



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 24, NO. 4

MAY 1983

From the Tivoli to the Ocean View

by STUART MacMACKIN

"Taxi, Anyone? Taxi, Mister?"

Those Elegant Steamers of Yesterday

Vineyard Names

by JOHN GUDE

Camp Meeting: 1868

Plus: *Jeremiah Pease Diary, Director's Report,
Bits & Pieces*

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The Dukes County Historical Society was founded in 1922 to preserve the history of Dukes County for the public benefit. It is a nonprofit institution supported entirely by membership dues, contributions and bequests, which are tax deductible. Its annual meeting is held in August of each year in Edgartown.

The Society maintains the Thomas Cooke House, the Francis Foster Museum and the Gale Huntington Library of History, 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 Huntington Library are in an adjacent building and are open to the public all year around. In the Museum is an exhibition of the Vineyard's maritime heritage with displays of fishing, coastal trade, whaling, navigation, plus a wide variety of scrimshaw. The Library contains collections of ship's logs, journals, genealogies and other Island documents, plus thousands of volumes of historical works.

The public is invited.

The Circuit Avenue Street Kid Takes Another Walk

From the Tivoli to the Ocean View

by STUART MacMACKIN

DURING my Circuit Avenue Street Kid summers, from 1918 to 1924, the boats (they were not called ferries then) landed at Oak Bluffs. Watching them dock and discharge passengers was a popular pastime. Along the bluff north of the dock, folks would gather to enjoy the proceedings.

At the time, the Island was served by three faithful old steamers, *Gay Head*, *Uncatena* and *Sankaty*. The first two were similar in appearance with an uncovered forward deck and a big walking beam amidships. The *Uncatena* was slightly smaller and nine years younger than the *Gay Head*. Both had interior appointments reminiscent of the splendor of the Fall River Liners.¹

Sankaty, built in 1910, was the newest, the first "modern" propeller in the fleet. Faster than the side-wheelers, she never achieved the reputation for dependability that the older vessels had. In 1923, the *Islander*, first of the truly modern steamers, went into service, followed in 1925 by the almost-sister ship *Nobska* (renamed *Nantucket* in 1928 and back to *Nobska* in 1957) and later by a slightly different *New Bedford* in 1928.

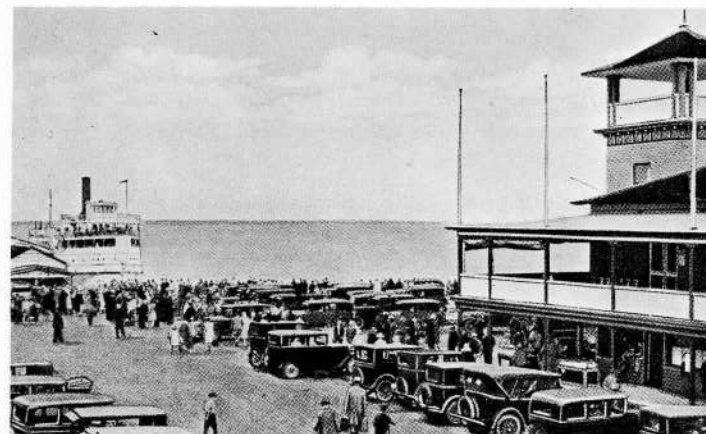
¹See page 147 for descriptions of the vessels.

STUART MacMACKIN's admirers, and there are many, including hundreds who knew him only through his Oak Bluffs reminiscences published in this journal, were deeply saddened when he died at his home in Edgartown on March 27th. He had suffered for many months from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis which gradually destroyed his body, but could not damage his indomitable mind and wit. He made the final corrections on this article only three days before his death. We all owe him our thanks for his shared memories and extend our heartfelt sympathies to his wife, Alice, and family.

The waterfront area around the dock was dominated by the Tivoli, a large wooden two-story structure with a tower on each end. It was located where the present town offices are. Painted a bright yellow and trimmed with a liverish dark red, the Tivoli was the dance hall and amusement center for the Island. The dance floor filled the entire expanse of the second floor. Surrounding it on the ocean side and the street side was a second-story porch or balcony which served as an overhanging canopy that shaded the shops below and provided a lovely spot for dancers to congregate between sets. Live music was furnished by visiting dance bands and it was a rare evening when the sound of fox trots didn't fill the evening air. The Tivoli's reputation was that of a "nice place." It provided wholesome pleasures with no element of honky tonk. There was, of course, no liquor (these were Prohibition years) so there was none of the alcohol-induced problems that can be troublesome.

Downstairs on the water side was a soda fountain with counter service from the sidewalk. Under the overhanging porch, it was always cool on a hot day. Sodas were served in bulb-shaped glasses that were supported by wire-frame holders with handles. Those holders, standard everywhere at the time, really served no useful purpose, but they were the style. Facing the street on the first floor were various shops selling souvenirs and displaying racks of postcards.

Across the street on the site of the present Martha's Vineyard Bank was a large one-story building housing the Oak Bluffs Roller Skating Rink, another popular amusement center. You could rent skates which attached to your shoes with clamps and straps. Skates came with wooden rollers for the novice or red rubber wheels for the more experienced. Music was supplied by a large barrel-organ device that clanged and oompahed out waltzes and marches in a cheery cacophony designed to convince



When a boat arrived, crowds gathered. That's the Tivoli on the right. anyone that he was having a good time whether he knew how to skate or not.

To the west, past the Nonpareil Diner, was a large bowling alley with at least eight lanes, which in New England fashion used duck pins and small balls about the size of a large grapefruit. Three balls were thrown in each frame and a game cost 10 cents. You were supposed to tip



This postcard, dated August 6, 1913, shows the Tivoli Ballroom.

the pin boy, but nobody did. I know because I worked once in a while as one!

Still farther west past the Dreamland Garage was the Strand Theater, right where it is today. It was newer than the one across the Square. For some reason I remember only one picture that I saw there: Douglas Fairbanks in "The Black Pirate." I can still see him taking on the pirate ship, escaping from the villains by thrusting his sabre through the square sails and sliding down each sail until he reached safety, disabling the ship at the same time!

When you came out of the Strand and turned right along the harbor, you soon came to another bowling alley on the left. I think it was run by Mike Keegan, a name that seems singularly appropriate for the sport of keglers.

Next to the bowling alley was an Island landmark: Tom Williston's gas station. His shop was the first floor of a two-story building. He lived upstairs. In front were the hand-cranked gas pumps and a wire fence that more or less kept in his two hound dogs. Tom was a character. He approached every customer with a yell. Generally, the yell included some warm and friendly insult, or a completely gratuitous comment on town politics. Whatever it was, it



A 1916 postcard of "The Great White Way" has this note: "It's Camp Meeting Week so the church bell rings most of the time."



Joy's Pier with the fleet of rental boats the author describes.

was delivered at high pitch and Tom's customers knew that he was in charge. He also maintained the dock on the harbor side of his shop and he roared his welcome and commands at the visiting yachtsmen too.

Down toward the jetties from Williston's Pier was the little green house of Charlie Joy, located right on the beach. There was no bulkhead then. Charlie was a house painter and I did not see much of him; I dealt with Mrs. Joy. She was a friendly middle-aged lady with white hair done up in a bun on top. Life had not been too kind to her in the dental department and the minimal number of occlusive teeth interfered with the warmth and friendliness of her smile.

I rented rowboats from Mrs. Joy. She kept a modest fleet of boats tied to the small dock that jutted into the harbor from her back porch. One had only to knock at her back door and she would come out to help you get under way. She was always very careful to see that I had the proper oarlocks and oars to fit the boat and my size. Each boat was immaculate and painted an individual color. There was *Eleanor* painted a sandy beige, *Brownie* appropriately medium brown, and *Bobby* which was pale green. I favored *Bobby* which was a bit smaller than the others and we

spent many happy hours together at 25 cents an hour. The harbor was not at all crowded then and it took little imagination for a small one to dream that he was on the open sea.

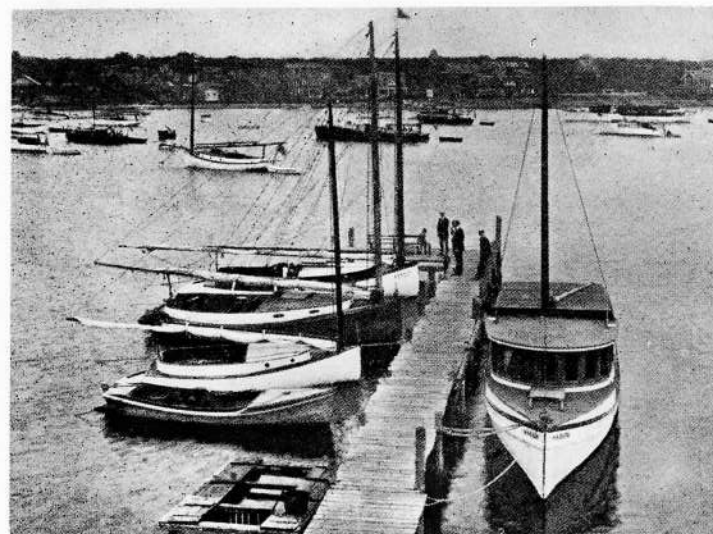
Once I came closer to the open sea than some would have liked me to. I was in the middle of the harbor when I noticed a large red dory drifting towards the jetties, going pretty fast in a fresh breeze and falling tide. I rowed after it, caught it and was surprised to find inside, way down under the middle seat of the big tub, one of the littlest of the Frey boys, from the cobbler's shop on Circuit Avenue. He was yelling his frightened head off because he had been playing in the dory by the Wesley House when it drifted free. I towed him back to shore where he started from and he thereupon made me more of a hero than I have ever been since by asking me: "If you hadn't saved me would I of hit Europe?"

