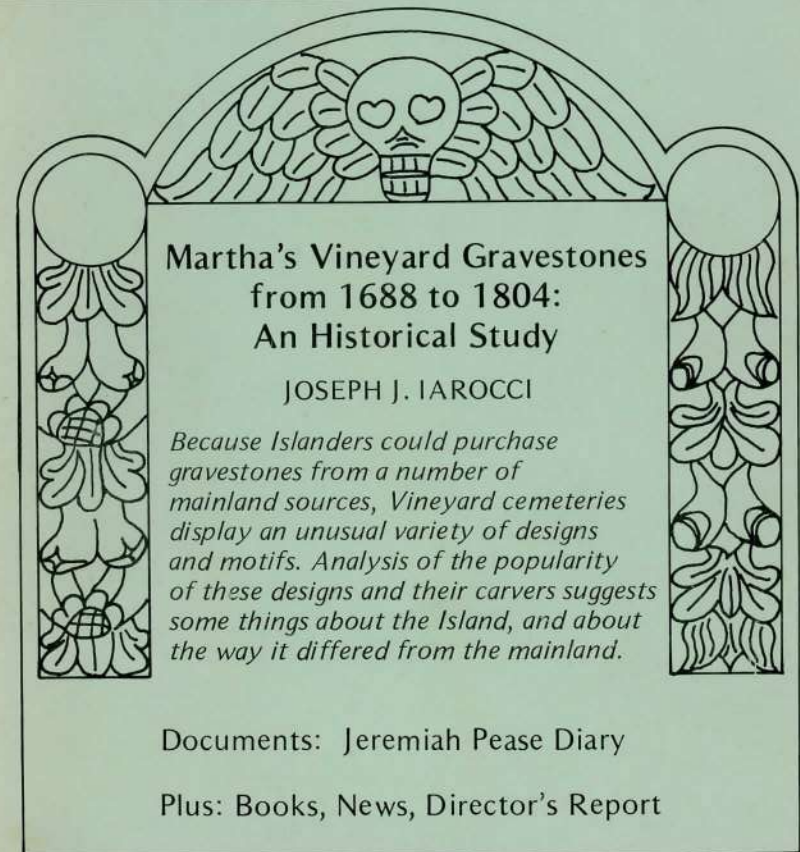




# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 20, NO. 3

FEBRUARY, 1979



**Martha's Vineyard Gravestones  
from 1688 to 1804:  
An Historical Study**

JOSEPH J. IAROCCHI

*Because Islanders could purchase gravestones from a number of mainland sources, Vineyard cemeteries display an unusual variety of designs and motifs. Analysis of the popularity of these designs and their carvers suggests some things about the Island, and about the way it differed from the mainland.*

Documents: Jeremiah Pease Diary

Plus: Books, News, Director's Report

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The Society maintains the Thomas Cooke House, the Francis Foster Museum, and a library, all located on its grounds at the corner of School and Cooke Streets in Edgartown.

The Thomas Cooke House was built about 1765. The Society acquired the building in 1935 and established it as a museum. Its 12 rooms are now devoted to historical displays and period rooms which reflect various eras of Vineyard life. Displays of whaling equipment, exotica brought home by sea captains, children's toys, early china and furniture, and portraits of Islanders may be seen on informal tours of the house.

The new Francis Foster Museum and the library are in an adjacent building. The library is devoted to Vineyard history, and has interesting collections of whaling logs and genealogical works. The Francis Foster Museum contains displays of scrimshaw and paintings.

The attractive grounds include an herb garden, a boatshed exhibit, and the famous Fresnel lens from the old Gay Head lighthouse.

The buildings and grounds are open during the summer (June 15 to Sept. 15) on Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Off-season, the Francis Foster Museum and the library are open Thursdays and Fridays, 1-4 p.m., and Saturdays, 10-12 a.m., and 1-4 p.m.

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## Martha's Vineyard Gravestones from 1688 to 1804: An Historical Study

by JOSEPH J. IAROCCHI

Until recently, little has been known about colonial Island gravestones or the men who made them. Yet Martha's Vineyard offers an unusual set of circumstances for the study of gravestones.

In other communities the stones were produced locally, not more than 10 or 15 miles away.<sup>1</sup> In some instances these local carvers held monopolies in their businesses; in any case, the diversity of gravestones erected in a given period was small.

On the Island, the matter was quite different. Vineyarders could -- and did -- buy stones from any one of many coastal towns on the mainland, according to their tastes. No carvers lived on the Island, but the variety of stones which can be found in Island cemeteries is great.

By studying the gravestones on Martha's Vineyard we can gain some insight into the interior and off-Island influences of the times. All stones carry chronological controls, and the epitaphs and decorative elements reflect the religious and social values of the community as they change through time. Gravestones can be projected against known historical data, detailing the dynamics of change.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>James Deetz, Edwin Dethlefsen, "Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow," *Natural History*, Vol. 76, (March, 1967), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>James Deetz, Edwin Dethlefsen, "Death's Head, Cherubs, Urn and Willow Trees," *American Antiquity*, Vol. 31, No. 4, (1966), 502.

JOSEPH J. IAROCCHI wrote this paper in the fall of 1977, while a freshman at Brown University where he is now majoring in anthropology. He is a resident of Topsfield, Mass., and has spent recent summers on the Island.



Dr. Charles Edward Banks, the Vineyard historian, includes this section at the end of the first volume of *The History of Martha's Vineyard*:

#### MEMORIALS OF THE DEAD

There are not but half a dozen gravestones now on the Vineyard which bear date prior to 1700. The oldest stone is that marking the grave of Rev. John Mayhew in the West Tisbury cemetery, and is dated 1688. The oldest in Edgartown commemorates the death of John Coffin in 1711. The oldest stone in the cemetery on Abel's Hill, Chilmark, is 1717, recording the death of Benjamin Mayhew, and the oldest in the Homes Hole cemetery is 1719, marking the grave of Elizabeth Chase. As far as can be judged, the earliest stones were imported from England, and perhaps cut there. They are probably Welsh slate, and are of a finer quality than the native variety, used here between 1700 and 1800. It is thought that the stones of Simon Athearn and John Mayhew are examples of the imported stone. It can hardly be said that these stones reached any high artistic standard, and such elaboration of design as they disclose exhibits that awful gruesomeness with which the colonists invested everything in life and death.<sup>3</sup>

In this brief description of gravestones on Martha's Vineyard, Dr. Banks makes some obvious errors. That stones were obtained from England was a popular misconception held to be true for many years. At present it is known that no gravestones on the island were quarried or cut outside of New England. The sources of slate, though not indigenous to the island, are easy to document. Thanks to the work of Harriet M. Forbes in 1927, we can positively identify the carvers whose work appears in Vineyard cemeteries.

To add to these errors, Dr. Banks passes some rather harsh judgements on these memorials. What he calls "awful gruesomeness" held an entirely different meaning for his Puritan ancestors. Allan Ludwig writes: "For the Puritans, these symbols held less dread than for us today because for them, the passing away of the flesh was as much a part of life

as birth and the renewal of life after the death of the body.<sup>4</sup> As funerary art, New England gravestones were meant to convey a specific message. Though this message underwent changes with time, it was always given true aesthetic value in stone. As Ludwig puts it, the New England gravestone "had a blunt freshness about it which was apparently much favored throughout the 17th and much of the 18th centuries."<sup>5</sup> Contrary to the belief of Dr. Banks, the gravestones on Martha's Vineyard did indeed reach a high artistic standard as funerary art.

In New England, funerary art has always been an important part of burial rituals. On the Vineyard, these rituals seem especially thin. The disposal of the dead was attended to with little ceremony, the body usually being interred within 24 hours of the death. Banks says: "Burials usually occurred in the late afternoon or evening and often by the aid of torches."<sup>6</sup> In the early days, burials may have been especially hasty. Since the Indian population was as much as ten times greater than the white, losses in number weren't publicized by the colonists. The settlers' population was widely scattered before 1700 and transportation was very difficult. It is safe to assume that burials took place on the farms where people died.<sup>7</sup> If markers were used at all, they were merely fieldstones.<sup>8</sup>

After 1700, burial rituals became similar to the Puritan rites on the mainland. For individuals of higher status, funerals were gala affairs. Those invited were given scarves, gold rings and velvet gloves. Sometimes there was a large meal.<sup>9</sup> After the burial, the estate was divided. Records of

<sup>4</sup>Allan Ludwig, *Graven Images*, (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), p. 77.

<sup>5</sup>Ludwig, p. 66.

<sup>6</sup>Banks, p. 500.

<sup>7</sup>Joseph C. Allen, *Tales and Trails of Martha's Vineyard*, (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1938), p. 90.

<sup>8</sup>The only marked stone on the Island dated before 1700 is Mayhew's, of 1688. It is possible but improbable that wooden rails were used to indicate early graves. Initialled boulders like those common in Boston during the 1650s are not found on the Island.

<sup>9</sup>Banks, p. 500.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Edward Banks, *The History of Martha's Vineyard*, Vol. 1, (1897: rpt. Boston: Franklin Press, 1946), p. 502.

the early divisions have since been lost or they never existed. It is not until after 1750 that probate records on the Island became nearly complete. Last, oftentimes many years after the burial, a gravestone was purchased. Going off-Island to order it, having it cut, and then shipped back, made the process of obtaining a stone a slow one. In the ordering stage, the deceased's family didn't really have a great choice of emblems.

On New England gravestones, the scope of imagery was very limited, ranging from emblems of death to images of the resurrection. Deetz classifies these emblems into three "universal styles". They are death's heads, cherubs, and urn and willows. These styles appeared first in England, and in New England about fifty years later.<sup>10</sup> The first universal style, the death's head was the chief symbol of the certainty of death. It preached the inevitability of death in a stylistic expression of Puritanism.<sup>11</sup> The skull itself was a symbol of mortality, decay, and life's brevity. When the artist added wings, he made it a dual symbol, of both death and resurrection.

While the death's head was a graphic reminder of death, the cherub was a spiritual reminder, a softening of the death symbol. It was introduced into Boston very early by a distinct social class, perhaps as an attempt at portraiture. Later cherubs became stylized, but they continued to symbolize the soul's blissful flight to heaven. Deetz believes that the cherub represents a breakdown of orthodox Puritanism because "the Puritans were iconophobic, feeling that to portray a cherub would be to introduce the image of a heavenly being, which would be idolatry."<sup>12</sup>

The last universal style, the urn and willow is a less emotional or more sentimental emblem. Its popularity correlates with a rise in intellectualism in New England. Their design shows a lack of originality, and most are quite uniform. By 1804, the urn and willow usurps the popularity

<sup>10</sup> Deetz, Dethlefsen, *American Antiquity*, p. 507.

<sup>11</sup> James B. Richardson, "Death's Heads, Cherubs, and Urn and Willow," *Dukes County Intelligencer*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (Feb., 1969) p. 187.

<sup>12</sup> James Deetz, *Small Things Forgotten*, (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday), p. 71.

of the remaining death's heads and cherubs on Martha's Vineyard. Deetz hypothesizes that the "replacement of one universal motif by another through time over the entire area is certainly a function of changes in religious values combined with significant shifts in views regarding death."<sup>13</sup> If this is true, then a study of gravestones on Martha's Vineyard would enable us to make some statements about the early inhabitants of that island.

