



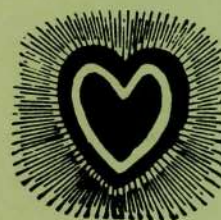
THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 26, NO. 1

AUGUST 1984

The History of Oak Bluffs As a Popular Resort for Blacks

by ADELAIDE M. CROMWELL



Gale Huntington Reviews *Consider Poor I,*

The Life and Works of Nancy Luce

1855 Button Hand Pumper Brought Back to Life



What the Old Woman Said to Her Daughter



Documents: *Jeremiah Pease Diary*

Director's Report

Bits & Pieces

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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 History of Oak Bluffs As a Popular Resort for Blacks

by ADELAIDE M. CROMWELL

Resort Life of Black Americans

IN his amusing and thoroughly documented book, *The Last Resorts*, Cleveland Amory explains how and where the rich and the very rich Americans recreate during the summer.¹ The rise and fall of the more famous watering spots such as Newport, Palm Beach, Bar Harbor and Narragansett are all included, as well as some less well known, such as Lenox and Cape May.

Blacks, too, as soon as they could afford it, followed paths similar to those of comparable Whites and sought convenient watering spots. On the Eastern seaboard, there are at least three (four if one includes Cape May) black resorts: Highland Beach on the Chesapeake, comfortably accessible to the black communities of Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia; Sag Harbor on Long Island; and Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard.

Highland Beach, a name often incorrectly used to include Venice Beach, Ocean Harbor and Arundel-on-the-Bay, in addition to Highland Beach proper, was established, as was Idlewild, a little known black resort in Michigan, by black initiative. Most other black resorts

¹Cleveland Amory, *The Last Resorts*, Harper and Brothers, N.Y., 1948.

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followed the usual pattern of black year-round communities, developing as part of the white communities surrounding them. Oak Bluffs and Sag Harbor illustrate this more typical pattern.

The first Blacks in these places were year-rounders seeking work in the more favorable northern environment. Initially, these Blacks did not form a separate community, being rather a collection of individuals who were able to survive in the local economy. Soon, however, they established their own institutions: first, and always, there was a church, followed, in some cases, by a school. These settlements differed little from other small groups of Blacks that moved into the north except that they were in communities that changed radically from winter to summer, thus altering the employment opportunities.

A second group of Blacks came just in summer and included some who would work only for Whites. Others, more entrepreneurial, set up guest houses and small hotels run by and for Blacks, anticipating the desire of the more affluent Blacks to seek vacations away from the city despite almost universal housing restrictions.

The third group of Blacks was made up of those who came on vacation as a leisure class, often, at first, as paying guests in the Black-owned guest houses and later returning to purchase their own homes. Who these leisured Blacks were, the cities from which they came, their occupations and the life style to which they were accustomed always altered the character of these resorts. Their arrival never eliminated the other groups of Blacks, it only made more complex the character of the black community.

In addition, of course, there were those Blacks who avoided all popular resorts, preferring to vacation as individuals on the Cape, in the mountains or at the lakes where they neither found nor sought year-round or summer communities of Blacks.

Today, for a variety of reasons, the black resort at Oak Bluffs is extremely popular and it illustrates by its history and social structure the complexities and the changes in black resort life styles.

The Coming of Blacks to Oak Bluffs

The first Blacks on the Vineyard were probably slaves, for slavery was legal in Massachusetts until 1783.² There is in the Society Archives a document reporting the sale of a Negro woman by Wilmot Wass in 1769. The idea of servitude was not quick to die after 1783, however, as John Saunders was apprenticed by his father to Melatiah Pease of Edgartown for 17 years on "the nineteenth day of January in the year of our Lord 1793."³ Ironically, John was probably a son of John Saunders, mentioned later, who is thought to have brought Methodism to the Island. He died in 1795, two years after his son's apprenticeship began.

After slavery became illegal, Blacks from such "havens" for free men as New Bedford had come to work on the ships as laborers, sailors and craftsmen and ended up on the Island. Many of these early pioneering families married members of the indigenous Indian population who, by the end of the 18th century, were being pushed to Chappaquiddick and Gay Head, opposite ends of the Island.

Even so, the black population remained small in the 18th century. A Commonwealth Provincial Officer in 1765 counted 46 Blacks. In the American Revolution, a census enumerated 59 Blacks, two percent of the population. Fourteen years later, in 1790, according to the first Federal Census, only 39 Blacks lived on the Vineyard, one percent of the population. For the next 100 years, the

²William Warren Sweet, *Methodism in American History*, Abingdon Press, Nashville. 1953 revision, p. 230: "... at the opening of the Revolution, Massachusetts alone had more than six thousand [slaves]."

³D.C.H.S. Archives. Melatiah Pease (1714-1832) was a master mariner who probably had retired and was running a business at the time.

year-round black population was never more than four percent, sometimes dropping to under one percent. There were small peaks, however. In 1800, 1870 and 1880, the black population rose to over 200, six percent or more. Between 1880 and 1890, the black total dropped from 275 to 132, increasing in 1910 to 193 (4.2 percent). By 1940, Blacks totalled 295 (5.2 percent), but in the next ten years there was again a decline to 160 (2.8 percent). By 1970, Blacks were 3.3 percent of the population with 207 persons.

Religious revival meetings were an important factor in the settlement of both Whites and Blacks in Oak Bluffs. The establishment of the Wesleyan Camp Ground in 1835 led, years later, to the town of Cottage City, later renamed Oak Bluffs. According to some persons still alive, it is only recently that Blacks have been welcome as residents on the Camp Ground. There is, however, good evidence that there were occasional Blacks in attendance at the August Camp Meetings.

Certainly, Blacks were involved in the growth of Methodism on the Island. The first persons known to profess being Methodists here were a colored couple, John Saunders and his wife. Having purchased their freedom in Virginia, they sailed for Massachusetts in a coastal vessel which laid over in Holmes Hole where the Saunders couple decided to stay. That was in 1787. "John, being an exhorter (having as is understood held this position among his fellow slaves) preached occasionally to the people of color, at 'Farm Neck.' . . . In 1792, Saunders removed to the adjacent island of Chappaquiddick, where there was also a settlement of colored people . . . and where he died in 1795."⁴

Saunders' preaching, however, did not lead to the formation of a Methodist Society as it was not until the 1800s that such organized meetings began and then almost

⁴Charles E. Banks, *The History of Martha's Vineyard*, v. II, Annals of Oak Bluffs, p. 45.

in secrecy there being so much opposition from the established religion. Incidentally, the fact that Saunders apprenticed his son for 17 years may suggest a concern for the boy's welfare and training rather than the existence of any broad program of indenture for Blacks.

At the Camp Meeting of 1856, Father John F. Wright of the Colored People's College in Ohio (it is now Wilberforce) was one of several senior preachers. In addition to his sermon, he preached twice in tents to smaller groups. His preaching was described as "able, thorough, and filled with evangelical fire -- just such as we might have expected from one of the apostles of Methodism in the West."⁵ Father Wright was given special permission, against the usual policy, to collect money for his college. He collected \$100.

Two years later, in 1858, the "famous negro Henson, said to be the original Uncle Tom of Harriet Beecher Stowe's well-known romance, visited the meeting and exhorted."⁶

It is important to note that a famous Oak Bluffs resident in the 1870s was Methodist Bishop Gilbert Haven, an anti-segregationist who "employed 20th Century freedom-rider and sit-in tactics during his travels. In 1873 in Mississippi he rode in a train car 'reserved' for colored passengers and ate in a Negro hotel in Vicksburg." He was white, of course, but he was the friend of black people being "one of the few men of his day who unflinchingly favored social equality, including the removal of all laws forbidding interracial marriage," a revolutionary idea at the time.⁷ It was at his cottage on Clinton Avenue that President Ulysses S. Grant stayed during his visit to Oak Bluffs in August 1879. The President occupied a seat on

⁵Hebron Vincent, *A History of the Wesleyan Grove Camp Meeting*, Rand and Avery, Boston, 1858, pp. 113-4, 162-4.

⁶Banks, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁷Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1974, p. 273.

the platform when the Bishop preached to the gathering on Sunday.