Joy's small-boat livery was the last commercial establishment along that side of the harbor. Beyond Joy's, it was residential all the way to the jetties. There was no *Island Queen*.

Heading back to Monument Square, you turned right Lake Avenue and the first business you would come to was Leonard's Garage, doing a general auto-repair business



Oak Bluffs harbor before the bulkheads. Church's and Joy's piers at right.



The party-boat Marion, on right, tied up at Coley Church's Pier.

and selling Fords, Model T's in those days. Ben David's Garage is on the site now. It was a joint enterprise of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard. Al Leonard had a lot of fishing gear in the front office showcases and I have the feeling that, along with Clayton Hoyle of Circuit Avenue, his real love was farther out in the Sound.

Next to Leonard's was Coley Church's Fish Market, now Poole's. Coley Church went out of his way to be nice to me on many occasions. Once when I was not more than five he gave me four clams for bait so I could go down to the end of his wharf and fish. This caused my mother some surprise -- not worry or concern, mere surprise: she didn't know that I knew how to fish. That may say something about my mother's supervision of me, but more than that, I think, it says something about the gentle friendliness and safety of the town and of the time.

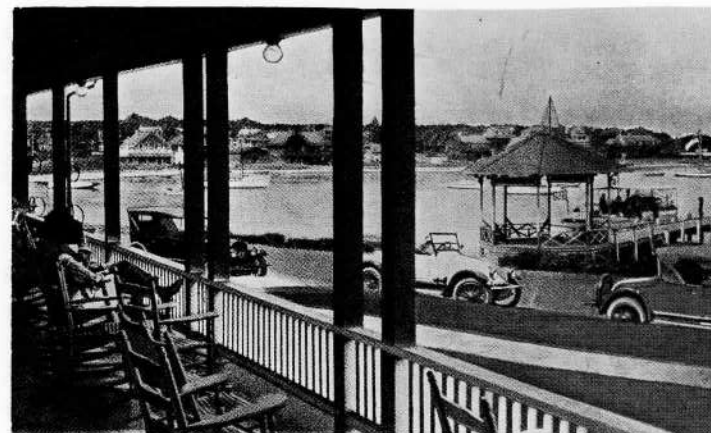
There was always somebody looking out for little fellows like me. Church's Pier was a busy place with several party boats tied up there. One was the *Marion*, a motor launch

which must have held about 30 persons and which made daily sightseeing trips out of the harbor. There was also a large catboat, *Jennie*, that I think was owned by Mort Manchester. She had a lot of varnished brightwork and looked so neat you wouldn't dare set foot aboard. In fact, the captain wouldn't let you aboard unless you took off your shoes or put socks over them!

To me, though, the most important boat at the pier was the 28-foot catboat of Capt. Edward Gannon, the *Sarah G.* Each year Captain Gannon sailed her down from Fishers Island, off Mystic, and spent the summer taking out parties from the Bluffs. He was pretty gruff with his passengers, although he didn't make them take off their shoes. But he did make them sit up and look alive when they came in from a sail -- even when they were sick (which was not infrequent). He lived aboard the boat, cooking in the tiny cabin on a small cast-iron, wood-burning stove. He always welcomed me aboard for chats and some of my happiest memories of the period are of sitting in that dingy cabin on rainy days listening to his sea stories. One involved a clipper ship that he was master of and which capsized in the Bay of Fundy. I would swipe pieces of pie from home and bring them to him, which no doubt added considerably to my welcome.

Leaving Church's Pier and heading roughly west along the harbor beach, you would find only five or six power boats moored about 25 feet or so from the beach. The shore was dotted with row boats pulled up above the tide or moored on pulley lines attached to stakes driven in about three feet of water.

The most prominent feature along the beach was the gazebo in front of the Wesley House. It was located at the shore end of the hotel pier that projected 40 or 50 feet into the harbor. Decorated with restrained gingerbread, it was a very pleasant feature of the Wesley House and the



View from Wesley House porch shows gazebo and an air-cooled Franklin.

town. From it, there was nothing else along the beach until you came to Our Market, known in later years in derogatory terms as "the rum shop." Beyond the market, and set up on the rise, was the prim and quiet Ocean View Hotel, which enhanced its reputation for elegant charm by having the Places play their harp and mandolin combination at dinner.

But it was the Wesley House that dominated the area with its five-story height, topped by a huge initial "W." It had a somewhat more dignified image than the hotels on Circuit Avenue, but it was not quite so prim as the Ocean View. Removed from the relative busy-ness of the Avenue, the Wesley House was under the ownership of Herbert Chase, who exuded proper Bostonian. Situated on the Camp Ground, right under the watchful eyes of the Adams Sisters, it had to be a bit more restrained.

The Adams Sisters were "little people" who had been with Barnum's Circus, even being members of the bridal party at the wedding of the world-famed General Tom Thumb. Daughters of Capt. Moses and Susan Adams of Chilmark, they were born and brought up at the family

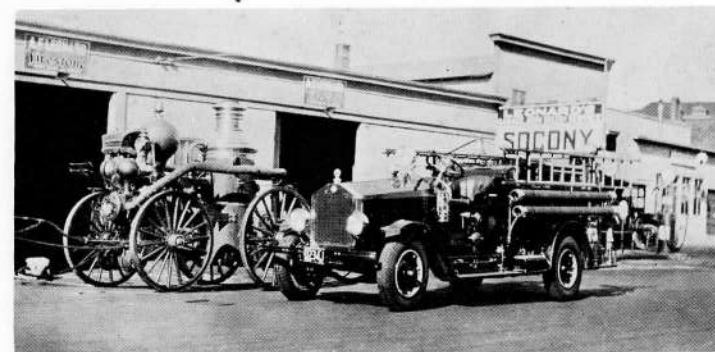
farm on South Road.² They toured the world with the circus and when they retired to the Vineyard, they lived in the old family farmhouse where they served afternoon tea and put on spinning demonstrations along with some musical numbers. When they moved to the Camp Ground in 1933, to a cottage right behind the Wesley House, they became an important part of the Oak Bluffs community, making their feelings known to everyone by writing letters to the newspaper in which they found immorality in many things from liquor to low-backed sun dresses.

I have no great confidence that I am right in this (it was just an impression of my youth), but it seemed to me that the Wesley House suffered somewhat because it was too male-dominated. Herbert Chase and his son were both welcoming and hearty. They greeted you with a disarming warmth: "Come on in, we'll put some more water in the soup and serve you right away!" Visitors knew they were truly welcome. But, at least by modern standards, there was a lack of feminine touch, of flowers, or coordinated

²See "Little Ladies from Chilmark," by Doris C. Stoddard, *Intelligencer*, August 1979.



Wesley House with its huge "W" in the 1920's. Church's Pier in foreground.



Maxim fire engine and the old horse-drawn pumper in front of Leonard's.

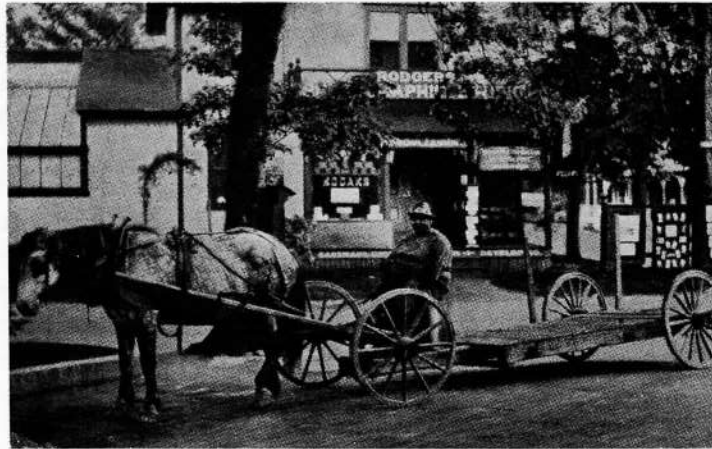
colors, or something to distinguish the place from a north Adirondack hunting lodge. In spite of that, the Chases made an enormous contribution to the hospitality of Oak Bluffs.

