



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 22, NO. 2

NOVEMBER 1980

The Island's First Methodists

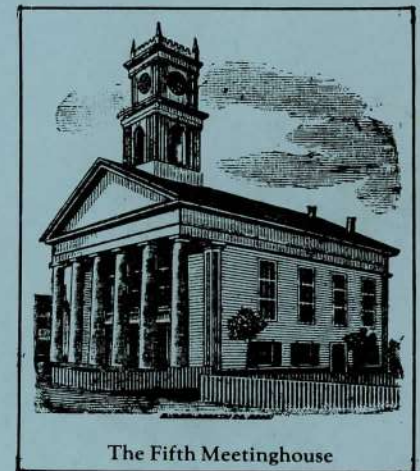
by

JEREMIAH PEASE

Jeremiah's Travail

by

ARTHUR R. RAILTON



The Fifth Meetinghouse

Up-Island Tales: Wry and Dry

by CYRIL D. NORTON

Book Review: Gale Huntington's *Vineyard Tales*

Director's Report, News, Bits & Pieces

Jeremiah Pease's Diary

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

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 displays that reflect past eras of Vineyard life. It is open to the public during the summer with a nominal fee being charged to non-members.

The Francis Foster Museum and the Society Library are 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.

Jeremiah's Travail

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

Jeremiah Pease was a reasonable, sensible person. His diary entries, those who have been reading them will agree, are clear, precise and objective as would be expected of a man who was a surveyor, bone-setter, lighthouse keeper and customs inspector, to name only a few of his occupations.

His official posts gave him status in the establishment. Furthermore, he was a protege of the Rev. Joseph "Parson" Thaxter, the "most distinguished personage in Edgartown,"¹ and learned surveying and bone-setting from him. His wife was Elizabeth (Eliza) Worth, whose father, Jonathan Worth, was a Deacon in Thaxter's church, just as her grandfather, John Worth, had been.

There was only one church in 1800, the tax-supported church of the Puritans, and the Reverend Thaxter had been its pastor since 1780, during the Revolutionary War.

One of Jeremiah's sisters-in-law, Sally Worth, married "Parson" Thaxter's son, Joseph, and another, Velina, married Frederick Baylies, Jr., who became Edgartown's foremost builder, the designer of the town's churches.

Yes, Jeremiah Pease, son of Noah Pease, Master Mariner, was a well-regarded citizen of Edgartown, an up-and-coming leader of the community. Yet this young man, then 30 years old, broke from the establishment, deserted his mentor, "Parson" Thaxter, probably breaking the

¹Charles Edward Banks, *The History of Martha's Vineyard*, Boston, 1897. Reprint, Dukes County Historical Society, 1946. Vol. 2, p. 161, Annals of Edgartown.

ARTHUR R. RAILTON is Editor of this Journal.

Reverend's heart, to join "Reformation" John Adams and the "crazy Methodists," as they were called.² His conversion to this brand-new "experimental" religion (it didn't even have a church building of its own) must have been the talk of the village and it must have created a trauma within the Pease family.

Jeremiah Pease and his wife, Eliza, were an attractive couple. Married in 1813, they already had three children when the travail began in 1820.

Hannah Smith, a contemporary of theirs, in her diary of 1813,³ the year they were married, describes how attractive they were: "I have just returned from Deacon Worth's [Eliza's father] -- spent the evening very agreeably. After some pleasing chat with Eliza and Jeremiah Pease, we had a pleasant walk through the city. I think Eliza one of the most amiable of her sex -- nor will I omit mentioning the many virtues of the constant Jeremiah."

A few weeks later, Hannah wrote, "I have had the unspeakable satisfaction to converse with Mr. Jeremiah Pease and Miss Eliza Worth on many subjects this afternoon."

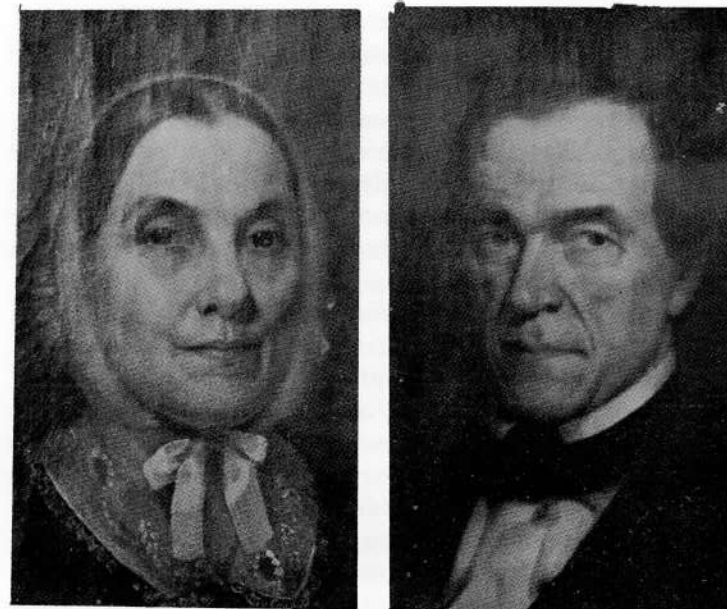
Clearly, Jeremiah was a fine catch for Eliza and vice versa. Two outstanding young people, proper, charming, well-informed and very establishment. They were married October 1, 1813, by the Rev. Thaxter. The church, no doubt, was filled.

But there was another group, much smaller, that didn't attend and, perhaps, didn't care. It was the Methodists. Holding meetings in private homes, usually in remote areas to protect them from the ridicule of the "opposers," listening to itinerant preachers warn of damnation and hell fires, the Methodists were very much outsiders to the establishment.⁴ At their meetings, there was much praying, exhorting and witnessing, in voices loud and

²Hebron Vincent ms. unpublished. D.C.H.S., p. 129.

³Hannah Smith, *Diurnal Records*, D.C.H.S.

⁴Vincent ms., pp. 28-9.



Courtesy Mrs. Edna Vose Weston

These portraits of Eliza and Jeremiah Pease are by their artist son, Cyrus

emotional. The establishment, and the newly married couple, paid little attention to those fanatics to whom religion was more than an emotionless Sabbath ritual during which the highly literate Thaxter gave long intellectual explanations of theological theory.⁵

But the sect attracted converts despite being ignored and despite the ridicule. Growth was slow for many years with membership going up or down depending upon the talents and vigor of the itinerant preacher assigned to the Island. Other itinerant preachers came to the Island, Baptists and evangelical Congregationalists, all equally held up to ridicule and abuse.

Jeremiah's first involvement with these "charismatics" came in the autumn of 1820. The Methodist District had

⁵New England Puritanism's crowning glory "was its vigorous intellectual activity . . . sermons studded with gems of philosophical and theological speculation . . . How much they penetrated the minds of the listeners is conjectural." Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1960, p. 76.

sent Rev. Eleazer Steele to the Island for a two-year stay. The group had no meetinghouse of its own, but had grown enough to have built a hall jointly with the Baptists. The building, started in 1811, had never been finished, there being no funds for such work. It was still a shell, a shack compared with Thaxter's meetinghouse. The pulpit was roughly built, high and unstable, poorly tied to the building frame. It was in that setting that Jeremiah first met Methodism.

Here is how Hebron Vincent describes the event, although charitably he does not identify Pease by name:

"On a clear Sabbath evening in the early autumn, Mr. Steele was preaching when suddenly he was so overpowered by the influences of the Holy Spirit as to become entirely speechless. He stood for a considerable time like a mere statue, holding on the top of the pulpit with clenched hands, having doubtless grasped it as he found himself faltering.

"His trembling caused the pulpit to shake, thus producing an unnatural noise which, it being evening, many of the hearers, giving free play to their imaginations, mistook for the sound of an earthquake and left the house in great consternation and confusion..... A man, who at that time was a strong opposer to experimental religion, but who was subsequently converted and became an active member of the church, hearing the noise while at his home, started and went with hurried tread to the meeting-house where, having entered, he gazed a while and then proposed to take the minister from the pulpit and thus demonstrate that he (the minister) had 'made fools of the whole of them.' But this he was peremptorily forbidden by the brethren to attempt. This scene was long characterized in ridicule by this man and others of his class, as the 'Homemade Earthquake.' "

Thus Jeremiah, protege of Parson Thaxter, first experienced the vigor of Methodism. Typically, he made no mention of this in his Diary entry for that day.⁶

⁶Pease describes this event with considerable regret in his history of Methodism (see page 67).

In July 1821, nearly a year later, Reverend Steele was replaced by the Rev. John Adams, a man whose persuasive talents drew many away from the established church. How Jeremiah came under the spell of this powerful revivalist is not known, but clearly he did. He credited the Reverend Adams, later known as "Reformation" John, with his salvation, but his Diary gives no hint of when, where or how it happened or of what must have been going on in his heart and mind during those traumatic years, 1821 and 1822. Comparing Jeremiah's Diary with that of "Reformation" John sheds some light on the mystery.