In this study, three cemeteries have been used for photo and seriation: Tower Hill in Edgartown; the West Tisbury cemetery; and the Chilmark cemetery on Abel's Hill. Smaller cemeteries (such as family plots) are usually incomplete. Sunburst and urn-and-willow designs are not explored because they didn't gain popularity until 1804. The study was greatly aided by Pat and Allen Symonds who supplied photographs from Tower Hill and indexes of stones in the three major cemeteries.

### William Mumford

The Reverend John Mayhew stone (Ill. 1), the oldest marked gravestone on the Island, was carved by William Mumford. As a citizen of high social status, Mumford undoubtedly knew the Mayhew family. It had its roots in Mumford's hometown of Braintree, Massachusetts. Mumford was friendly with many prominent citizens in and around Boston. In 1700, he carved a stone for his friend Judge Sewall's parents.<sup>14</sup> In fact, he carved many stones for the clergy. Some of his better known clients include the Mayhews, Mathers, Cushings, and Sewalls. It is ironic that although Mumford was well acquainted with Puritan ministers, he himself was a Quaker.

If for no other reason, the John Mayhew stone deserves mention here because of its age—it is dated 1688. What makes it particularly interesting is the symbolism found on the stone. It is so artistically carved, and the imagery is so well chosen, that it may in fact reflect the Puritan aspects of John

<sup>13</sup> Deetz, Dethlefsen, *American Antiquity*, p. 506.

<sup>14</sup> Harriet M. Forbes, *Gravestones of Early New England*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1927), p. 84.

Mayhew's life. William Hallock, writing on the Mayhew family, gives us a glimpse of John Mayhew's faith. He writes: "In his last sickness he expressed a desire, if it were the Divine Will, that he might live a while longer, to see his children grow up before he died, and to do more service for Christ on earth. But with respect to his own state before God, he enjoyed great serenity and calmness of mind, having a lively apprehension of the mercy of God, through the merits of Christ: far from being afraid to die, having hope, through grace, of obtaining eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."<sup>15</sup> It is not surprising that we find from this description that John Mayhew embodied the classic Puritan ideals concerning death.

The Reverend John Mayhew died on February 2, 1688/9 in the 37th year of his life, and the 16th of his ministry. His gravestone reads:

HERE LYES Ye BODY OF Mr  
JOHN MAYHEW THAT WORTHY  
LABORIOUS MINISTER OF Ye  
GOSPELL TO Ye INHABITANTS  
OF TISBURY & CHILMARK UNITED  
& TO Ye CHRISTIAN INDIANS  
WHO DIED FEBRUARY Ye 2d.  
1 6 8 8 AETATIS 37

The memorial placed over John Mayhew's body was more than a mere commemoration. As was often the case, a minister's gravestone was designed to serve as a didactic icon to inspire and guide succeeding generations.<sup>16</sup>

The John Mayhew stone is indeed a didactic icon. In its tympanum is a carefully carved death's head, (Fig. 1) which to the Puritans said 'as I am now, you shall be.' But the death's head on this stone is quite unlike the powerful emblems of death seen on most seventeenth century stones. It is a pleasant emblem, calm and peaceful. It may reflect John Mayhew's "serenity and calmness of mind" that he experienced during his last sickness. He believed he would be

<sup>15</sup> William A. Hallock, *The Venerable Mayhews and the Aboriginal Indians of Martha's Vineyard*, (New York: American Tract Society, 1874), p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> Dickran ann Ann Tashjian, *Memorials for Children of Change*, (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1974), p. 110.

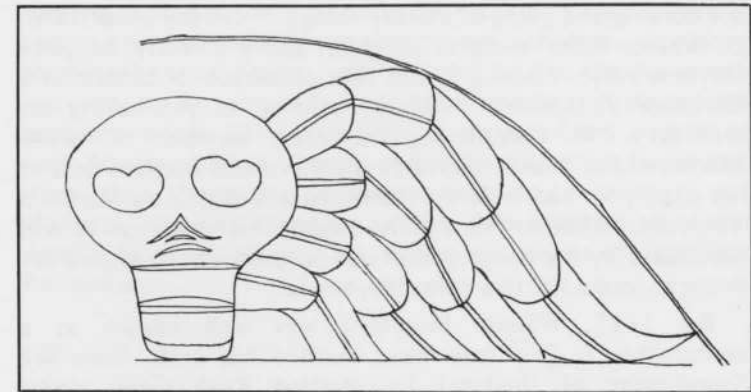


Fig. 1. William Mumford's death's head for John Mayhew.

saved, and this is seen also; the curling of the wingtips combined with the thinness of the jaw lends the death's head a light, airy appearance. Surely it was aerodynamic enough to reach heaven. Separation of the upper and lower jaws give John Mayhew's emblem an unmistakable smile. The small nose accentuates the lively heart-shaped eyes. Perhaps he is watching his children through them. The eyes smile in themselves, and their shape has iconographic significance. The heart was a common symbol on New England gravestones. It is used here with the death's head to contrast life and death. The heart also symbolized the soul's eternal life and love of God<sup>17</sup>, a love John Mayhew preached all his life.

In the pilasters of the John Mayhew stone are sunflowers growing straight up to the sun. (This is a pun in stone. To the Puritans, the word "sun" was freely interchangeable with the word "son" as in "Son of God.") The flower is compared with goodness<sup>18</sup> and in this case, the sunflower signifies John Mayhew's growth to God. His "roots" are easily seen at the bottom of the panels, perhaps in the grave. Hanging from the sunflower are objects that could be interpreted as either gourds or breasts. As gourds they contrast life and death as

<sup>17</sup> Ludwig, p. 168.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

the coming and going of earthly things.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, as breasts these symbols seem to apply directly to John Mayhew's life. Ludwig found this definition of breasts in a Christian dictionary, "without breasts, as yet having no ministry."<sup>20</sup> Considering the great number of white followers and Indian converts the Reverend Mayhew left at his death, he had indeed established a ministry on Martha's Vineyard. Whether his family bought his stone or it was purchased by his congregation, its purpose was to inspire the living to lead a life like John Mayhew's.

By 1681, William Mumford was well known as a stonecutter.<sup>21</sup> (He may have learned his craft from the Stonecutter of Boston.) He married Ruth Copp about 1670,<sup>22</sup> and inherited from her father ten acres of land a little beyond Braintree. This land was the source of light-colored "Braintree slate" of which John Mayhew's stone is made. His first stone for which records exist is the Moses Draper stone (1693).<sup>23</sup> (See Forbes, plate facing page 28.) The Moses Draper stone shows the same wings as on the John Mayhew death's head, and the same pilasters as on the Thankful Mayhew stone (1706) in West Tisbury. Thankful's stone exhibits erotic symbolism similar to that on the John Mayhew stone. Besides the John Mayhew and Thankful Mayhew stones, Mumford probably carved the Abigail Trapp stone (1717/18) in the Tower Hill cemetery.

Mumford's work varied with price.<sup>24</sup> The Moses Draper stone cost 1.0.0 in 1695.<sup>25</sup> John Mayhew's probably cost a bit more. It seems special, notably with the heart-shaped eyes. The epitaph is also a little longer than Mumford's usual. His lettering is always in capitals guided by faint lines where the slate has been ruled. "The" is always written "Ye" and his epitaphs begin "HERE LYES", or "HERE LYETH". His

rosettes are simple discs or coils, the teeth are rather carefully cut and are usually opposite one another. Studying Mumford's work Forbes says: "Death to this Quaker carver was not to be dreaded; it rather foretold the peace and happiness of the life beyond."<sup>26</sup> It appears from a study of John Mayhew's life and work and William Mumford's life and work that these two contemporaries had similar if not identical attitudes towards death. This indicates that the death's head motif was a tangible expression of orthodox Puritanism.

J. N.

William Mumford died on November 21, 1718.<sup>27</sup> At that time, Vineyarders knew of another stonecutter, who on occasions signed his work "J. N."

A few stones on Martha's Vineyard can be attributed to this unknown stonecutter. No records exist that give us any clues as to his identity. He was a highly imaginative worker who used many ornamentations and unusual plants. He introduced the peacock to New England gravestones, and his repertoire of symbols included flowers, hourglasses, and gourds. Forbes says of his style: "We note the ruling for the general design, the odd shape of the figs, the extremely low forehead of the death's head and the alternating teeth. The lettering, the crossing of the E's and F's with a triangle, the prominent serifs, and the U's always made as we make them today and not like the very common V of that day."<sup>28</sup> The stones of John Coffin (1711), in Tower Hill, and James Allen (1714), in West Tisbury, are most probably his work, and the John Trapp (1717/18), and Abigail Trap (1718) stones in Tower Hill may be his work also.

The James Allen stone (1714) is particularly interesting in that, though early, it portrays a cherub. The juxtaposition of the death's head over the cherub is a silent reminder of death over life, and yet the cherub has wings, and the skull doesn't,

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Forbes, p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 30. Note there is a two-year time lag between the date of death and the date of payment. This time lag was certainly greater when Vineyarders bought stones. The John Mayhew stones could have been cut after the turn of the century and back dated.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.



perhaps symbolizing in turn the power of eternal life over mortal death. J. N. was known to carve cherubs even earlier than the James Allen stone, which resembles quite clearly the side panels of the Rev. Edward Thompson stone (1705) in Marshfield. (See Forbes plate opposite page 36.)

### The Foster Tradition

In the 1720s we see the appearance of the Foster tradition on the Island. The Foster family worked in Dorchester until 1772, where they had a virtual monopoly in their business.<sup>29</sup> There were three James Fosters who worked in Dorchester, plus James Jr.'s brother Hopestill. In addition, there may

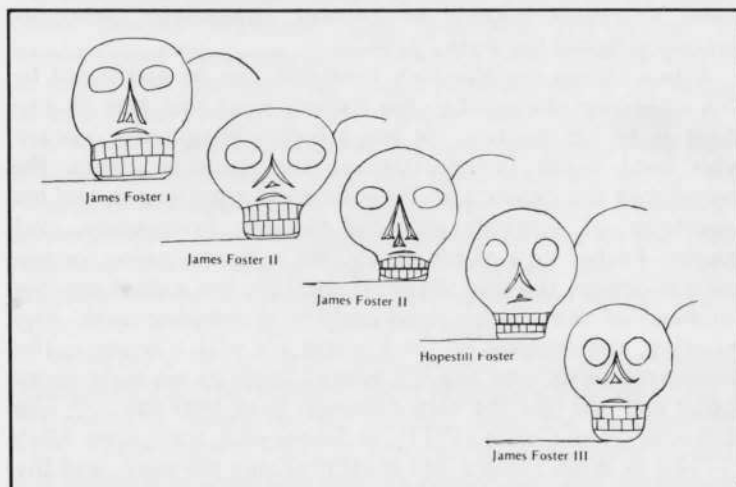


Fig. 2. A succession of Foster death's heads.

have been another man who carried on the Foster tradition a few years after James III's death. On Martha's Vineyard we can see that the Foster tradition underwent a definite evolution between the 1720s and 1780s (Fig. 2).