There are two more places I want to visit on our way back to Circuit Avenue. The first is the Fire Station. As is still true today, the volunteer fire company was a source of great pride and loyalty for its members and the town. This was made manifest in the speed with which the men got to a fire no matter where they happened to be working when the whistle blew. The pride of the company was revealed symbolically in the shiny red Maxim pumper that was cherished by all. It didn't take any effort at all to get a fireman to tell you at length why the Maxim was a much better fire engine than the American LaFrance. He would tell you how far the water would carry under full pressure and how quickly they were able to get the pressure up. For a time, they kept the old horse-drawn pumper the Maxim had replaced on display in the back of the station, but it finally got moved up behind the Stone Building on New York Avenue where it was left to rust. Nostalgia lost out to the shiny red Maxim!

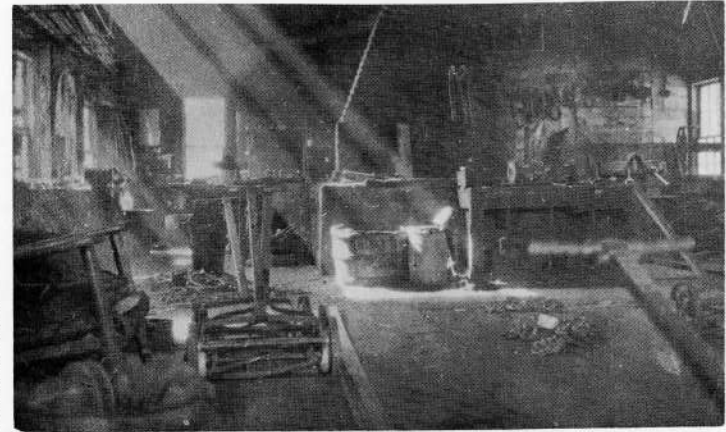
Next to the Fire Station was a blacksmith shop run by a man named Chadwick, I think. It was an old place even

then. The front door was hung on a rusty track and didn't fit too well. Behind the door, was a room full of smoke and mystery, with the sun shining through sooted windows and cutting slanting daggers of light across the piled-up equipment inside. At the rear, a huge bellows fed the fire on the large brick forge. In front, all sorts of metal objects were piled up: rusting bar iron ready to be fabricated; partially finished horse shoes; various wagon parts; and push-type lawn mowers awaiting repair. The blacksmith, who always seemed busy, would welcome you as a customer or as just someone eager to come in and watch. He used to let me help by pumping the bellows.

It's gone now. The big sliding door creaked shut and one summer no one opened it. While there had been an effort at transition from shoeing horses to repairing lawnmowers, the transition was not complete enough. There just weren't enough push-type lawn mowers to keep a blacksmith in business. Today it has been replaced by a moped rental store with ersatz Camp Ground decorations. I'm not sure that's progress, but I have no doubts as to



Fred James, his sluggish horse and underslung cart near Union Chapel.



Photograph by the author

Smoky, dark interior of the blacksmith shop is difficult subject for the author's camera in the 1930's, before fast film.

whether or not it is an improvement.

Heading back to Monument Square, you were almost certain to meet Fred James, who seemed as much a fixture there as the Civil War soldier. An enormous man, weighing 300 pounds or more, Fred moved so slowly he seemed like a second statue in the Square. He drove a heavy freight wagon drawn by his faithful work horse. The wagon had large steel-tired wooden wheels. Suspended from them was the bed of the wagon, underslung, lowered so its loading area was not more than a few inches off the ground. It could handle very large and bulky loads, including Fred. The wagon never moved very fast, loaded or empty, and it seemed that it was always there near the monument slowly creeping across your field of view.

We never thought about such things at the time, at least I never did, but it was Fred James and others like him who gave Oak Bluffs a charm unlike any other place I know. It was a friendly charm, a caring, that I can feel even now after all those years and it came from folks like Fred, and Captain Gannon, and Coley Church, and Mrs. Joy, and Tom Williston, and . . . and . . . and . . .

"Taxi, Anyone? Taxi, Mister?"

The Island, it seems, has a history of problems with its taxis. Something always keeps the waters roiled. In Oak Bluffs during the 1920's and '30's, the chief roilers were two women.

The taxi problem centered around the steamboat wharf. When you came down the gangplank and headed up the wharf, you were confronted by a line-up of taxis and their drivers. Getting past them was a major achievement. They were parked on the diagonal, the full length of the dock, and each driver saw you as a particular challenge. The one who made the most of that challenge was a close-cropped, gray-haired lady named Avis Taylor.

This was long before Women's Lib, but Avis was already a liberated woman with a strong sense of her "rights," most of which were written only in her personal sense of what was appropriate: there was no legal back-up.

Avis had "rights" to where her car was parked; she had "rights" as to how close to it a competitor could stand; she had super-reciprocal "rights" that let her stand closer to her competitor's car than he could stand to hers. And Avis had "rights" to customers. Once you rode in her cab, you were hers and no one could touch you after that -- according to the Avis bill of rights.

My mother became a chattel of Avis's and she was deathly afraid of violating that claim. She would stay at the end of the wharf until Avis was gone just to avoid a confrontation. It got so bad that when it was decided that my bride and I would go to the Vineyard for our honeymoon, my mother made me promise that I would use Avis's cab, "just to keep the peace."

I broke that promise and was subject to Avis's behind-the-back vituperation from then on!

In such an atmosphere, it is small wonder that there was constant friction among the cab drivers and that much of it had its origin with Avis. It got so bad that at one time Avis was brought into court, charged with being a "common scold," a charge based on an obscure Massachusetts statute that is still on the books. I am pretty sure that she was found guilty even though the text of the statute does little to enlighten the reader about what the offense is. It also mentions "railers and brawlers," and the other taxi drivers may have been thinking of this.

The ranks of female taxi drivers were swelled each summer with the arrival of Imogene Farnum. Imogene was a school teacher who couldn't afford to take courses or vacations in the summer. A small person, she was just a bundle of energy. She would get



Taxis line up on the dock waiting for the boat to arrive in 1921.

up before six every morning for a swim, work all day and then go for another swim after dark. Wiry and bandy-legged, she wore her skirts too short for the current fashion or for any reason of pulchritude. They allowed her to get around faster and that was always her aim. She aroused the animosity of the other taxi drivers because of her bold aggressiveness and, worse than that, because she was an off-Islander who was taking bread from their mouths. Imogene was not loud or surly like Avis, but she moved in fast with her sales pitch and would have her party signed up, in part because of her charm and knowledge, before the others could get moving.

For the most part, Imogene sought her customers on Circuit Avenue. She would arrive early, get a good parking spot and then put a sign in her car window that read, "To help a boy through college." That sign itself was unfair competition, although it

was truthful. The "boy" was her son. Imogene's husband had left shortly after the boy's arrival. I can think of reasons. Imogene had carried on alone and so Walter Farnum Graf went to Dartmouth College.

But even there he could not escape, any more than could the other taxi drivers, from that fierce mother love and drive. One day, coming back from class, he was greeted by a whooping "yoo hoo" from Imogene. On a surprise visit with a number of maiden aunts, she had spread a picnic lunch and the doting ladies all over the dormitory lawn. Poor Walt, dying of embarrassment, had to sit down and join them and, for a long time after, take the gibes of his classmates.

Walt had good stuff in him, much of it no doubt coming from his mother. One day at a Beach Club dance, I asked him if he had brought a date. No, he said, he had taken a long swim that day and he felt a little tired.

I asked how long a swim and he replied, "I swam from Falmouth to West Chop!"

Imogene's troubles with the other taxi drivers came to a head when she moved her base of operations from Circuit Avenue to the Steamboat Dock. That precipitated a genuine ruckus. One driver, tired of giving her the benefit of her status as a member of the "weaker sex," threatened her with a real masculine punch. For once in her life Imogene was scared and she ran. She ran into the Ladies Room of the comfort station at the head of the wharf.

The record is a little unclear as to

whether Imogene's would-be assailant followed her all the way in, but there was enough trouble arising out of the "Battle of the Comfort Station" so that, for the umpteenth time, the Selectmen were called on to have another meeting "to settle once and for all the troubles of the taxi drivers."

I suppose that the Gloria Steinems and the Karen DeCrows of the world would see these activities as part of a great struggle for women's rights. But I think it was more basic: it was two strong-minded individuals doing their thing in spite of genuine obstacles.

I miss Imogene and, deep in my heart I guess, I kind of miss Avis, too.

Stuart MacMackin



Do you recall a traffic light near the Flying Horses in the 1930's?



