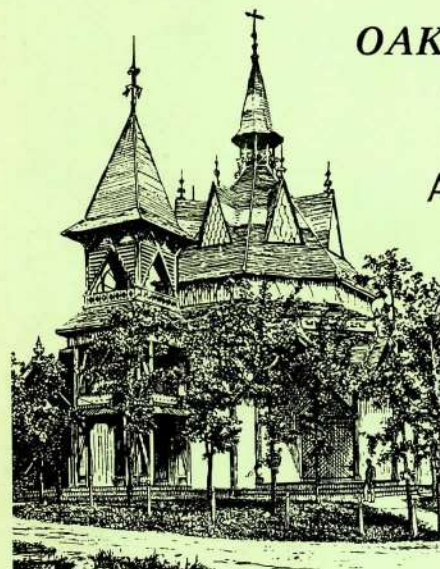




THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 21, NO. 4

MAY 1980



OAK BLUFFS CENTENNIAL

★ ★ ★

Samuel Freeman Pratt:
An Architect of Oak Bluffs

by

ELLEN WEISS

1877 Travel Guide
of Oak Bluffs

by

ORAMEL S. SENTER

☆☆☆

Fifty-Five Years of Island Divorces

by EMILY H. ROSE

Up-Island Tales: Dry and Wry

by CYRIL D. NORTON

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THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER is published quarterly by the Dukes County Historical Society, Inc., Cooke and School Streets, Edgartown, Mass. 02539. Subscription is through membership in the Society. Back issues may be obtained at cover price from the Society.

Manuscripts, letters, news items, and books for review should be sent to the Editor, *The Dukes County Intelligencer*, Box 827, Edgartown, Mass. 02539.

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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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Samuel Freeman Pratt: An Architect of Oak Bluffs

by ELLEN WEISS

Oak Bluffs had many carpenters, builders and architects during its boom building period, the 1870's. None, however, was as interesting a design personality, as compelling or talented a shaper of forms, as Samuel Freeman Pratt, architect of most of the structures erected by the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company and of about a dozen cottages built during the years 1870-1872.

Samuel Freeman Pratt, or "S.F.," as he seems to have preferred to be known, was born in Cohasset about 1826, son of a carpenter. From 1849 to 1869 he lived in Boston where he worked as a "carver," a manufacturer of decorative building parts. During this period he took out fifteen patents, mostly for metal products: stoves, screws, sewing machines, a bicycle frame and boat furniture.

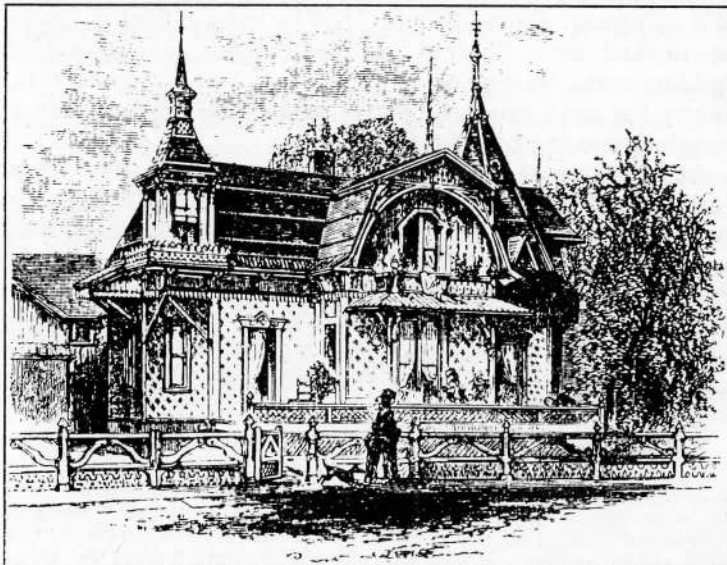
At least one of those patents proved fruitful, that for a "caterpillar," a feed device for sewing machines. His obituary in the *Newport Daily News*, Sept. 22, 1920, notes that because of this patent Pratt was able to spend his years in that city, which probably amounted to half a century, as a gentleman of leisure, a yachtsman and a dedicated walker, who wintered in Florida. The author of the obituary apparently never knew that Pratt had been a carver or an architect.

S. F. Pratt's involvement with architectural design seems to

ELLEN WEISS lives in Providence, R.I., but her affection for the Vineyard brings her to her parents' home in West Tisbury "as much as possible." She is an architectural historian who has taken an especial interest in the buildings of Oak Bluffs and her writings have been published in architectural journals. Her article on the Tabernacle in the Camp Ground appeared in the August 1979 *Intelligencer*.

have been brief and simultaneous with his work at Oak Bluffs. The only off-Island building that is known to be by him is his own house on Bellevue Avenue in Newport, constructed while he was building at Oak Bluffs. He first listed himself in Boston directories in 1869 as an architect, not carver, when he was in partnership with John Stevens. Stevens was a Boston-based designer with a wide New England practice whose work is only now being discovered and assembled. (Preservation-directed surveys of overlooked towns and cities are unearthing a stable-full of talented and hitherto unrecognized nineteenth-century designers.)

John Stevens' activities in Oak Bluffs antedate those of Pratt, going back to early 1867, when he drew some of the ideas for buildings shown on an early Robert Morris Copeland plan for the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company's development. At least two versions of the mansard-roof-cottage-with-tower shown on this early plan were built, one of them for E. P. Carpenter, the leading promoter of the new project. By 1870, however, the Stevens-Pratt partnership had split, with Pratt now listing



Pratt's Newport home, "Bird's Nest Cottage," as seen in Harper's in 1874



Gov. Claflin cottage in Oak Bluffs is same Pratt design as "Bird's Nest." Built about 1871 at 1 Pequot Ave., it has since been severely altered himself in the Boston directory as an independent architect who, it appears, inherited the Oak Bluffs part of the business. From 1870 to 1872, probably about 22 Pratt-designed buildings were built in the new development.*

The 22 Pratt buildings in Oak Bluffs, plus the one in Newport, reveal a designer of remarkable ability, worthy of national recognition. Pratt is a virtuoso of roofs that look like folded paper, of crisp geometries raised to the skies by a full-volume building mass below. Cresting and cupolas, candle snuffers and finials, a whole panoply of secular Gothic silhouette devices, read as almost nervous emanations from

*A detailed account of how the body of work which is here ascribed to Pratt has been defined is in an article by this author in *Nineteenth Century*, published by the Victorian Society in America, Autumn 1978. The attributions rest on newspaper mentions for the Mattakeeset Lodge and Union Chapel, coincidence of publication of drawings of buildings in the various Copeland plans and in an 1873 pattern book (see page 129), a clear identity of the Claflin Cottage in Oak Bluffs with Pratt's own in Newport and, most important, a consistent stylistic similarity among buildings. Since publication of the *Nineteenth Century* article, a mention of Pratt as architect of the Sea View hotel has been found in the *Providence Daily Journal*.



Another Pratt design, the Tillinghast Cottage, 1873, is at 2 Samoset Ave.

the tensions established by the complex geometries in the roof. Then, too, there is a level of abstraction in the designs, a contrasting sense of pure geometry, which seems to anticipate twentieth-century design principles. It is as if, in the words of one enthusiastic observer, he is "doodling in solid geometric shapes."

Where Pratt got all this ability, erupting, it seems in early middle age, is still a mystery. The style of the buildings, the European secular Gothic motif, was an advanced mode in France in the 1860's, particularly developed for suburbs, resorts and country chateaux. It was the style of many of the smaller pavilions at the Paris International Exposition of 1867. Perhaps Pratt went to see that show. Closer to home but also similar to Pratt's work are buildings by Richard Morris Hunt at Newport. Hunt, the first American architect



Howland Cottage, 18 Samoset, a fine example of "roof-level complexities"

trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, was working in this French picturesque vein on large houses that were being built while Pratt was designing for Oak Bluffs. Pratt's brother Frederick was publisher of the Newport *Mercury*, which leads us to assume that the Boston-based designer was well-connected socially in Newport and could have known Hunt. But there is also, in Pratt's designs, something so freshly observed that it is hard to believe that he was not seeing the European sources for himself. And the powerful geometric organization in his style is stronger than in Hunt -- another sensibility entirely.