From September 28 to October 5, 1821, Adams was on Nantucket for a period of preaching. An energetic and hard-driving evangelist, he had already travelled the length of Martha's Vineyard several times since his arrival and was now working on Nantucket. He returned to the Vineyard on the 5th. By coincidence, on that same day and doubtless on the same boat, Jeremiah's brother-in-law, Frederick Baylies, Jr., and his wife, Velina, were returning to the Island after having lived on Nantucket since their marriage in May of the previous year. Pease noted their return in his Diary: "Brother F. Baylies and wife move here from Nantucket. His wife being much out of health is the cause of their moving."

Those were small packets that sailed between the islands and Adams never missed a chance at conversion. Did he use the voyage from Nantucket to proselytize the young Baylies? We have no way of knowing, but it was certainly possible.

A few weeks later, November 28, 1821, the word Methodist appears in Pease's Diary for the first time: "The Methodist Meeting House raised."

Then, a more puzzling entry appears on April 6, 1822: "Frederick Baylies Jr., commences keeping house in my chambers."

Pease makes no mention of a separation of his brother-in-law and his wife, Sally (Worth) Baylies, but there is that possibility. Otherwise, why would he have moved in with

Pease? Had Baylies been converted to Methodism by Adams and had that so disturbed Sally, whose father was Deacon Worth, that they separated? Or was it simply that she was more seriously ill? She was pregnant at the time with their son, Henry, born in September 1822. Their first child had died in infancy only a few weeks before they left Nantucket. So the separation could have been related to her pregnancy, having nothing to do with Methodism. In any case, Baylies did become a devout Methodist and, with Pease, was part of the small group that much later set up the Camp Ground.

Two months after Baylies moved into Pease's chambers, Jeremiah attended his first non-established church meeting. It was a joint meeting of the two "fanatical" groups.

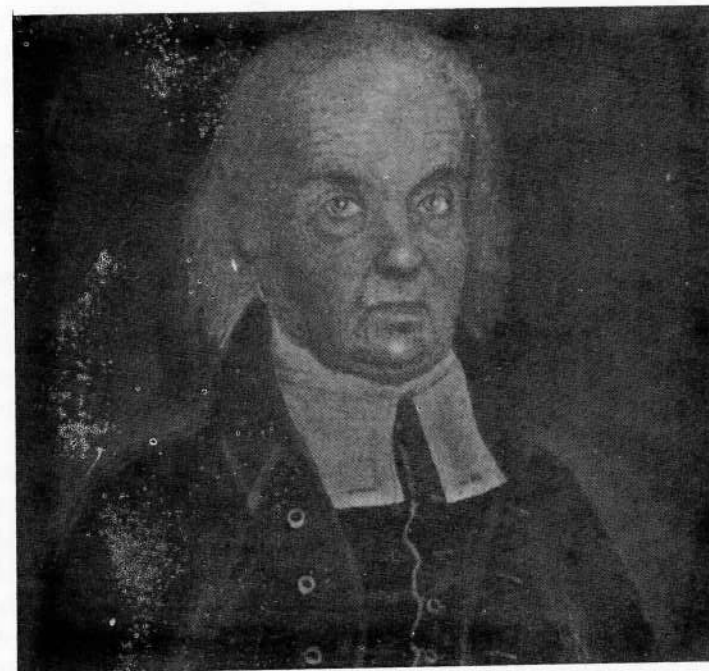
Jeremiah wrote: "June 2, 1822, attended a Methodist and Baptist meeting, being Sunday and Mr. Thaxter absent." Note that even here, in the privacy of his own diary, he wanted to make it clear that he was not being disloyal to the Rev. Thaxter -- after all, he was absent that day.

In the brief diary entry, Pease doesn't mention Reverend Adams, but Reformation John was there and he preached. Here's what the evangelist wrote about the same meeting: "Sabbath morning I returned to Edgartown and spoke on Amos 3: 7, 8; Acts 24: 25; 2 Cor. 10:4. Bless God! the prospect brightens. Some of the great opposers now attend; others request prayers. Col. V. prayed with us."⁷

Among those "great opposers," perhaps foremost among them, was Jeremiah Pease. "Praise God!" Adams wrote.

As one would expect, Parson Thaxter was distressed by the increasing swing to Methodism. It was something he had never expected. He saw his church, *the church*, being decimated by that spell-binder, John Adams. On May 9, 1822, a month before Pease attended his first meeting, Thaxter had written a letter to the Selectmen of

⁷This and subsequent quotations of Adams are from *The Life of "Reformation" John Adams*, written by himself. Geo. C. Rand, Boston, 1853. Vol. 1. p. 132.



Miniature by Frederic Mather

"Parson" Thaxter wore the cocked hat, knee and shoe buckles of Colonial days

Newington, N.H., Adams' home town:

"You, I presume, (he wrote) are sensible that itinerant preachers of every sect are going from place to place, with great zeal, to make proselytes About eight or nine months ago, there came a man here, whose name is John Adams, in the character of a Methodist minister and brought his wife with him; they both of them declare that they were sent here by God They adopt unusual modes of proceeding and cause not a little confusion and disorder I must beg it as a favor of you, gentlemen, to inform me as to his character, what his standing is where he is known; the interest of religion and the peace of society require that the character of every itinerant preacher should be known. . . . I do not wish to injure his good name. He appears to me to be in some degree insane."

And in a postscript to the letter, Thaxter added, "I have been a pastor of the church in this place more than forty years. It is grievous to see the flock scattered in my old age."

On June 27, the Selectmen responded, stating that Adams was "as faithful a servant as ever was called . . . and may you and we strive with him to serve the Blessed Lord, that we may meet in heaven!"⁸

On July 28th, the two letters were read to the congregation at the Methodist Meetinghouse. The room was packed and, according to Adams, "while these letters were read there was all attention among the people." Pease makes no mention of these letters in his Diary, but he surely was aware of them.

Reverend Thaxter, who had given Adams permission to make the letters public, wrote to the evangelist later offering (as Adams described it) to give him "a dollar if I would preach upon a text that he would give me. He said that I might preach in his meetinghouse. These, however, were the conditions -- that I was to stick to the text; but, if I left it, and ran in declamation and exhortation, he was to jog me, and I was to stop. The text, moreover, I was not to know till the time came for me to preach . . . I did not comply." Thaxter knew where Adams was weakest, but Reformation John was too smart to accept the challenge.

Twice, in the week after the letters were read, Jeremiah had been in the company of the "enemy." On August 1, he noted in his Diary: "Went to Holmes Hole in sloop *Superb* with a large number of ladies and gentlemen, returned." On Sunday, August 4, "75 persons goes (sic) to H. Hole in sloop *Superb* to meeting. Rev'd. Hubbert preaches there on Baptism." They were Baptist revival meetings and nine were baptized on the Sabbath.

One week later, Pease records, "A meeting held at the Rev'd. Thaxter's house." It would have been interesting if he had shared with us the comments the elder Parson made about the reading of his letter and his preaching

⁸Adams, p. 135.

challenge, but Pease, as usual, says nothing. His torment, however, must have been intense, having twice strayed from Thaxter's "flock" the week before.

On August 28, he makes a rare mention of his personal health: "I am unwell today with relax." These were difficult days for him and he was keeping his torment to himself. It was no wonder he was unwell.

During September 1822, the most intense period of his travail, on 24 of the 30 days, there is nothing in his Diary except the routine wind and weather report -- even on Sundays. Had he stopped attending Thaxter's church? We have no way of knowing from Pease. Indeed, to learn what was happening to Jeremiah during that critical month we must again rely on Adams.

Friday, September 27, Adams had gone to Nantucket at the request of a former Vineyard resident who was "very much afflicted in body." She had been "an enemy of the reformation" and her affliction (which Adams had predicted would come if she continued her opposition) had led her to become penitent. Adams went to Nantucket, "prayed with her several times and left her determined to seek God."

Saturday, he returned to Edgartown. "In the evening (he wrote) I conversed with J.P. He is very serious, and under true awakenings. He said that, when I first came to the island, if I had come to his house to talk on religion, he would have ordered me out. He would not suffer a Methodist hymn to be sung in his house."

Pease, in his diary, writes nothing of the momentous step he has taken in his private meeting with Adams. His diary entry gives nothing but the weather.

Reverend Adams held his usual Sabbath services the following day, preaching three times. He made no reference to J. P. in his journal for that date, but on the following day: "Monday, I saw J.P. He was encouraged to seek the Lord. He said that he had received two new ideas; one from Br. W., -- that Christ suffered and died on the cross for him *as an individual* (emphasis Adams'); the other

from me -- that we must come *now* expecting the blessing."