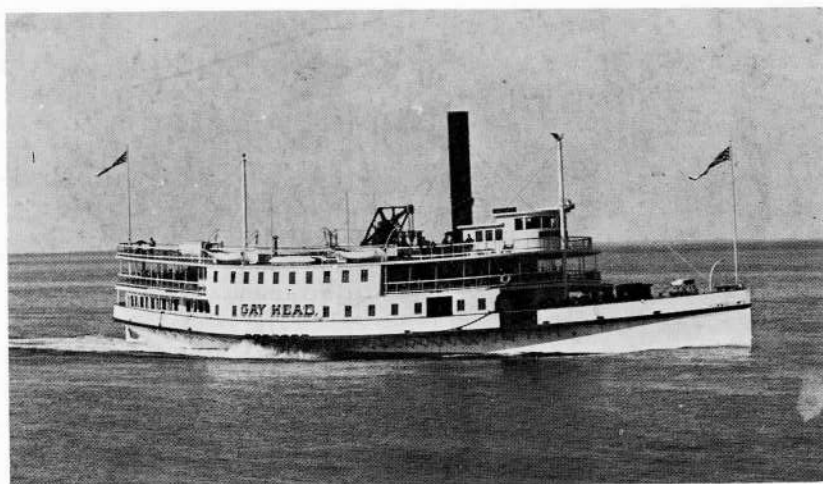
Those Elegant Steamers of Yesterday

Vessels serving the Vineyard in the early '20's were not new, but they certainly were luxurious compared with the utilitarian ferries of today. The *Gay Head*, built in 1891, is an example as this description, published at the time, makes clear:

"... aft [on the main deck] are the ladies' saloon, toilet rooms and social hall, all fitted in the Neapolitan style, with gold trimmings. The woodwork is of cherry, and the side seats are covered with maroon plush upholstery. The social hall floor is laid with black walnut and maple . . . [it] is 50 feet long . . . Above the main deck is the forward promenade and upper saloon, which are reached fore and aft by richly carved staircases. On either side are five state-rooms, fitted with willow furniture for summer. At the side are cupboards for the stowing away of the life preservers. This does away with the arrangement of racks overhead and does not mar the beauty of the fine white paint, gold trimmings and the shading of different colored French glass windows overhead."¹

Eleven years later, in 1902, the *Uncatena* was built. She was 187 feet long (the *Gay Head* was 203 feet long) and the first steel-hulled vessel in Island service. Used mainly on the Vineyard run, she boasted electricity and a 14-inch

¹Harry B. Turner, *The Story of the Island Steamers*, The Inquirer and Mirror Press, Nantucket, 1910, p. 71.



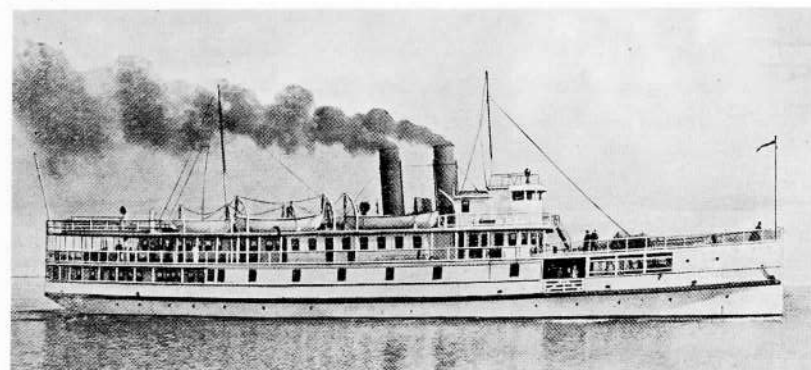
Lovely view of the steamer Gay Head by photographer Chamberlain.

searchlight, the first of its kind in the fleet. On the evening of her first run, with the vessel tied to the dock,

"after darkness had settled, the electric plant was started on board and a large crowd assembled to witness the manipulation of the 14-inch search-light from the pilot



The Uncatena with her 14-inch searchlight atop the pilot house.



A 1923 postcard of the two-stacker Sankaty, steaming into Oak Bluffs.



Steamer Sankaty aground on Sconticut Neck, New Bedford.

house a large ladies' cabin is a feature of the new boat One novel feature of the *Uncatena's* upper deck is a glass smoking room forward, so arranged as to be entered only from outside, thus insuring the freedom from smoke in the main cabin. On the upper deck are four outside staterooms, fitted in the most desirable manner for the convenience of guests."²

With the launching of the *Sankaty* in 1911, the first propeller-driven vessel went into service, marking the beginning of the end for the dependable side-wheelers with their midship shaft which passengers had to duck under or, in the case of the *Uncatena*, step over. All was not gain, however, as the wide side wheels helped stabilize the vessel in the rough water of the Sound, something a propeller doesn't do. The *Sankaty* rolled. But the rolling wouldn't bother the ladies it was thought because:

"on the upper deck, aft of the stairway, will be the ladies' parlor and toilet accommodations, the location being chosen so as to reduce to a minimum the motion and vibration due to the machinery or rough water."³

The *Sankaty*, alas, was not destined to have as long and useful a life on Vineyard Sound as the old sidewheelers. On June 30, 1924, while tied up overnight at New Bedford, she caught fire and burned down to her steel hull. Pumped out and refitted with an elemental open deck, she was taken to Rockland, Maine, where she operated as a rather ugly car ferry, her glory days of Vineyard Sound behind her.

The *Gay Head* was taken out of service that same year, 1924, after 33 years of operation; the *Uncatena* was retired in 1928, after 26 years.

²Ibid., p. 75.

³Ibid., p. 77.



Vineyard Names

by JOHN GUDE

ON the title page of the late George Stewart's wonderful book, *Names on the Land*, there is a quotation from Francis Bacon: "Name, though it seem but a superficial and outward matter, yet it carrieth much impression and enchantment."

I have always been fascinated and, like Bacon, enchanted by names, both of people and of places. There was a time, in simpler days, when people got by without surnames. But as the population grew, John the Baker became John Baker; Henry the Cooper became Henry Cooper; and Richard the Mason became Richard Mason.

Names based on places where people lived also proliferated: Leas and Meadows; Hills and Dales; Woods and Forest; Rivers, Brooks and Lakes.

Then a few centuries later, as Stewart's book tells us so entertainingly, the movement reversed itself and towns, rivers and mountains, as they were discovered, were named for people. The Spaniards and to some degree the French, both being Catholic countries, tended to name such places after those saints on whose "day" they were discovered. The British, Dutch and others were more likely to name places in honor of royalty. Thus, while the Spaniards were busy on our West coast naming San Diego, Santa Barbara and San Francisco, to name a few, the

JOHN GUDE has made words and names his vocation and avocation, thus is especially equipped to write about this subject. He and Tom Stix, who introduced John and his wife, Helen, to the Island before World War II, formed the first agency representing radio newscasters, those pioneers of electronic journalism. "Burning their Manhattan bridges" behind them in 1980, the Gudes moved into a lovely old Chilmark farmhouse they had summered in for years, leaving it only during the harsh months for a warmer spot in Vineyard Haven. This is his third article for this journal.

English Captain Gosnold, Sir Walter Raleigh and others were naming places on the East coast after Royalty: Virginia for the virgin Queen Elizabeth I, plus our own Elizabeth Islands, as well as Edgartown, for a child in the British royal household.

Capt. Bartholomew Gosnold sailed here to what was then known as "the northern part of Virginia," and with him was Gabriel Archer, gentleman. Archer loved words and names, and to play with them, like a man who wrote sonnets and bandied quips at the Mermaid Tavern. Thus, in Archer's account of that voyage, names are like raisins in a good pudding, many and tasty: Savage Rock, Shoal Hope, Point Care, Gosnold's Hope ("hope" being an old word meaning "bay"), Hap's Hill, and other tasty morsels.

From Archer's fine fancy probably sprang the name "Martha's Vineyard." To be sure, Stewart goes on, the voyagers found many grapevines on a little island, but that would usually result in Vine Island. As for Martha, Gosnold had a baby daughter of that name, but no one has explained why she should have been coupled with "vineyard." There is also a Biblical memory of the industrious Martha, and another about laboring in the vineyard, but that is a long bow for any man to pull.

Most likely, Stewart concludes, the name records some little incident among the voyagers themselves, on which Archer's fancy seized. Actually, the first "Vineyard" was a small island south of our present one (probably Nomans) but the name shifted to the larger island. Hap's Hill and the other fruits of Archer's wit have been lost.

Now, since he has got us here, we will leave George Stewart's book and turn, on our own, to Vineyard names. There will be claims and counter-claims about the origin of any name on the Island. Therefore, I must make a disclaimer: this is in no sense a scholarly, or even serious,

historical treatise on Island names. It is simply, like Francis Bacon's, one man's fascination and enchantment with the origin and meaning of names -- in this case, Island names.

Like Caesar's Gaul, names on the Vineyard might be divided three ways: Indian names; English names; and place names of early settlers. With a few exceptions, I'm going to skimp on Indian names for, like those early settlers who had great difficulty with the many tribal languages, I find them confusing and often unpronounceable. Also, to my untrained ear, most of them sound like Boy Scout and Campfire Girl summer camps. Exceptions would have to include Chappaquiddick and Menemsha. I don't know how, where or when these names originated, but they are Indian. Yet, most descendants of the Wampanoag tribe today live in Gay Head and most of them have very un-Indian names such as Vanderhoop, Ryan, Madison, Jeffers and the like.