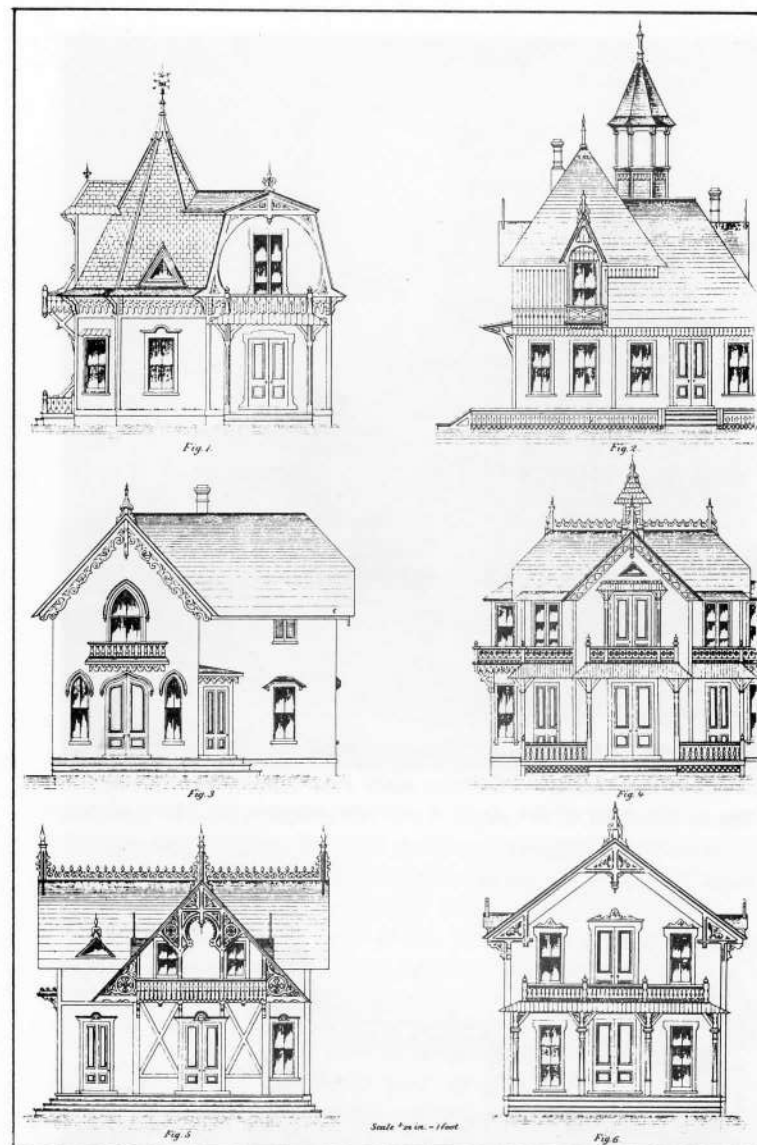
Whether we are dealing with Hunt or Paris as a stylistic source, the Pratt Oak Bluffs cottages are also a comment on the Newport "cottage" of the period. Newport summer houses in the late 1860's were vast three-story wooden piles



In its prime, the Blood Cottage at 24 Narragansett exuded Pratt's style with gables, awnings, dormers, chimneys, cresting, flaring eaves and sculptural mansard roofs. Pratt performed the ultimate act of absurdity of keeping all these roof-level complexities while lopping off the middle story, leaving a big roof on a little house and creating a toy-like rendition of the



Pratt's "cresting and flaring" are seen even on his boardwalk pavilion



This is a page from a design catalog, *Detail, Cottage and Constructive Architecture*, 1873, by A.J. Bicknell. Three of the designs are from Pratt's work: the Howland, the Tillinghast and the Claflin cottages



The 300-foot-long Seaview Hotel had many Pratt elements in its roofline. Below, at the head of the dock, it was the gateway for Island visitors



The Union Chapel, built in 1870, is one of Pratt's outstanding works original. Pratt's Oak Bluffs cottages, left on the sands as performing objects for the passing stereopticon camera, are comic manipulations of the great Newport "cottage" back to some semblance of true cottage size.

Since Oak Bluffs was often described at the time as a middle-class Newport (and the purer and better for being so), this was an exceedingly appropriate thing for him to have done.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author is indebted to Mrs. Edith Blake and Jill Bouck for their help in uncovering the Pratt houses in Oak Bluffs, all of which have been severely altered in the past 100 years. For those readers who might be interested, here is a partial list of locations of the Pratt houses (in addition to addresses given with the photographs): 11 Tuckernuck, 33 Pequot, 345 Canonicus, 10 Canonicus.



Pratt's Mattakeeset Lodge at Katama, 1873, was a design success, but a financial failure. Below, his dining pavilion on the Bluffs boardwalk



Oak Bluffs: An 1877 Travel Guide

by ORAMEL S. SENTER

At Cohasset Narrows, fifty-four miles from Boston, a railroad branches from the Old Colony Railroad to Wood's Hole,¹ seventeen miles, and connecting with steamers of the Old Colony Railroad line takes you to Oak Bluffs, which is seventy-eight miles from Boston. We had read much, and seen many flaming advertisements of this place, some of which were not very judiciously written, and had come to the conclusion that it was either a place of much merit, or a great piece of deception. Happily, our disappointment or realization was on the bright and favorable side; for we never like to censure or appear to underrate persons or places, but prefer to do so, rather than to swerve from the truth or mislead the public. Our motto is:

To praise where we can
Censure where we must.

¹ This branch of the railroad was opened in 1872 and was financed in part by the Oak Bluffs Land & Wharf Company and Dr. Daniel Fisher of Edgartown. Hough, Henry Beetle, *Martha's Vineyard, Summer Resort 1835-1935*, Tuttle Publishing Co., Rutland, Vt. 1936, p 75.

ORAMEL S. SENTER wrote this article in 1877 as part of a longer article entitled "The Cape Region and Martha's Vineyard," that appeared in *Potter's American Monthly* in August 1877. It was the second of a series, "Civic and Scenic New England." The first of the series described Newport, of which Senter wrote "it does not suit the average American, except it may be to gaze at and admire for a brief space, and then leave it for more congenial places. . . until Newport becomes more cosmopolitan in its customs and less expensive, as it will doubtless in time, we must look elsewhere for watering-places for the masses, the millions, so to speak." In his second article seeking "watering-places for the masses," he visited Provincetown, Hyannis, Nantucket, Woods Hole, Plymouth, Marshfield and, of course, Martha's Vineyard. His report on the Island was, as you will read, almost entirely devoted to Oak Bluffs, evidence of the importance of the new community in the creation of "Martha's Vineyard, Summer Resort," to borrow Henry Beetle Hough's phrase. The magazine, *American Monthly*, was published by John E. Potter and Company of Philadelphia.

Oak Bluffs exceeded our anticipation, if what we had read and heard could be relied on as the unvarnished truth. Its location, the facilities for enjoyment and rest, the buildings and the society far exceeded our expectations. The ride over the Sound, of seven miles, is a most delightful one, and as you approach the place by water, the varying aspects of the town, with the charming views of land and water, are calculated to prepossess one in its favor, and the more you inspect its attractions and elements of future growth the more favorable are your impressions. The island on which it is located is peculiar in location, topography and history.

Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket are as completely isolated from the mainland of Massachusetts, as Ireland and Great Britain are from the continent of Europe. Their geologic and climatic conditions, and many of the national productions, differ widely from those of the State at large. On the "Vineyard," the wild deer roam at large, and the prairie-hen, sometimes called the "heath-hen," is found in considerable numbers, a fact in natural history which we believe is true of no other portion of New England. The entire region about Katama, some eight or nine miles from Oak Bluffs, looks so much like a Western prairie, that if one were set down in its midst without knowing where he was, he would beyond doubt suppose himself in one of the prairies of the great West. The resemblance is "very striking."

There are five small towns on the island with a population of about four thousand. Oak Bluffs is situated in Edgartown,² which has a village of the same name, about five miles from the former, a well-built, solid place, and quite a summer resort.

The "Vineyard" is so entirely separated from the rest of the State that it is made to constitute a county by itself (Dukes), small as the population is, Edgartown being the country seat. In the winter season, their only communication with the mainland is by steamer three times a week. As the permanent population increases, especially at the "Bluffs," the trips of the boat will probably become daily, except during the prevalence of severe storms, or obstructions from ice.

²In 1880, three years after Senter's visit, Oak Bluffs was separated from Edgartown, becoming Cottage City.

Oak Bluffs, taken in its largest sense, is made up of three leading elements and three distinct sections -- the Wesleyan Camp Ground, Vineyard Grove, including the Baptist Camp Ground, and Oak Bluffs proper. The first is not a rude camping-ground in the wild woods, occupied by a limited number of board shanties and in the season of camp-meetings by a still larger number of tents; but it is an immense village in a grove, laid out upon the principles of rural art and architecture, with fine streets, and some seven or eight hundred handsome cottages abounding in everything that can minister to the comfort or taste of man. The style of architecture in these, is the very embodiment of elegance and taste, and the streets range in such a manner, whether in straight lines or curves, as to give the finest effect to each



Oak Bluffs' leading promoter, Hon. Erastus P. Carpenter, owned this house, designed by John Stevens, who was Pratt's partner for a while

residence separately, and in their combined effect. When this camp ground, or rather beautiful rural village, and the adjoining streets upon the Bluffs are fully lighted up, as is the custom during the meetings in the month of August,³ the effect is said to be picturesque and brilliant beyond description. Most of these beautiful and comfortable cottages are occupied during the hot season either by the owners or persons to whom they rent them. Some rent theirs till camp-meeting time and then occupy them themselves; and in other instances, where both families are small, they come in during the time of the meeting much like other guests. They of course take much less for the rent of their cottages on account of this reserved privilege.⁴ They are usually furnished by the owners. This portion of Oak Bluffs was commenced about thirty years since, although much of it has been built within the last few years.

