Portfolio of Cottage City Views

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by
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THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER
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Documents: Jeremiah Pease Diary

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Acquired by the Society in 1935, the Thomas Cooke
House was built in about 1765. It has been established as a
museum and its twelve rooms are devoted to historical
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in an adjacent building and are open to the public all year
round. In the Museum are displays of scrimshaw, ship
models and paintings. The Library is devoted to Vineyard
history and has valuable collections of whaling logs and
genealogical works.

The public is invited.

Vineyarders Down East

by DOROTHY COTTLE POOLE

Martha’s Vineyard was settled in 1642 by Thomas
Mayhew, Jr., and several other families from
Watertown, Massachusetts. A beautiful Island
with a temperate climate and an abundance of game, fish
and berries, its soil was poor, turning men toward the sea
and, eventually, as the population increased, causing
many to seek homes elsewhere.

At first, these emigrants from the Vineyard left singly or
by two’s or three’s, seeking richer farmlands. They went in
all directions, but a great many of them steered northeast
and settled in widely scattered parts of what is today the
state of Maine, then a part of Massachusetts. Sometimes,
other Vineyarders would join them and certain
settlements, through not so named, became “New
Vineyards.” Addison was one such settlement in Maine.

The first Vineyerder who ventured this far Down East
was Wilmot Wass, a brazier and trader who had come to
West Tisbury from Boston with his wife and three young
daughters in 1737. Through the years, during which his
family increased to fourteen, Mr. Wass became a leading
citizen of the mid-Island town.

In 1767, he decided to emigrate and sailed as far east as

1 The settlement in 1791 of New Vineyard, Me., was a real migration of about a dozen
families from Martha’s Vineyard. For the full story of this migration see A New
Vineyard, by the present author, available through the Society.

DOROTHY COTTLE POOLE of Chilmark is the Historian of the Society and is a
major contributor to the study of Island history through her articles and books. Her
most recent book is A Vineyard Sampler, published in 1978. She is currently at work on a
book about the whaling masters of Chilmark.
Machias, perhaps seeking the ideal home site, then he doubled back until he reached Pleasant Bay and sailed up it to the mouth of the Pleasant River. Great Wass Island, now a part of the town of Beals, was later named for him, but Wilmot Wass settled on Cape Split and is commonly acknowledged to have been the first settler of Addison, though concrete evidence is lacking that he was indeed the first.4

The Addison-Harrington Register of 1905 states that “In 1770 word came to Martha’s Vineyard that cod were plenty in Wescogus River near Jeremiah Plummer’s house. Mention was also made of the abundance of fine quality of meadow grass on Plummer’s and other meadows.” That year, 1770, a Captain Luce, who regularly sailed a sloop Down East from the Vineyard, exchanging goods for lumber, brought seven families to settle in Addison.

The name of one of the families has been lost. Another was Daniel Small’s, who seemed to have no connection with the Vineyard. The five other families were headed by Seth Norton, Daniel Look, Richard Coffin, Samuel Coffin and Barnabas Coffin. The majority of present-day residents of Addison and many in nearby towns, can claim descent from these Vineyard emigrants and Wilmot Wass, who had already established his home on Cape Split.

Seth and Amy Norton with their small children, Elihu and Abram, settled at the head of Pleasant Bay. They had five other children, probably all born in Addison: Seth, Elisha, Amy, Hepsibah and Betsey. Seth Norton’s will is on file in the Courthouse at Machias and, according to Lawrence Norton of nearby Jonesport, “His widowed daughter, Hepsibah Ramsdale, was left two cows, four sheep, wood for 1 fire, hay, pasturage, right to live in his

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2Mr. Lawrence Norton, Jonesport, Me.
3Addison-Harrington Register of 1905, p. 9.
4Ibid., p. 9. “There seems to be no doubt that the inhabitants of Martha’s Vineyard sent the first settler to our town, but who this person was, and the date of his arrival, is not definitely known.”
5Ibid., p. 30.
house. If she remarried = 0 zero! Her brothers, Elisha, Abram and Elihu6 fared pretty well."

Daniel and Ann Butler Look with three small boys and an infant daughter were neighbors of the Nortons. The Looks added five daughters and a son to their family after they settled in Addison, but only three lived to maturity: Damaris, Eunice and Daniel, the youngest.

The Coffin brothers, Samuel and Richard, acquired adjoining lots of land at the head of the Bay, according to an old map in the Mayhew Library.7 Samuel’s wife, Elizabeth, was a Gardiner from Nantucket. Their daughter, Miriam, married a Beal. Her daughter married Jeremiah Beal Norton, Jr., and his son, Ferdinand, married Julia Ada Davis. Their son is Lawrence Norton of nearby Jonesport, now 87 years of age and an acknowledged authority on the history of the area.

Richard Coffin’s wife, Mary, was the daughter of Temple Philip Cooke, an erudite schoolmaster and attorney of Edgartown.

Another Vineyard descendant, Oscar Look, is harbormaster and proprietor of a small store on the dock at Addison. Twenty years ago, when this store was serviced entirely by water, it carried all the necessities the townsfolk could not raise themselves. As recently as ten years ago, its stock of staples was adequate, though supplied by truck, not vessel. Now the showcases are sparsely filled and only an occasional candy and tobacco salesman calls at the store, which is inadequately warmed in winter by a pot-bellied stove in the rear. There, Mr. Look has his old-fashioned roll-top desk where he does his accounts and, in a place of honor, displays the pictures of his five children: Jane, Katherine, Sarah, Oscar Jr., and Robert, all accomplished musicians.

Cramming one display case in the store are odd stones, shells and fish skeletons, while hanging from the rafters are many curios from the sea and mementos of the owner’s years on Bataan in World War II. Displaying his treasures, Mr. Look, the great, great, great grandson of Daniel Look, who left Martha’s Vineyard before the Revolutionary War, relives the horrors of the 1942 Bataan “Death March” in which he participated.