As long as we are up-Island, let's begin our strictly personal interest in Island names there. Last year, in a *Gazette* editorial that delighted me, we were told that "It's never been clear who named Gay Head. Dr. Banks, in his History, merely says 'sometime before 1662, it was called by the English, Gayhead.' He notes that the name in the Dukes County deed was always written as one word. How this western headland of the Island could have been christened more appropriately is difficult to understand."

Others besides the writer have, or had, a special interest in Island names. Some years ago, the late Stanley King, retired president of Amherst College and a long-time Chilmark resident, whose lovely house still stands opposite the entrance to Meetinghouse Road, made a trip to England to track down the origins of Chilmark and Tisbury. Although their Island home was technically in Chilmark, it was much nearer the facilities and activities of West Tisbury. The Kings found what they were looking

for: approximately half-way along the rural road connecting the English Chilmark and Tisbury was a tiny village of Wooten. When they returned, they gathered friends and neighbors together and decided that their part of Chilmark, roughly between Abel's Hill and the West Tisbury line, should henceforth and forever be known as Wooten Bassett. The Bassett being in honor of the area's venerable patriarch, John Bassett.

Thus, there came into being another Island name; not officially to be sure, not another town or village, but a neighborhood, such as other Chilmark neighborhoods like Quitsa, Squibnocket and Windy Gates.

Insofar as names go, the three down-Island towns are all interesting in different ways. Some have royal origin. We have already touched on Edgartown, originally called Great Harbour and later renamed for a young lad of the British royal household (by the way, unknown to the namers, the youngster had died shortly before). Our neighboring islands, also part of Dukes County (another royal name), were named the Elizabeth Islands in honor of England's virgin queen. (Who can explain the name of the southernmost of those islands, Cuttyhunk? It was for many years officially called Cutter Hunk -- a fascinating combination.)

Chappaquiddick, a part of Edgartown, has an abundance of wondrous names: Drunkard's Cove (there's a name I've got to know something more about, whether truth or legend!); Shear Pen Pond (named when Chappy was dotted with sheep); Pocha Pond and Wasque (pronounced "way-sqee").

Vineyard Haven, the "town" part of Tisbury, was known many years ago as Holmes Hole or, as some historians insist, Homes Hole. The word "hole" itself is interesting, as applied to a kind of harbor. Mr. Webster, in my international edition of his dictionary, defines it as a small bay, or cove. It is often used to describe an opening,

a channel, as in Quick's Hole, Robinson's Hole, Wood's Hole. Who was Quick? The Robinsons lived at Tarpaulin Cove. But where is the Wood in Wood's Hole?

Or the Canapitsit in Canapitsit Channel?

Oak Bluffs, earlier Vineyard Grove and then Cottage City because of its building style, was and to some extent still is the principal Island resort town. First it was entirely a religious camp ground, but later in the 19th Century, it boasted the biggest and most luxurious summer hotels and bathing pavilions. It became Oak Bluffs officially in 1907, named after the Oak Bluffs Land & Wharf Company, which had developed it (there were few oaks still standing by then, however).

Island roads have fascinating names. State Road connecting down-Island and up-Island is quite logically called State Road, being maintained by the State of Massachusetts. Until, that is, it reaches North Tisbury, where it branches off just below Greene's Farm, one branch continuing on to Chilmark Center which is called South Road, and the other going through the western reaches of West Tisbury and Chilmark, ending in Menemsha, called the North Road. As the late McAllister Coleman remarked wryly in a skit he wrote for a benefit revue in the old Chilmark Tavern many years ago, both the North Road and the South Road run from east to west. In between, from West Tisbury to Chilmark center, is Middle Road, until shortly after World War II, an unpaved, narrow dirt thoroughfare with only a few scattered houses and almost canopied with flowering dogwood and other lovely trees. Most of these had to be cut down when the road was widened and paved, prompting the late Roger Baldwin, a modern-day Thoreau, to remark sadly, "There goes the last real country road on the Vineyard."

There are only two Main Streets on the Island: one in Edgartown, the other in Vineyard Haven (although some

West Tisbury residents call the part of South Road running past the general store, church and town office by that name). As far as I know, there are avenues only in Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs. Once again consulting my Webster's, I find that "avenue," derived from the French *avenir*, is defined somewhat cryptically as "a broad, beautiful street; also a street." I've always felt that calling any but a broad, beautiful thoroughfare an avenue was a bit hoity-toity. My wife and I spend the winter in a charming house in Vineyard Haven on a charming, short dead-end street, with about a half-dozen other charming houses *en face*, called Crocker Avenue. I feel sure that Mr. Crocker would have felt just as honored had it been named, more appropriately, Crocker Lane, or Crocker Way.

The two oldest down-Island towns, Edgartown and Vineyard Haven, have many obvious street names: School Street, Water Street, Church Street, etc., which are self-explanatory. Edgartown has a Summer Street, a Winter Street and a Spring Street, but, oddly, no Autumn Street. I've mentioned this curious omission of perhaps the most pleasant of our four seasons, "the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness," but no one seems able to account for it. But then, Edgartown has its Pease's Point Way (or is it Pease Point Way?) and the captivating Pennywise Path.

In all three up-Island towns, strangely enough, there is only one street, so-called. It is Music Street in West Tisbury. This comparatively short way was so engagingly named, I am told, because on it lived the only up-Island piano teacher.

Neither Chilmark nor Gay Head has any streets, only roads, ways and lanes, but these have a special enchantment. Meeting House Road, Indian Hill Road, Lobsterville Road and Lighthouse Road need no explanation. In Chilmark, there is Tea Lane, running now from Middle Road to North Road, so named we are told

because of a bit of tea-smuggling during the pre-Revolutionary War days (see "The House that Gave Tea Lane Its Name," *Intelligencer*, August and November 1982). And who can tell me which Scotsman was the one for whom Scotchman's Bridge Lane in West Tisbury was named?

There are so many roads, lanes, ways, and even a square (Commonwealth Square in Oak Bluffs), that we could go on for more space than the *Intelligencer* allows. But I hope to be permitted to add one -- make that two -- more sets of intriguing names. The big, mostly land-locked, ponds on the South shore are not called Great Tisbury Pond or Great Chilmark Pond, but Tisbury Great Pond and Chilmark Great Pond. Why that intrigues me is difficult to explain, but I know of no other part of our wide land where the name of a body of water is juxtaposed with the adjective describing its size -- it isn't called Salt Great Lake, you know!

But for myself, the most endearing place names on the Island are those that come right out of the old Testament: Abel's Hill, Hariph's Creek, Job's Neck, Seth's Pond and Tiah's Cove. They must have been named when everybody in each community knew everybody else by first name. Doubtless, a patient researcher could locate records which would provide the surnames of these individuals and whether they be farmers or fishermen, sheep herders or sea captains, but I don't want to know that much. What possible good would be served, for instance, by knowing the last name of the lady for whom Lovey's Cove was named?

I think Francis Bacon would find much enchantment in those names, just as they are.

Documents

One of the Island's most active persons, Jeremiah Pease, whose diary this is, was born in Edgartown in 1792 and died there in 1857.

His father, Noah Pease, was a master mariner and a cordwainer (the son, Jeremiah, among other occupations was also a shoemaker). Noah and his vessel were detained for some months in France during the French Revolution, prior to Jeremiah's birth.

Thanks to Julien Weston, the Society has in its Archives some of Noah's letters which we will publish in the future.

Jeremiah was, at the time he wrote this installment, 56 years old and he seems to be slowing down somewhat from the very active life he has led. There is more about the activities of his children, all except one of whom are adults and doing well in their chosen fields.

This is a period of prosperity for the village of Edgartown as the whaling vessels return with their valuable cargoes.

• • •

December 1847

1st. SW to SSW, cloudy. Cutter Jackson, Capt. Waldron, arrives.

5th. SEly, light, rains a little. Attended meetings at E-Ville. The new light vessel, Capt. Sylvanus Luce, goes to her station today at Cutter Hunk towed by Steamer Naushon.

6th. Cutter Jackson sails on a cruise.

9th. SSW & S, light and pleasant.

Thermometer after sunset 53.¹

13th. SSW, pleasant, Thermometer 91 in the sun.

17th. ENE foggy, P.M. moderate breeze. Thermometer 46 in the sun. 20th. NNW, cloudy. The ship *Louis Philip* of N.Y. having been on shore at the S. side of Nantucket is towed here this night by steamers *Massachusetts* and *Tellegraph* of Nant. The Ship is from France with passengers and a very valuable cargo.

22nd. NE, cold, little snow. Went to Holmes Hole to carry William. Thermometer 30, snows at night.²

28th. W to WSW. Moderate. Ship *Louis Philippe* of N.Y. is towed to N.Y. by Tow Boat R.R. *Forbes* of Boston. Starts for that port today. 40.

29th. SW, pleasant, snow melts fast. Cyrus goes to Boston. Cyrus returns from H.H., no steamer there today.³

A.M. 58; P.M. 76.

30th. SW, pleasant. Cyrus leaves for Boston via Packet. 58.