Br. W. had preached at the Sunday evening Methodist service so it is likely that J. P. had been in attendance, although there is no such reference in his own Diary.

Monday was September 30, 1822. Only a weather item appears in the Pease Diary.

But Tuesday, October 1, 1822, Jeremiah wrote: "This day I hope will never be forgotten by me. Wind N. fresh breeze, very cool."

Notice that he wrote his habitual wind and weather report at the end of the entry. That was the first (and only, I believe) time he failed to enter the weather, data first. What was it that was important enough to cause this inversion? What was never to be forgotten?

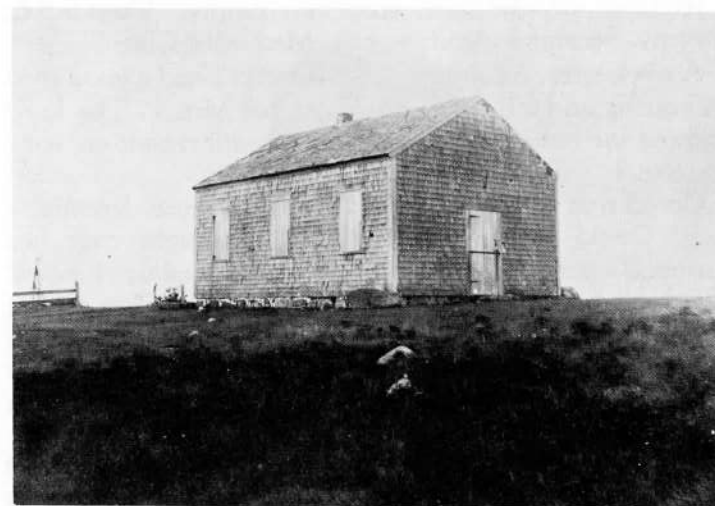
Again, we must turn to Adams' journal for the answer. Reverend Adams had been on Chappaquiddick all day Tuesday preaching. He spent the night there and returned on October 2nd.

"Wednesday, I came back, and visited J. P. Bless God! he now talks the language of Canaan. He found peace the night before and now preaches a free salvation. He says, 'God requires very little and enables us to do much.' He says he was like Saul of Tarsus. He never was seen at our meeting till of late, excepting once, when he helped take the preacher from the pulpit. Glory to God for another of the sturdy oaks of Bashan that is brought down!"

On that never-to-be-forgotten day, October 1, 1822, Jeremiah had made his decision to leave the establishment.

He continued to bear witness the next day. "That evening," wrote Adams, "J.P. came and told his love for the people he once hated."

October 6th, the first Sabbath after Pease's conversion, Adams wrote: "I was somewhat tried through the day. In the evening, many attended, although Elder H., a Baptist, was in town, and a number went to his meeting . . . the best of all was, I felt the approbation of God. Some of the so-called aristocracy attended. . ."



Sampson's Hill Meetinghouse on Chappaquiddick, where Rev. Adams exhorted

Jeremiah's entry for that Sunday, October 6, was as usual brief and precise: "Wind S. This was a very pleasant Sabbath for me." Had he been one of Adams' "so-called aristocracy"? It seems likely, he had found peace.

His travail had ended, he had made up his mind. That week when Adams preached on Chappaquiddick, "J. P. came over, and spoke twice." The next week, Adams wrote that "J. B. (probably a typographical error as this is the first time Adams mentions any J. B. -- it probably was J. P.) arose and warned the young converts not to do as he had done. He said that the Spirit of God once led him to join that people; but, in refusing, he backslid from God. Bless God for one more good time!"

Jeremiah (if it was he) was no doubt referring to the time the spirit led him to Rev. Steele's "trembling" and the clumsy way he had behaved. He said later that his actions had troubled his conscience ever after.

Then on November 28, 1822, Adams triumphantly wrote: "Thursday evening, J.P. and E.N. joined class. Thank the Lord! O God, bless them with us and us with them!"

Jeremiah, on that date, wrote very simply: "Wind S.S.E. Stormy. Became a member of the Methodist Class."

A week later, Adams wrote: "Monday I had a good time in visiting and felt a travail of soul for Mrs. P. The Lord showed me her condition. I hope she will repent ere it be too late."

Could that "Mrs. P." have been Eliza Pease, Jeremiah's wife? Could she have become so distraught over her husband's conversion that Adams felt a need to visit her? We don't know, but it is possible that it was Eliza and, if so, that the visit had been brought on by Jeremiah's travail. Jeremiah, himself, never writes in his Diary of how his conversion affected his wife, the daughter of Deacon Worth.

His travail may have ended, but that is not the end of the story. Unfortunately for us we have no Diaries by Jeremiah from the end of 1822 until January 1, 1832 -- nine years without a journal. When his Diary does begin again, in 1832, he wrote on the frontispiece of the notebook: "Jounal (sic) commenced January 1st, 1832. My former Journal has been kept for some time past by my Son J.T. Pease owing to some peculiar circumstances." The last part of the sentence has been blacked out by someone, but is still readable. Above the first entry, January 1st, Jeremiah again wrote, "My former Journal of winds, weather and remarkable occurrences has been kept by my son, J.T. Pease, owing to my peculiar circumstances."

The Society has a diary of the period from September 1829 to the end of 1832 and it was, indeed, kept by his son, filling in the information just as though it was being written by his father. But we have no diaries from the end of 1822 until September 1829. Those, no doubt, were the years of Jeremiah's "peculiar circumstances."

Those circumstances no doubt included his dedicated work to spread Methodism on the Island. On February 5, 1824, Adams, who had left the Island on June 5, 1823,⁹

⁹Reformation John worked right to the end of his term, trying to convert Islanders. Hannah Smith, in her diary for June 2, 1823, wrote: "The Rev. John Adams and Lady



Burford's Lith., Boston

"Reformation" John Adams, whose persuasive eloquence changed Jeremiah's life wrote "I received a letter from Br. J. P. at Martha's Vineyard. He writes of the glorious work on that island and informs me that many are under powerful convictions and that the fruits of my labors shine brighter and brighter

are here . . . Mr. Adams exhorts and prays with us, his prayer flows like a stream which, murmuring like the distant sound of sighs and moans, creeps along the vale . . . 2 of the clock . . . Mr. Adams presents Clarissa and myself with a couple of Hymn Books. He invites me to ride as far as Harrison's with him. I accept of his invitation." Rev. Adams left the Island three days later, leaving "weeping friends by the sea-side and on the wharves . . . We have a rough sea, and lash our horse to the mast by the neck, to keep him from washing into the ocean; but God is with us, and we arrive in safety." Adams, p. 164.

every day. He, moreover, informs me the people express a great desire for me to come on."

Indeed, Adams did "come on" in 1826 when he was reassigned to the Island. During that year, 1826, he seems to have lost his reason. The circumstances are vague. What triggered his delusions is not known by this writer. One thing in his book may offer a clue: he was thrown from his wagon one night in Chilmark and a few weeks later he began acting strangely.

It was a time of torment for him, his family and all those associated with Methodism, J. P. included. The Adams Journal, written later, is filled with wild stories of persecutions, usually in Biblical imagery. Often he mentions J. P. whom he called his Shadrach. The Vineyard became the isle of the Patmos, from Biblical history. He believed he had been sent here to begin a Reformation of the world by a battle in which "Naushon . . . will serve as a gun-boat to the ship Vineyard." He compared what had happened to him to what is described in Ezekiel 3: 24, 25, 26.

Jeremiah was deeply involved with all this. Those crazy, delirious sessions with Adams must have shaken that eminently sensible soul. These were, for certain, the "peculiar circumstances" that kept him from writing his diary. (Or, did he write one and destroy it later?)