Some younger progeny of Vineyarders in Addison are Frederick Davis, a young lobsterman, and his sons. They are descendants, through Seth and Amy Norton, of Alice Sisseton, the daughter of the Sachem of Sanchacantacket. Mr. Davis’ family comes from Cutler, Maine, where William Davis married Lucy Ann Beal Norton, the granddaughter of Seth and Amy Norton.

Merritt and Tabbitt are common family names in Addison and among these families are descendants of Emma Norton, daughter of Seth and Amy Norton. Emma married a Merritt and her daughter married a Tabbitt. Mrs. Frederick Davis of Addison has made a study of the families in town and finds that many are related to Vineyard people by marriage. There are Alleys who are married to Nortons and to a Coffin; Crowleys who are married to a Norton, a Wass and a Tabbitt. Historian Lawrence Norton states that “practically all the residents of Addison are descendants in one way or another of the Vineyard Settlers.” He adds that intermarriage was common, “with nobody else to marry, but there were no more fools and just as many bright as anywhere. In fact, the residents of Addison were self-sufficient, resourceful, thrifty, forehanded, intelligent and smart!” (Like their Vineyard forebears, we like to believe.)

The Pleasant River meanders across Washington County from its source in the northwest corner down to Addison on the Atlantic Ocean. It is navigable only as far inland as Columbia Falls, which is just above Addison, and where there once was a thriving shipbuilding industry that turned out 100 or so full-rigged ships. Now the shipyard
site is the neighborhood shopping center, but the river is still beautiful along its entire course.

Addison itself spreads over a large area and includes many islands, coves and headlands. Addison Point was once considered the elite part of town with stores, lodge and church surrounded by stately elms and well-kept homes, many of which have been destroyed by fire.

South of the point on the east side of the river are Eastern Harbor, the Carrying Place and Tumble Down Dick, once a valuable black-granite quarry, but now the site of a handsome modern home overlooking the islands and Mount Cadillac to the south. Another black-granite quarry was at the Nelson Carver homestead on the west side of the river. There, too, may be seen an old shipyard and an old sardine cannery, remnants of earlier industries. Back on the east side of the river are places with such names as Through the Woode, Tabbitt's Narrows, Kent Place and Cape Split, where Wilmot Wass settled and where some of his descendants live today.

To the east of Addison Point is Wescogus and then one goes through Addison Woods to Indian River, once a thriving village, but now decadent. Crowley's Island is reached from here and across the Indian River Bridge is the town of Jonesport. In all these settlements are families with Vineyard names or with Vineyard ancestors.

Why did Vineyarders go so far to find a new home? Very early in the Island's history there was established a coastwise trade with the entire coast of Maine. Large land tracts in what is now Maine were awarded to towns in Massachusetts to encourage settlement “Down East.” Vineyard fishermen sailed Down East to catch, dry and salt cod and were knowledgeable about the area. Eventually, many of the people engaged in these activities became settlers.

Their new homes were “salt water farms” like those on the Vineyard only with more space. Behind them were thick forests with excellent lumber and many fur-bearing animals. In front was the ocean, teeming with fish and dotted with islands. As on Martha's Vineyard, sheep raising was an important part of farming. Sheep needed little care and furnished meat for the table as well as wool to be woven into clothing and blankets. Whenever they could, the fishermen-farmers bought islands on which to pasture their sheep and these islands still bear the names of the old settlers: Great Wass Island, Dyer Island, Look Island, Norton Island, Tabbitts Island and others. Little Wass Island was later purchased by the Beal family and renamed Beals Island.

The early settlers built small one-and-a-half-story houses, not log cabins. As they prospered, they moved up to larger and sturdier New England houses, a few of which still stand. Usually, the building was actually a set of buildings, consisting of a main house with a long ell, a woodshed, a wagon house, a barn and the privy, plus smaller separate buildings for pigs, hens, etc. This type was used even in the villages although sometimes, as on the Vineyard, the barn was built a safe distance from the house to save one or the other in case of fire. Each

8 It still is, for Addison's Mrs. Davis and others are shepherds.
9 Oscar Look lives in his family's original house.
fisherman had a shack and dock along the shore. Travel
was generally by boat as only the very prosperous had a
team and that was usually work horses or oxen.

These early Addison settlers went to sea, fished, farmed
and built boats. They even framed houses and shipped
them to settlements along the coast where lumber was
scarce. Often combining two or more trades "they would
do anything to scratch up a livelihood."

Pleasant River Valley, for the most part, lived up to its
name and life was calm and serene, if not easy. But it
was not entirely detached from the world around it as two
memorable events of the past centuries will show.

The first of these occurred in 1775 when several men
from the valley joined their neighbors at Machias to
oppose the British threat to that settlement. In June the
British had sent a routine request to Machias for lumber
for new barracks in Boston. Some townsmen objected and
gathered at a nearby brook to discuss the matter at length.
Finally, one man jumped across the brook, announcing
that the time had come to bow to the British or to have
nothing at all to do with them. He preferred the latter and
invited all who agreed with him to come to his side of the
brook. The entire male population of Machias joined him
and soon cut a tall pine which they erected in the center of
town as a "Liberty Pole" to announce their revolutionary
leanings.

A short while later, the British cutter Margaretta and
two sloops, Polly and Unity, came into Machias Harbor
with a load of supplies for Ichabod Jones, a local merchant.
When Captain Moore of the Margaretta ordered the
Liberty Pole taken down, the men of Machias decided to
seize the British vessels. The British captain learned of
their plans and put to sea, but a group of colonists seized
the Unity and took chase, although the Margaretta was
heavily armed and the men from Machias had just twenty

muskets with three rounds of ammunition for each. Those
who had no guns armed themselves with pitchforks and
when the Unity drew abreast of the Margaretta the
colonists leaped aboard and engaged in hand-to-hand
combat, using pitchforks against bayonets. Surprisingly,
they won and sailed the Margaretta back to Machias. This
is frequently spoken of as the first naval battle of the
American Revolution. Seth, Elihu and Elisha Norton were
among the combatants from Addison. Elihu was later in
the naval battle at Badaduce (now Castine) when the
British beat the colonists, but the vessel he was in escaped
capture.