James Foster I was born in 1651.<sup>30</sup> He carved a square

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

jawed death's head, the jaw resting on and supported by the top of the frieze. This emblem is heavy and hollow eyed. Heaviness in the wings seems to hold the skull to the stone. The lines are bold and there is no ornamentation like that we have seen previously. (Certainly the Foster death's head is a strong symbol of mortality.) On the pillars and around the base is plain scrolling that is always found on Foster stones. Of this scrollwork Forbes says, "As far as I know, the Fosters never exactly repeated their patterns except in the very simplest of them all."<sup>31</sup> Some stones on the Island carved by James Foster I are John Worth (1731/32), and Anna Mayhew (1723) in the Tower Hill cemetery. Stones carved by either James I or James II are Jedidah Smith (1735/6) and James Stanbridge (1730) in Tower Hill, (Ill. 2). After the death of James Foster I in 1732<sup>32</sup> Vineyards continued buying stones from James Foster II who was working with his father up to that time.

James II was born December 8, 1698, and he followed in his father's footsteps.<sup>33</sup> It is hard to distinguish James II's early work from that of his father, but later he simplified the scrolls and smoothed out the jaw of his death's heads.<sup>34</sup> His work eventually acquired a unique character. As demand for Foster stones increased, his death's head became stylized with increased production. He probably was working with his brother Hopestill who continued the family business after James II's death in 1763.<sup>35</sup> Some stones I have attributed to James Foster II are: Joseph Allen (1733), Chilmark, (Ill. 3); and John Norton (1730) and Thomas Butler (1733) in Tower Hill. Examples of James II's or Hopestill Foster's work include Mary Norton (1740), Joseph Chase (1749), Benjamin Sumner (1739), Mary Beetle (1746), Mary Smith (1755), and Mary Norton (1734), all in the Tower Hill cemetery.

In addition to a death's head, James Foster II carved a cherub. It may have been an attempt at portraiture, but the many known copies (See Forbes plate facing page 49, Guillon

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.



plate 47) indicate that it was stylized. Two examples exist on the island, Ebenezer Allen (1733), (Ill. 4) and Thomas Harlock (1744). It is interesting to note that Hopestill Foster married Sarah Allen in 1724.<sup>36</sup> Whether she was related to Ebenezer Allen is not known.

The last James Foster was born in 1732, and his work is a bit different from his predecessors'.<sup>37</sup> His death's head had a "pear-shaped face and a blank expression."<sup>38</sup> The eyes were made with a compass, and his lines were very well defined. He showed some initiative in returning to the old symbols: hourglasses, pickaxes, spades, and crossbones. Over all, his stones showed little interior design change, and can be considered a continuation of the Foster tradition. Stones easily attributed to James Foster III are: Susannah Mayhew (1758), (Ill. 5), Jonathan Luce (1763), Chilmark; Jean Vinson (1764), Damoris Ripley (1761), and Mary Newman (1753), Tower Hill.

This does not seem to be the end of the Foster tradition. There was another man carving death's heads like John Foster III a few years after the latter's death. In at least one instance on the Island he even duplicates the crossbones that James III brought to the tradition. The Foster IV carver's work is easy to distinguish from the other Fosters' by its unique borders. The pilasters are bounded by a double line that replaces any scrolling. This border ends with an inward curl atop the finial. The other characteristic feature is the lack of a heavy border around the top of the tympanum. Some stones cut by the Foster IV carver are: Katherine Homes (1754), Mary Vinson (1781) and Mary Butler (1782), in Chilmark; and Mathew Norton (1779) and Mary Norton (1781) in Tower Hill.

### The Lamson Tradition

The Lamson tradition began with Joseph Lamson, first of a long line of carvers who operated in Charlestown,

Massachusetts. He may have learned his craft from the Charlestown Carver, many of their earlier works being hard to distinguish.<sup>39</sup> He was a very imaginative and original artisan who brought the stonecarving art of early Boston to a zenith. He was particularly fond of floral motifs, erotic symbolism, the clergy and imps of death. He used many newly created symbols. Joseph Lamson's stones are rare on the Island, the majority of Lamson tradition stones being done there by his sons. One stone I am sure he carved is the Dr. Thomas West (1704) stone in West Tisbury (Ill. 6).

Thomas West's stone exhibits the first cherub to appear on Martha's Vineyard. He was "their majesties attorney" in 1689, and his office as "the King's slisseter" is first mentioned in 1687. This position was established to aid the court in the trial of criminal cases. West was the king's attorney until 1690.<sup>40</sup> He held a high social position on Martha's Vineyard. This seems to confirm Deetz's belief that cherubs were introduced into Boston at an early date, and marked the graves of high status individuals.<sup>41</sup> Dr. Thomas West's stone is a good example to illustrate this. But in itself, it is a beautiful work of art.

On this stone we can see some of Joseph Lamson's variation and artistic innovation. The cherub's wing is folded, and this is hard to interpret. The pilasters and finials abound with foliage, including cherries, corn, and flowers. A contemporary of Joseph Lamson, Edward Taylor, writes:

Walking, my Lord, within thy Paradise  
I Find a Fruite whose Beauty smites mine Eye  
And looking up, I saw its boughs all bow  
With Cluster of this Fruite that it doth bring  
Nam'de Greatest LOVE, And well, For bulk, and brow  
Thereof, of th'sap of Godhood-Manhood spring  
What Love is here for kinde? What sort? How much?  
None, ever, but the Tree of Life, bore such. <sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>40</sup> Banks, p. 270.

<sup>41</sup> Deetz, Dethlefsen, *Natural History*, p. 31.

<sup>42</sup> Edward Taylor, *The Poems of Edward Taylor*, ed. Donald Stanford, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 138-139.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

The tree of life, hung with fruit, is very easily seen on the pilasters. It seems to be growing through some kind of ring, perhaps the "ring of eternity" or a portal of heaven. If indeed Thomas West's cherub is in paradise, then the reason it has a folded wing is to shield its eyes. Certainly a cherub couldn't look directly into the face of God. At such an early date this might have seemed idolatrous. Remember, death's heads didn't have eyes.

The Dr. Thomas West stone may have been high priced due to its high degree of ornamentation. Joseph Lamson's work is rarely seen outside his hometown area, and this is probably the only stone he carved for Martha's Vineyard. When he died on August 27, 1722,<sup>43</sup> his art was continued by his sons Caleb and Nathaniel.

Nathaniel Lamson was born in 1693, his brother Caleb in 1697.<sup>44</sup> Their death's head emblems were similar to their father's, though the differences are more noticeable in their later work. Forbes adds: "It is not easy to distinguish the work of one brother from that of the other, nor is it apparent why there should be any preference for one over the other."<sup>45</sup> These brothers made downswep wings, flattened skull and jaw, and curling eyebrows all part of the classic Lamson stone. Their father was the first Boston stone-cutter to use lower case lettering, a style which characterizes the Lamson's epitaphs.<sup>46</sup> He also left his sons a real feel for the scroll and floral motifs. These cover Caleb's and Nathaniel's stones, and adding an extra artistic dimension is the fact that they always used a diagonally striped slate. Given the price of these stones, it is obvious why the Lamsons' work was usually owned by individuals of high economic status on Martha's Vineyard.

As was the case with the Fosters of Dorchester, these two brothers held a monopoly in their area (Middlesex County) from 1722 to 1767.<sup>47</sup> Forbes tells us that they furnished stones for Boston, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Long Island. This list should now include Martha's Vineyard where

Lamson stones were in proportionate demand by the Island's upper class. Examples of stones carved by the Lamson brothers are: Jonathan Dunham (1717), Benjamin Smith (1737), Seth Cleveland (1734) and Mehetable Lothrop (1733) (Ill. 7), in Tower Hill; and Sarah Cobb (1721) and Remember Merry (1739) in West Tisbury.

Nathaniel Lamson died in 1755; Caleb died in 1769.<sup>48</sup>

### The Scituate Sculptor

Another carver of note whose work appears on the Island is an unknown stonecutter whose work radiates out of Scituate.<sup>49</sup> His style is unique, and we have but three examples of his work on the Vineyard, Mary (1724), Nathan (1725), and John Skiffe (1728), all in the Chilmark cemetery.

The Scituate sculptor carved a different type of death's head, more rounded, with wider eyes and an uncommon nose. Its wings are heavily ornamented with triangular cuts in the stone, made with sharp blows of a chisel. The rosettes are made the same way, always with triangular indentations. Open scrolling adorns the pilasters and base. The lettering is also unusual, carefully ruled out and cut. The Scituate sculptor and his son worked until about 1740.<sup>50</sup> It is probable that a careful search of the records would turn up a connection between the Skiffe family and the Scituate area.

### John Homer

Three stones carved by John Homer (1727-1803) stand in the Chilmark burying ground: Martha Mayhew (1778) (Ill. 8), Matthew Mayhew (1783), and Mary Mayhew (1783). Homer worked in Boston with his son William,<sup>51</sup> carving a rather strange side-angled view of a skull and crossbones, apparently their only motif. The design reflects attitudes towards death embodied by the "graveyard" school of

<sup>43</sup> Forbes, p. 46.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

English poets. It is a strong emblem of mortality, reinforced by the lack of decoration over the rest of the stone. Of these gravestones, veritable misfits, one cannot help but ask how they came to be here?

It seems that John Homer was a prominent member of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts Bay in 1767. (He played a vital role in the activities that precipitated the Revolution.) In that year, he carved a stone for his friend, Daniel Malcom, also a representative, who died in October, 1767.<sup>52</sup> A check showed that Matthew Mayhew was in Boston contemporaneously with Homer. He was Martha's Vineyard's representative to the General Court in 1760 and 1768.<sup>53</sup> These legislators no doubt knew each other, and may well have been friends. After Matthew Mayhew died in 1783, Homer carved his gravestone.

#### George Allen

The first cherubs on Martha's Vineyard by a stonecutter who used the cherub as his only motif were carved by George Allen, Sr. He and his son lived and worked in Rehoboth, Massachusetts. Biographical information on them is thin. George Allen, Sr. died in 1774; George Jr. was born in 1742 or 1743.<sup>54</sup> They left a great number of stones throughout southeastern New England. The Mary Jenkins (1772) stone and the Jeremiah Pease (1749) stone in Tower Hill are typical of George Allen, Sr.

Mary Jenkin's gravestone, like all Allen stones, is carved out of a very thick piece of slate. Other typical features include the smoke-like scrollwork, always tightly enclosed in the pilasters, and the epitaph, that always begins "In Memory of...." The cherub on the Jenkins stone has a rounded, hairless head, and a calm, tight-lipped face. I believe that George Allen I was consciously or subconsciously carving a soul effigy. This is evidenced by the wings: they do not connect to the head, and there is actually a border separating

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>53</sup> Banks, p. 510.

<sup>54</sup> Forbes, p. 99.

the two. They form a lily-like rest on which the head is borne. The general appearance of the face and head brings into mind the soul effigy of the Worster family carving in Harvard, Mass. (Fig. 3). Later, the Allens' emblem becomes a full-fledged cherub.

