



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 20, NO. 4

MAY 1979



The Joseph Norton house Cooke and School Streets

Edgartown: A Walking Tour

by JOY RYAN

Island Architecture

by POLLY BURROUGHS

Yesterday's Shops

A Photo Essay

Edgartown in 1836: As Described

by an "Inexperienced Clergyman"

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The articles in The Intelligencer do not represent a consensus of beliefs, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Society.

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The Dukes County Historical Society was founded in 1922 to preserve the history of Dukes County for the public benefit.

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.

The Society is a nonprofit institution supported entirely by membership dues, gifts, and bequests. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Edgartown in 1836: As Described by an "Inexperienced Clergyman"

After the death on July 18, 1827, of the famed Rev. Joseph "Parson" Thaxter, regular services at the Edgartown Meetinghouse were suspended and "for nine years there was only occasional supply of the pulpit by traveling or missionary preachers. In 1836, the Rev. Samuel A. Devens, a Unitarian clergyman, held services for a while, and wrote some interesting descriptive letters containing his observations of this place and the island as a whole."¹

Those letters were first published as a regular series in the *Christian Register* during the years 1836 and 1837. Shortly afterwards, the letters were "revised with considerable care" and published in book form under the title, *Sketches of Martha's Vineyard and Other Reminiscences of Travel at Home, etc.*

Modestly, the author does not list his name on the title page, the byline being merely "By an inexperienced clergyman." The brief preface, however, is signed, disclosing the author to be Samuel Adams Devens.

The following excerpts from the book were selected by the Editor as relevant to this issue of the *Intelligencer*:

¹ Charles Edward Banks, *The History of Martha's Vineyard*. Boston, 1897. Reprint, The Dukes County Historical Society, 1946. Vol. 2, p. 162.

SAMUEL ADAMS DEVENS was a young Unitarian supply minister who filled in frequently at the Edgartown pulpit after the death of Parson Thaxter. We know little about him except that, in his own words in the book's preface, he did "not profess to be a great traveler," and that "his object has been to add something to the enjoyment, if not the improvement of his readers, and, to accomplish this end, he has been willing to expose himself to the charge of an itch for authorship."

"The harbor of E. is almost entirely protected from winds and is one of the best in the world. A Northwester drove in something like an hundred sail a few weeks since. Though the wind blew a hurricane, and every thing on land shook as with the palsy, the surface of the bay was but little agitated and the vessels lay as tranquil as sea-birds in a calm. Next day the weather changed, and the scene I can never forget. The wind coming from the opposite quarter, the clouds passed off and the sun came down upon the waters bright and beautiful. The craft, small and great, uplifted their silver sails, and with a good breeze made out to sea in almost regular succession. For an hour to two they might be counted a few hundred rods apart, cleaving the deep blue waves with their dashing prows. At length they broke from the line and dispersed in all directions upon the boundless ocean.

"The harbor is so much superior to that of Nantucket, that the whale-ships belonging to the latter are obliged to resort to it to prepare for their voyages, and, I believe, to unlade when they return. Lighters carrying their outfits or return-freights, run between the islands."²

"The wonder has been expressed that the Islanders do not engage in the whale fishery. Ignorance is apt to wonder. The truth is, they *are* engaged in it, and own eight or nine first-rate ships. They were engaged in it before the revolutionary war, to the amount of fifteen or sixteen sail, but owing to some depressing losses occasioned by the war it was given up. I am informed that eighty captains of whaling ships belong to Edgartown. They sail mostly from N. Bedford and are esteemed the most skillful and trust-worthy that can be found. It has been recently the same as asserted in some of the public prints, that the inhabitants are unenterprising. This is also far from the truth. Ample evidence to the contrary is contained in what has just been stated. If more evidence is needed, we might add, that out of a population in Edgartown of fifteen hundred, (which number comprises all ages, *male and female*,) about three hundred of those who have arrived at maturity — the most

² Samuel Adams Devens, *Sketches of Martha's Vineyard*. Boston: James Munroe & Co., 1838, pp. 5-6.

active and vigorous, the bone and muscle of the community are, I may say, ever abroad and in all quarters of the globe: and further that, out of a population of three thousand on the island, about five or six hundred cannot be said to have a home upon the land, but go down and not only go down, but live upon the sea in ships and do business, most venturous business, upon the great waters."³

"The length of the village is the common promenade. A favorite resort is the Breakwater, erected by the general government at an expense of seven thousand dollars. It is built very strong of plank and timber, and runs an eighth of a mile into the Bay. It is wider than the foot walks of our bridges and being railed in, much resembles them. At its extremity is a small dwelling and light-house, conjoined. It is of the purest white and glistens beautifully in the clear beams of the setting sun. The view, from this point, of the lively happy village reposing so quietly along the shore, and of the calm blue Bay outspread on either side, is uncommonly pleasing. The termination of an afternoon's ramble generally found me fastened to this attractive spot."⁴

"There are no signs of intemperance in Edgartown. None are licensed to sell spirit, and all that is used is bought and sold secretly. Beer, cider, and wine are rarely seen. The inhabitants are remarkable for a generous, upright, peaceable, and religious character. Only three cases of litigation have gone to the Jury in the space of five years. Of course there is little or nothing for lawyers to feed upon. Knitting was a very general occupation some thirty years since. We are informed ... that 15,000 pairs of stockings, 3,000 mittens, and 600 wigs for seamen were knit annually. It is far from being so now. The good old times rise in judgment against the sad degeneracy of the present, and condemn them. It used to be said that when you reached Cape Poge light (which is near the North extremity of Chappaquiddick Island and several

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19. One can still enjoy this "uncommonly pleasing" view by walking out to the lighthouse.

miles from the Vineyard) you could hear the knitting needles at Edgartown. It is not so now, and many an ancient and discreet personage is found to lament that the fingers of the fair are bewitched to thrum the keys of that modern notion and arrant time-killer, — the Piano. If they could only talk Latin, how feelingly they would exclaim, O tempora — O mores.”⁵

“The oldest church in Edgartown is that consecrated by the long and faithful ministry of Mr. Thaxter. He was of the liberal school in Theology, was pastor of the Society about forty-seven years, and lived to be silvered over with age, not being gathered to his fathers until he had reached the patriarchal period of more than four score years. . . . It was built in 1768. The style of architecture — to frame a new order — is Quaker. It is situated a little out of the village⁶ and is the first object, when approaching it, that attracts attention. It is of large dimensions and without a steeple. No part is painted but the roof, which is of brick color. Of course with its broad paintless sides, relieved only by its reddish roof, it has a somewhat grave and sombre aspect.

“The interior of the Church accords well with the exterior. All is simple and plain — in the taste of the Puritans. The front of the galleries and pulpit, with the sounding-board above, and the Deacons’ seats below, are painted light blue. There is nought else but what wears its natural color. A neat green curtain and a cushion of the like material adorn the Pulpit.

“The first Sabbath I entered the Church it was highly decorated with fir, spruce, and other ever-greens, reminding one of the tabernacles of old in the wilderness. The following day was the Anniversary of our national independence; and

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21. It will ever be thus!

⁶ This church building, the fourth Meetinghouse, was located inside the present Edgartown cemetery at Pease’s Point Way and Cooke Street. It was replaced in 1828 by the fifth Meetinghouse, now the Federated Church on South Summer St. Devens, writing in 1836, must have visited the abandoned church out of historical interest. It was not being used for services at the time. The new church had been dedicated eight years before, on December 24, 1828. A few years after Devens’ visit, the old church was torn down and some of its timbers were used to build Ellis Lewis’ house and carpenter shop on School Street at Davis Lane.



Not the Devens’ parade, but similar no doubt. Date unknown. House just past the Methodist Church was later moved to the Harbor View

in this place, on this sea-girt Island, it was to be celebrated. I was invited to participate not only in the dinner but in the other services, and to make my appearance on Monday morning at the Inn, there to meet the chief ones of the village and to join the procession.

“One or two revolutionary patriots — revered wrecks of tempestuous times — were there. The affecting narrative which one of them gave of his sufferings and those of his comrades from hunger, thirst, chronic pains and rheumatisms, brought on by lying night after night on the cold ground without covering, caused many a tear to trickle down his weather-hardened and wrinkled cheek, and deeply moved the hearts of all present. He assured us we had no conception of the greatness of our blessings, and urged us with thrilling eloquence to be true to our country. The procession was shortly formed. The delegation from the place, the two school-masters, and the four members of the clergy walked in its honored places, while two individuals bearing staffs on which floated our national banner led the

way. We threaded several sandy streets beneath a sweltering sun — a solemn, pre-eminently noiseless train — without 'stirring fife or pealing drum.' Still there was music within, and our souls were pledged to do our best to celebrate our country's glory, yes, literally pledged — full six of us — the Senator of Duke's County to pronounce the oration — the School-masters, one to repeat the Declaration of Independence, the other to enliven us with the effervescence of his poetical fancy — the oldest of the Clergy, who was a Baptist Missionary, to address the throne of the Almighty — the Trinitarian and Unitarian Ministers to perform an equal part, each to peruse in the best manner an original Hymn, and though last, not least, our Methodist brother to put the finale to the chapter of services and ceremonies by the solemn benediction.

"This sub-division of labor was as it should be but it had a little touch of the amusing about it. We entered the church⁷ and took our seats amid the beauty, pride and patriotism of this simple, true-hearted people. All passed off cheerfully. The Oration was worthy of its author, and the Poem would have done credit to a practised and well-known hand at the art.