Another outstanding event in which ex-Vineyarders
were involved occurred nearly 100 years later. In the
1860's there was a religious group in Indian River that was
led by a spellbinder named George Adams, a fiery
preacher in the Mormon church. At his instigation, many
people in the Pleasant River Valley sold all their property
to finance a trip to the Holy Land where, Adams
promised, they would find rich farmlands, diverse
commercial enterprises and, best of all, they would be
eyewitnesses to the second coming of the Messiah.

A bark, Nellie Chapin, was built in the Knowles
Shipyard at Addison Point and, in the following August,
she was loaded with enough lumber for a church, a school
and a score of houses. The Palestine Immigration Society,
which the group was called, sailed from Jonesport, 155
strong, while a large crowd of their neighbors watched
from shore.

They reached Jaffa (now Tel Aviv) in about six weeks
and disillusionment began at once. They built houses with
the lumber they had carried with them and planted
gardens to provide food, but this was no "promised land."
Their leader proved to be extremely corrupt under his
sanctimonious manner; the local government was hostile;
they, as foreigners, were obliged to rent, not buy land. The
natives stole their crops and poisoned their water supply.

10 Lawrence Norton quotation.
The sun scorched the land and there were no cooling ocean breezes. Sickness and death were rampant.

Some colonists deserted and the settlement was abandoned. On October 1, 1867, an American steamer, Quaker City, stopped at Jaffa and rescued about two-score colonists, landing them in New York. Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), who was aboard, wrote an account for the New York Tribune, citing the numerous elements which caused the failure of the colony. He ended with, "Adams, the Prophet of God, got drunk in September, 1866, and remains so to this day. It is hoped he will see the error of his ways when he gets sober." Actually, he remained in Jaffa for some time and then went to California.

Many colonists returned to Maine, but some could not face the "I told you so" attitude of the stay-at-homes so they went elsewhere, several journeying to Michigan. A few remained in Jaffa, two of whom were Abigail Norton Alley and her son, but her husband went back to Maine.

The returned colonists soon adjusted to their old ways and rebuilt their lives. By this time, the people of the Pleasant River Valley had discovered more of nature's abundance in their seemingly barren land and new industries had evolved. There were packing plants for blueberries, which still grow prolifically on the "Barrens." Sardines, abundant in season, and some clams were also packed for shipment. Clam and lobster dealers bought the fisherman's catch and transported it to markets in larger towns and cities.

Today, Addison is mainly a fishing port with 35 to 40 lobstermen who set their traps from 30 to 32-foot open boats. They use square wooden pots and wooden buoys, although an occasional wire pot and styrofoam buoy may be seen. When not in use, the gear is somewhat carelessly piled in the owner's yard, but his boat is well taken care of.

In the "off season," the fishermen go sea-scalloping or

13 Lawrence Norton has three letters written by Abigail Alley in Jaffa to his grandmother in Jonesport.
Until fairly recently, each little community had its own one-room, one-teacher school and, big and little, everyone walked to and from school each day, toting books and lunch pails. Today, grades one through eight attend the D. W. Merritt Elementary School, with a teacher for each grade. Older students attend the regional Narraguagus High School in Harrington, being transported from their homes by buses.

The population of Addison recently topped 1000. It is governed by three selectmen (this year one is a woman) elected annually at town meeting, a lively event which brings out all the various factions to air their views.

Since the store on the dock ceased supplying their needs, housewives shop at the Red and White Grocery or at Brown's Shop and Save, near the post office in Addison, or go 25 miles north to Machias. Marine supplies can be bought in town and lumber, paint, and-so-forth, are available at Columbia Falls or Centerville, a few miles away. Machias and Jonesport are within "reasonable" trading distance. For clothing one has to drive nearly two hours to Ellsworth or Bangor, or else sit at home and choose from the plethora of gaily colored mail-order catalogs.

In winter, roads are "semi plowed" and usually sanded after the storm is over, but one has to learn to drive on snow-packed and often icy roads as winter lasts a long time in Maine. It was easier with horses and sledges.

The inhabitants of Addison are well-contented with their way of life and most have no desire to alter their beautiful valley. But the countryside is changing as each year more people "discover" the Pleasant River Valley and build large, rambling summer houses on the slightly peninsulas and promontories. The threat of overdevelopment is not yet evident, but as the Coffins, Looks, Nortons and everyone else on Martha's Vineyard know, it can happen with very little notice.

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Island Energy in Years Past

by GALE HUNTINGTON

There's nothing new under the sun and our present energy crisis provides further evidence of the truth of the cliche. In the 1800s, the Island used up its natural supply of cheap and convenient energy as the demand for wood as a fuel exceeded the land's capacity to renew it. At first, the wholesale cutting of trees seemed sensible. Cleared land was needed by farmers, especially sheep growers, of which there were many until the late 1800s.

Sheep raising was exceedingly profitable and nobody objected to denuding the Island of its trees to provide pasture land. That was particularly true of the western part of Tisbury and almost all of Chilmark.1 Most of the wool, probably, was sold off-Island, but a great deal of it was locally processed into yarn which was woven into blankets and fabric for all sorts of clothing on looms that stood in almost every Island home. Further, an almost universal Island home industry was knitting the wool into stockings, mittens and caps.2

This happy state of affairs was gradually ended by the

1 West Tisbury was then still a part of the town of Tisbury.
2 Many such knitted goods, as well as blankets and cloth, were carried all up and down the coast and sold by the small coasters. It was an important Island industry. In 1880, "15,000 pairs of stockings, 1,000 mittens and 600 wigs for seamen were knit annually... when you reached Cape Poge light... you could hear the knitting needles at Edgartown." Samuel Adams Devens, Sketches of Martha's Vineyard, Boston: James Munroe & Co., 1838, pp. 20-21.

GALE HUNTINGTON needs no introduction here. He is the founder and Editor Emeritus of the Intelligencer, without whose publication would not exist. He grew up in Chilmark and now lives with his wife, Mildred, in Vineyard Haven. One of the Island's outstanding historians, his real love is songs of the sea and fiddle playing. He is the author of several books, the latest, Vineyard Tales, is being published this month.
ever-increasing importation of wool from Australia and New Zealand, causing the Island's once large flocks of sheep to diminish and finally to vanish entirely. What was left was an Island almost without trees.