West of the Wesleyan camp ground the Baptists also have a camp ground and have made a good beginning towards building up a beautiful rural town for summer residence, and perhaps ultimately for permanent occupancy. The site was formerly owned by the "Vineyard Grove Company," and purchased of them by a number of prominent persons of the Baptist church in 1875, under the name of "The Baptist Vineyard Association," and a number of cottages erected the first year. The site is a high and attractive one, better we think than that of their Methodist brethren. Between the two "camps" there is a fine lake, nearly or quite fresh, though it at one time evidently belonged to the great ocean, which, with its big heart and strong impulses, every now and then pours into it numerous big drops of "joy and consolation." This lake is doubtless a bond of union and peace between the two denominations, for the good Baptist can "dip" himself in its clear waters till all his hardness of thought, if he has any, and other sins are "buried" in them; and his Methodist friends, if perchance their anger should wax hot at any time, can cool their passions in these fair and peaceful waters, so that nothing that is not loving and lovely

shall ever reach the "Highlands" beyond, occupied by their Baptist brethren. It seems almost singular that the latter denomination should hold camp-meetings, though the Presbyterians of the West have done so, this peculiarly American custom having originated with two persons in Kentucky, a Presbyterian and Methodist who were brothers. It seems at first a little strange, too, that the Methodists should wish to have a Baptist association right on their border, and should sell to them the land for building upon. But the explanation is -- that religious denominations harmonize now much better than formerly; that, as a Methodist gentleman remarked, "They had much rather have on their border a body of godly and temperate men than to have to stand watch and ward alone against other classes of the community far less orderly and peaceable."⁵

As to the "Gentiles" who occupy Oak Bluffs proper, "outsiders" as they are sometimes called, we think they are a very peaceable and respectable people. There is the most intimate and friendly intercourse between the different branches of this community, and it would be difficult to tell the difference between those outside and within the "sacred enclosures." Essentially they are one community, and blend and harmonize in most respects admirably.

We saw nothing of that great "impassable wall" between the two classes, the religious and those of mixed views, which some writers referred to and so vividly described. All this separation and difference existed chiefly in the imagination of the writers, though doubtless the contrast may seem greater in time of the meetings.⁶ These generally continue one week, occupying the last part of August, those of the Baptists being held first.

But we were speaking of Oak Bluffs proper, or that part of this "Cottage City" bordering upon the Bay and occupied promiscuously by the world's people somewhat after the simile of the fish gathered into the net; or "the wheat and the

³The first illumination was in 1869 and was sponsored by the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company. *Ibid*, p. 133.

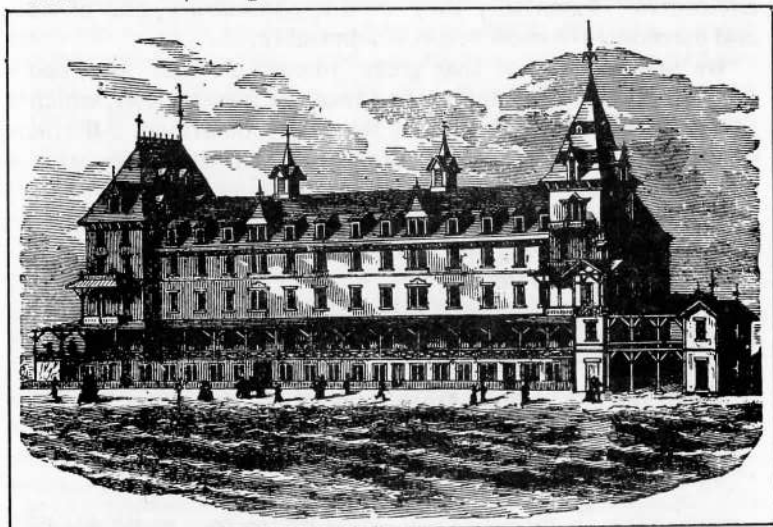
⁴Cottages rented for \$75 to \$150 a season. *Ibid*, p. 125.

⁵The manner by which the Baptists came to the Highlands was a bit more complicated than that. For a thorough report, see Hough's *Summer Resort*.

⁶Senter's description of this relationship was overly sanguine. Only a year or two later, the Camp Ground built an 8-foot picket fence around its entire property, as one non-Campgrounder wrote at the time, "to separate the outside residents from the fold within, lest contamination should ensue." *Ibid*, p. 167.

tares." The site is very feasible and beautiful, unsurpassed, in fact, the walks along its borders next to the ocean having no equal, without our knowledge, except that of "The Cliffs" at Newport.

The cottages are numerous, large and attractive in the highest degree, many of them, in fact, being spacious, tasty and expensive mansions. Here too, most of the large and well-appointed hotels are located, including the "Sea View," the "Pawnee House," "Island House," "Grover House," and others too numerous to mention. The "Highland House," a large and well conducted hotel, formerly upon the European, but now upon the American plan, is situated upon the Vineyard Grove bluff, adjacent to the Baptist camp grounds. It is finely located and, next to the Sea View, the largest hotel and most prominent object when you approach the place by boat. But *the* hotel of Oak Bluffs and of this great watering-place is the SEA VIEW HOUSE. Its site is in the most prominent part of the town, and whichever way you approach the place this house forms a conspicuous and attractive object to the vision. It is nearly three hundred feet in length, four stories high, has some two hundred rooms, and a fine imposing tower at each end. It looks as represented

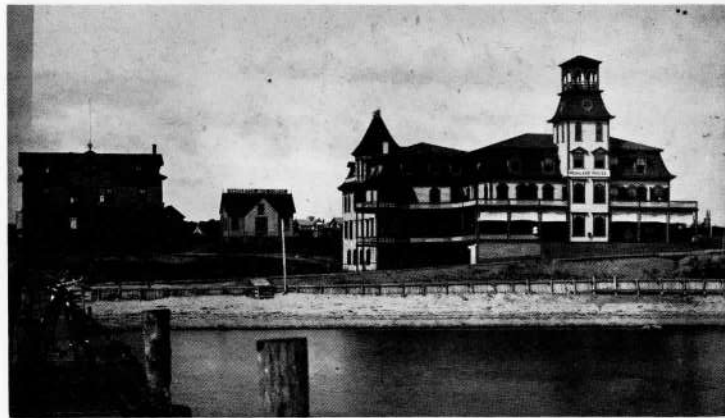


It is this Seaview engraving the author refers to. No dock is shown



The Pawnee House, with its own barbershop, had an elegant air about it in the engraving, only much better, as all well-built structures do. Its situation is directly upon the ocean shore, on the very water's edge, and the views it affords of the Bay as taken in at one commanding sweep, of its mirror-like face, adorned with hundreds of sail, or by a more minute inspection of the numerous coves and headlands of the near and remote shores, and the beautiful islands that seem to repose peacefully upon its waters -- are not only magnificent and of never-tiring interest to the gazer, but the gently lashing strokes and soft gurgle of the waves as they touch the shore, and the low murmur of their more distant and subdued voice, form a chorus soft and sweet as the lullabies of childhood, and that comes gratefully and soothingly to the ears of the guest to woo him to sleep.

We have listened to this music of the night-waves till, charmed and lulled by its sweet sound and borne upward upon the wings of the imagination, we were locked fast in the embrace of Morpheus and the oblivious, healing power of "balmy sleep." The beautiful walk fronting the sea, of which we have spoken, leads directly from this hotel. It was built five years ago, in the most thorough and substantial manner, and furnished with every convenience that the most exacting could wish. It has been under the management of the present proprietor, Mr. H.M. Brownell, from the start. Mr. Brownell



Highland House near East Chop had a dock (note high-wheeled cycles on it) and beach. At left, Agassiz Hall and, center, Bartlett's Art School