"This part of our duty done, we repaired to the Inn to partake of a generous dinner. Not a few merry toasts were cracked and, though wine passed round, many abstained, and all rose from the table self possessed and undeceived thereby.

"A happier Independent day, not even in my boyhood, has it been my lot to enjoy. Of itself it was worth a trip to the Island."⁸

⁷ It is not clear which church was used for the ceremony. It might have been the old one, although Devens does not say so and it seems unlikely.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 38-42.



Island Architecture

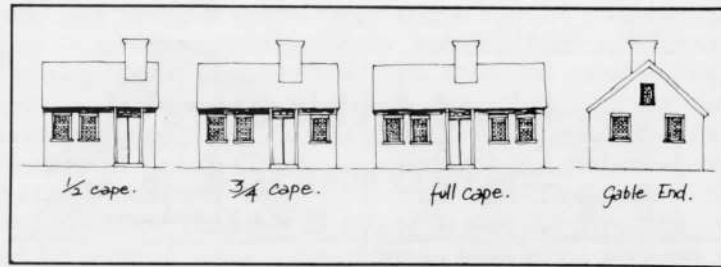
by POLLY BURROUGHS

The history of Martha's Vineyard lies in its houses and there are seven different styles spanning three centuries. The periods overlap, just as they did on the mainland, but with the Islanders' natural reluctance to change, the time spans were often longer, and exact dates somewhat obscure. None of the original settlers' houses remains, but the earliest types you will see, all built without the benefit of architects, are the Cape, double Cape and the Salt Box.

There are "full", "half" and "three quarter" Capes. The "full" Cape has a large central chimney supporting several fireplaces and a symmetrical window placement, with two windows on either side of the front door. The windows have small, square panes, usually 12 over 12. Based on a style from Devon and Cornwall in England, the one-story Cape, held down against the wind by its snug gable roof whose eaves come down to touch the front door and windows, hugged the ground and generally faced south. The steep shed roof served as both roof and wall, the ceilings are low, and the tiny, narrow stairs are just inside the entryway, set against the chimney.

There are "half" Capes with the front door at one end of the facade, two windows and the chimney usually directly above the front door. The "three quarter" Cape is also

POLLY BURROUGHS of Edgartown is best known for her book *Zeb*, the biography of Zebulon Northrop Tilton of Chilmark, skipper of the coastal schooner, *Alice S. Wentworth*. This article on Island architecture is from a chapter in her latest book, *A Guide to Martha's Vineyard*, to be published this month, and is used with the permission of the publishers, The Globe Pequot Press. She is currently at work on a biography of Thomas Hart Benton.

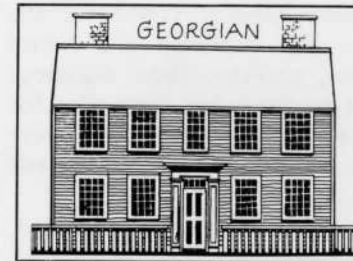


unsymmetrical with two windows on one side of the front door and one on the other, and the chimney off-center.

The double Cape is two story, with similar window and door arrangement and the Salt Box, which is just what these houses resemble, is also two story. The rear roof slope has a long pitch down to the first story.

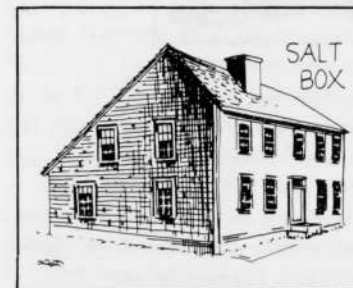
The Georgian period, from 1720 to 1780, was pre-eminently an expression of wealth; however, the Island wasn't prosperous at the time. Instead, as these pre-Revolutionary, four-square Colonial houses became larger and more comfortable, modest adaptations of the Georgian style were incorporated with the help of books from England. Two separated chimneys provided a central hall plan with wider staircase, closets by the chimneys, moldings, a paneled fireplace wall and a kitchen ell with another chimney to accommodate the new iron cookstove. The front door was paneled with a row of window panes set into the top, or a rectangular or elliptical fanlight over the door. Others have sidelights instead and most have squared-off pillars set flat, flanking the doorway. Many four-square Island houses have these modest Georgian details, which carried into the early 19th century, and were often built by ships' carpenters.

The post-Revolutionary Federal period, from 1776 to 1840, was a time of great prosperity on the Island and the architecture came into full flower. The newborn nation's carpenters and shipwrights, with the help of architects in many cases, adapted the warm delicate details of the Federal style which the architectural historian Hugh Morrison called one of America's "greatest architectural achievements."



These large, four-square, five-bay houses with mastery of composition, restraint and grace of detail in the balusters around the hipped roof, elliptical arched fanlights and sidelights, a small projecting portico, even the beautifully designed fences enclosing these yards with their clipped box and yew replacing the sprawling lilac and rose, were masterpieces of craftsmanship. Modest adornments from the Federal period are seen on many Edgartown houses built at this time. The town has two outstanding examples of this style: the Dr. Daniel Fisher house (1840) on Main Street and the Captain George Lawrence house (1832) on North Water Street, often called the Captain's house. To Islanders, it is better known as the Bliss house, having been owned by that family for many years. It is now owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

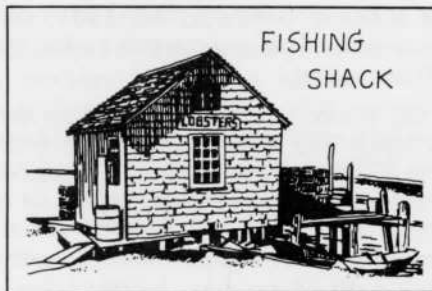
Before 1850, Greek Revival had swept up the coast from Jefferson's Virginia and was best suited to public buildings. However, the classical pillared doorways and cool aestheticism appealed to New Englanders and they adapted



the style. Edgartown's Methodist Church (1843) is the Island's outstanding example. To duplicate the white limestone of the Greek temples, painting these buildings white became the vogue and the tradition has carried on for all the houses. Many of the houses that are today white, were originally painted other colors, yellow and brownish reds being common.

As the initial fervor for these Greek adaptations subsided, the Romantic era, named for a Queen, arrived along with the invention of the fretsaw. These lacy, wedding-cake patterns of Carpenter Gothic decorated every "wooden tent" in Oak Bluffs, making it a landmark in gingerbread architecture. Examples of such decorative fretwork can be seen on many Edgartown houses.

One other structure which should find its way into the history of Island architecture is the fishing shack. Without it, Menemsha, which relates so strongly to the sea, would lose its character and its visual history. There are houses all over the Island which started out as such simple structures and have been expanded and modified into larger dwellings.



Drawings by Meg Taylor



Edgartown: A Walking Tour

by JOY RYAN

Edgartown, the first known white settlement on Martha's Vineyard, was founded in 1642 by Thomas Mayhew, Jr., "and some other persons" who sailed into the harbor in a shallop to take possession of the land that Mayhew's father had purchased the year before from King Charles of England.

The elder Mayhew, a businessman in Watertown, Mass., was having some financial problems at the time and hoped to recoup his fortune with this investment in the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. The first step in settling the land was the arrival of young Mayhew and party at Edgartown, which was known as Great Harbour. It did not become "Edgar Towne" until July 8, 1671, when it, along with Tisbury, was incorporated by the elder Mayhew and representatives of the Duke of York at Fort James, New York City.

The name, which soon became one word, Edgartown, was chosen to honor the only living son of the Duke of York, brother of King Charles, who was childless. The son, Edgar, was in line to become King upon the death of his Uncle Charles. The gesture, obviously aimed at currying future favor, turned out to be futile as Edgar died at the age of three; in fact, the boy was dead at the time his name was given to the town, although it was, doubtless, not known to the Mayhews at the time. Consequently, as far as is known, this is the only Edgartown in the world.

The new settlement grew slowly, becoming prosperous only after the rise of the whaling industry in the early 1800s. Edgartown's deep, sheltered harbor made it the most convenient fitting-out place for whaling ships that operated

out of Nantucket, where shallow water at the harbor entrance made its use by heavily laden ships impossible.

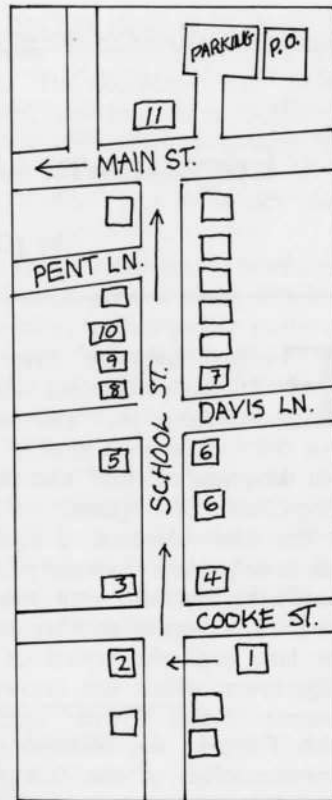
Most of the large houses in Edgartown were built during that whaling era by captains who made their homes here. Well over 100 masters of whaling ships lived in town. Most of their houses still survive, having been kept in excellent condition by proud owners through the years.

The best way to see these homes is by walking. Edgartown is a "walking town" with narrow streets and large houses built close to the sidewalks. It is a delight to stroll through the town day or night and, if one can erase the images of the automobiles, it is easy to imagine how the village must have looked a hundred or more years ago.