Looking at the woodlands on so much of the Island today it is hard to realize that was so, 100 years ago, but it was. Walking through the woods one can still see miles and miles of stonewalls that once separated one man's pasture from another's.

And so it was that in the 1800s, the matter of providing fuel for the widely separated farmhouses became a serious problem. Firewood had been the basic fuel for all of New England. Once a great deal of Vineyard cordwood had gone to treeless Nantucket, but as deforestation spread that was stopped. Of course, many families had kept small woodlots which were actually farmed, all the cutting being done in the winter so that new growth would start from the stump in the spring. Then, in 25 or 30 years, those trees would be ready to be cut again. But most families did not have woodlots, and coal, brought to the Island by the little coasters, was not widely used until almost the beginning of this century.

Fortunately, there was another Island source of energy: peat. Up-Island particularly has many peat bogs, most small, but some quite large. With wood almost nonexistent, the up-Islanders turned to this other energy source and eventually most places were provided with a peat house.

Peat had been forming in the bogs ever since the retreat of the last glacier some 9000 years ago and it was, and still is, quite deep in some of the bogs. After the bog was drained, the peat was cut into long bricks with a spade.

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The deforestation was not caused totally by the demand for fuel to heat homes. Industry played a major part. Chilmark's Roaring Brook brickworks consumed cords of wood annually as did the Sandwich Glass Works. The latter is said to have deforested Nomansland, Cuttyhunk and Nauset islands with its great need for fuel. (It may have burned some Vineyard wood as well.) See The Broken Archipelago, James D. Lash, Jr., Quadrangle-New York Times Books, 1976. Chapter one.
sentence because there were a few brick buildings up-
Island. Wood, however, was really the universal building
material.

Why, then, were peat houses always stone? Robert V.
McCormick, the editor of Venture magazine, told me that
the reason may have been that there was such a high water
content in peat it could have caused a wooden building to
rot. That sounds reasonable.

At any rate, the peat houses were made of stone and a
few of the stone buildings still stand in Chilmark, while all
the other outbuildings that once graced the farmsteads
have vanished. At least two of the peat houses have been
carefully maintained, but today most are merely four
roofless walls that look like ancient ruins.

The peat fire was usually started with wood. Much of
that wood came from the beaches. In the days of many
small coasters, there was always plenty of driftwood
alongshore. It came from lost deckloads and from wrecks.

The odor of burning peat and of peat smoke was very

Beyond this stone wall is a large peat bog that provided energy in 1800s
strong and pervasive although not really unpleasant. Women from Chilmark doing shopping in Holmes Hole or
Edgartown were always recognized as up-Islanders by the
odor on their clothing.

Other up-Island energy was provided by the waterpower
of the brooks that turned mill wheels. There were no
brooks of any consequence down-Island so there the mills
were powered by windmills, as they were on Nantucket.
Of course, wind provided the energy for the vessels that
served the Islands. On the farms all energy was provided
by the muscle power of man and beast. Oxen did the
heaviest work. Horses did some of the lighter farm work,
such as cultivating row crops, but mostly they were used
for riding and for taking the family to church in wagon or
carriage on Sunday.

One wonders if we will ever see the return of those once-
so-universal sources of energy?
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is grateful to the following owners of the Chilmark peat houses for allowing access for photography: Robert H. Conway (the James A. Vincent house); William I. Clark (the Jim Vincent house);

Ronald Briscoe (the Asa Smith house); Dr. Emanuel R. Piore (the Ben Fletcher Mayhew house); and Peter A. Darling (the former E. Elliott Mayhew barn). Thanks also to G. B. Barnes of Edgartown for his research assistance.
Seth Daggett: Master Pilot

by JANET P. BOSWORTH

Since the earliest days of seafaring, when mariners left their home waters to voyage to strange shores, pilots were aboard to direct the course of the ships. Later, the term, pilot, was applied to a person not regularly attached to a vessel who conducted it wherever navigation required special knowledge of local waters.

The earliest known pilot in New England waters was Squanto, the Indian, who was taken aboard the Swan by Governor Bradford in 1622 to thread the "dangerous shoulds and roring breakers" around Chatham. Equally dangerous were the currents, shoals and rocks of the waters to the east of Nantucket and also through Vineyard Sound en route from Block Island to Holmes Hole. Indeed, the south shore of Cuttyhunk, Nashawena and Pasque in the Elizabeth Islands came to be known as "The Graveyard" because so many vessels ran aground there in thick fog.¹

The first official action taken in New England to prevent

¹ As Capt. George W. Eldridge of Tide and Pilot Book fame explained in his letter to Captains and mates in 1875, the flood tide between Gay Head and the islands of Cuttyhunk, Nashawena and Pasque runs northerly rather than easterly, as it does farther down Vineyard Sound. Ebb currents in the same waters run westerly, setting the starboard bow of an eastbound vessel to the northward also. Thus, in a thick fog, eastbound ships often ran aground on the Elizabeth Islands before the master realized it.

JANET P. BOSWORTH is Curator of the Cuttyhunk Historical Center and has lived year-round on Cuttyhunk since 1975, after many years of summer visits. Her husband, Lloyd, is a member of a long-time Cuttyhunk family, his great-grandfather having settled there in 1806 and some other ancestors, Allens and Slocoms, even earlier. This article was developed during Mrs. Bosworth's research for an exhibit now on display at Cuttyhunk on the subject of Cuttyhunk Pilots 1798 - 1918. For full details on the exhibit see the News section in this issue.

Both flood and ebb tides set vessels to the northward, towards the Graveyard such losses was a law passed in 1783 to authorize suitable persons to be appointed as pilots. Cuttyhunk became famous for its pilots and so, too, did the Vineyard. Of the first ten pilots named for navigating Nantucket and Vineyard waters, three were named Daggett. A few years later, another Daggett, Capt. Seth Daggett (1780-1867) became one of Martha's Vineyard's most noted pilots.