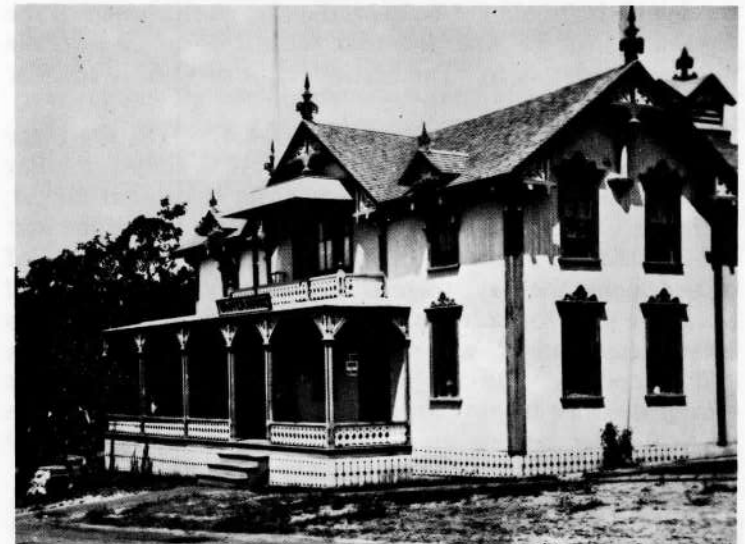
is also proprietor of the Parker House, at New Bedford, the "Sea View" being kept open only during the summer months; and to say that he understands the business and proper standard of a first-class hotel keeper, as very few do, would be only intimating what might be said, but which we forbear to put in words, lest it might be regarded as the language of extravagant praise.⁷ This hotel is run upon the American plan, the prices being as low as the accommodations will warrant. All the others, thirteen inclusive, except the Highland House, are conducted wholly or partly upon the European plan. The Grover House is a group of cottages, with a central house for cooking and supplies, and also for the entertainment of transient guests. It is run upon both the European and American principle. This arrangement has become a settled institution at Newport, as we have seen, and may become so at Oak Bluffs. Of course the hotel keepers here, as in other places, have felt the stress of times that has shaken the whole country and greatly tried

⁷Mr. Brownell was indeed an outstanding hotelkeeper, but the Sea View's financial problems were too great even for his talents. In September 1892, after the season was over, the grand structure burned to the ground in a spectacular fire that must have been visible as far away as Hyannis. Its origin was never determined, but "all the gas jets were found to have been opened." The fire was only the first of several hotel fires in quick succession, all of suspicious origin. Mr. Brownell died of apoplexy six months later at the age of 59. *Ibid.*, pp. 211-9.

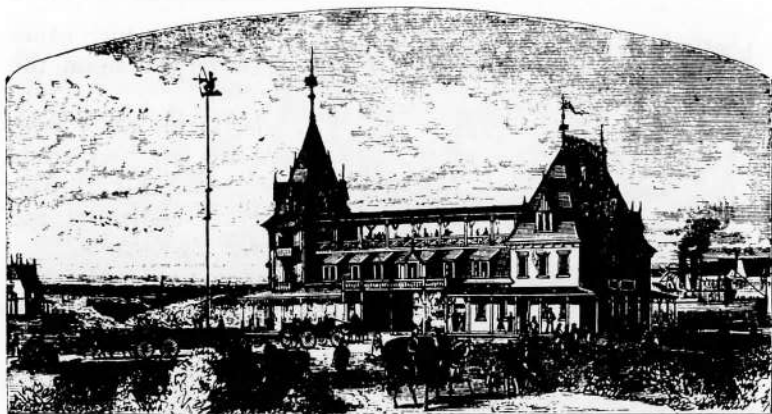
business men of all kinds, for the last four years.⁸

But one great drawback to individual success here is, that there are so many engaged in the business, and the patronage of the travelling public is still further divided up and shared by any number of boarding houses. At Oak Bluffs and vicinity, there are not less than twenty public houses, that are most of them large establishments and claim to be first class, while the number of places that entertain in one way or another can hardly be counted. In view of these two great facts, can it be expected that all the hotels will be full, or make large profits, while the times remain as they are? The number who visit Martha's Vineyard and especially Oak Bluffs, even now, is immense; and if the people here who seek the custom of the travelling public and draw it away from the hotels, had other business, or if most of those who own or rent cottages occupied them for their own enjoyment merely, the public houses would do a very large business and

⁸The nation was in a deep economic slump. It had started in September 1873 with many bank failures. Those readers who like to have a sense of contemporaneous events may be interested in knowing that the year before Senter's trip, 1876, Custer made his Last Stand at the Battle of the Big Horn.



Sign on porch of the Grover House reads "Ice Cream served in all rooms"



In the author's opinion, Mattakeset Lodge at Katama Bay, Edgartown, was "one of the best constructed and arranged hotels in the country" make reasonable profits. If it be said that tourists and summer boarders have the advantage of great competition -- we answer -- it is more likely to prove a "scrub-race" to see which will draw most from a given number. There is only so much patronage to be shared by many, and each one must ask good round prices to live at all. We have said this much to show why it should not be expected that all the hotels of the Vineyard shall be full, and that because they are not, the number of visitors to "The Island" is not necessarily small or really falling off.

Some eight or nine miles below Oak Bluffs is the place marked on the maps as "KATAMA." It is simply a point upon a beautiful bay that makes in from Nantucket Sound, with fine views, good fishing, sailing, etc., and one of the best constructed and arranged hotels in the country; while back of it and along the bay, there is any amount of feasible and attractive sites for cottages. The hotel, whose special name is "Mattakeset Lodge," was erected two years ago,⁹ and it has had to contend with the stress of the times, its somewhat greater distance from the centres of travel and the drawbacks of all new enterprises. With good times and good

⁹Senter is in error here. The hotel had opened in 1873, four years before his visit. It went out of business in 1905. Its South tower, in 1910, was moved to Edgartown to become a significant part of the new Harbor View Hotel. The remainder of the Katama hotel was demolished.

management, this point and the hotel, around which other enterprises may crystallize, should draw largely upon the interest and patronage of the travelling public.

A fine narrow gauge railroad connects this place with Edgartown and Oak Bluffs, and steamboats ply here when the travel warrants it. To the superintendent of this railroad, Mr. Carpenter, we are indebted for many courtesies and much that is here given to the public respecting Katama.

We have spoken only of those portions of Martha's Vineyard which we visited. Other parts are no doubt interesting in many respects, although they are not, with the exception of Vineyard Haven, to any great extent places of summer resort.

In concluding our sketch of "The Vineyard," we may say truthfully, that it has many and great attractions whether we consider the delightful route to it, and the excellent facilities that convey one hither, the beauty of its surface, the superior ocean views and privileges, the fine points that have been built up and opened to the public, or the superior accommodations and means of enjoyment that have been provided and await the demands and pleasure of the tourist.

As to Oak Bluffs, with its great number of first-class hotels, its countless cottages, beautiful as the abodes of fairy land, its excellent society, moral, intelligent, and high toned, yet reasonably open, democratic, and kindly disposed to all, the best and safest shore for bathing almost on the Atlantic coast -- it is the most beautiful of the seaside resorts of Massachusetts, unless it be Nahant, and in our judgment, all things considered, the most attractive place on her entire coast. We may say, in the language of one of old, "The half had not been told me."

OAK BLUFFS



CENTENNIAL

Fifty-Five Years of Island Divorces

by EMILY H. ROSE

In October of 1922, the first complaint for divorce was filed in the Dukes County Probate Court. Prior to that time, all divorces had been handled by the Superior Court. Since 1922, there have been 1138 complaints for divorce or annulment filed in the Probate Court, with more than half being filed during the past 12 years.

Inasmuch as I am a researcher at heart, and nearly all probate cases are public record, I thought it would be interesting to make a study of the county's divorces. Because the earliest data are skimpy and most divorces filed within the past year are still pending, I will confine this report to the 55 years between January 1, 1924 and December 31, 1978.

During those 55 years, 1081 complaints for divorce or annulment were filed, of which 822 have been granted, 636 to women and 186 to men, on the following grounds:

	Men	Women
Cruel and abusive treatment	101	497
Desertion	59	69
Irretrievable breakdown	14	42
Gross and confirmed habits of intoxication by drugs or alcohol	3	11
Adultery	6	4
Willful failure to support	0	8
Other (includes 7 annulments)	3	5
Totals	186	636

EMILY H. ROSE is Register of Probate, Dukes County. This is her second article for the *Intelligencer*, the first having been "Five Generations of Tilton Wills" in the issue of February 1978. She comes by her interest in the *Intelligencer* naturally as her father, Gale Huntington, is Editor Emeritus. She lives with her husband, Ronald, and two children in Vineyard Haven.

Although irretrievable breakdown (the so-called "no fault" divorce) accounted for relatively few of the divorces granted (6.8%) during the 55 years of this study, it should be pointed out that the grounds were not established by statute until January 1, 1976, and that "no fault" has steadily increased in popularity since then. In fact, it has been the grounds in more than half of the divorces granted since it became legal.

Incidentally, a far more fitting name for these divorces would be "Irreconcilable differences" rather than "Irretrievable breakdown" since the latter means literally that the marriage breakdown cannot be retrieved, thus the marriage must be stable. That is the exact opposite of the intended meaning. Obviously, not all legislators are grammarians.

Twenty-five years ago, I learned, in a college course on Marriage and Family, that one marriage in every four was destined to failure and was shocked by that fact. Just recently I read in *Reader's Digest* that today 44% of all American marriages end in divorce and it would not surprise me at all to see the figure rise to 50% in the next few years.