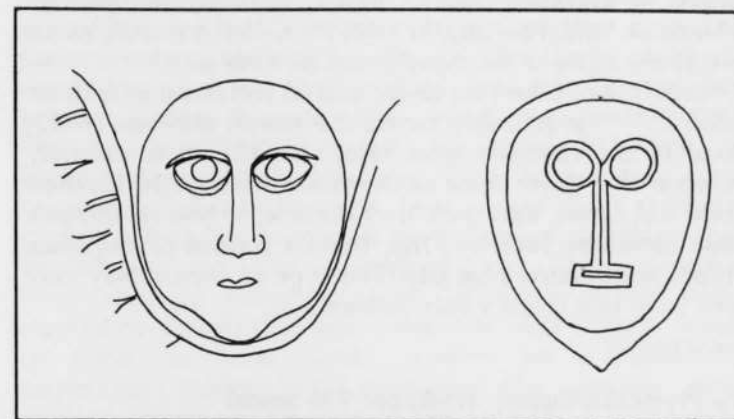


Fig. 3. Cherub and Effigy.

The Allen's later cherubs gain a wig-type hairstyle, first appearing as a halo, as on the Mary Jenkins (1774), and Susana Swift (1777) stones in the Tower Hill cemetery. Another hairstyle was a tightly-curved one, examples being found in the John Worth (1777), and Mary Daggett (1781) stones, also in Tower Hill. Cherubs like these were undoubtedly carved by one of the George Allens. I have seen one identical in a Providence, Rhode Island cemetery. Where the earth had eroded around the stone's base, it said: "G<sup>t</sup> Allen Scup." Since Allen is such a common name on Martha's Vineyard, I suspect that one of the inhabitants there probably started buying stones from a relative in Rehoboth. No proof of this exists yet.

Another style of cherub similar to George Allen's appears on the island, though it is not very common there. An example is the Freeman Pease (1796) stone in the Pease's Point Way cemetery, (Ill. 9). It is the product of the John Stevens shop in Newport, R.I.



## John Just Geyer

Henry Christian Geyer was an original, imaginative carver who worked in Boston. He gained a widespread reputation aided by the fact that he advertised his work.<sup>55</sup> He carved a variety of emblems, death's heads, cherubs, and perhaps portraiture. When he died in 1791,<sup>56</sup> he left his craft to his son, as did many of the stonecutters we have seen.

Henry's son, John Just Geyer, carved cherubs similar to his father's.<sup>57</sup> He probably carved the Joseph Mayhew (1782) stone in the Chilmark graveyard, (Ill. 10). It is the only example of a Geyer stone on the Island. Though the Mayhew stone was carved during Henry's lifetime, it best resembles a stone carved by John in 1786, William Warden (1786). (See Forbes plate facing page 64). This type of cherub may have been John Just Geyer's only emblem.

## The Plymouth County Tradition: The Soules

There are two stones in the Tower Hill cemetery that are quite unlike any of the gravestones we have seen so far. They are Temple Cooke (1764), "Aged 13 Days", and John Cooke (1766), "Aged 20 Days", (Ill. 11). In their tympanums are death's heads similar to those produced in Plymouth County. Ludwig believes that this emblem is nothing more than a "linear treatment" of the older death's head styles.<sup>58</sup> The eyes are large and compass drawn. The splayed-out nose and shape of the head are reminiscent of the death's head characteristics. The mouth is small and tight-lipped. The "hair" spreads out from the top of the tympanum and ends in two small waves on each side of the head. What are most interesting are the small, triangular cuts that ornament the hair. These can be seen on the Sarah May (1769) stone in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and the Deborah Samson (1761) stone in Kingston, Mass. (See Ludwig, plate 209, page 356.) The triangular indentations can be interpreted as raindrops or

tears. Except for the plain margin around the epitaph, the stones lack further ornamentation.

It is found in the probate records that the Samson and May stones were carved by Ebenezer Soule.<sup>59</sup> He was the first of a family of stonecutters who operated in Plympton, Mass. His classic emblem is the "medusa" type death's head, a style he developed from the work of another Plymouth County carver, Nathaniel Fuller.<sup>60</sup> The Cooke children's stones are not really the "medusa" type, but "a symplified version of the Medusa design which was used in both Plympton and Hinsdale to mark the graves of children."<sup>61</sup> Deetz and Dethlefsen conclude, "This development raises two interesting considerations. First, we see that a style, the medusa, which had been used for the general populace, ends its existence restricted to small children. This pattern has been observed elsewhere, with children's burials being marked by designs that were somewhat more popular earlier in time. In other words, children are a stylistically conservative element in the population of a cemetery. While no clear answer can be given to this problem, it may well be that children, not having developed a strong personal impact on the society, would not be thought of in the same way as adults, and would have their graves marked with more conservative, less explicitly descriptive stones."<sup>62</sup> These stones continued to be produced by some carver well into the 1770's, though Ebenezer Soule had left Plympton.<sup>63</sup>

Ebenezer Soule left Plymouth County in 1769.<sup>64</sup> Born in 1710/11, he died in Hinsdale, New Hampshire in 1792. Other stone-carving members of his family, Beza Soule born in 1750, and Coomer Soule, also left Plympton. Both worked a while in Worcester County, which as we will see, is very significant. Beza died in Deerfield, Massachusetts in 1835. Coomer died in Barre, Massachusetts. Since almost all the

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>58</sup> Ludwig, p. 537.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356.

<sup>60</sup> Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, p. 80.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>62</sup> Deetz, Dethlefsen, *Natural History*, p. 36.

<sup>63</sup> Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, p. 82.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

members of the Soule family left Plympton to carve elsewhere, it is a puzzling question as to who carved the simplified medusa stones after ca. 1770. A stylistic analysis shows that the same hand that cut those children's stones also cut a series of cherubs found on Martha's Vineyard.

Ebenezer Soule had a son, Ebenezer Jr., who was born in 1737.<sup>65</sup> Although his family moved about, he carved stones in Plymouth County, as far as we know, until his death in 1835.<sup>66</sup> It appears rather obvious that he was the unknown carver who continued to produce the children's stones of which the Cookes' are examples. Deetz says, "The people of rural Plymouth County developed a preference for the cherub design in the beginning of the 1760's. By this time, there was no simple way for the local carvers to develop their designs into a cherub motif, and the gravestones of this period show that they simply abandoned their older folk symbols and began carving cherubs on their stones."<sup>67</sup> Whoever carved the Cooke stones also carved a series of cherub designs that are very common on Martha's Vineyard. I believe it was Ebenezer Soule Jr. Lacking a model for a cherub, his first emblem was a copy of an already established style.

Soule copied the emblem of William Young (1711-1791). Young was an original stonecutter known as the "thistle carver".<sup>68</sup> He carved an unusual cherub with a partial body, a teardrop-raindrop background, and employed many floral motifs: notably, the thistle. "His distinguishing characteristics are: the way he crosses his A's, always with a point going down; a head with a long nose which is formed by continuing the eyebrows down, and straight mouths, often only a line; and low foreheads."<sup>69</sup> His cherub was

<sup>65</sup> Ludwig, p. 355.

<sup>66</sup> The first U. S. census, for the state of Massachusetts (1790) shows that in "Plympton Town", Plymouth County, one Ebenezer Soule was head of a family. Knowing that Ebenezer Soule, Sr. was living in New Hampshire at the time (he died there two years later) allows us to assume that this was his son, a known stonecutter, and that he was still working in that area.

<sup>67</sup> Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, p. 81.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>68</sup> Forbes, p. 130.



III. 1. The John Mayhew stone, carved by William Mumford.



III. 2. The Stanbridge stone (1730) by James Foster I or II.



III. 3. James Foster II's stone for Joseph N. Allen.



III. 4. A James Foster II cherub from 1733.



III. 5. A death's head by the third Foster.



III. 6. A lovely Lamson cherub of 1704.



III. 7. Another Lamson generation, and another motif.



III. 8. One of Homer's three mistits.



III. 9. From Newport, a John Stevens work.





III. 10. John Just Geyer's cherub for Joseph Mayhew.



III. 11. The "linear treatment" of a death's head.



III. 12. A later Soule Jr. cherub.

copied by some member of the Soule family.

Young carved Ebenezer Soule's prototype cherub in Tatnuck, a small town in Worcester County. He began carving it in the 1740's, long before the Soules removed from Plympton.<sup>70</sup> He undoubtedly worked there



Fig. 4. Ebenezer Soule Jr.'s borrowed cherub.

contemporaneously with them after their migration. Perhaps they knew each other; there is evidence for it. It is quite obvious that the Soules borrowed his emblem for lack of original design. They simplified it using the same "linear treatment" that Ludwig defines. Though Ebenezer Jr. may not have been the first of his family to use Young's design, he did make it quite common in Plymouth County, Cape Cod, and southeastern New England (Fig. 4). The last stone of this type on Martha's Vineyard is the Content Luce (1790) stone

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

in West Tisbury. For other examples of this style, see Guillon, plates 163 and 175.

It is interesting to note that William Young in turn borrowed a design from the Soules which provides more evidence that they exchanged ideas. On the Joseph Craig Jr. stone (1777), Young carved a "medusa" design for the three year old boy.<sup>71</sup>

After the Content Luce stone, the Soule Jr. motif changes on Martha's Vineyard. It seems that Soule's second design may also have been borrowed from the George Allen Sr. design. By flattening out that design and adding a V-shaped hairdo, we can see Ebenezer Soule, Jr.'s second cherub. (Ill. 12). This type is similar to his previous work in all other respects. The plain margin, the double border around the epitaph that reads "In Memory of...", and the lettering which is always the same, are characteristics of Soule Jr.'s stones.

In some instances he played with the shape of the stone, as on the Samuel Kingsbury (1778), in Tower Hill. Almost always there are the words "Memento Mori" above the tympanum or in the frieze, preceded and followed by a small floral scroll piece. The Bayes Norton stone (1785) in the Tower Hill cemetery is a good example of this. The last stone of this type appears on Martha's Vineyard in 1801; the Sarah Kelley stone in Pease's Point Way cemetery. The Bernard and Dorothy Case stone (1793) is an interesting double stone of this type.

Due to the popularity of the John Stevens and George Allen Jr. cherubs, Ebenezer Soule Jr. carved an imitation of them. Using the same eyes, nose, mouth, teardrops, and wings that he always used, he carved a third cherub. The rest of the stone is of course the same. Examples are the Timothy Daggett (1775), Joseph Jenkins (1763), John Smith (1777), and Abigail Jenkins (1763) stones from Tower Hill. It is interesting to compare these gravestones to the Stevens and Allen stones. In general, the designs are all the same. It must have been universally popular at that time not only on the Island, but throughout southern New England.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

## Conclusion

By taking a complete list of the stones from a given cemetery, grouping them in five-year periods, and plotting the number of stones bearing each emblem in each period, we can compare the popularity of the several universal styles. This is known as seriation. The shape of each graph represents the popularity career of the emblem through time.

Seriation has been performed on the Tower Hill, Chilmark, and West Tisbury cemeteries, and on all three combined. In looking at the accompanying graphs, it should be noted that Pease's Point Way burying ground stones have been included with the Tower Hill stones. Pease's Point Way was opened when Tower Hill was filled, and so is just a continuation of the older cemetery.