Seth was the fifth son of William and Mary (Stewart) Daggett of Tisbury and the nephew of Capt. Nathan Daggett, about whom Dorothy Daggett Johnston wrote in the November 1978 Intelligencer. All the Daggetts were seamen: Seth's father was a mariner, as were four of his uncles; one brother, William, was a master mariner; and one, Peter, was a pilot like Seth.

On February 28, 1799, Seth married Mary Dunham, herself the daughter of a master mariner. He was 19 and she 17. They lived at Holmes Hole (Tisbury) and had eleven children, two of whom died in infancy.

Life held many difficulties for pilots, both on land and at sea. Seth was eager to improve the system so as to make
things easier and better. It was the custom in those days, Seth wrote, for pilot boats always to be “cruising between Block Island and Gay Head, and often to the westward of Montoake (Montauk) Point.” He wrote to the Editor of American Coast Pilot a proposal that would make it easier for pilots and ships to get together:

“Sir, being a pilot and having experienced much inconvenience by there not being a uniform method of ships firing for a pilot, not being able in foggy weather to ascertain the direction the ship is from the boat, owing to the sudden explosion, when perhaps our attention is taken up by something else, therefore the ship has to put to sea again, or may be lost in consequence, but was the following method adopted there would be no difficulty in finding the ship——

“Whenever a ship fires a gun for a pilot that in exactly five minutes from firing the first gun a second shall be fired, and that to be continued every half hour, by that method the pilot, after hearing the first gun and knowing that it is for a pilot, another would be fired in five minutes, would be all attention and will know the direction the ship is in, and can easily find her.”

The Editor asked Captain Seth to have his proposal approved by the Wardens of New Bedford and he wrote to them asking “to have it sanctioned” and also suggesting to them that “if a notice of the above method was immediately published in the New Bedford paper it would be of service.”

It is not known whether the proposal was ever universally adopted, as Seth wished it to be.

However, after the passage of the new Piloting Act of 1820, the pilot had other problems. Even after he had located a ship signalling for his services, he was not always sure of being hired. Under the old rules, a fixed fee was set for the service, based on draft and length, but the new

2This and all other Seth Diggs quotations are from various documents in his own handwriting in the Society’s archives.
We do not know if the captain's reforms were adopted by the General Court, but the 1827 Pilot Act for the ports of New Bedford and Fairhaven incorporated many of them.

In 1819, in his schooner, Dove, Captain Seth went to the assistance of the brig Betsey which had lost both her anchors and their tackle while attempting to anchor at Tarpaulin Cove in a gale. She was drifting down dangerously upon other vessels. Seth, by the use of small boats, was able to retrieve one anchor and tackle and to secure the brig. Later, when the storm had subsided, he found the second anchor and piloted the Betsey into Holmes Hole. For all this, his fee was $45. which evidently was disputed by the master. Seth wrote a strong letter defending his fee:

“Pilots do not consider themselves as common labourers for one hour’s detention may heave them out of $100.00 and I really think that the detention by your brig threw them (he obviously means “me”) out of more than the bill against her.”

Maddeningly, our story must end there since he copied down no more letters about the Betsey. We can only hope that he received his full fee.

During the War of 1812, Captain Seth was so well known and such an experienced and trustworthy pilot that he was kidnapped with frequency by the British, needing assistance going over the dangerous shoals. Evidently a heavy sleeper, he made an arrangement with a neighbor who would awaken him and tell him when a party of British seamen was coming.

One night his friend banged on Seth’s back door and shouted that the British were coming to the front. Seth quickly grabbed an armful of clothes and fled into the woods behind his house where he hid till daylight. Listening carefully, he made sure that none of the kidnappers were still around and began to put on his clothes. He found that he had picked up his wife’s by mistake.

Besides being a good businessman and advocate, a fine seaman, a master pilot and patriot, Seth possessed a sense of humor, as shown in a verse he wrote about friends going herring fishing at Chappaquasset:

“Sometimes they fish by fire light
Sometimes by light of moon.
Zackery that saint so bright
Oft stays till Sunday noon.
One Sunday morn he fished so smart
He had no time to pray
And like Joe Harvey with his cart
Was seen to carry the herring away.
But Joseph Norton takes his boat
Since he been Warden chose,
Loads her as deep as she will float
Then down the Sound he rows.
To sell his fish in his intent
Both fast days and Sundays.
All is the same to this great Saint
As Saturdays and Mondays.
Now of those two it’s hard to know
Which of them is the keenest.
But neighbors say that Warden Joe
Most surely is the meanest.”

He was a generous man with his knowledge of local waters and he wrote a carefully detailed set of directions for strangers entering Vineyard Sound. “... there is some good directing as far as they go, already extant ... but thinking those already published as not sufficiently plain I give the following and if they add any security to the Navigation of those Waters my object will be obtained. . .”

His final words in the long, detailed set of navigational instructions seem to be characteristic of Capt. Seth Daggett:

“The channel for any ship is over three miles wide at the narrowest part in the Sound, so that a stranger attending

3These are the final six stanzas of an 11-stanza rhyme in Seth’s handwriting that is in the Society’s possession.
to these directions and the chart and putting proper confidence in himself, may with all safety day and night in clear weather harbour in Tarpolin (sic) Cove or Holmes Hole. But should he be, as is sometimes the case, timid or the weather is thick and he is afraid to run in into the night, by lying to till morning, he will be sure to get a pilot, if he wishes... The navigation to the eastward of Holmes Hole is too dangerous and restricted for a stranger without a pilot."

Captain Seth Daggett died October 7, 1867.
SUMMER PLEASURE RESORT

until at the present time there is only the one week each year devoted to the Camp Meeting, not noticeable even in its character outside the "Old Camp Ground." The rest of the ground and time being devoted to structures and amusements peculiar to Sea-side Summer Resorts.

To those who once visit the place comes a desire to do so again, for the charm of cool breezes (there being hardly more than two or three calm days during each season); bathing that is unsurpassed for comfort; fishing, the most varied; and a general restfulness which entirely captivates the visitor, and he becomes a yearly pilgrim to this Mecca of rest.