In 1827, Adams, much recovered, left the Island. On July 18, 1827, the Rev. Joseph Thaxter died, broken-hearted, no doubt. His church, once *the church*, was now sparsely attended and for several years after his death was served only by occasional preachers.¹⁰

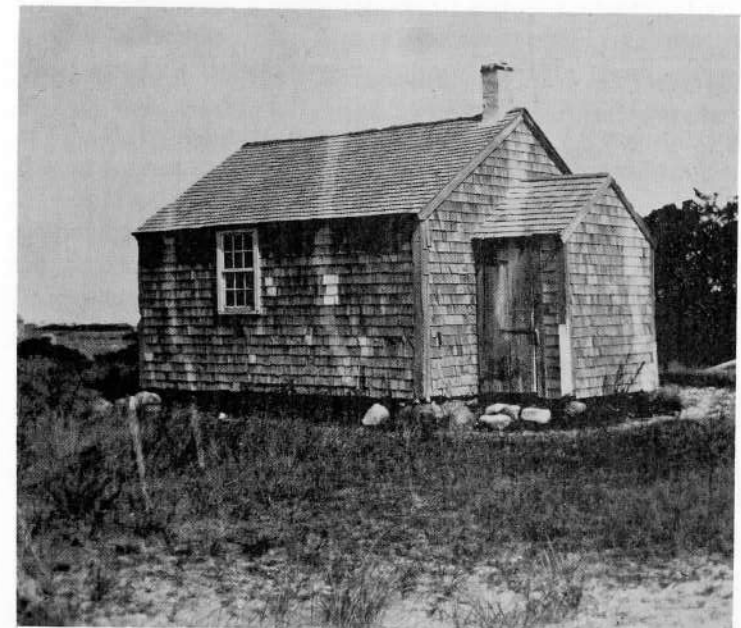
But we learn nothing of those painful years from Pease. By 1829, when he resumed his Diary, Methodism was on its way to becoming *the church*. Thanks to Pease and others, it had so many converts that it had built a large meetinghouse on Main Street, now the Edgartown Town Hall, and would soon outgrow that.

¹⁰Banks, Vol. 2, p. 162, Annals of Edgartown.

In 1835, Jeremiah and others selected the site for the Camp Ground, eventually growing into Oak Bluffs. In 1843, the Methodists were so numerous and so wealthy that the famed "whaling church" on Edgartown's Main Street was built.

The "experimental" religion had become *the church*. Jeremiah's travail, his inner struggle, his "peculiar circumstances," had turned out happily for him. Once again, he was a member of the establishment. He had, in John Adam's words, "found peace."

Chappaquiddick school was typical of buildings that the early Methodists used





The Island's First Methodists

by JEREMIAH PEASE

"Read by request of B. Otherman and several other preachers on the evening of the 5th March 1847 at the Methodist Meeting House in Edgartown by Jeremiah Pease."

I rise before you my Brethren to perform a duty which I deeply regret had not been assigned to some one better qualified to give you the information required. Having received this request at a very recent period I have not been able to collect from the several towns on this Island the necessary minutes to render what I may state on this occasion so interesting as it would have otherwise been. It would have afforded me great satisfaction to have been able to give a correct statement of the rise and progress of Methodism in all the towns upon the Island from its earliest period to the present time, but must content myself with laying before you such accounts as I have been able to collect from sources which admit of no doubt as relates to their correctness, and in my succeeding remarks permit me to point you to *Job 8th C. 7 V.*, "Though thy beginning was smaller thy latter end should greatly increase."

The first Methodist that visited this Island of whom we have any account was a coloured man by the name of John Saunders, who with his wife came to this town in the year 1787 and took up their residence in the village of Eastville. He preached to the coloured people at Farm Neck

JEREMIAH PEASE is familiar to readers of the *Intelligencer* through his Diary. His father was Noah Pease, an Edgartown Master Mariner; his mother, Hannah Dunham. He was one of eight children and his brother, Isaiah, was Sheriff of Duke's County for 40 years. His nephew, Richard Luce Pease, son of Isaiah, was the Island's outstanding historian and genealogist and was the single most valuable source for Banks' Volume 111, *Family Genealogies*. Jeremiah was born in 1792 and died in 1857.

occasionally at which time there were a number of families residing at that place. He and his wife were esteemed pious, and useful among that people during five years' residence in that place.

In 1792 they removed to the Island of Chapaquiddic. His first wife died. He married a [here Pease has only a blank line] by the name of Jane Diamond, who is now living and is 95 years old and has always sustained an excellent character. By his first wife he had one daughter and one son, both of whom are dead, by his second wife he had one daughter who is the wife of Mr. Joseph Sam [?]. She is likewise a person of good character, bright intellect, and deeply engaged in the good cause of Methodism. She may be said to be truly a bright and shining light and has several children who are as we trust traveling in the same road with their parents.

This first *Preacher of Methodism* (emphasis Pease's) on this Island and his wife were Slaves in the State of Virginia and by their extraordinary labor and prudence, they purchased their freedom and came to this town where he died in the year 1795. From the best information I can obtain he was murdered, this appears to be the opinion of all who were acquainted with him. I have heard my Father often say, it was supposed he was murdered.

I find in minutes made by Judge Bassett of Chilmark, who was the first Class Leader at that place, and from other sources, that the Rev. Jesse Lee visited this Island in the year 1795, he preached a few times and left the Island. In the fall of the year 1797, Rev. Joshua Hall, an Elder in the M.E. Church, came to H. Hole and preached there, and formed a society of ten members during the year 1798, and while Br. Hall was preaching on the Island, Rev. Geo. Pickering preached at Eastville once. Br. Hall was succeeded by Rev. Joseph Snelling in the fall of the year 1798. During the time he preached on the Island, seven members were added to the Society.

Br. Snelling preached once in this town, at the house of Capt. Joseph Pease. In the year 1799, he was succeeded by

Rev. Jacob Recklow, how long he preached on the Island I am unable to ascertain. He was succeeded by Rev. E. Kibby, who after tarrying a few months left the Island.

This was about the year 1801, from which time to the year 1809 seems to have been a very low time as relates to Religion. Intemperance prevailed to an alarming degree. Vice and immorality followed with its train of evils too numerous to enumerate. On this occasion, permit me, however, to glance at a few of those evils that were prevalent during that period.

Three rooms were fitted up in the public houses in this town for the accommodations of *Billiard Tables* (this emphasis and all later are Pease's); it was a very common practice for the inhabitants of this place to visit those places, where they employed their evenings and I might say their nights in playing *Billiards*, Pitching dollars, Playing cards, and drinking. I have understood from good authority that the Grandfather and Grandson have been known to leave one of those public houses after daylight in the morning, having been engaged all night in playing cards, etc. I have known the *aged* but *vigorous Mother* to visit those places in the night and bring out her children (young men) from these scenes of dissipation. I have known fifteen men of good abilities and worth a handsome property enter into the business of retailing ardent spirits, who in a few years became intemperate, all of whom, I fear, found a premature grave.

Much more might be added showing the deep degradation into which many of the Inhabitants of this town had fallen in consequence of using intoxicating liquors, but it would be inexpedient to digress farther upon this subject.

Rev. Wm. Beauchum, who was stationed at Nantucket, visited this town and preached one evening at the house of Mr. John Butler in the year 1800 or 1801. I cannot find that any other Methodist preached in this town until 1809 at which time Rev. Erastus Otis visited this place from his station at Falmouth and preached his first sermon at a

From Mrs. Priscilla Freeman's Journal

During the year A.D. 1787, my grandfather, John Saunders, and my grandmother, Priscilla, his wife, landed from Virginia at Holmes Hole. He was a pure African, she half white. Both were slaves to a Virginia planter; both were zealous Christians and Methodist speakers.

They took passage with Capt. Thos. Luce (afterwards called the blind man) in a small vessel laden with corn, in which the Captain had buried them the night previous to sailing. After a pleasant passage, arriving at H. Hole and holding several meetings, they repaired to Col. Davises on the East Side and were invited to move into the little schoolhouse, standing a few rods east of the Colonel's residence.

Here, or in this neighborhood, John Sanders (sic) son, the celebrated singer & dancer, was born. Here the minister's wife Priscilla died.

After living 5 or 6 years in this place, he located at Chappaquidic, where he preached as usual, and became acquainted with Jane Dimon, and married with her; which exasperated the Indians there, on account of his African descent; and this, together with the many visious (sic) Indian habits and opposition to spiritual religion is supposed to be the cause of his being murdered in the woods. At least, Jeremiah Pease, Esqr. has been heard to say that judging from all the circumstances which had come to his knowledge, he *was* a martyr.

But let his ashes sleep, his mantle rests on our Priscilla.

PRISCILLA FREEMAN, from whose Journal this excerpt was made, is a mystery to the Editor, except for this statement which was found in the Society's files attached to Jeremiah Pease's talk on Methodism. It was copied and signed by an S. Butler, date unknown, but sometime after 1869.

house provided at the request of Sister Beecher. This house was occupied by a Baptist Brother, who had lately removed to this town from Holmes Hole, by the name of Wm. Merry.

The Methodist Society on this Island was reduced at that time by death and removal to seven members, whom with Sister Beecher that had lately removed from Nantucket and Sister Love Stewart, who had united with the Class in the District of Maine, as it was then called, comprised the whole number, viz. *nine*.¹

Br. Otis continued to preach with power and the demonstration of the spirit. Souls were awakened and converted to God, the enemy of all righteousness became enraged. Opposition by all grades of Society who were destitute of vital piety ensued. Meetings [were] disturbed by throwing stones, mud, dead cats and the howling of dogs.