¹Although Jeremiah doesn't mention it, his son William was an officer on the *Jackson*, whose captain's name was Walden, not Waldron as Jeremiah spells it. William may have given his father a thermometer (from the ship's stores?) during the layover because the diary suddenly, and without explanation, starts recording the temperatures. It seems hard to believe, but apparently Jeremiah did not have a thermometer until now. Does any reader know when they first came into general use?

²It is not clear whether William was coming or leaving. His wife, Serena, was living in Newport, R.I., where the *Jackson* was stationed.

³Cyrus, an artist and later an officer in the Revenue Service was William's twin brother. Joseph, mentioned later, was another brother who was the Collector of Customs in the Edgartown District.

31st. SW to S, foggy. Light wind. This month has been very moderate and warm for the season.

January 1848

3rd. NE to N, moderate. Joseph goes to Boston.

9th. SE, gale with rain A.M. P.M., W, fresh. Did not attend Meeting at E-Ville on ac't storm. At night 4 below 0.

25th. E to SW, light pleasant. After sunset 42.

28th. NW to SW, pleasant. Shade 48.

29th. NW, fresh breeze, squally, little rain & snow. Remarkable appearance of the Northern Lights last night at ½ past 8 in the evening. Very red & bright.

February 1848

Jeremiah continued to record the thermometer readings each day until February 14th, some in the sun, some in the shade, some after sunset. After the 14th, no more readings. It was a month with little happening, at least in his diary.

26th. NW to SW, pleasant. Br. Matthew Vincent's Wife dies suddenly.

March 1848

4th. WNW, measured Sch. *Monteray*. New vessel.

9th. SSW to NE, light. Ship *Champion*, Capt. Merry, arrives in Holmes Hole.⁴

⁴The *Champion* had sailed July 9, 1845 for the Pacific Ocean, returning with 140 barrels of sperm oil, 2150 of whale oil and 14,000 pounds of whalebone. Grafton Norton of Edgartown was her agent. Jeremiah had measured the *Monterey* on the 4th in his position as Deputy Collector of Customs.

11th. WNW, pleasant. Ship *Champion* comes down from H.H. The Light Vessel, Capt. Silvanus Luce, sails for her station at Cutter Hunk, towed out by Schr. *Crusade*.

20th. SSW, foggy. News of a Revolution in France.⁵

21st. SW to W, pleasant. Br. Luke Gray dies.

24th. NE, cold. Funeral of Br. Luke Gray at the Methodist Meeting House, service by Revd. Thos. Ely & Revd. Mr. Goodnow of the Congregational Church. The death of Br. Gray was peaceful.

28th. NE, foggy. Mr. Henry Butler dies, aged 60.

29th. SW to W, pleasant. Funeral of Mr. Butler, service by Revd. Mr. Goodnow & Hebron Vincent.

April 1848

2nd. N, light, clear, cold. Attended meetings at E-Ville. Funeral of Miss Mary Crosby, Daut. of Mr. Harlow Crosby. She died very suddenly yesterday morning or during Saturday night. Service by Revd. Mr.

⁵This was not the French Revolution of 1789, but the February Revolution of 1848 that overthrew Louis Philippe, the "citizen king," and established the short-lived Second Republic. The Revolution had started in Paris on February 22nd, so it had taken nearly a month for the news to reach the Island. You'll recall that Jeremiah reported the rescue work done on the French Ship, *Louis Philippe*, which had gone aground off Nantucket in December "with passengers and a very valuable cargo." There were 167 passengers and a cargo valued at \$200,000 aboard. Was it people and money fleeing the Revolution? The ship's underwriters distributed \$31,000 to the individuals who took part in the rescue, including \$5000 to the officers and crews of the *Telegraph* and *Massachusetts*.

Hall. She was a member of the Baptist Church and considered a pious woman.

6th. WNW. Fast Day. The new Schnr. *Monterey*, Capt. Goold, sails on a fishing voyage.

8th. SW, cold. "Life is a span, a fleeting hour." Another year of my short life has fled. Went to D.C. Records.

13th. S to SSW. Serena very sick at New Port.

16th. S, light, pleasant. Set out for New Port. William's wife being very sick. Arrived there on Monday at 11 a.m., found Serena in a dangerous situation. The fever had abated in some degree. Remained there until the 20th.

20th. Went from N. Port to Little Compton, exchanged my Horse and returned to Fall River.

21st. W to SW. returned home.

23rd. S to SSE, pleasant. Set an Infant's arm. Daut. of James N. Luce.

24th. W. Cyrus goes to N.B., via H. Hole. Sent my horse.

25th. SW. Received my Grey horse which I exchanged with Mr. Leml. Scessen at Little Compton, R.I.⁶

26th. SSE, cloudy. Br. Elihu P. Norton dies of consumption. He was esteemed a pious man and died with strong faith in his Blessed Redeemer. Dr. I.H. Lucas' wife dies of consumption. She was also esteemed pious and died in faith and hope of a happy immortality.

⁶If any reader can fathom the story of Jeremiah's horse trading, the Editor would be grateful.

27th. NNE, light rains a little. Funeral of Br. Norton, service by Revd. Frederick Upham & Hebron Vincent. It was a solemn season. Br. Norton and myself were particular Friends for 25 years past, he was a man of good natural and acquired abilities and I trust a pious Christian. 29th. S to NW. Funerals of Dr. Lucas' Wife and Miss Caroline Arey. Service by Revd. Mr. Goodnow.⁷

May 1848

7th. S to SW, light. Attended meeting at E'Ville. Br. G. Weeks was there.

9th. SW. Littleton arrives from P.O. [Pacific Ocean?] having been cast away.⁸

10th. SW to S, foggy, gale at night SSE. William goes to N. Port.

15th. WNW to SW. Jeremiah & Wife go to Bristol on a visit. Littleton goes to N.B. Br. J.W. Hardy visits us today.

17th. SW, fresh. Harrison Pease, son of my Broth. Chase Pease, dies this morning. His Father found him sitting on a stick of timber in his shed about sunrise. He had probably been dead more than ½ an hour, I presume, when his Father saw him. He appeared like a man who had died in a Fit. He was 39 years old.⁹

18th. SW, pleasant. Funeral of

⁷There seems to have been an unusual number of deaths this winter.

⁸Littleton was Jeremiah's son-in-law, having married his eldest daughter, Isabel, in 1839. He was Littleton Cooke Wimpenny. Jeremiah should have given more details of the "cast away."

⁹Capt. Chase Pease, father of the dead man, was a mariner and a Whig, unlike brother Jeremiah, a Democrat.

Harrison Pease. Service by Revd. J.W. Hardy (who is here on a visit) and Revd. Frederick Upham. It was a solemn time, sudden and awful was his death.

19th. SW, pleasant. Cutter *Jackson* arrives.

20th. SW, pleasant. Cutter *Jackson* sails. William goes in her.

21st. SW, light very warm. Attended meetings at E'Ville. Br. Joseph Linton and Br. Seath Allen were there.

22nd. NE to N, rainy. Mr. John Thaxter dies suddenly, aged — years. He had been unwell for some time past but not considered so near his end.¹⁰

23rd. NE, cloudy. Surveyed land for Danl. Vincent near the Little Pond.

24th. NE, rainy. Funeral of Mr. Thaxter. Service by Revd. Frederick Upham.

June 1848

3rd. SW, pleasant. Nathan Smith dies, an infirm man.

4th. SW, pleasant. Attended meeting at E'Ville. Funeral of Mr. Smith, service by Revd. Jesse Pease.

5th. ESE, cloudy, foggy and rains a little. Jeremiah goes to Centerville to work upon a Meetinghouse.

10th. SW, fresh, pleasant. Quarterly Meeting, Br. W.W. Harlon, Presiding Elder.

13th. W, fresh, clear. Went to Bristol, R.I., with my Dat. Eliza. Arrived there at 8 P.M., via N.B. &

¹⁰John Thaxter was the youngest child of "Parson" Thaxter and his first wife. We know little about him except that he was 52 years of age when he died. As usual, Jeremiah failed to fill in the blank he left.

Providence.

15th. SW, pleasant. Arrived home from Bristol via Fall River and N.B.

16th. SW, pleasant, warm. Thermometer 83 in the shade at sunset.

17th. NW to E, and SSW, light, very warm. A Wreck is towed into this harbour by two Smacks.

21st. SW, cloudy. Velina goes to Nantucket on a visit.¹¹

22nd. SSW, cloudy. Growing weather.

28th. SW. Cutter *Gallatin*, Capt. Maffete, arrives & sails.

30th. SE, rainy. My Wife goes to Boston with Joseph and his Wife via N. Bedford.

July 1848

5th. SW, pleasant. Got my hay into the barn from the meadow near the house. My Wife, Joseph and his Wife, William & Frederick all arrive. Wm. from New Port, Frederick from Duxbury and the others from Boston.¹²

9th. NEly, light. Attended meeting at North Shore. Br. Blake was there. Read an address upon the rise & progress of Methodism. U.S. Steamer *Bibb*, Lieut. C.H. Davis and Cutter *Gallatin*, Lieut. Moffett, of the Coast Survey arrive.