To illustrate some of the features of this place this little book is intended, and to the admirers of Cottage City it is dedicated by the July, 1886

PUBLISHERS
Up-Island Tales: Dry and Wry

As collected by Cyril D. Norton

Old Mr. Edward Mayhew had a peculiar way of getting rid of late evening callers. When he deemed they had stayed long enough, he would get up from his chair and say, "I'm going to evaporate." If the late callers did not take the hint, they would find Mr. Mayhew actively divesting himself of his clothing.

Jane Ann Swett, the Cape Cod wife of old Mr. Edward Mayhew, was a prideful soul and usually referred to her family as "Our Folks." The Mayhew cattle were a constant source of annoyance to neighbors as he was so negligent in maintaining his fences. The cattle especially annoyed Capt. Anderson Poole and his son, Chester, who were neighbors on Quitsa.

In 1914, Chester Poole sold the Poole place and part of what had been the Asa Smith place to Dr. Elon Obed Huntington. The doctor hired Roger Allen to make some repairs on the house and to add a wing, changing it from a half-house to a whole-house.

Chester lived in the house while Roger was adding the wing and while he, Chester, was building himself a new house on part of the Point Inna pasture. That house, because of the beautiful stone wall around it, later came to be called Fort Chester.

One day, while Roger was working on the old place, he noticed one of the Mayhew critters had left a large cow-flop right by the back door. Before leaving work that day, he wrote on a shingle, "Our Folks Were Here," and put it next to the cow-flop so Chester would see it when he came home.

John Bassett liked nothing better than to play practical jokes on anyone on whom they could be played. As a result, he was not always in high favor with many people. Once one of those persons complained to the SPCCA folk that John was mistreating his horse. This was not true, but perhaps to the victim of John's jokes, truth was no matter.

In due time, two members of the SPCCA arrived at John's place: an older man who seemed to have a sense of humor and a younger man whose job gave him an overweening sense of his own importance.

John took the two out to the stable. The animal showed no sign of malnutrition or abuse. However, the young man suddenly observed where the horse had been cribbing (gnawing) the wood of his feed box.

"Ah, ha," said he, pointing to the cribbed wood, which is common enough in any horse stall. "That proves you don't give the horse enough to eat."

"Rats," John said. "The place is full of them. Come in the house and I'll show you where they've been gnawing the iron cook stove."

The young fellow was furious and it didn't make him feel any better when the older man laughed.

After retiring from the sea, Capt. Daniel Flanders decided to have his first vegetable garden. Among the vegetables he planted were beans. Not too long thereafter the beans came up, pushing the seed bean through the soil as is the nature of beans. The captain's eagle eye soon spotted them. Some time later, he went back into the house and reported that he had to plant all the beans all over again. It is very doubtful if they came up a second time.

Captain Daniel Flanders and his brother Richard were en route home from New Bedford in their small sailing vessel. There was a new Shipmate stove in the cabin. It was early in the morning and the weather was cold. Captain Daniel was steering. After a spell his brother Richard, who was also a retired whaling master, decided that he would go below and start a fire in the new stove to warm his chilly limbs.

Richard had twisted his brother no end about the bean-planting episode, but now the worm was about to turn. Time passed and no Captain Richard came on deck. Finally, smoke began to pour out of the cabin. "But no brother Richard," as Captain Daniel related later. Finally, brother Richard burst forth from the companionway, followed by a great cloud of smoke. Richard had tried to build a fire in the oven of the Shipmate stove.

After that, very little was said about the beans.
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 a most important period in Island history when there was no newspaper. We are indebted to Gale Huntington for transcribing and editing this material.

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

October 1842
2nd. Wind NW. Pleasant. Attended meeting at East Side Holmes Hole with Jeremiah. At evening we went to Tisbury attended meeting at Br. A. Johnson’s. It was a reformation Season. 13 persons requested the prayers of the Church and knelt before the Lord. One I believe found trust in believing. T. C. [1] Luce professes Religion at East Side Holmes Hole.
12th. Wind NW. Set out with my wife for New Bedford. Had a very rough passage, wind blew a gale. Arrived there about 4 p.m.
13th. Went to Fall River with my wife and Sister Velina Baylies. Visited Br. Ely.
14th. We all went to Bristol in the Steam Boat King Philip. We remained at Bristol 15th and 16th.
17th. We went to Providence. Stopped at Warren. Visited Br. H. Vincent and Br. Bonney. Visited Br. Otheman’s family. He was absent.
20th. Came to New Bedford and returned home. Had a pleasant passage.
23rd. Wind SW to W. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. The corps of Mrs. Caroline Fisher arrives from Taunton where she died yesterday at 5 a.m.
30th. Wind NE. Light. Went to East Side Holmes Hole in the forenoon.
Attended meeting there and at North Shore in the afternoon & at Tisbury at Br. Johnson’s at evening. Returned at night. Visited a son of Mr. T. Chase who broke his arm on Thursday and set it on Friday.
November 1842
4th. Wind NE. Went to North Shore to see the son of Mr. Chase above mentioned. Attended Class meeting at Widow Rebecca Norton’s at M.D. Returned at night.
14th. Wind NE. Town Meeting for choice of Governor, Lieutenant Gov., Senator, Representatives to Congress & General Court. Rains at night.
20th. Wind NW. Attended meetings at East Side Holmes Hole during the day and at Tisbury at night. Br. Adams preached at the Academy. It was an interesting time. A very full meeting. Returned at night.
24th. Wind ENE. Rainy. This day is set apart by the Governor & Council as a day of Thanksgiving.2 Stormy.
26th. Wind WSW. Attended the funeral of Sister Eleanor Linton, wife of Br. Joseph Linton who died on the 24th at 4 o’clock p.m. Funeral service by Br. John Adams. She was a pious woman and one of the first who joined the Methodist Society in Edgartown. She had done as much to support the cause of religion as any woman of my acquaintance, was remarkably kind in sickness and in administering to the comfort and necessities of the Preachers of the Gospel. She died in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. Her loss in the village where she lived will be very sensibly felt.