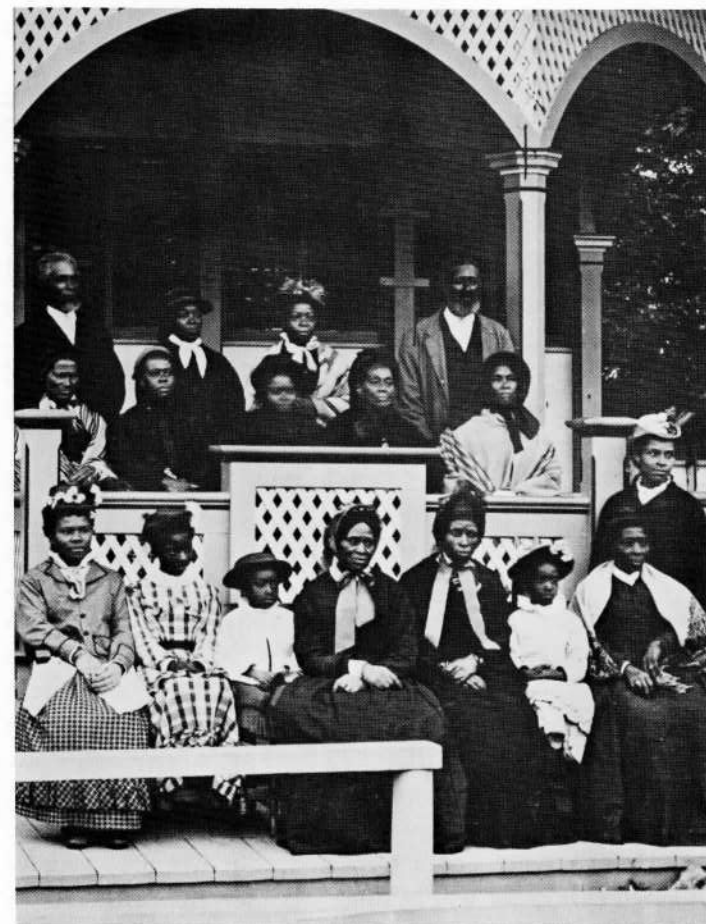
Although this was a period in history when the fervor for abolition and concern for Blacks had subsided, it is significant that there exists an undated photograph of a group of serious, neatly dressed Blacks posed beside the Preachers' Stand of the Camp Ground. Perhaps they were there as part of the group that welcomed President Grant. This picture and that of five black women outside the Promenade Hotel on the boardwalk were made by photographers Richard C. Woodward and Son whose work covers the period 1871 through 1888. Two other photographs from the same collection -- the staff of Narragansett House and Tom the Shoe Shine Boy -- are evidence of occupations followed by non-leisured Blacks at the time.

A somewhat later photograph portrays a well dressed group of Blacks at the turn of the century posing in front of an Oak Bluffs rooming house, probably on the Camp Ground, known as the Thayer Cottage. Until recent times no Black was known to have owned a cottage on the Camp Ground or even to have been welcome there as guests. So strict was this policy that, according to one source, the first guest house in Oak Bluffs open to Blacks was run by Mrs. Anthony Smith and though originally a cottage on the Camp Grounds, it had to be moved outside before Blacks could occupy it.⁸

From 1900 to World War II

For almost 50 years after 1900 the growth and changes in the black community were gradual and hardly visible to those outside its boundaries. Two identifiable groups came to augment its size, one year-round, the other in summer. In 1893, a white minister, Madison Edwards, headed a church in Vineyard Haven near the wharf, the Seamen's

⁸ Author's interview with Mrs. Barbara R. Townes.



The two men in this photograph, c. 1875, were probably preachers at the Camp Meeting. The latticed structure is the Preachers' Stand.

Bethel. Its mission was to provide religious guidance and hospitality for sailors while they were in port. While on vacation in Jamaica, Reverend Edwards met the Rev. Oscar E. Denniston, a black man who performed mission work in Kingston. Edwards persuaded him to come to Martha's Vineyard. Reverend and Mrs. Denniston came to the Vineyard in September 1900 and ushered in a major

change in the black community. Now it had an established leadership.⁹

The black community at the time was closely knit and "took pride in themselves." It was a small group. In 1920 only 175 Blacks were year-round residents of Dukes County.

Reverend Denniston started his work at Oakland Mission, later called Bradley Memorial Church, at 11 Masonic Avenue in Oak Bluffs. His wife, Charlotte, by whom he had three sons, died in 1905. One of their sons, Madison, still summers on the Vineyard. Later, Reverend Denniston married Medoria A. Curtin. Five children were born of this union: Olive, Baron, Dean, Amy and Gerald.

Reverend Denniston was a good fisherman, catching many hake which he salted to feed his family over the winter. The children attended public schools, although son Madison completed his high school studies in Boston. Dean, the second son, graduated from Oak Bluffs High School in 1931 in a class of twelve. All the children received further education and spent their working lives off-island. Dean received a B.A. and M.A. from Boston University, Madison attended Suffolk University Law School. Olive and Amy received B.A. degrees at Gordon College and did graduate work at Boston University, going South to teach, a pattern frequently followed by educated Blacks for whom there were few opportunities in the North. Baron and Gerald also graduated from Boston University. Gerald worked for the Federal government while Baron completed his medical education at Harvard. Madison, Dean and Olive all have homes in Oak Bluffs.

A true picture of just how Blacks fared at the time on the Island depended a good bit on who was evaluating the situation. The closest friends of the Denniston children were Blacks. One member of the group remembers being

⁹Documentation on this period comes from interviews with Madison Denniston and others conducted by Joseph Brown while a student in Afro-American Studies at Boston University.



Rev. Oscar Denniston, here with his wife, Charlotte, was minister of Bradley Memorial Church, Oak Bluffs, early 1900s, a key figure in history.

called "Nigger." Everett S. Allen in his recent book on the Vineyard noted the alienation and isolation of both Indians and Blacks, but as an outsider to both worlds perhaps he was not in the best position to know the vitality and inner strengths of these separate communities.¹⁰ His assessment, however, is probably quite in keeping with the view the white community, in general, held of its black and Indian neighbors.

¹⁰Everett S. Allen, *Martha's Vineyard, An Elegy*, Little Brown, Boston, 1982, pp. 192-214.

Madison Denniston recalls about 30 individuals in the Oak Bluffs year-round community of Blacks during the early years of this century. Among them were John Pollard, a Civil War veteran who ran a dining room in the Highland section, and his sister-in-law, Mrs. Matthews; another was Mrs. Sarah Wentworth, from New Hampshire, mother of three boys, one of whom, Arthur, was the first black graduate of Oak Bluffs High School; George Wormley, who owned the gasoline station on New York Avenue (now deBettencourt's); George Frye, for many years a cobbler on Circuit Avenue and his wife, Ella; Medie Wright and her sister, Nellie Hooks. Others included John Green, Amos Haskins, John Randolph (lost at sea), Virginia Swann, Mrs. Tilman, Mable Hughes and Mrs. Kibbie.

Gradually, there was a social merging of the permanent residents and the summer people. This was possible, perhaps, because many of both groups were business people, thus making it easier to mingle on the Island.

A glimpse into this merged community can be gleaned from the August 7, 1933, column entitled "Oak Bluffs Breezes," a regular feature of the *Boston Guardian*, the famous black newspaper started in 1901, edited by William Munroe Trotter and sold to summer residents by Madison Denniston as a boy. Unfortunately, few copies of the newspaper have survived, but this 1933 issue gives a good picture of social life of Island Blacks.

The column verifies the importance of Reverend Denniston and his family as well as of some summer residents, most of whom were from Boston, this being a Boston newspaper. The illness of Reverend Denniston, "well-beloved and progressive pastor of the Bradley Memorial Church," is noted as are several church activities. Birthdays, condolences and the comings and goings of summer visitors from Boston and Providence are reported. Attention is given to Shearer Cottage on the



Unidentified group outside the Thayer Cottage, date unknown. At right is a tent with a sign that may be announcing a religious meeting.

Highlands as an Island attraction. Smaller boarding establishments are also noted.

Another item refutes to some extent the feeling mentioned above about the racial attitude of the Camp Meeting Association: "The Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association opened the Bible Vocational School

on Monday. Ruth Andrade, a granddaughter of Mrs. Carolyn Jones, was appointed teacher in the kindergarten and attended the first faculty meeting on Tuesday afternoon."

Along with the merging of the summer and year-round black communities under the spiritual and perhaps social leadership of Reverend Denniston, additional affluent black summer people began coming from Boston and surrounding areas. This small and select group of successful Blacks knew each other in Boston and followed one another to the Island. First they rented or boarded, but soon were buying homes, establishing the solid foundations for the black community in the Highlands of Oak Bluffs. Even today, though Blacks now own homes all over the Island, the core of the community remains in the Highlands, where the children of these early comers, now in their 70s or older, still live. Other summer residents came from New Bedford and Providence: the Saxons, the Fabios, the Bushes, the Douglasses, the Handys, the Harrises and the Ballos, among them.

The Boston members of the "original" summer settlers were different from Denniston's "pioneers" and perhaps more numerous and cohesive than the New Bedford and Providence community. Their life style and continuity are easier to describe. They were the Garlands, the Wests, the Richardsons, the T.V. Jones, the Dabneys, the Turners, the Cunnards, the Hemings, the Cottons, and Miss Nellie Smith. Most had ties of friendship already forged in the Boston area. There was no social hierarchy within this group. They were a community of equals, transplanted friends, a group of about forty. For the most part, the husbands did not play important roles as, then as now, the men stayed in the city and continued working while the mothers and children enjoyed a vacation.

