during the summer months. But until the very last of the fishing the fleet of boats engaged in lobstering was always much smaller than the codfishing fleet. The lobsters were kept alive in big wooden crates called cars that were moored off the beach. Until at least about 1900 there seem to

have been no wells in any of the Nomansland boats. The lobsters were kept alive until they could be put in the cars, by covering them with wet rockweed in the bottom of the boat. A few boats used a tow car. The tow car was a double-ended boat-shaped wooden crate with the sides and bottom bored full of holes so that there was a good circulation of water. The tow cars were from four to six feet long. They probably didn't tow too hard. And, of course until the first pot was hauled they were carried inboard.

Smacks from New Bedford, Newport, and even New York, came to buy the lobsters. They all had big wells in them to keep the lobsters alive. The price payed for the lobsters was as low as five cents apiece. And at the time that really wasn't considered too bad.



Courtesy Norman F. Robinson

The Associated Press Nomanslander on the marine railway at Ed Lord's ship chandler store "Down Neck" in Vineyard Haven. Notice that the boat has been changed to full catboat rig.

The fishing community on Nomansland dwindled and finally ceased to exist. There are a number of interrelated reasons for that, all of which have to do with the technology that finally made oars and sail obsolete except for pleasure rowing and sailing, and that made radical changes in the world's eating habits. Lobstering from Nomansland lasted just a little longer than the codfishing, but that ended, too, when all the fishermen began putting gasoline engines in their boats.



Courtesy of Norman F. Robinson
Onslow Stewart's Nomansland boat freshly painted and just off the railway in Vineyard Haven. That was on July 4th 1942. Now she is at Mystic Seaport and is almost a hundred years old. Chester Robinson is forward and Capt. George Robinson is aft.

Power in the boats meant that the base of operations no longer had to be so near the actual fishing grounds. As a result, new fishing villages appeared, first at Lobsterville and later at Menemsha Creek after the creek was dredged. Today Nomansland is deserted and Squibnocket Landing is a bathing beach for Chilmark's summer population, and Cooper's Landing is only a name.

The changed eating habits resulted, of course, from modern methods of refrigeration and modern transportation. Corning food at home almost ceased, and salt codfish, corned beef, and salt pork became not nearly as necessary food items as they once had been. The final straw was that the price of salt codfish dropped from a

high of about ten cents a pound to a low of only one or two cents a pound. That ended it.

It seems fitting that we should end this account with a list of some of the Vineyard men who fished from Nomansland before the coming of power. All, or almost all, had their own Nomansland boats. And there were many, many more fishermen than we have been able to list. A very few of these men may have fished only from Lobsterville.

Quite a few up-Island fishermen never went to Nomansland but always dory-fished from Cooper's Landing in Gay Head, or from Squibnocket Landing. So these are the names of some of the men who had Nomansland boats.

David Butler
Frank Butler
George Butler
George H. Butler
Charles B. Cleveland
Edward Cleveland
James Cooper
Thomas Cooper
Frank Cottle
Lyman Cottle
Roy Cottle
Henry B. Davis
John Foster
Theodore Haskins
George H. Luce
Eben Luce
Hiram Luce
Jason Luce

Frank Manning
William S. Mayhew
James Mayhew
Oscar Pease
Albert Reed
Charles Ryan
Austin Smith
Freeman Smith
Onslow Stewart
George Fred Tilton
James Tilton
Percy Tilton
Welcome Tilton
William Tilton
Arthur H. Vanderhoop
Charles Vanderhoop
John Vanderhoop

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DCHS News

Once again autumn is upon us, and we have closed the doors of the Thomas Cooke House for the season. As usual we had visitors from nearly every state, and from many distant lands including Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Greece, Hong Kong, Japan, and Uruguay. Unfortunately, the number of visitors this year was down to 3,337 (not including members and school groups). This decrease is partly explained by the reduction in the number of weeks that we were open, but both August and the first two weeks of September were slower than usual. Among our distinguished visitors, we were particularly pleased to give Governor Michael Dukakis and his family a tour of the society.

At the annual meeting this year, the 120 members and guests in attendance were treated to an historical program presented by Henry Beetle Hough and Edith Blake. Mr. Hough, one of the founders of the society, took his audience on an historic journey that by-passed the whaling era and stressed some of the other aspects of island history. Much of his talk centered on the herring industry of Mattakeeset Creek, which provided Edgartown with its main source of revenue for the first 150 years of the town's existence. Mr. Hough provided the audience with a realization that the island has always gone through periods of change, and he left everyone wondering about the nature of the changes that the Vineyard is now experiencing. Mrs. Blake concluded the program with a slide presentation demonstrating all the main aspects of island life that need to be preserved. The quality of her photographic slides and her precise narrative were greatly appreciated by the members of the society.

At the business meeting before the lecture, the society received reports from the various officers, and then reelected Mrs. Samuel Halperin as secretary along with council members Nelson Coon, Dorris Hough, and Stanley Murphy. Mrs. E. Jared Bliss, Jr. was elected as a new member of the council. At the meeting on the following day, the council regretfully accepted the resignation of E. Gale Huntington, who has served as the society's vice-president for many years and who will continue as the acting editor of the *Intelligencer*. Then Stanley Murphy was elected as vice-president,

and Herbert Stewart was selected to fill Mr. Murphy's position on the council. Doris Stoddard was reelected as president and John Osborn as treasurer.

An important staff change occurred this fall when Joy Ryan, our archivist, resigned in order to enter the Washington University Law School in Missouri. For more than a year, she applied her organization skills to a variety of jobs in our library and as a result the material in our archives is now much easier to find and to use. Alison Shaw is now going to take over the position of archivist.

By the time that this issue of the *Intelligencer* is in print, the Thomas Cooke House should have a new roof. It will cost us nearly \$5,000, but half of this will be paid by the grant that we received from the Bicentennial Commission.

Among our interesting recent accessions, we received a contract for building the Dency Mudgett house, which was built in 1894 and is located next to the Federated Church. The contract is an interesting and unusual document, because it gives an exact description, right down to the size of the nails, of how the house was to be built. From the estate of Dorothy Austin, we received the steering wheel of the steamer *Uncatena*.

We are now on our winter schedule. The library is open on Thursday and Friday afternoons from 1 to 4, and on Saturdays from 10-12, 1-4. We will be looking forward to seeing any of you who want to do research this winter.

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¢.

People To Remember by Dionis Coffin Riggs. Illustrated, paper. \$4.95.

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, \$30.00.

Tales and Trails of Martha's Vineyard by Joseph C. Allen. Illustrated. Paper, \$3.95.

"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.

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

An Introduction To Martha's Vineyard by Gale Huntington. Illustrated, paper. A new edition. \$3.95.

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