What indignant feelings would arise in your minds, my friends, if while seated here your dresses should be besmeared with sand and mud, a dead cat thrown into your midst and your ears saluted with the hideous howling of a large dog? About this time, a meeting was held in the upper part of a new, unfinished house. Br. Otis preached from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. As he seemed to the people to be a setter forth of strange doctrine, many came to hear him. He preached with awful power. Solemn silence pervaded the assembly until he closed his discourse.

When the Rev. Mr. Conant, a Baptist preacher, commenced an exhortation by saying, "We have heard from Heaven and Hell this evening," and intended to have made some remarks upon the sermon which they had been listening to, when a man in the Congregation cried out, "Knock him off the table, he blasphemes." In a moment he was thrown from the table. Such a scene of confusion, I presume, was never witnessed in any meeting in this town

¹This was in 1809. Only 13 years later, the Methodists were threatening the established church. It was then, in 1822, that Jeremiah himself joined.

before or since. Some therefore cried one thing, and some another, for the assembly was confused, some shoving, some pulling, multitudes rushing for the door.

The Rev. Mr. Conant, finding himself assailed in this manner and the meeting broken up, endeavoured to make his way through the crowd to the door, in doing which, as he said, one man struck him with his fist and, to shelter himself from suspicion, cried out, "Run, you Devil, or they will kill you." Judge Bassett was attending that meeting. The tumult was such that he was unable to obtain his hat and had to retire to his lodgings without it.

About this time, Br. Otis rode into town in a chaise to attend a meeting in the evening. On his return he found one of the through traces cut off, the end of which being stiff and bent over the back rail, did not slip off. This no doubt was done for the purpose of tripping him out of his carriage. I have heard him say that he had walked our streets often times when he considered his life in danger.

In confirmation of what I have said, and for the purpose of developing the feelings of the people more fully, I will read you a petition which was sent to the Selectmen of this town on the 23rd day of August 1809, at which time Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists² held their meetings together:

"To Messrs. Daniel Coffin, Elijah Stewart and William Butler [Selectmen of the town of Edgartown], the subscribers, inhabitants of the town of Edgartown, do make the following complaint and information, viz. that there are several vague, loose and disorderly persons by the name of _____ Davis and _____ Whittemore who under a pretence of a Divine mission, without the consent of the town or the approbation of the authority thereof, have lately entered into the said town and whom with their Emissaries have made it their constant practice to go from house to house inducing persons to abandon their several occupations (by

²These were not the Congregationalists, rather a group of evangelistic Congregationalists, the "Charismatics" of that era. The two men named in the following petition were of that sect.

which they might support themselves and families) and suffer their interest in a great measure to go to waste; who creep into houses by day and by night and there continue till late and unseasonable hours of the night, exhorting the people and teaching them doctrines contrary to the Scriptures and subversive to good order, and peace of society, with an evident intention to break up and destroy the order and peace of the churches; Pretending to skill in Physiognomy and using a degree Incantation, calling upon children and weak minded persons to request their Prayers; Threatening them that if they do not they would immediately go to Hell and be Eternally damned; Suggesting to them at the same time that it is in their power by their prayers to save the people from that Condemnation; and (as if they had the great power of God) they pretended to know who are converted and who are not, by which means and in consequence of their nocturnal meetings the Loose, Profane, and inconsiderate, are led to attend and follow them and to Patrol the streets until very late hours in the night, to the Great Disturbance of the peace and tranquility of the orderly and quiet inhabitants of said town. We request therefore that you would Warn, or Order the said Davis and Whitmore to be Warned immediately to Depart out of this town, and on refusal to deal with them as Incendiaries and Vagabonds. Dated ye 23rd day of August 1809." Signed by twenty-five respectable citizens of this town, five of whom were magistrates or persons holding commissions from the Governor and Council. One of the signers of this petition made the following statement on the back of this Petition, "I further attest that I attended at several of their meetings and am personally knowing to the truth of principle and almost the whole of the charges stated within and have the rest from indubitable varacity, signed _____ etc.

I likewise find upon the back of this petition the following "(seal) Edgartown S.S. To Mr. Elijah Pease, Constable of the Town of Edgartown, Greeting. You are



Photography was not common until after Jeremiah died in 1857, but this 1880s view of Edgartown is probably little different from the Main Street he knew hereby required in the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, on the Receipt hereof, forthwith to notify and warn _____ Davis and _____ Whitmore mentioned in the within Complaint, immediately to depart out of this town, and on their refusal, you are to take with you sufficient aid and assistance and remove them accordingly. Given under our hands and seal at Edgartown the 25th day of August 1809, Selectmen _____, _____, _____."

Nothing was now lacking to effect their object but the signature of the Selectmen, one of whom publicly declared that he would sooner have his arm severed from his body than comply with the prayer of that Petition.³

I presume no such Petition can be found in the United States. From this you may judge the feelings of those who had sought and found the Lord and those who were awakened and felt themselves to be sinners, condemned and deeply concerned for their Souls, notwithstanding all opposition of Friends and Connections, blended with the efforts of those in authority.

³That outspoken Selectman was Daniel Coffin, a Quaker.

Opposition raged to such a degree in this village that it was judged most prudent to hold their meetings principally at Chapaquidick, on the Plain, or at some distance from this part of the town.

On the 4th day of Oct. 1809, Br. Otis formed the Society anew. In those days a paper was posted up at the most public place in the town purporting to be a publishment of Marriage between Rev. Erastus Otis and a certain *widow* of this place, whom I conclude was old enough to be his Grandmother, at the bottom of which was written "We forbid the bans," *Signed by three more widows.*

On the Town Records in Book 2nd page 179, you will find the name of Br. Otis there recorded as a Candidate for Representative to Congress. It was usual in those days to select some very inferior Character and vote for him as Representative to Congress in order to show our disapprobation to the other parts of this Congressional District in not granting us an opportunity of sending a man from this Island to Congress.

Permit me to read the record as it now stands in that book. "A legal meeting of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the Town of Edgartown qualified to vote for Representative in the General Court of Massachusetts. Said meeting was held at the house of Jonathan Pease, Innholder in said Town, on Monday the first day of November A.D. 1810, it being the first Monday of said month, for the purpose of voting for and choosing a Representative in the Congress of the United States. At said meeting the following persons were voted for, viz. For Isaiah L. Greene, Esq. 25 votes, Thomas Roach, Esq. 23 votes, The immortal Erastus Otis, Esq. one. *The immortal Erastus Otis, Esq. one.* Attest. John Cooke, Town Clerk.

You will very readily perceive the *stigma* intended to be thrown upon him. Every effort was used to render him and the Religion which he taught, a fazing stock and ridiculous in the eyes of the public. Notwithstanding, during the years 1809 and 1810, there were a great number who embraced Religion on this Island through the

instrumentality of Br. Otis, the Rev. James Davis, who was then a Congregational⁴ preacher, Rev. Abisha Sampson, Rev. Mr. Conant and other Baptist preachers, some of whom united with all the denunciations, but many of them did not unite with any society on account of the reproach and slander that prevailed at that period, particularly from those whom we had reason to expect better things.

Having been called to speak of the opposition of others, I now come to a period when duty requires, however unpleasant, to implicate myself in the same unrighteous conduct. My manner of life from my youth know the Inhabitants of Edgartown, who knew me from the beginning (if they would testify) that after the straightest sect of the Religion of that day, I lived similar to the Pharisees of old, condemning all who did not follow the traditions of the Elders of that period and having been brought up with all the popular prejudices of those times, I had now become confirmed in the opinion that the doctrines taught by the Methodists were as stated in that noted Petition, "Contrary to Scripture and subversive to good order."

I resolved not to attend their meetings myself or suffer any of my family to go, which resolution I closely adhered to for a number of years. During the time of my strongest opposition, Br. Steele preached occasionally in a meeting house owned by the Methodist and Baptist Societies.

One evening while he was preaching, he was seized with a trembling in consequence of which the house (not being finished) shook and caused a great alarm among many of the Congregation. I heard the sound and hastened to the Meeting House, went into the Pulpit, took hold of the Preacher and offered to bring him out if any one would help me. But as none seemed disposed to assist, I retired, much enraged at what had taken place. This rash act of mine, I have always regretted.

In the years 1821 & 22, Rev. John Adams was appointed

⁴Again, this was an evangelical Congregationalist.

to labor on this Island at which time the Society deeply felt the loss they had sustained by the removal of so many of their number to the Western Country. Nevertheless, God that comforteth those who are cast down comforted them by the coming of *John Adams*.

A very powerful Reformation commenced. Hundreds were brot to the knowledge of the truth on this Island, among whom were many of those who had been much opposed to the work of God: the men of middle age and first rank in this Community were brought to the Enjoyment of Divine grace and all classes shared in this good work.