15th. W, pleasant. Got all my hay in from Ox Pond.

16th. SW, pleasant. Attended

¹¹Velina was Jeremiah's youngest child, 13 years old at the time she made this trip.

¹²As we have mentioned before, Jeremiah's children did a lot of travelling

meetings at M.D. and commenced a Sabbath School.

17th. SW, pleasant. Engaged with hay for Br. I.D. Pease.

22nd. SSW, fresh breeze. Bark *Alfred Tyler* arrives from Pacific Ocean with 900 bbls. Sperm, 500 Whale Oil.¹³

23rd. SW, attended meetings at E'Ville. (Delivered the Letter to N.B.H.)¹⁴

24th. SW. Schr. *Monterey* sails on a Mackerel voyage.

25th. SW, foggy. Delivered my Report of the Meadow and Upland set off to Baise Norton to his Brother Darius Norton. S. Meadow and Upland was given to Son Baise Norton by his Father Darius Norton, deceased, as will appear by Will.

28th. S to SW. B.H.J. engaged in cutting my oats.

31st. ESE, cloudy. Went to Camp Ground & reserved my Tent.

August 1848

3rd. Ely, light. Ship *Mary*, Capt. Crocker, goes to the Cove.¹⁵ Got in all my Oats.

¹³The Bark *Alfred Tyler* had sailed for the Pacific October 30, 1844, shortly after she was bought in New York by Alex P. Weeks. She sailed again for the Pacific in November of this year.

¹⁴While Jeremiah was an early convert to the Methodist Society of Edgartown, he did not seem to attend services there. He attended Eastville services most of the time. It is not known why he chose to make the trek to Holmes Hole each Sunday. His parenthetical remark about the letter is another example of how he keeps many secrets from his journal. It was written in a much smaller and condensed style than the other entries. Who was N.B.H.?

¹⁵Tarpaulin Cove.

4th. E to SW. Went to Camp Ground, carried my Tent.

8th. SW. Went to Camp Meeting at E. Chop. Remained there until the 15th.

It was an interesting time. There was a very large number who attended and probably more persons found peace in believing than in any former meeting at that place. Good order was preserved during meeting. Some Rum, Gin & Brandy was brot from N. Bedford to be sold to those who attended the meeting. We found it, part in the woods and part on board a little schooner called the *Rough & Ready*. To prevent difficulty, it became necessary to destroy it, which I did without much hesitation as the owner ran into the woods. As the 2 men who were left to sell and guard it were poor creatures, we concluded to let them go by promising never to be engaged in such business again. They all left the Island for N. Bedford, leaving the Schooner at anchor in the Pond. I presume their loss would amount to more than \$100. If we could have caught the owner of the liquor I think we should have delt with him according to law.¹⁶

18th. SE, light. Sister Loas Coffin dies.

¹⁶This seems to be the first time we have an eyewitness account of what was often hinted about camp meetings at the time: the presence of liquor. Hebron Vincent, in his history of the meetings, doesn't describe this incident, although he does include a quotation from a Providence newspaper that says of the Camp Ground: "The curse of sin has indeed come over it, but it must be pronounced one of the earth's loveliest spots." There were 64 tents set up for this meeting, according to Vincent.

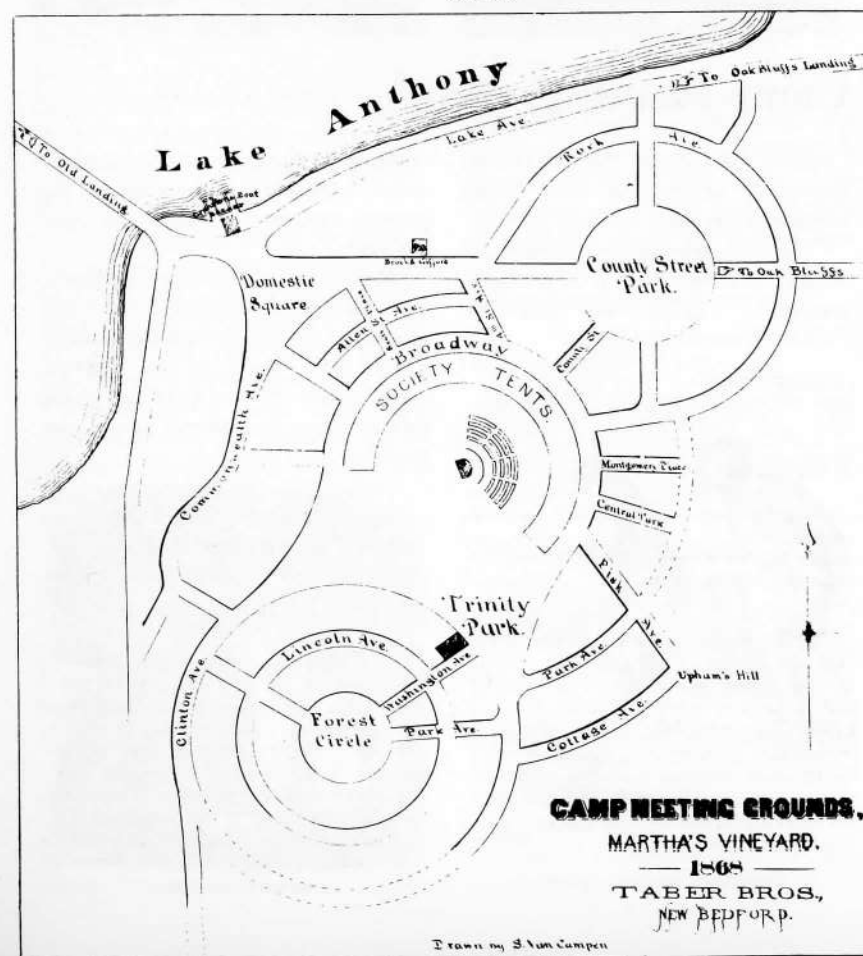
19th. NE, gale, clear. Funeral of Sister Loas [Lois] Coffin, who died in the faith of our Blessed Saviour. She was esteemed a pious loving Christian, her husband, Capt. Peter Coffin, died a number of years since. Funeral service by Revd. Frederick Upham and Revd. Wm. Goodenow, attended at the house of Br. I.D. Pease where she died.

22nd. NE, gale, squally. Wreck Schr.

Splendid towed in by Steamer Massachusetts, having lost her foremast and anchors.¹⁷

29th. SSW, rains a little, being the first shower since the 14th of July. The ground is very dry. I think I never saw it quite so dry. The last heavy rain was June 30th. The corn is much injured on this Island.

¹⁷Not to be confused with the famous ship *Splendid*.





COOKING.



STYLE OF TENTS.

Camp Meeting: 1868

[SKETCHED BY W. L. SHEPPARD.]

Harper's Weekly, in 1868, carried an illustrated article on the Camp Meeting. Here are a few lines from it:

"The daily attendance last year was 10,000; and this year it is probably greater . . . There are over 200

cottages on the ground, one-fourth of which have been erected during the present summer . . . there are over 400 tents.

"Here you see the latest fashions, and innocent flirtation is not unknown among the lads and lassies. They play croquet . . . When evening sets in, the girls put away their croquet and attend to the tea-making . . ."



BATHING ON THE BEACH.



SPECIMEN OF COTTAGES.

Letters

Editor:

After receiving my fourth issue of the *Dukes County Intelligencer*, I realized that it would be my last copy as an annual member. I would not like to miss a copy in the future so I enclose my check for \$200 for a life membership.

In the November issue (p. 79) there was mentioned a Dexter Room in the Cooke House. I am wondering which Dexter this room was named for?

ELIZABETH GERMERSHAUSEN
Norfolk, Va.

The bedroom is named for Thomas Nevin Jernegan Dexter of Edgartown, a young poet and historian who died in his youth. Much of the furniture in the room was given to the Society by his grandmother in his memory.

Incidentally, if you, like Mrs. Germershausen, don't want to miss an issue of the Intelligencer, please send in your 1983 dues without delay.

Editor:

Congratulations to Stuart MacMackin for one of the best articles ever in the *Intelligencer*. It is very nostalgic to me since at the same age I, too, wandered up Circuit Avenue each summer and enjoyed the same things as Stuart did.

I especially appreciated the picture of my grandfather's store with the sign "W.D. Harding," later taken over by my aunt and uncle, May and Clayt Hoyle. Stuart's comment on Clayt's

affinity for fishing is appropriate since he was one of the best on the Island.

I shared Stuart's favorite spots: Norton's Ice Cream Parlor, Darling's Popcorn, the Flying Horses, the Japanese store, the Organ Grinder with the monkey and the Pawnee House with Jerry. I, too, was one of the Captains sailing boats on Ocean Park Pond, possibly racing Stuart, although we didn't know it. One of my chores was to fetch doughnuts from Labell's Bakery early in the morning.