Housing for this growing leisured black community was a mixture of small cottages for families and those for

paying guests. The two deluxe boarding houses were those of Mrs. Anthony Smith on Circuit Avenue and her Annex on Pocasset Avenue and Shearer Cottage in the Highlands.

Mrs. Smith, mother of three (Clarence, Fred and Alma) lived in the West End of Boston and supported her family by preparing meals for several Boston lawyers. One of the lawyers, settling an estate, learned of the availability of a cottage in the Camp Ground and he encouraged Mrs. Smith to buy it, which she did. According to her son Fred, when the family arrived there, they were told "we don't have niggers in the Camp Ground and you'll have to get out as soon as possible."

Summoning her lawyer friend for advice, Mrs. Smith had her cottage moved to its present location on Circuit Avenue. Later she enlarged it, purchased another house, accommodating overnight guests and serving meals for a number of years. Some older residents of today's community remember coming as children to Mrs. Smith's.

Around the turn of the century, Sadie Shearer came to the Vineyard with her parents, Henrietta and Charles, and her younger sister, Lillie, to operate a laundry service for white summer residents.¹¹ They employed six helpers in their business in the Highland section. In a few years, Sadie, by then Mrs. Ashburn, saw the need for a guest house catering to her own people. Closing the laundry business, she converted the building into a guest house, adding rooms and a tennis court. The opening of Shearer Cottage gave a strength and endurance to the summer community of this period as had the leadership of Reverend Denniston to the year-round residents.

For many years the most distinguished black summer visitors stayed or had a meal or two at Shearer Cottage.

¹¹Charles H. Shearer, the father, was born in Virginia. He was a graduate of Hampton University where he taught. After his marriage to Henrietta, a Blackfoot Indian, the family moved to Boston where he was Maitre d' at Young's Hotel.

Henry T. Burleigh, the famous composer who came every year to Shearer, is often credited with establishing its reputation among other prominent Blacks who sometimes spent part of their vacations there. Included were Paul and Eslanda Robeson, Ethel Waters, W. H. Lewis, distinguished Boston attorney, J. E. Nail, prominent New York realtor, and Doyle Mitchell, Washington, D.C., banker.

Guests at Shearer Cottage and Mrs. Smith's came from the same social stratum as did those to Mrs. Izette's boarding house a door or two from Mrs. Smith's on Circuit Avenue. Mrs. Dora Hemings, though black, accepted only Whites at her three guest houses on Wayland Avenue.

Aside from Mr. Burleigh, the men generally identified with this period are Dr. Garland, a Boston physician, and the Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., and his son, Adam Jr. Dr. Garland bought a home in the Highlands which is still owned and occupied by his family. Like Mr. Burleigh, Reverend Powell stayed at Shearer Cottage. His son, the famous Adam Jr., later Congressman Powell from New York, first came to the Island at the age of 12. He subsequently purchased his own home in the Highlands and spent summers there with his first wife, Isabel, until their divorce.

More Blacks bought homes in the Highlands, in the main, coming from New England cities, Boston, Springfield, Providence and Worcester. According to one black person, now a year-round resident, who spent all her summers here at that time, the life style was simple, warm and relaxed. Recreation was bathing on High Beach, playing tennis and cards, and visiting with friends. The same people came year after year.¹²

Reminiscing in the *Vineyard Gazette* in 1971, Dorothy

¹²Dorothy West, "Fond Memories of a Black Childhood," *Vineyard Gazette*, June 25, 1971.

Courtesy Barbara R. Townes



Harry T. Burleigh with Lucy, Lilly and Sadie Shearer and a friend in front of Shearer Cottage.

West, a long-time resident, describes this black community as "probably twelve cottages -- all Bostonians . . . neither arrogant nor obsequious, they neither overacted or played ostrich... They were 'cool' -- a common condition of black Bostonians." As the community grew, there were changes. Dorothy West describes them this way: "For some years the black Bostonians, growing in modest numbers, had this idyll to themselves . . . And then came the New Yorkers . . . [who] did not talk in low voices . . . talked in happy voices . . . carried baskets of food to the beaches... carried liquor of the best brands. . . wore diamonds . . . dresses were cut low. They wore high-heel shoes on sandy roads. . . . They lost the [High] Beach for the Bostonians."

Whether or not such a description is completely accurate is not important. High Beach was purchased for the Yacht Club to which no Blacks could belong, thus forcing them to use the beach closer to the wharf, just below Ocean Park.

At this time, summer people seemed to come more and more from the New York area and reflected the broad spectrum of New York life: they were lawyers, doctors, teachers, businessmen and gamblers.¹³ The reasons for this change are many. A greater familiarity with the Island by New Yorkers, brought on, in large part, by the growing popularity of Shearer Cottage whose owner lived in New York City in winter and, of course, the popularity and visibility of the dynamic Adam Powell, Jr., were among the reasons. Additionally, the Island was becoming better known. Anne W. Simon in *No Island Is an Island* notes that the wide publicity the Vineyard was receiving in all the proper journals attracted more persons eager to enjoy its beauty and the association it offered with certain prominent personalities.

After World War II

The Highland residential section was gradually outgrown and summer people started buying homes closer to the beach and the center of town. They were now beginning to live in what had been called "The Gold Coast," the area roughly between Circuit Avenue and the Sound, from Tuckernuck Avenue to Ocean Park. One of the most distinguished persons in this movement was Dr. Lucien Brown of New York, whose home directly across from the beach was purchased in August 1944 through the familiar technique of a "straw," using a white intermediary who would be willing to sell to a Black.

Mrs. Sally Fisher Clark of Washington bought a house near the Browns shortly after, followed by Dr. C. B. Powell, editor of the *Amsterdam News* and a New York physician. Others followed in rapid succession. These individuals and others of similar prominence never

¹³Several writers have described the changing character of the black resort communities, among them E. Franklin Frazier, *The Black Bourgeoisie*, Roi Ottley, *New World A Coming*, *Inside Black America*, Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis*.



Bishop Gilbert Haven

challenged the prominent role of Adam Powell, Jr., leading very private lives on the Island. Even Powell led a relatively restricted life here, apparently enjoying the pleasures of fishing and the company of close friends more than the flamboyant role for which he was known in New York and later in Washington.

Other Blacks, professional and otherwise, had chosen to live inconspicuously in less affluent homes along and abutting Circuit Avenue and also off School Street. The tennis courts were the center of this section which had little, if any, of the rural atmosphere of the Highlands, all the houses being located on well-paved and maintained

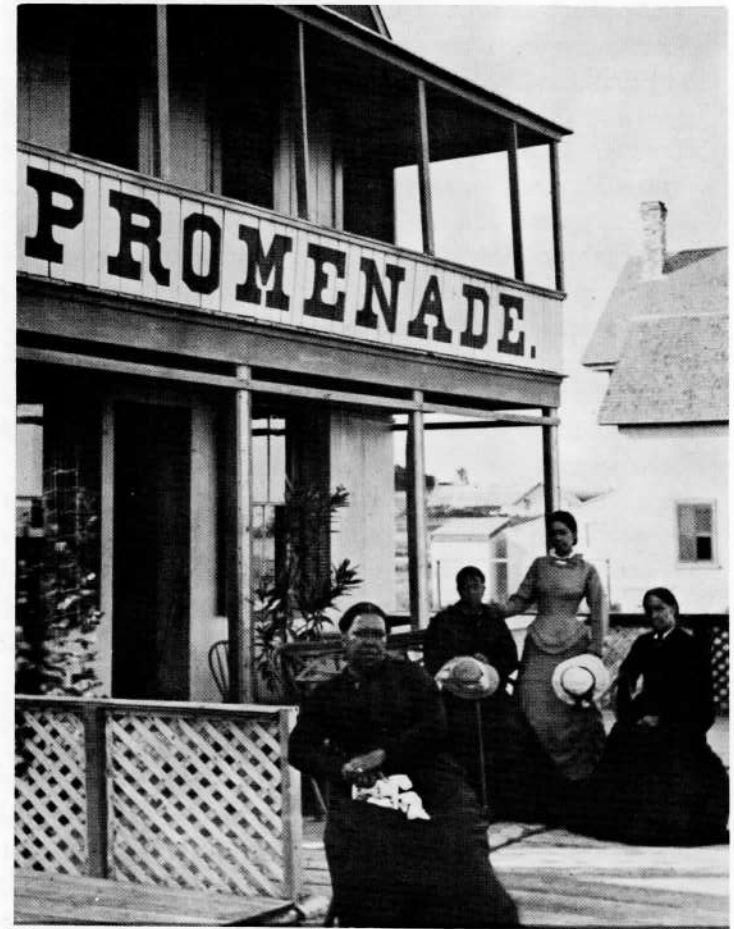
roads. While residents were predominantly black summer people, the area also included Whites and a few year-round Blacks.