Most of the houses are quite simple inside, consisting of a center hall and stairway with rooms leading off the hall, the whole building being designed in a simple box form. Although there is obviously a great difference in size and exterior detail, the large, elegant Daniel Fisher house and the small, simple Joshua Snow house, both on Main Street, have basically the same arrangement of rooms around a center hall.

Our walking tour begins at the Dukes County Historical Society buildings at Cooke and School Streets. The complete walk, at an average walking speed, will take about one hour. By studying the several maps accompanying this article, you could shorten it to any degree that suits you.

This tour will take you past many old houses for which no



details are included in the text. It is not because they are not genuinely and often handsomely old, but rather because records do not indicate ownership by persons of historical interest. The buildings themselves are of great interest visually, some being among the town's most attractive, so you should enjoy them as you walk past.

The Society buildings include the Thomas Cooke house (1). Built in 1765, it still has its original paneling and fireplaces intact, making it one of the best preserved houses of the period on the Island. Unlike most of the historic homes you will see, this one is open to the public. It contains a valuable collection of antiques, whaling gear and other Vineyard relics.

Across School Street is another large gray shingle house (2) that was also the home of Thomas Cooke. He had this second home built in 1788 and moved into it, giving the older house to his son, Thomas Jr. The newer house, roomier than the first, gives evidence of Squire Cooke's increasing affluence. He owned extensive salt works on North Water Street at Starbuck's Neck and was a leading businessman of the town, also serving as Collector of Customs, Justice of Peace and in other official capacities.

The principal difference, other than size, between the two Cooke houses is the location of the chimney. The older home has one central chimney, while the newer building has two, making it possible to have a central hall.

Across Cooke Street from the "new" Cooke house is the home of Captain Jethro Ripley (3), hero of the Vineyard tale *Eighty Years Ashore and Afloat*, published in 1873. He is perhaps most memorable for not having been a whaling captain, although he did serve on whalers as a mariner, ship rigger and sometimes cook. He was the master of a coaster, hauling cargo on the eastern seaboard. His house, built in 1820, is "strictly individual," reflecting the style of its owner. Most of the lumber in it was "rafted" down from Maine by the Captain.

On the fourth corner, across School Street, is the oldest of the four houses, the Joseph Norton house (4) built in about 1700 as a farmhouse at Farm Neck and moved to its present site in 1822 "by the help of stalwart men, strong

oxen and good Jamaica rum." (Many Island buildings have been moved from their original "moorings," some several times.) The dormers and ell were added in 1909. Beams in the house are all hand-hewn, the laths are hand-split and nails, hinges and latches were hand-made more than 250 years ago. A pencil sketch of this house is on the cover of this issue. It was done in 1922 by Miriam I. Butler whose aunt lived there.

As you walk down School Street toward Main Street, the next house on the left was built as the Thaxter Academy (5) in 1825 by Leavitt Thaxter, son of the famed Rev. Joseph "Parson" Thaxter of the Edgartown Meetinghouse or Congregational Church. Leavitt spent his early adult life at sea and then was a teacher in western Massachusetts and Georgia. He returned to Edgartown in 1823 and, with the urging and help of his father, began the academy. Notice the classic form of the grounds and doorway.

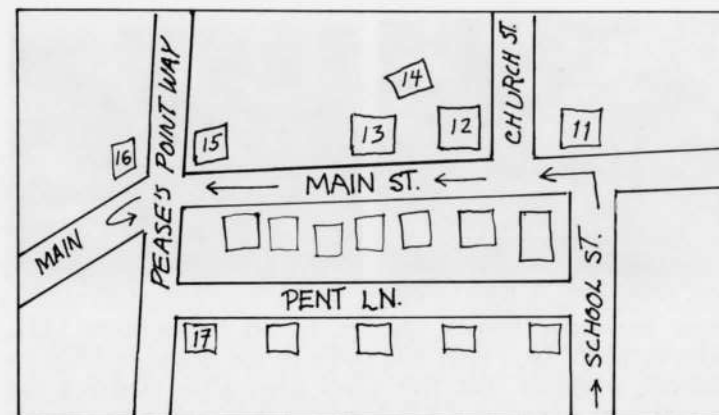
Across School Street is the Ellis Lewis house and to its left his carpenter shop, which was converted into a home in 1915. These two buildings (6) were built with timbers from the Fourth Meetinghouse around 1840. The large house was used as a fancy tearoom with outdoor service in fine weather during the first quarter of this century.

The large house across Davis Lane from the former carpenter shop was also built as a private school, the Davis Academy (7), which was run by David Davis from 1832 to 1850. The original school building burned down in 1836 and was rebuilt with the aid of contributions from friends and patrons. Public concerts and lectures were held regularly in the large room on the first floor, known as Davis Hall.

Across School Street, on the fourth corner, is the Captain Littlefield house (8), built about 1820.

The next house on the left is the Jared Coffin house (9), built in 1823. Notice its neo-Greek cornice and portico. Directly across the street is another house built by Jared, one of Edgartown's fine carpenters and father of a long-time postmaster.

The large columned building is Masonic Hall (10), built in 1839 as the Baptist Church. The Baptist congregation joined with the Congregational to form the Federated Church in



1925. This meetinghouse was designed by Frederick Baylies, Jr., of Edgartown, who designed three of the town's churches: the Federated in 1828, the Baptist in 1839 and the Methodist in 1843. His style progressed toward the classical as you will see when you view these three churches.

At the foot of School Street stands the Dukes County Court House (11) built in 1858 and one of the first brick structures on the Island. The two wings were added when the building was renovated in 1955. A small jailhouse on the left side of the Courthouse was torn down in 1870 when the new jail and jailer's house were built farther out on Main Street, where it still is today.

Turning left up Main Street you pass the handsome Methodist Church (12), often called the "whaling church" as it was financed in large part by whaling captains, one of whom, John O. Morse, went to Maine to bring back the lumber aboard his vessel. The church was completed in 1843. The organ was installed in 1869 and the tower clock in 1889. Before the clock, there were four handsome Gothic windows which reflected sunsets on clear evenings. The tower is 92 feet high. The church auditorium seats 800, testifying to the size of its congregation during the whaling era. This is the last of Baylies' three church designs and it may have been strongly influenced by Asher Benjamin, a noted Boston architect. If the church is open, it is well worth a visit.

Continuing up Main Street you next pass one of the town's



Left, upper Main St. from Methodist tower 100 years ago. Right, today most impressive houses, the Dr. Daniel Fisher home (13), built in 1840. Dr. Fisher had come to the Island in 1824 to practice medicine, but five years later, after marrying the daughter of a successful merchant and ship owner, he saw the money to be made in whaling. His activities were varied, including a whale-oil refinery that was the exclusive supplier for all the lighthouses in the nation, the largest spermaceti candle factory in the world and part ownership of several whaling ships. He also owned a grist mill up-Island. He was a founder and president of the Martha's Vineyard National Bank, which started in Edgartown, but later moved to Vineyard Haven. It is said that he made a half-million dollars a year on these enterprises, a spectacular sum in 1850. He entertained many famous persons here, including Daniel Webster.

The Federal-style house was framed with Maine pine that had been soaked in lime for two years at The Fort, the local name for a walled-in area farther up Main Street where he stored his whale oil. Only brass and copper nails were used in the construction. Notice the roof railing, cupola and the details of the entrance way. The building was renovated in 1974 and is now owned by the Martha's Vineyard Historical Preservation Society, which rents it to local businessmen for offices.

Behind the Fisher house, between it and the church, you will see the Vincent house (14), thought to be the oldest house on the Island. It was built in about 1675 as a farmhouse on the Great Plain of Edgartown and was moved here in 1978 when it was given to the Society to be preserved for the public. It is expected to be open to the public this



Historic view down Main St. Town Hall in foreground. Right, today summer. Full details on the history and structure of the house are available there as well as at the Historical Society Museum where you started this walk. The Vincent house is being restored by the Martha's Vineyard Historical Preservation Society and it deserves a lengthy visit. Walk to it through the yard of the Fisher house.

The next house on Main Street was the home of Capt. Thomas Mellen (15), master of the whaling ship *Levi Starbuck*, which was captured and burned by the Confederate ship *Alabama* during the Civil War. He also commanded the *Splendid*, flagship of the Edgartown fleet, and the *Europa*, which rescued 244 sailors during the Arctic disaster in 1871. The house was built by Ariel Norton, one of Edgartown's finest carpenters, and was purchased by Captain Mellen some years afterwards.

The next house on Main Street (across Pease's Point Way) is a small traditional cottage (16) that was built for Capt. Joshua H. Snow in 1838. The local story states that it was paid for, not by the captain's earnings, but by the money his wife, Cindy, made selling her home-made candies. Later, it was the home of the Honorable Richard L. Pease, a "historian and man of affairs" who was commissioned by the Governor of Massachusetts in 1866 to survey the land of the Gay Head Indians. Notice such interesting features as the door canopy, shutters, chimney caps — all functional as well as decorative.

Across Main Street a flagpole commemorates those from Edgartown who served in the first World War. As you look past the flagpole, on the left side of Pease's Point Way, you will see the Dr. Clement F. Shiverick house (17). He was a

successful physician who practiced here during the mid-1800s. The house with its rooftop cupola was one of the largest in town when it was built.

Retrace your steps along Main Street, this time walking on the right side of the street so you will get a full view of how the elegant houses on the left looked about 150 years ago.

As you pass Church Street look down it and you will see a small commercial building (18) on the right that is the law office of Martin Gouldey. It was for many years the postoffice, but it was located farther down Main Street where the hardware store now stands.