His words about front porches were very appropriate. Luckily, we own the Harding house on Pennacook Avenue and spend time on the front porch greeting friends and strangers as they pass by. I am hoping that some day Stuart will walk by and stop to reminisce with me on our porch.

WILLIAM C. HARDING
Nutley, N.J.

Stuart read this letter before he died (see note page 131) and, like Mr. Harding, hoped that he would be able to visit with him on his porch.

CORRECTION

On page 114 of the February 1983 issue, a map showed the locations of three Indian cemeteries and the Indian Chapel. The cemeteries were properly located, but the Chapel was erroneously placed on the south side of the Middle Line (1685) when it should have been on the north side. The Middle Line's function was to separate the Indian lands (to the north) from the colonists' land.

Director's Report

USUALLY the sounds of progress in a library amount to little more than the rustle of pages being turned, but this winter saws and hammers have also played a part as we have been making a number of changes in the basement of the Gale Huntington Library of History. In addition to the construction of a fireproof enclosure for the furnace, we have built a downstairs office for editorial and administrative work.

Carlton Sprague, the talented carpenter who is doing this work, has also been involved in other projects at the Society this winter such as constructing a new door for the Thomas Cooke House and building a cradle for the whaleboat on display in the carriage house. Maintaining our buildings and exhibits is an expensive, never-ending process, but fortunately we are able to keep up with it through the generosity of our members, who support such projects with contributions to our annual Preservation Fund drive.

Another form of support comes from people in the community who see the Society Archives as the proper repository for documents and artifacts related to Vineyard history. In these terms we have recently been very successful in obtaining books, manuscripts and photographs that are now part of our Archives where they are available to researchers. Since the beginning of the year, we have received particularly large collections from Mrs. William Gifford, Mrs. Harold Rogers, Mr. Henry Beetle Hough, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Lawless, and Mr. and Mrs. Ted Swanson. Through the good offices of John Kennan, one of our volunteers, the Swansons gave the Society several hundred letters and papers of Grafton Norton (1777-1862), who is known in history as an important Edgartown whaling entrepreneur, but up until

now we did not know much about the details of his life.

Every day, we use the Society's Archives to answer the many historical and genealogical questions that come to us from people throughout the world. Often, we receive information in return. An interesting example of this occurred recently when we received a letter from Rev. Robert E. Lee Bearden of Little Rock, Arkansas, who had visited Oak Bluffs last summer and wanted to know more about the Civil War Statue in Oak Bluffs, which has caused a certain degree of historical controversy over the years since on one side of the monument the inscription reads: "Erected in Honor of the Grand Army of the Republic by Charles Strahan, Co. B, 21st Virginia Regiment," while on the other side it states: "In memory of the Restored Union, this tablet is dedicated by Union Veterans of the Civil War and Patriotic Citizens in honor of the Confederate Soldiers." Part of the confusion results from an apparently erroneous belief that Mr. Strahan's regiment was a West Virginia military unit and thus part of the Union Army. We asked Reverend Bearden, who is a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, to look into this matter, and so he went to the Arkansas History Commission to look at the microfilm Register of the Confederate States Army in which he found that Charles Strahan had been a private in the 21st Virginia Infantry Regiment of the Confederate Army. We hope that Reverend Bearden's research helps to clarify some of the confusion about the intentions of Mr. Strahan, a leading citizen of Cottage City and editor of the *Martha's Vineyard Herald*, who was responsible for the erection of this statue. Over the years the soldier had been painted a neutral olive color, but it is now painted in the familiar gray of the Confederacy, although it is a Union soldier.

As we make our preparations for the summer season, we look forward to seeing many of our members at the Society. The Thomas Cooke House will be open this year from June 15 to September 17, Tuesday through Saturday, 10 until 4.

THOMAS E. NORTON

Bits & Pieces

Back in 1891, a man named Alfred J. Pairpoint visited the Vineyard and published his impressions in a little book, *Rambles in America*, "with illustrations by Miss N.M. Pairpoint."

He seems to have spent most of his time at Cottage City -- it was Camp Meeting week.

"... as an observer of religious observances, we think the camp-meetings, as a real benefit to sincere conversion, quite questionable, as the mode of converted fervor is too spasmodic and not lasting in its zeal."

He should have spent an hour or so with our diarist, Jeremiah Pease! Little seems to have won Pairpoint's approval:

"The monotony of the life at Martha's Vineyard, unless some lively society is kept up, must be very undesirable for any length of time. Miniature lodging-houses are built along lonely avenues, where the doors of the sleeping chambers are generally left open, and the beds visible in the best room... in full view of the passers-by... The sojourners suffer all sorts of inconveniences in their temporary homes, because it is called 'camp life,' and it is considered fashionable and the right thing to do.

"The only life in the whole affair appears to be upon the arrival of a New Bedford or Nantucket steamer; 'tis then the 'campers' and hotel visitors turn out en masse, either to welcome their friends or ridicule the seasick voyagers.

"It is no unusual sight to see a man emerge from a cottage in some avenue, in full bathing costume of short drawers, and walk in a stately manner to the shore, with umbrella over head and cigar in mouth, as proudly as the South Sea Islander did who stole the top boots and cocked hat of a naval officer, and then strutted with them on, as if full dressed for a dandy. The lady bathers generally have water-proof cloaks over their bathing costumes when leaving their cottages, and look a little more becoming in their costumes than their lords and masters."

The 1890 stuffed shirt was happier luxuriating at his hotel, the Sea View House, from which "a fine outlook can be seen... and as the eye wanders on the distant line of the horizon it is then, with placid calmness, that the busy man can settle down on the hotel piazza with a fragrant havana, and seem to forget, for a while, common business life, and its many attendant anxieties."

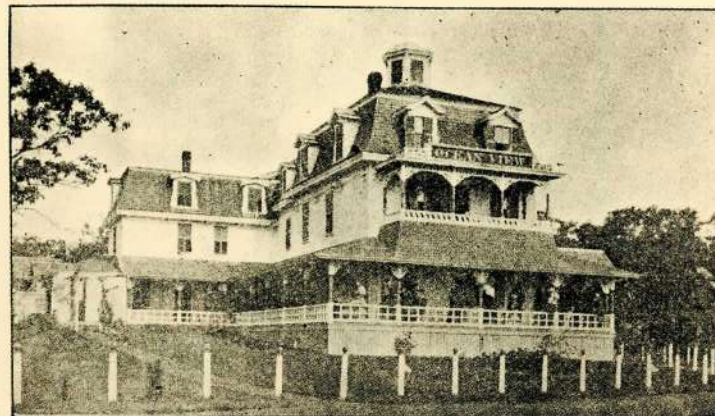
□

Editor Edgar Marchant of the *Gazette* had this to say in an editorial on the day after Christmas 1856:

"We live in a fast age. The old landmarks which used to be our guides are nearly all obliterated, and each man judges of that which is right and wrong for himself. There was a time when integrity, virtues and intelligence were the chief elements of a man's greatness. But alas! how changed we have become. Now-a-days, if a man is poor, he is nobody."

Seven years before that, in 1849, a Frenchman had written: "The more things change..."

A.R.R.



"Ocean View" House

VINEYARD HIGHLANDS, COTTAGE CITY, MASS.

WITHIN five minutes walk of Bathing Beach, Post Office and Boat Landing. Wide verandas on all sides, from which an unsurpassed view of the ocean may be obtained; also directly in front of the house is situated the newly constructed harbor, where hundreds of boats come to anchor.

Modern sanitary arrangements.

'Twenty-five years' patronage of people from the different states; extra large cool dining room. Table supplied with fresh vegetables from "Ocean View" Farm.

Open June 1

Box 402

M. A. RICE, Prop.

The Cottage City Calendar, 1905.

A Big Week

—AT THE—

-TIVOLI-

OAK BLUFFS.

August 26th--31st

Dancing Every Night !
HARDY'S NOVELTY ORCHESTRA
OF WORCESTER.

MONDAY EVENING, AUGUST 26th,

BY REQUEST, The Tivoli Management Will
Feature on This Evening, Several

Spot Dances

Fun for Everybody. Numerous and Attractive
Prizes. Amusing to Spectators and Dancers.

TUESDAY EVENING, AUGUST 27th,

Always Interesting, and This the SEASON'S
FINAL

Popularity Contest

Spectators' Applause Decides.
FIVE DOLLARS in Gold to Winning Couple.

WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY and FRIDAY
EVENINGS, AUGUST 28th, 29th and 30th,

Grand

Dancing Tournament

WEDNESDAY Evening—Preliminaries (First
Group) Fox Trot and Waltz.

THURSDAY Evening—Preliminaries (Second
Group) Fox Trot and Waltz.

FRIDAY Evening—GRAND FINALS, \$10 in
Gold to Winning Couple. 2d Prize \$5 in Gold.

THURSDAY AND FRIDAY EVENINGS

:- Dancing from 9 to 1 :-
HOLIDAY PRICES!

ANOTHER BIG NIGHT!
SATURDAY, August 31st

Dance at the Tivoli