Looking at the graph of a combination of the three cemeteries (Fig. 5), the rise and fall in popularity of the death's head and cherub is plainly visible. In the individual graphs of the cemeteries (Figs. 6, 7, and 8) we can begin to see the urn and willow motifs creeping into the graveyards of Martha's Vineyard before 1804. After 1804, the urn and willow quickly dominates. The next step is to project this graph against known historical data. The upper grey stripe crossing Fig. 5 represents the period of the Great Awakening.

In the period 1730-34, the death's head emblem reached the peak of its popularity. During these years, a throat distemper raged throughout New England and touched upon Martha's Vineyard. This accounts for the high number of deaths. It has been theorized that the disease helped bring about the Great Awakening. Afraid of a death that was becoming ever more common in those times, many people were caught up in repentance and conversion, lest they die and be sent directly to hell. It is noticeable that the popularity of the death's head emblem falls away rapidly after this period, while the cherub gains. This is good evidence that the rise in popularity of the cherub correlates with a change in orthodox Puritanism. The Great Awakening, begun in 1735 in the Connecticut Valley, must have had a direct influence on Martha's Vineyard. Through the sea lanes, it would have taken little time for the new ideology inspired

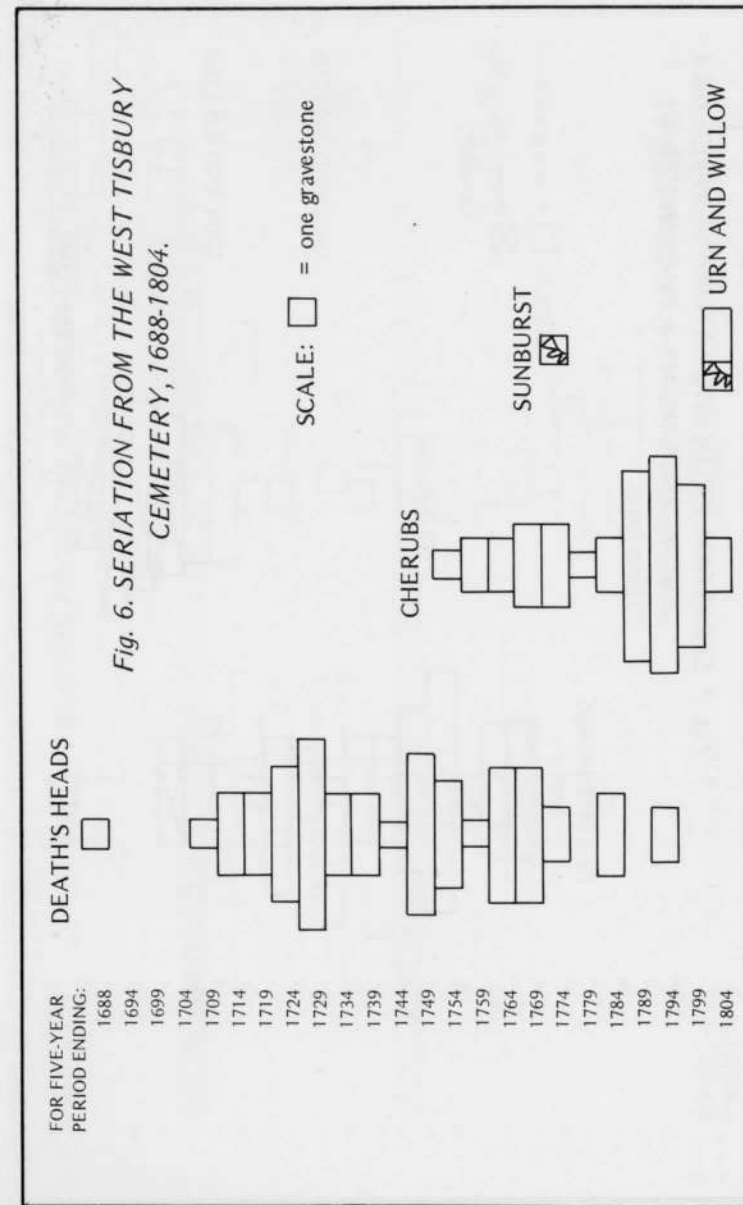
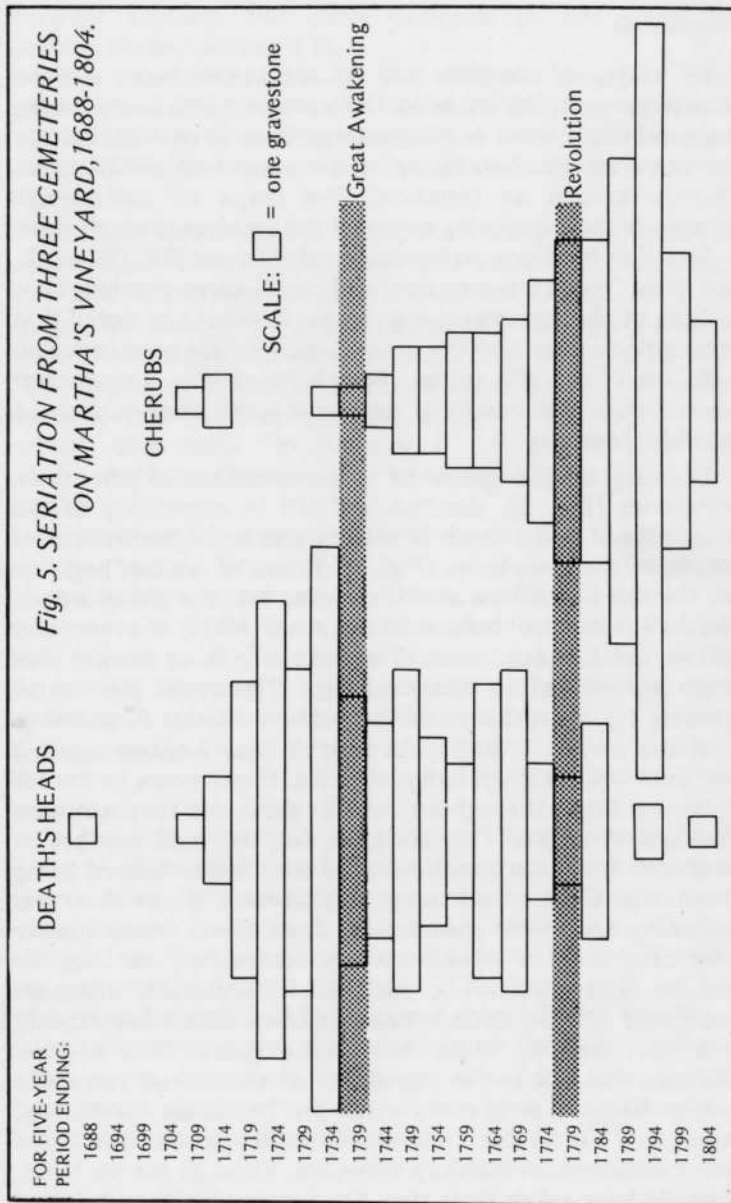




Fig. 7. SERIATION FROM EDGARTOWN'S TOWER HILL  
AND PEASE'S POINT WAY CEMETERIES,  
1688-1804.