Across School Street, the first building on the right is the Dukes County Savings Bank (19). The main portion of the building has had several lives. It began its existence as Capt. Holmes W. Smith's grocery store, farther down Main Street on the site of the hardware store — it was next to the postoffice. In about 1910, it was moved to its present location to become the meeting hall of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Recently, it was enlarged to serve its present function as a bank building.

Next is the Edgartown Town Hall (20), built in 1828 as the Methodist Meetinghouse. It is the town office not the town hall, as town meetings are held in the Boys' Club gymnasium, the old town hall being used now as a movie theater. This splendid building was once a church and when the much grander "whaling" church was built across the street in 1843, the town bought the building to use as its



Town Hall. It was enlarged and renovated in 1908 to include, as Charles Edward Banks wrote in *The History of Martha's Vineyard* "a stage and a new and handsome set of scenery for theatrical exhibitions." Summer theater groups, in years past, have used the upper hall, but when the local movie theater burned down, the hall was converted into a motion picture house — the only one on the Island, incidentally, to operate all year round. Town offices are located on the lower floor. There are public restrooms on the ground floor also.

Most commercial buildings on Main Street were built in the 19th Century, although nearly all have new fronts and every one has a new function. The building that is Martha's Restaurant was once a grocery store. The large building just past the Town Hall was originally the home of Chase Pease, jailkeeper. The Edgartown Deli, farther down the street, began as Richard Holley's grocery store and later was also a meat market run by Thomas Mellen. The small park adjacent was where the burned-out Edgartown movie theater once stood.

The present paper store (across the street on the corner of North Summer and Main) was once the home of Holmes W. Smith, who ran the grocery store that became the D.A.R. building and is now the bank. The rather graceless brick building on the corner was built in the 1920s as the A & P store and it was some time before the residents stopped complaining. Next to it are two small, old buildings, the smaller having had many tenants, including Western Union, during the period when telegrams were actually delivered by messengers on bicycles. The larger of the two was built as a dry-goods store for Leonard Bliss. It was called the "cheap store" because it handled lower-price goods than the more elegant shops. At one time, there was a clubroom upstairs for boys.

As mentioned above, the hardware store replaced several buildings, including a tobacco shop and pool hall.

What is now the Village Fair was originally known as Gothic Hall for its upstairs room with the large Gothic windows. On the ground floor, Richard E. Norton ran a meat market and grocery store plus a harness repair shop. Upstairs, his daughters operated a fashionable ice-cream parlor. Years



Shops along Main St. below Summer St. Right, a similar view today

later, the first floor became Jethro Cottle's dry-goods store and, upstairs in Gothic Hall, the town's Episcopalians held services before St. Andrews church was built.

The old house now occupied by the Worth & Norton law firm was originally the James Osborn residence, from which Mrs. Osborn sold homemade bread. The present Brickman's store was for many years a tobacco and candy store run by Fred Bunker, who lived upstairs. There was a poolroom in the back, one of several in town. This building was also the town's paper store for many years.

Tashtego was originally the John Robinson residence, later a grocery store and then a shop selling fine fresh fruit and vegetables. The Drug Store, one of the early commercial buildings on Main Street, was owned by Samuel Osborn, a leading Edgartown businessman. It had two shops on the first floor, one was Buchell's shoe store and shoe repair shop which fronted on Main Street and the other, fronting on Water Street, was a men's clothing store owned by Howard Osborn, son of Samuel. Later, it was the postoffice (there is scarcely a building in town that hasn't, at one time or other, been the postoffice!). Upstairs was the Federal Customs House. Edgartown was then a port of entry for the cargoes of whalers and the upstairs office was a busy place when a ship unloaded at Osborn's dock at the foot of Main Street.

On the other side of Main Street, where today there are various shops, almost all seasonal in nature, those same buildings were busy all year round as a drygoods store, another candy and tobacco store with another poolroom in the rear (this one run by John Mendence), Sam Stewart's

cobbler shop, later Hatch & Company's Express Service, which provided Islanders with regular deliveries from the mainland. Mr. Hatch must have been a splendid fellow as he was often called upon by local women to take a sample of goods to New Bedford and bring back some matching material. It is said that he did this willingly and gratuitously.

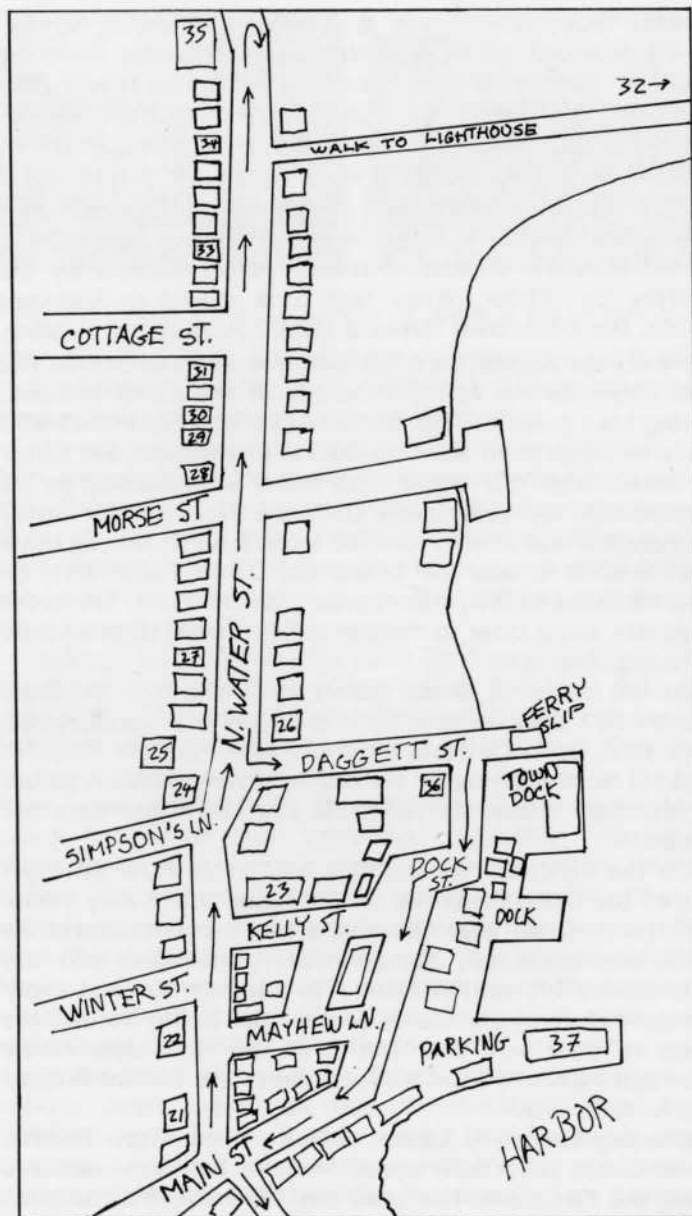
The Edgartown National Bank on the corner (this intersection is known as the Four Corners) was built in 1855 as the Martha's Vineyard National Bank, founded by the wealthy Dr. Fisher. When that bank moved to Vineyard Haven, the Edgartown National Bank occupied the building.

Facing the harbor, turn left onto North Water Street. The first house on the left (21) is one of the oldest in town, having been built in 1703 for John Coffin, a blacksmith who came to Edgartown from Nantucket and became the owner of considerable real estate. This house was occupied by his descendants for generations until the North Water Street Corporation was formed in 1946 to preserve it. Among those who lived in it was the famed Dr. Daniel Fisher after he married Grace Coffin, John's great-granddaughter. The house originally stood close to the sidewalk, its front steps actually intruding onto it.

At the corner of Winter Street, on the left, is the Capt. Charles W. Fisher house (22). It is a fairly new house, having been built in 1892. Notice the hip roof. Captain Fisher is credited with bringing in the largest sperm whale on record on the bark *Alaska* in 1884. He and Dr. Fisher were not related.

On the right, as you continue out North Water Street, is one of the oldest hostelrys on the Island, the Kelley House (23). John Harper began keeping a tavern at this location in 1748. His son-in-law, Lemuel Kelley, took over and was followed by his son, William. The old inn has had many names, including the Marcy House, the Kelley House, the Great Harbour Inn, and later it became the Kelley House once again when William Kelley, a descendant of the original family, took over.

Crossing Simpson's Lane, you come to the Capt. Thomas Worth house (24), built about 1800. It has been used as a hotel, the Edgartown Inn, since the 1850s and has had as its



guests Nathaniel Hawthorne and Daniel Webster. Captain Worth's son, who lived there in his youth, was William Jenkins Worth, a military hero, later Major General, in the War of 1812 and the Mexican War. General Worth was said to have been "the handsomest and most soldierly looking officer in the Army."

The brick Public Library (25) was built in 1903 with the help of a Carnegie grant. It cost \$5,000 originally. It has since been enlarged at the rear.

Across the street is the Daggett House (26), built by Thomas Pease around 1750 and sold in 1805 to Capt. Timothy Daggett, a shipmaster who was also part owner of several Edgartown whaling ships, including the *Splendid*, the *Almira* and the *Vineyard*. For many years, the basement, its door is on ground level facing the water, served as a general store, serving the ships in the harbor. The store was a favorite sailors' hangout and they came in nightly for a tot of rum and a "gam." It is the only pre-Revolutionary house in Edgartown with a hip roof. Several times in its long history it served as an inn, as it does today.

You will notice that the houses on the left side of North Water Street are not parallel to the street. They were placed askew to allow the best view of vessels as they came around Cape Poge en route to the harbor. At that time, there were few houses on the right to block the view.