No one has more reason for gratitude for this appointment than myself. My opposition became slain. Instead of depriving myself and my family of the privileges of attending Preaching and other means of Grace enjoyed by the Methodists, I could now rejoice in the opportunity offered me through the great mercy of the Lord. I have also cause for gratitude to God for the Conversion of a number of my own Family, Friends, and Connections, who have been made to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God and are enabled to say with myself that whereas we were once blind, we now see. Some, however, have gone, as I trust, to the reward of the Righteous, leaving an indubitable evidence that they have died in the Lord and notwithstanding my many errors, follies, and little engagedness in the blessed cause of my Redeemer, yet I am still permitted through Divine mercy and the charity of my Brethren, to be an unworthy member of that Society which I once persecuted.

In the early part of the history of Methodism on the Island, meetings were held at a house known by the name of The Hall, which had been previously occupied as a *Dancing Room*, etc.⁵ The first house occupied as a

⁵"In the eastern part of Edgartown lived Uriah Morse. His dwelling-house, then old, has long since been demolished. It had a large basement in which the owner worked at boatbuilding. On the floor above was a large room often occupied as a 'Dance Hall.'" Hebron Vincent ms., D.C.H.S. It was there that the meetings were held at the request of the 9-year-old daughter of Mr. Morse.



Chilmark Church before its "steepling" in 1931. Built by Edgartown Methodists, it was taken to Middle Road (1827), then in 1910, moved again to the Cross Road

Methodist Meeting House was a small building about 16 feet long and 14 feet wide, commonly called the *White Chapel*, in which many souls date their awakening and conversion to God.

For several years this was the only meeting house on this Island. A Quarterly Meeting was held there. Rev. Geo. Pickering was presiding Elder that season. They sometimes obtained liberty to preach in the Court House. The 2nd Meeting House was about 36 by 25 feet. Partly owned by the Methodist and partly by the Baptist Societies, in which Methodist meetings were held alternately.⁶ That part of this house owned by the Methodists was sold to the Baptist Society who removed it to the site where their new house now stands.

On 6th Sept. 1821, the Methodist Meeting House stood near the place where Br. S. P. Coffin's dwelling house now stands. This house was about 80 by 40 ft., occupied a few years and then sold to the Methodist brethren at Chilmark and removed to that place in the year 1827. The 4th Methodist Meeting House, 50 x 40 ft., was raised April 16, 1828. The 5th Methodist Meeting House, 75 x 62 ft.,

⁶It was in this building that Pease witnessed the "Homemade Earthquake" (see page 46).

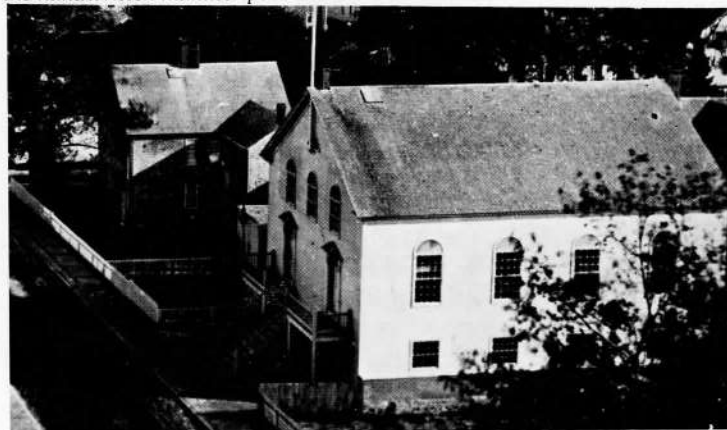
the raising of which was completed the 30th day of June 1842.

There is a Methodist Meeting House on the Plain about 28 x 24 ft. and another at Eastville about the same dimensions. There is a Meeting House on the Island of Chappaquidick, occupied by the Methodist Society there. There is a school house at Quampechy and one at the Middle District, so called, both of which are occupied frequently on the Sabbath and at other times for the purpose of holding meetings.

The first Methodist Meeting House at Holmes Hole, 33 x 37, was dedicated July 11, 1833. The 2nd Methodist Meeting House at H. Hole, 64 x 42 feet, dedicated Nov. 13, 1845. The Meth. Meeting House at North Shore, 30 x 25 feet, was dedicated Sept. 10, 1846. The 1st Meth. Meeting House at Chilmark, 30 by 40 ft., dedicated 1827. The 2nd Meth. Meeting House at Chilmark, 45 x 37, dedicated Jan. 25, 1843.

There are, at this time, about 550 members of the Methodist Church on this Island.

This article is a portion of a talk given by Mr. Pease at the Methodist Meetinghouse in Edgartown, March 5, 1847. It has been transcribed from the handwritten manuscript in our archives.



Six years after Jeremiah's conversion, the Methodists built this church on Main Street (now the Town Hall). By 1843, they had outgrown it once again

Up-Island Tales: Dry and Wry

As collected by Cyril D. Norton

Nomansland story. Twice a year, in Spring and Fall, the fishing shacks on Nomansland would be occupied by Vineyard fishermen for the codfishing. there were two communities of shacks and often at the end of the day there would be get-togethers of the codfishermen. Sometimes there would be little entertainments and, very often, to liven things up the fishermen would play pranks on one another.

On one occasion, Hervey Luce was occupying one of the backhouses about his business. Several fishermen saw him go in there and one of them told Captain Frank Cottle that he didn't think he could hit the backhouse, which was some 30 or 40 yards away, with his shotgun.

Captain Frank thought he could and he fired away. To the delight of all, the door burst open and Hervey came out with his pants around his ankles, yelling that he had been shot. Of course, he hadn't really been hurt, perhaps only stung a little.

Bige (Abijah) Hammett, who lived on the North Road in the Capigon area, used to proclaim loudly that the two greatest errors on earth were the Christain religion and the Republican party. He claimed that he had read the Bible industriously before making that statement and had watched the Republican party operate.

On his deathbed, he is said to have recanted about the Christian religion, but not about the Republican party.

Bige had been a 49er in the wild scramble for gold in California and had returned home without having made the wished-for strike. At that, he was lucky, for many who took part in the Gold Rush died of disease and accident. Otis Poole of Chilmark was one of those who did not survive.

Part of the time in California, Bige was in the same party with Otis. Once while they were resting from the heavy work of panning gravel, Bige was lying on his back with his feet up the trunk of a tree. Otis felt called

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.

upon to warn Bige.

"Look out, Bige. If you keep elevating your backsides, your brains are going to slide down into your head."

But Bige did have one thing on his place on the North Road that was most unusual -- a seven-holer backhouse. It was the most commodious one I ever saw.

Aunt Polly lived at the narrowest part of the North Road in a very old house that is now a part of the Seven Gates Farm corporation. Aunt Polly kept a pig so that in the Fall she would have a good supply of salt pork to see her through the winter.

Jake Norton was a near neighbor of hers. One Fall she asked Jake to come and slaughter her pig for her, which he did. The work was finished and no question of pay was raised. Aunt Polly said, "Jake, the Lord will reward you." Jake was somewhat taken aback, but still said nothing.

The next Fall, Aunt Polly again requested Jake's services in the matter of another pig. But when she again said, "Jake, the Lord will reward you," he had had a year to think the matter over.

He replied that he didn't doubt but that the Lord's credit was good, but he guessed he'd take his pay in pork rather than running up his credit any higher.

How wild carrot (Queen Ann's Lace) came to Chilmark. Wild carrot is an English import. It came to Chilmark through Matthew Mayhew, who was a brother of Edward Elliot Mayhew. They were the sons of old Mr. Edward Mayhew and Jane Ann

Swett, his wife, a Cape Cod product. Matthew bought a load of hay down-Island and fed it to the cattle on his place. That is how wild carrot, a hated weed, came to Quitsa.

John Bassett was an exceedingly intelligent man, but because of his sometimes most peculiar actions, many people, particularly the victims of some of his jokes, did not think so. Another reason may have been that John was never too particular about the appearance of his working clothes. Chilmark's master carpenter, Roger Allen, 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 actions of the ants intently. Getting to his feet all he said to Roger was, "Very industrious."

Mark Mayhew, Mr. Herman Mayhew's son, told this story. It was a cold April day and Mark got quite a jolt when returning home he saw John Bassett in the corner of a stone wall near the top of Abel's Hill divesting himself of all his clothing. When Mark got within hailing distance he wanted to know the reason for John's strange behavior.

"It 's the damned ants," John said. "They're all over me."

While looking out to sea, he had been unknowingly standing on an ant hill and had stood there too long. At that moment, he probably thought that the ants were much too industrious.

(The third of a series)

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.