With this increasing black population in the summer there was the start of a new style of living -- larger and more frequent parties and a great concentration of Blacks recreating on the beach along the Edgartown Road.

By the mid-fifties, Oak Bluffs was a heterogeneous black resort with summer visitors coming from all over the country and abroad. Not infrequently they came in their own boats and moored in Oak Bluffs harbor. Blacks now had homes all over the town, except in the Camp Ground. It was no longer important where you came from, but rather who you were and what was your life style.

Two other events influenced the ambience of the social environment: the arrival of Edward W. Brooke, later the Senator from Massachusetts, but not yet involved in politics, and also the establishment in 1957 of "The Cottagers," a club composed of black women who owned homes in Oak Bluffs.

Edward Brooke first came here in the early forties as a tourist. He liked the town and soon bought a house. Later, seeing the possibilities of starting a private club in the tradition of American resorts, he bought an impressive house, ballroom included, near the beach and town center, hoping to realize his objective. But this was not to be. The abutters to the house, all white, did not want any kind of club, for any kind of people, in their midst. Brooke gave up his idea. Meanwhile he started his political career which absorbed his energies and interest. Earlier he had sold his first house, which was closer to the beach, so he now decided to occupy the guest house of the intended club house, the latter he sold to his sister Mrs. Helene Amos for her year-round home some time later. Since leaving the United States Senate, Brooke has maintained his legal residence in Oak Bluffs, living in the original guest



Guests at Promenade guest house on the plank walk running from the Highland House wharf to the Camp Ground house.

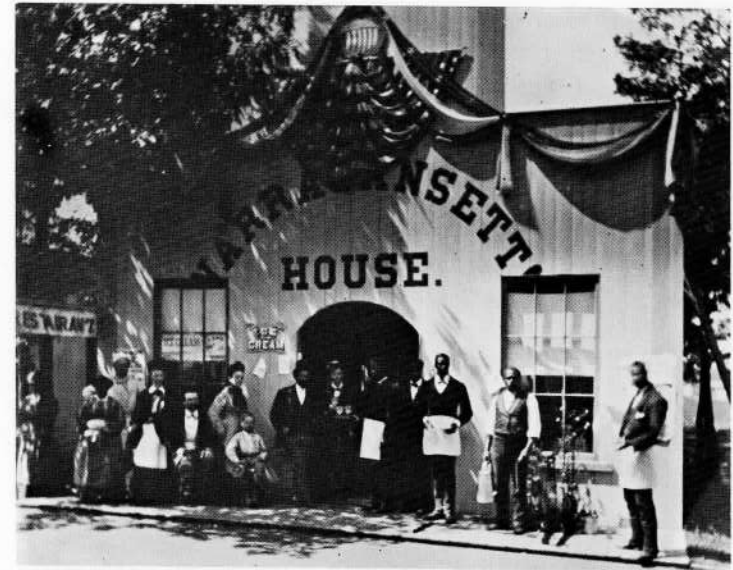
The formation of The Cottagers began the institutionalizing of group status by giving some specificity as to who was or was not "in." With membership limited to 100 women, the group was started to do good works in the community and to provide fellowship for the children of members. Money was raised for a charity, usually the Martha's Vineyard Hospital at first, by an annual Clam

Bake to which anyone could buy tickets. Several years ago, the group purchased its own meeting place, a former Town Hall-Firehouse on Pequot Avenue. Used for club activities during the summer, it is available to other groups during the winter. As membership in the group has grown (there are now 86 members), it has become more diversified in the activities it pursues. The Clam Bake is still featured, but a Fashion Show, Evenings of Elegance and House Tours have been added to raise money. All events are open to the public, if they can secure the frequently scarce tickets.

Most Blacks come to Oak Bluffs to enjoy the beach, if not the swimming. Other popular activities are bridge and poker playing, tennis and fishing. Tournaments are organized annually with participants largely, but not exclusively, black. Two or three black families have their own tennis courts. The only event in which Blacks and Whites participate in more or less equal numbers is the Annual Art Show at the Tabernacle on the Camp Ground. Black artists are frequent winners of prizes there.

Of course, there are also small, intimate black cocktail parties, but increasingly popular are the "Five to Sevens" (as they are often called). These large social gatherings (up to 100 or more guests) are usually held between five and seven in the evening. To attend one must be personally invited. Drinks are plentiful and so is the food. Small talk among small groups is the main activity. Usually, there is no music or dancing and dress, while optional, is usually semiformal. If one accepts several invitations, sooner or later one must reciprocate.

Some Blacks come to the Island each summer to rest and to associate only with their friends -- no tennis, no cards, no "Five to Sevens," just the beach and small gatherings of old friends. As there is no clubhouse to which one ought to or might like to belong, private homes become a club for friends.



Many Blacks came here to work at such places as the Narragansett House. Decorations indicate photo was taken on President Grant's visit, 1874.

There are also occasionally other activities: lectures (major civil rights leaders often come here under the auspices of the NAACP — the late Kivie Kaplan, who was white, was former president of the group and a summer resident), art shows (Lois Jones, the famous black painter and a resident of the Island since its "Boston only" period, is a frequent contributor), and concerts (Eddie Haywood, well-known jazz pianist, is a year-round resident and often gives concerts). A book party was recently given by the black community, open to all, for Dorothy West, well-known writer from the Harlem Renaissance period and another year-round resident. Her weekly column in the *Gazette* covers the activities and personalities of the black resort, but, of course, not exclusively.

In recent years, two highly visible public appointments have done much to interface the relations of the "summer" Blacks with those of the year-round Blacks. In 1977, Rufus Shorter, a black educator who had been a summer

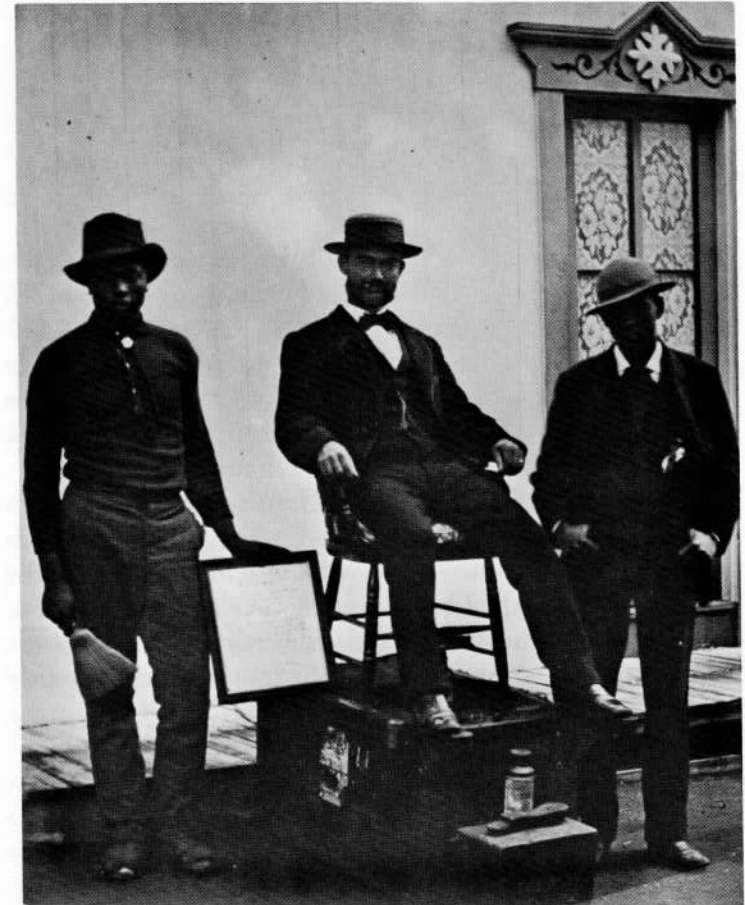


Promenade House is at left; Highland House is at far end of the plank walk.

resident for years, was named Superintendent of Schools for the Island. The second was the appointment in 1980 of Herbert E. Tucker, also a black summer resident, as a Presiding Judge of the County of Dukes County. Formerly living in Boston, Judge Tucker had been a member of the black leisure class who summered here. To live here year-round meant only an extension of that life style.

Mr. Shorter died in 1981, having served only four years. His replacement was white. When Judge Tucker retires, it is unlikely he will be replaced by a black. The willingness of these two highly qualified Blacks to be part of the year-round Island community in roles not customarily held by Blacks suggests a broadening of the structure of the black community. The fact that former Senator Brooke has the Island as his legal residence also gives the year-round black community a significance that was lacking heretofore.