1The first Thanksgiving, of course, was at Plymouth in 1621. It became a national observance on Nov. 26, 1789, by proclamation of President Washington. But it not widely observed as a national holiday until 1863 when President Lincoln startled the date on the last Thursday in November.

2Jeremiah must have written this with perverse pleasure. As regular readers will recall, he had been removed as Keeper of the Edgartown Light for political reasons in March 1841.

December 1842
6th. Wind NW. Barque Athalia Captain Bartlet Mayhew arrives from the Atlantic Ocean with 400 bbls Sperm oil.
11th. Wind NW light and calm. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Br. John Adams preached there this day & at Tisbury at night. Snows at evening.
16th. Wind NW. Went to West Side Holmes Hole on business of a brig.
19th. Wind SW to NW this morning. Light in the Light House went out. I was an eye witness of this.2
25th. Wind S to SW and SE. Went to East Side Holmes Hole. Attended Meeting. Sister Abegail Luce professes Religion at the Meeting in the forenoon. Br. John W. Smith in the afternoon & Br. Bristam Luce in the evening. This has been a glorious day. Sinners awakened. Souls Converted. God grant to carry on this work to his own Glory.
31st. Wind WSW. Attended the funeral of Mr. Jabor [?] Lumber who died the 29th inst. at East Side Holmes Hole. He was 70 years and accounted a pious man. He died in peace. It was a solemn time.
January 1843

1st. Wind NW. Attended meeting at East Side Holmes Hole. Had great liberty in speaking today. Br. Charles Smith who has lately returned from the Pacific Ocean was there and was very happy in his mind. 25th. Wind NW. Cold. Attended the Dedication of the new Methodist Meeting House at Chilmark. Br. John Adams preached the dedication sermon in the forenoon. Br. Charles Mereading[p] preached in the afternoon. The house was filled with hearers. It was a very interesting time. All the services were performed in an excellent manner.

27th. Wind ESE Light. Hauled up the Revenue Boat. Attended meeting at Widow Norton’s M.D.

February 1843

5th. Wind NE. Snow storm. Went part way to East Side Holmes Hole and returned. Did not attend meeting there on account of the Storm.

6th. Wind SW to W. Considerable snow on the ground. Reformation is now going on in each town and almost every Village on the Island. 15 or 20 have professed religion in this town with a few weeks.

7th. Wind NW. Very cold. Ice makes in the harbor.

12th. Wind NW. Snow squalls a.m. p.m. clear. Attended meeting at East Side Holmes Hole. Jeremiah attended meeting at M.D. schoolhouse. At evening we attended meeting at Br. Chas. Kidder’s. William goes to East Side Holmes Hole with me to join the Cutter. Capt. Conner being in command of her.

28th. Wind NW Light. Attended meeting at C. Kidders, M.D. This month has been quite severe; a considerable snow and much cold weather.

March 1843

6th. Wind NW. The harbour is closed near the Light house by ice that has made within a few days and the drift ice.

9th. Wind W. Pleasant. Went to East Side Holmes Hole and brought William he having arrived there in the Cutter Jackson, Capt. Connor. The ice prevented her coming into this harbour.

10th. Wind E. Light. Carried William to East Side Holmes Hole. Snows a little and rains. The ice goes out of the harbour. Did not attend Class meeting at M.D. on account of the weather.


News

History was the focus of attention on Cuttyhunk, Saturday, July 5th. The newly formed Cuttyhunk Historical Center, in a successful effort at raising funds and public attention, held an interesting open house at the old Cuttyhunk Club. A delegation from our Society attended and came back enthused.

The Cuttyhunk Club itself is worth a story and we hope to run one in some later issue. We welcome any word from Society members with knowledge of it. It was one of those exclusive fishing clubs whose members came from among the industrial barons of the 1800s, when such bars were, indeed, close to royalty.

Presidents of steel companies, banks and railroads entertained Presidents of the United States and governors in a style that has gone the way of the spittoon, with which the Club was amply supplied.

The Cuttyhunk Historical Center (not part of the Club) is currently located in the island’s Public Library, but hopes to have its own building eventually. Mrs. Janet P. Bosworth, Curator of the Center, has put together an interesting exhibit, “Cuttyhunk Pilots 1798-1918” with photos and memorabilia relating to the Cuttyhunk Lighthouse, the lifesaving station, various shipwrecks and other subjects.

That exhibit, at the Library, is open to the public Tuesdays and Fridays from 3 to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 10 until noon.

Two members of our Council have new books out this summer. Neither is a history book, but both are filled with historical fact and fancy.

Henry Beetle Hough’s Soundings at Low Tide is as current as today’s battle to save our environment, but the author, in his captivating manner, has interlaced vivid reminiscences to buttress his case——images that only Mr. Hough could evoke.

It is a pessimistic book (its title gives fair warning) with its underlying thesis that change is almost always for the worse. But the word pictures he paints of yesterday’s charms are so alive and his writings, as always, so endearing, that most history buffs will find much to smile about. Such hard-hitting and often disturbing advocacy as this is necessary if we are to hold onto our precious treasure.

Gale Huntington, like Mr. Hough, has a way with words that bring his memories to life. His newest book, Vineyard Tales, is a collection of short stories, all fictional, ranging from young, tender love stories to calculated murder. In each, there is the gentleness and aura so much a part of life when the world spun more slowly.

These fascinating stories all have Vineyard background and characters.
Director's Report

The Thomas Cooke House opened this summer on a bright note when the model of Sarah Adams was joined by a similar model (but three inches taller) of her sister Lucy Adams. As many of you will remember, these remarkable images, including the costumes, are the work of Margo Datz, an artist who specializes in the creation of little people.

In addition to getting the Thomas Cooke House ready for the season, we have been busy with a number of other projects including the expensive painting of the lighthouse, which required a great deal of glazing on the edges of the long windows. We have also been making progress toward our goal of turning the Francis Foster Museum into a first-rate maritime exhibit. The consultant on the project who came here last year under the aegis of a grant from the American Association for State and Local History sent us a set of detailed plans that appear to fit our needs very well. Stan Murphy, a member of our Council who has performed a number of difficult tasks for the Society in the past, has agreed to coordinate our efforts to develop this permanent exhibit.