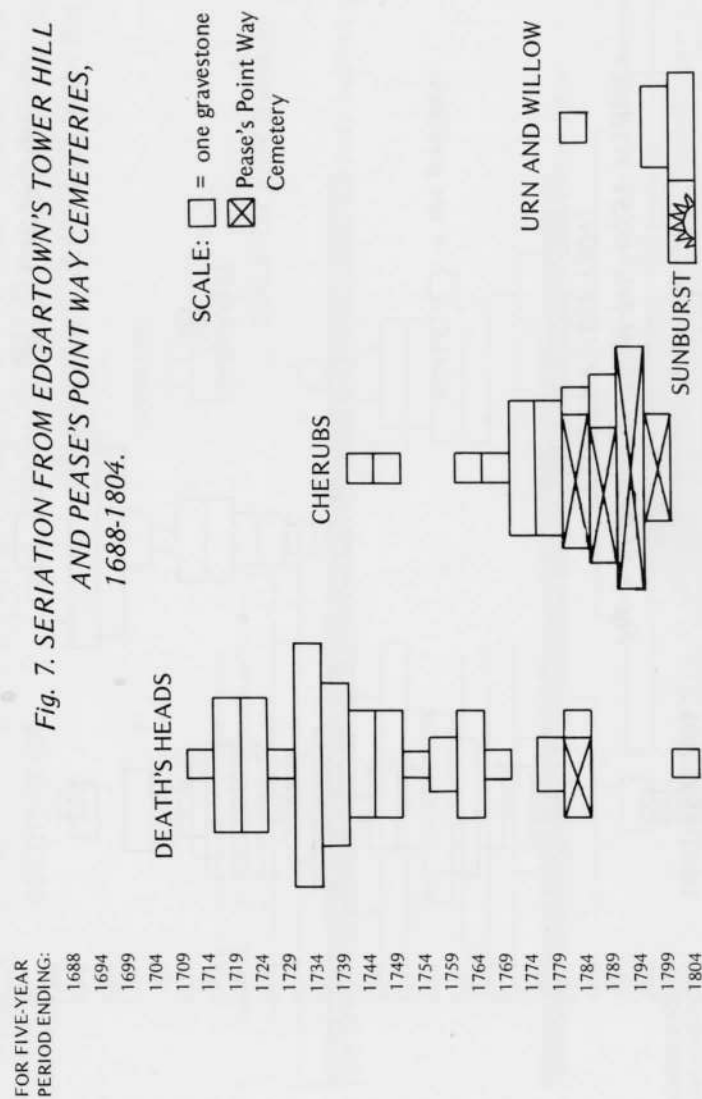
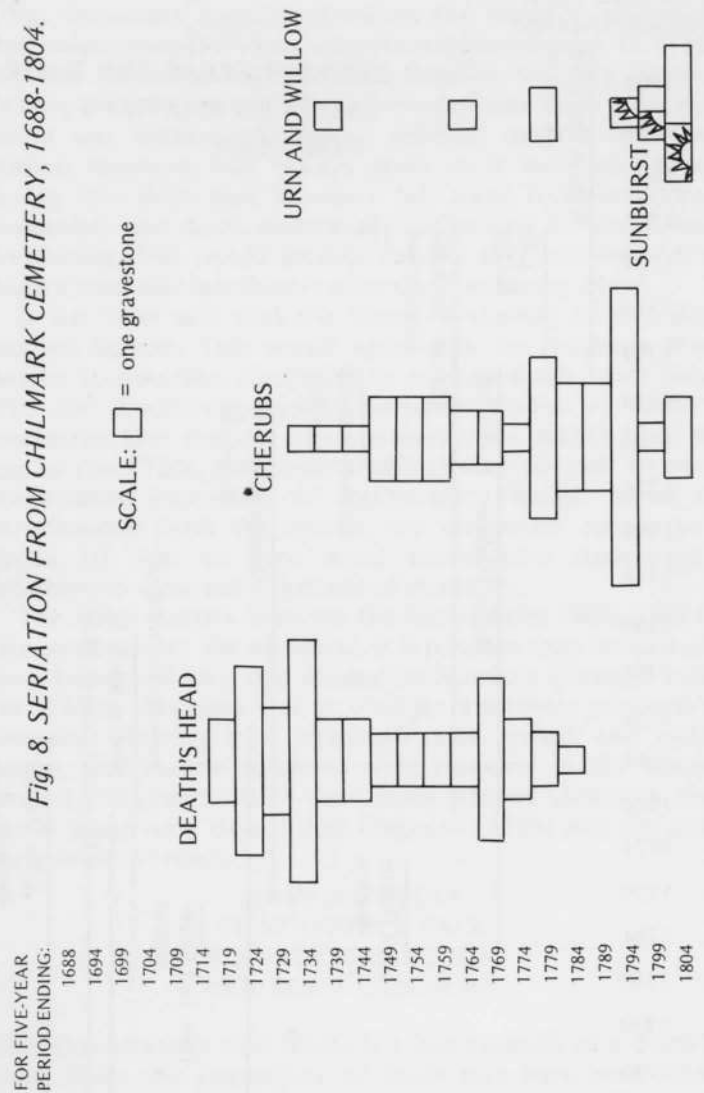
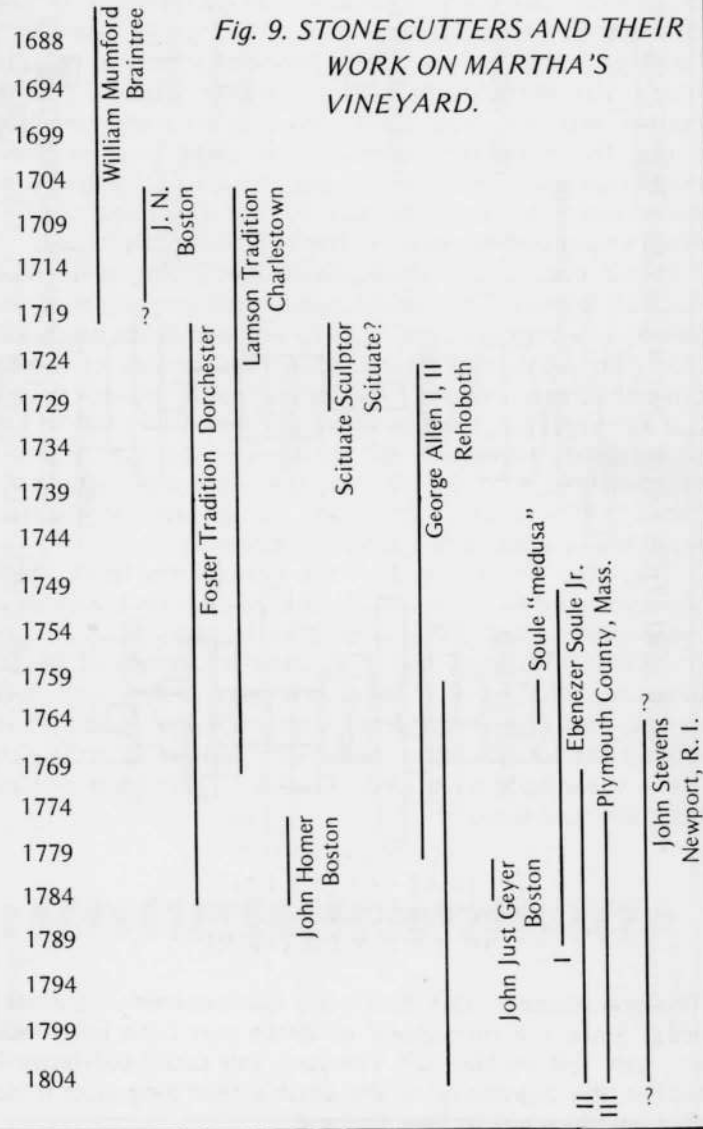


Fig. 8. SERIATION FROM CHILMARK CEMETERY, 1688-1804.



FOR FIVE-YEAR  
PERIOD ENDING:

*Fig. 9. STONE CUTTERS AND THEIR  
WORK ON MARTHA'S  
VINEYARD.*



by the Awakening to make an impression on the Islanders.

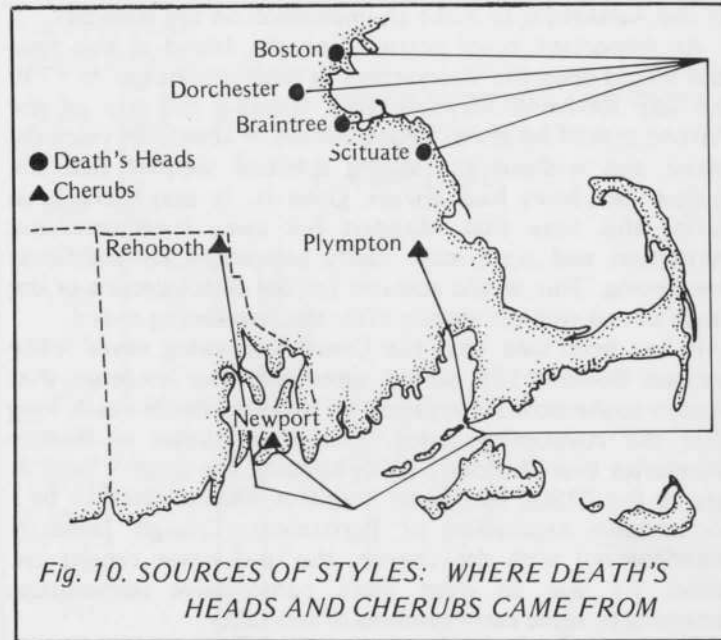
An important event occurred on the Island at this time that would open the Vineyarders to religious change. In 1730 the last Reverend Mayhew died, relaxing the grip of the "strong arm of Mayhew". For a period of about ten years the Island was without the strong spiritual support that the Puritan Mayhews had always given it. It may have been during this time that Islanders fell away from orthodox Puritanism and were more easily influenced by the Great Awakening. This would account for the direct decline of the death's head emblem shortly after the Awakening ended.

It has been said that the Great Awakening never really reached Boston. This would agree with our evidence that Boston stonecutters continued to produce death heads long after the Awakening faded. (Seriation studies of Boston cemeteries bear this out.) By continuing the death's head as late as the 1780s, the Foster tradition showed itself to be a conservative expression of Puritanism. Though James II experimented with the cherub, the idea never caught on. James III was an even more conservative stonecutter, returning to some early symbols of mortality.

The latest death's head on the Island dates 1800. This is late compared to the mainland. It is possible that, because of the whaling industry that existed on Martha's Vineyard into the 1860s, Islanders had a stronger awareness of death's presence. Whaling men frequently met violent and early deaths, and marine accidents were common in the shoals around the Island. There were many widows caused by the sea in those early days. Lydia Claghorn (1799) was one and her gravestone reads:

JOHN and LYDIA  
THAT LOVELY PAIR  
A WHALE KILLED HIM  
HER BODY LIES HERE

This gravestone in Oak Bluffs is a late example of a death's head. Since the immediacy of death may have been more intensely felt on Martha's Vineyard, this could satisfactorily explain the popularity of the death's head long after it had died out elsewhere in New England.



The death's head had fully given way to the cherub shortly after the Revolutionary War. This is the second grey stripe on Fig. 5. The death's head unexpectedly gains in numbers during the period 1780-84, but this is easily explained. During the war years, trade between Boston and Martha's Vineyard was minimal. Death's heads had always come from that area, and because of limited shipping, they became hard to obtain. This is shown by the small bar for the period 1775-1779. After the war, Vineyarders again had free access to Boston stonecutters, and obviously renewed their patronage of those markets. However, during this brief period, many families may have turned to new markets (Figs. 9 and 10). Newport was just becoming an important coastal trade center. We find most cherubs come from the south shore of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The quick rise in popularity of the cherub after 1780 may reflect a change in trade patterns as Martha's Vineyard shifted away from Boston as a market center.

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# Documents

Jeremiah Pease (1792 - 1857) lived in Edgartown and was a man of many occupations, as was often the case during that period. He was a Customs House officer, a light keeper, a surveyor, a bone setter, and a deeply religious man who became an early convert to Methodism. Caught up in the religious upheaval taking place on the Vineyard, he left the established Congregational church to become an exhorter for Methodism and was one of the founders of the Wesleyan Grove Camp Meeting, in which he was the Chorister and a tent master for many years.

His faithful entries in a daily journal provide one of the best records of events in Vineyard life during the years before any newspaper was published. Gale Huntington, editor of this diary, explains that "the diary is important historically for a number of reasons, chief among which, perhaps, is the fact that it was kept exactly at the time when the Vineyard was just entering upon the period of its greatest whaling prosperity."

Pease kept his journal in a series of notebooks. When one was filled, he simply started a fresh one with no attempt at matching the new book with the arrival of a new year. The following installment is from the same notebook we excerpted in our November 1978 issue and therefore the footnote numbering is consecutive.

*The Intelligencer* began publishing these excerpts in November 1974, Vol. 16, No. 2.

## January 1839

14th. Wind W to NNE. Rains, hails and snows a little. Went to the south division of the New Purchase to survey land. Returned on account of the weather.

18th. Wind SW. Pleasant. Hauled up the Revenue Boat.

23rd. Wind NNW. Snows and extremely cold at night. Revenue Cutter *Vigilant* arrives.

24th. Wind WNW. Cold. P.M. moderate. Revenue Cutter *McLane* arrives. Ice down below the Light House prevents the *McLane* from coming to the place where she usually anchors.

25th. Wind SSW. Cutter *Vigilant* and *McLane* sail on a cruise.

26th. Wind ESE. Ice all breaks up. A new opening breaks out in the South Beach. Harbour clears. Gale at night.

27th. Wind SW. Went to Pohogonut. Attended meeting. Returned evening. Br. Landers went with me.

## February 1839

5th. Wind N. Ice makes very fast this night.

25th. Wind ENE. Miss Betsy Loper, daughter of Amos Loper dies of a consumption. She died a very happy death having experienced a change of heart during her last illness. She died a little before 12 o'clock last night, aged 15 years.

26th. Wind E. Light. Funeral of Miss Loper at the Congregational Meetinghouse. Service by Rev'ds Mr.

Thomas, Kent and Hall. There was a simultaneous temperance meeting being held at the Methodist Meetinghouse this evening.

27th. Wind SW. Surveyed land for W. King and others. This being the estate of Joseph Ripley deceased.

28th. Wind ENE. Foggy. Launched the Revenue Boat. Snows at night.

## March 1839

2nd. Wind NW. Cold. Mrs. Betsy Ripley dies. Wife of F. R. Ripley.

3rd. Wind E. To NW. Cold. Snows A.M. P.M. went to Pohogonut. Attended meeting at Br. Josiah Smith's. Br. Munro went with me. Returned at evening. Funeral of Mrs. Ripley.

6th. Wind SW. Engaged in surveying land for E. Bradley. Did not attend class at East Side Holmes Hole.