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

March 1843

24th Wind NW. cold with Snow squalls. Ship *Spartan*, Capt. Coffin, from the Pacific Ocean for Nantucket went ashore at East Chop last night and bilged.¹ Attended meeting at M.D. at Br. Charles Kidder's.

31st. Wind ENE. Rains at night. Went

¹The *Spartan* was not lost on East Chop. somehow she got off. Starbuck notes her arrival on March 29.

to Br. C. Kidder's to attend Class Meeting. Returned on account of the storm. this month has been the most severe for several years past. The wind has not continued at SW for 48 hours for more than 2 months past.

April 1843

3rd. Wind NW. Fresh breeze. Town Meeting. Engaged at Custom House. Received a Commission as Justice of the Peace from his excellency Marcus Morton, Governor of the Commonwealth [and] for Alfred Norton, Esq., Representative from the Town of Tisbury to the General Court.²

4th. Wind NE. Cold. This day I was sworn to the Commission above mentioned by Thomas Cooke and Thomas G. Mayhew, Esqs.

6th. Wind NW to W. Last night Ichabod Norton, Esq. was robbed of about \$1,000 at about 9 o'clock in the evening. The man who robbed him came into the house with a hatchet in his hand and threatened to kill him if he did not give up his money and to kill Miss Anna Norton if she attempted to expose him or leave her chair in which she was setting. There was another man in front of the house at the time.³

10th. Wind NW. Fresh breeze. Cold. Ship *George and Mary* arrived from the Pacific Ocean.

11th. Wind NNW to WSW. The Collector sails in the Cutter *Jackson*,

²During this period all towns could send at least one Representative to the Legislature.

³Ichabod was the wealthiest man on the Island. At this time, when there were no banks on the Island, a great deal of money was often kept at home. In 1843, \$1,000 was a goodly sum of money. Much of Ichabod's wealth was in real estate and shares in whaling vessels.

Capt. Connor, to visit the Light houses. Set out for Meeting at Mr. Isaac Norton's, found him dying. Did not go to meeting but remained with Mr. Norton until about 10 p.m. He died at about 3 o'clock next morning.

13th. Wind SW. Did not attend the Funeral of Mr. Norton on account of certain circumstances.⁴

14th. Wind SW. Light. Collector returns via Holmes Hole.

17th. Wind NE. Br. Asa Johnson's Daughter dies at about 4 o'clock this morning. Br. John Adams having preached his farewell sermon yesterday was just going to New Bedford and from there home, receives a request from Br. Johnson to attend the funeral of his daughter. He takes his horse and carriage from the packet and sets out for Tisbury.⁵ Jeremiah goes to Fall River for the purpose of working at his business there this season. Rains at night.

18th. Wind NE. Gale. Did not attend meeting at M.D. on account of storm. Br. Moses Adams died at Chilmark.⁶

25th. Wind S to NNE. Rains a little. Went to Christiantown, surveyed land for George Peters.

26th. Wind SE. Surveyed land at Chapaquiddick for A. Brown.

May 1843

14th. Wind W. Light. Attended meeting at East Side Holmes Hole. Br. Weeks was there. Watched with Capt. Valentine Pease Jr's Wife.⁷

⁴Cryptic Jeremiah!

⁵It was easier, no doubt, in those days to change your plans and unload your vehicle from the ferry than it would be today.

⁶Grandfather of famed Adams Sisters.

⁷Capt. Pease was the master of the *Acushnet*, the whaler on which Herman Melville sailed.

15th. Wind N. Mrs. Pease dies at 12 M.

16th. Wind NW. Pleasant. Funeral of Mrs. Pease. Service by Rev'd Hebron Vincent & Storrs.

28th. Wind SE. Attended Meetings at North Shore and at Chilmark

June 1843

4th. Wind NE. Light. Attended meetings at East Side Holmes Hole. The Collector visits the Light Houses on Sloop *Susan*, Capt. C. S. Darrow.

7th. Wind SW. Collector arrives. Ship *Almira* hauls off into the stream.

12th. Wind SE. Ship *Almira*, Capt. C. C. Alley, sails for the Pacific Ocean. Went to Chapaquiddick with Deacon Allen Coffin on business of Tisdal Smith and Francis Smith.

17th. Wind SW. This day a great collection of people are assembled at Boston & Bunker Hill. The President⁸ and a number of his Cabinet are there with him.

18th. Wind SW. Attended meeting at North Shore and at Chilmark at Br. L. West's at 1/2 past 5 p.m. Returned at night. Br. Ewing came down with me. The Collector returns from Boston.

28th. Wind SW. Joseph sets out for Boston. Cyrus for Providence, William for New York to join the Cutter *Eroing* (?). They all go in the sloop *Passport*, packet, Capt. H. W. Smith.

⁸He was John Tyler of "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too," the nation's first campaign slogan. President Harrison (Tippecanoe) died after only one month in office, making Tyler the first Vice President to become President in this manner. Many considered him merely an "acting President." At this time he was in deep political trouble, having twice vetoed the National Bank Act, and his entire cabinet, including Daniel Webster, had resigned. He was apparently building support for his new Cabinet by this holiday appearance.

Books

The title of this volume of fifteen short stories invites us to make analogies. Some come immediately to mind: just as one of the glories of the Vineyard is its variety (think, for example, of how far apart Edgartown and Gay Head really are), one of the most impressive achievements of Gale Huntington's imagination is its range, its ability to look through many different kinds of eyes (a young boy's, an adolescent girl's, a divorced woman's, an aging captain's, and so on), to work in many different kinds of forms (from love stories to ghost stories to nautical yarns to tales of moral purpose), to recover many different eras (from the colonial past to the unhallowed present), and to engage themes as delicate and different as the suicide of a father, the murder of a husband, or the discovery of love.

As the reader moves through the book, he happily stops trying to anticipate what lies around the next turning in the path. He surrenders to the realization that he can take only one thing for granted: whatever Huntington attempts, he will meet the demands of this material squarely and well. To be surprised in so many ways and disappointed in so few will put every reader in the best possible humor with this book.

But a more extended analogy may suggest its real accomplishment. These tales are all immediately accessible. They each yield an

immediate pleasure. But if the Vineyard too cannot fail to delight the most transient visitor, the tourist with time only for the guided tour, many of the Island's beauties, and not the least of them, belong only to the people who have taken the time to live with its landscape. The shape of a half a dozen trees in West Tisbury, the look of the late afternoon light on the hills around Quitsa Pond, the quiet of Lobsterville an hour before sunset -- with these gifts the Island rewards patience, observation, reflection. Huntington's stories are full of similar rewards, the pleasures of an art that does not insist upon revealing itself all at once, but rather reserves many of its best moments to be discovered on a second reading.

Let me cite only four among the many such pleasures. There is the fact that Cap'n. Ephraim of the "antique" coasting schooner *Liza Jane* beats the rich slicker in a classic sailboat race, and beats him with a classic Yankee trick -- but Ephraim in fact got the idea for his trick from a magazine article on applied psychology he read while anchored in the lee of the United Nations building. Or the fact that Roger Damon, who suffers through a hunting trip with an odious stepfather and who watches the geese gunned down in silent horror and mounting rage, is the son of a pilot whose plane crashed in Vietnam. "The Pilot Was a Lady" is about two luckless people finding each other after being overlooked by so many others; the story, however, leaves it to us to realize that they find each other in a fog thick enough to hide a brig within fifty feet of a privateer. And Huntington has found a brilliantly

inspired means to suggest what a gray bleakness a Vineyard winter is -- and what "A Miracle" is the late, abrupt spring -- by asking us indirectly to imagine how those two seasons would seem to someone from another island, both farther south and closer to the Gulf Stream.

As every story in this volume testifies, Huntington has looked at the physical world with a writer's eye and listened to people's conversations with a writer's ear. But more impressively, in the best of these *Vineyard Tales*, he has shaped his insights with a writer's art.

STEPHEN RAILTON

The reviewer and his wife, Ilene, have lived on the Island and felt "the late, abrupt spring." He is associate professor of English at the University of Virginia and author of *Fenimore Cooper*.

News

After its very successful summer, the Cuttyhunk Historical Center is being given a more formal organization. It was founded two years ago under the auspices of the island's Church and now will become a separate entity, called the Cuttyhunk Historical Society.

A board of directors is being chosen and officers will be elected. A campaign to enlist dues-paying members will get underway shortly.

The change to a new organizational structure is the result of the excellent public response to the past summer's exhibit on Cuttyhunk pilots. Next year, a new exhibit by the Society will

cover the island's history from 1909 to the present, the years that followed the purchase of land owned by the Cuttyhunk Club by William Wood, who had Martha's Vineyard origins.

Next year will be the 100th birthday of the Cuttyhunk Church, making 1981 a very busy year for the new Society.