Why are marriages and, consequently, families falling apart? Could the futility of Vietnam have contributed to the "I don't care" attitude? Or could it be that before the possibility of government funds for housing, food, medical assistance and support, people worked harder, not only to earn a living, but also to make a marriage work?

Whatever the reason, the accompanying graph (Fig1) is a scary one. It reflects the normal post-war peaks after the Second World War and the Korean conflict and then a steady sky-rocketing during the past 15 years.

One might be tempted to argue that there are more divorces because there are more of us living on the Island. It is true that the population of Dukes County held fairly steady at around 6000 for several decades and then increased by 33.7% between 1965 and 1975 (from 5948 to 7951). However, the number of divorces increased much faster than the population, from 143 cases during the decade 1956-1965 to 274 cases in the decade 1966-1975, a rise of 92.3%, nearly

triple the population increase. This was not an Island phenomenon alone, as the national rate was increasing in a similar fashion (see Fig. 2).

What can we learn about the men and women involved in these Island divorces from the data available in the public record?

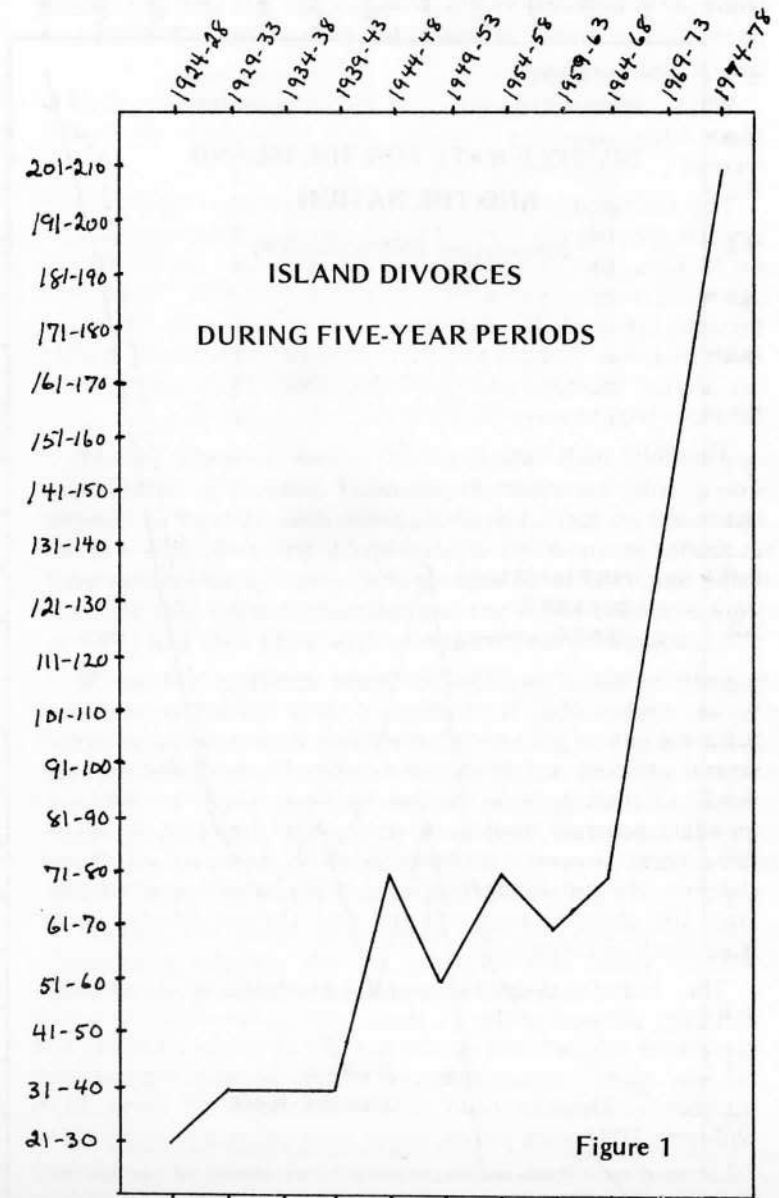
The average age of the individuals is very young indeed. A woman entered her first ill-fated marriage between the ages of 13 (yes, that is correct) and 45, with the median female age being only 19 years. Her spouse took his first "fatal" step between 16 and 46, the male median age being 22 years. Both of these medians are slightly below the national median age at first marriage (*AM JUR 2nd*, Doc. 152), which seems to imply that immaturity contributes to instability.

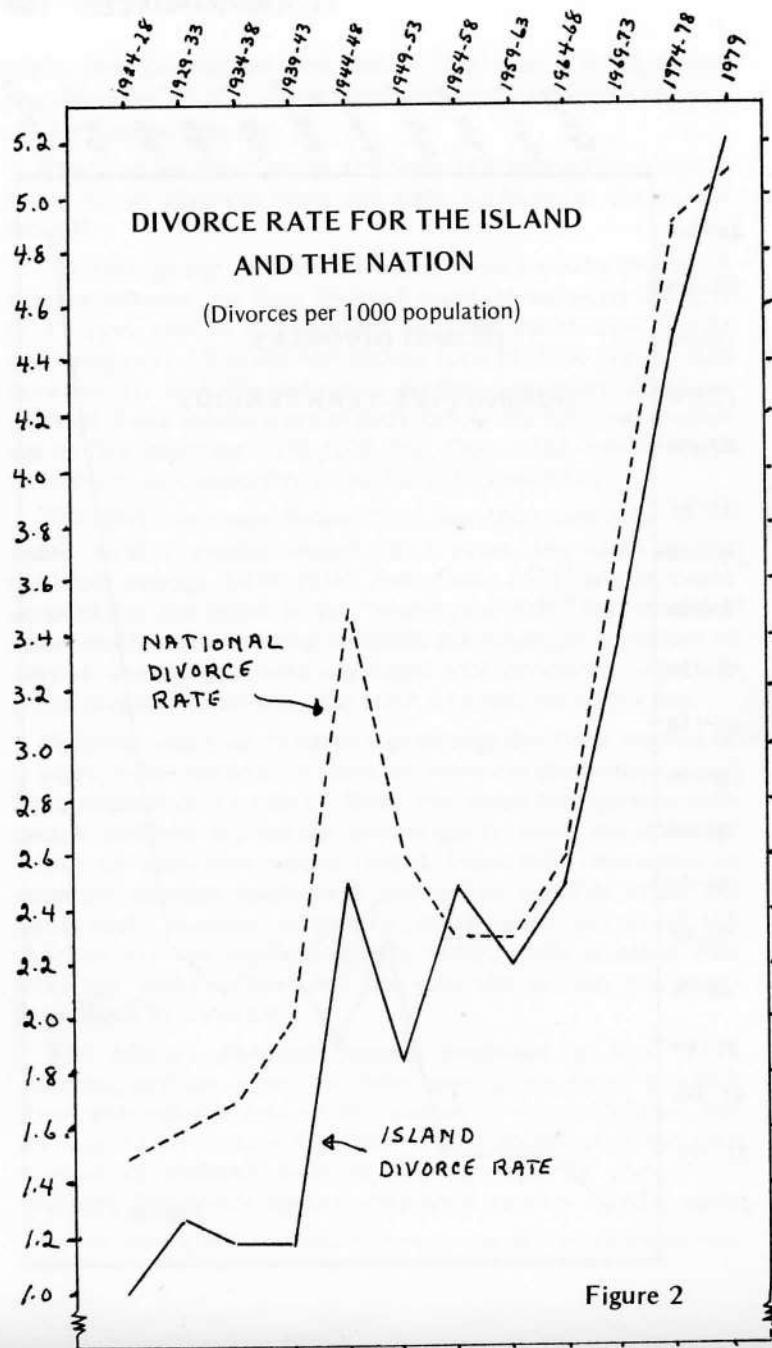
The split marriages lasted from less than one year to 46 years, with a median length of 7 years, the same as the national average (*AM JUR 2nd*, Doc. 151), which could account for the belief in the "seven-year itch." But that itch came much earlier among childless marriages, at a median of only 4 years. For those marriages that produced only one child, divorces came one year later, at a median of 5 years.

Couples with two children stayed together for a median of 9 years, while parents of three or more children stuck it out for a median of 15 years.¹ Does this mean that parents with several children try harder and longer to make the marriage work? Or that they would find it financially impossible to maintain separate households and so live together under the same roof, however unhappily, until some or all of the children are self-supporting? Or, sadly, could it mean that after the children have left the nest the parents no longer have much in common?

The Island's divorced couples produced at least 1176 children, perhaps more, as there were a few cases in which there were reliable data on the number of minor children, but no way to be certain that the minors constituted the total number of children born to the marriage. Of these 1176 children, 1042 were minors when their parents called it quits.

¹ An element in this statistic, of course, is that short-lived marriages must produce fewer children, simply because of the reduced time available.