Other changes are occurring. More Blacks are coming each summer, purchasing more expensive homes in many parts of the Vineyard. They have become far too numerous to be known to one another or to depend upon



Typical occupation for a Black in 1874: Oak Bluffs shoe-shine stand.

one another as before. More Blacks are choosing to retire here, not only in Oak Bluffs, but around the Island. These changes suggest a more diverse resort community of Blacks co-existing with a changed and more important year-round black community.

The black presence, at first mostly in Oak Bluffs and now throughout the Island, is permanent and promising.

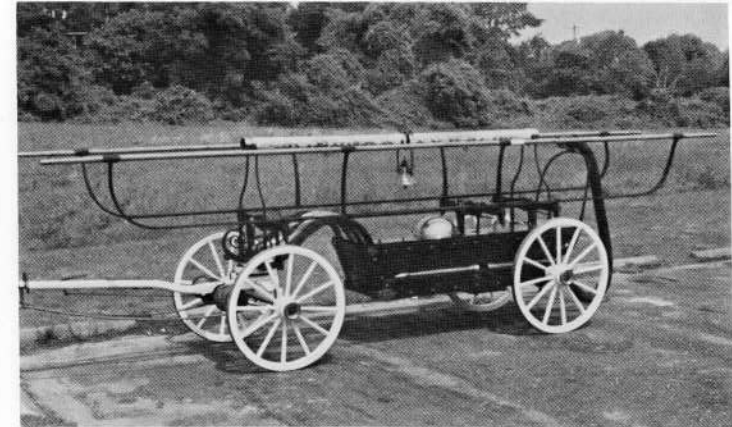
1855 Button Hand Pumper Brought Back to Life

WHEN the voters of Edgartown at their Town Meeting in 1855 approved the spending of \$1000 for a new fire engine and reel cart, they knew they were buying the best. What they didn't know was that the engine, a Button hand pumper, Class 2, would be as handsome in 1984 as in 1855, thanks to the hard work of members of the Edgartown Fire Department.

The machine, hand drawn and hand powered, was built at the L. Button & Co.'s Fire Engine Manufactory in Waterford, N.Y. The owner of the company, Lysander Button, came to the Island himself on October 23, 1855, to witness the delivery test and to certify to the engine's perfection. After the test, the Committee unanimously accepted the Button and paid Mr. Button \$1000 on the spot.

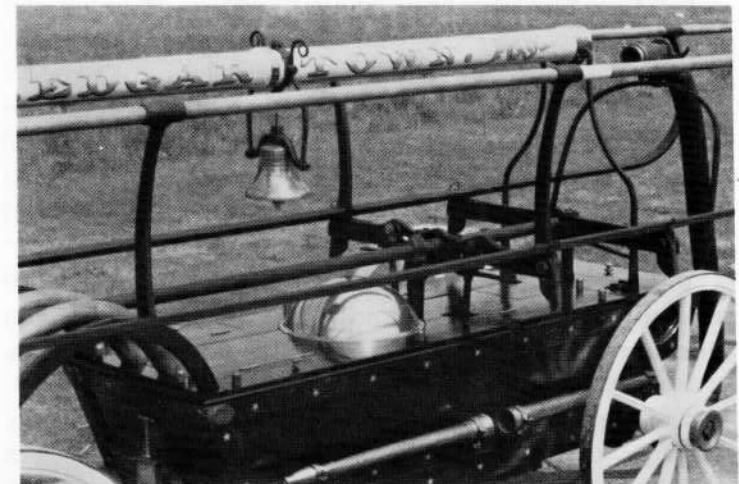
Describing the test, the *Gazette* was full of praise: "The Engine is a beautiful one in appearance and very effective in its operation. It has thrown 1, 2, 3 and 4 streams very beautifully and to a great height, has drafted water 15 feet perpendicular, and played through 400 feet of hose and thrown a 7-8 stream considerably more than 100 feet high and a horizontal stream 175 feet. . . . It can throw more than 10 barrels in one minute. . . . We congratulate the town in being in possession of so excellent a machine, made by the very best builders of Engines in the United States. . . . If our Holmes Hole friends are in want of a Fire Engine, we would recommend one of this description to them."

Revitalizing this handsome machine has involved

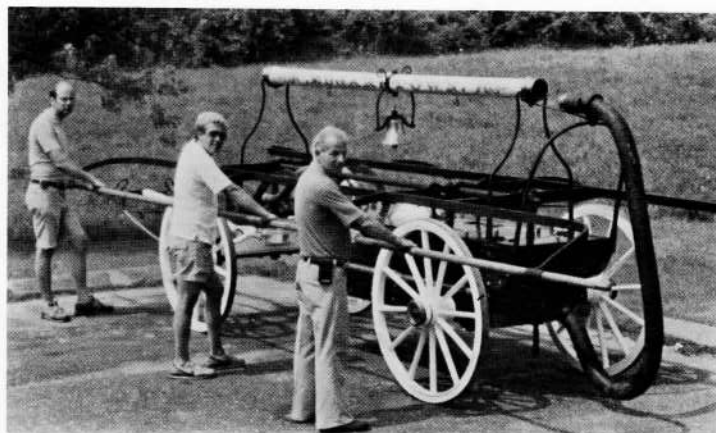


Newly refurbished Button pumper looks like new.

months of work by the Edgartown Fire Department's restoration committee headed by Michael Dolby and Peter Look, with the help of other members of the Department. Of major assistance was a team of experts from the Neptune 8 Veteran Firemen's Association of Newburyport, who made two weekend trips to the Island



Edgartown engine is an exceptionally well-preserved example of the old Button, according to a Fire Engine historian.



As many as 30 men powered the pump, using two brakes, one on each side, shown here. Three streams could be played over "any building in town."

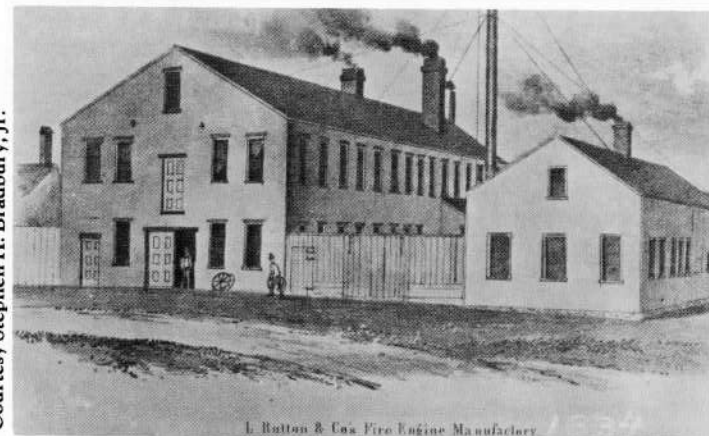
to provide both technical advice and skilled mechanical help in refitting the antique machine so it would once again pump water. The Neptunes, as they are called, also have a Button engine, an 1878 model, and have won many championships in the competitions held regularly by New England veteran firemen's companies.

Neptune President Stephen H. Bradbury, Jr., who is its Historian as well, has estimated that the Edgartown machine was about the 390th off Lysander Button's production line. There were, he says, a total of 750 hand engines built at the Waterford plant and perhaps 100 of them are still in existence. "However," he adds, "few exist in the beautifully original preserved state of the Edgartown engine."

Thanks to the work of these two groups, the Button's revitalization is not merely cosmetic: she can still pump a horizontal stream 175 feet, just as she did on the day she was accepted by the Town.

The Button hand pumper was in active service in Edgartown for over 75 years, drawing its water from cisterns scattered around town. The Fire House for those years was the ground floor of the Town Hall on Main

Courtesy, Stephen H. Bradbury, Jr.



The L. Button & Company factory in Waterford, N.Y., where the pumper was built.

Street. In 1938, the Button was presented by the Town to the Historical Society for safekeeping. It is displayed in our Carriage Shed year round.

The newly restored pumper was unveiled in the Edgartown Fourth of July parade this year, putting on an exhibition of its amazing pumping capabilities on Main Street. After months of rehabilitation, the 1855 Button is now back at the Society for the public to enjoy.

The Historical Society is most grateful to Mike Dolby, who spearheaded the operation, and to his crew for the hours of work they put into this major project. Lysander Button and the members of the 1855 Edgartown Fire Department would be proud of their work. We urge members to come and see for themselves.

What the Old Woman Said to Her Daughter

History teaches us much. Among its messages is that humans are much the same regardless of the century. We may have accumulated more facts, but we're basically little different.

In one of the many scrapbooks in the Society Archives (its date c. 1880, compiler unknown) is this hand-written rhyme, author also unknown, which proves the validity of the French aphorism: the more things change, the more they stay the same.