This row of houses is among the most photographed on the Island. The third house from the Library is the Peleg Crossman house (27), built in 1784 and notable for its handsome doorway.

As you cross Morse Street, the large house on the corner is the Capt. John O. Morse house (28) built in 1840. The Morse family owned a large commercial wharf directly in front of the house on the present site of Edgartown Marine. In his boatshop at the dock, the elder Morse, Uriah, built whaleboats which were said to bring good luck to the whaling ship. Captain John went to sea and was master of the whaler *Hector*, known as "the luckiest whaleship afloat." In 1849, he took time out from whaling to sail a load of would-be gold miners from the Vineyard to California on the

bark *Sarah*. The house originally had a porch only on the first floor.

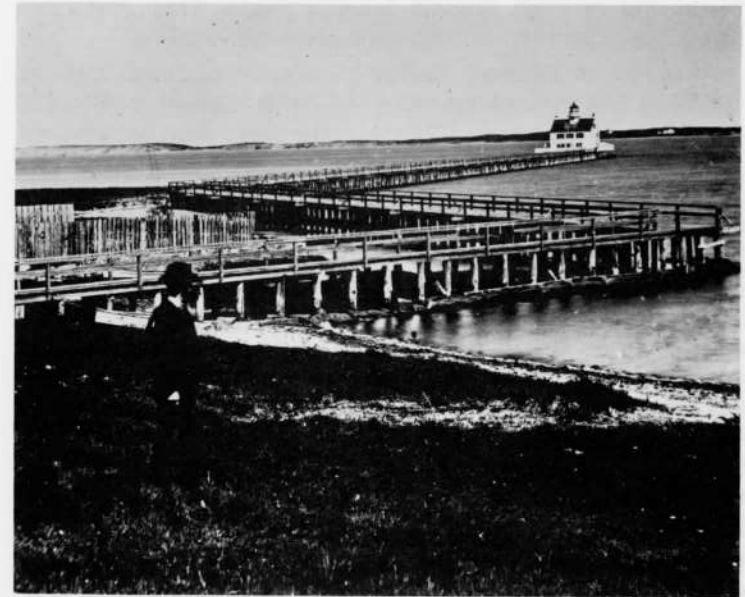
Next on the left is an imposing three-story house (29) built for Capt. George Lawrence in 1832 by Thomas M. Coffin and a crew of Edgartown's finest carpenters. It is a splendid example of a Federal mansion and includes a roof walk, usually called a widow's walk. Now owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, it is known as the Captain's House to many. Islanders usually refer to it as the Bliss House, it having been owned by that family for many years.

Equally handsome is the next house, the Capt. Edwin Coffin house (30) built about 1840. A whaling master and ship owner, he joined the Navy during the Civil War. After the war, he returned to the Island to become a farmer at Lambert's Cove. His son, Edwin Jr., was also a famous captain and lived in the next house on Water Street.

The house on the corner, just before Cottage Street, was owned by Capt. John O. Norton (31), who, local historians will tell you, was "the prototype of the Hollywood whaling captain." He was "brusk, fiery and tyrannical." His wife, Charity, is said to have gone along on his voyages just to "keep the peace." His crews, the story goes, would have murdered him except, as one sailor put it, "I s'pose the old lady would feel bad."

Across the street at the water's edge was the spermaceti candle factory owned by Dr. Fisher. These highly regarded candles were made from spermaceti, a waxy substance taken from the head of the sperm whale.

Across Water Street, about here, was the entrance to the long wooden walkway that led to the old Edgartown lighthouse. The light was then mounted on the roof of a house built on pilings in the shallows at the entrance to the harbor. It was this long "bridge" that Devens referred to in the description of his "afternoon ramble" (see page 179). Originally, the light, established in 1828, could be reached only by boat. A year later, the bridge was built, but it was so often damaged by ice and storms that in 1847 a stone breakwater and causeway were built to protect it. The present light (32) is accessible over a causeway from farther out Water Street (Lighthouse beach is a delight to walk



There was no beach at the lighthouse when you walked over the bridge along). It is a replacement for the earlier one and was brought to the Island from Ipswich, Mass., in 1935. North of the present causeway is where the evaporating beds for the old saltworks owned by Thomas Cooke were located.

The third house above Cottage Street on the left is the Capt. Robert Wimpenny house (33), built in 1802. He was active in the China trade and was one of the few shipmasters allowed inside the walls of the old Chinese port cities. After he was lost at sea in a typhoon, his house was sold and converted to an inn, the Ocean House, run by Capt. John H. Pease, a retired whaling captain.

Four houses farther out on the left is one of the oldest houses on the street, the Capt. Joseph Swasey house (34), built, it is believed, between 1766 and 1776. It is notable as the home of the first Portuguese to live in Edgartown. The owner, a master mariner, was born Jose de Souza, believed to have been the son of the Portuguese Ambassador to Great Britain, who went to sea to avoid being forced into the priesthood. Some years later, he settled on Chappaquiddick

Island and in 1766 married Susanna Pease. Their house on North Water Street was built soon after the wedding.

Ahead you will see the Harbor View Hotel (35), built in the 1890s. It was, in the words of Island historian and editor, Henry Beetle Hough, "in a sense the last of the old resort hotels and in a sense the first of the new." After some initial difficulties, it became "one of the most important factors in the growth of the town as a summer resort."

Turn around and walk back toward town, pausing at the intersection of Morse Street. Far up, at the end of the street you will see a tiny white cottage that was built some time around 1790 on Chappaquiddick, just across the harbor. About 1854, it was moved across the water to its present site by William Wood, born Silva. He had come "to the Vineyard from the Western Islands on a whaleship with Capt. Henry Pease 2nd," and worked as steward on the Island ferryboats for years. His son, also William, was born in this cottage and became president of the American Woolen Company, in its day one of the largest textile companies in the world. Wood owned a large estate on Cuttyhunk, an island in the Elizabeths, and was one of the wealthiest men in Massachusetts.

As you walk back along Water Street you should imagine the shoreline coming almost up to the street. The houses on the right side are seen to a much greater advantage from this direction.

At Daggett Street, turn left and walk down to the harbor. The building at the corner of Dock Street is the Old Sculpin Gallery (36), now owned by the Martha's Vineyard Art Association. This angular building was originally part of Dr. Fisher's whale-oil refinery that was located on the wharf. In the early 1900s, it became the boatshop of Manuel Swartz Roberts, famed for his catboats. He also built fine duck decoys and furniture. The wharf, once owned by Dr. Fisher, is now owned by the town and is called Memorial Wharf.

Alongside the wharf is the Chappaquiddick ferry slip. In the era of the whalers, and even in the early 1900s, the ferry was a man-powered skiff. At one time, early in this century, ferries from Woods Hole docked at this wharf. From the roof walk you will get a spectacular harbor view.



Lower Main St. from Osborn's Wharf. Big shed is now in Yacht Club

Many of the former fishing shacks along Dock Street are very old indeed, although their functions have greatly changed. Instead of today's gift shops and eateries, they were the shops of craftsmen and merchants catering to the needs of the whalers. Among them was a wooden bilge pump shop, a hardtack bakery, a shop selling sailors staples and supplies. Farther along, at the corner of Mayhew Lane, was a busy blacksmith shop which continued to operate until the 1930s. Across Dock Street, where there is now a town parking lot, were boathouses, fishing shacks and a sail loft. The water, at that time, came right up to Dock Street at the foot of the present Mayhew Lane.

The Edgartown Yacht Club (37) is located on what must have been the busiest place in town when a whaler arrived. It was Osborn's Wharf. Samuel Osborn, Jr., was the town's largest owner of whaling ships and his dock was often crowded with vessels being outfitted or unloaded.



Looking down Lower Main St. with whaler at dock. Right, today



Main and Water, about 1880. Right, with poles instead of trees today

Turning right, you head back up Main Street to the Four Corners. The much remodeled building on the right, presently a liquor store and real estate office, once housed a meat market on the first floor and the print shop of the *Vineyard Gazette* on the upper floor. The post office was located here on the first floor in the early 1800s.

Turn left onto South Water Street. The first house (38) on the right, next to the bank, was built by Heman Arey in 1825. He was one of the best-known Vineyard cabinet makers and his chairs, an adaptation of the so-called pigeonhole style, are collector's items. The Victorian detail over the doorway was probably added later. In addition to his cabinetmaking, Arey managed Squire Cooke's saltworks on North Water Street.

The houses on the left are now part of the Harborside Inn. The most interesting is the Capt. Thomas Milton house (39) built about 1830. Captain Milton put into Edgartown harbor while serving aboard the privateer *Yankee* in the War of 1812 and liked the town so much that he bought this house lot in

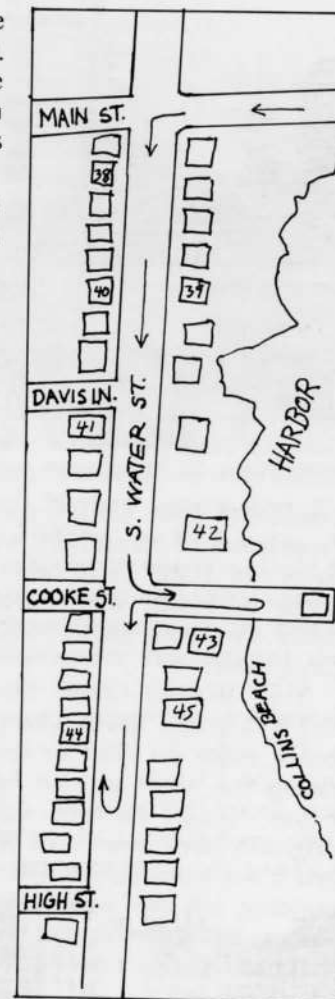


South Water St. from Main. Buildings on right have changed little

1814. When he retired some years later, he built his house. Even better known than the house is his pagoda tree, which he brought back from China as a seedling.