More than half the couples were either childless or had only one child. The tally comes out like this:

Number of Children	Number of Couples
0	269
1	197
2	164
3	83
4	48
5	16
6	9
7	5
8	5
9	2

These figures seem to indicate that childlessness contributes to divorce. However, the early arrival of a child appears to have an even more disastrous effect on a marriage. Of the 478 divorcing couples with children, on which we have reliable data, nearly 90% greeted their first child within the first two years of marriage and the majority (306 couples or 64%) had their child within the first year of wedlock.

If, as the statistics seem to indicate, a stable marriage requires maturity and a period of adjustment to the idiosyncracies of each partner before taking on the additional responsibility of a family, it should follow that the modern practice of living together before marriage will produce a lower divorce rate. It may do so in time, but today the rate continues to climb. In fiscal 1979, 50 divorces became final in the County of Dukes County, an all-time high.³

Perhaps the secret of a stable marriage can be found on Cuttyhunk. During the 55 years of this study, not one divorce was granted to a resident of Gosnold.

³Here, too, Dukes County is following the national trend. The Island rate in 1979 was 5.2 divorces per 1000 population; the national rate (estimated) was 5.1 per 1000.

Documents

Jeremiah Pease (1792-1857) lived in Edgartown where he served as Customs House officer, light keeper (although during the period now covered in his diary he has been replaced for political reasons), surveyor, bone setter, religious zealot and the father of ten children. He was the individual most responsible for the selection of the site of the Wesleyan Grove Camp Ground. He served faithfully as an official of the Association until his death.

During the period now covered in his diary, Pease was constantly involved in religious activities and we have left out many entries that do not include names of those attending the meetings or happenings of unusual interest.

This diary is being published because it provides an excellent day-by-day record of an important period in Island history when there was no newspaper. We are indebted to Gale Huntington for transcribing and editing this material, as well as for the footnotes.

We began publishing this series November 1974, Vol. 16, No. 2.

May 1842.

5th. Wind SW. Engaged at Custom House.

6th. Wind SW. Mr. Grafton Norton dies at about 1 o'clock a.m. He having been in a feeble state of health for some time previous to the breaking of his thigh no doubt shortened his days

although every attention was paid him and the bone set perfectly.

7th. Wind SW. Went to East Side Holmes with Br. Stickney. Attended funeral of Mr. G. Norton. Returned at evening.

11th. Wind NW. Went to West Side Holmes Hole. Attended temperance meeting.

12th. Wind SW. Engaged in planting corn.

15th. Wind S to NE. West to East Side Holmes Hole attended meetings, Jeremiah went with me. Attended meeting at the school house near I. Norton Esq.'s. Had a very remarkable meeting there. A number were awakened. Charles Kidder embraces religion.

16th. Wind SW. Pleasant. Finished planting corn. Dr. Munger lectures this evening at the Methodist Meeting House on Jerusalem & c. It is very interesting and profitable.

18th. Wind SW. Attended meeting at the School House near I. Norton Esq.'s this evening. It was a blessed time. A number have experienced religion in that neighborhood since last Sunday. At this meeting Widow Rebecca Norton, a very amiable woman, is brought to rejoice in God her Savior. It was a quickening time. Young converts were happy in the Lord and sinners were anxiously seeking the Lord as I trust. I visited many of the inhabitants of the region this afternoon and found them all enquiring the way to Zion.

19th. Wind NE. Rains. Attended the lecture before mentioned.

20th. Wind N. to E. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meetings there during the day and at evening at the School House near I.N. Esq.'s. Jeremiah attended meeting at that

place. Br. Hebron Vincent preached there in the afternoon and returned home in the evening. Br. J.D.P. Jr. & Edn'd Pease, Jeremiah and myself were there. It was a season that will long be remembered. I requested all to arise who had been blessed by the Lord that evening. There were three males and 2 females who arose; Elish Smith, Zacheriah Smith and H.D. Norton, Rhoda Norton & Romelia Norton, a girl about 9 years old. There were but two of the number present that did not speak during the evening. We returned home at about ½ past 10 o'clock rejoicing in the Lord. We have been blessed by the Lord this week.

24th. Wind NE. Attended meeting at the School House near I.N. Esq.'s. It was an interesting time. Brs. B. Davis & E.P. Norton were there. Stiph Kidder is this day happy in the Lord and speaks in meeting this evening to the great joy of all present. Returned at evening.

June 1842.

3rd. Wind ESE. Engaged in surveying land for A. Brown at Chapaquidick.

5th. Wind SSW. Fresh breeze. Meeting at East Side Holmes Hole and at 5 p.m. at the School House near I.N. Esq.'s. Jeremiah attended meeting there during the day. Returned at night. Miss Zared Coffin dies.

8th. Wind NE. Having received an invitation from Thomas Cooke Esq. to visit him and his family I gladly complied although I had not been there since the 31st of December 1829. I had an interesting and pleasant visit.¹

¹Cooke was the son of the famous Thomas Cooke, Collector of Customs under the British Crown and after the Revolution. It is his house that the Society now owns

10th. Wind ESE a.m., p.m. clear. Attended the funeral of a child of Frederick Vincent who died on the morning of the 8th. There being no minister of the Gospel in Town I was requested to perform the services of the occasion. It was a solemn season. Attended meeting at the School House above mentioned at evening with Brs. S.G. Vinson & B. Davis. Returned at evening.

12th. Wind NM to SW. Pleasant . . . at 5 p.m., I attended the wedding of Br. Paul Lucas' daughter. The marriage ceremony was performed by Br. Hiram Loring[?].

15th. Wind S. Rainy. Br. Chas. McReding arrives yesterday from conference which was held at Nantucket and leaves today for Providence to bring his family being stationed here for this year.

19th. Wind SSW. Rains a little in the morning. Attended meetings this day at the School House near I.N. Esq. Br. Stickney preached there at 5 p.m. After which I formed a class. Br. Lumbert from the continent² & Br. Benjamin Davis were there . . . Charles Kidder, Thomas Smith Jr. and his wife and Elisha Smith who have lately embraced religion & Fanny & L.B. Norton who have been members for several years joined this class. May the Lord bless them.

22nd. Wind W. Clear. Mowed my

This visit could have been in that house or in the "new" Cooke house across School Street. By the tone of this entry it would seem that Pease and Cooke may have had a "misunderstanding" somewhere along the line. It could have been political.

²In 1842, apparently, Islanders went to the "continent" not to the "mainland". Like their English ancestors, doubtless.

meadow near the house.

24th. Wind SW. Clear weather. Attended meeting at the School House near I.N. Esq. U.S. Brig *Apprentice* arrives from Boston via Nantucket.

25th. Wind NW. U.S. Brig *Apprentice* sails for New Bedford.

28th. Wind SSW. Attended meeting . . . Br. John Adams and his wife were there. He preached. It was an interesting time. Jeremiah went with me.

July 1842.

2nd. Wind SW. Fresh breeze. Many of the inhabitants were this day engaged in looking for Mr. Edward Weeks, son of Mr. Beriah Weeks, who had strayed from home 2 days before. He is an unfortunate man not possessing sufficient intellect to be left any distance from home being subject to fits and occasional derangement of mind. He had been engaged in hoeing corn not far from his father's house when he was last seen. He was found at about 5 P.M. and returned to his father's house to the relief of great anxiety of his connections and friends. I was first who obtained information of him.

3rd. Wind SW. Fresh breeze . . . At 5 P.M. at meeting. Br. Huxford, Br. John Linton & myself were there. A cloud of unbelief seemed to be there during the most part of the meeting. It was however a good time. Many were refreshed from the presence of the Lord.

8th. Wind SSW. Engaged with hay. Attended Class meeting at M.D. Br. J. Adams & wife were there. A good season.

10th. Wind SW. West to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended meetings at Br. A. Weeks. Br. I. Norton was there. Had a very interesting time.

17th. Wind N. Calm. Very warm. Attended meeting at M.D. Jeremiah went with me. Br. Joseph Linton and son were there from North Shore. Br. J. Norton from Holmes Hole & Br. Lumbert from Sandwich. It was a very interesting time. Sinners were awakened and young converts rejoiced in the Lord. The house was full. More than twenty took an active part by speaking or praying in meeting. Returned at night.

18th. Wind SW. Warm. Engaged with hay. Attended meeting at M.D. Br. J. Adams and wife were there.

19th. Wind SW. The collector goes in the Cutter *Jackson* to visit Light Houses. Engaged with hay and at the Custom House.

23rd. Wind SW. Fresh breeze. Mr. Thomas Smith's wife breaks her leg very badly. Went there and set it. Collector arrives today.

24th. Wind SW. Fresh breeze. Attended meeting at East Side Holmes Hole. Jeremiah was at M.D. Visited Mr. Smith's wife twice today.

25th. Wind NE to SW. The new Methodist Meeting House is partly raised today.