One summer eve I chanced to pass nearby a cottage gate.
An aged woman in the sun sat talking to her mate.
The frost of age was on her brow, yet garrulous her tongue,
As she compared the doings now, with those when she was young.
"When I was young, young gals were meek

and looked round kind of shy

And when they were compelled to speak, they did so modestly.
They staid at home and did the work,

made Indian bread and wheaten,

And only went to singing school, and sometimes to night meetin'.
The children were obedient then, they had no saucy airs,
But minded what their mothers said

and learned to say their prayers.

But nowadays they know enough, before they know their letters,
And young ones that can hardly speak,

will contradict their betters.

Young women now go flirting round and looking out for beaux
And scarcely one in ten is found to wash and mend her clothes.

But then, I tell my daughter
Folks don't do as they'd oughter.
They hadn't oughter do as they do,
Why don't they do as they'd oughter?

When I was young, if a man had failed, he shut up house and all,
And never ventured out till night, if he ventured out at all.
His wife sold all her china plates,

and his son came home from college,

And his gals left school and learned to wash
and bake and such like knowledge.

They gave up cake and pumpkin pies, and had the plainest eating,
And never asked folks home to tea, and scarcely went to meeting.
The man that was a bankrupt called, was kinder shunned of men,
And hardly dared to show his head among his townfolk then.
But nowadays when a merchant fails, they say he makes a penny.
His wife don't have a gown the less and his daughters just as many.
His sons do smoke their choice cigars and drink their costly wines,
And she goes to the Opera and he has folks to dine.
He walks the streets, he drive his gig, men show him all civilities,
And what in my days were called debts are now called liabilities.
They call the man unfortunate, who ruins half the city.
In my day it was his creditors to whom we gave the pity.

But then, I tell my daughter
Folks don't do as they'd oughter.
They hadn't oughter do as they do,
Why don't they do as they'd oughter?

When I was young, crime was a crime. It had no other name,
And when 'twas proved against a man, he had to bear the blame.
They called the man that stole, a thief, they wasted no fine feeling.
What folks call petty larceny, in my day was called stealing.
They did not make a reprobate the theme of song and story,
As if the bloodier were his hands, the brighter was his glory.
And when a murder had been done, could they the murderer find,
They hung him as they would a crow, a terror to mankind.
But nowadays it seems to me, wherever blood is spilt,
The murderer has sympathy proportioned to his guilt.
And when the law has proved a man to be a second Cain,
A dozen jurors will be found to bring him in insane.
And then petitions will be signed and texts of Scriptures twisted
Until the man who proved to be as bloodthirsty as Nero
Will walk abroad like other men, only a greater hero.

But then, I tell my daughter
Folks don't do as they'd oughter.
They hadn't oughter do as they do,
Why don't they do as they'd oughter?

Books

Consider Poor I: The Life and Works of Nancy Luce

By Walter Magnes Teller. Published by the Dukes County Historical Society. Illustrated. 144 pp. \$5.95

WALTER TELLER has given us a fine book of Island history in *Consider Poor I*, the story of the life and works of Miss Nancy Luce of West Tisbury. This carefully documented biography of a much misunderstood woman sets the record straight. Sympathetic and understanding, it gives us a very different view from what some of Nancy's contemporaries thought of her. To many of them she was more than peculiar, she was, they thought, insane, even petitioning the court to that effect.

Nancy Luce was peculiar, but she was not insane. She was a character -- a character being an individual who differs from the ordinary run of humanity. Nancy was not ordinary. The Vineyard has produced many characters, but none just like Nancy. Talented, proud, imaginative and very resourceful, she did some excellent things with words as Walter Teller makes clear in this book.

Her poetry, although it must be called primitive, is true to the Vineyard of her time and true to her

emotions. Teller includes in his book those poems he considers her best, commenting briefly on each.

Nancy never married, living alone with her animals after the death of her parents (she was an only child). She supported them for many years by operating a small retail operation in their home and by buying and reselling at wholesale knitted goods made by her neighbors. She was an entrepreneur at a very young age.

Becoming ill from some unidentified malady she was forced to find other ways to support herself. She turned to writing, a most unusual occupation for a female at the time. She hand-printed little books of her poems and sold them to sightseers. She had photographs made of herself and her hens, at a time when the camera was an exciting new invention, and sold them. As she became better known, she had her books commercially printed, making her perhaps the Island's first successful female author. Her book ran into five editions over 22 years, an amazing success. By her resourcefulness, she supported herself until her death.

Because she was so very different from the typical woman of that era, she was looked upon as strange. She was clever enough to exploit that difference. She not only made enough to take care of her needs, but also to buy two marble tombstones for her dear friends, three of her hens.

Included in this delightful book along with many of her poems are, for the first time, three of her hand-lettered works, reproduced in full, just as she printed them. Her lettering,

floriated and imaginative, is delightful.

Nancy's "trademark" was a heart, the symbol of her warmth and feeling. Her major work is entitled "Poor Little Hearts." She sprinkled the heart through her writing, using it in a way not unlike that used today in slogans proclaimed on bumper stickers and on T-shirts. Had there

been such items on sale in her day, she no doubt would have been a wealthy lady.

Walter Teller makes all this very clear and his graceful style of writing makes this a fascinating book. It will make a valuable addition to any shelf of Island history -- this story of the Vineyard's first female celebrity.

GALE HUNTINGTON

Sampling of Nancy's Hand Work

Nancy Luce
& 'T.T.' Pinky



This heart with a little one in it,
Is to give you to understand,
That hearts can be united.

Present from

Nancy Luce

September.
2d.

1865.

Do excuse me,
poor **M** sick.

@ Nancy Luce

Documents

This installment of the diary of Jeremiah Pease (1792-1857) gives no sense of the imminent fracturing of the nation over slavery. Such news comes slowly to the Island.

Jeremiah, a man of many occupations, continues as busy as ever, being involved in laying out the new road from Edgartown to Holmes Hole and dividing the Indian lands on Chappaquiddick. His only rest seems to come each August when he raises his tent (and his voice) at the annual Camp Meeting.

He notes the death of Pres. Zachary Taylor (Tailor). Millard Fillmore, who today is unfairly maligned, takes over. Congress abolishes flogging in the Navy, but school teachers are still free to apply the cane.

Disillusioned survivors of the Gold Rush are returning, often broken in health and finances, two of Jeremiah's sons among them.

We have been publishing excerpts of this diary since 1974.

April 1850

6th. N.E. Severe storm, heavy snow & gale.

8th. S.W. pleasant. "The year rolls around and steals away the breath that first it gave."¹

9th. W.N.W. cold, freezes hard last night. Rec'd Letters from Cyrus & John at California and William at N. York.

¹Jeremiah's 58th birthday. He's more poetic this year.

10th. N.W. to N. Went to N. Bedford on business of Littleton C. Wimpenny.

12th. N.N.E. Received \$1850.27 of Wm. O. Brownell on acc't. of L.C. Wimpenny making in all received of him \$4360.27 as per copies of receipts.²

15th. W.N.W. Br. Upham leaves Town for Bristol, R.I., being stationed there this year. His labours here for 2 years past have been much blessed of the Lord. I think he leaves us with as pleasant feelings as he ever left any former station.³

16th. W.N.W. gale, very cold. Br. Ch. Titus arrives being stationed here the ensuing year by Conference to preach to the M.E. Society.

18th. N.W. to E. Boarded a large number of vessels.

19th. S.W. fresh breeze, cold. Finished plowing for corn.

24th. N.W. to S.W. Mr. John Alley of Thomaston, Maine, who died of consumption at the Wid. Thaxter's Tavern on Monday 22nd. is carried home today by his brother who came from Thomaston for that purpose if he should find him dead. Ship *Alpha*, Cap. Coleman, arrives from the Pacific Ocean with 1200 bls. sperm oil. Oil being very high she will make a great voyage. 200 bls. Whale oil (of Nantucket).⁴

30th. S.W. Ship *Ontario* of Nantucket

²Littleton, a whaling master, was Jeremiah's son-in-law.

³Br. Upham was the Methodist minister.

⁴Sperm oil was selling for about \$1.18 a gallon at the time, making the total value of her catch over \$48,000. The voyage, under Capt. Joseph W. Folger, had lasted nearly four years.

arrives from Pac. Ocn.

May 1850

3rd. N.W. Mr. Benjamin W. Collins dies at about 2 o'clock p.m. He was a very interesting young man aged 25 years, son of Mr. Polgrey Collins, he died of consumption. A son of Gamaliel Marchant late of Gloucester (Gloucester ?) but formerly of this place deceased, died about 11 o'clock p.m., aged about 15 years. His name was Gamaliel. An infant of Capt. Coon dies at night.

7th. N.W. to S. Ship *Monticello* from P. O. arrives.

8th. Ely, light. Ship *Vineyard* arrives with 2000 Bls Sperm, 150 Whale oil.

9th. S.E. storm, rains. Having taken a severe cold I am quite unwell today.

10th. S.W. fresh breeze. I am rather better today thro. mercy.