The large house (40) across the street, now an inn, is especially notable for its early Victorian decoration.

As you cross Davis Lane, the first house on the right is the Capt. Abraham Osborn house (41) built about 1830. Captain Osborn was a whaling captain, later an agent-owner and innkeeper. One of the guests in the inn, which he ran in his house, was Capt. Raphael Seemes, superintendent of the 2nd Lighthouse District, who came to Edgartown regularly to buy sperm oil from Dr. Fisher for the lighthouses. Later, during the Civil War, Seemes served as captain of the Confederate raider *Alabama*. The first ship he captured was the *Ocmulgee* from Edgartown, skippered by Capt. Abraham Osborn, Jr., son of his friend, the innkeeper. Notice the Gothic detail on the third-story window, a precursor of the Victorian style, and the neo-Greek cornice and portico.



Diagonally across South Water Street is a much remodelled and enlarged house (42) that was built by the



South Water St. houses from waterfront years before the Harborside

blacksmith John Coffin, son of Tristram Coffin, one of the proprietors of Nantucket, when he first came to Edgartown to live in 1682. Later he moved to the much larger Coffin house on North Water Street. Portions of this first Coffin house were built about 1682, making it one of the oldest in Edgartown.

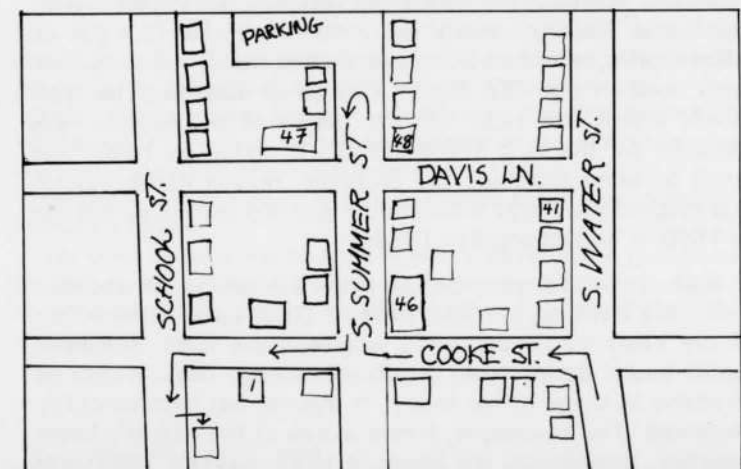
Turn left on Cooke Street and walk down to Collins Beach, a public beach where many residents keep their small boats, either on shore or moored to pilings. The large house facing the water on the right (43) is the Grafton Norton house. Notice the roof walk and hip roof. The dock was originally the Commercial Wharf, owned by Grafton Norton, and it was a prosperous business during the whaling days. The building on the wharf today is the Edgartown Reading Room, but little reading is done there — it is a private club that had its origins during Prohibition.

Walk back up to South Water Street and turn left, the fifth house from Cooke Street on the right is known as the Moby Dick house (44). It was built for Capt. Valentine Pease, master of the *Acushnet*, the whaling ship on which Herman Melville shipped as a green sailor in 1841 to gather material for his whaling epic, *Moby Dick*. Note the distinctive cornice details.

Across the street is the Mayhew Parsonage (45). Built in 1840 by descendants of Governor Thomas Mayhew, the founder of the settlement, it is now the parsonage of the Federated Church. This was the third home for the Mayhew family, the first having burned in 1670, after which a splendid Colonial house was built on the site to the right of the present house. The old house was there until 1910 when it was torn down, unfortunately for lovers of fine Colonial houses.

Walk back to Cooke Street, pausing to look at the gravestones near the Mayhew Parsonage. These graves date back to 1714. The principal grave is that of Matthew Mayhew, whose father, the famous Matthew Mayhew, became the political leader of the Island after the death of the settlement's founder, Governor Mayhew, his grandfather. The son, buried here with his wife, Anna, and children, was a far less important figure in history, although he was, like his father, holder of the entailed Mayhew estate and the hereditary Lord of the Manor of Tisbury.

At Cooke Street turn left onto what was laid down as Meetinghouse Way because it connected the houses on South Water Street with the Fourth Meetinghouse, several blocks over on Pease's Point Way. Later, when Norton built his





South Summer from Davis Lane with 5th Meetinghouse. Right, today wharf, it was called Commercial Street. Today, it is named after the famous Squire Thomas Cooke.

On the corner of South Summer Street is the Federated Church (46), built in 1828 as the Fifth Meetinghouse. It was, at that time, the Congregational Church. Today it combines the congregations of the Baptist and Congregational. The first of Frederick Baylies' three Edgartown church designs, it is the oldest church building on the Island. Unlike his two later designs, it is in the style of a traditional 18th century meetinghouse. Notice the woodwork and cornices on the steeples. The entrance, with handsome detailing, is on the side facing Main Street. The church auditorium is delightfully plain and Puritan. The box pews seat 400 worshippers. The Hook and Hastings organ was installed in 1841, a gift of Allen Coffin, who had bought it second hand, it having first been used in the Old North Church in Boston. The wall clock, which still ticks off the length of the sermon, was donated by the first Ingraham clock maker in 1840. The small building alongside the entrance, now a Parish House, was originally a village schoolhouse and was moved to the site in 1850. It was enlarged in 1958.

Walk down Summer Street toward Main Street and the lovely old building on the corner of Davis Lane is the office of the *Vineyard Gazette* (47), originally the Capt. Benjamin Smith house dating from pre-Revolutionary days. Although an active business office today, its interior has been carefully preserved. The newspaper, famed as one of the nation's finest weeklies, moved into the house in 1939. Captain Smith was

not a sea-going captain — he commanded a military company stationed here during the Revolution.

Across Summer Street (48) is the home of Capt. Jared J. Jernegan II, who spent 48 years at sea chasing whales. He started at age 13 as a cabin boy and took command of his first whaler when only 26 years old. He married the daughter of Capt. Jethro Ripley, whose house you saw at the start of the tour. Highly successful, his ships sailed every ocean. In 1862, he survived the loss of his ship *Erie* in a hurricane off Cape Horn. He sailed for many years afterwards, retiring to this house of his birth in 1889, where he died 10 years later.

Turn around and return to Cooke Street. Turn right and you are once again at the Dukes County Historical Society where you started your walk.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This walking tour is based on a pamphlet compiled and written by Joy Ryan while she worked at the Historical Society in the summer of 1975. She drew heavily on that excellent short history of the Island, Eleanor Ransom Mayhew's *Martha's Vineyard, A Short History by Various Hands*. She also received much help from Deidamia Osborn Bettencourt and Roger W. Moss, Jr., the latter of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Additional information was taken from a fascinating article in the May 4, 1951, Invitation Issue of the *Vineyard Gazette*, written by Charles F. Shurtleff. An updated version of the article has been given to the Society by the author's daughter, Helen S. Tyra, Secretary.

Other sources include a paper read before the Society on August 12, 1934 by Miss Lucretia S. Norton and another by the same writer that was read at a meeting of the D.A.R. on May 2, 1931.

Inevitably, we owe much to Charles Edward Banks' *The History of Martha's Vineyard*.

The cover drawing was made by Miriam I. Butler in 1921. Maps are by Jan Benham. Historical photographs are by Richard Shute and contemporary photographs by Alison Shaw, Art Director of *The Intelligencer*.

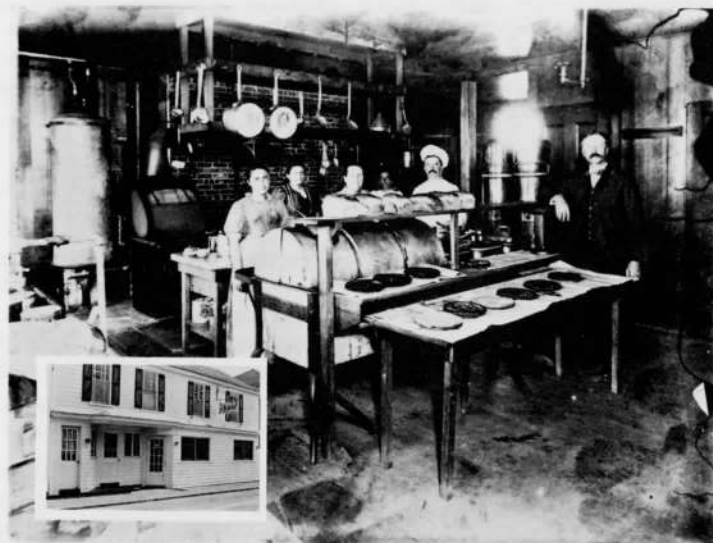
Yesterday's Shops

Edgartown doesn't change much on the outside. And that's much of its charm. Inside, though, its another story – as these photos show.