26th. Wind SW. Fresh breeze. Meeting House partly raised today.³ Attended meeting with Br. Adams. Br. Gow and wife are baptised in the Pond near

³The timbers for a building as large as Edgartown's new Methodist Meeting House could not all be put in place in one day. But it went quickly. The tower was started on the 30th, as we shall see.

Constant Norton's house.⁴ Visited Thomas Smith's wife.

29th. Wind S. Foggy. Rains a little. Went to Thomas Smith's to see his wife.⁵ Attend Class meeting at M.D.⁶ Br. Adams was there.

30th. Wind SW. Fresh breeze. Part of the tower of the Methodist Meeting House raised today. William arrives from Norfolk.

31st. Wind SW. Attended meeting at M.D. Jeremiah was there. William is Published this day to Miss Susana Pease.⁷

August 1842.

1st. Wind N. Cloudy, rainy. Isabella⁸ goes to New Bedford.

2nd. Wind SW. Isabella returns. William received orders today to join the Cutter *Jackson* at New Port.

3rd. Wind W. Light. William goes to New Port.

5th. Wind SW. Attended meeting at M.D. Br. Adams preached at 5 p.m.

⁴Converts in the Methodist Church seemed to have had the choice of baptism by immersion if they so desired.

⁵Jeremiah, as regular readers know, was a skilled bone setter, having learned the skill from Rev. Joseph Thaxter. He was not only skilled, but conscientious, as evidenced by frequent visits to his patients.

⁶The "M.D." so often mentioned refers, we believe, to the Middle District, a section between Edgartown and Vineyard Haven where there was a school house in which religious meetings were held.

⁷It was required that Intentions to Marry be "published" or announced in the church at least two weeks before the ceremony.

⁸Jeremiah's daughter, one of 10 children.

Then baptised Charles Kidder and Eunice Lumbert in the pond near Constant Norton's Dwelling. Attended class meeting at evening. Eunice Lumbert joins the class at this meeting. Br. Adams attended Class. Br. Otherman & daughter arrive to attend quarterly Meeting & Camp Meeting.

7th. Wind SW. Fresh breeze. Attended meeting at East Side Holmes Hole. Br. Weeks and Br. Chase were there. Rev'd Jesse Pease baptised 6 persons at M.D.

12th. Wind NE. Went to see Thomas Smith's Wife on account of her leg. Attended meeting at M.D.

13th. Wind NE. Rev'd. Jesse Pease Baptised 2 persons.⁹

16th. Wind S to SW. Went to Camp Meeting At East Chop, remained there until the 24th.¹⁰ It was a very excellent meeting. There were 21 or more preachers present. The effects will be realized hereafter and fully known in eternity.

24th. Wind SE. Light. Returned from Camp Meeting. William was married on the 22nd instant and starts for New Port Station via Boston.

⁹Many of those who were becoming Methodists had not belonged to any church, but a large number had been Congregationalists. As the Methodist Church grew, due to the efforts of men like Jeremiah and Reformation John Adams of Holmes Hole, who conducted the Island's first campmeeting in 1827 on West Chop, the old Pilgrim church, the Congregationalist, diminished in all the towns.

¹⁰This was the eighth Camp Meeting on the site selected in 1835 by Jeremiah. There were, by now, "forty tents, sheltering 1,189 persons" and "the congregation on Sunday numbered about 2,500 persons." Hough, *Martha's Vineyard, Summer Resort 1835-1935*, Rutland, Vt., 1936, p. 43.

28th. Wind SW to W. Went to North Shore. Attended meeting with Br. John Adams. The meeting was held in a grove of woods near Br. Leonard Luce's dwelling house. There were a great many persons present. The Communion of the Lord's Supper was administered after the afternoon service. There were 4 persons who came out from the Congregation and knelt upon the ground in prayer for the blessing of the Lord to rest upon their Souls. I returned to the M.D. at 6 p.m. and attended meeting there with Jeremiah who had attended meeting there during the day. Returned at night.

29th. Wind N. Very warm. P.M. West. Thunder showers. John goes to learn a carpenter's trade of Br. Charles Worth. September 1842.

4th. Wind SW. Attended meeting at North Shore. Br. Adams preached in the Grove before mentioned. It was an interesting season. A great number attended from various parts of the Island. Jeremiah was at Chapaquiddick & attended meetings there.

22nd. Wind SW. Cutter *Jackson* arrives. William comes in her.

23rd. Wind SW. Light. The corps of Capt. Ephraim Ripley arrives from Boston he having been sick and died at the hospital at that place.

24th. Wind SW. Settled Capt. R. Luce's account of Buoys¹¹ at the Custom House, he being present. This is his last account of Buoys. William sails in the Cutter *Jackson* for New Port.

28th. Wind SW. Funeral of Sister Nancy Mills, Wife of Isiah Mills who died on Monday morning. Service by Rev'd Chas. McReading & Rev'd W. Holmes of the Baptist Church.

30th. Wind ESE. Pleasant. Br. Jonathan Ward of New Bedford having been with us a few days for the purpose of having his shoulder set returns this morning with the complete use of his arm except what is caused by weakness.

¹¹The Customs House was responsible for lighthouses and navigational marks and apparently Captain Luce had been hired to maintain the buoys.

It's only a suggestion . . .

Do you know someone (in the intelligentsia, of course) who would enjoy reading the *Intelligencer* regularly? It's a simple matter to arrange a gift. Just send \$8, along with the name and address, to the Dukes County Historical Society, Box 827, Edgartown, Mass. 02539, and we'll do the rest. The recipient will receive not only a year's subscription to this quarterly, but a membership in the Society as well.

Books

The Black Ships by Everett S. Allen, Little, Brown and Company, Boston. 298 pp. \$10.95.

This is the story of rumrunning during prohibition. It is a history of what was almost a civil war in America, a war in which Vineyarders took sides.

This reviewer remembers it all very well -- the men, the boats, the escapes, the sinkings and the wrecks. Frank Butler of Nomansland, one of the most daring of those who challenged the United States Coast Guard, was my wife's great uncle. And Chester M. Poole, a neighbor of ours on Quitsa, was on the other side of the struggle. He patrolled the beaches and smashed every bottle he found that had washed ashore. That was a bit difficult for me to applaud, but he remained my friend and my mentor in Vineyard history and folklore.

This is a valuable and scholarly book and well documented. That "almost" civil war continued for more than fifteen years. It went on even after the repeal of the Prohibition Amendment in 1933, because it took some time for the liquor industry to get back on its feet again and to be able to meet the demand. During those years a few of the rumrunners became very wealthy, but most did not.

Songs of the Sea by Stan Hugill, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York. 189 pp.

Here is a book for all who are interested in the sea and in the songs that seamen sang. Stan Hugill is a

former deepwater sailor who surely knows what he is writing about. His *Shanties from the Seven Seas*, published in 1961, is a classic and is the definitive work on chanties. In his newest work, *Songs of the Sea*, there is a lot more than just chanties. Included are whaling songs, sea songs, fo'c'sle songs and more. It is a beautiful book, profusely illustrated, and the music is clear and easy to read.

GALE HUNTINGTON

Letters

Editor:

Gale Huntington's article, "The First Up-Island Summer People" (February 1980), is excellent and I am honored to have been mentioned. However, Gale forgot that George Blackwell of Chilmark has two brothers: John of Lexington, Mass., who has two sons; and Lane Blackwell of New York.

So there are a few more of our branch of the family with the Blackwell name on this side of the Atlantic.

ETHEL WHIDDEN

Vineyard Haven

Letters to *The Intelligencer* are welcome indeed and, if deemed of general interest to the members of the Society, will be happily printed, subject to editing to meet space limitations. We are especially anxious to hear from readers whose research and recollections may be more accurate than ours. Please address your letter to Editor, *The Dukes County Intelligencer*, Box 827, Edgartown, MA. 02539.

Up-Island Tales: Dry and Wry

As collected by Cyril D. Norton

For years, Oscar Flanders and his father-in-law, Bartlett Mayhew, before him furnished the public transportation between Chilmark and the down-Island towns. Some years ago, I was on a trip with Oscar down the South Road and he pointed to the right side of the road and said, "A feller just bought that land a short time ago." I said, "That so?" "Yes," continued Oscar, "he stopped me the other day. He was standing right beside a No Trespass sign and he said 'Oscar, what do you think of my new sign?' To which I replied, 'I don't think but damn little of it.' He said, 'What's wrong with it?' 'Well,' sez I, 'you've been around Chilmark for quite a few summers haven't you?' He agreed that he had. 'And,' sez I, 'you walked over anybody's land you wanted to without seeing any No Trespass signs, didn't you?' He said that was true. When I came back, the feller had taken down the sign."

During a severe drought around 1900, a prayer meeting was being held in North Tisbury, the chief object of which was to pray for rain. Among those present were Alonzo Tilton and blind Nathan Athearn of North Tisbury. Mr. Tilton prayed as follows, "Oh, Lord, please throw open the heavens for us and give us rain. Give us copious showers. Give us a

downpour of rain to wet our dry and parched earth."