At present, our temporary exhibit in the Francis Foster Museum takes up only about two square inches of space. Carved from a small whale's tooth, it is a tiny painted goose from the collection of Norma Norton Holmes.

During this summer season, we are participating in an exhibit at the Oak Bluffs branch of the Martha's Vineyard National Bank. Visitors to the bank's lobby will see a number of our artifacts arranged by Hilary Blocksom.

In the Intelligencer, we frequently mention the number of researchers who work in our library, and we are always pleased when publications result from these efforts. Recently, Model Railroader published an excellent article by Dan Morgan on the Martha's Vineyard Railroad, and there is also an article in the same issue by Andy Sperandeo on how to construct a model of the railroad's entire operation from Oak Bluffs to South Beach. In the June issue of Natural History magazine Nora Groce presented a most interesting article about the hereditary deafness that once existed to a large degree on Martha's Vineyard. Using many of our photographs, Jill Bouch and Sara Nevin have done a fine job of writing “An Historical Walking Tour of Oak Bluffs” as a combined effort of the Centennial Committee and Historical Commission.

Our one serious setback this spring occurred with the unexpected death of Rachael Williams, who was a skilled and vigorous worker for the Society. A more detailed account of her work appears elsewhere in this month's issue of the Intelligencer. In her memory we have received donations from Mr. and Mrs. E. Jared Bliss Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Cullen, Mr. Heston Clapp, Mr. and Mrs. Silas Howland, Mrs. Fred Ives Huss, Elizabeth McConnell, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur T. Silva, and Mrs. Kenneth Stodard. In the same spirit, the Society sent a contribution to the Pilot Program at Mystic Seaport.

Once again this year, the Snowden Taylor family came to the Society to provide us with the benefits of their marvelous mechanical abilities. Within a short time, they repaired both our music box and the banjo clock; they also oiled the lighthouse mechanism and provided us with advice on the restoration of the tall clock in the customs office.

The date for the annual meeting this year will be August 14 in the parish hall of the Federated Church at 8:00 p.m. Our program this time will be my slide presentation "Images of the Historical Society," which is a view of the Society from a perspective that is not available on a single visit. I hope many of you will be able to attend.

THOMAS E. NORTON
Bits & Pieces

John Bassett was quite a man. Cyril Norton sure makes him out that way. But to me, he was a hen! That won’t make sense until I explain it.

In the 1920s, I summere’d with my Aunt Jane in Edgartown. She, an English immigrant, and Uncle Everett (born in Edgartown) were typical Islanders with little income, adept at making a little go a long way. One way was to pick apples from trees that grew on private land, with branches hanging over the public roadway.

Aunt Jane and I would drive up Island in their shiny Pontiac (kept in a galvanized iron garage that still stands) to do the picking. She had her favorite spots, one being on the Menemsha crossroad. She sat in the car and I did the “stealing” reluctantly.

One summer, while picking apples at our regular spot, I spotted an egg in the grass. I told Aunt Jane and, of course, she sent me back after it.

We took it home and I forgot about it. Days later, she led me to her hen house and pointed to a fuzzy chick.

“That’s your chicken,” she said, “and its name is John Bassett.”

She had put the purloined egg under one of her setting hens and it hatched. The apple tree had been at John Bassett’s place, hence the name.

On Labor Day, I took the hen home in a wooden crate tied to the running board of our Model T. We were not farmers and never had a hen before (or since). Dad cut a hole in the garage wall and I had a hen coop.

I wasn’t happy at all. My pet was hardly responsive, not at all like Nancy Luce’s Ada Queenie. Soon Mother had had enough of John Bassett and suggested that we eat “him.”

That was a traumatic day. My father had never killed a hen and was as softhearted as any man alive. But he tried and I cried, helping not at all.

He put down the ax and tossed John Bassett back into the coop where “he” lived through the winter.

When I returned from Aunt Jane’s the following Labor Day, John Bassett was gone. “He died of old age,” Mother said and I believed her.

So that is how, until I read Cyril Norton’s Up-Island Tales, John Bassett was just a hen to me.

As I read Gale Huntington’s piece on peat bogs, mental images ran through my mind of Chilmark in my apple-stealing days. It was as open as the Yorkshire moors with miles of stone walls. You could see everywhere.

Whenever we drove up Island with my Uncle Everett, he would always stop briefly at Abel’s Hill. There were no trees to block the view of the ocean stretching out to Bermuda. Surf tatted its lace edging along the south shore.

“This is Long View,” Uncle Everett would announce, “and over here,” pointing to the Chilmark Cemetery, “is Long Rest.”

The long rest remains, but the long view is gone, alas.

A.R.R.

In Memoriam

Rachael V. Williams, a devoted Council member of the Society since 1976, died unexpectedly at Mystic, Conn., on May 11. She had spent the day doing what she did so often: donating her energies and skills to the preservation of our history. This time it was as a volunteer worker in the Mystic Seaport’s Pilot Program.

An energetic woman with many talents, she gave of them generously to the Society. She singlehandedly built the brick walk from the new Gatehouse, reshelung the back wall of the boat shed and refurbished our collection of models of Island ferry boats. This collection, appropriately, is now on display in Oak Bluffs, the town she lived in and loved and whose history she cherished. It can be seen at the Oak Bluffs branch of the Martha’s Vineyard National Bank.

But of her many projects, the one that appeals most to visitors to the Frances Foster Museum is the very old coin-operated bicycle slot machine which she restored and put into working order. Of all the exhibits in the room, it is the one that is most universally exclaimed over. The regular whirring of its wheels all summer will be a continuous reminder of the manner in which she so generously gave of her energies and talents.
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.


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


Wild Flowers of Martha’s Vineyard by Nelson Coon. Illustrated, paper. $3.95, $.75 postage.

An Introduction To Martha’s Vineyard by Gale Huntington. Illustrated, paper. A new edition. $3.95, $.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, $.75 postage.

Martha’s Vineyard: The Story of Its Towns by Henry Franklin Norton. Illustrated, paper. $6.96, $.75 postage.