Here's what was inside today's shops (inserts) a century ago: Top, Holmes Smith grocery; bottom, Clarence Dexter's (or Edmund Nichols?) barbershop. Opposite, Roy Bunkers ice cream parlor; Bill Cottle's cigar store and pool room; Charles Mayhew's tin shop





Opposite, top, Vineyard Gazette on second floor (Ripley's market on first); Bunkers pool room; Jared Coffin's dry goods. Above, Pillsbury's bakery; Willy Mayhew's hardware store

Documents

Jeremiah Pease (1792-1857) lived in Edgartown where he served as Customs House officer, light keeper, surveyor, bone setter and religious zealot. His mentor was the famed Rev. Joseph Thaxter, pastor of the established church in Edgartown, variously known as the Presbyterian and Congregational Church (now the Federated Church).

The two men were devoted friends and it must have come as a shock to both when Pease, unhappy with Thaxter's liberal Unitarianism, broke away to become a leading member of the group which formed the Methodist camp meeting, espousing more fundamentalist doctrine.

As the Rev. H. Vincent wrote in A History of the Wesleyan Grove Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting, 'the site now known as 'Wesleyan Grove' was selected and marked out by the late Jeremiah Pease, Esq., of Edgartown, and was repeatedly commended by him to the attention of both ministers and laymen till it was finally determined to hold a meeting here. . . ' Pease was not only the Camp Meeting's first Chorister, he also served as Superintendent of the Night Watch for several years as well as being a tent master.

He kept his Journal in a series of notebooks, starting a new one only when the previous book was completely filled, regardless of the time of year. Footnote numbering by the editor, Gale Huntington, is consecutive within each notebook and

therefore goes back to ¹ only when a new notebook is started.

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

February 1840.

2nd. Wind ENE. Light. Ship *Catawba*, Capt. Henry Pease sails for the Pacific. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meeting. Br. Trott of Bath was there and took an active part.

4th. Wind N. Very cold. Fresh wind. Harbour freezes up.

5th. Wind SW. County Temperance meeting at the Congregational Meeting House. Address by Rev'd Thomas Ely.

6th. Wind SW. Pleasant. Thaws. Ice goes out of the harbour. I sent communications to Mr. Parmenter in Congress relating to a pension for my father.

9th. Wind S. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meetings. Br. Trott was there and took an active part. Returned and held a meeting at evening.

12th. Wind NW. Pleasant. Brig *Ceylon*, J. Trott, arrives from Holmes Hole.

15th. Wind WNW. Fresh breeze. Ships *Charles Carroll* and *Phoenix* arrive.

13th. Wind SW. Pleasant. Br. Trott hauls up his brig on the Rail Way.

17th. Wind SW. Brig *Ceylon*, Br. Trott sails.

19th. Wind SW. Foggy. Went to Holmes Hole on business of the Custom House.

21st. Wind S. Foggy. Ship *Orion*, Coffin arrives from the Pacific.

26th. Wind S. Foggy. Surveyed land at T. Smith's for N. Norton and others.

29th. Wind S. Foggy. Very pleasant month for the season.

March 1840.

9th. Wind SW to NW. Rains a little A.M. P.M. Clear. 4 days meeting commences. Brs. Lovel from Nantucket, Cogshall from Falmouth and Wilder From Chilmark attend.

14th. Wind NW. Went to Holmes Hole. Carried Br. Lovel to meet the steamboat for Nantucket.

16th. Wind NE. Br. Lovell returns from Nantucket.

19th. Wind W to E. Engaged surveying land for J.D. Pease, R.L. and others.

31st. Wind NW. Gale. Ship *Martha* arrives.

April 1840.

17th. Wind SW. Engaged in surveying Trapp's Creek.

21st. Wind N to S. Ship *Omega* arrives from the Pacific Ocean.

27th. Wind NW. Gale. Set out for New Bedford via Woods Hole. Stayed there until next day.¹⁹

28th. Wind SSW. Went to New Bedford in Sloop *Liberty*.

¹⁹The Northwest gale would have made the passage to New Bedford through Buzzards Bay impossible.

29th. Wind NE. Rainy. Went to Taunton and returned to New Bedford.

30th. Wind WSW. Returned home in Sloop *Branch*.²⁰

May 1840.

1st. Wind SSW. Ship *Cyrus* arrives.

4th. Wind SSW. Set out for Barnstable via Woods Hole being summoned as a witness in the case of Br. Ariel Norton's children, he being dead. They were placed under the guardianship of Miss Sophia Worth. Returned on Friday the 8th.

12th. Wind SW. Attended meeting with Br. T.M.C. at the new Meeting House at Chapaquiddic for the first time.

15th. Wind SW. Planted corn. Rained at night. Watched with W. Jernegan, Esq. he being sick.

18th. Wind SW. Barque *Athalia*, Sprague master, sails on a whaling cruise in the Atlantic Ocean.²¹

19th. Wind NE. Foggy. Mrs. J.D.P. Landers, H. Marchant and myself and others attend meeting at Chapaquiddic.

²⁰These small sloops and schooners were not only packets, carrying passengers but carried freight, too. They competed with the steamboats until well into the 20th century.

²¹In 1840, the bark rig was just beginning to come into more common use. A little later a great many ships changed over to bark rig as being more suitable for whaling than the ship rig. Indeed, the *Athalia* had been ship rigged until that year, 1840.

23rd. Wind SW. Attended meeting at the Indian Meeting House at Chapaquiddic.

26th. Wind SW. Br. Sherman visits us from Nantucket. Comes to see his son who is going to the Pacific Ocean.

28th. Wind SW. Br. Sherman goes to Nantucket with his daughter Lucy and his son William's wife. His son sails today.²²

June 1840.

3rd. Wind E to SSE. Exchanged my horse with Mr. Morrison.

9th. Wind SW. Went to Nantucket to attend to business relating to the Beacon Light. Returned the 12th. Very warm.

13th. Wind SW. Warm. Engaged at the Custom House.

16th. Wind SW. Went to New Bedford on business for E.T. Smith.

Here Jeremiah started a new notebook on the first page of which he wrote the following notation:

Journal commences June 18, 1840. Book bot in New Bedford.

18th. Wind SSW. Returned from New Bedford having been engaged in surveying land at West (?) Island in the Town of Fair Haven for Ebenezer Smith of Edgartown.

²²Part of a page is torn out here. Perhaps it contained something that Jeremiah didn't want to go down to posterity. The Ship *Charles Carroll* of Nantucket sailed from Edgartown on May 29, 1840. She was probably the vessel that William Sherman was in.

19th. Wind SW rains A.M. P.M. clear and warm.

21st. Wind SW. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meetings at evening.

22nd. Wind SW. Engaged at the Custom House.

23rd. Wind SE. Engaged as above. Collector returns. Surveyed land for J. O. Morse.

July 1840.

1st. Wind SW Foggy. Engaged at the Custom House.

2nd. Wind SW. Warm. News of the death of Br. Chas. Daggett arrives he died in Matanzas of a fever Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, he was a valuable member of Society. Pious and amiable, a worthy member of the Methodist Church.

8th. Wind N. A.M. Ship *Vineyard* Capt. Sam'l Tilton arrives from the Pacific Ocean 2200 bbl Sperm Oil. U.S.R.C. *Vigilant* Capt. Corner arrives.

10th. Wind SW. *Vigilant* sails on a cruise with the Collector to visit Light Houses. U.S.R.C. *Hamilton* Capt. Sturgis arrives from Boston. Mr. Wellman and Capt. Sturgis visits the Light House here. Mr. W. and myself rode over the Plain.

11th. Wind SW. *Hamilton* sails.

12th. Wind SW. Went to East Side Holmes Hole attended meetings at evening. *Vigilant* arrives.

13th. Wind SW. *Vigilant* sails again to visit the Light Houses with the Collector.

Edited by
GALE HUNTINGTON

Books

They Kept the Lower Lights Burning, the Story of the Seaman's Bethel and its Chaplains, by George William Wiseman. Privately published. Bradenton, Fla. 196 pages. Illus. \$3.95.

At a time when we seem eager to believe that progress brings us nothing but problems, there is some comfort in a book such as this. Today's mariners, the book makes clear, are better off than those of 80 years ago. Theirs were not "the good old days."

Progress may have given us that trio of terrors, congestion, pollution and radiation, but during the Seaman's Bethel era, the period of this book, the terrors were more elemental: freezing in the rigging, falling from aloft or being washed overboard into dark, icy water.

This book, written by the son-in-law of the second of the Bethel's two chaplains, has many tales of lost ships and crews, disasters that occurred with such regularity that today they would bring marches on Washington.

The sailor's life was hazardous, but it was lonely as well and the Bethel was a haven for the lonely as much as for the shipwrecked. It was noted as much for its hospitality as for carrying out the Lord's work. Chaplain Madison Edwards, the founder, and later, Chaplain Austin Tower, devoted their lives to lonesome, despairing seamen, persuading hundreds to renew their faith and spirit.

In the days before radio and TV,

barges and schooners, anchored off Vineyard Haven awaiting a fair wind, were filled with restless and often homesick sailors eager for entertainment — even such innocent entertainment as gospel singing and evangelistic candy pulls, spiced only with cocoa, cake and cookies. They crowded on to the Bethel's tender as she made her evening rounds of the harbor and they filled Bethel Hall with song, to the accompaniment of an upright piano, a tamborine and a bass drum pounded by the Chaplain himself. They left at evening's end, feeling better about their lot and carrying handy "comfort bags" stuffed with needles, thread, buttons, bandages, a thimble and, the inevitable New Testament, to remind them of hospitable Vineyard Haven.

There were those sailors, of course, to whom the Bethel's launch was a way to get ashore for purposes other than Gospel singing. The trolley to Oak Bluffs, where there were bars and, that most sinful of places, a dance hall, stopped only a few feet from the Bethel's door, an overwhelming temptation to some. But most, made conscious of the closeness of death by a hazardous occupation, were content to put themselves in the hands of the Bethel's Chaplain and the young ladies who passed out the homemade cakes.