11th. Wind NW. Cutters *Vigilant* and *McLane* arrive. Prayer meeting at our house this evening.

14th. Wind SE. to SW. Rainy. A brig lately bought for a whaler arrives from New York. William receives a commission as a 3rd lieutenant in the Revenue Cutter Service and is directed to report himself to the Collector at Washington D. C. to be attached to the *Galatan*.<sup>8</sup>

17th. Wind S. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meetings. Br. A. Athearn and Br. B. Chase from the West Side were there.

<sup>8</sup> A number of William's diaries written while in the service are in the Society's archives.

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18th. Wind SW. Pleasant. Schooner *Adventure* arrives. The Captain being unwell.

29th. Wind NW to E. Light. Went to Holmes Hole with William. He takes passage in the Steam Boat for New Bedford being bound to Wilmington Delaware to join the Cutter *Gallatin*. God grant to bless the dear child. Br. Sherman leaves for Nantucket.

## April 1839.

1st. Wind NNW. Engaged at the Custom House. Watched with Mrs. Nancy Swift.

2nd. Wind NE. Cold. Fresh wind. Mrs. Nancy Swift dies.

4th. Wind NE to S. Pleasant. Funeral of Mrs. Swift. Service by Rev'ds Thomas and Hall. She died a triumphant death having been a pious woman for several years. Foggy at night.

8th. Wind N to E. "Life is a span a fleeting hour."

9th. Wind NE to SW. 89 vessels lying in the harbour today most of which sail this afternoon for eastern ports.

10th. Wind SSW. Attended County Temperance Meeting at Tisbury. Did not attend Class meeting at East Side Holmes Hole on account of bringing Br. Staples to Holmes Hole which made me too late.

13th. Wind NE. Gale with rain. Ship *Peru*, Brown, arrives in Edgartown from the Pacific Ocean.

17th. Wind NE. Went to New Bedford in Sloop *Hero*. Had a heavy gale with

rain and snow. Split the jib but arrived safely through divine mercy.

18th. Wind NW. Went from New Bedford to New Port.

19th. Wind SW. Returned from New Port via Fall River.

20th. Wind NE to SE. Returned home in the Packet *Brown* (?)

22nd. Engaged in the Custom House all day.

29th. Wind NE. Went to New Bedford.

30th. Wind SW to S. Went to Taunton and returned home via New Bedford.

#### May 1839.

6th. Wind NE. Went to Barnstable via Woods Hole. Arrived there at 5.

7th. Wind NE. Attended Court. Judge Marcus Morton presides.

9th. Wind S. Light. The attorney for Swasey agrees to withdraw their suit and refer it to men.<sup>9</sup> Returned to Woods Hole.

10th. Wind ENE. Returned home. Ship *George* and *Mary*, Edwin Coffin master arrives from the Pacific Ocean with 3,000 bbls of sperm oil worth \$1.08 a gallon.

11th. Wind S. Engaged in weighing whalebone for Ship *Almira*.

13th. Wind S. Engaged in planting corn.

14th. Wind N to S. Light. Mr. H. Crosby commenced digging my well. Digs to water this day.

23rd. Wind NE. Went to West Side

<sup>9</sup> This must mean that the case against Jeremiah would be arbitrated.

Holmes Hole to see Widow Polly Norton. Returned at evening.

26th. Wind W. Light breeze. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meetings. Br. Lumber preached. Br. S. Athearn was there. Returned at evening.

27th. Wind S. Schooner arrives from a fishing cruise. Capt. John D. Wilcox formerly of Stonington was killed this morning while heaving up the anchor on said schooner. He was buried here in the same grave the unfortunate George Hobbs was buried who was accidentally shot on his passage from Camden or Thomaston to New York, mentioned in the former part of this book. Capt. Wilcox's funeral was attended this day at about 6 P.M. in the old Congregational Meetinghouse. Service by Rev'd Asa Kent. He left a widow, several children and an aged father to mourn his sudden death. His father was in the vessel at the time of his death.

28th. Wind SW to S. Rains. Eliza and myself rode to C.N. (?) Returned at 3 hours (?)

#### June 1839.

6th. Wind SW. Engaged surveying land for Daniel S. Vincent.

10th. Wind W. Went to North Shore to attend the funeral of Tristram Look. Did not arrive in time to attend.

12th. Wind NW. Went to East Side Holmes Hole to set the arm of Miss Rhoda Norton, daughter of Capt. Shubael Norton, she having fallen from a horse and broken same.

13th. Wind S. Went to East Side Holmes Hole to see the young woman above mentioned.

14th. Wind SW. Went to Pohogonut with my wife and Hannah Smith on a visit and returned the same afternoon.<sup>10</sup>

15th. Wind S to NW. Rains. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meeting and the wedding at Mr. James Butler's. His daughter Mary is married to Mr. James Beetle this day.

17th. Wind SW. Went to West Side Holmes Hole to survey land for Br. Charles G. Smith and the heirs of Capt. Peter West deceased. Ran the line and returned at evening.

19th. Wind SW. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended class meeting and visited the young woman with the broken arm. Returned at night.

23rd. Wind WSW. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meeting there and at 5 P.M. at the schoolhouse near Ichabod Norton Esq's. Sister D. Fisher went with me. Visited the young woman with the broken arm at evening.

24th. Wind SW. Engaged at the Custom House.

25th. Wind SW. Surveyed land for T. Jernegan and D.S. Vincent. \$1 to each.

27th. Wind SW. Visited Widow R. Norton with Eliza and the young woman with the broken arm.

28th. Wind ESE. Rains. Engaged at the

<sup>10</sup> So at this time it looks as though Hannah Smith was living in Edgartown village and not at her brother's at Pohogonut.

Custom House. Br. Ely the preacher stationed here this year arrived yesterday.

#### July 1839.

4th. Wind SW. Mowed the meadow to the north of the barn.

5th. Wind E and variable. A little rain. Engaged making fence.

7th. Wind SSW. Fresh breeze. Attended meetings at East Side Holmes Hole. Visited the young woman with the broken arm.<sup>11</sup>

8th. Wind SW. U.S. Revenue Cutter *McLane*, Capt. Childs arrives and sails with the Collector to visit Light Houses. Engaged at the Custom House.

9th. Wind SW. Barzilla Luce, son of George Luce of Holmes Hole breaks his arm and came to me to have it set.

10th. Wind SW. Went to Holmes Hole to see the lad's arm which I set yesterday.

11th. Wind SW. Rains. Br. J.C. Bonteceau and wife visit us being here on a visit and being unwell.

20th. Wind SW. Got in all my hay and oats.

21st. Wind SW. Rains a little. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meetings and at the schoolhouse at Ichabod Norton's at 6 o'clock. Returned at evening. Revenue Cutter *Vigilant* arrives.

<sup>11</sup> That must have been a very bad break. Or else Jeremiah was working on her in his capacity of exhorter. Or is it possible that he just liked to go to see her?

29th. Set out for New York. Arrived at New Bedford.<sup>12</sup>

31st. Set out for New York in the Steamboat *Norwich*.

#### August 1839.

1st. Arrived at New York. Thence arrived at Rye at 7 o'clock P.M.<sup>13</sup>

2nd. Returned to New York. Thence set out for New Port.

3rd. Arrived at New Port about 5 A.M. Thence set out for New Bedford about 1 o'clock P.M.

4th. Wind SW. Light. Arrived home at 5 o'clock P. M. too late to attend meeting at East Side Holmes Hole.

13th. Wind SW. Erected a tent at the Camp Ground, East Side, Holmes Hole.<sup>14</sup>

14th. Wind SSW. Went to Camp Meeting. Stayed there until the 16th. Returned home and stayed a few hours and then returned to the Camp Meeting and stayed until the 19th when the Camp Meeting breaks up. Had an interesting meeting. Stormy most of the time.

<sup>12</sup> The wind and weather are not mentioned until August 4th when Jeremiah returns to the Vineyard.

<sup>13</sup> It would be nice if Jeremiah could have given us the reason for this trip to New York and Rye.

<sup>14</sup> In previous years Jeremiah has said the Camp Ground was at East Chop. Actually it seems always to have been exactly where it is today, in what was then William Butler's wood lot. The actual village of East Side Holmes Hole (Eastville) was in the general area of where the Martha's Vineyard Hospital now stands.

20th. Wind SW. Pleasant. Cutter *Hamilton*, Capt. Sturgis arrived yesterday and sails today with the Collector to visit Nantucket Light Houses.

21st. Wind SW. Br. John Adams<sup>15</sup> preaches in the Methodist Meeting House he having come from New Hampshire to visit his bretheren here and to attend the Camp Meeting. He arrived on the 13th with William who visits us from the Cutter *Wolcott*, New London station.

23rd. Wind SW. The Collector arrives from visiting the Nantucket Light Houses.

26th. Wind SE. Attended a meeting at evening at Br. S. Davis'. Came home sick.

27th. Wind SE. Very sick. Doctor attends me four or five times a day.

30th. Wind NE. Gale. Severe storm. Somewhat relieved from pain. Am better.

31st. Wind SW. Pleasant. Remain better.

#### September 1839.

1st. Wind SW. My health is much better but not able to attend meeting. Being the first Sabbath that I have been detained at home on account of illness for a number of years.

2nd. Wind SW. Walked out as far as the doctor's.

<sup>15</sup> This was Reformation John Adams the great evangelist who was really responsible for getting the Methodist Reformation started on the Vineyard.

6th. Wind SW. The new Baptist Meeting House is dedicated today. Mr. John Kelly dies at about 1 o'clock A.E. 25 leaving a wife and one child.

7th. Wind SW. Funeral of Mr. Kelly at the new Baptist Meeting House. Service by Rev'ds Mr. Hall, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Ely. My health through divine mercy is such that I was able to attend meeting yesterday and meeting today. Br. Joseph Linton visits us today.

8th. Wind SSW. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meeting Returned at P.M. Storm. Rains very much. Br. Linton went with me.

9th. Wind SW. Pleasant. William leaves town for New London to join the Cutter *Wolcott*.

14th. Wind SW. Capt. Nonus of the United States Revenue Service visits us with his wife and five little boys they having taken passage in the Brig (?), Capt. (?) of Wilmington Delaware for Eastport. The Brig is on shore at Cape Poge. Capt. Nonus and family came up in the *Vigilant's* boat. They return on board at night the brig having got off.

19th. Wind SW. Went to New Bedford in Sloop *Vineyard*. Ship *Splendid* Capt. Jason Luce arrives from the Pacific Ocean with 2,100 bbls of oil, 500 of which is whale the rest sperm.

20th. Wind SW. Pleasant. Returned home. The Cutter *Vigilant* sails for New Port.

23rd. Wind SW. Pleasant. Engaged at the Custom House.

#### October 1839.

20th. Wind SW. Ship *Kingston*, Coffin, arrives from the Pacific Ocean.

21st. Wind SW. Foggy. Went to Holmes Hole to see Capt. C. West.

22nd. Wind SW. Surveyed land at Tashmoo for Capt. C. West.

#### November 1839.

6th. Wind S to SW. Pleasant. This day Isabella is married to Mr. S.C. Wimpenny. The marriage ceremony is performed by Rev'd Thomas Ely. May God grant this union to be a blessing to both.