16th. N.W. foggy. Mr. Fred S. Pease from Albany, N.Y., visits us, arrives today.

20th. S.E. Went to Chappaquiddick with Richard Beetle for the purpose of dividing the Indian land that was reserved in the division of 1828 as common land. We took the number of coloured Inhabitants, &c and returned (²/₃ of a day).

22nd. Sly. Court of County Commissioners sets today, Stephen Skiff of Tisbury, Herman Vincent of Chilmark and myself of this Town were elected at the last annual meeting to fill the station of Commissioners.

23rd. E. light. Court sets again today, adjourned until June 7th. We viewed a part of the road leading to Holmes Hole for the purpose of laying out a

new road agreeably to a Petition presented for that purpose, went as far at the late residence of Ichd. Norton Esq. deceased, returned on account of rain (2 days).

24th. S.W. very pleasant, engaged in dividing Indian land at Chappaquiddick (1 day).

From the 24th of May until the end of June, he spent 15 days on the Indian land project and 7 days on the new road to Holmes Hole. Every Sunday, he went to Eastville to church.

July 1850

1st. S.W. County Commissioners met at the Court House to hear the parties relating to Henry Pease's Petition. The Commissioners went over to Chappaquiddick to view the damage done to Cheeges (?) Creek meadow. Returned to the Court House at 2 p.m., awarded H. Pease \$25. and costs, making about \$65.00 (1 day).

2nd. N.E. cloudy cool. Engaged at the Custom House.

6th. S.W. warm. Got in some hay. Schr. *Mintray* arrives with 32,000 fish.

9th. 9th. N.E. Rec'd. Letter from Frederick at California.

10th. N.E. Br. John Beetle dies at E'ville of Dysentery aged 64 years. He was a pious worthy man, had been confined to his house for many years on account of ill health.

11th. N.E. Mr. John Smith dies of Dropsy and other complaints, aged 46. News of the death of Gen. Taylor.⁵

27th. S.W. pleasant. Br. James H. Beetle dies at E'ville having been sick a number of months during which

⁵President Zachary Taylor.

time he has manifested a Christian spirit and has died (as we trust) in the Lord, his loss will be sensibly felt in that little village.

August 1850⁶

6th. Sly. Engaged with the other Commissioners in laying out the road from Edg. to H. Hole, very warm.

8th. S.W. surveying and cutting a line for the road through the woods to the road near Thom. Smith Jr. house.

7th. Sly. Engaged as above. Finished this day.

9th. S.S.E. Engaged as above, cut the line down to the road some distance below Mr. S. Kidder's.

10th. N.W. warm. Engaged as above. Adj. till after C. Meeting.⁷

14th. N.E. Gale. Went to the Camp Ground, carried my things for Camp Meeting. Returned at evening.

15th. N.W. light, pleasant. Camp Meeting commences.

16th. N. Ely. Went to Camp Meeting. It was a very excellent meeting. Many souls were awakened and converted to the Lord as we trust. The weather was cool but favourable for the meeting. The Steamer *Miantissoma* from Providence struck a rock in Wood's Hole and sunk which detained the passengers from that region until the Steamer *Massachusetts* returned from N. Bedford. She arrived in the night and took them to

⁶Jeremiah headed the month "June 1850", correcting his error only on the following page. It was a rare mistake on his part.

⁷Business seemed to stop on the Island during the Camp Meeting -- certainly it stopped for Jeremiah, who was a founder and the man who chose the site. In other words, he picked the site of today's Oak Bluffs.

N. Port the next morning after the meeting broke up. No lives were lost in the steamer. Mr. Caleb Thaxter died, the 19th. or 20th Inst.

23rd. S.W. Mr. John P. Worth having stuck a nail in the ball of his foot a few days ago, dies this morning about 5 o'clock of the Lock Jaw, his spasms were violent a short time before his death. The wound being very trifling, closed up in a short time, he was walking the street 2 or 3 days before his death.

For the rest of the month he worked every day except Sunday either on the Indian lands at Chappaquiddick or the Holmes Hole road.

September 1850

1st. S.W. pleasant. Attended meetings at E'ville. At ½ past 5 p.m. I married Capt. Enoch Ginner of Prospect, Maine to Miss Martha R. Drake, of Falmouth, but a resident of E'ville for a number of years past. Mr. Jethro Norton dies at about 12 o'clock this day. He was able to walk some distance from home yesterday. He broke a blood vessel in lifting his wife who is sick and died suddenly as I understand.

7th. S.Ely. Rec'd letters from John & Frederick being at California. By letters rec'd. we hear of the death of Wm. H. Coffin, son of Sam'l. Coffin. He died at sea near Callio (?) as I understand.

16th. N.Ely. Court of County Commissioners sets, commenced assessing damages on account of the new Road to Holmes Hole (1 day).

24th. S.W. foggy. News of the death of Edmund Lewis arrives, he died in

California.

October 1850

7th. N.W. Attended Comm. court at Smith Mayhew, Esq.'s at Chilmark. Viewed and accepted the new road near Smith Mayhew's dwelling house.

8th. W.N.W. News of the death of Rev'd. John Adams. He died in N.H. on the first of this month very suddenly as I understand. He preached here in 1821 & 1822. A great number of persons professed Religion during the time he preached here, his labours were blessed in the conversion of more souls (I think) on the Isd. than any other man who I can recollect. He preached here a number of times after the first mentioned period and reformation generally followed. I have great reason for gratitude to God that he was ever sent to this Town.⁸

21st. W.N.W. Tristram Butler and Jas. Cooms arrives from California.

He devoted a number of days this month to the Indian land project, two of them in writing his report.

November 1850

10th. N.W. fresh breeze. Attended meetings at E'ville. Rec'd a letter from Frederick being on his way home.

16th. E.S.E. Storm with rain at night. Watched with Br. Palfrey Collin's wife, she being very sick. It was an interesting time during the night, she having been a very moral woman and always sustained an excellent character yet never had embraced Religion, she now felt the need of Faith in our Blessed Saviour and

⁸For the full story of the "great reason" see the *Intelligencer*, November, 1880, "Jeremiah's Travail."

became very anxious to find peace in believing in Jesus. Prayer was most fervently offered to God in her behalf by her Husband and Daughters and she for herself, at midnight she sent for Br. Titus who came although a heavy storm. Again prayer was offered by him and others for her. In a few hours she found peace in believing and joy in the Holy Ghost as we trust. She could now give up all earthly concerns and resign her soul to the care of her Heavenly Father. It was a scene of much interest to all present. I was truly glad to be there.

20th. N.W. Mrs. Collins died, aged 55 years.

30th. N.Wly. Ship *Vineyard*, Cap. Edwin Coffin, sails for Pacific Ocean.

December 1850

4th. S.W. Light Vessel sails to her station at Pollock Rip.

21st. W.S.W. Went to North shore to see a child of L. Luce who had hurt its shoulder. The Corps of Alex. P. Weeks, J., son of Capt. Alex. P. Weeks, is bro't from Providence where he died yesterday about one o'clock p.m. having been sick about one week. He was a pleasant young man, aged about 20.

31st. W. to N.N. W. Our Son, John A., arrives from California, sick with fever and ague, having passed through many afflictions and has been mercifully preserved. Frederick also arrives at Duxbury sick.⁹

⁹John and Frederick, Jeremiah's sons, had left, along with many Vineyard men, to seek their fortune in California on the *Walter Scott* in April 1849. They seem to have returned empty handed.

Director's Report

EVERY Sunday night the brilliant flashes of the lighthouse mark the Society's unique way of celebrating the summer season. We are able to do this thanks to our modern-day lighthouse keepers, Tony and Kathryn Bettencourt, who crank up the machinery on Sundays at 8:30 p.m. in July and August. Reflection and refraction through the many lenses and the nearly 1,000 prisms produce a dazzling light show of historical interest that is well worth the trip to town on a pleasant and generally quiet Sunday evening.

For daytime visits to the Society there are several new or different attractions that you will want to see. The Button fire engine has been wonderfully restored by the Edgartown Fire Department, and it is on display in the carriage shed along with a refurbished whaleboat that now sits on a full-length boat cradle donated by Mrs. Alexander O. Vietor in memory of her husband. Our thanks to Carlton Sprague who built the cradle and added thanks to Tom Taylor, Zoltan Farkas, Jim Young, and Ted Amaral who engineered the job of moving the fragile boat and fitting it in place.

Mrs. Vietor has also donated a sperm whale's jawbone--an extremely rare artifact since almost all of them were broken up for the teeth. On display in the Francis Foster Museum, this six-foot long jawbone will help provide a vivid image of what a sperm whale is like. We have also recently received a pair of very large walrus tusks from Mrs. Ira S. Lewis, who is 92 years old and whose husband's grandfather obtained the tusks during a long seafaring career that included a lengthy visit with descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers on Norfolk Island.