The title comes from one of their favorite hymns, one they sang with gusto, knowing first hand of stormy nights when their eager eyes were "watching, longing, for the lights along the shore." One "lower light" that was always burning was that of the Seaman's Bethel, thanks to the untiring work of two faithful

chaplains, whose story this book tells.

Published privately by the author, who served as pastor of the Oak Bluffs and Chilmark Methodist churches in the late 1930s, it is perhaps too laden with religious testimonials to reflect all the adventure that surrounded the Bethel, but it does bring to life two men, "the sailors' best friends" who tirelessly served their God and, in doing so, sent "a gleam across the wave."

A.R.R.

News

Janet Bosworth, curator of the Cuttyhunk Historic Center, reports excellent progress on plans for an exhibit this summer in the Gladys Gage Memorial Room of the Cuttyhunk Library. Mrs. Bosworth has been developing biographies and locating photographs of the island's early inhabitants. A detailed and artistic chart of the Cuttyhunk cemetery, produced by Mrs. Patricia Warwick, will diagram the relationship of earlier residents to present-day Cuttyhunkers.

Mrs. Bosworth would like help in locating photographs of any of the following: Holder Allen (1808-1872), his son, Holder Jr., (1846-1881), Benjamin Eisener (1805-1891), Capt. A. B. Miller (1842-1889), George Slocum (1804-1865) and Helen Allen (1850-1939).

The Center is also reprinting an

account of the island written about 1906 and Louise Haskell's *Story of Cuttyhunk* (1953).

Still in the early planning state, work continues on preparations for the Oak Bluffs Centennial, set for the summer of 1980. Among the plans is a gala ball, similar to that held during the nation's Bicentennial.

Other plans include a Town Quilt, picturing the town's history in fabric and embroidery. A commemorative medallion is being designed as a souvenir of the occasion.

One glorious day will feature a town picnic at Ocean Park, a parade and an evening of concert and fireworks.

Committees are still being formed and volunteers are, as always, needed. Duncan Ross is chairman.

Dorothy Cottle Poole, the Society's historian, who seems happiest when digging into a research project, has started work on another book. This one, on the whaling masters of Chilmark, is close to home as both she and her husband, Donald, have whaling masters in their families. When published, the book will spread some of the whaling lure up-island, away from Edgartown which seems to hold most of it today.

August marks the 100th anniversary of the historic steel tabernacle in the Camp Grounds. This graceful, yet rugged, structure

was patterned in the style of the giant canvas tent it replaced so it would harmonize with the tent city that surrounded it. Under its protecting roof, hundreds of thousands have been moved in spirit during the past century.

A week-long celebration will be held, starting Sunday, August 5. Events include a worship service, social hour, old-time songfest, a hymn sing, Illumination Night and a Saturday concert — all in the old tradition of the Camp Ground.

Sunday afternoon, a plaque will be dedicated memorializing the pioneers who started this unique institution.

A historic highlight will occur on Friday night, August 10, when a pageant, written and directed by Mrs. Babs Brittan, depicting events of the "Century of the Tabernacle" will be presented.

Letters

Editor:

Since I am so long a member and a reader of *The Dukes County Intelligencer*, I must write you this brief line of deep appreciation for the able leadership and talents given to our publication by its first editor, Gale Huntington. I feel sure that his services will never be forgotten and that the foundations he laid will keep it alive and flourishing, as it is a unique publication and an important factor in the history and development of our

Island and a revelation of its progress. Most sincerely and gratefully,

ELIZABETH E. SAYRE
(Mrs. Francis B.)

Vineyard Haven

Editor:

Before hordes of Methodists revolve beneath their headstones, so well reviewed in *The Intelligencer*, let me call to your attention an error which cuts to the heart of my alumni's soul.

While it is conceivable that Gale Huntington may know where he is appearing in July, my venerable Alma Mater, rooted in deep Methodist tradition, both on and off Island, has been misnamed and mislocated.

For the record, it is Wesleyan University, not "college," and it is located in *Middletown*, not "Middleton," Conn. Again, for the record, there is a Wesleyan College, a small school for girls, in Georgia, most likely more involved with peanuts, than whales.

It is hoped that the errors will be duly noted and corrected. Having, for many years suffered an institutional paranoia as members of the Little Three, namely "Amherst, Williams, and Who?," to be catalogued for posterity, in the annals of the Society, in error, would be the unkindest cut of all!

BRUCE P. BERNSTEIN, M.D.

New Rochelle, N.Y.

Letters to *The Intelligencer* are welcome indeed and, if deemed of general interest, will be happily published, subject to editing to meet space limitations. Please address your letter to Editor, *The Intelligencer*, Box 827, Edgartown, Mass. 02539.

Director's Report

Spring is upon us and preparations for summer are underway, but first a few reflections on the accomplishments of winter. With money from the Preservation Fund, we reshingled the south side of the Thomas Cooke House and a side of the south ell as well as the roof of the library. A mundane, but important, job this winter was the installation of storm windows on the library, which has greatly reduced our heating costs.

We have scheduled the painting of the outside of the library and the lighthouse, which will be major tasks due to the amount of glazing work required. Also this spring the exterior paint on the Cooke House will be touched up.

Our project inside the house will be exhibit changes in the Adams Room. Using funds from special donors, the highlight of the refurbished exhibit will be lifesized dolls of the Adams sisters, the well-known and vivacious midgets from Chilmark. Margo Datz, a gifted artist, will construct these figures for the Society.

As always, important special projects like this could not have been undertaken without the assistance of volunteers. The Society has an extensive collection of glass photographic negatives that have never been fully utilized because we did not have prints of them. Fortunately, Stan Lair discovered this situation and rectified it by making prints of all the negatives, providing each with an index number. In appreciation of this and other contributions, the Council has elected him an honorary member of the Society. With the help of Harvey Garneau we will put all the prints into albums so that the collection will be much easier to use.

A consistent volunteer for several years, Rachael Williams has again provided us with her talented services by cleaning and refinishing our collection of Van Riper models of Island ferries. The Children's Room (or Borning Room) continues to be improved due to the close attention of Lorna Livingston, who was responsible for the complete refurbishing of it last year. With the second version of *Roots*

on television this winter, genealogical inquiries have been arriving at an increased rate and Doris Stoddard continues to handle them all as a service of the Society. At least half of the inquiries we receive deal with genealogical questions and it often requires a considerable amount of research to find the answers.

As mentioned in a previous issue, we received a grant from the American Association for State and Local History for a consultant to make recommendations for the arrangement of exhibits in the Francis Foster Museum. We have also received a grant from the National Endowment Concerning the Humanities to employ a consultant, who will survey our manuscript holdings to advise us on the best method for preserving and cataloging our archives.

In addition to the above projects, we have been busy with the many routine items that go into the operation of a library — historical society — museum such as ours. At this time of year we are in the process of sending out the second notices to those members who have not yet sent in their annual dues. It will greatly reduce the burden of our paperwork, if we can receive the bulk of these dues before the beginning of the summer season.

As in the past, the Thomas Cooke House will be open from June 15 to September 15, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and we hope that many of our members will have a chance to visit.

THOMAS E. NORTON
Director

Bits & Pieces

As any fool knows who has ever involved himself (or herself) in such an enterprise, historical research often uncovers fascinating data which fit no category or chapter heading except "trivia." It is sheer waste to file and forget these tidbits. Some authors save them for cocktail-party chatterings. Others slip them into footnotes, a bit of pedantic posturing that can be most uncomfortable.

So it is our intent to plant such bits and pieces here on the back page where they may be read, fertilized and (who knows?) one day bear fruit. Here are a few such.

In *Sketches of Martha's Vineyard* quoted herein, S.A. Devens, after many visits to the Island, states that Edgartown is "pronounced Edgar-ton."

Are there those among us who know this to have been so?

Devens further claims that "in the vicinity of Edgartown is a pond which is said to rise in dry weather and fall in wet." He continues, "Do you doubt it, reader? Many of three-score years and ten declare it upon their honor and would testify to it upon oath."

Any who can so testify today?

Still with the notion that the world changes little: Devens writes (in 1838, remember) that "Oil is money." The oil is from whales and not fossils. In those non-militant days, no demonstrators marched to save the whales. 'Tis better, is it not, to burn

fossils as we do now than the body oil from intelligent living mammals as we did then?

Devens loses current relevance, however, when you read the full quote: "Oil is money. Hence on the Island, the circulating medium is plentiful."

Think about it: were not our whaling captains the sheiks of their time? And wasn't Dr. Daniel Fisher, all by himself, yesterday's OPEC?

In the same book, published in 1838, Preacher Devens makes us aware that the world changes little. Coming from Boston, he was sufficiently impressed with the serenity of the Island to write: "At any hour of night the streets are perfectly safe."

Even in 1838, it seems, safe streets were rare enough to write about.

A Cape Cod boy (as he called himself) E. G. Perry, in his book *A Trip Around Cape Cod*, had this to say about our Island back in 1898:

"The island of Martha's Vineyard offers nothing wonderful, or even largely entertaining, in its ancient or modern annals to reward the lover of great deeds or remarkable events as told in story. . . . Here is simply an island in the sea, a gem of earth in ocean setting, so to speak, without historic fame or association, and appearing, for the most part, very much as in the beginning, when it was planted fresh from the hands of the Creator."

A dubious tidbit to end this piece with.

THE EDITOR

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.