Then Blind Nathan rose up and offered his prayer as an offset to Alonzo's. He prayed, "No, Lord, don't give us copious showers and especially don't give us any deluges, for such a rain would wash all our topsoil away. But, oh Lord, just give us a drizzle drizzle."

Frank Cottle, later a whaling master himself, was sitting on a cap-log on the New Bedford waterfront waiting for Captain Daniel Flanders with whom he expected to ship on his first whaling voyage. An old man came along and asked, "Going whaling, young feller?" Frank agreed that he was and that he hoped to go with Capt. Dan'l Flanders.

The old man cleared his throat. "A good man," he said, "a good man but sworn not to be suited. Damned if he can even suit himself sometimes."

This was quite true for Captain Daniel had been known to give an order and shortly come on deck again and countermand the order that he had just given and swear that he had never given the earlier order. This sometimes bothered his officers. But Captain Daniel had also been known to take a sick seaman into his own stateroom and see to it that the sick man received every possible attention.

A story of Phoebe Lumbert from about 1859: She would say, when matters came up between her and her husband, James: "If James is suited, I'm on-suited, and if I'm suited James is on-suited. Therefore, I would say, 'Just as you say, James, not as I care.'"

One day a caller on Wilbur Flanders began to tell what he considered a bit of choice gossip that was harmful to the person it was about. Wilbur listened for some time and then said, "How do you know this?" The caller who was telling the story began, "They say that..." That was as far as he got. Wilbur stopped him. "They Say is a goddamned liar," he said, ending the conversation. And that was entirely characteristic of the Wilbur Flanders that I knew.

Mr. C. Crandon Look and his spuds: When Burt and Art Smith were in the grocery business in Vineyard Haven, Mr. Look came to their store on Main Street one day with quite a substantial number of bushels of potatoes which the Smith brothers had agreed to buy. Removing the spuds from his wagon, Mr. Look announced that there were so many bushels of sixty pounds each. Mr. Burt Smith reckoned they had better be weighed.

Mr. Look tilted back his head, definitely offended that his word regarding the amount was questioned, but he said nothing. Mr. Art Smith

stood by with a half grin on his face. The spuds were weighed and came to a substantial amount more than the weight declared by Mr. Look.

"Okay," declared Burt Smith, "they're all right for weight." His brother Art spoke up, "No, you don't. You'll pay Mr. Look for the actual weight of his potatoes and you'll learn that when up-Islanders say a thing is so, you can depend on its being just what they say it is."

Cran, as all his fellow townsmen called him, went home highly pleased with the whole transaction.

John Bassett was an exceedingly intelligent man, but because of his sometimes peculiar actions, many people, particularly the victims of some of his jokes, did not think him very bright. Another reason may have been that John was never too particular about the appearance of his working clothes. Roger Allen (Chilmark's master carpenter) was one who fully recognized John Bassett's above-average intelligence. Roger dropped in on John one day and found him with his nose a few inches above an ant hill. John was studying the action of the ants intently. Getting to his feet all he said to Roger was, "Very industrious."

An old saying of grandmother Mary Ellis Tilton: "Dished up and done for in a way most amazing."

CYRIL D. NORTON, a native of Chilmark, was a Harvard graduate with a master's degree in education from Boston University. He taught school in New Hampshire and western Massachusetts, but spent most of his life in Chilmark, where he served as Town Clerk. He was a recognized expert on old up-Island houses and folklore. These tales are included in a manuscript made available by his wife, Evie Norton. Mr. Norton died in 1977.

Director's Report

Back in 1976, the Dukes County Historical Society received some high praise which completely escaped our attention at the time. Fortunately, the information has now come to our attention through Ginger Laux of Edgartown and we want to pass it along to everyone.

Women's Wear Daily produces a magazine called *W* and its issue of February 20-27, 1976, was entirely devoted to an article on the subject of "Quality." In its listing of 28 "quality" museums of the world, one will find included the Dukes County Historical Society, along with such institutions as the New York Historical Society, the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art! Indeed, this puts us in some high-class company, but not without justification. From the reactions of people who visit the Society, we are constantly made aware of a special appeal to be found in the various nooks and crannies of our half acre at the corner of Cooke and School Streets.

To some extent that special appeal involves the general appearance of our buildings and exhibits -- neat, clean and in good repair, but not too slick. In attempting to maintain this state of things, we seem to be following a pattern set by the owners of the Thomas Cooke House down through the years. These owners apparently had enough money to keep the house in good condition, but not so much money that they were constantly making alteration. Thus, without any major restoration work, the House remains much the same as it was two hundred years ago.

Nevertheless, we constantly need to keep up with the maintenance of our six buildings. This winter, we reshingled the front of the Thomas Cooke House as well as the roof of the Lighthouse. Although the Lighthouse is a small building, it is proving to be one of those unexpected large expenses that often crop up. Putting wooden shingles on the circular

roof was costly and painting the structure will also be expensive, because all the glazing around the large windows needs to be removed and replaced.

Fortunately, our Preservation Fund provides the money to solve these maintenance problems and we would like to take this opportunity to thank those members who have made contributions to that Fund (in addition to their dues) so far this year. The names of those generous contributors (as of March 1, 1980) are printed on the inside covers, front and back, of this issue.

For those of you interested in music of the sea, Mystic Seaport plans to host a festival from June 13 to 15, 1980, and we are pleased to note that Gale Huntington of our Society is one of the two featured speakers and singers. Upon retiring as Editor of the *Intelligencer* three years ago, Mr. Huntington promised to devote his extra time to a number of historical endeavors. His planned appearance at Mystic Seaport this summer is just another fine example to demonstrate that he has kept his promise to history lovers.

We are looking forward to another successful summer season. We will be open, during the period June 17 to September 13, from 10 o'clock to 4:30 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday (except July 4th).

Please be sure to stop in for a visit.

THOMAS E. NORTON
Director



Who will forget the original Darling's? Its aroma was its trademark

Bits & Pieces

In 1932, Oak Bluffs was not only a place. It was a state of mind. For me, Oak Bluffs was Fun City.

That summer I spent my evenings savoring it. My Uncle Jack, Depression-unemployed, was building a couple of houses in Edgartown, one for himself and another for his cousin. I was his low-paid laborer.

After work, we'd take a quick swim at the "Bend," eat supper and head in his aging Nash for the Bluffs, early enough to get our parking space between the Tivoli and the Flying Horses, at "Oscar's" souvenir stand.

And there we'd sit, every night, as daylight faded and Fun City came alive. Our entertainment was watching - we watched happy vacationers stroll by, stop to look at and sometimes buy Oscar's treasures.

About 9 o'clock, I'd take my walk. First, the Flying Horses. I never took a ride, but it was fun going through the building, absorbing the bouncy, up-beat music and admiring the grace of the riders as they snatched three, sometimes four, rings at a pass. With a studied nonchalance, they'd toss them into the bin if there was no brass.

Next, the auctions. My favorite was on the bluff, overlooking the Sound. Handsome, silver-voiced salesmen beguiled admiring ladies who filled the room nightly to spend more than they wanted on some knickknack they had little use for.

Then up the Avenue, past the big hotels, their long piazzas lined with rocking-chair regulars, endlessly chattering. I was heading toward the

tantalizing aroma that was Darling's. That sweet, cloying smell was as much a Bluffs trademark as Ocean Park.

Its entire front open to the street, Darling's offered a smorgasbord of candies and popcorn concoctions. As the tireless taffy-pulling machine worked its miracles, customers stepped up to hand a nickel or a dime to the bustling clerks for something sweetly frivolous -- Depression or not.

Once a week, I'd splurge on a bag of hot, buttered popcorn. Walking back to the car, munching on the tender kernels, I'd feel mighty rich indeed.

At about the Island House, I'd begin to hear the mellow sound of the band at Will Hardy's Tivoli. If it was a "Special Night" and Mal Hallet's Band was down from Boston, it might include Jack Teagarden's immortal trombone, although I had not heard of him then.

Back in the Nash, I'd offer my uncle the last of the popcorn (he'd never take any) and there we'd sit, saying little, just enjoying the ambiance of the Bluffs.

Soon Oscar would lower the shutters at the Tivoli end to block the cool ocean breeze. The strollers were few now, the carousel silent, the quiet summer night punctuated only by ballroom rhythms and the happy voices of couples on the Tivoli balcony. There was a delicious quality to the moment.

Uncle Jack, thinking about tomorrow's work, would shatter my mystical moment. "Time to head back to Edgartown." We'd cut through Ocean Park, past doll houses already starting to show Depression neglect, but the soft lights and Tivoli music wiped away the wrinkles.

It was a time to remember.

A. R. R.

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(Continued from inside front cover)

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Thank you.

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