10th. Wind NE. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meetings. Br. Willard's daughter goes. Returned at night.

11th. Wind NE. Stormy. Deacon Samuel Wheldon's wife dies suddenly.

13th. Wind NE. Funeral of Mrs. Wheldon. Service by Rev'ds Hall, Ely and Thomas.

18th. Wind NW. Cold. Fresh breeze. Set out for New Bedford. Arrived there at about 3 o'clock P.M.

19th. Wind NW. Went to New Port.

20th. Wind NW. Went to Providence and from there to Boston, and thence to Cambridge and back to Boston.<sup>16</sup>

21st. Wind NW. Returned from Boston to New Bedford. Waited there until the 23rd for a passage.

23rd. Wind NE. Returned home.

<sup>16</sup> Probably all this travelling was in connection with Jeremiah's Custom House duties. But he might have told us so.



26th. Wind NW. Fresh breeze. Ship *Alexander Barclay*, Capt. C. Norton arrives from Bremen.<sup>17</sup>

27th. Wind NE. Light. Some sailors from the Ship *Barclay*<sup>18</sup> of Nantucket which is fitting out for the Pacific Ocean stole the Revenue Boat some time during the night and went to Woodses Hole and left her. My son Joseph went after her and brought her home being damaged in hull and rigging.

29th. Wind NW. Hauled up the Revenue Boat.

#### December 1839.

13th. Wind NW. Gale. Ship *Washington* of Nantucket arrives from the Pacific Ocean.

15th. Wind NE to E. Gale. Rain and high tide. Sunday. Storm. Did not go to Holmes Hole. Wind dies away at P.M.

16th. Wind NE to N. Br. Ariel Norton dies suddenly.

22nd. Wind NNE. Stormy. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meeting. Returned to attend the funeral of Br. Ariel Norton.

25th. Wind NNW. Went to Nantucket in Sloop *Teaser* on business of the Custom House.

26th. Wind NNW. Returned in Ship

*Catawba* towed over by the Steam Boat.

28th. Wind NE. Heavy gale. Very high tide. Damaged the pier and breakwater at this harbour very much.

30th. Wind NW. Very cold. Makes ice in the harbour.

31st. Wind N. Cold. A very stormy month.

#### January 1840.

12th. Wind N to NE. Very cold. The Harbour is frozen over. During this time went to East Side Holmes Hole.

16th. Wind NW. Cold. Some snow on the ground. Ship *Henry* of Nantucket arrives.

24th. Wind NNW to W. Went to East Chop to Brig *Ceylon*, Capt. J. Trott, from St. Thomas on shore.

26th. Wind NW. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meeting. Capt. Trott attended and took an active part in the meeting.

30th. Wind SSE. Rain, foggy. Went to Holmes Hole on business of the Custom House.

31st. Wind WNW. Pleasant for winter.

Edited by  
GALE HUNTINGTON

<sup>17</sup> The *Alexander Barclay* has just made a successful whaling voyage with an American crew for a German firm. (See Jared Jernegan's autobiography in the Society's archives.)

<sup>18</sup> Not the *Alexander Barclay*.

## Books

*They Ploughed the Seas: Profiles of Azorean Master Mariners*, by Pat Amaral. Valkyrie Press, Inc., St. Petersburg, Fla. 190 pp. \$12.95.

The maritime history of south-eastern New England is replete with studies of the Yankee sailor whose hardiness and courage helped to form the American nation. In her volume Mrs. Amaral has successfully shown the effect that the Portuguese had in the development of our nation by writing a series of 74 vignettes of Azorean master mariners who sailed from ports along the southern New England shore. Their contribution, whether it be chasing whales or sailing coasters along the Atlantic coast, is intimately a part of the Yankee maritime experience.

Each of the profiles attempts to briefly summarize the individual's life. Important genealogical information on each man is given. Dates and places of birth, marriage and death are given if known. Because the author has made great use of family records and interviews with descendants of many of the subjects, a great deal of anecdotal and personal history is included. Facts and figures which could not have been culled from printed or manuscript sources have been gathered by this personal correspondence to create a vivid picture of the lives of these men. Following most of the biographies is a list of voyages including the name of

the ship, dates and places of departure and return and results of the voyage if it went whaling.

The time span of the profiles covers almost 200 years; from Joseph Dias of Vineyard Haven (born 1782) to present day Captain Richard P. Faria. The father of Joseph Dias Sr. was a patriot during the American Revolution who was captured and confined aboard the infamous English prison ship *Jersey*. Ironically his son also fought the English during the War of 1812, was captured and imprisoned at Dartmoor Prison, also known principally for its inhumane conditions. Toward the latter half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century Azorean seamen dominated the ranks of officers on whaleships. Epitomizing this was Nicholas R. Viera who rose from seaman to master of the bark *Canton* in 1901. As first mate of the *Canton* from 1899-1900, Mrs. Amaral shows his break down of wages based on the "lay" system and the fact he received \$1,800 for his 15 months of whaling. The lay system or payment to crew members based solely on a percentage of the voyage receipts was used throughout the history of the industry. This type of information has been interwoven into the biographies to give added meaning to the life and times of the men.

Mrs. Amaral's work is as pioneering as the men she writes about. While the book has a number of typographical flaws and at times the biographies repeat themselves in their explanatory paragraphs, research in this area of New England history is long overdue. This work only scratches the surface



of the importance the Portuguese have had in the development of Southeastern New England including Cape Cod and the Islands. It is therefore recommended reading not only for those interested in our New England heritage but also for those specifically researching the Portuguese American.

BRUCE BARNES

Boston

## News

The U. S. Department of the Interior recently notified the Oak Bluffs Camp Meeting Association and campground cottage owners that their houses and grounds are now being considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. It is one of the final steps: the Massachusetts Historic Commission has already reviewed the nomination forms submitted by the Oak Bluffs Historic Survey and has passed them on to the appropriate federal agencies.

An excerpt from the letter of notice from William J. Murtagh, Keeper of the National Register: "Listing in the National Register of Historic Places makes property owners eligible for federal grants-in-aid for preservation. . . provides limited protection from federally assisted projects on listed resources. . . and makes owners who rehabilitate certified historic properties used for income-producing purposes eligible for tax benefits. . ."

Among the criteria used for evaluation of a site or building are association with significant events or people in history, relation to broad patterns in American history, unique design or construction, and potential for yielding important new historical information.

The nomination process usually takes well more than a year to complete, and the process has been somewhat slowed by the flurry of applications which has recently descended on the authorities. However, properties which are endangered are given higher priority.

The demand for Gale Huntington's unique brand of historical preservation continues. The historian and editor-emeritus of *The Intelligencer* has been invited to perform at Wesleyan College in Middletown, Connecticut, on July 14 to 16, this year.

Mr. Huntington's store of whaling songs, sea songs and traditional songs numbers in the hundreds. He has recorded some of them for Folkways Records and has published two books, *Songs the Whalemens Sang* and *Folksongs from Martha's Vineyard*. He is currently working on a sequel to the whaling song book. It is tentatively titled *The Gam*. For those who are not knowledgeable in whaling lore, a gam is the social time that the whalers in the Pacific enjoyed when they were becalmed. The whalemens would row from ship to ship, exchanging news, stories and, most of all, songs.

## Director's Report

In our efforts to preserve the Island's history, we are always aware of the need to make information available to researchers and to the general public. We do this in a number of ways including museum displays and the proper cataloging of our materials. One great step forward this winter has been the work of Stan Lair, who has been making prints of our glass photographic plates. When this work is completed, we will put the prints in albums, making our photographic collections more accessible to researchers.

The oral history archives at the Society received a tremendous boost at Christmas time when Nancy Hamilton donated all the sound recordings that were used for the production of the movie "This is Our Island." Her gift includes narration by Katharine Cornell and many interviews with Vineyarders. It is a valuable addition to the preservation of Vineyard history.

Another substantial donation to the Society came in the form of several boxes of *Wildflowers of Martha's Vineyard*, given to us by the author Nelson Coon, who wanted to reprint his book while at the same time doing something for the society. As most members know, Mr. Coon is a former president of the Society and has served for many years as a member of our Council.

In November I attended the annual meeting of the New England Conference of the American Association of Museums in Newport. Our insular location makes it difficult for us to attend such events, but occasionally it is useful to make direct contact with the rest of the museum world, and the meeting in Newport was a particularly interesting one with a number of workshops designed to help with the needs of small museums. At the banquet, the featured speaker was Senator Claiborne Pell, who spoke on the difficulties of raising funds for the humanities during unsettled economic periods.

Many of our members have sent in their 1979 membership

dues, and we are very pleased with the large number of people who have included donations to the Preservation Fund. You probably have noticed this year that we included your membership card with the bill. This procedure will save us the time and expense (over \$100 in postage alone) of sending out these cards after receiving payment. Possibly we can use these savings to buy Mrs. Crossman a new typewriter so that we can retire the one that could very well have been used to type the minutes of our Society's first meeting back in 1922!

This issue of *The Intelligencer* is the last one under the editorship of George W. Adams, who has left the Vineyard to resume his career in marine architecture. During the year that he edited the magazine many major changes were made in the format and typography, improving it greatly. The Society is grateful for the work he has done and we will miss him. Arthur R. Railton of Edgartown and Chilmark has agreed to take over the position and we welcome him.

THOMAS E. NORTON,  
Director

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THOMAS E. NORTON,  
Director

## Some Publications

*The Mammals of Martha's Vineyard* by Allan R. Keith. Illustrated, paper. \$1.25, \$0.40 postage.

*People To Remember* by Dionis Coffin Riggs. Illustrated, paper. \$4.95, \$0.75 postage.

*The Heath Hen's Journey to Extinction* by Henry Beetle Hough. Illustrated, paper. \$1.00, \$0.40 postage.

*The Fishes of Martha's Vineyard* by Joseph B. Elvin. With 36 illustrations of fishes by Will Huntington. Paper. \$1.25, \$0.40 postage.

*The History of Martha's Vineyard* by Charles Edward Banks. A new edition. Indices, illustrations, three volumes. Cloth. \$30.00, \$2.00 postage.

*A Vineyard Sampler* by Dorothy Cottle Poole. Illustrated, paper. \$10.00, \$1.00 postage.

*"Cap'n George Fred" Himself.* The autobiography of Captain George Fred Tilton of Chilmark. A new edition. Cloth. \$6.50, \$1.00 postage.

*Wild Flowers of Martha's Vineyard* by Nelson Coon. Illustrated, paper. \$3.95, \$0.75 postage.

*An Introduction To Martha's Vineyard* by Gale Huntington. Illustrated, paper. A new edition. \$3.95, \$0.75 postage.

*A New Vineyard* by Dorothy Cottle Poole. Illustrated, cloth. \$12.95, \$1.00 postage.

*Shipwrecks on Martha's Vineyard* by Dorothy Scoville. Paper. \$3.00, \$0.75 postage.

*Martha's Vineyard: The Story of Its Towns* by Henry Franklin Norton. Illustrated, paper. \$6.96, \$0.75 postage.