This summer our herb garden has become a true showplace due to the diligent efforts of the Martha's Vineyard Garden Club. Special credit should go to Mrs. Herbert F. Custer, Mrs. Robert S. Bruguere, Mrs. Melville Chapin, Mrs. George Franklin Neil, and Mrs. A. Loring Rowe (chairman of the committee).

On our summer staff we are pleased to have with us this year Pauline Berube, Laura DeGroff, Nathan Durawa, Hilda Gilluly, Gladys Goud, Reva Lombard, Mary McLane, and Andrew Thomas. Also with us this summer, assisting Alvin Goldwyn with the cataloging in our Library, is Jean Crawley, a graduate student at Catholic University, Washington.

Before we opened our facilities for the summer season, our collections were examined by a team of consultants from the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh under the leadership of Professor James B. Richardson III, who has had a long association with our Society and who volunteered the services of himself and his staff. Their report noted that we have a large and important collection and that a great deal must be done to insure the preservation of these artifacts, particularly in enlarging our storage facilities. Over the years most of the progress that we have made in caring for our collections has been the result of contributions to our Preservation Fund. We hope that our members will continue to be generous in their support of this essential aspect of museum work.

This year we have planned a new format for our annual meeting, Monday, August 20, at 5:00 p.m. Instead of having a formal speaker, we will hold a brief business meeting on the Society's grounds, and then we will serve refreshments and take members and guests on a tour of our buildings.

THOMAS E. NORTON

Bits & Pieces

The Island has grown accustomed to celebrities. But it was not so 110 years ago when the President of the United States spent a few days at Oak Bluffs. Pres. U.S. Grant, his wife, his Vice President, and several of his Cabinet came to Camp Meeting.

The Grants stayed in the cottage of Methodist Bishop Gilbert Haven, a national celebrity in his own right. An ardent abolitionist since the 1840s, he had been Editor of *Zion's Herald* before being elected Bishop.

Prominent politicians and businessmen were here, too. J. W. Harper of Harper & Brothers, N.Y., had an elegant supper at the Sea View House for the President, followed by a lively "hop." One news item tells of Grant's sneaking away from the throngs for a quiet smoke:

"After tea, the President called at the cottage of Alderman J.H. Collins of Cambridge on Merrill Avenue and indulged in a quiet smoke, under the admiring gaze of some 20 spectators."

There may have been more to it than "a quiet smoke." Bishop Haven, an ardent prohibitionist, said in a sermon in praise of President Grant: "Great will be the happiness of the nation when no village shall be cursed with a grogshop."

We all know Grant's feelings about grog. Perhaps he slipped over to Alderman Collins' cottage for a drink! Surely, the Boston politician

would have been able to oblige, even at Camp Meeting time in Oak Bluffs.

AFTER Edgartown bought the Button engine in 1855 (see p. 27), the *Gazette* urged additional expenditures for the fire department: "We now need about 500 feet of leading hose, as a greater part of the old hose has been burst at the recent trials of the new Engine."

At Town Meeting, a month later, the voters agreed, but Editor Marchant had changed his mind:

"It is generally conceded [he wrote] that about 300 feet of hose would be ample . . . and the selectmen will not probably purchase more than the foreman of the engine, and other discreet citizens, recommend."

The next week, a letter of protest was published in the *Gazette*:

"... the citizens, with an unanimous vote (*not one person dissenting*), very wisely instructed the Selectmen to purchase 500 feet of leading hose. . . the assumption that 300 feet is sufficient, does not now, neither has it at any time, met the views of the foreman or other discreet citizens."

"The new engine can lead off one string 1500 feet; or three strings of hose, each 500 feet, and play 3 streams over any building in town, if we had the hose to do it with."

"Mr. Editor, I leave it to the good judgement of all to say if the town has not only acted wisely, but discreetly, in directing the Selectmen to furnish 500 feet of new hose for the

BUTTON ENGINE"
A.R.R.

Mrs. E. Clarence Kern
Mrs. Charlotte M. Kingsbury
Mr. Richard S. Knight, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. John R. Kranz

Miss Florence E. Larson
Ms. Barbara Lassen
Mr. and Mrs. John M. Leavens
Mrs. E. F. Leland, Jr.
Mrs. David E. Lilienthal
Mrs. Arthur Littleton
Mr. and Mrs. Dewitt C. Livingston
Mrs. Lorna M. Livingston
Miss Dorothea Looney
Miss Margaret C. Love
Mr. and Mrs. Lane Lovell
Mrs. Doris L. Low

Miss Duncan MacDonald
Mr. and Mrs. Melville G. MacKay
Mrs. Stuart MacMackin
Mrs. Frances B. Macy
Mrs. George Magnuson
Dr. and Mrs. Frank T. Mansure
Mrs. Robert B. Marshall
Mrs. Robert F. Marshall
Mrs. W. G. Mattern
Miss Rachael Mayhew
Mrs. William C. McConnell
Dr. and Mrs. James B. Medlock
Mr. Maxwell Moore
Mrs. Richard D. Morris
Miss Elinor C. Muller

Miss Patricia Neal
Mrs. Richard H. Neeld
Mrs. William A. Nerney
Mrs. Oak D. Norton
Mrs. Mary Louise Norton
Miss Mora E. Norton
Mr. and Mrs. S. Bailey Norton

Mrs. Margaret O'Neill
Mr. John W. Osborn

Mr. Everett B. Pease
Capt. Donald L. Poole
Mr. Robin C. Porter III
Dr. Robert Post
Mr. and Mrs. John Purcell
Mr. Anthony R. Puwal

Mrs. Francis F. Randolph
Mr. and Mrs. Edmund S. Redstone
Mr. and Mrs. James B. Richardson, Jr.
Mrs. Sanger P. Robinson

Mr. Robert E. Rohr
Dr. Wilfred V. Rounseville
Mr. Thomas R. Runquist
Mrs. Robert E. Russell

Mrs. Frances C. Sawyer
Dr. and Mrs. Edward B. Self
Mrs. Barbara F. Seward
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur T. Silva
Mr. and Mrs. Walter W. Slocum
Mr. Drayton Beecher Smith
Mr. Hollis A. Smith
Mrs. William E. Sorenson
Mrs. Kenneth A. Southworth, Jr.
Mrs. Page P. Stephens
Mrs. Everett St. John
Mrs. Kenneth Stoddard
Dr. William T. Strahan
Mrs. A. N. Swanson
Miss Olive Swanson

Mr. and Mrs. H. L. T. Tabor
Mr. Thomas E. Thatcher
Mrs. B. W. Thoren
Mrs. Lynn B. Tipson
Miss Ruth Todd
Mr. Frank W. Townes
Mr. Milton A. Travers

Mr. and Mrs. Keith M. Urmey

Mr. Anthony K. Van Riper
Mr. Edward W. Vincent

Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Washburn, Jr.
Mrs. Alice Webster
Mr. J. William Weeks
Mrs. John Wehncke
Mrs. A. Turner Wells
Mr. and Mrs. Wellington Wells, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Werner
Mr. Julian V. Weston
Mr. Theodore T. White, Jr.
Ms. Sydna White
Mr. Theodore T. White, Jr.
Mrs. Suzanne S. Whittemore
Mr. and Mrs. John A. Wiener
Miss Julia Wightman
Dr. James A. Wolff
Mr. and Mrs. George H. Woodard
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Wrigley

Mr. John A. Yntema
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph W. Yowell

Our thanks to each of you.

ANNUAL DUES FOR MEMBERS

Individual membership \$15.

(Includes two guest admissions)

Family membership \$25.

(Includes four guest admissions)

Sustaining membership \$40.

(Includes four guest admissions)

Life membership \$200.

(Includes two guest admissions)

Members receive *The Intelligencer* four times a year.

WINTER HOURS

1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Thursday and Friday

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturday

SUMMER HOURS

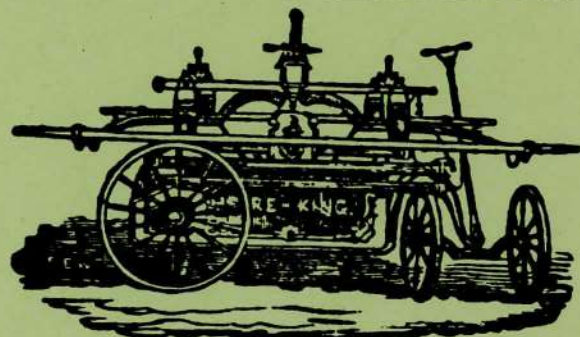
(June 15 to Sept. 15)

10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday through

Saturday

ENGINE MEETING.



THE members of the Button Engine Company, are requested to meet at their hall, on Saturday evening next, at 7 o'clock. A full attendance is requested. Per order. ap28

From the Vineyard Gazette, April 26, 1860.