Incidentally, there are handsome commemorative calendars for 1981 that celebrate the Church's 100th year. You can order one through the Cuttyhunk Historical Society, Cuttyhunk 02713.

Our own Historical Society will display a few items at the Bunch of Grapes Bookstore in Vineyard Haven this winter. One is an original of the Mayhew family tree and another a framed copy of the huge 1856 Walling map of Cape Cod and the islands. This map, made 125 years ago, is extremely precise and detailed. It includes inserts that show the street layouts of many towns during that period and is probably the most comprehensive single map of the area ever made.

Margot Datz, well known to Society members for her life-size figures of the Adams sisters displayed in the Cooke House, recently completed a sculpture of one of the Island's most powerful preachers, Rev. John Adams, known as "Reformation John." He is shown in a typical pulpit setting. The figure, along with those of a Campground couple of that era, also by Datz, will be displayed next year in Oak Bluffs.

The role Reformation John played in Jeremiah Pease's conversion is the subject of an article in this issue of the *Intelligencer*.

Letters

Editor:

Thank you for the attractive way in which you presented my article on Seth Daggett. The chart explaining the current was especially helpful.

I'll never know how I neglected to mention the fact the Seth was Grandma Allen Daggett's father-in-law. She was the great-grandmother, through her first husband, of virtually every Cuttyhunker!

JANET BOSWORTH

Cuttyhunk

Editor:

The fact that the peat house on my Chilmark land was not known to my old friend, Gale Huntington, in no way lessened my pleasure in reading his fascinating piece in the August *Intelligencer*. It was the late Roger Allen, nearly 40 years ago, who identified the roofless, eight-to-ten foot walls of rough-cut granite as "the place where they stored the peat."

I simply found it hard to believe. But unless Roger was putting me on, so to speak (and I don't think he was), he then offered the even more incredible information that there had been a peat bog on the original farmstead that had been owned and worked by Capt. Austen Smith and his two sons.

Peat bogs, I had always believed, were indigenous to another, faraway island called Eire, or Ireland, if you will. If there is still a peat bog in the

vicinity, it must be somewhere on the property of Eldon B. Keith, whose farm manager all these years has been Ozzie Fischer.

Over the years I've had a lot of fun showing off-Island guests the remains of my peat house, and asking them to guess what it was once used for. Most were incredulous when I told them and I am sure that some of them simply didn't believe me.

There were native grapes growing on the outside of the south wall and a few years ago I laid some planks across to the opposite wall in a not very successful attempt to develop a grape arbor. Now the male members of my daughter's family, who occupy the barn, are building a coal bin inside the old foundation in anticipation of winterizing what has gradually become a dwelling.

So once again the solid old structure will be used to keep people warm through the winter months.

JOHN GUDE

Chilmark

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 recollections and research may be more accurate than ours. Please address your letter to Editor, *Dukes County Intelligencer*, Box 827, Edgartown, Mass. 02539.

Director's Report

For the fifty-eighth time, the members of the Dukes County Historical Society met this summer for the annual meeting of our organization. At this meeting, we crossed a milestone of great significance for the Society: Doris Stoddard retired from her position as President after serving in this capacity for seven years. The election of a new President is always an important event for an organization, but little did we realize the significance of the election of 1973, when Mrs. Stoddard moved from her position on the Council to the Presidency. In this report, it would take far too much space to discuss all the good works that have been accomplished under her leadership. We can, however, sum up these years by noting that in the history of the Historical Society the Stoddard era will clearly stand out as a beacon of progress, and we should not look upon this milestone as the completion of a journey, but rather as a high point in the life of this organization. We look forward to the continued assistance and support of Mrs. Stoddard who remains on the council and who also continues her efforts as our Genealogist.

The new President is Melville G. MacKay, Jr., and the other officers elected by the members of the Society were Stanley Murphy, Vice-president; Kathryn M. Bettencourt, Treasurer; and Shirley K. Erickson, Secretary. The council members for the next term of three years are Elmer Athearn, Edith Bliss and Gale Huntington.

After the business meeting, the audience saw my slide presentation "Images of the Historical Society," and then we all went to the Society grounds to have punch at the tryworks and to watch the lighting of the Gay Head Lens.

During the summer season, many researchers worked in

the library and we received a greater number of accessions than usual, but probably due to the extraordinarily good beach weather, we only had about 3,000 visitors (compared to an average of around 3,300). Among the many accessions, we received a very old wax doll, a life vest from the *City of Columbus*, small paperweight decoys made by Frank Adams, an eel pot woven from reeds and one of the leather jerkins from the *Port Hunter*.

Again this winter, the Library and Francis Foster Museum will be open from 1 to 4 on Thursday and Friday afternoons and from 10 to 12, 1 to 4 on Saturdays. We always are happy to have visitors.

THOMAS E. NORTON

CHRISTMAS SUGGESTION

Membership in the Society, which includes a subscription to the *Intelligencer*, makes a thoughtful (and tax-deductible) Christmas gift for those friends and relatives interested in preserving Island history and artifacts.

Just send names and addresses to the Dukes County Historical Society, box 827, Edgartown, Mass. 02539, along with \$8 for each. Subscriptions will start with the February issue.

Bits & Pieces

We tend to think of yesterday as less violent, more peaceful than today. But was it?

The "murder" of John Saunders on Chappaquiddick in 1795, is described in Mrs. Freeman's Journal elsewhere in this issue.

In 1813, Hannah Smith wrote these lines (during the War of 1812):

"Oct. 20 . . . there is an English Privateer in Old Town harbor. Yesterday they set fire to one of the smacks belonging to Mr. Fisher & Mr. Coffin."

In 1814: "Jan. 29, Captain Peter Coffin is here. Informs us that the British have been bombarding Falmouth and done considerable damage."

The Rev. Hebron Vincent wrote of the beginnings of Methodism:

"A crowd came armed with clubs to a private dwelling where the people had just assembled for an evening meeting and began approaching the minister. Dr. Samuel Whelden, who had become interested in the new cause, and who although not of large size was a man of powerful muscle, arose and laid aside his coat, saying to the roughs -- many of them reputed gentlemen -- they could not go to the minister unless they should do so over his dead body. They knew their man, quailed and retreated."

Also from Hebron Vincent:

"The Rev. Mr. Otis once came to the [Chappaquiddick] Ferry opposite the town in a heavy rain having an appointment to meet. Such were the demonstrations of the crowd

assembled on the town side laughing at his unprotected condition while waiting and so overawing the ferryman that the latter did not dare to incur their wrath -- that Mr. Otis, after remaining some time, drenched with the rain, wended his way back on foot a mile to the nearest brother's house."

After selling their share of a joint meetinghouse, (Vincent wrote) the Methodists met in the "White Chapel," a small, whitewashed schoolhouse, 17 by 12 feet, "owned by one of the brothers. Opposers were still accustomed to call our members by opprobrious names and at one time they attempted to upset this little building by levers while the worshippers were within."

And folks were not always genteel. According to a paper in our files by Thomas Nevin Jernegan Dexter, in 1820, Joseph Ripley was "Edgartown's only avowed atheist." His son, Henry, was an early convert to Methodism. "Once Minister [John] Adams called on the Ripley family and began his prayer, looking slyly at the old atheist, 'Dear Lord, bless the poor old limb of the Devil.' Joseph jumped up with a pair of tongs in his hand and drove the frightened minister out of the house."

There were some poignantly sad moments, too. In 1832, the bark *Alfred Taylor* came into Edgartown, her crew sick with scurvy. Her mate died. Jeremiah Pease wrote: "Funeral of mate . . . a native of N. York and a stranger . . . It was a solemn occasion . . . To see a stranger buried among strangers excited the sympathy of every feeling heart."

A.R.R.

To our members:

It is a particular pleasure to render this, my first report, as President of the Dukes County Historical Society.

Following the annual meeting of members of the Society on August 14, 1980, the following resolution was unanimously adopted by the Council. It speaks for itself.

RESOLUTION

Be it resolved that whereas Doris C. Stoddard has served as President of the Dukes County Historical Society since her election in 1973, we, the officers and members of the Council of the Society, wish her to know that her decision not to stand for re-election was received with deepest regret. During the time of her stewardship, significant progress was made in many areas of the life of the Society. A new museum and the establishment of the Preservation Fund are but two of her many important achievements.

Mrs. Stoddard's enthusiasm for the work of the Society, her devotion to the purposes for which it was founded will be remembered always. Also noted with great pleasure is the fact of her continuing association with the Society, both as a member of the Council and as Genealogist, offices that she has held for many years and served with great distinction.

Unanimously adopted this 18th day of September 1980 by the officers and Council of The Dukes County Historical Society, Inc.

Attest:

Shirley F. Erickson

Shirley Erickson
Secretary

Melville G. MacKay

Melville G. MacKay
President

Some Publications

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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